

**COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW AND PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE
IRANIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

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Abstract

In the absence a cohesive examination of the history between the United States and Iran, it is the goal of this analysis to present such an examination, starting at the 1951 election of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and continuing until the brink-of-war developments in January 2020. By understanding and recognizing the events and their subsequent effects, the analysis thus proposes that the United States and Iran should negotiate / ratify an agreement similar to that of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in order to alleviate the tensions exacerbated in 2020. Therein, a brief summarization and analysis of two guiding political philosophies, offensive realism as described by John Mearsheimer and liberal institutionalism as portrayed in Robert Axelrod's Prisoner's Dilemma, are examined in order to propose which should act as the guiding principle for future relations. In this manner, Robert Axelrod's Prisoner's Dilemma ultimately becomes this analysis' philosophy of choice / recommendation. Though not exploratory into the necessary mandates within an agreement, it is noted that a new agreement would likely involve more concessions on the side of the United States than that of its 2013 counterpart and would likely need to be ratified as a treaty by the United States' Senate. In meeting these conditions, the new agreement would prove to be more long-lasting in the face of administrative changes yet also more politically divisive.

Introduction

Located in southwest Asia, Iran, i.e., Persia / the Islamic Republic of Iran, can trace its ethnic and cultural roots back centuries. Despite this rich history, Iranian relations with the United States stem mainly from a series of events in 1953. Despite this relatively short history between the two nations, relations have oscillated repeatedly between being positive or negative for the entirety of these relations. In this way, to understand the current political climate between the two states, it is imperative that one understands the entire history of relations due to their present-day effects on the opinions and actions of officials within both states.

Theory

Within this work, a comparative analysis of the United States' usage of three political theories within the realm of international relations will be used in order to formulate a prediction of which theory should guide the country's future relations / interactions with Iran. In this regard, a short summary of each theory is included.

To begin, realism, as a political philosophy, tends to focus on power or state capability in the international system; here, rational states seek to maximize and safeguard their power / relative gains in comparison to those of other states for their own strategic interests (Cimbala 131 & 132). In this regard, instances of realism can look like states only cooperating for immediate interests with that cooperation remaining highly fragile / weak and like the concept of a zero-sum game in the international system. In this regard, this inclusion of a zero-sum game speaks heavily to this theory's influence in disputes / interactions' between only two states; here, a realist, working under such conditions, would immediately presume this type of interaction to conclude with only one winner and one loser. In this way, cooperation between these states would be

unlikely to occur as each would have an incentive to gain the maximum amount of benefits from such an interaction, even at the expense of the other state.

Specifically, this analysis shall use the presumptions of offensive realism as derived from John Mearsheimer. Within offensive realism, Mearsheimer establishes five assumptions: anarchy exists within the international system, states possess offensive military technologies in order to hinder another state's successful accumulation of power, states do not know the intentions of others, the survival of a state is its biggest motivating factor, and states are strategic and rational in their actions / decisions (Mearsheimer 10). Under this theory, the only objective of a state within the international system is the continual maximization of its power in relation to that of other states; in seeking this continual increase to its power, a state is either seeking a level of power at which it would then feel secure within the anarchic system or seeking out other values which power would ultimately bring (Jervis 48). In opposition to that of Kenneth Waltz's defensive realism, Mearsheimer's is much more pessimistic in its predictions of more conflict and war with less cooperation between states in the international system (Snyder 153). In explanation for these predictions, offensive realism extends that each state's "security measures present real threats to others" within the system; therein, an increase in the power of one state would be seen as a direct threat to another state's security / survival (Snyder 155).

Following a different outlook, liberal institutionalism prioritizes the emergence / maintenance of cooperation in international relations, especially as that cooperation relates to the emergence of international institutions. Under this philosophy, international institutions are created and maintained by states for a multitude of reasons including higher access levels to information, lower transaction costs, more credible commitments, and higher chances of cooperation / coordination / reciprocity (Keohane and Martin 42). Similar to that of realism,

liberal institutionalism does include the assumption that actors within the international realm are rational; however, this theory's presumption of rationality concludes that a state following a rational train of thought / action, will ultimately lead it to creating international institutions in order to better facilitate instances of cooperation on the international stage (Keohane and Martin 39). Therein, contrary to critiques of the theory which state that it cannot be applied to security issues, its ability to provide states with higher access levels to information and more credible commitments does extend its relevance to both political economy issues and security issues (Jervis 45 & Keohane and Martin 43). In relation to this analysis, this theory includes an important concept in regard to cooperation: the practice of reciprocity. Under this concept, actors should mimic the actions / treatment that they receive from other actors; for this theory, this concept then acts as the foundation for the ultimate success of international institutions (Keohane and Martin 46).

