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Kissingerism and Iranian-American Relations: Prospects for Reconciliation and the Establishment of a New Order

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**Kissingerism and Iranian-American Relations: Prospects for
Reconciliation and the Establishment of a New Order**

An Honors Thesis Submitted to the International Studies Department at Macalester
College, Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA

As Partial Fulfillment of Bachelor's Degree

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May 1st, 2018

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to resurrect the strategic and philosophical thinking of Henry Kissinger in order to unlock the Iranian-American impasse. Encounters between the two countries have been in a state of deadlock since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, though its genesis dates back, at least, to the American-sponsored coup d'état of 1953. Within the American foreign policy establishment, no one looms larger than Dr. Kissinger: his contributions intersect the two worlds of academic diplomatic history and statecraft at the highest levels of international relations. He was the chief diplomat at a momentous period. Kissinger—through his writings and public policy—emphasizes *balance of power, raison d'état, and international pluralism*. As a result, these are the scaffolds of this study.

Using these concepts (in addition to others), I bring forth new policy possibilities for the United States and Iran to adopt, centered around the general and mutual position of *détente*. It is my contention that such recommendations could help mollify the deep and mutual antagonism that undergirds the current stalemate.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and Subject of Study

The political impasse between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the greatest foreign policy conundrums of the last half century. The souring of relations dates back, at least, to the 1953 coup d'etat, when the U.S. supplanted the democratically elected leader Mohammad Mosaddegh of Iran for a pro-American puppet regime headed by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Twenty-six years later in 1979, the Iranian Islamic revolution, led by Ruhollah Khomeini, used built up bitter civil sentiment around western imperialism and the Shah to catalyze the forthcoming revolution. Since then, anti-Americanism has been an official dictum of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy. In return, the United States has continually casted the Islamic Republic of Iran as a rogue state for the past thirty-nine years.

The recent ratification of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 is a noteworthy disruption to U.S. Iranian relations. The deal, however, does not mark a fundamental alteration. Tehran and Washington both remain apprehensive. If the nuclear deal underscored an easement of relations, it should be viewed as temporary; the deal does not guarantee the suspension of Iranian nuclear ambitious into perpetuity, nor has it curtailed American-Iranian enmity. While Iran's nuclear ambitions are curbed for the coming ten to fifteen years, hostilities and tension between the two nations can be identified in nearly all major conflicts across the Middle East and North Africa: Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Syria. These proxy military conflicts are compounded by the

political rhetoric of President Donald Trump and his administration's lack of a coherent Middle East strategy, let alone a general foreign policy. Moreover, President Trump has repeatedly expressed his distaste for the JCPOA and his intentions to remove the United States from the framework. In Iran, the regime is stuck in limbo; the ideas it propagates oscillate between those that favor an isolationist stance in the name of independence and those willing to consider international engagement as a mechanism to domestic prosperity. The former is supported by principlists, who seek to preserve the initial character of the revolution, while the latter, taking a pragmatic approach, want the revolutionary spirit to evolve in order to meet contemporary demands and conditions.

Given these conditions, I argue that the United States and the larger international community should not settle for the JCPOA as the premier arbitrator of Iranian-U.S. relations, let alone Iranian relations with the wider international community; the nuclear deal is not a foreign policy, only the product of one. While it is undeniable that relations between the two countries *should* be better, are the current socio-political conditions propitious for enhanced relations? Hence, one must ask oneself this: what is practically possible to improve relations, rather than what is ideally desirable?

Iranian-U.S. relations can be viewed within a larger narrative of the international order. At the end of World War II, the United States assumed a role of influence and stature that was unprecedented. As the most powerful nation to emerge out of the WWII era, it had the means to dictate an international order ideal for 'liberal democracy' and a liberal economic order. With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1989, the United States' vision for world order proved durable and favorable. The U.S. has remained the

preeminent guardian of the international order. Its hegemonic position, however, is in jeopardy.

Hegemony — in the Gramscian conception — is defined as a balanced mix of domination and consent. In the context of this paper, hegemony can be contextualized and understood by perceiving the United States as the dominator and most other nations as the consenters. A country must possess preeminent power to be hegemonic, but that is not the sole condition.¹ To be hegemonic, a nation must receive acceptance from other nations to be dominant. Assent is bestowed under the conditions of mutual exchange and compromise. In other words, nations grant legitimacy upon the United States when their demands and needs are fulfilled to a certain extent. If permission is absent and the U.S. resorts to pure coercion, dictatorship is all that remains, not a hegemonic balance between the ruler and the ruled. Similarly, if permission is absent and the U.S. falls into isolationism, removing itself as the great power on the world stage, hegemony fades.

In this paper, I propose that the United States of America is losing the support necessary to remain hegemonic. The People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Republic of Turkey are all examples of major nations who are challenging the hegemony of the United States by diplomatic, economic,

¹ The U.S.'s supremacy and its eligibility for hegemony flows from its economic, political, military, and cultural power. At \$19.5 trillion, the United States generates 24% of global GDP and it is a beacon of innovation. With 177 diplomatic missions around the planet, America has impressive political reach and influence. The second largest military on earth, but the most powerful, belongs to the United States, with over 800 bases located across the world and a military presence in 160 countries. A final example of American prominence is how deeply American culture - in the form of cinema, music, publishing and art - permeates throughout the globe. Despite these forms of power, the U.S. is not automatically a hegemon.

and militaristic means. These Nations are uncomfortable or unsatisfied with American preeminence; they feel, perhaps, that the U.S. is sliding too far towards pure coercion or they find themselves in enhanced positions of power. In fact, with the inevitable rise of India and China, and maybe Brazil and Russia, simply due to their sheer magnitude and resources, the United States' power is decreasing in relative terms. The world is slowly entering an era that will be defined by multiple centers of power—not just by the unipolarity of the United States.

Regardless, they have determined that their desiderata are not being adequately fulfilled. This is occurring because of their internal calculations (i.e. they feel emboldened by their growth in power), the behavior of the United States in the international arena (i.e. they feel threatened or insecure), or some combination of the two. Hence, the U.S. is at a pivotal junction: will it resort to a winner-takes-all game of pure coercion to achieve a desired outcome, will it utilize mutual-exchange and compromise, or will it retreat into isolationism? Pursuing the second option has the potential to reinvigorate hegemony, where, arguably, a more stable world is maintained. In addition, if the second option does not resuscitate American hegemony, it will help the United States transition to the impending era of global multipolarity. The other two options lead to paths of uncertainty and insecurity. The affairs between Iran and the United States is one of the fronts where the future of American hegemony will be decided.

In the case of Iran, I argue coercion is not productive, and, therefore, the time for creative diplomacy has come. Such a change could reinvigorate American hegemony and open new opportunities for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran is arguably the chief

country in the Middle East² and the U.S. is the unquestionable regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere.³ As such, it is in the interest of the United States and Iran, in the long run, to amend relations. To make this happen, the U.S. needs to retrieve the intellectual and strategic thinking of its distinguished foreign policy makers. In this context, no one looms larger than Henry Kissinger. The following paper will evaluate the prospect of critically adapting the strategic, intellectual, and diplomatic thinking of Henry Kissinger to transform the current deadlock.

Henry Kissinger is a unique statesman, unparalleled, perhaps, by all other Secretaries of State and National Security Advisers. He is a thinker of exceptional capacity, with personal and intellectual roots in Europe and its international affairs and philosophical traditions. His greatest achievement was his diplomatic imagination to rethink relations with the People's Republic of China, which ultimately helped usher the P.R.C. onto the world stage and the triangular balance of power that followed in its wake. Moreover, he tactfully maneuvered the isolationist sentiment in the United States during the 1970s—catalyzed by the Vietnam War—so as to preserve America's place in the international order. We are in a similar political environment today, as conveyed by the

² Its supremacy is derived from its combined economic, military, political, and religious might. Iran has the second largest GDP in the Middle East at \$425 billion. It has one of the most powerful armies in the region, only slightly behind those of Turkey, Egypt, and Israel, and it has a population of 80.26 million people. Moreover, it has had, and most likely still does have, nuclear ambitions. Last, the Islamic Republic of Iran has immense religious and political influence in the region, which is largely derived from its position as the preeminent Shia majority nation.

³ Here, the concept of hegemony follows the definition that John Mearsheimer bestows upon the term in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics: military and economic dominance over a connected and manageable landmass*. According to Mearsheimer, the United States is the only nation to have ever achieved regional hegemony.

Trumpian slogan “America First.” Finally, his policy of detenté ushered in the lowest levels of hostility between the Soviet Union and the United States since the beginning of the Cold War. These three constructions—triangular balance of power, a global United States of America, and detenté— hold relevance to the United States’ conundrum with Iran.

1.2 Central Questions

To be clear: this paper explores the potential of Kissinger’s thinking to the prospect of overcoming the deadlock between Iran and the United States, and ultimately as an avenue for enhancing American legitimacy on the world stage. With that said, three central questions arise:

1. What was Kissinger’s approach to international affairs?
2. What are the main sources of the Iran-U.S. impasse?
3. Could Kissinger’s intellectual and strategic legacy be useful in the thawing of U.S.-Iran relations?

Well researched and thought out answers to these questions are important for the United States, Iran, and the rest of the world for a number of tangible reasons beyond the theoretical discussion of hegemony and its conjunctural implications. The palpable importance of the topic is explored in the following section.

1.3 Importance

Sour relations between the U.S. and Iran impedes enhanced security and stability in the Middle East. Iran and the United States often engage in proxy warfare by backing

Shia and Sunni militias, respectively. The result is stark sectarian conflict. If the U.S. and Iran overcome their points of contention, security in the region would improve. Stability in the Middle East is one of the United States', let alone the entire international community's, greatest interests abroad. Peace, however, will not be achieved without the cooperation of Iran.

Second, amelioration of the status quo will have economic consequences. For example, the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and Europe on Iran restrict trade and development. When the Iran Nuclear Deal was implemented in 2015, it cleared the way for Boeing to win a trade agreement with Iran Air worth \$16.6 billion.⁴ If the all sanctions were lifted, similar agreements of greater magnitude would transpire.

Third, transcending the current stalemate would allow for improved relations with the Global North and the Islamic World. Currently, there is a mentality that the Muslim world and the Western world are at odds with each other — a narrative brought into precision by Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Reconstructing relations with Iran would deal a great symbolic blow to Huntington's thesis and deflate the rhetoric of extremist groups such as the Islamic State. The sweetening of relations would be a victory for cosmopolitan and multicultural projects across the world.

Fourth, Iranian people are a proud people with deep civilizational roots. They have been a defined group since the ancient world. Consequently, they have been able to adapt and evolve. Historically, the Iranian people have not been defined by isolation. On

⁴ Erdbrink 2016.

the contrary, they have been associated with cosmopolitanism, vibrancy, and innovation. Their current withdrawn mentality contradicts their history. Thus, they too need to re-enter the international arena with greater confidence in pursuit of their legitimate national interests.

More specifically, 50% of the Iranian population is under the age of 24 years. The country's large youthful population will be looking for opportunity in the coming decades; opening up to U.S. and the rest of the world will provide numerous possibilities to meet the ambitions of the Iranian people.

On a personal note, this thesis is of significance to me. I first became captivated by Iran in 2012, as a sophomore in high school, when I read the *All the Shah's Men and Rest: Iran, Turkey, and America's Future* by Stephen Kinzer. Since then, I haven't had the opportunity to pursue my interest as an academic subject. I want to rekindle my studies of this important nation. Second, state to state relations has not been part of my main academic experience at Macalester. International Studies transcends international borders, diplomacy, and trade, but this does mean inter-state and world politics are irrelevant. Before I attend graduate school, I want to dabble into the field of international politics. Third, I have recently completed a paper on the life and thinking of Henry Kissinger. In that assignment, I discussed the main contours of his life, his greatest achievements and failures, and the lessons one can learn from his tenure as an international leader.

1.4 Sources and Methodology

I use three types of literature to inform this paper: biographies, Kissinger's writings, and secondary sources. I will briefly describe the nature of each type of source below, but I will not list the exact titles. For a full bibliography, see the end of the document.

First, I have read a range of biographies that approach Kissinger's life from different angles. Each biographer brings a certain set of assumptions and a bias for information and narratives that support their agenda. Kissinger is a controversial and complex individual, so it was important to read a variety of narratives that attempt to capture the essence of his life and his strategic thinking.

Second, I rely on Kissinger's writings in order to discern the nature his strategic and diplomatic thinking. I incorporate writings from different periods in his life.

Diplomacy and *World Order* are the texts that I most heavily rely upon. The lessons and concepts extracted from his writings constitute the foundation on which I formulate the policy prescriptions to overcome the impasse.

Third, I have read a wide scope of secondary sources. These sources are the heart of the literature review. Relevant books cover concepts such as the state, leadership, realism and idealism, and diplomacy. Moreover, pertinent secondary sources are ones that will provide for a robust, historical understanding of U.S.-Iran relations. Finally, recent events and current events vis-a-vis the United States and Iran, and takes at their interpretation, are sourced primarily from *Foreign Affairs*.

The methodology of the thesis is to integrate the life and philosophy of Henry Kissinger with history, international political theory, and current events (as they pertain to the U.S. & Iran). Through such integration, I conclude whether there is any prospect of overcoming the impasse between the U.S. and Iran through Kissinger's thinking and writing.

The thesis has two main parts: (1) a critical biography of Kissinger; (2) a case study of U.S.-Iran relations. The former is composed of historical context, the contours of the life of Kissinger, and the assets and liabilities of his leadership style and his philosophy of diplomacy and international relations. The latter is composed of a historical survey of Iran-U.S. relations since WWII, the current state of affairs, and the application of Kissinger's thinking to the standoff in relations.

1.5 Organizational Structure

The thesis is composed of five chapters: (1) Introduction; (2) Literature Review; (3) Kissinger: Life, Policy, and Thinking; (4) U.S.-Iran Encounters: Discourse and Foreign Policy; (5) Prospects for Reconciliation and Balance of Power.

In the literature review, five concepts are explained at length: the *state*, *leadership*, *international relations*, *balance of power*, and *diplomacy*. These five concepts, in aggregate, form the foundation of the topic at hand. The United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran are states. When they interact, they do it through the apparatus of the state. As such, it will be necessary to comprehend the nature of the state and the state system. International relations is the study of how states conduct

and formulate relations, as well as coordinate multi and bilateral ventures and agreements. This paper is centered around the condition and prospect of Iranian-U.S. relations; therefore, it is necessary to explicitly define international relations and the schools of thought that make up the discipline. Diplomacy is one of the systemic tools and a real-life articulation of international relations. The paper's main purpose is to evaluate the merit of Kissinger's approach to diplomacy — in order to do this, a conceptual cognizance of diplomacy will be helpful. Last, leadership is the means by which great transformations occur within organized society. Considering that this paper seeks to find a plausible path to transformation through diplomacy, strong leadership is obligatory to the process. Therefore, leadership will be explored as a concept.

The third chapter explores the life and philosophy of Henry Kissinger. His life will be excavated for its failures and accomplishments and his philosophy of international affairs will be critiqued for its limitations and value. These isolated discernments will be synthesized with the findings of chapter 4, creating a framework fit for discerning the usefulness of Kissinger's strategic thinking, with regard to the impasse.

Chapter four focuses on four tasks. First, it conducts a brief survey of Iran and depicts the relations between the U.S. and Iran from the end of WWII to today. Second, it describes the Iranian approach to world politics and how it conceives of the United States. Third, it demonstrates how the Islamic Republic of Iran is depicted in American discourses. Finally, it evaluates the state of the current affairs between the two nations. The goal of this chapter is to isolate the historic sources of the impasse and to determine the causes of tension.

In the fifth chapter, I juxtapose the strategic thinking of Henry Kissinger and his foreign policy directives with the historical development of American-Iranian relations, the current state of affairs between the two countries, and the contemporary power dynamics of the Middle East. Ultimately, after making the case for *detenté*, I lay out the specific policy prescriptions I derive from Kissinger's thinking that would allow for *detenté* and a new balance of power to transpire and solidify.

CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION

2.1 The State

The modern state is the institution through which humans organize society and shape their political and social relations. Social organization and the pursuit of technological advancement are the two historic breakthroughs that set humans apart from other primates.⁵ Hence, as our approach to social organization, the state is a fascinating subject of study. Why and how the state developed is a question that has captivated scholarly attention since the beginning of the academy. Such a task, however, is outside the scope of this piece of work. What is attempted are answers to the questions of: what is the state and what are its defining features? What were its main stages of development leading up to its contemporary rendition? These questions are to be explored below.

2.1.1 Power and the State

Scholars of politics disagree on the nature of the state; that is, what its chief purpose is, or what it should be, as the overarching architecture of organizational life. Yet, there is general consensus that power is fundamentally connected to the state and without it, the state would not exist.

Gianfranco Poggi—a sociologist specializing in modern and ‘classical’ political institutions—wrote a book titled *The State: Its Nature, Development and Prospects*.

⁵ Stavrianos 2015, p.17.

Within his book, Poggi masterfully dissects the state: he expounds on its components, development, controversies, and its modern-liberal-democratic form. His tracing follows the Western European tradition of the state. Hence, one critique is the lack of thought given to state development beyond the region of Western Europe. Nevertheless, his book is of high value to anyone seeking a conceptualization of the state. This section relies heavily on his volume.

Poggi's *The State* begins with a discussion of social power. Like most scholars, he perceives social power to be the backbone of the state. He states, "...in all societies, some people clearly and consistently appear more capable than others of pursuing their own objectives; and if these are incompatible with those envisaged by others, the former manage somehow to ignore or override the latter's preferences. Indeed, they are often able to mobilise, in pursuit of their own ends, the others' energies, even against their will. This, when all is said and done, is what social power is all about."⁶ For Poggi, then, power is the ability to make others do what you want.

Poggi suggests this definition, perhaps, is too generic. Consequently, he offers a tripartite division of social power. For this, he turns to the words of the Italian political philosopher Bobbio:

We may classify the various forms of power by reference to the facilities the active subject employs in order to lay boundaries around the conduct of the passive subject ... we can then distinguish three main classes of power: economic, ideological, and political. Economic power avails itself of the possession of certain goods, rare or held to be rare, in order to lead those not possessing them to adopt a certain conduct, which generally consists in carrying out a certain form of labour ... Ideological power is based upon the fact that ideas of a certain nature, formulated ... by persons

⁶ Poggi 1990, p.3.

endowed with a certain authority, put abroad in a certain manner, may also exert an influence upon the conduct of associated individuals ... political power, finally, is grounded in the possession of facilities (weapons of all kind and degrees of potency) by means of which physical violence may be exerted. It is coercive power in the strict sense of the term.⁷

Therefore, all power is generated from the procurement of scarce resources (capital, social influence, and weaponry). What distinguishes political power from normative and economic power is its paramountcy and ultimacy.⁸ These unique traits are derived from political power's unique ability to generate coercion on a large scale. By extension, political power is emphatically attached to facilities by which violence may be deployed. The ability to exhibit the provisions to coercion is what allows one, or an entity, to make others do what they or it wants — to have power over them.

The language used thus far might confuse the reader into thinking that all commands are carried out by the constant presence of coercion. This not the case. Legitimacy — the willful conformity to authority — is what allows for “stabilised political power relationships”⁹ that do not heavily rely on the pervasive use of violence. Today, political power is legitimate when it is regulated by principles that are codified into a body of laws. Variations in law and its application are what allows for a variety of political experiences.

⁷ Ibid., p.4.

⁸ Paramountcy of political power — political power safeguards its claimed territory from external aggression, thereby allowing economic and normative power to assert their authority over a population. Ultimacy of political power — political power is the last resort in dictating what is an appropriate formulation of interpersonal relations; that is, physical force is the ultimate facility when normative and economic sources of power fail to sufficiently order relations internal to the claimed territory. Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p.7.

What is the relationship between the state and political power? The state is *an* entity by which political power can be institutionalized. Hence, the state is not *the* only body in which political power is located. It is, however, the most predominant form. Throughout the centuries, the state has widened in scope and scale, thereby stretching political power and its institutional manifestations into realms previously unimaginable — this is one of the key components of the modern state. Before a discussion on the development of the state takes place, its main components and modern features will be exposed.

2.1.2 Components of the State

For this paper, the relevant components of the state that Poggi highlights are eightfold: the state is (1) an organization; (2) demarcated; (3) a monopoly on violence; (4) sovereign; (5) a territory; (6) centralized; (7) a coordination of parts; (8) a member of the state system.

One, the state is an *organization*. As such, the state is the instrument — or organization — by which political power is invested. In principle, the state is *one* organization. Yet, Poggi suggests that it is “implausible” to render the modern state as *one* organization “in view of the enormous expansion and internal diversification of contemporary states.”¹⁰ Poggi attempts to reconcile the aforementioned discrepancy by insisting that while the state has expanded and come to consist of separate organs, its oneness is maintained through common purpose and a set of political interests.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.19-20.

Second, for an organization to be a state, it must be *demarcated* from all other organizations. Its central point of divergence — “at a maximum” — is that it “performs *all and only* political activities.”¹¹ It is helpful here to conceive of religion, enterprise, and civil society as spheres that are separate from the state, but still develop and maintain organizations to pursue their own interests. Social and economic organizations can influence the political process; however, they do not possess the prerogative of coercion that allows the state to execute collective, political activities.

Third, coercion is the sole privilege of the state (i.e. monopoly on violence). This component does not need much explanation, as it has been addressed intermittently throughout. Though, it should be said that while a state exercises control over a population typically through coercion, there is “ultimacy” attached to state compulsion. That is, “the state specialises in last-resort control” after the possibility of pain and imprisonment does not deter illegal action or after economic and normative organizations fail to control the population by their own means.¹² ‘Other organizations’ include religious and education organizations, as well as labor obligations. In other words, violence is used as a last resort.

Fourth, an organisation is a state when it is sovereign. In short, this means that the state is outside the control of any other organization or state and, thus, the state at hand is the only power exhibiting control or influence over the population. Not only does it claim such entitlements, but it is also willing to prove its sovereignty, if necessary, by the method of war. It is subject and bound to no outside rules. In fact, sovereignty, in part, is

¹¹ Ibid., p.20.

¹² Ibid., p. 21.

the ability to make rules and enforce them, irrespective of other states in the state system. Finally, sovereignty implies that a state is free to conduct an independent foreign policy that is in line with its national interests.

Fifth, the components discussed thus far — particularly the notion of sovereignty — have an implicit assumption: the state is the one and only state within a definitive *territory*. This does not mean a state needs to be the only state in the state system, as this would constitute a universal empire. Nevertheless, it does insinuate the need to be the only organization holding claim to sovereignty within a explicit territory. Borders demarcate a state and within these borders, the state “exercises jurisdiction and law enforcement...and... it is committed to protecting against encroachment from any other political power.”¹³ Furthermore, Poggi evokes the thinking of an Italian jurist to convey the relationship between the state and territory: “the state does not *have* a territory, it *is* a territory.”¹⁴ Without a defined and internationally recognized territory, an organization cannot be a state. States can exist *de facto*, however, if it controls a territory but is not recognized by the international community.

Sixth, to be a state, political power and political activities must originate or refer to the organ of the state that ultimately legitimizes activities carried out by bodies beyond the epicenter of power. For example, the office of the presidency and the legislative branch bestows the privilege to the Department of Homeland Security to use force and the Department is ultimately accountable to the Presidency and Congress. That is, members of the population “cannot exercise power, except in the capacity of agents of

¹³ Ibid., p.23.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.23.

the state itself, or by influencing the activities of such agents.”¹⁵ Hence, the use of force is perceived as plausibly legitimate or excusable only when violence is authorized by the state. While the state might very well consist of many specialized and distinguishable organs, the power to make decisions at the collective level or the use of coercion is not a prerogative of all agents or organs of the state, but only the elite who have such entitlement assured by the institutional dictates of the centralized state. In short, a state is an organization where power is *centralized*. An important caveat, however: it can be distributed and checked.

The seventh component of the state is what Poggi titles “formal coordination of the parts.”¹⁶ As the state developed from its initial form to the modern state of today, the organs of the state grew in size and in number. In order to remain a centralized and unitary organization, the organs of the state and their faculties need be integrated and coordinated through some interconnecting mechanism, such as hierarchy and bureaucracy. The organs of the state do not exist as independent power hubs, but rather as entities that enhance and support the centralized state.¹⁷

The eighth condition of a state — membership in the state system — is not inherent in a state’s own singular existence, but, rather, brought about by the presence of many states. The state system is comprised of all sovereign states — the fact that there is not a singular, unitary state, gives rise to inter-state relations. Though these states lie next to one another and are similar in nature, “these units do not consider themselves, and do

¹⁵ Ibid., p.22.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.23.

¹⁷ Ibid.

not conduct themselves in relation to one another, as organs of that wider entity, as they would if the latter had established and empowered them and were in a position authoritatively to regulate their conduct.”¹⁸ The regulation of inter-state conflict would demand a world government with the authority to arbitrate disputes. The existence of any such government would result in the decline of the state — according to the definition laid out here — because requirements, such as sovereignty, would not hold. These conditions are the impetus behind international diplomacy. While no one state has direct power to make decisions on the behalf of another, diplomacy, war, coercion, and sanctions can be used as tools of persuasion and compromise.

The account of the state detailed so far applies, according to Poggi, “[to] the advent of the modern era, [so] then in later stages of that era states acquired features not comprised within that definition.”¹⁹ Nationhood, democratic legitimation, citizenship, law, and bureaucracy are the ‘features’ Poggi emphasizes. In the following paragraphs, these “features” are regarded as contemporary-modern features, or simply contemporary, in order to distinguish them from the eight components of the modern state that were summarized above — these components are simply referred to as modern components. Accordingly, what is expounded upon below characterizes and differentiates the modern state from the contemporary-modern state.

Nationhood is a defining feature of the contemporary state. Nationhood is succinctly conceptualized as the sense of mutual belonging amongst people of many walks of life. As states grew in size, their borders increasingly encompassed a

¹⁸ Ibid., p.24.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.26.

heterogeneous population, making it difficult to generate a sense of nation along ethnic lines. Still, a few states do possess a relatively homogenous population, such as Japan. As a result, one can detect two types of nationhood — one generated along ethnic lines and one on civil lines, or a combination of the two. Poggi explains the possibilities of civic nationhood: “[nationhood] came to encompass, beside an ethnic bond, also a religious one, or a linguistic commonality, or one grounded on the sharing of institutional legacies, or something as vague as historical experience or a sense of destiny.”²⁰ Nevertheless, nationhood can be perceived, on one hand, as a tool of the state to legitimize their rule over a population — a means of consolidating and establishing power. On the other hand, nationhood can be seen as a tool of the civilian population. The argument goes that a unified populace along civil or ethnic lines will have the organizational capacity to penetrate the state and shape its policy to reflect the interests of the people. Nationalism and self determination, in the wake of decolonization, rearranged the state system’s borders, which helps to explain its importance to the contemporary state.

