

RAPPROCHEMENT:  
THE NECESSARY ENGAGEMENT WITH  
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the decision making process in Washington which led to the current non-existence of political and economic relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States. The study examines the U.S.-Iran relationship at three levels-of-analysis: the individual, state, and system levels.

From a geopolitical perspective, Iran and the United States have often been natural allies that pursued similar policy goals. After 9/11, the U.S. entered Afghanistan and Iraq which further necessitated the reengagement of Tehran. Iranian regional clout would play a vital role in stabilization of Iraq and Afghanistan and without Iran's assistance; peace will not likely be realized in those states. Amongst the most compelling reasons for Washington to engage in meaningful dialogue with Tehran are: terrorism, the war on drugs, the Iranian sponsorship of militant groups, and Tehran's pursuit of a nuclear program.

The study concludes that rapprochement should occur in two phases. The first being cooperation in areas of mutual concern such as the war on drugs. The second phase promoting confidence building methods, which would lead to a strategic partnership based on mutual interests.

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## CHAPTER 1: MAIN ARGUMENT

### *Introduction*

In the post-Cold War milieu, the United States has emerged as a global superpower with the ability to impose its will globally with a modicum of impunity. Unfortunately, Washington has occasionally prosecuted foreign policy undemocratically in that its endeavors are counter to the democratic consensus of the international community. I shall examine Washington's policy of containment towards Iran and uncover how it is wholly inappropriate and a detriment to America's political effectiveness abroad; not only in Afghanistan and the broader Middle East but with its European allies as well. This examination of Washington's policies towards Iran will elucidate their negative impact upon America's endeavors, specifically within the surrounding regions. What I hope to communicate clearly is that America's current foreign policy towards Iran is indeed inappropriate and how adjustments in Washington's foreign policies toward Iran could enable the U.S. to realize a myriad of important goals within the region. Washington cannot afford to ignore Iran or continue its policy of containment towards it. The Islamic Republic of Iran is a country that is a shimmering geopolitical jewel. Strategically situated on the Persian Gulf, Iran is one of the world's biggest oil producers through which most Middle Eastern oil flows into international markets. Washington's obstinacy has had the effect of pushing Iran into a Sino-Russo orbit. As a result, China and Russia have successfully maneuvered for influence in a post-Khomeini Iran and have been steadily negotiating for Iranian oil and gas.<sup>1</sup>

The tragedy of the current impasse in U.S. – Iranian relations is that despite a half a century of intrigue and acrimony, the Iranian populace strongly admires American values, ingenuity and industrial prowess.<sup>2</sup> In his book, *The Eagle and the Lion*, Iran scholar James A. Bill made note of a previous 100-year period of positive U.S.-Iranian relations. In the early 1800's American medical and teaching missionaries traveled to Iran to provide educational support. He also details how Washington stood

beside Iran during its campaign in the mid-1940's to convince the Soviet Union to withdraw its military presence stationed there during World War II. Iran had once looked favorably upon the U.S. as an ally and a role model for the struggle against colonialism. Yet the following three decades occasioned a dramatic shift in opinion resulting in the perception of the United States as an imperialist force. Washington depended predominantly upon the brutal Shah Pahlavi's assessments while neglecting overt signs of civil unrest leading up to open rebellion. Sadly, the level of hatred for the U.S. unleashed by the Khomeini revolution caught many in Washington completely by surprise.<sup>3</sup>

However, the Iranian revolution, the establishment of an Islamic Republic, the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, and the current state of affairs between Tehran and the Washington are all outgrowths of a history of unjust foreign interference and manipulation of Iran by Washington. Although Iran faces significant regional challenges, the United States stands as Iran's foremost strategic challenge. Its relations with Washington have been further exacerbated in recent times with the Bush Administration routinely calling for yet another U.S. orchestrated "regime change" in Tehran. The massive projection of American military might on the Iranian frontiers since September 11 has added credence to Iran's claims of being beset on all sides by the United States.<sup>4</sup> Despite its comedy of errors in the Middle East Washington remains intensely involved in Middle Eastern affairs, seeking to maintain its hegemonic influence and impose its will by force if necessary. As once stated by Michael Hudson, a professor at the school of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, "the United States stands astride this unhappy region like a colossus; the dominant power over the Middle East."<sup>5</sup>

Although the United States has legitimate reasons for involving itself in Middle Eastern affairs, namely in the realm of energy exploitation, it has also questionably involved itself in matters ranging from the projection of military might to regime change. Due to its hasty invasion and occupation of Iraq, Washington has landed itself in the role of a foreign sovereign with all the duties and obligations

attached to that office. Between Afghanistan and Iraq, Washington's expanding role has also created an uncomfortable fence of American influence around Iran that has understandably alarmed Tehran. Certainly Washington would be equally alarmed if Iran penetrated Canada and Mexico economically and politically while also patrolling the international waters of the coasts of U.S. littoral states. Regional instability, challenges with energy exploitation endeavors, and soured U.S./Iran relations can certainly be remedied by an adjustment in Washington's policy towards Iran. It is axiomatic that U.S. rapprochement with Iran would effect broad changes in the current political landscape and open profitable avenues for energy exploitation. From the stabilization of Afghanistan and the volatile Persian Gulf region to diminishing Sunni militancy, the United States and Iran at times find themselves uneasily on the same side. Should the two antagonists ever manage to dismantle the "wall of mistrust" separating the two governments, they would take a giant step toward creating a new and more stable Middle East.<sup>6</sup> Recent talks between Washington and Tehran established through Swiss intermediaries reveal that pragmatism might possibly overcome ideology and end the protracted period of soured relations. Switzerland has looked after U.S. interests in Tehran in the absence of formal diplomatic relations between Tehran and Washington, which were severed after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.<sup>7</sup> However events unfold, Washington officials are surely attuned with the positive benefits associated with normalized relations with Iran. In the words of G. John Ikenberry, Political Science professor at the University of Pennsylvania, "America is not adrift in uncharted seas: it is at the center of a world of its own making."<sup>8</sup>

This piece is not a suggestion that Washington should make any concessions that are of a detriment to American national security interests, domestically or abroad. It is equally not a suggestion that the Islamic government in Iran does not have major changes to make with regard to its internal and external practices. However, it does suggest that Washington must assume a leading role on the world



stage by taking the initiative to end the current diplomatic chill between Iran and the United States. There are adjustments that could be made in American foreign policy towards Iran which could conceivably occasion moderation in Tehran. This is a notion recently underscored by Representative Gary L. Ackerman in his statement before the Congressional Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia:

“We are in Iraq largely because we, as a nation, didn’t think. We can’t afford to make the same mistake twice. To face the challenge from Iran we must start by learning and questioning. What are Iran’s strategic aspirations? Who controls Iran’s foreign policy? Are there schisms and weaknesses in Iran’s political system that we can exploit? How do Iran’s leaders see their country’s place in the world, and what does that imply about our ability to affect its foreign policy choices? What’s behind the rhetoric—especially the threats to Israel and the repellent Holocaust denial? Who controls the balance between ideology and realpolitik in Iranian security policy?”

In his closing sentence, Representative Ackerman quoted American diplomat and deputy head of the U.S. mission in Moscow in the mid 1940’s. This statement stands as timeless advice, completely relevant to the suggestions in this policy piece as they apply to Washington’s current endeavors in the Middle East:

“We must have the courage and self-confidence to cling to our own methods and conceptions of human society. . . . The greatest danger that can befall us in coping with this problem . . . is that we shall allow ourselves to become like those with whom we are coping.”<sup>9</sup>

### ***Iran and the U.S. – Revolutionary Cousins***

A salient reality confronts all those who endeavor to examine the similarities between Iran and the United States. In the course of doing so, one discovers the two could be considered revolutionary

cousins; mutineer leaves from the same tree of insurrection. Clearly Iran and the U.S. are at different developmental stages. However a comparison can be made making general observations during the course of their developmental stages. Both similarly rebelled and successfully threw off what they perceived to be injudicious foreign manipulation. During their nascent independence, both countries were characterized by secular nationalism. It was only after the Iranian revolution that religious forces subsequently took control of Iran. It is also an inaccurate notion that regnant Anti-American sentiment in Iran was fomented solely on the basis of Islamic dogma. Anti-Americanism was also trenchant among the secular middle and upper classes who harbored no particular fondness of the Iranian clerics. Surprisingly, anti-American sentiment was also prevalent among many devout Iranians who ironically opposed the clerical leadership of Iran. Much like the United States, although guided by different cultural and religious structures, the Iranian revolution was the manifestation of a frustrated and demoralized population. Akin to the American colonists, the Iranians rebelled against a repressive government that allowed its citizens no influence in policies that affected them directly; or access to viable avenues for redress of grievances.<sup>10</sup>

During the course of the revolution, as well as in its wake, Khomeini rose to prominence as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln did in the early phases of the American republic. In America Washington emerged as the fearless warrior who liberated the nation from tyranny, establishing democratic institutions for posterity. His legacy was also that of isolationism – an America for Americans. Lincoln safeguarded the integrity of the American nation-state by cleansing the country of improper practices, such as the subjugation of human beings for profit. In doing so Lincoln became an immutable historical figure as it applies to the American scheme of freedom. Lincoln additionally demonstrated a profound willingness to prosecute war in the defense of American ideals. Both figures remain indelible models for American leadership whose mythic qualities have been routinely mimicked

by political figures across American history.<sup>11</sup> Like Washington and Lincoln, Khomeini emerged as a strikingly different type of Iranian leader; a key figurehead in Iranian history. Stoic and inflexible, Khomeini had powerful convictions and soaring confidence in his spiritual stature. His noteworthy brilliance and clear sense of destiny, not only for himself but for Iran, enabled him to command respect from his countrymen. Khomeini harnessed the power of Shi'a lore and imagery, which enabled him to seize control of Iran and lay claim to its very soul. Much like the framers did with American democracy and the rule of law, Khomeini made Islamic fundamentalism a political force that would change Muslim politics from Morocco to Malaysia. Similarly, Khomeini only became a revolutionary figure in reaction to external policies that had, in his mind, negative effects within Iran. Both America and Iran also share the misfortune of having been victims of European commercial and political pressures. The tentacles of colonialist influence threatened both countries by subjugating them economically and denying them a well-founded sense of political efficacy. Both Iranian and early American revolutionaries battled for their independence with their endeavors bulwarked by charismatic ideologues who rose in defense of certain inalienable rights and, above all, their national interests.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, both America and Iran have not hesitated to provide funding and material support during the course of endeavors to export their respective revolutionary ideals. This practice has predominantly been driven by a desire to expand their sphere of ideological influence not only regionally but abroad as well. Washington has routinely lambasted Tehran for its material support of Islamic organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Despite their negative images, it is undeniable that these Islamic organizations are regionally reactionary and outgrowths of what is perceived to be foreign interference. In essence, Tehran's ideological and material support of revolutionary groups is no different than that of Washington's in reaction to Communism's influence and perceived Soviet penetration into Latin America.

In Guatemala's 1950 democratic elections, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman was elected to power with 65% of the popular vote. Arbenz was a reformer who made it no secret that he intended to improve living conditions for the nation's destitute majority. Arbenz was ultimately perceived as a threat by the Eisenhower Administration due to his proposed leftist social reforms. In the United States McCarthyism had fomented an intense anti-Communism hysteria and this did not bode well for Arbenz who allowed the local Communist Party to operate openly. Despite the positive benefits for his country's poor citizenry, Arbenz's land reform program represented a looming threat to the commercial interests of an American-based multinational corporation, the United Fruit Company (UFC). The UFC was Guatemala's largest landowner and a majority of its holdings were vulnerable to Arbenz's reform plans. During the course of calculating its tax obligations, the UFC had purposefully undervalued the worth of its holdings by claiming its land holdings were only worth \$3 per acre. When, during the course of the land reform initiative, the Arbenz government offered to compensate the UFC at the declared rate the UFC argued the land's true value was \$75 per acre, unable to explain the precipitous jump in its own determination of the land's value. The UFC's close ties to the U.S. government and Arbenz's potential communist ties ultimately enabled the UFC to appeal successfully to the Eisenhower Whitehouse. In the years following Arbenz's election, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) trained and sponsored a Guatemalan military force to remove him from power. The U.S. sponsored operation succeeded in mid-1954, deposing the democratic government and replacing it with a military junta. The CIA coup ushered in an era of torture, repression, and state terrorism that took the lives of close to two hundred thousand Guatemalans. In 1960 the new government authorized the CIA to operate in Guatemala to train Cuban exiles for the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba. Additionally, State terror escalated to genocide in the 1980s as entire Mayan communities were wiped out with the active connivance of the Reagan Administration, according to the findings in 1999 of a United Nations sponsored truth commission.<sup>13</sup> Due to the U.S.

sponsored manipulation of Guatemala the country has never been the same. Its milieu of internecine conflict has been further exacerbated by numerous natural disasters in the region. Currently, Guatemala is characterized by a small ruling aristocracy, which possesses a majority of the country's wealth while its poor populace labors for survival. By no stretch of imagination, it is evident that U.S. government officials sponsored terrorism in Guatemala by virtue of the provision of arms, training, diplomatic cover, and intelligence.

In 1979 a left-wing revolutionary group, called the Sandinistas, toppled the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. The group was named after a Nicaraguan revolutionary leader – Augusto César Sandino. Soon after taking office in 1981, President Ronald Reagan authorized the CIA to secretly fund and equip the Contras. The Contras were mostly former members of the Somoza military who sought the overthrow of the Sandinista government and operated from bases in Honduras and Costa Rica. The Reagan Administration intervened on the basis of confronting “the Cuban presence and Cuban-Sandinista support structure in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America.” The CIA's controversial actions in South America, which included the mining of Nicaragua's harbors in the mid 1980's, resulted in the promulgation of the Boland amendment. This congressional law prohibited the sponsorship of military operations in Nicaragua, a practice commonly engaged in by U.S. Intelligence agencies. Despite the unlawful nature of supporting the Contra rebels, President Reagan gave orders to preserve the integrity of Contra resistance, “body and soul.” It was then that the National Security Council (NSC) assumed operational control; an endeavor previously orchestrated by the CIA. Although the activities were proscribed, President Reagan and U.S. officials continued to ensure that aid flowed to the Contras; the bulk emanating from private sources and third party states such as Brunei, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia. The clandestine operation was bulwarked by air support, secure communications, and Swiss bank accounts. Operating under the code name “the Enterprise”, this illegal organization was

overseen by Marine Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North who was at the time an aide to the National Security Council. The operation was conducted with the tacit approval of Colonel North's superiors, National Security Advisers Robert McFarlane and John Poindexter, and CIA director William Casey. Comprised of business people and former intelligence and military officials, this apparatus operated in secret and outside the realm of congressional oversight. In order to garner sympathy for the Contras, who were purportedly on their heels due to the congressional cutoff, the Reagan Administration also engaged in illicit propaganda campaigns in hopes of swaying congressional votes in favor of intervention.<sup>14</sup> The actions of the Reagan Administration became publicly known in November 1986. Investigations by a presidentially appointed panel and a joint committee of Congress focused on whether or not Reagan knew about or had authorized the diversion, and whether Congress's constitutional foreign policy and budget prerogatives as well as U.S. laws had been violated. An independent counsel investigated the legality of third-country fund-raising for projects banned by Congress, as well as the obstruction of justice by administration officials. It was ultimately determined there had been "secrecy, deception, and disdain for the law," but that President Reagan had not broken the law. Nearly a dozen senior administration officials and private citizens were convicted of crimes. However all convicted U.S. officials, as well as those awaiting trial, were pardoned in December 1992 by President George H. Bush. Much like the CIA-organized invasion of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba in 1961, the American fingerprint in Nicaragua left an indelible stain on American credibility. Officials at the highest level had been exposed for organizing international terrorism, violating U.S. law, and lying under oath. Sadly, the central figures in the controversy later enjoyed high-profile careers in both the public and private sectors.<sup>15</sup>

During the course of American intervention in South America, presidential administrations have gone so far as to portray the enabled elements as "freedom fighters." In most cases, the so-called "freedom fighters" engaged in wide-scale atrocities against the civilian population with the tacit

approval of Washington. When examined objectively, the freedom fighters are analogous to terrorists who are far worse than the elements they seek to displace. When successful, such as in Guatemala, the enabled parties establish repressive dictatorships that enjoy Washington's largesse as long as private elements or certain governmental agencies are given free reign to operate within their borders. Ironically, for engaging in the same practice, Tehran has been characterized by Washington as a "sponsor of terrorism".

This objective comparison reveals that much like American foreign policy, Iranian sponsorship of external revolutionary elements has been wholly reactionary. The notion of appropriateness is not as relevant to this argument as the rationale for the sponsorship. It is the penetration and expansion of unfavorable ideological elements, which is the basis for the sponsorship of rebel proxies. As revolutionary cousins, Iran and the United States are no strangers to the notion of aiding rebel movements in their struggles against threats that are ideological in nature. However it is a practice that has also encumbered them with the yoke of escalating commitments, ultimately entangling both Tehran and Washington in labyrinthine regional imbroglios.

### ***Thesis Methodology***

This paper will justify the necessity for U.S. / Iranian rapprochement via a "Waltzian" examination of relations at the individual, state and system levels. A well known scholar in the field of political science, Kenneth Waltz posited the notion of categorizing theories of international relations into three "images", or "levels of analysis". In his book, "*Man, the State, and War*", the procedure stresses the significance of each image during the examination of global politics. The first image, or individual level, deals with human nature, which Waltz suggests has great bearing upon the nature of relations between states. The second image, or state level, is analogous to the first in that Waltz suggests that

defects in states cause war among them. The third image, or system level, characterizes the international system as anarchical due to the lack of a supreme governing body. According to Waltz, conflict can occur because there no overall authority designated to prevent it.<sup>16</sup>

Although weak in theory and optimistic, this paper is primarily a policy piece that examines the issues from a cost benefit analysis perspective. During the course of objective examination and rational argumentation this paper will elucidate how Washington has failed to fully capitalize on many avenues for rapprochement and how simple adjustments in American foreign policy would still substantially benefit both actors. This researcher not only relied upon scholarly research but also research abroad. The rationale for the suggested American foreign policy change will be additionally supported by personal experiences and interviews of Iranian citizens conducted during the course of field research within the Islamic Republic of Iran.

#### *Individual Level Introduction*

The relations between leaders (individual level) have been the primary stumbling block to normalized relations with Iran. Washington's failures in this area emanate primarily from ideological misunderstandings coupled with a failure to capitalize upon subtle hints aimed at the establishment of diplomatic relations. Like the United States, Iran is a country characterized by pride and defiance; governed by competing centers of power. Its elected elements such as the President and its parliament (the Majles) are subordinate to appointed clerical leadership; the Supreme Council lead by the Supreme Leader (Grand Ayatollah). The Supreme Leader constitutionally controls the Iranian armed forces and crafts Iranian foreign policy. Iran's theocratic political culture causes power and influence in Iran to remain in a constant state of flux. For this reason, presidential administrations have routinely found Iran quite difficult to comprehend. Whether or not it may be the case, Washington's understanding of Iran



has routinely appeared somewhat rudimentary. Additionally, the absence of economic ties and diplomatic relations for over 25 years has fomented apprehension on both sides with regard to the other's motives. Simply stated, Washington and Tehran have become increasingly alien to one another and their lack of engagement has occasioned growing state of a misperception and unnecessary bellicose rhetoric from both sides.

In his book, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, the perspective of Robert Jervis underscores the previous paragraph. Jervis examines the psychology of leaders and hazards of foreign policymaking in an environment characterized by cognitive bias, inadequate information, and stressful conditions. For Jervis, misperception commonly emanates from the failure of one actor to realize their capacity to provoke a hostile reaction from the other. Application of Jervis' philosophy to this situation would suggest that Washington misreads Iran's penetration into its neighboring states as hostile rather than what might possibly have been part of its legitimate and longstanding diplomatic interaction with neighboring elements. As a result, Washington continues to operate under cognitive biases which compel its leaders to value certain types of information more than others, even if from an unreliable source.<sup>17</sup> If this current diplomatic chill is in fact caused by misperception, it is self evident that a policy change on the part of either actor would serve to re-establish productive diplomatic relations. Examination of the matter at the individual level will reveal Washington could break the cycle of hostility by taking the initiative to engage Iran directly. In doing so Washington could conceivably acquire Tehran's commitment to constructive policies toward important regional issues; namely Afghanistan and Iraq.

