

## ABSTRACT

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THE LIMITS OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY  
IN IRAN.

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Coercive diplomacy is a deceptively attractive strategy. If it can be made to work, it has the potential of achieving foreign policy objectives with considerably fewer costs. But when adopted in uncondusive circumstances, the strategy has the potential to backfire and make peaceful resolution of conflicts more difficult.

Since 2002, when the full scope of Iran's nuclear program and ambitions were revealed to the public, the United States has primarily relied on coercive diplomacy to force Iran to accept limitations and oversight that go beyond the NPT and Iran's safeguards agreement. This dissertation assesses how Iran's nuclear policy and program has been affected by US and UNSC sanctions. It argues that not only has coercive diplomacy failed to persuade Iran to accept binding selective constraints on its fuel cycle activities, but it has also triggered a series of reactions that have strengthened Iran's determination to advance, enhance, and expand its nuclear fuel cycle program.

The findings of this dissertation corroborate the conclusions of most other scholars that have studied coercive diplomacy. Indeed, the recurrent failure of coercive diplomacy is rooted in the strategy's neglect of the reality that national-level decisions are the resultant of the pulling and hauling of various forces within the target state and that in dealing with objectionable policies of states, one must seek to weaken the forces that promote and strengthen those that oppose the objectionable policy. In the case of Iran, sanctions have done the opposite. They have intensified Iranian distrust of the US and the post-war international order and have consequently augmented the forces in Iran that promote and have weakened those that oppose Iran's nuclear fuel cycle program. Taking the factors that drive and shape Iran's nuclear policy, this dissertation argues that the proliferation risks of Iran's nuclear program could be resolved more quickly, reliably, and effectively through arrangements that are based on mutually acknowledged rights and equitable principles than through arrangements based on coercion.

**WHEN COERCION BACKFIRES:  
THE LIMITS OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY IN IRAN**

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## **Dedication**

To those committed to the cause of justice, human dignity, and peace.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Coercive diplomacy is a deceptively attractive strategy. If it can be made to work, it has the potential of achieving foreign policy objectives with considerably fewer costs. This potential, as well as the lack of other alternatives in between cooperative mechanisms and military actions, has induced US policymakers to rely on coercive diplomacy even in situations where its odds of success are dismal at best. Interestingly, even when adopted to deal with situations that lend themselves poorly to coercive diplomacy, US policymakers have often portrayed coercive diplomacy as the best available strategy to further US national interests, neglecting that reliance on coercive diplomacy could sometimes exacerbate the situation at hand to the detriment of US national interests and security.

US reliance on coercive diplomacy to deal with Iran's nuclear ambitions is one such situation. Successive US administrations since the fall of the Shah have often emphasized on their tough Iran-related foreign policies and their ability to impose more stringent sanctions as a way to showcase their foreign policy credentials. Since 2002, when the full scope of Iran's nuclear program and ambitions were revealed to the public, Iran's nuclear program and the US response to it has gained much salience in foreign policy circles and debates. What is often missing in such debates, however, is the question of whether sanctions and use of coercion against Iran have actually influenced Iran's nuclear policy and whether sanctions have in fact furthered US national interests and international peace and security.

This dissertation seeks to assess how Iran's nuclear policy has been affected by US and UNSC sanctions that seek to persuade Iran to suspend its proliferation-sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities. Since 2002, the US and its allies have portrayed Iran's uranium enrichment and plutonium production capability as a grave threat to US national interests and international peace and security. As an ongoing and yet unresolved international dispute, how the US and its allies deal with the proliferation-sensitive aspects of Iran's nuclear program will have significant ramifications for US national interests and security, the global nonproliferation regime, and international peace and security. Hence, it is very important and quite timely to assess whether coercive diplomacy, which is by far the single most salient and the primary method employed by the US and its allies to persuade Iran to suspend, if not forsake, its proliferation-sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities, has been or should be expected to prove effective.

This dissertation argues that not only has coercive diplomacy failed to persuade Iran to accept binding selective constraints on its fuel cycle activities beyond its treaty and safeguard obligations, but it has also triggered a series of reactions that have strengthened Iran's determination to advance, enhance, and expand its nuclear fuel cycle program. The findings of this dissertation corroborate the conclusions of most other scholars that have studied coercive diplomacy. Coercive diplomacy is a very difficult strategy to employ successfully. It has a tendency to backfire and make matters worse if utilized for the wrong reasons, in uncondusive circumstances, and/or through ill-chosen measures and processes. For this very reason, not only does the strategy have a very low success rate,

particularly when dealing with high policy issues, but it also prolongs conflicts and makes their peaceful resolution more difficult and, hence, less likely.

The recurrent failure of coercive diplomacy is rooted in the strategy's neglect of how national-level decisions actually come to being. Contrary to the most fundamental assumptions of the theory of coercive diplomacy, national-level decisions are rarely a byproduct of crude, issue specific, cost-benefit analysis conducted by a unitary sovereign. The example of Iran shows that much more is involved in a national-level decision-making than a simple issue-specific cost-benefit analysis. This dissertation, therefore, argues that a whole new strategy, positioned in between cooperation and war, should be envisioned and that *strategic empathy* is the more viable substitute for coercive diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Regarding national-level decisions as the resultant of the pulling and hauling of various forces (e.g. interests, values, objectives, justifications, concerns, perceived threats and opportunities, constituencies and individuals) within the target state, this dissertation argues that in dealing with objectionable policies of states, the strategy should be to first understand the involved forces and then seek to weaken the forces, in the broadest sense of the term, that promote the objectionable policy and strengthen those that oppose the objectionable policy.

Applying strategic empathy to the case of Iran, the author suggests that Iran's nuclear fuel cycle program is only one of the manifestations of Iran's security concerns, its determination to be self-reliant and its policy to limit US influence in the region. Iran's security concerns, as well as its domestic and foreign policies, are based on a deep lack of

trust and confidence in the US and the post-war international order that the US has championed. Sanctions and coercive diplomacy have made matters worse by intensifying Iranian distrust of the US and the post-war international order. Coercive measures have also augmented the forces in Iran that promote and have weakened the forces that oppose Iran's nuclear fuel cycle program.

Therefore, to achieve a stable peace with Iran and to effectively deal with the proliferation risks of Iran's nuclear program, the US needs to regain the confidence and the trust of the Islamic Republic and seek to resolve the disputes over Iran's nuclear fuel cycle activities through means that respect Iran's rights under the NPT, including its right to produce nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes, provided that it submits to international safeguards and inspections and does not divert safeguarded materials and capabilities to produce nuclear weapons. Indeed, the preponderance of evidence suggests that the proliferation risks of Iran's nuclear program could be resolved much more quickly, reliably, and effectively through arrangements that are based on mutually acknowledged rights and equitable principles than through arrangements based on coercion.

## **Section 1.1: Background**

While US foreign policy toward the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken many shapes and forms since 1979, most could be characterized as being essentially coercive in nature. Having taken the United States by surprise,<sup>1</sup> the Islamic Revolution toppled an indispensable ally of the US and sent shock waves across the Middle East. Fearing a domino effect of Islamic uprisings in other regional countries allied with the US, the US was quick to resort to coercive means to ostensibly change the behavior of the Islamic Republic and to diminish its ability to influence regional dynamics. Yet, it is questionable whether these efforts have been effective in changing the behavior of the Islamic Republic. Despite doubt regarding its efficacy, however, coercive diplomacy has remained central to US policy toward the Islamic Republic and has been utilized by the US in most of its disputes with Iran.

Among all of the instances where coercive diplomacy has been employed toward the Islamic Republic, its use has been most pronounced, enduring, and systematic toward Iran's nuclear program. Accusing Iran of pursuing a nuclear weapons program long before Iran had developed an indigenous capacity to enrich uranium, the US has primarily relied on coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program, if not the entire program all together.

While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly the first time after the Islamic Revolution that US accused Iran of pursuing a nuclear weapons program, records indicate that the US has

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<sup>1</sup> Six months before the Islamic Revolution, a CIA assessment had concluded that Iran was not in a "revolutionary or even a prerevolutionary situation." (Andrew, 1995, p.439)

actively tried to prevent Iran from developing its nuclear capabilities at least since 1983. Records show that in 1983 when Iran, based on Article IV of the NPT, requested the IAEA for assistance to reactivate its dormant nuclear research program, the US directly intervened and prevented the IAEA from providing Iran with any such help (Hibbs, 2003).

US efforts to curtail Iran's nuclear ambitions intensified during President Clinton's administration as part of that administration's "Dual Containment" strategy toward Iraq and Iran. Such efforts intensified after August 14, 2002, when the spokesperson for the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI)<sup>2</sup> publicly revealed what was long known to the US Intelligence Community that Iran was constructing both a uranium enrichment facility and a heavy water reactor without IAEA oversight (Hosenball, 2005). Pursuant to that announcement, the US sought the support of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to curtail Iran's nuclear activities. To this date, the UNSC has adopted six resolutions against Iran, four of which impose Chapter VII sanctions. The last in a series of UNSC resolutions against Iran, was UNSC Resolution 1929, which was adopted on June 9, 2010. All UNSC resolutions against Iran demand Iran to "suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development." Iran, however, has to this date defied US and UNSC demands and has further developed and expanded its proliferation sensitive activities since the adoption of the first UNSC resolution against Iran in 2006.

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<sup>2</sup> According to the State Department, NCRI is an alias for the Mujahedine Khalq (MEK). The MEK was classified as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the State Department at the time of the announcement.

Understanding Iran's decision-making process, particularly with respect to its nuclear program, however, is critical to the formation of an effective policy toward the Islamic Republic. Without understanding how Iran's nuclear policies come to being and the factors that contribute and shape such policies, the US and its allies may formulate measures that further complicate the already difficult situation with Iran.

### **Section 1.2: Research Question**

This dissertation seeks to explore conditions under which coercive diplomacy not only fails, but backfires. It will use US reliance on coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program as a case to better understand how coercion and sanctions can affect policies in target states in ways that produce counterproductive outcomes.

More specifically, by answering the following questions in regards to US use of coercive diplomacy to deal with Iran's nuclear ambitions, this dissertation will seek to draw lessons on the efficacy of coercive diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

- 1) To what extent and in what ways has US reliance on coercive diplomacy helped the US achieve its intended policy objectives in regards to Iran's nuclear program?
- 2) What impact have past and current coercive strategies had on Iran's nuclear program?
- 3) Do the factors that drive and shape Iran's nuclear policies make coercive diplomacy more or less likely to succeed?



### **Section 1.3: Variables and Scope**

Although the focus of this dissertation is Iran's nuclear program and the efficacy of US reliance on coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program, this dissertation also seeks to contribute to and refine the generic knowledge of coercive diplomacy. As Alexander L. George (1991) has asserted, the "generic knowledge of coercive diplomacy remains provisional and incomplete. It will and should continue to be refined with the study of additional historical cases" (p. xv).

#### **Section 1.3.1: Generic Variables**

Hence, the generic *dependent variable* of this dissertation is the cessation or reversal of the objectionable policy or behavior and the main *independent variable* is the utilization of coercive diplomacy against the actor of the objectionable policy or behavior. Simply put, this dissertation, much like the studies undertaken by George and others who have followed in his footsteps, is seeking to evaluate the utility of coercive diplomacy as a strategy to persuade an opponent to stop or undo a policy or a behavior deemed objectionable and the conditions that affect its probability of success.

#### **Section 1.3.2: Case Related Variables**

In order to both contribute to the generic knowledge of coercive diplomacy and evaluate current US policy toward Iran and its nuclear program, the dependent variable of the case being studied is Iran suspending, if not forgoing, proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program. Indeed, all UNSC resolutions against Iran's nuclear program have demanded Iran to suspend:

- (a) all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, to be verified by the IAEA; and
- (b) work on all heavy water-related projects, including the construction of a research reactor moderated by heavy water, also to be verified by the IAEA (UNSC resolution 1737, adopted on December 27, 2006)

Hence, the dependent variable of the case study of this dissertation is essentially the extent to which Iran concedes to these UNSC demands.

The main independent variable of the case study of this dissertation is US use of coercive diplomacy. Essentially, to persuade Iran to concede to US and UNSC demands, the US has relied on coercive diplomacy and is seeking to persuade Iran to concede by inflicting Iran with various economic and political costs. Hence, the case study of this dissertation seeks to illuminate the degree to which US reliance on coercive diplomacy has contributed to the US goal of preventing Iran from developing, advancing, and expanding its proliferation-sensitive technologies and capabilities.

### **Section 1.3.3: Scope and Boundaries**

This dissertation is primarily focused on Iran's nuclear program and the effect of coercive diplomacy on Iran's nuclear policy from 2002 to 2013. It is important to note that much might be changing since November 2013, when Iran and the P5+1 countries (United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China) agreed on a Joint Plan of Action (JPA) to resolve issues relating to Iran's nuclear program and "to reach a mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution that would ensure Iran's nuclear

program will be exclusively peaceful.” As will be elaborated on in the conclusion of this dissertation, however, the author does believe that the finding of this dissertation will not only remain relevant, but will inform why or why not Iran and P5+1 were or were not able to achieve the abovementioned stated aim of the JPA.

#### **Section 1.4: Significance and Contribution**

This dissertation will have both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of International Security. By examining the case of Iran’s nuclear program and the US and UNSC efforts to curtail it through the use of coercive diplomacy, this dissertation contributes to and refines the generic knowledge of coercive diplomacy. Indeed, the theory and the body of knowledge relating to the conditions that favor or impede effective use of coercive diplomacy could only benefit and become further refined by the study of additional cases in which coercive diplomacy has been employed. Considering that Iran is the most sanctioned country in the world, it serves as an exceptional case to be studied in an effort to further advance the generic knowledge of coercive diplomacy.

On the practical side, it is important to recognize that since its inception, the Islamic Republic has in one way or another challenged the post Second World War political order in the Middle East and beyond. Immediately after the Islamic revolution in Iran, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini actively challenged both the United States and the Soviet Union by seeking to “export” the Islamic revolution to other Muslim countries that were governed by pro-American autocrats, criticizing the Soviet Union, disbanding the Iranian pro-soviet Tudeh (communist) party, and extending Iran’s support to the Mujahedin in

Afghanistan (Rubinsteing, 1981). Iran has also challenged US interests in the region expanding and deepening its soft power and influence in perhaps the most geopolitically sensitive part of the world (Chorin and Malka, 2008). Indeed, as Iran's soft power becomes ever more potent, the United States' ability to achieve its policy objectives in the region becomes increasingly diminished.

One of the main elements of Iran's soft power is its image as an independent Muslim country that is able to make significant advancements in many important areas despite pressures from the world's sole superpower. Iran's progress in the nuclear field and its ability to indigenize some of the most sensitive aspects of that technology has not only become a very salient aspect of Iran's image since 2002, but has also become a source of grave security concern for the US and its allies. As Iran makes steady advancements in the nuclear field and as it disregards America's opposition to the program, the US and its allies have become significantly worried about the various ramifications of a nuclear Iran for the nonproliferation regime, the security interests of the US, and the international peace and security.

For these very reasons, as successive US administrations have learned, Iran is not a country that can be ignored. The Islamic Republic has cornered the US into a strategic game that forces the US to frequently take positions and stances that it cannot sustain. It has showcased its ability to defy US demands and has augmented its domestic legitimacy as well as its soft power and influence in the region, at the cost of US credibility. There are, therefore, pressing reasons for the US to reevaluate its policies toward the Islamic

Republic, understand the reasons behind Iran's nuclear defiance, and reassess the utility of coercive diplomacy in its dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions. This dissertation will answer key question required for such an assessment and will be a relevant source of insight for those seeking to evaluate US foreign policy toward the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It is important to emphasize here that much of this dissertation deals with the perceptions of the Iranian people and policymakers and the effect such perceptions have had on Iran's nuclear policy and on how Iran has reacted to US and UNSC sanctions. Indeed, considering that people from varying cultures, geopolitical contexts, and historical experiences will have differing perceptions about the involved costs and benefits, effective use of coercive diplomacy is necessarily dependent on having a clear understanding of the opponent's perception of what is being "demanded of him, which may be at variance with what the coercing power thinks it is demanding" (George, 1971, p.25). It is needless to say that such perceptions need not be valid for them to affect Iran's behavior and cost-benefit calculus and the author's description of these perceptions should not necessarily be regarded or read as an attempt to justify or prove the validity of such perceptions. Instead, this dissertation attempts to make Iran's nuclear policy and its response to US and UNSC sanctions and demands more comprehensible and, hence, predictable to observers who have chronically been unable to understand Iran in its own terms.

### **Section 1.5: Methodology and Sources of Inference**

This dissertation uses a mixed-method approach. It relies heavily on the case study approach with quantitative methods playing a supporting role. Following in the footsteps of George, the case study method offers the best and most viable means for achieving the above-mentioned objectives of this dissertation. This is particularly the case considering the multifaceted nature of the questions this dissertation explores and the sources of inferences that such studies generally rely on.

This dissertation draws its inferences from both primary and secondary sources. For the research that has contributed to this dissertation, the author has spent extensive time in Iran since 2006, discussing issues related to this dissertation with Iranian policymakers, academics, business elites, religious scholars, and political figures and activists. In those years, the author also played a critical role in the fielding and analysis of dozens of probability sample national surveys, either conducted face-to-face or through call centers located inside and outside of Iran, on issues closely related to the topic of this dissertation. The author has also acted as the principal analyst of 29 focus groups conducted in the cities of Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Babol, Mashhad, Zahedan, Ahwaz, and Bandar Abbas. While most of the focus groups and surveys in which the author was involved are proprietary, these studies have given the author an understanding of the Iranian culture and public attitudes that have proven vastly beneficial in the writing of this dissertation.

This dissertation is also heavily informed by discussions the author has had with Iranian policymakers, academics, business elites, religious scholars, and political figures and activists during his extensive stay in Iran. It is important to note that none of these interactions took the form of structured interviews. While at first glance this might seem to be a deficiency of this dissertation, considering the sensitivity of the issues covered in this dissertation as well as its primary audience, informal, cordial, and unstructured discussions were the only viable way of engaging influential Iranian figures on the topic of this dissertation. Such discussions have not only informed the thinking of the author, but have also led the author to various open sources and documents that have been heavily used in this dissertation.

This dissertation also heavily relies on archival research, interview and speech transcripts, historical texts and documents, official documents, legislations, publications, and announcements of various governmental and intergovernmental organizations, scholarly journals and texts, and various datasets and indicators collected by reputable think-tanks and international organizations.

### **Section 1.6: Limitations**

This dissertation has some noteworthy limitations. First and foremost, this dissertation has a single-case research design and it seeks to draw general references for the generic knowledge of coercive diplomacy by doing an in-depth analysis of a single case. Regardless of how one looks at it, this is indeed a limitation of this dissertation and this dissertation could have been improved greatly had it looked into and included additional

cases. This limitation, however, does not jeopardize the contribution of this study. While some scholars doubt the utility of single observation case studies,<sup>3</sup> others have found them quite valuable depending on the nature of the selected case. For example, Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennet (2005) argue that “several kinds of no-variance research designs can be useful in theory development and testing using multiple observations from a single case. These include the deviant, crucial, most-likely, and least-likely research designs, as well as single-case study tests of claims of necessity and sufficiency” (pp. 32-33). It is important, nevertheless, to emphasize that while this dissertation only evaluates one case, the author considers it among many other cases that have been evaluated by other scholars. It is also important to note that as the most sanctioned country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Iran is a unique case that deserves specific attention. Furthermore, even staunch opponents of single-observation case studies agree that single-observation case studies that involve many intra case observations, as does this dissertation, have significantly less inferential limitations (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994, pp. 211-212).

The second limitation of this dissertation is rooted in its sources of inference. Considering the sensitivity of the topic and its ongoing nature, it is quite possible that the information available in the public domain does not cover the whole story. Since the author did not have nor sought to gain access to information that was not available in the public domain and since this dissertation is entirely based on open source information, some of its findings may deviate from reality. Indeed, as time passes and as more classified information finds its way into the public domain, some of the findings of this dissertation as well as the lessons such findings indicate may need to be revisited.

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994, pp. 208-212.



## **Section 1.7: Organization**

This dissertation is broken into five main chapters. After the introduction, the second chapter provides a definition and focuses on the existing literature on coercive diplomacy. Besides reviewing the background of the theory, the second chapter also examines the track record of coercive diplomacy and the conditions named in the literature for its successful use. The second chapter ends by noting some of the questions and situations that have not been thoroughly analyzed in the literature.

The third chapter of this dissertation aims to evaluate the impact of US and international sanctions on Iran's nuclear *program*. Before conducting the evaluation, however, the third chapter first provides a background on Iran- US relations in order to put into context the situation in which coercive diplomacy and sanctions have been employed against Iran. After going over Iran-US relations, the chapter provides an overview of the coercive measures that have been adopted by the US and the UNSC to persuade Iran to curtail its nuclear ambitions, followed by an impact evaluation of those coercive measures.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation evaluates the effect of coercive diplomacy on Iran's nuclear *policy*. The first section of chapter four evaluates the effect of coercive diplomacy on Iran's nuclear policy through the prism of existing literature on coercive diplomacy. The second section of chapter four evaluates the impact of coercive diplomacy on Iranian public attitudes toward their country's nuclear program. The third section looks into suggested channels of transmission that supposedly translate the pain and costs of sanctions and coercion into a change in the objectionable policy. Drawing

upon the theory of collective action, the third section questions the validity of the two main suggested processes through which sanctions and coercion are said to generate adversary concession. Section four of chapter four discusses Iran's strategic culture and its effect not only on Iran's nuclear policy, but also on Iran's reaction to US and UNSC coercive postures and demands. Section four examines why US and UNSC demands are regarded as being illegitimate; why, besides the reasons explained in the previous section, individual members of Iran's decision-making elite are unlikely to openly advocate conceding to US and UNSC demands as they have been thus far framed; and why US and UNSC sanctions are likely to ultimately result in more resistance. Finally, section five of chapter four discusses how Iran's quest for regional prominence has propelled it to master and expand its nuclear capabilities and showcase its defiance of US and UNSC demands.

Chapter five of this dissertation includes the lessons and the implications of the findings of this study both for coercive diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and for how the US should go about dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Section 2.1: The Theory of Coercive Diplomacy**

Warfare and use of coercion have been an integral part of human life since the very beginning of recorded history. Yet, like many fields of study, systematic thinking and analysis of coercive strategies primarily began shortly after the end of the Second World War with the emergence of a bipolar international system shaped by the rivalries of two superpowers; the United States and the Soviet Union. While before the Second World War, major powers more readily resorted to war to achieve their foreign policy objectives, post Second World War realities and the institutionalization of an international legal system have significantly limited the utility of military might for achieving foreign policy objectives. Consequently, in today's international system, interstate warfare has become a rare occurrence and relative military might is no longer the chief predictor of a country's ability to impose its will on other countries.

As the utility of brute force for achieving political ends diminished, coercive strategies gained traction, attracting the attention of strategists and academicians alike. Consequently, in late 1950's, as both the United States and the Soviet Union realized that total war among them was no longer an option, strategists and academics started to more systematically study and explore the alternatives to total war and their efficacy. Daniel Ellsberg was perhaps the first scholar to formulate what later became known as the compellence theory in a lecture sponsored by the Lowell Institute, Boston, on March 10, 1959, by the title of "The Theory and Practice of Blackmail" (See Ellsberg, 1968). Yet, Thomas Schelling is perhaps the best known theorists who has most contributed to this

field of study by utilizing concepts from game theory to understand how state actors bargain with one another in strategic settings. Schelling (1960) advanced the theory that since “most conflict situations are essentially bargaining situations” where each party at least somewhat controls what the other party wants and where there is at least some common interest that cannot be achieved without some form of a coordination, if not cooperation, the strategy of dealing with conflict situations should focus more on “exploitation of potential forces” and not so much on “application of force” (p. 5-7). Schelling’s theory in effect revolved around the premise that the coercing party will only achieve his aim if he could convince the target that the cost of the pain he will suffer if he does not comply will be higher than the benefits of non-compliance and resistance. In other words, the theory predicts that coercion should work when the expected cost associated with the threat exceeds the anticipated gains of defiance.

As Schelling (1966) states, however, the distinction between coercion and brute force is not always clear cut since intent, which is not always objectively decipherable, is often the distinguishing factor (p. 5). While two parties may take a similar action, the action of one may well be characterized as brute force while the very same action of the other party could be characterized as coercion. For example, while Iraq's invasion of Iranian towns during the Iraq-Iran war is generally seen as brute force, since Saddam's intention was to annex those territories, Iran's invasion of the Iraqi Al-Faw peninsula is often characterized as coercion, since Iran lay no claims to those territories and invaded Al-Faw with the intention of forcing Saddam to return to internationally agreed borders. As

it is obvious from the above example, the characterization of Iran and/or Iraq's action necessarily depends on imputed intentions.

While it could be quite difficult to judge which actions should be characterized as brute force and which qualify as coercion, the distinction between the two is quite clear in abstract. When a party primarily resorts to and takes forcible action to achieve his objectives, his actions could be characterized as brute force. Yet, when a party brandishes his ability to cause pain and uses threats and limited force to convince the adversary that it would not be in his best interest to escalate the conflict and that it would be best for him to concede, that party's actions could be characterized as coercion. Coercion is, thus, getting the opponent to do, stop doing, and/or undo something that he would have otherwise done, without resorting to brute force (Pape, 1996, p.13). Consequently, as Schelling (1966) clearly articulates, "[b]rute force succeeds when it is used, whereas the power to hurt is most successful when held in reserve. It is the threat of damage, or of more damage to come, that can make someone to yield or comply" (p.3).

Once distinguished from brute force, it is important to note that scholars have broken down coercion into various subcategories primarily based on what coercion intends to achieve. Schelling (1966), for example, breaks down coercion into two major subcategories of deterrence, defined as an effort to discourage an action through fear of retaliation, and compellence, which is an effort to actively convince a party to do something of interest to the compeller or stop doing something that negatively affects the interests of the compeller (p. 69-78). Another way of looking at the difference between

deterrence and compellence is that while deterrence passively seeks to maintain the status quo, compellence actively seeks to change the status quo in favor of the compeller. It is noteworthy to say that it was the distinction between passive and active forms of pressure that Schelling opted not to use the term “coercion,” which equally applies to both forms of pressure, and instead coined the term “compellence” to describe his theory (Schelling, 1966 p. 69-71).

Another vein of theory in this field stems from the works of Alexander George and his colleagues. Troubled by the inconsistent track record of compellence and bothered by United States’ compellence failure in Vietnam, George and his colleagues utilized the method of structured and focused comparison and conducted an in-depth case study of U.S. involvement in Laos, Cuba, and Vietnam in their 1971 book titled *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy: Laos, Cuba, Vietnam*. Their primary objective was to unearth the “many variables at play” in actual compellence situations and to create a “policy-relevant” theory geared toward improving foreign policymaking (p. ix-xviii). George and his colleagues use the term “coercive diplomacy” to describe their theory, which is to a large part consistent in definition with Schelling’s definition of compellence except that George and his colleagues’ theory is primarily limited to the “defensive uses of the strategy – that is, “efforts to persuade an opponent to stop and/or undo an action he is already embarked upon” (George, 1991, p. 5). In other words, while Schelling coined the term compellence to distinguish between passive and active forms of coercion, George took Schelling’s theory to its next logical step by distinguishing between defensive and offensive uses of compellence and named its defensive form coercive diplomacy.

The general abstract theory of coercive diplomacy is quite straightforward. Resting on the Rational Actor Model of decision-making, coercive diplomacy is the attempt to persuade a target to change its objectionable behavior and/or action through either the threat to use force or the actual use of limited exemplary force. It is important to note that the term “force” is being used here in its broadest possible sense such that it would include imposition of anything unfavorable, undesirable and in general costly to the target. It is also important to emphasize that the term “coercive diplomacy” only applies to the phase in a conflict situation when one seeks to stop or undo an undesirable action by *persuading* the responsible party to comply with one’s demands without actually employing full force and without bludgeoning him into compliance (George, 1991, p. 5). Therefore, if in a conflict situation force is used beyond its limited and demonstrative form, then by definition coercive diplomacy has failed. It is not, however always clear where one can draw the line between full-scale use of force and demonstrative use of force.

Resting on the Rational Actor Model, the theory of coercive diplomacy argues that an opponent would be persuaded to stop and/or undo an action he has already embarked upon if his cost-benefit calculation could be manipulated in a way for him to realize that the costs of his action is greater than its benefits. Such a manipulation, the theory argues, would only occur if the opponent could credibly be threatened that if he does not stop and/or undo his objectionable action, the punishments that would ensue will, at the minimum, wipe away the benefits of the action for the opponent. Logically then for

coercive diplomacy to work, the cost of the threatened punishment must equal, if not exceed, the benefits of resistance. Therefore, if what is being demanded of the opponent is significant, the threatened punishment must also be equally and credibly significant for coercive diplomacy to work. Hence, as George, Hall, and Simons (1971) maintain, while “asking very little of an opponent makes it easier for him to permit himself to be coerced,” asking a “great deal” in real, psychological or symbolic terms “makes the task of coercing him all the more difficult” (p.25).

It is important to note here that the coercer and the opponent are likely to have vastly different understanding in regards to the totality of what is being demanded. The outcome, nevertheless, depends not on what the coercer thinks but what the opponent thinks it is being demanded. Just as an example, if the opponent thinks that conceding to a demand is going to lead to more demands, even if the coercer has no such intentions and even if the demand is trivial in nature, the opponent is likely to regard conceding to the demand as having significantly more costs than the actual costs of complying with the initial demand.

Interestingly, one aspect of coercive diplomacy which is only lightly mentioned in the literature on coercive diplomacy but is an integral part of the deterrence and compellence theories is that the credibility of the stipulated threat depends heavily on its cost of application for the threatening party. As Schelling (1960) articulates in one of his earlier works “a threat has to be credible to be efficacious, and...[credibility itself] depend[s] on the costs and risks associated with fulfillment for the party making the threat” (p.6).



Hence, the Rational Actor Model would predict that within the context of coercive diplomacy, only threats whose application would be less costly to the sender than the costs that the sender is absorbing as a result of the objectionable behavior of the target, are going to be regarded as credible by the target. This raises paramount problems for the strategy since the benefits of the objectionable action for its doer often equals or even exceeds the costs that it imposes on the party that finds the action objectionable. Hence, if the party that finds the action objectionable would wish to persuade the opponent to stop, he, by definition, would have to brandish a threat whose costs of imposition to him will be greater than the costs that is being imposed on him by the objectionable behavior. Yet, a threat is unlikely to be deemed as credible by the opponent if he thinks that the threatening party is unlikely to accept undergoing a cost for stopping an objectionable action that is higher than the damage that is being inflicted on him by the action.

The solution devised to circumvent this problem for high stake deterrence strategies has been to try to make the opponent believe that one's action is somewhat guided by some form of "irrational automaticity and a [firm] commitment to blind and total retaliation" (Schelling, 1966, p.39) so as to make one's ultimate real intentions less predictable to the opponent. The same strategy, however, cannot be readily utilized in most cases where coercive diplomacy is considered due to the complexity of such cases. Indeed for coercive diplomacy to even have a distant chance of success, the conflict situation should be very much like a bargaining situation where the interests of the involved parties are not absolutely opposed. In the words of Schelling (1966), "[i]t is when his pain gives us little or no satisfaction compared with what he can do for us, and the action or inaction

that satisfies us costs him less than the pain we can cause, that there is room for coercion” (p.4). In such settings, there is little room for automaticity and both parties know quite well that they have no other option but to find quid pro quo formulations that would take into account the threatened penalties, their cost of imposition to the coercer, their potential cost on the target, the benefits of the objectionable action for the target, and the costs of the objectionable action for the coercer. What makes such settings even more complex is that many of the involved variables are dynamic in nature as each side engages in series of moves and counter moves based on and in anticipation of the other side’s moves as well as the constantly changing security environment (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 38), which leaves little room for anything close to automaticity as a strategy and makes effective use of coercive diplomacy very dependent on the coercer’s skills in constant improvisation (George, 1991, p. 83-84).

In theory, coercive diplomacy could be employed to make two different types of demand from an opponent; the opponent may either be asked to stop his objectionable behavior or he could be asked to undo and reverse what he has already managed to accomplish. It is needless to say that the inducement required to persuade an opponent to stop his objectionable action is generally less than what would be required to persuade him to reverse what he has already achieved (George, 1991, p. 6). It is also important to note here that coercive diplomacy is indeed different from pure coercion and since it is primarily focused on changing the cost-benefit calculation of the opponent, the strategy of coercive diplomacy does allow for the possibility of providing an opponent with positive inducements as well. Indeed, in the words of George and his colleagues (1971),

“what the stick cannot achieve by itself, unless it is a very formidable one, can possibly be achieved by combining a carrot with the stick” (p. 25) and resolution of disputes are more likely to occur when coercion is mixed with positive inducements (Baldwin, 1971). Yet, just the same way that the threat of punishment must be perceived as credible by the opponent for it to find its way into his cost-benefit calculation, positive inducements must also be perceived as credible by the opponent for them to affect his calculations.

While positive inducements are generally perceived as the exact opposite of imposition of costs and punishment, in reality they do not work as exact opposites. Threatening someone with a fine of 100 dollars does not have the same exact effect as promising him a reward of equal amount, even though they have the same opportunity cost for the target. This behavioral inconsistency with what seems to only be rational can be attributed to the fact that the target’s immediate response to threats often differ significantly from his response to promises of rewards (Baldwin, 1971). While fear, anxiety, and resistance are the usual responses to threats, the typical human response to promises tends to be one of hope, reassurance, and attraction. While threats are more likely to cause the target to feel stressed, affecting his problem solving capability, promises of rewards is more likely to induce the target to evaluate the expected benefit of the rewards and consider whether in aggregate the expected benefit of the rewards can act as an equally or more beneficial substitute to the expected benefit that the target envisions to draw from the objectionable behavior. While threats tend to generate resistance both against the demanded change in behavior as well as the threat itself, promises of rewards are more likely to generate attraction (French and Raven, 2002). Also, while positive inducements tend to signal

empathy, if not sympathy and concern, toward the target's needs and interests, threats of punishment tend to convey indifference, if not outright hostility, toward the target's wellbeing and security. As Cartwright (1959) well argues, such impressions indeed have a profound effect on how a target responds to attempts of influence (p. 33-34).

Another difference between positive and negative inducements is that while positive inducements tend to enhance the likelihood of cooperation between the target and the coercing power to cooperate on other issues in the future, threats of punishment tend to act as an impediment for such future cooperation. As George Homans (1961) has suggested, "while the exchange of rewards tends toward stability and continued interaction, the exchange of punishments tends toward instability and the eventual failure of interaction ..." (p. 57). Also, while it is generally easier to legitimize demands based on positive inducements making it easier for the target to concede without much damage to his reputation, demands made with the backing of threats of punishment are more difficult to legitimize and agreeing to them is likely to have significant reputational cost for the targets (French and Raven, 2002). And finally while threats of punishment provide the target with an incentive to operate under the radar and avoid detection, promises of reward provide less of an incentive for deceit and concealment.

Yet, while the differences between positive inducements and negative sanctions tend to suggest that positive inducements are more likely to be effective in bringing about change in the behavior of the target, there are very good reasons why coercing powers have generally been less eager to employ them and why their adoption is inadvisable under

some circumstances. First, there is a significant difference between positive inducements and negative sanctions in terms of their cost to the coercing power. As Schelling (1960) clearly describes, “a promise is costly when it succeeds, and a threat is costly when it fails” (p.177). Hence, the bigger the threat, the higher the odds of success, the lower the probability of having have to implement the threat, making it seem quite cheap for the coercing power to make big threats. Alternatively, the bigger the promise, the higher the odds of success, the higher the probability of having have to implement the promise, making it quite costly to give promises large enough to affect change in the behavior of the target. This difference between positive and negative inducements, hence, makes coercing powers more likely to rely on threats than on rewards to achieve their foreign policy objectives (Schelling, 1960, p.177).

The other reason why a coercing power is more likely to make use of threats in comparison to rewards is closely related to the first. Since promises tend to cost more when they succeed, they tend to be used more often when the odds of success is perceived to be low by the coercing power. Yet, there is significant evidence that coercing powers tend to overestimate the probability that their coercive attempts will succeed<sup>4</sup>, and hence have a bias toward using sanctions. Another reason why coercing powers are more likely to make use of sanction and not positive inducements is the symbolic differences between the two. Sanctions and threats have become psychologically and culturally linked “with such characteristics as courage, honor, and masculinity” (Baldwin, 1971). In fact, in the international arena, a country that relies on

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<sup>4</sup> See as evidence for example: Jervis, Robert. (1968). Hypothesis on Misperception. *World Politics*, 20 (3), 454-479.

positive inducements risks being perceived by others as being weak and since no country desires to be perceived as weak, coercing powers are less eager to rely on positive inducements to achieve their objectives. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, reliance on positive inducement is likely to encourage others to place themselves in conflict with the coercing power and in effect blackmail the coercing power in hopes of benefiting from his tendency to buy off those who oppose him (Galtung, 1967). Hence developing such a reputation could end up being quite costly for any player in the international arena.

Another aspect of the strategy of coercive diplomacy, which is lightly mentioned in the pertinent literature but is of great significance, is the fact that since coercion is about manipulating the cost-benefit calculi and the decision-making of an opponent, the analysis of the strategy should not focus on the “real” involved costs and benefits but on what the opponent *perceives* as the costs and the benefits. Indeed, people from varying cultures, geopolitical contexts, and historical experiences will have differing perceptions about the involved costs and benefits. What matters the most for effective use of the coercive strategy is a clear understanding of the opponent’s perceptions about the involved costs and benefits and what is being “demanded of him, which may be at variance with what the coercing power thinks it is demanding” (George, 1971, p.25). It is important to note and emphasize here that perhaps the most difficult aspect of effectively utilizing coercive diplomacy as a strategy is the very same difficulty that is associated with cost-benefit models; just the same way that use of cost-benefit models with any hopes of predictive accuracy depends heavily on the quality of information about the involved “real” and perceived costs and benefits, the success odds of any use of the

coercive diplomacy without a detailed knowledge of who the pertinent policymakers are, what they are after and what their goals and priorities include is unlikely to be high (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 11-12).

One of the involved variables that is often neglected in the literature on coercive diplomacy is the fact that the cost of concession to the opponent is not only the loss of the benefits the target once drew or envisions to draw from the objectionable action; indeed the mere act of capitulating to external pressure could potentially create all sorts of grave internal and external costs for the capitulating party. One such cost is what some have referred to as the “audience costs.” Both due to political considerations that are domestic in nature and also due to foreign relation considerations, no leader of a country desires to be perceived as having surrendered to foreign pressure and resistance is often overglorified in such circumstances. Hence, when coercive threats are issued against a country, particularly when what is being demanded is perceived as illegitimate either domestically or internationally (or both), the audience costs of capitulation becomes so “high that the stakes for the adversary leadership become truly vital and far exceed the issue in dispute” (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 36). In such situations it becomes more likely for the coercive threat to backfire and result in the leadership of targeted country to escalate the conflict in order to preserve its domestic legitimacy and international standing.

Another cost of capitulation, which is also very difficult to quantify, is the precedent that it sets with regards to how the coercing power as well as other countries will deal with

the targeted country in the future. Leaders generally believe that if they capitulate in face of a coercive threat, they are more likely to be coerced again in the future both by the coercing power as well as other observers. Interestingly, this very issue is also a source of concern for the coercing power. Indeed, the success or failure of the coercive threat affects the reputation of the coercing power and its ability to successfully make use of the same strategy in the future both against the current target and potential future targets. Notwithstanding the fact that the empirical validity of this perception is still unresolved,<sup>5</sup> countries and their leaderships have historically escalated conflicts and risked going to major wars primarily to showcase their resolve.

While often times coercive diplomacy could be employed using a wide variety of coercive mechanisms, these mechanisms typically fall under power base erosion, destabilization, decapitation, debilitation, denial, and/or second-order coercion. Power base erosion policies are those that attempt to force a target to change its behavior by undermining its relationship with individuals and entities whose support is necessary for the target to maintain its political control and grip on power (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 59). Destabilization mechanisms are those that seek to force the target to concede by fomenting unrest through the creation of general popular dissatisfaction against the target. Such efforts generally put pressure on and punish the target's civilian population as a whole in hopes that such pressures will incentivize the target's civilian population to put pressure on the target to change its policies (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 65). Another

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<sup>5</sup> For a good overview of the works on the reputation effects of coercion, see: Huth, Paul K. (1997). Reputation and Deterrence: A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment. *Security Studies*, 7:1, 72-99. The body of literature on this issue suggests that empirically the reputation effect is stronger when it involves the same countries but weak with respect to observers.



mechanism of coercion, which is often referred to as decapitation, is to try to exact concession from a target by threatening to undermine the personal safety and security of the target's leadership directly (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 72). Another way of trying to force a target to change its objectionable policies is debilitation, which occurs when the coercer threatens to (and if needed actually does) damage or destroy the target country's infrastructures, industries, communication, and anything else that contributes to the target country's economic well-being and social cohesion in order to force it to reconsider its policies and change its behavior (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 76). A target might also be forced to rethink its policies if it could be denied the benefits it associates with the objectionable behavior. Thus denial is referred to efforts that are geared toward rendering impotent a target's strategy for winning a conflict and to prevent it from gaining the desired benefits of its objectionable behavior (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 78). Finally, when a coercer has only minimal direct leverage, he may well decide to rely on second-order coercion, which occurs when coercer seeks to indirectly affect the policies of the target by pressuring a third party that has influence over the target. It is needless to say that for second-order coercion to work, the third party must both have influence over the target and must be willing to exercise that influence to shape the policies of the target in line with the demands of the coercer (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 82-84).

It is obvious that a particular coercive attempt might fall under several of the above noted mechanisms and in practice as well as theory, the abovementioned coercive mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. Also, one should not assume that when several coercive

mechanisms are used simultaneously, their net impact would be cumulative. Indeed depending on the circumstances, one mechanism may well undermine the effect of another and simultaneous employment of multiple mechanisms may result in diminished outcomes. Also, the abovementioned mechanisms do not always work the way intended and, depending on the circumstances, they could readily backfire and become counterproductive. For example it is quite well documented that attempts to coerce a country by targeting the wellbeing of its people often fail, if not backfire, primarily since coercive campaigns that target the populace of a country “provoke hostile public backlash against the coercer,” making any form of a concession prohibitively costly for the decision makers of the targeted country (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 68).

Coercive diplomacy also comes in four variants. The first variant is the classic full-fledged classic ultimatum, where the coercing power 1) makes a specific demand from the opponent, 2) places a deadline for compliance, and 3) puts forth a credible threat of punishment for noncompliance which is potent enough to impress upon the opponent that compliance is preferable for him. Another variant of coercive diplomacy is a tacit ultimatum, which differs from its full-fledged version in that it does not include a definite deadline for compliance even though it does convey a sense of urgency. Ultimatums, however, are often inappropriate and even risky due to their inflexible nature. For example, notwithstanding credibility related issues, oftentimes opponents do not respond to coercion with a clear and complete yes or no; instead opponents are more likely to respond to coercive threats by putting forth a conditional, partial, and/or equivocal acceptance in order to “create strong domestic and international pressure for negotiations

aimed at finding a peaceful resolution of the dispute” (George, 1991, p. 72). In such cases, the coercing power is going to be left with two options; either to back down from his ultimatum and be viewed as not being resolute enough or act upon it despite its changed and most often elevated costs. Consequently, ultimatums have become a rarity in international politics and the complexity of most conflict situations in the current era are such that they require more flexible resolution strategies.

The other two variants of coercive diplomacy, which are more common than ultimatums, include what George (1991) calls the “try-and-see” and the “gradual turning of the screw” approaches (p. 7-9). In the try-and-see approach, the coercing power makes a demand but does not set a deadline and does not convey a sense of urgency. Also, in the try-and-see approach, the punishment for noncompliance is often implied and is not explicit; the coercing power makes a clear demand and waits to see how the opponent reacts and if the demand needs to be backed with a threat prior to taking the next step. A stronger variant of coercive diplomacy that is still weaker than an ultimatum, is the gradual turning of the screw approach. In this approach, the coercing power makes a demand and at the same time either partially initiates or threatens to partially initiate and further step up the pressure and the punishment as time goes by if the opponent does not capitulate. It is important to note here that nothing binds a coercing power from not shifting from one variant of coercive diplomacy to another and that such shifts have historically been quite common.

In general, the concept and the theory of coercive diplomacy are quite straightforward. Coercive diplomacy is a form of coercion that seeks to persuade a target to stop or undo what it is doing by means other than full-scale use of force. Hence, as it often does, “coercion can succeed [even] if coercive diplomacy fails” (Art and Cronin, 2003, p. 360). Indeed, if the target changes its behavior only after being forced militarily or through regime change, then by definition coercive diplomacy has failed. Yet, even if a coercer is confident that its attempt at coercive diplomacy will fail and that war will be necessary to achieve the intended outcome, it will often find it politically worthwhile to attempt coercive diplomacy to showcase that it tried every alternative to war and that it resorted to military action only when all “peaceful” means failed to achieve the intended outcome.

As George (1991) asserts, however, our knowledge about coercive diplomacy is quite limited and a lot more needs to be done in order to explore various aspects of this strategy (p. xv). One aspect of coercive diplomacy that has received little attention in the literature is ways in which attempts at coercive diplomacy not only fail but backfire and produce counterproductive results. More specifically, the literature provides little guidance on situations in which coercive diplomacy is attempted in order to force an adversary to stop or undo actions that have primarily been undertaken by the target to offset the negative security and/or economic impacts of past coercive attempts. In other words, it is not yet well understood how effective coercive diplomacy can be when the adversary’s decision to undertake the undesirable action is at least partially rooted in past and current coercive attempts of the coercer.

## **Section 2.2: The Practice and Track Record of Coercive Diplomacy**

The effectiveness of coercive diplomacy, the most prominent and frequent manifestation of which has been economic sanctions, has been evaluated extensively in the literature. Most scholars concur that unilateral sanctions rarely produce the intended outcomes (Haass, 1998, p. 200). In fact, there seems to be a consensus that relatively speaking, even limited multilateral sanctions tend to be more effective than comprehensive unilateral sanctions (O'Sullivan, 2003, p. 300; Bapat and Morgan, 2009). But in absolute terms, as George, Hall, and Simon (1971) have indicated, history has shown that it is quite difficult to coerce an opponent to yield when the opponent's perception of what is being demanded is significant either in material and real terms and/or in psychological and symbolic terms (p. 25). In fact, scholars generally agree that sanctions have limited utility in compelling target states to change their behaviors, particularly when they have a strong disinclination to do so (Galtung, 1967; Wallensteen, 1968; Doxey, 1972; Schreiber, 1973; Knorr, 1977; Renwick, 1981; Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott, 1990; Pape, 1997; Morgan and Schwebach, 1997; Pape, 1998; Drury, 1998; Haass, 1998; Ang and Peksen, 2007; Nincic, 2010).

For example, Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot (HSE) (1990), who have used a case study approach to conduct one of the most extensive study of sanctions to this date, indicate that of all the 115 cases they have examined where sanctions were used by international bodies, United States, and other countries, only 34 percent "made [at least] a modest contribution" to achieving the intended outcome and that sanctions were even less likely to succeed when they were used to compel a target to "change its policies in major ways"

(p. 93). Reexamining the same 115 cases that were analyzed by HSE, however, Pape (1997) argues that HSE are far too generous and concludes that in fact less than 5 percent of those sanctions qualify as successful using HSE's own standards.

While Pape's (1997) finding could suggest that HSE's research method lacked objective reliability, since two studies using the same methods and coding standards have arrived at vastly different results, it could also be taken as an illustration of how difficult and subjective it is to discern 1) the intended policy objective(s) in a particular sanction episode and 2) the degree to which sanctions made at least a "modest contribution" to the realization of the intended policy objective(s).

Yet, perhaps what makes most studies on sanctions even less objective is the definition and criteria used in evaluating the success of sanctions in a particular episode. While the criteria used vary from study to study, efficacy of sanctions have generally been evaluated in two distinct ways. Some studies have evaluated the efficacy of sanctions based on the amount of "pain" they manage to inflict by using economic indicators to gauge the degree to which sanctions have negatively affected the economy of the target (Baldwin, 1985, p. 130-144; Dashti-Gibson, Davis and Radcliff, 1997). Most other scholars, however, base their measure of success on the degree to which they evaluate sanctions as having contributed to the realization of stated or implicit policy objectives using the case study approach (Wallensteen, 1968; Doxey, 1972; Schreiber, 1973; Knorr, 1977; Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott, 1990; Pape, 1997; Morgan and Schwebach, 1997; Pape, 1998; Drury, 1998; Hart Jr., 2000; Drezner, 2003; Ang and Peksen, 2007).

One ought to be very mindful of the evaluation criteria used in such studies since what is and is not regarded as a success is heavily dependent on the standard utilized to discern the cases of success. While it is true that sanctions, particularly those that have multilateral backing, do generally succeed in imposing extra costs on the target (Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott, 1990, p. 75), they have infrequently been able to independently induce the target to change its behavior in significant ways (Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott, 1990, p. 93). Therefore, if success is defined as a mere capacity to inflict pain, then sanctions, particularly those that have the backing of the international community, do generally tend to succeed. But if success is defined as achieving the intended policy aims, unless infliction of pain was the policy aim, then sanctions, even those that have the backing of the UNSC, have a low likelihood of success.

Consequently, the scholars who evaluate sanction episodes based on the degree to which sanctions manage to induce a change in the policy or behavior of the target, do not generally judge them to be a useful way of achieving such goals. The track record in that regard is fairly clear. Those who do promote sanctions as a useful policy instrument, tend to emphasize their effectiveness to impose costs on the target, their symbolic utility, and/or their usefulness when used in conjunction with other policy instruments (Baldwin, 1985, p. 130-144; Lindsay, 1986; Nossal, 1989; Dashti-Gibson, Davis and Radcliff, 1997; Addis, 2003).

Several scholars, however, have questioned the methodology used by most other researchers and have argued that since most of the empirical studies that have investigated the efficacy of sanctions have usually only examined cases where sanctions were actually imposed, they suffer from a selection bias since they systematically omit cases where sanctions were implicitly or explicitly threatened but not actually imposed. These scholars argue that since sanctions are usually threatened before they are imposed, if a target refuses to comply after being credibly threatened with sanctions, it is a sign that it will refuse to concede even after the imposition of sanctions. In other words, they argue that since a target would concede if it would credibly regard the costs of a threatened sanction to be sufficiently high, the cases where sanctions are actually imposed are instances where the target did not perceive the costs of the threatened sanctions to be high and/or credible enough. This is why, they argue, sanctions are more likely to result in concessions at the threat stage than at the implementation stage and studies that only examine imposed sanctions underestimate the utility of sanctions as a way of inducing change in the behavior of the target (Morgan and Miers, 1999; Drezner, 2003; Lacy and Niou, 2004; Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz, 2005; Marinov, 2005).

It is important to note that the problem of selection bias is perhaps even deeper and graver than is suggested. Over the last two decades much research has surfaced to indicate that as countries become more interdependent they are more likely to resolve their disputes through non-coercive means (Mansfield, 1994; Oneal et al., 1996; Reuveny and Kang, 1996; Oneal and Ray, 1997; Way, 1997; Oneal and Russett, 1997; Domke, 1988; Kim, 1998; Oneal and Russett, 1999; Boehmer, Li and Gartzke, 2001). Indeed



today most countries use diplomacy, negotiations, cooperative mechanisms, international institutions, mediations and other non-coercive means of conflict resolution to resolve their disputes with other countries and interstate conflicts and coercive statecraft are anomalies (Hewitt, Wilkenfeld and Gurr, 2010). Therefore, when coercion is even threatened, let alone utilized, it means that 1) the issue at hand is more severe than most other disputes between nations and 2) there is probably very little interdependence between the parties that are in conflict. It is important to note that both of these conditions (severity of conflict and lack of interdependence) are conditions that have been specifically named by scholars as conditions that make coercion less likely to succeed. For example, George, Hall, and Simon (1971) suggest that the more an opponent has a disinclination to yield, the more difficult it will be for the “coercing power to threaten sanctions sufficiently potent and sufficiently credible to overcome the opponents strong disinclination to comply with what is demanded of him” (p. 25). As for the effect of interdependence, HSE (1990) found that “sanctions directed against target countries that have long been adversaries of the sender country or against targets that have little trade with the sender country, are generally less successful” (p.99).

But if the threat of sanctions and sanctions themselves have had such low success rates and if they typically fail to bring about the intended foreign policy outcomes, why then do policymakers so readily employ sanctions to begin with? Unfortunately the literature on this issue is very sparse and very few scholars have attended to this seeming paradox. HSE (1990) have evaded this question all together and have “left to others the arduous task of unearthing” the senders’ side of the story (p. 3). Contemplating this question,

Pahre (1998) suggests that considering the costs of sanction to sender(s), if through sanctions policymakers are not maximizing their chance in compelling the target country to change its policies, those employing sanctions “must be maximizing some utility other than change in the target country’s behavior.” Pahre (1998) concludes that sanctions are employed because they tend to be more effective in achieving other ends, which may be as valuable to the sender. He indicates that while sanction rarely succeed in forcing the target country to yield, they may be more effective in deterring future “misbehaviors” by other countries, maintaining particular international norms, and serving “political ends in the sender country.”

Kaempfer and Lowenberg (1988) hold a position similar to that of Pahre (1998) and argue that sanctions are employed not in hopes that they may achieve their nominal objectives but “to serve the interests of pressure groups within the sanctioning country.” While some of these groups might derive specific benefits from the imposition of sanctions (for example, producers of import-competing goods gain from a ban on imports), others obtain utility directly from taking a moral stance against the target country’s objectionable behavior. Lindsay (1986) also agrees and indicates that the low “success” rates that research associates with sanctions is a result of researchers’ “naiveté” in assuming that the primary goal of sanctions is to achieve compliance. Lindsay (1986) argues that while sanctions more than often fail to bring about compliance, achieve subversion, or deter the objectionable behaviors, they do succeed in carrying “international and domestic symbols,” which “explains why states continue to employ

sanctions.” Doxey (1980) also suggests that economic sanctions primarily have domestic political utility and are not really aimed at influencing the target (p.101).

Lacy and Niou (2004) also critique most of the existing literature on sanction efficacy and argue that policymakers know quite well that sanctions alone are not going to achieve their most preferred outcomes, the realization of which is regarded as “success” by most of the existing literature on sanction efficacy. Yet, they argue, policymakers employ sanctions because sanctions achieve outcomes that are preferable to the status quo and a “resolute coercer is certainly no worse off imposing sanctions that are ignored than ...continuing under the status quo [and not taking a stance].” Lacy and Niou’s explanation of why sanctions are employed, however, ignores a fact that they themselves confess to in their paper. As Lacy and Niou indicate, sanctions are “costly to enforce.” Therefore, contrary to Lacy and Niou’s explanation, the status quo might be better for the coercer if the potential benefits of sanctions are not greater than the definite costs of imposing sanctions to the coercer.

Unlike most other scholars, Drury (2005), who has perhaps most thoroughly investigated why policymakers employ sanctions despite their bleak track record, holds that “use of sanctions for domestic political purposes is difficult, if not impossible” arguing that since a “sanction-worthy dispute must exist” before sanctions can be employed and since policymakers are most likely to employ sanctions against their adversaries, sanctions are more likely to have foreign policy goals and not domestic (p. 107). He further argues that sanctions should be “considered alongside of military action” since 1) policymakers

resort to sanctions as hostilities increase and 2) sanctions are followed by military coercion if the situation becomes hostile enough (P. 108). Drury does not, however, altogether negate the effect of domestic politics on policymaker's decision to employ sanctions. His research does indeed find some evidence in that direction. Drury, nevertheless, contends that the existing evidence does not suggest that policymakers would "fabricate conflicts with other countries just so that... [they could] levy economic sanctions against them when... [their domestic] approval is low" (p. 110). Therefore, he argues, when it comes to the decision to employ or not to employ sanctions "[i]nternational factors trump all other concerns" (p. 110).

While in general it can be said that coercive diplomacy and sanctions rarely achieve their intended policy objectives vis-à-vis a target, they have played a central role in international politics since the end of the Second World War. Indeed, coercive diplomacy is deceptively attractive in many ways. It is generally perceived that if it succeeds it can avert wars and achieve policy objectives with minimal cost and, even when it fails, it has at the minimum weakened the target and paved the way for use of more forceful future actions.

Yet, coercive diplomacy is at best a risky strategy with many pitfalls. When it fails, as it often does, the coercer will face the grim choice of either backing down, and hence tarnishing his own reputation and credibility, or enduring the costs of executing his threats, which often-time is higher than the expected gains. Moreover, coercive diplomacy can also erode the trust between the coercer and the target needed for them to

achieve any negotiated solution to their problems, thereby prolonging the conflict, which in turn both increases the costs of the conflict to both parties and hardens positions, making any form of a peaceful resolution more difficult to achieve. Coercive diplomacy is also a risky political strategy, both domestically and internationally. While at first coercive diplomacy might be the least costly action to take when the political environment requires “something” to be done, public and international attention could, and often does, shift away from the conflict before its resolution, leaving the coercer with a threat that must be backed-up with dissipated domestic and/or international support. This is particularly problematic when the execution of the threat made is at least somewhat dependent on the actions of other coalition of players, whose “views regarding the importance of the objective may not be shared equally” (Hufbauer, Schott, Elliott, and Oegg, 2007, p. 171).

### **Section 2.3: Conducive Conditions for Effective Use of Coercive Diplomacy**

Coercive diplomacy is a highly context-dependent strategy. While some conditions enhance the probability of its eventual success, there are many situations under which coercive diplomacy is unlikely to achieve its intended policy objectives. For this very reason, researchers from different fields have long investigated the effect of various contextual and tactical variables that affect the odds of achieving an intended policy objective through the use of coercive diplomacy.

Thomas Schelling is one of the earlier pioneers in this field. In his *Arms and Influence* (1966), he points to several contextual and tactical variables that could affect the success

odds of coercive diplomacy. Schelling contends that coercion is most effective when 1) the coercer inflicts minimal or no pain on the target if the target concedes, 2) the coercer inflicts great pain if the target does not comply with the demands of the coercer, 3) the target is provided with a feasible time table for compliance, 4) the target believes that the coercer is not capable of retracting his threat and that he alone can avert the costs and consequences of the imposed pain by complying with the demands of the coercer, 5) the target believes that compliance would automatically stop the pain, 6) the target believes that compliance would not result in more demands in the future, 7) the target concludes that the threatened pain is more unattractive to him than the pain of compliance, and 8) each side believes that more can be gained by bargaining than by acting unilaterally (pp. 1–4, 69–89). Schelling, however, is quite clear in the introduction of his book that his work is not empirically based and says: “I have used some historical examples, but usually as illustration, not evidence” (1966, p. vii). He does not put to test his theory nor does he suggest that his work provides policymakers with any specific policy prescriptions.

Another pioneer in this area was Alexander George. Soon after Schelling’s *Arms and Influence*, George and his colleagues published *Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (1971), which tries to help policymakers better understand the situations in which coercive diplomacy might be more effectively utilized by conducting a systematic, structured, and focused study of historical cases involving the use of coercive diplomacy. In the first edition of their book, George and his colleagues focus on US use of coercive diplomacy during the Laos crisis (1960-61), the Cuban missile crisis (1962), and the intervention in

Vietnam (1964-65) and in the second edition of their book published in 1994, they add more cases to their studies. At the end of both the first and the second editions of *Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, George points to a series of conditions that favor successful implementation of different variants of coercive diplomacy and suggests that policymakers should pick their variant of coercive diplomacy to implement, if at all, based on the extent to which his list of conducive conditions are present in a crisis. It is quite interesting to note that between 1971 and 1994, the list of conditions that George identifies remain almost identical. They are (1971, pp. 216-228; 1994, pp. 279-288):

<b>First Edition (1971)</b>	<b>Second Edition (1994)</b>
Clarity of coercer's objective	Clarity of coercer's objective
Coercer having a strong motivation	Coercer having strong motivation
Asymmetry of motivation in coercer's favor	Asymmetry of motivation in coercer's favor
Target's sense of urgency to concede	Target's sense of urgency to concede
	Coercer having strong leadership*
Coercer having adequate domestic support	Coercer having adequate domestic support
Coercer having usable military options*	Coercer having adequate international support*
Target's fear of unacceptable escalation	Target's fear of unacceptable escalation
Clarity concerning the precise terms of settlement	Clarity concerning the precise terms of settlement

\* Item(s) unique to the edition

But perhaps the most extensive work that both studies the efficacy of various coercive instruments and provides policy relevant lessons on the contextual and tactical variables that affect successful utilization coercive diplomacy using a systematic case study approach is the work of Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot (HSE), titled *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*. HSE published the first edition of their work in 1985, the second edition in 1990, and the third edition was published in 2007, updating each edition with the study of more sanction episodes. The extensiveness of HSE's work is indeed unique, the number of sanction episodes that they analyze is unparalleled, and their method of investigation is perhaps the most systematic. Like George, HSE offer their own list of conditions that

affect the degree to which sanctions are likely to succeed and like the study and recommendations that George offers, the policy prescriptions of HSE have remained almost intact throughout the three editions of the book. According to HSE's most recent work (2007, pp. 158-178), sanctions are more likely to succeed when:

1. The coercer's demands are limited, modest and clear;
2. The coercer has an otherwise cordial relationship with the target;
3. The target is politically weak and instable
4. The target is significantly smaller and weaker than the coercer;
5. The sanction is imposed quickly, decisively, and causes the maximum pain possible from the onset;
6. The sanction is imposed by a large coalition of countries who have very similar policy objectives and motivation;
7. The sanction is not intended as a prelude to war;
8. The sanction does not impose high costs on the coercer's own domestic constituents and foreign allies.

Numerous other scholars have also studied the contextual and tactical variables that affect the success odds of employment of coercive diplomacy. Many of their recommendations, however, are essentially captured by what Shelling, George, and HSE have offered in their works and only a few of the conditions and recommendations mentioned by other scholars are unique and important.



For example, Art and Cronin (2003) find that sanctions are more likely to succeed if they are coupled with positive inducement that are offered after or simultaneous to the sanctions (pp. 393–397). They also find that coercive methods that emphasize denial work better than those that focus on punishment (pp. 399-401). Cortright and Lopez (2000) suggest that sanctions are more likely to succeed if they target, pressure, and deny assets and resources of value to the decision-making elite and avoid measures that cause humanitarian hardship or negatively affect opposition constituencies in the target country (pp. 224-228).

Genugten and Groot (1999) indicate that sanctions are most likely to fail if the coercer's demands and concerns are not shared by a significant constituency within the target country. They also emphasize that sanctions are more effective if the demanded change in the policy or conduct of a country's decision-making elite is voiced both by external and internal forces (pp. 145-146). The finding of Genugten and Groot (1999) corroborates what the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found in November 1994 as it was assessing various aspects of imposing an oil embargo against Nigeria. In that report, GAO also asserts that “[I]f the targeted country has a domestic opposition to the policies of the government in power, sanctions can strengthen this opposition and improve the likelihood of a positive political response to the sanctions” (p. 12).

## **Section 2.4: Missing in the Literature**

While sanctions and effective utilization of coercive diplomacy have long been studied from a wide variety of dimensions, there are many issues that are yet to be addressed. Surveying the recommendations offered by various scholars on effective utilization of coercive diplomacy, it is remarkable how one of the most heated debates among international relations theorist has basically been ignored by those debating the various aspects of coercive diplomacy. Indeed, differing perceptions about the factors that drive the target state's policies have long underlined policy debates among international relations experts. Should one consider the adversary as being somehow intrinsically hostile or should the hostile actions of an adversary be primarily viewed as his response to the security environment in which he resides? Is the target state doing what is objectionable because it seeks to ultimately impose its will on others or are the undesirable actions of the target state rooted in its fear of others to seriously undermine its legitimate interests? Without knowing the answer to these core questions regarding the intentions of the adversary and without fully understanding the nature and the root causes of a conflict, any prescription geared toward increasing the success odds of coercive diplomacy is likely to have an unacceptably high failure rate.

As this dissertation illustrates, a coercing power must ensure that his coercive measures do not augment and/or add to the very factors that have positively contributed to the adoption of the objectionable policy by the target. Coercion could potentially initiate a positive feedback loop that would create many more reasons for the target to more aggressively pursue the objectionable policy. Indeed, if a coercive measure and/or the

costs that it imposes on the target positively induces it to continue on with or even intensify its pursuit of the objectionable policy, then it would be unrealistic to expect that that coercive measure would eventually persuade the target to stop the objectionable policy. What makes the situation even more tragic is that those who adopt such coercive measures are often unaware of the positive feedback loop that they might have created and when they see their coercive measures not working, they often conclude that their coercive measure was not tough enough, resulting in the intensification of the coercive measure, which in turn further adds to the motives of the target to pursue the objectionable policy with much more vigor.

Existence of such a mechanism has long been known to international relations theorists that have studied the nature of international conflicts under such labels as the “spiral model” or the “security dilemma.” More than half a century ago, John H. Herz described this tendency in international relation in his *Political Realism and Political Idealism* and asserted that “the self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs tend, regardless of intention, to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive and the measures of others as potentially threatening” (1951 p.7). Indeed, policymakers often interpret events and actions based on what they think to be true. So if they think a state has hostile intentions, neutral or even friendly postures of that state is more likely to be ignored, distorted, or seen as attempted duplicity if not outright as hostile (Jarvis, 1976 p. 68). It is due time for those studying various aspects of coercive diplomacy to start incorporating those concepts into their works and more vigorously study their effects on successful utilization of the strategy.

## **Section 2.5: Conclusion**

The literature on the theory, use and efficacy of coercive diplomacy is indeed extensive. Since early days of the Cold War, theorists from various fields have studied the strategy in depth and have provided their own policy prescriptions on when and how best to use the strategy to achieved foreign policy objectives. Coercive diplomacy is an alluring strategy because, if successfully employed, it promises to achieve intended policy objectives in conflict situations without having to burden the costs war. Yet, the track record of the strategy has been quite bleak and history suggests that the strategy is significantly more likely to fail than to succeed. For this very reason, scholars have studied the efficacy of the strategy from various angles, trying to suggest ways to increase and enhance the success odds of the strategy and inform policymakers of contextual and tactical variables that affect the strategy's probability of success and failure. Interestingly, their recommendations are quite similar and have roughly remained intact during the past half century, despite the radical changes in our world political, economic, and strategic environment. But perhaps more interestingly, scholars contributing to the literature on coercive diplomacy seem to have neglected the debates international relations theorists have had regarding the core nature of international conflicts and have not thoroughly accounted for the effects of security dilemma in their analyses.

### **Chapter 3: US Use of Coercive Diplomacy Against Iran**

Coercive diplomacy and sanctions have been the most constant feature of US foreign policy toward the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1979. While the indicated objectives of US sanctions against Iran have evolved over the past thirty five years, the overarching strategy of the US toward Iran has not changed much since the inception of the Islamic Republic. Soon after the fall of the Shah, the US sought to maintain the old order under the new political conditions in Iran. When those efforts failed and when US embassy in Tehran was seized by militant students, the US was quick to rely on coercive measures against Iran to achieve its foreign policy objectives in that country. From the time President Carter invoked the International Emergency Economic Act in 1979 to freeze all Iranian deposits, assets, and properties in the US, coercive diplomacy has remained the primary and most salient aspect of US foreign policy on Iran. It is, however, questionable whether the utilization and continued reliance on coercive diplomacy has positively contributed to the realization of US foreign policy objectives in Iran.

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to evaluate the impact of US and international sanctions on Iran's nuclear program. It is, nevertheless, important to provide a background on Iran – US relations in order to better understand the context in which coercive diplomacy and sanctions have been employed against Iran. Therefore, this chapter will begin with a survey of Iran – US relations, followed by a study of the coercive measures that have been adopted by the US and the UNSC to persuade Iran to curtail its nuclear ambitions, before an impact evaluation of these coercive measures is undertaken.

## **Section 3.1: Background: Iran – US Relations**

### **Section 3.1.01: Relations Prior to the Second World War**

American missionaries from the American Presbyterian Church were the first recorded Americans to travel to Iran in 1830s. They arrived in northeastern Iran and gradually expanded their sphere of activities. Since their religious activities were primarily directed at proselytizing Iranian Jews and Armenian Christians (Yeselson, 1956 p. 9), they did not face excessive opposition from the predominantly Muslim population of Iran. In fact, through their charity programs, schools, and direly needed medical services,<sup>6</sup> they were able to win the admiration of the people they served and, in comparison to missionaries from other countries and churches, were regarded with much less suspicion.

While it could be said that diplomatic relations between Iran and the US started with the 1856 Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, which was signed in Constantinople – present day Istanbul – between Iran and the US, it was not until 1883 that the American legation opened in Tehran, with Samuel G. W. Benjamin assuming the role of the first Consul General of the US to Persia. Generally speaking, Iranians regarded the US, a historically anti-imperialist nation, as a key potential ally in their effort to curb the malign influences of Imperial Russia and Great Britain (Yeselson, 1956 p. 27). However, despite Iran's eagerness for the US to play a more salient role in Iran, the Monroe Doctrine and American isolationism prevented the US from becoming too politically involved in a

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<sup>6</sup> The earliest modern medical school in Iran was set up by Joseph Plumb Cochran, an American Presbyterian missionary, in late 1870s. In fact, Dr. Cochran is credited as the father of modern medicine in Iran.

country that was squarely under the sphere of influence of both Russia and the Great Britain.

Interestingly, even Iran's 1906 Constitutional Revolution, the subsequent effort by Mohammad Ali Shah to eliminate the Majlis, and the ensuing unrest throughout the country that threatened the safety and security of American lives and properties in Iran were not enough to bring any change in America's strict nonintervention policy toward Iran. The same, however, was not the case with regards to the American missionaries, who refused to abide by the explicit instructions of the US government forbidding them from any act that may have the appearance of them taking sides in Iran's civil war and actively aided the Constitutionalists in their struggle against royal forces of Mohammad Ali Shah (Yeselson, 1956 pp. 85-104). Howard Baskerville, for example, who was an American teacher in the Presbyterian mission school in the northeastern Iranian city of Tabriz, was shot dead on April 10, 1909, as he led a small group of Constitutionalists against the royal forces of Mohammad Ali Shah. Quite interestingly, although the efforts of the American missionaries were not sanctioned by the US government and although they had been explicitly forbidden to become involved even in humanitarian efforts during that civil conflict, their efforts had a lasting effect on the psyche of the Iranian public and officials, who increasingly viewed the US as a "third force" that could prevent imperialist interventions in Iran (Lawson, 29).

Neither Constitutionalism nor US policy of strict nonintervention lasted for long. Discovery of oil in Iran and the First World War turned Iran into a geopolitically strategic

location that the Allied Powers could not ignore. Iran, which had declared neutrality, was occupied by Allied Forces during the First World War. Nevertheless, President Wilson's famous assertion that "the people of small and weak states have the right to expect to be dealt with exactly as the people of big and powerful states" (September 2, 1916), offered great hopes for countries like Iran that were enduring significant hardships due to their inability to preserve their independence and national sovereignty. Interestingly, while the events surrounding the First World War did not have much of an effect on US policy of nonintervention in Iran, US domestic politics and the Senate's opposition to the League of Nations did bring a change in America's Iran policy.

At the end of the First World War, Great Britain used its influence over Iran and effectively bribed Iranian officials to sign the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement, which would have turned Iran into a de facto protectorate of Great Britain (Olso, 1980, pp. 237-240). Wilson's opponents in the Senate had the treaty printed in Congressional Records and used it as evidence of how the League of Nations could pull the US into a war that was contrary to American ideals and interests. Senator Borah of Idaho, for example, passionately argued on September 29, 1919, that the agreement violated Iran's independence, asserted that the treaty was imposed on Iran since it was signed when Iran was under British occupation, and maintained that joining the League of Nations would force the US to help Great Britain should Iran seek to regain its independence sometime in the future (Congressional Record, pp. 6086-6089). This debate brought Iran's cause to the forefronts of American politics and forced the US government to publicly disapprove



and challenge the Anglo-Persian Agreement in contradiction of its strict nonintervention policy toward Iran (Yeselson, 1956, pp.161-166).

Since the Anglo-Persian Agreement did also include substantial aid for the reconstruction of Iran, Iranians took American opposition to the agreement as a sign that the US was ready to provide Iran with a counter offer. That, however, was not something the US was willing to do. Instead, the US was willing and did signal an association between rejection of the agreement by Iran and US investment in Iran's fledgling oil industry. To further persuade Iranians that the US opposed the agreement and that it was seriously contemplating investments in Iran oil sector, State Department impressed upon Standard Oil to "immediately and directly" start negotiating with the Iranian Government. Being heartened by the American support, the Iranian government denounced the agreement, and the Majlis, which for the first time in six years convened on June 22, 1921, rejected ratification of the Anglo-Persian Agreement (Yeselson, 1956, pp. 167-169)

The rejection of the Anglo-Persian agreement coincided with massive growth of American oil companies with both the capacity and the inclination to invest across the globe, including in the Middle East. Yet, despite the efforts of the US government to open Iranian oil to giant American oil companies and despite Iran's eagerness to counter British influence through American commercial presence in Iran, Great Britain, which had exclusive rights over southern Iranian oil fields, prevented American oil companies from gaining access to Iranian oil in a variety of ways. In one instant when the Majlis did manage to provide an oil concession to the American Standard Oil, the British effectively

maneuvered Standard Oil into an agreement with the British Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which was running the refineries in southern Iran. The Majlis, which was infuriated by the agreement between Standard Oil and the British Anglo-Persian Oil Company, promptly annulled the concession as soon as the alliance was announced.

### **Section 3.1.02: From the Second World War to the 1953 Coup Against Mossadeq**

During the Second World War, Iran was occupied again. Great Britain and the USSR saw the newly inaugurated Trans-Iranian Railway, which connected the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea, as an indispensable transport route for direly needed military supplies on the Eastern Front. Being vexed by increased German presence and influence in Iran, Great Britain and Soviet Union took no chances and occupied Iran on August 25, 1941. They sent Reza Shah into exile and replaced him with his young son, Mohammad Reza Shah. After declaring war against Japan and entering into the Second World War, the US also sent forces into Iran to secure the so called Persian Corridor. To bring the occupation of Iran in line with the Atlantic Charter, which had been drafted and agreed to by the United States and Great Britain less than two weeks before the invasion of Iran, Great Britain and the Soviet Union signed an Alliance treaty, known as the Tripartite Treaty, with Iran on January 29, 1942, promising to safeguard the economic interests of the Iranian people, to “respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran” and to withdraw their forces from Iran “no later than six months” after the end of the Second World War. Yet, having absolutely no trust in Soviet Union and Great Britain due to their history in Iran, Iran was quick to turn to the US to act as the enforcer of that treaty.

