



SMA Reach-back Report

Competition Short of Armed Conflict with a Regional Power: Lessons from the Gray Zone (and Beyond) for US-Iran Relations

Question (R6.7): *Are there examples from US history of competition short of open conflict¹ with a regional power? What lessons exist that may be applied to resolving competing US/Iran objectives short of open conflict? Which examples are most relevant—pre- or post-World War II?*

Contributors²

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Executive Summary

Dr. Sabrina Pagano, NSI Inc.

The experts drew on a wide range of examples from US conflicts and moved beyond a focus solely on competition short of armed conflict (CSAC or “gray zone”) to other strategies or forms of competition executed by the US. The examples offered rich source material from which to extract lessons applicable to current US-Iran relations. Lessons might be learned from relations with Iran itself beginning with the Revolution to the present; the US-Soviet Cold War; the US and North Korea (1953-present); the US and Great Britain during the 19th Century, when the US was a rising regional power and Britain was a global power; the US and China during the Taiwan Straits Crisis (1954-55); US-Cuba (1959-now); the US and Venezuela (1998-present); Central America in the 1980s; and conflict in the Balkans (1991-2000). At the most basic level, these conflicts were battles over regional security or global influence (US vs. Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, Great Britain, or USSR) or ideology/ideological influence (US vs. Iran, USSR, North Korea, China, Cuba, Central America, or the Balkans). By and large, the most relevant examples were those from the post WWII period.

Iranian versus US Interests

Most expert contributors saw US and Iranian core interests as fundamentally opposed,³ and identified several interrelated factors that are likely to be ongoing impediments to US-Iran relations. These included the

¹ The gray zone is a conceptual space between peace and war, where activities are typically ambiguous or cloud attribution, and exceed the threshold of ordinary competition, yet intentionally fall below the level of large-scale direct military conflict. Bragg, B. (2017). Integration report: Gray Zone conflicts, challenges, and opportunities: Retrieved from: <http://nsiteam.com/integration-report-gray-zone-conflicts-challenges-and-opportunities/>

² The present report also references the following work, previously conducted for Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA): Astorino-Courtois, A. (2016). Iran's post-ISIL strategic calculus. Retrieved from: <http://nsiteam.com/sma-reachback-irans-post-isil-strategic-calculus/>

³ For an overview of these core Iranian interests, along with associated objectives/activities to support these interests, please see Table 1 below.

perceived—or actual—divides between the two nations in terms of culture and values (Cabán), the persistence of each side’s view of the other as malevolent (Kluver and team), and the persistence of old grievances (O’Shaughnessy). The expert inputs⁴ mentioned five types of distinct but sometimes interrelated interests: 1) protecting Iran’s national security, 2) defending Iran’s internal sovereignty, 3) minimizing economic stress and associated public dissatisfaction, 4) defending Islamic identity and championing the Islamic worldview, and 5) regional hegemony. As summarized in the table below, the majority of Iranian objectives or activities intended to realize these interests are directly opposed to the interests of the US.⁵ Dr. Spencer Meredith III of the National Defense University provided a nuance to this view, noting that “Conflict with Iran today is not a harbinger of perpetually conflicting relations, even though it remains necessary for the foreseeable future to define interests clearly and harden US positions in opposition to Iranian ambitions and actions... This does not preclude a potential later broaching of areas of coordination against other common threats, to include a Saudi reorientation towards the PRC, and/or a deeper, more formal Turkish reorientation towards Russia.”⁶

Table 1: Contrast Between US and Iran Regional Interests in the Middle East

Iran interests	SME(s)	Conflict with US Interests?
SAFEGUARD IRAN’S NATIONAL SECURITY		
Ensure Iranian influence in Iraqi government Keep Iraqi militias dependent on Iranian weapons and military advice	Astorino-Courtois; Maye	Yes
Mitigate security threat from KSA Surround Saudi Arabia by training Bahraini Shi’a & supporting Houthi rebels in Yemen	Astorino-Courtois; Maye	Yes
Eliminate existential threat to Iran from Sunni extremism & related	Astorino-Courtois	Neutral
Retain and grow influence in Lebanon & Gaza Unhindered access to ports in Lebanon and on Mediterranean (land corridor across Iraq and Syria in Lebanon)	Astorino-Courtois; Maye	Yes
Combat US regional influence	Astorino-Courtois	Yes
DEFEND IRAN’S INTERNAL SOVEREIGNTY		
Manage public dissatisfaction with Iran; quell unrest	Astorino-Courtois	Neutral
Secure Iran’s borders and seacoast	Astorino-Courtois	Yes
RELIEVE ECONOMIC STRESS / ASSOCIATED PUBLIC DISCONTENT (THROUGH LICIT & ILLICIT MEANS)		
Defend economic assets & investments in Syria; gain foothold in post-conflict economies in Syria & Iraq	Astorino-Courtois	Yes
Work with other suppliers to increase global oil prices	Astorino-Courtois	Yes
Open economic relations with the EU (if and when Reformists given leeway by clergy & IRGC)	Astorino-Courtois	Yes
Nuclear weapons, nuclear power, uranium enrichment capability	Maye	Yes
Extraction of economic resources from Iraqis, Syrians, Yemenis, & Lebanese	Maye	Yes

⁴ Note: Inputs also referenced prior SMA Reach-back reports relevant to the current question (see Astorino-Courtois reference in footnote 1). As Astorino-Courtois noted, “while Iran’s tactics may change slightly, there is little to suggest that Iran’s key strategic interests will change with ISIL defeat.”

⁵ For a detailed overview of US interests as perceived by Iran (and presented in their media) and varied by context (e.g., Syria, Yemen, nuclear deal, etc.), see the contribution from Dr. Randy Kluver.