Based on the argument within liberal institutionalism, Robert Axelrod's work in the Prisoner's Dilemma heavily implies the necessity of cooperation in order for any actor to ultimately solve the security dilemma within the international realm (Axelrod 4). Showcased through a tournament of strategies, the Prisoner's Dilemma refers to the idea that when actors face a set of choices with differing weights in the outcomes of each, individual rationality would lead actors to choose a set of actions which would produce an overall less desirable outcome than would be produced by cooperation; understood in a different way, an action like defection, though possibly garnering immediate payoffs which are higher in value than those of cooperation, will not lead to the ultimate or best outcome possible for either actor involved (Axelrod 9). In this way, Axelrod's findings support the idea that to solve the overarching problem of the security dilemma within international relations, actors with whom one will

interact with over a period of time should choose to cooperate through the practice of reciprocity (Axelrod 5 and 11).

Specifically, Axelrod finds that within his tournament rendering of the Prisoner's Dilemma, the best strategy for actors to follow long-term is one which actually prioritizes reciprocity in interactions: Tit-for-Tat (Axelrod 118). Within this strategy, actor A chooses cooperation as its first move and then mimics actor B's moves going forward; this means that until actor B defects, actor A will continue to cooperate. Once actor A mimics a defection on the turn following a defection of actor B, actor A immediately will go back to cooperating; in this way, actor A, through the Tit-for-Tat strategy, showcases the ability to punish those who break agreements, through its subsequent defection, but also forgive them for the sake of continued cooperation (Axelrod 119). When understanding and analyzing this strategy, it then becomes doubly important that one remembers that the immediate payoff of cooperation may not be symmetrical due to the international realm not being a zero-sum game (Axelrod 17). As such, the effectiveness of the Tit-for-Tat strategy can be found in its ability to produce "mutually rewarding outcomes" with "higher overall scores" while "never once (scoring) better in a single game" (Axelrod 112). In this way, it is then the overall, long-term dedication to cooperation that brings the highest amount of benefit for both of the actors.

When analyzed in terms of the philosophies above, the Prisoner's Dilemma does help visualize how an actor practicing each might act. In this regard, were interactions to be limited to a singular instance, the argument could be made that because the initial, relative gains of defecting outweigh those of cooperation, an actor should choose to defect, resembling the argument behind international realism; however, this argument becomes null when applied to repeated instances of cooperation as a larger "shadow of the future" makes interactions more

durable (Axelrod 126 & 129). In this context, because actors have a higher likelihood of meeting again, their interactions must be examined within a context focused more on long-term repercussions. In doing so, the overall gains of cooperating in both the initial and subsequent interactions increase. Under the umbrella of liberal institutionalism, it would ultimately be under the guidance / autonomy of international institutions that these repeated instances of interaction would occur.

History of Relations

1950s

The 1950s saw the first continuous decade of relations between the two countries; events within this decade have continued to influence and shape subsequent interactions ever since. Starting off the decade was the election of Mohammad Mossadegh to Prime Minister in 1951; invested in bringing a period of national liberation from outside influence for his state, Mossadegh's reign as Prime Minister brought tensions with both domestic and foreign officials (Efimenco 345). It is because of these tensions that the domestic election of an Iranian official necessitates the beginning of this timeline's analysis.

For example, to bring about this national liberation, Mossadegh heavily supported the passing of the Nationalization Law of 1951; this act meant to nationalize Iran's oil industry and supply, thereby removing it from the control and influence of the British who had owned a majority of shares within the Anglo-Persian Oil Company since the early 1900s (Gasirowski 4 Kaur et al. 2020). In doing so, Mossadegh aimed to utilize the country's vast oil supply as an asset to broaden the state's economic and political standing; however, this nationalization would come with an incredibly heavy economic and political price for the Iranians. While there were initial attempts by both Iranian and British officials to compromise on a deal to maintain oil-related relations between the states, especially due to the high dependence on oil sales for both the British and Iranian economies, the end result of the Act was the creation of British interest to remove Mossadegh from power; specifically, the nationalization of the Iranian oil heavily angered British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who involved United States President Dwight Eisenhower (Balaghi 72). In combination with ever-increasing tensions between Mossadegh and

the Iranian Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, these two nations began to orchestrate the beginnings of a power struggle in Iran.

As such, 1952 saw the beginnings of what would be numerous coup attempts at the hands of American and British special forces. Specifically, these would be headed by political actors such as Kermit Roosevelt, CM Woodhouse, and Donald Wilber (Balaghi 71). By November of 1952 and into early 1953, American and British officials began utilizing propaganda in order to undermine Mossadegh's stature amongst the Iranian public through TPBEDAMN, an operation focused on undermining the strength and public support of the Tudeh party specifically (Gasiorowski 13). While Mossadegh himself was not a member of this party, rather that of the National Front of Iran, these two parties had an alliance within the Iranian parliament, granting them more power and numbers within the chamber. In June of 1953, according to Roosevelt, the first meeting took place between officials to begin plan what was coined 'Operation Ajax', though earliest plans for the coup had origins as early as March (Balaghi 81).