The title of citizen bonds a person to a land and its nation. In theory, citizenship implies a level of equality amongst all citizens, in terms of state entitlements and obligations. When one is a citizen of a state, it is typically their prerogative to participate in the formation of a state’s agenda, which usually transpires through the electoral system. Yet, this is typically not the extent of involvement a citizen is entitled to — one can expand their participation by running for public office. In the case of a theocracy or monarchy, citizenship might make you eligible for civil service, but the position will be

²⁰ Ibid., p.26.

bestowed upon you by a theocrat or monarch, not by the will of the majority. It should be noted that citizenship began as a privilege granted to male elites — typically those with economic power. In the global north, women were granted citizenship only in the 20th century. Still, there are states that deny certain demographics citizenship and, thus, its entitlements.

The expansion of citizenship is the product of a wider phenomenon that is unique to the contemporary-modern state: democratization. Yet, this process did not occur universally, within all states (i.e. not all nation-states are democracies). Democratization represents a change in the state's purpose: while political power is vested in the state, the constituency chooses the leaders to execute the prerogatives of the state, according to which candidate they believe will keep their interests in mind. Thus, the state exists to serve the people, not to serve itself. Furthermore, democratization gave impetus to the state as a provider of services and public goods. In exchange, the people abide by the law of the state and respect its authority. It should be noted that the way democratization has been described above does not, ironically, necessitate a state to be democratic, considering there are states, today, who provide services and public goods to its population, despite a democratic deficiency.

The relationship between state and law has evolved over the course of the modern era. For long, the state has been the enforcer of law, but it has not always been the architect. Historically, religion, tradition, and economic interests have played a heavy hand in the production of law, codified or oral. The advent of sovereignty catalyzed the politicization of law and constitutionalism made law-making a deliberative affair instead

an absolute affair. Accordingly, the state's developed legislative bodies that possessed the right to create law.

A pattern of increased scale and scope is found in the previous paragraphs. Today's state is different from earlier renditions because of the general increase in its primary activities. Initially, the purpose of the state was confined to the incubation of political power, but, over time, the state occupied itself with broader concerns. What emerged was the bureaucratic state. Bureaucracy alleviated the tension between a state's unitary makeup and its multi-part composition; bureaucracy is the thread that weaves all the components of a state into a uniform entity. The bureaucratic model connects the epicenter of political power to the organs of the state that carry out a diverse set of social activities. In other words, bureaucracy allows the state to take on a larger set of activities while harboring the ultimate control of these activities under the supreme seats of power, such as parliament or the executive branch.

2.2 International Relations

International relations is the study of inter-state behavior. Theorists are determined to layout ways that describe and, ultimately, predict how states interact with one another. In today's world, states are no longer the sole actor in international affairs—intergovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, and religious and terrorist organizations also hold noteworthy influence. Despite the complexity added by non-state actors, the traditional schools of international theory — realism and idealism — hold the state as the main actor in the international arena.

International relations theory, similar to all social science theory, is not predicated on any scientific facts. Its fluid, contradictory, and often conditional. Hence, it should be understood in relation to its particular context. No one theory should be held as a general theory. Paul Wilkinson has a useful way of wording this predicament: “[the main schools of thought] constitute ways of perceiving international relations, metaphors or models which appeal to their adherents because that is the way they prefer to view the world.”²¹ Essentially, which theory appeals to one is often contingent on their lived experience and how their lived experience is emulated on the international stage. With that in mind, let's take a look at some of the most influential theories of international relations that help one make sense of an interconnected, interdependent, and unpredictable world.

2.2.1 Realism

Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes are generally seen as the forefathers of the modern realist school of thought. Machiavelli and Hobbes — articulated in their *The Prince* (1532) and *The Leviathan* (1651), respectively — hold a worldview predicated on human beings motivated, naturally and unconditionally, by their own self-interests. The most precarious and enriching self-interest humans pursue is political power, which is entrenched within the state. Whether one wants to penetrate the state or maintain their rule over the state, the prince must accept coercion and violence as paramount to their ends. Though Machiavelli and Hobbes thoughts are targeted at capturing and retaining the state, the emphasis they place on power positioned them as the forefathers of realism,

²¹ Wilkinson, 2007, p.2.

which holds power as paramount to any inter-state analysis. While they wrote in the era before the establishment of the nation-state, their deep respect for power influenced international relations theorists in later ages as the world became an increasingly interconnected and interdependent.

Realism is predicated on a matter-of-fact analysis. In the international realm there is not a overarching state who projects power over the entire globe, nor is there a grand arbitrator, or global government, to settle disputes and insecurities between states. Therefore, the international system is defined by disorder and constant power struggle — a state known as *anarchy*. The accumulation of power is the best guarantee against encroachment and survival — similar to how Machiavelli and Hobbes conceived power as paramount to human interests and a ruler's perpetuation. Accordingly, military power is necessary for defence, expansion, and the pursuit of a state's *raison d'etat* (national interest). Military power is conditional on wealth and population, so industry and a large healthy population are seen as priorities for existent and rising powers. Eliminating conflict and war are viewed as futile efforts. As long as an anarchic system persists, realists stress the imperativeness of alliance-building, the state as the key political actor, balance of power, and an objection to empowering international organizations and entrusting agreements with collective security measures.

Despite these underlying commonalities, realism is not a unified theory. It has evolved over time and has taken on many transformations and adaptations. Twentieth century realist discourse was dominated by Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, who are regarded as classical realists and structural realists, respectively. For Morgenthau, it is

human nature that explains the behavior of a state; human beings possess a “will to power” that is insatiable.²² States are led by humans, so the state system manifests in a manner that evokes the behavior of humans and their appetite for power. Morgenthau suggests that states will always be on the offensive, seeking opportunities to dominate and extract resources that will enhance their relative power. He argues that the international system is better served by a multipolar balance of regional and global powers; his opinions stemmed from the perceived danger of the US/USSR rivalry.

Kenneth Walt, on the other hand, argues that the power struggle that defines the international system is not predicated on human nature, but on the international system’s innate disposition towards anarchy. States, therefore, assume an attitude of survival, meaning they pursue power because it is the best insurance policy against defeat. In other words, states seek survival, not necessarily the domination of other states. In fact, he makes the case that most states behave defensively, in hopes of maintaining the balance of power that created stability. For Walt, balancing is a strong counter to offensive behavior, yet, contrary to Morgenthau, he claims bipolarity creates enhanced stability over a multipolar system.

A noteworthy addition to defensive realism was developed by Robert Jervis, George Quester, and Stephen Van Evera. They argue that war is more likely to transpire when states can easily conquer each other. Thus, when defensive measures are more attractive and accessible than offense ones, peace should become prevalent and cooperation should flourish. The key is to get states to develop and value defensive

²² Walt 1998, p.31.

weaponry over offensive weaponry — allowing for a healthy, but tilted, balance between offensive and defensive measures.

John Mearsheimer's theory of “offensive realism” ushered realism into the post Cold War era. Mearsheimer’s theory is laid out in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. He argues that states pursue power because it is the requisite for survival within an archaic international system. Offensive realism is a structural theory of international relations and, thus, it is similar to defensive realism. However the former differentiates itself from latter over the question of how much power states want to accumulate.²³

Defensive realism holds that states wish to maintain the current balance of power rather than to chase more. Offensive realism, however, “believes that status quo powers are rarely found in world politics, because the international system creates powerful incentives for states to look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals, and take advantage of those situations when benefits outweigh the costs. A state’s ultimate goal is to be the hegemon in the system.”²⁴ Offensive realism shares a commonality with classical realism: great powers unremittingly work toward enhancing their relative power to other contending states. Yet, there is an underlying difference. Classical realists understand state behavior as an extension of humanity’s innate drive to dominate, whereas offensive realists predicate state behavior on the fact that more power increases a state’s odds of survival in an archaic system. Hence, offensive realism implies the following: power struggle is not inevitable, but is guaranteed under a system characterized by anarchy. If anarchy could be suppressed, the nature of the system would

²³ Mearsheimer 2014, p.21.

²⁴ Ibid., p.21.

change. Nevertheless, Mearsheimer's theory is creating a lot of noise because it predicts China will not rise to great power status peacefully; he predicts a confrontation between it and the United States is inevitable.²⁵

2.2.1 Idealism

The liberal school of international relations can be viewed as a set of reactions to the pessimistic nature of realist thought. Though there is a broad range of liberal theories, they have in common the belief that certain measures, institutions, and organizations can be adopted that will help prevent destructive power struggles and the wars that come with them. Liberal theories find their origin in the time of enlightenment when the intellectuals of Europe were constructing and advocating ideas that they thought would make the world a better place to live if they were institutionalized within the state.²⁶ Proponents of this school of thought — such as E.H. Carr and Woodrow Wilson — tend to be optimistic towards the possibility of making the world a safer and more peaceful place. Just as liberals of the enlightenment were labeled utopian for their belief that a democratic government would lead to internal harmony and national prosperity, liberals of international relations are often pegged as idealistic and naive. Yet, they hold firm in their belief that global cooperation and mutual exchange, as well as economic interdependence and the spread of democracy, will alleviate the international system of its anarchic state.

²⁵ Ibid., p.395.

²⁶ Ibid., p.15.

Liberal theories are supportive of three prospective institutions that could lead to international stability: economic interdependence, democratization, and international institutions. Supporters of economic interdependence see inter-state, economic contingency as a force for stability. That is, if a state's economy and its growth are reliant on other states — and vice-versa — then states will be less likely to engage in conflict. War would disrupt economic prosperity. Considering economic wealth is an input to military power, states are reluctant to undermine their economic well being with attritional warfare against states whose wellbeing is closely connected to theirs.

The second theory — democratic peace — upholds democracy as a means of suppressing inter-state power struggle. Advocates of this theory presume democratic states do not go to war with one another, but they stop short of considering democracies less warlike than their counterparts. The inherent values of democracy — liberty, freedom, and free speech — prevent like minded states from going to war with one another, thereby escaping the aggressive and offensive tendencies that dictatorial, authoritarian, or monarchical states exhibit when they face each other or democratic states in the international arena. The democratic peace theory's inaugural incarnation was expressed and pursued by Woodrow Wilson, hence the term 'Wilsonian idealism.'

Last, there is a subgroup of the liberal paradigm that argues the establishment and the perpetual enhancement of international institutions will eventually overcome the historic trap of international warfare. That is, international institutions will encourage cooperation among states. These institutions and their organizational manifestations — the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, NATO, and the EU — did not render

sovereignty meaningless, but, rather, stand as a set of important organizations with the influence to shape what is considered acceptable state behavior. Currently, these norms of conduct are not foisted upon states; they are negotiated and based on compromise and mutual exchange. Hence, these institutions lay out prescriptions, not proscriptions to member states. Proponents of international institutions believe international law poses as a strong incentive for states to prioritize collective security over the narrow mindedness and fallibility of *raison d'etat*.

2.2.2 Marxism and Deconstructivism

Within the field of international relations, there is a third, less conventional field of thought: radicalism. The most well-known of these theories — Marxism — challenges the assumptions underpinning the state system by pinpointing the capitalist system as the catalyst of international conflict. It suggests a socialist plan of transformation that would, in theory, bring an end to state power struggle and the exploitation of the working class. Stephen M. Walt explains, orthodox marxist theory holds that “capitalist states battle each other as a consequence of the incessant struggle for profits and battled socialist states because they saw in them the seeds of their own destruction.”²⁷ Subsequently, it was argued, and still is argued, that capitalist states exploit underdeveloped states at the expense of the latter's well being; furthermore, these exploited states become dependent on the capitalist state's extractive behavior. This theory is known as neo-Marxist dependency theory. Yet, Walt states, “both of these

²⁷ Walt 1998, p.32.

theories were largely discredited before the Cold War even ended.”²⁸ Academics point to history to dislodge these theories as viable explanations for international conflict. First, examples of cooperation between capitalist nations are abundant, suggesting capitalism does not naturally lead to conflict. Second, it was shown that energetic participation in the world economy is a better path to prosperity than isolated, socialist development and underdeveloped nations were not without example of successful negotiation with multinational corporations in the global north. Nevertheless, there is some truth to be found in neo-Marxist theory — particularly its argument of imperialism augmenting underdevelopment — but it hard to argue for its viability as a theory that explains inter-state conflict.

As Marxism capitulated as a reasonable theory for international conflict, its legacy and insight is held tight by a group of academics who were well versed in literary criticism and social theory. Their school of thought became known as deconstructivism. It should be noted that these theorists did not offer holistic alternatives to the mainstream theories of realism and idealism, just critiques to these theories. Their “approach was openly skeptical of the effort to devise general or universal theories such as realism or idealism.”²⁹ As a result, deconstructivism does not offer a unified theory of international relations.

²⁸ Ibid., p.34.

²⁹ Ibid.

2.2.3 International Relations in the 21st Century

The end of the Cold War marks a new era for the discipline of international relations. Gone are the days of the bipolar and ideological delineation of geopolitics. Since the fall of the Soviet Union it is not uncommon for Americans, including academics, to be optimistic for the future of international politics. According to their logic, a U.S. victory ended the era of great power politics and it renders obsolete the concept of balance of power. We now live in an era of international cooperation and mutual exchange. Some go as far as to say the new order will remain into perpetuity, as invoked by Fukuyama's phrase "the end of history." The realist school of thought is seen as outdated. However, September 11th, 2001 and its aftermath diminishes the credibility of the aforementioned world view. Accordingly, the aforementioned is no longer widely held.

What is undisputed is international relations has indeed adapted to a time period with a whole new set of questions and concerns. Walt suggests a general alteration of the discipline as it embraced a new age: "non-American voices are more prominent, a wider range of methods and theories are seen as legitimate, and new issues such as ethnic conflict, the environment, and the future of the state have been on the agenda of scholars everywhere."³⁰ In terms of how individual countries will alter the current order, China is paramount. In fact, China's growth might very well be the defining feature of the 21st century — its consequences will be felt all across the world. Of equal importance will be America's reaction to China's enhancement, as the former's economic and military

³⁰ Ibid., p.35.

preponderance declines in relative and, perhaps, absolute terms. Also of substance for the 21st century will be climate change, the outcome of the Middle East, and the war on terror. Russia, Japan, India and the European project's growing preponderance and strength will also play a role. These issues and the policies of the aforementioned countries will transcend borders and play out in distant regions of the world, such as Africa and South America. The schools of international relations produce useful insight regarding these matters. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the value of these schools of thought to each issue mentioned above. Yet, as the reader reflects on these issues, Walt provides useful advice that can perhaps serve as an immediate substitute: "The 'complete diplomat' of the future should remain cognizant of realism's emphasis on the inescapable role of power, keep liberalism's awareness of domestic forces in mind, and occasionally reflect on constructivism's vision of change."³¹ With that said, one should keep these schools of thought in mind as the paper approaches the section of contextualizing U.S.-Iranian relations and Iran's prospective role in the 21st century.

2.3 Diplomacy

While international relations is best understood as the study of how and why states interact with each other, diplomacy is the real-life practice and manifestation of inter-state interaction. As organizations, states do not naturally engage with one another — state engagement is ultimately the product of a humans interacting with humans on behalf of a state. Diplomacy, thus, brings to fruition international relations as an

³¹ Ibid., p.44.

academic discipline. One cannot be a practitioner of international relations, but one can be a practitioner of diplomacy: a diplomat.

In today's world, states are not the only player in international relations; multinational corporations, intergovernmental organizations, terrorist and crime organizations, and religious organizations all play a role in shaping international society and its future. For this reason, there is a growing trend to treat international relations as obsolete and replace it with the term world politics, as it is inclusive of non-state actors. This development has impacted the conceptualization of diplomacy. It is increasingly seen as a tool that is of use to individuals beyond that of just statesman. These trends are part of a larger debate on globalization and the state. Some argue that globalization is rendering the state obsolete, while others deny the erosion of sovereignty. Nevertheless, before prospects of the future can be more thoroughly explored, we must make sense of where we are now by looking at the history of modern diplomacy. Its history is closely aligned with the development of the state.

2.3.1 Peace of Westphalia, Sovereignty, and Modern Diplomacy

Diplomacy has been an integral component of organizational life for centuries. The formation of settled populations into urban centers gave impetus to confrontation and disagreement between neighboring settlements. Diplomacy, in its rudimentary form, was used in the transitional times of warfare to peace and vice-versa. Over the centuries as empires rose and fell, diplomacy was a frequent practice that allowed for empires to maintain relations across their multi-ethnic population — though this manifestation of

diplomacy was technically internal — and support relations with other empires. As humans and their institutions progressed and technology advanced, the nature of diplomacy evolved. Diplomacy became a perpetual, proactive and daily practice, no longer confined to transitional periods between peace and war or in times of disagreement. It is no longer a reactionary tool. Today, there are different conceptions of diplomacy and, thus, different, definitions. Yet, it is hard to deny that diplomacy has shaped the world in which we live.

For the purpose of brevity, a relatively in depth exploration of diplomacy will be limited to the tradition that finds its roots in the build up to the Peace of Westphalia and its solidification in the subsequent hundred years; this tradition is still, to some extent, practiced to this day. The year of 1648 is the typical date used to designate the advent of modern diplomacy, as it generally marks the birth of the nation-state. More importantly, it was at this time that states formed a common agreement on the principle of Sovereignty, which is a defining feature of the state system. These developments were not abrupt; hence, modern diplomacy was established in piecemeal throughout the preceding centuries. As the nature and the structure of the state evolved, diplomacy had to adapt to fulfill the needs of the time and place. Also, the states of Europe did not progress along identical timelines, so it is impossible to date these developments as they occurred at different times across Europe, according to the historical, intellectual and political status of each, respective state.

In the Classical and Medieval periods, the principle of Sovereignty was a loose set of ideas. Sovereignty didn't find formal articulation until Jean Bodin (1530-1596) laid

out the concept in detail. It would take another 50-100 years before sovereignty was widely accepted. Medieval monarchs did not enjoy sovereignty because the feudal-state necessitated the sharing of power with his *trustis* in order to maintain authority. The Church also had a role in maintaining the monarch's supremacy. Eventually, a few monarchs were able to escape the power limitations of feudalism and extend their reach over larger and larger swaths of territory — the states of England and France are examples. These monarchs no longer needed to delegate power to the *trustis* to maintain authority over a territory. Monarchs became *the* central authority, dependent only on its own faculties. While the feudal aristocrats were disposed, the power of the church remained a hindrance for a group of monarchical states across Europe or it stood as an integral component of authority, as in the case of the Holy Roman Empire. Hence, while some monarchical states operated free of papal authority, others were still contained by the papacy.

Correspondingly, medieval Europe was characterized by an aspiration to universality — to resurrect the traditions of the Roman Empire and attach it to the growing power of the Catholic Church. Accordingly, the feudal states of Northern Italy and Germany were under the auspices of the Holy Roman Emperor during the 17th century. France and England were independent states — beacons of sovereignty — though they remained devoted to the Catholic Church. For most of the medieval period, the Holy Roman Emperor lacked the ability to project his political power across his entire empire. Hence, its claims to universality was nothing but empty posturing. The Habsburg dynasty, however, resurrected the power of the Holy Roman Emperor through the

acquisition of Spain; furthermore, Emperor Charles V revived the imperial authority to a threshold capable of expanding his empire into central Europe. Such an empire would have been so large and powerful that it would have been capable of asserting its authority over the entirety of the European continent, perhaps even England. Yet, it was the outbreak of the Reformation that prevented this outcome and it empowered princes to break with the universal dictates of Rome. Supporting the emperor was not longer seen as a religious duty. Despite the effort of the Counter-Reformation, which led to the 30 Years War, the Holy Roman Emperor could not withstand the military and philosophical might of its opponents. After the Peace of Westphalia, the Holy Roman Empire was divided into hundreds of sovereign states who were free to conduct their own foreign policy. Many of these states did not evolve into nation-states; they were subsumed by quarrels and military conflicts.

The foundation of international society was now to be based on sovereignty. The order is referred to as Westphalian Sovereignty and is based on three principles: (1) a state is subject to no outside authority, so it is entitled to complete control over its designated territory and domestic affairs; (2) no state can interfere in the domestic policies of another state; (3) each state, no matter its resources or size, is treated equal in international law.³² Accordingly, diplomacy had to adapt for a new age based on *raison d'etat* and balance of power.

The transition from empire to the westphalian state was the impetus for a new incarnation of diplomacy. In the time of empires, diplomacy was typically a reactive tool.

³² Armstrong 2014, p.40.

The international order that emerged out of the Peace of Westphalia not only used diplomacy as a response to crises, but also as a means to preemptively honor the principle of sovereignty and maintain a balance of power. Thus, diplomacy became a preemptive and daily affair. Organizations — in the form of embassies and consulates — and positions — foreign ministers and their deputies — were created to allow for states to engage in frequent dialogue.

From the propositions of sovereignty arose three institutions that shape the composure of international society. Of the three, inter-state diplomacy is one; the other two are realized and associated with its practice: (1) a professional diplomatic service; (2) balance of power; (3) and treaties between states that have the status of law.³³ Treaties and congresses — the documents and assemblies that bring balance of power into practice — were brought into fruition by state representatives: diplomats. In the past, empire was the typical form of government; empires do not wish to operate within an international system and strike a balance of power that will allow for stability; empires aspire to be the international system.³⁴

2.4 Balance of Power and Raison d'etat

The premier implications of sovereignty on diplomacy are expressed through the concepts of *raison d'etat* (national interest) and the balance of power. These principles arose out of the political environment of the 17th century described in the previous

³³ Ibid., p.42.

³⁴ Kissinger 1994, p.21.

section. *Raison d'état* was used as a rationale for acting out against the Church. Henry Kissinger describes the historical necessity of these concepts:

With the concept of unity collapsing, the emerging states of Europe needed some principle to justify their heresy and to regulate their relations. They found it in the concepts of *raison d'état* and the balance of power. Each depended on the other. *Raison d'état* asserted that the wellbeing of the state justified whatever means were employed to further it; the national interest supplanted the medieval notion of a universal morality. The balance of power replaced the nostalgia for universal monarchy with the consolation that each state, in pursuing its own selfish interests, would somehow contribute to the safety and progress of all the others.³⁵

France and England were faced with the prospect of destruction if they let the Holy Roman Empire expand and consolidate its authority in central Europe. Thus, it was in their national interest — their *raison d'état* — to challenge the empire and the papacy. Fortunately for France, the reformation provided rivalries to exploit in their favor. Consequently, France backed a number of protestant states that would amount to a coalition against the Holy Roman Empire. In other words, by supporting Protestant German princes and the Protestant King of Sweden, France was able form a balanced of power against the Holy Roman Empire's ambition on the continent. For the time it was revolutionary maneuver: a Catholic nation-state was backing the protestant apostates in the name of national interest.

The primary statesman who conducted France's foreign policy was Cardinal de Richelieu; ironically, he was a prince of the Church. Kissinger describes the radicalness of his approach and his legacy on the modern state system:

³⁵ Ibid., p.58.

Few statesmen can claim a greater impact on history. Richelieu was the father of the modern state system. He promulgated the concept of *raison d'état* and practiced it relentlessly for the benefit of his own country. Under his auspices, *raison d'état* replaced the medieval concept of universal moral values as the operating principle of French policy. Initially, he sought to prevent Habsburg domination of Europe, but ultimately left a legacy that for the next two centuries tempted his successors to establish French primacy in Europe. Out of the failure of these ambitions, a balance of power emerged, first as a fact of life, then as a system for organizing international relations.³⁶

Therefore, *raison d'état* is adverse to restraining state behavior to a moral code. The Habsburg dynasty of the Holy Roman Empire was unable to adapt to the rules of *raison d'état*; that is, the emperor Ferdinand II would not pursue his universal empire through means that would not be in align with the doctrine of God and the Church. That is, he refused to engage in treaties with the Muslim Turks or the Protestant Swedes. Essentially, he was more concerned with obedience to God than the welfare of his empire.³⁷ For the nation-state, *raison d'état* proved more versatile and, thus, superior to actions regulated by strict moral law.

The pursuit of *raison d'état* leads to the objective of predominance or to the formation of equilibrium. The former often results in over extension and self destructive military adventures, as with France at the beginning of the 19th century and Germany in the first and second World War. When a dominant power arises, in pursuit of its perceived national interest, and it threatens the safety of its neighbors, they form a coalition to resist the aspirations of the aggressor. If in aggregate these nations are able to

³⁶ Ibid., p.58.

³⁷ Ibid., p.60.

check the aggressor so as to prevent imperious action, a balance of power has emerged. The goal of balance of power is not to prevent conflict, but to limit conflict.

For the first 150 years or so after the Peace of Westphalia, a balance of power arose *de facto*, not by design. The intentional and premeditated construction of a balance of power would not form until the Congress of Vienna in 1814. Ironically, after the Peace of Westphalia, France's *raison d'état* required it to expand in Europe. To the East, the German States were weak, numerous, and lacked unity. To the East lay the Netherlands, a relatively weak state. Hence, France was enticed by the prospect of expansion. England led the effort to create a coalition to check the aggression of France; it realized if France became the dominant power on the continent, its position would be at stake. A coalition was formed — known as the Grand Alliance — to balance against France; Louis XIV would wage constant warfare against the alliance for nearly a quarter of a century. While France remained the strongest country in Europe, it would not dominate the continent. It should be noted that the Grand Alliance was not established for the sake of balance of power theory, but because it was a necessity for the Netherlands and England if they wished to maintain independence; or, at least, that is how they calculated it.³⁸ An intentional equilibrium — in the name of the theory of balance of power — would emerge in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars.

The concepts of balance of power and *raison d'état* are the heart of the European tradition of diplomacy. These tenets arose throughout an era of political change, immense international conflict and conciliation; they were the products of the European

³⁸ Ibid., p.71.

experience in the 17th-19th century. Yet, the tenets of modern diplomacy have been adopted and practiced by all states. The adaptation happened inorganically, initially through colonialism and then by decolonization's subsequent waves of nationalism, when the nation-state was cemented as *the* unit of the international system and imperial empire declined. Accordingly, state's typically conduct international affairs with their national interests as their prime concern (as opposed to a cooperative institution, such as the United Nations, or a region organization, such as the European Union). While balance of power is a proven tool of European diplomacy, it is not as widely embraced or intentionally invoked as national interests is within the international system.