⁶ One such prospect for cooperation is offered in a previous CENTCOM Reach-back report in which the author noted the potential for coordination between Iran and the US in “shoring up the stability and legitimacy of the Abadi government among Sunni Iraqis to reduce the appeal of violent jihadism among disaffected Sunni Iraqis.”⁶ Ultimately, as Dr. Nicholas O’Shaughnessy noted, the best strategy moving forward with Iran may be—a “blend of coercion [and] seduction,” while working to avoid the military option, and providing Iran with face-saving opportunities, ultimately allowing both sides to claim victory. As in the uneasy partnership between the US (rising regional power) and Britain (global power), shared values [or superordinate goals] can be sought to facilitate collaboration, even when viewing each other as adversaries (Arquilla).

Continuation of drug trade, human trafficking & organs into Europe & South America via shortest land route (Afghanistan-Iran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon)	Maye	Yes
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DEFEND ISLAMIC IDENTITY		
Balance political influence of the IRGC with popular / Reformist views in the government	Astorino-Courtois	Neutral
Defend the dignity and essentialism of Shia Islam	O'Shaughnessy	Yes
Protect Shia communities	Jeffrey	Neutral
Export Islamic Revolution	Maye	Yes
Champion classic Islamic world view	Jeffrey	Yes
Present US actions related to nuclear agreement as demonstration of victimization of Iran (media presentation)	Kliver and team	Yes
Present Lebanon as threatened by alliance between US, KSA, & Israel / Hezbollah as a legitimate political force that fights terrorism	Kliver and team	Yes
REGIONAL HEGEMONY		
Expand as regional hegemon (informed by role in Shia Islam, and role as claimant to Islamic heritage)	Jeffrey, Maye, Meredith	Yes
End US-led regional security order	Jeffrey, Meredith	Yes
"Shi'ite Crescent" (corresponding with the land corridor)	Maye, Meredith	Yes
Unhindered access & profit from key religious sites in Iraq	Maye	Yes
To be the dominant power in the Middle East, and a mighty counterweight to KSA	O'Shaughnessy	Yes
Present Iran as victorious in its efforts in Syria	Kliver and team	Yes
Present Yemen conflict as US/Saudi-led war on Houthi legitimacy causing humanitarian crisis, while Iran acts as stabilizing presence	Kliver and team	Yes
Need for stability in Syria against efforts to undermine Assad	Kliver and team	Yes

Table Note: Major Iranian interests are presented in dark blue; Iranian objectives or activities intended to meet those interests are presented in alternating light gray and white.

Strategies

Given the variety of seemingly competing US and Iranian differences identified by the experts, it is perhaps unsurprising that tools or strategies discussed by the contributors as successful favored more direct and aggressive approaches (e.g., threat of force, sanctions), whereas strategies such as diplomacy and containment were less frequently emphasized. The experts' inputs revealed, for example, that when diplomacy and containment were successful, they typically were part of a multi-faceted strategy (e.g., Venezuela) or larger multi-lateral effort (Balkans). As Cabán noted, "Venezuela has attempted to compete with the US for regional hegemony in the political, economic and social realms." The US has met this competition with a combination of diplomatic, information, military, and economic sources of national power. In the Balkans, the US employed both military and diplomatic strategies, but was also part of a much broader international endeavor to quell the conflict. Successful US strategy also benefits from international alliances that support US-led initiatives, and from strongly limiting interference with these initiatives from any other states (Jeffrey). Though mixed strategies fully employing diplomatic, information, military and economic sources of national power (DIME) have been successful in conflicts such as that between the US and Venezuela, key differences were noted in comparison to the current conflict with Iran (Cabán).

Lessons from the Past

As noted above, the contributors provided a broad range of examples in response to this question. Table 2 below lists these examples, along with associated US strategies and lessons that might be applied to current relations between the US and Iran.

Table 2: Historical Examples, US Strategies, and Associated Lessons Applicable to US - Iran Relations⁷

Conflict	SME(s)	Strategies Used	Lesson(s)
<i>Lessons from Prior US Engagement with Iran</i>			
US vs. Iran (1953-present)	Jeffrey; Maye; O'Shaughnessy	<p>Successful Actions/ Relevant to Current Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sanctions for JCPOA/indirect support to forces fighting Iran •Threat of force (1980 – 1981) •Competition for influence in Iraq: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fought Iranian proxies ○ Supported Iran's sectarian agonist, KSA ○ Classified Iran client Hezbollah as a terrorist force ○ Pursued mix of diplomacy, soft power, hard power (int'l sanctions) to lure Iran to negotiating table over nuclear weapons ○ Supported Israel with weapons aid •Enabling regional conflict (between competing hegemony, Iran & Iraq) (1981 – 1990) •Propping up a weak buffer zone (post Gulf War no-fly zones over Iraq) (1991 – 2000) <p>Unsuccessful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diplomacy & covert action to return US diplomats (1979–1980) •'Strategic Pause' (2001 – 2012) <p>Limited Success / Not Relevant / Unknown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Containment Propping up a "strong man" (1953-1979) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sanctions/indirect support to forces successful due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strong engagement by President ○ Broad international alliance ○ Direct, punishing impact ○ Limited US/alliance 'asks' •Threat of force successful and relevant to current context •Mix of influence sources in competition for Iraq has been successful (led to nuclear weapons deal), due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proper "blend of coercion [and] seduction ○ Rejecting military option ○ Providing Iran with face-saving devices for its domestic and Middle Eastern audiences, allowing both sides to claim victory •Enabling regional conflict had moderate success, though might be useful long-term strategy (e.g., enabling KSA & Iran conflict, playing both sides). However, "this strategy has a malevolent undertone." •Buffer was initially successful, but economic sanctions severely weakened the Iraqi populace. Probably the most ethical option—i.e., propping up a stronger (but not too strong) Iraqi gov't to act as a buffer zone between KSA, Turkey, the Kurds, and Iran <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diplomacy + covert action was unsuccessful; do not pursue <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •'Pause' was mostly unsuccessful. Following US departure of US forces from the region, Iran had carte blanche to insert themselves into Iraqi politics. Do not pursue this strategy; it has enabled Iran to become a regional hegemon and undermine US interests <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Containment only partially successful given Iran targeting of weak states/ ungoverned areas/terrorist movements. Further, pain inflicted "has not reached decisive levels." •"Strong man" approach had limited success. While US had unrestricted access to oil / strategic location, the Shah's

