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THE REGIONAL
ORDER IN THE
MIDDLE EAST POST
9-11 THE
IRANIAN ROLE

AHMED
SHEB MORSY

2009

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

SCHOOL OF HUMNAITITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

THE REGIONAL ORDER IN THE MIDDLE EAST POST 9/11

THE IRANIAN ROLE

AHMED SHEBL MORSY

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

MAY/2009

The American University in Cairo

The Regional Order in the Middle East Post 9/11
The Iranian Role

A Thesis submitted by

Ahmed Shebl Morsy

To the Department of Political Science
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I would like to dedicate this work to all those who have stood beside me during the past

two years. On top of my list come my parents and sisters. Their continuous support and

confidence in me was an important element to my success.

To many of my friends who played another vital role through reading, editing, and

pushing me to finish this thesis; I wish one day to be able to pay them back.

To my advisor, Dr. Gamal Sultan, thanks a lot for your endless efforts into making this

thesis come true.
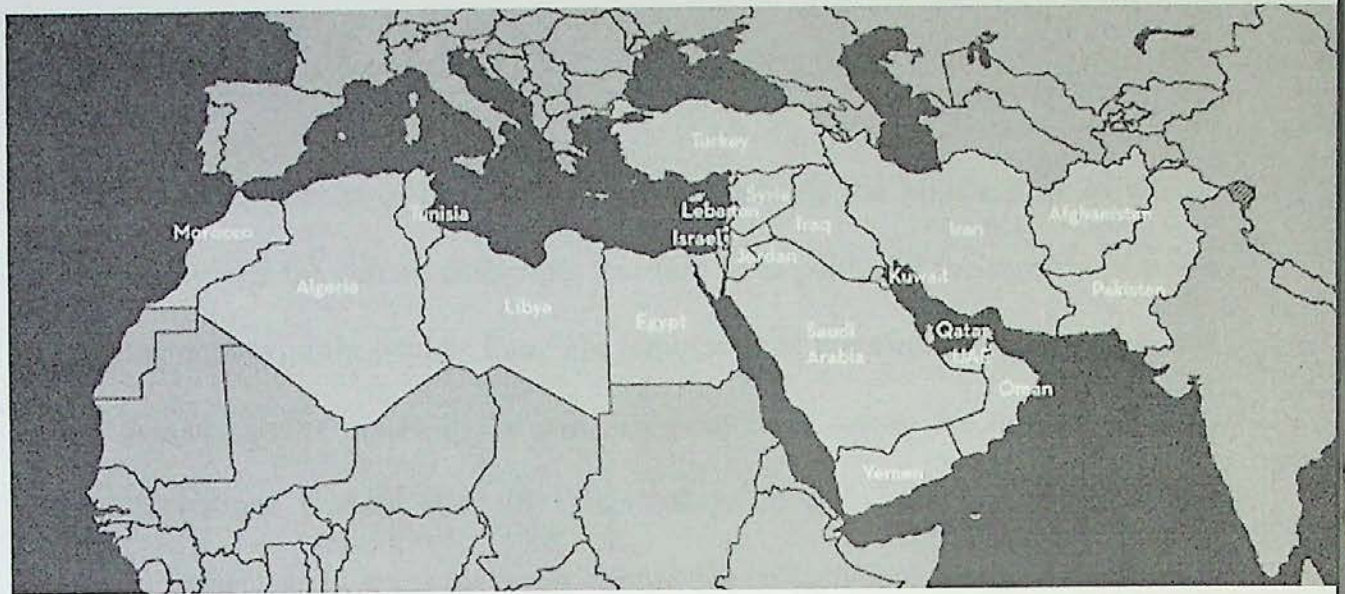
Figure 1: Middle East Map[1]

Propelled by the oil boom of the mid-1970, the Middle East emerged as the world's fastest growing region. A Pan-Arab state would include a total area of 13.7 million square kilometers, second only to the Soviet Union and considerably larger than Europe, Canada, China, or the United States ... By 2000 it would have more people than either of the two superpowers. This states would contain almost two-thirds of the world's proven oil reserves, it would also have enough capital to finance its own economic and social development. Conceivably, it would feed itself ... access to a huge market could stimulate rapid industrial growth. Present regional inequalities could ultimately be lessened and the mismatch between labor-surplus and labor-short areas corrected. The aggregate military strength and political influence of this strategically located state would be formidable ... It is easy to comprehend why this dream had long intoxicated Arab nationalists. (Lustick 1997)

INTRODUCTION

The subject matter of this thesis is regional order in the Middle East, as will be defined below, and the current challenges that face it, in particular the renewal of Iran's regional aspirations in the Middle East. The hypothesis of this thesis is that changes that were introduced to the region in the past few years have caused the renewal of Iran's regional aspirations. It is argued in this thesis that the US policy shift in the Middle East in the post September 11 era is the major change that brought about the renewal of Iran's aspirations in the Middle East. It is also argued that the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq has created a power vacuum that was used by Iran to consolidate its influence in some of the Middle East's hot spots, particularly in Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. (Taheri 2005) Furthermore, while the rise of Iranian power in the Middle East may be attributed to several factors on both the national and international level, the US policies toward the Middle East after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon have had the utmost impact on Iran's regional policy.

THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR A "REGION": THE MIDDLE EAST?

To begin with, the regional system of the Middle East is a theoretical construct presumed by the author to represent an overall framework for the analysis of the interrelationships between a number of countries in a collective setting. It is an analytical framework used to organize data and information, and explain foreign policy behaviors. Any system has constituting parts, which in the case of the Middle East are the political units which interact on a regular basis, and can delve into a general warfare at any point

in time.(Bull 1977) The political units constituting the Middle East are numerous, as they encompass all members of the League of Arab States (except the Comoros Islands and Somalia) and the triad of Israel, Iran, and Turkey.

It is noteworthy that there is no consensus regarding the definition of a region. A definition may be based on geography (sub-Saharan Africa), culture (Western Europe), culture and language (Arab world), or even an ad hoc problem (Southeast Asia). Fawaz Gerges introduces four criteria that this study will adopt to identify the Middle East as a distinctive region:

1. Two or more actors.

2. The units interact regularly and intensively.

3. The system is recognized internally and externally as a "Distinctive theater of operation."

4. The actors are generally adjacent.(Gerges 1994)

A special characteristic about the Middle East area is the fact that it is greatly comprised of Arabic speaking states with the exception of few countries with similar geopolitical location as well as somewhat overlapping historical background. In other words, it's made up of an Arab core resembled in the Arab States and a non-Arab periphery that includes Turkey, Iran, and Israel. However, what is more interesting than the geopolitical position and the strategic location of the region is the understanding of its origin. The region, which is mainly inhabited by Arabs and Muslims, is home to the three Abrahamic monotheistic religions. One of its most prominent characteristics lies in the huge amounts of energy resources, particularly oil and gas, which it holds. That said, the

region is of great strategic importance. Thus the focus of this paper will be mainly concerned with challenges to regional order in this strategic part of the world, specifically through Iran's regional role post 9/11.

THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

Anarchy is the main characteristic of the international political system, which means it lacks a governing body that works efficiently to ensure the rule of law, order, and stability among states. With regard to order in the Middle East, the region is demonstrating a great deal of vulnerability as opposed to stability. This vulnerability has a number of characteristics. Among these are the lack of a regional hegemon, the lack of functioning regional institutions effective in enhancing cooperation between the states of the region to reduce the possibilities of conflict among them, the presence of contending regional visions, and the presence of protracted regional conflicts, particularly the Arab Israeli-conflict. The Middle East is also highly penetrated by global powers and highly affected and shaped by outside forces at the highest level of the international system. For these reasons and more, the Middle East enjoys only little autonomy whether internally, within each state, or internationally, as a whole region.

The weak regional actors and institutions that, if stronger, could potentially help stabilize the Middle East are in fact making the region highly vulnerable to the effects of forces of instability. Global powers could either help compensate for the weak stabilizing regional dynamics or further expose and take advantage of them. This is particularly the case with the US, which has been assuming sole hegemony both at the global and regional level since the end of the Cold War. It could be argued that US influence in the

Middle East has been instrumental in maintaining the status quo and order in the region during the decade that followed the Gulf War of 1991. To the contrary, changes in US policy towards the Middle East in the post September 11 world further exposed the structural weakness of the Middle East and caused the renewal of challenges that put the entire region under serious strains. (Hinnebusch 2003)

DEFINING ORDER

Many questions arise once we try to define "order". The term holds ideological and normative implications that create much debate as it embraces several repercussions about how political, social, and economic systems are and ought to be structured. Another conception for order is whether it entails "…a minimum condition of co-existence [between] nation-states…or a larger conception in which all can live together relatively and prosper simultaneously." (Paul 1999) This allows for perceiving order as a variable not as a static state. Order can be perceived as a continuum; with a minimum level of peaceful coexistence and a maximum level of regional integration are the two opposite poles or ends of the continuum.

RESEARCH PLAN

Starting from this assumption, this thesis, through its first chapter will be examining the definition of order in a theoretical sense, trying to investigate how the realist and liberal schools tackle the concept of order; in addition to highlighting the difference between domestic and international order. The second chapter will be focusing on two selected means to maintain order. I will apply the balance of power and the

hegemonic stability theories as means devised to mitigate order in the international system as well as their application to the Middle East.

Chapter three will look into the regional order of the Middle East and some of the challenges to such order. I will focus in this section on three factors 1) the regional polarity, 2) the Arab-Israeli conflict, and 3) the US role in the region. I will try to review the concept of regional order in the Middle East by looking at different phases and patterns in the history of the region that would highlight the presence of order or the lack of it. Furthermore, rather than viewing the region as a homogenous entity, the research will examine whether major regional and international events have been unique and disconnected from one another or whether there is a connection and recurring themes gluing the seemingly scattered events of the Middle East together.

The fourth and fifth chapters will focus on the role of the Islamic republic of Iran in shaping Middle East regional order. Chapter four will primarily explore the structure of Iran both under the Shah and after the 1979 revolution. I will try to investigate if there was a previous attempt to regional hegemony by the Islamic Republic. While chapter five will depart from the September 11 attacks; examining how the US policies in the Middle East under the Bush administration has given Iran a chance to rise in the region.

My research question is to address the existence of a Middle East regional order as well as factors that either have contributed to or hindered its formation. If such an order exists, does it do so through a regional balance of power or is there a regional hegemon that dominates the regional system. In what ways did the United States' presence in the Middle East since the 1991 Gulf War reshape the region? What is the role of Iran in the Middle East, if any, and did Iran benefit from the changes that followed the

US-led invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq? How has the new US strategy under the Bush administration altered the Middle East regional system?

Chapter One

ORDER IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

One of the central and recurring debates in International Relations is whether interactions in world politics occur in a completely anarchical environment or whether there is an underlying order that regulate such interactions. The main schools of the field are divided in this regard with Realists claiming that anarchy is the overriding rule of world politics and Liberals on the other hand agreeing on the existence of anarchy but with an underlying order that can be detected and used towards the advancement of cooperation and peace. This chapter will start from the assumption that in spite of the existence of anarchy in world affairs, there are forces that help mitigate such anarchy and allowing for the formation of international order. It is also argued here that order is a multi-layer and multi dimension construct so that we can talk about not only one order but various 'orders' in this regard, which intersect at different points, interact in different ways and affect each other in different forms. There is not one single order that mitigates world affairs, but rather multiple orders and they are often said to be divided into international, regional, and domestic orders. With that said it's important to mention that order is not the antithesis of anarchy and anarchy is always there and cannot be eliminated as long as there is not a global government.

REALISM: ANARCHY RULES

Realism is considered the most widely influential theory in explaining International Relations. The realist school regards states as unitary actors that work to

achieve their interests amidst the insecurity of the anarchic international arena. This theory regards the international system as anarchic with no central government to regulate states' interactions. According to realists, the absence of a central political entity and the lack of trust between states, leads each state to be looking in maximizing its power, especially the military, to be able to attain its goals and interests, which lead to security dilemma. Although "Power is the core concept for realists", they differ in defining this notion. Some scholars understand power "to be the sum of military, economic, technological, diplomatic, and other capabilities at the disposal of the state." While others see, power "not as sum absolute value determined for each state…rather as capabilities relative to the capabilities of other states." (Viotti 1998)

Realists are known for their pessimism toward "moral progress and human responsibilities" and they tend to view history as cyclical rather than progressive. The classical realists' school is skeptical of human ability to overcome conflict and establish durable peace and cooperation. Their doubts are drawn from their belief in inherent lust for power within the human nature alongside a belief that the international system can never be governed. (Viotti 1998) On the other hand, contemporary realists think that pessimism comes mainly from the nature of the international system rather than human nature. Realism sees the world as anarchic with no higher authority to govern and keep it in order, which in turn leads to insecurity and conflict. This anarchic world leaves states with diplomacy and "balance of power" as tools to mitigate anarchy.

Realists believe in several hypothesizes. First, the important actors in world politics are the "territorial organized entities" that were represented by city-states in the distant past and nation-states currently. Although states are not the only actors in world

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politics, realists believe that a great deal can be understood through the behavior and interactions of these states rather than through studying the role of the individuals, non-state actors or even international organizations. Second, realists believe that state-relations are always competitive and every entity is looking for its own interests. Their utmost competition is in the military security realm and any other type of competition comes next. Competition is a direct consequence of anarchy, which creates a Machiavellian self-help system where each state has to rely on itself to achieve its interests and ensure its survival. However, this self-help system does not mean that states cannot look for cooperation as a means to attain their goals, but cooperation would only be so long as it does not affect the power of the state. (Burchill 2001)

Another belief of realists is that the interests a state purse is dependent on how much power the state has. State's interests are calculated on the amount of relative power they posses or seek to achieve, however this depends on the surrounding international circumstances. Although security and power are of highest priority for all states, this does not mean that we have to assume all states would be looking to maximize their powers and setting aside all other important goals. For instance, not all states seek nuclear capabilities but they would definitely consider improving their economies as a means to maintaining survival and a possible means of ensuring security. (Paul 1999) Finally, states are considered rational unitary actors in the realist point of view. Prominent neo-realist Robert Keohane wrote, "[World] politics can be analyzed as if states were unitary rational actors, carefully calculating the costs of alternative courses of action and seeking to maximize their expected utility, although doing so under conditions of uncertainty."

(Paul 1999) An important scholar, John Mearsheimer, summarizes the main conjunctures of realism in his book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics." as follows:

  1) The absence of a central authority that sits above states and can protect them from each other,

  2) The fact that states always have some offensive military capability,

  3) The fact that states can never be certain about other states' intentions,

  4) States are eager to maintain their territories intact, and enjoy an autonomous political order, and

  5) States are rational actors. (Mearsheimer 2003)

The previous assumptions comprise the realists' viewpoint in examining International Relations, which emphasizes the lack of order stemming from international anarchy. This is due to an inherent belief that an international governing body that would properly ensure stability, rule of law and trust among states could never exist.

THE MIDDLE EAST CASE

As for the Middle East case, Professor Raymond Hinnebusch "assumes that in the Middle East the state is the main actor in foreign policy and that state elites have an interest in maximizing the autonomy and security of the state." (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) In his book *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, he takes a modified stance of the realist theory of International Relations. Hinnebusch argues that the state is the primary foreign policy actor and that anarchy and insecurity are common features in the Middle East. Moreover, he portrays the region as "marked by high incongruity between the nation (identity) and the territorial state (sovereignty)." He

comments that while the paradigm "one nation/many states" may be the dilemma of the Arab world, the multinational state of the non-Arab Middle East "one state, plural nations" is the rule rather than the exception. This is clear when he deals with the trans-state identities, Arabism and Islam, which "for many people [are] more emotionally compelling than identification with the state." (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) For example, although Arabism was always used by all Arab states to affirm their rule, yet they differed upon their definition to such ideology and serious divisions emerged between the Arab states on what kind of unitary state would be the goal. (Kerr 1971) In sum, the first concrete and politically consequential meaning associated with Arab nationalism was anti-colonialism and political independence. Arab leaders began to cultivate and appropriate the symbols of Arabism as a way of legitimating their rule, those symbols were largely displayed during the fight for independence and statehood. "To be an Arab nationalist meant to be committed to independence and freedom from foreign control." (Barnet 1998) On the other hand, President Nasser stirred the imaginations and the desires of the masses because of his vision of a unified powerful Arab nation. His acts of daring and defiancing of the power of the West, were cheered and celebrated by the people all over the region; this secured his place as the leader of Arab nationalism. Other Arab leaders found Nasser's call for revolutionary change and unity a disturbing challenge to their rule, since he would "not only challenge their strategic interests but their very fitness to rule." (Barnet 1998) However, when Arabism declined after the 1967 war "[it] left little restraint on the realpolitik of individual actors, which made it easier for hostile periphery states [Israel] to exploit Arab divisions." (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) Throughout Hinnebusch's book, we can find

discussions of most of the Middle East states' foreign policies and how they are shaped without grouping them in one region, which further validates the realist school theory.

Fred H. Lawson in his book *Constructing International Relations in the Arab World*, speaks of how the Arab World has become to be an anarchic state-system as the nationalist leadership in the region had adopted foreign policy postures since the mid-1950s that stressed upon three main points and they are:

"(1) the denunciation of any claim to rule territory located outside the generally recognized boundaries of their respective countries, (2) a refusal to countenance any attempt by surrounding states to say how they should manage their own country's internal affairs, and (3) intrinsic rivalry and antagonism toward their own neighbors." (Lawson 2006)

Even though these points stress the independence of each state and respecting each other's internal affairs, we will find that this wasn't the case. Arabism was used systematically to discredit governments and credit others. Even with the fall of Pan-Arabism and the rise of political Islam in the region, the new ideology tried to play the same role.

This again indicates the realist idea of looking at states as the core element in analyzing international relations both in the Middle East (Arab World) as well as globally, adding that power politics and security rivalry have always preceded in defining Middle East relations more than other considerations such as norms and values.

LIBERALISM: AN UNDERLYING ORDER EXISTS

Although pluralist theorists, also known as Liberals, agree in principal with the idea of the anarchic nature of the international system, they believe that states still do cooperate through means and ways that fit the anarchic nature of international systems. The individual is the most important unit of analysis for liberal theorists and the state is to play a minimal role in a liberal society, but it maintains conditions and rules under which individuals enjoy their rights. For Liberals, the limitation of state power domestically assumes an underlying harmony of interests among the individuals who constitute this state and the state itself. For Liberals, the state is not a unitary actor, but rather a sum of groups that influence each other and eventually constitute the whole society. The pluralism characterizing domestic politics is also emphasized on the international level, so that local, regional, and international individual and collective actors play important roles in international relations and sometimes they play a much more significant role than the one played by states in shaping international relations.

Liberals also stress the importance of international and regional economic organizations and their connection to world politics. Moreover, Liberals take into consideration the role of public opinion, international norms, and law in affecting these politics. A key concept to this school is the possibility of change and especially peaceful change through individuals and organized groups. In that sense, anarchy and the security dilemma issues emphasized by Realists are largely downplayed by Liberals who believe that as much as there is a possibility that they may exist, there is a possibility that cooperation between states may exist as well – albeit with more likelihood.