Hence, on January 31, 1942, the young Shah wrote a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt, emphasizing that Iran relied on the US to “ensure the fulfillment of the pledges given” by Great Britain and Soviet Union (Alexander and Names, 1980, pp. 81-82). While despite the Shah’s insistence, President Franklin Roosevelt refused to attach his signature to the Tripartite Treaty, the US did come to realize Iran’s geopolitical significance around the end of the Second World War and was keen to take the place of Great Britain as it moved out of the Persian Gulf region. In fact, on August 16, 1943, in a memorandum to President Roosevelt on “American Policy in Iran,” Secretary of State Cordell Hull asserted that “it is to our interest that no great power be established on the Persian Gulf opposite to the important American petroleum development in Saudi Arabia” and recommended the US to “adopt a policy of positive action in Iran” (Foreign Relations, 1943, p. 378). Hence, in order to signal to the Great Britain and, more importantly, to the Soviet Union that the US was no longer pursuing a policy of nonintervention in Iran, the US welcomed Iran’s request at the Tehran Conference, 1943, for an Allied declaration respecting its sovereignty and President Roosevelt affixed his signature next to that of Churchill and Stalin on December 1, 1943, to the “Declaration of the Three Powers Regarding Iran,” which besides promises of economic aid, stressed that “the Governments of the United States, the U.S.S.R., and the United Kingdom are at one with the Government of Iran in their desire for the maintenance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran.”

With this change in US policy toward Iran, the US upgraded its legation in Tehran to Embassy status in February 1944 and openly opposed possible post-war Soviet ambitions

in Iran. Among US measures to this effect was the support it lent to a Majlis bill, which was principally authored by MP Mohammad Mossadeq, prohibiting any Iranian official from even discussing, let alone signing, any oil related agreements with any foreign government, company, or person until the end of the Second World War. Interestingly, while Western powers primarily supported the bill as a way to curtail Soviet ambitions in Iran, MP Mossadeq's primary objective in securing the bill was to not only prevent future oil concessions but to also seriously reexamine the concessions that had already been given to the Great Britain (Kermani, 1950, pp. 577-601).

US involvement in Iran reached its climax when at the end of the Second World War, it became clear that the Soviet Union had no intention of honoring its commitment to preserve Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity. During Soviet occupation of northern Iran, pro-Soviet groups gained control over two Iranian Northern provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan and, with the support of nearby Soviet forces, declared autonomy from Tehran. When the Soviet Union refused to withdraw its forces from northern Iran by the agreed-upon date and prevented the Iranian army from bringing Azerbaijan and Kurdistan back under the control of Iran's central government, President Truman felt that "the Russian activities in Iran" not only threatened US interests in the region but "threatened the peace of the world" (Truman, 1956, p. 93). Hence, on March 6, 1946, the US sent a note to the Soviet Union asserting that the United States "cannot remain indifferent" to the Soviet decision to maintain a troop presence in Iran despite its various promises to do otherwise (Truman, 1956, p. 94). Purportedly, in another message to Stalin, President Truman informed Stalin that he has given orders to US military chiefs to

prepare for the movement of US ground, sea, and air forces into Iran in case the Soviet Union did not end its occupation of northern Iran (Lenczowski, 1990, p. 13).

With the support of the US, Iran was able to diplomatically outmaneuver the Soviet Union, promising it oil concessions in return for Soviet withdrawal from Iranian territories. Consequently, on March 24, 1946, Moscow declared that all Soviet troops would at once withdraw from Iran, pending a final deal between Iran and the Soviet Union. Although a final deal promising Russia a 51% stake in northern Iranian oil fields as well as autonomy for the Azerbaijan and Kurdistan regions was signed between Iran and the Soviet Union in April 1946, soon after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, troops from Tehran crushed the secessionist governments in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan and, in December of 1946, brought those provinces back under the control of the central government of Iran. But perhaps, most significantly, when it came time for the newly inaugurated Majlis to ratify the Irano-Soviet agreement of April 1946, George V. Allen, the US ambassador in Tehran, publicly denounced the coercive measures employed by foreign governments to secure “commercial concession in Iran and promised full American support for Iranians in freely deciding about the disposition on their national resources” (Lenczowski, 1990, p. 12). Hence, with the political backing of the US, the Majlis almost unanimously refused to ratify the Irano-Soviet agreement of April 1946 on October 22, 1947, and declared it null and void.

While Iran was not specifically mentioned in the Truman Doctrine, it was one of the earlier places where the doctrine was put to test. Truman being convinced of the Soviet

expansionist intentions, perceived a long-term strategy of containment as the best way to curb Soviet aggression and expansionism. Hence, in that broader conceptual framework, Iran's geopolitical significance became further accentuated and the US economic, political, and military involvement in Iran was increasingly regarded to be vital to core US national interests. Consequently, successive US Presidents pursued a policy of active engagement with Iran. As US economic and military aid came pouring into Iran, Iran became confident that it could rely on the US to limit the excesses of the Great Britain and the Soviet Union, alike. Having significantly limited Soviet influence and pressure over Iran with the backing of the US, Iran relied on the US again as it tried to renegotiate a better oil deal with the Great Britain.

The Majlis, which had become the strongest public institution in Iran due to the weaknesses of both the Monarchy and the Executive, was outraged by the fact that the British government was deriving more revenues from taxing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), a British owned and operated company that was contracted to extract and export Iranian oil, than the Iranian government was receiving in royalties (Keddie, 2006, pp. 123-124). The Majlis appointed Mossadeq to head a committee to look into the issue and to renegotiate with AIOC a deal quite similar to the fifty-fifty profit sharing deal that the US (Aramco) had with the Saudi government.

AIOC, however, refused to accept a fifty-fifty arrangement, pushing both the Majlis and public sentiments toward full nationalization of Iran's oil industry (Keddie, 2006, p. 124). PM Ali Razmara, who was against nationalization on "technical grounds," was

assassinated in March 7, 1951. A week later, on March 15, 1951, the Majlis passed a bill to nationalize the Iranian oil industry and the Iranian Senate approved the bill less than a week later on March 20, 1951. When PM Ala, who had succeeded Razmara, failed to reach an agreement with the British to enforce the bill, the Majlis voted to replace Ala with Mossadeq on April 30, 1951 and on May 1 PM Mossadeq declared AIOC nationalized. Britain, however, rejected the nationalization as illegal, crippled the industry by ordering all British advisors and technicians out of Iran, froze Iranian assets in British banks, warned fleets from other countries that they would be severely dealt with should they transport, let alone market, Iranian oil, and filed a complaint against Iran in the International Court at The Hague. Great Britain also secured agreements with other western oil companies not to enter into any agreement with Iran and to increase their productions elsewhere to compensate for the loss of Iranian oil in the global oil market. These measures reduced Iran's oil revenue to almost nothing and further intensified Iran's economic plight (Saikal, 1980, pp. 35-45).

These measures only made Mossadeq, who also enjoyed the backing of Iran's religious establishment, even more popular at home. His growing popularity and firmness on the oil issue, however, created frictions between him and the Shah. In the summer of 1952, the Shah refused to grant Mossadeq's wish to have control over Iran's Armed Forces. Mossadeq resigned in response but after three days of pro-Mossadeq demonstrations the Shah was forced to reappoint Mossadeq as Iran's Prime Minister. However, the sorry state of affairs, created by the British embargo, made it very difficult for Mossadeq to

provide for the basic needs of the Iranian people, let alone implement his promised domestic reforms.

Mossadeq, whose firm stance on nationalization was encouraged by Henry Grady, the outspoken US Ambassador to Tehran (Saikal, 1980, p.41), paid several visits to the US, looking for support from the power that had previously helped Iran during its most difficult times. The US initially responded positively and President Truman expressed his sympathy with Iran's nationalist aspirations. Around the same time, the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) prepared a covert coup plan against Mossadeq and reached the conclusion that it needed US support and collaboration for the plan to succeed. It, however, became quite clear that despite the approval of Allen Dulles, who was at the time the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, President Truman was not going to approve covert action against Mossadeq (Andrew, 1995, p. 203). President Eisenhower, however, was not as sympathetic to the Iranian cause. He was persuaded by the British that Mossadeq was vulnerable to a coup by the Iranian Tudeh (communist) party, and shifted US policy closer to that of Great Britain (Andrew, 1995, p. 203). Hence, in June of 1953, President Eisenhower endorsed a British proposal for a covert operation, code-named Operation Ajax, to bring down Mossadeq. Then, on June 29, 1953, Eisenhower wrote a letter in response to Mossadeq's request for help informing Mossadeq that while "the Government and people of the United States... sincerely hope that Iran will be able to maintain its independence...the failure of Iran and of the United Kingdom to reach an agreement with regard to compensation has handicapped the Government of the United States in its efforts to help Iran."



Simultaneous with the letter, President Eisenhower secretly sent CIA agent Kermit Roosevelt to coordinate a coup against Mossadeq. Roosevelt spoke with the Shah and General Zahedi and went over the details of Operation Ajax. As part of the plan, on midnight of August 13, 1953, the Shah sent a royal order to Mossadeq, ordering him to abdicate in favor of General Zahedi. Mossadeq dismissed the order as forgery, arrested the messenger, and took extraordinary precautionary measures against a possible coup plot. This triggered the second stage of the operation, which called for a military coup. The second stage of the coup also initially failed and fearing for his life, the Shah immediately left the country. Within four days, however, the CIA managed to topple Mossadeq's government and returned the Shah to the country on August 19, 1953.

Upon return, the Shah, with the heavy hand of the US on his side, went back to his father's way of governance. He banned all political parties, put Mossadeq under house arrest until his death in 1967, executed Mossadeq's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hosain Fatemi and several other military leaders loyal to Mossadeq, imprisoned hundreds of National Front leaders and other Mossadeq loyalists and "turned Iran into a police state" (Ghods, 1989, p.189). The coup not only transformed Iran – US relations, but also the Iranian public perceptions regarding the US. Indeed, the Iranian public felt betrayed by the US (Bill, 1988, p. 86) as it had taken away from them a government they had strived to achieve since the Tobacco Movement of 1891.

### **Section 3.1.03: From Coup to the Revolution**

The US established a very close tie with the Shah of Iran after the CIA sponsored coup of 1953. It provided Iran with both economic and military aid and assistance. In the context of the Cold War, Iran was regarded as a crucial ally in curtailing the Soviet influence in the region. The Shah allowed Iran's territory to be used by the US for espionage activities against the Soviet Union. Among such activities were indispensable listening stations that were built by the CIA in northern Iran to monitor and intercept "radio signals broadcasted by missiles during the first minute or so of test launches from Turatam. The signals, known as telemetry, provided data on key missile characteristics, such as the size, payload and fuel consumption of new rockets" (Burt, 1979).

Among American aid to Iran was assistance in the field of nuclear technology. Iran and the United States signed an agreement for civilian nuclear cooperation on March 5, 1957. Two years later, the Shah ordered the establishment of University of Tehran Nuclear Center, which in 1960 ordered a 5 MWt research reactor from the US. The research reactor, known as the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR), became operational in 1967, fueled by 5.5 kg of American supplied 93% enriched uranium (Fuhrmann, 2012, p. 82). The US also pledged \$350,000 assistance to Iran's nuclear program as part of its Atoms for Peace agreement. Once Iran developed the prerequisites of a more extensive nuclear program, the US agreed to deepen its nuclear cooperation with Iran and to assist Iran in its declared quest to generate twenty-three thousand MWe from nuclear power facilities by 1994. Henry Kissinger and Iranian Finance Minister signed a \$15 billion trade agreement, which required US firms to supply Iran with eight nuclear power reactors

(Fuhrmann, 2012, p. 83). On January 1, 1978, President Carter and the Shah reached another agreement, which pledged that Iran would receive ‘most favored nation’ status for reprocessing, meaning that the US would not discriminate against Iran for permission to reprocess plutonium from enriched uranium fuel of American origin (Poneman, 1982, p. 88).

US support of Iran went much beyond economic and energy cooperation. Soon after the coup, it became clear that extra precautionary measures were needed to defuse all possible future threats against the monarchy. As a result, the CIA, with the assistance of the Israeli intelligence officers, helped in setting up SAVAK, the Shah’s secret police, in 1957. The SAVAK was given wide latitude to identify, torture, and execute opponents of the Shah and created a “pervasive climate of fear and intimidation” throughout the Iranian society (Gasiorowski, 1991, p. 152) The SAVAK was notorious for its grisly torture techniques and was feared by all segment of the society, including the elites. The Shah heavily relied on SAVAK and did as he willed without worrying much about possible domestic opposition. Considering SAVAK owed much of its efficiency and capability to extensive American assistance and to the CIA’s special training and liaison relationship with SAVAK, as SAVAK increased its operations, the people became more distrusting of the United States as they saw it behind its brutality (Saikal, 1980, p. 62; Gasiorowski, 1991, p. 121).

With time, the relationship between the Shah and the US became even more indispensable for both sides. The US embassy in Iran became the largest US embassy in the world, with over 1400 American staff (Moon, 2000). As a party to the Central Treaty

Organization (CENTO), the US encouraged the Shah to purchase more and more military hardware from the US. By 1977, Iranian military and security establishments were absorbing some 40% of Iran's budget (Bill, 1988, p. 202), making Iran the largest foreign buyer of American arms (Marshall, Scot and Hunter, 1987, p. 152). As the Shah purchased more and more military hardware from the US, the US sent increasing number of military advisors to Iran.

On October 13, 1964, the Majlis, under pressure from the Shah and the US, granted American military personnel full diplomatic immunity and approved the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which barred Iranian courts from prosecuting any member of the US military personnel, advisors, or their dependents. The move instantaneously enraged all Iranians, regardless of their political orientation (Bill, 1988, 157). Among the most vocal opponents of the bill was Ayatollah Khomeini, who in a speech said the agreement has "reduced the Iranian people to a level lower than that of an American dog" (Bill, 1988, 159). Anti-US and anti-Shah demonstrations broke out and the Shah used his military to suppress the demonstrators and sent the Ayatollah into exile. As the public support for Grand Ayatollah Khomeini grew, the SAVAK became even more brutal in its methods and more intolerant of any form of opposition to the Shah and his policies. The US, however, refused to put any pressure on the Shah. The unspoken understanding in the US was "that the deal with the Shah...[is] 'you rely on me for what goes on here, and I'll let you have all the telemetry and monitoring equipments [to monitor Soviet missile and nuclear activities] up north [of Iran] that you want'" (Ranelagh, 1986, p. 649).

### **Section 3.1.04: The Islamic Revolution**

In 1976, Jimmy Carter was elected President. During his campaign, Carter emphasized a foreign policy that was going to stress on human rights and reduction of US arms sales. In his Inaugural Address on January 20, 1977, President Carter declared that “our commitment to human rights must be absolute... because we are free, we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clear cut preference for these societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights.” President Carter’s election worried the Shah because Carter had been elected on “a platform that appeared to be hostile to many of the Shah’s policies” (Sick, 1985, p. 22). Yet, the Carter administration, which believed that the US did not have any viable strategic alternative to the special relationship with the Shah, went to great lengths to “reassure the Shah that there was no intent to alter the basic nature of the relationship” (Sick, 1985, pp. 22-23). In fact, President Carter instructed Bill Sullivan, Carter’s Ambassador to Tehran, to reassure the Shah that President Carter was not going to apply any pressure on the Shah on human rights (Precht, 2004).

As anti-Shah demonstration started to mount, the Shah used more lethal force and the US continued to publicly showcase its special relationship with the Shah. Quite famously, on December 31, 1977, less than ten days before the uprising in Qom, which led to death of at least seventy individuals and arrest of hundreds of demonstrators (Keddie, 2006, p. 224), in a visit to Iran, President Carter said: “Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world. This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to your leadership and to the respect and the

admiration and love which your people give to you... We have no other nation with whom we have closer consultation on regional problems that concern us both. And there is no leader with whom I have a deeper sense of personal gratitude and personal friendship.”

As people in the city of Tabriz marked the 40<sup>th</sup> day<sup>7</sup> of those killed in Qom, the Shah’s security forces clashed with mourners, killing hundreds of the protestors (Ghods, 1989, p. 217). The 40<sup>th</sup> day of those killed in Tabriz was commemorated throughout the country, and the Shah’s security forces reacted to those processions in even a more violent fashion. The more forcefully the Shah’s security forces suppressed the protests, the stronger became the ability of revolutionary leaders to organize new protests (Vance, 1983, p. 324). Day by day, more and more people were killed and imprisoned.

The US, however, was unable to understand the dynamics. The “US intelligence [community], in part because of policy decisions made by several administrations that severely limited collection, was largely blind to the growing likelihood” of the Shah’s fall (Lowenthal, 2006, p. 25). In fact a CIA assessment in August 1978, had concluded that Iran was “not in a revolutionary or even a prerevolutionary situation” (Andrew, 1995, p. 439). Even as late as September 28, 1978, some ten days after one of the bloodiest demonstration in the city of Tehran, the conclusion of US Defense Intelligence Agency was that the Shah “is expected to remain actively in power over the next ten years” (Bill, 1988, 258).

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<sup>7</sup> It is customary in Shia Islam to mourn and commemorate the dead 40 days after their death.

In the fall of 1978, the Shah declared martial law in order to quell the ongoing demonstrations. On September 8, 1978, people in Tehran ignored the martial law and took to the streets. The Shah's security forces surrounded the demonstrators in Jaleh Square and opened fire on an estimated 20,000 demonstrators that had congregated in the Square. Reports of casualty varies, with the government claiming 122 killed and 3,000 wounded, the opposition claiming the number killed to be around 1,000, and doctors estimating around 400 killed and some 4,000 injured (Sick, 1985, p. 51). In response, the US embassy prepared a statement declaring that "the monarchy is a deeply important institution in Iran and the Shah is, in our view, the individual most suited to lead the Iranian people to a more democratic system" (Nolan and MacEachin, 2006, pp. 22-23). President Carter also called the Shah on September 10, to express his support for the Shah and concerns over the events. The White House released a statement publicizing the telephone conversation and "reaffirming the close and friendly relationship between Iran and the United States" (Sick, 1985, p. 51). The statements infuriated the opposition and made them more convinced that they were fighting against a greater power than the Shah, i.e. the United States.

The revolution reached its climax in early 1979. Daily demonstrations made it impossible for the Shah to assert his authority. The people had become resolute and united to defeat the Shah and the overt US support for the Shah injected the revolution with an anti-American flavor. People looked at the revolution as something beyond a movement against the Shah. Instead, they regarded the revolution as a movement of the "oppressed" against the "oppressors," whomever and wherever they may be. They called it the

Islamic Revolution instead of the Iranian Revolution in order to internationalize the cause and the movement. As more and more people poured into the streets to demonstrate against the Shah, he decided to leave the country. On January 16, 1979, the Shah left Iran, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile on February 1, 1979, and the revolution succeeded in toppling the monarchy on February 11, 1979. Immediately after the fall of the Shah, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, with the help of the Interim Government of Iran (IGI) and the Council of Revolution of Iran (CRI), which were respectively, the executive and policymaking arms of the revolution, started to govern a country that was in total chaos.

### **Section 3.1.05: The Hostage Crisis**

The Shah, who had been invited to the US, went to Egypt instead, hoping that like 1953 order might be restored and he might need to quickly return to Iran to again take charge of the country (Vance, 1983, p. 338; Precht, 2004). Losing all hopes soon after the triumph of the revolution, the Shah moved to Morocco, then to the Bahamas, and from there to Mexico. In the meantime, the US decided to reconstruct a normal relationship with Iran. The State Department having established contact with Interim Foreign Minister Ebrahim Yazdi prior to the fall of the Shah, capitalized and expanded on that relationship (Precht, 2004). Consequently, while the US was trying to reformulate its relations with the post-Shah Iran, the Interim Iranian Prime Minister, Mahdi Bazargan, as well as the Interim Foreign Minister, Ebrahim Yazdi, were also undertaking efforts on their side to improve the relationship between the two countries.



While in Morocco, the Shah asked the US to allow him entry into the US. But at the NSC's Special Coordinating Committee meeting of February 23, 1979, it was decided to politely inform the Shah that while the original invitation remained open, it was not in anyone's interest, including the Shah's, for the Shah to take residence in the US. Being under pressure from the Moroccan monarch to find another place of refuge, the Shah moved to the Bahamas. There, the Shah used his friends in Washington, particularly National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski; chairman and chief executive of Chase Manhattan Bank, David Rockefeller; the influential former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger; and esteemed presidential advisor, John J. McCloy, to convince President Carter to allow him entry into the US. President Carter, however, saw Shah's entry into the US as a potentially inflammatory act and did not want to endanger American lives and US interests in Iran and the Middle East. Famously, as President Carter notes in his memoir, when Brzezinski once tried to convince Carter to allow Shah entry into the US, President Carter angrily reacted saying that he did not want to endanger the lives of Americans in Iran just so that the Shah could play tennis in the US (Sick, 1985, p.178).

The Shah, quite dissatisfied with things in the Bahamas, relocated to Mexico. There, one of the "best-kept state secrets of all times" (Sick, 1985, 182) surfaced. On October 1, 1979, President Carter learned for the first time that the Shah might be seriously ill. Twenty days later, on October 20, 1979, President Carter received a memorandum that substantiated earlier reports of the Shah's illness, indicating that the Shah was suffering from a malignant lymphoma and that New York was the only place where his dire medical needs could be met (Andrew, 1995, pp. 448-449). Hence, President Carter finally

decided to admit the Shah into the US on October 21 and the Shah arrived in New York the next day.

From the time the Shah had requested permission to enter the US from Morocco on February 22, 1979, to the very eve of the Shah's arrival in New York, the question of whether or not the US should admit the Shah was discussed extensively among high-ranking US officials. On all occasions, the response of those closely following the events in Iran, particularly the State Department officials as well as analysts stationed in the US embassy in Tehran, was that – to use the words of Bruce Laingen, the US chargé d'affaires in Tehran – “the Shah's entry would be prejudicial to US interests” (Sick, 1985, p. 181). Those with an understanding of Iran's history and Iranian people's paranoia, were quite aware of the fear of Iranians that the US might want to pull off another coup against their fledgling republic. When the embassy officials informed the IGI of the decision to allow the Shah entry into the US, both PM Bazargan as well as FM Yazdi made it quite clear that the decision was not welcomed and that the admission of the Shah into the US was going to “cause problems” (Sick, 1985, p. 181).

Upon permitting the Shah into the US, IGI and the US embassy in Tehran worked hard to defuse possible tensions. During these meetings FM Yazdi proposed two ideas. First, he suggested that the US must officially ask the Shah to publicly give up any claims to the throne. The second request of FM Yazdi was that a group of Iranian physicians be allowed to travel to the US and verify US claims that the Shah was in fact suffering from a life threatening ailment. Unfortunately none of FM Yazdi's proposals were taken

seriously (Yazdi, 2000). Brzezinski, as he recalled in a BBC interview for the “Iran and the West” documentary (2009), was steadfastly against any “procedure of this sort which would be... negatively reflecting on the veracity of the US government.”

Permitting the Shah entry into the US gave substance to a long held belief in Iran, where there was a widespread disbelief in the Shah’s illness, that the US was preparing a redo of the 1953 events (Ansari, 2007, p.283). The Iranian fear and anxiety were not totally misplaced. In fact, Brzezinski was pushing the “CIA to come up with a comprehensive covert action plan to unseat the Khomeini regime,” but CIA chief Turner persisted in arguing that “pulling a Mussadiq [sic]” was by then beyond the reach of the US (Moses, 1996, p.186). What made matters even worse was that the IGI, with whose members the US had established contact and links, was frequently finding itself at odds with the CRI as well as with Grand Ayatollah Khomeini and was fast losing the domestic political support it once enjoyed. Hence, as IGI and US embassy staff held more regular meetings to diffuse possible tensions over the admission of the Shah into the US, public suspicion grew and many became convinced that the US was planning to sponsor, perhaps with the help of some members of the IGI, another coup plot and that IGI members were trying to garner US support to advance their own political agendas in Iran. While this was a general public sentiment, student organizations, particularly Student Followers of the Path of the Imam organization, became more proactive. Hence, without conferring with Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, they decided to take the matters into their own hands.

While the students were pondering about how they should go about diffusing the perceived US threats, the IGI and the US increased their contacts. “What the Americans were trying to do was to reconstruct their old relationship with new partners. They acted as if the revolution had never happened” (Branigin, 1980). On November 1, 1979, Brzezinski and Iran’s Interim PM, Mahdi Bazargan, met along the sides of an event in Algiers. When the news of the meeting became public in Iran, the students became convinced that a coup was underway and decided to preempt it by seizing the US embassy and demanding the Shah’s return.

Initially, it is said, the students had intended the takeover to be temporary, more along the lines of a sit-in. But within hours of the seizure, tens of thousands of Iranians marched toward the embassy in support of the students. Many of them remained in and around the compound for several weeks. Immediately, the seizure of the embassy turned into a national pride issue from which no one could back down. What was intended to be a temporary event, quickly turned into a protracted crisis for the leadership in both countries.

It is a historical fact that Grand Ayatollah Khomeini was as surprised about the takeover as President Carter. Nine months earlier, when a group of leftists had occupied the US embassy on the Valentine’s Day, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini had directed the heads of IGI and CRI to go and “kick the occupiers out” (Yazdi, 2000). When Grand Ayatollah Khomeini first heard of the news of the seizure of the US embassy from PM Yazdi, he issued a similar order (Yazdi, 2000). But as tens of thousands of Iranians, including

many key revolutionary figures, marched toward the embassy in support of the hostage takers and as “the overwhelming popularity of the act among the Iranian masses” (Bill, 1988, p. 295) became apparent to all, the Ayatollah found it very difficult to go against the popular sentiments and hence decided to condone the take-over of the embassy by the students. Consequently, all members of the IGI submitted their resignation on November 5<sup>th</sup> to Grand Ayatollah Khomeini and the Ayatollah accepted their resignation and made CRI in charge of the duties of IGI on November 6, 1979.

The hostage crisis significantly increased public pressure on President Carter, who was facing a reelection in about a year. The Carter administration tried in vain to negotiate the release of the hostages. Since the US had refused to send the Shah back to Iran, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini had declared that it was the prerogative of the Majlis, which had not yet been inaugurated, to decide the fate of the hostages. Carter then tried to pressure Iran by condemning it in the UN, freezing its multi-billion dollar assets in the US, cutting off diplomatic relations with Iran,<sup>8</sup> and turning the international community against Iran. What Carter did not understand was that Iran was a country in chaos. No single individual or political faction had the needed capacity to make a decision about the hostages. Iran did not yet have a constitutional structure and there existed no neutral ground where people could have debated a policy of such significance. Any move by any member of the leadership could have resulted in more chaos and perhaps in the lives of the hostages. Consequently, since Iran was suffering from a decision-making paralysis on

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<sup>8</sup> It is important and quite significant to realize that as far as the official position of Iran was concerned, the takeover of the embassy was not an act by the Iranian government and it was not the policy of the Iranian government to cut ties with the US. In fact, Iran maintained an active embassy in Washington DC until April 7, 1980, until the US government decided to cut ties.

the issue, none of the measures and pressure employed by the Carter administration yielded any meaningful results. In fact, the “application of pressure only increased the determination of the hostage takers, whose popularity grew at home in direct proportion to the amount of pressure applied by the US” (Bill, 1988, p. 300).

In retrospect, it seems the only person who understood this dynamic was Secretary of State Vance. Vance believed that, as painful as it was, the national interests and the need to protect American lives required the US “to continue exercise restraint” and give Iran more time, room, and peace of mind to come to terms with itself (Vance, 1983, p. 408). He asserted that “the hostages would be freed only when [Ayatollah] Khomeini was certain all the institutions of an Islamic republic were in place” and that the US had no other realistic alternative to wait until Grand Ayatollah Khomeini determined “that the revolution had accomplished its purpose and that the hostages were of no further value” (Vance, 1983, p. 408). Vance also believed that raising the salience of the crisis by appearing as if the hostages were the only concern of the US, would prolong and complicate the issue. He believed that the more the US would declare its fear for the safety of the hostages and the more it would showcase its determination to do whatever possible to gain their freedom, the greater their value would become for the revolutionaries (Vance, 1983, p.380). A few months after the end of his presidency, President Carter, in an interview with the *New York Times* magazine (May 17, 1981), seems to have come to agree with Vance’s views, arguing that the “best approach” might have been for him to just stop making any statements on the issue (Smith, 1981).

At the time, however, Carter could not bear the political costs of inaction. With US presidential elections approaching, he had to show the American public that he was on top of the issue. After much hesitation, and against the advice of the State Department, he ordered a rescue mission, code named Operation Eagle Claw, on April 11, 1980. Brzezinski, who had long advocated a more decisive and assertive US action to free the hostages, was able to win Carter over by increasingly emphasizing “the growing domestic political costs to the president” of not doing something more assertive (Moses, 1996, p.186). Indeed, Carter was “not blind to the political benefits that would flow from a bold, dramatic raid” either and believed that a successful rescue mission would assure his reelection (Ryna, 1985, p.105).

Vance was not in Washington DC when the rescue decision was made. When he was informed, he vehemently tried to convince NSC that the mission had everything against it and would only exacerbate an already bad situation. While Vance was convinced “that the decision was wrong and that it carried great risks for the hostages and... [US] national interest” his position was not supported by anyone, and Carter decided to reaffirm his April 11 decision (Vance, 1983, pp. 409-410). As a result, Vance handed in his letter of resignation on April 21, 1980, asserted that he was resigning regardless of the outcome of the mission, but agreed to Carter’s request for him to remain in his post and not make his resignation public until after the rescue attempt (Vance, 1983, p. 411). As Vance predicted, the mission, which was launched on April 24, was a total failure. It resulted in the loss of eight American lives, seven helicopters, and a C-130 aircraft. It also jeopardized the lives of the hostages, who were subsequently dispersed throughout

the city to prevent a similar rescue mission. It also sent a very bad message to the Iranian public and policymakers and further convinced them that the US was willing to risk the lives of hundreds of Iranian civilians, as the plan itself had envisioned, to achieve what it deemed to be in its national interest.

The hostage crisis was eventually resolved neither through sanctions and coercion, nor through military action. As Vance had predicted, once the Islamic Republic was able to establish its institutions and once the country developed its decision-making apparatus and procedures, the crisis was resolved through negotiations. It is also important to note that Iraq's invasion of Iran on September 22, 1980, added to the urgency of resolving the hostage crisis. On the US side, the upcoming presidential election in November of that year, made Carter even more determined to try to secure the release of the hostages. Hence, both Iranians and the US, determined to resolve the crisis, engaged in intense negotiations. These negotiations, however, for quite suspicious reasons, did not come to a conclusion until after the US presidential elections. Iran and the US did not sign the Algiers Accord until January 19, 1981, and the hostages were not released until after President Reagan took the Oath of Office on January 20, 1981. Whether there was a covert collaboration between the Republicans and Iranian officials to delay the release of the hostages until after the presidential elections or even inauguration has been a matter of much debate and investigation. At the very minimum, what is clear is that Iran, for one reason or another, did not wish the hostages to arrive in the US while Carter was still in office and did not wish the hostages to be in Iran as Reagan took charge of the affairs in the US.



### **Section 3.1.06: The Iran-Iraq War**

President Reagan started his presidency with good news from Iran. He announced the release of the hostages the afternoon of his inauguration at a Congressional luncheon. Iran, however, was defending itself against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iranian territories and direly needed weapons and spare parts for the military hardware it had procured from the US during the reign of the Shah. Without going into the details of whether or not senior members from the Reagan's presidential campaign had colluded with the Iranian officials to delay the release of hostages until after the presidential elections in return for the delivery of direly needed arms to Iran once Reagan would come to office,<sup>9</sup> Reagan's Iran policy was centered on capitalizing on the Iran – Iraq war.

The general belief in Iran to this date is that it was the US who encouraged, if not instigated, Iraq to invade Iran on September 22, 1980. The belief is not without cause. Hitchens (1993), for example, quotes Gary Sick as having said: "After the hostages were taken in Tehran, there was a very strong view, especially from Brzezinski, that in effect Iran should be punished from all sides. He made public statements to the effect that he would not mind an Iraqi move against Iran." Hitchens continues on to say that according to a *Financial Times* report in the fall of 1980, "US intelligence and satellite data – data purporting to show that Iranian forces would swiftly crack – had been made available to Saddam through third-party Arab governments" (pp.78-79), effectively enticing Saddam

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<sup>9</sup> The claim, known as the October Surprise of 1980, has been advanced by many individuals, most notably former Iranian President Abulhassan Banisadr, former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, former Naval intelligence officer and National Security Council member Gary Sick, former Reagan/Bush campaign and White House staffer Barbara Honegger. For more on the claim, see Gary Sick's "October Surprise: American Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan" (1991). The claim was investigated by Congress and both the House and Senate inquiries concluded that the evidence fell short of proving that any collusion had taken place between the Reagan campaign and Iran to delay the release of the hostages.

to take advantage of the Iran's weakness to settle old scores. According to Howard Teicher, a White House NSC staff during early 1980s, "the reports passed on Baghdad depicted Iran's military in chaos, riven by purges and lack of replacement parts for its American-made weapons. [With] the inference... that Iran could be speedily overcome" (Lando, 2007, p.53).

While officially the US and Iraq did not have diplomatic relations at the time, the fall of the Shah and the hostage crisis on one hand, and the cooling of the relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq on the other hand, gave rise to the idea in the US that Iraq could be used to counterbalance Iran's revolutionary ambitions. Hence, in late 1979, with the blessing of Saddam, the CIA opened a station in Baghdad (Aburish, 2000, p. 187). Also, as Saddam was engaged in execution and deportation of thousands of Shiites, Brzezinski declared on April 14, 1980, that: "We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the United States and Iraq. ... We do not feel that American-Iraqi relations need to be frozen in antagonism" (Dawisha, Winter, 1980-1981). A few months later, in the summer of 1980, the Carter administration worked tirelessly to overturn Senate opposition and sold Iraq eight General Electric gas turbine engines to power Iraqi frigates, despite Iraq being on US list of state sponsors of terrorism (Timmerman, 1991, pp. 77-78). These moves were interpreted by Saddam as signs of US encouragement for Iraq to move against Iran. In fact, Alexander Haig, President Reagan's first Secretary of State, wrote in a memo after meeting with Saudi Prince Fahad and Egypt's Anwar Sadat during his April 1981 tour of the Middle East, that "it was also interesting to confirm that

President Carter gave the Iraqis a green light to launch the war against Iran through Fahad” (Lando, 2007, p. 52).

Whatever the reality might be, it is fair to suggest that at the very minimum the US did in fact know that Iraq was preparing to attack Iran and did let Saddam assume that the US would not oppose such an attack. As far as the US was concerned, despite its vast humanitarian cost, two countries unfriendly to the US “were undermining each other’s capabilities to threaten American interests” (Telhami, 2002, pp. 145-146). Soon, however, it became clear that the perception that Saddam was going to be able to declare mission accomplished in matter of months, if not weeks,<sup>10</sup> was false and Iran was not going to allow Iraq to achieve its war objectives. By the spring of 1982, Iran liberated much of its territories annexed by Saddam during the first year of the war and gained the upper hand. Alarmed by Iran’s advances, the US started to support Saddam in a much more overt fashion. The US removed Iraq from its list of state sponsors of terrorism in March 1982 in order to more easily assist Saddam in its war efforts (Sciolino, 1991, p. 164), and President Reagan signed National Security Study Directive 4-82, demanding a review of US policy in the region, on March 19, 1982.

The volunteer forces of Iran were able to march ahead and on May 24, 1982, they liberated the strategic port city of Khoramshahr, which had been under Saddam’s occupation for more than 18 months. Consequently, the US decided to provide Iraq with even more economic aid, intelligence, and weapons. According to a sworn affidavit

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<sup>10</sup> According to Robin Write (1989), “A CIA estimate predicted that Iran would last only three weeks against the Iraqi assault” (p. 83).

submitted by Howard Teicher, who was the Director for the Near East and South Asia and Senior Director for Political-Military Affairs on the staff of the National Security Council from 1982 to 1987, to United States District Court in the Southern District of Florida on January 31, 1995 in regards to Case number 93-241-CR-HIGHSMITH:

In June, 1982, President Reagan decided that the United States could not afford to allow Iraq to lose the war to Iran. President Reagan decided that the United States would do whatever was necessary and legal to prevent Iraq from losing the war with Iran... CIA Director Casey personally spearheaded the effort to ensure that Iraq had sufficient military weapons, ammunition and vehicles to avoid losing the Iran-Iraq war... the United States actively supported the Iraqi war effort by supplying the Iraqis with billions of dollars of credits, by providing U.S. military intelligence and advice to the Iraqis... CIA Director Casey was adamant that cluster bombs were a perfect "force multiplier" that would allow the Iraqis to defend against the "human waves" of Iranian attackers. The CIA, including both CIA Director Casey and Deputy Director Gates, knew of, approved of, and assisted in the sale of non-U.S. origin military weapons, ammunition and vehicles to Iraq... In certain instances where a key component in a weapon was not readily available, the highest levels of the United States government decided to make the component available, directly or indirectly, to Iraq.

Less than two months after Jonathan T. Howe, a senior State Department official, informed Secretary of State George P. Shultz on November 1, 1983, that intelligence reports showed almost daily use of chemical weapons by Saddam against Iran and the

Kurdish opposition, President Reagan sent Donald Rumsfeld to Baghdad on December 20, 1983, to inform Saddam that the United States desired to resume full diplomatic relations with Iraq (Dobbs, 2002). Even as Saddam relied more heavily on chemical warfare, “President Reagan, Vice President George Bush and senior national security aides never withdrew their support for the highly classified program in which more than 60 officers of the Defense Intelligence Agency were secretly providing detailed information on Iranian deployments, tactical planning for battles, plans for airstrikes and bomb-damage assessments for Iraq” (Tyler, 2002). In fact, just as an example, it has now been revealed by declassified CIA documents that when in 1987 CIA learned through its reconnaissance satellites and reported that Iran was just about to take advantage of a gaping hole in the Iraqi lines, President Reagan wrote a note to Secretary of Defense Carlucci that “an Iranian victory is unacceptable.” Consequently, the documents show, knowing full well that Saddam was going to rely on chemical weapons, the US provided Saddam with targeting packages suitable for use by Iraqi air force to destroy those targets using Sarin gas (Harris and Aid, 2013).

But Iraq was not the only country to which the US was selling arms. As the US was helping Saddam with arms and intelligence, it was also taking advantage of Iran’s dire need for arms and spare parts, channeling military hardware to Iran at prices often six times the DoD’s pricing list (Walsh, 1994, p. 21). Because of the US arms embargo against Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, it had become very difficult for Iran to gain access to weaponry and spare parts for most of its American made military equipment on the open market or directly from the producers (Chubin and Tripp, 1988, p. 126). Indeed, an

important element of official US policy toward Iran was to limit Iran's access to weaponry and as part the State Department's Operation Staunch, which was launched concurrently with Rumsfeld's trip to Baghdad in December 1983, Secretary of State George Shultz embarked upon a successful worldwide campaign to persuade countries not to sell arms to Iran. Iraq, on the other hand, facing no such embargos, was able to continually improve both the quantity and quality of its weaponry, purchasing well over 100 billion dollars of weapons from 1985 to 1988, making Iraq the largest importer of weapons on the world market (Sprinborg, 1990). Iran, however, was forced to procure much of its war needs from the black market at excessively inflated prices (Tarock, 1998, p.92).

Under such conditions, the US decided to make an overture to Iran. The US was significantly alarmed by the increasing influence and presence of the Soviet Union in Iran and was fearful of Iran falling into the hands of the Soviets should the government in Iran collapse under the pressure of the war or by Soviet covert action. The US also needed Iran's help to secure the release of American hostages in Lebanon. Consequently, in order to cultivate friendship with Iran, senior US security officials negotiated an "arms for hostages" deal with Iran. After delivery of hundreds of TOW anti-tank missiles, and release of hostage Benjamin Weir in Mid-September 1985 (Teicher and Teicher, 1993, p. 361) an American delegation headed by Robert McFarlane, arrived in Tehran for secret talks on May 25, 1986, on false Irish passports. The main objective of the mission was to initiate a strategic dialogue with Iranians that might lead to a thaw in US-Iranian relations. The mission, however, was a failure since the middle man, an arms dealer by

the name of Manuchehr Ghorbanifar, had misled both Iranians and the American delegation “about each other’s expectations” (Teicher and Teicher, 1993, p. 369).

Despite the failure of McFarlane’s mission, the arm-for-hostages scheme continued. In the meantime, the Reagan administration funneled the proceedings from the arms transfers to Iran, to the Contras in Nicaragua. Both channeling of weapons to Iran despite the US arms embargo against the Islamic Republic and aiding of the Contras despite the “Boland Amendment” to the FY 1983 Defense Appropriation bill, which had prohibited the US government from spending any money “for the purpose of overthrowing the government in Nicaragua,” were illegal under US law. When what had happened came to light on November 3, 1986, the deal, which to that date had resulted in the freeing of three US hostages and delivery of at least 2000 TOW and 240 HAWK spare parts at excessively high prices, fell apart.

But perhaps what has had the most lasting effect on Iranians and the Iranian policymakers’ impression of the US and the United Nations (UN) was the international community’s lack of intervention against the Saddam. The US systematically blocked or hindered all attempts by the Islamic Republic to seek justice at the UN and to stop Saddam’s aggression and use of chemical weapons. Chapter VII of the UN Charter explicitly indicates that “the Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or *act of aggression* [emphasis added] and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.” Yet, none of the first six

UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions, which were adopted from September 28, 1980 – October 8, 1986, were adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Only the seventh and the last UNSC resolutions, Resolution 598 (July 20, 1987), was adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. All of the pertinent UNSC Resolutions, with the exception of the UNSC Resolution 598, termed Saddam’s war of aggression against Iran merely as “the situation between Iran and Iraq,” not an aggression or even a conflict that would require UNSC action. Interestingly, the first UNSC resolution regarding the Iran-Iraq war simply demanded a ceasefire without even requiring withdrawal of forces to internationally recognized boundaries. Also, it was not until after Iran had liberated the strategic port city of Khoramshahr and after Iran had ejected Iraq from much of its territory that UNSC Resolution 514, adopted on July 12, 1982, called on both countries to withdraw their forces to the internationally recognized boundaries. Even worse, none of the UNSC resolutions until UNSC Resolution 582 (February, 24, 1986), which was adopted three years after Saddam had begun to routinely use chemical weapons, made any mention of Saddam’s use of chemical weapons. Moreover UNSC Resolution 582 and the resolutions adopted after that, instead of condemning the only user of chemical weapons in that war, in general “deplore[d]” “the use of chemical weapons contrary to the obligations under 1925 Geneva Protocol,” suggesting that Iran was using chemical weapons against Iraq as well.

Iran initially rejected all UNSC resolutions arguing that they all fail to satisfy the prerequisites of a just, honorable, and durable peace. Right from the early days of Saddam’s invasion, Iran had set two preconditions for peace; “1) withdrawal of Iraqi



troops from all Iranian territories and 2) compensation for the damages inflicted” (Tarock, 1998, p.78). Consequently, Iran tirelessly demanded that the UNSC should name the aggressor and should require it to compensate the victim for the damages that it has caused. None of the UNSC resolutions, including UNSC Resolution 598, satisfied those Iranian preconditions.

Yet, UNSC Resolution 598, which was adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and which was adopted when the balance of the war had tilted in Iran’s favor, at least envisioned a process that, if pursued impartially, would have resulted in satisfaction of Iran’s preconditions. Article 6 of UNSC Resolution 598 stated that the UNSC: “Requests the Secretary-General to explore, in consultation with Iran and Iraq, the question of entrusting an impartial body with the inquiring into responsibility for the conflict and to report to the Council as soon as possible.” Yet Iran, due to its past experiences with the UN and global powers, could not trust the “impartial body” to conduct its investigation impartially, and demanded that the aggressor to be named prior to a cease-fire and refused to accept UNSC Resolution 598 immediately after its adoption.

Increased foreign aid to Saddam, more severe imposition of the arms embargo against Iran, and political castigation of Iran for not accepting UNSC Resolution 598, all resulted in deterioration of Iran’s war efforts and standing. On April, 18, 1988, Iraq recaptured the Al-Faw peninsula. Also, when an American frigate in the Persian Gulf struck a mine believed to have been laid by Iran despite Iran’s denial near Bahrain on April 14, 1988, the US started to actively engage Iran’s military in the Persian Gulf. In a “measured

response” to the damage caused to its warship, the US sank three Iranian boats, severely damaged two of the four Iranian frigates, and destroyed two Iranian oil rigs, warning Iran against any further “provocation” and made it known to Iran that it must accept UNSC Resolution 598 or face further pressure (Tarock, 1998, p.176).

Nothing, however, impacted Iran’s decision makers more than the downing of the Iranian civilian airliner by USS Vincennes, which resulted in the death of 290 civilian passengers, on July 3, 1988. Iranian’s never believed US public statements that the downing was an accident<sup>11</sup> since claims made by the US regarding the incident did not correspond with the facts.<sup>12</sup> As was later admitted by the US, contrary to initial US claims, USS Vincennes was in Iranian territorial waters when it shot down Iranian Airbus A300; the Iranian airliner was well within the commercial air corridor; and the aircraft was ascending, not descending. Iran regarded the act as a preplanned stern US warning that Iran must accept UNSC Resolution 598 or face more horrific consequences (Rajaei, 1997, p. 125; Tarock, 1998, p.178-179).

One of the individuals that I interviewed, who at the time of the incident held a senior governmental position, said to me that “to us the shooting of the airliner carried three unmistakable messages from the Americans. First, the Americans wanted us to know that if we did not accept UNSC Resolution 598, they would enter the war on Iraq’s side.

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<sup>11</sup> According to a survey of the Iranian published jointly by UTCPOR and CISSM in September 2014, “Respondents were asked about the shooting down in 1988 of an Iranian commercial airliner by a U.S. Navy guided missile cruiser; the United States says the plane was shot in the mistaken belief that it was a military aircraft. Given four options, a 60% majority says that ‘America definitely downed the airliner knowingly and intentionally,’ with another 16% thinking this was probably the case. Only 14% put some credence in the U.S. account of events” (Mohseni, Gallagher and Ramsay, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Read “Sea of Lies” by John Barry and Roger Charles (Newsweek Magazine, Vol. 120, Issue 2, P. 28, 7/13/1992) for a more detailed account of the incident.

Second, they wanted to reassure us that should they decide to militarily force us to accept UNSC Resolution 598, being a superpower, no other country or international body was going to challenge the position of the US, just as no one chastised America for downing the airliner. Third, they wanted to reassure us that they would be able to convince the conscience of the American people to back military action against Iran, just as they were able to convince the American people that the attack was an accident.”

Not only did US refuse to apologize for the incident, it blamed Iran for the tragedy. Marlin Fitzwater, the Assistant to the President for Press Relations, declared on July 11, 1988 that “The responsibility for this tragic incident, and for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of other innocent victims as a result of the Iran-Iraq war, lies with those who refuse to end the conflict. A particularly heavy burden of responsibility rests with the Government of Iran, which has refused for almost a year to accept and implement Security Council Resolution 598...The urgent necessity to end this conflict is reinforced by... the deplorable precedent of the increasingly frequent use of chemical weapons by both sides, causing still more casualties.”

Washington’s increasing support of Saddam Hussein, the international community’s willingness to overlook Saddam’s violation of international laws, Saddam’s threat to send missiles with chemical warheads into Tehran and other major cities (Riedel, 2013), and the aggressive posturing of the US naval forces in the Persian Gulf, convinced Iran to accept UNSC Resolution 598 on July 18, 1988, two weeks after the downing of its airliner. As part of the mandates of the resolution, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de

Cuellar gave his much anticipated report to the UNSC on December 11, 1991, shortly after Saddam invaded Kuwait, declaring Iraq as the aggressor. Many Iranians openly ponder what would have happened if the UN would have made that declaration a decade earlier. They also doubt such a declaration would have ever been made had Saddam not invaded Kuwait and had he continued to enjoy cordial relations with the US.

While the Iran-Iraq war may be a distant event for many American policymakers, it remains a source of profound resentment toward the US among the Iranian people and policymakers. Every Iranian has a family member or a dear friend that was either killed or injured during that war. Moreover, many of the Islamic Republic's current policymakers had no diplomatic and/or strategic experience prior to the Iran-Iraq war. Indeed during the 1980s, many of them were either fighting in the battlefields or assuming political responsibilities for the first time. The Iran-Iraq war and the events surrounding that conflict have both traumatized and seasoned current Iranian policymakers and their experience with the US, the UN, and the outside world has primarily been shaped by the politics of that conflict.

The Iran-Iraq war affected Iran's strategic culture in two very important ways. First, since the early days of the war, Iranians have become convinced that they cannot fully rely on any country or international body to preserve Iran's honor, independence, security and wellbeing. The experience of the war has turned almost all Iranian policymakers into astute realists schooled by the realpolitik of the Iran-Iraq war. The experience of Iran-Iraq war has convinced many Iranians that Iran must be self-reliant and that no aspect of

Iran's economy, security, and power should ever be entirely reliant on any outside entity. This view is shared both by Iranian policymakers and the Iranian people. In a survey conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes in 2007, two out of three Iranians maintained that it is more important for Iran "to become economically self-sufficient because Iran should not be dependent on other countries" (Kull, 2007). In the summer of 2013, University of Tehran Center for Public Opinion Research (UTCPOR) also found that 72% of Iranians favored self-sufficiency over "becoming more integrated with the global economy."

The Iran-Iraq war has had a second more profound and enduring effect on the strategic culture of Iranians. Since the eight year war with Iraq was the only territorial conflict in the past two hundred years of Iran's history in which Iran did not lose any territory to the enemy, the war experience has made Iranians believe that through resistance, they will eventually prevail against their enemies regardless of the odds. That experience has made them relatively insensitive to pressure and coercion and has infused them with a strategic optimism that has enhanced their determination to steadfastly preserve their sovereign rights and to pursue their strategic objectives despite external hindrances.

### **Section 3.1.07: Relations During the Presidency of George H. W. Bush**

Less than a year after accepting UNSC Resolution 598, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini died on June 3, 1989, and Iran's President, Seyyed Ali Khamenei, was selected by the Assembly of Experts to become Iran's next Supreme Leader. Earlier that year, President Reagan's tenure had also come to an end and President George H. W. Bush, his Vice-President, had won the election and had become America's 41<sup>st</sup> President. During his inaugural speech on January 20, 1989, President Bush reached out to Iran for assistance. He famously said: "There are today Americans who are held against their will in foreign lands, and Americans who are unaccounted for. Assistance can be shown here, and will be long remembered. Good will begets good will. Good faith can be a spiral that endlessly moves on. Great nations like great men must keep their word. When America says something, America means it, whether a treaty or an agreement or a vow made on marble steps."

President Rafsanjani, who was elected Iran's President on August 3, 1989, saw this as an opportunity to fix the relationship between Iran and the US once and for all. In early August 1989 President Bush contacted UN Secretary General (UNSG) Perez de Cuellar, asking the UN to help secure the release of western hostages in Lebanon, knowing that he had direct access to the Iranian leadership. Then the National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft, explained to the UNSG that "Bush was prepared to embark on a series of reciprocal gestures that would ease relations [with Iran] and free the hostages...the president wanted a message directly delivered to [President] Rafsanjani... [and] wanted to hear his reaction to it." (Picco, 1999, p.111). On August 25, Giandomenico Picco, the

personal envoy of UNSG, met with Rafsanjani and told him that “President Bush has sought the release of the American hostages... He would react swiftly by taking action on Iranian monetary assets blocked by the United States and other appropriate gesture” and went on to reassure Rafsanjani that “taking an initiative on the hostages would inevitably elicit a positive response on the part of the United States” (Picco, 1999, p.113). In order to ensure optimum secrecy about the message, Picco used no translators and spoke to President Rafsanjani through the Iranian diplomat, Mohammad Javad Zarif. In response, President Rafsanjani explained to Picco that the hostage takers were not “the traditional Hezbollah” and that they do not follow directions from Iran. He, however, told Picco that Iran needed a signal from the US to try to help with the situation and that, as starters, the US “must halt their unreasonable animosity toward us” (Picco, 1999, p.113-114).

Rafsanjani, however, took the risk and proceeded to show “goodwill” with only a promise that the US would reciprocate. In early April 1990, Iran helped negotiate the release of two American hostages, Robert Polhill and Frank Reed and went out of its way to secure the release of other western hostages in Lebanon. Indeed, when Terry Anderson, the last American hostage was released on December 4, 1991, Picco delivered a statement asserting that the release of the hostages “could not have been achieved without the cooperation of Syria and Iran” (Picco, 1999, p.263). Iran’s “goodwill” gesture, however, was never reciprocated. As Iran pressed Picco and as Picco pressed Scowcroft on when Iran should expect reciprocation, Scowcroft kept on asking for more time.

In fact, a heated debate had erupted in Washington and there were severe disagreements among President Bush's national security team on whether or not the US should reciprocate Iran's goodwill gesture. After much back and forth, those favoring Bush keeping his inaugural address promise lost to those arguing that since 1989, Iran had engaged in acts that cannot be condoned by the US and any form of reciprocation would be interpreted both by Iran and other nations in ways that would be contrary to US national interests. Hence, on April 10, 1992, some four months after the release of Terry Anderson, Scowcroft met Picco in Washington DC and informed him that "the timing was not propitious" (Picco, 1999, p.3), that "there would be no goodwill to beget goodwill" and that the US was not going to reciprocate Iran's goodwill (Picco, 1999, p.286).

By that time, Iran had already played a positive role in the first Persian Gulf War against Saddam. Also, the Soviet Union had collapsed, relieving the US of any anxieties about Soviet advances into Iran and the Persian Gulf. In effect, considering that an election was approaching, the Bush administration perceived reneging on its original promise to have more benefits than costs. In the same month, Picco delivered the message to President Rafsanjani, again with Zarif translating. Picco asked Zarif to tell Rafsanjani that he (Picco) had lied to Rafsanjani, "although unknowingly," and that he "had been informed by Washington that no reciprocity would be forthcoming" (Picco, 1999, p.5). Rafsanjani felt that he had been played for a sucker. He had risked so much internally, believing that "when America says something, America means it, whether a treaty or an agreement or a vow made on marble steps."



### **Section 3.1.08: Relations During the First Term of Bill Clinton Presidency**

President Bush lost the election in November 1992, and President Clinton was inaugurated on January 20, 1993. “US relations with Iran hit new lows and highs under the Clinton administration” (Slavin, 2007, p.181). President Clinton came to office with a clear policy of containment toward Iran and was pressed both by the Israeli lobby AIPAC as well as by members of his national security team to increase and use economic pressure against Iran as a way to persuade it to: 1) forgo its support of Islamist organization opposed to Israel; 2) support the Arab-Israeli peace process mediated by the US; and 3) abandon its missile and alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. Martin Indyk, who was the senior director of Near East and South Asian Affairs at the President Clinton’s NSC, and Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who had negotiated the 1981 Algiers Accord with Iran and who had developed a “bitter feeling toward Iran and Iranians,” worked together to engender a “hostile policy of maintaining and intensifying economic sanctions against Iran” (Fayazmanesh, 2008, p. 71; Slavin, 2007, p.182). As early as May 1993, Indyk declared during a speech at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy that:

President Clinton also understands that, in the wake of the demise of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War, the United States stands as the dominant power in the region, uniquely capable of influencing the course of events... We reviewed existing policies, analyzed the regional dynamics...[and that] review is now all but complete... A short-hand way of encapsulating the Clinton administration strategy is thus: “dual containment” of Iraq and Iran in the east [and] promotion of Arab-Israeli peace in the west... When we assess Iranian intentions and

capabilities we see a dangerous combination for Western interests. Iran is engaged in a five-part challenge to the United States and the international community. It is the foremost state sponsor of terrorism and assassination across the globe. Through its support for Hamas and Hezbollah, Iran is doing its best to thwart our efforts to promote peace between Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab states. Through its connections with Sudan, Iran is fishing in troubled waters across the Arab world, actively seeking to subvert friendly governments. Through its active efforts to acquire offensive weapons, Iran is seeking an ability to dominate the Gulf by military means. And, perhaps most disturbing, Iran is seeking a weapons of mass destruction capability including clandestine nuclear weapons capability and ballistic missiles to deliver weapons of mass destruction to the Middle East...

We are firmly opposed to these specific aspects of the Iranian regime's behavior, as well as its abuse of the human rights of the Iranian people. We do not seek a confrontation but we will not normalize relations with Iran until and unless Iran's policies change, across the board... We will work energetically to persuade our European and Japanese allies, as well as Russia and China, that it is not in their interests to assist Iran to acquire nuclear weapons or the conventional means to pose a regional threat. Nor do we believe it is in their interests to ease Iran's economic situation so that it can pursue normal commercial relations on one level while threatening our common interests on another level... We will seek to impress upon our allies the necessity for responding to the Iranian threat and the opportunity now presented by Iran's current circumstances... [Also] To the extent that the international community...succeeds in containing Iraq but fails to contain

Iran, it will have inadvertently allowed the balance of power in the Gulf to have tilted in favor of Iran, with very dangerous consequences. That imbalance therefore argues for a more energetic effort to contain Iran and [to persuade it to] modify its behavior even as we maintain the sanctions regime against Iraq.

Rafsanjani, being in his second and last term in office, adopted a dual track policy as well. On one hand, he retaliated against US efforts designed to isolate Iran by supporting those organizations in the Middle East that opposed the US mediated Arab-Israeli Peace Process. On the other hand, he tried to signal to the US that it was possible to envision Iran and the US developing a cordial relationship based on mutual interests and respect. Hence, when Clinton found it costly to circumvent UNSC resolutions and his European allies' opposition to the arming of the Bosnian Muslims, Iran signaled that it was willing to help and it did. After the Clinton administration gave the Croatian President Franjo Tudjman the "green light" to accept arm shipments from Iran destined for the Bosnians in Spring of 1994, Iran delivered "hundreds of tons" of weapons and ammunition to Bosnia through Croatia, creating a more leveled battlefield, which paved the way for the negotiations that resulted in the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 110-111; Weiner, 1996; William and Lippman, 1995). Likewise, Rafsanjani sought to engage the US economically by favoring American energy companies over European and Asian companies. For example, when Iran's National Oil Company recommended Iran to either sign a \$1 billion contract with the French Total or the American Conoco Corporation to develop two oil and gas fields off Iran's Siri Island, "Rafsanjani persuaded the Supreme Leader that going with the American company rather

than its competitor, the French Total, was a good public relations exercise” (Seliktar, 2012, p. 102) and “as a deliberate overture to the US” Rafsanjani personally made the decision to award the contract to the American Conoco (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 112).

Neither of Rafsanjani’s overtures, however, were reciprocated during the first term of President Clinton. In fact the US responded to both overtures with more sanctions against Iran. On Bosnia, when the news broke out two years later that President Clinton had given the green light to covert Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia, the Clinton administration publicly condemned Iran for trying to “establish an Islamist beachhead in Europe’s backyard,” despite Iran doing exactly what Washington had requested (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, pp. 112-113). On Conoco, US response was even more devastating. When in March 1995 Iran awarded Conoco with the billion dollar contract, attentions were drawn to the fact that while the US was dissuading other countries from investing in Iran, its own companies were doing business there. Under severe pressure from a Republican Congress and AIPAC, on March 15, 1995, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12957, prohibiting US trade in Iran’s oil industry. Then, on April 30, 1995, at a dinner of World Jewish Congress with Shimon Peres present, Clinton pledged to impose a total US trade embargo on Iran and made good on his promise on May 6, 1995, by signing Executive Order 12959, which prohibited any US trade and investment in Iran.

As the United States imposed more sanctions on Iran, Iran publicly protested against US actions, further strengthened its ties with groups like the Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Palestinian Hamas, and went out of its way to ensure that the Oslo Accord would fail. Two other incidents around the end of Rafsanjani's second term led to further antagonism between the US and Iran. On June 25, 1996, the Khobar Tower bombings killed 19 US servicemen and wounded 498 people from various countries. Then, on July 17, 1996, TWA Flight 800 exploded midair and crashed into the Atlantic Ocean. Both the Khobar Tower bombings and the TWA Flight 800 crash were initially blamed on Iran.<sup>13</sup> In response to these events and the hostile environment that was created by AIPAC against Iran in Washington, Congress passed the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act on July 16, 1996, which imposed penalties on any company, foreign or domestic, that invested in Iran or Libya's energy sectors. It is important to note that after months of investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) ruled out terrorism and concluded in its August 23, 2000, report that the most probable cause of TWA Flight 800 was "[an] explosion of the center wing fuel tank (CWT), resulting from ignition of the inflammable fuel/air mixture in the tank. The source of ignition energy for the explosion could not be determined with certainty, but, of the sources evaluated by the investigation, the most likely was a short circuit outside of the CWT that allowed excessive voltage to enter it through electrical wiring associated with the fuel quantity indication system" (NTSB, 2000). As for the Khobar Towers, the intelligence is mixed. After three years of investigation, FBI came to believe that Iran was to blame for the attack (Seliktar, 2012, p.95). Yet, on May 22, 1998, Prince Nayef, the Saudi Interior Minister, rejected the idea that Iran was behind the attack and declared that the attack "took place at Saudi

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<sup>13</sup> See for example Polk, J. (2006, July 16). U.S. focused on Iran after TWA 800 explosion. CNN.

hands...No foreign party had any role in it” (Lancaster, 1998). Since 9/11 more people believe that Al-Qaeda was the most likely entity behind the attack (UPI, 2007; Atwan, 2006, pp. 168-169).

### **Section 3.1.09: Relations During the Second Term of Bill Clinton Presidency**

Rafsanjani’s second term ended on August 2, 1997, and President Khatami was inaugurated on the same day. Rafsanjani’s experience with two US administrations that were either unwilling or unable (or perhaps both) to keep their diplomatic commitments and to sustain cooperation based on mutual interest and mutual respect, engendered increasing skepticism and suspicion in Tehran about Washington’s ultimate and ulterior intentions toward the Islamic Republic. That suspicion significantly affected how Iranians interpreted future US statements, actions, and policies toward the Islamic Republic. (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 113). It is for that reason that Khatami, in his interview with Christiane Amanpour, published by CNN on January 7, 1998, indicated that:

U.S. foreign policy behavior toward Iran has inflicted damages upon us. But it also had a positive effect. It caused us to mainly focus on our domestic capabilities and resources to advance our objectives... There is a bulky wall of mistrust between us and the U.S. administration, a mistrust rooted in improper behaviors of the American governments... The attitude of the U.S. after the victory of the revolution has not been a civilized one. They have adopted a hostile policy against Iran. They have tried to inflict economic damage upon us, a clear example of which is the D’Amato act, which represents a continuation of Cold

War mentality and the lack of appreciation of realities to the point that they even want to impose their will upon other countries such as European countries and Japan or the allocation of the already mentioned \$20 million to topple the Iranian government... The success of our revolution has come at a great cost to our nation. And the U.S. has a major share in the cost imposed upon the Iranian nation. There is a grave mistrust between us. If negotiations are not based on mutual respect, they will never lead to positive results...There must first be a crack in this wall of mistrust to prepare for a change and create an opportunity to study a new situation. Unfortunately, the behavior of American Government in the past up to this date has always exacerbated the climate of mistrust and we do not detect any sign of change of behavior.

To build the minimal level of trust needed for any form of rapprochement, President Khatami focused on cultural and intellectual collaborations and adopted “dialogue among civilizations” as his signature foreign policy initiative. As part of that policy, Iran invited American wrestlers to take part in international wrestling competition in Iran and encouraged Iranian artists and academicians to travel to the US and establish links with their American counterparts. “A delighted Clinton swiftly embraced Khatami’s idea” and took steps to facilitate “people-to-people” relations” (Slavin, 2007, p.185). Then on April 12, 1999, at the Seventh Millennium Evening at the White House, President Clinton took a very bold step to show sympathy toward Iran and its grievances and said:

I think it is important to recognize... that Iran, because of its enormous geopolitical importance over time, has been the subject of quite a lot of abuse

from various Western nations. And I think sometimes it's quite important to tell people, "Look, you have a right to be angry at something my country or my culture or others that are generally allied with us today did to you 50 or 60 or 100 or 150 years ago"... So we have to find some way to get dialog, and going into total denial when you're in a conversation with somebody who's been your adversary, in a country like Iran that is often worried about its independence and its integrity, is not exactly the way to begin... we have to listen for possible ways we can give people the legitimacy of some of their fears or some of their angers or some of their historic grievances, and then say they rest on other grounds; now, can we build a common future? I think that's very important. Sometimes I think we in the United States, and Western culture generally, we hate to do that. But we're going to have to if we want to have an ultimate accommodation.

President Clinton, nevertheless, initiated his first official communication with Khatami with an accusation and demanded Iran's prompt response. Three years after the Khobar Tower bombings, despite being uncertain about the main culprit (UPI, June 6, 2007), President Clinton decided to use the bombings to press Iran. In a letter send directly to President Khatami via Sultan Qaboos of Oman in the summer of 1999, Clinton wrote to Khatami that:

The United States has received credible evidence that members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), along with members of Lebanese and Saudi Hizballah, were directly involved in the planning and execution of the terrorist bombing in Saudi Arabia of the Khobar Towers military residential complex on



June 25, 1996. Nineteen American citizens were killed. The United States views this in the gravest terms... The involvement of the IRGC in terrorist planning and activity abroad remains a cause of deep concern to us...In order to lay a sound basis for better relations between our countries, we need a clear commitment from you that you will ensure an end to Iranian involvement in terrorist activity, particularly threats to American citizens, and will bring those in Iran responsible for the bombing to justice either in Iran or by extraditing them to Saudi Arabia.

Iran replied promptly, denying the accusation. Interestingly, while Clinton's letter was only delivered to President Khatami, to use the words of Ken Pollack in his September 15, 1999, NSC memo for Samuel R. Berger, "the entire Iranian leadership" responded to Clinton's letter. Their letter read:

The allegations contained in the message attributed to President Clinton are inaccurate and unacceptable. The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) views the recurrence of such unfounded allegations in the gravest terms. Reliable investigations and serious scrutiny leaves no doubt that the allegation... is solely based on inaccurate and biased information. No agency or entity connected with IRI had any part, whatsoever, in the planning, logistics or execution of the said incident... As its irreversible and fundamental strategy, the Government of Iran, backed by a strong national consensus, shall vigorously pursue the policy of détente and institutionalization of the rule of law. The government is confident and there exists no threat from the IRI against any government or their nationals.

To move on to the next step and initiate government-to-government relations, Iranians demanded the US to make a practical and tangible goodwill gesture, something that Khatami could sell “to his friends, his enemies and the Supreme Leader” (Slavin, 2007, p.187). Indeed, due to Iran’s past experiences with the US, “most Iranian decision makers, including Ayatollah Khamenei, had made a sober calculation: the days of cooperation with the United States ‘for free’ were over” (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 114). While Iran was making demands for a concrete measure, US industries, particularly oil and agriculture, also intensified their lobbying efforts against US sanctions on Iran (Fayazmanesh, 2008, p. 91).

In response, the Clinton administration did take several steps, which by all accounts were too little too late. On October 8, 1997, State Department designated the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK), which advocates armed overthrow of the Islamic Republic and has American blood on its hands, as a terrorist organization. Then in December 1998, President Clinton removed Iran from the US list of “Major drug-producing countries.” Then on April 12, 1999, President Clinton delivered his famous speech at the Seventh Millennium Evening at the White House, indicating that it was important to recognize that “Iran, because of its enormous geopolitical importance over time, has been the subject of quite a lot of abuse from various Western nations.” Following that speech, on April 28, 1999, the Clinton administration announced that “it had decided to ease its sanctions policy to permit the sale of food and medical supplies to Iran, Libya, Sudan, and other nations accused of supporting terrorists” (Shenon, 1999).

Perhaps the most significant and tangible step that the Clinton administration took came around the end of his second term in office. In a lecture delivered at an event sponsored by the American Iranian Council (AIC) on March 17, 2000, Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, became the first US official since the 1953 CIA coup against Mossadeq to acknowledge US role in that episode. She said:

In 1953 the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular Prime Minister, Mohammed Massadegh... it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs. Moreover, during the next quarter century, the United States and the West gave sustained backing to the Shah's regime. Although it did much to develop the country economically, the Shah's government also brutally repressed political dissent. As President Clinton has said, the United States must bear its fair share of responsibility for the problems that have arisen in U.S.-Iranian relations. Even in more recent years, aspects of U.S. policy towards Iraq, during its conflict with Iran appear now to have been regrettably shortsighted, especially in light our subsequent experiences with Saddam Hussein.

After making this unprecedented admission, Albright went on to declare some changes to US sanctions against Iran and said:

The purpose of our sanctions, however, is to spur changes in policy. They are not an end in themselves, nor do they seek to target innocent civilians... Today, I am announcing a step that will enable Americans to purchase and import carpets and food products such as dried fruits, nuts and caviar from Iran... Second, the United

States will explore ways to remove unnecessary impediments to increase contact between American and Iranian scholars, professional artists, athletes, and non-governmental organizations. We believe this will serve to deepen bonds of mutual understanding and trust. Third, the United States is prepared to increase efforts with Iran aimed at eventually concluding a global settlement of outstanding legal claims between our two countries.

### **Section 3.1.10: 9/11 and the Afghan and Iraq Wars**

This declaration was an unprecedented move by the US. For nearly two decades, there had been little in US policy toward the Islamic Republic but threats and sanctions. Yet this change of heart came a bit too late and the measures declared by Albright were short-lived. Before the above said measures could even be implemented and before Iran could reciprocate, Clinton's second term ended, the Republicans defeated the Democrats, and George W. Bush became the 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States. The Republican Party Platform for the 2000 Presidential elections, which was published by the party on July 31, 2000, unequivocally indicated that "the next Republican administration... will stop making unilateral gestures toward the Iranian government which, to date, have failed to result in a change in Iranian behavior." Indeed, when President Bush took office on January 20, 2001, few expected that the days of "dialogue among civilizations" would continue.

No event shaped the Bush presidency more than 9/11. Within hours after the terrorist attacks, President Khatami condemned them, becoming one of the first foreign leaders to

do so. Iran was also quick to inform the US during a meeting in Geneva that “they were in favor of swift and decisive military action by the United States against the Taliban” and Al-Qaeda (Crist, 2012, p. 431). Ryan Crocker, who was dispatched by Secretary of State Colin Powell to attend the Geneva meeting, recalls a member of the Iranian delegation, who was a Revolutionary Guard general, producing a map with Taliban troop locations and advising the US to concentrate their bombing campaigns in those regions (Crist, 2012, p. 431). Crocker and his Iranian counterparts met regularly to coordinate their efforts in Afghanistan. Iran in turn used its extensive leverage and influence over the Afghan Northern Alliance and coordinated its campaign against the Taliban with that of US military. On November 12, 2001, Taliban forces fled Kabul when Northern Alliance forces took control of the city and in less than a month, all major fighting in Afghanistan came to an end.

When it was time to put together an Afghan government, Iran did not hesitate to use its influence in the region to make the December 2001 Bonn Conference a success. James Dobbins, who was appointed by Powell to represent the US in the UN-supervised negotiations with Afghanistan’s neighbors and Afghan warlords and factions to structure a new post-Taliban government and constitution, consulted regularly with his Iranian counterpart, Javad Zarif. Together they hammered out the framework for a new Afghan government. In fact, it was Zarif who brought to Dobbins’ attention that the draft agreement of the Bonn Conference did not include any mention of democratic elections and that the agreement neglected to require the Afghan government to cooperate with the international community on the war against terrorism (Dobbins, 2008, pp. 83-84).

Once the content of the agreement was finalized, a heated debate ensued regarding the composition and make-up of the Afghan Interim Administration (AIA), which was going to govern Afghanistan for six months before a Loya Jirga would meet to form the Transitional Government that would draft a new constitution and organize national elections. The Northern Alliance, having fought the Taliban since 1995 and having gained control over Kabul and much of Afghanistan, was in “no great hurry to engage in power-sharing arrangements with émigré figures who had no force on the ground and consequently had played little role in toppling of the Taliban” (Dobbins, 2008, p.23). This reluctance to share power created a deadlock in the conference. The deadlock was so severe that Yunus Qanuni, who represented the Northern Alliance in the Bonn Conference, proposed to adjourn the Conference without finalizing the list of cabinet members for the AIA (Dobbins, 2008, pp. 92-93). The insistence of the Northern Alliance to not only hold the three most important cabinet posts of defense, foreign affairs, and interior, but also three-fourths of the total was unacceptable to other Afghan factions. All national and factional representatives tried to persuade Qanuni to reduce his demands to no avail and Qanuni remained adamant in his demands. It was not until Zarif used his leverage over the Northern Alliance that Qanuni agreed to a compromise. Narrating how Qanuni finally conceded, Dobbins (2008) recounts: “Zarif stood up and signaled Qanooni [sic] to join him in the corner of the room. They whispered for no more than a minute. Qanooni [sic] then returned to the table and agreed to give up two ministries. He also agreed to the creation of three new ones that would go to other factions” (p. 96).

As Dobbins asserted later, “Zarif had achieved the final breakthrough without which the Karzai government might never have been” (Dreazen, 2013) and the US celebrated the accomplishment of a mission it could not have accomplish without Iran’s assistance. Yet, within weeks after Iran had helped the US stabilize Afghanistan and after Hamid Karzai was sworn in as the interim leader in Afghanistan, President Bush named Iran as part of an “axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world” in his January 29, 2002, State of the Union Address. The swift victory and stabilization of Afghanistan had the unfortunate effect of making regime change and nation-building seem easy and left the short-lived, yet dominant, “impression of near omnipotence” in the US (Dobbins, 2008, p.23).

This overconfidence increased the momentum for invading Iraq. As that momentum was building, however, many debated whether Iran or Iraq should be the next target of US global war on terrorism. Indeed many in the Pentagon argued that “the most urgent threat” was Iran and that by overthrowing the Islamic Republic, other Arab countries in the region would unite behind the US and against Saddam, “leading to his demise as well” (Crist, 2012, p. 451). While the Bush administration did not disagree with those who perceived Iran to be a more urgent threat, it believed that invading Iran would require all US military resources, bog down the war on terrorism and not allow any follow on operations, while invading Iraq would allow the US to maintain its momentum in the war. Hence, on March 19, 2003, the US invaded Iraq and in less than three weeks occupied Baghdad.

The occupation of Iraq presented Iran with a stark choice. On the one hand, Iran believed that a stable and democratic Iraq, due to the composition of its population, would only add to Iran's influence and standing in the region. On the other hand, a stable Iraq would have freed US military resources, making the US more capable of attacking Iran. Indeed, once the US successfully invaded Iraq, the most immediate question among Iranian decision makers was whether Iran was next (Rose, 2007). Consequently, Iran adopted a two-part strategy. It worked to empower those Iraqi elements over which it had the greatest influence, while at the same time doing everything possible to increase the cost of invading Iraq for the US.