⁷ Other examples offered by the subject matter experts, for which no specific lessons learned were noted, include: China vs. Malaysia (over Spratly Islands); India vs. Pakistan (over Kashmir); China vs. India (border issues); Britain vs. Spain (over Gibraltar); Turkey vs. Greece (over Cyprus); and the US vs. Iraq [O'Shaughnessy; Sager]. As such, these examples are not included in the table. Dr. Meredith also cites Britain vs. Russia in Crimea, which similarly was omitted from the table, as this conflict naturally did not focus on US strategies. Finally, conflicts for which outcomes/lessons are too early to tell (e.g. Cold War 2.0; Maye) are also omitted.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diplomatic effort (2012 – 2016) 	<p>extravagance propelled the Iranian revolution. Tool offered some utility for protecting economic interests but would be difficult in current political environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Recent diplomacy: Limited success. US renegotiated JCPOA and sidestepped Iranian support of Iraq’s PMU’s in the fight vs. ISIS, but Iran grew stronger
Lessons from Prior US Engagement with Other States			
US vs. Great Britain	Arquilla	<p>Successful Actions/ Relevant to Current Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Security cooperation (via Monroe Doctrine) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Look to [any] shared values and vision to facilitate partnership, even when viewing each other as adversaries
US vs. Venezuela (1998-present)	Cabán; Maye	<p>Limited Success /Less Relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diplomacy •Information: Rhetoric targeting regime legitimacy •Military <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ security cooperation ○ foreign internal defense ○ persistent military presence ○ joint training with regional actors •Economic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cooperation with US regional allies ○ Sanctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Joint strategy (DIME) associated with Venezuela’s weakened economic position and “delegitimiz[ation] of social democratic ideals/policies” <u>but</u> Venezuelan collaboration with Iran and other US adversaries is uninterrupted •While the US is similarly employing multiple instruments of power vs. Iran, there are <u>two key differences</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ US did not relinquish frozen assets to Venezuela ○ US did not sign one-sided deals in their favor •Security cooperation with LA countries effective in part due to shared cultures (e.g. religion, thought processes). <u>Less likely with countries neighboring Iran</u> due to greater cultural disparity, particularly given lack of separation between religion and government throughout the region
Balkans 1991-2000	Jeffrey	<p>Successful Actions/ Relevant to Current Context:</p> <p>US and allies/partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Military •Diplomatic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Balkans had political, economic & ethnic/religious fissures akin to those in the CENTCOM AOR. However, “successful US-led strategies did not involve, beyond marginal programs and commitments, major transformational economic, political, and reconciliation assistance from outside.” •US success was in large part due to preventing any outside power from intervening to undercut US-led initiatives. When this did not occur (e.g., Korea 1950, Vietnam, Afghanistan post-2001, Iraq post-2003), success has been much harder to achieve
Central America 1980s	Jeffrey	<p>Successful Actions/ Relevant to Current Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Economic, military, diplomatic assistance to nation states allied with it in this area •Support for insurgencies vs. USSR/Cuba client state(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •US almost universally successful, due in large part to its neutralization of outside power’s intervention (aimed at undercutting US-led initiatives) due to distance, US resistance, etc. •Once again, when this has not occurred, success has been impeded
US - USSR Cold War (1945-89)	Maye	<p>Successful Actions/ Relevant to Current Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •‘Spheres of influence’ •Containment •Military: Threat of MAD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •These strategies were successful, as the US achieved position as regional hegemon; led to stability/prosperity for Western Europe.
US - DPRK (1953–now)	Maye	<p>Limited Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Containment •Isolation •Working with regional allies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •These strategies have been associated with periods of heightened tension and a failing economy in North Korea
US - China (Taiwan Straits Crisis (1954-55)	Maye; O’Shaughnessy	<p>Successful Actions/ Relevant to Current Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Military: Threats of nuclear strike (deterrence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •China backed down as a result of this strategy •Taiwan has also experienced stability and economic prosperity

US-Cuba (1959-now)	Maye	<u>Successful Actions/ Relevant to Current Context:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Containment•Isolation•Diplomatic efforts	•These strategies have been associated with a failing economy in Cuba
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Expert Contributions

Dr. John Arquilla

Naval Postgraduate School

This is an excerpt of a transcript from the SMA/CENTCOM Reachback Round 6 NPS Panel Discussion on 10 January 2018. To listen to the audio file of this transcript, please email scanna@nsiteam.com.

[START OF TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT]

John Arquilla: Thank you, Glenn. I'd like to join you in thanking Dr. Cabayan, Sarah, and team for continuing to involve us in these events. To our friends at CENTCOM, just know that we're here to help in any way that we are able.

For my part of today's panel, I wanted to address two issues. One, your overarching question about the strategic environment, and then I just want to give kudos to whoever put Question 7 in there on slide seven about whether there are any examples dealing with a regional power and competition short of war in US history. I love that question and will try to address it. I'm going to try to stick to somewhere between 10 and 15 minutes in general remarks and then hopefully can take questions right after before I have to leave for the other event. (At this point Arquilla spends five minutes on the general strategic environment. See full transcript when available).

[...]