Furthermore, the latter stress that the history of the world is as much as it is a history of conflict as it is a history of peace and cooperation, and thus they refuse the Realist way of looking at history that believes in anarchy and inherent lack of trust among states. In that sense, Liberalism provides an opposing view to Realism in that Liberalism sees the international system as a space for cooperation and peace more than a space for anarchy and conflict (Viotti 1998). The pluralists acknowledge the existence and interactions of different actors, other than the state, that shape international relations. This plurality is seen through the supra-state (international and regional organizations), trans-state (transnational corporations), and non-state (social movements, NGOs...) actors. Among these players, Liberals argue that order can be achieved through the cooperation of different factors such as the supra-state, trans-state, and non-state actors.

THE MIDDLE EAST CASE

When applying the liberal theory on the Middle East, we can find that most of the regional cooperation attempts were based on ideology, represented by Pan-Arabism, rather than a pragmatic political-economic cooperation like the European Union. The idea of Arabism was to bring the divided Arab nations together seen as sharing common language and religion, while grouped in a geographically linked area. Therefore, the League of Arab States was formed in 1945 aiming at organizing the Arab states under one umbrella to advance cooperation and liberate Palestine among its goals. (Laanatza, Schulz and Schulz 2001) With the changes in world powers and the shift in alliances after WW II, Arab states started to disagree regarding the definition of Arabism and to what extent the cooperation could be achieved. Despite the growing differences, Egypt and

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Syria managed to achieve unity under their common understanding of the Arab nationalism ideology (United Arab Republic 1958-1961). The Arab League established several institutions and organs to facilitate Arab integration. Despite the existence of such regional institutions and organizations, most of the cooperation within the Arab World has taken the form of bilateral, and in few cases multilateral cooperation, but never a complete regional integration. In that sense, "the Arab League has thus in reality been based firmly on the state system and interstate relations rather than on pan-Arab ideology." (Laanatza, Schulz and Schulz 2001) In that way, under the slogans of Pan-Arabism that led to various forms of cooperation among the Arab states, there was some sort of mistrust between the Arab states that made them unable to fully integrate the whole region in one form of cooperation, which is affirmed by Paul Aarts description as "a region without regionalism." (Aarts 1999) However, the decline of Pan-Arabism, which was mainly connected to the defeat of the 1967 War, enabled more cooperation due to the rise of state interests and acceptance of the rules of the game by the Arab leaders. Ending the rivalry between radical and moderate Arab states allowed for the formation of a consensus that was the basis of the regional order characterized the Middle East during the period 1967-1970.

This doesn't mean that there aren't any attempts for cooperation, especially economic, in the Middle East. In fact, because of the retreat of the principles of radical pan Arabism and the rising of oil states, "it was shown that economic processes were perhaps more favorable to regional cooperation and integration than ideological visions." (Laanatza, Schulz and Schulz 2001) Clear examples of that are the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

The GCC was formed in 1981; as a form of a collective security against the hostilities in the Gulf, the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Iranian-Iraqi war of the 1980's. This was an "integration as a response to a crisis" that later was developed to be regarded as the most successful functioning regional cooperation endeavor in the Middle East. This is due to "all states are sheikhdoms with politics based on family [rule], all have small population that is difficult to mobilize, and all are based on enormous oil wealth." (Laanatza, Schulz, and Schulz 2001) This is in addition to the tribal structures of these states and their perception of the common threat at the time Iraq and Iran. However, despite the shared experiences and mutual concerns, the GCC failed to materialize a joint defense mechanism neither within the GCC nor regionally. Instead they continued to depend heavily on international partners for their security, namely the United States.

While on the other hand, the Arab Maghreb Union was established in 1989 aiming at creating a free customs union, along the lines of the European Community, now European Union (EU). The Maghreb Union countries, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, were aiming to open their borders to goods, people capital and services. It was seen as chance to increase non-traditional trade exports and reduce imports. Yet, deadlocks and hurdles due to the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco over leadership and the Western Sahara controversy led to tremendous difficulties in pursuing the ambitious project. Moreover, some EU countries were concerned and skeptic of cooperating with the AMU due to the agricultural market competition and increased immigration of North African states to mainland Europe

Because the Middle East is a marginal exceptional region in global trade, the oil boom has been the most important vehicle for cooperation among the Arab countries

because of two factors; first is the expatriates or the labor coming from other Arab countries and second is the capital produced from oil and invested in other Arab countries as well.

To conclude, little had been done for an Arab cooperation and most projects didn't go beyond bilateral or shallow multilateral cooperation. Ideological tensions, political conflicts, state control over economies as well as disputes on the unequal distribution of resources served as constrains against a deeper integration for the Arabs. (Aarts 1999)

WHAT IS ORDER?

Two main trends dominate the literature regarding international order. The first is "that order refers to a relationship between states", while the second is "that order refers to a condition of humanity as a whole" (Smith 1999 p.101). Both understandings were manifested in Hedley Bull's masterwork, *The Anarchical Society*. Bull defined international order as "a pattern of human activity that sustains elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society" (Bull c.2002). This explanation was taken from his earlier definition of order in social life as "a pattern of human activity that sustains elementary, primary, or universal goals in social life" (Bull c.2002). He identifies these goals as "life, truth, and property". This identification shows that truth and order are entangled. However, truth is more appropriate in the domestic level due to the presence of an authority to manage the system, while on the international level; its value is diminished due to the skepticism and lack of a higher authority that governs the system. Bull believes that an agreement on international order can be reached while

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international justice cannot. He also distinguishes between international order and world order. The former is based on the existence of states as a starting point for international relations and on a differentiation between a system of states and a society of states. For Bull, a system of states occurs when two or more states are in regular contact with one another to "make the behavior of each a necessary element in the calculations of the other" (Bull c.2002). He argues that a society of states exists "when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relation with one another" (Bull c.2002). The goals in the society of states are: "the preservation of the system and the society of states itself... maintaining the independence or external sovereignty of individual states... the absence of war among member states of the international society as the normal condition of their relationship... [and] the common goals [life, truth and property] of all social life" (Bull c.2002).

On the other hand, world order refers to "those patterns or dispositions of human activity that sustain the elementary or primary goals of social life among mankind as a whole" (Bull c.2002). World order is different from international order since its ultimate unit is the individual human being. Unlike international order, which deals primarily on a state to state level, according to Bull, "to give an account of it [world order] we have to deal not only with order among states but also with order on a domestic or municipal scale... and with order within the wider world political system" (Bull c.2002).

Another view of world order is that of Richard Falk in his book *A Study of Future Worlds*. For Falk, world order entailed something different from the one foreseen by Bull. Falk is more concerned with reaching solutions for the 'global' problems and focuses on

people rather than on social groups or states. He wishes to construct an order that "deals with the problems of humanity in such a way as to be beneficial to all humans" (Smith 1999). To construct this order, Falk argues that the minimization of large-scale violence, the maximization of social and economic welfare, the realization of the fundamental human rights and political justice and the maintaining and rehabilitating of ecological quality must be achieved on an individual level to be projected on a global level. Falk's opinion is based on cooperation and mutual understanding of mankind, which are the essentials of the liberal view of the how the world should be. On the other hand, Bull's contribution is his ability to make the distinction between the society of states and the world of mankind without posing them against each other.

In general, whether world order or international order, order in general is considered to be the foundation for stability. Bull considers the concept of order to be preceding other moral values because it is the condition for their realization. Without order in social life, there is no possibility of achieving "advanced, secondary or the special goals of particular societies" (Bull c.2002).

After reviewing some of the literature written about order through Bull and Falk's definitions, it's apparent that we have some sort of an underlying order that mitigate the anarchy of the international system. However, there are several means for maintaining order in the domestic, regional, and international systems.

DOMESTIC ORDER

There is an agreement among most of the scholars of political science that order exists in the domestic realm. This societal order presupposes the existence of some sort of

common interest in the elementary goals of social life. These goals may be vague and difficult to apply, thus rules were constructed for guidance within societies. According to Bull, "Rules are general imperative principles which require or authorize prescribed classes of persons or groups to behave in prescribed ways" (Bull c.2002). The application of the rules is the responsibility of the whole society with an emphasis on the government. In modern states, an institution or set of institutions are there to help make elementary social rules effective. Governments are distinguished from one another by their ability to control and monopolize the use of force in applying rules. However, when governments apply and exercise their power it should be "legitimate" within the society. Although the role of governments in promoting elementary social rules is crucial, other groups and individuals within the state should collaborate to ensure the effectiveness of the application of such rules. (Bull c.2002) Bull identifies several procedures that a government can implement and should be capable of to ensure the preservation of domestic order. Examples of such capabilities are:

(i)   *The government makes rules – not always in the sense that it invents them ... but in the sense that it fixes upon them society.*

(ii)   *The government helps to communicate the rules to those who are bound by them.*

(iii)   *The government is able to interpret the rules to resolve uncertainties.*

(iv)   *The government is [capable of enforcing] the law through the use or the threat of using the police, army or courts' sanctions.*

(Bull c.2002)

The above mentioned examples emphasize the role of governments in keeping stability and order within a state, which is something that is lacking on the international level due to the absence of a governing body to ensure the rule of law, order, and stability internationally.

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORDER

Although we do not have a higher authority to enforce order and rule of law over states, we can still look for other means that would try to minimize violence and safeguard international peace. In the international society of states, order is served through the same means as domestic and local societies assuming there is a presence of common interests, regulating rules and implementing institutions. On the international multilateral society level, states develop mutual interests that may be based on the fear of war, insecurity against certain actions by another state and other factors. These shared interests do not provide guidance because this is the function of rules. International rules, in that case, are provided by international law or established practices or even in the understood rules of the game.

Bull highlighted three types of rules that he believes to be playing an important role in maintaining international order. These rules are the rules of coexistence, normative principles of world politics and rules that regulate cooperation among states (Bull c.2002). The underlying belief is that to implement such rules, sovereign states and/or international organizations are the ones responsible for executing the rules and laws since there is no supreme government to do so.

Due to the conflicting interests of states, other means can be used to sustain order. One is the dynamics of balance of power and the other is based on the dynamics of hegemonic stability. The following chapter will examine order on both the international as well as regional level, with the Middle East as the focus.

Chapter Two

As explained in the former chapter, the lack of order is one of the main characteristics of the international system. The anarchic international system can't be fully controlled, however, there are several means devised to try to mitigate order. Hedley Bull identifies international law, balance of power, diplomacy among other factors that can play a role in mitigating order and minimizing the effect of the anarchy. For the purpose of this research, I will be using the balance of power and the hegemonic stability theory as two examples used to mitigate order. Both examples will be applied on the Middle East.

BALANCE OF POWER

Balance of power is "a state of affairs such that no one power is in a position where it is preponderant and can lay down the law to others." (Bull c.2002). Balance of power as defined by Bull is based upon the presence of nation-states that participate as individual actors in a system and that are concerned with preserving what they perceive to be their national interests, which presumably include such things as "national identity", independence, sovereignty, power and more. States, when successful at wielding international power, create a system that helps prevent other nations from becoming sufficiently threatening to their own interests and enforce their will upon others.

In the absence of any central authority, the only sanction other than international law is the capacity of the powers to hold each other in check. If this system fails, any

state sufficiently powerful may ignore international norms and laws and act solely according to its convenience and interests.

In reference to the balance of power theory, Bull draws our attention to two types: the simple and the complex. An example of the simple balance of power is the clash between the United States and the Soviet Union during the second half of the 20th Century. On the other hand the complex balance of power is exemplified by the emergence of several powers such as the multi-polar system that was in existence prior to WWI. However, Bull asserted that the balance of power has never been 'perfectly simple or perfectly complex.' Simple balance of power always had the tendency to be complicated through the existence of other powers whose capabilities are more than zero. Moreover, it requires certain equality in power to maintain its structure because the only option for the falling power "is to augment its own intrinsic strength." (Bull c.2002). This was clear in the case of the Soviet Union when it failed to keep up its military technology rivalry with the United States by the end of the 20th Century. In contrast, the complex balance of power had an inclination to be more simple in nature and did not need equal power since there have always been other alternatives to sustain the balance, according to Bull. One of those alternatives is through maintaining "diplomatic combination [alliances]." (Bull c.2002). A clear example would be the six power balance prior to WWI, which turned to the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente. Finally, as has been argued the complex balance of power is more stable than the simple one. (Bull c.2002)

Another feature of the balance of power theory distinguishes between the general 'central' balance of power and the 'local' balance of power. During the Cold War, the US-USSR balance of power was regarded as a central balance to the international system,

which differs from the local 'subordinate' balance that was present within the Middle East for instance. It should be clear that the subordinate balance of power is the one that affects the central balance of power. Such was clear in the case of the Middle East and how both the United States and the Soviet Union were crucial elements in the region.

THE MIDDLE EAST CASE

During the 50's and 60's of the 20th Century, the Middle East had two levels of balance of power, one was on among the Arab states, and the other was the Arab-Israeli level. Each level had its own local balance of power but all were within the same general balance of the US-USSR power play. On the Arab level, Michael Barnett argues that the Arab countries went through "a never ending process of negotiating norms" that governed their relations (Barnet 1998). Since the end of WWI, Arab states tried to organize their relations to achieve mutual understanding of their shared concerns. These concerns ranged from defending their nations from the West and Zionism, in addition to the desired regional order that would work with the norms and identity perceived by each state.

An example of state-to-state power tension was between Egypt and Saudi Arabia during the late 1950's until the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Although Egypt's military was much stronger than that of Saudi Arabia's both countries were perceived as the balancing powers within the system of Arab states, but ideologically both states differed greatly. Egypt's military capabilities were not the only aspect that Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser relied on; it was also "his ability to impose a meaning on the events of his time [and] to establish the norms of Arabism… " that also strongly helped his appeal in

the region (Barnet 1998). Barnet adds that the Arab states' competition was based on defining the norms of Arabism and not competing for "relative gains". Thus, the dilemma of the Arabs was not in the sense of a military threat to one another but the ideological differences that were against some regimes' interests at the time and could lead to the mobilization of people against that particular regime. For instance, the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958, which was spearheaded by Nasser, was a threat to Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia due to the ability of the UAR to "offer a powerful vision of how Arab politics should be governed… " and this was regarded as a threat to the domestic stability for these countries more than the threat they would face from a military combat (Barnet 1998).

However, on the Arab-Israeli level the balance of power was based on military and economic capabilities along with the amount of external support each side possess. The Arabs regarded Israel as an intruder and a foreign puppet for the West in the region. Not to mention Israel's Zionist ideology, which was one of the main concepts that Arab states were anxious about since expansion was an integral part of it. It is important to mention here that the West was skeptical of the nationalistic aspirations of Nasser, especially after his nationalization policy. Such a move would cause tremendous setbacks to the capitalist West and the US in particular, if it was applied in the Gulf States who own the world's largest oil reserves. Moreover, the simple balance of power at the time between the US-USSR, would not have allowed for a new unchecked power, even if it was regional, to rise and disturb both the international and regional order they were preserving. For this reason and others, Israel had full support from the US and Western Europe, while the Soviet Union tried to balance this alliance by assisting some Arab

countries rather than having them as full allies standing opposed to the US-Israeli alliance.

Finally, I would argue that although the region had witnessed several wars whether Arab-Arab through proxies or Arab-Israeli it still managed to keep a balance of power. Many would argue that the balance of power system is a system that cannot be sustained without a venting space to flex muscles. This demonstration of power may take several forms but the most common are proxy wars. This type of war setting had many examples in the Middle East. For example, the Arab states had little concerns about going to war against each other but were more worried about the differences in principles and beliefs. Arab nationalism advocated by Nasser's Egypt was an alarming issue for several Arab as well as non Arab states whether in the region or out of it. This ideology was perceived as a threat to other governing regimes especially Saudi Arabia, which resulted in what has been know as the Arab Cold War. (Kerr 1971) The balance of power between Egypt and Saudi Arabia was kept militarily in check and their disagreement was transferred to another place through supporting the fighting groups in Yemen during the early 1960s.

While on the international level, the US and USSR handled their disagreement not only through proxy wars, but also with their mutual understanding of the nuclear deterrence concept and the use of diplomacy at other times. However, the world was largely defined during the Cold War by proxy wars in different regions; prominent among them is the Middle East. The Arab-Israeli conflict was a chance for both super-powers at the time to show off their power without "direct" confrontation.

HEGEMONIC STABILITY THEORY

Although the hegemonic stability theory started as an explanation to certain economic situations (i.e. 1929 Great depression analysis by Charles Kindleberger), it has developed to encompass the political aspect as well. This theory is given credit for the success of the international system in preserving order in certain situations, while at other times it is regarded as a failing factor to international cooperation. It is argued that "the presence of a single, strongly dominant actor in international politics leads to collectively desirable outcome for all states in the international system" (Snidal 1985). Thus, the nonexistence of a hegemon could lead to disorder in the international system.

An understanding of hegemony and what it entails will enable us to also realize the implications of using such terms as hegemons, or potential hegemons. According to Michael Lind, hegemony is not merely the product of the absence of challengers to a country's dominance on the global arena, or on the regional spectrum, but also the sustained stationing of a country's troops in every significant region. Such stationing can be obtained either by the consent of regional actors (reassurance) or by intimidating these actors into acquiescence (dissuasion). (Lind 2006) Robert Gilpin has a similar view of hegemony, albeit more substantiated. Hegemony bears two dimensions, power (military forces), and prestige (giving enforceable commands). Gilpin in so saying is echoing earlier work by Ralf Dahrendorf, "...if power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance" ...authority (or prestige) is "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed."(Dahrendorf 1959) Gilpin gets more specific yet regarding the qualification for hegemony. A state which comes to enjoy the status of hegemony must

by necessity have won a 'hegemonic' war, where the victor is able to govern the new world order. To put it simply, Gilpin defines hegemony as "control of the system by a single powerful state."(Gilpin 1981) Following this line of reasoning, it is to be inferred that a hegemon is a state which has defeated its immediate rival in a total war, and has both the capacity and reputation to put its will into effect. A potential hegemon is a state which builds its capabilities in such a fashion that would enable it to mount defiance against the hegemon and emerge as the hegemon later on. So while global hegemony remains a distant dream, regional hegemony is every great power's realizable desire. For our purposes, regional hegemony is *every state's* realizable desire.

Great Britain played the role of the hegemon post the 1815 French defeat. England took on the leading role as an exporter of capital, and used its navy to enforce free trade. The United Kingdom acted as a hegemon and used this power to maintain the international economic and political system's stability to its favor. However, with the end of WWI came the declining power of the UK, which was soon after substituted by rising American supremacy. According to Robert Keohane, the hegemon is the state that possesses the ability to create and enforce international norms, in addition to acquiring domination over economic, technological, and military capabilities (Keohene 1984). If we apply such a definition on the world today, some would argue that the US is the world's hegemon following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the bi-polar system of that time.