'Operation Ajax', the final coup attempt, took place over the course of a week and was eventually successful on August 19, 1953 (Balaghi 71). Here, the 'Wilber Document', written by Donald Wilber in 1954 and leaked to the press in 2000, laid out the operation's multistep plan: bribe General Zahedi with payment of sixty-thousand United States dollars to take part in the coup, convince Iranian Shah Pahlavi that the overthrow of Mossadegh was crucial for his reign to continue, convince Shah Pahlavi that Zahedi needed to be the next Iranian Prime Minister, and orchestrate street attacks and protests, influenced by the CIA, in order to formulate the public opinion that Mossadegh was an unfit leader (Balaghi 77). Nevertheless, the coup, from its starting point on August 15, seemed to be a failure as Shah Pahlavi was forced to flee Iran after decreeing that Mossadegh was dismissed from his position; therein, the Shah's absence

Mossadegh and his supporters were granted the opportunity to hold their own conferences, communications, and street protests condemning the Shah as a traitor between August 16th and 17th (Efimenco 402).

After what then seemed to be a complete failure, the CIA, on August 18, set in motion a series of attacks on opposing parties' headquarters which were made to look as if committed by members of the Tudeh Party; in doing so, the CIA succeeded at forcing the Tudeh Party to retreat from public workings for the time being and at isolating Mossadegh and the National Front of Iran (Efimenco 402). This isolation, then, signifies the moment the coup began to become a success. As such, by the end of the day on August 19, with the decree of Mossadegh's dismissal publicized, pro-Shah protests and movements active in the street, and General Zahedi acting as head of government by decree of the Shah, General Zahedi was in complete control of the city with Mossadegh's surrender following just a day later on August 20, 1953 (Balaghi 78). On August 22, the Shah was welcomed back into Iran with open arms. Over the course of the next two years, the joint government of Iran, led by Shah Pahlavi and Prime Minister Zahedi, would arrest political supporters, activists, and allies of Mossadegh and resume all operations of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

For the next few years, relations between Iran and the United States would remain positive, especially in 1957. Beginning in this year and continuing until the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the American nuclear outreach program, Atoms for Peace, saw partnerships between the United States and countries like Iran to aid one another in peaceful research and attainment of nuclear technology; typically, this aid would include necessary materials, individual pieces of technology, and training (Gul 36).

Going further, 1957 would also see the creation of the SAVAK in Iran. Here, Israeli and American officials came together to help Shah Pahlavi create a National Security and Intelligence Network: Sazman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar or 'SAVAK' (United States, Library of Congress, Federal Research Division 2012). Initially formed for the purpose of stifling instances of domestic opposition, especially as they related to that of the Tudeh Party, SAVAK became an extremely anti-democratic and restrictive tool for the Shah to use against both domestic and foreign opposers. For instance, within the agency, there existed a censorship office, numerous surveillance techniques / protocols, and arresting powers for officials who presumed, though may not have proven, that they have apprehended anti-regimists (United States, Library of Congress, Federal Research Division 2012). Ultimately, along with numerous other networks, SAVAK would cease operations with the collapse of the regime in 1979 due to the Iranian Revolution.

1960s / 1970s

Leading into the 1960s and 1970s, the positive relations, especially in respect to nuclear technology and assistance, continued between these two countries. For instance, in 1967, the United States would send to Iran both a small research reactor, later coined the Tehran Research Reactor, and enriched uranium fuel to the Tehran Nuclear Research Center (Nuclear Threat Initiative 2020). Within the next year, Iran would go on to become a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, i.e., the NPT, further inciting the development of a possible, civilian nuclear program.

In addition to nuclear cooperation, the 1970s would see even further expansion of ties between these two states; in particular, expansion between the leaders of each state would grow into a problem for many Iranians. During this time Iran was the strongest ally of the United

States in the region, and the Shah was the largest purchaser of United States' arms (Halliday 11). In addition, some reports have pointed to United States support, aid, and personnel working within the Iranian military to further protect the Shah's extremely authoritarian rule (Maloney 2019). Outside of the Shah's realm of influence, his opposers deemed him to be a 'dog' of United States' Presidents due to his comfortable, close relationship with them and his relentless intent to please them (Halliday 12). For example, this relationship can be seen in the visits of two separate American Presidents, Presidents Nixon and Carter, in 1972 and 1977 respectively; to this effect, President Carter's famous description of Iran as an "island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world" would take place during his visit (Ekmanis 2020).