### State Level Introduction

Examination of the issue at the state level focuses upon how Islamic terrorism is viewed by both countries. The alleged exportation of Iranian revolutionary ideals as well as Iranian nuclear development are also analyzed as state level issues. It is evident that criticism of Teheran from Washington centers upon its alleged sponsorship of terrorism, its supposed endeavor to expand itself ideologically across the region, and its nuclear program. Though the international community is not unjustified in being alarmed with regard to these matters, Washington has clearly demonstrated double standards within the region as it applies to counterterrorism, ideological exportation, and nonproliferation. The chapter notes that from the outset of the U.S. led war on terror how Iran overtly demonstrated its willingness to confront radical regional elements. The confrontation of radicalism in this region is an endeavor where both sides are natural allies. The argument highlights Iranian antipathy towards al-Qaeda and how Tehran welcomed the notion of the U.S. military putting al-Qaeda elements to rout in Afghanistan. It is axiomatic that al-Qaeda is ideologically at odds with Iran on this basis of its Shi'a Islam, which al-Qaeda figureheads and its Sunni base perceive as heretical. Also examined is Washington's enmity towards Iran with regard to its alleged subversion and terrorism beyond its borders by virtue of the exportation of its revolutionary ideology. In the wake of its Islamic revolution, Iran evidently sought to expand itself ideologically however this endeavor proved to be ephemeral. Domestic and external threats soon commanded the attention of Iran's leaders. Homogeneity also represents a road block to Iranian ideological expansion. Shi'a Iran is culturally and religiously distinct from the majority of the Middle East, where Sunni Arabs are regionally hegemonic. For this reason, the inseparable elements of Shi'a Islam within the Iranian theocratic model will always deter Middle Eastern states and countries abroad from attempting to emulate its Islamic revolution. Examination of Iranian sponsorship will reveal that Washington's rhetoric with regard to hostile Iranian machinations in the Middle East and beyond is without merit. The chapter ends with examination of the Iranian nuclear issue, particularly Washington's current hysteria

with regard to Tehran's legitimate nuclear intentions. These fears are evidently ignorant to the reality that, from the Eisenhower Administration through the Carter years, the U.S. was a major benefactor in the constitution of Iran's nuclear program with the United States and Iran entering into a civil nuclear cooperation agreement in 1957. Over the following 20 years, that agreement was followed by technical assistance as well as an experimental nuclear reactor with enriched uranium and plutonium with fissile isotopes. Examination of this matter will elucidate Washington's double standards and unwarranted obsession with the supposed nuclear intentions of an adversary while at the same time turning a blind eye to the proven nuclear arsenals of Israel, Pakistan, and India. Pakistan and Israel both possess nuclear weapons and sophisticated delivery systems with Israel capable of striking against Iran with its long-range nuclear missiles in a matter of minutes. Unlike Iran, neither Israel nor Pakistan have participated as signatory powers to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Ironically, both are in violation of UN Security Council resolutions regarding their nuclear weapons programs yet Washington does not hold the same alarmist view towards countries that are actually in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions.<sup>18</sup>

### System Level Introduction

During the course of system level analysis, this paper will examine instances where Washington and Tehran's interests converge; specifically in Afghanistan, Iraq and the war on drugs. Suggested is a direct dialogue with Iran specifically regarding Afghanistan and Iraq for the purpose of regional stabilization. Iranian involvement would greatly enhance the process of consolidating authority within the central governments of both Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the rebuilding of their respective economies. Engaging Tehran with a willingness to work diplomatically in areas of common interests would substantially enable Washington to curb Iranian domestic and regional policies that Washington

finds to be objectionable. By selectively engaging Iran on issues where U.S. and Iranian interests converge, Washington would inevitably establish a productive political dialogue with Iran. It will be demonstrated how an adjustment in American foreign policy would increase Washington's efficacy by arming it with Iran's cultural, political, and religious clout. In addition, such dialogue would likely enable both parties to resolve deep differences over Tehran's nuclear ambitions and involvement in regional conflicts. It will reveal that the continued containment of Iran only impedes regional stability, does nothing to stem the flow of opium, and strengthens the hand of extremists who encourage confrontation with American forces. In closing the chapter ends with examination of the Pasdaran; the most ideologically committed arm of the Islamic regime. It will be demonstrated that by lumping together all aspects of the Pasdaran under the generic cognomen of a "terrorist organization", Washington has severely disadvantaged itself. In the case of the Pasdaran, Washington is dealing with an element of Iran whose hierarchy is characterized by a heterogeneous group of clerics, politicians and social climbers. The ascendancy of the Pasdaran, economically, militarily, and politically, should be widely perceived as a backlash against a failing American lead endeavor to contain Iran. Washington's bellicose rhetoric, such as calls for regime change, has clearly occasioned a conservative re-entrenchment and a new leadership that has systematically rolled back domestic freedoms and deepened its control over the Iranian populace. The Pasdaran's tentacles are seemingly omnipresent yet despite its rigid ideological components, many Iranians have political and economic stakes in maintaining and defending the current regime. Suggested will be pragmatic methods in which the Pasdaran maybe be approached in order to compel a majority of its elements to side with the populace against the rigidity of the ruling regime.

## **CHAPTER 2: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL EXAMINATION – RELATIONS BETWEEN LEADERS**

### ***Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi***

Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was the Shah of Iran after the Soviet Union, a country that had invaded Iran during the course of World War II, pressured his father to abdicate in 1941. American administrations held the view that the Shah of Iran was one of Washington's most dependable pro-West leaders in the Middle East. Positive congress with Tehran was a top priority among U.S. policymakers, who concurred on Iran's strategic significance and concerned themselves with events or matters that might destabilize Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's regime. In 1955 the Shah was one of the signatories of the Baghdad Pact which united the "northern tier" countries. The Baghdad Pact was a defensive organization for promoting shared political, military and economic goals. Founded by Turkey, Iraq, Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran the organization was similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Its main purpose was to deter communist incursions and foster peace in the Middle East. When Iraq ended its involvement in 1959, the organization was renamed to the "Central Treaty Organization", or CENTO.<sup>19</sup> Coupled with the Saud monarchy in Saudi Arabia, the Pahlavi regime in Iran was the linchpin in the United States "twin-pillar" policy in the Middle East—a policy that had brought both countries into prominence as being critical to Western interests prior to the Iranian revolution.<sup>20</sup> Ironically, U.S. and British efforts to assure Pahlavi's hegemony and to modernize Iran ultimately contributed to his downfall.

During his first year in office, Eisenhower authorized the CIA to deal with a problem in Iran that had begun during Truman's presidency. In 1951, the Iranian parliament nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, a British corporation that controlled the nation's petroleum industry. The British retaliated with economic pressure that created havoc with Iran's finances, but Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq refused to yield. Eisenhower worried about Mossadeq's willingness to cooperate

with Iranian Communists; he also feared that Mossadeq would eventually undermine the power of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, a staunch anti-Communist partner. In August 1953, the CIA helped overthrow Mossadeq's government and restore the shah's power. In the aftermath of this covert action, new arrangements gave U.S. corporations an equal share with the British in the Iranian oil industry.<sup>21</sup>

Following the Eisenhower and Kennedy commitments to Shah Pahlavi and to the Saudis, the Johnson Administration had pressed the Iranian monarch to carry out reforms—land redistribution, greater freedoms and rights for women and rapid improvements in education. These programs, it was felt, had to accompany Iran's rapid drive for industrialization and military strength. The only real tension between the two countries was the Shah's seemingly insatiable desire for a modern and larger military apparatus. His insistence on spending more of Iran's growing oil revenues on military armaments conflicted with U.S. policy goals of advocating Iranian economic development and reform as a check against internal upheaval or revolution. The Shah's power was known to be autocratic and at times arbitrary, nevertheless the monarch was seen as personally stable and generally enlightened if, at times, solitary and somewhat insecure. The fact that he made all the major decisions himself—was emperor, de facto prime minister, and commander in chief of the armed forces, as well as knowledgeable and supportive of SAVAK's internal security activities—was taken into account.<sup>22</sup> At one time the Shah was in negotiations to purchase arms from the Soviet Union, however Washington cautioned him there would be an adverse U.S. reaction. Ultimately, the Shah acquiesced to diplomatic pressure assuring Washington that he would not purchase sophisticated military equipment from the Soviet Union. In May 1968 President Johnson approved a 6-year, \$600 million military credit sales package for Iran. As the Johnson Administration drew to a close, an inter-agency review concluded that the United States should continue to plan on the basis of \$100 million in annual U.S. military credits to Iran. Military cooperation with Iran would continue to be a very high priority.<sup>23</sup> The overall strategic

value of Iran and the Shah to the United States was appreciated by every American administration from Eisenhower through Ford. President Nixon had gone farthest, encouraging the Shah to cast himself in the role of regional policeman. Because of Iran's strategic significance, the Nixon and Ford Administrations allowed the Shah to acquire virtually unlimited quantities of any non-nuclear weapons in the American arsenal.<sup>24</sup>

During the Arab oil embargos of 1967 and 1973 the Shah continued to export oil to the U.S., actually doubling its exports in 1974.<sup>25</sup> From 1951 into the 1970's, Iran recognized Israel as a state and the two ultimately became strategic partners. This partnership had four main components: Iranian assistance for the immigration operations for Jews from Iraq; Israeli-Iranian cooperation in the area of intelligence; agreements for military cooperation; and the supply of Iranian oil to Israel.<sup>26</sup>

In the summer of 1967, Harold Wilson's Government announced the withdrawal of British forces from "East of Suez", a promise honored in 1971.<sup>27</sup> Prior to the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, the perception of Iran as the main protector of Gulf security was reinforced by the American reluctance to fill the power vacuum left by Britain as a result of its decision to withdraw its forces from the area "East of Suez," including the Persian Gulf. Iran took Great Britain's place as the military power that guaranteed stability in the Persian Gulf.<sup>28</sup> Rather than replace the British presence "East of Suez" to secure shipping lanes with a direct American presence, the United States chose to rely on local powers, primarily Iran and Saudi Arabia, to provide Persian Gulf security.

Becoming the regional gendarme of the Middle East required a massive investment in modern military equipment and a substantial amount of American consultants to support the highly sophisticated equipment for Iran's military, which was comprised of unskilled and under-educated personnel. A clash of cultures emerged and subsequently antagonized the general Iranian populace. Resentment over the amount of Iranian oil revenues flowing to the United States and European countries concurrently

fomented resentment against the West. Additionally, Pahlavi's regime became increasingly and egregiously corrupt. To counter rising discontent, Shah Pahlavi unleashed his security forces (SAVAK) to seek out and halt the dissidents. Subsequently, serious human rights issues ensued that further alienated the Iranian regime from its own subjects.

The election of Jimmy Carter as president of the United States in 1976 can be characterized as a turning point in U.S.-Iranian relations. Known for his vocal emphasis on the importance of human rights in international affairs, Carter made a plethora of demands upon the Shah, threatening to withhold military and social aid if he didn't comply. Carter pressured the Shah to release "political prisoners," whose ranks included radical fundamentalists, communists and terrorists.<sup>29</sup> Responding to Carter, the Pahlavi regime released hundreds of political prisoners. The termination of dissident repression is said to have encouraged the Shah's opponents. Some have come to view this pressure on the Shah and Carter's unwillingness to allow Pahlavi's to squelch radical dissent as the impetus for Pahlavi's downfall.

Revolution ensued in 1978, fueled by the acrimonious sermons and lectures of aged fundamentalist cleric Ruhollah Khomeini, one of the Grand Ayatollahs of Shi'ite Islam. Between 1962 and 1963 Khomeini had spoken out against the shah's reduction of religious estates in a land-reform program and against the emancipation of women. His ensuing arrest sparked anti-government riots and after being imprisoned for a year Khomeini was forcibly exiled from Iran in November 1964.<sup>30</sup> Khomeini fomented rebellion from abroad, capitalizing on Pahlavi's history of harsh repression and attempts to modernize Iran. When Pahlavi was unable to totally comply with the Carter Administration's and British demands, the Carter Administration ordered the Central Intelligence Agency to terminate \$4 million per year in funding to religious Mullahs. Subsequently they became outspoken and vehement opponents of the Shah. Despite his granting of free and democratic elections Pahlavi was unable to



prevent an extremely volatile environment in Iran. The lack of U.S. support, coupled with angry Mullahs, left Pahlavi in a precarious position. Shah Pahlavi capitulated early and, under the guise of going on vacation, fled into exile. The provisional government he left behind collapsed soon thereafter and Khomeini returned triumphantly to Tehran where he was greeted by millions of Iranians filling the streets.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Shah Ruhollah Khomeini***

#### **President Carter's Term**

Trade between Iran and the United States prospered before the 1979 revolution. In 1978, American products accounted for \$4 billion (approximately 21%) of all Iranian imports. The United States at that time was Iran's number-one trading partner.<sup>32</sup> Following Khomeini's return the Carter Administration scrambled to assure the new regime that the United States would maintain diplomatic ties with Iran.<sup>33</sup> To symbolize support for Iran's clerics, President Carter initially rejected a visa application for exiled Shah Pahlavi to travel to New York for medical treatment. In late October, shortly before the assault on the embassy, the head of the State Department's Iran Desk – Henry Precht – arrived in Tehran for a ten-day visit with intentions of improving and normalizing diplomatic relation between Washington and the new regime in Tehran.<sup>34</sup> Around the same time frame Shah Pahlavi's medical condition worsened. On October 22, President Carter changed his position and allowed Pahlavi to enter the United States explicitly for medical treatment. Pahlavi was admitted to the New York Hospital on October 23, 1979 and the initial reaction to this was deceptively mild.<sup>35</sup> On November 1, 1979, Iranian foreign minister Ibrahim Yazdi met with Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's national security advisor, in Algiers to discuss resumption of relations. At the meeting, Brzezinski invited the new Iranian regime to enter into a strategic partnership with the United States. For the most part the offer was

enthusiastically received. However, Pahlavi's entry to the United States was a catalyst for a strident wave of anti-American protest, which swiftly drowned out the tentative protests of Iran's unemployed populace. Khomeini moved to harness the protesters' anger over the Shah's entrance into the United States for medical treatment. On November 1, 1979 a communiqué from Khomeini was broadcast over the state-controlled radio reminding Iranians that November 4<sup>th</sup> was the first anniversary of bloody anti-Shah demonstrations at the University of Tehran. Khomeini posited that in the absence of Pahlavi all of Iran's problems emanated from the United States. Khomeini appealed to the student population to protest and to focus all their anger and energy against the United States and Israel in order to compel the United States to return the deposed Shah. It was clear that Khomeini was seeking to establish his authority over Iran's unruly student population. Iran's younger population represented a large segment of the populace, which had been radicalized by the revolution. Yet it is uncertain whether he directly ordered the attack on the embassy or merely accommodated himself to a *fait accompli* engineered by overzealous followers.<sup>36</sup> Three days later, Iranian students attacked the U.S. embassy in Tehran, taking fifty-two diplomats hostage.<sup>37</sup> In his book, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, David Houghton posits several possible causes such as radical ideology, the utilization of American hostages as bargaining chips for Shah Pahlavi, or to prevent Washington from engineering a counter-revolution. The circumstances suggest, as asserted by Houghton, the hostage-takers most likely sought to prevent another clandestine endeavor by the West to re-install Shah Pahlavi as a puppet dictator.<sup>38</sup>

After the hostage seizure, Khomeini was concerned about the possibility of the United States taking strong military and political action against his still fragile regime. Khomeini's initial response to the takeover was to order that the students be chased off the grounds. However he reconsidered when he heard reports of its popularity.<sup>39</sup> Rather than assuming a firm position, Khomeini played a double game for several days while carefully gauging Washington's reaction. Khomeini's late son Ahmad, who had

been asked to coordinate with those who raided the U.S. embassy, later conceded that Khomeini genuinely feared "thunder and lightning" from Washington. Conversely, Carter responded with a series of polite requests asking for the release of the American hostages on humanitarian grounds.<sup>40</sup>

President Carter's response involved the dispatching of Ramsey Clark and William Miller to Tehran; two historical opponents of America's alliance with the Shah. With them came a letter signed by Carter that they were to personally deliver to Khomeini. It contained the assurance that the Shah would remain in the U.S. only for the duration of his illness, as well as an offer to procure access to the shah's doctors for Iranian representatives. Second, Carter explicitly recognized the independence and territorial integrity of Iran and expressed his willingness to resume arms exports. Third, he politely asked Khomeini to have the hostages released. However Khomeini would not entertain diplomacy, refusing to allow President Carter's emissaries to enter Iran. Washington responded by expelling Iranian diplomats as well as all Iranians in the U.S. illegally. This was also accompanied by the cessation of oil imports from Iran and the freezing of Iranian assets in U.S. banks. These actions failed to make the slightest impression. As the events unfolded, U.S. diplomats were paraded in front of TV cameras blindfolded and threatened with execution. For Khomeini it became increasingly evident there would be no military response from Washington. President Carter entered into protracted negotiations with Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr and his minister of foreign affairs, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, via French mediators. Although both were high-profile Iranian politicians, they were virtually powerless figures in comparison to Khomeini. America had hoped to influence Iran by using the habitual mix of carrots and sticks, yet Khomeini was indifferent not only to all material incentives but also to the threat of violence.

By the end of the first week of the drama Khomeini's view of America had changed. Once he had concluded that America would not take any meaningful action against his regime, Khomeini took over control of the hostage enterprise and used it to prop up his "anti-imperialist" credentials while

outflanking the Iranian left. The surprising show of weakness from Washington also encouraged the mullahs and the student hostage-takers. Matters worsened when a military mission to rescue the hostages ended in tragedy in the Iranian desert. In April 1980, Operation Eagle Claw, a top-secret mission to free the hostages, ended in disaster. From the outset of the mission, a helicopter developed engine trouble in a staging area of the Iranian desert. Eight Americans were killed as two planes collided during the subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces. The force dispatched by Carter fled under the cover of night, leaving behind the charred bodies of eight of their comrades.<sup>41</sup>

When the hostages were finally set free on January 20, 1981, this was thanks neither to international nor even just allied solidarity, nor, for that matter, to any particular American policy moves. The idea of providing positive incentives had failed just as much as the threat of armed intervention. The hostages were liberated in part because Tehran had grown weary of holding them. The liberation of the hostages was presented as a triumph by Khomeini being that they were only permitted to leave Iran on the day when Jimmy Carter left the White House.<sup>42</sup> Some also present compelling evidence that in 1980, while Jimmy Carter was frantically negotiating for an early release of American hostages in Iran, members of the Ronald Reagan campaign staff had struck a pact with Khomeini. That deal was allegedly an offer he couldn't refuse—badly needed U.S. arms and spare parts for his war with Iraq if he kept the U.S. Embassy hostages in Tehran until after Election Day. Of course there were negotiations with the Carter Administration over the hostages. However the bargaining with Carter was primarily over money and offered the return of only \$4 billion of the \$12 billion in Iranian assets seized in U.S. banks. Carter's offer involved no arms. There is also another compelling notion. Although Ayatollah Khomeini had thwarted Jimmy Carter at every turn, Carter's failed rescue attempt might look mild in comparison to what Ronald Reagan was likely to do in order to gain the release of the American hostages being held in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.<sup>43</sup>

Although the hostage taking incident remains a thorn in the side of most who would reject the notion of rapprochement with Iran, it must be noted that this incident was an inevitable outgrowth of injudicious American foreign policy towards Iran. The invasion itself was perpetrated by elements radicalized by the U.S. backed, heavy-handed Shah and the revolution. The bulk of the Iranian populace currently holds America in high regard and laments their plight under the hands of the current theocratic regime. Although the front of the American embassy in Tehran still remains covered with anti-American propaganda, that sentiment is not mirrored in the Iranian population. On several occasions during my visit to the Islamic republic Iranians pointed out the anti-American propaganda on the front of the closed American embassy with powerful disapproval. While driving past the U.S. embassy, a taxi cab driver expressed sadness over the embassy's closure and indicated that he prayed for its reopening, the return of the Americans, and western influence in Iran. One of my guides, Parviz Rostaminezhad, commented that historical events, such as the embassy invasion, must not remain the basis of the seemingly impenetrable roadblock to rapprochement between Washington and Tehran. He noted that the American presence would be overwhelmingly welcomed by Iranians but unconditional diplomacy rather than threats and sanctions were the key to moderating Tehran.<sup>44</sup>

### *President Reagan's Term*

Ronald Reagan began his term at the White House when U.S.-Iranian relations had entered a deep freeze that still lingers to this day. 1980 was a period when Iran and Iraq began warring with one another. Washington evidently did not want Iran to emerge victoriously. Khomeini was perceived by policymakers as a serious threat to the stability of the region and to vital interests, namely oil supplies and the security of Israel. However, Saddam Hussein was also recognized as a psychopath who was backed by the Soviet Union. Hussein was less of a threat to American interests but certainly no ally.

Initially, Washington decided to support the pro-Western regimes in the region by bulwarking their defenses. It was surmised and hoped that the combatants would weaken each other to the point that neither would emerge from the war as an aggressive regional hegemon.