The US has since dominated and excelled in several fields employing both its hard and soft power. Many would consider non-coercive means as the reason for the sustainability of US superiority via means such as the cultural influence of television,

music, fashion, Hollywood, and food. On the other hand, scholars like Joseph Nye and John Mearsheimer would argue that the United States does not have true hegemony, since it lacks the resources to impose dominance over the entire globe. While the United States has dominance on the political-military front, it is equal to Europe on the economic scale (Nye Jr. 2002). To John Mearsheimer, *hegemony* is defined as "domination of the system", be it global or regional. (Mearsheimer 2003) The domination of the system occurs when no other state in the system has the wherewithal to challenge the preponderance of the hegemon. A hegemon is the only great power in the system. When a great power is more powerful than others, it is not construed to be a hegemon, for it can theoretically be confronted by other great powers at any point in time.(Mearsheimer 2003) This definition narrows down the number of states, if not eligibility, that have been traditionally thought to be hegemons. For instance, whereas much of the literature speaks of the United States' hegemony of the world subsequent to the elapse of the Cold War, Washington, in fact, does not qualify for the global hegemonic status according to Mearsheimer's definition. The US is indeed the hegemon of North America, since no state in this region comes remotely close to matching America's power. On the global realm, nevertheless, it would be highly problematic to state that Washington is a hegemon over Europe or Asia. According to Mearsheimer, there has never been a global hegemon, and the likelihood is minimal in the foreseeable future.(Mearsheimer 2003)

Albeit omnipresent in realist literature, *power* may bear drastically divergent connotations to different authors. First, power is understood to be "the sum of military, economic, technological, diplomatic, and other *capabilities* at the disposal of the state." (Viotti 1999) This view is lamented by other realists as too absolute. To them, it lacks a

necessary comparative dimension. A state's capabilities, hence, are only determined in relation to other states'. Keohane, as mentioned above, sees power as tied to resources and production, which work as an important determinant of power. He regards the declining US Growth Domestic Product (GDP) in relation to other powers as a sign of the US losing power and therefore losing hegemony. Others would agree with the importance of controlling resources, but do not see it as the only determinative factor because for example, the German troops that conquered Western Europe were actually fewer in number than their opponents as Keohane explained. Thus, the decrease in the US GDP is not a sign of its decline, rather other factors might be. The concept of power offered by John Mearsheimer in "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics." can be divided into two categories: 1) military power and 2) latent power. Latent power is not a *quid pro quo* for military power, but rather a necessary condition. The definition of power, to him, is precise and refers to nothing more than a state's material assets. Yet, whilst we can intuitively identify military power in terms of the quantity and quality of both conventional and unconventional arms, our task becomes more problematic with latent power. In Mearsheimer's words "[L]atent power refers to the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power; it is largely based on a state's wealth and the overall size of its population. Great powers need money, technology, and personnel to build military forces and to fight wars, and a state's latent power refers to the raw potential it can draw on when competing with rival states." (Mearsheimer 2003) In the case of Iran, this study will demonstrate that Iran's power based on the foregoing criteria was on the rise vis-à-vis the power of its rivals.

In conclusion, the hegemonic theory faces much criticism. First, it is the recognition of the hierarchy of states by other actors in the international system and not only the presence of the hegemon that maintains order, some would argue. Thus, the Soviet threat to Europe can be considered as a driving factor in allying the UK and France with the US at the time. Lastly, those who argue against this theory point out that hegemons do not last forever due to internal decline and external challenges. (Mearsheimer 2003) Many see the international economic crisis of 2008 along with the problems that face the US military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan as catalysts for change in the international system.

THE MIDDLE EAST CASE

Throughout the modern history of the Middle East region there has not been a local dominant hegemon over the region. The Middle East hosts several states that could potentially act as hegemons and we have in history incidents of states that tried to extend their power and control over others but it was always kept checked from other regional or international powers. For instance, the Egyptian regime under President Nasser was advocating Arab unity, which was opposed by both some Arab and non-Arab countries. Although Egypt enjoyed military superiority over other Arab states in the region, it was the rhetoric and the ideology that Nasser used that moved people in the region to protest against their own governments such as in Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. Arab nationalism caused fear among other would-be hegemonic states such as Saudi Arabia and other weaker countries like Jordan and Lebanon. The escalation of tension and fear reached a near climax after the union of Egypt and Syria in 1958. However, despite the level of

popular support Nasser and his ideology had, he was not able to implement his Arab unity vision. The regional as well as the international system did not allow him to implement such a concept and even intervened directly, seeing that Egypt as a sole regional power would cause imbalance to the power in the region and would be a threat to other states' interests. This was illustrated for example when Jordan and Lebanon, fearing political instability in 1958, called upon the United States to interfere domestically through requesting arms and troops to maintain order to support the governments in power. Another example was during the Egyptian-Saudi cold war when both nations supported opposing sides in Yemen in a sort-of proxy war for regional power.

A more recent example is the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein thought to exercise his military power to gain more control over the Gulf region. His misunderstanding to the rules of the system led to an international coalition led by the US against him to liberate Kuwait. The result of the 1990-1991 crisis was a crucial factor in reshaping the Middle East power map.

Although, the Middle East is often regarded as one homogenous geographic region, it can be divided into several mini regions, such as, the Gulf region on one end and North African countries on another. Most of these mini regions have their own organizations whose aim is to work towards enhancing the social, economic, and political developments of the member-states. Examples of such organizations are the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

The US policy shift towards the Middle East after 9/11 and the subsequent 'war on terror' has led to instability in the region and opened the door to Iranian influence. The

US invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq opened a space for the Islamic Republic of Iran to rise. (Taheri 2005) In essence, if a regional hegemon has never been allowed to rise, thrive, or survive the question remains if Iranian influence continues to grow in the region, what are the limits to its power in the Middle East based on the current climate and historical examples? This will be elaborated more in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

CHALLENGES TO THE MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL ORDER

Barry Buzan regards the Middle East as a place with "an autonomous regional level of security…" This level of security has functioned for several decades despite the external interventions in its affairs (Buzan 2003). Many of the current conflicts within the Middle East have started with the end of the decolonization period, mid 20th Century. These regional divergences had several levels, the inter-Arab rivalry during the 50's and 60's, the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, and lately, the Iranian aspirations and influence in the Middle East. Most recently, the Iranian nuclear program and Iran's regaining aspirations for regional power after the US invasion to Afghanistan and Iraq has played a considerable role in the study of the regional order of the Middle East. Though the US military presence in the Gulf since 1991 has been there to stabilize and maintain the balance of power in the region, the shift in the US policy toward the Middle East outlined in President George W. Bush's policy doctrine after 9/11 has led to a considerable change in the balance of power of the system.

During the coming part, we will be trying to look into the different factors affecting the regional order in the Middle East. The factors chosen here are regional represented in the regional polarity in the Middle East and the long lasting Arab-Israeli conflict that has been ongoing for over 60 years and caused tremendous changes within the region. While On the other hand, the external part comes from the several attempts to dominate and affect the regional dynamics by the super powers. For the purpose of this paper, the United States will be the example due to its huge influence and its role in the

region; in addition to looking into the different changes it had undergone in its policies toward the Middle East. The American policies post 9/11, along with the Arab-Israeli conflict and the current Iranian hegemonic aspirations are among the main factors affecting the Middle East dynamics nowadays.

THE 'PENETRATED' MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East region has been ruled and penetrated by several powers during the course of history. Several countries, either within the region or outside, have shown interest and worked hard to get a chance to rule over this strategic location whether by direct governance and occupation or through using a client government. We have seen big powers like France and Great Britain since the early 19th Century trying to dominate over some of the strategic locations within the Middle East taking advantage of the weakening power of the Ottoman Empire that used to rule the whole region since the 16th Century. Some of the region's countries, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia (Iraq), constituted great importance to such powers in securing their transportation routes to and from their colonized territories.

With the industrial revolution, the superior technological advancement of Europe, and the expansion of capitalism and imperialism during the 19th and early 20th Centuries, the Middle East was reduced to an economic periphery to the European 'developed' core. Even after the independence of the region's countries, the "Western Capitalism continued to penetrate the Middle East [benefiting from its] strategic transit routes, oil resources, the creation of Israel, and the relative power vacuum issuing from the regional fragmentation." (Hinnebusch 2003)

Several scholars have discussed such issue, like Leon Brown and Fred Halliday, who emphasize the fact of the Middle East being a penetrated system and that great powers competition over the region has been more enduring than in any other region in the World. This led the local powers, (countries of the region), to try and manipulate this international rivalry to serve their agendas, however the fragmentation of the region, implantation of client elites, in addition to supporting Israel "have kept the region divided and dependent on external support." (Hinnebusch 2003) Brown continues to argue that whenever there is a hegemon on the international level, it has tended to dominate the region on behalf of a relatively united 'core'; and the first example is Great Britain.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL ORDER

A. REGIONAL POLARITY

The Middle East went through many changes throughout the past 60 years. Since the Middle Eastern system encompasses about twenty Arab states (core), and three non-Arab states (periphery), it has been immune to domination by states which lack credentials on the cultural and religious fronts. This is one reason why Israel, whereas militarily superior to all Arab states, is not a qualified candidate for regional hegemony. However, if a peace agreement was achieved to end the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Israeli role in the region will arise using its advanced economic, which was the main argument of Shimon Peres in his idea of creating the 'Greater Middle East'. (Laanatza, Schulz and Schulz 2001)

1. NASSER AND PAN-ARABISM

During the 1950's, the region was still emerging from colonial control. Turkey, Iran and Israel were more advanced in nation state building, while the Arab states were fragmented and unstable, led by oligarchies with fragile legitimacy, if any. To counter such weak legitimacy, the Arab regimes sought either implementing anti-imperialist rhetoric (Nasser's Egypt) or seek protection from the Western powers against their internal opposition (Lebanon and Jordan in 1958).

From the mid 50's up until the Arab defeat in the 1967 war, the region has seen a huge transformation. The Egyptian President Abdel Nasser deployed the trans-state ideology of Arabism creating from Egypt a center of the Arab world and leading the Arabs for solidarity and rolling back Western influence. (Barnet 1998; Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) Nasser saw the West and Israel as the main threats to the region not spreading of communism as the US advocated. This was his main argument in opposing the Baghdad Pact of 1955, which would have aligned some Arab states with Turkey and Iran in the name of communism containment. Instead, Nasser called for a collective Arab security pact and nonalignment to either super power. Managing to mobilize people around the Arab world behind his cause and ideas has created from Egypt a 'regional (Arab) hegemon'. This became evident with the unity with Syria in 1958. Leon Brown comments on that by noting that "Nasser came close, but never achieved, the 'organizing' of the region. (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) Another clear example of the spread of 'nationalism' over the Middle East, not only Arab countries, is Mossadaq's nationalization of the Iranian oil, which was a blow for the British influence in Iran and a new era for US-Iranian relations to begin. On the other hand, the non Arab states didn't

contribute to the regional order; they rather consolidated the power of Arabism. For instance, the Israeli attempts to weaken the power of Nasser through border clashes and the Suez War in 1956, resulted in granting Nasser more legitimacy and support rather than weakening him. Also, the U.S attempts under the Eisenhower doctrine to contain the power vacuum of the Levant only pushed Syria toward allying with Egypt. Furthermore, the American planned coup against the nationalistic Iranian government under Mossadeq contributed to the lasting hostility to the US in the eyes of the Iranians.

2. THE DECLINE OF PAN-ARABISM AND A NEW REGIONAL ORDER

By the late 1950's and early 1960's, the Arab world became more polarized between radical republics and status quo monarchies resisting Cairo's power and hegemony. Disagreement on the definition of Arabism and Egypt's attempt in implementing its interpretation, Arabs relation with the West, fighting Zionism, and Israel were the main disagreements or points of debate between the Arab leaders. (Barnet 1998) In 1961, Syria left the unity with Egypt, which resembled as the beginning of rejecting Cairo's hegemonic role in the region. Ironically, the Ba'thist coups in Syria and Iraq, though adopting the Pan-Arab ideology, started pushing back against Nasser fearing his domination. While on the other hand, the periphery states of Iran, Israel and turkey aligned to contain the rising Arab nationalist threat, which is a clear classic act of realism balancing.

Without going into the reasons that triggered the 1967 War, the outcome was humiliating to the Arabs. The Pan-Arab ideology aggressive approach gave Israel a reason to attack and a chance to realize its ambitions in the region. It was the defeat that

shattered the Pan-Arab system and weakened Nasser's Egypt. Hinnebusch argues that "Wars are catalysts for changes in state systems and the 1967 war was no exception. It signaled the decline of Egyptian hegemony, [Arab nationalism] and the Egypt–centric-Arab regime." (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) Moreover, Egyptian economy wasn't sufficient enough to maintain Egypt's regional superiority, that's why its hegemony was based mainly on the ideology of Arabism. Another blow to the Arabs beside the defeat and the end of Arab nationalism was the fact of accepting the permanence of Israel. At the same time on the Eastern periphery of the Middle East, Iran under the Shah was aiming to build a new developed country. He installed the 'White Revolution' and introduced several reforms to the country. The increase in oil revenues played in his favor and his close alliance with the United States that started after ousting Mohamed Mossadeq in 1953, gave him more power. All this and more has shaped Pahlavi Iran's aspirations, based on the Arab-Persian cleavage, to play the guardian role against Arab radicalism.

The death of President Nasser in 1970 ended Egypt's hegemonic role as his successor Anwar Al-Sadat was concerned and concentrating on the recovery of Sinai rather than trying to reestablishing Nasser's Pan-Arab system. This new Egyptian approach enabled other Arab states to acquire more freedom to pursue their state interests; however, Israel represented another threat to all Arab states. The new Egyptian President understood that the ill fated ideology of Arabism won't benefit him and instead started a pragmatic approach toward the Arab states. President Sadat understanding the rules of the games and the new regional dynamics in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, managed to consolidate relations with Syria, and most Arab countries, as a step toward

cooperating in their common goal of regaining their land from Israel. Thus an "Arab Triangle" was established involving "an axis of the largest (Egypt), the richest (Saudi Arabia) and the most Pan-Arab (Syria)… this trilateral alliance would replace the Egyptian hegemony… based on consensus building made possible between the main leaders, Sadat, Assad, and Faysal." (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) This new Arab alliance managed to bring along most, if not all, Arab states to support the frontline states in their attempt for retrieving their lands. Such collaborated efforts helped Egypt and Syria to launch a coordinated attack on October 6, 1973. The attack was followed by a Saudi (OPEC) decision to cut oil exports to force the intervention of the West, especially the United States. Other Arab countries contributed to the success of such a move by buying arms for the frontline states (Algeria and the Gulf states) or sending troops to fight (Jordan and Iraq). The new regional order that was created by the three big countries continued until disagreements on the method to resolve the conflict with Israel aroused. President Sadat believed in the ability of the US to pressure Israel to withdraw from Sinai, thus started calling for peace and asking Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians to join him in this new endeavor. The Syrian view was different from the Egyptian, still affected by the Pan-Arab ideology, the Syrians resisted making peace with the Israelis and attacked Cairo's attempt for peace. Egypt decided to move alone in its attempt to regain its occupied and signed a peace treaty with Israel on March 29, 1979. Sadat's peace deal with the Israeli affected the regional scene profoundly. An important consequence was the insecurity of the Arab system that led to mistrust and relying on the state-centric self help system.

3. THE 1980S: A REGION WITH NO HEGEMON

The Middle East of the 1980's was overwhelmingly unbalanced. Discrepancies of power distribution gathered momentum in an ominous fashion. Some of the regional poles were on a skyrocketing ascendancy, whilst others were slipping behind rapidly. Even though military considerations were chiefly responsible for the power-distribution transformation, intangible, non-military factors had their share as well.

The pre-1980 regional poles were Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Israel, and Iran. The countries possessed various qualifications for the title, such as relatively sizable populations (except for the Jewish State), relatively substantial military man-power (except for Israel), relatively advanced military equipments and arms vis-à-vis their neighbors (especially Israel), and relatively opulent economies (except for Egypt and Syria). The comparative power of these states in relation to each other has been dynamic. The October (Yom Kippur) War of 1973 played a forceful role in the redrawing of the power map over the years to follow. First, although the War was a tremendous setback to the unassailable image of the Israeli army, it also prompted significant losses to the Egyptian and Syrian armies and economies. The economies of Cairo and Damascus were war-weary, and unable to meet many of the fundamental needs of their respective populations. More ominously, the economies confronted numerous hindrances when it came to supporting, and sustaining, the war-effort. They have thus, demonstrated symptoms of ailment. Additionally, much of the militaries themselves had been exhausted, and in fact destroyed, in the course of the war. Both Cairo and Damascus lost together 2,000 tanks and 450 fighting jets, in contrast to Tel Aviv's 800 tanks and over 100 aircrafts.(Cleveland 2000) Syria's military was further dealt a blow in 1982, when

Israel invaded Lebanon. The Israeli army "inflicted large losses and pushed Syria from strategic sectors of Lebanese terrain."(Ehteshami 1997) The war, however politically successful for Egypt, induced a swift decline in comparative military power. (Barnett 1998)

In 1979, the Egyptian military was given an immense boost by the US military aid to Egypt. The very singing of the Camp David Accords, nevertheless, signaled Cairo's voluntary divorce from the position of leadership within the Arab system. Egypt no longer had the credentials to dominate or lead. Contrarily, it was expelled from the League of Arab States, whose headquarters was moved to Tunisia rather than Cairo. Syria, on the other hand, maintained its 'Arab' qualifications by rejecting any settlement with Tel Aviv. Such qualifications became highly irrelevant, though, as Damascus quickly became dependant on Arab and Iranian aid. According to Patrick Clawson, in the period between 1977 and 1988, Syria funded only forty five percent of its imports; a staggering $42 billion were channeled from the Soviet Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Iran and the West. (Clawson 1989) Despite the carcinogenic growth of debt and dependency, Syria continued to bear the same hegemonic ambitions in Lebanon, although unsustainable.(Ehteshami 1997)

The year 1979 marked a seemingly analogous decline in Tehran's power. One of Washington's most prominent allies in the Middle East, Mohammed Reza Shah, was dethroned by the Islamic Revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini. The revolution turned the regional power from a defender of the status quo to exporting the revolution threatening the Arab Gulf states. The US military and financial aid to Iran was discontinued. The Iranian army was in disarray following the execution and expulsion of most of the high-

ranking military officers. Iran appeared vulnerable and unable to reemerge powerful from its presumed domestic debacle. What its rivals failed to bear in mind, however, was the fact that Iran was a flowing on oil reserves in 1980, with estimates reaching as high as 100 million barrels. (Mosallam 1990) In fact, the Gross National Product (GNP) of the Islamic Republic in 1985-1986 was five times greater than that of its Ba'thist adversary, Iraq. (Mosallam 1990) Tehran's apparent waning prowess did not result in its demotion from the potential hegemon status. As obvious from the foregoing factors, its latent power was monolithic, and was relatively higher than those of its immediate competitor, Iraq. Furthermore, Iran's naval supremacy posed a serious peril to the transportation of oil in the Persian Gulf as much as the control of naval routes, especially in the strategic Strait of Hormuz. (Mosallam 1990)

The October (Yom Kippur) War was not equally bad news for other poles in the region. On October 17, in a show of support to the embattled 'front states', the Arab member states of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) declared their intention to curtail their oil production by five percent a month until Israel withdrew from all occupied Arab territories. Saudi Arabia, two days later, suspended oil exportation to the United States indefinitely. (Cleveland 2000) The oil embargo imposed by the Gulf States drove oil prices to unprecedented highs, and asserted the Arab cause more resolutely, particularly in Western Europe and Japan. The new riches of the Gulf Arab states did not, to be sure, parallel a rise in their power position in the region. Gulf States, due to their dwarflike dimensions, do not enjoy the antecedents to actual power. In other words, the latent power of the Gulf States is virtually non-existent. Yet, there is significance to their newly affluent status; Gulf States could now assist the state of their

favor to a higher power level within the system. Aid and loans were to present new opportunities to regional powers in search for resources not available to their adversaries. Such is the case for Iraq, and its quest for regional hegemony. Even though the "oil boom" elevated the economic standing of both Baghdad and Tehran, the former had virtually uninterrupted aid from the neighboring Gulf States.[2] This factor in itself may have proved indispensable for Baghdad's ability to remain engaged in a drastically draining war for about eight years. By the 1980's, a multi-polar struggle for power and hegemony raged among several contending countries. Although most of the Middle East states were perusing a state-centric policy, yet they were ambitious to exercise regional leadership. (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) This was a consequence of the Egyptian leadership decline; diminish of Arab nationalism and the rising petrodollar states. Moreover, the region was experiencing changes that further alleviated its vulnerability. The Israeli intervention in Lebanon in 1982, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Islamic revolution threat, led to polarizing the Arab states rather than uniting them against the new challenges. Two rival coalitions were established based on the location of the threat not based on ideology or identity. The first group, a moderate pro-Western coalition including mainly Iraq, Egypt, the GCC states, combined against the Iranian and Soviet threats. Driven by the Gulf monarchs' fear of Iran, a lot of money was transferred from the Israeli front to supporting Iraq in its war against Iran. Moreover, this represented a chance for Egypt to return to the Arab camp after been marginalized due to its peace treaty with Israel. On the other hand, a so-called "Steadfastness Front" of radical states, Libya, Algeria, Syria, Democratic Yemen, and later Iran, were brought together sharing common concerns/threats of the United States and Israel. In addition, Syria and

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[2] By 1976, eighty seven percent of Iraq's revenue came from oil exports. (Farouk-Sluglett 2001)

Iran, the mutual sense of threat from Iraq and their common goals, entered in a defensive counter-alliance. (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) The Syrian-Iranian alliance enabled Iran to enter into the heart of Arab politics. This was evident not only through its close relation with Syria but also through its mobilization of *Hizbullah* the Shiite group in Lebanon.