2.4.1 Alternative Tenets to Diplomacy

The United States is the only nation to have offered alternative principles to help guide diplomacy, while, simultaneously, possessing the power to project those principles. In fact, the United States has a tradition of antipathy towards balance of power. Woodrow Wilson is the 20th century father of this odium, though it's prodromes are traced to the preceding century. For Wilson, a better world comes about not by adherence to principles of balance of power, but through the proliferation of institutions or crusades embedded with the principles of liberty and democracy. Hence, he advocated for a messianic American diplomacy and the construction of inter-state institutions. The American people were not prepared to leave their position of isolationism at the time of Wilson and they would not be for another 25 years, but Wilson did possess the political power to establish

the the league of nations³⁹: the institutional incarnation of his conception of international affairs and diplomacy. Balance of power animosity was the product of the American experience: industrialization and expansion conducted in relative isolation, with the protection of an ocean each side. Wilsonianism has a deep legacy in American diplomacy.⁴⁰

Despite the United State's aversion to balance of power, the U.S. has participated in it — as an offshore balancer — and it has benefited from it. For the first 125 years of its existence, the Concert of Europe — the first intentionally designed balance of power — helped prevent European interference in American affairs. When the Concert collapsed, it was France, Russia, and Britain that checked the aggression of the German Empire through military means. The United States went so far as to reinforce the *de facto* balance of power through the application of its military might at the end of WWI. It would be forced to do the same in WWII, after the league of nations failed to contain German expansion — in fact, there is a strong argument that the Treaty of Versailles provoked Germany anger and expansionism. Hence, while the U.S. detests balance of power, it is a tool of necessity in the face of aggression. Pleas to liberty and freedom do not hold up well against empire and nazism. At its best, balance of power is design intentionally, primarily through diplomacy. At its worst, balance of power is maintained through military alliance and the application of military might.

³⁹ The League of Nations Treaty was never ratified by congress so the U.S. was never a member, though it did contribute to its formation.

⁴⁰ For more on this topic, see Perry Anderson's *American Foreign Policy and Its Thinkers*

2.4.2 Homogeneity and Domestic Institutions and Sentiments

Unlike the political architecture of a state, there is by and large uniformity in the structure of international affairs. In other words, states possess a variety of political ideas — democracy, constitutional monarchy, or theocracy, to name a few — that produce unique political experiences. A state within the international system, however, is faced with the same system of organization — or lack thereof, as conveyed by the concept anarchy — that all other nations confront. In a sense, then, all states will have a similar encounter as they conduct diplomacy in the face of anarchy. International experience differs along the lines of power, not along the lines of structure. All nations are faced with the same structure, but not all nations have the power to dominate, reform, or revolutionize the structure. It is the job of diplomacy to maneuver a state through an archaic international system, all the while guarding the state's national interest

Accordingly, states do not drastically shape how they interacts with the state-system with regard to the structure of its domestic political institutions. All states face the hegemonic, Westphalian order of international politics, which restricts the degree of agency they enjoy to shape their behavior in the international arena. Unless if a state possess the power necessary to seriously challenge the hegemonic order and raise the prospect of a establishing a new tradition of international statecraft, all states are limited by the norms, structures, and institutions of the Westphalian order.

Within this order, however, states are free to determine their own national interests;⁴¹ it's the differences in national interests across states that create divergences in state behavior. States, though, will adjust their level of involvement to the international system based on domestic sentiments. This is exemplified by Castlereagh's failure to convince England to commit to constant engagement on the European continent by the means of *the Concert of Europe*. The House of Lords objected to England's participation; Castlereagh was not able to ignore the representative institution of Parliament. Hence, structural, long-term ventures are constrained by domestic opinions, particularly in democratic societies. Within absolutist forms of government, public opinion is typically peripheral or secondary to the decision making process. However, regardless of domestic sentiment, states face the Westphalian conception of statecraft and its modern, liberal democratic form. While nations defy the dictums of the order (e.g. North Korea & Iran), they fall short of seriously challenging the perpetuity of the order. In the 21st century, only a rising super power such as China or India would have the capacity to challenge the status quo, which, as shown above, finds its roots in the 17th century Europe and its contemporary guardian in the United States.

2.5 Leadership

Leadership is an integral component of organizational life. Its scope is wide: politics, economics, religion, and culture, each of which have their own subgroups. The

⁴¹ If a state's national interest challenges the hegemonic order of statecraft, the state-supporters of the status quo will push back against the counter-hegemonic thrust (e.g. the allies counter the Third Reich).

scale of leadership varies too, with small scale, community leadership at one end and transnational leadership at the other end. The common thread between all leadership roles is social power. Accordingly, leaders have a greater range of assets than their peers, allowing them to stretch constraints on resources, institutions, and circumstances. This section will talk broadly of leadership, but it will favor political leadership and its requisite form of social power: political power.

All great human achievements and endeavors have been headed by an individual or a small regime, who have the authority to make decisions at the collective level. Leadership centralizes decision making processes into the hands of a select few. At its best, leadership can help a project of transformation in terms of efficiency and efficacy. Yet, because leadership condenses power to an individual, poor and incompetent leadership can have disastrous consequences. In the realm of political leadership, institutions are implemented to ensure a leader does not have absolute power to make all decisions at the collective level — a bulwark against inept or totalitarian leadership. Effective leadership begins with a clear understanding that its practice is found at the intersection of two dual, but antithetical concepts: agency and structure.

2.5.1 Agency and Structure

Agency is centered around freedom. It implies the ability to choose an action whereas freedom is the ability to follow through on a choice. In other words, freedom allows one to act in response to their own dictates (agency). Agency permits one to

choose change — individual or collective and on a range of scales — and freedom allows one to drive it. Agency, however, is in constant tension with what is known as structure: constraints that limit the range of one's actions; they stress the composition of one's circumstances. Often, these restrictions lean towards the reproduction of past and current set up. Institutions are how the past reproduces in the present. Hence, structures manifest through political, economic, legal and social institutions (e.g. constitution, private property, criminal law, and familial norms, respectively). Ultimately, agency and structure pose a quandary: structure is the constraint to agency, yet it is agency that has the ability to break structure.

As humans, we are intelligent, purposeful primates, who are capable of setting goals and manipulating our environment. We have the ability for inner subjectivity, which allows us to examine ourselves and our circumstances. If unsatisfied, we as humans can dare to use our agency to reform or transform our circumstances. If a human acts to alter a circumstance that people are faced with (e.g. lack of universal health care), they are elevating their agency to a collective level that might ultimately affect other people's lives. In most circumstances, this person will need the support of others if they wish to take on the status quo. When this occurs, an individual is on the cusp of leadership. However the intention or desire to create change will not suffice — an individual must have resources to pair their agency and vision with if they wish to see success. Resources give people the freedom to live out their agency.

In the case of political leadership, faculties of violence, intellectual prowess and historical insight, and awe are some of resources that can help raise an individual into a

leadership position. Academics and leaders are inconsistent on which of these inputs they regard as paramount. I will touch on a few — these thinkers thoughts on the matter are largely representative of the demands of their time period, so they should not be ingested as perennial truths.

2.5.2 Competencies, Resources, and Inputs

In *The Prince*, Niccoló Machiavelli lays out a series of pithy maxims on leadership, principalities, and human nature. For Machiavelli, adept leadership arises from the acknowledgement that power is paramount to all other faculties or traits that could constitute a Prince's position and character. Machiavelli's phrase, "what men do," captures the human tendency to be self-invested and, above all, to do whatever we can to escape premature death and poverty. To guard against demise, the prince must perceive humane nature pragmatically and, thus, subjugate virtuous aims and morality to political realities. Machiavelli summarizes the logic of his realist posture:

And many have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that no one has ever seen or known to be in reality. Because how one ought to live is so far removed from how one lives that he who lets go of what is done for that which one ought to do sooner learns ruin than his own preservation: because a man who might want to make a show of goodness in all things necessarily comes to ruin among so many that are not good.⁴²

Hence, Machiavelli advises those aspiring to a role of leadership to be prepared to go against their ideals, as there will come a time when they must defy what they think

⁴² Machiavelli 1532, p. 57.

should be in order to confront what is (i.e. the reality of the matter). Political power and realism are the twin dictums that lead to political success for Machiavelli.

It should be noted that Machiavelli lived and wrote in a time of transition. The feudal order of the middle ages was to be imminently replaced by an order with sovereign nation-states at its foundation. His words were written to help restore republican government, resembling of the Roman Republic. Thirty-five years after his death, Europe was plagued by the Wars of Religion. His ideas influenced the realization of sovereign during the 100 years after the Peace of Westphalia. However, the relevance of Machiavelli's thoughts diminished as the state transitioned from absolutism to constitutional monarchy and eventually, to liberal democracy. As the nature of politics transformed to a representative era, Machiavelli's maxims lost some of their explanatory power.

As the state became increasingly penetrable by citizens, political leadership took on a new, or at least an additional, form. While Machiavelli was concerned with rise and glory of the prince, others became concerned with citizens and their access to the state. In other words, in the years leading up to the French Revolution and in the proceeding one-hundred years, intellectuals built a philosophical tradition that claimed the state belonged to the people — not to an absolute monarch. The practitioners of this tradition — the soldiers of an idealised world — took on a role of political leadership that was largely unprecedented: leaders emerged who claimed to represent citizens and their desire to make a unified claim to the state.

With the democratic age on the horizon, intellectuals wrote treatises on how to successfully penetrate the state. One such scholar was Ludwig Von Rochau, a liberal who coined the concept *Realpolitik*, in response to the European Revolutions of 1848. His book — *Foundations of Realpolitik* — explored a question of immense importance to this day: “how to achieve liberal enlightened goals... in a world that did not follow liberal enlightened rules.”⁴³ *Foundations of Realpolitik* was a response to a liberal idealism that lacked efficacy.

Rochau, like Machiavelli, understood power as the determining factor of politics. Hence, he advised his liberal compatriots to accept the fact that change could not be implemented without preponderance or without linking liberal ideals to the interests of those who held power. Given the condition of the German Empire at his time, Rochau advocated for the latter. He believed statesmen could be convinced to accept the ideas of constitutionalism if they were persuaded that repression was not in the interest of the state. That is, a constitution would give monarchs a potent method of harnessing and balancing the powerful societal forces of the age. John Bew, a scholar of *Realpolitik*, explains Rochau’s thinking: “the conditions of modernity had changed the nature of statecraft ... in previous historical eras, the state had often been able to flatten and subdue challenges to its authority through the use of violence, as Machiavelli had described in *The Prince*.”⁴⁴ Technology and the rise of the bourgeoisie and the middle class had changed the character of politics. Suppression through violence would no longer work as it had in the days of Machiavelli.

⁴³ Bew 2015, p.18.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.37.

Ultimately, Rochau detected that public opinion now mattered in politics. Consequently, he argued that the *zeitgeist* (the “spirit of the age”) is the most important factor in determining the direction of state’s politics. John Bew expounds on this point, using his own analysis and the words of Rochau:

The *Zeitgeist* was the ‘consolidated opinion of the century as expressed in certain principles, opinions and habits of reason.’ An opinion transformed itself into the *Zeitgeist* to the extent that it stood the test of time. The *Zeitgeist* represented in all circumstances the most important influence on the overall directions of politics. For a state to act in defiance of the *zeitgeist* was completely self-defeating ... To put it simply, liberalism and nationalism could not be put back into the box. With the help of a strong police force, it may be ‘possible to manipulate citizenry like puppets’ but the ideals they held on to could not be smothered forever.⁴⁵

With that said, Rochau advises one to possess a deep understanding of history and how the past continues to shape the present and constrain the prospects of the future. Hence, an aspiring leader learns that historical perception and a deep understanding of the spirit of the age are necessary complements to political power if one is to be a consummate political leader.

In summary, I encourage the reader to perceive leadership at the intersection of agency and structure; or, in other words, at the intersection of choice and context. At this point of convergence, resources, ideas, and opportunity come together. Leadership can thus be defined as the possession of a set of critical competencies — which include, but are not limited to the ability to tactfully use violence, read into historical and current narratives, formulate a set of ideas that inspire and resonate — that help one drive a process of transformation.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

It should be noted that leaders come in two types: revolutionary leaders and tinker leaders. The former strives to invalidate the past by building something new — the creation of a new set of institutions. They devote their time, resources, and position of power to building a new future. Revolutionary leadership is arduous to lead and very hard to execute. Tinker leadership, on the other hand, takes a reformist approach. That is, the leader is intent on change, and no less intrinsically so than that of the revolutionary leader, but she is keen on driving change that does not shock the current structure, or the current institutions under which she operates. The change is not a deep transformation that redefines, in totality, the concept of structure as it pertains to a country, social group, etc. Essentially, tinker leaders do not advocate for the a total rejection of the past. Whether tinker or revolutionary leadership is appropriate depends on the circumstances, the trajectory of transformation, and one's political orientation.

CHAPTER III: KISSINGER: LIFE, POLICY, AND THINKING

Henry Kissinger is a statesman of unique makeup. He rose to the highest levels of the United States government despite his rather un-American approach to foreign affairs. Even though he spent the majority of his life in the United States, his tone and approach never resembled America's traditional conception of diplomacy. As such, he is a radical and controversial figure in the American milieu.

His approach to diplomacy is not the only component that sets him apart from his American predecessors and successors. Kissinger was an academic before he was a statesman — an intellectual heavyweight. His command of history and his clear interpretation of its meaning sets him apart from other National Security Advisors and Secretaries of State. Kissinger studied diplomacy for years before becoming the Chief diplomat of the United States; this cannot be said, perhaps, for any other individual who has held the same positions that he has.

All the while, his command of diplomatic history and his unprecedented approach in the American tradition did not earn him universal reverence by the American people at the time he exited government nor even now. In fact, his policies are a cause of bewilderment if not outright dismissal, though individuals, particularly on the realist end of the spectrum, do praise his tactics and achievements.

A consensus on Kissinger's tenure and legacy is nowhere to be found. Biographies, exposés and hagiographies seek to reach a consensus but have failed to

consolidate opinion. Perhaps a consensus will never be reached in our lifetime. In the coming decades and centuries, posterity will define the legacy of Kissinger as it hashes out a widely accepted narrative of history for his time period.

Like most people who leave their mark on historical development, Kissinger is a controversial figure. Within Kissinger's ten years of civil service, one can identify two types of Kissinger. There is the Kissinger who constructed detenté, the arm control treaties with Russia, shuttle diplomacy in the Middle, and the opening with China. Then there is also the Kissinger who toppled the democratically elected president in Chile, bombed Cambodia, prolonged the chaos in Vietnam, overlooked if not instigated genocide in Bangladesh, as well as play a heavy hand in the domestic affairs of East Timor, Kurdistan, Argentina, Uruguay, and Cyprus in order to fulfill his strategic doctrine.

Nevertheless, it is easy to critique the decisions of a statesman in retrospect than it is to actually make the decisions in the moment with asymmetrical and incomplete information. Disaster averted is taken for granted while calamity is repeatedly expounded as self-interest and criminality. The statesman should never be let off the hook for his questionable actions, as that is what he signed up for — he does not operate in a vacuum void of criticism. Still, the paper is hesitant to choose a label for Kissinger.

Accordingly, I approach an overview of his life and policies in a rather balanced fashion. I do not attempt to say definitively whether Kissinger should be regarded as good or evil or worthy of reverence or scorn. What I do attempt to do is deduce his theory, achievements and shortcomings, as well as isolate his greatest assets and

liabilities. The aforementioned is conducted in the first section of the Chapter, which provides a short biography and an overview of his time in office.

The second section is devoted to the philosophical and strategic thinking of Henry Kissinger. It does not analyze Kissinger's policy decisions in search of situations that resemble the current deadlock between the U.S. and Iran. Rather, it seeks to derive a framework — somewhat theoretical and definitely conceptual — of thinking that allows one to examine US-Iranian relations without having to resort to particular policy decisions that Kissinger enacted. His main foreign diplomatic convictions are isolated, but no policies are looked at in hope of finding one that is applicable by analogy. In fact, doing the aforementioned would be rather contradictory to Kissinger's mode of thinking.

Finally, within the following paragraphs, one might encounter contradictions, particularly between Kissinger in theory and in practice. These are intentional. Humans are not seamless and consistent, let alone the statesman. I do not attempt to reconcile the discrepancies in his actions and thought, just to lay them out as they are.

3.1 Biography

Henry Kissinger was born on May 27th, 1923 in Fürth, Germany. At this time, a new period of Jewish repression and oppression was underway. As a Jew in Nazi Germany, Kissinger's liberties were restricted. Eventually, Henry's mother — Paula Kissinger — decided it to be best that her family leave Germany for the United States.

The decision proved fateful. At least 13 of Kissinger's close relatives were murdered in the holocaust.

Yet, Kissinger minimizes the impact of the traumas he faced as a child on his life. He stated to a reporter once, "My life in Furth seem to have passed without leaving any lasting impressions"⁴⁶ and on another occasion he is quoted as saying, "that part of my childhood is not a key to anything."⁴⁷ Regardless of Kissinger's demurrals, it hard to believe his years in Nazi Germany had no impact on him. Kissinger's mentor in the U.S. Army — Fritz Kraemer — affirms the impact of his childhood:

For the formative years of his youth, he faced the horror of his world coming apart, of the father he loved being turned into a helpless mouse... it made him [Kissinger] seek order, and it led him to hunger for acceptance.⁴⁸

Hence, it seems that Kissinger's childhood had, at least, a subconscious affect on his outlook and development. Considering a close friend noticed an impact, it is possible to connect a few notable characteristics that he displayed throughout his life to his upbringing. I have identified a few of noteworthiness.

Kissinger's childhood experiences instilled in him a deep distrust of people. Neighbors and friends of the Kissinger family, who they thought they could trust, turned their backs on them. When in office, he repeatedly acted on his unwarranted distrust of those around him. He often conducted his diplomacy in secrecy (i.e. Paris Peace Accords) and instituted a series of measures to spy and keep tabs on his colleagues (i.e. secret wiretaps).

⁴⁶ Isaacson, p. 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

A second legacy of Kissinger's upbringing is insecurity. Growing up, Kissinger was exposed to forces that sought to convince him that he was worthless and inferior. These forces came to have an imprint and influenced the complex of Kissinger, leaving him at times socially fragile. Furthermore, Kissinger's self-doubt is part of the reason why he would attach himself to a series of patrons with strong personalities. Colonel Fritz Kraemer, Professor William Elliot, and Nelson Rockefeller helped both to curb Kissinger's insecurity and foster his intellectual arrogance.

Furthermore, growing up as an outcast in his own country and being an refugee in a foreign country, Kissinger was concerned with being accepted. Throughout his career, Kissinger went out of his way to win the approval or persuade those who opposed his ideas and actions. One of Kissinger's longtime friends — Arthur Schlesinger, Jr, — deemed his constant quest for social acceptance a manifestation of “his refugee's desire for approval.”⁴⁹

One can postulate that another legacy of his childhood was the appeal of philosophical pessimism. The grievances he experienced as a child made him adverse to thinking grounded in Idyllic naiveté. He came to favor the status quo over idealistic notions of what could and should be. He opposed revolution. He had seen too vividly the repercussions of transformation and the ensuing disorder.

At the age of 15, Kissinger arrived in New York City in 1938. Unlike his family and his immigrant friends, Kissinger was more directed, more ambitious, and more serious about assimilating and succeeding in America. He was looking for a way to

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 31.

escape his tight-knit Jewish community when he received a draft notice on his 19th birthday; the year was 1943.

Kissinger was made a citizen of the United States at Camp Croft in South Carolina. Over the course of the next three years, citizenship would transition from what might have felt like a gift bestowed upon him, to an honor that he earned. Kissinger conceded that the army “made [him] feel like an American.”⁵⁰ In addition to Americanization, the army helped Kissinger ground himself as a practical man and it exposed him to Fritz Kraemer, a Colonel and the individual who claims to have helped Kissinger find himself. The two bonded on conversations that linked theory with history. Impressed by Kissinger’s intellect, Kraemer became Kissinger’s patron. He help secure him the role of administering captured towns and helped him ease his way into the Counterintelligence Corps. In this position, Kissinger casted anger on his subordinates who showed anti-German sentiments. He found it impractical to perpetuate the same kind of hate that had given rise to Nazism. Hence, his realistic and practical orientation shined through from an early age. At the end of Kissinger’s tour in 1946, Kraemer convince Henry to go to Harvard.

Henry Kissinger received his Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and PhD at Harvard. While an undergraduate student at Harvard, Kissinger attached himself to Professor William Elliott. He was similar to Kraemer in persona and he would act as Kissinger’s benefactor at Harvard. Under his guidance, Kissinger’s realist and conservative orientation evolved into a holistic and personal philosophy. His intellectual

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 40.

development culminated into a B.A. thesis titled the *Meaning of History: Reflections on Spengler, Toynbee, and Kant*.

After completing his undergraduate, Elliotte placed Kissinger at the head of a project that would remain in his hands for the next seventeen years: the Harvard International Seminar. The program invited young leaders from around the world to spend their summer at Harvard, where they would take classes in politics and humanities. Some treat the International Institute as significant to the rise of Henry Kissinger, as it helped him build a network of influential contacts.⁵¹ When in office, Kissinger would often make use of the contacts he developed at the Institute.

Kissinger wrote his doctoral dissertation on a subject that would seem outdated in 1955, when the Nuclear Age was commencing. His thesis was titled, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-22*. Nevertheless, Kissinger produced a piece of work that was more relevant to the Nuclear Age than one might deduce from the title. The thesis laid the foundation for his approach to diplomacy: balance of power by design and the pursuit of the national interest. The approach endured throughout his career. To this day, he has not rebuked his method. Once he successfully completed his PhD, Kissinger was reluctantly awarded a professorship in the Department of Governance.

In 1955, Kissinger secured a job at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he would analyze the impact of nuclear weapons on foreign policy with a study group of specialist. The job proved consequential for direction of Kissinger's ambition. The

⁵¹Ibid., p. 73.

exposure to the inner workings of the New York foreign policy scene caused Kissinger to realize that pursuing a career at Harvard would always leave him in on the fringes of power. More importantly, it helped him realize that he did not want to be a professor for the rest of this life. He yearned for power.

Before Kissinger returned to Harvard to resume teaching, he met a man by the name of Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller. Mr. Rockefeller was the grandson of Standard Oil scion John D. Rockefeller. He hired Kissinger as a part time consultant and aide. Rockefeller became Kissinger's third patron and the one with the most influence and power. Their relationship was pivotal; it exposed him to realms of political power that he would have unlikely had access to without a personal connection.

Between 1959 and 1968, Kissinger continued his professorial responsibilities at Harvard while also participating in the political scene in Washington D.C. His heart was truly in Washington. He worked as an advisor to Kennedy and then Lyndon Johnson, while simultaneously working for Nelson Rockefeller. In 1967, Kissinger began his first encounter with secret diplomacy. He single handedly discovered a channel to engage in secret negotiations with the North Vietnamese while on a trip to Paris — what became known as the Pennsylvania Negotiations. Kissinger's willingness to provide Presidential Candidate Richard Nixon with back-channel insights about the Paris peace talks provoked Nixon to pay heed to Kissinger.⁵² Thus, when Nixon won the Presidential election of 1968, he offered Kissinger the position of National Security Advisor.

⁵² The move was not as seamless as the paragraph gives off. Kissinger was quite deceitful in the process of switching his allegiance to Nixon after the defeat of Rockefeller in the Presidential primaries. For a full exposé of events, see Greg Grandin's chapter "Ends and Means" in his book *Kissinger's Shadow*.

Kissinger accepted, enticed by Nixon's desire to set up a strong National Security Council staff in the White House, in order to seize the role of developing foreign policy from the State Department.⁵³ Kissinger would remain in office from 1969 to 1977, where he would assume the role of National Security Advisor and, eventually, Secretary of State under the Nixon and the Ford administration.

3.1.1 Historical Context

Henry Kissinger came into power at a time of international upheaval. Thus, the climate for international transformation was ripe. It is generally understood that placated environments inhibit direct and efficacious challenges to the status quo. Three main historical dynamics were at play at the time when Kissinger assumed the role of National Security Advisor in January 1969:⁵⁴

1. The Vietnam war was at an impasse: victory was not insight and withdrawal was difficult. More than 31,000 Americans had died in the War. The ill conceived war was inciting a wave of American Isolationism. The nation had to adjust to a new era of limits. It was the first time Americans had to face the fact that foreign policy has innate limits.

⁵³ The development and deepening of the national security state — characterized by imperialism, warfare, and unaccountability — is the overarching argument of Greg Grandin's book *Kissinger's Shadow*. He asserts that Kissinger's policy and style enabled "the ascendance of the neoconservative idealists who took America into crippling wars in Afghanistan and Iraq." Grandin argues that America's perpetual state of warfare is a direct result of Kissinger's mode of thinking and style of leadership.

⁵⁴1-3: Ibid., p. 158.

2. America's rejection of the PRC was becoming outdated. The PRC and the Soviet Union were becoming increasingly antagonistic towards one another, so the U.S. began to pivot away from viewing communism in monolithic terms. The division created the conditions for a new global balance of power.
3. The nature of relations between the Soviet Union and the U.S. were due for reconsideration. The nuclear arms race became less meaningful as nuclear arsenals reached a point where incremental additions were inconsequential. The time had arrived for both nations to avidly pursue arms control negotiations.

In his approach to these historical currents, Kissinger marked a break in how American foreign policy was conducted — a departure from typical Cold War strategy and a withdrawal from integrating Wilsonian idealism into foreign policy. He disfavored diplomacy based on what Americans like to believe are the traditions of their country's foreign policy — a respect for human rights, international law, democracy, and other idealist values.⁵⁵ He sought to redirect American foreign policy from a moral crusade against Soviet-communism to an unsentimental de-escalation of relations through cooperation with Moscow and to open up of relations with Communist China.

Unfortunately, these successes did not transpire in isolation. At the time, Kissinger linked detente and triangular diplomacy to what transpired in other corners of the world. The battlefields of the Cold War were located in what was then considered the

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 766.

‘Third World’ and today the Global South. He took a hawkish and often an imperial stance towards these countries that amount, in retrospect, to his greatest failures.

Kissinger argues that what are often regarded as failures were the in-the-moment price for securing what in retrospect are considered his accomplishments. Regardless, he redefined the orientation of American foreign policy, even if it was just for his time being. Given the historical climate, I will now commence with a survey of Kissinger’s greatest achievements and failures.

3.1.2 Accomplishments and Failures

Determining the achievements and failures of a statesman is no easy task. What one individual might deem to be a foreign policy success, another might deem it to be a failure; it depends on one’s philosophical orientation. Hence, I have judged Kissinger’s foreign policy from the baseline of order. Which policies amounted to heightened levels of stability and which led to chaos? The essence of Kissingerism is the pursuit of stability — stability can be achieved without domestic or transnational justice. It should be noted, that Kissinger strove to create, first and foremost, international stability, not domestic stability. Yet, I judge his policies on international steadiness and their implication on domestic cohesion. A statesman should not only be judged on geopolitical ramifications, but also on the implications of his policies on the domestic stability of foreign nations.