However as time passed it became evident the Reagan Administration was leaning in favor of Iraq. Washington had plenty of motives to favor Saddam over the Iranians. The United States was still reeling from the 1980 U.S. embassy takeover and truck bombings to its marine barracks in Beirut earlier in 1983. Despite the objections from Congress, Reagan had the State Department remove Baghdad from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, an act that opened avenues for economic aid and trade. Soon thereafter Reagan ordered a review of U.S. policy in the Middle East which resulted in a marked shift in favor of Iraq. Economic aid began pouring into Iraq in the form of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of loan guarantees to buy U.S. agricultural products; indirectly aiding the war effort.<sup>45</sup> Washington also began passing high-value military intelligence to Iraq to help it fight the war, including information from U.S. satellites that helped fix key flaws in the fortifications protecting al-Basrah that proved important in Iran's defeat during the course of the war.<sup>46</sup>

Reagan's special Middle East envoy, Donald Rumsfeld, was credited with establishing the back door avenue of communication to Saddam on a clandestine visit to Baghdad in December 1983. During the course of this visit and another in early 1984, Rumsfeld reassured the Iraqi leadership that it had broad latitude in prosecuting the war against Iran, to include using poison gas.<sup>47</sup> A November 1983 National Security Directive evidently set the stage for this stance indicating that U.S. policy was to do "whatever was necessary and legal" to stop Iran from winning.<sup>48</sup>

In 1984 the CIA began providing Iraq intelligence that was utilized to calibrate its mustard gas attacks on Iranian troops.<sup>49</sup> Subsequently the CIA established a direct Washington-Baghdad intelligence link and provided Iraq with data from sensitive U.S. satellite reconnaissance photography to assist Iraqi

bombing raids. It is evident this data was essential to Iraq's effectiveness against the Iranians. During the course of the war Iraq continued to use chemical weapons against Iranian forces. Washington never commented publicly despite noting almost daily in internal reports the Iraqi use of chemical weapons. Although the use of chemical weapons in war is in violation of the Geneva accords of 1925, during the last major battle of the Iran-Iraq war, 65,000 Iranians were killed – many with poison gas.<sup>50</sup>

The Iran-Iraq war endured for nearly eight years – from September of 1980 until August of 1988. The hostilities ceased when Iran accepted United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 598, which led to a cease-fire in August 1988. Although the UN-arranged cease-fire ended to the fighting, the two isolated states pursued an arms race with each other as well as other countries in the region.<sup>51</sup>

Shortly before the end of the Iran-Iraq War, July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes was patrolling the northern portion of the Straits of Hormuz. A group of Iranian gunboats had been threatening a Pakistani merchant vessel and one fired on the Vincennes. During the confrontation with the gunboats, the Vincennes picked up an aircraft on radar moving in its direction. After the plane failed to respond to the ship's warnings the Vincennes fired two surface-to-air missiles bringing the plane down. The aircraft turned out to be an Iran Air commercial jet carrying 290 people.<sup>52</sup> There were no survivors and Tehran claimed it was an intentional act. President Reagan characterized the event as a terrible accident, apologized and offered to pay compensation to the victims. In February 1996, the United States agreed to pay Iran \$61.8 million in compensation for the Iranians killed in the shoot down.<sup>53</sup>

Another event characterizing hot and cold relations between the leaders of Iran and the U.S. is the worst political moment of Reagan's eight years in the White House – the Iran-Contra scandal. The affair involved an arms-for-hostages scheme that could have resulted in his removal from office. Reagan had been cautioned by both his secretary of defense and state regarding the illicit nature of the clandestine operation but followed through despite their warnings. "Iran-Contra," unfolded in the mid-

1980s and became the sobriquet for a complicated back-channel operation during which U.S. government officials violated an arms embargo by secretly selling weapons to Iran. The arms were initially funneled through Israel and in return Iran was to help free American hostages held in Lebanon. Subsequently officials used the profits from the arms sales to illegally assist the Nicaraguan "Contra" rebels in toppling that country's duly elected Marxist government. However it was well known at the time that Congress, through the Boland Amendment, had prohibited U.S. aid to the Contras.<sup>54</sup>

In November 1986 the Lebanese newspaper al-Shiraa reported that the United States secretly sold arms to Iran. The Iranian Speaker of the Parliament, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, confirmed the secret deal in a speech to the Iranian Parliament the following day. This revelation caused Chief of Staff Donald Regan to urge President Reagan to "go public" about the arrangement. However John Poindexter discouraged Reagan from doing so. As a result, Reagan went on to assure reporters that the allegations had emanated from the Middle East and had no foundation. However, days later the President changed his story in a televised address to the nation, when he admitted to shipping some missiles to Iran but denied that the arms were sold to win the release of American hostages. As the crisis continued to build, Reagan went before the press and perpetuated the falsehood that the United States had nothing to do with other countries or their shipments of arms to Iran, including Israel. Unfortunately, Poindexter had already briefed the press about the U.S. negotiations with Israel to provide the weapons making the falsity of Reagan's account utterly transparent to everyone.<sup>55</sup>

President Reagan requested an independent review of all the events by a three-person commission headed by former Texas senator John Tower. A special prosecutor, Lawrence Walsh, was also assigned to look into possible illegal activities in the executive branch. Reagan maintained total ignorance of the actions of those who directly supervised the channeling of funds to Central America,



namely Colonel North and former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane. However Reagan also resisted the implication that he was a passive and oblivious bystander in his own administration.

In February 1987, the Tower Commission issued its report and concluded that there had been widespread abuse of power among renegade members of Reagan's staff who allegedly, without the President's knowledge, engineered and engaged in an illicit conspiracy. The report faulted Secretary of State George Shultz, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and President Reagan himself for their evident inability to effectively oversee the actions of their subordinates. The report stopped short of accusing the President of engaging in or approving any illegal conduct. Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh later made similar findings and was unable to establish complicity on the part of the President.<sup>56</sup>

*Shah Ali Hosayni Khamenei*  
*President Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani*

*President George H.W. Bush's Term*

When Shah Khomeini died in June 1989, the Assembly of Experts, an elected body of senior clerics, chose the outgoing President of the republic to be his successor. Ali Khamenei, assumed power of the republic in what proved to be a smooth transition. Khamenei also transformed the position of supreme leader by bringing many of the powers of the presidency with him into that office, turning it into an omnipotent overseer of Iran's political scene.<sup>57</sup>

In August 1989, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the speaker of the National Assembly, was elected President by an overwhelming majority. Iran's relations with the West began to improve under Rafsanjani's guidance. This was due in part to Rafsanjani's role in obtaining the release of Western hostages held by pro-Iranian Shi'ite groups in Lebanon, the last of whom was released in 1992. Rafsanjani, who has long been viewed as a Machiavellian figure in Iranian politics, maintained close ties

with Khomeini during the years following the 1979 Islamic revolution and consolidated strong support amongst Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards. Rafsanjani proved to be more pragmatic on issues involving Iran's dealings with the West and was very much disturbed by Iran's growing isolation.<sup>58</sup>

In August 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait over allegations that Kuwait was slant drilling into Iraq territory. The mechanized infantry, armor, and tank units of the Iraqi Republican Guard invaded Kuwait and seized control of that country. The invasion triggered Operation Desert Shield, a U.S. led effort to deter any invasion of Kuwait's oil rich neighbor, Saudi Arabia.<sup>59</sup> Although Khamenei condemned the invasion he bitterly criticized Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing Arab countries that invited American troops into their countries after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Khamenei characterized the event as a holy war asserting that anyone who engaged America's aggression, greediness and its plans to encroach on the Persian Gulf region had engaged in a holy war in the cause of Allah. Furthermore, he indicated that anyone killed on that path was a martyr.

Gary Sick, an American expert on Iranian affairs, suggested that Khamenei's remarks were motivated by Iran's desire to keep oil prices high, preserve its "revolutionary" credentials and keep President Hussein in a protracted confrontation with the United States.<sup>60</sup> Despite Khamenei's strident rhetoric, Iran remained neutral during the U.S. led intervention in Kuwait and subsequent march into Iraq. It is also important to note that Tehran pursued an almost contradictory foreign policy in this case. It strongly condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait while energetically pursuing a peace settlement with Baghdad. Tehran's seemingly ambivalent stance towards Iraq's invasion of Kuwait demonstrated the pragmatic leadership of President Rafsanjani's Government. Although Washington had engaged Iran's brutal, long-time foe (Saddam Hussein), Tehran was also not prepared to reject the notion that the United States is a force seeking to dominate the gulf region's oil resources to the detriment of both Iran and Iraq.<sup>61</sup>

In January 1991 Bush asked Congress for “all necessary means” to expel Iraq from Kuwait. He received congressional approval to use force, and in mid-January 1991 the U.S.-led allies launched a punishing aerial assault on strategic sites in Iraq. In a ground war in late February, allied forces drove the Iraqis from Kuwait and subsequently well into Iraq. Bush’s popularity rose to historic highs for a President, but he drew criticism for ordering a cease-fire before Iraq’s president, Saddam Hussein, was ousted. President George H.W. Bush later defended his administration's decision to forgo invading Iraq and toppling Saddam from power after Iraqi forces were forced to withdraw from Kuwait. Bush felt that occupying Iraq would have unilaterally exceeded the United Nations’ mandate and would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression his administration hoped to establish. In his opinion the invasion route would have left the U.S. as an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land where the coalition forces would have collapsed; the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Furthermore, under those circumstances, Bush saw no viable "exit strategy" which violated another one of his administration’s principles.<sup>62</sup>

Although Iran criticized Washington during and in the wake of the Gulf War, accusing it of regional interference, Khamenei and Rafsanjani showcased their Persian pragmatism. Despite strident rhetoric, Iran remained neutral as the U.S. engaged and hobbled the military apparatus of its arch nemesis – Saddam Hussein. The Hussein regime represented the region’s principle strategic counterweight to Iran and evidently Tehran recognized that although U.S. forces had occupied neighboring territories – the first Bush Administration was, in essence, performing an enormous favor for Iran.

### President Clinton's Term

Surprisingly, the demonization of Tehran reached new heights during the course of the Clinton Administration. According to the Clinton Administration, Iran represented a threat to the international community as a whole in several areas. First, it had speculatively engaged in sponsoring international terrorism in order to destabilize particular American allies. Second, it opposed the notion of an Arab-Israeli peace process and allegedly sought to derail it. Third, it actively endeavored to acquire nuclear weapons. Fourth, Tehran was presumably rebuilding its military machine with offensive equipment and technology, which posed a threat to the Persian Gulf region. Finally, Tehran's record of human rights was spotlighted and evaluated as dismal at best. The Clinton Administration's assertions were unequivocal in that Washington perceived Tehran as a hostile international actor. Iranian leadership reaction to Clinton's accusations was best summed up by President Rafsanjani's reply to an American correspondent who asked whether Tehran could prove its innocence. President Rafsanjani emphasized that in a court one is innocent until proven guilty and that it was the responsibility of the accuser to prove the guilt, not the accused.<sup>63</sup>

In 1993, the Clinton Administration turned down a request by Boeing to sell Iran civil aircraft needed for expanding Iran Air's level of operations. A majority of Iran Air's fleet consisted of Boeings and the year prior Iran Air had negotiated the purchase of 16 Boeing 737-400's. As a result of the sale ban, Boeing lost a \$900 million contract and Iran Air purchased aircraft from the European aerospace consortium Air Bus. Similarly, in 1993 BP America had negotiated the sale of a chemical fertilizer plant with Iran. The sale was again prohibited by the Clinton Administration on the grounds that the technology may be of a dual purpose nature, resulting in a \$100 million sales loss to BP America.

The most publicized loss regarding sanctions on Iran has been Conoco, a subsidiary of DuPont Corporation. On 15 March 1995, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12957, banning U.S. contributions to the development of petroleum resources in Iran. It came 10 days after Conoco had

signed a \$1 billion contract for developing two off-shore Iranian oil and gas fields. Pressure from the U.S. Congress continued and two months later President Clinton issued Executive Order 12959. The second order expanded the previous sanctions to include a total trade and investment embargo on Iran. Iran was declared an extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the U.S. This executive order has some extraterritorial reach since U.S. companies would not be allowed to facilitate any activities involving trade with Iran and severe restrictions were imposed on the re-export of U.S. or partially-U.S. products. Iran's alleged support for international terrorism and development of weapons of mass destruction were among the justifications for President Clinton's executive orders.<sup>64</sup> As a result of the Executive Orders and investment sanctions, Conoco was forced to withdraw from the contract to develop the Iranian oil and gas fields. This paved way for France's Total, which ultimately assumed control of the project.<sup>65</sup>

In late 1994, the Republicans gained control of both Houses of Congress and were looking at sanctions against unpopular foreign governments as a way to placate powerful pressure groups such as the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Additionally, the Republican dominated Congress also sought to erode the power of the Democratic Clinton Administration. AIPAC had exerted considerable pressure on the Administration and Congress to act against Iran for a number of reasons. Iran had allegedly supported terrorist activities against Israel, which had experienced a series of bombing attacks perpetrated by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Israeli intelligence had also informed Washington that Iran was acquiring components for nuclear weapons. Israel highlighted Russian plans to assist Iran in the completion of a civilian nuclear power reactor in Bushehr; a reactor Washington had pressured Germany not to build. AIPAC pushed for comprehensive U.S. sanctions against Iran, including secondary U.S. sanctions against foreign companies seeking to invest in Iran's petroleum sector.

What followed was a race between conservative Republicans and the Clinton Administration on Iran. President Clinton was under intense pressure to introduce legislation on U.S. sanctions against Iran to avoid passage of even more restrictive legislation introduced by Senator D'Amato of New York who was supported on this issue by the majority in the U.S. Senate. Despite the Administration's earlier executive orders (March and May 1995), the Senate passed the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) of 1996 (Libya had been added by Senator Kennedy because of the Lockerbie bombing). The bill passed with almost no opposition in the Senate and House, which shows how little power the international oil companies have on matters pertaining to Middle East policy.<sup>66</sup>

ILSA was passed when Iranian President Rafsanjani was still in office. Moderate Iranian President Mohammad Khatami was elected during a period when Washington's efforts to contain Iran were at their highest. However, ILSA had met with stiff resistance throughout the world, nowhere more so than in Europe due to its extraterritorial nature. ILSA also made things difficult with pro-western Arab states in the Gulf who engaged in substantial commerce with Iran. Iran's economy is dependent on foreign investment and Tehran conceded that ILSA was effective in deterring such investment. In an August, 1998 report to the UN, Iran stated that ILSA had "led to the disruption of the country's economic system, . . . caused a decline in its gross national product, . . . [and] weakened the country's ability to deal with its international lenders, . . . which impeded credit transactions." Iran went on to report that ILSA created difficulties in the petroleum and oil sector, such as "reduction in international investment, delays in oil projects, cancellation of some tender contracts, technological shortcomings, and increased negotiating expenses." President Khatami acknowledged later in 1998 that U.S. sanctions had "inflicted damage" upon Iran.<sup>67</sup>

The animosity between the U.S. and Iran, rather apparent during Clinton's first term, lessened to a certain degree during the period following his reelection. The precipitating factor was the unexpected

and overwhelming election of Mohammed Khatami as Iran's president in May 1997. Surprisingly, Khatami captured approximately 70% of the popular vote. Khatami was a moderate Iranian leader who sought to increase cultural and personal freedom in Iran. He also sought to improve relations with Iran's Gulf neighbors, Europe, and, to a lesser degree, the United States. However, Khatami would remain challenged by hardliners in the Iranian regime to include Iran's religious leader Ayatollah Khamenei, a supreme leader with complete control over important institutions such as Iran's military and police.<sup>68</sup>

Iranian foreign relations with Washington during the Clinton Administration generally assumed a posture of accommodation. However, it was evident that the Clinton Administration succumbed to domestic pressures from partisans and special interest groups and ultimately did not perceive Tehran as a regime with which Washington could diplomatically interact. In every instance that President Rafsanjani and Khatami signaled that economic interaction would be the basis of rapprochement those advances were casually rebuffed.

#### *President George W. Bush's Term*

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami took office in 1997, before George W. Bush was elected U.S. President in 2001. Khatami was subsequently re-elected in 2001 by an overwhelming majority. He was perceived by many as more amenable to relations with the United States as well as opening up his country to democratic reforms. Khatami was viewed as a possible reformist countermeasure to Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, and his coterie of clerics. Many felt the Clinton and Bush Administrations would ultimately diplomatically engage Khatami – a long awaited alternative to Iran's fundamentalist hardliners. However, President Clinton had sealed avenues for economic engagement in furtherance of Iranian containment. President Bush soon concluded with his senior foreign policy advisers that Khatami and his supporters in the government were "too weak, ineffective and not serious

about delivering on their promises" to transform Iranian society. Bush revealed his stance publicly in a strongly worded presidential statement during which he praised large pro-democracy street demonstrations in Iran. The shift emboldened foreign policy experts who had urged a tougher approach toward Tehran – a setback for the State Department, which had spearheaded efforts to engage the Khatami leadership.<sup>69</sup>

The oil industry was extremely optimistic that the Bush Administration would allow the unilateral ILSA to expire and die quietly. Both President Bush and Vice President Cheney were oilmen who realized that unilateral sanctions were ineffective and were only preventing U.S. oil companies from competing with Europe. Many future senior members of the Bush Administration were somewhat outspoken in their opposition to unilateral sanctions and the oil industry assumed the Bush Administration would not renew ILSA when it expired in August 2001. However, the Cheney energy report in the spring of 2001 surprised many in that it favored the use of sanctions as a tool to advance national and global security objectives. The new Administration's policy towards sanctions was no doubt influenced largely by AIPAC, which was actively pushing for a renewal of ILSA. In June 2001, 74 Senators sponsored a five-year ILSA extension and in August 2001 President Bush signed the ILSA Extension Act into law.<sup>70</sup> Public statements made by the Iranian President Khatami and his counterparts revealed that Iran's policy towards the U.S. would not change unless the U.S. took the first step. "As long as American politicians act under the influence of certain lobbies, harming even the interests of American companies and hinder the Iranian economy by sanctions and embargoes, there will be no change," Khatami stated during a press conference in June 2001. He added that "these sanctions are obstacles, and we do not accept any preconditions. If anyone is to impose any conditions, it should be us, who have been the victims of the oppressive policies of the United States."<sup>71</sup>



The 9/11 attacks rearranged Washington's approach to the Middle East, bringing Iran into focus geopolitically as a possible strategic ally that must be engaged in furtherance of the American led "war on terror." Tehran harbored a powerful disdain for the likes of al-Qaeda and the Taliban and possessed influence in Afghanistan that was useful to Washington. The period leading up to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was a time of extraordinary strategic cooperation between Tehran and Washington. While Washington established the logistical aspects of the military engagement in Afghanistan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs – Ryan Crocker – organized several discreet meetings with Iranian officials in Geneva. During the course of those meetings, Iran offered search-and-rescue help, humanitarian assistance, and even advice on which targets to bomb in Afghanistan. The Iranians, who had extensive experience in Afghanistan, namely working with the main anti-Taliban coalition – the Northern Alliance – also informed Washington about how to negotiate the major ethnic and political fault lines in the country. During a conference to establish a post-Taliban Afghan government, Iran pressed its allies in the Northern Alliance to limit their demands for ministerial seats and ensured anti-terrorism language was engineered into the agreement.<sup>72</sup> During the course of that international conference, the Iranians helped establish the post-Taliban Karzai government. "They were, in many ways, our principal collaborators at that meeting," said James Dobbins, President Bush's envoy to the gathering. Dobbins indicated that the Iranian envoy, Javad Zarif, persuaded the Northern Alliance to share power with other factions, a crucial step in establishing Karzai's government.<sup>73</sup> However, after Tehran's cooperation during the course of the invasion of Afghanistan and Afghan President Hamid Karzai's subsequent election, Washington immediately discouraged Karzai from seeking intimate ties with Iran. Although Iran was publicly praised by the United States for their positive role in Afghanistan, shortly thereafter Tehran was identified by the Bush Administration as one of the three protagonists in

the infamous “axis of evil”.<sup>74</sup> That label had bewildered and humiliated Iranians who were most vocal in regard to normalized relations with the United States.

Khatami battled Iran's clerical hard-liners for eight years and transformed the nation's political landscape; however he failed to effect a much needed structural change. Khatami was constitutionally required to leave office after two consecutive terms. Senior statesman and former two-term President Ali Rafsanjani campaigned on a socially moderate and reform-minded platform, but evidently Iranian voters were more attracted to the revolutionary candidate. In June of 2005, the hard-line mayor of Tehran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who had invoked Iran's 1979 revolution and expressed doubts about rapprochement with the United States, was elected president of the Islamic republic in a landslide with 62% of the popular vote.<sup>75</sup>

Ironically, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and George W. Bush have more similarities than either would care to admit. Namely in the realm of their fiery speeches and confrontational stances that have served more to annoy the international community rather than appealing to it in a diplomatic sense. Ahmedinejad came into the Presidency at a time U.S. containment measures and debate over Iran’s nuclear intentions were in full swing. While reiterating his country’s commitment to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Ahmedinejad inferred Washington was utilizing the U.N. Security Council as a tool of “threat and coercion”. Washington played a large role in helping craft a U.N. Security Council resolution passed in July 2006 that gave Iran until late August to suspend its uranium enrichment, asking the IAEA to report on Tehran's compliance, dangling the threat of sanctions if Iran refused. Tehran beamed unequivocally long before the deadline expired that it had no intention of suspending its uranium enrichment, which it asserts is for peaceful purposes. “All our nuclear activities are transparent, peaceful and under the watchful eyes of inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency”, Ahmadinejad said. Ahmedinejad went on to accuse the U.S. of dragging its feet in Iraq in order to

preserve its occupation, “It seems that intensification of hostilities and terrorism serves as a pretext for the continued presence of foreign forces in Iraq.”<sup>76</sup>

The Bush Administration has thus far resisted any suggestion of negotiations with Iran. But it is coming under increasing pressure from its European allies and from the leading senators on the Foreign Relations Committee to alter that dangerous attitude. The battle between American neoconservatives and Iranian hardliners persist despite many conciliatory gestures on the part of the Iranians. President Bush’s policy has not discouraged Iran’s nuclear endeavors. Rather, it has merely emboldened Iranian hardliners who argue that the Bush Administration has no interest in rapprochement with Iran and that it is in Tehran’s best interests to reach bomb capacity as soon as possible.<sup>77</sup>

Ahmadinejad too has faced harsh domestic criticism. The Iranian President’s popularity has also plummeted on the basis of his failure to fulfill election promises with respect to the economy and individual freedom. A poll run by the Tehran-based news website “Baztab” two years after Ahmadinejad came to power found that his popularity had sunk substantially. A poll of 20,000 people revealed that 62.5% of respondents who had voted for Ahmadinejad in 2005 would not seek to reelect him. The Ahmadinejad Administration's aggressive and unyielding foreign policy is perceived by many Iranians as the cause of the increasing isolation of Iran and the sanctions imposed upon the country for refusing to halt its controversial nuclear program.<sup>78</sup>

During the course of my travels within the Islamic Republic, I met several individuals who spoke favorably of President George W. Bush, but none who spoke positively of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Much like the American citizenry, most Iranians were historically myopic and were powerfully consumed by the political now. Commentary with regard to Ahmadinejad always began with a pronounced facial scowl and Iranian women were quick to attribute a renewed social rigidity to Ahmadinejad’s presidency. Fear of Ahmadinejad’s far reaching rigidity was underscored for this

researcher during the course of an interview conducted outside the Sadabad Palace in the Shemiran area of Tehran. Bitra Molkava, a college educated English interpreter, spoke confidently on the matter of Iranian politics but noticeably lowered her voice to the level of a whisper when saying the name “Ahmadinejad”. Bitra indicated his election did not occasion a positive environment for women and brought about a renewed enforcement of female dress codes.<sup>79</sup> Ironically, President George W. Bush enjoyed popularity among the Iranian populace for his incessant castigation of the Iranian government, the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, and the facilitation of his subsequent execution. On my return flight to the United States from Tehran I took the opportunity to interview the Iranian woman seated next to me, Mahnaz Mazaheri Assadi. Mahnaz was a strongly opinionated woman who held a PhD level education in the field of Bioscience and Biotechnology. She regarded the Ahmadinejad presidency with strong disapproval and felt his ascension to power was the product of Washington’s policy and harsh rhetoric towards Iran. Mahnaz surmised that renewed dialogue and diplomacy between Washington and Tehran would result not only in a vibrant Iranian economy but also a moderation of Iran’s rigid social codes.<sup>80</sup>