By the end of the 1980's, it seemed that "the balance of power became the main source of order…" (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) Examples for such conclusion are the Iran-Iraq and Syrian-Israeli balance. In the east, Iran and Iraq had an intense weary 8 year war for Gulf hegemony that ended in a stalemate and the Islamic revolution was contained. Israel and Syria established a 'deterrence relationship'. Syria with its influence and mobilization of the Lebanese Muslims against Israel and the armed support of the Soviets, pushed for such understanding that a new war will be costly for both countries. (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002)

Finally, I would argue that Iran, by the end of the 1980's, reestablished itself as an important pillar in the Gulf region. Through its alliance with Syria, it was given an opportunity to enter the heart of inter-Arab politics and influence it. For instance, its continuous monetary and arms support to the Shiite group *Hizbullah* in Lebanon made their involvement in a regional order crucial. Moreover, its Islamic background has enabled it to open dialogue with all the other non-Arab Islamic states and establish trade and economic relations based mainly on its oil and gas reserves.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The protracted Arab-Israeli conflict has resembled as the most challenging issue for this region, if not the whole world. It has been ongoing since the end of WWI with the huge amount of Jewish immigrants to the British mandated Palestine and reached the peak with the establishment of the state of Israel in May 14, 1948. This conflict led to about seven wars in the period of 1948-2008, huge infrastructure devastation, enormous death toll, in addition to a massive amount of Palestinian refugees around the world. These wars involved Israel and its neighboring Arab states (Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon), while other Arab states were supportive of the cause through other means like monetary and military aid. However, this long lasting conflict had a key impact over the inter-Arab politics and Middle East in general.

Israel sees itself surrounded by hostile Arab states waiting for the moment to push it to the sea. The Israeli invasion to Sinai in 1956, in coordination with France and Great Britain, could be seen as part of a larger plan enforced in 1967. The Israelis used the pressure exerted on President Abdel Nasser and seized the opportunity to smash the Arabs, achieving secure borders, and forcing the Arabs to accept its presence and deal accordingly. Israel added territories triple its size after the 1967 showdown. (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) It is only after the 1967 defeat that President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Arab nationalism rhetoric and his Arab unity ambitions started to weaken. During 1978-1979, Egypt and Israel went through tough negotiations that ended by signing the first peace treaty between one of the frontline states and Israel. This granted Israel the neutrality of Egypt, which was seen as a blow to the Arab and Palestinian cause by many regional states.

However, the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict changed from state level wars to a state versus non-state actors (i.e. *Hamas* and *Hizbullah*). These groups seized the chance of the Israeli-Palestinian accords in the 1990's and the alienation of Egypt and Jordan after their peace agreements with Israel to establish themselves. The new approach of fighting Israel through the militant groups and using the support of other regional powers, namely Iran, made it more difficult to reach any sort of agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians or even to control these militant groups. It has become clearer after the Israeli wars in 2006 and 2008 war against *Hezbollah* and *Hamas*, respectively, that the decision making of these groups is highly influenced if not coming from Tehran and Damascus. However, this does not neglect the unconstructive role of Israel in providing any solution and taking advantage of any chance to maintain the status-quo or develop new changes on the ground; in addition to not abiding by any resolutions or accords, as usual. Even the Arab peace initiative, which constitutes a total change in the Arabs political views toward Israel and a willingness from the Arabs to reach a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, was rejected. The plan had unanimous support from all Arab and Islamic nations by which they recognize and exchange all sorts of relations with the Israeli state in return for the Israeli withdrawal to the borders of June 4, 1967, the creation of the Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital and a just solution to the refugees' problem.

With the death of President Yasser Arafat and *Hamas* elected to power in 2006, the peace process deteriorated. Although the Israelis have supported *Hamas* when established in the late 1980's to stand against Arafat and his group *Fatah*, its not until the 1993 Oslo Accords that Israel started regarding *Hamas* as a terrorist organization due to

the attacks it launched on Israel. *Hamas' leaders* were under international as well as regional pressures to end its attacks on Israel. The Israelis used the opportunity of *Hamas* taking over and controlling the Gaza strip in summer 2007 to block all access points and minimize its supplies to the strip. Although, an act like that is against the international law and human rights norms yet the international community stood still in front of the deteriorating situation in Gaza.

Israel not only had clashes with *Hamas*, it invaded southern Lebanon in summer 2006, known as the 33 days war, retaliating to the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by *Hizbullah*. Israel aimed at dismantling *Hezbullah's* capabilities and recovering the two captured soldiers. Unfortunately, these attacks were not confined to the south but it reached Beirut and damaged a lot of the Lebanese state infrastructure. It took the international community so long to act and issue a resolution from the UN Security Council. The Israeli intervention against *Hizbullah* was played in favor of the US policy to weaken Iran, thus the Americans delayed such resolution hoping that the Israelis would destroy or at least weaken *Hizbullah*, the Iranian tool. However, the outcome of the 33 days was not in favor of Israel. It could not weaken *Hizbullah's* power or retrieve its kidnapped soldiers; in fact it helped increase *Hizbullah's* popularity in and out of Lebanon. Moreover, it deteriorated the Israeli military image for not being able to deal with such war, also decreased the popularity of the Israeli government led by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

On December 27, 2008, Israel launched its military operation against Gaza aiming at dismantling the rocket launching ability of the Palestinian resistance movements toward Israel, end *Hamas'* control over the Gaza strip, which it govern since the summer

of 2007, and creating new security arrangements/foundations on the ground. Israel seized the chance of *Hamas'* announcement to end the six month truce Egypt brokered during the summer of 2008, the differences among the Palestinians, and the transition period before the new US President-elect Barak Obama take office on January 21 to launch its attack.

The Israeli attacks on Lebanon and later on Gaza signify the regional order in the Middle East. The region is divided into two groups of countries, more or less the same division of the late 1980's. The first is the conservative/extremist group which includes Syria, Iran alongside movements like *Hamas*, *Hizbullah*, and Islamic Jihad. These states uses the ongoing conflict to their benefit through their support to the abovementioned groups and using them as a card in any negotiation with the United States, Israel, and/or any Arab country. As we have seen before, the Iranians have clearly backed and supported *Hizbullah* in its war with Israel in the summer of 2006 and continue to do so. In addition, the Israelis believe that Iran is supporting *Hamas* financially and militarily. The former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzepi Livni recognizes the development of *Hamas'* rockets capabilities as a sign of Iranian involvement. On the other hand, the Syrian regime has been hosting most of the senior leaders of *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad and using this to show their 'commitment' to the Palestinian cause.

The second group is the moderates combining Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and most of the Gulf States, in addition to the Palestinian Authority. This group has a strong relation with the United States and two of its members, Egypt and Jordan, have peace treaties with Israel. This cluster of states leans toward a solution to the conflict according to the current situation and based on the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. For example, they

shared the same views during the 33 days war on Lebanon in 2006 by condemning the excessive use of force from Israel and blaming *Hizbullah* for starting the fighting. Also, they stood firm during the latest Israeli assault on Gaza, calling for a cease fire and the opening of the crossings to allow humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. Their stance was in coordination with the European powers who were taking the lead on calling for a cease fire due to the presidential transition phase in Washington.

It is apparent that the Arab-Israeli conflict will continue to be an important variable in measuring the level of order within the region. The Israeli actions cause animosity within the region. Such animosity not only affects the regional politics of the Middle East, but also could create internal disputes to some states. On the other hand, the situation in the Palestinian territories will remain in a stalemate until the crucial differences between the Palestinian factions are resolved. All the factions, especially *Fatah* and *Hamas,* should be working to achieve consensus regarding all the disputed issues. Moreover, the election of a new Israeli right-wing government led by the *Likud* party and in coalition with the extreme right parties that denounce the creation of a Palestinian state some even call for expelling the Arabs from Israel contributes to the stalemate and diminishes any chances for a solution in the near future. Finally, this conflict will continue to prevail until a shift of power occurs giving the Arabs and Palestinians an upper hand to pressure the Israelis for peace, since neither the US nor any other power, so far, is capable of acting as a neutral broker for peace.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The United States' interest in the Middle East region is recognized as a late comer in its foreign policy. Although, Americans have been travelling to the region since the nineteenth century, the US government didn't focus on the region until maybe after WWII. However, since then the US has played a definitive role in Middle Eastern politics.

The US policy in the region "has focused primarily on seven objectives: ensuring the security of Israel; achieving an Arab-Israeli peace settlement; maintaining access by industrialized nations to Middle Eastern energy supplies; blocking Soviet influence in the region until 1989; countering terrorism; stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD); and recently promoting democratic transformation in certain countries." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007)

Although, the call for freedom in the Middle East by President George W. Bush and the changes undertook by the US in its foreign policy has faced criticism by many groups as "a pious hope or a hopeless promise from an arrogant superpower.", the elections in both Afghanistan and Iraq in addition to the changes within several Arab states in 2005 had made many believe "that the United States was serious about reshaping the Middle East and bringing it into the mainstream of the new global economic and political system." This new policy meant that the US under President Bush is "abandoning a 60-year old policy that had continued under 11 [US] Presidents." (Taheri 2005)

Among the first US Presidents to set a framework for his country's policy in the Middle East was President Woodrow Wilson. The framework was based on the aftermath

results of World War I and the agreements and declarations that took place during the War concerning the Middle East region, i.e. Sykes-Picot agreement and the Belfour Declaration. Wilson depended on post WW I peace settlements, under the League of Nations and both Great Britain and France. It was a result to the opposition of both the American people and Congress to interfere in the matters of other nations and better stay away and neutral. Thus, "the Middle East failed to hold the United States' attention during the interwar years." However, we will see how this changed post WWII. (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007)

THE US POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST FROM WWII TO THE GULF WAR 1991

The US perception of the Middle East changed after the end of World War II. Reasons for that ranged from the rising importance of the region's oil, the establishment of the Israeli state and the fight against communism through the US-USSR Cold War. The region proved its significance to the American administration and shifted it from "a backwater to a strategic priority for Washington." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007)

In 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt met the Saudi King Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud to assure the US commitment in ensuring "the security of the Muslim Kingdom in exchange for access to its oil." (Taheri 2005) President Harry S. Truman succeeded President Roosevelt and during his term it was the end of the catastrophic WWII and the first time use of an atomic bomb. Using the threat of nuclear weapons, the US managed to pressure the Soviet Union to withdraw from northwestern Iran. Moreover, the American administration under President Truman was coordinating with the British

concerning the Jewish migration and the creation of a "national home" to them in the land of Palestine. President Truman called in August 1945, "for the free settlement of Palestine by Jews to a point consistent with maintaining civil peace." To emphasis this, both houses of Congress passed a resolution in December 1945 "urging US aid in opening Palestine to Jewish immigrants and in building a democratic commonwealth." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007)

Based on that, the British thought to have the US share part of the responsibility, since their British mandated forces were under continuous attacks from the Jewish underground militant groups. With Truman going explicit about the support of the creation of a "viable Jewish state", the British feared that the American President's statement would undermine the chances of a compromise deal between the Arabs and Jews. As a result to the escalation in the Palestinian territories, the British referred the matter to the United Nations General Assembly to decide, which resulted in its famous Resolution 181 in November 1947 calling for the partition of the land of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish States.[3] President Truman supported the resolution of the UN against the advice of his advisors including his Secretary of State George Marshall, "who was worried that too much support for the Zionist project could compromise other US interests." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, President Truman thought that he would be able to push the Israelis toward compensating the Arab refugees but the Israelis saw this as an interference in their internal affairs. Thus, the US supported the creation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to assist the Palestinian refugees.

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[3] United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 called for the partition of the British-ruled Palestine Mandate into a Jewish state and an Arab state. It was approved on November 29, 1947 with 33 votes in favor, 13 against, 10 abstentions, and one absent.

By early 1950's the US policies started to shift and concentrate on the fear of communism expansion in the region; A new approach toward the Middle East to start with the election of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The new President and his administration were concerned with the cold war geopolitics and the global defense of the Western interests than with the goals of Zionism. The US recognized the Soviet Union's communist ideology as the threat to its powers while the Israelis regarded its Arab neighbors as of a more serious threat. As a result to the clash of interests between the two countries, the US administration decided to cut aid funding to Israel for some time. In 1953, it was the first time for the US to intervene directly in one of the countries of the region, Iran. In the name of communism containment and securing the access to oil, the US plotted a coup against the nationalistic Prime Minister Mohamed Mossadeq to restore Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi to power. Mossadeq was a member of the united Iranian opposition, The National Front, who seek to improve education, health services and above all retain control over the main source of income to the country, Oil. The Prime Minister was dubious of foreign control and articulated the notion "negative equilibrium" by which Iran can play empires against each other and preserves its autonomy. (Takeyh 2007) The Shah returned to Iran with the US and Western support, granting them access to Iranian oil fields and adopting pro-Western politics; in addition to using severe harsh measures to consolidate his rule, which created internal problems for the Shah and was one of the main reasons to his confiscation in 1979.

During the Suez crisis 1956, the US response to the matter was different from how it reacted earlier to Mossadaq's nationalization. The US denounced the attacks by Britain, France, and Israel and called at the UN, supported by the Soviets, to the

withdrawal of all troops from the Suez Canal area. A reason for such denunciation is, as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles put it, "… Israeli control in Sinai would damage US credibility with the Arabs and push them toward the Soviet Union." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) Moreover another reason would be that the US wanted to secure its energy supplies that come mostly from the Middle East. This has been a crucial reason for the continuity of US involvement in the region even after the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

Toward the end of President Eisenhower's term, the administration announced a new doctrine by which it would aid any country that suffers or fear an aggression from the agents of communism. This new policy was first implemented on the Middle East, and later as a reason to go in Vietnam. In 1958, Egypt and Syria created the United Arab Republic (UAR). As a result of the Union, Arab nationalists in Iraq managed to topple the Hashemite monarchy looking for the union with the Egyptians and Syrians. The establishment of the new state and the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq alarmed some Arab countries from Arab nationalism that the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser championed. Jordan and Lebanon fearing political instability called upon the United States to interfere through requesting arms and troops to maintain order invoking the Eisenhower Doctrine. Consequently, the US and Britain send troops to Beirut and Amman, respectively, to support the governments in power. (Barnet 1998) President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles were looking by their decision of sending marines to Lebanon, to endorse stable, friendly regimes that would counteract Nasser's power in the region. It proved successful as the US troops managed to quell disturbances and help in electing pro-Western, former General Fuad Chehab as President of Lebanon.

The end of the 1960's witnessed an escalation in the Arab-Israeli conflict that affected the whole region. In June 5, 1967, Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The results of the war were dramatic and shocking to the Arabs and left Israel with incomparable strength. The US Middle East policy was shaped with President Lyndon Johnson's statement on June 19, 1967, when he outlined a formula of five points seeing that it would help in creating peace in the Middle East: "the recognized right of national life; … justice for the refugees; …innocent maritime passage; …limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race; …political independence and territorial integrity for all." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) However, the US didn't pressure Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories as it did in the Suez War 1956.

On November 22, 1967, the United Nations passed Resolution 242 unanimously. The resolution called for the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the occupied areas, to end the state of belligerency between the Arabs and Israel, the acknowledgment and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all the states in the region, the establishment of a 'secure and recognized boundaries', freedom of navigation through the international waterways in the region, and a just settlement to the refugees program. (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) Although all means to end the conflict failed, Resolution 242 remained as the basis for all peace initiatives that established the 'land for peace' formula.

During the 1970's under the Republican President Richard Nixon, the US policy was affected and pressured by several internal disturbing issues like the opposition to the War in Vietnam and the civil rights movement that it agreed, unlike previous administrations, to hold bilateral as well as four-power talks to include the Soviet Union,

France, and Britain. In December, Secretary of State William Rogers proposed a peace plan called after him, Rogers plan. The plan was aiming at the withdrawal of Israel from Sinai, and direst negotiations between Israel and both Jordan and Syria regarding the West Bank and Golan Heights. The plan had warm acceptance from the Arab countries but was rejected immediately by Israel. However, Rogers submitted another proposal calling for a 90 day cease-fire, that began on August 8, 1970, and resumption of efforts to implement Resolution 242, which was accepted by Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. Upon announcing the agreement, protests were held all over the Middle East rejecting the plan and denouncing Nasser's acceptance. The level of rejection increased and triggered a serious of aircraft hijackings by Palestinian commandos during September 1970, which was named as Black September due to the amount of hostility that was carried out in Jordan including an attempt to assassinate King Hussein of Jordan. Ironically, an Israeli threat to intervene to support King Hussein; in addition to President Nasser's mediation who soon died after, halted possible escalation by Syria. (Kerr 1971)

The Gulf security was another pressing issue for the Nixon administration. Since the British expressed their intention to withdraw from the Gulf as part of the reevaluation of their commitment east of Suez, the US looked for Iran as regional power to maintain stability and security to the region, ensure access to oil supplies and stand against any Soviet movements to obtain a warm-water port. The fact that the US had commitment in Vietnam precluded it from replacing the British troops in the Gulf. However, Iran wasn't the only country that the US looked for as a stabilizer. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran were regarded as bulwarks in the region. The main reason for this support was for these two nations to lead the efforts against any potential Soviet expansion and to

maintain the oil supplies from the region. Moreover, Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, made both Iran and the Saudi Kingdom part of the "two pillar policy" which involved number of assumptions. They thought that Iran and Saudi Arabia, themselves rivals, would be willing to work together to guarantee the security of the region. This proved to be contradicting to reality as for example they had opposite views regarding the oil crisis in the 70's with Iran looking to keep the prices high and the Saudis leaning toward moderation. Another example is that both regimes are stable. This assumption was later shaken after the assassination of King Faisal and the dramatic fall of the shah in the 1979 revolution. Although the transition to King Fahd was smooth and kept the stability of the kingdom, it emphasized the fragility of the governments in the Gulf. (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007)

In the mid of all that, Egypt and Syria worked together, along with Arab support, to launch a war against Israel. The war aimed at ending the "no war, no peace" stalemate. The war started on October 6, 1973 and lasted till the end of the month, when the US and the Soviet Union sponsored a new UN Resolution 338 calling for a seize fire and respecting the territories of the other parties and recalling that peace is the way to solve such a conflict as addressed before in Resolution 242. At the same time, President Nixon and some of his top aides were facing charges of illegally using government agencies for their benefit in what came to be known as the Watergate scandal. The Congress was already in a hostile mood against the administration for its ill-command of the War in Vietnam and impeachment procedures against the President were in the making. By 1974, he had to resign leaving Vice President Gerald Ford assuming office until the 1975 Presidential election that brought Jimmy Carter to the oval office.