Beginning in 1978, however, these positive relations would begin to sour as the Iranian Revolution began. During this time, the fragility of the Shah's regime became extremely apparent as power politics became based in the struggle between Shah Pahlavi and the Iranian masses; between 1977 and 1979, there would be numerous protests, strikes, and public skirmishes between officials within the regime and the public until Ayatollah Khomeini would ultimately be successful in forcing the Shah into exile in January of 1979 (Halliday 2). In April of that same year the Iranian parliament would formally vote to officially become the 'Islamic Republic of Iran'.

The Iranian Revolution symbolized a major strategic loss for Americans due to the immense feelings of distrust and anti-Western sentiments felt by Khomeini and his followers (Maloney 2019). Because of these feelings and sentiments, all American influence within the bounds of the state became nonexistent as the United States' predatory actions into Iranian politics from the previous decades caught back up to them (Nandakumari 1301). This

environment of distrust, anger, and frustration towards Americans would then culminate in the Iran Hostage Crisis on November 4, 1979 (Larson 196).

Lasting for four-hundred and forty-four days, the Hostage Crisis saw a takeover of the American embassy in Tehran by a group of militarized college students angry at the United States for two main reasons: its lack of support for the Iranian Revolution and its history of involvement within Iranian politics (Larson 196). Specifically, these students cited the United States' acceptance of the exiled Shah into its country for medical treatment as a direct blow to the will of the Iranian people; upon seizing the embassy, one of the first demands of the group was his return for trial and punishment for crimes against the Iranian public. When their demands were not met, and a message of support for the hostage-taking was given by Khomeini coining it 'Iran's second revolution', the crisis continued (Maloney 2019).

Over the course of those four-hundred and forty-four days, the United States, due to its lack of immediate influence in the country, was forced to partake in numerous different tactics to try and solve the Crisis. Initially, President Jimmy Carter tried to take a non-provocative / non-threatening route in order to avoid direct harm being imposed on the hostages; from there, tactics included appealing to the Iranian Prime Minister Mehdi Barzagan, though he and his cabinet were forced to resign just days into the Crisis due to public pressure, negotiating, involving the United Nations Security Council and International Court of Justice, and utilizing economic pressures like freezing assets or halting the sale of weapons to Iran (Larson 197- 204).

Ultimately, negotiations over the course of 1980 would culminate in the release of the hostages and the Algiers Accords on January 20, 1981, the same day as President Reagan's inauguration; under these accords, in return for the release of the hostages by Iran, the United States would unfreeze Iranian assets, grant immunity to Iran in the face of any potential lawsuits

from the incident, and vow to never become involved into Iranian internal affairs (Erllich 2013). From this point onward, political isolation would become the new norm for Iran in regard to American influence as all formal diplomatic ties between the two states were cut (Jahanpour 36).

1980s

In the midst of the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1980, the Iran-Iraq war broke out with Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi forces invading Iran; during this time, the United States, due to its lack of any diplomatic ties with Iran, openly supported Hussein's invasion (Douville 136). In fact, this support even endured after Iraqi forces utilized chemical weapons against Iranians, though the Reagan administration would ultimately condemn the use of such weapons (Ekmanis 2020). Further igniting flames between the two states, in 1984, the Reagan Administration would openly declare the Islamic State of Iran to be a "state sponsor of terrorism" (Kaur et al 2020).

Nevertheless, the public treatment of Iran by the United States was not consistent with the private treatment; in this regard, the Iran Contra Affair refers to the political scandal within the Reagan administration throughout the 1980s. Here, the administration approved the covert sale of weapons to Iran, in direct violation of an arms embargo being in effect, from 1985 to 1987; ultimately, these funds were funneled to the Contras in Nicaragua (Scheffer 696). In doing so, the administration hoped to stave off Soviet influence in both of these regions and to secure the release of hostages taken by Hezbollah in Lebanon (Douville 119). Nevertheless, by selling these weapons, the administration was openly defying the Boland Amendments which were passed during this time period in an attempt to stop such funding by government agencies for these revolutionary groups (Douville 97). However, this scandal highlighted a degree of hypocrisy within the United States actions / dealings with Iran: officials were publicly declaring

Iran to be a “supporter of terrorism” while privately profiting from selling the state weapons (Scheffer 700).

Then, on July 3, 1988, Iran Air Flight 655 was mysteriously shot down over the Strait of Hormuz, killing all two-hundred and ninety passengers (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 2020). In an attempt to divert blame, American officials, stationed in the area to protect oil routes in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war, initially claimed that the plane had been in a rapid descent toward the *USS Vincennes*; however, a later report would call into question this claim (Fisher 2013). Ultimately, the United States would agree to pay over sixty-one million dollars to families of the victims in restitution when taken to the International Court of Justice (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 2020). Though this event may not be common knowledge in the United States, it represents a very symbolic event for Iranians for two reasons. First, at the time, Iranian officials understood the event to be a physical representation of the United States backing of the Iraqi military; second, this event represents an even heightened level of distrust and malice between the countries as we continued into the 1990s (Fisher 2013).