There is, if I can move to my second topic very quickly, a historical analogy we're considering here. The question now is, is there an example in US history of having to deal with a regional power? Yes, there is. The twist in this is that it was the United States that was the rising regional power and Great Britain was the global power at that time. I would have us all think back to the early 19th Century, in the wake of and in the few years after the battle of New Orleans at the end of the War of 1812. We have a situation. We've fought two wars with Britain. Yet we very soon began creative, sustained cooperation. Britain as the global power made a decision that they would engage in security cooperation with the young United States. They did so by something called the Monroe Doctrine, which attempted to limit European colonization in the western hemisphere. There were rough edges in this, no question about it. In 1833, the British take the Falkland Islands, although for people who don't want to be Anglophilic there, you can call them the Malvinas Islands, which the Argentinians insist upon, which is itself kind of ironic because the name Malvinas actually derives from les Malouines, the French settlers from St. Malo who originally settled there. Not to get into one of the more intractable territorial disputes. But the point is the British went there and the United States did not at all object. Similarly, Britain did not object with the Westward

expansion of the United States for the most part, certainly not in terms of the war with Mexico.

Although in the decades following, the relationship was tested many times. Both the United States and Britain saw each other as likely adversaries. Certainly out here in the West where we have a Russian Fort Ross not too far north up here. We know that Russia, Spain, Britain, the United States all had interests, and between Britain and the United States, this nearly came to conflict on a couple of occasions. With some British show of force, they didn't have an Air Force that could anywhere in those days, but they did have a Royal Navy, and they threatened to bombard American coastal cities if things didn't work out too well. So a diplomatic solution was found to the border dispute in the Pacific Northwest, and Vancouver Island was kept a part of Canada, where it still is today. Britain had interest in this region, in Canada overall, and in Latin America as well. The United States was clearly a rising power, though, that did pose challenges that had to be met.

There came an opportunity in the 1860s where the United States might have broken apart. Much as today, we think about the possibility of some sort of dissolution of the Iranian regime. Britain thought long and hard about siding with the Confederacy and helping to break the United States apart, but in the end decided that there were enough shared values that it was going to be a hard case to make in Britain, which was profoundly anti-slavery at this point, to align itself with the slave republic. Russia played a role as well, suggesting that it would ramp up its own competition with Britain if London decided to go with the Confederacy. This was just before the beginnings of the Anglo-Russian competition in Central Asia. So this was another issue of the global power and the regional power, the tectonic plates kind of grinding a little bit and still somehow avoiding conflict, yet again. Despite a really close call, as historians look at it today. But Britain made, I think, the wise decision not to intervene in the US Civil War.

Not to go too far down the list, but there was one more time when there came the possibility of war between the United States and Britain, and that was over a territorial dispute between the British and their holdings in Guyana and Venezuela. The United States, asserting the Monroe Doctrine, said that the British were engaging in a grab for gold mines. We came close to blows. Again, this is one of those regional influence issues, and something very, very interesting arose out of this. Rather than fight over it, the global power, the British insisted upon arbitration. So an arbitration board was created, which had an equal representation of Americans, Venezuelans—and I think the American chief justice served on this— and the British. But the key arbitrator was an outside person agreed to by all parties. He was a Russian diplomat, and everyone said, "Okay, you hear all the evidence and decide." What did he do at the end of the day?" He gave 90% of the territory in dispute to the global power, the British. So the Russians were not particularly friendly at that time with Britain. This is 1895. But still their arbitrator decided largely in favor of the British.

There's terrorism at that time as well. British hostages were taken in Nicaragua, and again the United States urged Britain not to intervene militarily and worked out a peaceful solution to the crisis. I think it is well worth considering these examples from our earlier history as a rising power. Of course, in these few minutes, to go over a century of relations is a hard thing. But I think we have a very good example in these 19th Century instances of the global power of the time dealing with the regional power, which happened to be the rising United States. They managed to avoid open warfare with each other. Despite serious conflicts of interest, they were able to see shared values, a shared vision, and they found the mechanisms to be able to work together peacefully in what turned out to be the best interests of both parties.

With that, I will open up questions about either the strategic environment or the historical example and apologize that I will have to leave early for a meeting with the Afghan ambassador.. Over.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT]

Allison Astorino-Courtois

National Security Innovations Inc. (NSI)

Question (LR2): *What will be Iran’s strategic calculus regarding Iraq and the region post-ISIL? How will JCPOA impact the calculus? What opportunities exist for the US/Coalition to shape the environment favorable to our interests?*

Executive Summary

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI

Iran’s Approach in Iraq

A number of the Iran SMEs who contributed to this Quick Look characterized Iran’s approach in Iraq as “flexible” and “opportunistic,” rather than determined by a strict set of guidelines or strategies. Michael Eisenstadt and Michael Knights of the Washington Institute find Iran’s “strategic style” in Iraq to be “subtle and thrifty,” for example, in pursuit of what Alex Vatanka, an Iran scholar from the Middle East Institute, highlights as its ultimate security objective. That is, to prevent Iraq ever becoming a state that could threaten Iran as was done during the Iran-Iraq War—a time that remains in recent memory for many Iranians. This does not mean a failed state in Iraq, but does imply a militarily weak Iraq. In this regard, Iran could see US and Coalition efforts to build the Iraqi security forces into an inclusive and strong national force as a direct threat to its security.

Iran’s Post-ISIL Strategic Calculus

Cognitive decision researcher, Allison Astorino-Courtois (NSI), points out that an actor’s strategic calculus is context-dependent, and implies that a choice of behaviors is under consideration. There is therefore not a single strategic calculus that would explain the range of Iranian foreign policy choices and behaviors that US analysts and planners are likely to encounter. The good news is that while Iran’s tactics may change slightly, there is little to suggest that Iran’s key strategic interests will change with ISIL defeat: Iran saw what is perceived as Saudi-backed Sunni extremism as a significant threat before the emergence of ISIL, and surely will be prepared for the emergence of similar groups in the future.