President Carter started his term facing several difficulties, among which are the rising oil prices and the situation the Middle East. The Arabs and Israelis were refusing to negotiate to reach a peace deal based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Egypt was the only Arab country leaning toward a solution with the Israelis as President Anwar Al Sadat understood that any other war could result in another 1967-type defeat for the Arabs. (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) Thus, President Sadat decided to announce his intention to visit Jerusalem and address the Israeli Knesset. Such a move took the Americans and Israelis by surprise and forced them to deal with it. Carter's administration decided to fully support the peace efforts between Egypt and Israel instead of working for a comprehensive deal. Initial talks ended in a stalemate, which pushed President Carter to invite both President Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin to the Presidential retreat in Camp David for face-to-face talks. The negotiations between the two parties passed through a lot of troubles and tough times; however, after concessions and pressure from the US a framework was signed between Egypt and Israel paving the way for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed in the White House Garden on March 26, 1979, to be the first peace treaty between an Arab country and Israel.

The US foreign policy faced couple of serious challenges toward the end of the 70's. First, the US close ally in the Gulf, Shah Mohamed Pahlavi of Iran, was abdicated and the Islamists took over the country. Then in November 1979, Iranian students attacked the US Embassy in Tehran, taking large number of Americans as hostages. This move was backed up later by Imam Khomeini and his Revolutionary Council. Carter's administration was paralyzed and the incident represented the biggest embarrassment to the US policy. Several attempts to free the hostages failed including a military rescue

mission that was aborted due to equipment failure. The frustration of the American people toward Carter's inability to free the hostages contributed to his defeat against Ronald Reagan in the 1980 Presidential elections. Ironically, the remaining 52 American hostages were freed after 444 days on January 20, 1980; a few minutes after Reagan took the oath of presidency. Finally, the hostage crisis was resolved, however, an important ally and pillar of US policy in the Middle East is no longer existent.

Another challenge to the US was the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan in December 24, 1979. Carter called the invasion as the "most serious threat to peace since the Second World War." The fear of affecting the oil industry in the Persian Gulf fell short, although some analysts saw it as a threat to security in the Gulf. In his State of the Union speech, President Carter announced his Doctrine that "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) The Soviet adventure in Afghanistan proved later that it harmed rather than advancing their interests in the Middle East. Muslim countries including Iran and Saudi Arabia stood firm against such intervention regarding it as a lack of respect to Islam. As a result to the Soviet actions, several Gulf States moved toward closer ties with the United States.

President Reagan brought to the office a vigorous anticommunist view of the world, which is a continuation of the way most US Presidents have looked at the international community. He accused previous administrations of being too accommodating to the Soviets, harming US interests and declining its role in the world politics. As a counter to Carter's policies, the new administration focused more on

countering communism, especially after invading Afghanistan, rather than supporting developing countries. Regarding the Middle East, few of the Reagan's administration had Middle East experience and they didn't develop an overall US strategy toward the region until the Israeli invasion to Lebanon in June 1982.

During the early years of the 1980's, the US was the target of several groups supported by some of the Middle East countries, especially Libya, Lebanon, and Iran. The acts took several forms such as hijacking American airplanes, bombing public places or taking Americans as hostages. The Reagan administration had to deal with each incident on its own and in a different way. For instance, after intelligence information revealed the involvement of the Libyan government in some of the attacks against Americans and airplanes hijacking, President Reagan ordered an air strike against Libya on April 14, 1986. Such an attack was accepted internally by the people and congress but wasn't accepted by the international community.

The establishment of the Iranian-backed group *Hizbullah* in Lebanon was another major issue for the United States. Since the establishment of this group in 1982, it worked against the US interests; bombing the marine barracks in Beirut and kidnappings of Americans. Although the United States has remained clear with its policy of not negotiating with terrorists or any group that use such means, it was forced to do so after several American personnel were kidnapped including the CIA station chief in Beirut, William Buckley during 1983-84. (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) In 1985, the administration started considering selling arms secretly to Iran through Israel, known as Iran Contra, as a way to achieve its goal of releasing the hostages and to open a dialogue with moderate Iranians. This was contradicting to the American rule of not dealing with

terrorists or their affiliates. Meanwhile, President Reagan signed on January 16, 1986 a secret finding authorizing a covert US diplomatic initiative toward Iran that would aim at establishing a moderate government in Iran, obtaining significant intelligence information on the Iranian government's intentions with respect to its neighbors and the terrorist acts, and furthering the release of American hostages in Beirut. Couple of hostages were released later during 1986, but on November 3, *Al-Shiraa'*, a Lebanese magazine revealed the secret trip by the US officials to Iran. Such a report led to extensive investigations in Washington that forced Reagan to admit the US arms shipments to Iran clarifying that he didn't trade arms for hostages. Moreover, critics in Washington accused Reagan of undermining American interests in the Gulf through supporting Iran, which was fighting a war against an Arab country, Iraq, supported by Egypt and Saudi Arabia who are US allies; in addition to weakening the US credibility and its international determination to fight terrorism.

Throughout the previous review of the American policy in the Middle East from WWII up until the Reagan administration, three main ideas were dominating the US foreign policy behavior. These schemes were containing the Soviet power and Communism, securing its interests in the Middle East, mainly Gulf oil, and guaranteeing the security and superiority of Israel in the region. (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) However, the era of the 1990's experienced a different US approach. By 1991, after the end of the Gulf crisis and the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States assumed the sole hegemony of the international system. Its policies in the region continued with the same framework but with some changes such as the attempt to dually contain Iran and Iraq in stead of focusing on fighting Communism, the push for peace in the Middle East between

Israel and the Arabs, which succeeded in signing a peace deal between Jordan and Israel, the Oslo accords between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This is for sure while keeping its access for oil secured. The following part will discuss US policies during the 1990's after establishing a permanent military presence in the Middle East.

THE US MILITARY PRESENCE: PRESERVING THE STATUS-QUO IN THE MIDDLE EAST

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States' interest in the Middle East was altered toward an uneasy combination of "maintaining local stability and promoting democratization." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) The new administration under President George H. W. Bush (Bush Senior), assuming office in 1989, has maintained Reagan's administration policies in the Gulf. Such policies included securing the transfer of oil and maintaining local stability to the Gulf monarchs; however, another feature of this policy was tilting toward Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq war. Bush's foreign policy team emphasized that "normal relations between Iraq and the United States would serve our longer-term interests and promote stability in the Gulf and the Middle East." (Pauly 2005) In the mean time, Iraq was facing economic challenges due to the eight-year war with Iran that crippled its economy, not to mention Iraq's dependency on the oil revenues, which was decreasing. Thus, Saddam Hussein decided to pressure his neighboring Gulf States for economic aid. For Saddam, Kuwait represented a treasure that would solve his problem if he managed to get hold of their financial assets that reached $208 billion. Former analyst of the CIA, Kenneth Pollack, notes that "Saddam's solution was as simple as it was misguided: raid the treasure chest next door.

... Saddam believed that by invading Kuwait, he will not only get hold of the Kuwaiti oil industry ... but also, Kuwait's financial assets ..." (Pollack 2004)

The invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces in August 1990 started a crisis that would consume the international community's attention for over a year. The United States under President Bush responded to such crisis by pulling out an international coalition with UN authority to force Iraq out of Kuwait if Saddam Hussein didn't compel with the withdrawal ultimatum of January 15, 1991, set by UNSC Resolution 678. President Bush announced four principles the U.S would stand behind *"1) the unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, 2) restoration of the Kuwaiti monarch, 3) stability in the Persian Gulf, and 4) the protection of US citizens abroad."* (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) In the preliminary discussions of Bush's National Security Council (NSC), Deputy Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger argued the importance for a superpower involvement. He noted that "[a]s the bipolar world relaxed, it permits [aggression like the Iraqi one], giving people flexibility because they ate not worried about the involvement of the superpowers ... if [Saddam] succeeds, others may try the same thing." (Pauly 2005) Moreover, both Dick Cheney and Colin Powell expressed the need for Iraqi determent and American military involvement. As Powell mentions that the most prudent option is the presence of US forces on the ground; an issue that should be arranged with Saudi Arabia "... so Saddam looks south and sees an American presence." (Pauly 2005)

Several attempts to convince Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait were made, however, his refusal to withdraw from Kuwait led to enforcing the use of force article in the UN Resolution 678; starting operation Desert Storm with around 40 countries

contributed with different means to the effort. The offensive operations, halted on February 27, 1991, succeeded in driving the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait and installing the monarchy back to Kuwait city. The US led coalition victory in the war led to a change in the Middle East scene. Instead of limiting the US role in the region as some countries were calling prior to the conflict, in fact the US prestige and power were enhanced after the Gulf crisis allowing more US involvement in Middle Eastern politics. This was further highlighted by the end of 1991 when the Soviet Union was completely dissolved and its main successor, Russia, wasn't in a position to continue its military and financial support to some of its Middle East allies, Syria in particular. Thus, the US stood as the sole superpower of the international system.

The US military presence in the region, particularly in the Gulf serves as a counter argument to emphasize the change in regional order and power distribution. US bases in the Gulf were established in the aftermath of the Second Gulf war to balance the power in the region. After the Iraqi invasion to Kuwait, the Gulf monarchies recognized that they were powerless in the face of regional hegemons. Although they negotiated briefly with Egypt and Syria to create a form of a regional/Arab security alliance but they regarded the US as the only capable force to maintain the Middle East order and the security of their regimes. Such belief on behalf of the Gulf States was stemmed from the personal assurance of President Bush to the Saudi King Fahd, before deploying the American troops in Saudi, saying "I [Bush] am determined that Saddam will not get away with all this infamy ... once we are there, we will stay until we are asked to leave." (Pauly 2005) Thus, the US felt obliged to readjust its strategy and "advance a vision of global order that included a particular balance of power operating in favor of its allies in

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the region" (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002). Although President Bush managed to deal effectively with the Gulf crisis and the different changes in the international system; i.e. dissolution of the Soviet Union, unification of Germany and the US superiority, he decided to turn inward and concentrate on domestic politics. Instead of using his success on the global level, he focused on one of his weaknesses, domestic policymaking, that played a significant role in his loss to Clinton in the 1992 elections.

The new President William J. Clinton, unlike his 10 predecessors, "… lacked a clear, overarching national security threat … to deal with upon assuming office in January 1993." (Pauly 2005) This affected Clinton's policy making and the administration tended to characterize its interests in broad terms with no clear prioritization of those interests. Consider the comment by Samuel Berger, Clinton's National security Advisor, in January 2001, which reflects the U.S administration's insistence on trying to do everything instead of focusing on one or two initiatives because "[t]oday… America is by any measures the world's unchallenged military, economic, and political power. The world counts on us to be a catalyst of coalitions, a broker of peace [and] a guarantor of global financial stability." (Pauly 2005)

Among the initiatives and policies that Clinton sponsored was a new Middle East strategy aimed at the regional threats Iraq and Iran. This policy rested on two main points. First, the US acceptance to maintain permanent military forces because the Iraqi attacks on Kuwait altered its premise that "Israel's military superiority in the Middle East … [would] deter [any] attack and prevent a call for direct American intervention" (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) Second, the adoption of a dual containment policy toward both Iraq and Iran since it was believed that the long-standing policy of

maintaining Israel's military domination is under threat from both countries. The policy aimed at changing "the balance of power by weakening the military and economic capabilities of both Iraq and Iran through a single policy that would impose restricted sovereignty [no fly zones] on Iraq and sanctions policy regarding trade and investment in Iran" (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002). The US succeeded to isolate Iraq from the international and regional system and limit threats posed by Iraq to the American interests in the Middle East helped with its military presence and the UN embargo over Baghdad. This continued until the George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq in 2003 and toppling Saddam's regime. As for Iran, it was recognized as a threat as great as Iraq. The US lobbied to tighten the technology and weapons going to Iran as a mean to slow down Tehran's development of military technology and weapons of mass destruction. It also, opposed the World Bank granting loans for Iran. There was a growing concern within the Clinton administration of Iranian involvement with terrorism directed against US interests in the Middle East, especially the allegation of the Iranian backed *Hizbullah* involvement in the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers, a residential complex for US military in Saudi Arabia.

However on the other hand, the Iranians have long recognized the threat of the 'Great Satan' since the early days of the Islamic Revolution. Moreover, the American military presence is perceived as another threat to Tehran causing a security dilemma for the Islamic Republic especially after the invasion of Iran's neighbors Afghanistan and Iraq. Such security dilemma is something that would help understand the aggressive Iranian narrative. (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) Through the coming chapter which is solely devoted to the case study, Iran, I will try to pinpoint a previous attempt by

Tehran to assume a regional hegemonic role in the Gulf under the Shah; a move that is re-aspired lately in the post 9/11 world fueled by the US Middle East policies and the Iranian belief in there important role in the region.

To conclude, this chapter aimed at identifying three of the factors that affects the regional order of the Middle East; the regional polarity, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the US policies toward the region. It's apparent that the region needs congruence between all three. Throughout the history of the region, we have seen attempts from some countries trying to play hegemonic and/or leadership roles, most notably the Egyptian experience under President Nasser in the 50s and 60s. Such attempt was not only based on the military capabilities, *hard power*, Cairo possessed but also, and more importantly, on the ability of Nasser to construct a meaning to the events of his time using it to further accentuate his Pan-Arab credentials and his influence over other countries. Thus, Nasser's power was mainly *soft power*. Thus, the subject of concern for the region's regimes was mainly the ideological preponderance of the rising ideology of Pan-Arabism and not Egypt's military power. The unity of Egypt and Syria (UAR) further emphasized the powerful role of soft power in the region as the UAR was able to offer a vision of how Arab politics should be tackled and implemented. (Barnet 1998)

The other factor, Arab-Israeli conflict, will remain a pivotal variable in the regional order of the region. The lingering conflict, anti-Israeli sentiments, and the image of the defender of the Palestinian cause has been of great significance to any state looking to challenge the status-quo in the region and seeking to assume a greater regional role. This was the case with Nasser's Egypt, Saddam's Iraq, and now with the Islamic

Republic of Iran. Without a successful solution to this ongoing conflict, the region will continue in its current perplexity. However, this takes us to the third factor; the US policies in the Middle East. There is a link between the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the US role in the region. The U.S. has been central to the struggle for regional order in the Middle East. By and large, the U.S. can be considered as the status quo power of the Middle East. However, The U.S. failure to effectively address the Arab-Israeli conflict denies its hegemony the badly needed moral base. The U.S. can hardly mobilize the needed political support for the status quo as long as its regional allies are restrained in expressing their support for the U.S. lest delegitimizing their regime. Thus, the US needs to construct an effective policy toward the Middle East by which it can push for and accelerate reaching a solution to this protracted conflict.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Figure 2: Map of the Islamic Republic of Iran[4]

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the main focus of this thesis. Iran has been lately the most significant country in the Middle East with its role in Iraq, pursuing of nuclear capabilities and the rhetoric of its President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This chapter will be divided in two parts. The first will tackle the political structure of the Islamic state through pointing out the different institutions that govern it and how they affect the

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[4] http://www.audiencescapes.org/themes/Standard/view/images/region_map_MENA.gif
Accessed on: April 19, 2009

Iranian policies. On the other hand, the second part will be a background to the Iranian influence/aspirations in the region under Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi and after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Iran is one of the most important and deep rooted countries of the Middle East with its Old Persian heritage and civilization that differentiate it from the rest of the region. It lies on the eastern periphery, bordering Iraq and Turkey from the west, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea from the north, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan from the east while to the south it controls the strategic strait of *Hormuz*.

The Iranian state has gone through different changes during the course of the 20th Century. It is a country which was never colonized, only parts of it were under the British and Russian control during WW II. It has been ruled by a dictatorship monarchy until the sudden change brought by the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Since the revolution, Iran has been ruled by a theocratic rigid system that contains several checks and balances to minimize the role of the popularly elected president and parliament, while placing extensive power in the hands of the Shiite clergy. On top of the clerical institutions is the Supreme Leader, *faqih,* who oversees and controls the other governmental institutions by the power given to him by the constitution.

The foreign policy of Iran especially since the Iranian Revolution has been the concern of many political analysts. But to understand the external output of Iran and its role in the international community, one has to examine the Iranian internal dynamics. The following part will try to examine the different institutions that constitute the political system of Iran as it highlights the decision-making apparatus.

WHO RULES IRAN? THE DECISION MAKING APPARATUS[5]

The Iranian political system is complex and unusual as it combines both Islamic theocracy and democracy. It combines unelected institutions controlled by the Supreme Leader opposed to an elected president and parliament, *Majles*. By the end of the 1990s, a struggle was going between these elected and unelected institutions as in 1997 the moderate reformist President, *Mohamed Khatami*, was elected followed by moderates dominating the parliament. A campaign to foster political reform in response to popular dissatisfaction was initiated. Yet, the movement struggled as conservative politicians, through the control of unelected institutions, prevented reform measures from being enacted and increased repressive measures. Starting with nationwide municipal elections in 2003 and continuing through *Majles* elections in 2004, conservatives reestablished control over Iran's elected government institutions, which culminated with the August 2005 election of the hardliner Mayor of Tehran, *Mahmoud Ahmadinejad*.

The figure below illustrates the different institutions, elected and unelected, that formulates the Iranian political system. Through the next lines, I will try to examine some of these institutions and explain its role in shaping Iran's politics.