1990s

Within the 1990s, the current three-decade trend of the United States implementing economic sanctions and arms embargoes against Iran in order to have a small semblance of control over Iran’s domestic actions and policies began to take shape (Schott 190). For instance, Congress passed the Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act of 1992 in order to stop the spread of any piece of material or technology that could be used by either country to create a chemical, biological, or nuclear weapon; four years later, in 1996, Congress would pass the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act which would focus on placing sanctions on companies / countries which invested more than twenty million dollars into the Iranian petroleum industry (Sen 2018). In addition,

beginning in 1995, the Clinton administration, through a series of executive orders, would enact a full oil and arms embargo against Iran in an attempt to stop all transfer of goods and services between the states (Frazee 2020). From this year until 2010, the United States, as seen through the implementation of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, would utilize ‘secondary sanctions’ to influence other countries to cease all dealings with Iran (Newcomb and Lee 1). In doing so, the United States hoped to further isolate Iran within the political, international system.

2000s

2000 would see the first time a United States official would publicly acknowledge the United States’ role in the 1953 coup. Here, then Secretary of State for the Clinton administration, Madeleine Albright, speaking in front of the American-Iranian Council, would go on record citing the United States’ dealings within Iran being centered on “isolation and containment”; in addition, she would publicly confirm the United States’ role in the coup and in the subsequent “setback for Iran’s political development” (Albright 2000). In doing so, relations between the two states seemed to be on the uptick.

On September 11, 2001, shockwaves were sent across the globe when four planes, hijacked by members of Al-Qaeda, with three flown into key structures within Washington D.C. and the fourth crashing into a field in Pennsylvania. In doing so, the members placed foreign policy, especially as it related to states in the Middle East, onto the agenda of the entire United States government (Davies 389). From the get-go, Iranian officials condemned the attack on the United States, and Iran became the first Muslim country to do so; in addition, the possibility of cooperation between the states’ intelligence agencies in search of the Taliban seemed to further broach the divide between the states (Heradstveit 427 & 431).

Nevertheless, President Bush, in his 2002 Inaugural Address to the nation, included Iran, along with North Korea and Iraq, in his metaphor of there being an ‘Axis of Evil’ which was attacking the free world; in doing so, President Bush re-calibrated the way in which the United States would view the world: rather than being more collaborative, the viewpoint became similar to that of the 1930s in an ‘us versus them’ dynamic (Heradstveit 421 & 422). As such, what once seemed to be an environment of lessening tensions, turned more hostile as the actions and words of the President were both insulting and threatening to those in Iran; as such, the Bush Doctrine created a more hostile environment for all those involved (Davies 394).

Within the Bush Doctrine, the point of weapons of mass destruction became a hot topic as they related to those in the ‘Axis of Evil’. Thus, from 2003 until 2008, the threat and possibility of an Iranian nuclear program engulfed the minds of American officials; over the course of this decade, the International Atomic Energy Agency would play an increasingly large role in monitoring and evaluating Iran’s nuclear developments (Frazee 2020). In addition, between 2007 and 2008, the United Nations Security Council, at the behest of the United States, would pass two separate resolutions, Resolution 1747 and 1803 respectively, to enforce economic sanctions against Iran for not conforming to the Council’s demand of Iran suspending its enrichment of uranium (Sen 2018).

2010s

Initially, the 2010s seemed as if the instances of political isolation of Iran and heightened concerns over an Iranian nuclear program would continue. For instance, in both 2010 and 2011, Congress approved the filings of new economic sanctions against Iran with respect to its energy sector and central bank respectively; in addition, the 2011 sanctions included a caveat directed at outside countries who were unable to decrease their levels of imports of Iranian oil in six

months' time (Sen 2018). Nevertheless, 2012 would see a change in these relations as secret meetings between Iranian and American officials began to take place in an attempt to come to an agreement in regard to the Iranian nuclear program. In fact, in September of 2013, Presidents Obama and Rouhani, of the United States and Iran respectively, would speak on the telephone regarding the potential nuclear agreement; this phone call marks the highest level of communication between these two heads of states in three decades (Ekmanis et al 2020).