Both out of fear and in order to gauge true US intentions, Iran sent a letter to the US through the Swiss Embassy in the spring of 2003, soon after the fall of Baghdad. The letter indicated that Iran was willing to put everything "on the table" and negotiate with the US on issues such as "full cooperation on nuclear safeguards, 'decisive action' against terrorists, coordination in Iraq, ending 'material support' for Palestinian militias and accepting the Saudi initiative for a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (Kessler, 2006). The US, however, refused to even acknowledge the receipt of that letter. Moreover, instead of closing down the primary training camp of People's Mujahidin of Iran (MEK) in Iraq, which advocates military overthrow of the Islamic Republic and was designated by the US and the European Union as a terrorist organization until recently, the US agreed to a ceasefire with the organization and Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, declared members of the organization as



Protected Persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention (Goulka, Hansell, Wilke and Larson, 2009). These measures convinced Iranian policymakers that the US was unwilling to compromise or even reason, that the actions of the Islamic Republic did not have an effect on American's attitudes and policies toward Iran, and that the only aim of the US was to destabilize and weaken the Islamic Republic.

Consequently, Iran used every means at its disposal to constrain America's ability to pose an existential threat to the Islamic Republic and chose Iraq as its primary battleground. Iran followed its two-part strategy and used the Badr Brigade of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which has long standing ties with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, to bog down the US military in Iraq (Baker and Hamilton, 2006, pp. 28-29). From Iran's perspective, there were several advantages to keeping US forces in Iraq. First, a US military fully engaged in Iraq was regarded as being less able to pose an existential threat to the Islamic Republic. Second, maximizing the cost of the invasion of Iraq was regarded to reduce the likelihood of support for future possible military adventures, both among the American people and policymakers. Third, the loss of credibility of the American military and its inability to bring about stability in the region might have made regional countries rethink their security alignments. Finally, Iran believed that keeping US ground troops within its reach would act as an effective deterrent against possible aerial or missile attacks against Iran. Therefore, as the Iraq Study Group indicated, it was only rational, given the circumstances, for Iran to use whatever means possible to ensure that the US would remain fully occupied in Iraq (Baker and Hamilton, 2006, p. 52).

### **Section 3.1.11: Iran's Nuclear Dossier Under President Khatami**

While the US and Iran were fighting a proxy war in Iraq, they were also engaged in a diplomatic war in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the UNSC. On August 14, 2002, the spokesperson for NCRI revealed that Iran was constructing both a uranium enrichment facility and a heavy water reactor without IAEA oversight. The revelation created a conflict that was temporarily resolved through Tehran Declaration, which was adopted by Iran and the EU3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) on October 21, 2003. In accordance with the Declaration, Tehran voluntarily suspended all “uranium enrichment and processing activities” and signed and implemented the Additional protocol on December 18, 2003. Yet, Iran and the EU3 disagreed on how to define the scope of enrichment activities to be suspended. While Iran claimed that preparatory stages of uranium conversion did not constitute enrichment under the Tehran declaration, the EU3 wanted to see Iran suspend all activities related to Iran’s nuclear fuel cycle program. The debate on what constitutes nuclear enrichment dragged on until the Paris Agreement was signed on November 14, 2004. According to the Paris Agreement, Iran was to voluntarily suspend “all uranium conversion activities, the assembly and testing of centrifuges, and even the import of centrifuge components” (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 141). In return, according to the same agreement, the Europeans agreed that the suspension was “a voluntary confidence building measure and not a legal obligation.” They also agreed to begin negotiations on long-term arrangements that would provide Iran “with firm guarantees on nuclear, technological, and economic cooperation and firm commitment on security issues.”

Iran quickly implemented the Paris Agreement and one week later, “IAEA inspectors confirmed that the suspension was in place” (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 141). As Iran waited for the Europeans to put together their offer under the Paris Agreement, its “cooperation with the IAEA remained strong” and only a few inspection issues remained (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 141). When the European failed to present Iran with any offer, Rouhani, who was then Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator, submitted a paper to the EU3 in March 2005 with a proposal that would be acceptable to Iran. Yet, the Europeans still refused to present Iran with their own offer. Indeed the Europeans were under much pressure themselves. On one hand, the US was adamantly opposed to any offer that would allow Iran to have any nuclear fuel cycle activity. On the other hand, they knew quite well and Iran had unequivocally forewarned them that any offer that would require Iran to indefinitely forgo enrichment, let alone other components of the fuel cycle, would be rejected by Iran. Stuck between a rock and a hard place, the Europeans had deliberately decided to make no offers to the Islamic Republic until after Iran’s coming presidential election and “asked for more time to develop a detailed proposal” (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 141).

Considering that the Iranian Presidential election was coming up in June 2005, Khatami and Rouhani were, nevertheless, desperate to show the public what it was that they had attained through their conciliatory approach and cooperation with the EU3. By that election, the nuclear issue had gained much salience among the public. A *New York Times* report published on May 29, 2005, declared: “From nuclear negotiators to student dissidents, from bazaar merchants to turbaned mullahs, Iranians agree: the right to develop nuclear power is a point of national pride” (MacFarquhar, 2005). This public

mood in Iran made it even more difficult for Rouhani to accept any offer that was not going to go well with the public and Rouhani did let the EU3 know about the constraints he was facing back at home. Just as an example, Kamal Kharazi, Iran's Foreign Minister, said in a May 2005 interview: "We have insisted [to the EU3] that we are looking for something tangible to convince our public opinion... We are under heavy pressure from our parliament and media to show results for the time we spent on the negotiations... we cannot wait forever and we have to take some measures toward the realization of our rights" (Linzer, 2005a). Rouhani and those who advocated a conciliatory approach within Iran, however, "lost all faith in the process" when the French informed Iran of what was coming and when they realized "how little they would be offered after months of negotiation" as well as full suspension of all nuclear fuel cycle related activities (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 145).

These developments discredited the conciliatory approach of Khatami and his advisors and the perception that they were duped into agreeing to freeze a program of such significance in return for a promise that was never honored became widespread among the Iranian public. Considering that Iran was in an election season did not help President Khatami and his political allies. Khatami's "naiveté," "weakness," and "sense of inferiority when dealing with foreigners," were frequently invoked during the election and such rhetoric was used "to transform the nuclear issue into one of national pride and to sideline moderate political camps in election campaigns" (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 127). This, among many other reasons, led to the victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on June 24, 2005, with almost 62% of the votes.

### **Section 3.1.12: Iran's Nuclear Dossier Under President Ahmadinejad**

During his campaign, Ahmadinejad “had passionately defended Iran’s nuclear program” (Ehteshami and Zweiri, 2008, p. 81). Upon winning the election, no one had any doubts that he was not going to continue with Khatami’s conciliatory foreign policy approach. As president-elect, Ahmadinejad urged the policymakers to resume Iran’s nuclear fuel cycle activities and to unilaterally end the voluntary suspension that Iran had agreed to in the Paris Agreement. Hence, on August 1, 2005, two days before Ahmadinejad took office, Iran sent a letter to the IAEA, informing it of Iran’s intention to resume work at Isfahan Uranium Conversion Facility (UCF). President Khatami and Rouhani, however, had decided not to act on Iran’s letter to the IAEA and believed that it would be better to wait until the EU3 would officially submit their proposal. On August 3, 2005, Ahmadinejad took office with a firm belief that he had a mandate to revitalize Iran’s nuclear program. That day he phoned Rouhani, asking him why the UCF in Isfahan had not yet begun operations. In response, Rouhani blamed the continued suspension of the UCF on IAEA staff, saying that IAEA was using delaying tactics to postpone the removal of its seals from that facility (Rouhani, 2013, p. 599).

Finally, on August 5, 2005, the EU3 officially submitted their proposal to the Islamic Republic. As Paris had already informed Tehran, the offer was nothing close to what Iran deemed acceptable. It offered Iran potential trade and technology “incentives,” if Iran signed a “binding commitment not to pursue fuel cycle activities” and gave IAEA inspectors, whose access is limited by international law, the right “to visit any site or interview any person they deem relevant to their monitoring of nuclear activities in Iran”

(Linzer, 2005b). The US backed up the deal by threatening to refer Iran to the UNSC if Iran ended its voluntary suspension of its nuclear fuel cycle related activities. Iranian officials, however, regarded the EU3 offer as “insulting.” Javad Zarif, who was at the time Iran’s ambassador to the UN, said in protest: “Maybe the Europeans are willing to sell out their own [sovereign] rights at a cheap price, but not Iran...[The EU3 offer] is absurd, demeaning and self-congratulatory” (Linzer, 2005b). After receiving the EU3 offer, Iran, which had suspended its enrichment activities for close to two years and its entire fuel cycle related activities for close to one year in hopes of receiving a proposal from the EU3 that would – as was promised – recognize Iran’s rights under the NPT, decided to resume operations at its UCF in Isfahan on August 8, 2005, but the suspension of enrichment activities was continued.

The failure of the Paris Agreement has left a long lasting impression in the minds of Iranians and the Iranian policymakers. From Iran’s point of view, Iran had suspended its nuclear program and had fully cooperated with the IAEA and had received “an insulting and humiliating” offer in return. The failure of the Paris Agreement did put an end to the careers of those who had advocated a conciliatory approach toward the west during Ahmadinejad’s tenure and made it extremely costly for anyone to promote any policy that would require even the slightest level of trust in the US and its allies. Indeed, the failure of the Paris Agreement “forever killed the idea of suspension in Iranian minds, and those more moderate figures within the establishment who advocated cooperation would forever have the argument thrown back at them by the hardliners: we suspended

once and it brought us nothing, they would repeatedly argue” (Patrikarakos, 2012, p. 219).

Iran’s decision to end its voluntary suspension of uranium conversion infuriated the US and its European allies. A day after Iran ended the voluntary suspension of its fuel cycle activities, IAEA Board of Governors held an emergency meeting and urged Iran in its August 11, 2005, report to “re-establish full suspension of all enrichment related activities.” When Iran refused, the IAEA issued a damning report against the nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic and on September 24, 2005, declared Iran to be in “non-compliance” with its safeguard agreements. It also indicated that “absence of confidence that Iran’s nuclear programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes have given rise to questions that are within the competence of the [UN] Security Council.” From then on, both Iran and the US adopted a series of policies that escalated the conflict and the hostile rhetoric between the two countries.

Soon after Ahmadinejad took office, the EU3 leaders demanded the new Iranian government to clarify and openly discuss its nuclear policies. In response to all such demands, President Ahmadinejad suggested that he had declarations to make during the annual heads of state meetings at the UN General Assembly. During his address to the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly on September 17, 2005, President Ahmadinejad outlined Iran’s nuclear policy under his administration and said:

- 1) The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its previously and repeatedly declared position that in accordance with our religious principles, pursuit of nuclear

weapons is prohibited... 3) Technically, the fuel cycle of the Islamic Republic of Iran is not different from that of other countries which have peaceful nuclear technology. Therefore, as a further confidence building measure and in order to provide the greatest degree of transparency, the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to engage in serious partnership with private and public sectors of other countries in the implementation of uranium enrichment program in Iran. This represents the most far reaching step, outside of all requirements of the NPT, being proposed by Iran as a further confidence building measure. 4) In keeping with Iran's inalienable right to have access to a nuclear fuel cycle, continued interaction and technical and legal cooperation with the IAEA will be the centerpiece of our nuclear policy. Initiation and continuation of negotiations with other countries will be carried out in the context of Iran's interaction with the Agency.

Yet, Ahmadinejad's proposal to create an international consortium to manage Iran's uranium enrichment program was never taken seriously and the push by the US and its European allies to force Iran to fully abandon its entire fuel cycle activities continued. Iran in return defied all foreign pressure and slowly expanded its fuel cycle activities. By changing the realities on the ground, Iran hoped to persuade other countries to abandon demands based on a "zero-enrichment" policy, persuading them to instead focus on nuclear safeguards and verifications. As part of this new strategy, on November 22, 2005, the Iranian parliament passed a law requiring the government to end all voluntary confidence building cooperation with the IAEA, such as enforcing the Additional



Protocol prior to its ratification by the Majlis, should the IAEA refer Iran's case to the UNSC. In addition, on January 3, 2006, Iran informed the IAEA of its intention to resume its nuclear enrichment related R&D and on January 10, 2006, Iran removed IAEA seals on enrichment related equipment and materials at Natanz and two other storage and testing locations, and resumed its enrichment related activities under IAEA surveillance.

In response, on February, 3, 2006, the EU3 countries, with the backing of the US, tabled a damning resolution at the IAEA and the IAEA adopted a resolution on February 4, 2006, requesting its Director General to report Iran's case to the UNSC. In response, as Iran had previously warned, Iran ended all voluntary and confidence building safeguards and verification measures, including the implementation of the Additional Protocol, it declared that it would start its nuclear enrichment activities, and further accelerated all components of its nuclear fuel cycle program. The UNSC's response to Iran's nuclear defiance was abrupt. On March 29, 2006, the President of the UNSC issued a statement, demanding that Iran suspend its entire nuclear fuel cycle related activities. In response, in less than two weeks, on April 11, 2006, Iran declared that it had successfully enriched uranium to 3.5% and President Ahmadinejad declared Iran a "nuclear state."

#### **Section 3.1.12.1: First UNSC Chapter VII Sanction Against Iran's Nuclear Program**

Iran's strategy of presenting the world with a fait accompli, did force the west to provide Iran with better offers. A simple comparison of the August 2005 offer and the June 2006 offer clearly illustrated to Iranians that resistance was paying off. For example, the offer that was presented to Iran by all permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany (P5+1)

on June 1, 2006, offered Iran US easing of sanctions, permit of sales of light water reactors, and investments in Iran's oil and gas projects in return for Iran only halting uranium enrichment and implementing the Additional Protocol. The deal was so good that Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, had confided to Javier Solana that its terms were acceptable to Iran (Crist, 2012, p. 506). Yet, because of the failure of the Paris Agreement and its wide ranging political and psychological ramifications, Iran refused to accept any offer that did not recognize its right to enrichment. When Larijani took the deal to Tehran, he had difficulty convincing other Iranian policymakers that Iran should trust the west once again. Among those who opposed, was Rouhani himself. In his "Iran's Nuclear Program: The Way Out" that was published by the *Time Magazine* on May 09, 2006, Rouhani, who at that time was the representative of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), stated:

Iran is intent on producing nuclear fuel domestically for reasons both historic and long-term economic. The U.S. and some Europeans argue that they cannot trust Iran's intentions. They argue that they cannot accept Iran's promise to remain committed to its treaty obligation once it gains the capability to enrich uranium for fuel production. They ask Iran to give up its right under the NPT, and instead accept their promise to supply it with nuclear fuel. This is illogical and crudely self-serving: I do not trust you, even though what you are doing is legal and can be verified to remain legal, but you must trust me when I promise to do that which I have no obligation to do and cannot be enforced. It is this simple and this unfair.

Almost immediately after Iran rejected the offer because it did not trust the west to fulfill its part of the deal, UNSC passed Resolution 1696, its first Chapter VII resolution, sponsored by the EU3 countries, against Iran on July 31, 2006. UNSC Resolution 1696 demanded that Iran “suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, to be verified by the IAEA” or face punitive action by the UNSC. Iran responded in defiance and President Ahmadinejad declared “Iranians today possess the nuclear know-how...If some believe they can use the language of force and threats they are badly mistaken... They are facing a knowledgeable and proud people” (Nasseri, 2006). In defiance to UNSC Resolution 1696, Iran moved ahead and expanded its enrichment program.

The context in which UNSC Resolution 1696 was adopted is very important. From the time NCRI publicized Iran’s nuclear program until the summer of 2006, Israel and the US repeatedly threatened Iran with military action. All members of the US national security team were on the record emphasizing that when it came to Iran, “all options are on the table.” Israeli officials were also openly threatening Iran with surgical military attack. There were also numerous reports in the media about the US and Israel actively planning a military attack against Iran. Just as an example, Seymour Hersh, in his “The Iran Plans” article, which was published in the *New Yorker Magazine* on April 17, 2006, stated:

The Bush administration, while publicly advocating diplomacy in order to stop Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapon, has increased clandestine activities inside Iran and intensified planning for a possible major air attack. Current and former

American military and intelligence officials said that Air Force planning groups are drawing up lists of targets, and teams of American combat troops have been ordered into Iran, under cover, to collect targeting data and to establish contact with anti-government ethnic-minority groups. The officials say that President Bush is determined to deny the Iranian regime the opportunity to begin a pilot program, planned for this spring, to enrich uranium.

When Israel attacked Hezbollah forces in Lebanon on July 12, 2006, many analysts, particularly those in Iran, perceived it as a prelude to war with Iran. Both the Israelis and the Americans regard the Hezbollah “as a frontal commando unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards” and believe that Iran’s support for the Hezbollah is a “mean[s] to ensure that [Iran] would have a ready strategic response if Israel took action against it” (Schiff, 2006). When Israel attacked Lebanon, an influential Iranian official proclaimed that the US and Israel “want to cut one of Iran’s arms” and Iran’s former head of the IRGC said in an interview that “Israel and the US knew that as long as Hamas and Hezbollah were there, confronting Iran would be costly. So, to deal with Iran, they first want to eliminate forces close to Iran that are in Lebanon and Palestine” (Slackman, 2006).

UNSC Resolution 1696 was being negotiated at the UNSC while Israel was in Lebanon’s territory, engaging Hezbollah. This had two important effects on how Iran responded to UNSC Resolution 1696. First and foremost, it further delegitimized the UNSC in the eyes of Iran and other regional countries, and provided them with just another example of

“UNSC being an instrument of the US.” Indeed, while from the very first day of the war in Lebanon, the government of Lebanon and Hezbollah called for a ceasefire and exchange of prisoners and while Lebanon and other regional countries sought UNSC intervention for a ceasefire, the UNSC systematically failed to demand a ceasefire, primarily due to obstructions from the US and the United Kingdom. The US had explicitly adopted a “policy of delaying a [UNSC] cease-fire [resolution] so that the Israeli military can continue its anti-Hizballah campaign,” and Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, proclaimed that the conflict as the “birth pangs of a new Middle East” (Karon, 2006). As John Bolton, who at the time was US ambassador to the UN recalls, “repeated US statements made clear we weren’t interested in yet another Middle East cease-fire that would simply return us to the *status quo ante*; we wanted to make real progress in the region...” (Bolton, 2007, p. 395). Iranians could not help but ask how it was that while Israel was flying sorties over Lebanon, bombing areas with high civilian concentration, and while Israeli forces had violated Lebanon’s territorial integrity, it was Iran’s fledgling nuclear program, which was operating under the surveillance of IAEA, that UNSC selected as the utmost threat to international peace and security at that time.<sup>14</sup> This further delegitimized the UNSC in the eyes of Iranians, which in turn made defying UNSC Resolution 1696 significantly easier.

The other effect of passing UNSC Resolution 1696 during the 2006 Lebanon War, was the link it created between the resolution and the military campaign against Lebanon. Had Israel been able to neutralize Hezbollah and achieve its war objectives, Iran might have

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<sup>14</sup> It was not until August 11, 2006, that UNSC passed Resolution 1701, demanding a cease-fire and withdrawal of Israeli forces to internationally recognized borders.

taken the resolution more seriously. But Israel and, by extension, the US failed to achieve their primary war objective to “destroy or gravely weaken Hezbollah as either a military or a political force” (Cordesman, 2007, p. 9). The US being bogged down in Iraq and Israel failing in its effort to disarm a small proxy of Iran on its northern border, significantly discredited US and Israeli threats and allowed Iran to defy UNSC Resolution 1696 with more ease of mind.

#### **Section 3.1.12.2: Iran’s Nuclear Dossier and Negotiations Under Larijani**

UNSC Resolution 1696 had given Iran until August 31, 2006, to comply with the resolution or face Chapter VII sanctions. That date passed without Iran suspending its nuclear fuel cycle activities and without Iran agreeing to implement the Additional Protocol prior to its ratification. Immediately after the August 31 deadline passed, Bolton spearheaded a campaign at the UN to impose Chapter VII sanctions on Iran. The US, however, faced significant resistance from other UNSC members, particularly Russia and China, and was not immediately able to get the UNSC to impose sanctions after the August 31 deadline. In the meantime, Larijani and Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, were engaged in intense negotiations, looking at various ways of defusing the tensions. Iran was also installing more and more centrifuges, rapidly expanding its enrichment capabilities. Troubled by lack of progress in the UN toward imposing sanctions against Iran, the US Department of Treasury stepped up its efforts to dissuade European banks from doing any business with Iran. Efforts on that front started to bear fruit for US policy much faster than their efforts in the UN. By late September, 2006, two of Europe’s largest banks decided to end

business with Iran, with UBS canceling business with Iranian individuals, companies, and banks and Credit Suisse embarked on a “controlled withdrawal” by refusing new business with Iran (Rice-Oxley, 2006).

While UNSC Resolution 1696 had only given Iran until the end of August to comply with its demands or face Chapter VII sanctions, it took the US and its allies until the end of the year to get UNSC on board for sanctions. Finally, on December 23, 2006, UNSC adopted Resolution 1737, which imposed an embargo on “all items, materials, equipment, goods, and technology which could contribute to Iran’s enrichment-related or heavy water-related activities, or to the development of nuclear weapon delivery system.” It also froze foreign assets of Iranian individuals and entities involved in Iran’s nuclear and missile programs. UNSC Resolution 1737 gave Iran 60 days to suspend all its proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities or face further sanctions.

Iran responded to UNSC Resolution 1737 by installing even more centrifuge cascades and by declaring that it was planning to start enriching uranium on an industrial scale. In fact, the Iranian parliament passed a law on December 27, 2006, requiring the government to accelerate its efforts in the nuclear field and suspend implementation of code 3.1 of the subsidiary arrangements. Immediately after Mohamed ElBaradei, IAEA’s General Director, issued his report after the 60 day deadline of UNSC Resolution 1737 affirming that Iran had not complied with the demands of UNSC Resolution 1737, the US pushed for more UNSC sanctions on Iran. The US push for sanctions, coupled with increasingly “widespread speculation about possible US plans to launch a military attack

against Iran” (Fayazmanesh, 2008, p. 215) worried other P5+1 countries about possible ulterior US motives. Reports of possible US action against Iran had become so widespread and frequent in 2007, that some prominent US Senators also became worried about the Iraq war spreading into Iran and Syria. Just as an example, on January 11, 2007, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joseph Biden found it necessary to warn Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, that “if the president concluded he had to invade Iran... the present authorization [that] granted the president to use force in Iraq does not cover that and he does need Congressional authority to do that” (Mohammed and Morgan, 2007). As the US pushed for much harsher UNSC sanctions and as reports of possible unilateral US action became widespread, Russia and China agreed to a more moderated UNSC resolution. Hence, on March 24, 2007, UNSC unanimously passed Resolution 1747.

UNSC Resolution 1747 reaffirmed previous resolutions and added a number of new penalties against Iran. In addition to the penalties that were imposed by UNSC Resolution 1737, UNSC Resolution 1747 decided that Iran should not sell “any arms or related material” and asked other states to “exercise vigilance and restraint” in supply of a specified list of weapons to Iran. UNSC Resolution 1747 also demanded other states not to provide Iran with “any grants, financial assistance, or loans, except for humanitarian or developmental purposes.” UNSC Resolution 1747 gave Iran 60 days to comply with all UNSC resolutions or face further punitive action.



Iranian policymakers drew a very interesting lesson from the rapid adoption of UNSC Resolution 1747. They arrived at the conclusion that time was not on their side and that they should achieve a *fait accompli* in a speedy fashion. One policymaker in the Office of Presidency informed me that after the unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 1747, the general belief in Tehran was that the sooner Iran could show the world that it had mastered various elements of the nuclear fuel cycle, the sooner the US would abandon its coercive postures designed to deprive Iran from attaining that very know-how. Hence, Iran responded to UNSC Resolution 1747 by declaring on April 9, 2007, that having succeeded with enrichment on a laboratory scale, it was now going to embark upon enriching uranium on an industrial scale and named April 9 National Nuclear Energy day. By May 13, 2007, according to the Director General's May 23, 2007, report to the IAEA Board of Governors, Iran was simultaneously operating eight 164-machine centrifuge cascades, feeding them with UF<sub>6</sub>, had two other similar cascades vacuum tested and ready to be fed with UF<sub>6</sub>, and had three other cascades under construction.

Simultaneous with advancements in the technical field, Iran intensified its negotiations with Solana and the IAEA. From April 25 to June 22, 2007, Larijani held three rounds of intensive negotiations with Solana. On June 22, 2007, Iran and the IAEA announced that they would start working on drafting a plan of action that would address all outstanding issues regarding Iran's nuclear program. Soon after announcement, IAEA and Iran started their negotiations and agreed to a Workplan on August 21, 2007. As stated in the agreement, the Workplan covered "all remaining issues and the Agency confirmed that there are no other remaining issues and ambiguities regarding Iran's past nuclear program

and activities.” The agreement also indicated that “the Agency and Iran agreed that after the implementation of the above work plan and the agreed modalities for resolving the outstanding issues, the implementation of safeguards in Iran will be conducted in a routine manner.” Based on the agreed Workplan, Iran started to address the IAEA concerns and one by one resolved all outstanding issues and ambiguities regarding Iran’s past nuclear activities. Finally, ElBaradei’s Feb 22, 2008, report to the IAEA Board of Governors, declared that Iran had answered all 6 outstanding issues listed in the Workplan in an acceptable manner and that IAEA no longer considered them as outstanding. In an interview on that same day, ElBaradei declared “we have managed to clarify all the remaining outstanding issues, including the most important issue, which is the scope and nature of Iran’s enrichment programme” (ElBaradei, 2008).

The Workplan, however, included one other issue. Apart from the agreed outstanding issues, the IAEA also requested Iran to address issues surrounding the so called Alleged Studies. According to a series of documents provided to the IAEA by US intelligence agencies, Iran had conducted a series of nuclear weaponization studies. The documents had come from a laptop that was reportedly handed to the US in mid-2004. While the documents were damning, their authenticity was severely under question. Moreover the US never allowed Iran access to the documents, but demanded Iran to respond to them. What little IAEA could show Iran, Iran rejected as “fabricated and baseless” (ElBaradei, 2011, pp. 279-281).

While Iran and the IAEA were resolving the agreed outstanding issues, the US was pushing for more UNSC sanctions. Indeed, the deadline of UNSC Resolution 1747 had long passed and Iran had not complied with its demands. Soon after ElBaradei's Feb 22, 2008, report to the IAEA Board of Governors, efforts to push through another UNSC sanctions intensified and while Iran and IAEA were still working on resolving issues pertaining to the Alleged Studies, UNSC adopted UNSC Resolution 1803 on March 3, 2008.

The Resolution, which placed more sanctions on Iran, had extremely adverse effects on Iran's cooperation with the IAEA. In ElBaradei's words, "Iranians' cooperation on the Workplan had been rewarded with yet more Security Council sanctions" (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 291) and "the council [had] issued the verdict before the deliberations. Not only was this a procedural fault, it gave the impression – perhaps accurately – that the council was taking action based on predetermined policy objectives rather than on the facts" (ElBaradei, 2011, pp. 280-281). UNSC Resolution 1803 made Iran even more convinced that no matter what it did, the US was intent on using the UNSC to punish Iran.

The belief that the United States was seeking regime change and not a change in Iran's policies was particularly reinforced since not only the IAEA but also the US intelligence community had at the time issued reports, indicating that Iran did not have an active nuclear weapons program. As Iran and IAEA were resolving outstanding issue in the second half of 2007, the US National Intelligence Council had released an unclassified National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran's "nuclear intentions and capabilities." The

report stated “with moderate-to-high confidence that Iran does not currently have a nuclear weapon” and “with moderate confidence [that] Tehran had not restarted its nuclear weapons program as of mid-2007.” For these reasons, policymakers in Iran could not make themselves believe that the US and other P5+1 countries honestly regarded Iran’s nuclear program as a danger to international peace and security, requiring the UNSC to deal with it under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. To Iran, it was clear that the UNSC and Iran’s nuclear program were simply being used by the US to achieve other anti-Iran objectives. Consequently, Iran stopped cooperating with the IAEA on resolving issues pertaining to the Alleged Studies and declared that it was going to double the number of its centrifuges at Natanz from 3000 to 6000 (ElBaradei, 2011, pp. 280-281).

#### **Section 3.1.12.3: Iran’s Nuclear Dossier and Negotiations Under Jalili**

Soon after Iran decided to further expand its enrichment capabilities by installing more centrifuges, P5+1 countries developed a new offer package and delivered it to Iran on June 14, 2008. Less than a month later, on July 4, 2008, Iran responded to the offer by pointing to the commonalities between the P5+1 package and the package Iran had offered less than two months earlier and agreed to restart negotiations with P5+1 based on the commonalities of the two packages. Hence, on July 19, 2008, Iran’s new chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, met with the representatives of P5+1 in Geneva. What made this session different from all previous talks, was that the US had finally decided to join the talks as well. It is worth recalling that less than three years earlier, Condoleezza Rice had demanded total suspension of all nuclear fuel cycle activities as a precondition of the US joining the talks. By the summer of 2008, that precondition was dropped and

William Burns represented the US at the P5+1 talks with Iran. Yet, at the talks, UK representative, Mark Grant, demanded that Iran respond to their June offer in less than two weeks. When the deadline passed, the US pushed for a new UNSC sanction. Hence, on September 27, 2008, UNSC adopted UNSC Resolution 1835, which, due to resistance from Russia and China, did not include any new sanctions and simply reaffirmed previous UNSC resolutions against Iran. As in the past, Iran responded to the UNSC Resolution 1835 by further expanding its enrichment activities.

### **Section 3.1.13: President Obama and Iran's June 2009 Presidential Elections**

In November 2008, Barack Obama won the US presidential election. Throughout his campaign, he had promised to bring about “change.” Iranians followed the US presidential elections closely and were “as intrigued by Obama’s background and personal history as were others around the world” (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 134). Iranians, too, wanted to believe in Obama’s promise of change. Hence, when Obama declared in his 2009 Inaugural Address that “to the Muslim world, [I say] we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect,” Iranians believed that Obama’s remarks were directed at them. Yet, the history of Iran-US relations made it difficult for Iranians to believe that Obama would be able to deliver.

President Obama further reached out to “the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran” in his Nowruz video, which was released on March 20, 2009. He said:

In this season of new beginnings I would like to speak clearly to Iran's leaders.

We have serious differences that have grown over time. My administration is

now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us, and to pursuing constructive ties among the United States, Iran and the international community. This process will not be advanced by threats. We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect.

Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, was quick to respond to President Obama's overture. In his annual New Year speech the next day, Ayatollah Khamenei said:

Changes in words are not adequate...[this change] should not come with unhealthy intentions. You may say that you want to change policies, but not your aims, that you will change tactics. This is not change. This is deceit. There can be true change, which should be seen in action... If the US government continues its same behavior, methods, course, and policies against us, as in the past thirty years, we are the same people, the same nation that we have been for the past thirty years... We do not have any experience with this new US president and government. We shall see and judge. You change, and we shall change as well.

President Obama, however, waited until the Iranian presidential election in June 2009 to build on his initial expression of goodwill. The media in the US and other western countries were full of stories and analyses wishfully predicting Ahmadinejad's defeat. Just as an example, David Ignatius wrote in a *Washington Post* article that was published on May 31, 2009, that "Change is in the Air in Iran" and continued on saying: "As Iran heads toward its presidential election on June 12, there are signs that Iranian voters are embracing their own version of 'Change we can believe in.' The fiery incumbent,

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, appears to be losing ground to a more pragmatic and experienced rival, former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi.”

The June 2009 presidential elections, however, did not produce the results that were expected in the West. As opinion polls conducted both In Iran and from outside had correctly predicted,<sup>15</sup> Ahmadinejad won the presidential election with a solid majority of the votes. However, when his rivals refused to concede defeat, civil unrest engulfed Tehran, where Mir Hussein Mousavi, Ahmadinejad’s main contender, had won with a slight majority. Mir Hussein Mousavi, however, failed to produce much court worthy evidence in support of his allegations. Ayatollah Khamenei, believing that the sanctity of the ballot box must be preserved and its outcome must be respected, refused to take any extralegal measures to address the demands of the so called Green Movement, which was comprised of various opposition groups and protesters. The US and the west, however, romanticized the Green Movement. They accepted its claim that the election had been stolen. The belief that a popular movement calling for an end to the core policies of the Islamic Republic had failed only because it was brutally crushed, “weakened support among Western elites and publics for diplomatic engagement with Iran” (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 259) and any mention of rapprochement with Ahmadinejad’s government became politically toxic in the west.

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<sup>15</sup> See for example: Kull, S., Ramsey, C., Weber, S. and Lewis, E. (February 3, 2010). Analysis of Multiple Polls Finds Little Evidence Iranian Public Sees Government as Illegitimate. WorldPublicOpinion.org.

#### **Section 3.1.14: Tehran's Research Reactor (TRR) Nuclear Fuel Swap Deal**

Soon after the June 2009 presidential election, Iran's fuel need for Tehran's Research Reactor (TRR) gained salience. Iran has been relying on TRR to produce the medical isotopes that it is no longer capable of procuring from international producers as a result of the sanctions. More than 850,000 Iranian patients are dependent on these medical isotopes and the closure of TRR could have a devastating effect on their well-being (Erdbrink, 2010). The last time Iran had refueled TRR was in 1993 and the fuel required to keep TRR operating started to run out in 2009. Hence, as in 1993, in June 2009, Iran officially requested the IAEA to facilitate the refueling of TRR, which is a safeguarded facility that has always operated under the supervision and oversight of the IAEA. Iran informed the IAEA that it was willing to purchase the fuel from anyone who was willing to sell it to Iran, including the United States. In fact, President Ahmadinejad labeled the request as "a litmus test" to gauge the sincerity of the US and other western powers when they claim they have no problem with Iran benefiting from a peaceful nuclear program (FNA, September 30, 2009)

Iran's request was seen as an opportunity by the P5+1 to reduce Iran's breakout potential by demanding it to ship out 1200 kg of its low enriched uranium (LEU) in return for fuel for TRR. On October 1, 2010, on the sidelines of P5+1 talks with Iran, Iran agreed "in principle" to a deal offered by US representative William Burns, according to which Iran would trade 1,200 kilograms of its 3.5 percent LEU for 120 kilograms of 20 percent LEU fuel from abroad. This was perceived as a victory in Iran (FNA, October 9, 2009), because for once the P5+1 had not demanded that Iran suspend its enrichment activities.



Between the Geneva talk on October 1, 2009 and the trilateral talks [Iran plus US, France, and Russian (aka the Vienna group) plus IAEA] in Vienna on October 19, 2009, high ranking Iranian officials expressed satisfaction with the Geneva talks and showed optimism about the potentials of the Vienna meeting, during which Iran and the Vienna group were going to workout the details of the offer under the auspices of the IAEA. The Vienna meeting ended on October 21 and ElBaradei circulated a draft agreement which he regarded as a “balanced way forward” and requested parties to respond back by October 23. ElBaradei, however, emphasized to reporters at the end of the meeting on October 21, 2009, that the draft agreement was not final and said: “there has been a lot of technical issues, legal issues, policy issues, and issues of confidence and trust, and that is why it has taken us some time and that is why we need to send the agreement to capitals for final approval.”

The draft agreement, which required Iran to ship out twelve hundred kilograms of its LEU in a single batch in return for 120 kg of fuel for the TRR to be delivered two years after the date of delivery, was not received well in Iran. On October 23, France, US, and Russia declared their approval of the draft agreement but Iran requested more time saying that “it is considering the proposal in depth and in a favorable light, but it needs time until the middle of next week to provide a response.” Between October 21 when the Vienna talks ended and October 29, when Iran submitted its formal response to IAEA, Iranian political figures from all sides rejected the deal on grounds that it lacked “sufficient guarantees.” On October 25, Larijani, who was now the Speaker of Majlis, said: “My guess is that the Americans have made a secret deal with certain countries to take [low-

enriched uranium away from us under the pretext of providing nuclear fuel. We hope Iranian officials will pay due attention to this issue” (Daragahi, 2009). Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the Chairman of Iran’s Foreign Relations Committee in Majlis, also voiced his opposition to the deal saying, “because the West has repeatedly violated agreements in the past, Iran should send its low enriched uranium abroad gradually and in several phases and necessary guarantees should be taken...It is better if Iran purchases 20 percent enriched fuel from Russia or any other supplier” (Hefezi, 2009). Also, a day after Iran submitted its formal response to the IAEA, opposition leader Mir Hussein Mousavi issued a statement saying:

Today it seems like we have to surrender a major portion of the product of our country's nuclear program, which has caused so much uproar and has brought upon our people so many sanctions, to another country in hopes that they may out of kindness provide us with this basic need sometime in the future and give us a little fuel? Is this a victory? Or a lie portraying surrender as a victory? Not only have the officials been unable to solve global problems, but they are not even safeguarding the undeniable rights of our people and have generously given these rights up. This shows that the officials are extremists even when it comes to surrendering [to foreigners].

On October 29, 2009, Iran submitted its response to ElBaradei’s proposal. While the details of that response have not been disclosed, from Ahmadinejad’s speech on that day warning the west against any “plot,” it could be inferred that Iran required the agreement to include some guarantees (FNA, October 30, 2009). Ahmadinejad delivered another

speech on that same day pointing to numerous past episodes of unfulfilled agreements and contracts to illustrate why Iran could not accept a deal that lacked “sufficient” guarantees (FNA, October 29, 2009). ElBaradei also confirmed in his interview with CNN on November 5, 2009, that “Iran wants guarantees and is concerned about trust.” By the time Iran responded to ElBaradei’s proposal, a consensus had developed in Iran that without further assurances and guarantees, the details of the proposal was not acceptable to Iran.

Iran, however, never got a response to its request for further guarantees. On the contrary, the US imposed a deadline on Iran to either accept the proposal as it was or face further UNSC sanctions (Bohan and Schedrov, 2009). Between October 29, 2009 and February 8, 2010, Iranian officials stipulated many possibilities to salvage the swap deal. The proposals included:

- 1) Simultaneous exchange of nuclear fuel on Iran’s territory;
- 2) A staged exchange of nuclear fuel;
- 3) On November 15, Mohsen Rezayi, Secretary of the powerful Expediency Council, suggested that due to a lack of trust in US, France, and Russia (P3) because of their past behaviors and considering that ElBaradei’s proposal lacks sufficient guarantees, Iran should not accept the proposal unless the Vienna Group first makes a symbolic move, such as suspending UNSC sanctions, to show their goodwill;
- 4) Simultaneous exchange of nuclear fuel on the soil of a third country;

- 5) Putting the entire 1200 kilo of Iran's LEU under IAEA's seal and custody in Iran and allowing the IAEA to take the material out once Iran received the fuel for TRR;
- 6) Downsizing the deal and swapping only some of the LEU for some of the fuel and swapping the rest several years later, when more confidence was built.

But the US remained adamant that Iran must accept EIBaradei's proposal as it was. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton declared: "This is a pivotal moment for Iran. We urge Iran to accept the agreement as proposed and we will not alter it and we will not wait forever...We are speaking with one voice on this critical issue" (Eckert, 2009). Not receiving any guarantees, not even a verbal assurance or any signals suggesting goodwill, Iran's foreign minister declared that "the international community has only one more month to make a decision. Otherwise, Tehran will enrich uranium to a higher purity needed for the fuel," adding that, "this is an ultimatum" (Xinhua, January 3, 2010). This was not the first time Iran had issued such "ultimatums," but it was the first time that Iran was setting a date. Before going into the Vienna talks, for example, Iran's nuclear agency spokesman Ali Shirzadian had said that "if the negotiations do not yield the desired results, Iran will start enriching uranium to the 20 percent level for its Tehran reactor" (AFP, October 20, 2009).

Iran's ultimatum did not result in any change in the tone and the posture of the Vienna group, which refused to provide Iran with any assurances, not even a verbal one. Therefore, as promised, Iran informed the IAEA on February 8, 2010, that it was going to

start using its own enrichment facilities to make the required fuel for TRR. It started to enrich uranium to 20% on the very next day. Soon after Iran informed the IAEA of its plan, State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said that the international community was willing to help Iran procure medical isotopes from abroad and that he hoped the offer would help to “build some confidence” and show that Iran’s plan to enrich uranium to 20-percent purity for a reactor making isotopes for cancer patients was “unnecessary” (Quinn, 2010). This statement made Iranian officials even more suspicious of the US intentions and more certain that the west did not intent to deliver the fuel as they were promising, since Crowley was asserting a position that was at odds with ElBaradei’s proposal: that Iran did not need to produce its own isotopes, that it should decommission TRR, and that it could rely on a market that had stopped selling it these isotopes since the imposition of UNSC sanctions. On February 18, 2010, IAEA confirmed that “Iran [had] provided the Agency with mass spectrometry results which indicate that enrichment levels of up to 19.8% U-235 were obtained at PFEP<sup>16</sup> between 9 and 11 February 2010.”

After proving that it was technically capable of enriching to higher levels, Iran continued to insist that it would prefer to buy the fuel and it would stop enriching up to 20% as soon as it received assurances that it would be provided with the fuel. In fact, on the very same day the IAEA confirmed that Iran was capable of enriching to higher levels, Iran sent a letter to the IAEA reaffirming that while Iran was “still seeking to purchase the required fuel in cash,” it was also willing to exchange its low-enriched uranium for the fuel rods “simultaneously in one package or several packages in the territory of the Islamic

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<sup>16</sup> Iran’s Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz

Republic of Iran” (Jahn, 2010). The US, however, rejected Iran’s request and Crowley called Iran’s response “a red herring” (Jahn, 2010).

ElBaradei, whose tenure at the IAEA ended in November 2009, suggested other ways of satisfying the demands and expectations of both the US and Iran. In an interview with CNN’s Amanpour on November 5, 2009, ElBaradei suggested that one way Iran could be assured that it would get fuel for TRR once it relinquished custody of 1200 kg of its LEU would be to send the LEU to Turkey instead, an idea with which President Obama was comfortable (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 311). Iran warmed up to the idea of a swap deal that would use Turkey as a interim storage location and sent signals to Turkey and Brazil, both non-permanent UNSC members at the time, to that effect. Turkey’s Prime Minister Erdogan and Brazil’s President Lula da Silva approached the US with the idea. In response, President Obama wrote a letter on April 20, 2010, both to President Lula and to Prime Minister Erdogan, laying out his conditions for a deal. In the letter, which was publicized by President Lula on May 28, 2010, President Obama stated:

I agree with you that the TRR is an opportunity to pave the way for a broader dialogue in dealing with the more fundamental concerns of the international community regarding Iran’s overall nuclear program. From the beginning, I have viewed Iran’s request as a clear and tangible opportunity to begin to build mutual trust and confidence, and thereby create time and space for a constructive diplomatic process. That is why the United States so strongly supported the proposal put forth by former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General ElBaradei. The IAEA’s proposal was crafted to be fair and

balanced, and for both sides to gain trust and confidence. For us, Iran's agreement to transfer 1,200 kg of Iran's low enriched uranium (LEU) out of the country would build confidence and reduce regional tensions by substantially reducing Iran's LEU stockpile. I want to underscore that this element is of fundamental importance for the United States...We understand from you, Turkey and others that Iran continues to propose that Iran would retain its LEU on its territory until there is a simultaneous exchange of its LEU for nuclear fuel. As General Jones noted during our meeting, it will require one year for any amount of nuclear fuel to be produced. Thus, the confidence-building strength of the IAEA's proposal would be completely eliminated for the United States and several risks would emerge...There is a potentially important compromise that has already been offered. Last November, the IAEA conveyed to Iran our offer to allow Iran to ship its 1,200 kg of LEU to a third country – specifically Turkey – at the outset of the process to be held “in escrow” as a guarantee during the fuel production process that Iran would get back its uranium if we failed to deliver the fuel. Iran has never pursued the "escrow" compromise and has provided no credible explanation for its rejection...I would urge Brazil to impress upon Iran the opportunity presented by this offer to "escrow" its uranium in Turkey while the nuclear fuel is being produced... Meanwhile, we will pursue sanctions on the timeline that I have outlined...I look forward to the next opportunity to see you and discuss these issues as we consider the challenge of Iran's nuclear program to the security of the international community, including in the UN Security Council.

With Obama's letter, Iran attained the confidence it needed to pursue with the deal. In less than a month, Iran, Brazil, and Turkey worked together to draft an agreement that delivered on every single term that was laid out in Obama's April 20 letter to Lula and Erdogan. On May 17, 2010, Iran, Brazil, and Turkey signed the Tehran Declaration, which met all of President Obama's conditions. According to the agreement, "Iran would send twelve hundred kilograms of LEU to Turkey, in a single shipment, to be held in escrow while Iran's research reactor fuel was being fabricated" (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 312). A day after the signing of the declaration, however, the US rejected the deal. In a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called more UNSC sanctions "as convincing an answer to the efforts undertaken in Tehran over the last few days as any we could provide" (Sanger and Landler, 2010). Indeed, "the west had refused to take yes for an answer" (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 313), further persuading Iranians that there was nothing they could possibly do to satisfy the US and that the US was simply using nonproliferation concerns as a cover for an underlying intent to undermine the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On June 9, 2010, UNSC adopted Resolution 1929, which placed more sanctions on Iran. The rejection of a deal that was based entirely on Obama's letter severely undermined US credibility and made Iranians doubtful about the true intention of the US government. Turkey and Brazil were also so infuriated that they voted against the Resolution at the UNSC. Iran, nevertheless, continued to declare that it did not wish to enrich uranium to higher levels and that it would abandon 20% enrichment immediately upon receiving assurances that it would be provided with the fuel for TRR. Just as an example, in an



interview with the *Washington Post* on September 13, 2011, President Ahmadinejad stated:

At the beginning we had no interest to produce uranium grade 20 percent. But the West refrained from giving us that uranium, so we had to start producing uranium grade 20 percent... We felt that they wouldn't give us the fuel required here for our reactor. There were some political leaders who gave interviews in the United States and Europe and they said they want to keep Iran from having access to such fuel. So we realized that they wouldn't give us that fuel so we had to do it ourselves. Even if they gave us now uranium grade 20 percent, we would not continue with the production of this fuel... We don't want to produce uranium of 20 percent. Because they did not give us that uranium, we had to make our own investments. If they start to give us that uranium today, we will stop production. I repeat: If you give us uranium grade 20 percent now, we will stop production. Because uranium grade 20 percent can only be used for such reactors, nothing else.

### **Section 3.1.15: US Sanctions and Covert Actions Against Iran's Nuclear Program**

UNSC Resolution 1929 was significantly watered down by China and Russia and was not as tough as the US wished it to be (Patrikarakos, 2012, p. 263). Concurrent with pursuing sanctions at the UN, the Obama administration and the Congress pursued some of the toughest sanctions against Iran. As will be explored in more detail, the US pursued two different paths of putting more pressure on Iran. The first path went through the US Congress, which adopted some of the toughest sanction legislations against Iran. The

other path was pursued by the State Department and the Department of Treasury, which actively dissuaded US trade partners from doing any business with Iran.

Besides imposing economic pressure, the US and Israel resorted to cyberattacks and assassination of Iranian scientists to slow down Iran's nuclear advances. Soon after taking office, President Obama authorized the continuation of sophisticated cyberattacks against Iran's enrichment facilities that had started under President Bush. In fact, President Obama decided to accelerate the attacks, code named Operation Olympic Games, even after the computer worm the US had developed in conjunction with the Israelis – named by computer security experts as Stuxnet – escaped Iran's nuclear facilities and created problems throughout the world (Sanger, 2012). The worm is reported to have destroyed a fifth of Iran's centrifuges and is viewed as the main reason why Iran's enrichment activities was temporarily halted in late 2009 (Broad and Markoff and Sanger, 2011). According to an "insider," besides its crippling effect on Iran's enrichment facilities, Stuxnet was deliberately designed "to make Iranians feel stupid" (Deibert, 2013, p. 179).

Israel also began an assassination campaign, financing, training, arming, and guiding members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK) to target and assassinate Iranian nuclear scientists (Engel and Windrem, 2012). The campaign has to this date resulted in the death of four Iranian nuclear scientists, including Dr. Shahriyari, who was one of the chief experts tasked with ridding Iranian enrichment facilities from the Stuxnet computer

worm and whose scientific and mathematical expertise allowed Iran to convert Iran's stockpile of 20% enriched uranium into the fuel rods needed for TRR.

### **Section 3.1.16: Nuclear Negotiations Between Iran and P5+1**

Between the summer of 2010 to the summer of 2013, when Iran's presidential election were held, Iran and P5+1, engaged in a series of promising negotiations. P5+1 and Iran met in Geneva on December 6, 2010, and agreed to "talk and cooperate on mutually acceptable points." Then a second round of negotiations were held in Istanbul on January 21, 2011. In Istanbul, Saeed Jalili, Iran's chief negotiator, steadfastly refused to talk about any other issues that were not agreed to during the Geneva talks. He suggested possible areas of cooperation and demanded P5+1 to either respond to those or suggest their own possible areas of cooperation. Because of the negotiation postures of both Jalili and P5+1, the Istanbul talks did not produce any results and no further negotiations were scheduled. After much behind the scene talks and negotiations between Iran and various P5+1 countries, as well as talks among P5+1 countries, Russia proposed a "step-by-step" solution to the Iranian nuclear impasse in July 2011. The "step-by-step" solution proposed by Russia was welcomed by Iran during a meeting between President Ahmadinejad and the Russian Security Council Secretary, Nikolai Patrushev, in Tehran on August 16, 2011. While the actual Russian proposal was rejected by the US because it was perceived it to be too "front-end loaded," the concept of a step-wise de-escalating and confidence building solution was accepted by P5+1 and Iran and became the basis of future negotiations.

On November 20, 2011, President Obama signed Executive Order 13590, imposing new sanctions that targeted Iran's petrochemical and energy sectors. On January 22, 2012, the European Union (EU) joined the US and passed sanctions on Iran's oil, which were set to take effect from July 1, 2012. Some two weeks later, on February 5, 2012, President Obama signed Executive Order 13599 to block all assets of the Government of Iran and all Iranian financial institutions that were within the jurisdiction of the US. In the meantime, Iran expanded the operation and production capacity of its uranium enrichment facilities. According to the November 8, 2011, report of the IAEA General Director to the Board of Governor, while in February 2012 Iran was feeding UF6 into 6208 centrifuges in Natanz, by November 2012 Iran had increased the number of its centrifuges that were being fed with UF6 to 8808 and was vacuum testing another 348 of its centrifuges.

On April 14, 2012, Iran and P5+1, held another rounds of negotiations in Istanbul. The negotiations in Istanbul were important because they were happening after some 14 months since the previous round of talks between Iran and P5+1. In Istanbul, Iran and P5+1 agreed to restart the negotiations, and agreed to adopt a step-by-step process with reciprocal actions, in order to create momentum towards a long-term solution. They also selected Baghdad as the next venue for their negotiations.

During the negotiations in Baghdad, which took place on May 23-24, 2012, Iran presented P5+1 with its five step proposal and P5+1 presented their own 2 step proposal:

<b>P5+1 talks in Baghdad (May 23-24, 2012)</b>	
<b>Iran's Proposal</b>	<b>P5+1 Proposal</b>
<p><b>Step 1 - Guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iran emphasizes commitments under the NPT and its opposition to nuclear weapons based on the Supreme Leader's fatwa.</li> <li>• P5+1 recognizes and openly announces Iran's nuclear rights, particularly its enrichment activities, based on NPT Article IV.</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 2 - Transparency Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iran continues broad cooperation with IAEA and will transparently cooperate with the IAEA on "possible military dimensions."</li> <li>• P5+1 will end unilateral and multilateral sanctions against Iran outside of the UNSC resolutions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 3 - Confidence Building Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beyond continuous IAEA monitoring of enrichment activities for Tehran Research Reactor (TRR) fuel, Iran will cooperate with P5+1 to provide enriched fuel needed for TRR.</li> <li>• P5+1 will terminate the UN sanctions and remove Iran's nuclear file from UNSC agenda.</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 4 - Strengthening Cooperation on Mutual Interests</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parties will start and boost cooperation on: designing and building nuclear power plants and research reactors (Iran's priorities);</li> <li>• And light water research reactors, nuclear safety and security, nuclear fusion (P5+1 priorities).</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 5 - Strengthening Joint Cooperation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parties will start cooperating on: regional issues, especially Syria and Bahrain (Iran's priorities);</li> <li>• And combating piracy and countering narcotics activities (P5+1 priorities).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Iranian actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iran halts all 20 percent enrichment activities.</li> <li>• Iran transfers all 20 percent enriched uranium to a third country under IAEA custody.</li> <li>• Iran shuts down the Fordow facility.</li> </ul> <p><b>P5+1 Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P5+1 will provide fuel assemblies for the Tehran Research Reactor.</li> <li>• P5+1 will support IAEA technical cooperation to modernize and maintain the safety of the TRR.</li> <li>• P5+1 could review the IAEA technical cooperation projects and recommend to the IAEA Board restarting some of them.</li> <li>• P5+1 has put together a detailed package to provide medical isotopes for cancer patients in Iran.</li> <li>• The United States is prepared to permit safety-related inspection and repair in Iran for Iranian commercial aircraft and provide spare parts.</li> <li>• The P5+1 will cooperate in acquiring a light water research reactor to produce medical isotopes.</li> </ul>

While neither side agreed with one another's proposals, Iran considered the Baghdad talks as a success, since for the first time since 2002, P5+1 did not demand Iran to suspend its 5% enrichment activities and instead focused on the suspension of Iran's 20% enrichment activities and the closure of the Fordow enrichment facility. Less than a month later, on June 18, 2012, Iran and P5+1 met again in Moscow to elaborate on their respective proposals and to get them closer to each other. Quite optimistic and having engaged in a series of bilateral talks, Iran and P5+1 then met in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on February 26-27, 2013 and then again on April 5-6, 2013. While at the second Almaty talks, Iran and P5+1 still did not see completely eye to eye, but their proposals did get quite close to each other:

<b>P5+1 talks in Almaty (April 5-6, 2013)</b>	
<b>Iran's Proposal</b>	<b>P5+1 Proposal</b>
<p><b><i>Iranian Actions</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iran freezes centrifuge installation at Fordow.</li> <li>• Iran continues talks with the IAEA.</li> <li>• Iran continues converting 20 percent enriched uranium hexafluoride to uranium oxide.</li> <li>• Iran suspends enrichment of uranium to 20 percent.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>P5+1 Actions</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The P5+1 lifts all sanctions against Iran.</li> <li>• The P5+1 recognizes Iran's nuclear rights.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Iranian actions:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iran halts all 20 percent enrichment activities.</li> <li>• Iran transfers part of its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium to a third country under IAEA custody.</li> <li>• Iran suspends all operations at the Fordow facility.</li> <li>• Iran provides the IAEA with information to address the outstanding allegations of possible military activities, commits to the additional protocol and the modified version of the subsidiary arrangement to Iran's safeguards agreement, known as Code 3.1.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>P5+1 Actions:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P5+1 will provide fuel assemblies for the Tehran Research Reactor.</li> <li>• P5+1 will support IAEA technical cooperation to modernize and maintain the safety of the TRR.</li> <li>• P5+1 could review the IAEA technical cooperation projects and recommend to the IAEA Board restarting some of them.</li> <li>• P5+1 has put together a detailed package to provide medical isotopes for cancer patients in Iran.</li> <li>• The United States is prepared to permit</li> </ul>

<b>P5+1 talks in Almaty (April 5-6, 2013)</b>	
<b>Iran's Proposal</b>	<b>P5+1 Proposal</b>
	<p>safety-related inspection and repair in Iran for Iranian commercial aircraft and provide spare parts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The P5+1 will cooperate in acquiring a light water research reactor to produce medical isotopes.</li> <li>• The P5+1 will provide sanctions relief on sales of precious metals and petrochemicals.</li> <li>• The P5+1 will not impose any new proliferation related sanctions on Iran.</li> </ul>

On June 14, 2013, Iranians went to the polls to elect their next president. After an intense campaign, Hassan Rouhani, who was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator during the Khatami Presidency, was elected by 50.88% of the votes. President Rouhani selected Javad Zarif, who had served as Iran's ambassador to the UN from 2002 to 2007, as his Foreign Minister and a decision was made to make Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for the nuclear negotiations. Zarif, who is a US-educated experienced diplomat, wasted no time to start the negotiations with P5+1.

After the first meeting between Zarif and Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, on the sides of the sixty-ninth session of the UN General Assembly, Iran and P5+1 agreed to continue their negotiations. Hence, during their first meeting in Geneva on October 15-16, 2013, Iran presented a modified proposal, which outlined the broad framework for a comprehensive end-state agreement and specific steps for each side to take in a first-phase agreement. P5+1 and Iran met again on November 7-10 and then against on November 20-24, 2013. Finally, on November 24, 2013, at the presence of the Foreign Ministers from all P5+1 countries, including John Kerry from the United States, Zarif and Ashton signed an interim

agreement, known as the Joint Plan of Action (JPA). The JPA has a duration of six months, which can be extended if Iran and the P5+1 agree to renew it by mutual consent:

#### **Joint Plan of Action**

##### ***Elements of the First Phase***

###### *Iranian actions:*

- Convert half of its stockpile of uranium enriched to 20 percent to oxide form and downblend the remainder to an enrichment level of no more than five percent;
- suspend production of uranium enriched to above five percent;
- no further advances in nuclear activities at the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant, the enrichment plant at Fordow and the Arak heavy water reactor;
- convert uranium enriched up to five percent produced during the six months to oxide form when the construction of the conversion facility is completed;
- no new enrichment facilities;
- research and development practices, including on enrichment, will continue under IAEA safeguards;
- no reprocessing of spent plutonium fuel or construction of any facility capable of reprocessing; and
- enhanced monitoring including, providing information to the IAEA on plans for nuclear sites and the Arak reactor, negotiating a safeguards approach for the Arak reactor, allow daily IAEA access to Natanz and Fordow, and allow managed access to centrifuge workshops and uranium mines and mills.

###### *P5+1 Actions:*

- No new nuclear-related sanctions from the UN Security Council, the EU, and the U.S.;
- pause efforts to further reduce Iran's oil sales and partial repatriation of frozen Iranian assets from oil sales;
- suspension of U.S. and EU sanctions on petrochemical exports and gold and precious metals;
- suspension of U.S. sanctions on Iran's auto industry;
- supply and installation of spare parts for Iranian civil airplanes, including repairs and safety inspections;
- establish a financial channel for humanitarian goods using Iran's oil revenues that are frozen abroad, which can also be used for tuition payments for Iranian student abroad and payment of Iran's UN dues; and
- increase of the EU thresholds for non-sanctioned trade with Iran.

##### ***Elements of a Comprehensive Solution***

- An agreed upon duration;
- reflection of the rights and obligations of all NPT parties and IAEA Safeguards Agreements;
- lift all multilateral and unilateral sanctions on nuclear-related measures;
- define Iran's enrichment program with agreed upon limits
- resolve concerns about the Arak reactor;
- implement agreed up on transparency measures, including Iran's ratification and implementation of the Additional Protocol of its safeguards agreement with the IAEA;
- cooperate on civil nuclear projects, including a light water reactor for power, research reactors, and nuclear fuel.



In his January 20, 2014, as well as February 20, 2014, reports to the IAEA Board of Governors, IAEA Director General confirmed that Iran has taken the steps required by the JPA and has remained committed to its terms.

### **Section 3.2: US Employment of Coercive Diplomacy in Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Program**

Coercive diplomacy and sanctions have been the constant feature of US foreign policy toward the Islamic Republic of Iran. Yet, the stated objectives and goals of US sanctions toward Iran have evolved over time. While in the 1980s, US sanctions were primarily adopted to limit Iran's strategic reach in the Middle East, since early 1990s, US sanctions have targeted Iran for its purported sponsorship of international terrorism, opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process mediated by the US, and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Since the summer of 2002, however, much of US sanctions have focused on Iran's nuclear program. Besides banning US persons and entities from doing business with Iran, the Congress and successive administrations since President Clinton have put in place measures that force foreign entities to choose between doing business the US and doing any business with Iran. While the US began to unilaterally impose a variety of sanction on Iran soon after the fall of the Shah, since 2002 the US has become significantly more active in persuading the UNSC, EU, and other countries to limit their business with Iran.

The first form of sanctions that the US adopted against Iran was the freezing of Iranian assets on November 14, 1979. While Iranian asset freeze of 1979 has been often attributed to the hostage crisis, it is a matter of public records that almost a year before

the hostages were seized and during the final days of the Shah's regime, the Department of Treasury had concluded that conditions for invoking the International Emergency Economic Power Act (IEEPA) existed due to the vulnerability of the US banking and financial systems to the threat of a withdrawal of Iranian assets from US banks and financial institutions (Fayazmanesh, 2008, p. 13; Alerasool, 1993, pp. 20-22; Flaherty, 1981). The hostage crisis, however, enabled the US government to more easily implement a freeze it had already considered to protect US financial institutions against a sudden withdrawal of Iranian assets.

While the US arms embargo against Iran continued after the Iran-Iraq war, Iran's nuclear ambitions began to gain more salience and increasingly attracted more attention. Hence, one of the measures adopted by Congress soon after the first Persian Gulf War, was the Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act of 1992. The Act declared that:

It shall be the policy of the United States to oppose, and urgently to seek the agreement of other nations also to oppose, any transfer to Iran or Iraq of any goods or technology, including dual-use goods or technology, wherever that transfer could materially contribute to either country's acquiring chemical, biological, nuclear, or destabilizing numbers and types of advanced conventional weapons.

The act imposed penalties on any entity that would supply Iran with any goods or technology that would contribute to Iran's efforts to "acquire weapons of mass destruction." The act also provides for a "presumption of denial" for all dual use exports to Iran.

The most dramatic sanctions against Iran, however, were imposed during the first term of President Clinton. Under severe pressure from a Republican Congress and AIPAC, on March 15, 1995, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12957, prohibiting US trade in Iran's oil industry. Then, again, on April 30, 1995, at a dinner of the World Jewish Congress with Shimon Peres present, Clinton pledged to impose a total US trade embargo on Iran and made good on his promise on May 6, 1995, by signing Executive Order 12959, which prohibited any US trade and investment in Iran. The two Executive Orders did not elaborate on why the sanctions were being imposed on Iran and sufficed to saying that the sanctions were being imposed since "the actions and policies of the Government of Iran constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States" requiring a declaration of "a national emergency to deal with that threat."

Another sanction that was adopted during the first term of President Clinton was the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA). Passed by Congress on July 16, 1996, ILSA imposed penalties on any company, foreign or domestic, that invested in Iran or Libya's oil and gas sectors. ILSA was renamed Iran Sanction Act (ISA) after it was terminated with respect to Libya in 2006. ISA is quite clear with respect to its purpose and the objectives it seeks to attain. Section 2(a) of ISA declares that:

[I]t is the policy of the United States to deny Iran the ability to support acts of international terrorism and to fund the development and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them by limiting the development of

Iran's ability to explore for, extract, refine, or transport by pipeline petroleum resources of Iran.

ISA then states that the ISA's requirements to impose sanctions would terminate whenever the US president would certify that, among other things, "Iran has ceased its efforts to design, develop, manufacture, or acquire a nuclear explosive device or related materials and technology." ISA as well as Clinton's Executive Orders not only set the tone of US policy toward Iran, but have also acted as the cornerstone of most subsequent US sanctions against Iran.

Soon after the full extent of Iran's nuclear program was publicized by NCRI in the summer of 2002, the US relied on sanctions to, on one hand, impede Iran's ability to advance its nuclear fuel cycle program and, on the other hand, persuade it to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle activities. In the summer of 2005, President Bush signed Executive Order 13382, which expanded upon Executive Order 12938 of November 14, 1994, and Executive Order 13094 of July 28, 1998, to more effectively block the assets of those individuals or entities identified as WMD proliferators and any individual or entity that would in any way support them.

As Iran's nuclear fuel cycle program became further developed, and as Iran refused to accept P5+1 demands to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle program, the US more aggressively employed sanctions to both slow down and persuade Iran to suspend its nuclear fuel cycle activities. The Iran Freedom Support Act, which was signed on September 30, 2006, amended ISA and made its sanctions also applicable

to any individual or entity that “exported, transferred, or otherwise provided to Iran any goods, services, technology, or other items knowing that the provision of such goods, services, technology, or other items would contribute materially to the ability of Iran to acquire or develop chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons or related technologies.”

Then, in the summer of 2010, Congress passed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA). CISADA both extended the termination date of ISA to December 31, 2016, and amended it to make its sanctions applicable to any individual or entity that would either sell gasoline, jet fuel, and other forms of fuel to Iran or provide it with equipment or services which could potentially enable Iran to make or import gasoline. This amendment to ISA was adopted to exploit Iran’s dependency on imported fuel, which formerly accounted for 40% of Iran’s fuel needs. CISADA also put into law the total trade bans that were previously being enforced under President Clinton’s Executive Orders 12957 and 12959. Hence, as a result of CISADA, the ban on trade in such items as nuts, fruit products, carpets, and caviar, which were relaxed in 2000, were reinstated. CISADA also prohibits US banks from opening new “correspondent accounts” or “payable through accounts” and forces the cancellation of existing such accounts for foreign banks that process transactions with Iran’s energy and shipping sectors or Iranian entities that have been sanctioned by various UNSC resolutions. CISADA also promotes divestment of shares of firms that have invested in Iran’s energy sector by providing a “safe harbor” for financial managers who sell shares of firms that invest in Iran’s energy sector.

CISADA names multiple objectives. Besides pointing to Iran's "serious, systematic, and ongoing violations of human rights," "support for international terrorism" and "threat to the security of the United States, [and] its strong ally Israel," it primarily focuses on Iran's nuclear program and the aim "to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons," and "acquiring a nuclear weapons capability." In fact CISADA asserts that the "[e]conomic sanctions imposed pursuant to the provisions of this Act, the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996, as amended by this Act, and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.), and other authorities available to the United States to impose economic sanctions to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, are necessary to protect the essential security interests of the United States."

US sanctions against Iran became significantly more damaging when Congress decided to sanction foreign banks that deal with Iran's Central Bank. Section 1245 of the FY2012 National Defense Authorization Bill, which was signed on December 31, 2011, obliged the US President to prevent a foreign bank from opening an account in the US if that bank transacts with the Central Bank of Iran. The law, however, includes an ingenious mechanism for placing Iran under even more pressure. As part of the law, the President is authorized to grant an exemption from sanction, if the President could certify that the parent country of the bank has significantly reduced its purchase of oil from Iran. Such exemptions are only valid for 180 days and, once an exemption expires, countries must prove that they have "significantly" reduced their import of oil from Iran, relative to the previous 180-day period, in order to qualify for a new exception. Therefore, the law has provided countries with significant incentives to continuously reduce their purchase of oil

from Iran in order to retain their exemption. This provision of the law, however, was waived on January 20, 2014, per the requirements of JPA.

Another US measure adopted against Iran is the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act, which codified Executive Order 13590 and was signed by President Obama on August 10, 2012. The Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act expands on previous sanctions and makes ISA sanctions applicable to any individual or entity that would participate in a joint venture with Iran relating to the mining, production, or transportation of uranium. The Act also makes ISA sanctions applicable to any firm that would provide Iran with goods and services that could help it maintain or develop its oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors. The Act also applies ISA sanctions to any unlicensed purchase of Iranian oil and any transaction with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), and Naftiran Intertrade Company (NICO). The most crippling effect of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act came as a result of a provision in the Act that requires any funds owed to Iran as a result of a licensed transactions to be only credited to an account located in the country that owes Iran money, effectively preventing Iran from bringing earned hard currency back to Iran and compelling it to instead buy the products of the countries that owe it money.

The Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act is quite clear in its aim to “strengthen Iran sanctions laws for the purpose of compelling Iran to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons and other threatening activities.” The Act asserts that “It is the sense

of Congress that the goal of compelling Iran to abandon efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability and other threatening activities can be effectively achieved through a comprehensive policy that includes economic sanctions, diplomacy, and military planning, capabilities and options.” It is quite interesting that under its “diplomatic efforts,” the bill makes no mention of pursuing diplomacy with Iran and instead only focuses on intensifying diplomatic efforts to persuade US allies, the UNSC, and “each member country of the United Nations” to impose more sanctions, trade limits, and transportation restrictions on Iran.

Another US law that targets Iran’s nuclear program is the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (IFCA) under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, which was signed on January 2, 2013. IFCA further strengthened the previous sanctions by requiring the imposition of at least 5 out of 12 ISA sanctions on any individual or entity that would, among other things: 1) provide goods or services to the energy and shipping sectors of the Islamic Republic, 2) provide underwriting services, insurance, or reinsurance for shipping oil, gasoline, or other refined petroleum products, and 3) provide gold or other precious metals, semi-finished metals or industrial software to Iran. IFCA hit Iran hardest by preventing Iran’s transaction with foreign firms using gold or other precious metals. One of the main objectives of IFAC, as stipulated in the Act, is to target “Iran’s nuclear proliferation activities” by limiting Iran’s revenue from its energy sector. In doing so, IFAC targets “key element[s] in the petroleum supply chain responsible for generating energy revenues that support the illicit nuclear proliferation activities of the Government of Iran.”



Besides the actions taken by Congress, President Obama has also used his executive authority to put in place Executive Orders that target Iran. These executive orders stipulate neither the reason behind nor the objective of the orders. On May 23, 2011, President Obama issued Executive Order 13574, clarifying that the Treasury Department is the responsible party to implement those ISA sanctions that involve the financial sector. Executive Order 13599, which was signed on February 5, 2012, imposes sanctions on the Central Bank and other entities determined to be owned or controlled by the government of Iran. This order, unlike the previous ones, requires such assets be impounded by US financial institutions, not just refused or returned as was required prior to Executive Order 13599. Executive Order 13608, issued on May 1, 2012, gave the Treasury Department the power and the ability to identify and sanction foreign individuals or entities who help Iran and Syria evade US and international sanctions. Executive Order 13622, signed on July 30, 2012, applies virtually all ISA sanctions to any entity that would conduct any transactions with NIOC or NICO or purchase Iranian oil or petrochemical products without having received an exception from the US. The last of President Obama's Executive Orders issued to date on Iran, is Executive Order 13645, which was signed on June 3, 2013. Executive Order 13645 imposes ISA sanctions on any individual or entity that would supply goods or services to Iran's automotive sector and blocks foreign banks from operating in the US if they process transactions for Iran's automotive sector.

The US has also sought and championed multiple UNSC sanctions against Iran. To date, UNSC has adopted six resolutions against Iran, four of which impose sanctions on Iran. The last in a series of UNSC resolutions against Iran, was UNSC Resolution 1929, which was adopted on June 9, 2010. UNSC Resolutions 1737, 1747, 1803, and 1929 impose a wide array of sanctions on Iran. These resolutions prohibit UN member countries from transferring any goods and services that may contribute to Iran's nuclear and missile programs and bars countries from trading in dual-use items, except for those used in light-water reactors. The resolutions also prohibit Iran from exporting weapons. They also bar Iran from exporting technologies related to the manufacturing of WMD. Furthermore, the resolutions bar Iran from investing abroad in uranium mining or other nuclear weapons or energy related technologies. They also prohibit Iran from launching ballistic missiles, even on its own territory. UNSC Resolutions 1737, 1747, 1803, and 1929 also place an extensive, albeit not total, arms embargo on Iran. They also call on member countries to inspect cargoes carried by Iran Air Cargo and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines if there is reason to believe that they are carrying banned items to Iran. UNSC Resolution 1929, specifically asks UN member states to be proactively vigilant with respect to all Iranian banks and encourages restraint in providing Iran with any loans, trade credits, or other financial instruments and services. UNSC Resolutions 1737, 1747, 1803, and 1929 have also named Iranian persons and entities believed to be contributing to Iran's nuclear and missile programs, requiring countries to freeze their assets and restrict their travel.

UNSC resolutions against Iran have been clear in regards to the three main objectives they are seeking to attain. These objectives are:

- 1) To persuade Iran to “suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development;”
- 2) To persuade Iran to “act in accordance with the provisions of the Additional Protocol and to implement without delay all transparency measures as the IAEA may request;”
- 3) “To constrain Iran’s development of sensitive technologies in support of its nuclear and missile programmes.”

Again, while UNSC sanctions have been adopted by the UNSC, it would be fair to say that the US has played a significant role in persuading other UNSC members to adopt these measures against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Had it not been for the efforts of the US and its active diplomacy, it is quite doubtful that these punitive measures would have ever been adopted by the UNSC. Also, it has been a US policy, expressed both by Congress and by successive US administrations, to pursue international sanctions and pressure against Iran to persuade it to forgo the aspects of its nuclear and missile programs that the US finds threatening to its national security. Moreover, considering that the US has also assumed the leadership role in implementation of UNSC sanctions and has been the most active member of the UN in not only executing the UNSC sanctions against Iran but also ensuring the compliance of other countries as well, it would be correct to regard UNSC sanctions against Iran in the category of coercive measures employed by the US in its dealing with Iran’s nuclear program.

In short, the US has adopted a wide variety of coercive measures to deal with the perceived threat from Iran to the national security and interests of the US. Some of these measures have been adopted to achieve specific objectives, while others have been implemented for more general purposes. The most common objective of US sanctions against Iran since the 1990s, however, have been to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive technologies and to constraint Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology. Therefore, a necessary component of assessing the efficacy of US sanctions against Iran is an evaluation of the degree to which such sanctions have:

- 1) Persuaded Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program;
- 2) Constrained Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology.

This is the evaluation that will be made in the following section of this chapter.

### **Section 3.3: Impact Evaluation of US Use of Coercive Diplomacy in Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Program**

Indeed, the US has imposed "the most sweeping sanctions on Iran of virtually any country in the world" (Katzman, 2014) and no country has ever been placed under as many sanctions for pursuing a nuclear fuel cycle program as Iran. It is therefore, important to evaluate the degree to which such sanctions have had an effect on Iran's nuclear fuel cycle activities. It is important to note that in this section, only the outcome will be evaluated and the mechanisms that have produced the outcomes will be investigated. In essence, in this section two basic questions will be explored:

- 1) Have US sanctions persuaded Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program?
- 2) Have US sanctions constrained Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology?

Since key ingredient of any type of a nuclear weapon is nuclear explosive materials, the most proliferation-sensitive aspects of a nuclear fuel cycle program are activities that produce nuclear explosive isotopes (Hinderstein, 2010, p. 70). Practically speaking, there are two main forms of nuclear explosive isotopes that are suitable for nuclear weapons; highly enriched uranium (HEU) and weapons-grade plutonium. Therefore, uranium enrichment, which increases the proportion of uranium-235 isotope with respect to other isotopes of uranium, and nuclear reprocessing, which extracts plutonium from irradiated nuclear fuel – also known as spent fuel – are the most proliferation-sensitive aspects of any nuclear fuel cycle program. Thus, for the purposes of answering the first question of this section, it will be determined whether or not the use of coercive diplomacy, as a strategy, has persuaded Iranian policymakers to forgo activities related to uranium enrichment and nuclear reprocessing.