The contributors to this Quick Look identified the following enduring strategic interests that should be expected to feature in almost any current Iranian calculus, as well as after the immediate threat of ISIL violence has weakened considerably. These are:

Safeguarding Iran’s national security *by*:

- Ensuring Iranian influence in the future Iraqi government, Syria, and the region as a whole to maintain the leverage to defeat threats to Iran posed by a pro-US and/or Sunni-inclusive Iraqi government
- Mitigating the security threat from Saudi Arabia and Gulf states, and decreasing Saudi influence throughout the region
- Eliminating the existential threat to Iran and the region’s Shi’a or Iran-friendly minorities from Sunni extremism, violent Wahhabism, and the re-emergence of ISIL-like groups
- Retaining and growing its influence in Lebanon and Gaza as leverage against Israel
- Combatting US regional influence in general

Defending Iran’s internal sovereignty *by*:

- Managing public dissatisfaction within Iran; quelling unrest

- Securing Iran’s borders and seacoast

Relieving economic stress and associated public discontent *by*:

- Defending Iranian economic assets and investments in Syria and gaining a foothold in the post-conflict economies (e.g., via construction contracts) in Syria and Iraq
- Working with other suppliers to increase global oil prices
- If and when Reformists are given leeway by the clergy and conservative forces in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), opening economic relations with the EU⁸

Defending the Islamic identity and leadership of the regime *by*:

- Clergy and Supreme Leader balancing the independent political influence of the IRGC against popular and reformist views in the government

Impact of JCPOA

Although as reported in SMA Reachback V6, other experts disagree on this point, Eisenstadt and Knights (The Washington Institute) believe that an unintended consequence of the JCPOA has been greater Iranian assertiveness in the region, and that “the more the US steps back in Iraq, the more Iran will step forward.” As a result, they argue, deterioration in US-Iran relations—perhaps as the result of a JCPOA-related crisis—could prompt an increase in Iranian challenges to US vessels in the region and arming of proxies. The implication is that the JCPOA may have increased the IRGC’s ability to argue for a more assertive regional policy, and that a new nuclear crisis could further strengthen their hand in this regard.

A political football? The success or perceived failure of the JCPOA may have important domestic political implications in the run-up to Iran’s May 2017 presidential election. Specifically, the perceived failure of the Agreement to produce widely anticipated improvements in the Iranian economy is a point on which President Rouhani and other reform-minded thinkers will be particularly vulnerable to advances by conservative opponents.⁹ In fact, Gallagher et al. (2016) reported this summer that, although Rouhani was still the front runner, his lead over former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had dropped to a narrow margin largely on account of Rouhani’s perceived failure to improve the economy—a for significant basis of the popular support – including that of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – for the JCPOA. This fall, apparently at the express request of Khamenei, Ahmadinejad announced that he would not run in May 2107 citing a meeting he had had with the supreme leader in which he was told that his candidacy would not serve the interests of the country. (Quds Force commander Major General Qasem Soleimani who also had been mentioned in the press as a potential candidate has similarly announced that he does not intend to run.) Speculation is that the Khamenei is determined to both avoid a repeat of the 2009 popular protests following Ahmadinejad’s divisive “stolen election”, and to put up attractive conservative candidates to challenge the relatively moderate Rouhani. However, there is also conjecture that Khamenei, who has been a vocal opponent of the JCPOA and a number of

⁸ Even Iranian officials perceived as more moderate, such as Abbas Araghi, a senior nuclear negotiator, have consistently stressed that “enmity between . . . [Iran] and America is still in place. . . . America from our view is still the Great Satan and nothing has changed.” From: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/05/22/elusive-equilibrium-america-iran-and-saudi-arabia-in-changing-middle-east-pub-55641>

⁹ When it was first concluded, the JCPOA was a domestic win for Rouhani and Reformist voices in Iran, and Rouhani saw a large spike in already high public approval, while approval of conservative politicians declined (Gallagher et al. 2015). At the time, polls indicated that the Agreement was overwhelmingly popular with Iranians, many of whom anticipated rapid improvements in their quality of life as a direct result. By summer 2016, however, support had fallen but remained greater than 50% of those polled. Gallagher et al. (2016) surmise that this drop-off occurred because a majority had not seen expected improvements in their standards of living.

Rouhani's other policies may not approve Rouhani's run for re-election either. The official, vetted candidate list will be announced in April 2017.

Finally, Eisenstadt and Knights (The Washington Institute) argue that to compensate the IRGC for acquiescing in the JCPOA, it has been given greater latitude to "(flex) its muscles abroad to demonstrate that it remains in control of Iran's regional policies."

Shaping Opportunities

The SMEs offer a number of suggestions for opportunities to:

Counter Iranian influence in Iraq

- Ensure long-term, multi-national commitment and funding to security in Iraq lasting beyond the war against ISIL (Michael Eisenstadt and Michael Knights, Washington Institute)
- Help the Iraqi Government resist Iranian pressure to institutionalize the PMUs as a military force independent of the Iraqi Security Forces (Eisenstadt and Knights, Washington Institute)
- Encourage Arab states to view the current Iraqi Government and press for influence on the basis of their common Arab identity, rather than continue to see the government as Shi'a first, and thus an inevitable ally of Iran (Alex Vantaka, Middle East Institute)