3.1.2.1 Accomplishments

Rapprochement with China

The creation of strategic and diplomatic ties to the PRC was one the greatest foreign policy achievements since the Marshall Plan or the creation of Nato.⁵⁶ Kissinger headed the endeavor. The opening up of China, in the words of Henry Kissinger, “transformed the structure of international politics.”⁵⁷ Rather than the binary power struggle between the Soviet Union and the U.S. that had defined world order for about 25 years, the new triangular system between U.S., China, and the Soviet Union would give way for a new, more complex, balance of power. The triangle presented the opportunity for creative diplomacy and the manipulation of delicate leverages.

Henry Kissinger was initially skeptical of the idea of opening up to China. However, as the hostility between China and the Soviet Union started to heat up during 1969⁵⁸, Kissinger and Nixon started to pursue the idea. After two years of flirtation, China invited a U.S. envoy to visit Beijing. Kissinger was tasked with charting the path of the new relationship. While Kissinger did not single handedly improve relations with China, he did indeed play a significant role in the transformation. He was the visionary of the Soviet-China-America triangle and he skillfully executed his visit⁵⁹, so as to lay the

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 333.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Throughout 1969, the two countries frequently exchange of gunfire on border.

⁵⁹ On Friday, July 9, 1971, Kissinger and his party landed in Beijing. He was welcomed by Premier Zhou Enlai. Over the course of the visit, Kissinger and Zhou held talks for 17 hours. The discussions were not formal. They discussed mutual interests, the state of their nations, and world affairs. The only practical piece of business Kissinger had to settle

foundation for the gradual fruition of the triangular balance of power and Nixon's Presidential Visit in February 1972 — the first official American Presidential state visit in history.

The spearheading diplomacy of Henry Kissinger helped promote world stability. First, the opening of relations with China made the Vietnam War seem like a historical holdover. The U.S. had just ameliorated relations with a communist country, so it made the ideological component of the Vietnam War seem outdated. The U.S. was ready to end the violence in Vietnam and it was not considering military conflict with China. Moreover, the reworked cooperation between the U.S. and China would contain Soviet aggression and make them more interested in Détente⁶⁰ (instead of looking to prolong American anguish in Vietnam). Third, the renewed relations between the two nations made the need to stop the advancement of Chinese Communism in the region less pressing. The perceived spread of Chinese communism was one way the Vietnam war was initially justified, so the easing of the relations between the two countries decreased the likelihood of conflict. The world had become a more stable place through the new triangular fixture. Hence, the opening of relations with China was indeed one of Kissinger's greatest achievements.

was to convince Zhou and his counterparts to invite President Nixon for a summit in Beijing. The two reached an agreement, which was typed up into a formal document, stating the summits purpose: "to seek the normalization of relations."

⁶⁰ Detente is defined as the easing of relations between the Soviet Union and US.

Soviet Union Relations: Détente

Détente was one of Kissinger's signature foreign policy achievements. Détente is defined as the United States' effort to ease the strained relations between it and the Soviet Union. It is not represented by one agreement or one meeting, but rather it was a general policy pursued in a series of fashions, such as summit meetings, arms control negotiations, and other bilateral agreements. The U.S. did not want to further militarize its relations with the Soviet Union. Instead, the U.S. wanted to pivot from a pattern of hostility and force, to a new pattern of diplomacy and negotiations. The Cuban Missile Crisis had shown the potential dangers of a nuclear attack. The scare was still fresh and alive at the time. A new policy was needed to detract from the nuclear option. Détente was the solution and Kissinger was the mastermind and executor.

The backbone of the Nixon and Kissinger Détente policy were the arm control negotiations. These negotiations were held in a piecemeal fashion, over the course of the first few years of Nixon's administration. Kissinger was largely at the head of the negotiations and at the head of fostering improved relations between the two countries. For example, Kissinger laid the groundwork for the acclaimed SALT I agreement of 1972 while in Vienna for the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks in the year 1970. Moreover, Kissinger, from 1969-1971, wonderfully molded his relationship with Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, so as to breed the formulation of a Moscow Summit in the year of 1972.

The Moscow Summit is the hallmark of Détente. It took place in May 1972 and marked the first visit of a U.S. president to Moscow. The Strategic Arms Limitation

Talks (SALT I) were the center achievement of the Summit. While the agreements had little effect on the world's nuclear arsenals, the Summit represented a turn in Soviet-U.S. relations. Two countries with competing ideologies, who had been keeping the world on edge for a quarter of a century, were able to come together, cooperate, and form a new relationship based on realism, not ideological emotion.⁶¹

Kissinger and his style of leadership deserves credit for the pursuit and implementation of Détente. Kissinger had usurped the traditional powers of the Secretary of State. That is, Kissinger was conducting Nixon's foreign policy in every corner of the world except the Middle East, where Secretary of State William Rogers was largely in charge.⁶² With the unorthodox power he had attained, Kissinger created a diplomatic environment ripe for the easing of hostility through secret, back door diplomacy.

Operating in the West Wing, he was able to avoid the bureaucracy of the state department. On a different note, Kissinger's statecraft that lead to improved Chinese-U.S. relations helped to manipulate the Soviet Union into following the U.S. policy of Détente.

⁶³ The Soviets feared the combined Strength of the U.S. and China. The policy of Détente did indeed ease tension between the two Cold War adversaries. Therefore, it deserves to be recognized as one of Kissinger's finest successes.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 437.

⁶² This would change once Kissinger became Secretary of State and conducted what is now referred to as shuttle diplomacy throughout the Middle East.

⁶³Ibid., p. 353.

Vietnam: Success or Failure?

The Vietnam War is one of the greatest points of contention in American history. Nixon and his administration inherited a war that the majority of the American public found frivolous and an act of imperialism. Kissinger assumed the role of leading the effort to end the Vietnam war, mainly through a series of secret peace negotiations with the North Vietnam representative Le Duc Tho in Paris. The negotiations took place over four years, but they never truly created peace. The Paris Peace Accords of January 1973 were the negotiations' best attempt for peace. The accords created the pretense necessary to end direct U.S. military involvement, but the agreement only temporarily stopped the fighting between North and South Vietnam. The fighting between the two Vietnam factions would continue and not cease until the fall of Saigon in April 1975.

One of Kissinger's maxims of realpolitik was that military force and diplomacy must work together⁶⁴— an emulation of Machiavelli's concept of *Virtù* (i.e. The combination of virtue and vice). In the case of Vietnam, this maxim brought disdain to Kissinger's name. The military might that he employed did not give him the upper hand at the negotiation table that he was looking for; instead, it created instability and domestic abomination. The consequences of the secret bombings of Cambodia, the invasion of Cambodia, and the Christmas Day bombing were too antithetical to stability that they overshadow the secretive diplomacy he conducted in Paris.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 237.

The Guardian of American Hegemony

Nevertheless, Kissinger's success in Vietnam is found not in his direct handling of the war, but in the way he reshaped American foreign policy in response to the isolationist sentiments at home.⁶⁵ He maneuvered and manipulated the complexities of the Cold War, so as to preserve American influence in the post-Vietnam era, without relying solely on American military resolve.

Since the onset of the cold war, American foreign policy was self-defined by the willingness to assure the wellbeing of liberty throughout the world. However, Americans were starting to consider the limits of American interventionism due to the Vietnam War. Henry Kissinger did not want to see America retreat into isolationism; at his core, Kissinger was an internationalist.

In order to preserve America's globalism, Kissinger pursued a triangular balance between the Soviet Union, China, and the United States and he integrated Détente. In aggregate, these policies conveyed that the United States was redefining its role in the world. It was looking to create stability, cut back on intervention, and co-operate. However, the stalemate in Vietnam was impeding the commencement of the new era.

It was clear that there was not a military victory in sight for the U.S. Nixon was not interested in maintaining an indefinite military presence, since his reelection counted on military withdrawal. In the eyes of Kissinger, however, troop removal would not only weaken the possibility of a diplomatic solution, but it would damage the United State's legitimacy. Furthermore, it would compromise the success of Detenté and the opening up

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 239.

of relations with China. If the U.S. pulled out unconditionally, it would appear that the U.S. was retreating into isolation, giving in to domestic sentiments. Its legitimacy would be lost and, by extension, its hegemony.⁶⁶ Hence, Kissinger provided tension to Nixon's policy of Vietnamization — a plan that reduced the number of U.S. troops in the country — in order to reach a diplomatic agreement before military removal was complete

Kissinger managed to sign the Paris Accords before U.S. troops were completely pulled out of Vietnam. While the agreement did collapse, it provided the pretense that the time was right to remove all U.S. troops from Vietnam. Hence, U.S. credibility was not damaged to the extent that it would have been had it extracted all of its troops in absence of a peace agreement. The historic holdover was over and a new era had begun; the U.S. could now comfortably situate itself within the Triangular balance. Kissinger's leadership deserves credit for reorienting the U.S. in the post-Vietnam era and preventing the nation from retreating into isolation. The U.S. remained hegemonic.

It is worth noting that one might not consider this new course of path as a success. The United States' position in the post-Vietnam era simply assured the continuance of American imperialism. It could have reverted to a more isolated position in world affairs and assumed the role of an offshore balancer, as it had in both the World Wars. Counter to that, world stability would not have necessarily improved with the implementation of American isolationism. The relations between China and the Soviet union were heating

⁶⁶ Hegemony is defined as the functioning balance between domination and consent. Hence a country needs to have power in order to be hegemonic, but the position also requires more than power. Nations give consent to U.S. domination when their needs are met to a high degree. When needs are met, legitimacy is bestowed upon the United States. If permission to rule is obsolete, than dictatorship is what remains.

up and tensions in the Middle East were rising (i.e. Yom Kippur War of 1973). Kissinger believed a global America was integral to stability. The avoidance of isolationism deserves to be at least considered a success of Kissinger's leadership.

3.1.2.2 Failures

While Kissinger achieved success as the leader of American diplomacy, he also pursued policies that were detrimental to stability, antithetical to human rights, and imperialist. His quest for international stability and the protection of American interests at times resulted in what some deem to be immoral calculations. Furthermore, he failed to consider — or he chose to ignore — the domestic consequences his policies would have on foreign nations. I have isolated three such policy scenarios that exhibit the aforementioned. The cases I outline are by no means exhaustive.

Callousness: Invasion of Cambodia

Kissinger's moral callousness arises in his support for the invasion of Cambodia. His support for the invasion arose out of his concern that the internal upheaval of Cambodia would interfere with his containment of Vietnamization. After Norodom Sihanouk — the King of Cambodia — was deposed by his subordinate Lon Nol, Kissinger advised Nixon to back Nol, since he was avidly pro American. Sihanouk refrained from expressing allyship with foreign powers out of the fear that it would subvert the delicate balance of his country.

Nol took a hardline stance against the North Vietnamese, demanding that they abandon their sanctuaries on the Cambodian side of the border. In response, the North launched an attack. Crippled, Nol pleaded for American military assistance. After much deliberation with his staff and academic friends, Kissinger was convinced that the only way Vietnamization could proceed unhindered and the only way American credibility could be preserved was through a military invasion composed of U.S. and South Vietnamese troops. The invasion, Kissinger thought, would prevent Cambodia from becoming a conduit for massive communist infiltration and resupply. The invasion lasted from May to July of 1970.

The consequences of the invasion were devastating. The invasion only widened the war in Cambodia: it initiated the spread of North Vietnamese troops throughout half of Cambodia and it encouraged them to begin arming the local Khmer Rouge — a fanatical Cambodian communist group. The American invasion would only last three months, but the war in Cambodia lasted until 1979 — four years beyond the end of the Vietnam war. During this time, the Khmer Rouge committed a genocide that few countries have endured during the modern human history. More than 3 million people were killed.

It is forcefully argued that Kissinger and Nixon created the conditions necessary for the growth of the Khmer Rouge and, thus, the execution of the group's genocide.⁶⁷ Yes, the Khmer Rouge bear the brunt of the moral responsibility for their unspeakable actions; Kissinger never intended for the genocide to take place. Yet, a statesman of

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 273.

Kissinger's caliber should not only be judged by his intentions, but also by the outcomes of his policy. Kissinger was warned by his advisors and academic cohorts of the possible implications of the invasion. His outlook lacked sensitivity and moral responsibility for the civilian population.

Kissinger and Nixon express no regret for their decision to invade; in fact, all they regret is that they did not go far enough.⁶⁸ Kissinger's leadership style, perhaps, too heavily prioritized his grand vision: ushering the United States into a redefined position for the post-Vietnam War era. The consequence of his primacy of realism and his disdain for moral deliberations in the case of Cambodia deserves to be listed as one of his greatest failures; his policy indirectly transpired into the greatest form of instability: genocide.

Detest of Moral Considerations: The Bangladesh Genocide and The Indian-Pakistan War

Kissinger's dismissal of Pakistan's genocidal, political crackdown and his backing of Pakistan in India-Pakistan War are additional displays of unfettered realpolitik. The Bangladesh Genocide and the Indian-Pakistan War are intimately connected. In both situations, Kissinger backed Pakistan, despite its brutality against east Pakistan. He did so because he perceived his global vision to be conditional on U.S. support for Pakistan, since Pakistan was providing the channel of communication with China.

⁶⁸Ibid.

What became the Bangladesh Genocide was Yahya Khan's — the President of Pakistan — solution to the political victory of the Awami League in East Pakistan that favored autonomy from West Pakistan. The Bangladesh Genocide, overtime, became a general repression of separatist sympathizers. The suppression began in March 1971; within a year, the death toll would amount to a half a million people. Despite the senseless killing, Kissinger condoned the killing in order to keep the secret back channel with China open.⁶⁹ According to Kissinger, Pakistan's cooperation was integral to creating a triangular relationship with China; hence, the strategic issues at hand outweighed immediate moral concerns.

The India-Pakistan War was indirectly caused by the Bangladesh Genocide. Ten million refugees sought safety from the Genocide by fleeing across the border into India. The influx of refugees caused India's prime minister, Indira Gandhi, to call for the autonomy of East Pakistan. The environment was prime for conflict between the two neighboring nations. According to Kissinger's geopolitical analysis, India was likely to use the Bangladesh Genocide as an excuse to annex part of its neighbor.⁷⁰ If India made the first act of aggression, Kissinger predicted the Soviets would come to back India and that the Chinese would come to back Pakistan. Therefore, Kissinger did not want to alienate the U.S. from the situation and allow the Soviets to stand unchecked by American competition by casting harsh words of criticism upon Pakistan. Hence, his geopolitical analysis persuaded him, yet again, to disregard the state's act of genocide.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 372.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 373.

In aggregate, the two conflicts convey two basic maxims of his leadership style: the priority of geopolitics over humanist concerns and the proclivity to see world dynamics solely through the lens of Soviet-American confrontation. While these two maxims might have resulted in international stability, the cases of Bangladesh and Cambodian Genocide convey how the maxims simultaneously contributed to intrastate instability and violence. On these grounds, his handling of the Bangladesh Genocide and the India-Pakistan war deserve to be labeled as leadership failures. The handling of these events represent a larger failure too: Kissinger's inability to reconcile geopolitical strategy with the advocacy for a higher set of moral principles that transcend international border and set targets for the development of humankind.

Imperial Kissinger: The Fall of Allende

Kissinger's support and intent to subvert the democratically elected Chilean President Salvador Allende stands as one of his most explicit acts of imperialism while in office. In the cases of Pakistan and Cambodia, Kissinger did not seek to control or sway a political outcome. In Chile, Kissinger meddled in national politics in order to achieve an outcome favorable to his desire to destroy the success and consequent expansion of socialist governments.

Salvador Allende — a democratic socialist — was elected President of Chile on the 4th of September 1970; he won a narrow plurality of 36.2%. The CIA tried to 'buy' votes in the Chilean Congress in order to block Allende.⁷¹ It was fruitless. Thereafter,

⁷¹Ibid., p. 290.

Kissinger handled the orchestration of subversion efforts himself. Kissinger viewed Chile as linked to a web of trials of American geopolitical resolve. If Allende stayed in power, it would be an infiltration of the Western Hemispheres bulwark against socialism. Hence, to Kissinger, it was imperative that the U.S. depose the democratic socialist.

Kissinger began to avidly pursue a more brutal form of sabotage: the promotion of a military coup. He instructed the CIA to approach Chilean military commanders about the possibility of a coup.⁷² The climate was not right; the military was committed to refraining from political involvement. Under the guidance of Kissinger, the U.S. reverted to economic measures (investment discouragement and credit blockage) and funneled money to anti-Allende activities. Moreover, Kissinger refused a policy of accommodation, even when faced with Allende's amazing gesture of inviting a U.S. aircraft carrier to make a ceremonial stop at the port of Valparaiso. Kissinger demanded that the invitation be declined. Hence, he turned down an opportunity for improved relations. Kissinger favored meddling in Chile's political system.

The U.S. played a direct role in the coup that led to the death of Allende. In the aftermath, Chile entered a period of violent dictatorship and social instability. Kissinger's approach to the rise of Chilean socialism was not doubt imperialistic in nature: he sought to dominate Chile through political manipulation and degradation. Kissinger's binary view of the east-west struggle caused him to treat a peripheral country as disposable in his quest to eradicate South America of what he deemed to be soviet influence. For Kissinger, imperialism was a valuable tool of diplomacy, not a liability.

⁷²Ibid., p. 290.

3.1.3 Assets and Liabilities

As shown, Henry Kissinger's policies resulted in success and failure. It is worthwhile to deduce lessons — positive and negative — from the policies he implemented. The following points will help guide the fifth chapter as I attempt to size up Kissinger's assets without overlooking his shortcomings when formulating a policy to upend the deadlock between the U.S. and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Intellectually Secure, yet Socially Insecure

Henry Kissinger was intellectually brilliant and self assured. He had a mind capable of conceptualizing unobvious patterns and seeing connections between different events that others had a hard time deciphering. He could decrypt how an action in one corner of the world reverberate in a different corner of the world. Moreover, he was intellectually poised, so he often sought having his ideas and theories debated with aides and academics. Hence, the following lesson: *be thoughtful, attuned to detail and interconnectedness, and so familiar with a idea or theory, that you can defend it to the point where you can disprove the opposing argument.*

Simultaneously, Henry Kissinger was socially insecure. His social uncertainty was connected to his habits of secrecy and deceit. For example, he unnecessarily tapped the phones of his colleagues, aides, and adversaries in order to have an upper hand in

persuading the president to implement his geopolitical vision.⁷³ The tactic wasn't even particularly effective and it almost led to Kissinger's resignation. Moreover, Kissinger's social diffidence manifested in his constant quest for approval. He tried to seduce a broad spectrum of people in order to be liked and admired. He was socially thin skinned, but also charming. His social maneuverings resulted in a reputation of duplicity, which not only hurt him at times in the hierarchy of government, but also in his diplomacy. A lesson can be derived from his social insecurity: *while social fragility is not innately a liability, one needs to contain and examine the impulse to act on it; if introspection is absent, one's secretive actions could backfire and result in downfall.*

Master Geopolitical Architect, but Inconsiderate of Domestic Implications

Henry Kissinger was attuned to global dynamics, history, and political nuance. Hence, he was adept to overarching geostrategic frameworks. Testaments to this are his creations of Detenté and Soviet-Chinese-American triangular relations. Both policies sought to intrench international stability. These geopolitical frameworks required patience, manipulation, and clairvoyance. The aforementioned qualities are ones imperative to a statesman of the highest caliber.

While a geopolitical visionary, Kissinger too often overlooked and underemphasized the domestic implications of his policies on foreign countries. For example, his advocacy for the invasion of Cambodia indirectly created the conditions that

⁷³ The wire tapings were initially justified on the basis of deducing the source of the leak on the U.S.'s bombing of Cambodia. The practice, however, remained in place for nearly two years.

allowed for the Cambodian Genocide. An important lesson is derived here: *while visionary thinking is fundamental to leadership in the international realm, one should not downplay the consideration of domestic implications that could potentially amount to internal instability.*

Unfettered Realism

Kissinger's greatest successes were derived from his realpolitik disposition. He vehemently believed the prime responsibility of diplomacy was to establish international stability. He detested foreign policy guided on moral principles and considerations. Basing policy on ideals made a nation seem dangerously unpredictable. This philosophy led to a reorientation of the U.S.'s stance towards the Soviet Union and China. Kissinger's realistic strategy of containment and cooperation with Moscow allowed for the internal contradictions of the Soviet system to play out. In an age of idealistic diplomacy, it is imperative to reconsider the underlying value of Kissingerian realpolitik: *it diminishes unpredictability by prioritizing stability through the balance of power.*

Simultaneously, Kissingerian realpolitik was often left unconstrained by morality. He failed to strike an appropriate balance between values-based idealism and realism. While it is imperative to deduce the reality of a situation, it is also useful to conceptualize idealized outcomes. Stability and the support for values-based idealism are not inherently at odds. Kissinger, however, pushed a foreign policy that denied the use of American hegemony to advocate for ideals — such as inclusive institutions, free media, sovereignty, and self-determination — on the global stage. *Hence, aspiring leaders must*

recognize the importance of striking a balance between realism and idealism; the pursuit of one at the denial of the other ignores the nuance and complexity of geopolitics in the contemporary world.

3.1.4 Final Thoughts

I have distilled two possibilities as to why Kissinger remains a pivotal and central figure in American Foreign Policy debates: (1) Kissingerian realpolitik was unprecedented in modern American foreign policy, yet it managed to enhance the stability of geopolitics — though at a great cost; (2) Kissinger ignored or overlooked how detrimental American policy can be to the internal stability of the nations on the receiving end of his policies — his decisions amount to crimes against humanity.

To his enthusiasts, his legacy is that of a realistic strategist whose policies ushered in a newly defined role for the United States, a role defined by containment and cooperation, not by the unconditional protection of world liberty. To his critics, his legacy is that of a immoral tactician whose policies were imperial and callous; while he might have stabilized the international realm, Kissinger's policies destabilized entire nations. Of course, there are those who sit somewhere in between.

The next section challenges the position that Kissinger was adverse to morality and ethics. An analysis of his theoretical thinking and philosophical disposition conveys that he was well attuned to conceptions of morality and ethics. His takeaways, however, are markedly different than American notions of moralism. While completing his B.A. and PhD at Harvard, Kissinger thought considerably about these topics. The section lays

out a moral positioning that is perhaps hard for some to recognize from Kissinger in practice: the circumvention of war through a constructed and legitimate balance of power.

3.2 Kissingerism: Strategic Thinking and Philosophical Disposition

3.2.1 Kissinger on Order

Henry Kissinger's latest book is titled *World Order*. It strives to articulate regional conceptions of order that have heavily influenced the evolution of the modern era. In aggregate, his geopolitical analysis amounts to an attempted framework on which to build World Order, but stops short of prescribing explicit piecemeal policy proposals. His experience with the complexity of the world leaves him with the state of mind that in-depth policy needs to be formulated by today's statesmen operating the power structures of government. On another note, Kissinger's decision to write, what might very well be his last book, on the concept of world order conveys the state and direction of his thinking in the final years of his life. Hence, from this book, I attempt to distill the up-to-date state of Henry Kissinger's strategic thinking.

As a statesman rooted in the European tradition of diplomacy and philosophy, Kissinger devotes the first chapter of his book to an overview of the European experience and isolates from it what he finds to be the most likely path to World Order: a contemporary rendition of the European tradition of pluralistic international society. The

task of world order requires a framework of thinking that transcends borders, yet gives credence to the role of the state in cultivating a universally accepted international order, and avoids universal prescriptions other than those agreed upon as the governing principles of inter-state relations.

What, precisely, does the concept of order entail? How does it change with variant contexts, such as world, international, and regional order? Kissinger defines his overarching concept using a tertiary scale of differentiation:

World order describes the concept held by a region of civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world. An international order is the practical application of these concepts to a substantial part of the globe — large enough to affect the global balance of power. Regional orders involve the same principles applied to a defined geographic area.⁷⁴

Hence, the notion of World Order rests on a set of overarching principles on which the international system is predicated and a distribution of power that holds off conflict and preserves stability. For a world order to reach beyond conceptuality, it needs to be backed by power and accepted as legitimate. Today, for many, the liberal international order is supreme. However, when Kissinger references the quest for World Order, he implicitly rebukes the efficacy of the current liberal international order. In fact, there are some who claim it has collapsed entirely, such as the Historian Niall Ferguson. Finally, a regional order is not necessarily incompatible with an international order of a different mold, though it helps if there are clear points of similarity. This is exemplified by the European Union and its participation in the liberal international order.

⁷⁴ Kissinger 2014, *World Order* [Henceforth WO] p.9.

In the quest for World Order, the multifacetedness and contradictory nature of the human experience will need to be reconciled. In the words of Kissinger:

Can regions with such divergent cultures, histories, and traditional theories of order vindicate the legitimacy of any common system? Success in such an effort will require an approach that respects both the multifariousness of the human condition and the ingrained human quest for freedom. Order in this sense must be cultivated; it cannot be imposed...In our time, the quest for world order will require relating the perceptions of societies whose realities have largely been self-contained. The mystery to be overcome is one all peoples share — how divergent historical experiences and values can be shaped into a common order.⁷⁵

Inevitable in this process is the capitulation of ideals and historical conceptions of justice and order. As countries rise in power, such as China and India, their perceptions of morality and order that “have [hitherto been] largely self contained” will be placed onto the crucible of diplomacy. If the resulting mixture of principles is rejected, diplomacy will fade and war will decide the outcome of the new status quo.

However, if nations compromise on the principles that they hold as universal, what are they getting in exchange? They receive stability through a “set of commonly accepted rules that define the limits of permissible action and a balance of power that enforces restraint where rules break down, preventing one political unit from subjugating all others.”⁷⁶ This will not emerge naturally but, rather, through persistent cultivation and compromise.

Take, for example, the conflicting claims over proprietorship of the city of Jerusalem. Any future Israeli-Palestinian peace deal will necessitate a compromise over

⁷⁵ Ibid., WO p.8.

⁷⁶ Ibid., WO p.8.

Jerusalem, as both parties claim the city to be their rightful capital. Each claim the city is rightfully theirs. Regardless of who should have it from a moral standpoint, the statesmen is forced to treat dictums of divinity as bargaining chips. A recent Atlantic article reporting on Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem nicely frames the palestinian and jewish orthodox position — or at least a rendition of the possible positions:

When Jews all over the world pray, they face Israel. Those in Israel face Jerusalem, and those in Jerusalem face the Temple Mount, the site of Judaism's two ancient sanctuaries, which once stood on the same patch of land now occupied by the Al-Aqsa mosque. "This is all because we believe this is our capital," said Arieh King, a right-wing member of Jerusalem's City Council. "For the Orthodox Jew like me, Jerusalem is not just a place to live. It's a way that you live. It's in a place close to where everything important of our history happened ... also in the future, [where] we believe the third Temple will be built."