Ultimately, two years' worth of these meetings would culminate in the 2014 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran and the P5+1 countries; under this agreement, sanctions would be lifted off of Iran in exchange for decreases in their stockpiles of centrifuges and enriched uranium, for the removal of the core from their reactor in Arak, and for the allowance of increased IAEA monitoring in Iranian facilities (Davenport 48). In addition, while pathways for a nuclear weapon would be removed under the agreement, Iran would still maintain the capability to develop a peaceful, energy program (Patman and Argue 3). By 2016, relations between the two seemed to be on the mend: more sanctions were lifted off of Iran and an accidental entry into Iranian waters by a group of American sailors would be dealt with no qualms or problems.

Nevertheless, with the election of President Trump in 2016, tensions with Iran were almost immediately ignited once again. Seven days after assuming office, President Trump would sign a series of Executive Orders banning nationals and migrants from seven, predominantly Muslim nations, including Iran; the next day, the Iranian Foreign Ministry would call the ban "an obvious insult to the Islamic World and in particular to the great nation of Iran" (Dewan 2017). A day later, Iran would test a ballistic missile, an act taken by the United States to be in direct violation of a prior United Nations Security Council Resolution restricting such

tests; in response, the United States Treasury Department would enact sanctions against twenty-five companies and individuals who were found to have ties to the Iranian ballistic missile program and were found to support the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, one of the armed forces within the Iranian government (Dewan 2017).

Regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, President Trump initially continued to uphold the certification that Iran was in compliance with the agreement in early 2017; however, by October, Congress had passed Resolution 3364, placing new sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia through the Countering Adversarial Nations Through Sanctions Act (Sen 2018). By May of 2018, President Trump announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; according to this administration, for any new deal to be brokered, a list of demands, presented by President Trump's new Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, would need to be met by Iranian officials (Belal 26 & Davenport 24).

Though the remaining countries within the agreement articulated their stark commitment to the deal, without cooperation and engagement by the United States, Iranian officials became understandably concerned about the worth and weight of the deal within the international system (Belal 29). In addition, the exit of the United States from the deal came with the onset of new economic sanctions against Iran toward its nuclear program; however, because the E3 were determined to uphold the deal, the weight of these sanctions was not as burdensome as the United States had hoped (Davenport 25).

In April of 2019, President Trump would again exacerbate tensions between the states when he made the unprecedented move of labeling the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist group; this labeling would mark the first time another nation's military has been deemed a terrorist organization by the United States in its history (Belal 87). By December, tensions

between the two states would attain an all-time high with the death of an American resulting from an attack on the United States' military base in Iraq; per similarities in the weaponry used, the United States would place blame for the attack on a militia group within Iran (Simon 2020). Two days later on December 29, President Trump would approve five airstrikes, on bases in both Syria and Iraq, against Hezbollah, the assumed perpetrator of the December 27 attack, with reports placing the death toll for these strikes at around twenty-five individuals (Frisch et al. 5). In response, a pro-Iranian mob would attack the United States' Embassy in Baghdad, triggering the deployment of over seven hundred troops to establish control (Simon 2020).

2020s

On January 3, 2020, President Trump, in response to the attacks and death of the contractor, would order a drone strike against Hezbollah and General Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad, Iraq; according to the administration, Soleimani, as the second most powerful man in Iran, was targeted due to his role as the leader of the Revolutionary Guards Quds Force and suspected involvement in the most recent attacks on the United States (Frisch et al. 6). As a response on January 8, Iranian officials would fire ballistic missiles at American military bases in Ein Assad and Erbil, though no deaths would be reported (Rubin 5).

Within three hours of the attack, the Iranian military, whilst on high alert for incoming missiles from the United States, would shoot down Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752, killing all passengers on board; three days later after enormous international pressure and probes, Iran would take responsibility for the crash (Rubin 17). Between the immediate devastation of the crash and the eventual severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, both states avoided taking the conflict any further.

Theory Results from Timeline

From the timeline, three main instances can be seen of offensive realism directly influencing the actions of the United States' foreign policy toward Iran: the Cold War era, the 'Axis of Evil' speech following 9/11, and the United States' exit from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. In regard to the era of the Cold War, roughly from 1947 to 1991, the United States was directly facing off with the Soviet Union as both attempted to gain hegemonic status within the international system. Here, actions like the 1953 coup, seen by some as an "imperial power grabbing power", showcased the influence of a zero-sum game in the international system (Balaghi 85). Rather than allow Iran to nationalize its oil industry and cut out a portion of both British and American influence in the state, the coup culminated into a puppet-regime being reinstated and held up by American forces / funds. Thus, no power was lost by the United States. This focus / goal of the United States, to only allow either a maintenance or increase in its power / influence compared to that of other states, thus showcases a belief in the international system being a zero-sum game where one country's gain must result in a loss for another.