Increase stability in the region

- Provide Iran incentives for "positive behaviors" that reinforce its perception that it is succeeding in "re-creat[ing] the international order" (Bob Elder, GMU and Hunter Hustus, HQ USAF)
- Recognize that Iran views the Syrian War as "an existential matter for the Alawites in Syria and Shiites in neighboring states" and adjust US and partner activities to allay Iranian perceptions of sectarian threats (Bob Elder, GMU and Hunter Hustus, HQ USAF)
- Coordinate with Iran on pursuing the US shared interest in shoring up the stability and legitimacy of the Abadi government among Sunni Iraqis to reduce the appeal of violent jihadism among disaffected Sunni Iraqis (Bob Elder, GMU and Hunter Hustus, HQ USAF)
- Provide security/prestige guarantees to Iran in exchange for its encouraging sincere efforts at sectarian power-sharing by the Abadi government in Iraq (Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI)

Contributors: Michael Eisenstadt and Michael Knights (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy); Alex Vantaka (Middle East Institute; Jamestown Foundation); Allison Astorino-Courtois (NSI); Robert Elder (George Mason University) and Hunter Hustus (HQ USAF); Alireza Nader (RAND)

Editor: Allison Astorino-Courtois (NSI)

Mr. William Cabán

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

For the last 20 years, Venezuela has attempted to compete with the US for regional hegemony in the political, economic and social realms. Politically, a democratically elected president (at least the first time around), Hugo Chavez, rose to power in 1998 voicing strong anti-US rhetoric and vehemently opposed what he called "US intervention" throughout Latin America. Once he was established in office,

he dismissed the judicial and legislative branches of government, and rewrote the constitution to allow longer terms, and an indefinite number of reelections for politicians in Venezuela. Economically, Chavez expropriated billions of dollars in companies and land, some owned by US companies. He then created an alternative trade bloc called ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative to the Americas) with the help of Cuba. Hugo Chavez controlled the media, manipulated education in his country, and used strong rhetoric in high-vis forums to portray himself in the image of a revolutionary leader fighting against so called “imperialist powers,” specifically referring to the US as a negative influence in the region looking to take advantage of Latin Americans. All the while, Venezuela has seen a significant increase in economic and diplomatic relations with Iran. Throughout Chavez’s tenure, Venezuela rose in power and influence, but after his death, there was a steep descent that had its citizens facing a humanitarian crisis. Irrespective of this decline, the “revolutionary” government continues to make deals with Iran in spite of the mounting sanctions against both countries.

The Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA), and 21st Century Socialism – Throughout his political ascent, Hugo Chavez touted that he was following through on Simon Bolivar’s revolutionary dream of creating an integrated nation-state in South America. [Bolivar is the Latin American equivalent of George Washington in that he liberated what was then known as Gran Colombia (Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador), and helped facilitate the liberation of the entire South American continent from Spain, excluding Brazil which was a colony of Portugal.] Chavez wanted to take the Bolivarian concept a step further and create a nation-state that encompassed all of Latin America to include the Caribbean, under the political model of “21st Century Socialism.” Until his death in 2013, he made concerted efforts to decrease US influence in the region by aligning with Cuba and together they created a political bloc focused on spreading self-described “social democratic” ideals under the banner of 21st Century Socialism. Together, they created a political bloc known as ALBA (the Bolivarian Alternative to the Americas). Its member states include eleven (11) Latin American and Caribbean countries (Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines). Other interested countries attended ALBA meetings as “observers,” and until recently this list included Uruguay and regional power houses Brazil and Argentina. During the early 2000s, there was a sweeping series of elections across Latin America that saw left leaning administrations come into power. These political happenings were seen as a swing leftward, away from US political and economic endorsement. Some of the elected Latin American officials were former leftist guerrillas turned politicians (e.g., Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, or Dilma Rousseff of Brazil).

Using ALBA as a foundation, Chavez created an alternative to the Clinton era proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). The intent was to use 21st Century Socialism to combat western style economic models. The FTAA never gained momentum and was abandoned in 2005 as a result of alternative trade agreements such as ALBA, and Mercosur. ALBA has its own virtual currency (like Bitcoin) established in 2009 called the SUCRE (Unified System for Region Compensation); the first transaction using the currency took place in 2010. The SUCRE peaked in 2012 with just over \$1Bn in transactions. Use of the SUCRE has waned since the collapse of the Venezuelan economy (2013 – 2014). Recently, the SUCRE has had almost no transactions made by Venezuela, its use now almost exclusive to Ecuador. Coincidentally, Ecuador adopted the US dollar in 2000 after its currency failed. Prior to adopting the dollar, its currency was called the Sucre.

Using his political power, Chavez controlled the education system, and adjusted local education to propagate social democratic ideals. With record high oil prices in his favor, he boldly paraded the international scene, openly stating he would use oil as a “geopolitical weapon” against the US (2005). He

also once referred to former US president George Bush as Satan before the UN General Assembly (2006). High revenue from oil production allowed Chavez to buy influence and friends. Chavez provided government handouts to a large portion of the population, used private jets to fly ALBA partners across the region, and even propped up the Cuban regime until its economic demise.

Venezuela as a springboard for Iran and Hezbollah – Venezuela’s ties to Iran begin with the creation of OPEC, of which both are founding members. Their relationship was minimal until Chavez came to power in 1998. Since then, Iran has steadily increased its presence in the country as they both have the common goal of minimizing US influence, and increasing their own. Iran has provided “political advisors” as well as military advisors to Venezuela. There are politicians in Venezuela of Iranian descent, and sympathetic to Iran’s cause to include the newly appointed Vice President of the country, Tareck El Aissami. El Aissami has ties to the IRGC and Hezbollah, and is under suspicion for issuing fake passports to known Islamic terrorists so they can travel about the international scene as Venezuelans. He is also under sanctions amidst drug trafficking allegations from the US Treasury Department. El Aissami was raised by Shiite extremist parents who emigrated from Syria and were leaders in Venezuela’s Baathist party. Reporting has indicated IRGC involvement in Venezuela pre 2010, with many IRGC affiliated companies open for business in Venezuela. It is known that the IRGC and Hezbollah have more than a casual relationship.