### CHAPTER 3: STATE LEVEL EXAMINATION

#### *Terrorism*

Contrary to the rhetoric of rabid western ideologues, Muslims and Islamic entities across the globe were outspokenly vocal in their condemnation of the events on 9/11, characterizing them senseless attacks on innocent human beings. Many in the Islamic world were as shocked and disturbed by the terrifying images of the event as those in the west. Iranian President Mohammad Khatami was among the first world leaders to condemn the 9/11 attacks and express his sympathy stating, “On behalf of the Iranian government and the nation, I condemn the hijacking attempts and terrorist attacks on public centers in American cities which have killed a large number of innocent people.” “My deep sympathy goes out to the American nation, particularly those who have suffered from the attacks and also the families of the victims,” the Iranian President said in a statement, adding that “terrorism is doomed and the international community should stem it and take effective measures in a bid to eradicate it”. Khatami asserted that the Islamic Republic is treading a road to uproot terrorism and to this end, he noted, it will spare no efforts.<sup>81</sup> Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, also strongly condemned the suicide terrorist attacks but discouraged notions of an emotional counter-offensive in Afghanistan. “Mass killings of human beings are catastrophic acts which are condemned....wherever they may happen and whoever the perpetrators and the victims may be,” Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a televised September 2001 discussion.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the conservative Iranian media and authorities followed suit in condemning the terrorist attacks. Hardliner magazine *Siyasat-e-Ruz* openly posited, “any act that victimizes innocent people, whatever their race or nationality, for achieving the goal of greedy international politics, is severely condemned and is a terrorist and anti-human act.” Iranian citizens also mourned America’s losses and responded with a genuine and spontaneous outpouring of

sympathy. Sixty thousand spectators observed a minute of silence during a soccer match in Iran's Azadi stadium. Hundreds of young Iranians held a candlelit vigil in Tehran for the victims who perished in the 9/11 attacks. The routine chants of "death to America" that had become a staple part of Friday prayers in Iran ceased in deference to American suffering. The degree of unanimity exhibited over a foreign policy issue was unprecedented in the history of the revolutionary Islamic Republic.<sup>83</sup>

From an ideological standpoint the worldviews of al-Qaeda and Iran are completely at odds. Iran is a stable sovereign entity and al-Qaeda is a radical non-state terrorist actor. Iran seeks to shore up its national security interests while al-Qaeda endeavors to eliminate national boundaries and re-establish the caliphate, the seventh-century Islamic empire. The figureheads of al-Qaeda leaders completely reject the notion of solidarity between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims and exclude the Shi'a from their midst; namely the sect that predominates in Iran – Twelver Shi'a.<sup>84</sup> The Iranian response to 9/11 led to expectations that Washington would seize the opportunity for limited rapprochement and factor Iran into an anti-Taliban coalition – a notion that was overwhelmingly prudent in a geopolitical sense. The Iranian overtures were more than subtle in that Tehran was willing to put aside its grievances and join the west in eradicating unsavory elements – especially the Taliban. Iran had regularly supplied the Northern Alliance, a collection of mainly Tajik and Uzbek anti-Taliban militias, with arms and intelligence. Iranian intelligence officers regularly meet with Northern Alliance commanders. Diplomats in Tehran say that information gleaned from those meetings is regularly relayed to India and Russia, which also supported the Northern Alliance. A majority Shi'a Muslim country, Iran had opposed the Sunni extremist Taliban since 1996 when it assumed power over Afghanistan. Iran denounced the Taliban's extremist version of Islam asserting that it has cast a negative light upon the faith. In a domestic sense, Iranian officials had legitimate reasons to be concerned regarding the Taliban's anti-Shi'a views and the presence of a hostile regime with the backing of two regional powers – Pakistan and Saudi Arabia – on

their border. Additionally, Iran and the Taliban had been at odds since Taliban forces, during the course of a military offensive against the Northern Alliance, killed 11 Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998.

Iranian parliamentarian Mohammad Kazem Jalili seemed to confirm Tehran's desire to cooperate with the U.S. when shortly after the 9/11 attacks he told *The Washington Post* that "Iran is interested in joining the anti-terrorism coalition," and that such a development would positively impact future relations between Tehran and Washington. A mid September report in Canada's *National Post* also contributed to the notion of rapprochement. It was reported that, via a Canadian intermediary, Tehran sent a message to Washington that there would be no Iranian opposition to military strikes against the parties responsible for the September 11 attacks.<sup>85</sup> Although the White House and the State Department had expressed interest in a gradual rapprochement with Iran, the U.S. Congress failed to demonstrate a willingness to expend political capital on the Iran issue. No doubt, Tehran was willing to cooperate but such engagement would have necessitated incentives on Washington's part. Meaningful incentives for Iranian cooperation would have entailed carrots such as a lifting of U.S. sanctions on Iran, the withdrawal of U.S. opposition to Caspian Sea pipelines traversing Iran and an end to U.S. attempts to isolate Iran internationally.<sup>86</sup>

Evidently Washington needed Iran's influence in Afghanistan – namely in getting the Northern Alliance to support the Karzai post-Taliban Afghan government engineered by Washington. Iran rendered vital assistance and as a result they did ultimately seize an opportunity to settle an old score with the Taliban who had long been in their crosshairs. Iranian assistance surely came as a pleasant surprise to Washington's right wing ideologues. During this period of warming relations between Washington and Tehran, President George W. Bush delivered his first State of the Union address in

January 2002. During the speech Iran was mentioned as a member state within an “axis of evil” that aggressively pursued weapons of mass destruction and exported terror. Bush went on to claim that Iran, in union with terrorist allies, was arming to threaten the peace of the world. The speech immediately dashed all hopes of rapprochement and alienated Iranian moderates who had pressed for reconciliation with Washington. In light of Tehran’s vital support during the course of the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan, many in the international community were shocked to hear the American’s characterizing the Iranian’s as evil. Moderate Iranian President Khatami immediately criticized President Bush’s characterization of Iran accusing a U.S.-Israeli alliance of “exploiting the ominous phenomenon of terrorism as an excuse for creating war and domination.” The convergence of interests in Afghanistan was evidently ephemeral revealing that hostility between Tehran and Washington will not be easily overcome. Khatami highlighted President George W. Bush's inexperience in world affairs and the clout of pro-Israel factions in Washington as the basis for the fomenting of an escalation of violence threatening to ignite the Middle East. The reformist movement in Iran sustained a sharp setback as a result of President Bush's rhetoric. The "axis of evil" comment clearly eliminated the opportunity for convergence between Tehran and Washington over a shared antipathy toward Afghanistan’s Taliban regime. Iranian moderates had begun to compete for influence in foreign policy, an arena dominated by Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. However, President Bush’s speech immediately dashed all notions of moderates gaining traction in that respect. Khatami indicated that threats from Washington, specifically President Bush, resulted in the hardening of “national solidarity” in Iran, rhetoric that inferred the “axis of evil” comment had dramatically reduced his domestic political clout.<sup>87</sup>

Without any support by intelligence analysts, the Bush Administration has persistently alleged that Iran has harbored al-Qaeda operatives who had fled from Afghanistan and that they had participated in planning terrorist actions. Pentagon officials were also leaking information to the media and their



audiences in order to infer that they had evidence that Al Qaeda had been provided “safe haven” in Iran and was planning and directing terrorist activities abroad. However, a majority of U.S. intelligence analysts specializing on the Persian Gulf perceived that the Al-Qaeda operatives situated in Iran, who were in communication with operatives elsewhere, were in hiding rather than being harbored by the Iranians. A former national intelligence officer for Near East and South Asia – Paul Pillar – revealed when being interviewed by Inter Press Service in a 2006 interview that the “general impression” was that al-Qaeda operatives were not in Iran with the complicity of the Iranian authorities.<sup>88</sup> Kenneth Pollack, a former CIA analyst who was a Persian Gulf specialist on the National Security Council staff in 2001 stated in his book, *The Persian Puzzle*, “These al-Qaeda leaders apparently were operating in eastern Iran, which is a bit like the Wild West.” However, he also pointed out, “It was not as if these al-Qaeda leaders had been under lock and key in Evin prison in Tehran and were allowed to make phone calls to set up the attacks.”<sup>89</sup> During the course of my field research in Iran I discussed the notion of Usama bin Laden or al-Qaeda operatives operating within Iran with the complicity of Iranians with an English teacher in Isfahan, Mehrdad Doulatshahi. Mehrdad suggested that those who would consider such an idea to be true were truly ignorant with regard to the Islamic world and Middle Eastern politics. Mehrdad further added that Iranians viewed Islamic extremism with a profound hatred and would tear bin Laden or any of his operatives to pieces with their bare hands if they encountered them within Iran.<sup>90</sup>

Intelligence reports have confirmed that Tehran is no friend to al-Qaeda and remains committed to preventing its operatives from utilizing its territory as a safe house or regional pathway. In early 2007, the CIA sent an urgent report to President Bush's National Security Council indicating that Iranian authorities had arrested two al-Qaeda operatives traveling through Iran on their way from Pakistan to Iraq. The operatives were captured while traversing a well-worn, if little-noticed, passage utilized by militants determined to engage U.S. troops in Iraq. Intelligence officials presented the detentions to

Bush's senior policy advisers as evidence that Iran was evidently committed to preventing al-Qaeda operatives from utilizing its soil as a thoroughfare to zones of conflict. This intelligence assessment came at a time when the Bush Administration, in an effort to push for further U.N. sanctions on the Islamic Republic, was preparing to publicly accuse Tehran of cooperating with and harboring al-Qaeda operatives. However, the accusation would have been groundless in light of Iran's early cooperation in the U.S. led war on terror. According to senior U.S. intelligence and administration officials, when al-Qaeda militants fled by droves into Iran from Afghanistan in the winter of 2001, Tehran handed over hundreds of them to U.S. allies and provided U.S. intelligence with the names, photographs and fingerprints of those it held in custody. In early 2003, Iran offered to turn over high-value al-Qaeda targets directly to the United States in exchange for a group of exiled Iranian militants hiding in Iraq. Among the high level detainees was Usama Bin Laden's son, therefore President Bush's top advisors pushed for the exchange being that the trade would most likely have produced a wealth of valuable intelligence on al-Qaeda. Although the trade would have released individuals on the State Department's terrorist list, they were individuals who had aligned with Saddam Hussein in effort to overthrow the Iranian government and were not in danger of wandering free after the exchange. Vice President Cheney and former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld convinced President Bush to rebuff the exchange offer. The trade was rejected on the basis that any cooperation would legitimize Iran and other "sponsors of terrorism". Ultimately, the National Security Council indicated it would accept intelligence on al-Qaeda from Iran but would give nothing in exchange for such cooperation.<sup>91</sup>

Both Tehran and Washington's interests are clearly consonant in regard to radical organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which makes the aversion to rapprochement all the more politically irrational. Additionally, radical elements benefit from Iran and the United States being at odds over an issue where they are natural allies.

Capitalizing upon the lingering animus, Bin Laden is alleged to be engineering plans such as exploiting or even triggering an all-out war between the United States and Iran. Evidence suggests that Al Qaeda in Iraq and elements of the Iraqi Sunni community increasingly consider Iranian influence in Iraq to be a far greater threat than the American military occupation. In a Shi'ite-dominated Iraq, al-Qaeda fears the Sunni minority would become politically benign after the American exodus.

It is important to note that a war between America and Iran would benefit the jihad against both groups. By pitting two of the Sunni jihadis worst enemies against each other, the radicals would be essentially killing two birds with one stone. A full-scale U.S. invasion and occupation of Iran would be a jackpot for al-Qaeda. The endeavor would presumably depose the Shi'ite regime in Tehran, further antagonize Muslims worldwide, and expand al-Qaeda's battlefield against the United States so that it extends from Anbar Province in the west to the Khyber Pass in the east. It is well known, especially amongst al-Qaeda operatives, that the U.S. military is currently overly committed in its occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. If the U.S. is to invade Iran, it is expected that Washington will resort to the use of nuclear weapons. According to Bruce Riedel, a former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Near East Affairs on the National Security Council (1997-2002), the biggest danger is that al-Qaeda will deliberately provoke a war with a "false-flag" operation (a terrorist attack carried out in a way that would make it appear as though it were Iran's doing). Reidel has posited that Washington should remain extremely wary of such machinations on the part of radical organizations such as al-Qaeda.<sup>92</sup> A document recovered in an al-Qaeda hideout in Iraq indicated the terrorist organization considered drawing the United States into a war with Iran in order to undermine the effectiveness U.S. and Iraqi forces have had putting the organization to rout. The document's author bemoaned the fact that al-Qaeda had been greatly weakened and posited that opening another front in the war would divert U.S. efforts in Iraq. According to the memo part of the diversion is "to entangle the American forces into

another war against another country,” or to create friction between the United States and its Shi’ite allies in Iraq. The document suggests “first to exaggerate the Iranian danger and to convince America and the West in general, of the real danger coming from Iran.” Furthermore insurgents proposed fabricating “bogus messages” that Iran has chemical or nuclear weapons or that its agents planned to hit targets in the West.<sup>93</sup>

In the event of a terrorist attack against the U.S. or its interests abroad, accurately assigning blame would be of paramount importance to avoid improper retaliation. This would require very careful intelligence work that would be much easier should Tehran and Washington finally recognize their convergence of interests and makes rational political choices.

### ***Revolution Exportation***

Dr. Houman Sadri defines a “radical revolutionary idealist” as one who has an extreme sense of mission for exporting their revolution by any means. He goes on to add that what separates this type from the rest of the idealists is that they do not confine themselves to employing rhetoric and spiritual support as do most idealists. Rather, their goal is to send material, particularly military, support to groups abroad with similar ideologies. Numerous American presidential administrations, including that of President George W. Bush, have designated the spread of democracy as their principal foreign policy objective positing the notion that nascent democracies will make the world a better and safer place for *Americans*. Such mentalities fly in the face of democratic principles in their blatant disregard of the fact that the imposition of any ideology via “gunboat diplomacy” is inherently undemocratic. As posited by Dr. Sadri, romanticism and optimism blind the idealist to essential facts and such individuals are simplistic and gullible in assuming that their particular revolution is actually exportable. By examining

the foreign policies of both states one undeniable notion is elucidated; Iran and America are far more alike in their revolutionary principles than they are different. Much like the American Revolution, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was an internal revolt driven by principles that were both spiritually and culturally relevant to the populace. This point is highlighted by Dr. Sadri in that a revolution that is to be legitimate, decisive, and *successful* must be deeply rooted within a particular society.<sup>94</sup> Both countries are soon to discover at some cost that the fomentation of their revolutionary ideals and subsequent attempts to export their respective ideologies, under a “one size fits all” rationale, is both foolish and culturally insensitive – a ticking time bomb laden with far reaching consequences. This salient reality makes the notion of the exportation of the Iranian revolution all the more absurd.

As indicated by Kenneth Timmerman, director of the Middle East Data Project Incorporated, the Islamic Republic’s success in exporting its revolution is checkered at best. The revolution lost the bulk of its legitimacy with the death of the Islamic regime’s founder – Ayatollah Khomeini. His successor, Ali Khamenei, vitiated his predecessor’s goals primarily through his lack of charisma and religious credentials. This is not to suggest that Tehran is innocent of subversive activities abroad. However the Islamic Republic now utilizes more classical means of achieving foreign policy objectives in lieu of ideology exportation.<sup>95</sup> Iran is a unique state beset by competing internal forces, clerical radicalism and political pragmatism. Moderate politicians routinely struggle to consolidate power through appeasement of hardliner clerics while at the same time attempting to establish normalized relations with the outside world that are vital to the Iranian economy. Under the guidance of a supreme clerical leader, Iran is still certainly guided by its Islamic values. Yet, Iran is fast becoming more politically pragmatic with the realization that its revolution is clearly not exportable. International editor of United Press International, Claude Salhani, has indicated that while Iran's clerical leadership has tried "to interest a number of countries to follow in their footsteps, they ultimately failed." “There is not one country that has adopted

the Iranian system,” Salhani observes. He noted that Iran's revolution has been unsellable outside its borders and now Iran is beginning to incrementally swing back towards a more moderate center. He has urged the world to consider that although Iran has not genuinely embraced democracy, it is a very different Iran from the one that ousted the Shah and hung those who dared oppose the Islamic Revolution. Salhani posited that with a large young population born after the revolution, change will continue apace.<sup>96</sup> While in Shiraz, this researcher took the opportunity to interview an electrical engineer and Iranian historian, Parviz Rostaminezhad. Parviz had received his education in America and was quick to note that Iran's clerical governance was vastly unpopular and would be eroded incrementally over time as newer generations whittled away at its rigid practices. “No one likes dictatorship,” Parviz uttered while looking me directly in the eyes with searing conviction. However Parviz cautioned that positive change would only endure if America engaged Iran politically, rather than militarily, and supported a subsequent cultural revolution that would yield an enduring Iranian democracy.<sup>97</sup>

### Hezbollah

According to Augustus Norton, the Iranian revolution provided a context for another organization to emerge – Hezbollah – “the party of God.”<sup>98</sup> Hezbollah was the most clearly identifiable echoing of the Iranian Revolution, which occurred after Israeli troops marched through Beirut to occupy the heavily Shi'ite populated Lebanon. Reacting to Israel's invasion and under the aegis of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, a group of Shi'a Muslim clerics led by Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah established Hezbollah to promote Islam and resist Western influences in Lebanon. Hezbollah's paradigm was evidently inspired by the Revolution of Iran, which had culminated in the overthrow of Iran's secular government in 1979. Iran also provided generous economic support and much needed armaments. Hezbollah hoped that Iran, which was then fighting Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War, would be able

to export its revolution to Lebanon. Hezbollah was a more radical alternative to Lebanon's mainstream Shi'a faction, known as the Amal movement that also sought greater power for Muslims in Lebanon.<sup>99</sup>

When the Lebanese Civil War ended in 1990, Lebanon made the gradual transition towards parliamentary rule. Hezbollah's leaders argued that the group should try to achieve power through politics, not just military action. Hezbollah and the Iranians then came to an agreement with the late Syrian President Hafez Assad. Hezbollah agreed to suspend its domestic revolutionary activities in exchange for the right to organize resistance to the Israeli Defense Forces in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah also dropped its objections to a political system that bars Shi'ites from the presidency and premiership and allots them only 21% of the seats in parliament. A noticeable paradigm shift also occurred. Hezbollah's discourse changed from religious to nationalist, characterizing its engagement of Israel as a national liberation struggle rather than a holy war.<sup>100</sup>

The manner in which Hezbollah has adapted itself politically suggests there will be no Iran-esque theocracy in Lebanon. Hezbollah no longer conforms to its initial goal of forcefully remodeling Lebanon into an Islamic Republic. Rather than seeking to supplant the political hierarchy Hezbollah's leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, utilized his military experience and successes to make substantial political gains. Upon assuming power in 1992, Nasrallah advocated strongly for Hezbollah to participate in Lebanon's confessional system. Although radicals argued that he had betrayed the revolutionary principles of the group, Nasrallah insisted Hezbollah better served its interests by working within the political system rather than expressing itself from the fringes. In 2004, Hezbollah had nine of the twenty-seven seats reserved for Shi'ites in the 128-member Lebanese parliament; it also controlled three additional seats held by allied parties and occupied, respectively, by a Christian and two Sunni. Hezbollah has become deeply embedded into Lebanese society becoming socially democratic in their

provision of social services such as hospitals and job training in the Shi'ite community. Hezbollah has forged alliances across religious lines and is progressive in its levels of female activism. Nasrallah has also publicly conceded that an Islamist State would require an overwhelming popular desire, which he admits is not existent in Lebanon and probably never will be.<sup>101</sup> Despite continuing support from Iran, it is evident that Hezbollah operates in accordance with a nationalist paradigm and not as a revolutionary extension of Iran. Support emanates from Iran not in support of shared Islamic goals, but rather in furtherance of pragmatic political ends such as the ending of a reviled occupation and engagement of Western endeavors via proxy elements.

### *Bosnia*

When the Bosnian Muslims, who were also staunch allies of the West, were battling against the rampaging Croats and Serbs the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) rendered assistance. Iran and other Muslim countries supplied them with arms and training; the Iranians also participated in the battle alongside Bosnian Muslim soldiers. Some have attempted to characterize the incident as an attempt by Iran to export its revolution to Bosnia. However, similar to events in the recent invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. military and the IRGC interacted positively in Bosnia. The Bosnians were clearly under siege and solicited the assistance of Iran. Subsequently, the IRGC trained and armed Bosnian fighters with the tacit blessing of the Clinton Administration and Iran continued to provide humanitarian support even after their military role ended.<sup>102</sup>

According to Clinton Administration officials, the policy brought military pressure against the Serbs into the equation in order to obtain a better political settlement. The Iranian option was the least labor-intensive way of reaching that military equilibrium. The plan was successful in that working in union with aggressive NATO air strikes Croats and Bosnians ultimately dealt the Serbs compelling



battlefield losses.<sup>103</sup> In November 1995 the Dayton Agreement was signed in Paris, calling for the exit of foreign forces and ending the three and a half year war in Bosnia.