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[5] Iran's Complex Political System
http://ahuyevashi.wordpress.com/2007/01/19/irans-complex-political-system/

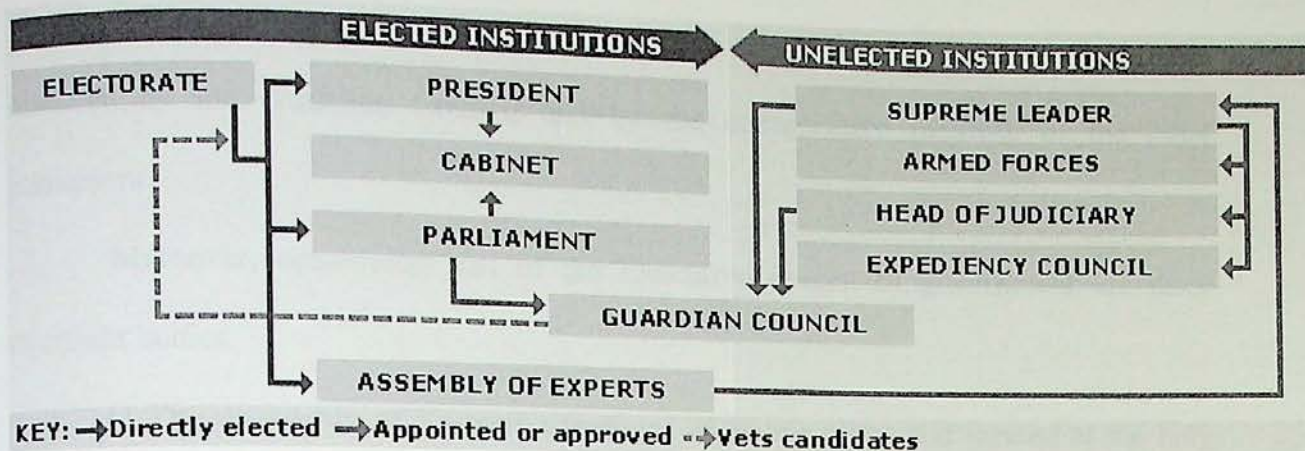KEY: →Directly elected ⇢Appointed or approved ⋯⊳Vets candidates

Figure 3: The Iranian Political System[6]

Iran's population is estimated around 67 million people (CIA World Factbook).
According to the Iranian constitution, all those over the age of 15 have the right to vote.
The people of Iran elect the Assembly of experts, the president, and parliament. The
electorate are an important element in the political process in any country, thus the
turnout of 80% of the eligible voters in the 1997 presidential elections was unprecedented
in Iran. However, this huge turnout didn't continue to pressure for more reforms and
things went into stalemate with the election of Ahmedinejad.

The presidency is one of the popularly elected institutions. The president run for
4 year-term and is eligible for a second term and third nonconsecutive term. He is the
second highest ranked official after the Supreme Leader, according to the constitution. He
is responsible for appointing the cabinet after consulting with the Supreme Leader.
However the president's powers are constrained by the clerics and conservatives who are
very powerful in Iran's political structure, not to mention the Supreme Leader who
controls the armed forces and make decisions on security, defense, and foreign policy
issues. An example for the pressures of other institutions over the president is during

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[6] BBC Special Reports, Iran: Who Holds the Power?
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/iran_power/html/default.stm

President Khatami's term when he tried to install some reforms but his efforts were hindered by the Guardian Council and by the conservative majority of the 2004 parliament.

Moreover, considered part of the Executive branch of government are three oversight bodies:

1) **The Assembly of Experts** composed of 86 members and located at the holy city of Qom. Although it is a body elected by the people, it is charged with appointing and not electing the most important figure in the Iranian political system, the Supreme Leader. It reviews his performance, and can depose him if deemed necessary.

2) **Expediency Council**, which exerts supervisory authority over the executive, judicial, and legislative branches and resolves legislative issues on which the *Majles* and the Council of Guardians disagree. Ayatollah Khamenei designated this council with some of his powers to be a kind of supervisory power over all government branches.

3) **The Guardians Council** (Council of Guardians of the Constitution) determines whether proposed legislation is both constitutional and faithful to Islamic law, vets candidates for suitability, and supervises national elections. In the last parliamentary elections, it was said that the Guardian Council banned around 1000 candidates composed mostly of reformers and some women. Same procedure occurred during the presidential elections of 2005 by baring several moderate contestants from running for the presidency. (Ansari 2006)

Finally comes the **Supreme Leader**, *Faqih*. According to the constitution, the Supreme Leader is based on top of the Iranian political structure. This was based on the ideas introduced by Ayatollah Khomeini when he established the Islamic Republic. The

Supreme Leader, currently *Ayatollah Ali Khamenei*, is chosen by the Assembly of Experts and his powers are endless as he appoints the head of the judiciary, six of the members of the powerful Guardian Council, the commanders of all the armed forces, Friday prayer leaders and the head of radio and TV. Moreover, he authenticates the results of the presidential election. As it appears, the Supreme Leader has great powers over the political structure and he influences most of the decisions.

Through the above overview of the Iranian political system, it's apparent the domination of the conservative clergy over the system. Although there are some elected institutions like the president and parliament, yet the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council still has the upper hand in shaping the Iranian politics. Though the Iranian elected a moderate President, Mohamed Khatami, for two terms however it wasn't a surprise to find the Iranian politics not changing much due to the conservatives' pressure.

IRAN UNDER SHAH MOHAMED REZA PAHLAVI

The Iranian history, following WW II, holds an attempt for regional hegemony. Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi ruled the country after the abdication of his father in 1941. He was a conduit to the British and played a role in helping the allied forces in the war. With the end of the war in 1945, the Shah worked hard to keep his close ties with the West, establishing himself as an indispensable ally. He gave British companies access for oil excavation and wanted to modernize the country through the 'White Revolution' reforms that was inspired by the Americans. (Ansari 2006)

The oil monopoly by the Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) owned by the British and collect most of Iran's oil profit was an alarming issue. Iran's demands to the

AIOC were increasing the profit-share of the oil and allowing better living conditions for the Iranian labor. At the same time, American companies were allowing 50-50 profit-sharing deals with the governments of Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. However, the AIOC and the British Government accustomed to their profit and fearing that such concessions would affect their global holding only accepted to increase Iran's share with four million pounds. (Takeyh 2007) The British failure to recognize that nationalism and gaining independence were the most defining ideology of the developing countries, would cause problems to the longtime empire with several newly structured states in the Middle East.

The oil issue provoked an internal political crisis to the young Shah, who was looking to consolidate his rule and establish strong links with the West. Nevertheless, the British arrogance and provocative attitude managed to unite the differing groups of Iran's opposition under the National Front. A group composed of liberals, socialist activists, members of the clergy, middle-class professionals and others. It aimed at improving several aspects within the Iranian society like education, public health and judicial reforms to decentralize the power. On top of the National Front was Dr. Mohamed Mossadeq, son to an aristocratic family and educated in Switzerland. Dr. Mossadeq "was a principled politician with deep reverence for Iran's institutions and constitutional arrangments." (Takeyh 2007) With the oil issue escalating and the AIOC refusing to accept the 50-50 profit-share arrangement, Mossadeq and his group in the parliament were able to pass a law on April 30, 1951 to nationalize Iran's oil. This was a tremendos hit to the British and the AIOC. As a counter the British government contemplated a policy of regime change in Iran, by which they deprive Iran of its oil revenues, call British technicians to cripple Iran's oil industry, and take legal ramifications against any

oil compant to deal with Iran. Based on this pressure, the Iranians would go out and protest until they bring down Mossadeq's government.

Now it was the time for the United States to stand up and intervene to be "[O]ne of America's first acts as a great power in the Middle East..." (Takeyh 2007) The US thought to try and mediate between the British, AIOC and the Iranians, yet the mediation failed due to the political ferment sweeping Iran. Mossadeq had the ability to mobilize different national forces. However, with the economic/oil crisis intensifying, the National Front coalition started fracturing and suddenly the champion of democratic change and government accountability behaved autoctraticaly, which deepend the fractions and upseted some social groups within the society. Mossadeq getting isolated day by day, thought to use Communist threat as a mean to extract consessions from the United States. In a note sent to the Americans, Mossadeq worte: "If prompt and effective aid is not given this country now, any steps that might be taken tomorrow to compensate for negligence of today might be too late." (Takeyh 2007) He failed to recognize that playing the card of communism would push the US to stand by its intimate Cold Was ally, Britain. By 1953, series of events led to the CIA 1953 orchestrated coup against the nationalistic Prime Minister Mohamed Mossadeq and the reinstalling of the USShah.

According to Kirmet Roosevelt[7], the Shah's first words when he returned were "I owe my throne to God, my people and my army to you" (Ansari 2006). However, Roosevelt assured the Shah that he owed the Americans and the British. After surviving the threat to his rule, the Shah proceeded to create a rigid authoritarian regime relying on

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[7] Kirmet Roosevelt was the grandson of the former US President Theodore Roosevelt. He directed the 1953 coup against Dr. Mohamed Mossadeq.

secret police to maintain order. This destroyed the internal societal balance that was already altered by the coup and this would make the Islamic Revolution predictable.

Starting this year, 1953, the US replaced Britain as the dominant power in Iran. The British were irritated for losing the monopoly over the Iranian oil, while the Americans were moving enthusiastically to build a "client state" (Ansari 2006). Thus, by the end of the 1950's, the US – and indeed most Western countries – regarded the Shah's regime as stable and friendly. Consequently, by 1961 the Shah planning to reforming Iran started 'White Revolution'. The main aim of the new policy was modernizing Iran and integrating it with the big powers through enhancing the economic growth and social developments. The revolutionary ideas included promoting women's rights, health, education, privatization, and profit-sharing for workers. However, the cornerstone of the plan was land reform, which upset the Islamic Shiite clergy. The new reforms "threatened the clergy's extensive landholding and challenged their conservative views on women's rights and other matters." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) By 1963, Islamists led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini started violent demonstrations against the Shah's plan but the security forces crushed the demonstartions and the Shah continued his reforms.

With President Nixon coming to office, US-Iranian relations became *US-Shah* relations. This relationship was built on personalities rather than countries. By the end of the 1960's, Great Britain announced that it would not be able to service its imperial obligations east of the Suez Canal after 1971 and would withdraw its forces. **The Shah wanted to fill that gap and take the responsibility of the Persian Gulf security; a move that was encouraged by the US.** (Pollack 2004) As a result to the Shah's aspirations to police the region, President Nixon granted Iran his approval to buy any

military hardware it wanted short of nuclear weapons to be able to police the region. Such move made the Iranian people skeptical, as they perceived the role of their country to be the 'American policeman' and the Shah is playing a role in a broader US strategy.

Meanwhile, the Shah wanted to acquire the nuclear technology to ensure his regional power and to minimize the use of oil and gas, which are non-renewable. He invested enormous amounts of the oil revenues gained from the oil crisis of 1973 to acquire the most sophisticated weapons from the United States, carry out his plan to build nuclear reactors and buy shares in multinational companies.

The election of US President Jimmy Carter engendered a fundamental change in the history of the Persian nation and US-Iranian relations. Carter, as a result of reports issued by Amnesty International, started pressuring his Iranian ally to ameliorate human rights standards. The Shah, fearing for his privileged relation with Washington hastened to relax police controls, introduce court reforms for the trial of political opponents and release political dissidents from prisons. (Cleveland 2000) Such policies emboldened the opposition to take a more active role. The Opposition was divided into a secular left-leaning wing called the "Freedom Movement of Iran" as well as a militant wing of the *ulama* led from exile by Ayatollah Rohullah Khomeini.

The string of protests which engulfed Iran for two years were a direct result of the brutality and authoritarianism which had come to characterize the reign of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. The Iranian government was at odds with two relatively autonomous segments of the society: the bazaar merchants and the *ulama*. After scrapping the two-party system, and institutionalizing a single-party system, the monarchy aimed at imposing a stranglehold over the bazaar, and diminishing the role of Islam in public life.

For instance, the Islamic lunar calendar was officially replaced by a royal calendar dating back to Cyrus the Great. (Cleveland 2000) Yet, this kind of totalitarian rule was not accompanied by economic benefits to the large population, despite the salient wealth of the governing stratum. The monarch and the ruling class led a lavish lifestyle with wasteful expenditures. The result was not only the uneven distribution of national revenues, but also a decapitating inflation.

THE 1979 ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

The close alliance of the Shah and the US continued until the eruption of the 1979 revolution and the Islamists seizing power. The 1979 revolution was a surprise for the Shah and the United States. However, domestically the Iranian people saw it coming as the internal policies of the Shah have created great amount of hostilities among the people, especially the Islamic clergy. Ayatollah Khomeini managed to unite the people around him and led the revolution from his exile after being forced to leave Iran in the aftermath of the 1963 protests against the Shah's 'White Revolution', which is considered by his followers as the beginning of the revolution.

During the 1960s and 1970s, anti-government and anti-Shah sentiments were growing within the Iranian society. The new policies of secularizing the country and giving women the right to vote, along with the Family Protection Law, which allowed women to disobey the Islamic teaching and divorce their husbands, agitated the Islamic clergy. This is in addition to the suppression and the use of force against the people. Hence, the poor people led by the Shiite clergy started opposing the Shah seeing his policies disrupting the old balance between the religious and secular authorities in Iran.

From January 1978 until January 1979 a series of rebellions and demonstrations organized almost every day shocked the Shah's regime into collapse. With the return of Khomeini in February 1979, the Revolution in Iran assumed a more palpable Islamic orientation, at the expense of the secular Freedom Movement. By March 1979, a referendum declaring Iran an "Islamic Republic" had already been approved. (Cleveland 2000) The novel constitution of Tehran embraced the Khomeini-promoted principle of *vilayit-i-faqih*, or the governance of the Islamic jurist on behalf of the occulted Imam. Although neither a president nor a prime minister, ultimate power resided with the Islamic jurist.

The US was skeptic and concerned about its former ally especially that the Shiite Islamists launched hostile rhetoric against the US renouncing its policies while describing it as the 'Great Satan' that wishes to manipulate and control Iran as part of bigger strategy to dominate over the oil rich region. The US-Iranian relations deteriorated totally with the hostage crisis, where Iranian students - later embraced by Ayatollah Khomeini- captured the US embassy and held hostages for 444 days. Since then the US decided to cut all relations with Iran and later imposed sanctions and embargos over the Iranian oil and economy.

The circumstances surrounding the outset of the revolution and its consolidation are not of central importance to our quest, nonetheless. This study pays more attention to the regional and international repercussions of the overthrowing of the Shah and his replacement by an Islamic theocratic regime in the biggest power in the Gulf region

The Islamic Revolution's Impact on the Middle East

The radical change of the Iranian regime after the 1979 revolution destabilized the Middle East and the Gulf region in particular. Through its first days of conception and formulation, the Islamic revolution depicted Iran in a new light. A country which had thus far been the *benign* hegemon of the Gulf, at least to the autocratically-governed Gulf Sheikhdoms and the US patron, became intent on defying superpower dominance and destabilization of the ruling regimes in neighboring countries. Indeed, as Edmund Ghareeb puts it: "[t]he emergence of a radical and revisionist Islamic regime in Tehran altered the regional military and political balance of power, sent psychological shock waves throughout the region..." (Joyner 1990) The burgeoning regime constituted considerable military, political, and ideological challenges to the majority of states in the Gulf region, in particular, and the Middle East, in general. The clerical leadership in Tehran viewed the very notion of "nation-state" to be alien to the Islamic world, and they hoped that the Islamic revolution would soon spread to the rest of Muslim countries. (Joyner 1990) Iran's supposed backing of subversive forces had put the Islamic Republic on a collision course with all the Arab Gulf states (the West's oil-producing allies), as well as the United States. Iranian President, Bani Sadr commented, to the alarm of most Arab states and Washington, that "the Arab governments in the Gulf area are friends of the US; therefore, we do not consider these states as independent, nor do we wish to cooperate with them, and *Iran intends to export its Islamic revolution in support of any Islamic movement.*" (Nonneman 1986) In April 1980, the Iranian government warned against continuing demands for the *liberation* of the three UAE islands, affirming that Iran would claim Bahrain instead, and that all Gulf countries are historically a part of

Iranian territories. (Mūminī 1988) One of the methods Tehran employed to undermine stability in the Gulf was through encouraging Iranian immigration to Gulf Arab countries in order to further the Shiite influence in those countries. (Surūr 2003) The aforementioned policies and statements were countered with harsh public accusations from Bahraini and Saudi officials. (Abdulghani 1984) Iran had, voluntarily given up its role as a surrogate of Washington in the Gulf by stressing its new direction to be: "Neither East nor West [but Iranian]." (Clawson and Rubin 2005)

In effect, the Islamic Revolution has transformed Iran from a *status quo* power into a *revisionist* state whose ambitions could not be immediately predicted. Thus, Iran antagonized most of its former friends and allies; by 1987, Iran endured hostile relations with Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Afghanistan. Even though the country maintained 'friendly' relations with Algeria, Pakistan, Turkey, South Yemen and Libya, it could only count on Syria as an ally. (Ehteshami 1997) Iran had almost driven herself out of the regional and international favor. The overriding perception of the Iranian threat had stimulated the realization amongst the Gulf Sheikhdoms that a new 'defender' must be sought. Any belligerent Iraqi action at that point was going to be indisputably accepted, and reinforced by the Gulf Arabs and the US, particularly after the US embassy in Tehran hostage crisis. Such were the signals discreetly conveyed by leaders from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. (Nonneman 1986) Between 1980-1988 Iraq and Iran were engaged in a war that had an indecisive end. The Iraqis were supported by the US and most of the Arab countries mainly Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf Monarchs as they were concerned of the rise of Islamization along with the aforementioned reasons.

THE 1990S AND THE US DUAL CONTAINMENT POLICY

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 constituted a major shift in the regional system. The international coalition led by the US was able to liberate Kuwait and weaken the Iraqi military capabilities in relation to its neighbors. Although Iran stood neutral during the Kuwaiti liberation War, the destruction of the Iraqi state power affected the regional power distribution of the Gulf and the Arab states were afraid that this would play in favor of Iran politically and strategically. This assumption was based on several on ground facts. First, many Shiites fled Iraq to Iran after Saddam crushed their uprising in the South, adding to the increasing number of Iraqi and Afghani refugees in Iran, however it provided the Islamic Republic "with a crucial lever for potential influence [in Iraq and Afghanistan]." (Ansari 2006) Morever, the Arab's fear for a bigger role to Iran was enforced through the different comments by some Iranian officials considering the Gulf to be Persian, or through its policies of exporting the revolution and their course of action regarding the UAE islands of Abu Musa and the Tumbs[8].

With the US presence in the Gulf and an enforced status-quo prevailing over the region during the 1990s, Iran was excluded from any discussion on post-Gulf war security arrangements. The fact that the United States suggested that the regional states seek security alliance with Egypt and Syria, was perceived as an anti-Iranian move rather than being a move to contain Saddam Hussein. (Ansari 2006) However, President Bush Sr. was open to the idea of establishing contacts with the Iranians. The Bush administration offered a deal to President Rafsanjani of Iran. This deal would revolve around Tehran's help in releasing the American hostages in Lebanon and denouncing

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[8] The Three islands of Abu Musa, Greater and Little Tumbs were seized, with Western consent in 1971, when the Shah was preparing to become the Gendarme of the Gulf.

terrorism, in exchange the US would begin the process of normalizing relations, including the release of frozen Iranian assets in the United States since the 1979 revolution. Rafsanjani fulfilled his part of the bargain through pressuring the Lebanese groups holding the hostages and publicly renouncing terrorism and anti-western rhetoric at a Friday Prayer's sermon on December 20, 1991. Despite the Iranian changes, President Bush procrastinated and the rapprochement that was thought to happen between the United States and Iran faded. (Ansari 2006) The American administration decided to postpone its response until after the presidential elections of 1992 that resulted in the election of Bill Clinton.