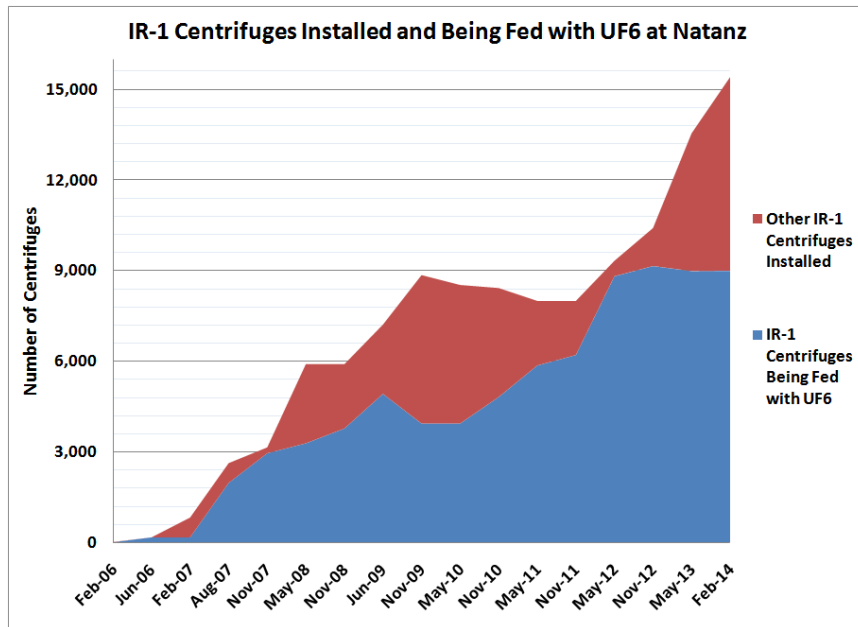
As for nuclear reprocessing, the Islamic Republic of Iran has never to this date pursued industrial scale nuclear reprocessing. All IAEA reports verify that Iran does not have and has not pursued industrial scale nuclear reprocessing. Iran did, nevertheless, experiment with reprocessing using hot cells on a laboratory scale in the early 1990s. Yet, as the IAEA has repeatedly confirmed, even those experiments ceased long before the adoption

of various US and international sanctions against Iran's nuclear program and there have been "no indications of ongoing reprocessing activities in Iran" (IAEA, August 31, 2006). Therefore, since Iran ceased even its laboratory scale reprocessing experimentations long before the US and the UNSC imposed sanctions on Iran, it is not reasonable to link Iran's decision to not engage in reprocessing activity to the US and the UNSC demands and sanctions. Indeed, all indications suggest that Iran's decision not to pursue reprocessing activity has been independent of US and UNSC sanctions against Iran.

The same story, however, does not apply to uranium enrichment. Iran has actively pursued and progressively advanced its uranium enrichment capabilities. All indications suggest that progressively stringent US and UNSC sanctions have not been able to persuade Iran to even suspend, let alone forgo, its nuclear enrichment activities. To the contrary, instead of observing a negative correlation between imposition of increasingly tougher sanctions and the advancements of Iran's enrichment capabilities, a positive correlation is observed. Both the severity of US and UNSC sanctions as well as Iran's enrichment capabilities have simultaneously increased during the past decade.

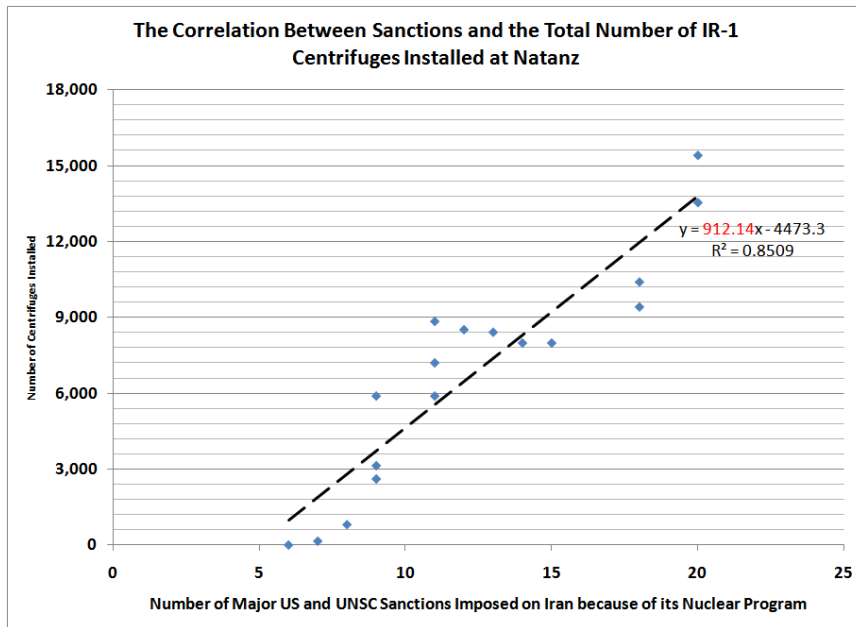
There are two major indicators that could be used to evaluate Iran's enrichment capabilities and its breakout potentials. The first indicator is the quality and quantity of Iran's gas centrifuges. Despite sanctions, Iran has increased both the quantity as well as the quality of its gas centrifuges. According to the Director General's reports to the IAEA Board of Governors, Iran has increased the number of its installed centrifuges at its

Natanz enrichment facility from less than 20 in February 2006 to more than 15,000 centrifuges in February 2014. Moreover, Iran currently feeds close to 9000 centrifuges with UF6, while in December 2006 – when UNSC imposed its first sanction on Iran – Iran was merely experimenting with a single 164-cascade of its IR-1 centrifuges. The following chart illustrates the number of IR-1 gas centrifuges that Iran has installed and the number of gas centrifuges that have been fed with UF6 at Natanz since 2006:



One of the least sophisticated ways of assessing how effective US and UNSC sanctions have been in persuading Iran to curtail the proliferation-sensitive aspects of its fuel cycle program is to see if a negative correlation exists between the number of major US and UNSC sanctions and the number of centrifuges that Iran has installed in its primary enrichment facility. While correlation does not necessarily imply causation, it is an indicator and a necessary component of causation. Therefore, if sanctions have persuaded Iran to suspend, if not forgo, the proliferation-sensitive aspects of its fuel cycle program,

a negative correlation between the number of major US and UNSC sanctions against Iran due to its nuclear program and the number of centrifuges that Iran has installed in its primary enrichment facility must be observed. The evidence, however, points in the very opposite direction. In fact, as the following chart illustrates, every additional US and UNSC sanction is correlated with installment, not dismantlement, of 912 new centrifuges at Natanz:

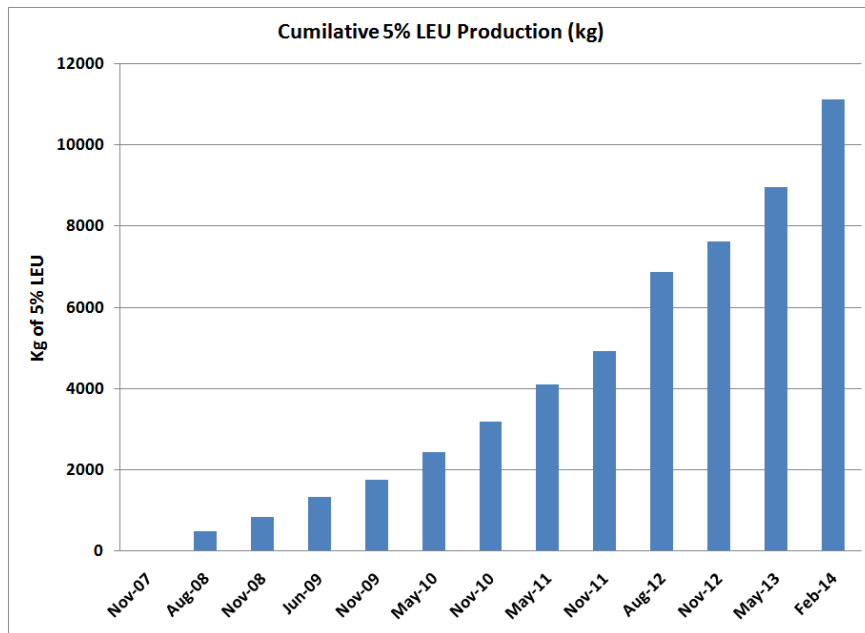


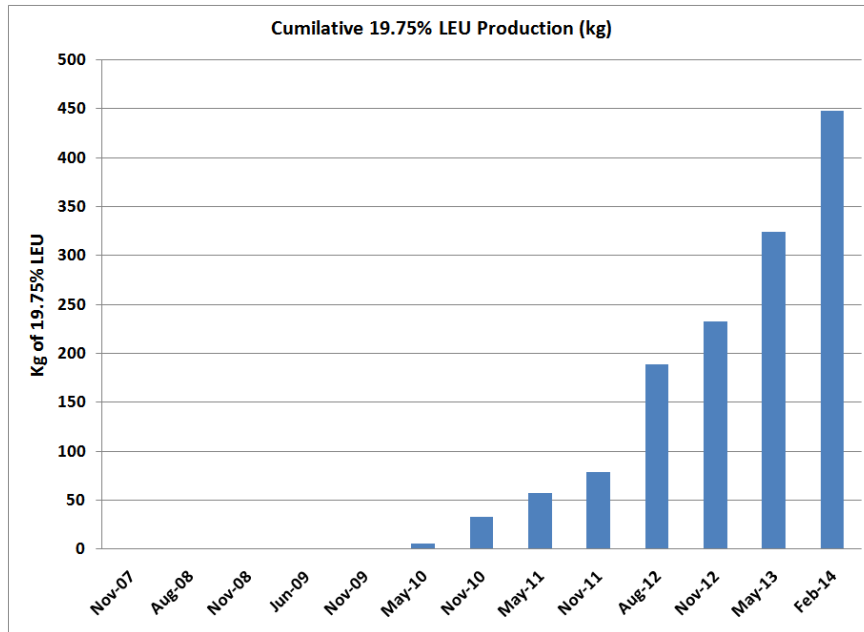
The quality and efficiency of Iran’s centrifuges have also improved since 2007. One of the indicators that could be used to evaluate the performance of Iran’s centrifuges is to chart over time the average separative work per year per centrifuge (swu/year-centrifuge) at Iran’s main enrichment facility. According to the reports of the Director General to IAEA’s Board of Governors, the average swu/year-centrifuge of the Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz (FEP) has increased from approximately 0.47 Kg U swu/year-centrifuge in December 2007 to 0.75 Kg U swu/year-centrifuge in February 2014. It is also important to mention that Iran has been able to achieved even better centrifuge efficiency



both in its Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP) and in its Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz (PFEP), which had until recently been dedicated to enriching uranium to 19.75%, reaching a Kg U swu/year-centrifuge of 0.92 at PFEP and 0.89 at FFEP.

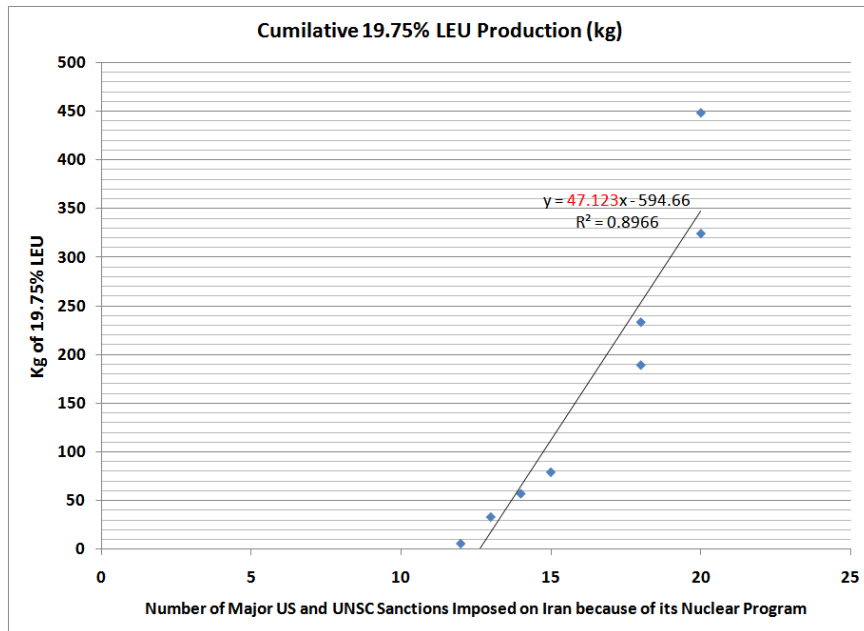
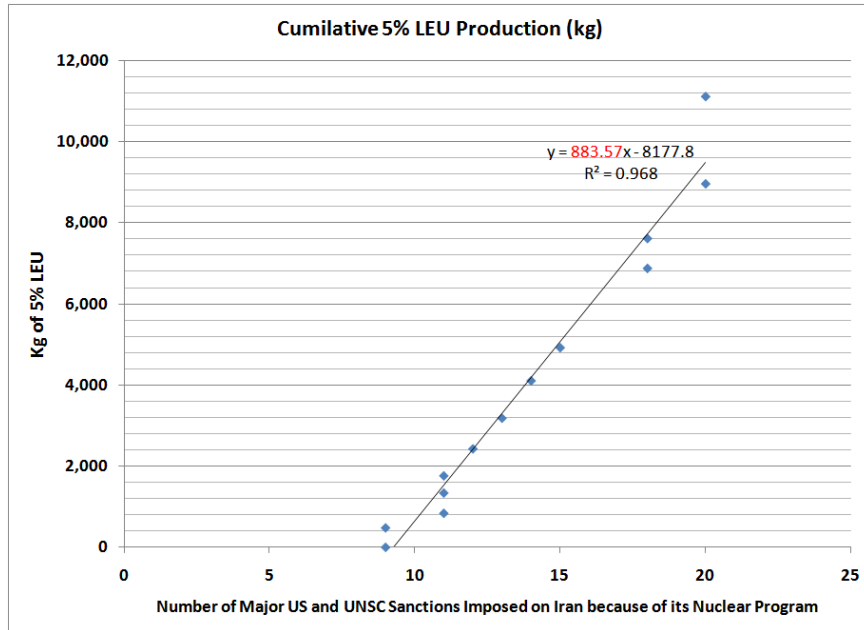
A third major indicator that could be used to evaluate Iran's enrichment capability and its breakout potentials is the amount of enriched uranium it has been able to produce, accumulate, and stockpile. Iran has been enriching uranium to about 5% since it commenced its enrichment activities at the Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz. It also enriched uranium to 19.75% from February 2010 to January 2014. The following two charts illustrate the cumulative amount of 5% and near 20% enriched uranium that Iran has thus far produced according to the Director General's reports to the IAEA Board of Governors:





At least 25kg of weapons-grade uranium, generally defined as uranium enriched above 90%, is needed to produce a single nuclear weapon. It takes significantly less time to produce weapons-grade uranium from a stockpile of LEU and therefore any addition to Iran's stockpile of 5% and, more importantly, near 20% enriched uranium could be perceived as an enhancement of Iran's breakout potential. Therefore, another way of assessing whether or not US use of coercive diplomacy toward Iran has persuaded it to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program, is to see if a negative correlation exists between the number of major US and UNSC sanctions against Iran due to its nuclear program and the amount of LEU it has stockpiled. As the following chart clearly illustrates, not only a negative correlation is not observed but there is in fact a statistically significant positive correlation between the number of major US and UNSC sanctions imposed on Iran for its nuclear program and the amount of LEU Iran has

stockpiled, with each additional sanction roughly correlating with an additional production of 883 kg 5% LEU and 47 kg of 19.75% LEU:



Lack of a negative correlation between the number of major US and UNSC sanctions against Iran due to its nuclear program and the number of centrifuges that Iran has installed in its primary enrichment facility, as well as the amount of LEU that it has stockpiled, clearly indicates that US sanctions have failed to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program. In fact, instead of a negative correlation, a very strong and statistically significant positive correlation between imposition of increasingly tougher sanctions and the advancement of Iran's breakout capability is observed, suggesting that both the severity of US and UNSC sanctions as well as Iran's enrichment capabilities have simultaneously increased during the past decade.

Before moving on to the second major question of this subsection, it is important to address one of the most significant arguments that could be made against the abovementioned assessment. It could be well argued that what is being observed is a classic example of reverse causation and that instead of analyzing the observed phenomenon in terms of US sanctions causing Iran's nuclear advancements, US sanctions should be seen as a response to Iran's march toward a breakout capability. While this argument could well be true, it has no effect on the assessment that US sanctions and, by extension, US use of coercive diplomacy against Iran have failed to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program. Whether the US has in fact been pursuing, as declared, a change in Iran's nuclear policies or whether it has been merely punishing Iran does not change the reality that despite increasing sanctions Iran's latent capability to manufacture a nuclear weapon has progressively improved and that

Iran has not yet been persuaded to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program.

The second major question of this subsection is more difficult to answer. Simply put, it is very difficult to conclusively assess whether or not US sanctions have constrained Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology. Those who argue that it has, correctly indicate that US and UNSC sanctions against Iran's nuclear program have made it considerably more difficult for Iran to procure materials needed for its nuclear program from foreign sources. At the very minimum, they argue, that US and UNSC sanctions have significantly increased the costs of obtaining such materials for Iran. They also argue that Iran's access to nuclear technology and know-how has also been considerably limited by US and UNSC sanctions and, as a result, conclude that relatively speaking, US sanctions have in fact constrained, even if not very significantly, Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology.

Those who argue that US sanctions have not constrained Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology, also point to the incentives such sanctions have created for Iran to more aggressively pursue indigenization of its nuclear program. While prior to the sanctions, Iran relied primarily on foreign suppliers both for technology and equipment, as a result of the sanctions, as will be described later, Iranian universities and research centers became effectively encouraged to attain more sophisticated nuclear know-how and Iranian industries found it quite lucrative to provide

for the needs of Iran's nuclear program. Hence, they argue, that in fact US sanctions have prompted Iran to indigenize a technology that was previously heavily dependent on foreign suppliers and argue that such indigenization, which has allowed Iran to further expand its nuclear program, would have never occurred had it not been because of US and UNSC sanctions.

Yet, even assuming that US and UNSC sanctions have in fact constrained Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology, this achievement cannot be regarded as a "success" of coercive diplomacy. At the maximum, constraining Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology could be conceptualized as a "denial" strategy. Denial "succeeds" when the policymakers of the target country "realize that they cannot gain benefits [by pursuing their objectionable policy] and will continue to pay costs if they do not concede" (Byman and Waxman, 2002, p. 78). Hence, a denial strategy could only be regarded as having succeeded in terms of coercive diplomacy, if it achieves a change in the policy of the target country in the direction desired by the coercing country. More concretely, in the case of Iran's nuclear program, we could label constraining of Iran's ability to develop and expand its capabilities in the field of nuclear technology as a "success" of coercive diplomacy only if such a constraint would persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program. Considering that the constraints have not yet resulted in such a change in Iran's nuclear policies and that the denial strategy has not been able to convince Iran that it has nothing to gain from pursuing its nuclear policies, such constraints cannot be regarded as a success of US use of coercive diplomacy against Iran.

Indeed, even if we agree that the US and UNSC sanctions have placed significant constraints on Iran's nuclear program, such constraints have only been achieved through the use of "brute force" and not through an ultimate change in the cost-benefit analysis of the policymakers in Iran.

### **Section 3.4: Conclusion**

Since the fall of the Shah, the US has heavily relied on coercive diplomacy in its dealings with the Islamic Republic. While the US initially sought to achieve a change in Iran's support for Islamist organizations opposed to Israel, its opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process mediated by the US, and its pursuit of missile and WMD related technologies, during the past decade the US has primarily focused on Iran's nuclear ambitions. Soon after the full extent of Iran's nuclear program was publicized by NCRI in the summer of 2002, the US relied on sanctions to, on one hand, impede Iran's ability to advance its nuclear fuel cycle program and, on the other hand, to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle activities. While it is difficult to assess the degree to which US sanctions have actually impeded Iran's ability to advance its nuclear fuel cycle programs, it could be more assertively maintained that US sanctions have failed to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program.

It is, nevertheless, important to note that the failure of US sanctions to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program should not be regarded as a complete failure of US policy. It could well be argued that US sanctions against Iran have

dissuaded other nations from following a similar path and have helped maintain an international norm that is vital to US national interests. It could also be argued, though less authoritatively, that US sanctions against Iran have placed significant constraints on Iran's nuclear program, slowing its march toward a nuclear breakout capability. It is, nevertheless, important to note that the abovementioned and other possible accomplishments of US sanctions against Iran have been achieved independent of a change in Iran's nuclear policies and at best could be viewed as a testament to US power and its ability to use its force to bring about circumstances that favor its national interests.



#### **Chapter 4: Effect of Coercive Diplomacy on Iran's Nuclear Policy**

The previous chapter showed that US reliance on coercive diplomacy has not persuaded Iran to abandon proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle program. Instead a strong positive correlation is observed between increasing reliance of the US on coercive measures in dealing with Iran's nuclear program and the expansion of Iran's nuclear fuel cycle activities. This chapter will investigate the effects of coercive diplomacy on Iran's nuclear policy and the reasons behind the failure of the US to persuade Iran to abandon proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle.

The first segment of this chapter evaluates the success odds of US coercive diplomacy against Iran's nuclear program based on the lessons and predictions from the existing literature on coercive diplomacy. Since the literature on coercive diplomacy is quite extensive, the first segment of this chapter primarily relies on the works of 1) Thomas C. Schelling, 2) Alexander L. George, and 3) Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot (HSE), who have authored the most frequently cited scholarly works on coercive diplomacy. It will use the conditions they set for successful employment of coercive diplomacy to see, based on what is already known in the literature, how likely it is for coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle program.

Then the chapter will explore the effects of coercive diplomacy on various other factors that shape and drive Iran's nuclear policy. Among such factors are the Iranian public opinion, Iran's strategic culture, Iran's domestic politics, and Iran's foreign and strategic policies. Evaluating the effect of coercive diplomacy on these various factors that drive

and shape Iran's nuclear policy will help one better understand the effects of coercive diplomacy on Iran's nuclear program and the reasons behind the failure of coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to abandon proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle activities.

#### **Section 4.1: Applying the Lessons from the Existing Literature on Coercive Diplomacy**

Coercive diplomacy is a highly context-dependent strategy. While some conditions enhance the probability of its eventual success, there are situations under which coercive diplomacy is unlikely to produce the intended policy outcomes. For this very reason, scholars from various fields have long investigated the effects of various contextual and tactical variables on the success odds of the strategy. In this segment, an evaluation will be made based on some of the main lessons and recommendations provided in the works of the most eminent scholars who have closely investigated the various dimensions of the strategy to establish the utility of coercive diplomacy in dealing with Iran's nuclear program and its success odds in persuading Iran to abandon proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle activities.

### **Section 4.1.1: Lessons from the Works of Thomas C. Schelling**

Thomas Schelling is perhaps the best known theorist who has significantly contributed to the body of literature that seeks to create a better understanding of the dynamics of coercive diplomacy. Schelling relies heavily on concepts from game theory to evaluate how state actors bargain with one another in strategic settings. Schelling (1960) advanced the theory that since “most conflict situations are essentially bargaining situations” where each party at least somewhat controls what the other party wants and where there is at least some common interest that cannot be achieved without some form of mutual accommodation, the strategy of dealing with conflict situations should focus more on “exploitation of potential forces” and not so much on “application of force” (pp. 5-7). Schelling’s theory in effect revolved around the premise that the coercing party will only achieve his aim if and only if he could convince and persuade the target that the costs he will suffer if he does not comply will be higher than the benefits of non-compliance and resistance. He predicts that coercion would work when the expected costs associated with the threat exceed the anticipated gains of defiance.

In line with his theory, Schelling identifies a series of conditions that are necessary to credibly persuade a target that it would be better off conceding than resisting. Among conditions that Schelling (1966) identifies is the target coming to a belief that should it not concede, it would certainly be inflicted with such a pain that would more than offset the benefits of defiance (p.89). Schelling (1966) then asserts that for coercive diplomacy to work against a target, “whatever is demanded of him must be less unattractive to him than the threatened consequences... and must not entail costs in prestige, reputation, or

self-respect that outweigh the threat” (p. 89). In case of US demand for Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its program, there is an almost consensus view among Iran experts, in Iran and abroad, that such a demand is regarded both by Iranian policymakers as well as the public, regardless of their political inclinations, as an encroachment on Iran’s sovereignty and its rights under the NPT.

What is important to note here is that the existence of such a perception, regardless of its validity, is enough to undermine coercive diplomacy. With a fundamental principle believed to be at stake, no feasible amount of pain is likely to persuade Iran to forgo what it perceives to be its sovereign right, regardless of whether others agree with it or not. In a discussion with a foreign policy advisor to a high ranking Iranian official I went through various economic problems US and UNSC sanctions have inflicted on Iran and questioned whether the economic benefits of having a nuclear fuel cycle program were sufficient enough to make defiance a “sensible and rational” policy. In response, the advisor pointed to a location on Iran’s map on the border with Pakistan and claimed the location to be void of any population and resources and indicated the price of land in that location to be near nil. Then he asked me, “how much cost should Iran be willing to burden to defend this territory, should Pakistan try to annex a single square meter of it?” Without waiting for my response he said, “don’t you think we would and should sacrifice a lot more than its material worth to maintain our sovereignty over it?” Indeed, what the advisor as well as many others with whom I have discussed the issue try to get across is that Iran regards having a full nuclear fuel cycle program as an inalienable sovereign right that must be defended like all other sovereign rights of the Islamic Republic.

It is precisely because of this perception that Iran, from the time of the Shah up to this very day, has outright rejected and have termed as “insulting” any offer that has required it to sign off major aspects of its nuclear fuel cycle program. In fact the most major stumbling block to a nuclear agreement between Iran and the US during the time of the Shah, which prevented effective nuclear collaborations between the two countries beyond the purchase of Tehran’s Research Reactor, was the “disagreement over the right of Iran to reprocess the plutonium and other elements from the spent fuel extracted from its reactors” (Poneman, 1982, p. 87). Despite the fact that Iran did not even have a nuclear reactor, let alone a reprocessing plant, and despite the fact that Iran did not have any plans whatsoever to construct a reprocessing plant in the foreseeable future, the Shah refused give up the perceived right of Iran to develop such plants should it chose to do so in the future. To preserve that perceived right, Iran turned down lucrative nuclear trade agreements with the US and spent years negotiating with the US over a right it never intended to invoke. Although those negotiations eventually led to an agreement in January 1978 with the US promising Iran the “most favored nation” status for reprocessing (Poneman, 1982, p. 88), they dragged on without a conclusion for so long that Iran and the US were never able to actualize their high hopes for cooperation in the field of nuclear energy.

All recent offers, many of which were quite enticing for a country like Iran, were also rejected on the same grounds. Just as an example, when the EU3 countries submitted their first offer to Iran on August 5, 2005, promising Iran better relations and trade with

the EU in return for Iran signing a “binding commitment not to pursue fuel cycle activities,” Iranian officials felt insulted. Javad Zarif, who was Iran’s ambassador to the UN at that time, said in protest: “Maybe the Europeans are willing to sell out their own [sovereign] rights at a cheap price, but not Iran...[The EU3 offer] is absurd, demeaning and self-congratulatory” (Linzer, 2005b). In fact, the only reason Iran has been able to agree to the November 2013 Joint Action Plan (JPA), is that unlike the previous offers, it does not demand that Iran relinquish any of its perceived sovereign rights. Even to make the 2003-2005 suspensions possible, Iran insisted on and made sure that both the Tehran Declaration and the Paris Agreement would include language asserting that the suspensions were voluntary confidence building measures that were not legally binding.

This is precisely why requiring Iran to abandon proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program under Chapter VII of UN Charter made matters so much more difficult to resolve. UNSC resolutions turned what Iran was willing to do and had previously done on a “voluntary” basis into a “legal obligation,” something Iran could not legitimize through its compliance. Hence, in effect, by branding suspension a legal obligation, UNSC assured its rejection by Iran and no amount of pain is likely to persuade Iran to lend legitimacy to documents that require Iran to indefinitely relinquish what Iran perceives as its sovereign right. The fact that Iran was going to perceive such a demand as an encroachment on its sovereign rights could hardly been a mystery to those pushing for such UNSC resolutions, not least because they were explicitly forewarned by Iranian officials and diplomats. Hence, from Iran’s perspective, those pushing for such UNSC resolutions against Iran’s nuclear program, knew quite well that Iran could not comply

with them and were, therefore, most likely pursuing ulterior motives distantly related to Iran's nuclear fuel cycle activities. As will be discussed, this perception has also undermined the utility of coercive diplomacy in dealing with Iran's nuclear program in other ways as well.

Another condition Schelling (1966) names as a prerequisite for successful employment of coercive diplomacy, is to provide the target with enough credible assurance and to convince it that compliance would not result in more demands. Unless the target knows what it is precisely that would fully satisfy the coercer, it is unlikely to comply with the demands since it would not know whether such compliance would end the hostilities or bring more costly future demands. (pp. 74-75). In the case of Iran, not only has the US refused to clearly articulate its demands and reassure Iranians that cessation of proliferation-sensitive activities is all that it seeks from the Islamic Republic, but to the contrary, both verbally and through its actions, the US has made it clear to Iran that the Islamic Republic's nuclear program is only one of many issues that are of grave concern for the US. Sanctions on Iran were imposed long before the full extent of Iran's nuclear program was exposed in 2002 and most current US sanctions on Iran have not solely been adopted as a result of Iran's nuclear fuel cycle activities. Just as an example, besides concerns about Iran's nuclear program, the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 names, among other US concerns, Iran's "violation of human rights," "suppression of freedom of expression and religious freedom" in Iran, Iran's "fraudulent presidential election," Iran's "unresponsiveness to President Obama's unprecedented and serious efforts at engagement," "Iran's ongoing

arms exports to, and support for, terrorists,” “involvement of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran’s nuclear program, international terrorism, and domestic human rights abuse,” “the oppressive activities [of IRGC] against the people of Iran,” “support received by Hezbollah from the Government of Iran,” and “Hezbollah’s terrorist activities and the threat Hezbollah poses to Israel, the democratic sovereignty of Lebanon, and the national security interests of the United States.”

Even worse than official US positions and declarations have been the actions the US has undertaken against Iran. As Schelling (1966) asserts:

Actions not only speak louder than words on many occasions, but like words they can speak clearly or confusingly. To the extent that actions speak, it helps if they reinforce the message rather than confuse it... if the object is to induce compliance and not to start a spiral of reprisals and counteractions, it is helpful to show the limits to what one is demanding, and this can often be best shown by designing a campaign that distinguished what is demanded from all other objectives that one might have been seeking but is not. To harass aircraft in the Berlin air corridor communicates that polar flights are not at issue; to harass polar flights while saying that it is a punishment for flying in the Berlin corridor does not so persuasively communicate that the harassment will stop when the Berlin flights stop, or that the Russians will not think of a few other favors they would like from the airline before they call off their campaign. Most of the problems of defining the threat and the demands that go with it, of offering assurance about what is not demanded and of promising cessation once compliance is



forthcoming, are aggravated if there is no connection between the compelling action (or the threat of it) and the issue being bargained over (p. 88).

Indeed, the coercive measures adopted by the US against Iran confuse the message more than they clarify it. US sanctions against Iran are in no way limited to Iran's nuclear program and its proliferation-sensitive activities alone. US sanctions have targeted everything from Iran's hydrocarbon refineries to its automotive industry and from its need for imported gasoline to, in practice, medicine for cancer patients. In fact, by cutting Iran off from the international financial system, US sanctions have put pressure on all segments of Iran's economy. The range of items, organizations, and activities that US sanctions have targeted is so vast that it leaves no question in the minds of Iranians that US demand for Iran to cease proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program is only the tip of the iceberg of the US demands from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Such an Iranian perception, has undermined another condition Schelling names as a requirement for coercive diplomacy to succeed. Schelling (1966) indicates that for coercion to work, the target must credibly believe that "compliance [would] automatically preclude" the threatened or demonstrated pain (p. 89). Since "the object of a threat is to give somebody a choice... both sides of the choice, the threatened penalty and the proffered avoidance or reward, need to be credible" (Schelling, 1966, pp. 74-75). In fact, as Schelling (1966) asserts, a target's belief that we would inflict pain anyway and its disbelief in our willingness or even ability to cease infliction of pain once

compliance becomes forthcoming, would only raise its “incentives to do what we wanted to deter and to do it even more quickly” (p. 75).

The case of US sanctions against Iran is a clear example of what Schelling forewarns against. While most Iranians<sup>17</sup> as well as Iranian policymakers have confidence in the US ability to ratchet up pressure against Iran, there is no trust in US willingness or ability to cease the pressure if Iran would suspend proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program. There are several reasons for this. First, as was mentioned, US sanctions against Iran have been in place long before Iran had a fuel cycle program. Forgoing the program all together, would only put Iran where it was in the 1980s and 1990s, during which period the US imposed some of its toughest sanctions against Iran. Secondly, the current sanctions against Iran do not limit their demands to a suspension of the proliferation-sensitive aspects of Iran’s nuclear program. The Iran Sanctions Act (ISA), for example, requires the President to determine and certify that Iran has “ceased its efforts to design, develop, manufacture, or acquire a nuclear explosive device or related materials and technology, chemical and biological weapons, and ballistic missiles and ballistic missile launch technology; been removed from the list of countries... determined to have provided support for acts of international terrorism; and poses no significant threat to United States national security, interests, or allies,” before the ISA sanctions against Iran could be lifted. Third, from Iran’s point of view, US hostilities toward Iran would not

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<sup>17</sup> In a survey conducted by UTCPOR in the Winter of 2013, 61% of Iranians indicated that it was either very likely (26%) or somewhat likely (35%) for the sanctions against Iran to increase if Iran would continue enriching uranium.

cease even if Iran addressed all US concerns.<sup>18</sup> Many Iranian policymakers and analysts point to how the US reacted to Iran's 2003 offer, which addressed almost all, if not every, US concerns, and claim that the ultimate goal of the US is to undermine the Islamic Republic and not just change its various policies.

It is important to note, however, that right after the election of President Obama, there was a short-lived yet widespread belief that Obama did sincerely wish to accept the Islamic Republic as it is and sought to engage with it based on "mutual interest and respect." But even then many believed that even if the President wanted to lift some sanctions, he would not be able to do so. One example that is often invoked is that it took the US approximately seven years after the ousting of Saddam to lift most US and UNSC sanctions against Iraq. Also, considering that most US sanctions against Iran have been codified into law by Congress, an entirely new bill will be required to repeal or even amend any of these sanctions. As with all pieces of legislation, such a bill would first have to be voted out of its relevant committee and then the full House of Representatives and Senate would have to approve. Given how Congress works and the influences exerted on members of Congress by lobbying entities such as AIPAC, the Arab lobby and even the Mojahedin-e Khalgh Organization (MEK), whose State Department designation as a terrorist organization was recently lifted, many in Iran do not have much faith in the ability of the US to lift sanctions, even in the event of a grand bargain between President

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<sup>18</sup> According to a survey of the Iranian people published jointly by UTCPOR and CISSM in September 2014, "respondents were told to 'assume that Iran would fully accept and implement U.S. demands in regards to its nuclear program.' They were then asked whether they thought the U.S. would "gradually lift most nuclear-related sanctions against Iran,' or whether the U.S. would 'continue the sanctions and the pressures...for some other reasons and excuses?' In response, three quarters say the U.S. would continue these sanctions for other reasons; just 19% thought the U.S. would gradually lift most of them. Only 7% did not answer, which is a low level of non-response for such a speculative question." (Mohseni, Gallagher and Ramsay, 2014).

Obama and Iran. Also, past engagements with the US, particularly with respect to the assistances Iran has provided to various US Presidents and the Presidents' unwillingness or inability (or both) to reciprocate, have all but discredited US promises of sanctions relief in the eyes of Iranians.

In the relationship between Iran and the US, the perception that has oscillated the most, primarily in the US but also in Iran, is the degree to which each country has perceived its interests to be intertwined with that of the other. As Schelling (1966) asserts:

Coercion by threat of damage also requires that our interests and our opponent's not be absolutely opposed. If his pain were our greatest delight, and our satisfaction his greatest woe, we would just proceed to hurt and to frustrate each other. It is when his pain gives us little or no satisfaction compared with what he can do for us, and the action or inaction that satisfies us cost him less than the pain we can cause, that there is room for coercion. Coercion requires finding a bargain, arranging for him to be better off doing what we want – worse off not doing what we want – when he takes the threatened penalty into account (p. 4).

It is interesting that while there have been episodes when Iran and the US have truly felt to have converging interests, expression of such feelings from one side has often corresponded with opposite feelings on the other side. Unfortunately, instead of negotiating a win-win bargain, Iran and the US have mostly preoccupied themselves with first attaining leverage against the other. It is quite common to hear policymakers in the US and, to some extent, those in Iran echo the expressed opinion of former Secretary of

Defense, Robert Gates, that “we need to figure out a way to develop some leverage . . . and then sit down and talk with [Iranians]” (DeYoung, 2008). Indeed, it has become widely accepted by policymakers in both countries that, to use the words of *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman (2008), “the right question... isn’t whether we talk or don’t talk. It’s whether we have leverage or don’t have leverage. When you have leverage, talk. When you don’t have leverage, get some -- by creating economic, diplomatic or military incentives and pressures that the other side finds too tempting or frightening to ignore.”

But viewing “leverage” as a prerequisite for talks is unhelpful. If both sides were to regard “leverage” as a prerequisite, good-faith negotiations would never ensue, since each side would refuse to negotiate without having a net positive leverage against the other and, since logically both sides of a negotiation could not simultaneously have a net positive leverage against the other, negotiations would never take place. But perhaps the bigger danger of seeking leverage first, is what happens when leverage is actually attained. The history of US dealings with Iran is full of examples of US refusing to negotiate with Iran because it had achieved a perceived leverage against Iran and did not see why it should negotiate when it thought it could simply impose its will on Iran. Disregarding Iran’s 2003 offer after the US had brought down Saddam is just one example.

### **Section 4.1.2: Lessons from the Works of Alexander L. George**

Another distinguish scholar in the field of coercive diplomacy is Alexander L. George. Troubled by the inconsistent track record of compellence and bothered by compellence failure of the US in Vietnam, George and his colleagues conducted an in-depth case study of US involvements in Laos, Cuba, and Vietnam in an attempt to unearth the “many variables at play” in actual compellence situations and to create a “policy-relevant” theory, geared toward improving foreign policymaking (pp. ix-xviii). The last chapter of George and his colleagues 1971 book, written by George himself, compares the three cases and identifies eight conditions that “favor adoption and implementation” of coercive diplomacy and the absence of which makes it “difficult and imprudent for American leaders to adopt the strong form of coercive diplomacy” (p. 216). In 1994, George and his colleagues published the second edition of *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, covering more than twice as many more cases. The last chapter of that edition is also dedicated to lessons policymakers should draw from past US attempts at coercive diplomacy and names nine conditions, which are primarily the same as the eight conditions George and his colleagues had laid down in their 1971 book, “that, if present, favor its success or, if absent, reduce the likelihood of its being effective” (p. 279).

One of the conditions that George and his colleagues (1994) name is “clarity of the objective.” George and his colleagues argue that “clarity with respect to what is to be achieved through coercive diplomacy is important... [because such clarity] assists policymakers in selecting from among several available response options... [and also] helps persuade the opponent of the coercing power’s strength of purpose” (p. 280). As

discussed earlier, the objectives of the US with respect to the Islamic Republic are not very clear and the US has been seeking to achieve varying outcomes through coercive diplomacy. Even on the issue of Iran's nuclear program, US policy objectives have not been clear, shifting from opposing the Russians to finish Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant to merely opposing above 5% enrichment activities. Interestingly, while UNSC resolutions demand Iran under Chapter VII of UN Charter to "suspend all reprocessing, heavy water-related and enrichment-related activities," the November 2013 JPA, only requires Iran to "not enrich uranium over 5% for the duration of the 6 months." This wide degree of change in the position of the US and the coalition that it has put together, communicates to Iran that there exists little clarity with respect to what is to be demanded with respect to Iran's nuclear program, let alone other aspects of Iran-US relations.

At the very minimum, one reason for such lack of clarity is the length and duration of US sanctions against Iran. Although sanctions have remained a fixture of US foreign policy toward Iran, various US administrations have followed differing policy aims toward Iran. Hence, since successive US administrations have been pursuing differing policy objectives without significantly altering the instruments being used, the aims of US coercive diplomacy have lost the clarity they needed to be successful. The US is also facing the difficult task of keeping together a coalition whose members have vastly different policy objectives toward Iran, while at the same time responding to the demands of various domestic constituencies and lobby organizations that advocate for policy objectives, such as regime change, that are not only opposed by the very coalition the US

seeks to preserve. These, along with many other reasons, have caused the US to have difficulty forging a coherent strategy toward Iran, which has in turn blurred the objectives the US is seeking to achieve through coercive diplomacy.

George and his colleagues also believe that the coercer has to be more motivated than the target for coercive diplomacy to have acceptable odds of success. As George and his colleagues (1994) argue “the relative motivation of the two sides plays an important role in determining the outcome of coercive diplomacy...[it] is critical... that the adversary believe the coercing power is more highly motivated than the adversary to achieve its crisis objective” (p. 281). In this case, both the US is highly motivated to prevent Iran from achieving a viable nuclear weapons capability and Iran is highly motivated to preserve what it regards to be its sovereign rights.

Assessing who is more motivated, however, depends heavily on what is perceived to be demanded. Indeed, one way the coercer could achieve an asymmetry of motivation in its favor is to demand “of the opponent only what is essential to protect its own vital interests and not [make] demands that engage the vital interests of its adversary” (p. 281). Iran regards enrichment to be its sovereign right and is determined to defend its “right to enrichment” as a way to both preserve its right to national self-determination and showcase its autonomy and independence. In comparison the US does not regard a nuclear armed Iran, let alone a nuclear weapons capable Iran, as a danger to its national self-determination, autonomy, independence, or even vital national interests. Hence, while Iran is ready to sacrifice a lot more to preserve what it regards as its sovereign



right, it does not regard the US as willing to sacrifice a lot to prevent Iran from having a safeguarded nuclear fuel cycle program.

This Iranian perception is sourced in both US actions and US statements. President Obama has been very careful in regards to where he has drawn his administration's red line on Iran's nuclear program. Time and again President Obama has asserted his redline to be Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. Attaining a nuclear weapons capability has never been President Obama's redline. This is in stark contrast with where President George W. Bush had drawn his administration's redline, which was Iran attaining the capability to produce nuclear weapons.<sup>19</sup> By drawing America's redline at Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon, the US has been able to make Iranians believe that the US would not tolerate Iran obtaining nuclear weapons. What that means to Iranians, however, is that the US is not motivated enough to make much sacrifices and undergo severe costs to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons capable state.

US actions have also intensified that Iranian perception. As Iran has marched toward becoming a nuclear threshold state, the US has refrained from undertaking any costly measure to forestall Iran's march and has merely resorted to measures that at best impose costs but do not prevent Iran from developing the capability to develop nuclear weapons. From Iran's perspective, had the US been really concerned with a nuclear weapons capable Iran and had the US truly perceived a nuclear weapons capable Iran to be a

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<sup>19</sup> Just as an example of President George W. Bush's position on Iran's nuclear program, on October 17, 2007, President Bush stated in a news conference at the White House that he had told "people that if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing [Iran] from having the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon" (Stolberg, 2007).

source of significant threat to its vital national interests, it would have for sure taken more drastic, forceful, albeit costly, measures. In absence of such measures, it is logical to assume that Iran has come to the conclusion that the US is not as motivated to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons capable state as Iran is motivated to develop its indigenous nuclear fuel cycle program.

The target's sense of urgency to concede is another factor named by George and his colleagues. Indeed, "if the state employing coercive diplomacy genuinely experiences a sense of urgency to achieve its objective... it is more likely to be able to generate a sense of urgency for compliance on the part of the opponent" (George and Simons, 1994, p. 282). But when such urgency is not credibly conveyed, either through words or actions, there is no reason why the opponent would feel that it must concede in a timely fashion. In the case of US coercive diplomacy toward Iran, particularly since the US has adopted the "gradual turning of the screw" approach, no such urgency is credibly conveyed and no such urgency is felt by Iran. From Iran's perspective, short of military action, the US is already inflicting the maximum amount of pain it could inflict on Iran and not complying with US demands would at most result in the US seeking ways to further increase pressure on Iran. Being inured to sanctions and pressure, however, Iranian policymakers seem to have become insensitive to the threat of further sanctions and having operated under sanctions for some 30 years, the Iranian economy is believed by Iranian policymakers to have become insulated, self-reliant and resilient enough to withstand further attempts at its disruption. Hence, even though the sanctions have negatively affected Iran's economy, neither the sanctions nor the threat of more

sanctions, have been enough to create a sense of urgency among Iranian policymakers. Lack of such an urgency could readily be seen not only in Iran's disregard for the various deadlines set by successive UNSC resolution on Iran's nuclear program, but also in Iran's expansion of its nuclear fuel cycle activities on those very deadlines.

George and his colleagues (1994) also regard the coercer having adequate domestic and international support as being important and indicate that not only "a certain level of political support at home is needed for any serious use of coercive diplomacy" but that also "[i]nternational support (or lack thereof) is also an important factor" (p. 284). This is one of the areas that the US, particularly in recent years, has been quite successful. Domestically and internationally, almost all public opinion surveys indicate solid support for sanctions on Iran. Just as an example, according to a survey by Pew Research Center conducted between March 4 – 18, 2013, 93% of the American public, along with solid majorities in eleven of the thirteen countries surveyed, oppose Iran developing nuclear weapons. Of those opposed, 78% of the Americans, as well as strong majorities in nine of the thirteen countries surveyed, approve imposing "tougher international sanctions on Iran to try to stop it from developing nuclear weapons." (Pew Research Center, 2013). Also, while prior to 2002, the US had difficulty persuading other countries to impose sanctions on Iran, since 2002, four UNSC resolutions with sanctions have been passed against Iran, and the EU and Canada have imposed their own set of sanctions on Iran.

It is, however, important to mention two significant facts. First, both US and international public opinion on Iran is not well informed. Just as an example, contrary to all

assessments by the US intelligence community as well as the IAEA, according to a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation survey conducted between February 12 – 15, 2010, 71% of Americans think that “Iran currently has nuclear weapons.” Also contrary to the assessments of most security experts as well as the US intelligence community, there is a widespread belief in the US and globally that Iran has decided to develop nuclear weapons and does have an active nuclear weapons program. But, perhaps worse, is the very pessimistic view held by a solid majority of Americans as well as the publics of many other countries, which is in contradiction with the assessment of most security experts, that if Iran obtained nuclear weapons, it would use them against Israel and other countries in the Middle East, would “supply nuclear weapons to terrorists,” and would “threaten Europe with nuclear weapons” (Council on Foreign Relations, 2012).

Media coverage of Iran’s nuclear program is also not very impartial. A study by the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) has found US and UK media coverage of Iran’s program to have “focused on the ‘he said/she said’ aspect of the policy debate, without adequately explaining the fundamental issues that should have been informing the assessment,” “lacked precision and was inconsistent over time,” “failed to provide adequate sourcing and context for claims,” “generally adopted the tendency... to place on Iran the burden to resolve the dispute over its nuclear program, failing to acknowledge the roles of... other countries in the dispute,” “paid insufficient attention to the broader context... that influence what specific actors say or do about Iran’s nuclear program,” and “reflected and reinforced the negative sentiments about Iran

that are broadly shared by US, European, and Israeli Publics” (Siegel and Barforoush, 2013).

Without going into why the public is so pessimistic and why the media, particularly in the west, has lacked adequate objectivity on Iran, it is important to know that the support provided for more US sanctions on Iran is at least partially, if not completely, based on misconceptions about Iran’s nuclear program. Hence, while the needed public and international support for US use of coercive diplomacy is currently present and strong, just as with the 2003 Iraq war, the level of support for such measures could precipitously change once domestic and international public opinion become more informed.

Secondly, when it comes to the support of other governments for US measures against Iran, current US policies against countries that wish to, and in some ways need to, trade with Iran are not sustainable without some degree of legitimization. Even US allies, let alone countries that have significantly different worldviews than the US, have long complained about US extraterritorial legislations. In fact, the French Total S.A. oil and gas company, was among the first international energy companies to disregard the Iran Sanctions Act to sign a multi-billion dollar contract with Iran to develop Iran’s South Pars gas field back in 1997, forcing the US to issue an embarrassing waiver. Also, just recently, senior British politicians have begun complaining about “US bullying of UK banks and hindering legal trade with Iran,” which, according to them, is “costing British companies hundreds of millions of pounds in lost sales” (Parker, 2014). It is, therefore, questionable how deep and sustainable current level of international support for US

sanctions on Iran is and whether the US can prevent alienating even its allies, let alone other countries, if it continues to penalize other nations' companies and financial institutions for engaging in internationally legal trade with Iran.

There is, however, another side to enjoying domestic and international support. Although George and his colleagues place exclusive emphasis on having domestic and international support for the “sticks” side of the strategy, the coercing country must also enjoy domestic and international support for the “carrots” and the stipulated terms of settlement, for them to be perceived as credible by the target. In other words, if the target knows that the coercing country would face considerable domestic and/or international opposition should it decide to deliver the promised benefits linked to the target's compliance, then the credibility of both the terms of settlement as well as the promised benefits of compliance would become undermined. With the case of Iran, public opinion both in the US and internationally does favor diplomatic settlement of the conflict and US officials would not face much public opposition should they decide to ratchet down the sanctions. The voice of the public opinion as a whole, however, is often overridden by the voice of those who feel more strongly about an issue. In the case of Iran, those in the US who feel strongly about Iran-related issues tend to also be quite hostile toward adoption of any conciliatory policy toward the Islamic Republic. Not only the Israeli and Arab lobby groups but also the Iranian expatriate community living in the US, advocate hostile US policies toward Iran and are very sensitive to any signs of rapprochement between the US and the Islamic Republic of Iran. This has led the Congress to also be quite sensitive to any conciliatory US measures toward the Islamic Republic, making Iranians quite

doubtful about the ability of the administration to deliver on its promises for sanctions relief.

Another factor that is named by George and his colleagues as being important for achieving intended outcomes through coercive diplomacy is the target's fear of an unacceptable escalation in the conflict. George and his colleagues (1994) assert that the "impact of coercive diplomacy is enhanced if the initial action and communication directed against the adversary arouse his fear of an escalation to circumstances less acceptable than those promised by accession to the coercing power's demand" (p. 285). As George and his colleagues emphasize, a fear of escalation alone is not enough; the opponent must feel the net impact of escalation on its interests to be costlier than conceding for such a fear to be effective. In other words, as an Iranian official who was engaged in the nuclear negotiations during the first few years of Ahmadinejad's first term in office told me in a discussion, "no one is going to commit suicide out of fear of death," which is a Persian proverb that captures the essence of what George and his colleagues are alluding to. When the US occupied Baghdad and was perceived to be on its way to Iran, fear of a military engagement with the US most probably did have an effect on Iran sending its 2003 offer to the US, practically promising to address every single US concerns with Iran. Yet, when the offer was rejected out of hand and when its receipt was not even recognized by the US, Iran arrived at the conclusion that the US is determined to overthrow the Islamic Republic, regarded conceding to US demands as more costly than possible military engagement with the US, rendering the fear of possible escalation of conflict between Iran and the US ineffective. Hence, it is doubtful that Iran currently has

fears of an escalation to circumstances less acceptable than those promised by acquiescence to US demands.

Finally, as with Schelling, George and his colleagues also emphasize the importance of clarity concerning the precise terms of settlement. George and his colleagues (1994) indicate:

Clarity of objectives and demands... may not suffice. In some cases it may also be necessary for the coercing power to formulate specific terms regarding the termination of the crisis that the two sides can agree on and to establish procedures for carrying out these terms and verifying their implementation. Obviously, this would not be helpful in cases with extreme demands... where the desired terms are more threatening to the opponent's interests than the punishment being inflicted...[s]pecifying terms of settlement in advance of formal agreement can also be of major importance to the adversary's side. It may want precise settlement terms to safeguard against the possibility that the coercing power has in mind a broader, more sweeping interpretation of the formula for ending the crisis or will be tempted to renew pressure and push for even greater concessions after the initial agreement for terminating the crisis is concluded. The adversary who contemplates succumbing to coercive diplomacy may need specific and reliable assurance that the coercing power will carry out its part of the termination agreement" (p. 286).

To this date, the US has not clearly, credibly, and with one voice clarified exactly what it would take to fully address all US concerns with the Islamic Republic of Iran, let alone



formulate a clear procedure of how US concerns could be alleviated. Even with respect to US concerns regarding Iran's nuclear ambitions, no precise formula for ameliorating the crisis has yet been put forward by the US and its allies. Interestingly, even the demands formulated by UNSC have not been expressed as terms of settlement but rather as the prerequisites for arriving at the terms for the final settlement of the issues regarding Iran's nuclear ambitions. Hence, without knowing exactly what is credibly requested from the Islamic Republic, Iran has had difficulty conceding to terms that, from Iran's perspective, would not necessarily bring it significantly closer to a final settlement of the hostilities.

It is, however, important to note that Iran has delivered whenever the US or the IAEA have clearly put forth specific terms for resolving the conflict, provided that, from Iran's perspective, they did not violate Iran's sovereign rights. Iran and IAEA's agreed upon "Workplan" in 2007 is just one such example. Just to recall from the previous chapter, IAEA and Iran agreed to a Workplan on August 21, 2007, which, according to the Workplan, covered "all remaining issues and the Agency confirmed that there are no other remaining issues and ambiguities regarding Iran's past nuclear program and activities." Then, based on the agreed upon Workplan, Iran started to address the IAEA concerns and one by one resolved all outstanding issues and ambiguities regarding Iran's past nuclear activities. Finally, in ElBaradei's Feb 22, 2008, report to the IAEA Board of Governors, it was concluded that Iran had answered all 6 outstanding issues listed in the Workplan in an acceptable manner and that IAEA no longer considered them as outstanding. Indeed, Iran agreed to the Workplan and did its part because the agreement,

to use the words of George and his colleagues (1994), did “formulate specific terms regarding the termination of the crisis,” did “establish procedures for carrying out these terms,” and did “safeguard against the possibility that the coercing power has in mind a broader, more sweeping interpretation of the formula for ending the crisis or will be tempted to renew pressure and push for even greater concessions” (p. 286).

Another example of how Iran has reacted positively to credible deals with specified demands is how Iran responded to the nuclear fuel swap proposal in 2010. Iran was initially reluctant to agree to ElBaradei’s swap proposal since, from Iran’s perspective, it lacked not only clarity but also the necessary assurances and guarantees. The Obama’s April 20, 2012, letter to President Lula of Brazil and Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey, which not only formulated “specific terms regarding the termination of the crisis,” but also provided for the needed guarantees and assurances that were lacking in ElBaradei’s deal, gave Iran the confidence it needed to pursue the swap deal. In less than a month from Obama’s April 20, 2010, letter, Iran agreed to deliver on every single term that was laid out in that letter. On May 17, 2010, Iran, Brazil, and Turkey signed the Tehran Declaration, which established the procedures for carrying out the terms specified in President Obama’s letter. A day after the signing of the declaration, however, the US rejected the deal and, in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called more UNSC sanctions “as convincing an answer to the efforts undertaken in Tehran over the last few days as any we could provide” (Sanger and Landler, 2010).

Currently, what Iran is working toward as part of the JPA, is securing a precise and mutually acceptable agreement to conclusively end the conflict over Iran's nuclear program. Considering past Iranian experiences with such agreements, however, it is likely that Iran will be more concerned with the credibility of the assurances provided in the "mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution" that is envisioned by the JPA. The main question in Tehran, however, is whether the hostile relations between Iran and the US would end with even a "mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution" on the nuclear issue, considering that US concerns about Iran are in no way limited to Iran's nuclear ambitions alone. Any sign that would suggest the initiation of a new conflict over a new issue after the termination of the conflict over the nuclear issue, is likely to make Iran less motivated to work toward the resolution of concerns over its nuclear program. Conversely, any signs that would reassure the policymakers in Iran that by addressing US concerns over its nuclear ambitions the US would change its hostile policies toward Iran, is likely to make Iran more motivated to actively address concerns about its nuclear program.

#### **Section 4.1.3: Lessons from the Works of Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot**

The work of Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot (HSE), titled *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, is perhaps the most extensive work that provides policy relevant lessons on the contextual and tactical variables that affect successful utilization of coercive. HSE published the first edition of their work in 1985, the second edition in 1990, and published the third edition in collaboration with Barbara Oegg in 2007, updating each edition with the study of more sanction episodes. Like George, HSE offer their own list

of conditions that affect the degree to which sanctions are likely to succeed and like the study and recommendations that George offers, the policy prescriptions of HSE have remained almost intact throughout the three editions of the book.

One of the most important lessons HSE and Oegg (2007) draw from their analysis of 174 cases is that “sanctions are of limited utility in achieving foreign policy goals that depend on compelling the target country to take action it stoutly resists. In some cases, the security, political, or other costs of complying with the sender’s demands may simply be higher than any pain that can be imposed with sanctions” (p. 159). Hence, like Schelling and George and his colleagues, HSE and Oegg conclude that for sanctions to be effective, the coercer’s demand ought to be limited, modest, and clear. HSE and Oegg (2007) assert that “at most there is a weak correlation between economic deprivation and political willingness to change. The economic impact of sanctions may be pronounced, especially on the target, but other factors in the situation often overshadow the impact of sanctions in determining the political outcome” (p. 162). Having explained earlier how the US is seeking Iran’s compliance with a series of significant yet ambiguous demands, without providing it with any assurance that compliance with those demands would not lead to further future demands, it suffices to simply emphasize that from Iran’s point of view, the costs of complying with US demands are higher than the pain the US has been or credibly threatens to inflict on Iran, not least because Iran perceives US demands not only as an encroachment on its sovereign rights, but also as perpetual with the ultimate intention of severely undermining the Islamic Republic, both domestically and internationally.

Another lesson provided by HSE and Oegg is that sanctions work much better against friends than against enemies. HSE and Oegg (2007) argue that since “erstwhile friends and close trading partners... have more to lose, diplomatically as well as economically, than countries with which the sender has limited or adversarial relations,” it is significantly easier to coerce them than antagonistic targets (p.163). HSE and Oegg (2007) further argue that “a target country that has little economic contact with the sender” is also more immune from its economic threats and, hence, less likely to feel obliged to comply with the demands of the coercing power (p. 163). Another reason HSE and Oegg (2007) give as to why sanctions work better with friends than with enemies is that unlike enemies, “allies will not be as concerned as adversaries that concessions will undermine the government’s reputation and leave it weaker in future conflicts” (p. 164).

Indeed, the relationship between the US and Iran has been anything but cordial since 1979. Long before the US sought to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program, various US sanctions had already minimized Iran’s economic contact with the US and even, to a lesser degree, with the EU. Hence, current US sanctions and threat of future US sanctions on Iran do not factor as much into Iran’s nuclear calculations. That is precisely why the US has gone after other countries that do have trade relations with Iran and has placed significant pressure on them as a way of putting pressure on Iran. While those efforts have proven to impose significant economic costs on Iran, they have not been crippling primarily since the price of oil, which is Iran’s main export commodity and which is quite fungible and has a global market, has remained quite high during the past decade. But US pressure on Iran’s trading partners

have in fact imposed significant costs on them as well. Since the US is not compensating any of Iran's trading partners for their losses in trade with Iran and since most of these countries do not fully share US views and concerns on Iran, these countries, many of which are US allies, are growing more frustrated with US foreign policies on Iran.

The costs that the US is imposing on its domestic constituents, allies and other countries as part of its attempt at coercive diplomacy, undermines another lesson which is advanced by HSE and Oegg. According to HSE and Oegg (2007), sanctions are less likely to succeed if they do "match costs imposed on domestic constituencies (and allies) to expected benefits; otherwise public support for the sanctions policy may quickly erode" (p. 176). HSE and Oegg (2007) also argue that while "some analysts have argued that imposing a high cost on one's own economy sends a signal of seriousness, the intended signal may be quickly drowned out by a cacophony of protests from injured domestic parties. Efforts to extend sanction extraterritorially will very likely produce the same effect abroad" (p. 177). In the case of sanctions on Iran, since the US does not itself have much economic leverage on Iran, it is dependent on other countries to comply with its demands not to trade with Iran. To do that, US extraterritorial laws have put in place measures that force foreign entities to choose between doing business with the US and doing any business with Iran. But such US measures create significant costs for all foreign entities that have had close trade relations with Iran. Considering that many foreign entities do not fully share US views and concerns on Iran, and considering that the main reason they are cutting back on their trade with Iran is their fear of becoming penalized by the US, their cooperation with the US, as will be explained, seems

impermanent. Also, once foreign entities go back and benefit from their investments in Iran's hydrocarbon and various other sectors and industries, it is quite likely that the business community in the US will also start becoming more vocal in its opposition to US sanctions that have prevented them from benefiting from Iran's vast hydrocarbon resources and its unsaturated lucrative markets.

HSE and Oegg also warn against trying to coerce a country that is economically resourceful and politically resilient. HSE and Oegg (2007) argue that "strong and stable countries are less vulnerable to coercion than weak ones" and that "the relative size of the target's economy is less important" (p. 167). HSE and Oegg (2007) assert that:

In the great majority of cases we have documented, the target country has been much smaller than the sender country. Considering the median value, the sender's GNP is nearly 105 times larger than the target's, and there is little correlation between the size of the gap and the odds of a successful outcome. Even when the ratio between the sender and the target's GNP is 10 or less, there is little difference in the odds of a successful outcome when compared with the sample as a whole... In sum, senders should not expect that sanctions will work as well against very large targets that are strong, stable, hostile, and autocratic. (p. 167)

While, HSE and Oegg (2007) do not clarify what they exactly mean by "strong" and "stable," it could be well assumed that they are referring to countries that are economically and politically resourceful and resilient enough to withstand and not disintegrate under the pressure of sanctions.

By all accounts, Iran is not disintegrating under the pressure of sanctions. According to the CIA's World Factbook, Iran currently has the world's 19<sup>th</sup> largest GDP (ppp), its GDP per Capita (ppp) stands at 12,800 current US dollars, and it has the world's 26<sup>th</sup> largest Gross National Saving, equaling to 30.3% of its GDP. Iran is also capable of domestically producing most of its needs and has held a current account surplus since 2002. While there is no question that sanctions have negatively affected Iran's economy, Iran is economically resourceful and resilient enough to prevent a debilitating shortage in goods and services. Indeed, to use the words of *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius, "[i]t's a mistake to underestimate the tensile strength of Iran's economy. This is a country that survived eight years of bloody war with Iraq, and Iranians know how to suffer through adversity...They'll survive" (Ignatius, 2013).

Politically, sanctions have not taken the toll they have taken economically, and they are not creating serious dissension among the public or within senior Iranian leadership. As will be subsequently explained, Iran's political system is designed to remain resilient in face of foreign pressure or even intervention. Interestingly, contrary to what is sometimes claimed, analysis of survey data suggests that the voting behavior of the Iranian public has not been significantly affected by US and international sanctions and Iranian people's support for Iran's nuclear policy has remained strong and widespread despite the toll such sanctions have taken on the welfare of ordinary Iranians. Iran has not witnessed any significant public strikes in the recent years and the unrest it has experienced in the past decade has had no direct links to sanctions or Iran's nuclear policy. In fact, analysis of surveys conducted during and after Iran's contested June 2009 presidential election,



which was followed by the worst domestic unrest Iran has experienced since the revolution, clearly show that “[l]ike Iranians in general, a majority of Mousavi<sup>20</sup> supporters want to develop nuclear power, while a significant minority want nuclear weapons as well. Though Mousavi supporters are even more likely to perceive sanctions as hurting Iran, and most expect more sanctions to come, they are no less determined to continue Iran’s nuclear program... Among Mousavi supporters, a mere 6% wanted to have no nuclear program; a modest majority (57%) wanted to develop nuclear power only, but 37% wanted weapons as well. The general public was statistically the same as Mousavi supporters (only nuclear power, 55%, weapons also 38%, no program 3%)” (Kull, Ramsay, Weber and Lewis, 2010).

Another finding of HSE and Oegg (2007) is that “in cases involving high policy goals” multilateral sanctions are more effective than unilateral sanctions. They argue:

In high policy cases, International cooperation serves three useful functions: to increase the moral suasion of the sanctions, to help isolate the target country from the global community psychologically as well as economically, and to preempt foreign backlash, thus minimizing corrosive frictions within the alliance. However, pressing too hard to corral reluctant allies can have the perverse effect of undermining the impact of the sanctions, if multilateral agreement takes too long to achieve or requires watering down the sanctions imposed... [Yet] international attempts to force “cooperation,” using the heavy hand of

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<sup>20</sup> Mir Hussein Mousavi was a presidential candidate who opposed the incumbent, President Ahmadinejad, during Iran’s June 2009 presidential election. When Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared the winner of that election, Mousavi refused to concede, alleging fraud and vote rigging, and initiated a protest movement, which was later dubbed as the Green Movement. For almost a year, the protests crippled the city of Tehran, where Mousavi had won the majority of votes.

extraterritorial controls, will seldom yield desirable results. Sanctions should be either deployed unilaterally, because the need for one's allies is slight, or designed in genuine cooperation with one's allies in order to reduce backlash and evasion (pp. 173-175).

Prior to 2002, the US was not able to persuade other countries to impose sanctions on Iran. Since then, however, four UNSC resolutions with sanctions have been passed against Iran and the EU and Canada have also imposed their own set of sanctions on Iran. So, the US has to some extent been able to internationalize its efforts to sanction Iran. To internationalize its efforts, however, the US has been forced to invest much time and resources and has been forced to accept severely watered down sanctions. Precisely because of the inherent difficulties of securing genuine international cooperation, the US has not pursued any other UNSC sanctions against Iran since 2010, despite the fact that UNSC Resolution 1929, which was adopted on June 6, 2010, and has been the last UNSC resolution on Iran's nuclear program, only gave Iran 90 days to "suspend all reprocessing, heavy water-related, and enrichment-related activities" or face "further appropriate measures under Article 41 of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations." That 90 days expired some 4 years ago, Iran, to this date, has not suspended its enrichment related activities, and UNSC has not adopted any further Chapter VII measures against Iran.

The US, however, has pursued another path of forging international "cooperation" on Iran and has relied on extraterritorial laws to secure the cooperation of other countries on

Iran. This has led even US allies, let alone countries that have significantly different worldviews than the US, to become more vocally opposed to US extraterritorial legislations. As HSE and Oegg also emphasize, it is simply doubtful that the US can sustain coercing the whole international community to refrain from doing perfectly legal trade with Iran without suffering a backlash or encouraging evasion. It is, therefore, questionable whether the current methods the US has adopted to mobilize international pressure against Iran are sustainable and whether they serve long-term US interests.

Finally, another one of HSE and Oegg's most important lessons is that the more a sanctions episode becomes prolonged, the less likely it is to succeed. HSE and Oegg (2007) stress that:

Political leaders value an incremental approach toward deploying sanctions to avoid immediate confrontation and to justify the subsequent use of force, if all else fails. Our analysis continues to stress the opposite: There is a better chance to avoid military escalation if sanctions are deployed with maximum impact... When the goal in a sanctions episode is an ambitious one, the speed and decisiveness with which sanctions are imposed can also affect the outcome. Sanctions imposed slowly and incrementally may simply strengthen the target government at home as it marshals the forces of nationalism... [Also t]he longer an episode drags on, the more public support for sanctions dissipates [in the coercing country]. This is particularly true for sanctions imposed by a coalition of sender countries, where views regarding the importance of the objective may not be shared equally... [Indeed t]ime affords the target the opportunity to adjust: that

is, to find alternative suppliers, build new alliances, and mobilize domestic opinion in support of its policies (pp. 168-172)

Cuba and Iran are perhaps the only two countries that have been under sanctions since the beginning of their current constitutional order. The Islamic Republic has been under one form or another type of sanctions since the very early days of its inception. The Islamic Republic has developed its constitutional institutions, has fought eight years of war, has conducted its post-war reconstruction efforts while being under sanctions, initiated and advanced its nuclear program, and has handed power from one president to the other all while being under sanctions. Hence, living under sanctions has become the norm, defying sanctions has become a part of Iran's political identity, and surviving sanctions has become Iran's primary craft. Exactly as predicted by HSE and Oegg, the prolonged episode of sanctions against Iran has made Iran inured and less sensitive to pressure, making the threat of more future sanctions less likely to produce the intended outcomes.

Also, quite contrary to the advice provided by HSE and Oegg, the US did not initiate sanctions on Iran because of its nuclear program with maximum impact, not least because it was not capable of doing so. For sanctions to impact Iran's economy, the US needed the support of other countries, since the US itself did not have a noticeable economic contact with Iran to use as leverage. To gain the support of other countries, however, the US was forced to agree to watered down UNSC resolutions, which took months, if not years, to negotiate, without imposing the kind of sanctions the US sought. In fact, Iran barely noticed the effects of sanctions until the US abandoned its efforts at the UNSC and

instead relied on coercion against global financial institutions to dissuade them from doing business with Iran. That single effort, which was undertaken in an abrupt fashion, has had the most significant negative impact on Iran's economy. Besides that effort, US sanctions against Iran have in general been adopted in a gradual fashion, giving Iran much time and opportunity to find creative ways of minimizing their negative impact.

It must also be noted that imposing sanctions with maximum impact in an abrupt way, even if possible, is a very risky endeavor particularly in cases involving high policy goals. Such sanctions could easily provoke the target to take preventive measures, even when it would calculate them to have a low chance of success. Just as an example, when the US imposed an abrupt oil embargo against Japan in 1941, Japan was left only with the option of either securing an end to the embargo through diplomacy or going to war. After finding US demands to be unacceptable, Japan arrived at the conclusion that it was more acceptable to initiate war against the US, even though such an undertaking was fraught with incredible risk, than conceding to US demands. Had the US been able to abruptly impose sanctions with maximum impact against Iran, through for example imposing a naval blockade on Iranian ports and oil docks, it might have prompted Iran to adopt stark measures against the US, such as inflicting maximum casualty on US persons and interests, through proxies or even mercenaries, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places in the world. During a period when the US needed Iran's active cooperation in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US was simply not in a position to impose abrupt sanctions with maximum impact on Iran without itself suffering major consequences.

#### **Section 4.1.4: Lessons from the Works of other Scholars**

Besides the seminal works of Schelling, George, and HSE, many other scholars have also looked at conditions that favor successful application of coercive diplomacy. While most of these scholars have merely approved or disapproved of the conditions mentioned by more prominent scholars, some have identified other conditions not mentioned by Schelling, George, and HSE.

David Cortright and George Lopez (2000) suggest that sanctions are more likely to succeed if they target, pressure, and deny assets and resources of value to the decision-making elite and avoid measures that cause humanitarian hardship or negatively affect opposition constituencies in the target country (pp. 224-228). This is a very important lesson. Unfortunately, the more common wisdom is that if sanctions inflict enough pain on the citizens of the target country, they would in turn exert pressure on their political elite to force either a change in the objectionable policy or their removal from power. Indeed, “inflicting civilian pain in order to achieve political gain remains the modus operandi of sanctions policy” (Wiss, Cortright, Lopez, and Minear, 1997, p. 4). But when policymakers are not personally burdened by the sanctions, they could readily, as they often do, mobilize domestic public opinion in support of their policies. Unlike the public, however, policymakers are less likely to become influenced by their own propaganda. Therefore, if sanctions could directly affect the wellbeing of the decision-making elite, one step in the traditionally envisioned sanctions mechanism would be eliminated, making a change in policy, if possible, more likely.

With respect to Iran, US sanctions have affected the entire population and not just the decision-making elite. If anything, as will be discussed, some members of the elites and some influential Iranian institutions have in fact benefited from the imposed sanctions. Hence, contrary to the recommendation of Cortright and Lopez, US sanctions against Iran have caused maximum humanitarian hardship and have not exclusively targeted the decision-making elite. US sanctions have also weakened Iranian opposition groups, living and operating inside Iran. Time and again Iranian opposition groups have declared that US sanctions and hostilities against Iran only deteriorates their standing inside the country and places more pressure and restrictions on them. Ali Shakouri-Rad, who is a leading member of the banned opposition Islamic Iran Participation Front, has for example opposed US sanctions on many occasions arguing that such measures would allow the “government... [to] say that critics of their policies are doing the foreigners’ bidding and will use sanctions as a pretext to silence [its] opponents” (Erdbrink, 2009). Indeed, as sanctions become more stringent and damaging to the welfare of ordinary Iranians, the opposition groups are less likely to take actions that may increase their risk of being marked as being on the side of the party who is imposing such costs on the population. Consequently, as in the case of Iran, sanctions usually undermine opposition groups and push the “population to rally behind their leader and resist external pressure” (van Genugten and de Groot, 1999, p. 124). This is exactly why, as Bolks and Al-Sowayel (2000) also maintain, states under sanctions are more likely to “have greater internal cohesion” than those who are not under foreign pressure.

Another important work on the subject is the work of Willem van Genugten and Gerard de Groot. Genugten and Groot (1999) indicate that sanctions are most likely to fail if the coercer's demands and concerns are not shared by a significant constituency within the target country. They emphasize that sanctions are more effective if the demanded change in the policy or conduct of a country's decision-making elite is voiced both by external and internal forces (pp. 145-146). The finding of Genugten and Groot (1999) corroborates what Government Accountability Office (GAO) also found in November 1994 as it was considering various aspects of imposing an oil embargo against Nigeria. In that report, GAO asserted that "[I]f the targeted country has a domestic opposition to the policies of the government in power, sanctions can strengthen this opposition and improve the likelihood of a positive political response to the sanctions" (p. 12). This condition is also missing in Iran. As will be discussed in much more detail, survey after survey suggest that Iranians are not willing to accept Iran forgoing proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program, and some eight years after the imposition of the first UNSC sanction against Iran's nuclear program, support for various elements of the program remains overwhelming and intact.

#### **Section 4.1.5: Conclusion**

Coercive diplomacy is a very attractive strategy. If successful, it avoids military confrontation and brings about the intended outcomes with little cost. Yet, as George and his colleagues (1994) emphasize, "not all situations in which a government determines that an adversary's policy must be changed are appropriate for the employment of coercive diplomacy" (p. 292). Policymakers, therefore, must carefully study the particular



cases in which they are contemplating coercive diplomacy and must evaluate, in light of existing literature on the subject, whether the particular situation makes coercive diplomacy, relative to other available policy options, more likely or less likely to succeed. In making that evaluation, it is also important to keep in mind the urgency with which the situation at hand needs to be resolved. Indeed, a policy option that may bring about the intended change in the policy of the adversary much later than one's national interests and security requires, might need to be passed on in favor of other policy options that, despite their cost, may produce the intended results faster.