For most of Bosnia's Muslims, the relationship with Iran was pragmatic in that it was established for the purposes of obtaining military assistance and had very little to do with religion or ideology. Additionally, after pressure from the Clinton Administration, the Iranians were expelled from Bosnia after their assistance was no longer needed.<sup>104</sup> That Tehran sought to expand its influence into Europe is axiomatic. However, the Bosnian's desire to be part of the European community eliminates the notion of it becoming an Islamic republic and a pawn of Tehran.

### *Chechnya*

There is no debating that Iran, like the rest of the Muslim world, sent aid to Muslim refugees in Chechnya. However, in sharp contrast to criticism of Russian conduct from other parts of the Islamic world, Tehran's stance was relatively subdued in reaction to the war. Iran's stance on the issue of Chechnya is a primary example of Iran's migration away from religious fundamentalism to political pragmatism. Iran has consistently treated Chechnya as Russia's internal matter and played an instrumental role in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to keep it from openly supporting Chechen rebels. But why would an Islamic republic that has routinely been accused of attempting to export its Islamic revolution to zones of conflict take the side of a non-Muslim state that has been accused of assailing separatists on the basis of their religion?

Russia and Iran share many strategic interests in Central Asia, the Caspian and the Caucasus. In the past, both countries worked bilaterally to end the civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s and the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Both are major stakeholders bent upon maintaining peace and stability in Central Asia and the Caucasus; increasingly alarmed in regard to the growing U.S. economic and military

presence in the region. Russia is also Iran's primary supplier of arms and technology. *Gazprom*, a Russian natural gas monopoly is actively developing the South Pars field in Iran and is poised to assist in the establishment of an Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. The Russian Railways company is involved in a multinational project to build a 350-km line for the North-South Transport Corridor linking the town of Astará on Azerbaijan's border with Kazvin in Iranian territory. As the world's largest holders of natural gas reserves, both Russia and Iran support the notion of creating a gas OPEC. Iran also possesses observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and is likely to become a member of an energy club Russia is planning for the SCO. Russia and Iran share the same positions in that they wish to limit the presence of outside powers in the Caspian region, namely the U.S. and its desire to control the flow of energy from the region.<sup>105</sup>

For those who accuse Tehran of ideological exportation, Chechnya is clearly not a suitable example. It has been Washington's supposed ally, Saudi Arabia, which has historically been of the largest supporters of Chechen separatism. According to a State Department official who requested anonymity, between 1997 – 1999 alone, Saudi foundations and rich individuals have out poured over \$100 million to support Chechen separatism. Radical Chechen leaders, such as Movladi Udugov and Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, have also found asylum in Saudi Arabia.<sup>106</sup> Other than for humanitarian assistance Tehran's ruling clerics have been muted in their rhetoric and have noticeably aligned themselves with Russia in this case. Not only does Tehran have numerous shared interests with Russia in a regional sense, a cozy relationship with Moscow enables Iran to stymie Washington's economic sanctions and the endeavor to politically isolate Iran.

### Egypt

Egypt is not a state that borders Iran; however its regional clout in the Persian Gulf makes it extremely significant in Tehran's geostrategic planning vis-à-vis American and Israeli pressure. Ayatollah Khomeini severed relations with Egypt subsequent to the Iranian Revolution in 1979, when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat came to peaceful terms with Israel and provided safe harbor to the deposed Shah Pahlavi. As a result, Egypt tacitly backed the Iraqi invasion of Iran that it was aware was supported by Washington.<sup>107</sup>

It has been posited that Tehran has attempted to instigate Islamic groups in Egypt to depose its leaders in a Khomeini-esque Islamic revolution. It is evident the Iranian revolution fomented a revival of the political role of Islamic edifices, such as mosques and madrassahs, in the mobilization of politically-oriented Islamic elements throughout the Muslim world. Certain Islamic actors in Egypt were impressed by the proposed Iranian project of Islamic renaissance with its extra-national dimensions. However, during the period following the Iranian revolution, certain political Islamic actors in Egypt began to change their positions on the revolution. A negative attitude toward Shiism was fostered by a plethora of anti-Shi'ite publications which discredited the Islamic credentials of Shi'ites and questioned the true intentions of the "Shi'ite" Iranian revolution. Islamic Associations in Egyptian universities soon affirmed their ideological differences with the Shi'ite nature of the Iranian revolution, indicating they would rebuff support offered by Iran being that such support might be ostensibly one of Islamic solidarity with the true intention of imposing ideological hegemony.<sup>108</sup>

Egypt and Iran resumed relations in the late 1980's albeit at a very low level. However, in February 2008 Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced he would be traveling to Egypt after accepting an invitation from Cairo. Such a visit would be the first time an Iranian president has

entered Egypt since ties were severed and communication occurred only at minimal levels of diplomatic contact.<sup>109</sup> This recent thaw is an unprecedented act of diplomacy for Iran, being that cozying itself up to Egypt breaks new ground in the realm of Iranian foreign policy. Evidently, Tehran is actively endeavoring to divide the coalition of conservative Arab states that the Western alliance is intent on consolidating against Iran with Israeli participation.

Iran's revolution could never be exported to Egypt due primarily in part to schismatic religious differences – the Sunni/Shia divide. Both Cairo and Tehran will encounter overwhelming internal voices of opposition from their respective hardliner elements. Diplomatic relations between the two countries are clearly politically pragmatic and not sought on the basis of religious ideology. Tehran again strengthens its policy of non-alignment and further stymies Washington's efforts to regionally isolate it. Egypt benefits from Iran's counterweight to Israel as well, as using Iran's stance as a model for its pursuit of nuclear technology for its economic and electricity needs.<sup>110</sup>

### ***Nuclear Technology***

Due to their concerns over an Iranian nuclear weapons program, Washington and a few of its allies have failed to acknowledge Iran's legitimate pursuit of a nuclear energy program. Washington's containment policies and bellicose rhetoric have emboldened Tehran and only further encouraged its nuclear endeavors. It can be argued that Washington's coercive approach has enabled Iran to become increasingly independent and has fostered warming relations with China and Russia – both states capable of providing Iran with advanced nuclear technology. The attempt to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear technology is evidently futile and also blatantly ignores Tehran's legitimate energy concerns. Recent history has witnessed the Middle East becoming increasingly volatile, which all the more calls

for a substantial change in American foreign policy towards Iran. Meaningful dialogue with Tehran is absolutely necessary in order to prevent Iran from becoming all the more intimidated and further developing its nuclear technology for military applications.

### Washington's Complicity

The current Bush Administration either banks upon a historically myopic electorate or has succumbed to a peculiar case of collective amnesia. Both Republican and Democratic administrations in Washington supported Shah Pahlavi's elaborate plans to make nuclear power an integral part of Iran's domestic energy apparatus. This was due in large part to Pahlavi's willingness to purchase the bulk of his nuclear equipment from the United States. Iran's first research reactor was established by the U.S. in 1967 at Tehran University. Later that same year a U.S. corporation, United Nuclear, provided Iran with 5.85 kilograms of 93 percent enriched uranium. In the 1970's Washington continued to countenance Shah Pahlavi's nuclear development in Iran on the basis of its growing energy demands and finite amount of natural resources. President Gerald Ford's Administration, for which Kissinger was Secretary of State, backed Iran's nuclear endeavors. It was posited that Tehran should "prepare against the time...about 15 years in the future...when Iranian oil production is expected to decline sharply." General Electric and Westinghouse ultimately acquired contracts to establish eight new reactors in Iran. By the late 1970's, just prior to the Islamic revolution, Shah Pahlavi had intentions of purchasing a total of eighteen nuclear power reactors from the United States, France, and Germany.

Washington had full intentions of selling billions of dollars worth of nuclear reactors, spare parts and nuclear fuel to Iran. It is most important to note that Pahlavi ran a brutal dictatorship unfettered by democratic elections or an independent judiciary. The National Security and Intelligence Organization (SAVAK), the Shah's secret police, was notorious for arbitrarily torturing and murdering political

dissidents. The Shah also made no secret of plans to possibly militarize his nuclear program. Washington wasn't concerned at the least about an Iranian nuclear program in the 1970's; actually encouraging Iran to enrich its own uranium. Despite his regional ambitions Washington was not concerned as long as the Shah fulfilled important roles for his Washingtonian benefactors. In that respect, Pahlavi acted as regional gendarme for the U.S. and ensured a steady flow of petroleum to U.S. and other western oil companies.<sup>111</sup>

### *Iran's Legitimate Need*

When its war ended with Iraq in 1988, Iran was experiencing a massive population increase. Iran's population reached 70-million people mid-2006, which represented 16 percent of the Mid-East's 444-million inhabitants. According to data released by the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), Iran's population alone will reach 89 million by 2025. According to the same source, Iran will also have a population of 102 million people in 2050.<sup>112</sup> Iran's energy planners understood that demand would ultimately far exceed supply. Iran's current level of oil and natural gas exploitation would not be sufficient to meet electricity demands. An analysis by a scientist in the National Academy of Sciences presaged that Iran might deplete its exportable oil by 2015.<sup>113</sup> Its population growth rate and finite amount of resources suggest strongly that Iran cannot possibly rely exclusively on oil and gas for its energy needs. Due in large part to Washington's unilateral sanctions that deter foreign investment, Iran's aging oil industry has been unable even to match anywhere near the pre-revolution oil production level of 5.5 million barrels per day. Of Iran's 60 major oil fields, 57 need substantial repairs, upgrades and re-pressurizing; this would require \$40 billion over a period of 15 years. Iran's current production level of 3.5 million barrels daily is increasingly geared toward domestic consumption, which has expanded by more than 280 percent since the 1979 revolution. If this trend continues, Iran will eventually become a

net oil importer by 2010. This would be a catastrophe for a country that relies on oil for 80 percent of its foreign income and 45 percent of its annual budget.

It is routinely argued that Iran sits on a mountain of natural resources and should obtain electricity from natural gas-fired power plants that are allegedly more efficient. Experts have posited that this argument is wholly without merit. Professors from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) conducted research that indicated the cost of producing electricity from gas or oil is comparable with the price tag of generating electricity with nuclear reactors. Gas and oil processes also produce carbon emissions which adversely effect the environment. Nuclear reactors would provide Iran with a renewable energy resource and allow it to focus upon maximizing its profits as a main supplier of energy to Asia and Europe. Although nuclear energy will not resolve Iran's energy issues, it represents a significant move towards diversification of its domestic energy sources.<sup>114</sup>

### *Nuclear Iran: Why Now?*

Washington legitimately condemned the Taliban giving it ultimatums that were met with non-compliance. Ultimately, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and deposed the ruling Taliban regime. Washington also made many demands of Saddam Hussein and despite a lack international consensus, it unilaterally invaded Iraq. Subsequently, Saddam was turned over to the Iraqi's who tried, convicted and marched him off to the gallows. Iran now has long been the target of U.S. saber-rattling regarding its role in a so-called "axis of evil," and a being a sponsor of terrorism. Hawks in Washington also frequently utilize rhetoric such as "regime change" and the "military option" when discussing foreign policy towards Iran. Tehran has not only found itself surrounded by an ardent wall of U.S. military occupation, it has also witnessed two regimes at its northern and southern borders deposed by the United

States. It is without question that nuclear weapons would deter Washington from attempting to invade Iran as an extension of its “war on terror” in the Middle East. For hardliners in Iran, such as Ahmadinejad, nuclear weapons are seen as a legitimate means of defending Iran from what he must perceive to be a menacing and powerful regional presence. Iran’s hostile rhetoric, namely towards Israel, is evidently a maneuver to incite nationalist sentiment and divert domestic dissatisfaction away from Tehran; directing it towards the United States and its allies.

Evidently Tehran seeks to develop its nuclear technology for legitimate energy needs, security and the prestige associated with such an accomplishment. For obvious reasons the global community must react with due care. That Iran has legitimate needs for nuclear power is self-evident and the international community must gain a rational consensus on this matter. In Tehran I interviewed Mehrdad Hemmatyar, an Iranian steel merchant routinely sidelined by U.S. sanctions. Although Hemmatyar made a good living selling steel to the Chinese he longed for an end to the U.S. sanctions so that his country could once again profit from dealings with the Americans. “History suggests we should not trust the Russians, and the Chinese are only engaging us for selfish economic ends,” he stated before going on to add, “We Iranians have so much in common with the American’s. We legitimately need each other and now circumstances indicate that we should become partners in many aspects.” Hemmatyar indicated that a diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue would enable Iran to develop its nuclear energy program and put an end to the routine rolling blackouts in Tehran. Hemmatyar noted that the U.S. once supported an Iranian nuclear program and that Washington must be fully aware that Iran will ultimately become a nuclear power. He asserted that as a nuclear power Iran would not be a threat to Israel and a nuclear armed Iran would merely guarantee that neither side would benefit from attacking the other.<sup>115</sup>

Moderate elements in Iran are politically pragmatic and are endeavoring to reconcile Tehran’s ruling theocracy with modernity. The clerical establishment is vastly unpopular and a fast swelling,



college educated younger generation will ultimately erode the clerical grip on Iran's governance. However, moderate elements are only further marginalized by hostile rhetoric and policies of containment towards Iran. That Iran will eventually develop itself in a nuclear sense is not a looming threat for the world outside its borders. Historically speaking, nuclear powers have never considered invasion or all out war with each other. Stalemate or diplomatic resolutions are the usual outcomes. Most in the Middle East are quite aware that had Saddam Hussein actually developed a nuclear weapons program, he would likely still be alive and lording over Iraq today. However, he has passed from existence and the American flag now waves indefinitely over Baghdad. Any examination of this issue, unobscured by political or personal biases, suggests that Iran's pursuit of nuclear energy is wholly warranted. That Iran would additionally seek to develop a nuclear arsenal and become a member of the nuclear guild is not an irrational pursuit – it makes complete sense.

## CHAPTER 4: SYSTEM LEVEL EXAMINATION

America has many interests in common with the government of Iran and its populace. On the basis of regional endeavors, the United States and Iran are natural allies. Washington and Tehran have a shared interest in free access to the Persian Gulf and the free movement of oil out of that area. More important, both have a shared interest in stability in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both also have a common interest in every effective way to stopping the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan into Iran, Western Europe and the United States.<sup>116</sup>

### *Washington & Tehran – Strategic Allies*

The United States has done a huge service for Iran. It has removed the Taliban to the east and Saddam Hussein to the west, Iran's two greatest enemies and its greatest security threats. The United States has, in fact, given the Islamic Republic a very comfortable space to operate on the international scene; significantly more than it possessed before. Iran is quite active in southern Afghanistan. It is a big donor in building roads and other public projects. On the Iraqi side, the Iranians have been extremely helpful. They were the first country in the world to recognize the governing council set up by the United States. They are pursuing what they regard as a very enlightened policy in Iraq. They are offering petroleum products across the border, and they are opening their borders to trade. There are approximately 50,000 tourists in Iraq on any given occasion, traveling there primarily to visit the holy sites at Najaf and Karbala, which were previously closed to Iranian pilgrims for many years. Tehran was also very helpful in establishing the governing council and convincing the Shi'ite elements to cooperate in Iraq. In return for these efforts, the Islamic Republic was rewarded with Bush's "axis of evil" speech.<sup>117</sup>

### Afghanistan

Tehran is inherently at odds with the Taliban's malevolent anti-Shi'ite ideology – ironically this was the primary impetus for Saudi Arabia and the U.S. supporting the Taliban movement in the mid-1990's. The Taliban massacred Shi'ites in the Hazarajat region and in northern Afghanistan during its years in power in Kabul; among the thousands some were actually buried alive. As mentioned earlier, in Mazar-i-Sharif in 1997, the Taliban executed eight Iranian diplomats, which brought Tehran close to engaging the Taliban militarily.

It is no secret that Iran has actively supported the Northern Alliance. Tehran not only rendered huge amounts of material and military assistance to the Northern Alliance groups, an Iranian special envoy, Alae'ddin Broujerdi, was a frequent visitor to the Amu Darya region and Panjshir Valley for the purpose of blandishing the anti-Taliban resistance. It was Broujerdi's persuasive skills that overshadowed the petty conflicts and turf wars amongst Northern Alliance groups and united them against the Taliban. Although American occupation of Afghanistan was irreconcilable with Tehran's vital interests and core concerns, it put aside its differences with Washington. Because Afghanistan's long-term stability is of utmost concern to Tehran, it pragmatically supported the invasion.<sup>118</sup>

Despite their dramatic international struggle over Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology, Tehran and Washington briefly put aside their enmity and cooperated rather well in Afghanistan – a place where interests converge. Members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards fought alongside and advised the Afghan rebels who helped U.S. forces topple Afghanistan's Taliban regime in the months after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. James Dobbins, a former State Department official who worked with diplomats from Iran and other Afghan neighbors to create the first post-Taliban government, says the Iranians “were equipping and paying the Northern Alliance. Russia and India were also helping, but at the time, Iran was the most active.” After the fall of the Taliban, Iran offered to help train and equip a new Afghan army, Dobbins says. That offer was rebuffed by the Bush Administration.<sup>119</sup>

Despite preexisting tensions, Afghanistan is a fine example of how U.S. and Iranian interests can constructively align in the Islamic world. Tehran aligned itself with the Northern Alliance in its struggle against al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime, and had been financing opposition to the Taliban and Usama bin Laden long before the United States considered the invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>120</sup> Tehran later allowed the United States military to use its airspace during the course of the post 9/11 invasion.<sup>121</sup> In a gesture to openly display its full backing of the fragile post-Taliban government, Iran capitulated to Washington in 2002 by closing the office of dissident Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who subsequently left Iran.<sup>122</sup> The Iranian government also pledged \$560 million in development aid to President Hamid Karzai's government since 2002, half of which has already been administered. Afghan-Iranian relations have proven to be crucial, due to Tehran's economic and political influence inside Afghanistan. Former Secretary of State James Baker III, in unveiling the Iraq Study Group's recommendations on how to improve the situation in Iraq, pointed to Afghanistan as a possible model for U.S.-Iran cooperation in Iraq. This statement was supported by Iranian cooperation with Washington in Bonn, where during the course of an international conference they helped establish the Karzai government. "They were, in many ways, our principal collaborators at that meeting," said James Dobbins, President Bush's envoy to the gathering. Dobbins indicated that the Iranian envoy, Javad Zarif, persuaded the Northern Alliance to share power with other factions, a crucial step in establishing Karzai's government.<sup>123</sup> However, after Tehran's cooperation during the course of the invasion of Afghanistan and Afghan President Hamid Karzai's subsequent election, Washington discouraged Karzai from seeking intimate ties with Iran. Although Iran was publicly praised by the United States for their positive role in Afghanistan it soon found itself again vilified in Bush's "axis of evil" speech. Washington not only perplexed Tehran, but erased many of the political opportunities previously dangling at Washington's fingertips.<sup>124</sup>

Regardless of the breakdown in U.S. / Iranian ties, Tehran has continued to push ahead with development projects in Afghanistan, albeit amid little interaction with the American presence there. Its investments have helped make the country's western and central regions among the most stable there, in contrast with Afghanistan's south and east, where Taliban insurgents have heightened attacks on NATO, U.S. and Afghan forces in recent months, say Afghan officials and businessmen.<sup>125</sup> Iran continues to effect positive changes within Afghanistan as it projects its influence into the bordering region. Afghan cities, such as Herat, are now enjoying the luxury of uninterrupted electricity and impeccably paved highways. United States officials have largely attributed this stunning development at Iran's periphery to Tehran's largesse.<sup>126</sup> However, in August of 2007 President Bush took issue with Afghan President Hamid Karzai's characterization of Iran as a "helper" in Afghanistan. President Bush pointedly disagreed stating, "I would be very cautious about whether the Iranian influence in Afghanistan is a positive force." Yet a recent national intelligence estimate concluded that the al-Qaeda network had reconstituted itself and was reengaging coalition forces. However, al-Qaeda had not found refuge in Iran rather the mountainous territory in neighboring Pakistan<sup>127</sup> – a so-called "ally" in the war against the Taliban. Those scrutinizing Iran's conduct in Afghanistan will find they are extremely challenged in uncovering evidence of misconduct. Objective researchers ultimately concede that Iran, despite its policies elsewhere, has proven to be a benevolent neighbor to Afghanistan.

Amid tensions over Iran's nuclear ambitions and alleged support for militants, Afghanistan remains one of the opportunities for Washington and Tehran to mend the relations cut off since 1979. Both Iran and the United States share a common goal: to eliminate the Taliban and establish a stable post-Taliban political order in Afghanistan. Apparent post 9/11 cooperation demonstrated to Afghan warlords they could not play America and Iran off one another and mutual concerns compelled Tehran to deport hundreds of suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives who had fled Afghanistan. While

America and Iran worked together, Afghanistan was much more stable than it is today, al-Qaeda was on the run, the Islamic Republic's Hezbollah protégé was comparatively restrained, and Tehran was not spinning centrifuges. Oddly, the Bush Administration conveyed no interest in building on these positive trends.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, Washington's alienation of Iran via economic sanctions and "regime change" rhetoric threatens to erase the substantial progress made in Afghanistan, the primary battlefield in the "war on terror". Mohammad Reza Bahrami, Iran's Ambassador to Afghanistan has indicated, "The disagreements we have with the international community do not have a place in Afghanistan," he went on to add, "Our understanding for Afghanistan is that it can be a good model for cooperation among the international community."<sup>129</sup>

As will be seen in the following pages, Washington must seize the opportunity to move forward decisively toward strategic engagement with Iran. This will ensure success in its efforts to pacify violent elements and stabilize the environments inside Iran's neighboring countries. Iran remains a partner vital to this endeavor by virtue of its shared culture, language, geographic location and early cooperation. It is not prudent to discard a potential ally with a demonstrated history of successfully pursuing its interests unilaterally within Afghanistan. It is important to note that Tehran could have elected to sideline itself as America toppled the Taliban, overtly abstaining to side with the "Great Satan" in the eyes of the Muslim world. Instead, Tehran cooperated with Washington's efforts in Afghanistan and sided with the West against the Taliban. Why would a government that has been labeled as "fanatical" by many U.S. politicians assist the United States in a war against Muslim extremists? The Iranians were hoping that their assistance in Afghanistan would have strategic implications with an entire new relationship between Tehran and Washington as the ultimate outcome. "Iran made a mistake not to link its assistance in Afghanistan to American help in other areas and by just hoping that the U.S. would reciprocate," said Javad Zarif, Iran's United Nations ambassador who was in charge of negotiations with Washington over

Afghanistan.<sup>130</sup> The aforementioned activities overwhelmingly suggest that Tehran evidently desires normalized relations with Washington, which would also allow it to interact much more freely with the rest of the Western world.