Palestinians feel just as strongly about the city's religious significance. "Jerusalem is part of our faith. It's the first place where Muslims started praying," said Ziad Abu Zayyad, a lawyer and former minister of the Palestinian Authority. Not only is Jerusalem a symbol of national identity; it's the home of one of the most important sites in Islam. "Al-Aqsa is in the heart of every Muslim," Zayyad said. "It's a red line. It's the third holy place," after the Saudi Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina.⁷⁷

The task of statesmen is daunting, evidenced by the absence of a resolution on the palestinian-Israeli conflict for decades. How does one go about reconciling such divergent and seemingly incompatible aims? Another pertinent question: does world order depend on a resolution of the conflict? If yes, the order will have to be considered just by both and accurately assess the balance of power in the region. Moreover,

⁷⁷ Green 2017.

statesmen must convince the people and state they ultimately represent that order is acceptable, otherwise it will not be sustainable.

World order is a scheme for the statesmen. However, an order that is successful in the long-run is contingent not only on the support of elite statesman, but also the citizens of the states invested in the system. Acceptance is based on the perception of a just system. As a result, World Order cannot be imposed. In the words of Henry Kissinger:

Any system of world order, to be sustainable, must be accepted as just — not only by leaders, but also by citizens. It must reflect two truths: order without freedom, even if sustained by momentary exaltation, eventually creates its own counterpoise; yet freedom cannot be secured or sustained without a framework of order to keep the peace. Order and freedom, sometimes described as opposite poles on the spectrum of experience, should instead be understood as interdependent. Can today's leaders rise above the urgency of day-to-day events to achieve this balance?⁷⁸

While often criticised for overlooking domestic sentiment during his tenure as Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, his words, here, do not convey negligence towards domestic institutions and sentiment. Rather, Kissinger defines the role of the statesman, in part, to bridging the gap between domestic maxims held as universal and those of other nations. Kissinger seems to believe reconciliation will arise out of what he calls “the ingrained human quest for freedom.”⁷⁹ He suggests in *World Order* to frame order and freedom as interconnected and not as two opposite poles. While Kissinger offers no specific blueprint for striking an equilibrium, he contends that an order that encompasses the whole globe will have to have pluralism as its guiding and unabiding tenet. Pluralism is the best means to satisfying the “the ingrained human quest for

⁷⁸ Kissinger 2014, WO p.8.

⁷⁹ Kissinger 2014, WO p.8.

freedom.”⁸⁰ In the context of states, no region is ripe with a tradition of pluralism as the European experience.

Henry Kissinger believes in the validity and prospect of the pluralistic international order that arose out of the European experience after the end of the Roman Empire. The order amounted to little other than diversity for centuries; it was defined by the makeup of many different polities, but lacked a commonly accepted set of rules that maintained relative peace between regional states. Hence, disorder and warfare was prevalent. The European experience is unique in that competing powers did not display examples of “political contests [that were] fought for control [over]...established framework[s] of order,”⁸¹ unlike in China and Islam; “dynasties changed, but each new ruling group portrayed itself as restoring a legitimate system that had fallen into despair. In Europe, no such evolution took hold.”⁸² Though Europe is denoted as a general geographical area, its political complexion was defined by a range of governance styles and identities. In addition, when one leader defeated another, the principles by which rule was established were typically different than that of their predecessor.

When the Roman empire disintegrated, a new empire did not rise to take its place. The unity of the Roman empire was replaced with the Church. Yet, the relationship between Church and state was never synthesized, despite the fact that the two mutually

⁸⁰ Kissinger 2014, WO p.8.

⁸¹ Kissinger 2014, WO p.11.

⁸² Ibid., WO p.11.

reinforced one another for centuries. Ever since, Europe has been composed of a multitude of polities, some of which were ironically titled empires.⁸³

Accordingly, order, under the European Experience, was conceived as not only an internal matter, but also contingent on the equilibrium among states. This differs drastically from the empire/imperial conception of order, where it is conceptualized as being contingent on the state of internal governance. As such, the farther the empire reached, so did the prospect of complete order. In other words, total order was feasible when an Empire had *all* people and *all* land under its domain.

In Europe, Kissinger holds that it was the inability of anyone state to dominate the others that resulted in a plural regional order. He states:

It is not that European monarchs were more immune to the glories of conquest than their counterparts in other civilizations or more committed to an ideal of diversity in the abstract. Rather, they lacked the strength to impose their will on each other decisively. In time pluralism took on the characteristics of a model of world order. Has Europe in our

⁸³ Kissinger admits a partial caveat, but attests it is not incoherent with his argument: “Aspirations to unity were briefly realized on Christmas Day 800, when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne... as Emperor Romanorum (Emperor of the Romans), and awarded him the theoretical title to the former eastern half of the erstwhile Roman Empire, at that point the lands of Byzantium...But Charlemagne’s empire did not fulfil its aspirations...After Charlemagne’s death, his successors sought to reinforce his position by appeal to tradition, by naming his possessions the Holy Roman Empire. But debilitated by civil wars, less than a century after its founding, Charlemagne’s empire passed from the scene as a coherent political entity (though its name remained in use throughout a shifting series of territories until 1806)” (14). Furthermore, Kissinger recognizes “the rise of the sixteenth-century Habsburg prince Charles (1500-1558)” as the only period when “a full flowering of the medieval concept of world order was envisioned [a concept based on universalism].” In fact, “a Chinese or Turkish visitor to Europe at the time might well have perceived a seemingly familiar political system: a continent presided over by a single dynasty imbued with a sense of divine mandate. If Charles had been able to consolidate his authority and manage an orderly succession in the vast Habsburg territorial conglomerate, Europe would have been shaped by a dominant central authority like the Chinese or the Islamic caliphate.” Ibid., WO p.16.

time transcended this pluralistic tendency — or do the internal struggles of the European Union affirm it?⁸⁴

The “model of world order” that Kissinger references has largely proliferated across the world. This model is based on national interest and balance of power. The means of proliferation were colonialism. Hence, the system’s spread out to be thought of as inorganic. If regions of the world were free to develop their own model of world order, it is possible that the foundational tenets would have been at odds with the pluralistic nature of the European experience. Henry Kissinger frames this development with less explicit language:

The modern era announced itself when enterprising societies sought glory and wealth by expanding the oceans and whatever lay beyond them...sixty years later, the European powers sailed from a continent of competing sovereign authorities; each monarch sponsored naval exploration largely in the hope of achieving a commercial or strategic edge over his rivals...the age of three centuries of preponderant European influence in world affairs had been launched. International relations, once a regional enterprise, would henceforth be geographically global. With the center of gravity in Europe, in which the concept of world order was defined and its implementation determined...Their global competition for territorial control changed the nature of international order. Europe’s perspective expanded — until successive colonial efforts by various European states covered most of the globe and concepts of world order merged with the operation of the balance of power in Europe.⁸⁵

It is unlikely that Kissinger disavows colonialism on practical grounds, and perhaps ethical ones as well. Though never stated explicitly by Kissinger, it is possible that he conceives colonialism as a means — intentionally or not — to subsume areas of the globe

⁸⁴ Ibid., WO p.12.

⁸⁵ Ibid., WO p.17.

to the international organizational structure of the nation-state. Decolonization and the simultaneous tide of nationalism instituted the state as the unit of the international system — a unit averse to universal conceptions of order.

What, precisely, is the Westphalian conception of order? At its base, it holds each nation as equal, regardless of its power or domestic system of government. As such, each state recognized by the international community is, in theory, granted the right to exist in its own right into perpetuity. The state's guiding principle is its national interests.

Accordingly,

The Westphalian concept took multiplicity as its starting point and drew a variety of multiple societies, each accepted as a reality, into a common search for order. By the mid-twentieth century, the international system was in place on every continent; it remains the scaffoldings of international order such as it now exists.⁸⁶

The Westphalian order does not escape the fact that nation-states are possessed by power and perennially fearful of their neighbors, but it does help subdue universal inclinations or quests of force by prioritizing the cultivation of a balance of power. This balance provides a kind of insurance against hegemonic aspirations. Before the Westphalian model of order, balance of power was not sought after intentionally. It incidentally emerged when empires were incapable of establishing a comparative advantage in violence, resulting in military stagnation. For the Westphalian model to have legitimacy, nations need to exhibit a degree of reservation when contemplating or adopting conquest as the rock of national interest. It is the job of diplomacy to establish a suitable and efficacious balance of power where war is not a desirable means to a country's aspired

⁸⁶ Ibid., WO p.27.

ends. If a balance of power is legitimate, grievances are expressed and settled through diplomacy. The Westphalian concept attempts to adjudicate within the existing system.

Kissinger distinguishes between a balance of power *as a fact* and balance of power *as a system*. As a system, balance of power must be established and, eventually reestablished. As history attests through the rise of and fall of empires, power is never fixed. Hence, a balance of power of a certain configuration will not last into perpetuity. Typically, warfare readjusts a balance of power, but it is also the later that limits the former's extent. A readjustment to balance of power is typically enacted by a challenge to the status quo. This happens in at least two ways according to Kissinger:

The first is if a major country augments its strength to a point where it threatens to achieve hegemony. The second occurs when a heretofore-secondary state seeks to enter the ranks of the major powers and sets off a series of compensating adjustments by the other powers until a new equilibrium is established or a general conflagration takes place. The Westphalian system met both tests in the eighteenth century, first by thwarting the thrust for hegemony by France's Louis XIV, then by adjusting the system to the insistence of Prussia's Frederick the Great for Equal Status.⁸⁷

Thus, a challenge to the system does not amount to an automatic adjustment and it is plausible to achieve great power status without challenging the status quo with force. While a state's national interests might amount to a *tour de force* to upset the current balance of power, it is more common for a state's national interests to be aligned with the preservation of the current balance of power. Secondary powers with little hope of augmenting substantial power to be a threat or a current major power falls into this box.

⁸⁷ Ibid., WO p.33.

The appeal of balance of power is that it is practiced under the assumption that the international system would not tolerate hegemonic aspirations.

Nonetheless, the concept of balance of power arose out of the historical conditions of Europe; for nearly three hundred years, it was the guiding principle of the international order. In past, balance of power transpired as a necessity — one power was not able to augment enough power to overcome their foe. Under the European experience, balance of power became proactive, something that was sought after.

Kissinger undoubtedly supports balance of power. He sees it as the most plausible path to a World order. Yet, he is hesitant, if not against, the assumption that it'll automatically transpire on the world stage.

On this note, Henry Kissinger likes to raise Kant's idea of perpetual peace. To reach such a state, according to Kant, a voluntary federation of republics, united under the premise of goodwill and transparent domestic and international conduct, would cultivate world peace. Humans would "reason [their] way toward 'a system of united power, hence a cosmopolitan system of general political security' and 'a perfect civil union of mankind.'"⁸⁸ While the state has become the unit of international system, each society had its own set of unique historical circumstance that result in a diverse institutions and approaches to order that differentiate it from its peers. As such, is the world too complicated and diverse to rationally approach the conception of world order as something that can be invented by apt thinkers and instituted by statesman?

⁸⁸ Ibid., WO p.40.

Kissinger seems to deny the viability of the rationalist tradition that arose out of the enlightenment as a means to international order. He seems to embrace a different approach, “requiring a kind of intuition and an almost esoteric element of statecraft.”⁸⁹ He claims such a *modus operandi* aligns with the organic view of political evolution. On these grounds, the ideas that emerged out of the enlightenment — the very ideas that constitute the foundation of Western political tradition — are not the requisite to world order. Each nation possess its own perception of legitimacy and national interests, so as to make “a perfect civil union of mankind” impossible. One cannot rationally reconcile contradictory ideals. World Order is the realistic substitute to Kant’s theoretical ideal of perpetual peace. Therefore, for Kissinger, World order is something that needs to be cultivated, but not solely through the rational tradition of statesmanship that holds federal, republic institutions as its guiding principle. In order to overcome varying cultures, histories, and ideas of morality, esoteric leadership, based on intuitive perceptions of reality, is keen. Any such conception of reality is not avoiding reality as much as it is creating it. The statesman, using his or her position to align divergent experiences, seeks to create conditions and principles for a common system of world order that is vindicated by all participants in the system. Conjecture is an essential component of the leadership style that Kissinger embodies and advocates.

⁸⁹ Ibid., WO p.41.

3.2.2 Kissinger on Hegemony

Kissinger's denial of historical determinism is relevant to American hegemony. In his B.A. thesis, Kissinger incorporated Spengler heavily, but rejected the cyclical nature of his thinking — that is, that civilizations inevitably rise and collapse. For Spengler, culture is the period of becoming, while civilization is what has become once the impulses of culture become static. This cannot be escaped. Kissinger denied its inevitability, but recognized the validity of the signs emblematic of societal decay. Namely, it is when the “fact-men” take over a civilization that its position is put in jeopardy. At this point, the heyday of dreams, myths, and risk-taking that inspired a society in its early days fade. The intellectuals, political leaders, logicians, and rationalists become overly concerned with questions of why rather than how. Greg Grandin explains this point nicely:

Spengler wrote (referring to the rationalism of modern society, which strives for every more efficient ways of doing things), “is a time of decline.” The intuitive dimensions of wisdom get tossed aside, technocratic procedure overwhelms purpose, and information is mistaken for wisdom. “Vast bureaucratic mechanisms,” Kissinger said, develop “a momentum and a vested interests of their own. Western Culture was history's highest expression of technical reason: it “views the whole world,” Kissinger wrote, “as a working hypothesis.”...At Harvard, the Vatican of American positivism, filled with the country's high priests of social science, Kissinger looked around and asked: Would American leaders command or fall slave to their own technique? “Technical knowledge will be of no avail,” the twenty-six-year-old student-veteran warned, “to a soul that has lost its meaning.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Grandin 2015, p.20-1.

A soul that lost its meaning is prone to soul searching. In the case of civilizations, they stumble outward, conducting conquests and implementing imperial projects to fill the soulless void. The wars that great civilizations get tangled in result in exhaustion and eventually demise. In the words of Kissinger: “‘Imperialism is the inevitable product’ of this final stage... ‘an outward thrust to hide the inner void.’”⁹¹ Yet, decay is not inevitable.⁹² It is the job of the statesmen to spare a nation from this impending abyss.

According to this strain of thinking, American hegemony will not necessarily fade, but it does need be continuously cultivated in order to be sustained into the future. Positivism and its cause-and-effect analysis will not resurrect the United States’ position. An imaginary and innovative population and statesmen who rely on intuitive and instinctive conjecture are the means to a revival of American hegemony. Retreat into isolationism, similarly, will not sustain American preponderance.

There is a Caveat to Kissinger’s thinking, as it regards to America in the post Cold War order. American will never be able to revive the economic, political, and

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 21-22

⁹² Greg Grandin makes an interesting note to this point. He possess the thought that if Kissinger realized war and imperialism help, if not cause, the process of a civilizations decay, then why did he wage and prolong war while in office. In other words, he claims Kissinger’s philosophical stance seems to be at odds with Kissinger in practice. Grandin writes: “Based on his reading of Spengler (and other philosopher-historians, such as Arnold Toynbee, who warned of the “suicidalness of militarism”), Kissinger might have come to the conclusion that the best way to avoid decline was to avoid war altogether, to put America’s greatest resources to building a sustainable society at home rather than squander them in adventures in places far and wide. But Kissinger took a different lesson from Spengler: it wasn’t war that was to be avoided but war fought without a clear political objective. He in fact advocated fighting wars far and wide — or at least advocate for a willingness to fight wars far and wide — as a way of preventing the loss of purpose and wisdom that Spengler identified as taking place during civilization’s final stage.” Ibid., p.22.

military dominance it experienced at the end of WWII. Other nations are progressing and increasing their might vis-à-vis these metrics. The United States will remain absolutely relevant and improve its condition, but it will not make drastic relative gains. It will have to define its place in world where China, the EU, Russian, and India too are emblematic of preponderance in their regions of the world. To be sure, the United States remains the regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere and will remain so for the foreseeable future. World hegemony is a far fetched dream, considering the rise of these growing civilizations.

3.2.3 Kissinger on Diplomacy & Foreign Policy

Kissinger's magnum opus — *Diplomacy* — weighs the realist and idealist foreign policy perspectives. In the introduction and conclusion, he speaks generally, with no one diplomatic episode tracing the section. In the intermittent 29 chapters, Kissinger devotes each chapter to a theme he recounts and analyzes in detail, amongst them are those Kissinger personally partook in. Kissinger gives credence and appreciation to ideals, but, nevertheless, favors a diplomacy first and foremost guided by national interest.

Take democracy for example and the American experience. Democracy and liberty are the cornerstone of the historical development of the United States. Accordingly, it is intimately connected to the nation's foreign policy formulations. Kissinger holds the ideal of democracy has created “two contradictory attitudes toward foreign policy.” He writes,

The first is that America serves its values best by perfecting democracy at home, thereby acting as a beacon for the rest of mankind; the second, that America's values impose on it an obligation to crusade for them around the world.⁹³

Kissinger seems to generally favor the former. A national interest that prioritizes direct threats to the nation's physical security is more sustainable than a national interest that emphasizes the defence and spread of democracy through threat and force. This does not mean American ideals are irrelevant, but it does mean they should not constitute the linchpin of American foreign policy. Ultimately, a balance must be struck that favors the absence of sentimental notions in favor of the reproduction of the status quo (i.e. An international environment that allows America to perfect its democratic system).

For Kissinger, contingency is the prerequisite of a solid foreign policy. He writes, "the essence of policy is its contingency; its success depends on the correctness of an estimate which is in part conjectural."⁹⁴ Foreign policy based on conjecture is diametrically opposed to foreign policy rooted in rationalization (i.e. if one does y, the numbers or facts concretely predict x). Kissinger thinks the world is too complicated and humans too irrational to depend on fixed policy informed by facts. For Kissinger, "profound policy thrives on perpetual creation, on a constant redefinition of goals."⁹⁵ Hence, one must be creative in the implementation of foreign policy, resorting to conjecture based instinct, intuition, and history. Foreign policy is dynamic, not static.

⁹³ Kissinger 1994, *Diplomacy* [Henceforth D] p.18.

⁹⁴ Kissinger 1957, *World Restored* [Henceforth WR] p.326.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.326.

If one's estimate is incorrect, they must adapt. Time and its pressure demands the statesman to act "on assessments that cannot be proved at the time that he is making them."⁹⁶ The decisions at hand must be made partly on conjecture and partly on one's understanding of what worked and failed in the past and why. In accordance with such thinking, the one who sits in front of a page typing cannot lay out a precise blueprint for what foreign policy should be, but they can outline a general, overarching framework that contains necessary voids, left to be filled by the conjectural thinking of the leaders of foreign policy.

3.2.4 Kissinger on America's Role in the 21st Century

An international system free of an overarching ideological landscape, delineated along binary lines, is the fundamental difference between the contemporary international system and its Cold War predecessor. In the new order, states enjoy more flexibility as they execute their foreign policies and possess rather individualized national interests. The world is no longer dominated by two superpowers, but, rather, five or six major powers and an abundance of smaller ones; the system is now multipolar.⁹⁷ In a sense, then, the world we live in bears resemblance to the European, pluralistic order of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹⁸ In accordance, order will not emerge through a balance of wills between the Soviet Union and the United States, but by the means of

⁹⁶ Kissinger 1994, D p.27.

⁹⁷ Since the end of WWII, nearly 100 nations have joined the international community. The five, maybe six superpowers of the 21st century are the United States, China, Russia, the EU, India, and maybe Brazil.

⁹⁸ Kissinger 1994, *Diplomacy* [Henceforth D] p.805.

reconciling and balancing the national interests of a number of nations. The unique feature of the 21st century is that never before has the modern world experienced major centers of power distributed around the world.

The United States has yet to determine how to transition from its experience in the 20th century to the new power dynamics and realities it faces in the 21st century. Its attempts to adopt a position and strategy for the 21st century have largely failed.⁹⁹ Its approach has been too heavy handed on the military end, particularly considering that its use of force has been applied to situations that do not directly jeopardize its national security. From the fall of the Soviet Union to the eventual backlash of the Iraq War, the United States attempted to police the world. With no immediate or direct threats after the fall of the Soviet Union, blunt calculations of national interest were ignored largely because they did not exist beyond the need to exercise restraint.

Having entered an international landscape emblematic of the 19th and 18th century Europe, but on a global scale, the United States is fronted with a set of practices that were used successfully during these two-hundred years. These practices, however, have been questioned or dismissed since the establishment of the United States of America (i.e. national interest and balance of power). While still preponderant and capable of projecting power anywhere on the globe, other nations, too, are gaining the ability to exercise power far and wide — markedly China. At this point in time, China has largely kept their military reach within the confines of their territory and their immediate peripheries. Economically, the United States is projected to be passed, in

⁹⁹ Mandelbaum 2016.

terms of magnitude, by China, at the turn of the 5th decade of this century. This is remarkable considering that the U.S., at one point, possessed 35% of the world's total economic output.

Given the greater distribution of power throughout the world, Kissinger argues "America's ability to employ [power] to shape the rest of the World has actually decreased."¹⁰⁰ With power diminishing in relative terms, American foreign policy conducted on the basis of Wilsonian Principles is becoming less viable and progressively dangerous. In 1994, Kissinger wrote, "As the twenty-first century approaches, vast global forces are at work that, over the course of time, will render the United States less exceptional."¹⁰¹ As the basis of Wilsonian foreign policy, the decline of American exceptionalism in real terms needs to be accompanied by a change in mindset regarding America's role in the world. American policy makers have not adequately adjusted to these new realities.

Kissinger argues that with rise of multiple centers of power, balance of power becomes paramount over the spread and adaptation of American principles. Wilsonianism requires preponderance at a level where coercion leads to a desired outcome, or, at the very least, where its perception and its potential consequences result in the fruition of America's strategic plan. However, America does not enjoy such power and, perhaps, it never did. When the U.S. conducts itself on the world stage as if the aforementioned is true, the U.S. gets bogged down in conflict and becomes overstretched.

¹⁰⁰ Kissinger 1994, D p. 809.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, D p.809.

It is a regional hegemon, not a global one. Thus, America should prioritize inter-state peace instead of the universal adaptation of its principles — these are secondary.

With the dictates of Wilsonianism becoming less practicable, this question arises: “on what principles *ought* America to base its foreign policy in the coming century.”¹⁰²

Kissinger provides no answers to this question, but he recommends the nation would “do well to consider the era before Woodrow Wilson and the ‘American century’ for clues about the decades to come.”¹⁰³ Kissinger believes clear and proper principles are necessary in order to restrain the scope of the nation’s urge to police the world.

Simultaneously, he insists on the cultivation of an equilibrium in order to protect against a great power’s capacity to insist and crusade on their respective principles, including the United States. Nearly a fifth of the way through the 21st century, the United States remains strongly committed to Wilsonian principles and often ignores the long term perils of resorting to force without direct threats to national security. With the rise of additional centers of power, the price of conducting a crusading foreign policy will rise, as it will irritate other major powers when it occurs in their backyard.

This is not to say Wilsonian idealism is to be abandoned. It is to say that democratic crusades and state-making missions are to be reconsidered, as they come at the detriment of national security and the overall geopolitical balance. Support and preference for democratic governments is not at odds with the role Kissinger envisions for America in the 21st century; nor does he object to paying some price for the U.S.’s moral convictions. However, the difficulty of the matter is determining the amount of

¹⁰² Ibid, D p.810.

¹⁰³ Ibid, D p.810.

resources that can be devoted to moral convictions and to other American interests that do not amount to supporting and spreading democracy. The proliferation of democracy and human rights are to be embraced and advocated for, but their implementation through force is a questionable practice that ruins the standing and influence of the United States. In addition, these efforts largely fail.¹⁰⁴

America's moral precepts are best served by posing as a beacon of freedom, democracy, and liberty. That is, using America's soft power to ignite the values it holds dear — letting them manifest throughout the world organically, not by imposition. The cultivation and establishment of inclusive institutions — the very institutions that make America exceptional — must emerge organically within the countries that have yet to implement them. America can assist, but it must do so free of coercion and military force. Otherwise, America takes on a rather imperial project as it pursues the creation of a world from its own unique, domestic mold.

Defining America's role in the world as such is not out of line with the historical experience of the American people. America's exceptionalism has resulted in oscillations between two positions: "the notion that America must remedy every wrong and stabilize every dislocation, and the latent instinct to withdraw into itself."¹⁰⁵ The Cold War brought America out of its historic shell, but today its in a position where its reach is too heavy. While America should retain the prospect of exercising its ability to reach far and wide, it should not be constantly put to use. Hence, what is needed is a set of criteria that can be used to select appropriate situations to deploy its massive resources.

¹⁰⁴ Mandelbaum 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Kissinger, D p.832-3.

Power calculations and national security is a large component of the criteria that Kissinger advocates for. The United States should be keenly adverse to the establishment of a regional hegemon in any of the power centers of the world. That is, one power subduing, by force, the surrounding countries in the area. In such a scenario, a superpower would have the territory and resources necessary to threaten the United States in its rather isolated position if it desired. Yet, *realpolitik* will not suffice on its own. “To be true to itself,” Kissinger states, “America must try to forge the widest possible moral consensus around a global commitment to democracy. But it dare not neglect the analysis of the balance of power.”¹⁰⁶

The United States would do well to minimize its reliance on military power to execute its fidelity to its principles. Its economic and cultural power, if properly employed, will do a finer job, in the long run, in cultivating a world order with democracy and liberty as two of its hallmarks. As the only nation ever founded on the concept of liberty, the United States provides a heavy thrust of soft-power capable of permeating the ideals of the United States without any use of force or treasure. Accordingly, the United States should rely primarily on its soft-power to cultivate what Kissinger titles a “global commitment to democracy.”

In addition to soft power, American Diplomacy and the balance of power that it can help cultivate should aim to build a series of overlapping economic and political structures that act as an alternative to direct and forceful impositions of American ideals and institutions. “The most creative solutions [to the new world order] will be to build

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, D p.834.

overlapping structures,” Kissinger say, “some based on common political and economic principles as in the Western Hemisphere; some combining shared principles and security concerns as in the Atlantic area and Northeast Asia; others based largely on economic ties as in the relations with Southeast Asia.”¹⁰⁷ These structures, perhaps, will help realize, world-wide, what America holds dear, but only through “ accumulation [in] partial successes.”¹⁰⁸

3.2.5 Kissinger On Iran

Kissinger captures his published views on Iran and Iran-U.S. relations in his most recent book *World Order*. Like most, he takes issue with Iran’s revolutionary language and, at times, practices. He does not attack outrightly Iran’s theocratic political structure, but he does take issue with the rhetoric and practices that undermine the pluralistic, westphalian order Kissinger so deeply values. He frames the implications of the Iranian revolution on the liberal international order as such:

a theocratic wielding supreme spiritual and temporal power was, in a significant country, publicly embracing an alternative world order in opposition to the one being practiced by the world community. The Supreme leader of contemporary Iran was declaring that universal religious principles, not national interests or liberal internationalism, would dominate the new world he prophesied.¹⁰⁹

Despite the declarations of Khomeini and their revolutionary challenge, they have yet to transpire out of the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Hence, while Iran labels

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, D p.835.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, D p.836.