The Decline of Venezuela – The recent increases in US oil and natural gas exports (2014) bottomed out oil prices that severely affected Venezuela’s economy (which is primarily energy export based) and in turn put them in an economic crisis that has left the country in dire straits. The government cannot provide stability, as inflation has risen above 800%. Everyday food items are impossible to find, forcing citizens to migrate to other countries by the thousands in search of basic necessities, to include over the counter medications. The average Venezuelan is estimated to have lost 20 pounds in the last 2 years due to lack of food. This crisis has delegitimized the ideals of social democratic policies, and the ideals of the “revolution.” Now, Chavez’s successor is facing steep competition from political rivals, and has resorted to jailing his opponents, and touting all uprisings as acts of aggression funded and caused by US agitators with the intent of slowing down the revolution. Soon after the oil prices shattered Venezuela’s economic prowess, Cuba revisited talks with the US. Shortly thereafter in the summer of 2015, the US embassy in Cuba was reopened after having been closed since 1961.

Future for ties with Iran and Venezuela – Venezuela’s economic instability has not affected its relationship with Iran as it continues to provide Iran with oil despite US sanctions, and also to Damascus, which only underscores Venezuela’s defiance. Increasing sanctions appears to have strengthened Iran and Venezuela’s resolve in maintaining their alliance, at least under current Venezuela leadership. In September 2017, officials from Iran’s Research Center of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) announced a joint venture between Iran, Venezuela, and Syria to build an oil refinery just outside Homs (in Syria) as the area approaches relative stability. The refinery is scheduled to begin breaking ground by the end of 2017, early 2018. The RIPI also announced plans to rebuild two other refineries in Syria once stability has been restored in associated regions. Talks of a joint Iran – Venezuela oil company venture are not new, and have been underway since roughly 2009. Reporting on this venture dissipated in about 2011, then resurfaced again under the guise of a more direct supplier to consumer relationship. These oil refinery projects are important for Iran as they would serve to cut out a strategic intermediary – the US. Venezuela currently does not have the capacity to refine its crude oil, so Venezuela traditionally sends its oil to the US for refinement, then ships it back, and exports it, using it as currency to pay debts (to China), or to help keep ALBA members afloat during fluctuating markets and political climates (more specifically to help prop up the Cuban regime).

It is likely that Venezuela will continue to subvert international pressures as long as the current regime is in place. If Venezuela can stay afloat until the proposed infrastructure projects bear fruit, this will provide them the much needed infrastructure and revenue they require to endure. Iran would like to maintain this relationship with Venezuela due to the strategic value of their geography; their proximity to the US and access to Latin American markets. Also, the Andean region is home to a high volume of the world's illicit drug production, and with Iran's mid- to long-range weapons capabilities on the rise, this could pose a threat to US regional interests (like the Panama Canal) and the continental US. With tensions escalating in North Korea, Venezuela does not see the US diverting military resources to their shores, which further emboldens them. All eyes are on US troop movement and resource allocation as Venezuela continues to increase its ties with Iran and the IRGC, and steadily expel diplomats who speak out against them (Venezuela expelled top Brazil and Canada diplomats in late December 2017). Venezuela's recent appointment of a vice president with ties to Syria, who was raised as a Shiite extremist sympathizer and has ties to illicit trade, is an indicator that it has no intention of scaling back its rhetoric or actions. The nexus between political control, and economic interests tied directly to IRGC affiliated enterprises indicates consolidation of soft power in an effort to further shape an operational environment suited to anti-US organizations. This also sets the scene for a hard power node that could potentially be used by Iran in the future.

Lessons from US-Venezuela Competition – In order to effectively compete with Venezuela for regional influence, the US has employed multiple tactics. These tactics include diplomacy and rhetoric targeted directly at Venezuela's government institutions, coupled with economic sanctions, and security cooperation. US officials regularly speak out against Venezuela's political decisions and actions, often calling into question the legitimacy of its government institutions (Venezuela only allows selected international observers during high-vis elections, and also promotes or appoints individuals to key positions to maintain control). The US continues to tighten sanctions against Venezuela, which is putting a strain on the population and in turn the government. Because government authorities can't help their people, there has been a significant increase in support for the political opposition; folks who are no longer enamored by the Bolivarian idea and the means being employed to achieve it. Coincidentally, these politicians also have more amicable views on the US. Economic actions outside of sanctions the US are employing include creating lucrative trade deals for regional countries. After the collapse of the FTAA, a series of deals were made with countries, some as a collective, and others on an individual basis. Central America and the Dominican Republic have a free trade agreement (CAFTA – DR). South American countries with individual trade agreements include Panama, Peru, and Colombia. All of these countries received harsh criticism from Venezuela. These deals are important because the countries are in close proximity to Venezuela, and have all expressed disinterest for the Bolivarian alternative. The bottoming out of oil prices also contributed to the collapse of Venezuela, but may have happened serendipitously as the increase in US energy production was more of a private enterprise endeavor than a government sanctioned initiative. Militarily, the US has ramped up security cooperation and foreign internal defense in the region, providing a persistent military presence with the employment of an SPMAGTF headquartered out of Honduras. Colombia receives significant training and funding for military, which has proven so successful that they are now a regional exporter of military training and advising. They sometimes work alongside US troops to deliver instruction and guidance to less skilled militaries, pulling from their experience in counterinsurgency operations against cartels and insurgent groups like the FARC and ELN. Further, the US has recently been executing small scale military exchanges with Guyana, Venezuela's eastern neighbor. This is strategic, as Venezuela claims three quarters of Guyana is rightfully theirs, based on a treaty with a former colonizer that is hundreds of years old.