### *Iraq*

Since the toppling of Saddam Hussein and his Ba'athist regime, Iraq is a state that has gone from bad to worse. The occupying force, the United States, claims to have a plan for success, but as the death toll continues to mount it is increasingly evident that Washington may have unwittingly opened Pandora's Box in the Arab World. The U.A.E. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mohammed Hussain Al Sha'ali, indicated that his country historically looked upon the United States as a role model. However in his opinion, the war in Iraq appears to have been executed without a great deal of advanced planning. "Our countries tried to advise the U.S. not to go in to Iraq without a plan," Sha'ali recounted, "Because of arrogance no one was willing to listen to advice from the region. Military might should be couched in wisdom. The U.S. didn't analyze the situation before invading. They dismantled the country's education, health care and security system." In the wake of this invasion, U.S. occupation authorities eliminated Iraqis' jobs and tried to govern and police an entire country. As a result, Iraqis who lived in peace together for thousands of years became divided and headed for civil war.<sup>131</sup>

Amidst tensions between Tehran and Washington lurk mutual concerns and powerful incentives to cooperate in order to back away from the precipice of deadly military confrontation. Washington is fast learning the unilateralism that enabled it to swiftly enter Iraq and dispose of Saddam, is now somewhat ineffective in managing the complex situation that has unfolded during the occupation. The United States now faces a stark choice. It must either escalate its confrontational policy with Iran or adopt a policy of engagement. Far from arresting the Iranian danger, escalation would most likely

present the United States with new perils. Given the balance of power in the region, a continued confrontational course with Iran would saddle the United States with the protracted commitment of setting up camp in the Persian Gulf indefinitely and deploying to other conflict zones in an environment of increasing radicalism. It would place the United States at the heart of the region's conflicts, leaving it all the more vulnerable to ideological extremism and terrorism at home and abroad. An American conflict with Iran would also undermine regional stability, jeopardize the economic gains of the Persian Gulf emirates and inflame Muslim public opinion. Persistent clashes with the United States will radicalize the Iranian theocracy and, more important, the Iranian public.<sup>132</sup>

A crucial factor for stability in Iraq is cooperative relations between Iran and the United States. For the first time in Iraq's history, the Arab-Sunni minority has been forced out of power and has been replaced, at least for the present time, by the Shi'ite majority. The success of this historical reconstruction of Iraq's political system will depend largely on cooperation between the U.S. and neighboring countries, namely Iran. The decades-long political repression and economic discrimination against the Shi'ites will come to an end and Iraq's new face is certain to have significant regional implications. However success will not materialize without the reduction of tension realized through cooperative relations between the United States and Iran.<sup>133</sup> Tehran / Washington rapprochement would serve to foment stability in Iraq, where both parties evidently support the same Shi'ite-led government. In February 2007 a powerful senior Iraqi Shi'ite leader, Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, indicated his country had urged Iran to hold talks with the United States and that such talks were important for the security of the region.<sup>134</sup> Further cooperation should entail the U.S. curtailing its projection of power towards Iran in the Persian Gulf, ceasing its calls upon the international community to not invest in Iran, and proactively bringing Iran into multilateral endeavors confronting Middle Eastern affairs. As a part of its new diplomatic approach, Washington must also encourage stabilizing Iranian influence in bordering states



and cease casting an enemy image for Iran with language that labels Iran as a main protagonist in an "axis of evil" or the "central banker of terrorism". In light of many years of sanctions, containment, and inflammatory accusations, the time has come to realize that such measures are wholly incapable of moderating Iran's behavior.

In September 2006, former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami criticized both Ahmadinejad and President Bush for using intemperate language that has heightened tensions, "A politician must conduct himself at the highest level of etiquette and diplomacy." On the topics of sanctions and military action Khatami went on to state, "Sanctions and, even worse than that, military action will only serve to complicate the issue, not solve the problem." He further indicated that despite the change in the leadership, Iran was not the enemy of the United States and that the two countries share strategic interests in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>135</sup> Both Tehran's moderate voices and history of foreign policy practices reveal that the Islamic Republic is quite capable and willing to mitigate its ideology with pragmatism.<sup>136</sup>

The Bush Administration is facing increasing domestic and international pressure to pursue Iranian assistance in pacifying sectarianism in Iraq. British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Australian Premier John Howard have indicated they favor engaging Iran and Syria in order to develop effective measures to reduce the level of violence in Iraq; a stance increasingly shared by many influential U.S. lawmakers from both parties.<sup>137</sup> By engaging Iran in order to pursue the stabilization of Iraq, the Bush Administration could also open additional avenues of dialogue leading to further rapprochement. To continue on its quest to halt the sectarian violence only to meet further failure would leave Iran feeling more confident and less inclined to assist the United States in minimizing its losses.<sup>138</sup> The key to Washington freeing itself of the Iraqi quagmire is to do what the current Presidential administration has refused to do all along: link Iranian cooperation in Iraq to Washington's willingness to find a

compromise on the nuclear issue. Neither Congress nor a pragmatist in charge of the Pentagon is likely to change the course on Iraq and Iran unless the President recognizes the reality on the ground: without Iran, the U.S. cannot win in Iraq, and without linking Iraq to the nuclear issue, Tehran is not likely to cooperate.<sup>139</sup> Such compromise with Iran would ultimately serve as the most viable exit strategy from Iraq, leaving the door open for future political and economic relations with Tehran.

### ***Opium: Iran and U.S. Interests Converge Again***

The cultivation and production of opium in Afghanistan have skyrocketed since the U.S. deposed the Taliban in 2001. It is said that Afghanistan now supplies 92 percent of the world's illicit opium. The rapidly expanding opium apparatus now threatens to destabilize the Afghan government and transform the embattled country back into sanctuary for drug traffickers and terrorists.<sup>140</sup> Drug traffickers have characterized Iran as part of the "golden route", an opium smuggling trail that extends from Afghanistan into Pakistan and then into eastern Iran. From Iran opium, and its derivative heroin, ultimately makes its way into western markets. Afghanistan's drug cultivation and trafficking is somewhat pervasive and its proceeds also enrich certain elements allied with Washington. A senior U.S. Pentagon official, who has been involved in the reorganization of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan to effectively pitch them against the Taliban, admitted the drug economy in Afghanistan was more powerful than the actual economy. However, the route has become a lucrative funding source for the Taliban resistance whose other sources of financing have been nearly eliminated due to the "war on terror".<sup>141</sup>

Iran has the highest rate of heroin and opium addiction per capita. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC, of Iran's 70 million people more than 4 million are addicted to drugs. This addiction cuts across educational, class, age and economic barriers. Experts claim that Middle-aged professionals and academics are as vulnerable as under-educated, socially

deprived teenagers. Iran is plagued by the movement of drugs flowing in through its eastern and western borders, as well as its southern seaports. Overwhelming quantities of opium and heroin are smuggled in from Afghanistan, Pakistan and former Soviet republics such as Turkmenistan. Further exacerbating this problem is an influx of hallucinogenic and chemical-based drugs, such as ecstasy, from Turkey and through the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.

Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, more than 2.6 million Iranians have been arrested on drug offenses. Almost half the prison population is serving time for drug-related crimes. Iran's police and security forces have been engaged in a losing battle with drug smugglers. In 2003, the country's anti-drug forces seized 220 tons of drugs, reckoned by the UN to be just a fraction of the amount entering the country. Since the revolution, approximately 3,200 members of the security forces have been killed in clashes with drug traffickers.<sup>142</sup> However Iran is not the only country that has a strong desire to eradicate the opium apparatus firmly rooted in Afghanistan.

In September 2006, the UNODC published a survey on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, which it said has risen 59 percent since 2005. The report characterized the 6,100 tons of opium harvested in Afghanistan in 2006 as "unprecedented," and claimed harvest revenues are likely to exceed \$3 billion. On the heels of the U.N. report, Thomas Schweich of the U.S. State Department issued a statement to reporters in Brussels that U.S. officials believe aggressive eradication of opium poppies in Afghanistan is crucial. John Waters, the White House drug control policy director, also noted that opium poppy eradication endeavors have been successful in Mexico and South America. Both countries have been the main suppliers of heroin to the United States. However he indicated that enforcement agencies, such as the Drug Enforcement Administration, are concerned that opium emanating from Afghanistan may ultimately fill the void.<sup>143</sup>

The void left by the removal of the Taliban from power in Afghanistan is being occupied by corrupt officials, criminals, and terrorists. Furthermore, these elements are substantially subsidized by the opium trade. The majority of Afghanistan delighted in the Taliban's fall, however the weak central government along with U.S. and NATO forces has been ineffective in establishing security or ameliorating the quality of life in Afghanistan. Additionally, errant bullets and bombs have injured and killed many innocent Afghans who have become increasingly disillusioned with U.S. and NATO forces. Ironically, Afghans are now turning back to the Taliban in order to meet their security needs. The opium crop is also a major source of funding for the Taliban insurgency.

The opium problem and security of Afghanistan are intimately linked and Iran must not be precluded from this regional equation. Iran's cultural, political, and religious clout has earned it a position of unrivaled regional prominence. Iran has harbored close to two million Afghans either as refugees or illegal immigrants. In addition to supplying Afghanistan electricity, Iran is also actively building roads, schools and hospitals within the war-torn country. Iran has clearly made substantial investments in Afghanistan. In the past it has offered support and assistance to the Northern Alliance and has provided millions of dollars in aid after the toppling of the Taliban. Additionally, as its neighbor, Iran has intimate historical and linguistic ties with Afghanistan. Washington has clearly benefitted in the past from Iranian influence in Afghanistan. Afghan elements view Shi'ite Iran as an ally and are predisposed to accepting Iranian political advice in regional affairs. The reality on the ground such as the return of the Taliban, suggests that Washington must abandon its overly ambitious goals and reengage Iran. It is important to stress that rapprochement with Iran does not constitute a drastic overhaul of Washington's initial strategy. Co-opting Iran simply reflects Washington's ultimate realization that it must recruit relevant regional players in order to establish a renewed sense of security

in Afghanistan. As an alien regional player seeking to effect changes from abroad, the United States must reestablish dialogue with Iran and cooperate with it in this important area of mutual interest.

The opium flow from Afghanistan is addressed by Iran primarily through interdiction. Recently, Iran has increased its interdiction efforts, largely because of its increasing domestic addiction problem. Iran has also lost several thousand troops in its efforts to guard its porous border with Afghanistan.<sup>144</sup> Iran's commitment to preventing opium emanating from Afghanistan from reaching its citizens also prevents the illicit substance from finding its way into Western markets.

The interdiction effort has become a dangerous business for Iran. In 2005 more than a quarter of the drug seizures in Iran came by way of "armed clashes," according to the Iranian Drug Control Headquarters. Iranian security forces seem to be having increased success by concentrating their interdiction efforts in the eastern provinces. The eastern provinces, specifically the southeast, are among the poorest regions in Iran. The population there has made its living by smuggling for many years, even prior to the 1979 Revolution.<sup>145</sup> Iran pursues an aggressive border interdiction effort and has invested as much as \$800 million in a system of elaborate counter-trafficking infrastructures such as patrol roads, concrete dam constructions, ditches, sentry points, observation towers, barbed wire, electrified fences, and even electronic surveillance devices. 30,000 law enforcement personnel man Iran's borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Iran says it spends \$400 million annually on anti-drug operations.<sup>146</sup>

The United States is equally concerned about the opium emanating from Afghanistan. However, its primary role should be that of counter-insurgency and not so much counter-narcotics. Clearly Afghanistan lacks a modicum of stability and without widespread security, counter-narcotics measures will water down forces and would be hopelessly ineffective. Instability in Afghanistan represents a looming danger for the Karzai government whose grip on power is tenuous at best. In the absence of

stability, efforts to eradicate the illicit opium apparatus would only lead to adaptation and a strengthened insurgency by the Taliban, which continues to dominate remote areas of Afghanistan.

Eradication and interdiction efforts within Afghanistan, on the part of the United States, are accompanied by the risk of political fallout that could lead to more violence and instability. Aerial spraying would also kill food crops some farmers plant alongside their poppies. Herbicidal spraying could ultimately be characterized, namely by the Taliban, as American chemical warfare against the Afghan peasantry. Ironically, officials at the Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency have also challenged the White House and State Department support for poppy eradication, raising concerns about its potential to destabilize the Karzai government, current and former American officials have said.<sup>147</sup>

Both Tehran and Washington have a shared interest in combating the illicit opium industry and promoting the rule of law in Afghanistan. Both should provide financial aid, material support and training in order to empower the Afghani central government to increase its eradication / interdiction capacities as well as its ability to target criminal organizations and corrupt officials. Iran and the United States are better equipped to work in unison to address the re-emerging insurgency while allowing the Karzai government to police itself domestically.

### ***The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: “Pasdaran”***

The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini established the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), or “Pasdaran”, in 1979. The clerical counterpart to the country's standing armed forces, the Pasdaran is the Islamic Republic's principal ideological weapon.<sup>148</sup> Although the Iranian Constitution entrusts the military with guarding Iran's territorial integrity and political independence, it empowers the Pasdaran to guard the integrity of the Iranian Republic's revolutionary ideology. Specifically, the Pasdaran is to assist the ruling clerics with the enforcement of the republic's Islamic codes and morality. The formation

of the Pasdaran unified several paramilitary forces into a single force loyal to the new regime. The Pasdaran was to function as a counter to the influence and power of the regular military and to disarm non-Islamist members of the broad revolutionary coalition. Its sacrifices and gradual adoption of classical warfare doctrines during the Iran-Iraq War enhanced its reputation as an efficient military force and political influence soon followed. While discussion of the Pasdaran's cultural and religious activities remains muted outside narrow academic circles, they are as real as its political activities.<sup>149</sup>

The Iranian military is a powerful apparatus which, within the region, is commonly said to be second only to Israel. However, the Iranian military is routinely spoken of in the media as a single entity; a practice that is wholly inaccurate. Militarily speaking, Iran's forces are comprised of three different elements – the regular armed forces, the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF), and the Pasdaran (IRGC). Like the Regular Iranian army, the Pasdaran has land, air and navy forces. The Pasdaran is also comprised of a missile and special forces arm.

However the regular military is, in totality, much larger and a better-equipped apparatus than the Pasdaran. The regular military is comprised of approximately 400,000 active duty members while the Pasdaran has only 120,000. Pasdaran land forces are significantly smaller and less armed than their regular army counterparts. The regular army is also better equipped in comparison. The bulk of Iran's 200 or so operational “high performance” combat aircraft are owned by the regular air force in contrast to the Pasdaran's few dozen trainer aircraft. The Pasdaran navy consists of 10 Chinese Houdong class missile boats and more than 100 small boats, shore-based anti-ship missile batteries, and a large combat swimmer (naval special warfare) force. Iran's regular navy controls a dozen major surface combatant ships and three submarines. Although relatively small in stature, the Pasdaran is a key institution in Iran today due to its role as “guardian of the revolution” and the fact that many senior Pasdaran commanders

have close personal and family links to powerful members of Iran's clerical establishment. Consequentially, the Pasdaran has assured itself a crucial role in the selection, ideological indoctrination, professional development, and advancement of future senior officers.<sup>150</sup> Despite their differences, all three military arms are under the direction of the Supreme Leader of Iran, who has a representative in charge of each of the three arms. This diaspora of military power within Iran is an outgrowth of the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979. For obvious reasons, the nascent clerical regime was suspicious of the regular armed military which had previously supported the Peacock throne. As a result, the Pasdaran were constitutionally entrenched as an ideological counterweight to the regular armed forces. The regular army is solely committed to protecting Iranian territory, independence and general order within the country. The Pasdaran protect the “purity” of Islamic theology practiced in Iran.

As the most ideologically committed arm of the Islamic regime not only was the Pasdaran established to discourage notions of a future military coup, it has also become one of the main political and economic players in the country. In actuality, the Pasdaran has become somewhat of a franchise chain rather than a corporation controlled by a board of directors. This aspect of the Pasdaran necessitates a sophisticated approach when foreign actors endeavor to engage it. The Pasdaran is divided into five commands, each of which has a direct line to the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, also one of the earliest members of the force in 1980. Of the five commands that make up the Pasdaran, only two could be regarded as “terrorist” according to the U.S. State Department’s definition. The first, which includes the so-called “Quds” Corps, is responsible for the exportation of the “Islamic Revolution”. Apart from Hezbollah and Hamas this command coordinates a number of radical groups across the globe. The second command that is radical in nature deals with internal repression. It operates through several auxiliary forces, including the notorious “Karbala” brigades charged with crushing popular revolts in Tehran. A majority of the Iranian populace perceive these as instruments of terror.<sup>151</sup> Parallel



to the regular army, the Pasdaran also control the “Basij Mustadafin” (mobilization of the dispossessed), a zealously ideological, semi-voluntary force of 90,000 full-time fighters and 2 million reserves. It is said this force could be expanded to 11 million according to its commander General Mohammad Hejazi. Their role is to combat internal enemies of the revolution and ensure that Islamic law is respected. Pasdaran membership is said to stand at approximately 125,000 members. Its officers’ corps, including retired members, is comprised of 55,000 individuals who are said to be as divided on domestic and foreign policies as the Iranian populace.<sup>152</sup> During the course of my field research in Iran, Bitka Molkava was quick to point out members of the Basij Mustadafin, whom she referred to as “Basijis”. Under the control of local mosques, these individuals wore regular clothes and were known to patrol public areas monitoring the conduct of Iranians. Molkava indicated their domestic spying had noticeably increased after the election of hardliner President Ahmadinejad. Although Molkava stated she highly favors the end of hair covering and other social codes, she cautioned against the notion of immediate change. Molkava favored gradual, rather than abrupt change, which she felt would inevitably occur over the course of diplomatic relations (political and economic) with the west.<sup>153</sup> Mehrdad Hemmatyar also noted that containment, sanctions, and harsh rhetoric from the west – namely Washington – had occasioned the elections of hardliner figures that ratcheted up enforcement of morality codes. For Hemmatyar, the Pasdaran is a tool of the clerical apparatus to prevent Western values from taking root and endangering their grip on political power. He too asserted that engagement, rather than abrupt regime change, would ultimately lead to the moderation of the clerical apparatus.<sup>154</sup> Reactionary in nature, it is surmised the Pasdaran would evolve during the course of the moderation of the Islamic Republic. Despite its oppressive practices, through the years the Pasdaran has provided Iranians with an effective vehicle not only to advance themselves socially, but also economically and politically as well.

The Pasdaran has established a domineering economic empire that has made it a financially independent segment of Iran's power elite. This empire entails a vast array of financial and economic enterprises, from trading corporations to huge public works projects. Following the 1980-88 Iran/Iraq war, the Pasdaran was directed to assume control over a majority of the country's reconstruction. In furtherance of the endeavor, the Pasdaran established the "Construction Jihad". This event enabled the Pasdaran to become a formidable actor within the Iranian economic sector. In 1983, the Supreme Defense Council authorized the Pasdaran to set up its own military industries. This ended the U.S. sponsored monopoly of the regular armed forces over domestic arms production and repair industries. Over the course of a few years, the Pasdaran operated a growing defense industry which currently produces a vast array of military weapons; from ballistic missiles to automatic rifles. Washington's arms embargos have had the opposite effect, enabling Iran to become increasingly self sufficient. In the face of sanctions and embargos, the Pasdaran has actively endeavored to limit the penetration of foreign contractors into Iran's economy, positing that they constitute a security risk or have business dealings with Israel. Washington's containment policies hobbled reformists, such as former President Mohammed Khatami who favored opening up the economy to badly needed outside investment during the period between 1997 and 2005. The Pasdaran's widening economic reach can be attributed, for the most part, to Washington's historical aversion to rapprochement with Iran. As a result, the Pasdaran have been able to dramatically expand their activities. Through its companies, the Pasdaran has become involved in a diverse array of activities, from small road, dam, and tunnel projects to petroleum production and major construction projects across the country.