¹⁰⁹ Kissinger 2014, *World Order* [Henceforth WO] p.148.

non-Islamic political institutions as “illegitimate” because they “do not base themselves on divine law,”¹¹⁰ the state has not been able to — our zealously strove to — cultivate these institutions abroad, nor has it posed as a viable model of direct emulation for the wider region. Iran’s most noble and influential characteristic, perhaps, is its willingness to endure isolation in order to protest against the hierarchical world order governed by the United States and the Soviet Union during the cold war, the U.S. in the first 20 years of the post Cold War, and, currently, the U.S and Russia and maybe China.

Iran’s revolutionary spirit has largely translated into support for militias, paramilitary groups, and militant Islamic groups that challenge Iran’s adversaries throughout the Middle East. This support has amounted to little other than instability and higher degrees of influence in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. Islamic institutions have not arisen from Iranian support in the aforementioned countries, but support has heightened attritional conflict. This reality has led to Kissinger to the following assessment of the Iranian Republic since the revolution: “Yet thirty-five years of repetition had all but inured the world to the radicalism of these sentiments and the actions backing them. On its part, Iran combined its challenge to modernity with a millennial tradition of statecraft of exceptional subtlety.”¹¹¹

Furthermore, Kissinger suggests there is an inherent paradox in assuming the role of a revolutionary theocracy while also operating within the Westphalian system (albeit reluctantly). That is, by institutionalizing the tenets of the revolution into the apparatuses of the state, the Islamic Republic of Iran automatically loses a degree of its revolutionary

¹¹⁰ Ibid, WO p.153.

¹¹¹ Ibid, WO p.148-9.

zest. In fact, by proclaiming the title Republic, one is evoking westphalian principles that are at theoretical odds with the official dictums of the revolution. As a result, a “paradox took shape,” says Kissinger, “in the form of a dualistic challenge to the international order.”¹¹² He goes on to elaborate:

With Iran’s revolution, an Islamist movement dedicated to overthrowing the Westphalian system gained control over a modern state and asserted its “Westphalian” rights and privileges — taking up its seat at the United Nations, conducting trade, and operating its diplomatic apparatus. Iran’s clerical regime thus placed itself at the intersection of two world orders, arrogating the formal protections of the Westphalian system even while repeatedly proclaiming that it did not believe in it, would not be bound by it, and intended ultimately to replace it.

This leaves the international community in limbo — what is the true posturing of Iran? Is reconciliation plausible considering the export of revolution is an explicit dictum of regime? Its leaders use language that is rather universal, resemblant of the age of empire when polities were determined to be the system rather than a participant within it. Similarly, the position of supreme leaders casts itself as the head of the Islamic Revolution and the leader of the Islamic Ummah and Oppressed People.

Regardless, Kissinger believes that the current state of affairs between Iran and the U.S. and Iran and the international order is not necessarily permanent.¹¹³ He points to Iran’s flirtations with the Westphalian framework of international affairs as reason to believe that its reformist undertones of the general revolutionary-reformist dualism can be cultivated in a manner that successfully incorporates Iran into the international system as a devoted and active member. Furthermore, Kissinger pinpoints Iran’s “coherent

¹¹² Ibid, WO p.154.

¹¹³ Ibid, WO p.158.

experience of national greatness and the longest and subtlest strategic tradition”¹¹⁴ among the states in the Middle East as addition reason to believe that Iran is ripe with the historical DNA necessary to partake in the established, international framework.. Finally, he signals the cordial relations between the U.S. and Iran before the Islamic Revolution as additional evidence that the two countries can perhaps maintain cooperative relations.

Kissinger goes as far as to state that “the United States and the Western democracies should be open to fostering cooperative relations with Iran.”¹¹⁵ Hence, Kissinger does not align himself with the rather militaristic approaches advocated by a number of neoconservative voices or the hawkish positions of Israel’s Likud party and Saudi Arabia’s monarchy. In other words, diplomacy is Kissinger's favorable course of action given the current situation. If and when the U.S. pursues actions symbolic of reconciliation, Kissinger provides instrumental advice on dealing with a significant power that holds a world view quite different than those of the Western democracies:

What they must not do is base such policy on projecting their own domestic experience as inevitably or automatically relevant to other societies’, especially Iran’s. They must allow for the possibility that the unchanged rhetoric of a generation is based on conviction rather than posturing and will have had an impact on a significant number of the Iranian people. A change of tone is not necessarily a return to normalcy, especially where definitions of normalcy differ so fundamentally. It includes as well — and more likely — the possibility of a change in tactics to reach essentially unchanged goals. The United States should be open to a genuine reconciliations and make substantial efforts to facilitate it. Yet for such an effort to succeed, a clear sense of direction is essential, especially on the key issue of Iran’s nuclear program.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ibid, WO p.158.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, WO p.158-9.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, WO p.158-9.

Accordingly, the statesman tasked with these issues must reconcile an Iranian worldview that holds the current hierarchical order as unjust with what the U.S. sees a front to the overall consensus on the way states should behave and act. In the pursuit of reconciliation, goals can remain unchanged, but tactics must change. Inevitably, each nation will have to partially compromise on its ideals in order to commence the beginning of a cooperative relationship.

Regarding the nuclear question, Kissinger considers nuclear armed Iran unacceptable. He makes the argument that a nuclear Iran would have uncontrollable proliferation ramifications in the most tumultuous region in the world — a region where nonstate actors can acquire and control large swaths of territory and conventional organs of the state. *World Order* was written and published in the midst of the fruition of the Nuclear Deal. With the deal having yet to fully manifest at the time of publication, Kissinger devotes a sizeable section of his chapter to the Nuclear Question. He foresaw the essence of the agreement; he states, “the quest for an agreement must contend with the prospect that Tehran will be at least exploring a strategy of relaxing tensions just enough to break the sanctions regime but retaining a substantial nuclear infrastructure and a maximum freedom of action to turn it into a weapons program later.”¹¹⁷

Improving relations with Iran is contingent on timing. In other words, a transformation in relations is predicated on the state of domestic affairs and, thus, the physiological comfort of the regime, as well as how the regime perceives the relationship between external forces and the state’s geopolitical position. Moreover, the matter weighs

¹¹⁷ Ibid, WO p.160.

heavily on the strength of the reformist position over that of the hardlined establishment. If Iran feels secure domestically and externally, it will be rather difficult to get the regime to capitulate on the principles that are essentially directly in opposition to western dictums of international affairs. On the other hand, if the regime is insecure — due to domestic sentiment, Sunni jihadism on its borders, or economic instability — then it will be more willing to adjudicate its oscillation between “reform” and “revolution” and participation and confrontation in favor of the former positions, thereby appeasing the United States and allowing it to take a less confrontational stance. “Which option[s] Iran chooses will be determined by its own calculations,” Kissinger says, “not American preconceptions.”¹¹⁸

As a participant and advocate of the international pluralistic order, America, in principle, should be prepared to overcome the deadlock with Iran on the basis of the Westphalian principles of nonintervention and to be willing to work alongside Iran in developing a regional order that rids the region of proxy warfare and manipulation. Kissinger rests the next step — from principle to action — on Iran acknowledging that it too needs to operate under the principles of nonintervention and the gradual rescindment of its support for non-state actors throughout the Middle East. The ultimate test for U.S.-Iran relations is whether Iran considers the chaos throughout the region as a threat or opportunity as it seeks to fulfill its millennial aspirations.

Ultimately, a series of questions emerge that will determine the future of U.S.-Iran relations in the coming years and decades. If we assume a fundamental change

¹¹⁸ Ibid, WO p.166.

in the driving agenda of Iran, what brought about these changes in its national interests and how can the United States reform its policy in order to take advantage of the new conditions? Will the conflict be solved through a change in the attitude of the United States or a reform of its policy? And if the latter, what is the modification that should be sought? If the answers to these questions are favorable to a change in posture on both ends, though not necessarily a transformation of goals, then there is a chance that the spirit of the age is ripe for overcoming the nearly 40 year deadlock. If not, the U.S. will continue to contain Iran through a combination of sanctions, rhetoric, and proxy warfare that will only prolong instability in the region. It would be an unwise to assume the Islamist forces and movements of era will fade anytime soon. The task before us is not only about reconciling U.S.-Iran relations, but about attempting to construct a pluralistic international order that is capable of accommodating a range of polities of unique, historical development.

CHAPTER IV: A HISTORY OF AMERICAN-IRANIAN ENCOUNTERS IN WORLD POLITICS AND DISCOURSE

4.1 Iran: Country Overview

Home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, the Islamic Republic of Iran occupies a territory rich in history, tradition, culture, and identity. Contemporary Iran is located in Western Asia and shares a border with a number countries and bodies of water. To west lies Iraq and Turkey; to the northwest is Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan; directly to the north is the Caspian Sea; Turkmenistan is to the north east; to the east is Afghanistan and Pakistan; directly to the south is the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Iran has an area of just under 1.7 million km; the second largest in the region. Tehran is the Capital and the largest city, and it is the economic and cultural hub of the state.

Iran is home to over 81 million people, making it the 18th most populated country in the world and the 2nd most populated country in the Middle East. Over 60% of Iran's population is under the age of 30, though it is aging. The nation is composed of predominantly Persians, though Azerbaijanis and Kurds make up sizeable minorities. Shia Islam is the principle religion. The majority of the population speaks Farsi.

After Saudi Arabia, Iran possesses the second largest economy in the Middle East. Its GDP for 2016 was \$412.2 billion and its main impetuses are oil, agriculture, and service sectors. The state has a large presence in the economy, particularly in the

manufacturing and financial services sector. Moreover, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is quite active in the private sector, using revenues to fund adventures abroad. Despite the sanctions lifted under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran remains subject to an international sanctions regime that limits the possibilities of economic growth.

Iran is a theocratic republic. The unique political makeup of Iran is institutionalized in its 1979 Constitution. The Leader of the Revolution — the Supreme Leader — is the state's ultimate authority. All major decisions demand his approval. He is not only the political leader of the nation, but also the religious leader and the commander-in-chief, thereby providing him with the sole power to declare war and peace. The Assembly of Experts elects the Supreme Leader. To date, the Assembly of Experts has never publicly challenged the decisions of the Supreme Leader. The Guardian Council vets and approves all presidential and parliamentary candidates, though the Supreme Leader selects all members of the council. The President is designated as the highest authority of the state, albeit his secondary stature to the Supreme Leader. The position is determined through a process of universal suffrage, though popular complaints of interference have occurred. The legislature — the Islamic Consultative Assembly — drafts legislation, ratifies treaties, and approves the national budget. Though power is centralized at the hands of the supreme leader, there are multiple centers of power within the state.¹¹⁹ The government of the Islamic State is by no means apolitical.

¹¹⁹ Council on Foreign Relations 2018.

In effect, there are three domains of power: the Supreme Leader, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and the Presidency and its administration.¹²⁰ Though power is concentrated in the hands of the supreme leader, not one center has a monopoly on power, making the others irrelevant. The IRGC is weakened by the fact that it has the lowest level of political function and empowerment. The presidency often butts heads with the IRGC, as the latter is heavily ingrained in economic, domestic and foreign policy. Furthermore, the IRGC is unique in that it is not a component of the formal Iranian military, making it, technically, a paramilitary group. The supreme leader has the most sway over the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. With a force of 125,000 soldiers, the IRGC is a substantial military force. Finally, the IRGC is the entity that oversees Iran's extraterritorial and clandestine operations. Today, the group has a substantial presence in Iraq and Syria.

The IRGC and the Presidency and the Ministries of government are rather dichotomous. In Tehran, the latter two are framed as the technocrats, while the former is conceived of as the guardian of the revolution. Both are committed to the tenets of the revolution, but each have their own means or ideas of how to faithfully fulfill their commitment to it.¹²¹ In addition, each have their respective vision of reform. The technocrats, in part, are weary of the components of the revolution that might precipitate international isolation; they do not see confinement as sustainable for the regime. The former, however, fear Western capital, ideas, and technologies will endanger not only the stability of the regime, but also jeopardize the spirit of the revolution.

¹²⁰ Vatanka, 2017.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Iran is often referred to as a state sponsor of terrorism. This title has built up legitimacy throughout the years largely due to IRGC directed programs. Domestically, the IRGC is known to have led oppressive and violent campaigns targeting Kurdish and Baluchis dissent throughout the 1980s, as well target figures of the Iranian civil reform movement. For example, in 1999, the IRGC dismantled student protests and, in 2009, the paramilitary group crushed the Green Movement by arresting thousands of descendants. In both cases, civilian deaths occurred.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps international workings have attracted the most attention. Attacks are not carried out directly by the IRGC, but by its proxies. The most infamous of attacks in American memory are the 1983 bombing of a U.S. Marine compound in Lebanon, killing 283 personnel, and the 1996 Khobar Tower bombing in Saudi Arabia, which killed 19 American service members. Ever since the U.S. implanted a large U.S. military force in the Middle East, Iranian munitions and Iranian-trained forces have repeatedly harmed American service members.¹²² The Revolutionary Guard conducted its first attack on American soil when it attempted to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador to the United States at a restaurant in Washington D.C. Eric Holder, the Attorney General at the time, claimed the plan was ““directed and approved by elements of the Iranian government, and, specifically by the senior members of the Quds force.””¹²³ With such a track record, figures in Washington argue heavily for placing the Revolutionary Guards on the U.S.’s Designated Foreign Terrorist List, while others hold that doing so would raise hostilities without providing any concrete benefits.

¹²² Dubowitz 2017.

¹²³ Ibid.

4.2 American and Iranian Encounters: 1953-Today

The roots of American-Iranian hostility date back to the fateful 1953 Iranian coup d'état.¹²⁴ The American CIA, along with its British counterparts, orchestrated a covert operation, known as Operation Ajax, to help organize the overthrow of the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh. At first, the coup failed, but was followed by a second attempt which succeeded. To this day, there is debate around why the United States felt the need to topple a democratically elected prime minister. Nevertheless, the immediate consequences are clear: the Shah would reassume power and maintain an oppressive state until the 1979 Iranian revolution. While in power, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was one of the closest allies of the United States. The U.S. provided the Shah with monetary aid and training for the secret police that would keep his regime in power. Ironically, the U.S. helped Iran establish its nuclear program and provided it with weapons grade enriched uranium in 1967. The United States engineering of the Coup of 1953 and its explicit support for the Shah throughout his twenty-six years in power made the Revolution of 1979 a reaction against not only the monarchical regime of Pahlavi, but also the United States influence in the country and the region.

The Iranian revolution of 1979 shocked the world. It ousted the Shah and instituted the Islamic Republic of Iran with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini at the head of government. After the fall of the regime, when the United States temporarily allowed the

¹²⁴ Abrahamian, 2013.

Shah to enter the United States for cancer treatment, the validity of the narrative that the Shah simply constituted an American puppet was solidified and it weaved a fierce and invigorated anti-americanism into the flames of the revolution. The act was perceived as an attempt to shield the Shah from facing his crimes under the new government. This, in addition to every other American act of subversion in the country instigated the storming of the American embassy by students loyal to Khomeini. The coup of 1953 had come to complicate America's position in the region twenty-six years after it made the initial mistake. The deadlock in American-Iranian relations has remained in place ever since 1979.

American foreign policy towards Iran — since the revolution — has been aimed at subversion, aggression, containment, or some combination of the three. On the other hand, Iranian foreign policy, concerning the United States, has sought to challenge American aspirations in the region and the hierarchical order it champions. As a result, there is a deep level of distrust between the two nations that makes reconciliation extremely difficult. Simultaneously, both countries contain powerful domestic factions who outrightly deny engagement and, therefore, only consider subversive policy options as aligned with their respective national interests. It should be noted that though Iran and America remain suspicious of one another, they do engage in occasional and limited acts of cooperation.

During the Iran-Iraq war, the United States provided military, intelligence, and logistical support to Iraq. There are reports that the U.S. also supplied information to Iran,

¹²⁵ as America simply wanted the war to end in a stalemate, so as to preserve the balance of power in the region. American support of Iraq, however, outweighed its assistance to Iran. Moreover, because Iran was bogged down in attritional warfare, it was not in a position to seriously challenge the United States, despite its desire to. Iran remained dormant for a few years after the war. Meanwhile, the belief that the United States disproportionately supported Iraq during the eight year war exasperated Iran's perception of the United States as the "Great Satan."

The Iran-Contra Affair — arranged in the mid 1980s — is an act of engagement intent on improving relations. Yet, the act violated a United States arms embargo. The Ronald Reagan administration hoped that by selling Iran armaments the U.S. might obtain Iran's influence over Hezbollah in Lebanon and, therefore, secure the release of American hostages being held in Lebanon. The affair received additional scrutiny when it was discovered that the proceeds of the weapons sale went to fund Contra rebels fighting the revolutionary government in Nicaragua. Ultimately, no hostages were released by Hezbollah, so the deal failed to enact meaningful change.

In 1988, the United States launched a naval raid on Iranian waters, sinking two oil platforms, one frigate war boat, and one gunboat. The United States launched the attack in retaliation for Iranian mining in the Persian Gulf. In April 1988, the USS Samuel Roberts struck a mine while in the Persian Gulf. The naval raid, known as Operation Praying Mantis, was the U.S.'s response to the destruction of their boat. A few months later, on July 3rd, 1988, the U.S. Navy shot down an Iranian commercial plane on its way

¹²⁵ Woodward 2005, 507.

to Dubai. It killed 290 civilians from six nations, most of whom were Iranian. Together, the acts aggravated anti-american sentiments within the regime and the country

The bush administration's refusal to follow through on its promise to match goodwill with goodwill added yet another instance of distrust to the track record of Iranian-American relations. The Bush administration approached President Rafsanjani with a proposal: use its influence and leverage over Hezbollah to secure the release of the remaining American hostages being held in Lebanon in exchange for a reciprocal gesture. The administration was considering easing sanctions, taking Iran off the terrorist list, compensating Iran for the shooting down of the Iranian airbus, and allowing the sale of badly needed airplanes. In the end, the Bush administration did not respond to Rafsanjani's effort and ultimate success in securing the release of the hostages. Intelligence suggesting Iran was seeking Nuclear Weapons and planning terror attacks convinced Bush to reconsider. Rafsanjani was further irked when the United States excluded Iran from the Madrid and Oslo peace processes.

Perhaps the fullest expressions of mutual respect and possible cooperation transpired under the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, who was president from 1997 to 2005. He put forward the idea of a "dialogue of civilizations" as a first step towards political rapprochement. He believed engagement would best be served through an initial apolitical encounter. Thus, a team of American wrestlers traveled to Iran to compete against their Iranian counterparts. The easement in relations did not continue, however, due to pushback from Iranian conservatives and American preconditions for discussions. Another gesture of easement occurred in the days following the attacks of September 11th,

when the President and the Supreme Leader condemned the attacks. There are reports that Iranian citizens gathered in front of the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, in an expression of mourning and solidarity. Finally, when the United States invaded Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran cooperated with the U.S. by providing it with intelligence and targets for its air force. American airpower backed the ground force of the Northern Alliance — Iran’s main ally in Afghanistan — which led the effort to take Kabul back from the Taliban.

Collaboration, however, did not last. On January 29, 2002, President Bush presented the annual State of the Union Address, where he labeled Iran, along with North Korea and Iraq, as an “axis of evil.” President Khatami claims this rhetoric brought American-Iranian relations to, perhaps, their lowest point since 1979. In the aftermath and in anticipation of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Iran, in a display of realpolitik, offered to provide the United States with the intelligence it held on Iraq; the gesture was enticing considering that the intelligence the U.S. received on Afghanistan proved reliable and consequential. In the end, the Bush Presidency ignored the offer, remaining firm in his position that Iran constituted a substantial threat to the United States and, therefore, would not cooperate with it.

Over a year later, Iran sent the State Department a document titled the “Roadmap,” which suggested direct talks between Iran and America take place in order to improve relations — everything was on the table. The mainstay of the document was that the U.S. would refrain from supporting regime change in Iran and it would abolish all sanctions in exchange for Hezbollah becoming an exclusively political and social

organization and for Iran's acceptance of the two state-state approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Iran favored because its content respected and acknowledged Iran as a regional power — an absent feature of relations in the past. Moreover, the Supreme Leader agreed with large swaths of the paper's prospective, making the "Roadmap" viable in the long run. In the end, Washington said no — a decision made not by the President, but by the State Department. Washington's rebuff was likely based on its intelligence suggesting Iran was pursuing nuclear capabilities. For the remainder of the Bush Presidency, diplomacy with Iran was left to the European states.

When the Bush administration closed the diplomatic channel provided by the "Roadmap," interactions were fraught and confrontational. The two sides exchanged accusations of the other's wrongdoings. The U.S. has been accused of covert operations in Iran, including support for the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK) and Jundullah. Furthermore, the U.S. government was said to have supported the minority Ahwazi and Baluchi groups in hope of instigating dissidence. There were suspicions, too, that the U.S. Special Forces conducted cross-border operations for intelligence purposes from Iraq. In 2007, the U.S. raided an Iranian Consulate General in Erbil and arrested a number of staff members. Iran, on the other hand, has been accused by the United States of supporting Iraqi insurgency groups that killed American troops stationed in Iraq during the height of the Iraq War.

The Obama administration ushered in a period of American-Iranian relations that differ quite substantially from Obama's predecessors. The Obama presidency was the first to receive a congratulatory message from an Iranian president since 1979. In

addition, Obama and Rouhani talked on the telephone on September 27th, 2013 — it is often regarded as the highest political exchange between the two countries since the Islamic Revolution. The product of Obama's reformed approach was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — the agreement that restrained Iran's nuclear ambitions in exchange for the removal of the sanctions regime.

4.3 Iranian-American Discourse in America

America's general, historical position towards Iran — since the 1979 Revolution — can be accurately characterized as an oscillation between limited confrontation, antagonization, and subversion; indeed, there are brief moments of cooperation intertwined throughout the years. Hostilities between Iran and the United States were at their highest levels during the presidency of George W. Bush. Rhetoric during these eight years aimed to showcase Iran in a particular light. It is argued by authors such as John Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt, and Arshin Adib-Moghaddam that American enmity towards Iran — during the Bush Administration — rose to unproductive levels due to the heavy influence of the neoconservative mindset and the Israeli Lobby. These authors pinpoint the influence of the Israel Lobby and the neoconservative ideology on American foreign policy as a crucial reason — if not the reason — why the United States has historically and consistently opposed detenté or cooperation. Mearsheimer and Walt

attest that America's avoidance of engagement "has been harmful to the national interest [of the United States]."¹²⁶

Adib-Moghaddam builds an argument around the idea that one cannot separate facts "from a manufactured context."¹²⁷ Indeed, facts are sometimes fabricated. He contends that narratives around world politics are often socially engineered in order to push forward specific agendas or interests. For Adib-Moghaddam, the image of and narrative about Iran that permeates the American milieu are the ones "manufactured" by neoconservatives. The guiding interest and agenda for the neoconservatives is "to subvert the Iranian state and, by extension, to recode Iranian behavior in accordance with American and Israeli interests in West Asia and beyond."¹²⁸ Neoconservatives, typically, welcome aggression, rationalize war, and prioritize militaristic foreign policies. In order to use these means, they engineer narratives that legitimize and frame the aforementioned means as appropriate.

Iran is considered a rogue nation by the hardliners in America's foreign policy establishment; it is unpredictable, irrational, and defiant, as the narrative goes. While this version does, perhaps, hold some evidence of validity, it is pushed as irrefutable and reinforced with misinformation and fabrication. Invalid stories,¹²⁹ characterizations, and simplifications foster a public and political sentiment where militarism or hostility is seen as suitable or even wise. In other words, national discourse is centered around the assumption that Iran is a rogue. Adib-Moghaddam refers to this step as "writing the

¹²⁶ Mearsheimer 2007, 305.

¹²⁷ Adib-Moghaddam 2008, 124.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 133.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 133.

script, the speech, the terminology of a specific political discourse... (e.g. The ‘axis of evil’ invented by David Frum). The ‘writing’ is followed by two additional layers of scaffolding — what he refers to as “decision-maker” and “strategic value.”¹³⁰ The former are the individuals who take the script and elevate it to policy. Whereas the script writers are tasked with setting discourse and therefore occupy media, think-tank, lobbyist, and advocacy positions, the decision-makers are “part of the day-to-day affairs of politics in Washington.”¹³¹ They hold positions of power that elevate discourse to action. “Strategic value” is the point where day-to-day is ingrained into “the long-term state interests;” therefore, it is stubborn, ingrained, and “not easily discarded or altered.”¹³² It is at this third level that discourse is elevated to an ontological position.

For Adib-Moghaddam, the ontological positioning of Iran within the United States is completely distant from Iran’s own ontological content. Hence, “the facts” regarding Iran and its character within the foreign policy establishment of the United States deviates quite heavily from the ontological reality in Iran. War is, therefore, pushed as the only reasonable means to overcoming the Iranian threat and the only way to reconcile divergent ontological positions. It is such a discrepancy between “the facts” permeating the United States and the reality on the ground that made the invasion of Iraq feasible. Military action against Iran is cultivated under similar conditions and circumstances. Though the Bush presidency and the heyday of neoconservatism are behind us for now, the “strategic-value” of their discourse remains pervasive (e.g.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 141.

¹³¹ Ibid, 142.

¹³² Ibid.

Trump's refusal to reinstate the Iran deal despite its effectiveness). The legacy of neoconservatism is its inscription of preemptive war into the composition of American foreign policy. Thus, we can understand Trump's antagonism toward the Iran deal as a personal affinity for war as the suitable alternative for an already efficacious diplomatic solution to the global interest of nonproliferation — the very interest the argument for war would claim to defend. Let us now take a look of how one might conceive of the ontological position(s) of the Iranian state vis-à-vis its approach to world politics.

4.4 Iranian Foreign Policy Milieu

Iran's political, structural, and ideological disposition makes it arduous — if not impossible — to securely ingrain it within the general framework of the Westphalian, pluralistic international order. On one hand, Iran calculates its national interests based on the reality that power is the ultimate factor in the international realm. That is, despite its revolutionary character — devotion to undermining the unequal scaffolding of the international order, though not limited to this tasks — international relations operates in a specific manner that the state is not able to escape. As a result, it behaves like any other state in the system: adopts policies that increase its relative power (e.g. supporting the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq). Simultaneously, Iran's national interest is constructed in accordance with the guiding principles of the 1979 revolution — anti-hierarchical world order and anti-imperialism — and, therefore, takes on an idealist undertones. The main challenge to overcoming the current deadlock between the United

States and Iran, let alone the Western World, is how to incorporate Iran into the international system without violating Iran's institutionalized precepts and historical memory (i.e. incorporation through regime change or other forms of coercion).