Fearing the ramifications of a nuclear armed Islamic Republic, the US has relied on coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program. Yet as the above analysis, which is summarized in the following table, illustrates, the situation in Iran lacks most of the conditions and requirements identified in the literature for successful employment of coercive diplomacy:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Presence of Condition?</b>
Schelling (1966)	Demand being less unattractive than the threatened and/or the inflicted pain	No
George et al (1994), Schelling (1966) and HSE and Oegg (2007)	The target being convinced that compliance would not lead to more demands	No
Schelling (1966) and George et al (1994)	The target being convinced that compliance would end hostilities	No
Schelling (1966)	Appropriate connection between the compelling action and the issue being bargained over	No
Schelling (1966)	Mutual belief that interests are not absolutely opposed	Ambiguous
George et al (1994)	Clarity of objective	No
George et al (1994)	The coercer being strongly motivated	Yes
George et al (1994)	The targets belief in the asymmetry of motivation in favor of the coercer	Ambiguous
George et al (1994)	The target's sense of urgency to concede	No
George et al (1994)	The coercer having adequate domestic and international support	Qualified Yes
George et al (1994)	The target credibly fearing that noncompliance would unacceptably escalate the conflict	Ambiguous
George et al (1994), Schelling (1966) and HSE and Oegg (2007)	Clarity and credibility of the precise terms of settlement	No
George et al (1994), Schelling (1966) and HSE and Oegg (2007)	The target perceiving the demand to be limited and modest	No
HSE and Oegg (2007)	The target and the coercers having an otherwise cordial relationship	No
HSE and Oegg (2007)	The coercion inflicting minimal cost on the coercing power's own domestic constituents, allies and other countries	No
HSE and Oegg (2007)	The target being politically and economically weak	No
HSE and Oegg (2007)	The coercion being genuinely multilateral	Ambiguous
HSE and Oegg (2007)	The inflicted pain is abrupt and not gradual	No
HSE and Oegg (2007)	The sanction episode is short and not prolonged	No
Cortright and Lopez (2000)	The sanctions target the decision-making elite and cause minimum humanitarian hardship	No
Cortright and Lopez (2000)	The sanctions do not weaken, if not strengthen, the opposition	No
Genugten and Groot (1999) and GAO (1994)	The sanctions seek to change a policy that is also unpopular with the populace of the target	No

What is important to note is that the assessment made above is quite widely shared by most analysts and it is doubtful that those deciding to employ coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program were and have been blind to this reality. Assuming that Iran becoming a nuclear threshold state is

really regarded to be detrimental to US national interests and assuming that preventing Iran from achieving such a status is in fact regarded as being vital to US national interest, relying on coercive diplomacy to achieve that end defies logic, is unwise, and is tantamount to ignoring, at one's own peril, all existing literature on the subject.

Pursuing a policy that does not seem rational has had other effects as well. Just as an example, in almost all of my interviews with Iranian officials and academics, I have been told that Iranian policymakers are convinced that American officials know, as any intelligent person would, that they will not be able to force Iran to forgo its perceived nuclear fuel cycle rights through sanctions and coercion. Convinced that US policymakers cannot be that "irrational" to pursue policies that are quite obviously destined to fail, many Iranian analysts have become certain that the US must be pursuing some other policy objectives and that Iran's nuclear program is just being used as a cover. Even if the situation in Iran would have satisfied most of the mentioned conditions, this Iranian perception alone is enough to significantly diminish the success odds of US coercive efforts.

## **Section 4.2: Effect of Coercive Diplomacy on Iranian Public Opinion Regarding Iran's Nuclear Policy**

While much research has been conducted on the efficacy of sanctions, only a few analyze sanctions from the vantage point of the target and even fewer use survey data from the target country to evaluate the impact of sanctions on the public's support for the policy, behavior, or the government that sanctions have sought to change. One might, however, question the impact of public opinion on policymaking, particularly in contexts where citizen input into policymaking is limited, and, as a result, see little utility in assessing the effect of sanctions on the support or opposition of the public for the policy that sanctions aim to change. It must, nevertheless, be noted that the overarching rationale of sanctions has indeed been that if the sanctions cause enough pain "the citizens in the target country will exert political pressure to force either a change in the behavior of the authorities or their removal altogether" (Weiss, Cortright, Lopez, and Minear, 1997, p. 4). Moreover, it has been emphasized by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in its November 1994 report that "[I]f the targeted country has a domestic opposition to the policies of the government in power, sanctions can strengthen this opposition and improve the likelihood of a positive political response to the sanctions." It has also been noted that the bearing public opinion has on the success odds of sanctions becomes particularly significant in instances where the issue at hand gains enough salience to find its way into the public discourse of the target (Knecht and Weatherford, 2006). Genugten and Groot (1999) also indicate that sanctions are most likely to fail if the coercer's demands and concerns are not shared by a significant constituency within the target country and emphasize that sanctions are more effective if the demanded change in the policy or

conduct of a country's decision-making elite is voiced both by external and internal forces (pp. 145-146).

Many scholars believe that public opinion does in fact affect how elites make decisions, even in countries that are not fully democratic. Joseph Nye (2010), for example, argues that in all systems of government, even in autocracies, "public opinion affects elites by creating an enabling or disabling environment for specific policy initiatives." In other words, the more the public is opposed to a particular policy, the more difficult and politically costly the elites will find adopting that policy and vice versa. This is by no means limited to liberal societies. Indeed, many comparative political scientists have argued that even autocratic governments are dependent upon a certain threshold of public support to remain in office.<sup>21</sup> In fact, it could be well argued that while going against the flow of public opinion might merely jeopardize the political careers of those in office in liberal democracies, doing so would put in jeopardy the whole system of government in autocracies, making the costs of going against public opinion even higher under autocratic settings. This is perhaps why most autocratic regimes insist on exerting a strong control over mass media and maintain a tight control over the flow of information into their respective societies. That said, the Islamic Republic is not an autocracy and the level of public participation in Iranian politics is quite extensive, making an investigation of Iranian public attitudes toward their country's proliferation-sensitive activities even more important.

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<sup>21</sup> See for example: Geddes, 2003 and Weingast and Wittman, 2006.

There exists broad empirical support that the American public responds rationally to salient international events and that public opinion does affect how policymakers in the US respond to such events (Page and Shapiro, 1983, 1992; Monroe, 1998; Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson, 1995). There are also studies that suggest the same to be true in the context of western democracies (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2004). Testing for the existence of the same public opinion – public policy dynamic beyond the context of western democracies, Cale D. Horne (2009), found that the “existing theory on the determinants of public preferences on government policy are salient” in other political contexts as well. In particular, Horne (2009) found that in Iran “[c]ore beliefs about the world, in combination with domain specific beliefs and preferences, show strong relationships to policy preferences across the range of issues examined.” He concludes that Iran is not an exception to the general theory and that decision-making in Iran is influenced by public opinion. Therefore, it seems even more crucial to investigate how sanctions have influenced the Iranian public’s position with regards to Iran’s nuclear program as the US and European leaders consider their various options with respect to Iran.

In this section, two nationally representative probability sample public opinion surveys of the Iranian publics, one of which was conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) and the other by University of Tehran Center for Public Opinion Research (UTCOPOR), are used to assess the effect of sanctions and other factors on the Iranian people’s willingness to accept a deal under which their government would agree to forgo uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of sanctions against Iran.

### **Section 4.2.1: Research Design and Methodology**

This section uses two nationally representative probability sample surveys of Iranians, one conducted by PIPA between August 27 and September 10, 2009 (hereinafter ‘PIPA 2009’) and the other conducted by UTCPOR between March 3 to March 18, 2014 (hereinafter UTCPOR 2014) to gauge the effect of sanctions on persuading Iranians to create an enabling environment for their policymakers to comply with UNSC demands. PIPA 2009 used an independent opinion research company, which relied on native Farsi speakers calling into Iran from a call center located in Istanbul, to produce a sample size of  $n=1003$ . The margin of error for a sample of that size is approximately  $\pm 3.2\%$ . UTCPOR 2014 used its own call center in Tehran to produce a sample size of  $n=1216$ . The margin of error for a sample of that size is approximately  $\pm 2.8\%$ . Both surveys interviewed Iranian citizens over the age of 18.

#### **Section 4.2.1.1: Quality of Data**

In general, the validity and reliability of the surveys conducted by PIPA in Iran have been thoroughly tested and verified by independent scholars. For example, after carefully scrutinizing two of the public opinion surveys that PIPA has conducted in Iran, Horne and Bakke (2009) conclude that “[t]hrough not flawless, the data pass every test of reliability, and of demographic and substantive validity to which we have subjected them. Where the data are problematic, the problems exhibited are not unique to polling in Iran, but are problems nearly ubiquitous in survey research—such as the overrepresentation of highly educated persons and the underrepresentation of the illiterate.” The same is also true with respect to the surveys conducted by UTCPOR. The surveys conducted by

UTCPOR during both the June 2009 and June 2013 Iranian Presidential elections have accurately predicted the election results.<sup>22</sup> The reliability of the results produced by UTCPOR as well as PIPA regarding Iran is also corroborated, as will be shown, by the results that have been obtained by other survey and research organizations that have independently conducted public opinion surveys in Iran.

Indeed, as the following table illustrate, though not flawless, the sample of both PIPA 2009 as well as UTCPOR 2014, are generally representative of Iran’s population along several demographic dimensions:

<b>Demographic Dimensions</b>	<b>PIPA 2009</b>	<b>UTCPOR 2014</b>	<b>Target (SCI<sup>23</sup> 2011)</b>
<b><i>Gender</i></b>			<b>(18+)</b>
Male	50	49	50
Female	50	51	50
<b><i>Urban-Rural</i></b>			<b>(18+)</b>
Urban	69	72	73
Rural	31	28	27
<b><i>Age</i></b>			<b>(18+)</b>
18-24	26	18	21
25-39	38	42	39
40-59	26	32	28
60+	10	8	12
<b><i>Education</i></b>			<b>(15+)</b>
Less than a secondary degree	29	39	50
Secondary degree	36	31	31
Tertiary education	35	30	19

As the above table illustrates, both PIPA 2009 and UTCPOR 2014 quite closely match Iran’s most recent census information, which was conducted in 2011, on gender, age composition, and Iran’s urban-rural population proportions. In both PIPA 2009 and UTCPOR 2014 surveys, however, those with tertiary education are over-represented and

<sup>22</sup> See for example Marandi, Mohseni and Salahi, 2012 and Mohseni, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) is the main Iranian governmental agency responsible for collecting Census and other official statistical information. The most recent Iranian census was conducted in 2011.



those with less than a degree from a secondary institution are underrepresented. Based on the information available, however, it cannot be determined how significant this bias is since both surveys interviewed only those over the age of 18, while SCI's census information on education provides its estimates for those over the age of 15. Considering that normally people in Iran do not graduate from a secondary educational institution until after the age of 18, and considering that 6.5% of those over the age of 15 are between 15 and 18 years of age, the bias in both surveys in favor of those with higher levels of education is not nearly as strong as illustrated in the above table. Nevertheless, as will be discussed later, this problem might introduce some other biases since education is somewhat correlated with the dependent variable of this study.

The ethnic composition of both PIPA 2009 and UTCPOR 2014's samples are almost identical to the most reliable available data on that issue. While SCI does not collect data on the size of Iran's various ethnic groups, CIA's World Factbook (2013) estimates closely match with those of PIPA 2009 and UTCPOR 2014's sample:

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>PIPA 2009</b>	<b>UTCPOR 2014</b>	<b>CIA World Factbook</b>
Persian	53	56	53
Turk or Azeri	23	16	18
Kurd	7	10	10
Arab	2	2	2
Baluch	1	3	2
Lor	5	5	6
Gilak / Mazandarani / Shomali	6	7	7
Other	3	1	2

#### **Section 4.2.1.2: Empirical Methodology**

This section uses two econometric techniques to test the hypotheses of this study. First, since the dependent variable of this study is binary, with “success” (1) meaning a willingness to forgo enrichment and “failure” (0) meaning an opposition to forgoing uranium enrichment, logit regression model with robust standard errors was utilized. The logit estimation technique allows for estimating a model that describes the relationship between the independent variable(s) and a binary dependent variable (Hill and Lewicki, 2007). Since the dependent variable of this study is binary and since the goal of this study is to test for the existence of a statistically significant relationship between the independent variables and the respondents’ willingness to forgo enrichment (defined as success), a logit regression model was used.

The second method used in this section is the Average effect of Treatment on the Treated method (ATT) – using the Nearest - Neighbor Propensity Score Matching technique. In experiments, the group that does not receive a treatment is referred to as the “control group” and the group that does receive a treatment is referred to as the “treatment group” and for an experiment to be valid, cases must be assigned randomly to either of the groups and neither the cases nor the researchers should know to which group each of the cases have been assigned. However, in observational studies that lack the benefit of a random double blind assignment, the only way to make valid inferences about the effects of a treatment is to balance the treatment and control groups across possible confounding variables and to make the two groups as similar in as many aspects to each other as possible. To do this, the propensity-score method is used to “compare like with like by

matching individuals on propensity scores – summary scores based on observed variables” (Firebaugh, 2008, p. 147). And to the extent the observable variables that are used for propensity score matching are correlated with possible unobservable confounding factors, propensity score matching also reduces the potential biases generated by unobservable confounding factors and allows one to evaluate how those who are given the treatment differ from those who have not been given the treatment as far as the dependent variable is concerned.<sup>24</sup>

Since this section is primarily interested in the effect of sanctions on the Iranian people’s willingness to forgo uranium enrichment, in addition to a logit regression analysis, the Average effect of Treatment on the Treated method (ATT) was also utilized. Through propensity score matching, the samples’ of both surveys were divided in two groups and the compositions of the two groups were made almost identical to one another in many demographic and attitudinal dimensions. The most important difference between the two groups, however, was whether or not they regarded sanctions as having a negative impact on Iran’s economy and whether or not they thought sanctions against Iran would be increased if Iran continued enriching uranium, the two main independent variables of this study. Then the two groups’ attitudes toward the dependent variable of the study were evaluated to see if:

- 1) Those who think that sanctions are negatively impacting Iran’s economy are more likely than those who do not think that sanctions are negatively impacting Iran’s economy to believe that Iran should forgo uranium enrichment as part of a deal that would also lift sanctions against Iran.

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<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed explanation of the method see Becker and Ichino, 2002.

2) Those who think that sanctions against Iran would be increased if Iran continued enriching uranium are more likely than those who do not think that sanctions against Iran would be increased if Iran continued enriching uranium to believe that Iran should forgo uranium enrichment as part of a deal that would also lift sanctions against Iran.

### **Section 4.2.2: The Logit Regression Model**

#### **Section 4.2.2.1: The Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable of this study is the willingness to forgo uranium enrichment as part of a deal that would also lift all sanctions against Iran, which is measured by an identical question in the two surveys. Both PIPA 2009 and UTCPOR 2014 ask Iranians “Would you favor or oppose an agreement whereby the current sanctions against Iran would be removed and Iran would continue its nuclear energy program, except that it would agree not to enrich uranium?” In response, the respondents could either indicate that they would favor such an agreement or say that they would oppose such an agreement. They were also able to say “don’t know” or decline to answer. As the results of PIPA 2009 indicate, when faced with this question, 32% of Iranians favored and 55% of them opposed such a deal. Also, 13% of the respondents either said “don’t know” (10%) or declined to answer the question (3%). While the results of UTCPOR 2014 are somewhat similar to the results of PIPA 2009, UTCPOR 2014 does show a slight increase in the proportion of Iranians who would oppose such a deal. In response to the very same question, 62% of UTCPOR 2014 respondents said that they would oppose and 29% said that they would favor such an agreement. Also, 9% of the respondents either said “don’t know” (6%) or refused to answer the question (3%).

Q. Would you favor or oppose an agreement whereby the current sanctions against Iran would be removed and Iran would continue its nuclear energy program, except that it would agree not to enrich uranium?

	<b>PIPA 2009</b>	<b>UTCPOR 2014</b>
Would favor such an agreement	32	29
Would oppose such an agreement	55	62
Don't know	10	6
Refused	3	3

Using this question as a dependent variable, this section will employ the abovementioned two econometric methods to evaluate whether or not the belief that sanctions are having a negative impact on Iran's economy as well as the belief that sanctions would increase if Iran would continue its enrichment activities do positively and significantly correlate with the respondents' willingness to favor forgoing uranium enrichment in return for the lifting of sanctions against Iran.

#### **Section 4.2.2.2: Main Hypotheses and Independent Variables**

The most important hypothesis of this study is that:

*H1: The pain of sanctions is positively associated with Iranian public support for stopping Iran's uranium enrichment activities.*

This hypothesis suggests a commonly held perception that the more painful sanctions become, the more likely it is that the target will concede. This assumption holds that the motivation to persist with an objectionable policy would erode if sanctions could elevate the costs of that policy beyond its benefits (George, 1991, p. 11). To test this hypothesis, this study uses an identical question in the two surveys. Both PIPA 2009 and UTCPOR 2014 ask "As you may know, Iran is currently under sanctions for enriching uranium. To what degree would you say these sanctions have had a negative impact on our country's

economic situation?” In response, the results of PIPA 2009 show that 23% of Iranians said that sanctions have “had a lot of negative impact,” 37% said sanctions have “had some negative impact,” 15% said sanctions have “had only a little negative impact” and another 15% said sanctions have “had no negative impact” on Iran’s economy. Also, 10% of the respondents of PIPA 2009 either said “don’t know” (9%) or refused to answer this question (1%). Understandably, the results of UTCPOR 2014, as compared to the results of PIPA 2009, show a significant increase in the proportion of Iranians who believe that sanctions are having a greatly negative impact on Iran’s economy. In response to the same question, 42% of the respondents of UTCPOR 2014 said that sanctions have “had a lot of negative impact,” 26% said sanctions have “had some negative impact,” 17% said sanctions have “had only a little negative impact” and another 6% said sanctions have “had no negative impact” on Iran’s economy. Also, 9% of the respondents of PIPA 2009 either said “don’t know” (5%) or refused to answer this question (4%).

Q. As you may know, Iran is currently under sanctions for enriching uranium. To what degree would you say these sanctions have had a negative impact on our country’s situation?

	<b>PIPA 2009</b>	<b>UTCPOR 2014</b>
Has had a lot of negative impact	23	47
Has had some negative impact	37	23
Has had only a little negative impact	15	19
Has had no negative impact	15	7
Don’t know	9	3
Refused	1	1

For the purposes of the evaluations of this study, this question is used to split respondents in two groups: 1) those who think that sanctions have had “at least some negative impact” on Iran’s economy and 2) those who do not think so. Using this question as one of the main independent variables, this study is able to evaluate the effect of the perceived pain of sanctions on the Iranian people’s willingness to forgo enrichment. Hence for *HI* to be

substantiated, the perceived pain of the sanctions should be positively and significantly correlated with the dependent variable of this study.

Another important hypothesis that this study seeks to test is whether the fear of increased future sanctions could make Iran's enrichment program less attractive to Iranians. Thus the second hypothesis of this study is:

*H2: The threat of increased sanctions is positively associated with Iranian public support for stopping Iran's uranium enrichment activities.*

This hypothesis is based on the commonly held assumption that "coercive diplomacy can succeed only if the opponent accepts as credible the threat of punishment for noncompliance with the demands made upon him" (George, Hall, and Simon, 1971, p. 238). To test whether being credibly fearful of increased sanctions has an effect on Iranian people's attitudes toward their country's nuclear enrichment program, this study uses an identical question in the two surveys as its second main independent variable. Both PIPA 2009 and UTCPOR 2014 ask "If Iran continues its current nuclear program, including enriching uranium, how likely do you think it is that the current sanctions against Iran will be increased?" In response, the results of PIPA 2009 show that 35% of Iranians said that sanctions will "definitely be increased," 35% said sanctions will "probably be increased," 10% said sanctions will "probably not be increased," and 9% said sanctions will "definitely not be increased." Also, 11% of the respondents to that survey either said "don't know" (9%) or refused to give an answer (2%). The respondents of UTCPOR 2014, however, were slightly more doubtful that sanctions would increase,

with 25% saying sanctions will “definitely be increased,” 36% saying sanctions will “probably be increased,” 17% saying sanctions will “probably not be increased,” and 11% saying sanctions will “definitely not be increased,” in response to the very same question. Also, 11% of the respondents to that survey either said “don’t know” (10%) or refused to give an answer (1%)

Q. If Iran continues its current nuclear program, including enriching uranium, how likely do you think it is that the current sanctions against Iran will be increased? Do you think they will:

	<b>PIPA 2009</b>	<b>UTCPOR 2014</b>
Definitely be increased	35	25
Probably be increased	35	36
Probably not be increased	10	17
Definitely not be increased	9	11
Don't know	9	10
Refused	2	1

For the purposes of the evaluations of this study, this question will be used to divide the respondents into two groups: 1) those who expect that sanctions against Iran would be increased if Iran does not comply with the demands of UNSC and 2) those who do not have such an expectation. For *H2* to be substantiated, the expectation that sanctions would be increased should be positively and significantly correlated with the dependent variable of this study.

*Section 4.2.2.3.1: Other Independent and Controlling Variables for the Model Using PIPA 2009:*

In addition to the two sanctions related variables that are used as the main independent variables in order to test for the validity of the two hypotheses of this study, the model using the data from PIPA 2009 entails other independent and control variables as well:



- *Confidence in Government*

Two questions from PIPA 2009 were used to control and test for potential effects of the respondents' degree of satisfaction with Iran's system of government and their perceptions of the contested June 2009 presidential election. The inclusion of these two variables is important to avoid potential omitted variable bias since some analysts have suggested support for Iran's nuclear program and attitudes toward sanctions to be a function of support for Iran's Islamist government and/or its conservative president.<sup>25</sup>

- *Confidence in the United Nations (UN)*

One question from PIPA 2009 survey was used to control and test for the effects of the respondent's confidence in the UN. Many scholars have argued attitudes toward sanctions to be a function of confidence in the UN and have maintained that without "widespread confidence in its integrity, sanctions are unlikely to serve as an effective tool for resolving international conflict" (Farrall, 2007, p. 10).

Unfortunately, however, PIPA 2009 did not include any questions directly asking about the respondents' confidence in the UN. The only question that PIPA 2009 asks that could be used as a proxy for the respondents' level of confidence in the UN asked Iranians "Do you think that when there are concerns about the fairness of elections, countries should or should not be willing to have international observers from the United Nations monitor their elections?" The results of the survey indicate that 37% of Iranians think that such countries should, 55% think that such countries should not be willing to accept UN

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<sup>25</sup> See for example Waddington, 2010.

election monitors, and 8% of the respondents declined to pick one of the two provided response options.

It could be well argued that it is problematic to use this variable as a proxy for the respondents' degree of confidence in the UN since the survey was conducted in less than three months after Iran's contested presidential election and as a result how people respond to this question might be driven more by their concerns about the fairness of elections in Iran and less by their confidence in the UN. But since this model does control for the respondents' degree of satisfaction with Iran's political system as well as the respondents' degree of confidence in Iran's June 2009 election, it is reasonable to assume that this variable is more likely to capture the effects of general attitudes toward the UN than anything else. Therefore, this model took a "should" response as an expression of confidence in the UN and a "should not" response as an expression of lack of confidence in the UN.

- *Attitudes toward the US*

Many policy analysts have argued attitudes toward the US to be a major factor in Iran's decision-making regarding its nuclear program. In fact, the former head of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohamed ElBaradei, who was at the center of the standoff over Iran's nuclear program, maintained from early on that it is difficult to envision a final agreement with Iran regarding its nuclear program without security guarantees from the US (Karen, 2005). To control and test for this effect, three questions from PIPA 2009 were used.

One of the questions used in this category divides respondents into four different groups depending on their opinion of the US government, with (1) denoting having a “very unfavorable” opinion of the U.S. government and (4) denoting having a “very favorable” opinion of the US government. The other question used categorizes the respondents into 4 different groups depending on their perception of US foreign policy objectives, with (1) being those who think the US definitely does not seek to “weaken and divide the Islamic world” and (4) being those who think the US definitely does seek to “weaken and divide the Islamic world”. The last question used in this category splits people into 4 different groups depending on their attitudes toward negotiations with the US, with (1) being those who would “oppose strongly” full unconditional negotiations with the US and (4) being those who would “favor strongly” any such negotiations.

- *Exposure to Alternative Sources of News and Information*

Many observers contend that the Iranian public’s perception about their nuclear program and their attitudes toward sanctions are shaped by Iran’s state-controlled media. These observers argue that “since mass media plays a crucial role in forming and reflecting public opinion, the Iranian regime’s total control of newspapers, TV and radio broadcasting helps it to direct and manipulate the public opinion” (Pedatzur, 2008). If this is true, and if public opinion regarding Iran’s nuclear program is primarily shaped by Iran’s state-controlled media, individuals who get their information from alternative sources should feel differently about Iran’s nuclear program, making access and use of alternative sources of information a significant predictor of the dependent variable. To

control and test for such an effect, two questions from PIPA 2009 was used. The first question used in this category asks the respondents whether or not they follow the broadcastings of Voice of America (VOA) or British Broadcasting Company (BBC), and the second question used measures the respondents' degree of access and use of the internet.

- *Ideology and Demographics*

The study also controlled for the respondents' age, level of education, economic status, and whether or not they had an Islamist approach to governance.

*Section 4.2.2.3.2: Other Independent and Controlling Variables for the Model Using UTCPOR 2014*

For the same reasons mentioned above, the regression model using data from UTCPOR 2014, also makes use of other independent and control variable. Besides controlling for the respondent's age, level of education, economic status, and whether or not they had an Islamist approach to governance, quite similar to the model using PIPA 2009 data, the model using UTCPOR 2014 also included independent variables that test for the effects of government support, confidence in the US and UN, and access to alternative sources of news.

### Section 4.2.3: The Results of Logit Regression Model

#### Section 4.2.3.1: The Results of Logit Regression Model using data from PIPA 2009

As can be seen in the following table, the logit regression model (with robust standard errors) using the data from PIPA 2009 yields some very interesting results:

<b>Logit, r</b>	<b><i>Dependent: Agree to halt enrichment</i></b>	
	Prob > chi2	0.0000
	Pseudo R2	0.0870
	Hosmer-Lemeshow lack of fit test	0.2820
Sanctions	Sanctions have negative impact	0.2548 (0.235)
	Sanctions will increase	0.2968 (0.239)
Gov. Support	Satisfaction with system of Gov	0.0327 (0.826)
	Confidence in June 2009 Election	-0.1747 (0.152)
U. N.	Confidence in the UN	0.4758** (0.016)
Attitudes Toward U.S.	Favorability of the US Gov	0.2089* (0.075)
	Belief that the US aims to weaken and divide Muslim World	-0.3315*** (0.002)
	Favor Negotiations with the US	0.1342 (0.124)
Alternative News	Follow VOA or BBC	0.1439 (0.533)
	Internet use	-0.0903 (0.286)
Demographics	Has Islamists approach to governance	-0.0199 (0.924)
	Age	-0.0037 (0.657)
	Education	-0.1293** (0.023)
	Economic Status	-0.1780 (0.173)

\* Significant at 0.1 level    \*\* Significant at 0.05 level    \*\*\*Significant at 0.01 level

The results of the logit regression model using data from PIPA 2009 does not provide support for *H1* or *H2* of this study. As the model indicates, all else held constant, neither the perceived pain of sanctions nor the perceived likelihood of increased sanctions are

significantly predictive of the respondents' willingness (or lack thereof) to forgo uranium enrichment. The model, however, does suggest a significant positive relationship between the respondents' degree of confidence in the UN and their willingness to forgo uranium enrichment. Indeed, increased confidence in the UN does positively and significantly predict a willingness to negotiate away Iran's uranium enrichment capabilities. Also, perhaps more interestingly, the model does support the idea that attitudes toward the US do predict Iranian people's willingness to forgo uranium enrichment. As expected, holding all other variables constant, increased favorability of the US is positively and significantly predictive of the Iranian public's willingness to turn their back on Iran's uranium enrichment program. Yet, people's conviction that the US is seeking to "weaken and divide the Islamic world," is significantly and negatively predictive of their willingness to support Iran halting its uranium enrichment program.

The results of the logit regression analysis did not provide support for any other commonly held views regarding the determinants of the Iranian public's attitudes toward their country's uranium enrichment program. Neither the degree of satisfaction with Iran's system of government nor people's confidence in the legitimacy of the June 2009 presidential election were significantly predictive of the dependent variable. Also, the model does not support the suggestion that Iranian people's support for Iran's enrichment program is a function of where they get their news from. Following the news programs of VOA and BBC and increased usage of the internet were not significantly predictive of the dependent variable.

Interestingly, among the demographic variables, the model did find education to be negatively correlated with the dependent variable. The more educated the respondents were, the less likely they were to agree to forgo uranium enrichment. Considering that the sample of this study was skewed in favor of the more educated segment of the Iranian society, it is important to be mindful that the analyses of this study might be somewhat tilted in that direction.

**Section 4.2.3.2: The Results of Logit Regression Model using data from UTCPOR 2014**

As can be seen in the following table, the logit regression model (with robust standard errors) using the data from UTCPOR 2014 yields very similar results:

Logit, r	<i>Dependent: Agree to halt enrichment</i>		
		Prob > chi2	0.0000
		Pseudo R2	0.1167
		Hosmer-Lemeshow lack of fit test	0.2424
Sanctions	Sanctions have negative impact	-.0165 (0.862)	
	Sanctions will increase	-.0348 (0.679)	
Gov. Support	Confidence in Majlis	-.1750 (0.144)	
	Confidence in President	-.1107 (0.262)	
	Confidence in Judiciary	-.1812 (0.175)	
UN	Confidence in United Nations	.3339 (0.001)***	
Attitudes Toward U.S.	Favorability of United States	.3239 (0.004)***	
	Importance of having relations with US	.1816 (0.049)**	
Alternative News	Follow VOA or BBC	-.0376 (0.832)	
	Use the Internet	-.0820 (0.231)	
Demographics	Has Islamists approach to governance	-.2496 (0.186)	
	Age	-.0015 (0.297)	
	Education	-.0608 (0.048)**	
	Economic Status	.0966 (0.161)	

\* Significant at 0.1 level    \*\* Significant at 0.05 level    \*\*\*Significant at 0.01 level

Quite similar to the results of the model that used the data from PIPA 2009, the results of the model that uses the data from UTCPR 2014 do not support the two hypothesis of this



study. As the model indicates, all else held constant, neither the pain of sanctions nor the threat of increased future sanctions are significantly predictive of the respondents' willingness (or lack thereof) to forgo uranium enrichment. The model using the data from UTCPOR 2014, however, does corroborate the finding from the model that used data from PIPA 2009, suggesting there to be a significant positive relationship between the respondents' degree of confidence in the UN and their willingness to forgo uranium enrichment. Indeed, increased confidence in the UN does positively and significantly predict Iranian people's willingness to negotiate away Iran's uranium enrichment capabilities. Also, perhaps more interestingly, the model does support the idea that people's willingness to forgo uranium enrichment is predicted by their attitudes toward the United States. As with the model using data from PIPA 2009, holding all other variables constant, increased favorability of the US as well as attaching importance to having diplomatic relations with the US is positively and significantly predictive of the Iranian public's willingness to accept forgo Iran's uranium enrichment program.

The results of the logit regression analysis did not provide support for any other commonly held views regarding the determinants of Iranian public's attitudes toward their country's uranium enrichment program. Variables relating to the respondents' degree of support for various Iranian institutions did not significantly predict the dependent variable. Also, the model does not support the suggestion that people's support of Iran's enrichment program is a function of where they get their news from. Following the news programs of VOA and BBC and increased usage of the internet were not significantly predictive of the dependent variable. As with the model that used the data

from PIPA 2009, however, among the demographic variables, the model using data from UTCPOR 2014 does find education to be negatively and significantly predictive of the dependent variable. The more educated the respondents were, the less likely they were to agree to forgo uranium enrichment. Again, considering that the sample of this study is biased in favor of the more educated segment of the Iranian society, it is important to be mindful that the analyses of this study might be somewhat tilted in that direction.

#### **Section 4.2.4: The ATT – Propensity Score Matching Method**

##### **Section 4.2.4.1: The Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable of the ATT analysis is also the willingness to forgo uranium enrichment as part of a deal that would lift all sanctions against Iran, which is measured by an identical question in the two surveys. As was indicated, both PIPA 2009 and UTCPOR 2014 ask “Would you favor or oppose an agreement whereby the current sanctions against Iran would be removed and Iran would continue its nuclear energy program, except that it would agree not to enrich uranium?” In response, the respondents could either indicate that they would favor such an agreement or say that they would oppose such an agreement. They were also able to say “don’t know” or decline to answer. As the results of PIPA 2009 indicates, when faced with this question, 32% of Iranians favored and 55% of them opposed such a deal. Also, 13% of the respondents either said “don’t know” (10%) or declined to answer the question (3%). While the results of UTCPOR 2014 are somewhat similar to the results of PIPA 2009, UTCPOR 2014 does show a slight increase in the proportion of Iranians who would oppose such a deal. In response to the very same question, 62% of UTCPOR 2014 respondents said that they

would oppose and 29% said they would favor such an agreement. Also, 9% of the respondents either said “don’t know” (6%) or refused to answer the question (3%).

#### **Section 4.2.4.2: The Treatment Variables**

The two main independent variables of the logit model presented above are used as treatment variables in the ATT analysis. Hence, like the logit model, the two hypothesis of the ATT analysis are:

*H1: Those who are made to believe that sanctions has a negative impact on Iran’s economy are more likely than those who do not hold that opinion to support Iran forgoing uranium enrichment.*

*H2: Those who are made to believe that sanctions against Iran would increase if Iran continued enriching uranium are more likely than those who do not hold that opinion to support Iran forgoing uranium enrichment.*

#### **Section 4.2.4.3: Balancing Variables for the ATT Analysis**

As was explained, to conduct an ATT analysis, control and treatment groups need to become balanced in as many ways as possible so that the two groups would become similar to each other in aspects designated by the balancing variables, with the treatment variable remaining as the “only” difference between the two. For the ATT analysis using PIPA 2009 data, the treatment and control groups were balanced using the respondents’ 1) confidence in June 2009 presidential elections, 2) confidence in the UN, 3) attitude toward the US government, 4) perceptions about US goals vis-à-vis the Muslim world, 5) attitudes toward negotiating with the US, 6) having or not having an Islamists approach

to governance 7) exposure to VOA and BBC, 8) level of internet usage, 9) age, 10) level of education, and (11) economic status. For the ATT analysis using UTCPOR 2014 data, the treatment and control groups were balanced using the respondents' 1) confidence in Majlis, 2) confidence in the President, 3) confidence in the Judiciary, 4) confidence in United Nations, 5) attitudes toward the US and Iran-US relations, 6) exposure to VOA or BBC, 7) level of Internet use, 8) having or not having an Islamists approach to governance, 9) age, 10) level of education, and 11) economic status.

**Section 4.2.4.4: Results of the ATT – Propensity Score Matching Method**

The results of the above two logit regression models are also corroborated by the results obtained through the ATT method. After balancing the treatment and control groups using a multitude of balancing variables, the ATT method, based on both the data from PIPA 2009 as well as UTCPOR 2014, could not support *H1*, and did not support the hypothesis that those who are made to believe that sanctions has a negative impact on Iran’s economy are more likely than those who do not hold that opinion to support Iran forgoing uranium enrichment:

***Treatment: Pain of Sanctions***

<b>Data</b>	<b>n-treated</b>	<b>n-controlled</b>	<b>ATT value</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>t-statistics</b>	<b>p-value</b>
PIPA 2009	415	133	0.074	0.060	1.227	0.22
UTCPOR 2014	702	171	-0.006	0.062	-0.099	0.92

ATT estimation with Nearest Neighbor Matching method.

Also, after balancing the treatment and control groups using the abovementioned variables, the ATT method, based on both the data from PIPA 2009 as well as UTCPOR 2014, could not support *H2*, and did not support the hypothesis that those who are made to believe that sanctions against Iran would increase if Iran continued enriching uranium

are more likely than those who do not hold that opinion to support Iran forgoing uranium enrichment.

*Treatment: Threat of Sanctions*

<b>Data</b>	<b>n-treated</b>	<b>n-controlled</b>	<b>ATT value</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>t-statistics</b>	<b>p-value</b>
PIPA 2009	500	100	.096	.061	1.572	0.12
UTCPOR 2014	598	204	0.017	0.048	0.348	0.73

ATT estimation with Nearest Neighbor Matching method.

All four of these results obtained through the ATT method, align with and support the findings of the two logit regression models, described above.

**Section 4.2.5: Interpretation and Policy Implications**

The results presented in this section have extensive policy implications. The most important finding of this section is that the negative impacts of the sanctions and the threat of increased future sanctions do not appear to have a significant negative effect on the public opinion of Iranians regarding Iran’s nuclear fuel cycle activities. Therefore, if the aim of the sanctions on Iran is to “persuade” the Iranian people to forgo uranium enrichment, they are indeed failing to have that effect. Another important finding of this study is that, when controlled for other factors, feelings toward the Islamic Republic and its constitutional institutions are not significantly correlated with how Iranians view their nuclear program. The assumption that support for Iran’s fuel cycle program is a byproduct of support for the Islamic Republic is not supported by the findings of this section. Therefore, supporting opposition groups to the Islamic Republic as a way of reducing Iran’s proliferation risks would probably not produce the intended outcomes.

The unwillingness of Iranians to forgo uranium enrichment does not appear to be due to their lack of exposure to alternative sources of news and information either. The analysis of this section does not find exposures to VOA or BBC and use of internet to be significantly correlated with a willingness to forgo enrichment. Interestingly, the results of this study show that educated Iranians are significantly less likely to be willing to relinquish Iran's uranium enrichment capacity. It should also not be assumed that Iranians favor uranium enrichment due to ideological commitments. The findings of this study find no evidence connecting Islamism to the unwillingness of the Iranian public to negotiate away Iran's uranium enrichment program. Therefore, since the support of Iranians for Iran's fuel cycle program does not seem to emanate from their lack of information or from their ideological convictions, efforts that are geared toward exposing the Iranian people to alternative sources of news, information, or even ideology will probably have an insignificant, if not the opposite, effect on their willingness to forgo uranium enrichment.

The findings of this study suggest three ways Iranians could be persuaded to support Iran foregoing proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program. The first measure that could be taken to persuade Iranians to agree to an enrichment halt is to increase their confidence in the UN. This study shows that Iranians who trust the UN are more likely than those who do not trust the UN to be willing to forgo uranium enrichment.

Indeed, it is quite logical for confidence in the UN to be significantly and positively predictive of the dependent variable. Besides a desire to safeguard what they regard as

their sovereign right, there are two other possible major reasons why Iranians would want their country to develop the capacity to enrich uranium: 1) to become self-sufficient and less reliant on foreign countries for Iran's growing energy needs and 2) to develop some form of a security deterrent. If Iranians could be persuaded to have sufficient confidence in the international system to provide for Iran's energy and security needs without discrimination, the utility of investing in uranium enrichment would become significantly diminished. Conversely, the more the UN is used to pressure and isolate Iran, the more likely it is that Iranians would lose confidence in the international system, become more convinced that Iran could not trust the "outside world" to provide for its energy and security needs, and, as a result, become more supportive of Iran's uranium enrichment and, for that matter, any other self-sufficiency programs. Indeed when asked whether it was more important for Iran "to become more integrated with the global economy, because that is the only way for Iran to prosper in the world today," or to "become economically self-sufficient because Iran should not be dependent on other countries," two thirds (66%) of Iranian said that Iran should become self-sufficient (Kull, 2007). In the summer of 2013, a UTCPOR survey also found that 71% of Iranians favored self-sufficiency over "becoming more integrated with the global economy."

The second measure that could be utilized to persuade Iranians to support forgoing uranium enrichment is to improve their perceptions of the United States. This study shows that Iranians who have more favorable views of the US government are more likely to support a halt in Iran's enrichment activities. This is perhaps because having an unfavorable feeling toward the US is heavily correlated with feeling threatened by the US

military presence in the Middle East. Indeed, in a poll that was conducted by PIPA in 2008, close to 60% of those who had an unfavorable view of the US government believed that US bases in the Middle East pose at least some threat to Iran (Kull et al., 2008).

The effect of feeling threatened by the US military on the US image in the Muslim world is well-known and was highlighted in a testimony given by Steven Kull, the director of PIPA, to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on May 17, 2007. In that testimony Dr. Kull emphasized that “views toward the US have turned sharply negative in the recent years [and] a key factor seems to be that the US is perceived as unconstrained in its use of military force by the system of international rules and institutions that the US itself took the lead in establishing in the post-[world] war [II] period.” Therefore, the more Iranians perceive the US as a threat, the more likely it is that they would support any measure that could deter and neutralize US threats, including development of the capability to enrich uranium. Hence, if the intention is to persuade Iranians to relinquish their support for Iran’s uranium enrichment program, the United States should work toward mitigating Iran’s security concerns and their fear of a possible US military action against their country.

The third measure that could be adopted to persuade Iranians to support an enrichment halt is to reassure them about US intentions toward the Muslim world. This study shows that Iranians who think the US is seeking to “weaken and divide the Islamic world” are less likely to be willing to relinquish their support for Iran’s uranium enrichment program. This finding of the study is closely linked to and strongly corroborated with

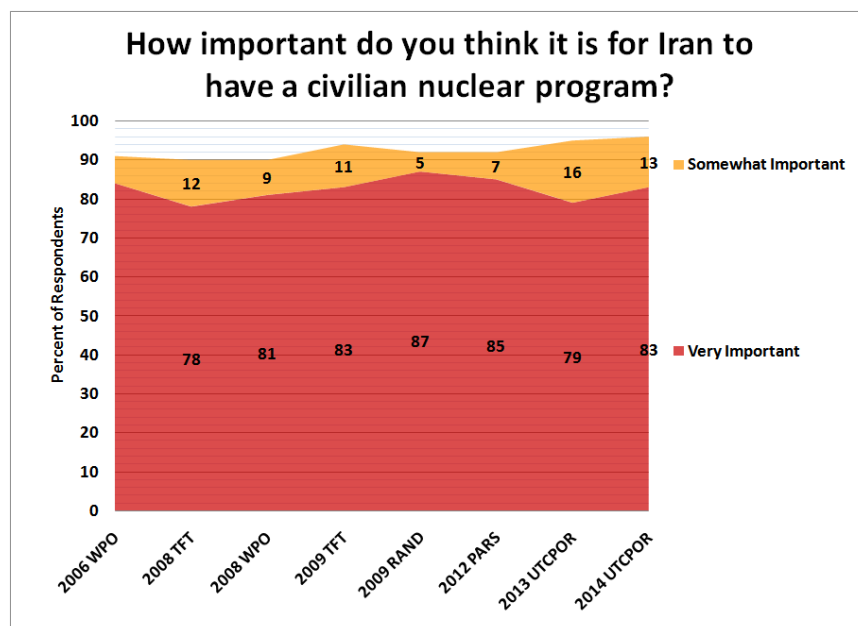


other findings of this section. The less Iranians are reassured about US intentions in the region and the more they feel threatened by the US, the more likely it is that they will oppose Iran giving up its uranium enrichment program.

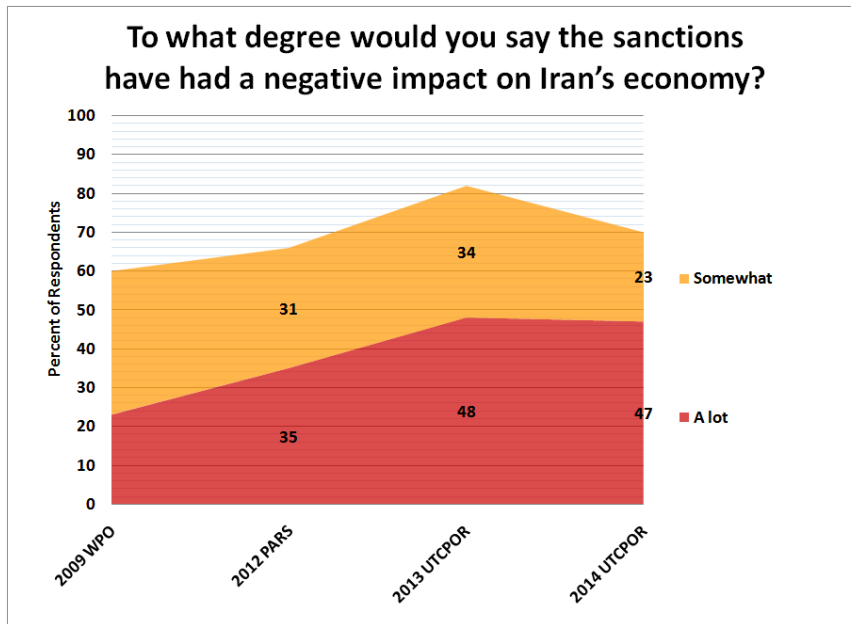
It must be said, however, that the above three suggested measures, are not something that could be achieved through a public relations campaign alone. As Admiral Mullen nicely put it, “we need to worry a lot less about how to communicate our actions and much more about what our actions communicate” (Mullen, 2009). Indeed, the results of this study show that exposure to VOA, which broadcasts official US positions in Farsi, or BBC, a western news media, has no significant effect on the Iranian public’s willingness to forgo uranium enrichment. This suggests that people in Iran have serious and real concerns that need to be concretely addressed before they could consider forgoing a self-sufficient nuclear program, and, as again the results of this section shows, much of those concerns are closely linked to the policies of the US and the actions of the United Nations. Therefore, as long as the US and UN fail to win the confidence of the Iranian people, there is little hope that the Iranian people would provide the enabling environment for their government to make any serious compromises.

### **Section 4.2.6: The effect of Coercive Diplomacy on Iranian Public Attitudes Toward Iran’s Nuclear Program**

Unlike most other sanction episodes, Iranian public opinion regarding Iran’s nuclear program has been evaluated through a series of surveys conducted by various research organization through various methods. All of these surveys show that an overwhelming majority of Iranians continue to support Iran’s civilian nuclear program, despite US and UNSC sanctions against Iran:

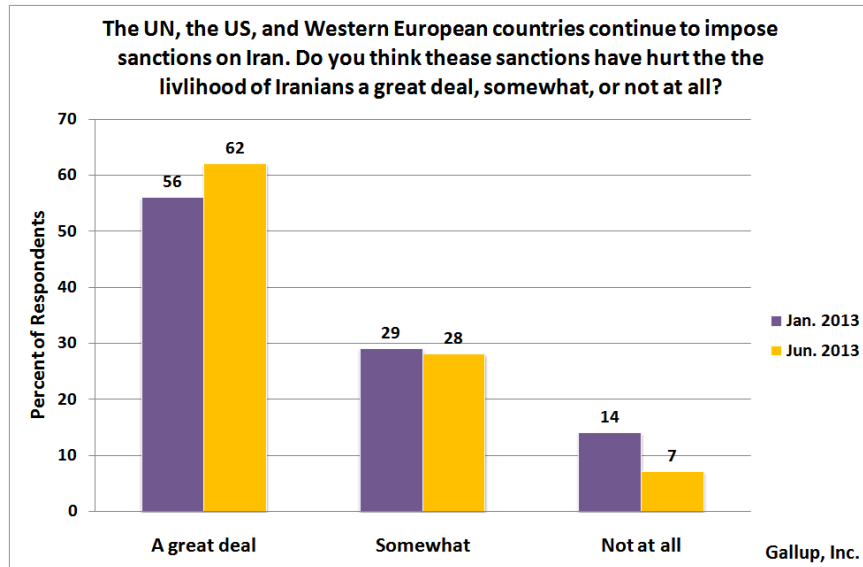


As the presented logit regressions as well as the analysis using the ATT method showed, the level of support is not negatively affected by sanctions and has remained roughly constant despite increasing sanctions against Iran. It is important to note, however, that this is not because sanctions have not been debilitating. Indeed, a strong majority of Iranians have continuously indicated that sanctions have had a negative impact on Iran’s economy:

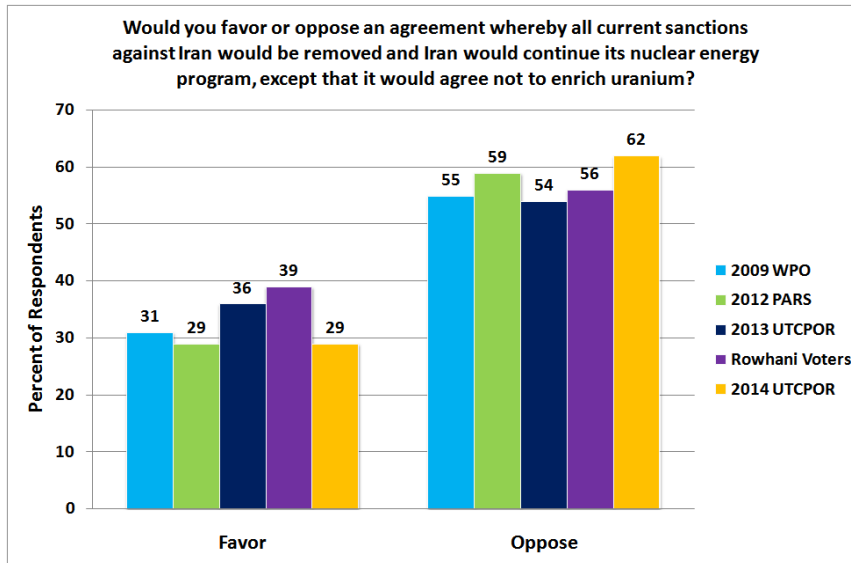


The results shown by WorldPublicOpinion.org<sup>26</sup> (WPO) and UTCPOR are corroborated by Gallup as well. Gallup has asked Iranians using call centers located outside of Iran about Iranian people's attitudes toward sanctions and their nuclear program. On several occasions, Gallup has asked Iranians "The United Nations, the US, and Western Europe continue to impose sanctions on Iran. Do you think these sanctions have hurt the livelihood of Iranians a great deal, somewhat, or not at all?" In response to Gallup's most recent survey, which was conducted between May 24 and June 6, 2013, a solid majority (62%) of Iranians indicate that the sanctions were hurting the livelihood of Iranians "a great deal," 28% said that sanctions were "somewhat" hurting the livelihood of Iranians, and only 7% said that sanctions were "not at all" hurting the livelihood of Iranians.

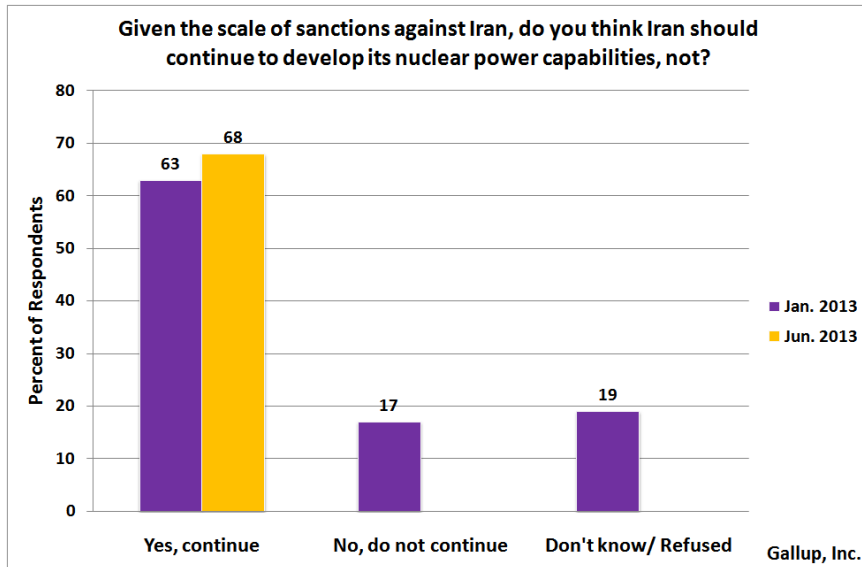
<sup>26</sup> WorldPublicOpinion.org is an international collaborative project, which was initiated by and is managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA).



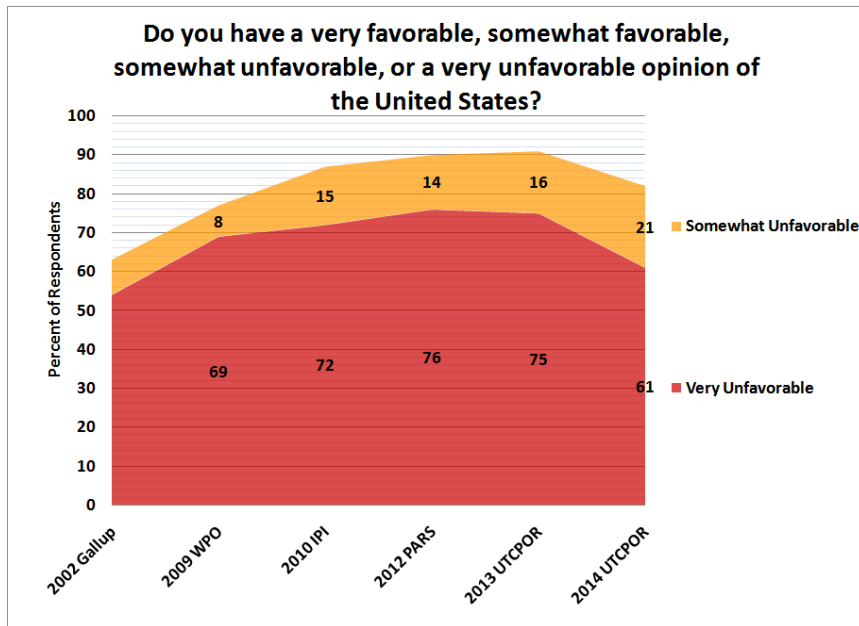
All available surveys, however, indicate that despite recognizing the severe negative impact of the sanctions on Iran’s economy and the livelihood of the Iranian people and despite believing that sanctions against Iran would increase if Iran did not suspend enriching uranium and did not curtail its nuclear program, the Iranian people oppose their government suspending uranium enrichment and believe that Iran “should continue to develop nuclear power despite the scale of sanctions against Iran” (Loschky, 2013). WPO and UTCPOR have since 2006 asked the Iranian public “Would you favor or oppose an agreement whereby all current sanctions against Iran would be removed and Iran would continue its nuclear energy program, except that it would agree not to enrich uranium?” In response to the most recent survey conducted by UTCPOR, 62% of Iranians indicated that they would oppose such a deal, while only 29% of them said they would favor such a deal:



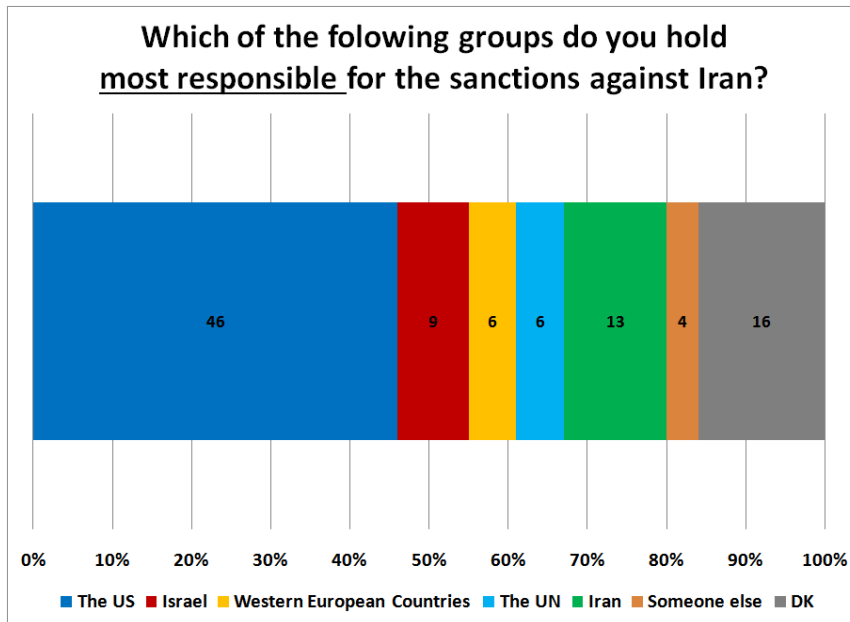
Again, Gallup surveys corroborate the findings of WPO and UTCPOR. On several occasions, Gallup has asked Iranians “Given the scale of sanctions against Iran, do you think Iran should continue to develop its nuclear power capabilities, or not?” In response to Gallup’s most recent survey, which was conducted between May 24 and June 6, 2013, a solid majority (68%) of Iranians said “yes,” Iran should continue to develop its nuclear power capabilities. While Gallup does not say what percent of Iranians said “no,” in the survey that was conducted in June 2013, when Gallup asked the very same question in January 2013, 63% of Iranians said “yes, continue” 17% of Iranians said “no, do not continue,” and 19% of the respondents either said “don’t know” or refused to answer the question.



While, as was shown above, sanctions have not been effective in eroding Iranian public support for Iran’s nuclear program and fuel cycle activities, it has eroded the standing of the sanctioning countries and institutions in Iran. As the US has pushed sanctions through the UNSC and as it has adopted more stringent sanctions against Iran, Iranians have developed stronger negative feelings toward the US. Survey data from a variety of sources indicate that Iranians have stronger negative feelings toward the US today than they did in 2002:



The Iranian public's confidence in the UN has also taken a hit. According to UTCPOR 2014, while 74% of Iranians have little confidence (27%) or no confidence at all (47%) in the UN, only 23% have some (17%) or a lot of confidence (6%) in the United Nations. As it is obvious, the primary reason why the US and UN are viewed so negatively in Iran is because the Iranian people hold them, and not the government of Iran, responsible for the sanctions that have negatively affected their livelihood. According to a Gallup survey of the Iranian people, which was conducted between May 24 and June 6, 2013, while two-thirds (67%) of Iranians hold the US (46%), Israel (9%), Western European countries (6%), and the UN (6%) most responsible for the sanctions against Iran, only 13% of Iranians hold the Iranian government responsible.



As was shown previously, however, attitudes toward the US and the UN are positively correlated with the Iranian people's willingness to suspend Iran's nuclear fuel cycle activities. In other words, all else held constant, as Iranians develop more favorable feelings toward the United States and become more trusting of the UN, they become more willing to favor a deal that would require Iran to suspend uranium enrichment in return for lifting of the sanctions. But the opposite is also true. Indeed, as Iranians lose their confidence in the UN and develop more negative feelings toward the US, the less likely it is that they would agree to any deal that would place Iran-specific limitations on Iran's nuclear program. Thus, to the degree that the US and UNSC sanctions make Iranians more negative toward the US and the UN, they erode the possibility of the Iranian people creating an enabling environment for Iranian policymakers to accept Iran-specific limitations on Iran's nuclear program and its fuel cycle activities.



### **Section 4.2.7: Conclusion**

This section sought to measure the effects of sanctions on the Iranian public's willingness to comply with UNSC resolutions, which demand Iran to verifiably suspend its proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities. It was argued that it does matter how sanctions have affected the position of the Iranian people on this issue since the policies of the Islamic Republic are at least somewhat influenced by the Iranian public opinion. Indeed, it would certainly be more difficult for the decision makers in Iran to go against the flow of public opinion, which creates an enabling or a disabling environment, and it would therefore be of value to see where the Iranian people stand and how, if at all, they are influenced by sanctions.

The analyses provided in this section found both the perceived pain of sanctions and the perceived likelihood of future sanctions to be of no significant utility in persuading Iranians to support a deal under which "sanctions against Iran would be removed and Iran would continue its nuclear energy program, except that it would agree not to enrich uranium." The two factors, however, that do have the intended effect on the Iranian public's position with respect to Iran's nuclear program are 1) greater confidence in the UN and 2) better attitudes toward the US, both of which are more likely to be undermined by further pressure and sanctions against Iran.

While the findings of this section might run counter to the prevalent perceptions in some circles, it only highlights what the literature on sanctions has been saying all along. As early as 1967, Galtung, who examined the first ever UNSC sanction that was placed on

Rhodesia (present day Zimbabwe), maintained that sanctions push the population of the target states to rally behind their leaders and increase “the political integration” within the target, solidifying the leaders’ resistance to pressure. Similarly, Weintraub (1982) asserts that “the more public an attempt on coercion, the less likely is the attempt to succeed” because such attempts would make the public more intransigent which in turn would “increase the pressures on the target state’s policymakers to resist the coercive measures” (p. 19). Genugten and Groot also claim the relationship between economic decline and nationalism to be well known. They argue that large-scale sanctions are more likely to push the “population to rally behind their leader and resist external pressure” (Genugten and Groot, 1999, p. 124). Bolks and Al-Sowayel (2000) have similarly maintained that states under sanctions are more likely to “have greater internal cohesion and ability to ignore the impact of sanctions.” Furthermore, this study also corroborates Joseph Nye’s (2004) assertion that if the US and, for all intent and purposes, the UN become so unpopular in a country that being perceived as conceding to them would be a political kiss of death, “political leaders are unlikely to make concessions to help us.” Conversely, as this study suggests, if the US and the UN could win the confidence of the Iranian people through concrete confidence building measures, it is more likely that they would provide the enabling environment for their policymakers to become more accommodating.

It is important, however, to draw attention to the fact that Iranian people’s attitudes toward the US are anything but fixed. Indeed, as far as the effect of sanctions are concerned, the available survey data suggests that as the US placed more sanctions and

pressure on Iran, the Iranian public's view of the US also deteriorated. But, quite significantly, when the US decided to pause its coercive posture toward Iran and negotiate the JPA with the Islamic Republic in late November, 2013, Iranian people's attitudes toward the US also became less negative. Hence, as the survey data suggests, engagement, positive inducements, and other less confrontational measures than sanctions and coercion are more likely to encourage accommodating behavior in Iran and are less likely to evoke opposition and antagonism.

#### **Section 4.3: Logic of Collective Action and the Effect of Coercive Diplomacy on Iran's Nuclear Policy**

As George (1991) puts it, the general idea and logic of "coercive diplomacy is to back one's demand on an adversary with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that he will consider credible and potent enough to persuade him to comply with the demand" (p. 4). The logic of coercive diplomacy, however, is flawed in many aspects. One of its main flaws, particularly as it pertains to international relations, lies in its apparent assumptions about the adversary. Based squarely on the rational actor model (RAM), the logic assumes the adversary to be a utility maximizing unitary actor. In reality, however, no country is run by a single rational actor making decisions for the entire country. Rather, even when it pertains to high policy decisions, decisions are shaped, even if not "made," by a collective of individuals "who focus... on many diverse international problems..., [and] act... according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals" through a series of legitimizing procedures (Allison and Zelikow, 1999, p. 255). It would be unfair, however, to maintain that eminent scholars like Schelling and George

did not recognize this reality when formulating their concepts of compellence and coercive diplomacy. Nonetheless, the strong reliance of these and other scholars' work on RAM has blinded those contemplating the utility of coercive diplomacy in particular circumstances to the complexities involved in arriving at national-level decisions. It is, therefore, important to disaggregate the logic of coercive diplomacy and independently evaluate the validity of each of its components and assumptions.

In this section, one of the most central components of the logic will be evaluated. The logic of coercive diplomacy assumes that the target will decide to concede once it finds the pain of the threatened or the demonstrated coercive action to be higher than the benefits it draws from the objectionable policy. The logic, however, is silent on the exact channel of transmission and on how the pain of the coercive measure would actually result in a change in the objectionable policy. In fact, the logic almost assumes some form of automaticity in this regard and neglects the complexities involved in the shaping and making of national-level decisions. It is, therefore, important to evaluate possible channels of transmission, and see whether or not they allow for the pain of sanctions to be translated into a change in the objectionable policy.

#### **Section 4.3.1: Channels of Transmission**

No country has ever been run by a single individual. Even the most despotic dictators have depended on advisors, functionaries, military officers, various professionals such as engineers and doctors, and at least a grudgingly cooperative general population to govern. Hence, at the very minimum, it must be assumed that countries are run by a collective of

individuals and that national-level decisions are the resultant of the pulling and hauling of those involved in the decision-making process. For coercive diplomacy to work, therefore, it must augment the forces that oppose the objectionable policy and/or diminish the strength of those who support the objectionable policy in the target country. The theory of coercive diplomacy, however, does not go into such details and, as was indicated, assumes that decisions in a target nation are made by a well-informed rational unitary actor who would abruptly stop his objectionable behavior once he becomes convinced that the costs of his behavior outweigh its benefits.

Despite a lack of attention to the involved channels of transmission in the literature, the available works imply various channels. Among the implied channels of transmission, the two most cited or implied are 1) the pressures applied by the people of the target on the decision-making elite in opposition to the objectionable policy; and 2) increased dissension within the targets' senior leadership regarding the objectionable policy.

Indeed, the channel of transmission that is most often alluded to is the actual or the fear of political pressure that would be applied by the public in the target country in opposition to the objectionable policy. The argument goes that "imposition of economic coercion will exercise sufficient 'bite' that citizens in the targeted country will exert political pressure to force either a change in the behavior of the authorities or their removal altogether" (Wiss, Cortright, Lopez, and Minear, 1997, p. 4). Byman and Waxman (2002) argue that coercion could lead to political pressure being applied on the target by its population either through instigation of public unrest, erosion of the power

base of the adversary's leadership, and/or threatening the decision-making elites' relationship with key supporters (pp. 59-72). This is indeed the most commonly held view in regards to how sanctions actually translate into a change in the objectionable policy. For example, in response to Senator King when he asked James Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, in a hearing held by the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 18, 2013, that "It seems to me the problem with sanctions against countries that are essentially autocratic is that the sanctions affect everybody in the street and they don't necessarily affect the decision maker. The supreme leader could hang on. He's not going to have any problems getting bread in the marketplace," Clapper said "Right, it won't affect him that way. What they do worry about, though, is sufficient restiveness in the streets that would actually jeopardize the regime. I think they are concerned about that" implying actual or the threat of "restiveness in the streets" to be the intended channel of transmission of the sanctions against Iran.

It is primarily because of this line of thinking that when addressing the Iranian people, US officials, including President Obama and Congress, emphasize that the Iranian people are suffering due to the policies of the Islamic republic of Iran. President Obama, for example, in his March 20, 2014, video statement to the Iranian people and leaders on Nowruz, said "the economic hardship that so many Iranians have endured in recent years" are "because of the choices of Iranian leaders." He made a similar remark in his 2013 Nowruz statement and said "The people of Iran have paid a high and unnecessary price because of your leaders' unwillingness to address this issue." US sanction bills against Iran usually include similar references as well. While such remarks do imply that

the pain being inflicted on the Iranian people is intentional and will persist until a change in the objectionable policy, they are generally designed to clear the US of any wrongdoing and channel public dissatisfaction and anger into citizen activism in opposition to the objectionable policy.

The other channel of transmission that is also alluded to both in the literature as well as by policymakers is increased dissention and disunity among the decision-making elites of the target country regarding the objectionable policy. In fact, some experts go as far as defining “sanction effectiveness as sparking dissention within the senior” leadership of the target country (Katzman, 2014). The argument goes that sanction will either directly or indirectly negatively affect the economic wellbeing and/or the political standing of some of the members of the decision-making elite, giving them more reason to voice their opposition to the objectionable policy. In regards to Iran, for example, Hillary Clinton said in an interview with BBC Persian on October 26, 2011, that “[sanctions] has put a lot of pressure on the regime, which is the first step toward, perhaps, getting some within the regime to look at each other and say, ‘Hey, come on. Why are we doing this to ourselves and to our people? Our economy is – wasn’t terrific to begin with, and now it is under greater stress. Why do we want to continue down a path that we know is not going to bring the kind of support for our own development, our own economic future?’”

### **Section 4.3.2: The Logic of Collective Action and the Channels of Transmission**

Indeed, both of the abovementioned channels of transmission are themselves based on an assumption that needs to be evaluated. Both the idea that a dissatisfied population would organize to put political pressure against their decision-making elite as well as the assumption that members of the decision-making elite who become, in one way or another, negatively affected by the sanctions will voice their opposition to the objectionable policy assumes that when people share a common interest they will unite to further that interest. However, the assumption that groups of individuals with a common interest will act when necessary to achieve their group objectives, though a popular proposition, is at best a dubious assumption.

#### **Section 4.3.2.1: The Logic of Collective Action**

As Mancur Olson (1977) elaborates in his seminal work, *The Logic of Collective Action*, “rational self-interested individuals will not act to achieve the common or group interests... Even if all of the individuals in a large group are rational and self-interested, and would gain if, as a group, they acted to achieve their common interest and objective, they will still not voluntarily act to achieve that common or group interest” (p.2). This is because individual members of a large group or a society have both common and individual interests. Since it is usually the case that the actions of a single individual will not have a noticeable effect on the probability of achieving the common interest, and since individual members of a society would not be barred from enjoying the benefits of the common interest if it becomes achieved by the efforts of other members of the



society, no single individual would have the required incentive to voluntarily endure any costs to achieve the common interest. As Olson (1982) elaborates:

The very fact that the objective or interest is common to or shared by the group entails that the gain from any sacrifice an individual makes to serve this common purpose is shared with everyone in the group...[and thus an] individual in any large group with a common interest will reap only a minute share of the gains from whatever sacrifice... [he] makes to achieve this common interest. Since any gain goes to everyone in the group, those who contribute nothing to the effort will get just as much as those who made a contribution. It pays to “let George do it,” but George has little or no incentive to do anything in the group interest either, so... there will be little, if any, group action. [Hence]... large groups, at least if they are composed of rational individuals, will not [voluntarily] act in their group interest (p. 18).

Olson (1977) then goes even further and claims that “these points hold true even when there is unanimous agreement in a group about the common good and the methods of achieving it” (p. 2).

Olson’s argument, nevertheless, does not, at first glance, appear to be as robust as it sounds. While it is true that states rely on coercion to collect taxes instead of relying on voluntary donations, even though every member of the society knows that without their financial backing the state would not be able to provide for crucial services, it is also true that a good proportion of the population participate in elections, knowing full well that their individual votes will not affect the outcome of any election. Also, contrary to what

Olson would seem to predict, history is full of instances of people joining hands to topple despots or protest against the violation of their civil liberties, despite all odds. And we have multitude of organizations in any given nation, such as labor unions, lobby organizations, cartels, farms organizations, professional associations, and other formal and informal groups and organizations, that seek to further the interests of their constituencies.

Olson's argument, which is more generically known as a public goods problem, however, has become more nuanced and hence stronger as a result of such criticisms. In his other seminal work, *The Rise and Decline of Nations*, Olson (1982) argues that public actions are usually undertaken and supported by individuals not because of the collective good such actions achieve, but because of the selective incentive they provide to their supporters. Olson further argues that without positive and/or negative selective incentives, public action in support of the common good will rarely, if at all, take place (pp. 19-23). While Olson does not go into much detail regarding the potency and efficacy of various positive or negative selective incentives that could entice individual members of the society to contribute to a collective cause, he does make it quite clear that the selective incentive has to be both *selective*, meaning that it would only selectively benefit and or harm the individuals depending on whether or not they contribute to the provision of the collective good, and that it has to be *incentivizing*, meaning that its net benefits should outweigh the costs of participation to the individuals.

With this addition to Olson's initial argument, it is easy to see how organizations such as labor unions form. All such organizations require, in one form or another, their members to contribute to the cause of the organization and, when and if possible, block the benefits acquired by the organization from going to those who do not contribute. But the addition does not clearly suggest how, contrary to what Olson and other Collective Action theorists seem to be claiming, social movements in opposition to a policy or even a system of government develop. While there is a whole separate academic field that investigates this very question, a broader understanding of Olson's "selective incentive" could shed light on how such movements come to being as well.

In most cases involving a public good or a common interest, the common good cannot be achieved without the efforts and contributions of enough participants. Under such circumstances, the problem becomes further compounded since even those who have the incentive to contribute would not because their individual contribution alone would not result in achieving of the common good. Indeed, in such cases each individual's willingness to contribute becomes dependent on his/her information regarding the intent of others to contribute. Without going into much detail, collective action problems could either be perceived as a prisoner's dilemma or as an assurance/coordination game, or both. Olson's "selective incentive" addresses the problem in both games and incentivizes all players to undertake measures that are more beneficial to them and the society as compared to the alternative. Through a potent selective incentive, individuals would become incentivized to contribute and if it becomes common knowledge that people are incentivized to contribute and if the selective incentives do credibly reassure individual

members of the society about the intention of other members of the society, then it would become rational for every incentivized individual to contribute toward the common interest.

Selective incentives, however, need not only be economical and rationality does not suggest neglecting the fact that humans are social beings. Indeed, selective incentives could also be social, religious, moral and psychological in nature.<sup>27</sup> While some have argued that popular protests take place because the protestors, in particularly their leaders, expect to attain selective material gains once their protests bear fruit, this is seldom why social activists take part in protest movements. Indeed, “the desire to gain or sustain friendships, to maintain one’s social standing, and to avoid ridicule and ostracism are all social goals that constitute selective incentives for individuals to participate in collective action” (Chong, 1991, pp. 34-35). Also, since people have to live with themselves as well, people’s sense of obligation, either to one’s self, the society, and/or to God, and their values could readily incentivize them to participate in costly collective actions without expecting any future material benefits. Indeed, most people need not be pressured to do the “right” thing and will act “morally” even when not doing so would entail a net material benefits. For example, most people often do not steal, even when they have a chance to do so, and most people do not take advantage of others even when they could do so with impunity. Hence, people could be selectively incentivized to

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<sup>27</sup> While Olson (1982) recognizes the significance of non-material selective incentives, he maintains that such incentives “are available only in certain situations... [and] have little applicability to large groups” (pp. 23-25). This judgment, however, seem to primarily be based on Olson’s own cultural upbringing. Indeed, while Olson’s judgment about the significance of selective social incentives might be somewhat accurate with regards to liberal societies in the west, he seems to underestimate its value with respect to more communal and/or religious societies.

partake in collective action in support of a common good merely by becoming convinced that their lack of participation would entail a cost, be it material, social, religious, moral, and/or psychological, that is beyond the expected benefit of not participating and/or would entail material, social, religious, moral, and/or psychological benefits that outweigh the costs of participation.

Even if individual members of a large group become selectively incentivized to participate in a collective action, however, collective action is unlikely to materialize in cases where the public good cannot be achieved without the participation of enough participants unless the incentivized members of the society become convinced and reassured that 1) enough people will partake in the collective action and that 2) the collective action will likely achieve the intended public good.<sup>28</sup> Potential participants in such a setting will need to know that the collective action is likely to bear fruit and that their efforts will not be in vain before agreeing to endure costs for the sake of the common interest. Obviously, different individuals will have different thresholds for participation. This is exactly why protest movements often start with a few pioneers, who, for a variety of reasons, tend to have lower participation thresholds, and attract others as their probability of success goes up and as the cost of participation in the movement goes down. Hence, those who initiate and lead a protest movement, tend to endure much more costs than those who join them down the road.

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<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that while certain individuals might feel so obligated and duty bound to partake in a collective action without any regards for its outcome or even its popularity, “rationality” does require decisions to be made based on expected outcomes.

Still, reassurance and coordination problems could “severely impede efforts to initiate mass political activism” (Chong, 1991, p. 112). Not only will those who pioneer a protest movement will have to accept enduring significant costs than others, but they will also need to be able to both reassure sympathizers that the probability of success is worth the costs of participation and convince the sympathizers that large enough participants will partake to make achieving the common interest possible. Therefore, the probability of a collective action actually materializing is dependent on the costs the pioneers have to and will be willing to endure, the resilience and the stamina of the pioneers, the credibility and standing of the pioneers among other members of the group, number of sympathizers with selective incentives to participate, the probability of sympathizers joining the collective action in time to share the costs of the collective action before its costs become intolerable for the pioneers, and the perceived value of the common good and the likelihood of achieving it through collective action. The probability of collective action actually materializing is also depended on what those who oppose the materialization of the “common good” do as well.