In 2006, "Khatam al-Anbiya" secured deals worth at least \$7 billion in the oil, gas, and transportation sectors, among others.<sup>155</sup> Said to be the "engineering arm" of the Pasdaran, in June 2007 "Khatam-al-Anbia" was awarded a \$2.09 billion contract to develop the huge South Pars offshore gas

field. Around the same period, the Pasdaran was awarded a \$1.2 billion contract to construct a 900 kilometer pipeline linking the South Pars field to southeastern Iran to provide domestic gas. Developing the South Pars gas field is a significant economic endeavor that will enable the exploitation of Iran's vast gas reserves. Second on the globe only to Russia's gas reserves, the Pars development project will be Tehran's money-train as oil reserves are depleted. The Pasdaran's footprint in South Pars highlights its overt penetration into Iran's sacrosanct energy sector and further broadens its growing political power. In addition, the Pasdaran recently procured Iran's largest private oil company, Oriental Kish, for approximately \$90 million. Sources indicate the Pasdaran are involved in approximately 250 additional projects worth a total of \$2.8 billion, including a new port terminal for shipping petrochemicals, while 1,220 projects worth between \$2.7 billion and \$3.2 billion have been completed. The impact of the Pasdaran's growing economic power is heightened by the control that the regime's financial oligarchs, dominated by the influential League of Islamic Associations, exert over state and non-state institutions. These include a collaborative of powerful semi-government, supposedly philanthropic, foundations known as "bonyads", which control assets worth billions of dollars. These financial reserves have also enabled the Pasdaran to allegedly fund covert operations. Its economic brawn has enabled the Pasdaran to build up an ideological franchise throughout the republic, which provides funding independent of the state.<sup>156</sup>

Overtly religious, nationalistic, and battle-trained since 1980, the Pasdaran has emerged as a critical force in determining Iran's national security strategy. In a post-Khomeini era, the Pasdaran is more often displaying its ability to wield enormous power to approve or disapprove governmental changes. Close relations with the highest political authorities have enabled Pasdaran enterprises to win lucrative building and other contracts in non-competitive bidding.<sup>157</sup> However, Pasdaran officials have also utilized their access to the Revolutionary Council and Khomeini as a stepping-stone to higher

offices. Both President Khamenei and Majlis speaker Hashemi-Rafsanjani were previously commanders within the Pasdaran.<sup>158</sup> The Pasdaran have been incrementally gathering political power with the passing of Ayatollah Khomeini 1989. This activity became especially pronounced when its current commander, Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, assumed control in 1997. The Pasdaran's economic and political clout was significantly augmented in June 2005 with the surprise election of the fiery populist Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a former Pasdaran commander, to the Iranian presidency. Many who are historically dependent upon the Pasdaran to maintain political power, such as militant ideologues and conservative clerics, operated in roles that were critical to ensuring Ahmadinejad's election.<sup>159</sup> By 2005 the IRGC's long reach into political affairs was increasingly apparent. Iran's parliament included about 80 former IRGC members, while other former members command the regular army and the national police. Still more occupy important civilian and government positions, such as municipal councilors, mayors, provincial governors, university professors, and businessmen.<sup>160</sup> Through examination of the various facets of the Pasdaran, it is evident its elements work under an ideological veil, but truly have both political and economic stakes in maintaining and defending the current regime.

Although ideological by design, many in the Pasdaran have assumed roles within its ranks in order to simply acquire a paycheck. Most distinguished Pasdaran commanders can be viewed as businessmen, with the distinction as a military figure being merely a ceremonial role. A majority of the members have relatives abroad in Europe or North America in order to safeguard business interests and maintain congress with foreign "satans" should Tehran eventually fall in an ideological sense. Those Pasdaran commanders who found themselves unable to embrace the Islamic Republic's rigid practices defected to America. Hundreds of others relegated themselves to a low-profile exile, for the most part as businessmen in the UAE, Malaysia and Turkey. Contrary to popular sentiments in the partisan media, few Pasdaran commanders, including some in the highest of offices, abhor the notion of hostile relations

with America. Should the Pasdaran be forced to engage American troops a true military victory is highly unlikely, and protracted conflict with America would damage or utterly destroy lucrative Iranian business empires.

The term “Pasdaran” (vigilantes) evokes a mixture of loathing and grudging admiration. Although many Iranians perceive it as a monster protecting an evil regime, most realize that Pasdaran leaders are truly pragmatic businessmen who would ultimately side with the populace against an increasingly repressive and unpopular clerical regime. It must be noted the Pasdaran was established after the Islamic revolution had succeeded; a fact of crucial importance. Those who joined the Pasdaran came from a myriad of backgrounds, many being opportunists who signed up on fictitious grounds. Membership in the Pasdaran afforded only revolutionary credentials but, most importantly, substantial income during a period when economic collapse made stable employment a rarity. Membership in the Pasdaran enabled many, especially those who had supported the former regime, to erase their past and obtain "revolutionary virginity." An Iranian who joined the Pasdaran obtained access to rare goods and services, such as electronics and decent housing. Most importantly, the Pasdaran represented a lifeline for many Iranians during uncertain times. For this reason, it would be irresponsible to broadly characterize the Pasdaran as a terrorist organization. A blanket labeling of the Pasdaran (IRGC) as "terrorist" as opposed to targeting specific elements that terrorize the Iranian people, and others in the region and beyond, could prove counterproductive. It may, in fact, unite a fractious force that could splinter into more manageable parts given the right incentives.<sup>161</sup>

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

“We want good relations with the American people. There has to be a dialogue between the governments, but what can one do when your government has always wronged us? We need to see evidence that this process will be reversed.”

Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani – Former President of Iran

Objective examination of the status of relations between Iran and the United States invariably leads the unbiased researcher to become somewhat critical of American foreign policy. This research has unequivocally revealed that the United States did a great disservice to the nascent democratic forces in Iran, beginning with the CIA lead disposal of Mossadegh. As the chief architect of American foreign policy, U.S. presidents determine the warmth of relations with the exterior world. Examination of foreign policy crafted by previous presidential administrations establishes that barriers to U.S. / Iranian rapprochement are raised between the two countries at the individual level. Previous administrations have seemingly remained fixated on the international milieu as an ideological arena characterized only by “win or lose” outcomes. All dissonance in this realm is viewed by Washington ideologues solely through the prism of “good versus evil” confrontation. By virtue of its wealth and military might, Washington has claimed for itself the role as the consummate force for good. Consequently, states or entities not firmly entrenched in Washington’s camp are characterized as enemies to be confronted and expatriated from the international collective if they dare not acquiesce. Because Tehran has displayed the temerity to resist Washington with increasing levels of success, Iran has been labeled as dangerous.

During the course of my tour of the Islamic Republic, I found myself within a western oriented country whose citizenry powerfully craves higher levels of freedom and engagement with the western world. Although Iran is situated between two worn-torn, underdeveloped states and is besieged by sanctions and an American containment policy, the Iranian populace is highly educated and Iran's major cities are modern in every sense of the word. Iranian women lead productive lives, routinely pursue graduate level educations, and are noticeably coddled by their male counterparts. The Islamic government, its hardliner figures, and the rigidity of the apparatus are indeed no reflection of the Iranian society. Pro-American sentiment is rampant amongst Iranians and unlike in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Iranian people are absolutely prepared for American style democracy.

My experience in Iran confirmed my suspicion that Washington's history of economic sanctions and policy of containment have been not only ineffective but also counterproductive. Evidently Washington does not have a clear understanding of the Islamic Republic and has reacted aggressively rather than pragmatically. Iran is a country whose younger population and future leaders are in the majority. This up and coming segment also views the west, specifically America, quite favorably and would welcome engagement. Iran's economic future is also uncertain and its current political leadership is extremely unpopular. However Washington's lack of engagement and vilification of Iran in general serves only to allow leaders such as Ahmadinejad to rouse nationalistic sentiment and pursue bellicose policies. By ending hostile rhetoric and engaging Iran piecemeal across a plethora of issues, Washington could easily garner the domestic political support necessary in Iran to occasion positive outcomes. At this juncture, there are no longer nuclear possibilities in Iran; there are inevitabilities. The circumstances dictate extensive engagement in order to assure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear intentions. An Islamic Republic engaged politically and economically with the U.S. would be certainly less inclined to pursue a nuclear weapons program and would assist in stabilization efforts in its bordering states.

## *Individual Level Implications*

### *Eisenhower's Legacy*

A pervasive dearth of awareness with regard to the history of U.S. / Iranian relations plagues the American populace. Mohammad Mossadegh, a colossal figure in Iranian history and Time magazine's 1951 "Man of the Year", and his fate at the hands of the CIA are virtually unknown in well-educated circles of modern America. For this reason, ideologues in Washington are able to demonize Iran while paying lip service to the notion of democracy. Not widely acknowledged is the fact that the United States was responsible for eliminating democratic rule in Iran in 1953; subsequently installing a long-standing dictatorial regime. U.S. administration officials have been successful in vilifying Iran by tactically elucidating particular events subsequent to the Islamic Revolution of 1979. However, it is U.S. foreign policy prior to the Islamic Revolution that continues to stir negative Iranian sentiments. Americans who fail to understand the Iranian animus towards Washington need only look into the actions of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1953. By overthrowing Iran's democratic government, the Eisenhower Administration irrevocably changed the political culture; in effect imposing upon Iranians the rigid elements of life they endure today. Not only were the healthy crops of democracy extirpated in Iran, a dictatorial monarch replaced a revered political figure who embraced the United States as a reliable sponsor and an ideological ally. The Eisenhower Administration's fingerprint in Iran dramatically changed the manner in which most of the international community viewed America. Eisenhower's legacy is an unromantic communication from the past warning policymakers of the dangers of effecting far-reaching changes in distant nations. For this reason, architects of American foreign policy who seek to gain compliance from Iran must be cognizant of historical realities that have great bearing upon the Iranian mindset. Primarily, they must refrain from repeating the mistakes of their predecessors and avoid subordinating notions of national sovereignty and democracy to pecuniary motives.



### *Carter's Miscalculations*

There are several lessons to be learned from the miscalculations of the Carter Administration. Although admirable, Carter's apparent obsession with the notion of human rights veered his presidential decision making well outside the realm of political pragmatism. Domestically, Shah Pahlavi had alienated himself, operating a repressive dictatorial regime with a secret police force infamous for committing acts of torture. However Pahlavi's methods assured his regime's foothold and had little to do with his fall from power. Despite his despotic shortcomings, Pahlavi had normalized relations with the West, recognized the state of Israel, and publicly accorded women equal status in Iranian society. Because Pahlavi's was forced make broad rather than incremental steps toward political freedom, radical elements in Iran were left unfettered to establish a revolutionary powder keg in Iran. Carter's subsequent termination of funding that assuaged the enmity of outspoken anti-Western mullahs lit the match. Faced with the choice of either backing the Shah or working with revolutionary elements to attenuate the violence associated with transition to the new government Carter remained indecisive. After the new revolutionary regime had come to power, Carter again allowed his humanitarian heart-strings to prevail over pragmatism by admitting the Shah into the U.S. for medical treatment, stoking the anger of a younger radicalized Iranian element; thus placing U.S. diplomats in Iran at their mercy. Enabled by Carter's humanitarian naïveté, the new regime also put thousands of so-called spies, informants, and pro-Western Iranians to death by firing squads. Iranian women were again forced to wear conservative attire and a once free media fell under rigid government scrutiny. A government that was once amenable to Washington was replaced by an intractable regime utterly antagonistic towards the United States. Had the Carter Administration not abandoned Shah Pahlavi and sought progressive change incrementally, it is axiomatic the mullahs of Iran would not be in control today. Unfortunately for the Iranian people, President Carter was an idealist and not a statesman. Although good intentioned, Carter failed to

recognize Iran for the intricate political puzzle that it is. Carter's miscalculations represent a great lesson for future policymakers. Much like with George W. Bush's endeavor in Iraq, presidential administrations should consider the possible consequences associated with abruptly terminating the repression of certain dissident elements in sovereign countries. The scheme of American freedom has not yet proven to be universal, namely in countries where it is culturally and religiously incompatible. Fostering abrupt widespread political freedom has more often produced violent undercurrents with proven global implications. The forcing of Pahlavi's hand, much like the toppling of Mossadegh and Saddam Hussein, was not a process that had positive implications with regard to freedom and humanitarianism. All were processes that resulted in chaotic or more repressive environments. Even in America, progressive and enduring change occurred incrementally with leadership and the citizenry laboring in concert with one another. The endeavor to effect positive change abroad should be an endeavor approached with trepidation. Carter failed to consider the possible consequences his demands would have upon the stability and continuity of governance in Iran. When confronted with their ultimate reality, Carter was ponderously indecisive and set the stage for the emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The nascent clerical regime in Tehran and its pugnacious Shah acutely sensed Carter's affable nature; subsequently emboldened by their ability to flout his courteous requests with apparent impunity. Although Pahlavi ran a repressive regime, Iran was still laboring towards democracy and Carter failed to recognize the importance of incremental change during the course of Iran's tumultuous political development. The lesson in Carter's case is that Washington should have a more thorough understanding of the political milieu within a particular country before encouraging or compelling it to make broad political reforms.

### Reagan's Duplicity

Although revered amongst conservative ideologues, Reagan's presidency will be forever foreshadowed by two rather damaging foreign policy blunders; the arming of the Hussein regime with chemical weapons and the Iran-Contra Affair. Siding with Hussein against Iran revealed that the Reagan Administration evidently wished to relegate the Middle East to a globally innocuous group of warring states incapable of resisting U.S. foreign policy endeavors. The Reagan Administration only further alienated the U.S. from Iran and ultimately further empowered a murderous despot the United States would itself engage militarily in the future. Furthermore, Reagan's denial of any knowledge regarding an Iran-Contra affair framed him as a confused and uninformed executive whose lethargic managerial paradigm hampered his ability to control rogue subordinates. While circumventing congressional prerogatives, the Reagan Administration operated under a majorly flawed assumption. This being the notion that "moderate" Iranian elements somehow exercised complete control over Hezbollah. No one can fault the Reagan Administration for attempting to negotiate with Iran in order to secure the release of American hostages. However, the administration can be righteously castigated for over \$50 million in illegal arms sales to Iran, betrayal of the standing U.S. policy to never make concessions to terrorist elements, and its subsequent duplicity upon the revelation of its illegal conduct. Sadly, at the end of Reagan's time in office, there were more kidnapped Americans in Lebanon at the end of Reagan's arms-for-hostages endeavor than there were at the outset. In retrospect, the Reagan Administration clearly made a mistake in siding with Hussein against Iran. Additionally, Iran clearly exploited the hostage event to its benefit. Iran evidently drew the Reagan Administration into an illicit arms deal with the intention of eventually leaking the arrangement in order to humiliate the United States before the international community. However, openly challenging Iran to control its proxies and waging an effective campaign to rescue America hostages would have vitiated the Reagan Administration's

clandestine endeavors in Nicaragua. Coupled with the actions of his predecessors, Reagan exited office leaving Washington with no other alternative than a reversal of America foreign policy towards Iran if it hopes to garner a token amount of credibility in the Middle East.

### *George H.W. Bush's Missed Opportunity*

George H.W. Bush entered office during a period of significant change in Iran. After Khomeini's death, Ali Khomeini had taken the grand clerical helm and Rafsanjani had been elected as president. Strongly aligned with the Iranian business class Rafsanjani was, and remains, antagonistic towards Islamic ideologues in Iran such as the current president - Ahmadinejad. As a pragmatic conservative, Rafsanjani is a domestic centrist and an international moderate who strives to avoid conflict and improve Iran's relations with the United States. In hindsight, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and subsequent U.S. invasion of Iraq was a salient window of opportunity for George H.W. Bush to reach out to Rafsanjani in order to pave the initial path towards rapprochement. Rafsanjani publicly condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Iraq; however Iran also remained noticeably neutral as U.S. forces marched into Iraq. Bush also did well to assert publicly that the U.S. presence in the Middle East was indeed temporary and that its forces would depart once the Kuwaiti crisis had been averted. Although enduring a firestorm of domestic criticism for leaving Saddam in power Bush made good on his promise. With the American objective achieved, U.S. troops were pulled from Iraq leaving its military substantially crippled. After a decade of severed diplomatic relations, the hostile rhetoric between Tehran and Washington had also subsided. To his defense, Bush was also at the helm during a period when Washington's focus was global and the U.S.S.R. was in its death throes. However the Bush Administration seemingly ignored an opportunity to re-establish relations with a country that, in Saddam's weakened state, had the regional balance of power tipped in its favor. With a common enemy hobbled, there was at this time an opportunity to engage Iran

diplomatically in order to further contain the Hussein regime. Rafsanjani was extremely motivated to revive Iran's badly flagging economy on the basis of free-market principles. For this reason he signaled his desire to improve relations with the West, gradually reopen the country to foreign investment, and reestablish Iran as a regional power. After a protracted period of soured relations, the Bush Administration stood in a position to abandon the sticks and bring Iran galloping back into the fold with merely a hand full of carrots. Rafsanjani's support for renewed relations with America and his free-market economic policies stand in stark contrast with those of Ahmadinejad and his counterparts who are absolutely unwilling to capitulate to the West. Bush's missed opportunity with regard to the Iran of his time brings to mind the sage advice of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, "You could not step twice into the same river; for other waters are ever flowing on to you." That an opportunity was lost is not in question. That it remains lost forever is dependent upon the ingenuity of America's future statesmen.

### *Clinton's Contrasts*

It wasn't until almost 50 years after Mossadegh's demise that a U.S. presidential administration formally acknowledged the great disservice the Eisenhower Administration had visited upon the people of Iran. To his credit, President Clinton appeared to be genuinely compelled to seek reconciliation with Iran. Clinton conceded that American officials had injudiciously deposed a democratically elected figure, installed an authoritarian Shah, and had effectively eliminated parliamentary democracy in Iran. Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, also acknowledged that the removal of Mossadegh was a setback for Iranian political development and that it was evident that this intervention in Iran's internal affairs still fostered negative feelings towards America. Yet despite these conciliatory sentiments, the demonization of Iran soared to new heights under Clinton's watch producing two Presidential Executive Orders (Iranian investment embargos) and the Iran-Lybia Sanctions Act (ILSA). But why would an administration that genuinely empathized with the plight of the Iranian people

promulgate additional sanctions that further exacerbated their predicament? Clinton faced a Republican controlled Congress willing to accommodate well moneyed special interest groups who sought to hobble unpopular governments such as Iran. The Clinton Administration was willing to bow to congressional initiatives in return for support of his domestic agenda. Furthermore, sanctions were also less expensive and not as unsavory to the Clinton Administration as foreign military intervention. The U.S. had also at one point pressured Germany not to supply Iran with a nuclear reactor while the U.S was still importing a substantial amount of oil from Iran. The sanctions quelled criticism from the E.U. and showed that the U.S. was willing to operate consistently with its Iranian containment policies. Persistent pressure from the Republican Congress, coupled with lobbying from the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) – the main Jewish lobby in Washington, also caused the Clinton Administration to act further against Iran via ILSA.

ISLA alone has alienated the United States from some of its European allies and has neither ended Iranian support of Palestinian groups nor ended Iran's pursuit of nuclear development. The Clinton Administration should have expanded upon its desire to reconcile with Iran, reminding Congress and Americans that from a geopolitical standpoint Iran is the central cohesive element necessary for any successful endeavor in the Middle East – as recent occurrences would prove. The Clinton Administration might have done well to publicly side with major U.S. oil companies and assert that active engagement, rather than containment, would yield not only economic rewards but also substantial political dividends. President Khatami, a moderate Iranian politician, had signaled that economic investment was the key to further political dialogue. Had trade and investment been established between Iran and the U.S. under Clinton's watch, political dialogue would have arguably expanded at an exponential rate. Surely this notion is what inspired the EU to establish dialogue and bilateral relations

with Iran in defiance of ILSA. Unfortunately, Washington once again began to fall prey to the notion of regime change, in lieu of dialogue, as a remedy for Tehran's defiance.

*George W. Bush's Bellicosity*

By characterizing Khatami as "weak and ineffective" and signing the ILSA extension, the Bush Administration revealed that their oil roots were no match for Washington's hardliner elements and AIPAC. Although the 9/11 attacks briefly transformed Iran in the Bush's Administration's Middle Eastern conceptual framework, that honeymoon phase proved to be rather ephemeral in the face of powerful special interests. Bush's "axis of evil" rhetoric substantially hobbled moderate elements in Iran and arguably fomented the nationalistic sentiment that swept Iranian hardliner Ahmadinejad into office. The current stalemate between Tehran and Washington is clearly a battle of wills between ideologues on both sides. However it is evident that both executives suffered a loss in domestic popularity as a result of their hubris and obstinacy.

With regard to the Iranian puzzle, the Bush Administration has leaned far too heavily upon the threat of a "military option", which unfortunately still cannot be characterized as a successful policy in either Afghanistan or Iraq. Ironically, intervention in Afghanistan yielded its best results when Iranian influence was added to the equation. The Bush Administration erred greatly in snubbing the Iranians after their benevolence during the course of the establishment of the Afghan interim government. Had the Administration recognized its political boon and expanded Iranian involvement throughout its field of operations in the Middle East, it could be reasonably surmised that Iran's cultural and political influence would have enhanced the overall efficacy of the U.S. endeavors in Iraq. The Bush Administration should have also realized that Washington's containment gambit had no hope of success in a scenario where other power players such as China, the European Union, and Russia were

successfully pursuing diplomacy and economic engagement. Washington's economic sanctions and military threats are clearly not succeeding due to the fact that other nations have rationally recognized Iran's geopolitical significance and have seen fit to draw Iran into their orbit. Iran is not the petulant entity the Bush Administration would have had the world believe. Washington should have long ago perceived Iran as it occurs to other world actors – a nation-state with much needed natural resources and substantial regional clout that is equally capable of skillfully pursuing its own interests in the international realm. With the Bush chapter fast coming to a close, there is a lesson to be learned from his Administration's paradigm. The re-establishment of diplomatic ties with Iran will not occur in an atmosphere of threats or without conciliatory gestures.

In a geopolitical sense, Iran and the United States have always been natural allies pursuing the same goals. This individual level examination has unequivocally produced a salient political imperative. Washington must realize that Iran stands poised to play a vital role in stabilizing the Middle East. This course of action can be realized via the reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Iran through trade, economic engagement, and security guarantees. Rapprochement with Iran is the only logical solution to ameliorating the current milieu of hostility.