When focusing more on the influence of the United States' face off with the Soviet Union during this era, the ultimate building and stocking of the Tehran Research Reactor in 1967 shows another concept of offensive realism as long-term benefits / consequences were ignored in favor of focusing on short-term ones. Here, the United States' focus on heightening its immediate interactions with Iran, in order to stop the spread of communism, would ultimately backfire when the threat of Iranian proliferation emerged in the 2000s. In this regard, the United States ultimately created a problem which would later become the main focus of multiple presidential administrations and one which was a direct consequence of its actions in the 1960s. In addition, this focus on stopping the spread of communism, i.e., the spread of Soviet influence,

can be seen again in the 1980s with the Iran Contra Affair; though the fight was more focused in Latin America, the private selling of weapons to a state, which was being publicly condemned by the federal government at the time, heavily implies that the overall focus was still in containing any increases in Soviet power (Douville 117).

In this vein, from the end of the Cold War until 9/11, realism, as a whole, would seem to be out of date with the transition of the international system into a more globalized / interconnected society (Snyder 168). Nevertheless, moving to George Bush's 'Axis of Evil' speech in 2002, offensive realism would again come into play with the reorganization of the United States' worldview into another 'us versus them' mentality with Iran / the Middle East replacing the Soviet Union's former place (Heradstveit and Bonham 422). Through this reorganization into a semi-bipolar world, the brief bit of cooperation with Iran that immediately followed the events of 9/11 would showcase another of Mearsheimer's beliefs; here, offensive realism does acknowledge that cooperation between two states within the anarchic, international system could occur when there appeared a third party / actor, in this case the Taliban, that both states would benefit from the defeat of (Mearsheimer 13). Ultimately, the cooperation would be extremely short lived due to the deliverance of the speech and the United States view of the partnership being unnecessary to its goal in establishing itself as an enemy of terrorism in the Middle East.

The most prevalent instance of offensive realism, at least in terms of this analysis, from the timeline of interaction between these two states can be seen in the exit of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Here, the Trump Administration's belief in the unequal distribution of benefits from the Agreement is entirely based on a zero-sum game mentality: though the United States had the strategic benefit of zero Iranian proliferation, the

economic benefits secured by Iran constituted a loss / injustice to the United States' interests. In addition, the threat of Iran becoming the preeminent power in the Middle East, especially as that power preponderance related to Israeli interests, was a major factor in the choice to leave (Ayooob 49). Here, according to Mearsheimer, "regional hegemons do not intervene in neighboring regions until it is clear that local powers cannot contain their would-be hegemon" (Snyder 160). In this regard, increases in Iran's economic, political, and strategic standings in the region began to act as a major threat to that of United States influence; as such, the Trump administration's exit from the agreement, with the subsequent re-enforcement of sanctions and troops, thus constitutes the concept of a 'regional hegemon' intervening into regions with emerging hegemons in order to maintain its power / rank.

Therefore, as seen in the timeline, up until the creation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2013, the United States had primarily utilized the tenants of offensive realism as its guiding philosophy in its handling of all issues in the international system (Hunt 319). Therein, the Obama administration's shift to a more liberal-institutionalist approach, with its creation and execution of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, garnered substantial criticism. Within this instance, Robert Axelrod's concept of the Prisoner's Dilemma can thus be utilized to explain the emergence of such an agreement.

Within this concept, it is the idea of repeated interaction between actors which is most important, especially between Iran and the United States. As seen through Axelrod's work, long-term interactions, such as those which have occurred between the United States and Iran consistently since the 1950s, and the idea of promoting reciprocity allow for an understanding that the creation and stabilization of cooperation, even between antagonists, will bring better overall outcomes for both actors; in recent memory, this emergence of cooperation can be seen in

the creation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Axelrod 60). Here, both countries were aware that a long-term commitment to cooperation, even with the inclusion of concessions, would garner higher absolute gains than either could achieve in the form of short-term relative gains. As such, liberal institutionalism was correct in its prediction that “relative gains are unlikely to have such an impact on cooperation if the potential absolute gains from cooperation are substantial” (Keohane and Martin 44).

The influence of liberal institutionalism within the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action can also be seen in the concessions of both Iran and the United States. Here, as mentioned above, Iran agreed to delay / avoid the proliferation of nuclear weapons, a path that the country would likely have been successful on, in exchange for the removal of economic sanctions and the ability to pursue a peaceful nuclear program. In this manner, though the state was likely giving up the opportunity to achieve a power that some have argued would become the new focus of realism in the rise of proliferating states, Iran viewed the long-term gains as more noteworthy / substantial (Cimbala 131). Further, by recognizing that any immediate gains from having the strategic advantage of nuclear weapons, a course that offensive realism would have likely recommended in order to protect its standing in the international system from challengers, Iran prioritized the long-term benefits of cooperation. In addition, one of the main concessions on the side of the United States was the delegation of power to the International Atomic Energy Agency; here, the United States ultimately agreed to empower / trust an international institution to properly monitor, evaluate, and report on the progress of Iran (Hunt 335).