The following section seeks to critically examine the Iranian milieu vis-à-vis world politics in hope of configuring a possible path forward. Coming from their own unique tradition, it is difficult for Americans and other foreign statesman to comprehend the convictions of the Iranian regime. As a result, the convictions of the United States and Iran often come to a ferocious grind that ultimately leads to political inertia between the two nations. If American statesmen can come to comprehend the Iranian complex, they will, perhaps, be in a better position to engage with the regime in a manner that does place irrationality at the forefront of the policy decisions making process.

Similar to the U.S., the Iranian government considers its founding principles as relevant and desirable to all people — liberating. At its conception, the Iranian revolution was proclaimed to not solely belong to Iran, but to the entire world. “Islam [was] revealed for mankind and the Muslims,” the Ayatollah stated, “...An Islamic movement, therefore, cannot limit itself to any particular country, not even to the Islamic countries; it is the continuation of the revolution by the prophets.”¹³³ Accordingly, the Islamic Revolution is central to how Iran imagines its purpose on the world stage. Because the revolution was just as much about challenging the hierarchical world order as it was about domestic and political discontents, the revolution extends beyond domestic policy into Iranian foreign policy.

¹³³ Adib-Moghaddam 2008, 32.

When the revolutionary flare subsided and the new government consolidated power, dictums of the revolution were institutionalized into the state. Of these precepts, the challenge and denial of the international order, headed by the United States, is the most important in the context of the present argument. The new regime set out to fulfill a central component of the revolution: “[a] redefinition of the country’s identity and redirection of relations with the whole world; Iranians wanted to reinvent both themselves and the way they saw the outside world.”¹³⁴ However, Adib-Moghaddam attests that the very action of institutionalizing revolutionary ideals “established Iran as a revisionist power in international affairs.”¹³⁵ That is, after toppling the Shah and establishing the Islamic republic, the latter became the new status quo. What was once the counter-hegemonic force became the hegemonic force in Iran. By using the apparatuses of the state to fulfill the mandates of the revolution, the government automatically assumed a reformist approach to the fulfillment of its ideals. Throughout the 1980s, the Revolution became hegemonic in the domestic sense. Internationally, however, Iran remains a counter-hegemonic force, intent on subverting the regional and global status quo. Simultaneously, its disposition towards world politics takes on theocratic undertones, keen on spreading the Islamic mandates of its revolution. The two — anti-hierarchical world order and Islamic theocracy — are not at odds, but in harmony.

Central to “exporting” revolution abroad was the use of the notions ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressors’ (Mostazafan and Mostakbarab in Farsi).¹³⁶ This language came short of

¹³⁴ Ibid, 45-6.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 54.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 56.

explicit religious connotation, which mattered in the context of the Palestinian liberation movements, but not in the context of Latin America during the 1980s. Oppressed and oppressor fit into a larger anti-imperialist narrative, thereby linking what was happening in the Iranian Revolution with the liberation movements occurring all over the world.¹³⁷ Accordingly, the constitution is ripe with notions that promote the triumph of the oppressed over the oppressors. The constitution holds that Iran “provides the necessary basis for ensuring the continuation of the revolution at home and abroad.” This is an example of the institutionalization of revolutionary precepts.

Upending the international status quo, support for liberation movements, and export of revolution were not to be pursued through “aggressive intervention in the internal affairs of other nations” and not by the means of force according to Khomeini.¹³⁸ He aspired to export the precepts of the revolution, but was weary of force as the means. Hence, on the one hand, Khomeini framed the task as such:

We have set as our goal the world-wide spread of the influence of Islam and the suppression of the rule of the world conquerors we wish to cause the corrupt roots of Zionism, capitalism and communism wither throughout the world. We wish, as does God almighty, to destroy the systems which are based on these three foundations, and to promote the Islamic order of the Prophet in the world of arrogance.¹³⁹

Despite the harsh and confrontational language around liberation, the subtlety with which Iran conducted its revolutionary aspirations in the years after the revolution makes such statements appear bombastic and simply rhetorically confrontational. Furthermore, Khamenei warns that Iran’s position “does not mean that we intend to export [revolution]

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 58.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

by the baynet. We want to call [dawat] everyone to Islam [and to] send our calling everywhere.”¹⁴⁰

It is under this context and critical analysis that leads Arshin Adib-Moghaddam to conclude that in the initial years of the Islamic Republic, portraying the country as a beacon of hope for the toppling of an unjust world order was more central to its mission than any military support it may have provided. Adib-Moghaddam states:

Although covert backing for liberation movements in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Latin America, Africa and Palestine was sometimes justified openly, exporting the idea of the Islamic Republic without military aggrandisement was rather more central. Reliance on dawat (calling) and tabligh (propagation, advertisement, dissemination) was hence substituted for the militaristic coercion periodically characteristic of the Shah’s reign. In accordance with that attitude, the Islamic Republic cancelled the Shah’s multi-billion dollars defence contracts with the United States and Western Europe and abandoned Iranian military installations in Oman.¹⁴¹

In theory, the revolutionary era assumed a position, then, where Iran’s radical independence from both superpowers would catalyse a process that would liberate the oppressed from an unjust world order. Essentially, what Iran and, by extension, the Revolution stood for would — by itself — have the power to export the revolutionary spirit abroad. Iran intended for the liberation movements throughout the world to look to Iran as example of a nation breaking from the shackles of foreign powers.

During the time of the revolution, a particular phrase rose in prominence: neither Eastern nor Western, only the Islamic Republic. The revolutionary generation was willing to accept this new identity, even if it meant that Iran was to be casted as a rogue

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 58.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

state or an outlaw. A number of immediate foreign policy decisions can be explained with the narrative so far provided. Iran abdicated its membership to a number of Cold War institutions. It fought an attritional war with Iraq, drawing its motivation, in part, from the belief that the war was a global effort to subdue the revolutionary spirit of the nation. The country immediately supported the PLO and offered solidarity for leftist movements throughout the world. With the severance of ties with Apartheid South Africa, and bellicose language and posture to the United States, a foreign policy culture emerged where the ideals of the revolution were perfectly aligned with the states national interest.

Yet, societies and cultures, after all, are not static, but dynamic. Hitherto, I have laid out a narrative that portrays Iran, in its initial years, as a nation that was in part founded on the precept of indignance — directed towards the hierarchical world order, its absence of equity, and imperial manipulation. This dissension to the international system persists, but a competing posture has arisen in the foreign policy establishment that seeks different means to what are essentially the same goals. Since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, positions, practices, and stances have been incorporated into the culture of the regime that deviate quite drastically than those preached by the first supreme leader (i.e. nonintervention, weariness around the development of nuclear weaponry, and anti-militarism). Today, regime practices in the region are more emblematic of security concerns and sphere of influence than the direct fulfillment of an ideological agenda based on the principles of the revolutions. Nevertheless, the leitmotif of opposition and

challengement to international system — particularly the United States and its role in sustaining the system — persist.

The modifications of the perspective that defined the Iranian state throughout the first 15 or so years after the revolution emerged and developed throughout the end of the 20th century and the 21st century. At the moment, it is quite robust and contends for the highest positions of government. Internally, the counter thrust “has manifested itself in a multi-dimensional movement for a pluralistic democracy” and, this thrust, “has already had an impact on the country’s foreign policies.”¹⁴² The dialogue among civilizations, detenté with Europe, engagement with Saudi Arabia, its pressure on Hezbollah for the release of American hostages, dialogue with the U.S. on Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Nuclear Deal are prime examples.

Author Arshin Adib-Moghaddam warns his reader, however, not to perceive the aforementioned policies solely through the lense of a power struggle between reformists and conservatives, calling such a mistake reductionist. He attests that “Iranian foreign policy elites have remained committed to certain core strategic principles of the state.”¹⁴³ He finds it helpful to think of the Iranian foreign policy establishment as coherent around “grand strategic preferences that transcend the faultlines of day-to-day politics.”¹⁴⁴ Those who do take on a reformist approach remain pro-palestinian, anti-zionist, anti-imperialism, and demand cultural and political independence — all of which were integral dictums of the revolution. For the reformist, more so than the conservative, there

¹⁴² Ibid, 69.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

is no contradiction between detenté and engagement and the spirit of the revolution. The reformist takes on a less aggressive approach to their grand strategic goals. Moreover, Adib-Moghaddam asserts that the reformists in Iranian society generally conceive of the millenarian aspect of the regime's theological disposition in relation to foreign policy as evolutionary rather than immediate. He offers yet another point of distinction: progressive versus fundamentalist Islam. Despite these differences, both camps prioritize the preservation of the revolutionary cause, all the while projecting Iranian power both regionally and globally. Finally, the reformist forces are most prominent within civil society. High officials often oscillate between both camps, depending on the issue at hand and the center of power (i.e presidency or IRGC). With all that said, Arshin suggests Iran's moments of "seemingly eclectic pragmatism" should be seen within the aforementioned context. He states:

Iran's seemingly eclectic' pragmatism during times of crisis with the arms deals United States and Israel (the Iran-Contra affair), the diplomatic backing of the US invasion of Taliban Afghanistan in 2001, relative silence about Russian war crimes in Muslim Chechnya and Chinese suppression of Muslim primarily in the Western provinces of the country, mute support for the war against Saddam Hussein in 2003, and efforts to engage with the US diplomatically should be seen within that context.¹⁴⁵

Such foreign policy decisions should be interpreted as times when Iran took advantage of world politics, outside of their control, to further their grand strategic preferences; they are not an abandonment of the foreign policy agenda of the post-revolutionary era. They are acts of *realpolitik*.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 74.

In summary, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 ushered in a set of precepts that were institutionalized in the years after the revolution. Markedly, the regime consolidated a strategic doctrine around political and cultural independence, ant-imperialism, anti-zionism, the persistent challenge of Western expansionism and the established world order, and anti-americanism. Having been institutionalized into the DNA of the state, these ideals are not easily disregarded. A counter-hegemonic force has emerged, generally signified through the term reformist — though it would be reductionist to consider the reformist bloc as uniformly opinionated. It is best to frame the counter forces as residual convictions of the revolution, not as an effort to diverge from the original tenets of the Islamic Republic — a posture that seeks their gradual, evolutionary achievement rather than its immediate imposition.

When the U.S. formulates policy directed towards Iran, it would do well to recognize this reality and not perceive Iran's actions as irrational or completely unpredictable. While the culture behind the foreign policy establishment cannot explain all that is occurring in the world regarding Iran's foreign policy decisions, it is an important, overarching leitmotif that the U.S. would do well to consider as it formulates policies that protect vital U.S. interests as they relate to confronting and cooperating with Iran. It is the reformist position that is perhaps most likely to give way to an opportunity for the gradual improvement of U.S.-Iranian relations. In fact, it was the rather un-raucous presidency of Hassan Rouhani during which a deal was struck to temporarily curb Iran's nuclear ambitions; the deal was also secured by the absence of hawkish undertones to Iran-U.S. relations.

CHAPTER V: PROSPECTS FOR RECONCILIATION AND BALANCE OF POWER

From Kissinger's thinking, one can isolate a number of valuable diplomatic insights that are relevant to an international system defined by multiple centers of power. His perspicacity, I argue, is of great utility to the prospect of diplomatic reconciliation between the United States and Iran. The components of Kissinger's thinking that could potentially help usher in an age of conciliation are numerasized below.

One, Kissinger's thinking posits the avoidance of war through the balance of power. For Kissinger, this is the highest moral attainment that can be pursued at the level of the international state-system. Two, pluralistic and liberal internationalism is the ideal scaffolding on which to construct a stable state-system. It respects nonlinear conceptions of historical development, thereby appreciating differences in international historical sociologies. Three, power is not a static phenomenon; therefore, balance of power necessitates adjustments on behalf of the participants of the balancing act. The inability of one or more states to adjust to a new power reality, precipitated by a rising power, results in the eventual recalibration of the balance through force. Four, multipolarity demands not the proliferation of domestic precepts, but the establishment and safeguarding of the balance of power. Hence, America should be cautious when formulating diplomacy on the basis of its 'universal' ideals. Instead, ideals can be self-perpetuated through the construction of overlapping economic and political structures and domestic civil societies. Five, Kissinger asserts that a nuclear Iran is

unacceptable due to the proliferation consequences it would have across the region.

Accordingly, the nuclear question is a starting point when determining criteria that would necessitate a military response. Six, efficacious diplomacy is conditional on timing and other external conditions. In other words, in order for a political deadlock to be surmounted through diplomacy, timing is particularly crucial. The final point is used as the point of departure for the next section.

5.1 Timing and Posture

The direction of Iranian-American relations is in limbo. The new source of uncertainty stems from the Presidency of Donald Trump and his antagonism towards the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). His bombastic and confrontational language is jeopardizing the possibility of a serious period of detenté ushered in by President Obama. Hence, the current political environment does not appear well suited for the continuation of engagement, let alone detenté. Regardless of recent events and American politics, Iran, domestically, is within a period of suspense and it is anticipating a period of transformation (i.e. the selection of a new Supreme Leader). Ultimately, the transition of power will represent a sound adjudication on the direction of Iranian politics and foreign policy for the foreseeable future. The JCPOA represented a victory for Iranian moderates (i.e. those not necessarily opposed to engagement with the West). The fact that Iran agreed to the treaty on the grounds of sanction relief conveys the importance the regime, and particularly Ayatollah Khamenei, places on economic

development and growth. It recognizes that the health of the regime is partly contingent on its socio-economic conditions. Yet, nearly three years since the completion of the deal, Iran has still to benefit to the degree it thought it would. It is now clear that economic development necessitates engagement with the United States and other economic centers of the world. This gives the United States a high degree of leverage and a clear set of next steps in the general pursuit of detenté, but the opposite directions is being pursued by the Trump administration.

To raise and answer the question in the previous section *Kissinger On Iran*: can one isolate a change in posture from the Iranian regime and, if so, what brought about these changes in its national interests? Yes, we can identify a change in Iran's posture: its willingness to engage the West, and particularly, the United States, on the matter of Iran's nuclear program. What brought about this change in posture? In part and overtime, the counter-hegemonic voices in the country established political power through the electoral system. For some time, the majority of civil society was willing to endure the consequences of political and economic independence in the name of revolutionary ideals. No doubt, to this day, portions of the population are still willing to endure the negative externalities of such a position. Political and economic independence, in the case of Iran, has resulted primarily in a lack of political freedoms and insufficient economic opportunity. Devotees come in two general types. There are those who are willing to pay the price because they are largely politically and economically secure, to the point where autarky is not overwhelming. On the other hand, enthusiasts of the Islamic Republic's isolation, despite its overwhelming impact on socio-economic conditions, persists due to

their unwithering devotion to a set of ideals. Those of the latter, particularly, are increasingly far and few, as the revolutionary generations is reaching the end of its life-cycle.

The revolutionary generation is subsiding and the costs to the precepts of the revolution are rising. The Green Revolution and the December 2017 and January 2018 protests portray a frustrated populace, economically and politically. The latter protests are particularly noteworthy due to the fact that their participants included the rural population — not just the liberal, educated elite of Tehran. In the future, the discontent of the Iranian people could potentially encourage the government to assume a stance that is favorable to reconciling relations with the United States because of the socio-economic opportunity it would catalyze. In return, the counter-thrust to the regime would potentially subside. The fact of the matter is that the Iranian government needs the passive and agreeable language of the U.S. government in order for U.S. and international capital to flow handsomely into the country. The confrontational language of the United States — “no option is off the table” — will not provide the reassurance and stability capitalists require in order to lend large sums of capital. Hence, if the regime feels uneasy about the implications of civil society’s discontent on the longevity of the Islamic Republic, the regime could be encouraged to further reconsider its posture towards the United States if the proper incentives are provided by the former. Such a prospect is not guaranteed — the U.S. and the reformist positions in Iran would be going up against Iranian fundamentalists and the hawks and warmongers of the United States.

The JCPOA should not be interpreted as the Islamic Republic of Iran's abandonment of the spirit it was founded on, despite Tehran's slight pivot away from isolating itself from the West to its reluctant engagement with it. The Iranian regime remains committed to its founding precepts whether one is a reformist or conservative, as chapter four argued. The reformist and fundamentalist divide is emblematic of a larger divide between a set of contested means for a shared set of goals. The "pivot" I suggest above is driven by the rise of the reformist bloc. To be clear: they remain devoted to the revolutionary zest the regime hopes to cast into perpetuity.

The impending end of Khamenei's reign will potentially further shift Iran into the international orbit if a centrist or a moderate is chosen as successor. There are unconfirmed reports that Khamenei has been battling cancer for a number of years.¹⁴⁶ At his age, there is no doubt he is laying the groundwork for his successor's smooth transition, despite the fact the next Supreme Leader is chosen by the Guardian Council. Moreover, Khamenei will most likely seek a successor who simultaneously embodies his conservative views and his calculated willingness to sparingly indulge the reformist agenda. The forthcoming transition of power will inevitably pose a shock to the Republic of Iran; this will be only the second time the country has gone through a transition of power and it will mark the first time in nearly thirty years. Khamenei should know that any transition that seeks to block out the reformist stance will most likely anger a large block of the Iranian people. However, the bellicose language of the United States helps reinforce anti-american voices in the regime, thereby limiting the prospects of detenté in

¹⁴⁶ Vakil 2017.

the future by positioning hardline voices as attractive. Consequently, the United States should assume a foreign policy that does not increase the desirability of Iran's hardlined positions, as these are the voices that make rapprochement next to impossible.

Concerning the transition of power, America's antagonistic rhetoric could possibly help Khamenei and the Guardian Council feel politically secure to a point where the Council feels secure sidelining moderate positions.

If cooler heads prevail in the future, the policy prescriptions detailed below might be able to build on the JCPOA and the general and gradual — yet not guaranteed — repositioning of Iran, thereby instituting a long-term shift to detenté and ultimately reconciliation. Hopefully, when more moderate or attuned leadership prevails, it will not be too late to make use of detenté in order to help overcome the impasse between the United States and Iran.

Now that it has been conveyed that the spirit of the age is different than in the previous era, it will be argued that detenté is the best way to take advantage of the anomalies in Iranian posture. After, specific policy recommendations are laid out that will allow for a successful manifestation of detenté.

5.2 The Case for Detenté

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is remarkable considering it is the first instance of a substantive pivot toward faithful compromise and engagement between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1979. The JCPOA is by no means

perfect, but it marks a triumph of diplomacy. The deal secured, at the very least, a postponement of Iran's nuclear weapon program without resorting to force. At its best, it will lay the necessary foundation for the continuation of nonproliferation to Iran and the Middle East once the deal expires in the next ten to fifteen years. The deal is extraordinary considering two foes — Iran and the U.S. — were able to compromise on their national precepts and overcome the hardlined voices trumpeting against the deal within each countries political scene.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action does not amount to an overcoming of the deadlock between Iran and the U.S., but it gave way to a substantive break in their relationship that has nearly always been confrontational. Iran has largely complied with the requirements of the deal — minus a few minor slips that were quickly corrected. Since the change in administrations in the United States, the U.S. cannot say the same. The trump Administration is threatening to pull out of the deal due to his general distaste for the deal and because of Iran's support of "terrorism" and its ballistic missile program. Trump's rhetoric is jeopardizing the true value of the deal: the opportunity to rebuild trust and lines of communication and engagement with Iran. Remaining committed to the JCPOA is in the best interest of the United States. The other options — regime change and aggressive containment — are bleak and, ultimately, they would not lead to regional stability nor would they help establish a sustainable balance of power with the least amount of carnage.

The United States has three general options when it comes to dealing with Iran, now and in the future: containment, regime change, and detenté. I argue that all but the

third option will result in a degeneration of relations and regional destabilization. The first — containment — is contingent on a successful sanctions regime and a stable and all-embracing coalition. The heart of the United States containment policy, then, rests on economic sanctions and support for a coalition of Arab states that will address fears of Iranian hegemony. The coalition needs a regional leader, and while it has one in Saudi Arabia, it does not appear up to the task. It is bogged down in domestic strife and reform and it is stuck in the Yemeni Civil War, which has no clear end in sight. As a result, Saudi Arabia does not appear to be in a position to efficaciously lead. Moreover, a coalition of Arab states would require a solid sense of cohesion and commitment between its members. The Saudi-Qatari upheaval shows the limitations of Arab unity and Egypt's domestic problems make it disinterested. Finally, the absence of serious Turkish fears of Iranian hegemony in the region make its participation in a coalition doubtful. Also, at the moment, it seems that Turkish and Iranian interests align, as they both possess sizeable Kurdish populations and they are economically interdependent.¹⁴⁷ Without Turkey's involvement, a coalition would lack credibility and military muscle.

The second major component of a containment policy is sanctions. While they proved vital in getting Iran to the table to negotiate its nuclear program, sanctions would not enjoy the success they did in the years before the JCPOA. In order to be successful, sanctions need to be multilateral. With Iran complying with the nuclear deal, the U.S. will have a hard time convincing the E.U., Russia, and China to support an international sanctions regime similar to the one in place before 2015. Moreover, a renewed sanctions

¹⁴⁷ Biglari 2017.

regime would undermine Iran's reformists and boost its hardliners political positions.

Considering the latter is the backbone to Iran's outright opposition to the United States, the re- imposition of sanctions would come at the detriment of the United States.

Regime change is the second plausible, but mistaken, option for the United States. It could pursue such a measure by the means of covert action or a full scale military operation. The former would necessitate dissident factions or popular support . The only functioning opposition group is the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK). This organization, however, is minuscule in size and most of its adherents reside outside of the country. Furthermore, the group is not supported by the public, as the MEK sided with Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq war. The MEK lack the political and social power necessary to overthrow the regime. Even if this were not the case, it would not be wise to repeat the history of the 1953 Coup d'etat, sponsored by the CIA. In addition, it does not seem that the U.S. could ferment popular opposition to the State; U.S. interference in 20th century Iranian history looms too large. As long as the regime does not brutally subdue the reform movement, change by force is unlikely. The brutal civil wars in the region cast too strong of an aversion to popular uprising for the youth of the country to stir dissent.

Finally, if the United States invaded Iran with a full scale military operation — similar to the 2003 invasion of Iraq — the U.S. would repeat the ills of the past. Iran does not possess weapons of mass destruction and, under the JCPOA, they will not for the foreseeable future. In addition, an invasion would require a long term military presence in Iran and U.S. military forces would not only face a good fight from Iran's military, but also extreme hostility from the Iranian people. An invasion could also precipitate wider,

regional instability. The situation in Iran and throughout the region does not necessitate a U.S. military invasion of Iran.

That leaves us with detenté — a politically unpopular option, but best aligned with America’s long term strategic interests. Detenté is a two sided project; hence, both parties would have to agree that the easing of hostilities is in both of their interests. Fortunately, this is the case. With Iran’s nuclear program on pause for the next ten years, the U.S. has the comfort of knowing that a policy of engagement is not a gamble aiming to suspend Iran’s nuclear development. Moreover, the current limbo in U.S. foreign policy — that is, its combination of containment, hostile rhetoric, and cold war tactics — taxes U.S. resources. Detenté raises the possibility of long term stability in region, thereby constraining the environments that breed militant extremism — the main interest of the United States in the region, outside the geopolitical game of power politics. Together, these conditions and prospects make detenté in the interest of the United States.

Iran, on the other hand, is well suited for a phase of detenté. Its support for proxy groups throughout the Middle East divert funds from domestic priorities. Long-term overextension is a fear of the Iranian regime. The fate of the Soviet Union has to play a psychological toll on the Iranian regime. Yet, Iran will likely not rescind support for its military proxies unless it receives a reliable alternative to its current security structure. The stability of the regime relies on a delicate balance between economic health and security. The United States can assist on these fronts in exchange for a regional posture that is more accommodating to American interests and regional stability. Hence, detenté

is in the interests of the Iranian regime if it leads to an alternative security arrangement and enhanced economic health.

While I argue detenté is directly in line with each country's national interest, there is no guarantee that it will prevail. Detenté is contingent on a few additional preconditions. First, it will depend on how Iran approaches statecraft in the coming years and maybe even decades. If Iran does not adhere to the Westphalian conceptions of statecraft and, therefore, acts as a cause and not as a country, the United States and Iran will be approaching foreign policy from two different ontological positions that will render detenté irrelevant. In the case of Iran, the approach it takes might, in the end, depend on the strength of the reformist or progressive position. In the United States, detenté is contingent on un-maximalist and compromising dispositions. The Trump administration seems to be pursuing the opposite trajectory.

Assuming Iran, in the future, practices statecraft in a manner that is aligned with the Westphalian tradition, I contend the U.S. needs to assume a new and updated position in the Middle East that will allow for the gradual improvement of relations between the United States and Iran, as well as prepare it for a less tumultuous journey throughout the 21st century. Before relations can become cordial, hostilities will need to cool. Detenté is the aim, but what are the means?

The United States, I argue, should base detenté on six prescriptions. In other words, the U.S. needs to do the following in order to usher in age of conciliation. One, the United States needs to recognize the substantive role it played in the 1953 Coup d'etat and offer an official apology. Second, the United States should accommodate or tolerate

Iranian influence in the region. Third, the U.S. should work to wean Iran from its reliance on instability as a means to regional influence and, instead, work with it to establish alternative levers of sway. A first step to the aforementioned is the tolerating Iranian regional influence. This will help Iran come to the calculation that stability is in its interest and it will allow for Iran to establish and ultimately yield non-military mechanisms of power. Four, the United States must accept Islamism as heterogeneous and not necessarily at odds with Westphalian traditions of statecraft. Five, American foreign policy should be constructed in a manner that does not seek to manipulate foreign, domestic situations to align with the domestic precepts of the United States. This means overlooking the internal conditions of non-democratic states when the balance of power is in disarray. By doing so, the United States will assume a less imperial role and abstain from heavy handed policies that prevent the United States to take on a facilitating roles in the region. Six, the U.S. should accept a neutral role in the Middle East for the coming decades. Hence, it should abdicate its favoritism for Israel and Saudi Arabia.

5.3 American Policy Prescriptions

1. Apology for the Coup d'etat of 1953.

The original divide between the United States and Iran is the former's participation in the Coup d'etat of 1953, its subsequent assistance in reinstating the Shah as the head of state, and the police state that it help construct to keep the Shah in

power for over 20 years. Hence, the first step in reconciliation between the two countries must begin with the United States offering an official, congressional resolution apologizing to the Iranian people for violating its sovereignty. By doing so, the United States would send a strong signal to the people and the government of Iran that it sincerely aspires to shift away from the paradigm that has left the two countries in deadlock for nearly four decades. As shown in Chapter four, the deficit of trust between the two countries is inhibiting engagement. An official apology, however, would be a sincere step towards rebuilding trust, particularly due to the fact that the gesture would not be transactional. The JCPOA was a concrete step that allows for trust to be built up over time, but it is rather transactional: the lifting of sanctions in exchange for the temporary abolition of Iran's militaristic nuclear program. An apology is rather apolitical, and, perhaps, it would appeal to the deep generosity and maturity of the Iranian people. Such an act will also reassert American leadership and welcome its presence in the region.