#### **Section 4.3.2.2: Evaluating the Utility of Coercion to Instigate Collective Action**

As was said, it is often assumed that sufficiently potent coercive action will instigate the public in the target country to place political pressure on the decision-making elite to change the objectionable policy. It is also assumed that even without an actual political pressure from the public, the decision-making elite will concede fearing its actualization. These assumptions have led coercers to undertake measures that have imposed tremendous costs on the civilian population of the target countries. Just as an example, it

is estimated that US and UNSC coercive measures against Iraq since its invasion of Kuwait resulted in 400,000 to 500,000 excess deaths of children under the age of five in Iraq (Ali, Blacker, and Jones, 2003). It is, therefore, important to evaluate whether and under what conditions coercion can push the people of an adversary to place potent enough political pressure on their decision-making elites to bring about a change in the objectionable policy.

As was mentioned earlier, collective action is very difficult to achieve. It is not enough to convince a significant proportion of the population of an adversary that they would be better off if their decision-making elite would change their objectionable policy. For collective action to materialize, those convinced will also need to become selectively incentivized to partake in a collective action. Not only that, but for popular collective action to materialize against an objectionable policy, determined, resilient, risk taking, and charismatic leaders who would be willing to endure significant costs to spearhead the collective action and persuade others to join are also needed. The collective action against an objectionable policy would also need to be stronger than other competing collective actions for it to ultimately succeed.

Indeed, there is a reason why history is almost void of any examples where external coercive pressure, without an actual military intervention, has resulted in public protests against the objectionable policy. It simply takes a lot more than just sanctions to instigate a popular movement against an objectionable policy. From amongst hundreds of sanctions episodes, the case that is often heralded as an example of how sanctions can

successfully change an objectionable policy of a target through a popular collective action against the policy, is the case of international sanctions against the National Party (NP) government of South Africa.

Without going into much detail, the South African case is unique in many aspects. First and foremost, it is important to note that sanctions did not instigate a collective action against the apartheid policy in South Africa; it merely supported and capitalized on an already existing domestic opposition. While the South African Native National Congress, which later became the African National Congress (ANC), was formed in 1912 with the express goal of leading, mobilizing, and coordinating the domestic opposition to the apartheid system and the NP's discrimination against the black South African population, UNSC did not adopt its first legally binding action against South Africa until 1977. But even more importantly, the ANC welcomed and in fact was the staunchest advocate of international sanctions against South Africa and "the call for isolation was part of the overall political strategy of the internal black opposition" (Crawford and Klotz, 1999, p. 178). In fact, while ANC made isolation of the NP central to its political strategy as early as 1969, it was not until the mid-1980s that the anti-apartheid lobbies were able to successfully pressure major western countries to adopt sanctions against South Africa (Crawford and Klotz, 1999, p. 179). It is also important to note that economic sanctions contributed only slightly to the fall of the NP. The most significant sanctions that affected the South African racist government were the social sanctions, such as exclusion of South Africa from world-class cricket and rugby competitions. Such sanctions "inflicted socio-psychological pain and undermined the ideological foundation



of the apartheid system, including South Africa's deeply mythologized ties to European culture," which ultimately delegitimized the apartheid system among the white South Africans, further bolstering the already existing anti-apartheid movements in South Africa (Crawford and Klotz, 1999, p. 271). Indeed, sanctions against South Africa did not "succeed" because it coerced the NP into conceding. They "succeeded" because they heartened the domestic opposition about the prospects of their struggles and also because they were able to convey a very strong moral message against racial discrimination, which ultimately led to the delegitimization of the apartheid system and hence its eventual fall (Crawford and Klotz, 1999, p. 275).

Sanctions against South Africa carry many lessons from a collective action point of view. One of its most important lessons, however, is that international sanctions are quite effective in attracting the attention of the populace of the target country as well as the international community to the objectionable policy. To the extent the populace of the target country and the international community find the policy to be in fact objectionable, sanctions can play a signaling and even a mobilizing role. In the case of South Africa, the majority of the South African population had already found the apartheid system to be objectionable but needed and advocated for the international sanctions to awaken the white South African population as well as the international community to the reprehensibility of the apartheid system. But sanctions could also backfire if the populace of the target country fail to see why the policy in question is being perceived as objectionable by the coercers. In fact, in those cases, sanctions would only add salience to the policy and intensify domestic support for the objectionable policy if the coercive

measure and not the policy in question is domestically regarded as being illegitimate. Under such a situation, considering that the objectionable policy would probably already have a constituency of core supporters, one could imagine collective action materializing in support and not in opposition to the objectionable policy. Also, since “leaders will give closer consideration to the... [political] impact of their decisions the more attentive the public is” (Knecht and Weatherford, 2006), and since sanctions could make a public very attentive, if the public ends up supporting the objectionable policy, sanctions will also make the leaders more attentive to the support of the public for the objectionable policy.

#### **Section 4.3.3: Logic of Collective Action and the Effect of Coercive Diplomacy on Iran’s Nuclear Policy**

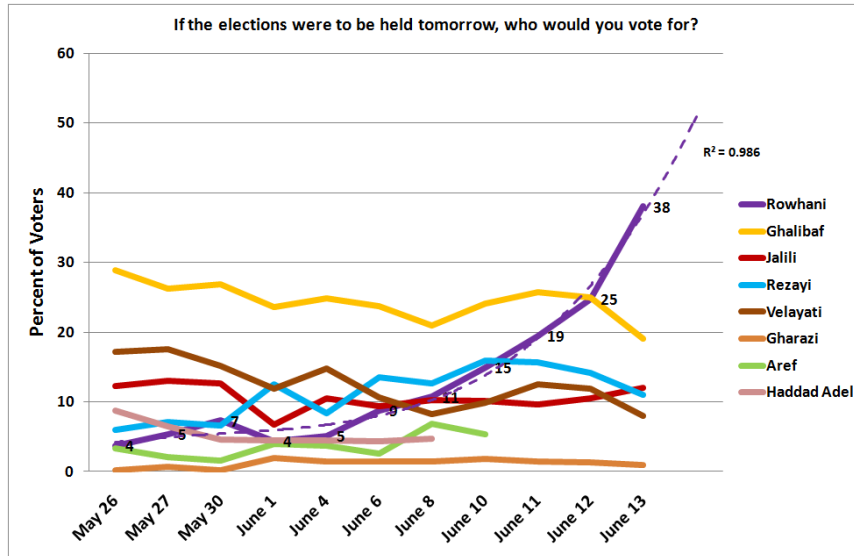
As was shown in the previous section, all surveys from Iran show that despite increasing sanctions against Iran, Iran’s nuclear program has remained popular among the Iranian public. Consequently, there is no significant political group in Iran that calls for the Islamic Republic to concede to US and UNSC demands and there is no evident sign of a domestic opposition developing against Iran’s nuclear fuel cycle activities. To the contrary, the program is so popular that it would be a political suicide for any member of Iran’s decision-making elite to suggest that Iran should concede to UNSC demands, much of which could be attributed to the salience the program has attained as a result of US and UNSC sanctions.

#### **Section 4.3.3.1: The Effect of Sanctions on Iran's June 14, 2014, Presidential Election**

It is important here to clarify a common misconception that has surfaced since President Rouhani's election in June 2013. Many in the West have heralded President Rouhani's election as a collective action that was instigated by US and UNSC sanctions against Iran. Just as an example, President Obama in his remarks at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Saban Forum hosted by the Brookings Institution on December 7, 2013 asserted that it was "precisely because of the international sanctions and the coalition that we were able to build internationally that the Iranian people responded by saying, we need a new direction in how we interact with the international community and how we deal with this sanctions regime. And that's what brought President Rouhani to power." There is, however, little evidence in support of such claims and most available evidence point to the other direction. In fact it could be well argued that it was not until President Rouhani reassured the Iranian public that he was not going to suspend Iran's nuclear fuel cycle activities as he did in 2003 and not until he convinced the Iranian people that the 2003-2005 suspensions were part of an intelligent scheme to allow Iran to master the entirety of the fuel cycle technology, that Iranian people started to seriously consider Rouhani's bid for presidency.

UTCPOR surveys conducted before and after the election show that support for Rouhani did not galvanize until about four days prior to Iran's June 14, 2013, presidential election, even though almost the entirety of all US and UNSC sanctions on Iran were well in place long before presidential campaigns began in Iran around the end of March, 2013. Hence,

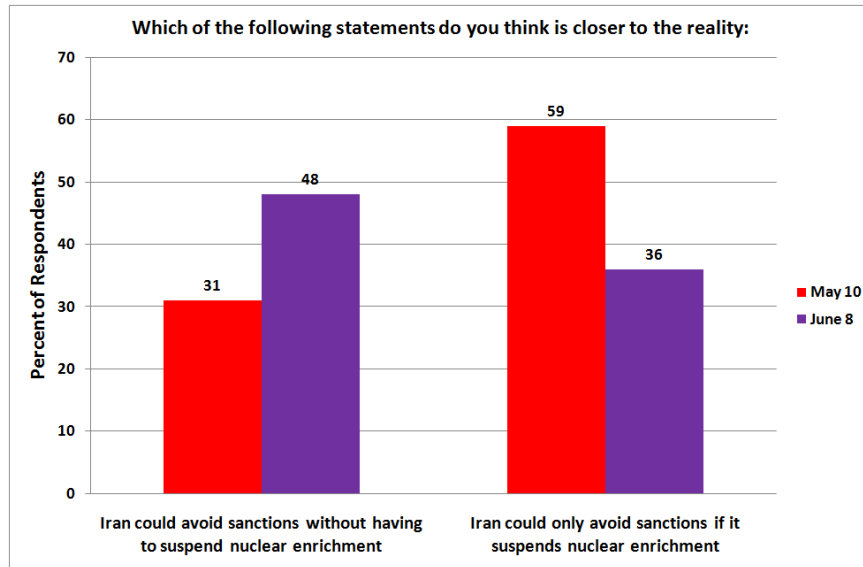
something besides the sanctions must have been responsible for Rouhani’s surge during the last days of the presidential election campaigns:



Indeed, President Rouhani used all of his major campaign programs to win back Iranian people’s confidence regarding his attitudes toward the nuclear program, a confidence that was in question due to Rouhani’s role in the 2003-2005 nuclear suspension. Just as an example, in response to the Iranian State TV Channel 2 reporter’s question on May 27, 2013 regarding Rouhani’s role in the 2003 – 2005 suspensions, Rouhani charged back saying that the suspension was tactically necessary and that “we completed the nuclear technology... [and by agreeing to the suspensions] we... provided the opportunity for our nuclear scientists... to complete Iran’s nuclear [fuel cycle] technology.” But it was not until the last TV debate among presidential candidates centering on national security issues that people became convinced that Rouhani was not a “sellout.” Rouhani had used every opportunity to convince the public that he was not going to turn his back on Iran’s

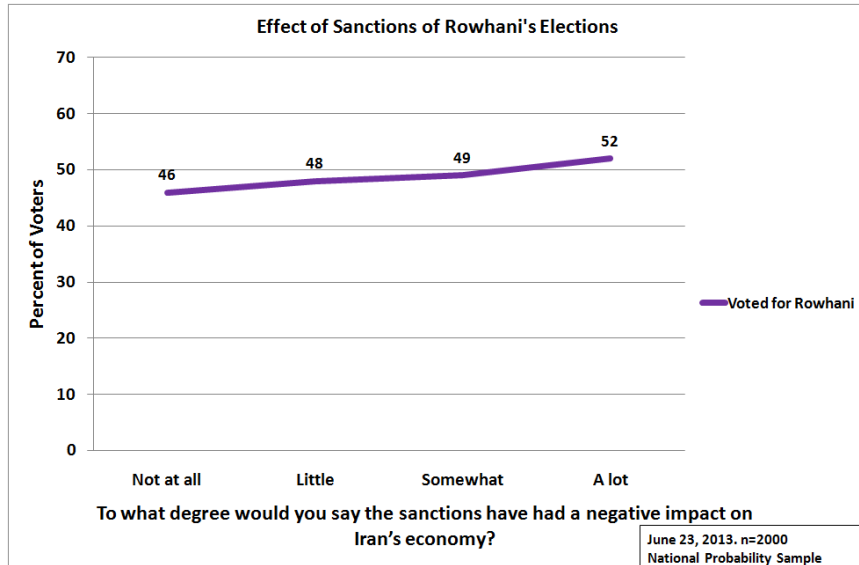
nuclear program and that he was going to use his diplomatic skills to have the program and avoid sanctions at the same time. But it was not until Ali Akbar Velayati, another presidential candidate who is also the Chief Counsel to the Supreme Leader on International Affairs and who was considered to be an opponent of Rouhani, charged against Saeed Jalili, who was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator under President Ahmadinejad, during the third debate accusing him of missing opportunities to resolve the nuclear dispute, that Rouhani's claim became more widely accepted.

The third presidential election debate, which took place on June 7, 2013, changed a public perception that had inhibited the Iranian people from trusting Rouhani. Less than a month prior to the June 7, 2013, debate, according to UTCPOR election surveys, a solid majority (59%) of Iranians were of the opinion that the only way Iran could avoid sanction was to suspend its nuclear enrichment program and only 31% believed that it was possible for Iran to avoid sanctions without having to suspend nuclear enrichment. The majority belief that it was not possible to avoid sanctions without forgoing enrichment, prevented people from trusting Rouhani who was making the contrary claim. When Velayati made statements during the third presidential debate that corroborated Rouhani's claim, the public perception regarding this issue underwent a fundamental change. In response to the same question after the June 7, 2013, presidential debate, only 36% of Iranians believed that sanctions could not be avoided unless Iran stopped its enrichment activity and a plurality (48%) accepted Rouhani's position that it was possible for Iran to enrich uranium and avoid sanctions at the same time:

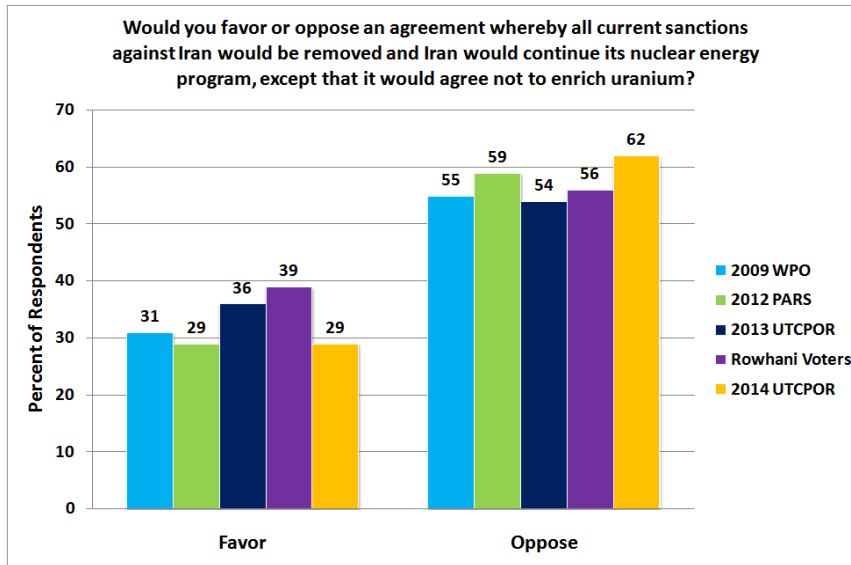


Hence, from the third debate onward, people started to more seriously consider Rouhani. It is no wonder that it is precisely after the third debate that we see Rouhani's number going up. It must be said that Rouhani's numbers did not only go up solely because of his promise to continue with the nuclear program. Obviously there were many other domestic reasons. Rouhani's demonstrated ability to work across Iran's political divides, for example, made Rouhani a very formidable candidate for a public that was tired of constant political gridlocks during the presidencies of both Khatami and Ahmadinejad. But despite his attractiveness, people could not trust him until they became convinced that he had not turned his back on Iran's nuclear program during the 2003-2005 period. Once that barrier was lifted, Rouhani's other impressive characteristics and credentials began to attract supporters and he was finally able to attract 50% of almost all segments of Iran's population.

Quite importantly and contrary to what is assumed in the West, Iranian people's attitudes toward sanctions did not have much of an effect on their likelihood to vote for Rouhani:



Also, those who voted for Rouhani were slightly more likely than the Iranian population as a whole to be willing to forgo enrichment in return for the lifting of all sanctions against Iran. According to UTCPOR, while at the time of the election 36% of the whole sample and 39% of those who said they had voted for Rouhani favored a deal that would require Iran to agree not to enrich uranium in return for the lifting of all sanctions against Iran, 54% of the whole population and 56% of those who had voted for Rouhani indicated in June 23, 2013, that they would oppose such a deal.



It is, therefore, important to refrain from drawing the kinds of conclusions that President Obama and many other analysts in the west draw from the outcome of Iran’s June 2013 presidential elections. None of the survey data available support the claim that people voted for President Rouhani in order to protest against the nuclear policies of the Islamic Republic. If anything, a close examination of the events surrounding that election emphasize how symbolically important Iran’s nuclear program has become to the Iranian people and how even a doubt about a person’s commitment to the program could negatively affect his/her political career.



### **Section 4.3.3.2: Coercive Diplomacy, Special Interest Groups, and Iran's Nuclear Policy**

The Collective Action theory has another very important implication as well. As was previously indicated, the Collective Action theory suggests that typically “large groups, at least if they are composed of rational individuals, will *not* act in their group interest” (Olson, 1982, pp. 18-23). Furthermore, due this and other properties of collective action, “the incentive for group action diminishes as group size increases, so that large groups are less able to act in their common interest than small ones” (Olson, 1982, p. 31). The implication of this is that “[m]embers of ‘small’ groups have disproportionate organizational power for collective action,” which in turn means that in any given society we would witness more organized groups that actively promote the interests of a few than organizations that advocate the interests of the society as a whole (Olson, 1982, p. 41).

When a country is placed under sanctions, it could either concede or resist. If it decides to resist, it will have every incentive to find ways to circumvent and mitigate the pain of sanctions. The incentive to circumvent and mitigate the pain of sanctions, create groups that in one way or another specialize in and significantly profit from activities that are geared toward mitigating the negative effects of sanctions on the society and, more importantly, on those who are, for one reason or another, better able to pay higher premiums for the services of such groups. As the duration of sanctions become more extended, such organizations become even more specialized and more efficient in what they do, resulting in a reduction of their costs of operation. Also as the sanctions become more stringent, the premium such organizations receive for their services also go up. Hence, as sanctions episodes become more prolonged and more stringent, the profit such

organization attain for their services go up, making the enterprise more and more attractive to other entrepreneurs. It is important to emphasize, that such organizations do not come to being only inside the sanctioned country. The benefits involved often become so significant that nationals and organizations of other countries also begin profiting from either the sanctions, by substituting for the commodities that used to be exported by the sanctioned country, or by providing sanction busting services to the sanctioned country, or both.

Such organizations have several qualities. First, since they provide crucially needed services and must operate under the radar to be able to provide such services, to the most extent their activities are not usually regulated. Secondly, since they are “helping to mitigate” the pain of sanctions, they tend to be admired by the society as well as the decision-making elite. Third, since most of their activities require some level of cooperation, if not help, from the state, they tend to either be linked to the state or have very good relations with the state. Fourth, since organizations that are capable of delivering such services are small in number, they are significantly more capable of forming coalitions. Finally, due to the abovementioned qualities, they have disproportionate power to directly and indirectly influence public policy.

Considering that sanction busting organizations exist and profit because of sanctions, they are much more incentivized to promote policies that, in one way or another, ultimately prolong the duration of sanctions. Hence, those organizations located inside the sanctioned country along with their supporters are more likely to support and

advocate the objectionable and other provocative policies and those that are located outside of the sanctioned country along with their supporters are more likely to lobby the coercing countries to adopt stricter and less accommodating policies toward the sanctioned country. Although the two forces need not to coordinate their efforts, they collectively escalate the conflict situation and impede or even spoil efforts geared toward its resolution.

While the abovementioned dynamic is not sketched by HSE and Oegg (2007), it is perhaps an important reason behind one of their most important findings. While HSE and Oegg (2007) mainly attribute their key finding, that there exist a strong negative correlation between the duration of sanctions and the success odds of sanctions, to the ability time affords to sanctioned countries to “martial the forces of nationalism,” “find alternative suppliers... and build new alliances,” the fact that time also affords domestic and foreign firms that benefit from sanctions with the opportunity to undertake measures that hinder conflict resolution should also be taken into account.

Indeed, sanctions against Iran have been in place for such a long time that most Iranian industries, which have mushroomed as a result of Iran’s post-revolution import substitution policies in response to the sanctions, are in operation precisely because Iran is, have been, and is assumed to remain under sanctions. Much of the investments that have gone into inefficient Iranian industries only appear rational if the investors did in fact count on the sanctions to remain in place for the foreseeable future. In fact, sanctions have acted as externally imposed tariffs that protect Iranian industries from foreign

competition. Hence, it is very difficult for Iranian industries to promote policies that would result in the lifting of the barriers to trade, just as it is difficult for any country that has operated its economy through protectionist measures to accept undergoing major liberalizing reforms. In fact, it would only be rational for Iranian industries and business elites to use their ability to take collective action to push for the exact opposite.

External profiteers have also played a major role in keeping the sanctions in place. Just as an example, Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region have been the staunchest opponents of a comprehensive nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 and Iran-US rapprochement. The Arab lobby in the US, which is primarily funded by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, has in fact joined hands with the Israeli lobby to hinder a deal between P5+1 countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran (Minin, 2013). While geostrategic considerations are indeed among the issues that concern Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region, the economic effects of sanction reduction on these countries should not be neglected. Indeed any easing of sanctions against Iran could only negatively affect the economy of these Arab countries. Just to give a few examples, more investment in Iran's energy sector is likely to reduce investments in the energy sectors of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. But even worse, lifting of sanctions against Iran would allow Iran to provide more oil to the world market, which would bring down the global price of oil to the detriment of these Arab countries.

Moreover, these very countries have also significantly benefited from providing Iran with sanction busting services. Just as an example, after China, UAE is Iran's biggest trade

partner not because UAE produces anything that Iran needs or vice-versa, but because UAE provides Iran with sanction busting services. Anything that Iran needs that it cannot import directly, it does so through UAE, and more specifically Dubai. Dubai is the biggest importer of US products in the Middle East and ranked 17<sup>th</sup> among all importers of US products in 2013. What is interesting is that Dubai re-exports 80% of the materials it imports from the US, at least a quarter of which ends up in Iran (Feroohar, 2010). It is no wonder that as sanctions against Iran became more stringent, the volume of Iran-UAE trade also went up. In fact, according to Dubai Chamber of Commerce, from 2005 to 2009, trade between Iran and Dubai tripled to \$12 billion. Obviously, Dubai charges a premium and makes good profit on everything it re-exports to Iran. It is needless to say that such lucrative trade with Iran is only possible because of the sanctions against Iran and would cease quite rapidly if Iran could import these commodities directly into its own ports.

#### **Section 4.3.4: Conclusion**

The logic of coercive diplomacy assumes that a target state will capitulate if it would become convinced that the pains it is or will suffer because of its objectionable policy are going to be greater than the benefits of the objectionable policy. No country, however, is run by a single rational unitary actor. Every country has its domestic politics and national-level decisions, particularly those with significant ramifications, necessarily do need to be adopted through a legitimizing political process. Therefore, national-level decisions should be regarded and often times are a mere resultant of the pulling and

hauling of multitude of individuals and organizations representing various interests in the decision-making process.

While the literature mostly leaves the actual channels through which the pain of sanctions translate into a change in policy obscure, the most cited and implied channel of transmission is the political pressure the populace of the target country would place on its decision-making elite. It is often assumed that if sanctions become crippling enough, people in the target country will realize that the benefits of the objectionable policy is not worth its costs and will therefore mobilize in its opposition. The argument suggests that a mobilized domestic opposition to the objectionable policy and/or the fear of such mobilization, will be enough to persuade the decision-making elite in the target country to change course. There is also the notion that sanctions may create dissension among the decision-making elite regarding the objectionable policy.

Public mobilization, however, is very difficult to achieve and even when members of a large group or a society agree on a common interest or a goal, there are prohibitively complex barriers to collective action. In fact, large groups are seldom capable of taking collective action and when such actions materialize it is rarely because of the common benefit they produce and more often because of the selective incentives they were able to afford to those who contribute to the collective cause. For this very reason, we do not have many good historical examples of sanctions not only convincing the populace of a country that they would be better off forgoing the objectionable policy but also instigating them to take action in opposition to the objectionable policy. In the case of

South Africa, which is often heralded as an example of how sanctions can work, sanctions did not instigate, but supported and capitalized on an already existing and vibrant domestic opposition to the objectionable policy.

Sanctions, however, can backfire if the populace of the target country does not find them to be legitimate. In those cases, sanctions could exacerbate the conflict and make its resolution more difficult by elevating the importance and the symbolic significance of the objectionable policy among the populace of the target country. Once a policy gains such a salience and symbolic significance, changing it as a result of external pressure would carry considerable political risk for the decision-making elite of the target country.

But perhaps more significantly, one of the ways sanctions, particularly those that are prolonged, can become counter effective is the incentive they create for the target country and others to try to circumvent them. Such an incentive often times create opportunities for domestic and international actors to seek to profit from the situation, engendering enterprises and various forms of economic activity that only exist and are only profitable as a result of the sanctions. While it is very difficult for the public, even if they become convinced that the objectionable policy is not serving their interests, to mobilize against the objectionable policy, entities that profit from the sanctions are small enough in number to more easily mobilize and advocate policies that further their own interests, even at the cost of the general public.

The lesson the theory of Collective Action has for those contemplating to resort to coercive diplomacy is that for coercive diplomacy to succeed, it needs to generate special interest groups in opposition to the objectionable policy and not in its favor. Indeed, the most direct way of bringing about change in a target country's objectionable behavior is to augment the strength of the forces that oppose the objectionable policy and/or diminish the strength of those who support the objectionable policy in the target country. Whenever sanctions do the opposite, they are most likely to be counterproductive.

It is important to emphasize that the strength of the forces that favor or oppose the objectionable policy does not depend only on the number or the wealth of the individuals and/or groups in each camp. The reasons they bring to bear for their support or opposition, the legitimacy of those reasons, and the ideological sway of those reasons from the perspective of the populace of the target country is oftentimes much more important. Indeed, while people would be willing to even sacrifice their own lives for a legitimate cause, there are very few individuals who would be willing to take any action in promotion of a cause they regard as being illegitimate. If sanctions could highlight the illegitimacy and moral reprehensibility of a policy, as it did in the case of South Africa, then it has a better chance to succeed. Likewise, if the coercing powers make demands that are deemed as illegitimate and unjustifiable, those demands are likely to generate resistance.



#### **Section 4.4: Coercive Diplomacy, Iran's Strategic Culture, and the Nuclear Policy of the Islamic Republic**

In the previous section, it was explained, through the prism of the Collective Action theory, why coercive diplomacy is unlikely to instigate a popular collective action in opposition to Iran's nuclear policy. The previous section also pointed to a few of the reasons, again through the prism of the Collective Action theory, why coercive diplomacy was unlikely to create dissension among Iran's decision-making elites in regards to Iran's nuclear program. It was suggested that since US and UNSC coercive postures and their demands are regarded as illegitimate by the public, there is significant public pressure on the decision-making elite not to concede to US and UNSC demands. It was also suggested that since almost the entirety of Iranian industries as well as a significant portion of all economic relations and activities are in one way or another dependent on the sanctions, the decision-making elite face little, if any, pressure from Iran's influential business community. It was, therefore, suggested that Iran's decision-making elite are not under any significant domestic pressure to change Iran's nuclear policies.

The previous section, however, would be an incomplete explanation of why coercive diplomacy is unlikely to instigate either a popular opposition to Iran's nuclear policy or dissension among Iran's decision-making elite regarding Iran's nuclear policy without a discussion about Iran's strategic culture and its effect not only on Iran's nuclear policy, but also on Iran's reaction to US and UNSC demands. Such a discussion is necessary because it sheds light on why US and UNSC demands are regarded as illegitimate, why, besides the reason explained in the previous section, individual members of Iran's

decision-making elite are unlikely to openly advocate conceding to US and UNSC demands even if they become convinced that doing so would be materially more beneficial, and why US and UNSC sanctions are ultimately likely to result in more resistance.

#### **Section 4.4.1: Strategic Culture and its Significance**

Before discussing Iran's strategic culture, it is first necessary to briefly define strategic culture and expand upon its significance. As with most grand concepts, strategic culture does not have any single agreed upon definition. Indeed, "strategic culture, no less than culture itself, is a contested concept" (Gray, 2006, p. 161). Culture is one of those most clearly understood yet most difficult terms to define. If defined too broadly, it is capable of becoming so all-encompassing that it would become void of its utility as an independent variable. Yet, narrowing its definition would also be problematic since it would be almost impossible not to be perceived as being arbitrary in what to include and what to exclude in an attempt to develop a narrower definition. Without getting too tangled in the fine distinctions between the various definitions that have been provided by different scholars, however, this section uses strategic culture to mean "an integrated system of shared symbols, values, and customs that, working through perceptions, preferences, and governmental processes, impose a degree of order on the ways that policymakers conceive and respond to the strategic environment" (Morgan, 2003, p. 28).

As social beings, humans necessarily live within distinct social communities that over time become exposed to distinct thoughts, ideals, values, and historical experiences,

creating a level of relative homogeneity within communities and making each social community somewhat distinguishable from other communities. The shared thoughts, ideals, values, and historical experiences of each community constitute its culture, which shape how each community and its members give meaning to and interprets strategic events and information to which they become exposed and condition how they respond to such events and external stimuli. Hence, “everything a security community does, if not a manifestation of strategic culture, is at least an example of behavior affected by culturally shaped, or encultured, people, organizations, [and] procedures” (Gray, 2006, p. 153).

The strategic culture of a society affects its strategic decisions in several ways. First, as was explained, culture influences how people perceive external stimuli and interpret the “reality.” When decision-making elites become exposed to an event or information of strategic significance, they will inevitably process and evaluate the information based on their own understanding and perception of the reality. It is needless to say that how decision makers define and understand their surroundings and how they process incoming information does form the basis of any decision they make, strategic and otherwise. Secondly, culture plays a significant role in defining a society’s strategic goals and preferences. When evaluating various policy options, decision makers will often weigh them according to their expected contribution, or lack thereof, to long and short term goals. A society’s strategic culture provides “the value system that policymakers use to rank alternatives when they perceive opportunities or threats in the strategic environment” (Morgan, 2003, p. 26). Finally, since culture does frame social interactions and hierarchies, and since how individuals within a community relate and interact with

one another is at least somewhat cultural, governmental processes and institutions that organize and regulate such interactions are also at least to some extent cultural. Consequently, strategic decisions are a byproduct of strategic culture to the extent governmental processes and institutions that produce and legitimize them are influenced by culture.

It is important to note that just like culture, strategic culture both influences and is influenced by strategic decisions a society adopts over time. As societies accumulate strategic experience, their strategic culture becomes further developed and nuanced. As Issa Boullata explains:

The culture of any human group is its collective experience in time. As the group moves in time from generation to generation, it continuously meets with new needs that challenge it. The response of the group shapes its experience of reality, which in turn, adds to its culture. The group learns to acquire new cultural elements and discard others, so that its culture continues to develop in the service of group survival and enhancement. Culture is thus continually changing and accommodating the group's institutions, beliefs, and values, to its ever rising needs, both material and otherwise. Certain cultures may be more open to change than others. But there is no culture that does not change unless it is a dead culture" (Sharabi, 1988, p. 148).

Also, certain elements of a society's strategic culture may become more salient than other elements depending on the situation at hand and the society's most recent strategic

experiences. Considering that a nation's strategic culture is somewhat shaped by that nation's historical experiences, elements of a society's strategic culture that have been affected by more recent historical experiences will generally have greater influence on strategic decisions than older ones. Indeed, the attitudes and worldviews of different generations of policymakers are shaped by different historical events and strategic experiences. While a society's strategic culture is not usually overwhelmed by any single event, policymakers, when processing information, are more likely to be influenced by events they have personally experienced than events only traces of which could be found in the strategic culture of their respective society.

It is important to note, however, that strategic culture does not dictate, but influences policy. A nation's strategic culture is only one of many variables, albeit an important one, that affect strategic policies. While strategic culture may shape how strategic stimuli are perceived, they do not produce the stimuli nor do they initiate government processes or develop policy alternatives. Strategic culture is the lens through which the strategic reality is conceived; it does not create the reality but perceives it. Indeed, strategic culture does not determine strategic behaviors or decisions. It does, however, provide for a societal common ground that allows for easier legitimization of national-level decisions. While there is significantly more to strategic decision-making than culture alone, strategic decisions that clearly violate the dominant strategic culture tend to become extremely difficult to defend and legitimize and are hence less likely to be adopted. Even in circumstances that require adoption of strategic decisions that contradict the dominant culture, policymakers often represent them as not being so and when such representation

is not possible, “deviant” decisions are portrayed as an expedient exception or temporary in nature. Regardless of the circumstances, however, “the effects of strategic culture will be more or less strongly stamped upon strategic behavior of all kind” (Gray, 2006, p. 168).

#### **Section 4.4.2: Iran’s Strategic Culture**

Due to its millenniums long history, geographic location, ethnic composition, and religious orientation, Iran has a very complex, nuanced, and pervasive strategic culture. Indeed, it would be beyond the scope of this section to comprehensively expand upon the many elements and aspects of Iran’s strategic culture and their implications. In this section, therefore, I will suffice to first explaining how Iran’s political structure as well as key national and religious experiences and narratives have shaped and been shaped by Iran’s strategic culture.

##### **Section 4.4.2.1: Iran’s Political Structure and its Effect on Iran’s Strategic Culture**

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has a complex political system that cannot be fully understood without some knowledge of the evolving Shiite political philosophy, Iran’s political history and the evolving religious identity of the Iranian people. Without such a knowledge, the Constitution of the IRI would seem to lack the required coherence and practicality to act as the supreme law of a multiethnic and socially diverse country like Iran. The challenge of fully understanding the nuances of the political system of Iran is further compounded by the fact that throughout the political history of the human race, there has been no system of government that could be characterized as being even

similar, let alone equivalent to the current political order in Iran. This lack of precedence coupled with the difficulty of understanding the subtleties of the political thoughts and principles that underlie Iran's current framework of government, have made IRI significantly prone to mischaracterization. This section intends to shed light on and explain some of the religious thoughts, political philosophies and historical experiences that have interacted with one another to, on one hand, shape Iran's current political order and, on the other hand, form the contemporary Shiite political philosophy.

#### **Section 4.4.2.1.1: The Evolution of the Political Thoughts of Shiite Islam and the Role of Shiite Scholars in Iran Until the Islamic Revolution in 1979**

Unlike any country in the world, the Iranian population is overwhelmingly Shiite. More than 90% of Iran's population is Shiite and it could be well argued that considering Iran's multiethnic makeup, the only two factors that unite the Iranian people and keep the country together are the Iranian people's shared Shiite faith and shared historical experiences. It is, therefore, important to have some understanding of this major unifying factor before seeking to understand the foundations upon which Iran's current political order rests.

The Shiite faith is a branch of Islam that was formed after the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD. Shiites believe that 1) Prophet Muhammad had in fact declared that it was divinely ordained for Imam Ali, who was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, to succeed him after his death as both the spiritual and the political leader of the Muslims, 2) regard rulers who were selected instead of Ali as illegitimate, and 3) emphasize the family of the Prophet Muhammad as the most authentic source of knowledge about the

Prophet's teachings and way of life. While Shiites, like Sunnis, believe that the Quran is indeed the very words of God that ought to be fully heeded by believers, unlike Sunnis they allow much more room for human interpretation. Shiites, nevertheless, consider honest and sincere interpretation of the Quran to be not only an esoteric academic task that requires deep knowledge of a range of disciplines including Arabic literature, Islamic hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic history, philosophy and logic, but also a "purified" person free from any prejudices and conflicts of interest (Nasr, Dabashi and Nasr, 1988, pp. 26-33).

Initially, the Shiite Imams, who were the direct decedents of the Prophet and Imam Ali and are considered to be infallible, were regarded as the only authoritative interpreters of the Quran and explainers of the Prophet's way of life. Shiites also believed that the Imams were divinely ordained to rule over Muslims and that anyone who would ever assume any form of political leadership without the direct endorsement of the Imam of the time was in effect "usurping" an authority that was divinely vested in the infallible Imam. Consequently Shiites regarded the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties as "usurpers" of authority and thus illegitimate (Sachedina, 1988, pp. 89). But with the death of the 11<sup>th</sup> Imam in 874 AD, his son Al-Mahdi, who is considered by Shiites to be the last Imam and the ultimate savior of mankind, went into hiding and communicated with the Shiite community only through four of his select deputies for a period of 67 years. Before this period, which is known by the Shiites as the "minor occultation," ended in 941 AD, it is narrated that Al-Mahdi through his fourth and last deputy informed the Shiites that soon all of his communications with the Shiites was going to come to an end, and that his



“major occultation,” the length and duration of which is only known to God, was going to begin. It is also narrated that he ordered Shiites to refer to the Shiite scholars for guidance during his major occultation (Majlesi, V. 53 p. 118).

With the beginning of the major occultation, the Shiites, who since the death of the Prophet had challenged the legitimacy of all Caliphs on the basis that the Imams were the only divinely ordained legitimate authorities, faced a difficult situation. On one hand, considering that they believed Al-Mahdi, the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam, to be living, they had to continue to regard him as the only legitimate authority to rule over Muslims, which in turn meant that they had to continue to oppose the authority of all other rulers, including those that may rise to power from within the Shiite community itself. On the other hand, considering that the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam himself had indicated that he would be nowhere to be found and accessed for an unknown period and considering that he had selected no one to represent him, it soon became necessary to develop a mechanism to address the leadership void created by the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam’s major occultation (Sachedina, 1988, p. 93). Therefore, soon after the start of the major occultation, the Shiite scholars resorted to the Islamic principle of *Ejma* (consensus), which allows for scholars to authoritatively generate new understanding of the religion after reaching a consensus among themselves, as well as the last decree of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam to his deputy to slowly take charge of the responsibilities of the hidden Imam.

The first responsibility the Shiite scholars took upon themselves was to directly answer the newly emerging religious questions of the Shiites. While before the major occultation,

Shiite scholars would only disseminate answers already provided by the Imams, after the major occultation they realized that with the passage of time more and more new situations that required new religious decrees were emerging. They thus arrived at a consensus that during the major occultation of the Imam, each of the Shiite scholars familiar with the Quran, the teachings of the Prophet, and the interpretations of the Imams would have the authority to utilize deductive reasoning to arrive at their own best judgment as to what the Imam would have decreed if he was presented with a similar question (Momen, 1985, pp.185-191). They, nevertheless, did maintain that it would be every Shiite's responsibility to identify and abide by the religious decrees of the scholar they regarded to have the deepest understanding of the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet and the Imam. They also did not rule out the possibility that a person might think of him or herself as being the "most learned" Islamic scholar and determined that such individuals must follow their own best judgments.

Another responsibility that Shiite scholars soon assumed was to collect religious taxes. During the life of the Imams and the minor occultation all religious taxes were either given to the Imams or were spent in accordance to the direct wishes of the Imams. With the start of the major occultation, the Shiites could no longer access the Imam and were left to wonder what to do with their religious taxes. The Shiites scholars, believing that the major occultation of the Imam was not going to last too long, refrained from collecting the religious taxes and decreed that the Shiites should deposit their taxes in a safe location or leave it with a trusted individual so that the accumulated funds could be handed to the Imam once he returns. This position on the taxes remained accepted by

religious scholars until about 300 years into the major occultation. Yet in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a prominent Shiite scholar by the name of Muhaqiq Hilli (1205 - 1277 AD) realized that the occultation may not end anytime soon and that it was not wise for Shiites to simply accumulate their religious taxes in hopes of ultimately handing it to the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam. He, therefore, decreed that Shiites scholars may collect religious taxes and that Shiite believers must pay their religious taxes to the Shiite scholar they regard to be the most learned so as to ensure the highest probability that the funds would be spent “in the way the Imam himself would have determined” (Sachedina, 1988, pp.241). From that point onward, Shiite believers handed their religious taxes, in particular the portion that is specified in the Shiite faith for the Imam (10% of annual savings), to the Shiite scholars they followed. This independent source of income, on one hand significantly empowered the Shiite scholars and, on the other hand, paved the way for the institutionalization of their role in the Shiite society.

Shiite scholars, however, deliberately refrained from assuming any aspects of the political responsibilities of the Imam until around early 19<sup>th</sup> century. While Shiite scholars did start to actively collaborate with the governmental institutions during the Safavid Dynasty (1507 - 1722 AD), which declared the Shiite faith as the official religion of Persia, their role mostly remained limited to the courts, since partaking in politics, let alone assuming political responsibilities, were regarded to be in direct violation of the Shiite belief. Yet, when northern Iranian territories, which were ethnically Azeri, came under attack from Russia in 1804, Abbas Mirza, the heir of the King and the commander of Iran’s armed forces, successfully convinced Shiite scholars of the time that they had an

Islamic obligation to issue a Jihad decree against the Russian forces in defense of Azeri Shiites, making it a religious obligation for all Shiites to participate in Abbas Mirza's military campaign against the Russians (Momen, 1985, pp.138). While the decree was instrumental in mobilizing the Shiites against the Russian invasion during the first and the second Russo-Persian wars of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, relative technological and tactical superiority of the Russian forces resulted in Russia's ultimate victory. This event, however, made the Shiite scholars, who had up until then refrained from assuming the political leadership role of the Imam, to seriously consider up taking that responsibility as well.

Slowly, with the rise of colonialism, Shiite scholars became convinced that they should take anti-imperialist stances. They felt quite confident that their Imam would have certainly required Shiites to oppose western colonial domination of Muslim territories. Having showcased their ability to mobilize the masses in support of a cause, they frequently threatened to issue decrees both against the interests of the colonial powers and anyone, including the King, who may consider collaborating with them. In 1891 when the King refused to heed the ultimatum of the Shiite scholars who opposed a tobacco monopoly concession deal that was granted by the King to a British company in return for a fixed monthly transfers of royalties, the most senior Shiite scholar of the time, Ayatollah Mirzayeh Shirazi issued a decree forbidding the use of tobacco in any form. The decree resulted in a universal boycott of tobacco across Shiite territories, making the concession void of any economic benefits for the British. Shortly after the

decree, the King withdrew the concession in an effort to both calm the public and mend his ties with the Shiite scholars.

The ordeal, which became known as the “Tobacco Movement,” again showed the Shiite scholars as well as Iranian and foreign statesmen and politicians the full extent of political power Shiite scholars could exercise and the degree to which they could mobilize the masses in support of their cause. The Tobacco Movement also made ordinary people realize that Shiite scholars could both act as powerful advocates of their interests and effectively protect them against the arbitrary rule of the King. Increasingly when the public wished to protest against any of the policies of the government or the actions of a governor or a magistrate, they turned to Shiite scholars to voice their grievances. Shiite scholars, in turn, being financially independent from the state and practically immune from its pressure, openly advocated people’s interests and criticized the government when they deemed it to be deviating from Islamic doctrines (Momen, 1985, pp.143). Consequently, the political influence of Shiite scholars rapidly increased and they found themselves on a slippery slope toward fully assuming the political leadership role of the Imam.

While Shiite scholars became more politically active around the ends of the 19th century, they were careful not to cross any of the traditional boundaries that they had establish for themselves. The events of the last years of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century, however, changed this all. In 1897 the Prime Minister (PM) of Iran, Aminuddula, introduced a series of taxes and tariffs that considerably reduced the buying

power of the public and the profits of the merchant class. The taxes and tariffs also reduced the revenues of Shiite scholars, since Shiite religious taxes are based on the net annual savings of the believers. The taxes and tariffs were hugely unpopular with all segments of the society and resulted in protests against Aminuddula. As a result, within less than two years, the Shah replaced Aminuddula with Atabak, a seasoned yet brutal politician who was a fixture of the Qajar dynasty. Upon becoming the PM, Atabak sought the consultancy and assistance of Joseph Naus, a Belgian technocrat, to reorganize Iran's customs and tax system. Naus along with two of his colleagues arrived in Tehran on March 15, 1898 and within less than a year were able to augment state revenues by more than 35% (Destrée, 1989). King Mozaferadin and his PM were so pleased with the work of Naus that they promoted him to assume the responsibilities of multiple cabinet level positions and made him the de facto minister of Commerce and Treasury (Keddie, 1969).

As Naus gained more influence in the government, he introduced stricter tax and customs regulations and proposed to rely on Belgian tax collectors who were regarded as being generally more immune to bribery and favoritism as compared to their Iranian counterparts (Keddie, 1969). Naus's increased influence and his proposal to use Belgian tax collectors were perceived as a threat by all elements of the Iranian society. Not only did the merchants and Shiite scholars become wary of Naus's increased influence, but at the administrative level, royal court officials also began to regard Naus as a political competitor and a threat to their special interest (Bayat, 1991, pp. 107). Resentments against Naus, however, became a public matter when a picture of him dressed in the garb of Shiite scholars in a party was spread around during the holy week of Muharram in

March 1905. Some of the Shiite scholars regarded this act as being deliberately offensive and mobilized their followers to demand the dismissal of Naus. The incident and the passions it aroused eventually subsided when the government provided the merchants, the Shiite scholars, and the protestors with a vague promise of a thorough investigation.

Yet Naus was never removed from his position. The government's lack of accountability inspired philosophical deliberations among Shiite scholars and the intelligentsia on ways of making the monarchy more restrained, accountable and responsive to people's will. Secret societies were formed to discuss the issue and the necessity of deep political reform became widely recognized. Consequently, in December of 1905 sit-ins were organized by Shiite scholars and merchants, demanding the King to accept the establishment of a "House of Justice." In January 1906, the sit-ins came to an end with the King promising the establishment of a House of Justice, the meaning and composition of which was never made clear. The King, however, could not fulfill his promise in due time, resulting in deep suspicions about the King's ultimate goals. Consequently, Shiite scholars became more critical of the government and prominent lecturers, such as Sheikh Mohammad Vaez, held frequent public speeches against the monarchy. As these speeches attracted more and more listeners, the government decided to banish Sheikh Mohammad Vaez and ordered the security forces to apprehend the Sheikh in July 1906. When security forces arrested the Sheikh, seminary students stormed their headquarter to free the Skeikh, resulting in the death of a young seminary student from an esteemed family by the name of Seyyed Abdol Hamid (Keddie, 2003 pp. 67).

The death of Seyyed Abdol Hamid triggered mass protests across Tehran. To void the monarchy of any religious legitimacy, Shiite scholars left Tehran en masse in what is known as the “Great Migration” on July 16, 1906. A day after the start of the Great Migration, the merchants and ordinary people staged a sit-in at the premises of the British Embassy, which was immune from possible attacks by state security forces. As the sit-in at the British Embassy grew larger by the day, unrest engulfed the whole country and the list of demands from the monarchy gradually became lengthier. Among the protesters’ demands was the creation of a representative parliament and enactment of a Constitution to restrain the authorities of the King. Eventually, after much hesitation, on August 6, 1906, the ailing King Mozaferadin accepted the demands of the protesters, dismissed PM Eynoddoleh and replaced him with Moshiroddoleh, and ordered PM Moshiroddoleh to facilitate the creation of Iran’s first constitutional assembly.

With the King’s order, the Shiite scholars, who had led much of the protests against Eynoddoleh and the monarchy, found themselves in an awkward situation. Although they had advocated for enactment of a Constitution, they had little idea of how they should go about taking part in its drafting without crossing the boundaries they had established for themselves since the beginning of the major occultation. As prominent leaders of the movement, all eyes were on the Shiite scholars and they had to choose the type of political system they were going to promote. The ball was in their court and, unlike before, there was no way they could refrain from taking a direct political stance. The problem, however, was that unlike matters dealing with jurisprudence, Shiite political philosophy was a topic that was rarely discussed by Shiite scholars and little scholarly



work had been done on the topic. The lack of religious literature on politics and governance, however, was not accidental. The firm Shiite belief that God has only vested the Imam with the authority to rule over Muslims and anyone who would assume that authority without his direct consent was usurping a power that did not belong to him, had prevented Shiites scholars from contemplating politics (Amid-Zanjani, 1998, V2 p. 78).

The deliberations surrounding Iran's future political system split Shiite scholars into two main camps. One camp, most notably led by Ayatollah Nuri, was composed of those advocating for the Shiite scholars to actively assume the political responsibilities of the Imam. They idealistically argued that Islam "contains all the regulation for administration of the state" and that instead of legitimizing man-made legislations, Shiite scholars should rely on the teachings of Islam and present the community with laws, regulations, and policies that are solely sourced in the canonical texts of Islam (Milani, 1988, pp. 54). To be sure, these Shiite scholars did not advocate for a theocracy and did not entertain the idea of Shiite scholars assuming political office. Instead they were happy with the continuance of the status quo provided that the monarch would fully execute the decrees of the Shiite scholars. The other camp, which comprised most of the leading Shiite scholars of the time, adopted a more pragmatic approach. Their argument, which was best articulated Ayatollah Gharavi Naini, was that in the modern age, governments are either tyrannical or constitutional and since during the major occultation no authority can claim legitimacy, it is upon Shiites to support the lesser of the two evils, i.e. constitutional monarchy.

The deliberations among the Shiite scholars eventually resulted in a compromise that was much closer to Ayatollah's Naini's proposition than to Ayatollah Nuri's. The Shiite scholars agreed to endorse a constitutional monarchy provided that Shiite scholars would have a legislative veto power to turn down any law they would deem to be in conflict with Islamic laws and principles. The Article II of the amended<sup>29</sup> Iranian constitution stated that:

At no time must any legal enactments of the sacred National Consultative Assembly, which was established as a result of the favor and assistance of His Holiness Imam Mahdi (may God Hasten his reappearance), the favor of His Majesty the King of Islam (may God maintain his rein) and the vigilance of the Muslim scholars (may God multiply their likes), and the whole people of the Persian Nation, be at variance with the sacred rules of Islam or the laws established by His Holiness the Best of Mankind Prophet Mohammad (on whom and on whose household be the Blessings of God and His Peace). It is hereby declared that it is and has been for the Shiite scholars – may God prolong the blessing of their existence – to determine whether enacted laws are or are not compatible to the rules of Islam; and it is therefore officially enacted that there shall at all times exist a committee composed of not less than five Shiite jurist and devout theologians, cognizant also of the requirements of the time, elected in this manner: The senior Shiite scholars shall present to the National Consultative

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<sup>29</sup> Iran's first Constitution, which only defined the role of the Parliament, was written hurriedly to ensure that constitutionalism would become endorsed by the mortally ill King Mozafaradin before his death. The first Constitution, which went into effect after being endorsed by the King on December 30, 1906 (the King died on January 8, 1907), was recognized by all to be critically lacking in all aspects and practically only served as a document to give rise to the creation of Iran's first parliament. Once the first Majlis opened, the work to amend the initial Constitution began. The amendments to the Constitution were finalized within less than a year and went into effect on October 7, 1907.

Assembly the names of Twenty of the Shiite scholars possessing the attributes mentioned above; and the Members of the National Consultative Assembly shall, either by unanimous acclamation, or by lottery, designate five or more of these, according to the exigencies of the time, and recognize these as Members, so that they may carefully discuss and consider all matters proposed in the Assembly, and reject and repudiate, wholly or in part, any measure that they would find to be at variance with the Sacred Laws of Islam, so that it shall not obtain the title of law. In such matters the decision of this ecclesiastical committee shall be followed and obeyed and this article shall continue unchanged until the appearance of His Holiness Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance).

The idea that Shiites should engage in a political process that is checked by a veto power of Shiite scholars was indeed a revolutionary idea that opened the floodgates of Shiite political activism. The jubilation over constitutionalism, however, was short lived. Upon King Mozaferadin's death, his son Mohammad Ali ascended to the throne. Although King Mohammad Ali had sworn to defend the Constitution and although the amended Constitution was endorsed by him, he was instigated by Russia, which found a Constitutional order in Iran destabilizing, to take action against the constitutionalists. Under the influence of Russia, King Mohammad Ali took full advantage of a failed assassination attempt on his life and a lack of unity and bitter factionalism among the constitutionalists to suspend the Constitution and restore what is now referred to as the "Lesser Despotism" on June 23, 1908. Major Shiite scholars, however, were quick to condemn the King. They simultaneously issued decrees against the "King's despotism,

urging the faithful to support the Constitution as the best means to guard Islam from the onslaught of its enemies” (Bayat, 1991, p. 236). The decree of the Shiite scholars and the constitutionalist fervor of those living in the provinces impelled the constitutionalist from all over Iran to mobilize against King Mohammad Ali. They marched toward and placed a siege on Tehran. Finally, on July 16, 1909, the constitutionalists were able to force the King into exile and replaced him with his ineffectual nine years old son, King Ahmad.

By ridding the monarchy of any effectual power, however, local and provincial actors became immensely powerful, resulting in decentralization of authority which in turn resulted in political chaos throughout the country. What made matters worse was that the subsequent Majlis took a very secular approach to politics and actively marginalized the Shiite scholars fearing their extra-constitutional powers and influence. While the second Majlis, which started its work some four months after the fall of King Mohammad Ali on November 16, 1909, did ultimately implement Article II of the amended Constitution, the committee envisioned by the article did not take shape until December 30, 1910. The second Majlis, however, was soon dissolved as a result of the Russian occupation of Tehran during the First World War on December 29, 1911 and all subsequent Majlis never even tried to implement Article II of the amended Constitution.

In February 21, 1921, with the support of the British, General Reza Khan staged a coup and was able to take over Tehran with as little as three thousand men and 18 machine guns (Abrahamian, 2008, pp. 62). Reza Khan did not depose King Ahmad and retained the Qajar dynasty intact for some four years, during which time he restored central

authority over Iran. Once he consolidated the control of central government across Iran, however, he deposed of the Qajar dynasty and declared himself the first King of the Pahlavi dynasty on December 15, 1925. Political life under King Reza became very limited and his reign could well be described as a secular military dictatorship. He was unhesitant to suppress dissent and restored a de facto absolutist monarchy. Shiite scholar's influence during his reign was severely limited, Article II of the amended constitution was simply ignored, and Seyyed Hassan Moddares, the main politically active Shiite scholar who had served on the Article II committee of the second Majlis and was an elected MP from Tehran during the third, fourth, and the fifth Parliaments, was first imprisoned and then killed (Keddie, 2003, pp. 88).

King Reza, however, overstepped his bounds when he introduced a set of reforms confronting a series of Islamic laws and practices he deemed at odds with the modernization of Iran. Among them, he banned women from wearing the traditional Muslim dress and ordered security forces to forcefully confront women who covered their hairs or faces. He also banned traditional clothes of the men and ordered that all men, with the exception of state approved clergymen, must instead wear western style trousers, coats, and hats. He then moved on to ban any public display of religious symbols and public observance of religious ceremonies (Abrahamian, 2008, pp. 91-97). While these measures angered the public and offended Shiite scholars, they found themselves helpless in confronting King Reza. In one instance when Shiite Scholars and ordinary people took sanctuary in a holy shrine in the city of Mashhad to express their

opposition to the King Reza's policies, King Reza ordered his forces to storm the shrine, killing hundreds of men, women and children (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 94).

King Reza, however, was forced into exile on September 15, 1941, when Allied forces occupied Iran during the Second World War and was replaced by his 22 years old son, Mohammad Reza. From the time King Reza was forced into exile until the 1953 coup against Prime Minister Mossadeq, the central government in Iran remained severely weak. Just as an example, between August 1941 to May 1951, the position of Prime Minister changed hands eleven times and, at the dismay of the western powers, Iran's communist party became stronger and operated in the open until it was banned after the failed assassination attempt against Muhammad Reza Shah (hereinafter the Shah).

The tumultuous political environment of the period, however, provided room for the Shiite scholars to reestablish their role in the society and politics. The seminaries grew in number and Shiite scholars started to preach in the mosques and other religious institutions. During this same period, senior Shiite scholars began to consolidate authority and established a more direct link with the believers. Perhaps the most significant event that occurred during this period was the publication of an easily understandable book of Shiite jurisprudence pertaining to the day to day activities of Shiite believer. The book, which was called *Tozihol Masael* (literally meaning "explanation of questions"), was written at the request of Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi (1875 – 1961), who was recognized as the most senior Shiite scholar from late 1940s until his death, by mid-ranking Shiite scholars and was widely published in 1955 after being endorsed by the Grand Ayatollah.

*Tozihol Masael* explained in layman's terms the aspects of Shiite jurisprudence that most affected ordinary believers and covered everything from the Shiite way of going to the bathroom to Shiite inheritance laws in a single volume.

After Ayatollah Burujerdi death, all other senior Shiite scholars followed the tradition and have published their own *Tozihol Masael*. Through *Tozihol Masael*, senior Shiite scholars found their way into the lives of the believers and dictated every aspect of their lives. While before *Tozihol Masael* believer had to go to their local Shiite scholars on their own initiative in case they had a religious question, with *Tozihol Masael* in every house, the practice of turning to the *Tozihol Masael* for guidance on even the most mundane issues became commonplace. This, in turn, paved the way for the believers to become stricter followers of senior Shiite scholars and desensitized them to the direct role Shiite scholars were playing in their day to day lives. Also, while before the publication of *Tozihol Masael*, Shiite scholars had to present the believers with supporting evidence for the responses they were providing, with *Tozihol Masael* having the endorsement of the most senior Shiite scholar of the time, slowly people became less keen about the supporting evidence and became more interested in getting answers fast.

The publication of *Tozihol Masael* also consolidated the authority of senior Shiite scholars by weakening the link between the believers and local Shiite scholars. This consolidation process was further expedited with the advent and prevalence of new communication technologies such as telegraph, telephone, and radio. With the advent of these technologies, local Shiite scholars effectively turned into the deputies of senior

Shiite scholars, enabling senior Shiite scholars to exercise almost all of the authorities of the Imam.

This rapid change in the religious culture of the public and the hierarchy of the Shiite religious institutions transformed senior Shiite scholars, the Grand Ayatollahs, into figures with unparalleled weight and influence. Were it not for Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi's own reservation about involvement of Shiite scholars in politics, he could have easily forced the Shah into exile and formed any type of government he deemed appropriate simply through issuing a decree. Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi, however, did on several occasions directly intervene and forced the Shah to reverse policies he deemed contrary to Islam. For this very reason, the Shah waited until Ayatollah Burujerdi's death in 1961 to introduce his liberal social and economic reforms dubbed as the White Revolution, particularly since the corner stone of the White Revolution was a land reform policy that was opposed by the Grand Ayatollah (Kiddie, 2003, pp. 139).

During this same period, some Shiite scholars also became active in the political realm, the most notable of whom was Ayatollah Kashani. Ayatollah Kashani joined forces with the nationalist Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq to nationalize Iran's oil and to limit British interests in Iran. Yet, the alliance between Mossadeq and Ayatollah Kashani withered quickly and their differences became quite apparent after the nationalization of Iran's oil on March 20, 1951. It was not, however, until January 1953, when Ayatollah Kashani, who was then the Speaker of the Majlis, opposed Mossadeq's demands for a one year extension of his emergency powers, that the relationship between Ayatollah



Kashani and Mossadeq became openly confrontational. Mossadeq, in order to secure a one year extension of his emergency powers, relied on his political allies in the Majlis to remove Ayatollah Kashani from his post as the Speaker of the Majlis on July 1, 1953, and sought to marginalize Ayatollah Kashani in every aspect. Ayatollah Kashani, in return, publicly condemned Mossadeq, named him a self-centered despot and completely withdrew his support from him. Upon losing the support of Ayatollah Kashani, Mossadeq's tremendously broad grassroots support precipitously shrank and he was ultimately ousted through an effortless CIA sponsored coup on August 19, 1953. As far as the Shiite scholars were concerned, this was the second time they had agreed to join forces with the nationalists and the intelligentsia only to be quickly marginalized by them.

The Shah returned to Iran immediately after the success of the coup, more determined than ever to follow the path of his father. Yet, acknowledging the influence of Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi, the Shah waited until the death of the Grand Ayatollah to consolidate power and implement liberal social and economic reforms much opposed by Shiite scholars. In deference to Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi's quietism, most other Shiite scholars also refrained from partaking in politics until the death of the Grand Ayatollah. The death of Ayatollah Burujerdi, however, broke open the floodgates of both western liberalism and political activism of Shiite scholars in Iran, with both the Shah and Shiite scholars becoming convinced that the Shah's perception of modernism and Islam was not reconcilable. As the two battled to gain the upper hand, the Shah relied more and more on

US support, the SAVAK, and brute force while Shiite scholars capitalized on the hearts and the minds of the Iranian people.

While the Shah's authoritarianism, brutality and bad economic policies all contributed to the public grievances that eventually led to his downfall in February 1979, perhaps nothing was more damaging to his rule than the perception that he was subjugating Iran to the will of the US. In fact, it was Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's opposition to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between United States and Iran that brought the Ayatollah, who had remained politically quiet in deference to Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi, to political prominence in 1964. On October 26, 1964, in perhaps the most significant sermon delivered in modern Iranian history, Ayatollah Khomeini chastised the Shah for approving the SOFA and said:

They have passed a law ... according to which ... all American military advisers, together with their families, technical and administrative officials, and servants - in short, anyone in any way connected to them - are to enjoy legal immunity with respect to any crime they may commit in Iran! If an American butler or an American cook were to assassinate your religious leaders in the middle of the bazaar, or were to run over them, the Iranian police no longer has the right to apprehend him! Iranian courts do not have the right to prosecute him! The case must now be sent to the United States so that our masters there can decide what is to be done! They passed [the SOFA] without any shame, and the government shamelessly defended this scandalous measure. They have reduced the Iranian people to a level lower than that of an American dog. If someone runs over a dog

belonging to an American, he will be prosecuted. Even if the Shah himself were to run over a dog belonging to an American, he would be prosecuted. But if an American cook runs over the Shah, or the religious leaders in Iran, or the highest officials, no one will have the right to object (Bill, 1988 pp. 159-160).

Although the Shah immediately sent Ayatollah Khomeini into exile, this very sermon turned Ayatollah Khomeini into a nationally recognized leader and triggered mass protests that eventually led to the Islamic Revolution in 1979 (Bill, 1988 pp. 261-315).

#### **Section 4.4.2.1.2: Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and the Constitutional Assembly**

After the death of Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi and before being sent into exile on November 4, 1964, Ayatollah Khomeini used every opportunity to speak out against the liberal reforms of the Shah and his over reliance on the US and other western powers. The Ayatollah, however, did not seek or advocated a change in government and refrained from suggesting an alternative to Iran's system of Constitutional Monarchy.<sup>30</sup> In fact, in most of his speeches he would warn the Shah against following the path of his father and would demand that he remain loyal to and fully implement Iran's Constitution. For example, in a speech he delivered on April 15, 1964, the Ayatollah criticized the Shah for ignoring the Constitution and categorically stated that Shiite scholars would cease their protests if the Shah would fully implement the Constitution (Khomeini, 1993, V1 p. 288). Yet after being sent into exiled, Ayatollah Khomeini started to conceptualize an Islamic alternative to Iran's constitutional monarchy.

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<sup>30</sup> While Iran's system of government was a Constitutional monarchy, many of the articles of Iran's Constitution was put in abeyance after the 1953 coup and Iran practically tuned into a military dictatorship under direct control of the Shah.

While Grand Ayatollah Khomeini was an early believer in the idea that senior Shiite scholars could and should assume all of the responsibilities of the Imam, he had never conceptualized a system of government based on that idea. As could be witnessed in his early writings and speeches, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini did not find the amended Constitution of Iran, which had called for a constitutional monarchy overseen by a council of religious scholars, to be at odds with his notion of how Shiites should govern themselves during the major occultation of the Imam. However, having witnessed how the Constitutional Revolution, which was whole heartedly supported by most of the Shiite scholars of that time, in effect prepared the grounds for King Reza's anti-religion despotism, and having experienced the events that had led to the 1953 coup, Ayatollah Khomeini soon became convinced that the ultimate success of any major political reform in Iran depended on senior Shiite scholars playing a more direct, active and sustained leadership role. It is important to note, however, that Ayatollah Khomeini never advocated for the institutionalization of the role of Shiite scholars in government. In fact, he regarded any such efforts as a limitation on the full range of real powers senior Shiite scholars have and ought to be able to exercise.

While in exile in Najaf, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini articulated his thoughts about the characteristics of an Islamic government in a series of thirteen lectures delivered between January 1 and January 20, 1970, that were eventually collected into a book called *Velayat-e-Faghih* (meaning "the Authority of the Jurist") and published a year later in Arabic and Farsi. In this book Grand Ayatollah Khomeini unequivocally states that

during the major occultation of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam, senior Shiite scholars have “the same authority and can carry out the same functions as the Imam” (Momen, 1985, p. 196). Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, moreover, unlike his predecessors asserted that while Shiite scholars must become satisfied that their decrees and practices are based on the Quran, the teachings of the Prophet and the Imams, they are not necessarily bound by the letter of these sources. In other words, while previous Shiite scholars heavily emphasized on Islamic jurisprudence, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, placed more emphasis on the role and the supreme authority of senior Shiite scholars. Grand Ayatollah Khomeini’s *Velayat-e-Faghih*, however, never discussed the practical processes through which senior Shiite scholars should go about exercising their supreme authority (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006, pp.86-87)

After the fall of the Shah on February 11, 1979, the first and most pivotal step taken toward establishing a new form of government was to abolish constitutional monarchy and have it be replaced by a form of government that had not yet been well conceptualized. While all segments of the society and revolutionary elites agreed that the monarchy had to be abolished, there was some debate about the system of government that should take its place. In general, however, it was clear that any system of government that was going to replace the monarchy had to be both based on Shiite religious beliefs, which Grand Ayatollah Khomeini represented as the main leader of the revolution, as well as republican ideals. Consequently, main revolutionary leaders as well as Grand Ayatollah Khomeini decided to bring closure to such debates and called for a referendum on whether the monarchy should be abolished and replaced by an “Islamic Republic.”

While some factions argued for the inclusion of more alternatives to the monarchy on the ballot, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini opposed such proposals and argued that if anyone wished to have any other system of government besides an Islamic Republic, they could simply vote “No” on the referendum. Hence a yes/no referendum “to replace the previous regime with an Islamic Republic, the Constitution of which would be subject to people’s approval” was held on April 1, 1979. The referendum, which attracted 20.4 million Iranians, resulted in 98.2% vote in favor of replacing the monarchy with an Islamic Republic.

The next step, which was unequivocally predicted in the referendum, was drafting a new constitution that would precisely clarify what it meant for a system of government to be an Islamic Republic. While in France, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini had asked Dr. Habibi and five other legal experts to draft a preliminary Constitution. The draft Constitution had 160 articles and had refrained from institutionalizing the role of Shiite scholars beyond Article II of the amended pre-revolution Constitution. In fact, it could be well argued that what was envisioned in the draft Constitution as a way to safeguard against passage of laws deemed to be contrary to Islam was much weaker than the Article II of the amended pre-revolution Constitution. Chapter ten of the draft Constitution envisioned a “Guardian Council of the Constitution” composed of six legal experts and five Islamic jurists that would passively vet laws for constitutionality and/or adherence to Islam. The envisioned council, however, was only allowed to look into laws that were objected to by the President, the Chief Justice, the Chief Prosecutor, and/or one of the senior Shiite scholars

on Constitutional or Islamic grounds within at most a year from their passage (Article 144 of the draft Constitution).

What is interesting is that a detailed review of Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's comments, which he wrote directly onto the draft Constitution, reveals that he had no serious objection to the draft Constitution. From this, one can well deduce that before returning from exile, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini was not envisioning a formal Constitutional process through which senior Shiite scholars would exercise their supreme authority and in fact was opposed to any efforts that would officially define, and thus limit, the role and political capacity of senior Shiite scholars. While the Ayatollah never explained how senior Shiite scholars were practically going to undertake the responsibilities of the Imam, from his various speeches during this period one can arrive at the conclusion that Grand Ayatollah Khomeini much preferred for Shiite scholars to play a strong advocacy and supervisory and not a direct policymaking role. For this very reason, he departed Tehran soon after returning from exile, went to Qom and refrained from assuming any formal political positions. Therefore, it could be understood that while institutionally Grand Ayatollah Khomeini was quite satisfied with the existing non-governmental Shiite religious institutions established by Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi but unlike Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi he was envisioning a much more active utilization of the full capacity of those institutions in support of political objectives.

At any rate, after the finalization of the draft Constitution, which again had not institutionalized the role of Shiite scholars beyond what was envisioned in the pre-

revolutionary Constitution, and its endorsement by Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, the Council of Revolution of Iran (CRI) and the Interim Government of Iran (IGI), a debate ensued on whether the finalized draft Constitution should be directly put to referendum or whether a large Constitutional Assembly composed of people's representatives should be established to review the draft Constitution before it would be put to a referendum. It is interesting that Grand Ayatollah Khomeini and most other Shiite scholars in the CRI who wanted to quickly restore order and bring an end to the tenure of IGI argued against a Constitutional Assembly, fearing that it might take a while before such an Assembly could form and finalize a constitution. The more liberal elements of the revolution, however, insisted that the draft Constitution lacked the required legitimacy and was at best a working document that needed to be further refined by a Constitutional Assembly composed of people's representatives. A compromise was finally reached in late June 1979 between the various political factions of the revolution to form a small 73 member Constitutional Assembly composed of the people's representatives to finalize the constitution (Milani, 1988, pp.262).

The compromise worked against the aspiration of the liberals. While hundreds of candidates from a wide variety of ideological persuasions<sup>31</sup> freely competed against each other in an election that was held on August 3, 1979, being more organized and resourceful and having built much closer relationship with the general public as compared to the liberals, Shiite scholars and their conservatives allies were able to secure an overwhelming majority of the seats in the Constitutional Assembly. In fact the

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<sup>31</sup> Even communist ideologues such as Ehsan Tabari were allowed to present themselves as candidates in this election (Milani, 1988, p.262)



Constitutional Assembly, which held its first session on August 19, 1979, was composed of 41 high-ranking Shiite scholars, 12 mid-ranking Shiite scholars, 5 low-ranking Shiite scholars, and only 15 non-clerics.

The Constitutional Assembly opened its first session with Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's pronouncement that it must speedily review the draft Constitution and prepare a finalized version to be put to a national referendum. Yet, the very first debates of the Assembly centered on whether they were obliged to only review the draft Constitution or whether the draft Constitution should be regarded as a non-binding guideline as they drafted a Constitution from scratch. Soon the Assembly decided to regard the draft Constitution as only a guideline and embarked on drafting the Constitution for a unique system of government that had to be based on republican ideals and Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's concept of the supreme authority of Shiite jurists.

#### **Section 4.4.2.1.3: Institutionalizing the Role of Shiite Scholars**

The Constitutional Assembly deliberated for almost four months, convened a total of 67 sessions, and concluded its work on November 15, 1979. During this period many contentious issues were discussed both on the floor of the Assembly as well as in the seven working committees that were established by the Constitutional Assembly. Considering the composition of the Assembly, however, much attention was paid to the role that religion and Shiite scholars were going to play in the new system of government. In fact, the draft Constitution was most heavily criticized for its lack of clarity on the role of Grand Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors in Iran's new system of government.

Though a contentious issue, an overwhelming majority of the delegates in the Assembly arrived at the conclusion that the new Constitution should institutionalize the role of senior Shiite scholars and define a mechanism through which a single senior Shiite scholar would be selected as the most supreme authority in the country (hereinafter “the Supreme Leader”). What is interesting, however, is that different delegates sought to institutionalize the role of senior Shiite scholars for quite different reasons. Some feared that the country would come to a standstill if the exact mechanisms through which Shiite scholars were to influence policy and the administration of the country was left undefined.<sup>32</sup> The fear was that if more than one senior Shiite scholar was to become recognized in the society as the most learned, each would want to influence policy through issuing binding decrees for their followers, creating chaos in the country. Another group of delegates were primarily interested in engaging the most senior Shiite scholar in the political process framed by the Constitution in order to make him a stakeholder of the new system of government and accountable for the direction of the country while limiting his extra-Constitutional powers and means of influence.<sup>33</sup> Others had a historical perspective and argued that historically Iran has best been able to stand against despotism and foreign interventions when led by a senior Shiite scholar and that by institutionalizing the role of senior Shiite scholars, the country would be safeguarded against both despotism and imperialism.<sup>34</sup> Yet others argued from an ideological

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<sup>32</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 39th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Ayatollah Yazdi.

<sup>33</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 40th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Dr. Ayat.

<sup>34</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 39th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Ayatollah Sobhani.

perspective and indicated that since people - through the April 1, 1979, referendum - have asked for an Islamic system of government, a necessary component of a Shiite government is the recognition of the principle that the Imam alone has the right to rule over the believers and that “logically” during his occultation, Shiite scholars, as people who are most familiar with the teachings of the Imams, are burdened with the responsibility to assume the leadership role of the Imam.<sup>35</sup> Another group argued that it was necessary to make a senior Shiite scholar be the most supreme authority of the country in order for all legislated laws, even trivial traffic laws, to be regarded as both legitimate and as having the full force of the Shairi law.<sup>36</sup>

The only person who argued against the institutionalization of the role of Shiite scholars was a delegate by the name of Moghadam Maraghei, a non-cleric from the Province of Eastern Azerbaijan. Mr. Maraghei argued that while it made a lot of sense to give Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, who was popularly recognized as an exceptional leader without whom the revolution would not have succeeded, special authorities and powers, it did not make much sense to institutionalize his role since it was very unlikely that upon his death anyone could rise to his stature and qualify to assume his responsibilities. He particularly warned the Constitutional Assembly, which was primarily composed of Shiite scholars, against enacting Articles that could be perceived as being self-interested.<sup>37</sup> Mr. Maraghei’s comments, however, drew angry responses from other delegates. The acting

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<sup>35</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 15th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Ayatollah Beheshti.

<sup>36</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 3rd session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Ayatollah Rabani Amlashi.

<sup>37</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 15th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Mr. Moghadam Maraghei

chair of the Assembly was so infuriated by the accusation that he went as far as taking an informal vote from the delegates on whether they thought their quest for institutionalizing the role of Shiite scholars was in fact self-interested. When the delegates almost unanimously rejected the accusation, the acting chair ended the debates and took a formal vote.<sup>38</sup> Out of 65 members present, 53 voted in favor, 4 abstained, and 8 voted against Article 5 of the Constitution, which stated that *“During the occultation of Vali Asr (Imam Mahdi) - May God hasten his reappearance - in the Islamic Republic the leadership of the people rests with a just and pious Shiite scholars who is aware of the circumstances of the time, and who possesses good leadership skills and is also wise, and who is also recognized and accepted by a majority of the people as the leader. In case a single individual did not possessed such a majority, leadership will rest with a council of Shiite scholars possessing the abovementioned qualification.”*

Upon passing Article 5 of the Constitution, the delegates opened up a new chapter in the Constitution to detail the institutional role and capacity of the Supreme Leader. The debates on the powers of the Supreme Leader were quite contentious. The main debate was on whether the Constitution should or should not detail the powers of the Supreme Leader. The opponents of detailing the powers of the Supreme Leader contended that the Assembly did not have the authority to define and thus limit the powers of the Supreme Leader<sup>39</sup> since by doing so it would in effect be rejecting Article 5 of the Constitution, which recognized the Supreme Leader as the acting deputy of the Imam, who is divinely

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<sup>38</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 15th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Ayatollah Beheshti.