In this sense, the benefits of transitioning to liberal institutionalism, which some would argue is the guiding philosophy for Axelrod in general, and of creating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action aptly highlight the overall, long term benefits that Axelrod theorized would occur

through cooperation. By creating this multilateral agreement, both countries were able to secure protections to their immediate and long-term interests: the agreement's promotion of the United States' security interest and of Iran's economic interest (Hunt 327 & Belal 34). Nevertheless, the actions of the Trump Administration ultimately showcased an early, and unnecessary, defection thereby ending the brief bit of cooperation, and an ultimate return to the concepts of offensive realism.

Proposal

It is not the aim of this analysis to place blame or fault on either state or any official for the differing instances of progression or regression in terms of the two states' relations. Rather, it is merely the hope that by understanding the timeline of how and why tensions have escalated to these unprecedented levels, one would be better equipped to predict and handle future relations.

With the awareness, then, that a distinctly low level of tension between the two states is possible, the goal of future administrations should be to achieve that same level. In order to achieve the levels associated with the presence of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, it would seem then that the best course of action would be for future administrations to create a similar deal. In this regard, if the Bush Doctrine's focus on proliferation, especially as it relates to Iran, still remains top priority for the United States, an agreement similar in nature to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action seems to be the best methodology; in addition, even this claim, which some would consider to be divisive, is supported by the timeline above.

Here, though most United States Congressmen were not in favor of the initial signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action by the Obama administration, most were also not in favor of the Trump administration's exit from the deal without a replacement available (Singh 147). Mainly, this is because the biggest threat of Iranian proliferation is the threat of the unknown; without any sort of diplomatic ties or agreement, the United States would be unaware of breakout times, stockpiles, capabilities, or intents within such a program. As such, the presence of an international agreement / institution, which would play a markedly large role in facilitating open lines of communication and information management, would help alleviate these issues (Keohane and Martin 43).

As such, it is the recommendation of this analysis that the United States attempts to create, facilitate, and maintain an agreement similar in scope and subject to that of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action though different in its form. In terms of scope and subject, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, according to regulators and officials within the International Atomic Energy Agency, was successful in limiting Iranian proliferation as multiple intelligence officers found Iran to be in full compliance to the agreement prior to the 2016 exit of the United States (Davenport 26). As such, since the main goal / interest of the United States was being met, the structure and substance of the initial agreement was successful. Nevertheless, because the United States did choose to defect, even in the face of that success, a new agreement would likely necessitate more concessions on the side of the United States in order to prove commitment / true interest on the American side.

In addition, it is recommended that the United States formulates a new agreement as a true treaty between the necessary states; in doing so, the United States will gain a tool in negotiation and the ability to showcase its commitment to the treaty. Because the United States Constitution necessitates that all treaties be ratified by two-thirds of the Senate, negotiators have a sort of bargaining chip when discussing possible terms to the treaty (Putnam 448). When negotiating, state officials are able to blame the impossibility of certain concessions or the necessity of certain criteria on the likelihood of the Senate ratifying a treaty that does / does not contain them. Therefore, by understanding that the United States would likely be forced to give multiple concessions for a new agreement and that many officials in the United States would be wary of such concessions, this necessity within the Constitution grants American negotiators a tool that could protect from too many / large concessions. In regard to showcasing the commitment of the United States, shaping the agreement as a treaty would decrease the chances

that a future administration would be able to exit the agreement as the United States would either be forced to follow necessary exit protocols within the treaty or be taken to the International Court of Justice. Therein, if the goal of current or future Presidential Administrations were to create such an agreement, formulating it as a treaty would strengthen both its negotiation and its lasting impact.

While the recommendation is the creation of a new agreement, this analysis cannot recommend what should be specifically included. In this regard, representatives of both states would need to understand, mitigate, and predict the impact different concessions or criteria within an agreement would have on one's international standing or dealings going forward; however, it is understood that both sides, even with multiple anticipated concessions, have the incentive to re-bargain due to their different security and economic interests (Singh 151).

Conclusion

Due to the lengthy and repetitive nature of the interactions between Iran and the United States, an analysis and application of the findings within the concepts of offensive realism and the Prisoner's Dilemma would dictate that the two states need to come to cooperate, under the guiding criteria of the latter, to garner the best overall outcome for both. In this regard, the most useful / strategic methodology for both states in achieving this cooperation would be the creation of an agreement similar to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action from 2016. It is then the recommendation of this analysis that such an agreement mimics the goal and scope of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action while shifting its form to that of a true treaty. In doing so, the United States, though ultimately giving up concessions in order to bring Iran to the table and formulate the treaty, would provide itself both a tool in negotiations and an outward expression of commitment to the agreement itself.

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