2. Tolerating Iranian Influence

America's status quo position is poorly attuned to the realities of the power dynamics in the region. The reality of the matter is that Iranian regional power status is stubbornly being denied — this comes at the expense of regional stability. Accordingly, a serious push for detente will require the United States to recognize Iran as a regional power, which means, by extension, accommodating Iranian influence in the region.

Hence, American-Iranian detenté and the future of the regional balance of power are not at odds.

Regional powers extend influence into smaller states; it is a reality of the international state system. Tolerating Iranian influence throughout the Middle East, however, is typically against conventional wisdom in the United States. This type of thinking is predicated on the assumption that Iran's heightened influence is equivalent to expansionism or it is treated as a prodrome of a *tour de force*. Influence and expansionism, then, are often treated as synonymous. I contend that trying to subvert Iranian influence is out of touch with the reconfiguration of the contemporary Middle East Order and, therefore, harmful to future Iran-U.S. relations. Now that Iran has solidified its reach into Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon — through its “Axis of Resistance”¹⁴⁸ — it should be tolerated to maintain these partnerships at a political and social level, and, perhaps, a limited military extent as well. It is not within the ability of the United States to fully undercut these ties without military force — even then there is no guarantee such a maneuver would help foster stability in the long run.

Henry Kissinger's strategic thinking reminds us that power is never fixed in the international arena. As a result, balance of power is never static or perpetual; it is reconfigured through challenges to the status quo. Heretofore, Iran was a secondary state in Eurasia; today, it is making its weight felt. It is putting up a fight to be accepted amongst the ranks of the major powers. Hence, it is regularly pressing for modifications in order to receive compensation for hitherto low levels of respect. It is insisting that the

¹⁴⁸ The Axis is composed of Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas in Palestine, and, of course, Iran.

regional order adjust. Iran will not accept a balance of power where it perceives the arrangements to be humiliating, unjust and tilted against it. It is within this context that the growth of Iranian influence should be understood. The world powers would do well to listen unless they can stomach a constant, but draining military response.

American foreign policy, therefore, needs to clearly differentiate between Iranian influence and Iranian expansionism. The former does not necessarily jeopardize American interests, while the latter — as a possible maneuver to regional hegemony — does threaten American interests, as the establishment of any regional hegemon would. Of the states where the Axis of Resistance is present, not one organ of the resistance has absolute control of the state in which they are based. In Iraq, the Popular Mobilization Front and Shia politicians and clerics are checked by the Sunni minority, Iraqi Kurds, and U.S.-Iraq relations. In Syria, while Iran's ally — Bashar al-Assad — remains in power, the resources of the state are exhausted and are consumed with domestic concerns, not external ambitions. Moreover, the United States, Turkey, and the Syrian Kurds — all with their own respective interests — check the Syrian government. If Bashar al-Assad remains in power or if a head of state sympathetic to Iran takes his place, the U.S. would not lose a historic or regional ally. Historically, Syria's orientation has been directed to Iran and Russia. In Lebanon, Hezbollah remains militarily dormant and politically active. They too are checked, by Israel. Hence, the Axis of resistance — and in particular Iran — do not look fit to launch military campaigns aimed at territorial acquisition nor do they appear to be in a position to consolidate political power. On these grounds, the United

States overestimates the military capabilities of Iran, particularly with the temporary pause on their nuclear weapons program.

Iran's new position in the region could have positive implications on a future balance of power. If Iran's influence across the region is accepted as status quo by regional players, Iran could potentially make the calculation that stability and engagement is within its interest. A leading component of Kissinger's strategic thinking is developing ways to incorporate ill behaved states into a balance of power that restrains expansionist behavior. In order for this to occur, Iran must feel power is fairly distributed throughout the region. In other words, establishing Iran as a status quo power might very well be contingent on accepting the Axis of resistance as legitimate. Otherwise, Iran will not be content with its position in the region, making a balance unattainable. Moreover, one should question the efficacy, in terms of stability, of having Iran withdraw its support for its proxies in the long run. If Iran were to relinquish support for its dependent state and non-state actors, they would not necessarily become irrelevant. Iran's relationship with actors such as Hezbollah and the leverage it enjoys over them could be an important component to preventing further escalations and to establishing a strong balance of power. For example, it was the leverage Iran held over Hezbollah that resulted in the release of the remaining U.S. hostages that Hezbollah held captive in 1991.

Given this environment, cautiously tolerating Iranian influence in the region is not a direct threat to America's immediate or long term interests. Nor is accepting a degree of Iranian influence in the region improper for a country of its magnitude and importance. After all, it has the deepest collective history in the region and, thus, it possesses a strong

national pride. Accordingly, the United States should not predicate engagement and detenté with Iran on the grounds that it must first cease its support for regional proxies. Serious talks or negotiations over the nature of Iran's relationship with these entities will occur only after hostilities mitigate. By accepting Iranian influence in the region and forgoing constant efforts to contain it, U.S.-Iran relations will begin to improve.

On similar grounds, the United States should not predicate engagement with Iran on the grounds that it abandon its ballistic missile program. In the region, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Libya, Israel, Iraq, Egypt, and Afghanistan are all known to possess some form of ballistic missile systems.¹⁴⁹ During the Iran-Iraq war, Iran did not possess ballistic missiles while Iraq did; Iran struggled to get their hands on them due to American sanctions. Eventually, Iran received ballistic missiles through an arms deal with North Korea and Libya. Given the environment of who possess ballistic missiles in the region and the historical memory of their lack of ability during the Iran-Iraq war, Iran's development of Ballistic Missiles should not be viewed as irrational or improper.

3. Source of Iranian Influence and New Prospects

For the United States, a serious and a continues push towards Detenté will depend on its ability to ease Iran's military support of non-state actors throughout the Middle East. Yet, the United States will have to offer substitute security arrangements before Iran abdicates support for these groups.

¹⁴⁹ Arms Control Association 2017.

The preliminary source of Iranian influence in the Middle East was the instability precipitated by the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Ever since these military campaigns, Iranian influence has gradually expanded. Today, Iran yields influences unlike anytime in the modern era. Instability remains Iran's primary source of influence and, thus, security; it is skilled at manipulating and injecting resources into conflicts beyond its own borders. It is ironic that Iran's influence is directly correlated, if not caused, in part, by American foreign policy.

Stability in the Middle East and a sustainable balance of power will be impossible to establish as long as conflict remains Iran's primary source of regional sway. Similarly, any regional agreement or treaty that excludes Iran will not be sustainable in the long-run. Iranian participation is integral to regional stability given the leverage it has at its disposal. In other words, regional stability is currently not in Iran's national interest because it would minimize the country's influence and, thus security.

The challenge for American foreign policy — and truly the international liberal community — is to find a way to divorce Iranian influence from instability and militarism. Iran will not retract its military support for its proxy forces throughout the Middle East unless if its feels it has other avenues of influence to resort to. Besides military power, what other forms of power could Iran resort to? Ideological, economic, and political power are the only options. Its founding ideology is certainly attractive to factions throughout the globe, but it would be a form of soft power and, thus, not well suited for the replacement of hard, military power. The nation's soft power does little in terms of national security and it would not hold up well against the ideologies of the

United States and Saudi Arabia that are typically backed with military power and large treasuries (e.g. from 2013-2016, Saudi Arabia spent \$300 billion on its military while Iran spent \$45 billion). Finally, it is hard to imagine an American foreign policy capable of convincing Iran that relying on its soft power will sufficiently protect Iran's interests in the region.

Economic power, on the hand, is more promising. It would hold substantial sway across the region, but Iran currently lacks the economic muscle to act as a financial, economic, and innovative hub with the ability to drive investment and reconstruction throughout the war torn region. This is not to say Iran's economic power could not be enhanced. Iran has a relatively robust middle class, a solid education system, and an extremely large youth population; hence, Iran has a solid set of inputs that will help it become an economic powerhouse in the region. Such a project would take years and require international support, thereby giving the international community a degree of leverage. More specifically, in order to experience meaningful and holistic economic growth across all classes, Iran needs tremendous international financing that largely only the United States can provide. Yes, Iran could access finance from other countries, but such sources would still be contingent on the nature of American-Iranian relations. At the end of the day, financial institutions will not make large scale investments in Iran if they believe there is even a slight possibility of the U.S. invading Iran or the possibility of Iran sliding into a regional war. Large scale investment necessitates stability.

The United States and Iran should take advantage of this reality. The medium to long term security of the regime rests on the state of the Iranian economy. It realizes this.

Moreover, as Iran progresses economically, it will translate its growth into regional influence by building economic structures in the region, instead of bilateral military corridors and enterprises. It is in the absolute Interest of the United States to help Iran economically as long as such help is tied directly to a reduction in its support for proxies. China and its one belt one road initiative, however, could pose a threat to the U.S.'s prospect of using economic support as a gateway to reconciliation. The longer the West waits to help Iran beef up its economy, the more likely any leverage it might have would fall into the hands of China and other countries with large financial industries.

Helping Iran economically is directly connected to integrating it into the international system, so as to create a situation where Iran will seek to participate in the system and not exacerbate from the sidelines. Henry Kissinger is adamant on the necessity to not humiliate, punish, and belittle nations who are reinventing themselves for the new order. For example, Kissinger criticizes the treaty of Versailles so heavily due to the fact that it neither pacified nor weakened Germany after the end of the first world war. He attributes this to the fact that Germany was treated too harshly throughout the treaty, particularly in the section of what is now known as the War Guilt Clause — the need to pay reparations for all damages done. Similarly, after the end of the Cold War, Kissinger stressed the importance of integrating Russia into the international system through a series of economic and political measures. He thought it was necessary not to reprimand and scold Russia and Germany for their past actions because it would not help establish stability in the future.

Of course, Iran is not recovering from collapse, like the soviet union was, or recovering from a brutal world war, like germany. Yet, the general sentiment of Kissinger's tenet of reintegration holds. One can conceive the JCPOA as a diplomatic solution or postponement to an issue that could have been dealt with militarily. The nature of the beast is that the international community needs to ingrain Iran into a system that, as of now, it has one foot in and one foot out. The JCPOA needs an economic plan of support in order to help overcome the deadlock.

Political influence is more precarious, yet crucial to the needed divorce. It threatens the Westphalian principle of nonintervention and is likely to perpetuate the fear of expansionism throughout the region. Yet, such fears will need to be suppressed and endured — and addressed when legitimately threatened — in the short to medium term in order to allow for the cultivation of the long-term project of economic development. Political support for factions within the axis of resistance will need to be tolerated, as verbal and limited resource support is a better alternative than military support. It is perhaps best to consider the Axis of resistance as an alliance that contains and suppresses the fears of individual factions within the axis by the sense of security it provides through the conception of alliedship and strength through numbers.

Demanding that Iran outrightly abdicate military support for its proxies is naive and inevitably fruitless. As a main lever of influence and power, Iran will rely on these groups for its national security as long as the policy's negativities clearly do not outway its benefits. In order for Iran to consider rescinding support, the U.S. will first have to engage Iran through an overarching period of detenté and offer it alternative security

measures. The nuclear deal is a once in a generation chance, if not a one time prospect, to rebuild a degree of trust that will allow for fruitful engagement between the two countries. Therefore, U.S. foreign policy should refrain from outrightly suffocating Iranian influence in the region and, instead, gradually set up an incentive structure that divorces Iran's influence from the exploitation of conflict and reconnects it to political allyship and economic influence.

At the end of the day, the enhancement of Iran economic power will not completely satisfy Iranian security concerns, despite its plausibility as a substitute for the military support of proxies. As the ultimate factor in inter-state relations, hard power must be replaced with a close or comparable alternative. *When* and *if* Iran retires its support for its paramilitaries, its relative degree of hard power will diminish. *If* Iran relinquishes sponsorship, it will do so in anticipation of — or having already realized — replacement channels of auxiliary national security. *When* is dependent on how quick regional players are willing to seriously offer and engage Iran on issues of regional and national security. Hence, Iran will need to be offered a seat at the table — a sign and respect of its regional power status. Hamid Biglari offers a step in the direction of respecting, but addressing regional conflict and security. He states:

One possible diplomatic arrangement could be a regional security summit, attended by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, and sponsored by the P5+1, building on that groups success in negotiating the 2015 nuclear deal. Regional ballistic missile reduction as well as a ban on nuclear weapons development would be on the agenda. Respect for territorial integrity, mutual non-interference in each other's affairs, safe shipping passage in the Persian Gulf, and the eradication of terrorism and religious extremism would also need to be negotiated.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Biglari 2017.

As the three supreme states in the region, the summit would be balanced, fair, and complete. The 2017 Riyadh Summit that took place in May is the antithesis the summit offered by Biglari. The attendees were the statesman of 55 muslim and Arab countries; Iran was barred from attending. During the Summit, Saudi Arabia and the United States signed an arms treaty amounting to \$350 billion dollars over the next ten years. Such maneuvers cast hope for regional stability and action into a perpetual state of misalignment and, even, perhaps, render a summit suggested by Biglari impossible, let alone a sustainable balance of power in the region.

4. Accepting Islamism as Heterogeneous

Kissinger stresses the need for states to capitulate domestic ideals in order to form a pluralistic national order to flourish. That is, states need to restrain their urge to treat their guiding principles and systems of governance as universal and supreme. Iran and the United States both hold their founding principles and historical experiences with high regard. The latter is based on liberal democracy, with an emphasis on freedom and democracy. The former is founded on Islamic, political institutions and gives heavy weight to political independence and antagonism towards the un-equitable international order. The institutions of each country are quite dissimilar.

The west is particularly frightened by the political concept of Islamism. It is often framed as incompatible with Western political traditions. International strategic thinking based on pluralism should, in theory, be able to accomodate institutional differences

within the international system. The aforementioned is precisely what occurred throughout the 1970s when the United States and China went through a period of reconciliation, despite their economic, political, and ideological differences. Throughout the first three decades of the Cold War, the United States was accustomed to treating communism in monolithic terms.

Today, any non-secular regime is treated with suspicion, particularly those that combine politics and Islam. When Nixon came into power, and thus, Kissinger, a new mindset emerged that started to treat communism less monolithically. Conceiving communist regimes as not constituting one cohesive threat, the United States loosened up to the idea of engaging the People's Republic of China. Today, I argue, it would be wise to begin to treat Islamism in, similarly, less unitary terms.

With a specific rendition of Islamism institutionalized into the Iranian state, the international community is able to engage and negotiate with the Islamic, theocratic government. In the case of militant Islamism — such as ISIL and al-Qaeda and other groups — it lacks the centrality of the state, which makes it hard, if not impossible, to engage and negotiate with it. Liberal democracies should seek a way to accommodate states that incorporate Islamism into their political structure in a manner similar to how the liberal states came to terms with the People's Republic of China and its take on communism. It is possible that the international zeal of Islamism will pass as the region embraces alternative forms of organization, similar to the fate of communism as the Soviet Union collapsed.

The point of the matter is that treating Islamism in a less stringent and hostile manner will potentially assist in the attempt to integrate Iran into the international system. Iran's conception of international affairs is often painted as being diametrically opposed to the Westphalian framework of order — that it poses a direct challenge to its guiding principles. There is some validity in this appraisal — as Kissinger displayed in the earlier section — but it is reductionist to treat the entirety of the Iranian political milieu as emblematic of rejecting national interest in favor of universal religious principles — as the ideas of Adib-Moghaddam in chapter four displayed. In order to overcome the deadlock, the U.S. needs to address the conditions of the international order that cause Iran to challenge it — primarily that it perceives it as unjust. The United States inability to entertain the idea that there are other forms of political and economic organization other than the renditions of the liberal, democratic form practiced in the global north exacerbate Iranian challenges to the international system. Indeed, Iran confronts the current order, but it has yet to show total rejection of the contemporary tradition of the state.

5. A Smaller, but Enhanced Role: Balance of Power and American Neutrality

America's ultimate goal in the region should be to strike a settlement where all significant parties—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran—are in support of the status quo's distribution of power and where minority parties feel protected and supported by the balance. Within the balance, the United States, China, and Russia can pose as outside facilitators and additional sources of structural support for the balance. In order for this to

occur, the U.S. needs to construct close relationships with all parties, including Iran. These bilateral relationships will need to be closer and more influential than most bilateral relationships within the region. Such a task will take years, if not decades, and it will be extremely difficult to execute. Such a balance is emblematic of Bismarck's diplomatic achievements while in power. In such a position, the U.S. could wield its sway with regional powers in a manner that accommodates and reconciles conflicting interests and grievances. For such a balance of power structure to exist, the U.S. would have to assume a position of neutrality it hasn't displayed in the region for decades and all associated parties would have to hold trusts in the U.S. Moreover, such a strategy assumes that at some point in the future, conflicting interests in the region will be reduced to a level where a balance would be possible to maintain. Hence, before the balance could be cultivated, internal stability in Iraq, Yemen, and Syria will need to transpire. Finally, the deadlock between Iran and the U.S. will need to be overcome.

In order for the United States to help construct a sustainable balance of power, it needs to pivot its foreign policy orientation in a number of ways. Besides sticking to the guidelines of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, it must transform its unconditional support for Israel. Israel and its representation in America — the Israeli Lobby — enjoy an unwarranted amount of influence over U.S. foreign policy. In fact, the policies of the lobby and Israel are often counterintuitive to the national interests of the United States. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt argue the aforementioned persuasively in their book *The Israeli Lobby*. By distancing itself from Israel, the U.S. will take its first step in assuming a more neutral role in the region. By no means should the United States

abdicate its position that Israel is to be a secure state, but the U.S. must recognize the Palestinian cause with explicit language that condemns Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and it needs to reinvigorate its support for a two state solution (though it should support a one-state solution should that transpire). The United States possess quite a bit of leverage over the foreign policy of Israel, considering it relies heavily on the United States — leverage that is poorly exercised. The U.S. will do well to exercises its hold vis-a-vis Israel in a manner that situates America into a centrist position that more accurately protects its interests in the region, as pointed argued by Walt and Mearsheimer. This pivot would deprive Iran and Islamist causes throughout the Middle East the sources of their anti-american rhetoric, as it is largely, but partly, founded on the United State's absolute support for Israel and its reluctance to embrace the palestinian cause.

On a similar note, the United states needs to reconsider its heavy-handed support of Saudi Arabia. It can and should start with the abdication of its support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen. Saudi Arabia and the United States have a complicated relationship, dating back to the Quincy Agreement of 1945, when the President Roosevelt promised U.S. military security to Saudi Arabia in exchange for secure access to oil supplies. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia bred and exported its wahhabi doctrine across the Muslim world, thereby permeating the very ideology the United States spends billions of dollars fighting through military confrontation each year. Moreover, portions of the monarchy helped fun and facilitate the September 11th attacks. Nevertheless, the relationship persists. By distancing itself from the monarchy — simply by the means of

relinquishing unabiding support — the U.S. will enhance its regional neutrality twofold. The costs will be minimal and are outweighed by the long term prospects in the region presented by doing so.

Renouncing absolute support for Israel and Saudi Arabia will allow the United States to pursue a more flexible foreign policy in the region. Primarily, the U.S. will be in a position where it can more likely make amends with Iran and loosen its reliance on force and rhetoric as the primary means of dealing with a resurgent Iran. In fact, if the relationship between Iran and the United States improved, it would likely benefit Israel and Saudi Arabia, as the U.S. would have a diplomatic channel with which it could mitigate the tensions between the three countries. All of this is in line with a wider regional ambition: shaping a smaller physical presence in the Middle East region for the United States. The U.S. should not be so necessarily intent on seeing Bashar al-Assad removed from power or feel the need to prolong the Syrian Civil War in order to counter Russian and Iranian expansionism. Since decolonization, Syria has been within Russian and Iranian spheres of influence. If the War were to end with the reestablishment of the status quo, it would not definitely harm U.S. interests in the region (albeit tragic). The U.S. should maintain its presence in Iraq and Syria on the grounds of expelling and cementing the exodus of I.S. as a territorial organization — no more. By limiting its quest in the region to stability and balance of power, the United States will assume a role for the 21st century that I and ultimately Henry Kissinger, vehemently argue is in its long term interest.

5.4 Iranian Recalibration

Iran, too, must undertake a series of policy pivots if the deadlock is to be overcome. One, if the United States releases an official apology for its role in the 1953 coup d'etat, the Iranian government must welcome it and express forgiveness. Two, Iran needs to limit its nuclear program to civil purposes. Three, Iran needs to forgo its support for violent extremism, regardless of the breed or the agenda it seeks to push through its use. Four, Iran must abdicate its expansionist temptations.

1. Forgiveness

A firm Iranian expression of forgiveness towards the United States' role in orchestrating the 1953 Coup d'etat and its interference in its politics will be commensurate and set the basis for a new time. For the United States, an apology would be emblematic of introspection and of the desire for reconciliation. For Iran, forgiveness would signal a distinct break from the anti-American fervor that the Islamic Revolution was partly based upon.

Yet, forgiveness might very well be an unrealistic expectation. The regime's legitimacy is partly derived from its anti-American rhetoric. Therefore, should the Islamic Republic of Iran accept the apology of the United States, it could mean renouncing anti-Americanism as a source of legitimacy. The regime's primary concern — the continued existence of the theocratic regime — could very well stand between the

acceptance and rejection of an apology. How an apology will be received is ultimately contingent on timing and the internal calculations of the regime. Accordingly, the United States should be mindful of these contingencies when it considers offering an apology.

Accepting an apology from the United States is in the interest of the regime. Perpetual animosity towards a foreign power is not a sustainable or desirable form of legitimacy. The regime would do well to repurpose its authority away from American antipathy and towards a domestic project of rejuvenation. By expressing forgiveness, Iran will be distancing itself from its antediluvian past, which could provide a gateway to a future predicated on regional integration and prosperity rather than manipulation and exploitation of warring factions. The point being: forgiveness will create a space for reinvention that will allow Iran to calibrate its place in world politics.

2. Non-Proliferation

Iran's nuclear ambition—with the exception of Israel—sets it apart in the Middle East region and it is the chief source of tension between Iran and the United States. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is the culmination of a series of none continuous negotiations that began 12 years before the treaty was ratified in 2015. Essentially, for the next ten years Iran will never be more than a year away from nuclear weapon capability and after that initial decade, its capabilities will improve and it will be able to assemble a weapon if it chooses within a shorter time frame. The temporary and tolerant nature of the treaty and the inability of the Obama administration to link nuclear restraint to

regional military and political restraint are the mainstay of the criticism directed at the deal.

Henry Kissinger critiques the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on three fronts. First, Kissinger asserts inspection and enforcement of the deal will be a perpetual and perhaps insurmountable challenge to the deal's efficacy. Second, the framework of the agreement is predicated on the acceptance of Iranian enrichment and the logic of multilateral nuclear deterrence, leaving Iran within close reach of a weapon and the region still in nuclear limbo. Third, the JCPOA will not improve regional order, but “reinforce, not resolve the world’s challenges in the region. Rather than enabling American disengagement from the Middle East, the nuclear framework is more likely to necessitate deepening involvement there — on complex new terms.” Indeed, nearly three years since the framework's ratification, instability in the region has remained consistent if not exasperated. Moreover, the United States has a heavier presence in the region than it did in 2015.

Nevertheless, now that the deal is established, it is foolish to strip it of its credence or ignore its obligations. Hence, Iran should continue to abide by it and the United States should remain faithful to its word. If the United States abdicated from the deal, it would tarnish its ability in the future to construct and realize nuanced, multilateral negotiations on which the international order is increasingly predicated. Second, an attempt to reimpose sanctions risks isolating America, as it would be difficult to restore the international sanctions regime when Iran is abiding by the deal. Accordingly, even if the United States fails to meet its obligations under JCPOA, Iran should continue to

adhere to the deal, considering the p5+1 have expressed a commitment to the deal despite the United States' hesitancy under a new administration.

If Tehran remains faithful to the framework despite the precarious behavior of Washington, the simple shock of a change in a Presidential administration might be sufficiently and politically weighty to recast relations between Iran and the United States in the direction of detenté. If Iran backs away from the deal, the United States and Iran will no longer have common ground and will need to start from scratch. The consequences of this are unforeseen. At worst, inter-state conflict in the region will emerge and perhaps an outright war, as there will be no pact to mitigate nuclear agitation and America will not be able provide the Arab states with the security they depend heavily on. Ultimately, Iran and the United States need to remain faithful to the nuclear framework and focus attention on their counterparts heavy hand in the region.

3. Iranian Backed Militias and Expansionism

Currently, the major threat emanating from Iran is its militant foreign policy and expansionist behavior — not its nuclear program which is temporarily placated. Iran has bolstered its position in the region at the expense of prolonging and aggravating the civil wars that have stricken the Middle East. It relies on insurgencies, militias, political opposition movements, and terrorist groups in order to execute its foreign policy agenda in nearly every country in the Middle East. This dependency is due to its own resource limitations and a lack of willingness to use its own national military. These tactics have largely been effective and have helped challenge the status quo in the region.

Unfortunately, Iran's success in the region is dependent on unrest. Accordingly, Iran's

bolstered position is predicated on the Middle East's instability. In addition, Iran is a sufficient power to the point where steadiness in the region will require its cooperation.

A challenge presents itself: Iran depends on unrest for its influence and, simultaneously, stability in the region depends on Iranian temperance. A roadblock to the reconciliation between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran is that the fact that the latter benefits from the disarray at the former's expense. The U.S. will not continuously and positively engage Iran when it is directly supporting the forces that challenge the interests of the United States. The reverse also holds true: Iran will not warm up to the United States while its forces are stationed in its backyard. The dichotomous nature of relations makes reconciliation particularly hard.

On Iran's part, it must treat its support for regional militias as a temporary and ultimately negotiable. This does not mean abdicating its support in order to comply with the preconditions of negotiations laid out by the United States. It does mean coming to terms with the fact that it eventually needs to pivot the source of its influence from Iranian-backed militias to other political and economic avenues (these avenues were described in an earlier section). The issue of Iranian-backed militias will perhaps be solved by connecting it to issues of American military presence in the region. If solved in tandem and in contingency to the other, Iran and the United States will be on a path to surmount the deadlock.

Finally, Iran must heavily curtail the expansionist tendencies that arise from a belief that the nation ought to dominate the Middle East due to its historical experiences of consolidating the wider region into a single empire. This paper has painted

expansionism as a redline. Hence, if the Islamic Republic of Iran leads a military effort to annex or occupy a neighboring country, an international military response will be necessary in order to preserve the multipolar power structure of the region. An imperial Iran would certainly suspend the possibility of reconciliation between it and the United States until deep into the 21st century. On this note, Iran will do well to abstain from inter-state military aggression or invasion.

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