Clinton was elected to the presidency with a domestic policy platform capitalizing on America's Cold War victory. This new approach by the American president alarmed his European allies when they thought the United States would neglect foreign policy issues. The European fear was encouraged with the debacle in Somalia, in which dead American soldiers were dragged by the Somali militants over the streets. As far as the Middle East is concerned, the Clinton's administration was dominated by Israeli priorities, in a qualitative shift from that of Bush Sr. and his team, particularly his Secretary of State James Baker, who "were known of their unusual impartial approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict…" (Ansari 2006) Same for Iran, the Clinton administration took a harder line approach than that of the Bush. The new administration interpreted Iran's pressure to release the hostages as a matter of self interest to the Iranians. In 1993, Martin Indyk, member of Clinton's National Security Council (NSC), "declared a policy of dual containment," making it clear that "Washington would not normalize relations with Iran until and unless Iran's policies change across the board." (Clawson and Rubin 2005) The

dual containment was the end of the concepts of "Two Pillars" or "Tilt Toward Iraq" devised earlier by the US. The US administration looked at containing both Iraq and Iran within a "*cordon sanitaire.*" However, the dual containment wont be applied uniformely to both countries. Indyk went on to say that the Iraqi containment would be mush aggressive even far from the one employed against Russia. While on Iran, Indyk indicated that the US has no problem with the make up of the Islamic Republic, it cares for constraining Iran's ability to create trouble in the Middle East through modest measures until Iran change its behavior. The administration officals understood that a change in the Iranian rhetoric and behavior was unlikely and that the dual containment policy toward Iran was a defensive rather than an offiensive startegy. (Pollack 2004)

With Republicans dominating the Congress, some advocated the idea of regime change in Tehran and others accused Clinton's administration by not matching their rhetoric with actions. As a result, Clinton signed in 1996 the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) that threatened sanction against third countries firms that would invest in Iran's oil or gas industry. This escalation by Washington, despite some US government officials proclaiming the willingness to have official dialogue with the Iranian government, resulted in a tougher stance by Tehran. The Supreme leader Ali Khamenei made it clear that Iran is opposing "anything more than the minimal exchange of indirect communications via the Swiss embassy in Tehran, [and that Iran] has nothing to talk to them about." (Clawson and Rubin 2005) However, with all the hostility between Washington and Tehran, the Europeans worked toward expanding their economic relations with Iran, despite the American criticism of such move, casting away the concerns over human rights and terrorism. The European approach, and later the Asian,

toward engaging with Iran emphasized the fundamental problem of containment against Iran. The problem with Iran, unlike Iraq, was the lacking of a multilateral commitment to the containment and sanction policies over Tehran. It seemed difficult for the United States to try to contain Iran as it did with Iraq, limited air strikes, through the 1990s. (Pollack 2004)

The European rapprochement was an opportunity for Iran to enhance its economic capabilities and a chance to reestablish its place in the international trade and economic sphere capitalizing on the pragmatic approach President Rafsanjani sponsored. For instance, it used European loans during its debt crisis of 1993-1995 to help alleviate its problems. Also, the Iranians have maintained good relations with the Soviet Union, and later Russia, by which they signed mutual agreements to invest in Iran's nuclear and military programs. Moreover, Tehran looked at expanding its relations to other parts of the world, especially Muslim non-Arab countries and its neighbors in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Caucasus area is rich with gas and oil, which are the same resources that Iran has. Based on that, the Iranians thought to revive the old pipeline plan of the Caspian Sea, constructed under the Shah, with possible extensions to pump oil to Turkey and Europe. This was an attempt by Iran to stand against the dual containment policy of the US that has prohibited international investment in the Iranian oil industry.

By the end of the 1990s, the domestic politics of Iran succeeded in leading the country to 'de-securitizing its relations with the Gulf Arabs' through withdrawing its support to the Shiite opposition groups and abandoning its policies of exporting the revolution for the sake of creating alliances especially with the Islamic neighbors to keep the balance of the region. The Iranian internal changes were culminated by electing the

reformist president Mohamed Khatami in 1997 over the traditionalist candidate, Nateq-Nuri.

THE MODERATES REACH POWER IN TEHRAN

Moderate thought in Iran has been always there since the time of the Shah and it continued with the Iranian revolution in 1979. The 'Islamic' revolution wasn't based on an Islamic doctrine as many think but it included groups from several ideological backgrounds that was against the Shah regime, who were later dominated by Khamenei and his clerics. However the origin of the reform movement, as it was defined during Khatami's presidency, "can be found in the vigorous debates and discussions that emerged in Iran's universities following the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988." What most of the reformists wanted was a modern Iranian state in which "the personal nature of power was diminished in favor of a legally regulated and transparent structure." (Ansari 2006) This could be achieved through minimizing the powers of the Supreme Leader who can control many aspects in the domestic politics of Iran, rather than being a religious guardian with transnational function. Therefore, with Rafsanjani's second term he tried to introduce more economic and political reforms through a technocratic and educated cabinet. His cabinet was supported by the emerging intellectual debate over the role of the religion in politics, Islamic democracy, and Iran's relationship with the West. This was the beginning of a new shift in the Iranian domestic and foreign policy with the reformer Mohamed Khatami coming to power in 1997. He managed to take over the Iranian presidency with a 78 percent of the votes. Many observers thought electing the conservative candidate, *Majles* speaker; Nateq-Nuri, to succeed President Rafsanjani

would be easy since he had the support of the most influential person in the Iranian politics, the Supreme Leader Khamenei, but Khatami surprised all. (Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007)

The former Minister of Culture and National Library Head, Khatami, started campaigning for the presidential elections across the country aiming at reaching the neediest and the disaffected youth. Khatami was a middle-ranking cleric with an unorthodox career. Although a keen supporter for the revolution, his views are both idealistic and cosmopolitan. Being in charge of the Islamic center in Hamburg, Khatami was exposed to the Western civilization which he believed that even with its flaws it has much to offer to humanity, commenting that it is "a phenomenon... whose positive achievements are not few." (Ansari 2006) Add to this his involvement with the people, encouraged the Iranians to participate in the voting with 20 million votes and 24 out of 26 provinces accepting him as a president. (Clawson and Rubin 2005) The 1997 elections changed the image, if not some of the substance of the Iranian revolution. Although Islamic thought was spreading all over the Muslim world, the Iranians were rejecting it favoring introducing reforms that would enhance their political and economic system. These changes in the Iranian thought made some Western leaders try to extend support to the reformer president. Recognizing previous failures to deal with the international community was something that concerned Khatami as he argued that "the first rule of dialogue...is to know yourself and [your] identity. The second...is to know the civilization with which you want to maintain a dialogue." (Ansari 2006) These words were the beginning for a call by President Khatami to a "dialogue of civilizations" introduced through his CNN interview in January 1998.

With the reformers taking control over the *Majles*, it was still difficult for them and President Khatami to promote and adopt the reforms they wanted due to the Supreme Leader's power to veto such laws and his control over the security apparatus. Although Khatami won the title of president, unfortunately it didn't give him enough authority to implement the newly desired reforms as the Iranian system remained always checked by the theocratic institutions. This was clear when Khatami called for a transfer of some key responsibilities from the unelected political institutions to the government, but as usual the Guardian Council vetoed these bills even though the *Majles* accepted them. With more laws failing to pass, the people started losing faith in Khatami's politics and this gave a chance to the hardliners to regroup and stand against him. Moreover, the Supreme Leader started denouncing the government's political reforms and argued that the country's economy should come first.

Throughout the chapter, we were introduced to the several institutions that form the political apparatus in Iran. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the real ruler of Iran, it seems that the Ulama-led power structure implanted by Khomeini after the Islamic revolution is the cornerstone of the Iranian political system. Iranian policy making is fragmented and crippled by the checks and balances of different institutions. Some of the institutions posses more power than others, such as the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council. Both of these institutions are capable of blocking bills that could contradict with their beliefs, which is usually the revolution's rhetoric. It was clear through the Khatami presidency that even with the presence of a reformist president and parliament; still the reformers ability is limited with the powers of the Supreme Leader. Moreover, the reformists weren't able to mobilize the enormous support of the people they enjoyed to

challenge the status quo of the Iranian political system. However, what was obvious is the change in the foreign policy. With Khatami in power, he was able to alter the Iranian position in the international community. Even though he faced great resilience from the hardliners in Iran, he managed to show the world another face of Iranian policies. But the election of the hardliner Ahmadinejad, made the world realize that the modified image and rhetoric of Iran Khatami created was reversed to get more conservative and aggressive.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE 9/11 ATTACKS AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM

On September 11, 2001, the US was attacked for the first time in its mainland. The attacks targeted the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon. As a result, the US administration announced its global War on terrorism starting with Afghanistan and then Iraq as repercussions to the 9/11 attacks. It's argued that since the beginning of President Bush's term in 2000 and before the September attacks, there have been a group of advisors led by Vice-President Richard Cheney "press[ing] for a campaign against Iraq" however; the official policy looked for "introducing regime chance in Iraq short of war." (Congressional Quarterly Inc. c.2007) The overall policy of Bush's administration at the beginning was to follow cautious realism as a continuation to America's foreign policy since WWII, which will later change to the neoconservative attitude post the 9/11 attacks.

The 9/11 attacks broke the taboo of using American military forces in an unjustified operations that doesn't fall under the self defense notion. The preemptive wars concept was acknowledged with overwhelming public support to defend American interests and fight its enemies; and was implemented in Iraq in 2003. The world view for Washington has been altered by the 2001 attacks and due to that the George Bush Jr. administration understood "that the status quo the United States had worked so hard to preserve in the Middle East for six decades had produced swamps of despotism, fanaticism and despair in which large numbers of terrorist mosquitoes were bred."

(Taheri 2005) The President himself stated that "After September 11, the doctrine of containment just doesn't hold water." (Takeyh 2007)

THE US WAR ON AFGHANISTAN

In the preparations of the US bombing of Afghanistan, Iran's role in the success of such an operation couldn't be ignored and considered to be crucial for various reasons mainly strategic and economic. The strategic location connecting Central and South Asia and the Middle East could allow Iran to play an influential role in these volatile regions. The close relations of the Iranian government with the anti Taliban groups would ease the American led coalition in their operations. Before the attacks, several committees were established combining American and Iranian officials to discuss and share intelligence information. The US led coalition managed to topple the Sunni extremist Taliban group, which was an Iranian concern. After the war, statements from both sides were encouraging for a rapprochement opportunity. This reminds us with a previous chance of reconciliation during the last two years of the Clinton administration. As a response to the pacifying gestures of Khatami's regime, in 1999 Secretary of State Madeleine Albright delivered an important speech apologizing for the American role in the 1953 coup and the US shortsighted policy in supporting Iraq over Iran in the 1980's. This rhetoric was followed by lifting sanctions on some of Iran's most lucrative exports such as carpets and pistachios. (Takeyh 2007) Despite the nice introduction by Albright, the speech tackled internal Iranian politics, which resulted in upsetting the regime in Tehran giving an advantage to the hardliners over Khatami's reform and reconciliatory approach.

Surprisingly, after the rapprochement that brought the US and Iran together in the preparations for the war on Afghanistan some US officials, including Secretary Powell, complained about the negative role of Iran in Afghanistan and of cooperating with Al-Qaeda members fleeing Afghanistan. In his State of the Union speech on January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush declared the Axis of Evil. Iran was one of the axis members that represented a threat to the US and the 'international' peace and security. The President said:

> Iran aggressively pursues these weapons [of mass destruction] and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom… States like these [Iran, Iraq, and North Korea], and their terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world… They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. (Clawson and Rubin 2005)

This was a blow for President Mohamed Khatami and the reformists in Iran because it weakened both their internal and external position in favor of the hardliners. For instance, the Supreme Leader Khamenei response was calling the US as the most hated Satan in the world. This closed the opportunity for any US-Iranian compromise to their relations. Moreover, the statement had a direct influence in enhancing the power of the hardliners that will lead to electing the conservative Mayor of Tehran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005. (Ansari 2006)

However, every crisis requires a catalyst to bring the attention to it. In the case of Iran, the trigger, in addition to the comments on its role in Afghanistan, was a shipment of arms to the Palestinian resisting groups in the occupied territories. Israel intercepted the ship, *Katrine-A,* in January 2002, which brought Washington's attention to the

'Iranian terrorism' as opposed to its constructive role in Afghanistan. (Takeyh 2007) This incident highlights the contradictions within the Iranian foreign policy. Although, Tehran managed to move a long way toward gaining acceptance from the international community since the 1979 revolution, in addition to reaching a point of readiness to embrace a different relation with the United States during the late 1990s and after the 9/11 attacks, yet it couldn't divest itself from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The US-Iranian cooperation on Afghanistan, high level negotiations and international gatherings weren't able to balance Iran's opposition to the Jewish state. (Takeyh 2007) This could be understood through observing the internal political structure of Iran and how it allows multiple forces to be at play at the same time. As discussed earlier, the unrivaled political and religious power of the Supreme Leader allows for the submission of the president and parliament, which could lead to the delivery of contradictory messages as in the case of Khatami.

With the new developments on the ground, fall of Taliban in Afghanistan, the US administration started expressing their opposition to the Iranian politics and calling for regime change. Zalmay Khalilzad, senior White House aide at the time, spelled out the new US policy toward Iran to be "Our policy isn't about Khatami or Khamenei, reformer or hardliner; it is about supporting those who want freedom, human rights, democracy, and economic and educational opportunity for themselves and their fellow countrymen and women". (Takeyh 2007) Regime change constituted a conviction for the Bush administration after the war on Afghanistan. Washington believed that its national security "requires fundamental political, economic, social, and cultural change in the Middle East." Therefore, "the United States should transform itself from a status quo

power into a force for change in that part of the world." (Taheri 2005) By October 2002, the Bush administration enunciated "a national security doctrine that … pledged the preemptive use of force as a tool of counter-proliferation and regime change as a means of ensuring disarmament." (Takeyh 2007) In simple words this meant pursuing regime change in the region, either through military operations like in Afghanistan and Iraq or isolation and economic sanctions like with the Iran and Syria.

THE GEORGE W. BUSH DOCTRINE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In fact, the US new strategy in the Middle East, or what is called the 'Bush Doctrine' that "shifted from one of consistent support for the status-quo to an ill-defined quest for change…"; in addition to the invasion of both Afghanistan and Iraq and the international pressure exerted over Syria to drive out its army from Lebanon has played in favor of the Iranians. (Taheri 2005) These changes have created a power vacuum for Iran to use to emphasize its regional influence. However, the changes that were brought by the US actions were part of a larger plan to transform the Middle East into a more democratic friendly region. Moreover, not only the US was interested in upsetting the status quo, other regional states like Iran and Pakistan were interested in creating new realities to serve their interests in the region.

Pakistan regarded Afghanistan as an important ally and a link to Muslim Central Asia, in addition to being an extension to its geopolitics in face of India. That's a reason why Pakistan has worked closely since the mid 1980s to support the radicals and on top of them Taliban to maintain its power and interest. On the other hand, there was a majority of Persian speaking Afghanis regarded by Iran "as part of its cultural habitat".

Thus, Iran worked to support some of the *Hazara* Shiite community as well as some warlords especially the *Northern Alliance* group under Ahmed Shah Massoud. Through the American intervention in Afghanistan, the Iranians were able to get rid of the Sunni extremists Taliban group while depriving the Pakistanis from their friends. Therefore, any American abandonment to Afghanistan would mean that Iran is the biggest winner.

In Iraq too, the American invasion in 2003 helped Iran get rid of its old rival Saddam Hussein. This was an important moment for the Iranians. Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin argue that Iran began planning its influence campaign over Iraq before even the first shots were fired. An example for that is the establishment and broadcast of an Arabic television into Iraq by the Islamic Republic. (Clawson and Rubin 2005) Not only the US invasion brought down and got rid of Saddam's regime but also, the Shiite groups taking refuge in Tehran like the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISC) and its Iranian trained militant arm -Badr Brigade- was able to return to Iraq. Moreover, the recruiting, training and financing of other Shiite militant groups, particularly the Mahdi Brigade led by Muqtada al-Sadr; providing safe havens to anti-US militants; and arming both Sunni and Shiite insurgents are among the tactics pursued by Tehran.

The Iraqi Shiites assuming power in Baghdad for the first time was among the significant results that played in favor of the Iranians. Iranian influence in Iraq has sent a wave of fear in the Arab world and Turkey, especially with Iran's close relation with Baghdad's new government and the Shiite and Kurdish communities in Iraq. This was communicated by King Abdullah II of Jordan in late 2004, who stated that:

> If pro-Iran parties or politicians dominate the new Iraqi government, a new crescent of dominant Shia movements or governments stretching from Iran into Iraq, Syria and Lebanon could emerge. Alter the traditional

balance of power between the two main Islamic sects pose new challenges to US interests and allies. (Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007)

The same concern was further emphasized through Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Saudi Foreign Minister, in New York in September 2005, blaming the US policies since the war of handing Iraq over to the Iranians. While in an interview with Al-Arabiya television station, the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak added more to the concerns of Iran's involvement by stating that "...[The] Shia are mostly always loyal to Iran and not the countries where they live... Naturally Iran has an influence over Shia who make up 65 percent of Iraq's population."[9]

The American and international pressure exerted over Syria to withdraw from Lebanon has benefited and added to the Iranian influence. Although Syria will remain an influential country when it comes to Lebanon, yet the Iranians will have more of a say in the events as their link with *Hizbullah* is so intimate. (Takeyh 2007) Moreover, the forced Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon has strenghtend the Syrian-Iranian alliance that has been going for over two decades. The two countries were reffered to as the 'odd couple', since it was an alliance between a Persian theocratic regime and a Pan-Arab secular republic. According to the geopolitical school, contiguous states tend to be rivals and balancing dictates alliances with one's neighbor's neighbor; thus, the most obvious factor in the Syrian-Iranian alliance is the shared threat from neighboring Iraq and Turkey during the 1980s. However, the alliance might be seen from another scope, which is the rooted shared interest of deflecting the american hegemony over the region and balancing the pro-Western axis that includes contries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Therefore,

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[9] See 'Mubarak Shia remarks stir anger', Al Jazeera News, at http://english.aljazeera.net/English/archive/archive?archiveId=21914, 12 April 2006.

the Syrian-Iranian alliance can be a convergances of vital strategic interests, notably, their common opposition to Iraq, Israel and Western hegemony in the region. (Ehteshami1997; Goodarzi 2007) Yet, after the 9/11 attacks, the US excerted tremndous poressure on Syria as well as Iran, which was decalred a member of the so called axis of evil. Both countries were seen as terrorist states that are of detrimental effect on US interests and the intenraional peace and security. As a result, Syria and Iran saw the continuation of their partnership, regionaly and internationaly, as a useful way to maximize their autonomy through keeping their local adversaries checked, diluting foreign, especially US, influence in the Middle East and asserting themselves in their spheres of influence. (Goodarzi 2007)

THE IRANIAN QUEST FOR HEGEMONY

Iran's quest for regional preeminence has been driven by the feeling of its exceptionalism and self sufficiency, which are deeply rooted in the Iranian psyche. Winston Churchill's description of the Soviet Union as "being a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" could be applied on Iran with its complex and turbulent politics. (Yaphe 2008) However, to be able to analyze and understand Iran's actions, we should look into the fundamental principles that shape the Iranian politics. First of all is *Iranian nationalism,* which acts to unify the society and ensure territorial integrity. The second reason is *Islam.* Since the revolution in 1979, it has been acknowledged as the country's source of faith and ethical code. The third is *Persia,* which acts as a base for historical and cultural pride. These factors together with the quest for *self sufficiency* are

yielding a great influence over the Iranian society and affecting its political attitude. (Yaphe 2008; Clawson and Rubin 2005)