### ***State Level Implications***

Terrorism, Iranian sponsorship of militant groups as well as their pursuit of a nuclear program are amongst the most compelling reasons for Washington to engage in meaningful dialogue with Tehran. The future of rapprochement with Iran should fundamentally occur in two phases. The first being cooperation in areas of mutual concern. The second phase would involve the utilization of the trust gained during the course of the strategic partnership to tailor undesirable Iranian conduct; namely



its sponsorship of Palestinian resistance groups and its nuclear intentions. Examination of the matter from this viewpoint presents a compelling argument as to why Washington and Tehran should cooperate against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

### Terrorism

This research has revealed that Iranian influence served Washington well in Afghanistan against the Taliban, and would have further bulwarked its efforts to curtail the actions of al-Qaeda operatives had members of the Bush Administration elected to do so. It is important to realize that regional terrorist organizations, such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda, are not only of concern to the United States. In addition to Iran, their presence and actions are of extreme concern to China, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Russia, Turkey as well as a host of other regional actors. It is important for Washington to recognize that in order to effectively engage the Taliban and al-Qaeda it can no longer afford to pursue uni-dimensional policies. By clinging to its ineffective containment policy, Washington unwittingly contravenes its other regional endeavors. Iran is demonstrating that it is increasingly able to counter Washington by aligning itself with other world powers; namely China and Russia. Additionally, Iran has recently cooperated with Turkey against Kurdish rebel groups. By engaging and working in concert with an increasing list of U.S. allies in areas of mutual concern, Tehran is additionally lessening the popularity of U.S. economic sanctions. Cooperation with Iran against regional terror groups makes complete geopolitical sense. It could also possibly lead to wider terrorism cooperatives with countries such as China and Russia that would enable U.S. foreign policy to be conducted through mutually-reinforcing institutions.

Prior to the “axis of evil” speech, Iran willingly put aside its animus and cooperated with the United States in Afghanistan. As a result the Taliban was deposed, al-Qaeda forces were put to rout, and an interim democratic government was established. Now that Tehran and Washington are no longer

cooperating, it is said that nearly half of Afghanistan is again plagued by Taliban resurgence, al-Qaeda elements, and an aggressive militant group under the control of radical Islamic leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Cooperation with Iran lead to success after September 11<sup>th</sup> and arguably further success could be realized via active re-engagement. Iran's cultural and political influence clearly had a stabilizing effect in Afghanistan. Therefore it stands to reason that rapprochement would visit the same results in Lebanon, Iraq, the Persian Gulf, and quite possibly the broader Middle East. Iran and the United States have common enemies – the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Continued friction between Tehran and Washington only weakens their regional effectiveness and benefits their common enemies. As posited by noted Iran scholar Rouhollah K. Ramazani, an American-Iranian partnership against al-Qaeda will not signal the end to Iraqi or Afghani problems. However, such collaboration will be a vital move towards stabilizing both countries, a vision desired by reasonable people worldwide.<sup>162</sup>

### *Revolution Exportation*

Although Tehran clearly cooperated with Washington to depose the Taliban and engage al-Qaeda elements in Afghanistan, its actions earned it no relief from incessant U.S. claims that it actively sponsors state terrorism. Tehran's support of militant groups, namely Hezbollah, is largely explained by its perception of its geostrategic milieu. In addition to supporting Hezbollah for ideological and humanitarian reasons, Tehran has utilized Hezbollah as a tool to confront external elements that it perceives as a national security threat; specifically Israel and the United States.

With no expectation of peace in the Middle East on the horizon, coupled with calls for “regime change” from Washington, Tehran logically perceives it is facing the peril of military confrontation. In the face of U.S. sanctions and hostile rhetoric, the Islamic Republic will not likely alter its current relationship with Hezbollah. Additionally, Iran is currently experiencing a salient strategic quandary. It

is beset on its northern and southern borders by an ardent wall of U.S. occupation with Israel nearby; a reality that surely exacerbates Tehran's ever-growing perception of being under siege by Washington.

Although labeled a terrorist organization, Hezbollah is nowhere near the destructive threat that al-Qaeda represents. Furthermore, radical figureheads such as Usama bin Laden have clearly demonstrated their bellicose and uncompromising natures. Conversely, leaders in Hezbollah have expressed a willingness to compromise and possibly commit to an Israeli-Syrian-Lebanese peace agreement. Hezbollah's increasing efficacy also does not emanate from its paramilitary nature. Hezbollah has achieved prominence and stability by functioning as a political and social welfare organization as well. This evolution has allowed Hezbollah to ultimately occupy a conventional role in Lebanese politics.

As Tehran perceives that it is under threat, it is unlikely that the Islamic Republic will consider altering the fundamental nature of its support to Hezbollah. However, as of April 2005 Iran had systematically removed virtually all of its forces from Lebanon. Additionally, even if Iran discontinued all financial and logistical support Hezbollah would not cease to exist. As a social welfare organization and a political party, Hezbollah has moderated its militant Islamic orientation enabling itself to seek longevity as a member of the Lebanese political arena. Hezbollah and Iran have also broadened their political relationships in Lebanon. This evolving relationship suggests rather clearly that Hezbollah is no longer seeking to mimic Iran's establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon. Overall, Iran's relationships in Lebanon are more of an endeavor to seek an accommodating neighbor rather than the exportation of its revolution. By ending its antagonistic projections of power and limiting its involvement in Lebanon to diplomatic engagement, Iran has demonstrated that it is prepared to play a constructive role in the Middle East peace process.

### Nuclear Power

Evidently it is not common knowledge in America that Iran is among the 189 signatories of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) entered into force in 1970; indefinitely extended in 1995. Among the three major “pillars” of the NPT is the right of signatory states to peacefully utilize nuclear technology. In addition to discouraging the development of nuclear weapons it also requires nations to reduce their nuclear weapon stockpiles. Ironically, while demonizing Iran for its nuclear endeavors the United States is currently in violation of the reduction provision of the NPT. That Washington has refused to engage Iran in any form of direct negotiations with regard to its nuclear ambitions is surely the impetus for Tehran’s 2005 declaration to remain undeterred in exercising its right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes.

Washington’s double standard of criticizing Iran's nuclear program while tolerating Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons also prevents it from vilifying Iranian conduct with any modicum of legitimacy. Known to possess nuclear weapons with the ability to deploy them by air, land and sea, Israel has also labored diplomatically, militarily, and covertly to forestall other regional actors from developing nuclear capabilities. Despite its policy of nuclear opacity Israel has yet to be targeted with the same vitriol as Iran. Situated in a region that is fundamentally at odds with it, Israel has logical reasons for pursuing nuclear capabilities. However, it is an equally rational endeavor for Tehran to pursue capabilities that effectively counterbalance those of whom they perceive as a hostile neighbor. Clearly Tehran initially concealed its uranium enrichment activities. However, unlike Israel, Iran is a signatory state of the NPT that agreed not to pursue nuclear weapons development and has committed itself to full cooperation and transparency with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Although nuclear technology will not completely resolve Iran's energy issues, it apparently pursues nuclear technology also for security and the prestige associated with such an accomplishment. Tehran's pursuit of nuclear development is intimately intertwined with its need for security. Not only is Iran situated close to a nuclear Israel, it has been routinely assailed by notions of "regime change" by a powerful country whose armed forces have deposed the ruling regimes in neighboring states. Allegations of a dangerous weapons program served as the justification for the elimination of the Hussein regime in Iraq. Similar accusations have been made against the clerical regime in Iran, therefore it is rather apparent why its leaders have embraced an unyielding stance on the nuclear issue.

This research suggests that Washington must accept the inevitability of a nuclear Iran. Had Washington expanded upon the success experienced during the course of working together with Iran in Afghanistan, there might have been a chance to discourage Iran from uranium enrichment altogether. However, that opportunity no longer exists. At this point, direct engagement of Iran by Washington in order to assure the peaceful purposes of its nuclear program may be viewed askance by Tehran. Washington would better serve its interests by working in concert with its European allies to tailor the Iranian nuclear program while offering incentives such as technological / economic assistance, and most importantly the incremental lifting of sanctions.

### *System Level Implications*

A recurring notion throughout this paper is that Iran and the United States are very much natural allies in the Middle East making the diplomatic chill all the more politically irrational. Paradoxically, Tehran and Washington find themselves common enemies of al-Qaeda and the Taliban, as well as the most steadfast foreign supporters of the Kurdish-Shi'ite political axis that surfaced in the post-invasion

Iraqi government. It remains undeniable that Washington and Tehran are very much strategic allies with respect to Afghanistan and Iraq. Furthermore, Iran stands poised to play a crucial stabilizing role within its own neighborhood. The mutual pursuit of regional stability is also an endeavor threatened by illicit narcotics. The trafficking of illicit narcotics remains one of the most serious threats to the stability and security of Afghanistan being that they are a primary funding source for the re-emerging Taliban. Opium emanating from Afghanistan has caused a serious addiction crisis in Iran, and according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) may ultimately fill the void created by successful poppy eradication endeavors in Mexico and South America. Finally, Washington has created yet another problem for itself by its blanket labeling of the Pasdaran (IRGC) as a terrorist organization. It is clear that the Pasdaran was initially founded to safeguard the integrity of the Iranian Islamic establishment and prevent a military coup. However the Pasdaran has morphed into a huge military and economic conglomerate, with tentacles reaching into all the major state organizations. It has also widely integrated itself into Iran's oil industry, construction, and other key sectors. Yet, its compartmentalized aspect represents an opportunity for Washington to moderate Iran incrementally via economic engagement. This final examination at the system level elucidates the necessity for Washington to engage Iran economically and politically in order to realize some of the more important goals of the modern age. What stands to be gained is the attenuation of regional insurgency in the Middle East, an ally in the global war on drugs, and the end of hostility between Washington and Tehran through engagement of some of the less ideological components of the Iranian Islamic apparatus.

#### *Afghanistan / Iraq*

This research clearly indicates that Iran's assistance is vital in the reestablishment of stability within Afghanistan and Iraq. Not one of Afghanistan's or Iraq's neighboring states have demonstrated that they are as willing and effective as the Islamic Republic has been before and during the course of

the U.S. presence in the Middle East. Both countries are well within the orbit of Iranian influence with Washington acutely sensing it during the course of the U.S. occupations. Iran has and continues to maintain a strong political and economic presence in southern Afghanistan. By virtue of an 8-year war with Iraq and an enduring religious connection with its Shi'ite inhabitants, Iran is also quite familiar with the political landscape and its actors as well. As coreligionists, the Shi'ite populations of both countries routinely look upon Iran with a more favorable disposition than their other neighbors. Tehran's political and religious influence in both states is grander in significance than its alleged interference that is supposedly hampering Washington's military and political efficacy. Despite all the hostile rhetoric, Iran avidly seeks to assume its rightful role in the stabilization of its neighboring states. Further obstinacy on Washington's part will surely exacerbate the milieu of violence and instability plaguing these besieged states.

Ironically, despite the lingering animus, the U.S. led invasions and subsequent occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq are a boon to Iran. Iran's ominous security threats, the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, were removed from power at no expense to Tehran. However, the time has come for Washington to change its strategy and align itself with one of the most important players in the region – Iran. Prudence dictates that the roadmap to success in the arena of regional stability and an enduring peace involves Tehran's influence. Washington, as well as the American taxpayer, can no longer afford to ignore the region's most important power player. Much like its allies, Washington must pragmatically engage Tehran directly in pursuit of mutual goals. This by no means suggests that Washington must countenance an Iran armed with nuclear weapons. Simply stated, active dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual concern will serve to attenuate the milieu of antagonism and open the door to negotiations on more controversial matters.

The suggested change in Washington's regional strategy is not a form of surrender or retreat as

posited by certain political theorists. It is merely the recognition of salient regional realities. From a logical standpoint, Washington simply has no other viable alternative; a notion Iran must be increasingly aware of. Two major regional realities with regard to Iran's significance in regional affairs have elucidated the impractical nature of Washington's current policies. The first being the Karzai government's routine highlighting of Iran's stabilizing hand in Afghanistan. The second being the al-Maliki government (Iraq) calling for an expansion of security talks between Washington and Tehran. Stable governance and the absence of violence in both Afghanistan and Iraq is the key to regional stability. Therefore it can be reasonably surmised that this goal can be realized via an alteration of American foreign policy towards Iran.

The Iranian containment policy clearly impedes some of Washington's most important regional endeavors. By abandoning such tactics and recognizing Iran as a worthy regional player to be pragmatically engaged, Washington will surely realize a plethora of short and long-term goals. By drawing Iran into the mix, American and Iranian interests in Iraq and Afghanistan will no longer be perceived to be in opposition to one another. Should all major goals be realized, it would also ultimately facilitate the graceful extraction of U.S. military forces from the region as well. No matter what course of action Washington elects to pursue in the short-term, the turmoil within Iraq and Afghanistan will ultimately dragoon Washington into negotiations with Iran. It is then that Washington will finally recognize Iran's legitimacy as a regional player, which shares numerous mutual regional concerns. Over time this cooperation will pave the road to constructive negotiation over Iran's nuclear intentions and establish a broader framework within which the historical discord between Tehran and Washington can be effectively mitigated.



### War on Drugs

There has been a paucity of success in the abatement of the enormous opium crop in southern Afghanistan, a location still menaced by a resurgent Taliban. This research has shown that despite the presence of American troops in Afghanistan, opium production has increased exponentially. The smuggling of opium into Iran is the first leg of a journey that ferries the drug to Western markets. Currently, Afghanistan produces the bulk of the global opium supply and approximately half of this supply flows through Iran. This reality would make cooperation with Iran in the war on Afghani opium exports mutually rewarding.

Because thousands of Iranian police have perished during the course of violent confrontations with armed drug traffickers, there is substantial evidence that Iran is somewhat committed to stemming the flow of drug from Afghanistan into its land and beyond. The west has also found it extremely difficult to abate opium farming in remote areas of Afghanistan due in large part to the Taliban, who finances their operations via taxation of opium farmers. Cooperation with Iran in the area of opium abatement would ultimately align Washington and Tehran against a common enemy – the Taliban. If Washington also administered economic and material aid to Iran during the course of its domestic battle against drugs, that aid could also be used as leverage to tailor Tehran’s policies in other areas. Currently, unilateral sanctions prevent Washington from providing Iran aid in its battle against drugs. However several European states continue to contribute aid via the United Nations in this regard. Although millions have been raised by European states to assist Iran in its domestic battle against drug trafficking, that amount still represents a mere fraction of what the United States has invested into Afghanistan in order to discourage opium farming. Despite Washington’s substantial investments since 2001, opium production has proliferated. The current administration’s “go it alone” approach has proved not only to be ineffective but also overwhelmingly expensive.

The war on illicit narcotics is a global affair and can't be effectively addressed without international cooperation. By operating through multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, Washington would arguably realize numerous goals at a substantially discounted rate. Cooperation with Tehran in this regard, as well as many others, is neither an admission of defeat nor a special favor. Such cooperation would facilitate the accomplishment of a plethora of Washington's regional goals and set the stage for amicable negotiations on more controversial matters.

The Taliban had previously proscribed opium production in Afghanistan. However, due to the U.S. led invasion the Taliban and opium production have now become intimately intertwined. Opium farming has become the livelihood of farmers in remote areas of Afghanistan. The Taliban in turn taxes opium farmers and utilizes the proceeds to finance its resistance against the military occupation and the new Afghan government. This nexus demands both a comprehensive and multilateral approach with Iran as one of the main protagonists. If Washington singlehandedly focuses upon poppy eradication in Afghanistan it risks uniting the farmers and other fractious elements with the Taliban, making the contentment of this state next to impossible.

Yet, research suggests that counter-narcotics operations are a regional affair and not a business Washington should directly involve itself in. Washington should limit itself to economic and material support while focusing primarily upon engaging the mutual enemy – the Taliban. By providing economic and material support to Kabul and Tehran in their battle against the narcotic apparatus, Washington will enable them to engage a network that finances the Taliban insurgency. As a benefactor in the regional war on drugs, Washington will enable itself to focus more upon one of its primary goals – the elimination of the Taliban insurgency.

### Pasdaran

As indicated previously, the Pasdaran was established as a security measure for the purposes of defending the ideological purity of the Islamic Republic. However, abreast of the Pasdaran is a correlative economic base which enabled the organization to become financially independent. The Pasdaran's ability to forgo state funding also allows it to remain committed to its objectives despite any changes in the country's political hierarchy. The Pasdaran's tentacles of influence have continued to entrench themselves deeper as former operatives retired from military offices to become business men and members of the state bureaucracy. The intimate nexus between the state bureaucratic apparatus, business community, and military-police forces have in essence afforded the Pasdaran a modicum of domestic sovereignty. The Pasdaran's financial and political ascendancy stems from its substantial holdings and a plexus of internal relations within Iran. A conglomerate of sorts, the Pasdaran has become a redoubtable economic and political force to be reckoned with in Iran.

This research suggests a nexus between Washington's growing criticism of Iran, namely the Pasdaran, and its Sunni allies alarm regarding the anchoring of Shi'a influence in Iraq. Arguably Saudi Arabia is concerned about the security and political vacuum resulting from the U.S. lead invasion which has created an opportunity for Iran to gain a larger regional foothold. It is becoming increasingly apparent the Pasdaran has sponsored armed Shi'a elements in Iraq in order to afford these elements a significant advantage over the opposition, which for the most part are Sunni factions. Rather than confronting the American military directly, the Pasdaran has pragmatically elected to empower Shi'a Arabs in Iraq. In doing so, Iranian elements are focusing upon a post-occupation scenario where its history of support will surely garner substantial political dividends. Its history of involvement in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Bosnia, and work with dissident groups in Iraq reveals the Pasdaran is adept at working through proxies in order to occasion regional goals. Washington's blanket labeling of the

Pasdaran is an overt signal to its Sunni partners that American politicians are committed to confronting the regional projection of Iranian influence.

Earlier in this paper a salient similarity was explored with the historic conduct of the CIA and Iran's Pasdaran. In the past and post 9/11, Washington has reserved for itself the right to preempt perceived threats. On the basis of this rationale, Washington has legitimized its support of rebel elements that attack regimes it has deemed to be unacceptable. However, for essentially the same regional conduct the Pasdaran earned for itself a terrorist label and for Iran a role in President Bush's infamous "axis of evil." There is no question that the Pasdaran has trained and provided arms to regional elements such as Hezbollah and militant Shi'a groups in Iraq. However, is this different than the Reagan Administration's support of the brutal military in El Salvador or the Contra Rebels in Nicaragua? In the course of comparing the killers of non-combatants to America's founding fathers President Reagan stated, "I am Contra too." Reagan's conduct, although in the interest of freedom, national security, and national interests in the arena of anti-communism is clearly analogous to Iran's regional conduct. In essence, an accomplice to the deaths of thousands of South American non-combatants, has Washington too not earned itself the "sponsor of terrorism" label as well?

Ironically, Tehran's willingness to embrace U.S. backed regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq has in no way altered the current U.S. presidential administration's proclivity to vilify Iran and designate the Pasdaran as a terrorist organization. Despite Washington's benevolence and continued endeavors to contain Iran, Tehran has still managed to establish cozy relations with its neighboring nascent regimes. Washington's terrorist label is clearly an attempt to posit the Pasdaran is analogous to al Qaeda; however such a notion clearly lacks any modicum of intellectual lucidity. Additionally, such rationale would earn the United States the same designation several times over. Both callow and simplistic, this

worldview reflects no true understanding of global realities and threatens to unite fractious regional elements against the current American military presence in the Middle East. Washington's labeling of the Pasdaran clearly threatens to push militant elements of Iraq and the Pasdaran closer together which would guarantee more violent attacks against American troops.

### *Closing Statement*

This paper is certainly not an indictment of America and goes well beyond the scope of political diatribe in that it proffers political solutions supported by a growing amount of specialists in the foreign policy establishment. It is additionally not uncommon for a policy piece to focus criticism upon political leadership, past and present, as well as the forces that govern their decision-making. Failed policies, such as the CIA engineered 1953 coup, were discussed in depth as they are completely relevant to the current state of affairs between Tehran and Washington today. Many who support the notion of regime change in Iran are completely unaware that Iran was in fact a budding democracy at one point in history. It is undeniable that Washington's intervention in Iran eliminated democracy and nurtured a dictatorship which later occasioned the rigid theocratic government that exists today. Sadly, almost an unknown in modern political circles, Mohammed Mossadegh is a colossal figure in the realm of democracy. However, Mossadegh was fated with the temerity to assert that his country's natural resources were the sovereign property of the Iranian people at a time when certain global powers felt otherwise. The 1953 coup not only settled a battle over natural resources, it ended the Iranian people's fight to win their independence and craft their own foreign policy.

This piece has been authored at a time when the Bush Administration is aggressively prosecuting its notion of "democracy promotion" in the Middle East, calling for "regime change" to wrest political power from the hands of the "un-elected few". However this comes as a hard sell to objective political

observers and Iranians who are aware that Washington's past intervention in Iran crushed its nascent democracy with dictatorial consequences. With history as a guide, it is evident there must a long-term strategy employed by the United States, in concert with other state actors, which diplomatically encourages Iran to evolve. It has become increasingly obvious that sanctions, containment strategies, and threats have only empowered Iranian radicals and undermined diplomacy. By encouraging Iran to focus upon mutual interests, Washington could certainly lessen Iran's focus upon nuclear enrichment for military applications and moderate its leadership's stance towards the state of Israel.

Certainly misperception has played a role with Iran's complex political culture being among the leading causes. As indicated in the first chapter of this paper, Iran is a complex challenge Washington must first face by first learning and questioning. With many strategic interests in common, Washington currently has the opportunity to pragmatically re-conceive its relationship with Tehran. Washington is also no stranger to the notion of taking the lead to pursue rapprochement with its previous foes. The situation with Iran calls for a similar strategy employed by President Nixon resulting in the Shanghai Communiqué. As it was with China in 1972, so is it in the interest of the global community for the United States and Iran to work towards the normalization of their relations for the purposes of prosecuting a successful campaign against modern issues such as the war on drugs and transnational terrorism. The subsequent expansion of cultural and economical relations would arguably lead to compromise on the nuclear issue as well. It is evident this paper argues for nothing more than what has yielded ample success for American statesmen in the past.

“To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”

Sun Tzu<sup>163</sup>

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