<sup>39</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 40th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Mr. Nourbakhsh

vested with absolute authority over the believers. They argued that since the authority of the Imam is absolute, so should the authority of the Supreme Leader and there would be a contradiction in the Constitution if the powers of the Supreme Leader becomes in anyway limited. In response, the proponents argued that by mentioning the powers of the Supreme Leader in the Constitution the Assembly was not limiting his powers and was only emphasizing on what it entailed.<sup>40</sup> Yet, by passing Article 113 of the constitution, which stated “*After the Supreme Leader, the President is the highest official in the country and is responsible for implementing the Constitution, coordinating the relations between the three branches and heading the executive branch, except in affairs that is the direct prerogative of the leader,*” they did in effect limit the Constitutional powers of the Supreme Leader to items explicitly mentioned in Article 110 of the Constitution.

The belief that the Supreme Leader would safeguard the nation against despotism and not become a despot himself, was strongly held by an overwhelming majority of the delegates. It again seems quite likely, as opponents of institutionalization of the role of Shiite scholars pointed out,<sup>41</sup> that this belief was much influenced by the perceived charisma, humble personality, and, strong republican convictions of Grand Ayatollah Khomeini. This is not to say, however, that the delegates assumed that Grand Ayatollah Khomeini and the subsequent Supreme Leaders were destined to remain qualified for the duration of their lives. In fact, on more than one occasion it was stated by the proponents of Article 5 that the Supreme Leader, “as with all officials and citizens, is first

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<sup>40</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 40th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Mr. Taheri Khoram Abad

<sup>41</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 15th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Mr. Moghadam Maraghei

accountable to God and then to the people. The people can hold the leader accountable and oversee his conduct to see whether or not he is fulfilling his duties.”<sup>42</sup> The delegates also called for establishment of a body composed of the people’s delegates to actively oversee the conducts of the Supreme Leader and called it the Assembly of Experts. Article 111 clearly stated that *“If the Leader or any of the members of the leadership council become incapable of fulfilling his Constitutional duties or loses one of the qualifications stated in Article 109, he will be dismissed. The authority of determination in this matter is vested with the experts specified in Article 108”*<sup>43</sup>

The Constitutional Assembly, however, did not settle with institutionalizing Grand Ayatollah Khomeini’s concept of supreme authority of Shiite jurists. Building on the Article II of the amended pre-revolution Constitution, the Assembly passed Article 72 of the Constitution, stating that *“The Islamic Consultative Assembly cannot enact laws contrary to the official religion of the country or to the Constitution. It is the duty of the Guardian Council to determine whether a violation has occurred, in accordance with Article 96.”* This Article was passed without much debate and only one of the delegates voted against it. The Guardian Council was established per Article 91 of the Constitution. Article 91 of the constitutions stated that *“With a view to safeguard the Islamic ordinances and the Constitution, in order to examine the compatibility of the legislation passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly with Islam, a council to be known as the*

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<sup>42</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 41th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Ayatollah Taheri Khoram Abadi

<sup>43</sup> Article 108 of the Constitution stated " *The law setting out the number and qualifications of the experts, the mode of their election, and the code of procedure regulating the sessions during the first term must be drawn up by the religious men on the first Guardian Council, passed by a majority of votes and then finally approved by the Leader of the Revolution. The power to make any subsequent change or a review of this law, or approval of all the provisions concerning the duties of the experts is vested in themselves.*"

*Guardian Council is to be constituted with the following composition: 1. six just Shiite scholars, conscious of the present needs and the issues of the day, to be selected by the Leader of the Leadership Council, and 2. six legal experts, specializing in different areas of law, to be elected by the Islamic Consultative Assembly from among the Muslim jurists nominated by the Head of the Judiciary.”* A handful of delegates objected to this Article and argued that it was not necessary to have legal experts in the council since Shiite scholars are jurists themselves and could ascertain whether or not an enactments of the Majlis runs at odds with the Constitution.<sup>44</sup> Most other delegates, however, agreed that it was beneficial for legal experts to also be a part of this council in order to prevent unconstitutional enactments of the Majlis from turning into law.

The Assembly gave the Guardian Council the power to actively vet all enactments of the Majlis to insure their compatibility with Islam and the constitutions. In this aspect, the council was quite similar to the council envisioned by Article II of the amended pre-revolutionary Constitution and hence the idea did not face much opposition in the Assembly. The Assembly also gave the council the power to interpret the Constitution. The argument was that it was not only natural but necessary for the body tasked with the responsibility to ensure the constitutionality of the enactments of the Majlis to also have the ability to interpret the Constitution since without the power to interpret the Constitution, the council would effectively be unable vet enactments of the Majlis for their compatibility with Islam and the Constitution. This idea too did not result in much controversy in the Assembly. Though some members of the Assembly argued that the

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<sup>44</sup> Refer to the transcript of the 36th session of the Constitutional Assembly, particularly the remarks of Ayatollah Khamanei.

power to interpret the Constitution should be given to the Majlis, as had the amended pre-revolutionary Constitution, the idea was overwhelmingly rejected on the grounds that such a power would on one hand result in the erosion of constitutional principles, and on the other hand, enable the Majlis to effectively fix the decisions of the Guardian Council.<sup>45</sup>

#### **Section 4.4.2.1.4: The New Constitution in Action**

The Constitutional Assembly held its last session on November 15, 1979. In that session the Constitution was read Article by Article and, at the very end, delegates put their signatures onto the Constitution. As promised, the Constitution was printed in national newspapers and a two-day long referendum was held on the 2nd and 3rd of December 1979 and an overwhelming majority of the participants voted “Yes” to Iran’s first ever Constitutional referendum, which asked “Do you approve of the Articles of the Constitution, which was passed by the Council of Experts?”

Soon, however, the Constitution’s shortcomings became apparent. Grand Ayatollah Khomeini was frequently asked to intervene using both his Constitutional and extra-Constitutional influence and power to mediate and adjudicate between various branches and to personally resolve deadlocks not envisioned by the Constitution. One such area was the conflict between the Majlis and the Guardian Council. When the new Majlis started its work on May 28, 1980, it soon realized that it was forced to pass laws that “on the surface appeared” to be at odds with the Sharia. All such enactments of the

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<sup>45</sup> Refer to the transcripts of the 62nd and 63rd sessions of the Constitutional Assembly.



Parliament, however, were rejected by the Guardian Council whose responsibility was to reject such laws without concerning itself with its importance for the nation. In time, the conflict between the Majlis and the Guardian Council became evermore frequent. Consequently, on September 27, 1981, the speaker of the Majlis officially requested Grand Ayatollah Khomeini to intervene using both his Constitutional and extra-Constitutional religious authority to resolve such deadlocks. In response, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini issued a decree that allowed the Majlis to override the religious veto of the Guardian Council provided that they would establish the necessity of the enactment through a two-thirds majority.

Through Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's decree, for the first time in the history of Shiite Islam, laws that were at odds with Islamic principles attained the endorsement of Shiite scholars on grounds of expediency. Through his decree, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini established that expediency was often more important than the letter of the Sharia law and that Sharia law could "temporarily" be put in abeyance if so required. Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's decree, however, opened a Pandora's box and the Majlis began to abuse the decree to bypass the Guardian Council by labeling most laws that enjoyed a two-thirds majority as "necessary." As a result, on June 25, 1984, the Chair of the Guardian Council requested Grand Ayatollah Khomeini to allow the council to determine whether in fact such enactments did qualify to be named a necessity. Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, however, refused to grant the Guardian Council such a power but signaled his dismay of the Parliament's abuse of his decree. Eventually, on February 6, 1988, Grand

Ayatollah Khomeini established an extra-Constitutional council to mediate between the Guardian Council and Majlis and called it the Expediency Council.

As with any new system of government more and more loopholes of the Constitution became apparent, requiring Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's direct extra-Constitutional interventions. While Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's direct extra-Constitutional interventions were deemed necessary by most officials, it was apparent to all, including the Ayatollah, that it was not a viable way forward. As a result, on December 1, 1988, a group of Parliamentarians wrote a letter to Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, complaining about the erosion of the Parliament's powers due to his frequent extra-Constitutional interventions. In response, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini blamed the shortcomings of the Constitution and the Iran-Iraq war for his frequent interventions and indicated his determination to "bring about a situation under which in every area all of us would act in accordance to the Constitution" (Khomeini, 1993, V21 p. 202-203).

To fulfill his promise, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini issued a decree to the President on April 24, 1989, ordering him to form a committee to amend the Constitution. In his decree, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini indicated that the committee should look into and revise Articles of the Constitution that had resulted in deadlocks requiring his extra-Constitutional interventions. In response, the committee amended the Constitution primarily by:

- 1) Emphasizing that the Supreme Leader has absolute authority over all affairs of the country (Article 57 of the amended Constitution);

- 2) Institutionalizing the mediating role of the Expediency Council (Article 112 of the amended Constitution);
- 3) Doing away with the Office of the Prime Minister and concentrating executive powers in the Office of the President;
- 4) Doing away with the Judicial Council and concentrating judicial power in a Judiciary headed by a person selected by the Supreme Leader;
- 5) Doing away with possibility of having a Leadership council;
- 6) Amending the qualifications of the Supreme Leader such that it would not be necessary for him to be the most senior Shiite Scholar (Article 109 of the amended Constitution);
- 7) Creating a Supreme National Security Council (Article 176 of the amended Constitution);
- 8) Making the Guardian Council responsible for supervising the Assembly of Experts elections as well (Article 99 of the amended Constitution);
- 9) Envisioning a process through which the Constitution could be amended (Article 177 of the amended Constitution).

The amended Constitution, which was put to a referendum during the Presidential election some two months after the death of Grand Ayatollah Khomeini on July 28, 1989, was endorsed by 97% of the voters. The referendum had a participation rate of 55%.

#### **Section 4.4.2.1.5: Iran's Constitution and its Strategic Culture**

As was discussed above, the Islamic Republic, though a novel experience, has been the Iranian people's response to a millennium old Shiite conundrum. It seeks to, on one hand, remain loyal to a Shiite thought that reserves political power only for the divinely ordained Imams and, on the other hand, recognize the people's right to self-determination and self-governance. Relying on Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's concept of *Velayat-e-Faghih*, the Islamic Republic brought an end to the cognitive dissonance that Shiites had been suffering from since the beginning of the major occultation.

The Islamic Republic, however, has come to being through a long historical and philosophical process, the traces of which could readily be identified in Iran's Constitution and its current governmental processes. The Islamic Republic is a system of government that bridges the two elements of the Iranian people's identity and seeks to create a synergy between the Iranian people's national and religious identities in support of both national and religious goals and aspirations. Yet, contrary to what is often assumed, when national and religious goals and aspirations cannot be reconciled, the Islamic Republic attaches more significance to doing what is "expedient" than following the Sharia or even the constitution. This emanates from the Shiite thought that emphasizes, as a matter of religious belief, that the true interests of the believers and the true understanding religious tenets can never be in contradiction. In fact, human intellect and reason, or *Aghl* in Arabic, is one of the sources of law in Shiite legal tradition, alongside with the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams, and consensus among religious scholars. Also, a very important principle in Shiite legal tradition is that

“whatever is dictated by human intellect and reason is also dictated by the Sharia and whatever is dictated by Sharia is also dictated by human intellect and reason.” One of the utilities of this principle is that when there is a contradiction between what intellect and what Sharia dictate on issues requiring moral judgment, the source that arrives at a more certain conclusion is given more weight than the source which is less certain. For this very reason, again as a matter of religious principle, the Shiite school of thought forewarns against arguments that require the sacrifice of people’s interests for the sake of religion or vice versa. To emphasize this point, in a lecture that Grand Ayatollah Khamenei delivered on January 29, 1990, less than a year after being selected by the Assembly of Experts to become Iran’s Supreme Leader after the death of Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, he stated before an audience composed of Iranian officials and policymakers that:

The values we will pursue through our revolution are based on two pillars: religious ideology and the people. We cannot conceive of ideology absent of the people. Our ideology is not an ideology that could separate itself from the people. In fact, the notion of separating ideology from the interests of the people and the saying that we should forsake the people and their destiny in order to adhere to the religion, God and Islam is nothing but a sheer deceit... This is something that the Imam (Grand Ayatollah Khomeini) fought against from the early days of the resistance... Islam is for and by the people. If you ever come across an issue that you thought to be Islamic, knowing that it does not satisfy the interests of the people, know that you have either misunderstood Islam or have certainly misunderstood the issue at hand.

The Islamic Republic, therefore, requires all laws and policies not to contradict Islam and in cases where there seems to be a contradiction between the interests of the people and the Sharia, requires the recognition of the contradiction and its resolution based on expediency. Hence, the Constitution gives policymaking authority to the Majlis and the President, requires the Guardian Council to monitor laws to ensure that no law contradicts Islam or the Constitution, and gives the Expediency Council the power to determine what is expedient when the Majlis and the Guardian Council fail to bridge their differences. What is important to recognize, however, is that since the actions, writings, statements, and consent of the Supreme Leader all have the weight of religious pronouncements, the Supreme Leader has to ensure that all outputs of the system could be proven to be in accordance to the tenants of Shiite Islam. Indeed, considering that the Islamic Republic is based on a relatively contemporary and evolved understanding of Shiite political thought, measures that could not be defended according to the tenants of Shiite Islam could undermine the validity of the contemporary understanding with adverse consequences for the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic and, much more importantly, the evolved Shiite school of thought.

Another important feature of the Islamic Republic, contrary to what is often assumed, is that it is not a strictly hierarchical system. Indeed, because the Islamic Republic came to being as a result of a popular revolution against the Shah's despotism, the system is designed so as to ensure that most important decisions in Iran would be adopted through a consensus building process among key stakeholders. In short, while the Constitution

gives the Supreme Leader absolute authority over all affairs, his political capacity, mostly because of how the system is set up, falls way short of his legal capacity. Not only is his conduct supervised by the Assembly of Experts, which is composed of elected high ranking Shiite scholars, but the constitution has also vested much authority in the presidency and also in Majlis, forcing the Supreme Leader, the President, and the Majlis to coordinate their activities with one another and to adopt policies of strategic significance only after achieving a consensus among themselves. Again, while the Supreme Leader could legally dictate policy, doing so would not only carry much social and political cost but would also result in his decision not being fully and efficiently implemented on the ground. For this very reason, per Article 176 of Iran's Constitution:

*In order to safeguard the national interests and preserve the Islamic Revolution, the territorial integrity, and the national sovereignty, a Supreme Council for National Security presided over by the President shall be constituted to fulfill the following responsibilities:*

- 1. Determining the defense and national security policies within the framework of general policies determined by the Leader;*
- 2. Coordination of activities in the areas relating to politics, intelligence, social, cultural and economic fields in regard to general defense and security policies; and;*
- 3. Exploitation of materialistic and intellectual resources of the country for facing the internal and external threats.*

While all of the decisions of the Council have to be approved by the Supreme Leader before they take effect, the Supreme Leader has never rejected any of the Council's decisions. In fact it could be said that the requirement for the Supreme Leader's approval is more to give legitimacy to the Council's decisions and make the Supreme Leader a stakeholder of the decisions, than to ensure that the decisions are in line with the Leader's way of thinking. The composition of the Council is also established by the Constitution. According to the same Article:

*The Council shall consist of:*

- *the heads of three branches of the government,*
- *the chief of the Supreme Command Council of the Armed Forces,*
- *the officer in charge of the planning and budget affairs,*
- *two representatives nominated by the Leader,*
- *Ministers of foreign affairs, interior, and information,*
- *a Minister related with the subject, and*
- *the highest ranking officials from the Armed Forces and the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps.*

Accordingly, six members of the Council are individuals who are most associated with the Supreme Leader, six members are from the Executive branch, and one is from the Majlis. As the composition of the Council suggests, considering that the President presides over the Council, it would be very difficult for one power center in Iran to formulate and execute decisions of strategic importance.



Besides the abovementioned issues and their implications, the Islamic Republic came to being through a historical process that has left a lasting impression on its identity. Being used for sheer instrumental purposes both during the constitutional revolution as well as the nationalization of Iran's oil by the liberal elites, religious elements of the Iranian society not only articulated the values and principles of the Islamic Republic in the Constitution, but also established institutions to look after their realization and empowered the Guardian Council to block individuals that do not wholeheartedly agree with the constitution or refuse to adhere to the values and principles of the Islamic Republic from assuming high political office.

Considering that the Islamic Republic was born out of an opposition to what was perceived as US domination of Iran, it is also a very anti-imperialistic system of government. The Iranian Constitution has a whole section on the foreign policy principles of the Islamic Republic. Article 152, which is the first Article of the chapter that covers the foreign policy principles of the Islamic Republic, asserts:

*The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it, the preservation of the independence of the country in all respects and its territorial integrity, the defense of the rights of all Muslims, nonalignment with respect to the hegemonic superpowers, and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent States.*

This article is then followed by Article 153, which unequivocally asserts:

*Any form of agreement resulting in foreign control over the natural resources, economy, army, or culture of the country, as well as other aspects of the national life, is forbidden.*

Again, mostly because of historical reasons alluded to in this and previous chapters, the Islamic Republic is also a system of government that is very sensitive to any form of foreign intrusion on its sovereignty. Article 6 of the constitution reads:

*In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the freedom, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the country are inseparable from one another, and their preservation is the duty of the government and all individual citizens.*

Then, in two other Constitutional Articles, Article 145 and Article 146, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic asserts:

*No foreigner will be accepted into the Army or security forces of the country. The establishment of any kind of foreign military base in Iran, even for peaceful purposes, is forbidden.*

Not only does the Constitution of the Islamic Republic forbid foreign military bases on Iranian soil, it also makes it very difficult for Iran to hire foreign advisors, military and otherwise. Article 81 of the Constitution states:

*The employment of foreign experts is forbidden, except in cases of necessity and with the approval of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (the Majlis).*

The founding leaders of the Islamic Republic, being mostly composed of Shiite scholars who espoused ideals that transcended Iran's national boundaries, also regarded the

Islamic Republic as a model for the peoples of other countries that were also in a struggle against world powers. Hence, as part of its foreign policy principles, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic indicates in its Article 154:

*The Islamic Republic of Iran has as its ideal human felicity throughout human society, and considers the attainment of independence, freedom, and rule of justice and truth to be the right of all people of the world. Accordingly, while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the just struggles of the freedom fighters against the oppressors in every corner of the globe.*

It is important to recognize that the abovementioned ideals are not sheer rhetoric. While most of the abovementioned strategic values and principles emanate from Iran's historical experiences and past interactions with the outside world, Iran's post-revolutionary experiences have not provided Iran with any fundamentally different experience that would require it to reevaluate its strategic worldview and principles. To the contrary, Iran's post-revolutionary experiences have mostly reinforced Iran's strategic worldview and, as will be discussed, have emphasized on the efficacy of these principles. It is also important to remember that these ideals are based on the very same principles that have allowed for the very establishment of the Islamic Republic and rejecting anyone of them is perceived to be tantamount to rejecting the foundational principles of the Islamic Republic.

For those who believe in the Islamic Republic, the Islamic Republic is not just a system of government. The Islamic Republic is an answer provided by Grand Ayatollah Khomeini to a Shiite conundrum that prevented Shiite communities from achieving self-determination. Indeed, it was also through his leadership and teachings that Shiite believers, for the first time since the death of the fourth Caliph in 661 AD, were able to exercise their political will to bring about a form of government that was respectful of the core elements of their national and religious identities. This is not to say, however, that the Islamic Republic, as it stands today, is the end point of Shiite ideological evolution. Though costly and often difficult, the realities of governing a strategically positioned country like Iran has forced Shiite scholars and believers in Iran to consider practical ways of closing the gap between abstract ideological convictions and real life political and economic considerations and to pragmatically modify the political process in such a way to most effectively arrive at legitimate collective decisions. But were it not for the Islamic Republic and Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's insistence of merging Islamic and republican ideals, the Shiite religious ideology would have not evolved to a degree to recognize, as does Article 56 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, that while *"Absolute sovereignty over the world and man belongs to God... it is He Who has made man master of his own social destiny. No one can deprive man of this divine right, nor subordinate it to the vested interests of a particular individual or group."*

#### **Section 4.4.2.2: Key Religious Narratives that have Shaped Iran's Strategic Culture**

Iran is the only country in the world where Shiites compose more than 90% of its population and where Shiite narratives have had the most significant influence on its culture and politics. These narratives and the lessons they carry are frequently invoked by all segments of the Iranian society as they seek to corroborate or disprove a claim or legitimize or delegitimize a policy. It is, therefore, important to review the key religious narratives that have and continue to shape the value system and the strategic culture of the Iranian people. Since it would be beyond the scope of this section to comprehensively cover all key religious narratives that have shaped Iran's strategic culture, I will suffice with a cursory summary of some of the most important ones. It is important to note, however, that since the objective of this section is to discuss how various religious historical events, as perceived by the Shiites, have influenced Iran's strategic culture, the narratives are all from the Shiite perspective and sources.

##### **Section 4.4.2.2.1: Imam Ali**

Most of the political religious narratives that have become commonplace in Iran emanate from the lives and times of the three initial Imams in Shiite Islam. These three Imams, who are also much venerated in Sunni Islam, lived during significant historical episodes of the Islamic civilization. The first of these Imams is Imam Ali. Shiites believe that he was divinely selected, as pronounced by Prophet Muhammad, to succeed the Prophet after his death. According to Shiite tradition, however, immediately after the death of the Prophet, Muslims reverted back to their tribal way of life and contrary to the Prophet's wish and order, tribal leaders relied on their tribal, and not Islamic, principles to select

Abu Bakr to succeed the prophet. How Imam Ali responded to Abu Bakr's selection as the first caliph is a narrative that has influenced Shiites since that episode. It is said that fearing division among Muslims and, most importantly, realizing that people have abandoned the Prophet's instructions, Imam Ali despite his dismay, swore allegiance to Abu Bakr and did not contest his caliphate. Imam Ali is narrated as having said after he became the fourth caliph that:

Be Aware! By Allah, Abu Bakr dressed himself in the gown of caliphate knowing full well that [I was more qualified and that] my position in relation to the caliphate was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill. He knew that the flood water of knowledge flows down from me and the birds cannot ascend up to my intellectual stature. So I let go of the caliphate and kept myself detached from it. Then I began to think whether I should rise to attain what justly belonged to me with an empty and injured hand or calmly endure the blinding darkness of tribulations wherein the grown up are made feeble and the young grow old and the true believer become depressed until they meet Allah upon their death. After evaluating the situation, I decided to remain patient while feeling as though a torn was in my eyes and bone in my throat.<sup>46</sup>

The Shiites believe that Imam Ali consented to Abu Bakr's rule primarily because 1) he wanted to prevent division among Muslims, 2) was fearful that a division at that pivotal point in Islam's history may lead to its demise, and, more importantly, 3) because he did not wish to rule over Muslims without their request and consent. Imam Ali is narrated as having said:

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<sup>46</sup> First part of the third sermon in Nahjul Balaghah.

When the Prophet passed away, the Muslims quarreled about power after him. By Allah, it never occurred to me, and I never imagined, that after the Prophet the Arabs would snatch away the caliphate from the family of the Prophet, nor that they would take it away from me after him. But I suddenly noticed people surrounding the man (Abu Bakr) to swear allegiance to him. I therefore withheld my hand until I saw that many people were reverting from Islam and trying to destroy the religion of Muhammad. I then feared that if I did not protect Islam and its people and there occurred in it a breach or destruction, it would mean a greater blow to me than the usurpation of caliphate.<sup>47</sup>

The need to have the support of the people in order to govern is also present in Imam Ali's sayings. In explaining why he assumed the caliphate after the assassination of the third caliph, Imam Ali is narrated as having said:

[After the assassination of the third caliph] nothing took me by surprise, but the crowd of people rushing toward me. They advanced toward me from every side... such that [my two sons] Hassan and Hussein were getting crushed and both the ends of my shroud were torn. They collected around me like a herd of sheep and goats... if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument... I would have cast the rope of caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one [and would not have accepted the caliphate. Indeed...] in my view this world of yours is not much more valuable than the saliva of a goat.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Letter 62 in Nahjul Balaghah

<sup>48</sup> Sermon 3 of Nahjul Balaghah

These narrations from the life of Imam Ali have carried many lessons for the Shiites. From the perspective of Shiites, governance is a means to an end and not the end itself. When Imam Ali came to the conclusion that the end, i.e. the preservation and promotion of Islam and its principles, would be jeopardized if he would contest the caliphate of the first three caliphs, he decided to accept their caliphate and work alongside them to attend to the needs of the Muslim community. To Shiites this only highlights the significance of expediency and that sometimes it might be necessary to sacrifice one's own rights for the greater good of the society. Perhaps more importantly, however, Shiites take two other important lessons from Imam Ali's refusal to take power until people requested and demanded from him to become the caliph. Shiites believe that through his action, Imam Ali showcased the significance of popular support and that Muslim leaders should refrain from imposing anything onto the public that is not welcomed by them. When Imam Ali lacked popular support, he did not try to attain what was rightly his through other means, and when he enjoyed popular support, he did not hesitate to assume the leadership role of the Muslim community.

#### **Section 4.4.2.2.2: Imam Hassan**

After Imam Ali came to power, he decided to correct the wrongs of the past caliphs. Consequently, one of the first things he did was to replace the governors that were selected by the previous caliphs. One of the governors he sought to change was Muaviyeh. Muaviyeh was appointed as the governor of Damascus by the second caliph. According to Shiite narrations, Muaviyeh, as the head of the Umayyad Clan, was more



interested in promoting the interests of his tribe than the interests of the Muslim society. When Muaviyeh refused to abdicate in favor of the governor that was selected by Imam Ali, Imam Ali waged an indecisive war against Muaviyeh. Before Imam Ali could subdue Muaviyeh, however, he was assassinated. Upon Imam Ali's assassination, his son, Imam Hassan became the fifth caliph. Muaviyeh, however, declared himself the caliph as well. Consequently, Imam Hassan put together an army to coerce or defeat Muaviyeh in order to bring back Damascus under his rule. Muaviyeh, on the other hand, bought off many of Imam Hassan's commanders and used spies to spread rumors against the Imam. The civil war in the Muslim Empire, empowered the Byzantines, the main external enemy of the Muslims, and afforded them with the required breathing room to shore up and strengthen their forces (Treadgold, 1997, pp. 314-318).

As the armies of Imam Hassan and Muaviyeh came closer to a war, Imam Hassan arrived at the conclusion that a decisive victory against Muaviyeh was impossible. Also, many of Imam Hassan's commanders and supporters were either deceived or bought by Muaviyeh and could not be trusted by Imam Hassan. Furthermore, due to Muaviyeh's trickery and massive propaganda campaign, the Muslim society was also at loss over who they should regard as the legitimate caliph after the assassination of Imam Ali. Consequently, when Muaviyeh dispatched two respected men to extend his peace offer to Imam Hassan, fearing senseless bloodshed as well as the external threat of the Byzantines and also sensing that the Muslim society needed to become exposed to Muaviyeh's hypocrisy, Imam Hassan decided to sign a peace treaty with Muaviyeh. The treaty, which was signed by Imam Hassan and Muaviyeh in 661 AD, mainly stipulated that:

- 1) Hassan the son of Ali relinquishes caliphate in Muaviyeh's favor on the condition that Muaviyeh would rule in accordance to the Quran and the tradition of the prophet.
- 2) After the death of Muaviyeh, Hassan would become the caliph and should an accident befall Hassan, Hussein would become the caliph. Muaviyeh is not allowed to select a successor for himself.
- 3) The cursing of Imam Ali during prayers should cease and his name should only be used with respect.
- 4) The money in the treasury of the city of Kufa, which is a total of five million dirham, will not be handed to Muaviyeh and will be used under Hassan's discretion. Also, Muaviyeh should distribute one million dirham among the sons of those who were killed in Imam Ali's war against Muaviyeh.
- 5) Muaviyeh commits that all people, regardless of their tribe and race, would be protected against any form of persecution. No one should be punished due to his past opposition to Muaviyeh. The companions of Imam Ali should also be safe wherever they may be. Muaviyeh should not plan or direct any covert or overt action against Hassan or Hussein or any member of the prophet's family.
- 6) Muaviyeh declares that he would remain true to this treaty and bears Allah witness that he would fulfill it to the best of his ability.

In Shiite tradition, the peace treaty of Imam Hassan is termed as the "most glorious heroic flexibility of history." History has it, as will be discussed later, that Muaviyeh did

not remain true to the treaty and discredited himself and the whole Umayyad dynasty by openly violating its terms. Through the peace treaty, Imam Hassan not only awakened the Muslim society to Muaviyeh's hypocrisy and insincerity, but also unified the Muslim Empire, prevented bloodshed among Muslims, protected Muslim territories against a possible Byzantine incursion, made Muslims realize their mistake in forsaking their Imams, and protected the lives of himself, his brother, and his companions to advocate and promote the true Islam and to more effectively confront Umayyad rulers in the future.

Shiites draw many lessons from Imam Hassan's peace treaty with Muaviyeh. First, while they do see the treaty as something that the Imam was forced to accept out of necessity, the fact that the Imam did accept the treaty and did relinquish power when the situation at hand necessitated it, is regarded as a testimony to the Imam's tactical pragmatism. Hence, Shiites believe and regard tactical pragmatism to be a legitimate way of pursuing one's ideals, provided that the means used to achieve a legitimate end are not illegitimate themselves. Second, Shiites believe that Imam Hassan, just like his father, was forced to concede because his followers did not remain true to him. Hence, one of the lessons Shiites draw from the life of Imam Hassan is to proactively remain loyal to their religious leaders. Third, Shiites believe that one of the reasons Imam Hassan signed the treaty was because he was certain that Muaviyeh would openly violate it and by doing so would expose his true face to those who were beguiled by him and his propaganda machinery. Hence, another lesson Imam Hassan's peace has had for the Shiites is the importance of internal cohesion and the necessity of forming a unified perception of the enemy before

initiating a confrontation against it. Fourth, Shiites believe that one of the most important reasons why Imam Hassan abdicated in favor of Muaviyeh was the present and clear danger of an incursion into the Muslim territories by the Byzantines. Hence, the Shiites conclude that when face with an external enemy, one must do its utmost to resolve internal differences, regardless of the sacrifices needed, to forge a unified front against the external enemy.

#### **Section 4.4.2.2.3: Imam Hussein and the Battle of Karbala**

Soon after Imam Hassan abdicated in favor of Muaviyeh and once Muaviyeh consolidated his control over the Muslim Empire, he publicly announced that he would not respect the terms of the treaty. While the treaty did have a moderating effect on his posture toward those who opposed him, he did, nevertheless, overtly and covertly kill key opposition figures, including Imam Hassan himself. He also established the Umayyad dynasty by appointing his son, Yazid, as his successor in contravention to the treaty. Imam Hussein, the younger brother of Imam Hassan, however, remained true to the treaty and did not contest Muaviyeh's caliphate until his death. Once Muaviyeh died in 680 AD, his son assumed the throne and demanded the allegiance of tribal leaders and other men of influence. Yazid sent letters to all of his father's governors across the Muslim Empire and instructed them to secure the allegiance of all influential individuals through whatever means possible.

Among individuals Yazid specifically named was Imam Hussein. In fact, it is said that Yazid had instructed the governor of Medina, the city in which Imam Hussein was

residing, to behead Imam Hussein if he refused to swear allegiance to Yazid. When the governor of Medina informed Imam Hussein of Muaviyeh's death and of Yazid's order. Imam Hussein, however, refused and immediately left Medina and went to Mecca. While most other tribal leaders did swear allegiance to Yazid out of fear for their lives, they did start sending Imam Hussein their letters of support and requested him to revolt against Yazid's despotism and illegitimate rule. As more and more people secretly swore allegiance to Imam Hussein, Imam Hussein left Mecca along with his family and children and marched toward Kufa, a city in current day Iraq, in response to the invitations of its residents.

Yazid fearing that the fall of Kufa could domino into his worst nightmare, sent one of his trusted commanders, ibn Ziyad, to Kufa to subdue its residents and prevent Imam Hussein from setting foot in Kufa. Through buying off those who could be bought off, threatening others with an imaginary huge army that was supposedly on its way to Kufa from Damascus, and killing those who remained true to Imam Hussein, ibn Ziyad was not only able to subdue the unrest in Kufa but also mobilize them against Imam Hussein. When Imam Hussein neared Kufa, the forces of ibn Ziyad intercepted the Imam, prevented him from going to Kufa, and forced him to set camp in Karbala, near the banks of the Euphrates River. There, Imam Hussein along with his close companions and family members were offered to either swear allegiance to Yazid or face his army. When Imam Hussein refused to swear allegiance to Yazid, ibn Ziyad's army first cut Imam Hussein's access to water, leaving the Imam and his family thirsty for three days. The Imam was then given a final ultimatum to either swear allegiance to Yazid or be killed.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram,<sup>49</sup> also known as *Ashura*, ibn Ziyad's army, which was composed of tens of thousands of warriors, waged war against Imam Hussein and his companions. As was customary in those days among the Arabs, each of the seventy-two companions of Imam Hussein fought one by one with members of ibn Ziyad's army until they were all killed. Ibn Ziyad's forces then charged against Imam Hussein, killed him and took his women and children and the women and children of his companions as captives.

From the time Imam Hussein left Medina to the time he was killed in Karbala on the day of *Ashura*, Imam Hussein is narrated as having explained why he could not swear allegiance to Yazid, regardless of the consequences. Some of his declarations, however, are more frequently cited than others and are thus more known to lay Shiites. Among commonly known narrations from Imam Hussein is his reply to the governor of Medina when he demanded the Imam to swear allegiance to Yazid. It is narrated that when the governor of Medina demanded him to swear allegiance to Yazid, Imam Hussein responded by saying:

O' Governor. I am a member of the Prophet's family and we the family of the Prophet are the sources of knowledge and revelation. We are the destination of the angels and God's never ending blessings. God began the creation with us and will end it with us. Yazid, on the other hand, is a lewd transgressor who is a drunkard. He has murdered the innocent and openly commits sins with impunity. A person like me cannot swear allegiance to a person like him.

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<sup>49</sup> Muharram is the 1 month in the Arabic lunar calendar.

It is also famously narrated that when the Imam rejected to swear allegiance to Yazid and decided to leave Medina, he declared:

I revolt not out of vanity and pride, nor to incite corruption or oppression. I revolt to correct the deviations in the affairs of the followers of my grandfather Mohammad. I aim at commanding virtues, and prohibiting vices and seek to follow the traditions and conduct of my grandfather Muhammad and my father Ali.

Also, there are some short and famous narrations from Imam Hussein that Shiites often cite. They include:

- “If the religion of Muhammad would not be upheld except through my blood, O’ swords come toward me.”
- “Death in the path of God is nothing but salvation and living alongside the oppressors is nothing but sheer humiliation.”
- “A heroic death is better than living in humiliation.”
- “Never shall I accept humiliation.”

Indeed, it could be well argued that among various religious occasions that Shiites commemorate, none is more important than the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and among shrines that Shiites go to for pilgrimage, none is more significant than the Shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala. Most Shiites, regardless of their level of religiosity, participate in the 10 day public processions, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram, to commemorate the anniversary of Imam Hussein’s martyrdom. Also, each year, on the 40<sup>th</sup> day after the Martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein, known as

Arbaeen, millions of Shiites go to Karbala, many of them on foot, to pay homage to Imam Hussein. Despite the security situation in Iraq and numerous suicide bombings against Shiite pilgrims, during this year's Arbaeen, which took place in December 2013, "20 million people from some 40 countries made pilgrimages to Karbala... Last year around 18 million people made pilgrimages to Karbala" (AFP, December 24, 2013).

All of these processions include lectures on the reasons behind Imam Hussein's revolt against Yazid and the lessons his revolution carries for Shiites today. While Shiites draw many lessons from the life of Imam Hussein, his willingness to sacrifice not only his own life but also the life of his most dear ones and the safety of his women and children in order to resist something he deemed illegitimate under coercion, is perhaps the single most prominent narrative that Shiites extract from the life of Imam Hussein. Imam Hussein's refusal to swear allegiance to Yazid and his resistance against Yazid despite all odds and costs, has glorified resistance against illegitimate demands in the eyes of Shiites. In fact the symbolism of the battle of Karbala has so captivated Shiites that they view many world events through the prism of that battle. The famous saying from a Shiite poet, who lived during the times of the sixth Imam, that "everyday is Ashura and everywhere is Karbala" is regarded by Shiites as an article of faith. Shiites believe that every person at the juncture of every decision, could either decide to side with Imam Hussein and resist evil, despite all costs, or side with Yazid and oppose the cause of Imam Hussein. The narrative also divides the world into oppressors, on one side, and the oppressed on the other. This worldview has had tremendous impact on Iran's foreign relations and is in fact one of the reasons why Article 154 of Iran's constitution asserts:



*The Islamic Republic of Iran has as its ideal human felicity throughout human society, and considers the attainment of independence, freedom, and rule of justice and truth to be the right of all people of the world. Accordingly, while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the just struggles of the freedom fighters against the oppressors in every corner of the globe.*

The other very strong narrative that emerges from the life of Imam Hussein, is again the significance of rallying behind and actively supporting and not betraying the legitimate leader of the Shiite community. As Shiites condemn the residents of Kufa for betraying Imam Hussein out of fear for their lives, they also remind themselves that forsaking their current day “Imam” would be equally reprehensible. Hence, one of the slogans that is often chanted in gatherings before the Supreme Leader is that “we are not the people of Kufa. Ali<sup>50</sup> will not be left unaided.”

#### **Section 4.4.2.2.4: Conclusion**

While at first glance the drawn lessons from the lives of the first three Imams of the Shiite faith may seem somewhat contradictory, the Shiites have worked hard to reconcile them. From the Shiites point of view, all Imams are infallible and their conducts during various historical episodes serve as an ideal model for their followers. Shiites further believe that had the Imams been in one another’s places, they would have acted and performed exactly the same way. Hence to reconcile the lessons they draw from the lives

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<sup>50</sup> In this slogan “Ali” both refers to Imam Ali and Grand Ayatollah Seyyed *Ali* Khamenei.

of the three Imams, they argue that the situation with Abu Bakr was different from the situation with Muaviyeh and the situation with Muaviyeh was different from the situation with Yazid. First, while both in the case of Abu Bakr and Muaviyeh, the Imams were facing individuals who proclaimed to uphold Islam and the tradition of the Prophet, Yazid openly scorned Islamic teachings and did not abide by them. Second, while both in the case of Abu Bakr and Muaviyeh, not conceding would have had adverse repercussions for the Muslim community and the Empire, Yazid was not facing any external threats and no one was following Yazid out of admiration. Hence, while Imam Hassan needed to sign a treaty with Muaviyeh to expose his true face, Imam Hussein needed to inspire the Muslim community and instigate them to actively oppose a leader they already hated but feared. Third, unlike Yazid, neither Abu Bakr nor Muaviyeh forced the Imams to choose between an unconditional capitulation and death. Imam Hussein is narrated as having said to the forces of ibn Ziyad that:

Your commander has forced me to choose between death and humiliation. But we, the family of the Prophet, shall never accept humiliation and disgrace. God has forbidden us, the family of the Prophet, and the believers to accept humiliation. People like us, who have lived pure lives can never prefer legitimizing the rule of the impious over an honorable death.

Yet, perhaps the most significant difference between the conditions under which Imam Hussein and the first two Imams lived is that while consenting to the rule of Abu Bakr or abdicating in favor of Muaviyeh under the terms of the abovementioned treaty did not entail an indefinite deviation from the path of Islam, swearing allegiance to Yazid, who

besides being openly impious had assumed power illegitimately and in contravention to Imam Hassan's treaty with Muaviyeh, would have legitimized a deviation with perpetual and perverse consequences for Islam and the Muslim community.

Religious narratives, three of which were briefly described above, have for centuries influenced how Shiites view the world and the realities it entails. Much of these narratives, however, could not be used to mobilize collective action until quite recently. Though the stories were continuously narrated and commemorated through various rituals, the fact that no one could legitimately assume the political responsibilities of the Imam, effectively neutralized the political ramifications of these narratives. Shiite political thought, however, began to evolve around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, Shiite scholars began to openly contemplate how during the major occultation, Shiites could both remain true to the basic tenants of Shiite Islam and exercise their right to self-determination. Once Shiite scholars, through various formulations that were previously discussed, allowed Shiites to become politically active, these religious narratives took center stage and have since affected many of the debates within the Shiite communities. Just as an example, according to court transcripts, during the 17<sup>th</sup> session of his trial in the military court on November 28, 1953, the ousted Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq declared in his defense:

I declare and admit in this court that I am a Shiite Muslim. My way of life, path and manner of conduct is the path and the manner of conduct of his holiness the leader of all martyrs, Imam Hussein. This means that when truth and rights are at stake, I oppose all forces and will sacrifice everything in my possession. [When

truth and rights are at stake] I will act as if I have no wife, no son, and no daughter! Nothing! I will only have [the rights of] my country before my eyes. The Prophet says: “stand up and resist.” Of course, he did not say resist without having studied the situation at hand. But when one realizes the truth, he must stand, resist, and advocate it. And now I am pursuing the path of my leader, Imam Hussein, as I have done throughout my life, until my last breath. (Bozorgmehr, 1990, p. 413)

Also, as Iran was negotiating with P5+1 and before the JPA was agreed to in Geneva, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, in a lecture he delivered on September 17, 2013, alluded to Imam Hassan’s peace treaty and said:

I am not opposed to logical and correct diplomatic moves. Both in the realm of domestic and foreign policy I am a believer in what I named “heroic flexibility” some years ago.<sup>51</sup> Sometimes showing flexibility is very necessary and good. There is no problem with showing flexibility, per se. But a wrestler who is wrestling with his opponent and sometimes must show flexibility for tactical reasons, should never forget who his opponent is and what he is trying to achieve. This is the most important principle. He should know what he is doing, who he is confronting, and where the opponent has targeted.

When reconciled, Shiites draw many political lessons from the lives and times of their Imams. In Shiite faith, resistance and self-sacrifice, particularly when undertaken against

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<sup>51</sup> It is important to note that Grand Ayatollah Khamenei used this term to describe the peace treaty of Imam Hassan as a subtitle to one of the most authoritative books on the incident, which he translated from Arabic to Farsi some eight years before the revolution.

stark odds, is glorified. The reason Iranians glorify those who were killed during the Iran-Iraq war is that they resisted against Saddam's aggression, despite all odds. Resistance and self-sacrifice, however, could legitimately take many forms. From Shiites point of view, what is important is to undertake legitimate decisions and actions that *best* contribute to the final noble objective. Hence, when Imam Hussein saw that the best way he could contribute to the final noble objective was sacrificing the life of himself and his most dear ones, he did just that. Likewise, when Imam Hassan realized that abdicating in Muaviyeh's favor was the best way to promote the interests of the Muslim community, he did not allow his ego and the criticisms of others get in the way of signing a peace treaty with Muaviyeh. Hence, Shiites view tactical pragmatism as their Imams' way of approaching issues of strategic significance and do not necessarily venerate one legitimate mean over another.

The other lesson that Shiites draw from the lives of their Imam is in regards to the relationship between the leaders and their followers. As a ritual, Shiites have for centuries condemned those who betrayed the Imams and forced them to make painful sacrifices that they would have otherwise not needed to make. In fact, many Shiite supplications include parts that condemn those who did not remain loyal to the Imams. These very supplications also include promises from the supplicater's behalf that he would certainly not leave his Imam unaided. Before the described evolution in the Shiite thought, all of these promises of loyalty were directed at Imam Mahdi alone and the believers were promising and declaring their loyalty only to the occultated Imam. However, under the evolved understanding of Shiite Islam and to the degree people believe in the evolved

understanding, considering that senior Shiite scholars have assumed all of Imam Mahdi's powers and responsibilities, and considering that Grand Ayatollah Khamenei is selected to undertake the political responsibilities of Imam Mahdi, senior Shiite scholars and, particularly, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei have also become the subject of such promises of loyalty.

#### **Section 4.4.2.3: Key National Historical Experiences that have shaped Iran's Strategic Culture**

While Iranians are significantly influenced by the abovementioned religious narratives, their shared historical experiences as a nation have also significantly affected their strategic worldview. Again, without going into much detail since much of Iran's historical experiences have been covered in other parts of this writing, this section will suffice to point the effects that various historical experiences of Iran have had on Iran's strategic worldview, values, and culture.

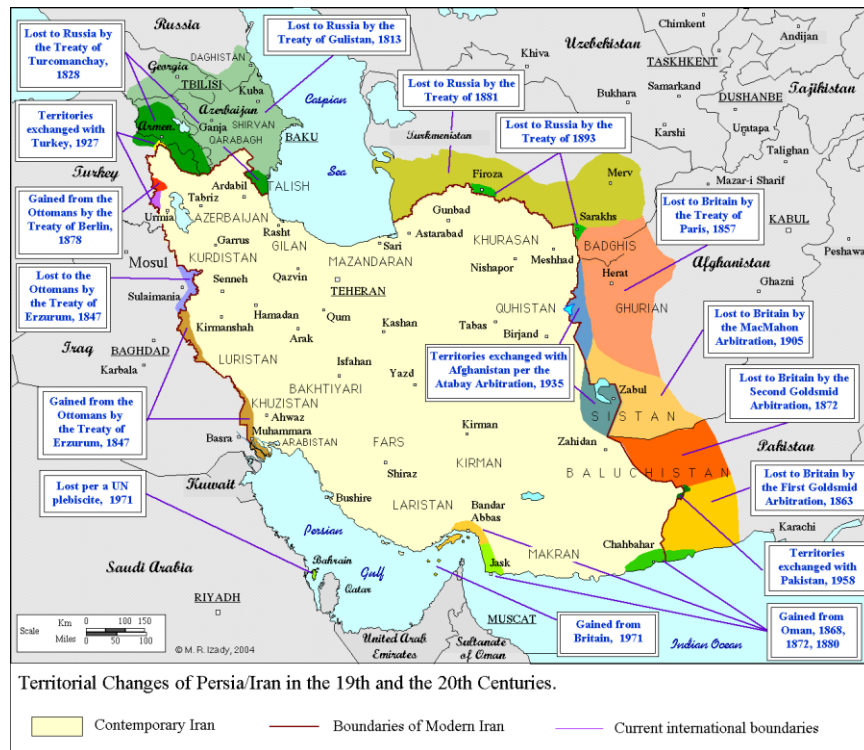
Iranians traced their roots to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC and to when Cyrus the Great unified various tribes that had settled on the Persian plateau to forge the Achaemenid Empire (550 – 330 BC). At its height, the Achaemenid Empire covered the current day territories of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Half of Pakistan and parts of Egypt, Libya, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania. This glorious past, among other things, have provided Iranians with a sense of pride and nationalism that is almost unique in the region. According to the World Value Survey, Iranians rank second in being “very proud” of their nationality, with 92% of Iranians saying that they are “very proud” to be

Iranians. To put this number in context, 75% of Saudis, 72% of Americans, 71% of Indians, 64% of Turks, 48% of Indonesians, 40% of the French, 31% of Russians, 26% of the Chinese, and 23% of the Japanese people say that they are “very proud” of their nationality.

Yet, Iran’s contemporary history has been anything but glorious. While Iran has not initiated an attack against any country for some two centuries (Rabkin, 2006), it has lost much territory to international conflicts up until quite recently. In fact, current day country Bahrain, used to be a part of Iran until 1971, when Bahrain’s Al-Khalifa clan declared its UN sponsored independence from Iran. Each loss of territory was and has remained a source of humiliation for Iranians. Just as an example, the peace treaties of Gulistan (1813) and, more specifically, Turkmenchay (1828), which brought to an end the first and the second Russo-Persian wars of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by Iran relinquishing sovereignty over current day Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia to Russia, are dubbed as “shameful” and have turned into Persian literary expressions to denote a humiliating surrender and capitulation to external pressure.

Without going into much detail, while Iran was never officially colonized, much of Iran’s history since the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is marked with annexation of Iranian territories and perverse foreign intervention in Iranian affairs. In fact, the most important reason why Iran was never officially colonized is that the British and the Russian Empires had decided to preserve Iran as a buffer zone between themselves. This did not, however, mean that the British and the Russians did not annex Iranian territories. During

the 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran lost much of its northern territories to Russian and much of its eastern territories to British invasion:



Besides seizing its territory, the Russians and the British Empires also divided Iran into three zones, with the north designated as the Russian sphere of influence, the south as the British sphere of influence, and a narrow strip in the middle was preserved as a buffer between the two empires. This agreement between Russia and Britain was formalized in 1907 as part of the Anglo-Russian Entente (Keddie, 2006, p. 69). During this period, the British used their influence to extract costly concessions from the Iranian government. These concessions included decades long contracts giving the British Empire unlimited access and exploitation rights over Iran's petroleum resources. To preserve these interests, Russian and Great Britain violated Iran's neutrality during the First and the



Second World War and invaded Iran. These invasions not only crippled Iran's economy and undermined its political sovereignty, but also led to widespread famine and disease, resulting in the death of millions of Iranians, as the occupying forces "requisitioned food for their troops" (Kinzer, 2011). After the Second World War, when Iranians tried to gain control over their affairs by lending their support to their elected officials, the US and UK orchestrated a coup, which resulted in the fall and arrest of the popularly elected Prime Minister Mossadeq and twenty-five years of iron fist military rule by the Shah.

All of these burdened heavily on the collective memory of the Iranian people when Grand Ayatollah Khomeini initiated his anti-imperialist lectures in Qom. It is very important to keep in mind that Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's initial lectures did not target Iran's constitutional order. In a speech he delivered on April 15, 1964, the Ayatollah criticized the Shah for ignoring the Constitution and categorically stated that Shiite scholars would cease their protests if the Shah would fully implement the Constitution (Khomeini, 1993, V1 p. 288). But Grand Ayatollah Khomeini did unequivocally voice his objection to the "domineering" nature of US-Iran relations under the Shah. As the relationship between the US and the Shah became more and more indispensable for both, Iranian people developed even stronger anti-imperialist sentiments, which eventually led to the fall of the Shah. Hence, as was previously emphasized, the Islamic Revolution in 1979, was primarily "a rebellion against a regime that was seen to have sold out to a foreign power" (Kinzer, 2008). The narrative of the time primarily focused on the Shah's special relationship with the US at the cost of the interests, dignity, independence, and the honor of the Iranian people.

As was discussed previously, the humiliations Iran suffered during the 19<sup>th</sup> and much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century generated a deep rooted anger that reached its apex in the 1979 revolution, resulting not only in the fall of the Shah but also in anti-imperialism, independence, and self-reliance becoming fundamental *raison d'être* of the newly formed Iranian government. These sentiments and worldviews became even more pervasive during the Iran-Iraq war. That war, which is still fresh in the collective memory of the Iranian people, convinced Iranians that the great powers, in particular the US, are determined to undermine the Islamic Republic. This perception about the US as well as the international organizations that are perceived to be heavily influenced by the US became further crystallized when Iran saw how the international community responded to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and compared it to how the international community acted in response to Saddam's aggression against Iran. The war also convinced many Iranians and policymakers that they cannot completely rely on any external entity for their safety and wellbeing and that the only way they could preserve their independence and sovereignty was to become more self-reliant. But, perhaps most significantly, the Iran-Iraq war showcased the utility of resistance and self-sacrifice, which were already a part of Shiite thought, to the Iranian people. In the minds of the many Iranians and policymakers, relatively speaking Iran was as weak, if not weaker, as it was during its other military conflicts in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century as compared to its opponents. Yet, unlike its wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through resistance and self-sacrifice, for the first time in Iran's contemporary history they were able to preserve Iran's territorial integrity, restore their national dignity, and assert their independence, resilience, and

sovereignty. Another very important effect the war had on Iran was the international relations lesson Iranian diplomats and security officials drew from the war. According to a high ranking Iranian Foreign Ministry official who was involved in the war related negotiations at the UN, the tone and the substance of UNSC resolutions regarding the Iran-Iraq war was heavily influenced by the military accomplishments of Iran during that war. What Iranian diplomats observed at that time was that while the advancements of the Iranian forces in the battle fields resulted in UNSC resolutions that were more favorable from Iran's perspective, battleground failures often led to obstructions in Iran's efforts at the UN. This observation of Iranian officials, who had no prior diplomatic or political experiences, has convinced them that the only way Iran could better its standing in the international arena is to be more assertive on the global stage.

Iran's most recent experiences with the US have only highlighted the lessons and the perceptions that Iranians had attained throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Iran's various failed attempts to accommodate US interests in hopes that the US would change its policies toward Iran have further convinced the Iranian people and policymakers that the US is determined to undermine Iran and the Islamic Republic. Also, Iran's inability to provide for some of its most basic needs from the international market, such as the P5+1's refusal to provide Iran with the nuclear fuel it direly needed for TRR, have further convinced Iran of its need to be self-reliant. Moreover, as the US shifted its redlines from commissioning of the Bushehr light-water reactor in the 1990s to enriching of uranium above 5% since the signing of the JPA, Iranians have become more convinced that the

only way the US would become more accommodating toward Iran is for Iran to change ground realities in its own favor.

### **Section 4.4.3: Iran's Strategic Culture, Coercive Diplomacy, and Iran's Nuclear Policy**

#### **Section 4.4.3.1: Key components of Iran's Strategic Culture**

Iranians have a very rich history with a deep-rooted sense of national identity. The perception that Iran, a previously glorious country, was humiliated during the 19<sup>th</sup> and much of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a result of foreign meddling in its affairs and weak and corrupt leaders who allowed foreign subjugation of Iran, is commonly held by the Iranian people and officials. These resentments have contributed to a more evolved understanding of the Shiite faith, which not only legitimized but also instigated Shiites to become more proactive in their quest for freedom, self-determination, and independence. Public resentments against the perceived domination of Iran by the US, the Shah's insensitivity toward people's national and religious identity, and the rise of Shiite political activism, ultimately culminated in the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

The Islamic Republic, which was born out of the revolution, adopted opposition to all forms of imperialism as its most fundamental *raison d'être* and promised the Iranian people that hence forth foreigners were not going to be allowed to control Iran's destiny. To showcase their anti-imperialist identity, the founding leaders of the Islamic Revolution constitutionally required all subsequent Iranian governments to reject "all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it," and declared, per Article 6 of the constitution, that "In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the freedom,

independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the country are inseparable from one another, and their preservation is the duty of the government and all individual citizens.” It is important to note that the Islamic Republic drives much of its legitimacy from its anti-imperialist and anti-domination values, which not only emanate from the historical experiences of the Iranian people but are also rooted in and justified by major Shiite narratives. Considering that the Islamic Republic itself is a manifestation of an evolved understanding of the Shiite Islam, Iranian policymakers are very sensitive to being perceived as having abandoned the Iranian people’s quest for independence not only because of the ramifications that would have for the Islamic Republic but also because of its ultimate negative repercussions on the evolved understanding of Shiite Islam.

To say that the Islamic Republic has a very strong anti-imperialist identity and strategic culture, however, is not to say, as many US officials and scholars - including President Obama in his June 4, 2009, speech in Cairo - have claimed, that the Islamic Republic is so dependent on anti-Americanism for its domestic legitimacy that it cannot contemplate improving its relations with the US. If this was true, we should not have witnessed many of the unilateral measures adopted by consecutive Iranian administrations since the inception of the Islamic Republic to improve Iran’s relations with the US and we should not have heard demands from the highest ranking Iranian officials, including Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, for the US to cease its hostilities toward Iran. Some of the lectures of Grand Ayatollah Khamenei on this issue are noteworthy. In a lecture Grand Ayatollah Khamenei delivered in the city of Yazd on January 3, 2008, he said:

One of our fundamental policies is to not have diplomatic relations with the US. We have never said that our relation should forever be severed. No. There is no reason to perpetually have severed relations with any country or any government... The day that having relations with the US would be good for our interests, I would be the first person to ask for the relations to be mended.

In another lecture a day after President Obama broadcasted his first Nowruz video on March 20, 2009, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei in his annual New Year speech that he delivers in the city of Mashhad said:

Changes in words are not adequate...[this change] should not come with unhealthy intentions. You may say that you want to change policies, but not your aims, that you will change tactics. This is not change. This is deceit. There can be true change, which should be seen in action... If the US government continues its same behavior, methods, course, and policies against us, as in the past thirty years, we are the same people, the same nation that we have been for the past thirty years... We do not have any experience with this new US president and government. We shall see and judge. You change, and we shall change as well.

In another very telling speech on the issue, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei in his annual New Year speech on March 21, 2013, said:

If the Americans sincerely wish to end the issue, I present the solution [and that is] for the Americans to stop their hostilities against the Islamic Republic. To stop their hostilities against the Iranian people. Having sheer negotiations is not a

reasonable, sound, and well-founded proposition. This is the correct way forward. If they want there to remain no problems between our two countries – as they claim – they should cease their hostilities. For over thirty-four years, successive US administrations, due to their incorrect understanding of Iran and the Iranian people, have planned and undertaken many hostile actions against us, against our territorial integrity. They have supported our big and small opponents against us through all these years. They have acted against our economy and have used every instrument in their disposal against the people of Iran. And thank God they have failed to achieve their goals in all these efforts and they will continue to fail if they would continue their enmity against the people of Iran. I am therefore guiding the American officials: If you are pursuing a sound policy, a sound policy is for you to correct your policies, correct your actions, and cease your hostilities against the people of Iran.

Indeed, there is also very little evidence that anti-Americanism is a value that is cherished by the Iranian people. In a survey conducted by PIPA in 2009, when Iranian people were asked: “To what degree do you favor or oppose Iran and the United States restoring diplomatic relations?” in response, 63% of Iranians indicated that either they would favor strongly (18%) or would favor somewhat (45%) a rapprochement with the US. Also, according to the same survey, a majority of Iranians have favorable views of the American people.

Therefore, considering the Islamic Republic's past and current efforts to develop a relationship, based on mutual respect and interests, with the US and the statements of high ranking Iranian officials, some of which was quoted above, as well as positive public attitudes toward Iran-US rapprochement, it is necessary to draw a very sharp distinction between being anti-imperialist and anti-domination and being anti-American. Indeed, the Islamic Republic does draw significant legitimacy from preventing foreign influence in Iran. This is very different from being anti-American, which suggests there to be no linkage between US policies and the attitudes of the Iranian people and policymakers toward the US. So long as the US is perceived as the primary foreign entity that seeks to dominate and coerce Iran into complying with its demands, it is only natural that Iran's anti-imperialist identity will become manifested in its resistance toward the US.

Closely linked with anti-Imperialism, for reasons explained above, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-sufficiency are key elements of Iran's strategic culture. While it could be well argued that the excessive emphasis of the Iranian people and policymakers on self-reliance is a manifestation of their anti-imperialist worldview, self-reliance is not only regarded as a means to fend off foreign influence on Iran but has also become a value in its own right. Primarily emanating from Iranian nationalism and its fears of domination and its historical experiences, absolute dependence on external sources for any needed commodity or service, particularly those that are of strategic significance, is deemed irresponsible and senseless.



Another element of Iran's strategic culture is preservation of its internal cohesion and adoption of decisions of strategic significance through consensus. Nothing is more important to the Islamic Republic than preservation of its internal cohesion. The Islamic Republic views internal cohesion as the single most important pillar of its survival and ability to resist external pressure. Lack of internal cohesion is regarded as the primary reason why the 1905 Constitutional Revolution failed and why the coup against Mossadeq succeeded. Conversely, existence of a strong internal cohesion is credited for the success of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's success in repelling Saddam's aggression, and the ability of the Islamic Republic to resist foreign pressures. In order to maintain internal cohesion and as a way to prevent despotism from taking hold in the country, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic has decentralized power and has required decisions of strategic significance to be adopted in the Supreme Council for National Security (SCNS), which is composed of the representatives of Iran's most important formal centers of power.

Closely linked to the significance attached to the preservation of internal cohesion and adoption of decisions of strategic significance through consensus building, is the significance and the stature of the Supreme Leader. "Although the Supreme Leader has the final say on all domestic and foreign policy issues, he governs by consensus - not by decree" (Gerami, 2014). He is an agenda setter, the primary mediator between Iran's various formal and informal centers of power, and his ultimate responsibility is to formulate policies of strategic significance by building consensus on such issues across political divides. The Supreme Leader also provides the adopted decisions with the

required legitimacy and religious backing to make it stand. He also plays the very significant role of bringing matters to closure. He is recognized to have the final say. To be able to play this very crucial role, however, he depends heavily on his popular charisma and on being perceived as a fair mediator and a self-less decision maker whose only objective is to safeguard and promote the values of the Islamic Republic and the interests of the Iranian people. Recognizing the significance of his leadership, his pivotal role in preserving the country from degenerating into factionalism, and his religious authority, the Iranian people and policymakers attach as much importance to remaining loyal to the Supreme Leader as they attach importance to preserving the Islamic Republic.

Finally, tactical pragmatism is another significant component of the strategic culture of the Islamic Republic. Both emanating from Shiite religious narratives as well as Iran's historical experiences, the Islamic Republic is much more focused on objectives than on means. It is often incorrectly assumed that "resistance" forms the basis of Iran's foreign and strategic policy. While it is true that Iran's strategic culture has come to give more weight to resistance than other means of achieving its objectives, they do recognize that resistance is a mean and not the objective. The only reason resistance has become Iran's dominant mean to achieve its objectives, is its exhibited efficacy. It is perceived, for example, that through resistance Iran was able to preserve its territorial integrity and shift US redlines regarding Iran's nuclear program. Yet, the religious narratives that influence Iran's strategic culture, past Iranian actions, such as accepting the UNSC Resolution 598, as well as statements from high ranking Iranian officials suggest that the Islamic

Republic is capable of adopting means other than resistance to preserve its independence and further its interests.

#### **Section 4.4.3.2: Iran's Strategic Culture and its Nuclear Policy**

A country's strategic culture influences every strategic decision of that country. Iran and its nuclear policy are not an exception. Iran's quest for nuclear technology, besides other issues, is also rooted in the Islamic Republic's desire to showcase its competence, preserve its independence and sovereignty, increase its self-reliance and national self-confidence, and promote its internal cohesion. As a new system of government based on an evolved and contemporary understanding of Shiite Islam, the Islamic Republic continuously seeks to showcase its competence and ability in advancing the interests of the Iranian people. By showcasing its competency and ability to further the interests of the Iranian people and preserve Iran's independence, the Islamic Republic seeks to increase Shiites' confidence in the legitimacy of the evolved understanding of the Shiite Islam. As will be discussed in more detail, it also seeks to convince a broader audience that it is possible to excel without the support of the world's sole superpower. To emphasize this point, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei in his annual New Year speech on March 21, 2013, said:

Through our advances our people have proven that not living under the influence of the US is not tantamount to deterioration of one's standing. This is a very important point. World powers and imperialists – imperialists when we had direct imperialism and, today, the US, wish to convince peoples of the world that if you wish to have a good life and excel, you must do so under our shadow. The people

of Iran proved that this claim is a lie. Our people proved that not being dependent on the US and other great powers will not only not result in the deterioration of one's standing, but will result in one's advancement. Just as an example, compare the Islamic Republic during the past thirty years and the thirty years of other countries that live under the shadow of the US; they have satisfied themselves with two to three billion dollars of US foreign aid and have surrendered their destiny to the US. Just see where they are and where we are?

Besides seeking to showcase its competence, the Islamic Republic seeks to preserve its independence and national sovereignty and enhance its security through its nuclear program. Iranian officials believe that a nuclear Iran is a stronger Iran and a stronger Iran is better able to preserve its independence and national sovereignty. While Grand Ayatollah Khamenei has declared development of nuclear weapons to be contrary to Islam and while Iranian officials avoid suggesting Iran's nuclear program to have an "intentional" security dimension, "there is consensus across the Islamic Republic's political spectrum that a nuclear weapons option holds deterrent value even without overt weaponization" (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 88). In one of my interviews with a high ranking presidential advisor, in response to my question about the factors that drive Iran's nuclear policy and whether security considerations have been at play, the advisor rejected the idea that Iran is pursuing nuclear technology because of its deterrent value but did say that Iranian officials are very cognizant of this "fortunate side-effect" of having an advanced nuclear fuel cycle program.

But there is another very interesting reason why Iranian policymakers think Iran's nuclear program safeguards Iran's independence, national sovereignty, and internal cohesion. Since Iranian policymakers are convinced that the ultimate objective of the US is to undermine the Islamic Republic in whatever way possible, they think Iran's nuclear program has been able to channel US antagonism and hostile actions against Iran toward Iran's least vulnerable program and policy. An Iranian Foreign Ministry official told me in an interview that "thank God they have focused their energy on Iran's nuclear program. No one can deny that as a member of NPT Iran has an inalienable right to nuclear energy and technology. The more they try to deprive us of this right, the more internal cohesion it will generate against them and the less they will be able to put pressure on us for issues that may not have as strong as a public backing. They were going to sanction us anyways. We are lucky that they are sanctioning us for something the people and international law supports. This exposes their imperialistic face and will ultimately hurt them more than it hurts us."

Iran's nuclear policy, however, is most strongly influenced by Iran's desire to be self-reliant. Considering Iran's strategic culture, it would simply have been implausible for Iran to decide to start becoming more reliant on nuclear power without first mastering the nuclear fuel cycle. Such absolute dependence on outside suppliers is not something any policymaker familiar with Iran's history could have ever proposed. Since Iran-Iraq war, when Iran could not fully use most of the weapons it had purchased from the US because it was fully dependent on the US for spare parts, Iranian policymakers, due to their lack of trust in foreign suppliers, have adopted as an article of faith the policy of always

having a domestic backup plan for any commodity or service that Iran primarily imports from abroad. The idea is that a viable backup plan would prevent the suppliers from using a commodity or service that Iran imports from abroad as a leverage against it. In fact, since the war, Iranians have become extra sensitive to providing any external entity with anything that could be used as a leverage against Iran. Consequently, when Iran decided to begin relying on nuclear energy as an alternative to fossil fuel, as a backup plan it also invested in mastering the nuclear fuel cycle.

Quite closely linked to Iran's strategic culture of self-reliance, is the goal of elevating national self-confidence; the belief that one is capable of doing whatever one can plausibly imagine. Many Iranian policymakers assert that self-reliance cannot be achieved without a level of self-confidence. They also argue that since self-reliance allows a country to fend off foreign intervention, those seeking to have undue influence on Iran have targeted the national self-confidence of the Iranian people. To preserve and enhance the national self-confidence of the Iranian people, Iranian policymakers have invested quite significantly in prestigious and scientific projects with the aim of elevating the Iranian people's sense of self-confidence, elevating Iran's standing and image in the region, and promoting endeavors of Iranian scientists and engineers in a variety of fields and sectors. Iran's nuclear program is only one such project. In fact, Iran's investment in prestigious and scientific projects as well as its determination to become increasingly self-reliant, has resulted in Iran having the highest scientific and technological growth rate in the world (Cookson, 2011).

### **Section 4.4.3.3: Coercive Diplomacy, Iran's Strategic Culture, and Iran's Nuclear Policy**

Iran's strategic culture has significantly contributed both to the shaping of Iran's nuclear policy and how Iran responds to the coercive measures of the US. As mentioned, the strategic culture of a society affects its strategic decisions in several ways. First, as was explained, culture influences how people perceive and interpret external stimuli. Secondly, culture plays a significant role in shaping and defining a society's goals and preferences. Finally, culture influences how national-level decisions are adopted and legitimized. Considering that coercive diplomacy seeks to change a target's behavior by making the objectionable policy seem less beneficial, it is important to see how a target's strategic culture influences how it perceives and interprets coercive measures, how coercion affects a society's strategic goals and preferences, and how governmental processes affect how a nation responds to coercive diplomacy.

As was mentioned previously, the Iranian people and policymakers believe having a full nuclear fuel cycle program to be their sovereign right. In fact, they believe that Article IV of the NPT does not give, but assert on "the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination." Hence, the Iranian people and policymakers regard US and UNSC demands to be illegitimate and interpret coercive measures of the US as a form of imperialism. According to Shaul Bakhash "the memory of foreign intervention in Iran runs very deep. It is playing itself out again in today's stand-off with the United States over the nuclear program. Iranians think, 'Once again the west want to deny us technology and modernism and independence.' It's a very powerful history. Iran is

extraordinarily sensitive to any indication of foreign influence or foreign direction” (Kinzer, 2008). What makes matters worse is that the Iranian people and policymakers also have difficulty interpreting US demands as something that emanates from a serious and legitimate US security concern. Due to Iran’s past history and due to the fact that the US had imposed a variety of sanctions against Iran prior to 2002, most Iranians<sup>52</sup> and policymakers believe that Iran’s nuclear program is only an excuse and interpret US and UNSC nuclear-related sanctions as measures adopted to ultimately undermine Iran and the Islamic Republic.

Interpreting US coercive measures as a form of imperialism and as an indication of the US intent to dominate Iran and undermine the Islamic Republic automatically triggers Iran’s anti-imperialism. Hence, in deciding how to respond to US coercive diplomacy, US demands are not judged nor treated in their own merits but rather as manifestation of foreign intent to dominate Iran. Once framed in such a way, it become prohibitively difficult for the Islamic Republic and the Iranian public to contemplate conceding to US demands on the nuclear issue since doing so would be interpreted as surrendering Iran to US domination. This makes Iranian policymakers even less likely to contemplate conceding to US demands. Not only are they barred by the Constitution to adopt any decision that would submit Iran to foreign domination, but conceding would also make them be perceived much the same way the Shah was perceived by the public. The

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<sup>52</sup> According to a survey of the Iranian published jointly by UTCPOR and CISSM in September 2014, 75% of Iranians believe that “the main reason for the United States to sanction Iran is not concern about proliferation, but some other motive... The 75% who think the main American motive is not Iran’s potential ability to develop nuclear weapons were then asked an open-ended question: ‘In your belief, what is the main goal the United States is pursuing?’...The most common responses were that the U.S. seeks to dominate Iran or block its development (amounting to 53% of replies). Another 11% think that the United States is trying to change Iran’s domestic political order.” (Mohseni, Gallagher and Ramsay, 2014).



consequences of Iranian policymakers becoming perceived as having surrendered Iran to foreign domination, moreover, will not be limited to the policymakers alone, but is recognized by Iranian officials to also have grave consequences for the evolved and contemporary understanding of Shiite Islam, which has allowed the Shiites, after some fourteen centuries of religiously dictated political dormancy, to exercise their right to self-determination. So in essence, due to Iran's strategic culture, US demands are perceived and ultimately interpreted to have costs that go tremendously beyond just forgoing of the benefits of a nuclear fuel cycle program.

For these reasons, no amount of pain is likely to induce the Iranian people and policymakers to accept US and UNSC demands. In fact, as US imposes more sanctions on Iran, the Islamic Republic has had no other option but to undertake salient measures to showcase its ability to resist and disregard US and UNSC demands. This Iranian posture is quite evident in how they have responded to each of the US and UNSC sanctions. As previously illustrated, each new US and UNSC sanction is correlated with 912 more, not less, centrifuges at Natanz and an additional production of 883 kg of 5% LEU.

US and UNSC sanctions have affected Iran's strategic preferences as well, but not in the intended direction. As US and UNSC imposed more sanctions on Iran, Iranians became more convinced that they need to become more self-reliant. When, for example, the US sanctioned export of gasoline to Iran, a commodity that Iran did not produce enough of it domestically, it simply corroborated the Iranian perception that the US and other great powers would use any Iranian dependence as a leverage against it. In an interview with a

high ranking Foreign Ministry official, he said: “they are using gasoline, which people put into their cars to go to work and pick up their children from school, as a leverage against us. How can we be assured that they would not use nuclear fuel as a leverage if we become absolutely dependent on them.” More specifically, when nuclear fuel suppliers refused to provide TRR with its needed fuel, and when Iran was forced to use its own expertise and enrichment capacity to refuel the reactor, which produces medical isotopes for some 800,000 Iranian patients, Iranians saw the value and importance of having an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle program and became further convinced that they cannot completely rely on foreign suppliers to provide for Iran’s needs. Considering that part of the reason why Iran is pursuing an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle program is its belief in self-reliance, and considering that Iran’s belief in self-reliance is rooted in its past troubling relations with the outside world, the more US and UNSC use any of Iran’s dependence on foreign suppliers as a leverage against it, the more convinced Iranians will become that they need to become more self-reliant, which will lead Iran to more aggressively pursue its various self-sufficiency programs, including in the nuclear field.

In its reliance on coercive diplomacy to deal with Iran’s nuclear program, the US has repeatedly implied the possibility of a US military attack on Iran. While Iranian policymakers believe that it is unlikely that the US would attack Iran, the possibility of such an attack has generated much debate among the Iranian people and policymakers, alike. Considering that succumbing to US domination is not regarded as an option, deterring the US and Israel through a viable threshold or break out capability is gaining more credence as Iran’s only viable option. As the US adopts a more threatening rhetoric

and posture, the Iranian people and policymakers are slowly becoming more convinced that only a nuclear weapon capable Iran is likely to restrain the US from attacking Iran.

US coercive diplomacy also provides Iran with the opportunity to increase its internal cohesion and national self-confidence. As the US highlights its ability to impose crippling sanctions on Iran, the Islamic Republic in turn showcases its resilience and Iran's ability to resist foreign pressure and intervention. An Iranian policymaker linked with Iran's SCNC told me in an interview "that it is a win for the Islamic Republic either way. It is like a boxing match between a world champion and an amateur boxer. Every second that the amateur remains vertical in the ring is a win. He does not need to defeat the champion. Surviving alone is a victory for the amateur and a defeat for the champion." Iranian policymakers also use US sanctions as a scapegoat for their own shortcomings. An "external enemy making illegitimate demands" has also proven to be quite useful for preserving an internal cohesion.

Lastly, it is important to see how Iran's governmental processes for adopting decisions of strategic significance affects its response to US and UNSC sanctions. As was mentioned, Iran's current political order both draws and provides legitimacy to a contemporary and evolved understanding of Shiite Islam. If the current political order in Iran fails to deliver on its most fundamental promise of protecting Iranians from foreign domination, the evolved understanding of Shiite Islam, which has paved the way for Shiite political activism, will also lose credibility, resulting in a vicious cycle that would strip both the Islamic Republic and the evolved understanding of Shiite Islam of their legitimacy. The

stakes are, therefore, quite high for all Iranian policymakers who regard protecting Iran from foreign domination and external intervention as their most fundamental religious and national responsibility. With such a mental frame, considering that the Islamic Republic adopts decision of strategic significance through consensus, even those who may have dissenting opinions in regards to how US demands should be perceived and responded to, are more likely to moderate their dissention, if not acquiesce to the majority opinion, than risk being labeled cowards, sell-outs, or, simply, naïve, or accused of “treason” (Mousavian, 2012, pp. 77, 279-285).