The Iranian leaders see their country surrounded by real and potential enemies - Iraq which they fought against for 8 years; the Gulf Arab states that financed Saddam against Tehran, host US military bases and seen as repressing their Shiite communities; by Pakistan, a Sunni anti-Iran regime who had several skirmishes on their common borders and influenced activities against Iran in Afghanistan; and Central Asia, an area once pro-Soviet, now a source of sectarian risk and host to US military forces. Above all, according to the Iranians, the United States and Israel are to be the main antagonist to the region. The United States became a virtual neighbor to Iran on both its eastern and western borders - after the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the occupation of Iraq in 2003; and the state of Israel that threatens to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities while throwing the blame on Iran for derailing the efforts for any peace agreement with the Palestinians and/or the Syrians. (Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007)

Through the past two decades, the Iranian politics have been pragmatic and moderate. Surprisingly, in each phase there was a US component that would alter this policy and lead to more rigid hard-line resistance toward reconciliation. For instance, during the pragmatic presidency of Rafsanjani, the Bush Sr. administration, and later Clinton's, didn't benefit from the pragmatism of the Iranian government and its openness on the international community. In fact, Clinton devised a harsh dual containment and sanctions policy that diminished the chances of normalizing relation with the US under President Khatami in the late 90s. (Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007) Thus, the Iranian Leaders share and understand the threats posed against their country and the means to combat it to

protect the Iranian interests. This consensus include an underlying sense that they may well have to fight alone, as they did from 1980-1988 against Iraq, and that Iran must be able to defend itself without assistance. (Yaphe 2008) Therefore, Iran should be independent and self sufficient on all levels to be able to stand against any threat. These beliefs add to the already strong sense of Iranian exceptionalism. These schemes emphasizes the clerics' conviction of the 'endowed' right of Iran to lead the region and the Muslim world. (Ansari 2006)

Iran's ambition to dominate the Gulf is ancient. The pursuit for regional hegemony started "under the Shahs and has been continued by the clerics of the Islamic Republic." (Yaphe 2008) The Iranian preeminence in the region is due to its large mass population, vast territory, huge military and its old culture and civilization. Moreover, the strategic place it holds in the Gulf, controlling the flow of oil through the *Hurmoz* strait, and bordering both Iraq and Afghanistan, give Tehran an important role in the aftermath of any American withdrawal, which is a crucial card Iran holds and the US cannot ignore. Thus "Tehran expects to be consulted on all issues affecting the region," and will retain that without its consent and participation none of the region's conflicts - from an American exit strategy in Iraq, a peace settlement to the Arab-Israeli protracted conflict or Gulf security - could be resolved. (Takeyh 2008)

Through the previous review, it is apparent that Iran always had an attempt or aspiration for regional power in the Gulf. This attempt was supported by the US recognizing the Shah's regime as a close stable ally, which differs significantly from the theocratic fundamentalist regime that has been governing Iran since 1979. Since early 1980's, the United States and some of its allies have worked to impose sanctions,

especially economic, on Iran. These sanctions have minimized the Iranian ability to develop their economy for several years that led to affecting greatly the Iranian oil and gas industry. As the main pillar of the Iranian economy, it became difficult to develop and enhance the capabilities of the oil and gas sector due to either the restrictions imposed on foreign companies to invest in this segment or the inability of the Islamic government to upgrade its oil fields and refineries due to the imposed sanctions. It is not until the early 1990s with the developments and reforms introduced by both President Rafsanjani and President Khatami that Iran was able to reemerge again. Their ability to modify the Iranian rhetoric to be more neutral and peaceful toward its neighboring countries has helped regaining economic relations and political acceptance with some of these countries. (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002)

After electing the conservative Mahmoud Ahmedinejad in 2005, Iran's oratory became more aggressive toward the US, Israel, and the West in general. The newly elected President denounced the presence of the state of Israel and called for pushing the Israelis in the sea. He accused the US of being responsible of all the deterioration and instability of the Middle East and the world in general due to their ill-fated and double standard policies. (Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007)

On the other hand, the US accuses Iran of developing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and that its nuclear program is for military not peaceful reasons. The origin of this nuclear program dates back to the time of the Shah and was stopped by Khomeini after the revolution seeing it against the nature of Islam. However, the Iranian nuclear program is something that proved indispensable to the Iranians. It started again with a slow pace during the 90's and it wasn't until August 2002 that the developments of

the Iranian nuclear program were revealed. An Iranian opposition group declared the presence of a secret Iranian nuclear program and identified uranium enrichment facilities in Natanz, which was emphasized by satellite photos; hence the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) intervened and carried an intensified investigation which concluded that Iran was already on its way to enrich uranium and active in developing plutonium. (Takeyh 2007) The Iranians claimed that the NPT allow them to develop their peaceful nuclear program and only alert the IAEA when they intend to enrich uranium. Moreover, some Iranian officials regarded the US attacks over Afghanistan and the whole change in the world affairs after 9/11 as another reason for the Iranians to accelerate their program to be able to defend itself and deter any US plans to attack Tehran. In 2003, President Khatami announced publicly the presence of the program and started a series of negotiations started between Iran and the EU-3 (France, Germany and United Kingdom) which ended with "an agreement whereby Iran would voluntarily suspend all enrichment related and reprocessing activities, in return the EU-3 [with the association of the IAEA] would suspend [reporting] Iran to the UN Security Council." (Perkovic 2006) Yet again, after the election of President Ahmadinejad, the nuclear program continued to develop and Tehran was able to actually enrich uranium. Once more, The US, European Union (EU), and Russia along with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) went on another round of negotiations with the Iranian officials concerning its nuclear program but it reached a dead-end where the whole case was presented to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and two economic sanctions resolutions were issued against Iran.

Moreover, Iran is continuously criticized by the US for its role in destabilizing Iraq through the infiltration and support of the Shiite militant groups. In conclusion, the US regard Iran as the reason for all the problems it has in Iraq and responsible for the disorder of the region where its role did not stop in Iraq but also it reached out to the Levant area by extending support to both *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad in the Palestinian territories and *Hizbullah* in Lebanon and backing up the authoritative Syrian regime among other key elements. The Islamic Republic's alleged role in supporting terrorism is another indictment against Tehran for destabilizing the region. Although the Iranian diplomats and spokesmen stress that Iran seeks to live in peace with its neighbors, the Iranian actions often contradicts with this conciliatory rhetoric. Iran has cemented its position as "the most active state sponsor of terrorism." according to the State Department's annual report. The endorsement of terrorism by the Islamic Republic was shortly communicated by Khomeini after assuming power. The first active support was directed toward the Palestinian groups fighting the Israeli Zionists state. In fact, allegations link the creation of the *Palestinian Islamic Jihad* (PIJ), the Sunni extremist group, in 1981 to the Iranian intelligence and security officials. (Clawson and Rubin 2005) The support to the PIJ was later extended to *Hamas* and other Palestinian factions in an attempt to derail the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. An important incident that linked Iran to supporting the Palestinian groups is the interception of the freighter *Katrine-A,* loaded with 50 tons of sophisticated weaponry, by the Israeli Defense Forces in January 2002. (Pollack 2004) Investigations showed the involvement of the Iranian intelligence and chief *Hizbullah* officer, Imad Mughniyeh. The *Katrine-A* affair ended the rapprochement between the US and Iran that has just started with their cooperation in

Afghanistan. Moreover, it created doubts over the sincerity of late President Arafat in pursuing peace with the Israelis. (Clawson and Rubin 2005) In January 2006, *Hamas* was victorious in the Palestinian parliamentary elections. The election of *Hamas* was rejected by Israel, the US and later some EU countries, however, Iran was among the first countries that welcomed such elections. In fact, Tehran was the first capital visited by the newly elected *Hamas* government, which resembles the close relations between the Islamic Republic and the Islamic Palestinian faction. This close relation was emphasized by Khaled Meshal's statement while visiting Tehran in December 2005. *Hamas* political chief said that:

> Just as Islamic Iran defends the rights of the Palestinians, we defend the rights of Islamic Iran. we [Hamas] are part of a unified front against the enemies of Islam. Each member of this front defends itself with its own means in its region. We carry the battle in Palestine. If Israel launches an attack against Iran, we will expand the battlefield in Palestine. (Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007)

Since the election of *Hamas* and later its takeover of the Gaza strip in summer 2007, Iran has been charting a path to allow it a role in a key matter for the Arabs, the politics of Palestine. The Islamic Republic saw the Palestinian cause as a card to use in its ongoing confrontation with the US.

Yet, the Shiite militant group, *Hizbullah,* remains the central group for Iran's influence in the region. The creation of this Shiite militant group in Lebanon was a direct result to Khomeini's desire to spread the Iranian revolution to other Muslim countries. Among the Iranian Revolutionary Guard established by Khomeini was Al-Quds Force that was sent to help repel the Israeli invasion in Lebanon. This group was preaching a message of militancy through the different mosques and schools they established. During

its presence in Lebanon, Al-Quds Brigade trained and financed *Hizbullah* that carried out one of the deadliest attacks on Americans; the bombing of the marines barracks in Beirut in 1982. The Iranian financial and militarily support continues until these days where *Hizbullah* is often referred to as Iran's "chief regional proxy." (Clawson and Rubin 2005) The 33 days war with Israel during the summer of 2006, further illustrates the close connection between Tehran and *Hizbullah*. After announcing the ceasefire, Iran pledged over $ 50 million reconstruction aid for Lebanon. To counter this move, the US pressured its Arab allies to join the reconstruction process in lebanon as an attempt to prevent the emergance of Iran as the dominant and victorious party of the 33 days war. (Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007)

Finally, the United States' accusations against Iran, which revolves mainly around sponsoring terrorism through supporting militant groups in Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine, in addition to working on acquiring nuclear weapons, emphasize the wider role and influence Iran plays in Middle East politics. The Iranian aspirations for a definite role in the region emanates from its ideological and supranational background that was developed after the 1979 revolution. On the other hand, the Iranian claims that the American military presence in the Gulf, it's ill-fated and double standard policies in the Middle East, especially the ultimate support to Israel, are the reasons for the regional disorder and insecurity to the states of the region. These accusations against the 'Great Satan', the US, has been an old believe within the Iranian mindset stemmed from the Iranians different negative experiences with the US since its first intervention in the Iranian politics with the 1953 coup against Dr. Mossadeq.

CONCLUSION

A QUEST FOR ANALYZING THE MIDDLE EAST

The process of transformation from the colonial to postcolonial era played a role in the ideological differences in the region. The Middle East states were divided between those "willing to continue a cooperative postcolonial relationship with the West and those who were not willing to do so." (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) This allowed a role to the superpowers, USSR, and US as each state in the region formed its own alliance. The superpower rivalry in the region contributed to the fragmentation of the region on all aspects, even though it could not control states' policies, it succeeded in imposing huge amount of constrains that limited the amount of flexibility and the easiness of change in the region.

With the end of the Cold War, the international system changed greatly. The US became the dominant country in the world, which gave it the chance to be the "sole arbiter in the [Middle East] politics…" (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002) Unfortunately, the US could not alter the fragmentation of the region to allow for more coherence and collectivity. Moreover, despite the US domination over the Middle East, it was not able to solve the disputes that destabilize the region, mainly the Arab-Israeli, and create a more orderly peace environment. The amount of foreign interdependence that the US created in the region works against its own interests and leaves the Middle East states unable to establish their own course to the future. (Barnet 1998) All this emphasize the idea that order in the Middle East exists within the states of the region but is vulnerable on the regional system.

It's very hard to claim that there is one theory that can explain the dynamics of the Middle East; I would argue that realism is having the upper hand in forming the Middle East states' policies. But, realism in the region looks different in some of its main pillars. The security definition in the Middle East isn't limited to the military aspect but it expands to encompass ideological concerns. Surprisingly, the Arab states were little concerns about going to war with each other but were more worried about the differences in principles, beliefs and the interpretation of Arabism. The famous Arab nationalism thought advocated by Nasser's Egypt was an alarming issue for several Arab, as well as non Arab, states whether in the region or out of it. This ideology was perceived as a threat to other governing systems especially Saudi Arabia, which resulted in what has been know as the Arab Cold War in Yemen during the 1960s. (Kerr 1971) The same can be applied on the Islamic revolution in Iran. The threat of exporting the revolution by the Iranian Shiites had a huge effect on the decision of the Gulf monarchs to support Saddam Hussein in his eight-year war against Islamic Republic in the 1980s.

Another aspect that the Middle East has is the important and crucial role individuals and non-state actors play in shaping their states' policies. Realists acknowledge the role of the individuals within the system but they are not seen as of great impact in the decision making since the state is a unitary actor derived by interests and security concerns. In the Middle East we would find that there are two types of individuals. The first are those who perceive their individual interests as part of their state's interest. For example, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been constantly expressing the need to wipe Israel off the map. He also confirms the Iranian desire for acquiring a nuclear program for energy purposes. These statements by the

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Iranian president conform to those of the Supreme Leader and the clerical elite in Iran. However, if we looked back to the time of Mohamed Khatami, we will find a different rhetorical approach toward certain issues. The reformist president called for a dialogue of civilizations and was looking forward to a rapprochement with the United States; things were not inconformity with the tenants of the Islamic revolution and the Supreme Leader. Another example of those who would sometimes look for their own glory and self-interest neglecting what would be beneficial for their states is the actions by *Hizbullah* prior to the 33 days war in the summer of 2006. The misperception by the Lebanese Shiite group led to grave consequences against the Lebanese state causing damage to a lot of the infrastructure creating a controversy within the society, while putting *Hizbullah's* credibility at stake.

IRAN AND THE UNITED STATES: WHAT DOES IRAN WANT?

The Bush administration's decisions and strategies in the Middle East has created difficulties and increased hostilities against Washington. The invasion of both Afghanistan and Iraq has resulted in the emerging of Iran as a main pillar to the stability of the Gulf region. This was emphasized when the US negotiated with the Iranians in 2005 for the security of Iraq and to pressure Al-Sadr brigade to halt its offensive attitude toward the American troops. However, with the developments in Iran's nuclear program and the support to militant organizations like *Hizbullah* and *Hamas*, many voices in Washington advocating for regime change or military strikes as means to deal with Iran. They felt that negotiating with the Iranians or even imposing more sanctions won't affect or change the realities on the ground; in fact continuing to be soft with the Iranians would

play against the interests of the US and its allies in the region. Yet, after eight years of struggling whether to fight or engage in a dialogue with the Iranians, the new administration under President Barack Obama is determined to new Middle East initiatives. The fact that Iran remains a national security issue for the US stress the fact that neglecting and isolating Tehran didn't bare any fruit. Thus, one of the Middle East plans President Obama supporting is starting a dialogue with Iran. Washington has a long list to discuss with the Iranians - from supporting terrorism and destabilizing the region to the nuclear issue and the Arab-Israeli peace - however, the success of the talks will depend on knowing what is that the Iranians want?

Iran will look for an American acknowledgment of its regional status and the important role it can play to pacify the Middle East in general and the Gulf in particular. The Iranians will focus in such negotiations, if started, on comprehensive talks that would cover not only its nuclear program but also developments in Iraq, the conflicts in the Levant region (Lebanon and Palestine) and a Gulf security system. To make it clear, the Iranian nuclear program would loom large in any discussions as it remains the most controversial and unclear issue. Having been sanctioned by four UN resolutions, the Iranians will hope to get an American probation to the program leading for international acceptance. (Takeyh 2008)

Despite all the animosity and mistrust from both sides, Washington and Tehran share some commonalities and overlapping interests in respect to some of the regional conflicts. This make is inevitable that both countries have to deal with their differences and embark a constructive dialogue. However, Confidence between the US and Iran should be built with negotiations on areas of common interest, such as Iraq and

Afghanistan, rather than those of little or no common interest, such as the Palestinian–Israeli conflict or the nuclear issue.[10] Moreover, the record shows that 'secret' or 'private' discussions out of public earshot have a greater success rate. Building confidence in the public realm will be difficult, as politicians on both sides will likely feel the need to use harsh rhetoric to maintain appearances.

For instance, both countries understand that stability in the region is essential. Thus, a functioning stable Iraqi government capable of maintaining its territorial integrity and security serves both American and Iranian objectives. The same understanding applies to Afghanistan, which constitute a more fertile ground for US-Iranian cooperation than Iraq. The two countries believe that fighting Taliban, drug trafficking, while supporting stability and reconstruction are essential needs for Washington and Tehran.

Moreover, although the Middle East has witnessed many conflicts, the Arab-Israeli protracted conflict remains the central issue. It has contributed to every other clash within the region. Many states and non-state actors used it as an excuse to their actions, rhetoric and as a mean to challenge the status quo of the region. It's argued that the solution of this conflict would bring peace and prosperity to the whole region. On the other hand, another group believes that the continuity of such conflict is protecting the region from deterioration believing that if the Arab-Israeli conflict is solved then many internal divergences will appear and it will be difficult to control them. (Laanatza, Schulz and Schulz 2001) However, during the last eight years the Bush administration brought up new issues of concern to the US, namely the Iranian nuclear program, terrorism support, and democracy. This decreased the magnitude for reaching a solution to the

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[10] Attached at the end of the conclusion a table devised by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace illustrating the commonalities between the US and Iran in six topics (Iraq, Afghanistan, energy, terrorism, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the nuclear program.)

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nevertheless, the Obama administration's commitment to renew the Middle East peace talks and its adoption of the two-state solution as the only resolution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict are positive gestures. The US should work as hard to incorporate the EU in its initiatives since the EU's eagerness to cooperate with Washington could pave the way for real change in the region. But for that to happen, it is paramount that Brussels, EU headquarter, and Washington be on the same page. Also, any American-Iranian talks will tackle the Arab-Israeli conflict as an important aspect in the broader image of pacifying the region. Iran's close ties with *Hizbullah* and *Hamas* will prove pivotal to the US. Although Iran denies the legitimacy and calls for the eradication of Israel, its extensive relation with the Islamic Palestinian factions might help pressure them for a constructive role in the peace process. Finally, in any prospective dialogue Iran will come to the table with firm ambitions and determinations on all aspects and will look for an American confirmation of its crucial role in the region.

Issues	Iranian Interests	Common Interest	US Interests
Iraq	-Shiite led, Iranian friendly government	-Stability and territorial integrity	-Democratically elected, US friendly government
Afghanistan	-Reduce US influence	-Stability and reconstruction -Stop drug trafficking -Fight Taliban	-Reduce Iranian influence
Energy	-Wants OPEC to reduce the output to raise the prices	-Exploit Iran's liquefied natural gas resources to challenge Russia's energy leverage over Europe	-Wants OPEC to increase output to reduce prices
Terrorism	-Supports Hizbullah and Hamas as popularly elected freedom fighters and social justice organizations	-oppose Al-Qaeda	-Considers Hizbullah and Hamas terrorist organizations, the main reason for considering Iran as the "most active" state sponsor of terrorism
Nuclear Proliferation	-Right to develop a nuclear peaceful program and to develop the full cycle of fuel	-Avoid nuclear arms race in the Middle East	-Iran should suspend the enrichment of uranium and open all facilities of inspection.
Arab-Israeli Conflict	-Advocates popular referendum as a prelude to a one-state solution		-Negotiated settlement as a prelude to a two-state solution based broadly on 1967 borders

Table 1: US-Iranian Common Interests

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