Of course, each Iranian policymaker has his own opinion and preferences, but in Iran, due to its strategic culture, individual’s preferences must be moderated once a “consensus” opinion begins to emerge. Being obsessed with internal cohesion, those within the decision-making circles who do not moderate their dissention and, even worse, those who endanger the internal cohesion of the society on core national security issues, are likely to be marginalized, if not dismissed in utter opprobrium. As with most consensus based processes, when a majority opinion begins to coalesce around a specific decision, not only do dissenters cease their dissent, but they are also likely to join in with the majority and advocate the “consensus” decision they had initially opposed. These dynamics makes it very difficult to change the goals, preferences, and the grand strategies of the Islamic Republic, once they get adopted and, more importantly, once they attain public salience as the consensus decision of the policymakers.

Coercive diplomacy, particularly to advance demands that are deemed imperialistic and illegitimate and particularly when adopted by an entity deemed to be the archenemy of Iran and the Islamic Republic, raises the cost of dissent even higher, making it prohibitively costly for anyone to step outside of the realm of the majority opinion for three main reasons. First, coercive diplomacy raises the public salience of the objectionable policy and if the public favors and supports the objectionable policy, the public will demand policymakers to reject the demands of the coercing powers and will monitor and become informed if a policymaker dissents, leaving little room for much political maneuvering. Second, a person who changes his mind and dissents as a result of the coercive measure of an external force is much more likely to be castigated and accused of being a “coward,” “not having enough trust in domestic capabilities and resilience,” “being a sell-out,” or even a “traitor” both by the public and other policymakers. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, when faced with external threats, particularly if the threat emanates from one’s archenemy, “putting aside differences,” “uniting behind the leader,” and “showing a unified front” turn into values in by themselves, making it extremely costly for a dissenting Iranian policymaker to not unite behind the leader.

The dynamics governing adoption of tactics, however, are much more flexible. While SCNS is charged with devising consensus opinion on the tactics as well, due to Iran’s adherence to the notion of tactical pragmatism, Iranian decision makers are capable of adopting various tactics to advance Iran’s goals and objectives. While at times the change in tactics aim to affect the international political environment and the policies and

behaviors of other countries, sometimes the change in tactics are necessitated by internal reasons. Iran currently seeks to advance Iran's nuclear program while limiting and mitigating foreign pressure on Iran. The ultimate objective of advancing Iran's nuclear program, however, has not changed since 2002 under the presidencies of Khatami, Ahmadinejad, and Rouhani. All changes have been tactical. In fact, as was previously explained, the most significant difficulty Rouhani faced during the presidential election campaigns was to convince the public that suspension of Iran's fuel cycle activities during his tenure as Secretary of SCNS, was a shrewd tactical move and did not mean that he did not agree with the consensus goal of advancing Iran's nuclear program.

As was said, however, internal cohesion is of utmost importance in Iran's strategic culture. Consequently, sometimes the Islamic Republic adopts some tactical changes in order to preserve and enhance Iran's internal cohesion. Agreeing to the JPA is one such instance which was necessitated, at least to some degree, by the events that led to the election of President Rouhani. Considering that during the election campaign, two out of three chief Iranian nuclear negotiators were presidential candidates, and considering that Rouhani had to defend his track-record if he was going to have any chance of winning, Iran's nuclear program and its tactics did become a campaign issue. While prior to the campaign the Iranian people and most policymakers were confident that there was very little they could plausibly do to prevent and reverse US and UNSC sanctions and hence did not think much about adopting any accommodating measures beyond Iran's treaty obligations, Rouhani and Velayati were able to convince the public that it was possible to pursue Iran's nuclear ambitions and avoid sanctions at the same time. This change in

public opinion could have resulted in the disintegration of Iran's internal cohesion had Iran not changed its tactics. Hence came the notion of "heroic flexibility," which Grand Ayatollah Khamenei borrowed from the subtitle of a book on Imam Hassan's peace treaty with Muaviyeh that he had translated into Farsi prior to the revolution.

As was discussed earlier, one of Imam Hassan's primary objectives in signing a peace treaty with Muaviyeh was to expose Muaviyeh's true face and, as a result, create an internal cohesion among Muslims in opposition to the Umayyad dynasty. It was a "heroic flexibility" because Imam Hassan was willing to sacrifice himself and take an action opposite to his own inclinations just to restore the needed domestic cohesion to preserve the society from a mortal disintegration. Likewise, it appears from the statements of Grand Ayatollah Khamenei and other high ranking Iranian officials, by accepting the JPA and by empowering President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif to undertake nuclear negotiations in any way they see fit, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei is seeking to expose the true face and intentions of the US and its western allies and preserve Iran's internal cohesion by reassuring the public that the Islamic Republic has done everything in its power, short of surrendering its sovereign rights, to prevent US and UNSC sanctions. In fact, Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, the commander of the powerful IRGC, said in an interview that "according to the decision of the Supreme Leader, the [Rouhani] administration has entered into negotiations. The objective of these negotiations is either for the sanctions against Iran to be removed or for Iranian officials to become discouraged by the negotiations and instead focus on exploiting Iran's domestic capacity and capabilities" (Tabnak, February 19, 2014). Grand Ayatollah Khamenei has also been

quite clear that “heroic flexibility,” which allowed for the formulation of JPA, is purely a tactic. As Iran was negotiating with P5+1 and before the JPA was agreed to in Geneva, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, in a lecture he delivered on September 17, 2013, asserted:

I am not opposed to logical and correct diplomatic moves. Both in the realm of domestic and foreign policy I am a believer in what I named “heroic flexibility” some years ago. Sometimes showing flexibility is very necessary and good. There is no problem with showing flexibility, per se. But a wrestler who is wrestling with his opponent and sometimes must show flexibility for tactical reasons, should never forget who his opponent is and what he is trying to achieve. This is the most important principle. He should know what he is doing, who he is confronting, and where the opponent has targeted.



#### **Section 4.5: Soft Power, the Utility of Resistance, and the Effect of Coercive Diplomacy on Iran's Nuclear Policy**

Iranian policymakers do not view US sanctions in fully negative terms. Many of them argue that US sanctions have actually helped Iran and the Islamic Republic in many ways. They point, for example, to the fact that sanctions have forced Iranian policymakers and entrepreneurs to have more trust in Iran's internal capacities that were left unexploited prior to the stiffening of the sanctions. Without sanctions, it is argued, Iranian policymakers would have solely relied on purely material, often short-sighted, and politically motivated cost-benefit calculations when devising Iran's economic and trade policies. Hence, sanctions are viewed as the chief motivator that pushed Iran away from an economy that simply sold oil and used its funds to import all needed goods and services from abroad toward an economy that is much more dependent on its internal capacities and capabilities. Such dependence on internal capacity and capability has allowed for investments in science, technology, and education and has allowed Iran to develop, despite its very high investment costs, other sectors with comparative advantage besides its hydrocarbon sector.

While it is true that Iran is currently capable of domestically providing for much of its needs and has invested in its universities and human capital, it is not at all clear that all of the heavy investments that have gone into Iran's import-substitution programs have ultimately been beneficial for Iran. It could be well argued that at least some of these "investments" have only gone to subsidize intractably noncompetitive and inefficient industries. It is, nevertheless, true that the Islamic Republic is trying quite hard to make the best of the situation and has looked at various ways to turn sanctions into an

opportunity for Iran. One of the ways it has tried to do so has been to turn its response to US sanctions into a source of its soft power. It is, therefore, important to analyze how significant soft power is to the Islamic Republic and how Iran's nuclear policy and its response to sanctions both influence and are affected by Iran's soft power considerations.

#### **Section 4.5.1: What is Soft Power?**

As with many grand concepts, there is no single agreed upon definition for *power*. While some scholars have defined power as “the total sum of a nation's resources” (Rothgeb, 1993, p. 19), others have adopted a more control-oriented definition. For example, Hans Morgenthau (1967) defines power as “control over the minds and actions of other men” (p. 26). More recently, however, most scholars have adopted a more general variation of the control-oriented definition and argue that “power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants” (Nye, 2004, p. 2). Basically speaking, there are three ways one can seek to influence the behavior of others. One can try to coerce and/or bludgeon others into positively contributing to the outcome one seeks; one could also bribe and entice others into doing what one desires; or one can attract and co-opt others into doing what one wants (Nye, 2004, p. 2). *Soft power* is concerned with the third mechanism of achieving one's intended outcomes. Soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others and getting others to want the outcomes one wants (Nye, 2004, p. 5).

While “soft power” was coined by Joseph Nye in the 1980s, it is not a contemporary concept. Leaders have long recognized the value of soft power and the power that comes

with attraction. If one could get others to want what one wants, then one does not need to burden the costs of employing coercion or making payoffs to achieve one's intended outcomes. Conversely, if the outcome one intends to achieve or the values one espouses do not attract others and, worse, if others find one's motives and sought outcomes as repulsive, then the costs one has to endure to achieve one's intended outcomes could become prohibitively high.

Yet, contrary to what Nye and others have argued, the soft power of a country does not depend on that country's overall attractiveness. While being generally attractive does help countries in their quest to accumulate soft power, it is certainly not a prerequisite of engendering soft power. Considering that the aim is to achieve one's intended outcomes and not showcasing one's ability to get others to positively contribute to one's intended outcomes, a country could very well get other nations to positively contribute to its intended outcomes without them even knowing that they are contributing to outcomes desired by that country. Hence, contrary to Nye's (2004) claim, I would argue that just like hard power, soft power could very well be accumulated by a country in a stealth fashion and even countries that, for a variety of reasons, are not much admired beyond their borders, could accumulate soft power to further at least some of their foreign policy objectives.

#### **Section 4.5.2: The Significance of Soft Power for the Islamic Republic**

The power of the Islamic Republic is constrained in many ways. Although Iran has a large military force with considerable "ability to operate in relatively static defensive

roles,” it has very limited offensive capability and is not capable of projecting power through its military force much beyond its very borders (Cordesman and Kleiber, 2007, pp. 196-198). In fact, as compared to many of its neighbors, both in absolute terms and relative to GDP, Iran has not heavily invested in its military capabilities. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), while in 2012 Iran’s military expenditure was \$6.2 billion, which constituted about 1.2% of its GDP, the military expenditure of Saudi Arabia was \$56.7 billion (8.9% of its GDP), Turkey’s military expenditure was \$18.2 billion (2.3% of its GDP), Israel’s military expenditure was \$14.6 billion (6.2% of its GDP), the military expenditure of UAE was \$14.4 billion (6.9% of its GDP), Pakistan’s military expenditure was \$7.0 billion (2.7% of its GDP), the military expenditure of Oman was \$6.7 billion (8.4% of its GDP), and Iraq’s military expenditure was \$6.1 billion (2.7%) of its GDP.

Economically, while Iran has the 21<sup>st</sup> largest economy in the world, it only has a very limited foreign aid program and trade with other countries. Sanctions, particularly financial sanctions against Iran, have severely limited Iran’s ability to pursue its foreign policy objectives through its economic leverage. Hence, the only type of power that Iran could most viably exploit in favor of its foreign policy objectives is its soft power. Yet, Iran’s soft power also faces many constraints. Unlike any country in the world, Iran is a predominantly Shiite country. Also, Iran’s political system is both contemporary and unique. Consequently, since “parochial cultures are less likely to produce soft power” (Nye, 2004, p.11), the Islamic Republic has difficulty attracting the admiration of other countries, all of which have significantly different cultures and political systems.

Furthermore, for a wide variety of reasons, explanation of which is beyond the scope of this section, Iran is not a warmly regarded country in the world. According to a survey conducted by PEW in spring of 2013, out of the 39 countries surveyed, majorities in 26 countries (Canada, US, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Czech Republic, Greece, Poland, Britain, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Japan, Australia, Philippines, South Korea, China, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, and South Africa) and pluralities in 8 countries (Russia, Tunisia, Argentina, El Salvador, Bolivia, Nigeria, Ghana, and Uganda) had an unfavorable view of Iran. Also out of the countries surveyed, majority opinion in only Indonesia (55%) and Pakistan (69%) and pluralities in Malaysia (48%), Kenya (42%), and Senegal (41%) had favorable views of Iran.

The Islamic Republic and the Iranian people, however, either refuse to recognize these trends or blame the US and “Zionist controlled media” propaganda for its poor global image (Kull, 2011, p.45). Hence, the poor global image of the Islamic Republic not only does not discourage Iran from pursuing its foreign policy objectives through its soft power, but makes them even more eager to invest in it. Considering that Iran regards the US as the most active global force that seeks to dominate Iran through coercion and efforts geared toward the isolation of the Islamic Republic, Iran regards weakening of US influence in the region and beyond to be ultimately in its interest. Consequently, knowing full well that it could not limit US influence in the region and beyond through coercion or enticement of other countries and nations, Iran has heavily relied on its soft power to achieve that end.

As was mentioned earlier, the most dominant narrative in Iran is that the US is striving to either re-impose its domination over Iran and/or turn Iran into a lesson for other nations in the region and beyond who may contemplate following Iran's path. Iran does regard many world countries, particularly those in the region, to be in one way or another under US domination and influence and does regard the people of US dominated countries as oppressed people who either do not realize that they are oppressed or are too weak and/or lack enough self-confidence to oppose US control over their destiny. Born out of a revolution that was primarily aimed at liberating Iran from US control and domination, the Islamic Republic regards the status quo as ultimately illegitimate, considers itself as the vanguard of the "oppressed people," regards its revolution and resistance model as a perfect model that other Muslim and non-Muslim nations under "US domination" should follow, and, most importantly, does regard the liberation of other countries from "US domination" to be in the interest of the Islamic Republic.

What is important to emphasize here is that while Iran would be more than happy to take credit for the "liberation" of other countries from "US domination," it has come to realize that seeking such a credit may undermine its efforts to limit "US domination" in the region and beyond. Obviously, as in the case of Iran, no nation would like to rid itself from the domination of one country to become dominated by another. Hence, the Islamic Republic is quite explicit in its rhetoric that, with the exception of the efforts directed toward Israel, in helping other nations in their cause, Iran is merely acting as an example and is not pulling any particular strings. In the sermons of Tehran's Friday prayers that Grand Ayatollah Khamenei delivered on February 3, 2012, he said:

The rulers of Bahrain have claimed that we are intervening in the situation in Bahrain. This is a lie. No, we are not intervening. Wherever we intervene, we make it be known. We have intervened in efforts against Israel, and its result was the victory of the 33-day and 22-day wars. We will continue to back and help any nation or any group who would confront and oppose the Zionist regime. We have no shame in declaring this. This is the truth. But the claim of Bahrain's rulers that we are intervening in the situation in Bahrain, No, this is not correct. The claim contradicts reality. If we would have intervened in Bahrain, the situation in Bahrain would have been very different.

Iran's efforts in the region have a very simple logic: the more Iran can portray the US as a domineering force and the more people in the region gain the self-confidence to oppose "US domination" of their destiny, the more difficult it will become for the US to influence and attain the cooperation of regional leaders. Also, from Iran's point of view, just like the way the Shah was not capable of distancing himself from the US, many of the regional leaders who are dependent on the US will also not be able to distance themselves from the US and will consequently face the wrath of their people and will suffer the same destiny as the Shah. This simple logic not only threatens the interests of the US in the region but is also a source of concern for regional leaders with deep dependence on the US. It is hence not surprising that, as was explained previously, the Arab lobby in the US is heavily invested in pushing for tougher sanctions against Iran.

In the initial phase of the abovementioned strategy, it is not at all important and in fact would be counterproductive for Iran to portray itself as the source of 1) the negative perceptions about the US and 2) the increased public confidence to confront the US. Iranian policymakers regard each country that distances itself from the US as a victory for Iran in of itself. They are further convinced that as countries distance themselves from the US, there would be less US control over their thoughts and perceptions, leading nations to become familiar with the “true Islamic Republic,” which would in turn make it more likely for them to positively contribute to outcomes desired by the Islamic Republic.

As was mentioned before, tactical pragmatism acts as the cornerstone of Iran’s strategic culture. During the first decade after the revolution, Iran pursued the abovementioned strategy under the rubric of “exporting the revolution.” Grand Ayatollah Khomeini is quoted as having said:

We should try to export our revolution to the world. We should set aside the thought that we do not export our revolution, because Islam does not regard various Islamic countries differently and is the supporter of all oppressed peoples of the world. On the other hand, all the superpowers and the [great] powers have risen to destroy us. If we remain in an enclosed environment we shall definitely face defeat (Ramazani, 1986, p. 24).

Iran, however, soon understood that many nations, for a variety of reasons, were not willing to import a revolution that was made in Iran. After the death of Grand Ayatollah



Khomeini, Iranian policymakers were able to reformulate Iran's "anti-oppression" foreign policy to address a challenge that had created division among Iran's more nationalist and more Islamist decision-making elites, which is best described by Iran's post-revolution Interim President, Mehdi Bazargan. In his book *The Revolution of Iran in Two Movements*, Bazargan (1984), who was a nationalist affiliated with Mossadeq, describes the nationalists' difference with Grand Ayatollah Khomeini and says:

The goal that the Interim Government had adopted was to serve Iran through and in accordance to the teachings of Islam while Mr. Khomeini had adopted serving Islam through Iran as his objective and the objective of the revolution. In his opinion, the Iranian people had given their blood to serve Islam (p. 111).

While Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's viewpoint prevailed, forcing Bazargan to resign, the question was revisited after his death. It was decided that the tension between the nationalists and the Islamist was based on a false dichotomy and that the Islamic Republic should neither seek to "serve Iran through Islam" or "serve Islam through Iran", but that the objective of the Islamic Republic should be to "serve Islam through serving, building, and empowering Iran." Consequently, Iranian policymakers more frequently proclaimed Iran as the "capital of the Muslim world," and adopted the building and strengthening of the "capital" as the primary objective of the Islamic Republic (Panah, 2007, p.149). This change also affected Iran's "anti-oppression" foreign policy tactics. Instead of trying to "export the revolution," the Islamic Republic focused on turning Iran into an example and pushing others toward Iran's desired outcomes by serving as a desirable model for its target population. Since then, Iran has heavily invested in a variety

of efforts geared at 1) “exposing” US intentions in the region and the “complicity” of many regional actors, 2) “injecting” people in the region with the required self-confidence and vision to confront the US and its regional allies, and 3) portraying Iran as the “city on the hill” for other regional nations.

Since 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq, the first step of Iran’s regional objectives has been fulfilled not because of Iran’s efforts, but due to the actions of the US. Survey after survey shows that a significant majority of Arab and Muslim populations do regard the US as an oppressing country that “coercively dominates and exploits the Muslim world” (Kull, 2011, p. 42). According to a survey conducted by University of Maryland’s Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development in 2011 among the peoples of Egypt, UAE, Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan, a solid majority (59%) of those surveyed have an unfavorable view of the US and 53% think that “controlling oil” is the most important goal that drives US policy in the Middle East. Also, according to a PEW survey conducted in spring of 2013, 70% of Turks, 81% of Egyptians, 85% of Jordanians, 53% of Lebanese, 79% of Palestinians, and 74% of Pakistanis have unfavorable views of the United States. According to the same survey, 75% of Turks, 83% of Egyptians, 76% of Jordanians, 73% of Lebanese, 81% of Palestinians, and 53% of Pakistanis believe that in making international policy, the US does not take their country’s interests into account. The same survey also shows that 61% of Turks, 73% of Egyptians, 81% of Jordanians, 56% of Lebanese, and 78% of Palestinians “disapprove...the international policies of President Barack Obama.”

Not only have most Muslim majority countries developed negative feelings toward the US, but they also see the US as a country that is domineering. According to a survey conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org in 2009, 90% of Pakistanis, 87% of Palestinians, 86% of Turks, 85% of Iranians, 72% of Iraqis, 63% of Indonesians, 62% of Egyptians, 61% of Azerbaijanis, and 31% of Jordanians believe that in their governments' relations with the US, the "US more often... abuses its greater power" to make them do what the US wants (Kull, 2011, p. 44). The US is also perceived as either opposing democracy in Muslim countries or as only favoring democracy in Muslim countries if it produces governments that are cooperative with the US. According to a WorldPublicOpinion.org survey conducted in 2009, 67% of Iraqis, 74% of Iranians, 68% of Turks, 74% of Indonesians, 86% of Palestinians, 82% of Azerbaijanis, 85% of Pakistanis, 81% of Jordanians, and 94% of Egyptians believe that the US either opposes democracy in Muslim countries or only favors democracy in Muslim countries if it produces governments that are cooperative with the US (Kull, 2011, p. 106).

What troubles Iran, however, is that while there are widespread negative feelings toward the US in the region and while people have "awakened" to realize that their countries are dominated by the US, the people in the region continue to "allow" their governments to have extensive cooperation with the US. This is where the second step of Iran's regional strategy comes into play. Iran views the Arab Spring as an Islamic Revivalism and is of the opinion that most of the movements against regional dictators are primarily rooted in people's desire to achieve self-determination and limit US influence in their country. In their mind, the movements are not as much about the economy or even quest to achieve

greater freedoms as it is about confronting US domination of their country and their destiny. In the second sermon of Tehran's Friday prayers that Grand Ayatollah Khamenei delivered in Arabic on February 3, 2012, he said:

The most sensitive areas of the Muslim world are overwhelmed with movements that seek to bring back Islam, reassert people's dignity and identity, and free people from various forms of domination... The Arab people no longer want their dictators. They can no longer tolerate the rule of those who have been imposed on them by domineering entities. They are tired of poverty, humiliation, and dependence... Through the slogan of 'God is Great,' and relying on spirituality, justice, prudence, and religious democracy they are trying to rid themselves from a century old humiliation, despotism, imperialism, corruption, poverty, and discrimination, and this is the best path to take... Any other claims regarding the identity of these movements... would be at odds with the reality... My brothers and sisters... do not trust the US and NATO. They will never bear your interests and wellbeing in mind. Also, do not fear them. They are a hallow entity on rapid decline. The domination over the Muslim world was merely due to our fear and ignorance during the past 150 years... Only have confidence and rely on God, the Almighty, and your own people.

Iran's perception regarding the root causes of the Arab Spring does not seem far from reality. Many other scholars and analysts have debunked the claim that these movements are primarily rooted in domestic grievances such as widespread poverty and inequality.

Just as an example, Shibley Telhami in an interview with the Diane Rehm Show on June 6, 2013, argued that:

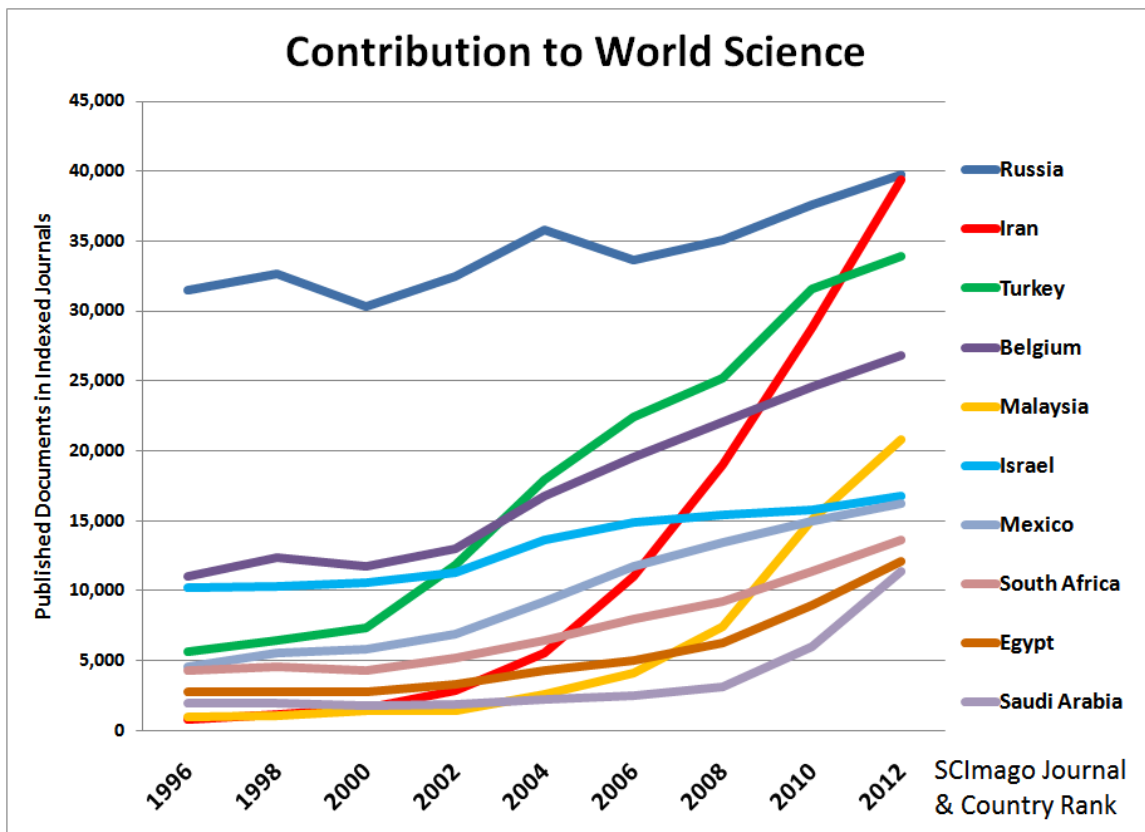
[The unrests in the Arab world] is about a lot of issues, the economy, dictatorship, poverty, absence of jobs, all of this. But it was also about raising their head high. Raising their head high not only vis-à-vis the rulers but undoubtedly vis-à-vis the outside world. This is something that's not fully understood and it's not fully analyzed in our discourse. We've fallen into this belief that this is all about, you know, the economy. Well, let's look at it this way, look at the past two, three, four decades...The economy has been bad throughout. There is no major economic crisis the likes of which Arabs hadn't experienced that took place in 2010 or 2009. There is no major repression the likes of which Arabs haven't experienced even worse before. So what was it then that was new in 2010? There were two things really. One is the information revolution... But the second thing... What was the source of that anger over the past decade? Foreign policy! Because you look at it, what did it start with? The collapse of the Israeli policy and negotiations in 2000, the fighting between the Israelis and Palestinians that captured the television screens, that post 9/11 war on terrorism, the Iraq War, the Lebanon War, the Gaza War. That was the decade... of foreign policy humiliation. I say humiliation because these events... were humiliating to them. And... Arab people are angry with their governments, yes for the repression and for not providing for sure. But they're also angry because... they were seen... as subservient on core issues like the Iraq War, [which] the overwhelming majority of the Arab people

opposed... [And because] the Arab governments not only couldn't stop it, but were seen to be collaborators with Arab enemies on those issues.

Most Iranian policymakers believe that while Muslim nations have become aware of and do resent US domination of their countries, they lack the courage and the self-confidence required to turn their anger into political action against the US. It is generally believed that the prevalent lack of courage and self-confidence in these countries is primarily rooted in several fears of failure; fear of failure to stop US domination, fear of failure to achieve independence, fear of failure to resist US pressure, and fear of failure to excel and advance without US assistance. So in other words, Iranian policymakers believe that if other nations came to believe that they could limit US influence, achieve independence, resist subsequent US pressure, and excel despite US hindrances, they would not hesitate to take political action, despite its risks, to make it extremely difficult for the US to impose its will on to them. Hence, as a country that has gone through that process, Iran seeks to present itself as a success story. It realizes that as a country that has resisted US pressure and "domination," many contemplating nations are carefully studying Iran's experience to draw judgments on whether or not the benefits of independence are worth the costs of opposing the world's sole superpower.

This view of the world has led Iran to try to be that "city on the hill," to showcase, among other things, the possibility of resisting "US domination" and excelling at the same time. Hence, Iran has heavily invested in areas previously deemed to be out of the reach of any developing country, let alone one that is heavily sanctioned by the US. Such efforts have

indeed transformed Iran. It has allowed Iran to have the world's fastest scientific growth rate, with its scientific output growing 11 times faster than that of the world's average (Archambault, 2009). Iran's scientific growth rate is particularly noteworthy when compared with the scientific growth of other Muslim and non-Muslim countries that have had very close relations with the US:



### **Section 4.5.3: Iran's Nuclear Program and its Soft Power**

State legitimacy, prestige, and reputation, in the eyes of its people as well as external actors and audiences, are fundamental sources of a state's power. Even traditional realists, such as Hans Morgenthau, hold the view that legitimacy and prestige matter in the modern political order. In his seminal work, *Politics among Nations*, Morgenthau (1967) argues that:

[I]nternational and domestic politics are but different manifestations of one and the same social fact. In both spheres, the desire for social recognition is a potent dynamic force determining social relations and creating social institutions. The individual seeks confirmation, on the part of his fellows, of the evaluation he puts upon himself. It is only in the tribute others pay to his goodness, intelligence, and power that he becomes fully aware of, and can fully enjoy, what he deems to be his superior qualities. It is only through his reputation for excellence that he can gain the measure of security, wealth, and power he regards to be his due. Thus, in the struggle for existence and power... what others think about us is as important as what we actually are... This is exactly what... prestige is about. Its purpose is to impress other nations with the power one's own nation actually possesses, or with the power it believes, or wants the other nations to believe, it possesses (pp. 69-70).

From its very inception during the reign of the Shah, Iran's nuclear program was less about immediate economic concerns and more about prestige and recognition. Indeed, the Shah openly linked Iran's nuclear program with "increased Iranian prestige and



influence” (Poneman, 1982, p. 126). This is in no way unique to Iran’s nuclear program. Nations all over the world and throughout the history have undertaken large and costly projects simply to showcase their ability and competence, enhance the self-confidence of their populace, and win the respect of external observers. Because of their technological sophistication, industrial complexity, and political sensitivity, nuclear programs have often been the “project” of choice for many developing countries concerned with prestige related issues. Just as an example, the traditional competition between Brazil and Argentina for prominence in Latin America undoubtedly contributed to the push in both countries for nuclear energy and technology.

Iran’s nuclear program is deemed to serve multiple prestige, influence, and legitimacy related goals. First it serves as a testimony to the Islamic Republic’s competence, which not only contributes to its legitimacy but also the legitimacy of the contemporary and evolved understanding of the Shiite political thought that has made the Islamic Republic possible. Second, it serves as a sign and symbol of Iran’s progress despite the obstacles created by great powers. Finally, it showcases Iran’s insistence on its independence and sensitivity toward issues relating to its national sovereignty. Indeed, developing an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle program has become an “embodiment of progress and regional and international prestige for Iran... The nuclear program has become a symbol of national unity, the country’s desire for development and advancement, as well as resistance to foreign power’s unacceptable demands” (Kamrava, 2012, p. 229.) During the last months of his tenure as the Director General of the IAEA, on November 4, 2009,

in a Q&A session at the Council on Foreign Relations in response to a question regarding Iran's nuclear program, Mohamed ElBaradei said:

Iran's nuclear program, in many ways,...is an effort to force recognition of its role as a regional power...in my view, Iran's nuclear program is a means to an end. It wants to be recognized as a regional power... they believe that the nuclear know-how brings prestige, brings power, and they would like to get to see the US engaging them. And fortunately or unfortunately, that holds some truth. Iran has been taken seriously... since they developed their program and developed the technology.

As a new system of government based on an evolved and contemporary understanding of Shiite Islam, the Islamic Republic does seek to legitimize and attract others to its political thought by showcasing its ability to deliver on multiple regional aspirations, namely independence, recognition and prosperity, which other ideologies, alignments and alliances have thus far failed to bring for the people in the region. Iran's nuclear program is deemed to serve this objective. As a symbol of the Islamic Republic's ability to further the interests of the Iranian people and enhance Iran's self-reliance, Iran's nuclear program is believed to be a powerful and salient testimony to the legitimacy and the efficacy of the political thought and system that has allowed Iran to ascent to the ranks of a handful of countries that have fuel cycle programs.

Through its nuclear program, the Islamic Republic also seeks to convince a broader audience that it is possible to excel and advance without the support of the US. Iranian

policymakers believe that the US extends its “domination” over other nations by making them feel inferior. Grand Ayatollah Khamenei in his annual New Year speech on March 21, 2013, said: “World powers and imperialists – imperialists when we had direct imperialism and, today, the US, wish to convince peoples of the world that if you wish to have a good life and excel, you must do so under our shadow.” Iranian policymakers believe that if Iran could belie this assumption, the likelihood of other nations opposing US “domination” would increase.

Iranian people and policymakers also believe scientific and technological advancement to be a key component of Iran’s international standing and prestige. In fact, many see US pressure on Iran as a manifestation of US objective to undermine Iran’s progress and power by denying it advanced technology.<sup>53</sup> Iranians believe that a technologically advanced Iran would better be able to win the recognition and admiration of other countries and view Iran’s nuclear program as the engine of Iran’s scientific and technological growth and advancement. Indeed, when the fast pace of Iran’s scientific growth is more closely analyzed, it becomes clear that Iran’s scientific advancements have all taken place in parallel to its nuclear program. Iran’s nuclear program has been able to mobilize Iranian scientists in various sectors to contribute to Iran’s scientific growth. Iran’s nuclear program has also allowed those sectors closely related to the nuclear program to advance in a much faster pace. According to Eric Archambault (2010), who has conducted an in-depth analysis of Iran’s scientific growth using

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<sup>53</sup> According to a survey of the Iranian published jointly by UTCPOR and CISSM in September 2014, 75% of Iranians believe that the “main reason for the United States to sanction Iran is not concern about proliferation, but some other motive” and of those, 53% think that “the United States seeks to dominate Iran or block its development” (Mohseni, Gallagher and Ramsay, 2014).

information from the Web of Science (Thomson Reuters) database of scientific publications since 1980, while the scientific output in the nuclear energy related fields such as of inorganic and nuclear chemistry, nuclear and particle physics, and nuclear engineering “has increased by only 34% at the world level between 1990 to 2009, Iran’s scientific output [in these fields] has increased 84 times,” allowing Iran’s scientific ranking to rise from 53<sup>rd</sup> in 1996 to 17<sup>th</sup> in 2012.

But there is another very interesting reason why Iranian policymakers think Iran’s nuclear program increases Iran’s soft power. As mentioned before, Iran faces many obstacles in its quest for regional prominence. Among them is Iran’s Shiite identity, which significantly hinders Iran’s ability to make inroads into Sunni majority societies. Iran’s nuclear program and its fuel cycle activities, however, are perceived to address this Iranian “weakness” by changing the narrative in the region in Iran’s favor. It is believed that because of Iran’s nuclear program, the nations in the region have become more likely to identify Iran with its nuclear program, its resistance to the US, and, most importantly, with its ability to counterbalance Israel’s regional superiority, than its discordant Shiite identity. This perception is not totally misguided, partly because most people in the region do not perceive Iran and its nuclear fuel cycle activities as a threat. According to a survey conducted by University of Maryland’s Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development in 2011 among the peoples of Egypt, UAE, Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan, while most (52%) respondents believed that Iran was “trying to develop nuclear weapons,” a strong majority (64%) indicated that “Iran has the right to its nuclear program” and refused to agree with the suggestion that “Iran should be pressured to stop

its nuclear program.” This is perhaps rooted in the threat perceptions of the Arab population. While a majority of the respondents regarded Israel (71%) and the US (59%) as countries that pose the biggest threat to the region, only 18% of the respondents regarded Iran as a source of such threat.

#### **Section 4.5.4: Resistance, Soft Power, and the Effect of Coercive Diplomacy on Iran’s Nuclear Policy**

US reliance on coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program has failed to have its intended effects at least partly because of its audience cost as well as its effects on Iran’s soft power calculus. None of Iran’s soft-powered related justifications for its nuclear program are abated through US coercion. Iranians policymakers generally perceive that conceding to US and UNSC demands would significantly jeopardize Iran’s strategic ambitions, while resisting US and UNSC demands would enhance Iran’s ability to advance its goal to expand its regional influence and play a more prominent role in the Middle East and beyond.

The reliance of the US on coercive diplomacy has given more credence to Iran’s regional goals and soft-power related justifications for its nuclear program. As the US puts more pressure on Iran for its nuclear program, Iran’s nuclear program gains more salience, allowing Iran to be defined by a program many people in the region think Iran has a right to pursue than by its Shiite identity. This significantly raises the stakes for Iran. Should Iran concede to US and UNSC demands, the narrative espoused by Iran that it is possible to resist “unreasonable US demands” and its “domination” and excel at the same time, would significantly lose its footing and regional nations would become further convinced

that despite their opposition, the US is and will continue to be able to achieve its strategic objectives in the region. This would embolden the US, Israel and other regional US allies to play a more assertive role in the region. Iranian policymakers also believe that by conceding to US demands, the contemporary and evolved understanding of Shiite political thought, which is partly legitimized by its staunch opposition to various forms of imperialism, would also significantly suffer.

Conversely, it is believed that resisting US and UNSC demands has positioned Iran as the leading defender of the nuclear rights of all non-nuclear states, has given more credence to Iran's narrative that the US cannot impose its will on determined nations and that nations can prosper and advance despite oppositions from the US, and has allowed Iran to more prominently showcase its competence and ability to further the interests of the Iranian people, resist US dominations, and preserve its independence and national sovereignty; all to the detriment of the interests and credibility of the US. Moreover, Iranian policymakers believe that the more US and UNSC pressure Iran for its safeguarded nuclear program while ignoring Israel's clandestine nuclear activities, the more they would undermine their own legitimacy in the region. Indeed, on numerous occasions, Iran has exploited western criticism of its nuclear program to draw greater attention to Israel's undeclared nuclear activities, "taking the lead from other regional states – especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia – that have been working futilely for years to bring world attention to Israel's nuclear arsenal" (Leverett and Leverett, 2013, p. 90).

US reliance on coercive diplomacy has also provided Iran with the opportunity to discredit the US and raise its own stature in the region and beyond. In the sermons of Tehran's Friday prayers that Grand Ayatollah Khamenei delivered on February 3, 2012, he said:

[Western powers] continuously stress in their propaganda efforts that we want to impose these sanctions on Iran so as to force Iran to back down, for instance in the nuclear issue. So the whole world becomes informed that these sanctions are meant to force Iran to back down on its nuclear program and other issues. Well, when we do not back down...and Iran will not back down, what happens? In the eyes of the people in the region... the credibility of the west and their threats will be shattered and the power and the glory of the Iranian people will become more admired. And this is in our interest.

By resisting sanctions and pushing ahead its nuclear program despite US and UNSC objections, Iran believes that it is "exposing" the world's sole superpower's inability to impose its will on nations determined to safeguard their sovereignty. Iranian policymakers believe that if other nations as well as world leaders recognize the viability of Iran's anti-imperialism and anti-domination resistance methods, they too would become inclined to assert their independence to the detriment of US global and regional hegemony. Conversely, they believe that by conceding to US and UNSC demands, they would disprove their own narrative of resistance, leading to greater US influence in the region and beyond. These considerations have significantly affected Iran's nuclear policy

and have pushed Iran to escalate its nuclear fuel cycle activities in response to US escalation of coercive measures against Iran.

#### **Section 4.6: Conclusion**

US reliance on coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to forgo proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program has failed to produce its intended outcome. While US and UNSC sanctions have had a devastating effect on Iran's economy, Iran has continued to develop and expand its nuclear fuel cycle activities despite being inflicted with increasingly more stringent sanctions. In this chapter, the reasons behind Iran's nuclear defiance and the failure of US and UNSC sanctions to persuade Iran to forego proliferation-sensitive aspects of its nuclear program was discussed.

First, it was concluded that one of the reasons why US reliance on coercive diplomacy has failed to produce its intended outcome is that the policy neglects most lessons and recommendations that have been provided in the literature for successful employment of coercive diplomacy. Indeed, not only does the situation in Iran lack most of the conditions and requirements that are identified in the literature for successful employment of coercive diplomacy, but the way sanctions have been employed against Iran is also at odds with the recommendations provided in the literature. While the literature identifies many conditions that are conducive to effective employment of coercive diplomacy, there is wide consensus on at least three of these conditions, the lacking of which in the situation in Iran has significantly hampered US efforts to force Iran to concede.



There is almost a consensus in the literature that target nations are significantly less likely to concede to the demands of the coercing power if they believe that conceding to the most immediate demand of the coercing power is going to lead to more future demands. As it was shown in the case of Iran, there is widespread consensus both among the Iranian people and policymakers that US concerns with respect to Iran is in no way limited to certain aspects of Iran's fuel cycle activities, that conceding to US and UNSC demands with respect to proliferation-sensitive aspects of Iran's fuel cycle activities is not going to end US pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran, and that Iran's compliance with US and UNSC demands would also lead the US to rely on coercive diplomacy to extract concession from Iran in other areas. Grand Ayatollah Khamenei has on numerous occasions expressed this perception. Just as an example, on May 28, 2003, in a speech addressed to Majlis delegates, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei stated:

The enemy is a calculating enemy. It thinks about what it must do. One of their adopted methods is to not utter their final demand in the initial stages [of a negotiation]. Slowly and slowly they indebt others and force them to retreat. Immediately after one retreats, they make new demands. Some people say let's give something and get something in return. The "giving" part is true, but the "getting" part is not... Beware! If one would retreat, there would be no stopping. Once you retreat from one post; for example accepting an [unreasonable] agreement, they will raise another issue: such as recognizing an illegitimate regime. The pressure and threats would remain constant and only the demands would change. The second you would recognize that illegitimate regime, they will

make another demand: 'remove Islam from your constitution.' They will force you to retreat little by little and there is no stopping... I ask! Where is the stopping point of US demands and pressure?... [It will only stop] when you declare on behalf of the people that 'we do not want Islam, we do not want Islamic Republic, we do not want self-governance. Please identify whomever you want to rule over Iran to come and rule.' This is when the pressure would stop: With the surrender of the country. Can we? Could I and you surrender the country to the enemy? Who gives us such a right?! The people have not brought us to power to surrender the country to the enemy.

There is also unanimous agreement among scholars studying coercive diplomacy that sanctions have a better chance of succeeding if the target regards the demand to be limited and modest. The Iranian people and policymakers do not regard US and UNSC demands to be limited and modest. Iran's nuclear program, as a result of US and UNSC sanctions and demands, has gained much public and international salience and has consequently become a symbol of the competence of the Islamic Republic, and the sovereignty and independence of Iran. Also, from Iran's point of view, the costs of conceding to US demands significantly outweigh the promised benefits of complying, not only because Iran regards US demands as an encroachment on its sovereign rights, but also because Iran perceives the ultimate intention of the US to be the undermining the Islamic Republic, both domestically and internationally.

Scholars studying coercive diplomacy also agree on the importance of clarity and credibility of the precise terms of settlement. To this date, the US has not clearly, credibly, and with one voice clarified exactly what it would take to fully address all US concerns with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Even with respect to US concerns regarding Iran's nuclear ambitions, no precise formula for ameliorating the crisis has yet been put forward by the US and its allies. As was shown, whenever the terms of settlement were clarified, Iran has shown significant willingness to follow through. In fact, currently the Islamic Republic is seeking to secure a precise and mutually agreeable arrangement to conclusively bring an end to the conflict over Iran's nuclear program as part of the "mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution" that is envisioned by the JPA. The main question in Tehran, however, is whether US hostilities toward Iran would end with even a "mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution" on the nuclear issue, considering that US concerns about Iran are in no way limited to Iran's nuclear ambitions alone.

Indeed, US policymakers have either neglected or ignored these and many other recommendations and predictions that have been laid out in the literature on coercive diplomacy. Out of the 22 conditions and recommendations that have been suggested in most prominent literature of coercive diplomacy for its effective employment, the situation in Iran and the way US has employed coercive diplomacy only satisfies one of the conditions and recommendations and clearly fails to satisfy 17 of the other conditions and recommendations. Hence, from the point of view of the existing literature on

coercive diplomacy, US policymakers should have never expected coercive diplomacy to succeed in persuading Iran to forgo its nuclear fuel cycle program.

Second, based on the available survey data from Iran, Iranian people regard Iran's nuclear program and its fuel cycle activities as extremely important for Iran. In fact, while they think the sanctions are having a negative impact on Iran's economy and while they expect them to increase if Iran does not concede to US and UNSC demands, they reject any deal that would require Iran to forgo nuclear enrichment. US sanctions and pressure against Iran have, however, been effective in making the Iranian people more resentful of the US and more distrusting of the UN, making it a political suicide for Iranian policymakers to concede to US and UNSC demands.

Another reason why US sanctions have failed to produce its intended outcome is rooted in the logic of collective action. Even if one were to assume that, contrary to the reality, the Iranian people have become convinced that Iran's nuclear program is not worth its costs, it takes a lot more than a mere conviction of a populace for such policies to change. For collective action to materialize, those convinced will also need to become selectively incentivized to partake in a collective action. Not only that, but for popular collective action to materialize against an objectionable policy, charismatic leaders who would be willing to endure significant costs to spearhead the opposition would also be needed. Furthermore, for the opposition to succeed it has to be stronger in force than the forces that favor the objectionable policy. Hence, it would be almost inconceivable to imagine

that US sanctions would instigate the Iranian public to undertake collective action in opposition to Iran's fuel cycle activities.

Sanctions, particularly those that are prolonged, can also become counter effective because of the incentives they create for the target country and others to try to circumvent them. Such an incentive often times creates many opportunities for domestic and international actors to profit from the situation, engendering enterprises and various forms of economic activity that only exist and are only profitable as a result of the sanctions. While it is very difficult for the public, even if they become convinced that the objectionable policy is not serving their interests, to mobilize against the objectionable policy, entities that profit from the sanctions are small enough in number to more easily mobilize and advocate policies that further their own interests, even at the cost of the general public. In the case of Iran, whose entire industry and economy are configured to mitigate the pain of a three and half decades long sanction episode, the sanctions have acted as an externally imposed tariff that protects currently existing Iranian industries and economy from foreign competition. Hence, it is very difficult to imagine Iranian industries promoting policies that would result in the lifting of the sanction. If anything, it is only rational for them to take collective action to push for the exact opposite.

Fourth, Iran's nuclear policy and its response to US reliance on coercive diplomacy are affected by Iran's strategic culture. Due to its historical experiences and its religious identity, which is based on an evolved and contemporary understanding of Shiite Islam, Iran is an extremely anti-imperialist state and the Islamic Republic draws much of its

legitimacy from showcasing its ability to resist and defy foreign pressure and influence. Considering that the Iranian people and policymakers regard US demands and pressure as a form of imperialism, US demands are not judged nor treated on their own merits, but rather as manifestations of a foreign intent to dominate Iran. Once framed in such a way, Iranian policymakers find themselves having no option but not only to resist, but to showcase their unwillingness to concede to US demands.

Finally, it was argued that Iran's power and influence is heavily rested on its soft power. While, for a variety of reasons, Iran is not a warmly regarded country, the Islamic Republic believes that acting as an example of a country that has been able to excel, progress, and advance without having the backing nor the assistance of the US, would push other nations to undertake measures that would significantly constrain US influence in the region and beyond. Such a view, has led Iran to heavily invest in areas previously deemed to be out of the reach of any developing country, let alone one that is heavily sanctioned by the US. Such efforts have transformed Iran and have allowed Iran to have the world's fastest scientific growth rate. Yet, because of the sanctions and the salience it provides to Iran's nuclear program, Iran's nuclear fuel cycle activities have turned into the most pronounced sign and symbol of Iran's progress despite the obstacles created by great powers and its ability to resist and defy the unreasonable demands of foreign powers. Believing that other countries in the region and beyond are carefully studying Iran's experience to draw judgments on whether or not the benefits of independence are worth the costs of opposing great powers, Iran has found it incumbent upon itself, based

on national interest considerations, to showcase its defiance by expanding its fuel cycle activities in response to US and UNSC demands.

These, however, are only some of the many reasons why US reliance on coercive diplomacy in its dealings with Iran has not only failed, but has been counter effective. Introduction of each new US and UNSC sanctions on Iran, has left Iran with little option but to respond by accelerating and expanding its fuel cycle activities. In the case of Iran, the only thing that sanctions have been able to achieve is to undermine the trust and the confidence of the Iranian people and policymakers in the US and the post-war international order. Iran's lack of trust and confidence in the US and the post-war international order has in turn pushed Iran to adopt self-reliance and self-sufficiency as the main pillar of its domestic policy and limiting US influence in the region and undermining its global image, as the main pillar of its foreign policy. From Iran's perspective, defying US and UNSC demands and expanding Iran's nuclear fuel cycle capabilities, serve both these ends.

## **Chapter 5: Lessons and Conclusion**

As many scholars have warned, coercive diplomacy is rarely a high-confidence strategy. Historically, it has failed significantly more frequently than it has succeeded. Yet, despite its track record, it has remained an attractive strategy to many policymakers. When faced with an objectionable policy that is, on one hand, perceived to be difficult to change through cooperative mechanisms and, on the other hand, perceived to have no viable military solution, countries with formidable leverages have often relied on coercive diplomacy as an intermediate alternative. What needs to be considered, however, is whether coercive diplomacy should even be regarded as a viable alternative, considering its dismal track record, and if so, under what conditions and in what situations? It is also important to remain cognizant of the fact that so long as coercive diplomacy is regarded as a viable alternative, both the probability of relying on cooperative mechanisms as well as military options to resolve international disputes will be diminished.

This dissertation has analyzed perhaps the most seminal and prominent case of coercive diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Indeed, Iran is currently (and perhaps historically) the most sanctioned country in the world and has been under various forms of sanctions almost since the inception of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Sanctions on Iran became further intensified after the full scope of its nuclear program and ambitions were made public in 2002. Since then, the US and its allies have portrayed Iran's uranium enrichment and plutonium production capability and capacity as a grave threat to US national interests and international peace and security. Hence, analyzing how coercive diplomacy has affected Iran's nuclear policy is both of theoretical and practical value. On the theoretical



side, US reliance on coercive diplomacy to persuade Iran to suspend, if not forgo, its fuel cycle activities serves as a very good case to be analyzed in order to further refine the generic knowledge and theory of coercive diplomacy. On the practical side, as an ongoing and yet unresolved international dispute, how the US and its allies deal with the proliferation-sensitive aspects of Iran's nuclear program will have significant ramifications for US national interests and security, the global nonproliferation regime, and international peace.

### **Section 5.1: The Theory and Utility of Coercive Diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

This dissertation has many important lessons for the theory of coercive diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First of all, while the case of sanctions on Iran does corroborate the conclusions of other scholars who have studied the strategy of coercive diplomacy, it emphasizes, significantly more than the literature does, the striking importance of taking into account the intentions of the target and the forces that drive and shape its objectionable policy before considering coercive diplomacy. While the literature on coercive diplomacy does emphasize that coercion is in the eye of the beholder, many scholars analyzing coercive diplomacy have not taken the next logical step that has been taken by International Relations (IR) theorists.

One of the most debated issues in the IR field, centers on the intentions of the opponent and that factors that drive and shape his security policies. Proponents of the deterrence theory and the spiral model have long debated this issue in the IR field. Without going into the complexities of the deterrence theory and the spiral model, the central argument

of the proponents of the deterrence theory is that if an opponent of 'country A' believes that 'country A' is weak in capability and resolve, the opponent will test 'country A,' starting with a small or even ostensibly unimportant issue. If 'country A' concedes by retreating, it would send its opponent a signal of weakness, encouraging it to press even harder the next time around. To avoid such a situation, as proponents of the deterrence theory argue, 'country A' should continuously display its ability and resolve to forcefully defend its interests and should not judge conflicts on their own merits since even conflicts over issues of "little intrinsic value become highly significant as indices of resolve" (Jervis, 1976, p. 58).

The proponents of the spiral model, however, contend that the real source of international conflict is not necessarily rooted in a desire to test the capability and resolve of one's opponents, but in how opponents perceive attempts aimed at increasing and enhancing one's own security. Since attempts that increase the power and enhance the security of a country could often be also used to project power and threaten the interests of other countries, any such attempts, regardless of the intentions involved, could also be regarded as hostile in nature by an opponent. Indeed, "people perceive what they expect to be present. If they think that a state is hostile, behaviors that others see as neutral or friendly will be ignored, distorted, or seen as attempted duplicity" (Jervis, 1976, p. 68). Hence, the "self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs tend automatically (i.e. regardless of intention) to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive, and measures of others as potentially threatening" (Buzan, 1983, p. 3). Therefore, as 'country A' attempts to enhance its own security, others will feel

threatened, leading them to undertake their own self-help attempts, which in turn makes 'country A' feel threatened, resulting in a costly vicious cycle of mistrust, rivalry, and conflict escalation.

This debate is not merely academic. How one responds to an opponent's security related activities depends heavily on what one perceives to be his intention. If one regards the intention of the opponent to be offensive and domineering in nature, balancing against it is the only option one is left with, which is unlikely to produce peace even if it results in a fragile stability. But if one sees the intention of the opponent to be defensive in nature and geared toward self-preservation and survival, then a whole range of cooperative measures could be adopted to prevent a tragic escalation in hostilities. This requires an understanding of the opponent's actions, behaviors, and intentions that is honest, informed, and, to the degree possible, void of prejudice.

As the case of this dissertation shows, the theory of coercive diplomacy could significantly learn from this debate in the IR field. It is unfortunate that, in the literature of coercive diplomacy, very little attention is paid to the intention of the target and the forces that shape and drive its objectionable policy. Just as an example, if the objectionable policy of the opponent is shaped by its fear of becoming undermined or dominated by 'country A,' reliance of 'country A' on coercive diplomacy will most likely make the opponent more fearful of 'country A,' making it even more determined to pursue its objectionable policy.

Lack of attention to the intentions of the target and to the forces that shape and drive its objectionable policy, has led much of the literature on coercive diplomacy astray. Indeed, many of the variables mentioned in the literature for effective employment of coercive diplomacy are at best proxy variables. In generic terms, considering that coercive diplomacy is a very context-dependent strategy, effective employment of coercive diplomacy depends a lot more on the context in which it is adopted than on the presence or lack of presence of certain isolated conditions and adoption or lack of adoption of certain tactics and coercive instruments. This is not to say that the conditions and the recommendations mentioned in the literature are futile. Indeed, when the conducive conditions mentioned in the literature do not exist, as proxy variables they signal that the forces that have shaped the objectionable policy are probably not going to respond to coercive diplomacy in the intended and desired way. That said, however, one has to be careful not to regard the presence of the mentioned conditions as sufficient for successful employment of the strategy.

Considering that the objective of coercive diplomacy is to persuade the opponent to either stop or reverse its objectionable behavior, it is possible to envision a broader strategy to achieve that very objective. The alternative is *strategic empathy*, which the author defines and uses to mean achieving one's own objectives through understanding the forces that drive and shape the policies of the target and undertaking measures that would augment the forces, in the broadest sense of the term, that pull the policies of the target toward what one desires and weaken the forces that push the policies of the target away from what one desires. Unlike the current theory of coercive diplomacy, which assumes

national-level decisions to be the byproduct of rational unitary decision-making, strategic empathy regards national-level decisions to be the net resultant of the pulling and hauling of various forces, e.g. interests, values, objectives, justifications, concerns, perceived threats and opportunities, constituencies and individuals, within the target state. Hence, when dealing with an objectionable policy of a target, strategic empathy would require one to first understand the involved forces and then seek to weaken the forces that promote the objectionable policy and strengthen those that oppose it. In the context of strategic empathy, all available instruments, tactics, policies, and strategies, including coercive diplomacy, should be used after being evaluated in terms of their utility for weakening the forces that promote and strengthening those that oppose the objectionable policy, without any prejudice against and inclinations in favor of a particular instrument, tactic, policy, or strategy.

Indeed, the most important lesson this dissertation has is the importance of understanding the opponent and the forces that drive and shape its policies, including its objectionable policy. Without such an understanding, the actions one takes to deal with the objectionable policy of an opponent could readily backfire and make the opponent even more determined to pursue its objectionable policy. Just as an example, if the objectionable policy of an opponent is shaped by its security concerns, augmenting those concerns through coercion and threat of war should not be expected to persuade the opponent to change its objectionable policy. Realizing this reality will at least protect countries from adopting counter-effective strategies in response to an objectionable policy of an opponent.

The other lesson of this dissertation is the importance of realizing the dynamic environment in which coercive diplomacy is often adopted. Nothing is constant in the real world and countries and their policymakers respond and adapt to exogenous stimuli. Even if one were to assume the objectionable policy of a target to be the byproduct of a rational unitary decision-making, one cannot ignore the fact that the opponent makes decisions on a continuous basis, responding to the efforts geared at imposing upon it costs for its objectionable policy. Just as an example, the case of Iran shows how a country can turn inward to provide for the needs it was previously procuring from outside, effectively “disarming” coercing powers of their leverage. Hence, those contemplating coercive diplomacy must take into account the full range of actions, from compliance to defiance, that the target could adopt in reaction to coercive diplomacy and must be able to have the capability to reasonably adapt in response. Just as an example, if a country contemplating coercive diplomacy knows that it would not be able to precipitously cease or undo its coercive measure if the target complies with its demands, then, for the sake of its credibility and its ability to clearly communicate its intentions to the target and beyond, it should not employ coercive diplomacy.

Another lesson of this dissertation is to be careful about one’s assumptions in regards to the mechanisms through which coercive diplomacy is going to translate into a change in the objectionable policy. Unfortunately, the literature lacks a full discussion on this important topic. The literature almost assumes some form of automaticity in this regard and neglects the complexities involved in the shaping and making of national-level

decisions. As the findings of this dissertation illustrate, those contemplating coercive diplomacy should evaluate the viability of various possible channels of transmission and see whether or not they allow for the pain of the sanctions to be translated into a change in the objectionable policy.

This dissertation also corroborates the findings of other scholars that coercive diplomacy is likely to raise the salience of the objectionable policy both among the public in the target country and, to some degree, at least among some constituencies in the coercing country. This is a given. Those contemplating employment of coercive diplomacy, therefore, must evaluate whether increasing the salience of the objectionable policy, particularly among the public in the target country, is going to help or undermine efforts geared at persuading the target country to change its objectionable policy.

This brings forth one of the most important findings of this dissertation, which corroborates the findings of other scholars who have evaluated the effect of coercive diplomacy in other contexts. If the demand being made of a target country is perceived as illegitimate by the public in the target country, raising its salience through reliance on coercive diplomacy is likely to make it prohibitively more difficult for the decision-making elite of the target country to comply with the demand. Conversely, if the demand is perceived as being legitimate by the public and if the objectionable policy is opposed by at least a core organized constituency within the target country, as in the case of South Africa, coercive diplomacy could help highlight the illegitimacy and moral reprehensibility of the objectionable policy and bring about a change in the objectionable

policy by augmenting the forces opposed to the objectionable policy and abating the forces in its favor by merely raising its salience. Indeed, perceived legitimacy, or lack thereof, oftentimes has significantly more impact on national-level decisions and policies than even the perceived costs.

This dissertation also finds a target's strategic culture and the sources of state legitimacy to be very significant predictors of the success odds of coercive diplomacy. As was mentioned, "everything a security community does, if not a manifestation of strategic culture, is at least an example of behavior affected by culturally shaped, or encultured, people, organizations, [and] procedures" (Gray, 2006, p. 153). Indeed, while there is significantly more to strategic decision-making than culture alone, strategic decisions that clearly violate the dominant strategic culture tend to become extremely difficult to defend and legitimize and are hence less likely to be adopted. Even in circumstances that require adoption of strategic decisions that contradict the dominant culture, policymakers often present them as not being so and when such representation is not possible, "deviant" decisions are portrayed as an expedient exception or temporary in nature. Regardless of the circumstances, however, "the effects of strategic culture will be more or less strongly stamped upon strategic behavior of all kind" (Gray, 2006, p. 168). It is therefore really important for those contemplating employment of coercive diplomacy to evaluate beforehand how their demands are going to be perceived, what their intended coercive measures are going to communicate, and the net value of the costs and benefits the target would associate with conceding, considering its strategic culture. By studying and understanding the strategic culture of the target, those contemplating employment of



coercive diplomacy could better predict how the target would respond to coercive diplomacy and whether coercive diplomacy could persuade it to change its objectionable policy.

Finally, this dissertation also corroborates the literature in that Type C (regime change) coercive diplomacy, which is by far “the most frequent foreign policy objective of economic sanctions” (HSE and Oegg, 2007, p. 67), is significantly more likely to fail than to succeed. This is because Type C coercive diplomacy by default raises the stakes for the regime of the target country to the highest level possible, leading to an asymmetry of motivation in favor of the target. What is important to note here, as illustrated by the case of Iran, is that the real intention of the coercing power in employing coercive diplomacy is not as relevant as what the target perceives to be the ultimate intention of the coercing power. If the target perceives or even suspects the ultimate intention of the coercing power to be a dramatic change in its internal political order, even if in reality the coercing power does not seek any such change, the target will regard the adopted strategy as a threat to its very survival and will most likely use every instrument at its disposal to resist and confront the coercing power and its demands.

This highlights something that Schelling has emphasized in his work. According to Schelling (2008) “any coercive threat requires corresponding assurances... [and] that *both* sides of the choice, the threatened penalty and the proffered avoidance or reward, need to be credible” (p. 74-75). Hence, if the coercing power is not seeking regime change, it must credibly reassure the target about its ultimate objective. As the case of

Iran illustrates, reassuring a country, which used to be a target of one's regime change and other hostile policies, that one no longer intends to significantly change its internal political order, is very difficult and requires significantly more than verbal assurances. Those contemplating employment of coercive diplomacy against past or current adversaries, therefore, must know that the burden of proof is on them and that they must credibly convince the target that regime change is not the sought objective. Those incapable of doing so would be better off not relying on coercive diplomacy to begin with.

For all of the reasons discussed in this dissertation and presented in the literature, coercive diplomacy is rarely an appropriate strategy to achieve one's foreign policy objective and could readily prove counter-effective. Also, when appropriate, i.e. when it actually does strengthen the forces that oppose and weaken the forces that promote the objectionable policy, coercive diplomacy is a strategy that usually bears fruit very slowly, if at all. Hence, even when appropriate, it is not a viable strategy in cases and crisis that require speedy resolution. In George's (1991) words, "although the strategy sometimes assumes an attraction that may be difficult to resist, its apparent advantages should not be allowed to distort judgment of its feasibility in any particular situation" (p. 84).

It is important to emphasize here that, as was shown, coercive diplomacy is not a strategy that at worst might fail and bear no fruit. Rather, it is a strategy that could make matters worse and much more difficult to resolve if utilized for the wrong reasons, in uncondusive circumstances, and/or through ill-picked measures and processes. Hence,

considering that coercive diplomacy is a strategy that could undermine the national interests and security of those who decide to employ it, much more careful attention needs to be paid to its true success odds in any particular situation. This is particularly the case since ill-judging its efficacy is likely to make serious consideration of other perhaps more inconvenient and/ or difficult policy alternatives, that may be more effective and efficacious than coercive diplomacy, less likely.

Before ending this section, it is important to note that maintaining international law, norms, and order is indeed a worthwhile endeavor. It is needless to say that no law, norm, and order could be maintained without an indiscriminate effective enforcement mechanism. As customary in most cultures and legal frameworks, those who break a legitimate law, must not only be forced to compensate the victims and rectify the damages caused, but also be effectively punished to deter future violations. Moreover, to ensure the legitimacy of the law and its enforcement mechanism, it is generally believed there should be no discrimination or double standards in how the law is enforced. The same logic also applies to international law, norms, and order. It is, however, important to distinguish between coercion and punishment. While coercion seeks to persuade a party to do something it would otherwise not do, punishment is the cost a party has to endure for having done something it should not have done. One should be careful not to conflate the two concepts and to refrain from using ‘punishment’ and ‘coercion’ interchangeably. Doing so is dishonest and likely to weaken the deterrent effect of punishments.

## **Section 5.2: Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Program**

Iran's nuclear program confronts the US with many challenges. It must be realized, however, that these challenges have at least to some extent been created by the US and hence resolving them depends on what the US does as well. Indeed, throughout history, world powers have often underestimated, if not failed to see, how their security policies have been perceived as threatening by others and "United States statesmen in the postwar era have displayed a[n]... inability to see that their country's huge power, even if used for others' good, represents a standing threat to much of the rest of the world. Instead the United States... has believed that others will see that the desire for security underlines its actions" (Jervis, 1976, p. 71).

As was described, the US and Iran have had a very difficult history and, contrary to what is often implied, Iran does harbor significantly more consequential grievances and security concerns. When analyzing much of Iran's foreign or even domestic policies, it becomes apparent that Iran is continuously responding to the external threats it perceives emanating mostly from the US and its allies. As explained, Iran's nuclear program is not an exception.

It is a matter of public records that immediately after the 1979 revolution, the US used all of its leverage to strangle Iran's fledgling, peaceful, and fully lawful nuclear program and to prevent it from advancing beyond the point it had advanced under the Shah. According to Mark Hibbs (2003), Iran requested the IAEA in 1983 to provide it with assistance to move Iran's peaceful nuclear research program forward. When in November 1983 "the

recommendations of an IAEA mission to Iran were passed on to the IAEA's technical cooperation program, the U.S. government then 'directly intervened' to discourage the IAEA from assisting Iran in production of UO<sub>2</sub> and UF<sub>6</sub>' (Hibbs, 2003). Hibbs (2003) quotes a former US official saying "we stopped that in its tracks." In April 1984, the State Department openly confirmed that while the US "has no evidence Iran has repudiated or violated its pledge under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to place its nuclear activities under international safeguards... Previous actions of the Government of Iran do not provide us with great assurance that it will always abide by its international commitments" and that the US "has asked other nuclear suppliers not to engage in nuclear co-operation with Iran, especially while the Iran- Iraq war continues" (Reut, 1984; Gwertzman, 1984). As a result of US pressures, France unilaterally reneged on its contract with Iran to provide it with nuclear fuel, the German contractor, Kraftwerk GmbH, refused to fulfill its contract to finish the Bushehr nuclear power plant, despite having been paid \$4.78 billion in advance, and the IAEA declined to provide Iran with any assistance for its civilian nuclear research (Porter, 2014, pp. 26-29).

This use of US power to place a de facto nuclear embargo on Iran, without Iran even being suspected of violating its treaty and safeguard obligations, and, perhaps worse, the compliance of other countries and international organizations with US demands despite having binding nuclear contracts with Iran, convinced Iran that the US was determined not to allow Iran to exercise its rights under the NPT. Consequently, Iran believed that it was left with two options; either it had to forsake its rights under the NPT or become self-sufficient. It chose the latter. Considering that Iran lacked the very basics of nuclear

technology and know-how, Iran had to rely on reverse engineering to master the technology. Hence, Iran went into the black-market and, with the help of the AQ Khan network, secretly procured nuclear materials and equipment for its nuclear research activity in late 1980s.

So it is important to keep in mind that the reason Iran kept its procurement and nuclear research activities secret until 2002, was because the US had shown both its intent and capability to deny Iran its rights under the NPT. Moreover, since Israel had not only threatened to take military action against Iran's nuclear centers, but had also demonstrated both its military and political capability to take such action when it bombed Osirak in 1981, Iranian policymakers became certain that the US and Israel would effectively forestall Iran's nuclear research and activities if Iran disclosed its nuclear program and ambitions. Hence, in order to preserve and exercise its rights under the NPT and advance its nuclear know-how, technology, and capability without prohibitively costly hindrances from the US and Israel, Iran made the strategic decision to pursue its nuclear program in secret.

Lacking empathy, however, the US never took this Iranian argument seriously and never tried to resolve the security challenges that emanated from a secret Iranian nuclear program by addressing the very reasons why Iran was forced to pursue its nuclear program in secret. Instead, through threats and coercion, the US has since 2002 exacerbated the very same factors that had forced Iran to go underground. According to ElBaradei (2011):

[Iranians] were adamant that...[keeping Iran's nuclear activities secret] had been indispensable: the sanctions imposed on them by the United States and its allies prohibited any import of nuclear-related items, including peaceful nuclear technology. Despite operating under the radar, they had paid double, triple, or more for the technology and material they had purchased abroad. Keeping the program secret for as long as possible had been, they insisted, a necessary measure. In diplomatic circles, back in Vienna, the Americans did not want to consider the Iranian arguments – despite having themselves been in the driving seat of the efforts to isolate Iran for more than two decades. The fact that Iran had lied was, in their view, proof positive that Tehran intended to produce nuclear weapons. This conclusion was, of course, entirely premature in terms of the verification process; what the IAEA needed was hard evidence. But the U.S. statements of certainty regarding Iran's nuclear weapons intentions soon began to be echoed by others in the West. Many representatives of developing countries were, by contrast, more sympathetic to Iran's need to go underground to evade the sanctions (p. 119)

Other Iranian policies that are deemed objectionable by the US are of similar nature. Just as an example and without going into much details, Iran's opposition to and sabotage of the various US mediated Middle East peace processes is mostly because these efforts, beside their main objectives, are perceived as having been designed to isolate the Islamic Republic as well (Parsi, 2007, p. 173-176). It is, hence, plausibly rational for Iran to seek to undermine an effort that it perceives to have been designed to challenge Iran's

security, interests, and influence in the region. Likewise, Iran's support for Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hizbullah are meant to extend Iran's strategic depth and act as a deterrent against a possible Israeli attack against Iran. Considering that various Israeli officials have since the late 1980s threatened to take military action against Iran, it is also plausibly rational for Iran to seek to develop some form of a deterrence against Israel.

As the abovementioned examples illustrate, to deal with the security threats that emanate from Iran and, in particular, its nuclear fuel cycle activities, the US first needs to understand Iran and the forces that shape and drive its objectionable policies. As this dissertation has argued, many of the policies of the Islamic Republic that the US perceives as hostile or objectionable, including its nuclear fuel cycle activities, are rooted in US threats and hostile postures toward Iran and in Iran's lack of trust in the US and the international political order that it champions.

Indeed, it could be well argued that US threats and hostile postures toward Iran are also rooted in Iranian policies that target US national interests and security. While this could well be true, the Islamic Republic has taken this possibility quite seriously and, despite being the significantly weaker party in the conflict, has taken numerous unilateral, concrete, and costly steps to signal its desire for a stable peace with the US. In almost all of those instances, however, the US has responded to Iran's gestures of goodwill with more hostility. This has significantly eroded Iran's trust in the US and the international political order that it champions, making Iran less likely to take similar unilateral actions in the future.



This extreme lack of trust coupled with Iran's security concerns that emanate most directly from explicit US threats as well as US efforts to isolate and undermine the Islamic Republic, has pushed Iran to adopt self-reliance and self-sufficiency as the main pillar of its domestic policy and limiting US influence in the region and undermining its global image, as the main pillar of its foreign policy. From Iran's perspective, defying US and UNSC demands and expanding Iran's nuclear fuel cycle capabilities, serve both ends. Hence, as the US increases its pressure on Iran and seeks to isolate the Islamic Republic, the Islamic Republic resorts to policies deemed objectionable by the US. This has only led to increased hostilities, which has in turn pushed Iran to more aggressively pursue its nuclear fuel cycle activities and other policies designed to undermine US influence in the region and make Iran more self-reliant.

The current situation, which very much resembles the spiral model, however, is a lose-lose game. The only ones winning in this conflict are Salafi extremists, along with their supporters, who are wreaking havoc in the region and beyond. Luckily, while the spiral model cannot be abolished, it could be ameliorated. It cannot be ameliorated, however, without some level of empathy, recognition of the involved stakes as well as legitimate concerns, and, most importantly, a genuine and mutual conviction that they are both "caught in a dilemma that neither desires" (Jarvis, 1976, p. 82). Hence, as long as the US believes that it could force Iran to capitulate through coercion and as long as Iran believes that hostilities would cease if and when it accomplishes a nuclear *fait accompli*, neither sides is likely to pursue a different path forward.

Next, either the US or Iran needs to take an initiating step that would not only signal goodwill, but concretely increase the security of the other party. The US, as the more powerful country and as the country that can take more risks considering its resources and depth of power, is best positioned to take this initial step, particularly since Iran's previous goodwill gestures, be it their assistance to free western hostages from Lebanon, their indispensable help to stabilize the post-Taliban Afghanistan, or their deliberate move to only install but not feed any more centrifuges with UF6 since 2012, have not been reciprocated by the US. To be effective, however, the step the US takes must not be perceived as an isolated step. Instead, US initiative must be regarded as being a part of a general strategy to credibly reassure the Islamic Republic that it respects Iran's rights and legitimate interests, that it does not wish to dominate Iran, and that it does not seek to undermine the Islamic Republic or cripple Iran's future. Such a step, could go a long way to allay some of the security concerns that have led Iran and the US into a hostile vicious cycle of coercion and resistance, culminating in a minimum level of trust that is needed for any sustainable and fruitful diplomacy.

Cultivating some level of mutual trust should be the goal of any US initiative. Without some level of trust, defined and used here to mean "a belief that the other side prefers mutual cooperation to exploiting one's own cooperation" (Kydd, 2005, p. 6), no breakthrough in the nuclear dispute, let alone the decades long conflict between Iran and US, should be expected. Cooperation is never possible when one party believes that the other party both intends and is capable of undermining its security and legitimate

interests. Hence, since all of the objectionable policies of the Islamic Republic is at least somewhat rooted in its lack of trust in the US, instead of aggravating Iran's mistrust through coercion and threats, for any US effort aimed at changing Iran's objectionable policies, including its nuclear policy, to succeed, it must positively contribute to Iran's trust and confidence in the US. This is why the author believes that notwithstanding some short lived tactical retreats and cooperation, the US should not expect any real change in the objectionable policies of the Islamic Republic unless the US changes its strategic attitude toward Iran, abandons its hostile policies, and credibly signals to Iran that the US is interested in a stable peaceful relationship, based on mutual interests and respect, with the Islamic Republic. This was the essence of Grand Ayatollah Khamenei's statement on March 20, 2009, when he said in response to Obama's outreach that:

Changes in words are not adequate... If the US government continues its same behavior, methods, course, and policies against us, as in the past thirty years, we are the same people, the same nation that we have been for the past thirty years... We shall see and judge. You change, and we shall change as well.

The US, however, should not expect that Iran would unilaterally forgo what it perceives to be its sovereign right, even if it could attain Iran's trust. Any attempts designed to push Iran down such a path is likely to undermine Iran's trust in the US and precipitously undo any past confidence building measures. No country differentiates between its territorial integrity and its sovereign rights. Just as one should not expect a country to remain idle if an action is taken against its territorial integrity, there is no reason why one should expect any country to not resist attempts geared toward undermining what it perceives to be its

sovereign right. Iran is not an exception. The only mechanism through which countries have agreed to voluntarily put into abeyance their sovereign rights are mechanisms that have not only effectively addressed the legitimate concerns of the countries involved, but have also enhanced their security and well-being in a multilateral fashion. Hence, the only way the US can successfully deal with the security concerns that emanate from Iran's exercise of its sovereign rights is to rely on arrangements that are based on mutually acknowledged rights and equitable principles to enhance and strengthen the international nonproliferation regime and seek its universal application without discrimination or prejudice.

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