The US is currently employing political, economic and military means against Iran. However, a major contributing factor to the instability Venezuela is experiencing is that the US is not going to the negotiating table with Venezuela and signing one-sided deals in their favor as they have with Iran. The US is also not relinquishing billions of dollars in cash and assets to Venezuela, which they could desperately use to further initiatives and help quell the agitated population. In August of 2016, 400 million in cash was shipped to Iran, and large amounts of frozen assets released back to them. It has also recently come to light that the previous US administration put a stop to investigations and operations on the continental US against Hezbollah, the long arm of Iran which conducts economic and subversive activities in support of Shiite extremist interests. Security cooperation with Latin American countries is successful largely due to shared cultures. Having similar prevailing religions and thought processes helps make building bridges through military cooperation more impactful in Latin America. Also note, that formal (government recognized) military leaders in Latin America tend to successfully shift gears into politics after they retire from the military. This reality shows that security cooperation directly translates to building relationships and furthering mutually supporting initiatives in the long term. Building security cooperation in the countries neighboring Iran is less likely to yield the same effect due to the disparity in cultures, specifically because separation between religion and government is almost non-existent throughout the region.

Ambassador James F. Jeffrey

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

1. What are Iran's key interests and objectives with regard to the region, and how do these relate to US regional interests and objectives?

Iran's key interests	Describe Iran's interest and the driving factors behind it	Does this key interest align or contrast with US interests?
Protect Shia Communities	Claimed/claimed role as leading Shia force; justification for second interest below	Not necessarily either. U.S. traditionally opposed to taking sides. Problems begin with second Iranian interest below
Expand as regional hegemon	Classic regional power motivation, informed by (1) role in Shia Islam (above) and (2) role as claimant to Islamic heritage	Absolutely contrasts. U.S. policy since WW II has been to oppose challenges to values- and law-based global order by regional hegemons.
Champion classic Islamic world view	To some degree similar to ISIS philosophy— Islam at war with 'other.' "Resistance" to Israel as most egregious manifestation of 'other' in the region the core trait.	Absolutely contrasts. Recipe not only for war between Islam and 'the rest' but for perpetual war within Islam.
End U.S.-led regional security order	To some degree this is a 'subset' of above regional hegemon interest but is so central to that interest, and so central to Iranian action/thinking, that it earns its own category.	Traditionally, absolutely contrasts. But to some degree both Obama and Trump Administrations unlike previous have questioned either cost-benefit equation of maintaining such an order or ability (or need) to do so. Such uncertainty decisively weakens any attempted U.S. counter.

2. What strategies and tools, other than kinetic force, has the US used in past conflicts with Iran?

Strategies (other than kinetic force) US has used with Iran	Was it successful? Please describe	Is this tool relevant to US interests WRT Iran or the region? How?
Punishing impact on Iranian nation—sanctions for JCPOA,	U.S. succeeded with sanctions on the JCPOA, and with indirect support on Iran-Iraq war.	Absolutely. TTP's change but all four points in next left must be involved.

indirect U.S. support for forces fighting Iran (Iran-Iraq War)	What explains success is (1) strong engagement by president (2) broad international alliance in both cases (3) direct, punishing impact on Iran as nation (4) limited U.S./alliance 'asks' (i.e., moderate restriction to nuclear program; withdrawal from Iraq)	
Containment	Only partially	'Containment' has been less successful as Iran has been able to prey on weak/states/ungoverned areas/terrorist movements and pain inflicted on it has not reached decisive levels.

3. Can you name any particularly relevant examples of conflict short of open war outside the region that may be relevant to US-Iranian competition for regional influence.

- For each conflict event, please indicate 1) the cause of conflict (nature of the issue at stake for both parties), 2) actions taken by parties to reach their objectives, 3) the outcome of conflict, 4) the extent to which the outcome of the conflict satisfied the interests of each side, and, 5) the effect that the conflict had on short and longer-term stability in its region.

BALKANS 1991-2000

- (1) Breakup of Yugoslavia and underlying Orthodox Christian-Muslim tensions within the region risking spread to national level (Turkey; Greece and Eastern Balkan Orthodox states).
- (2) Serbian para-military pressure on Muslim populations; direct state pressure on them (Kosovo); Government resistance to para-military pressure (Bosnia), insurgency (Kosovo Muslims); appeals to the international community (primarily Bosnian government and Kosovo Muslim population but Serbia both to States traditionally allied to it (Russia, France), and to those fearing a 'Muslim wave' in the Balkans.
- (3) Defeat for Serbia, consolidation of independent Bosnia and Kosovo; but some underlying instability in both countries. Collapse of Milosevic in Serbia; Closer Serbian-Russian relations and limited Russian re-introduction into the Balkans.
- (4) All sides including international community met their minimum needs. Serbian goal to dominate Muslim populations blocked. International Rule of Law system restored. Violence basically ended.

- (5) Resolution of the conflicts in the 1990s has given the Balkans almost 20 years of peace, considerable economic-social development and integration into European/Atlantic institutions. Region still potentially unstable and Russia is much more active.

CENTRAL AMERICA 1980s

- (1) Failed states, systematic poverty exploited by ideological movements; Cold War intervention by USSR and Cuba, and U.S.
- (2) Both sides (U.S. and USSR/Cuba) supported nation states allied with them (Nicaragua in case of USSR and Cuba, rest of region in case of U.S.) with military, economic and diplomatic assistance and limited military deployments (U.S. and Cuba); promotion of insurgencies against other side's client state(s) (i.e., U.S. sponsorship of Contras in Nicaragua, Communist support or attempts to support insurgencies in El Salvador and elsewhere).
- (3) Near total victory for U.S. side. Communist insurgencies all defeated and Nicaragua eventually became a functioning democracy and (temporarily) removed its left-wing government.
- (4) U.S. totally satisfied; USSR and Cuba deeply unhappy; regional inhabitants satisfied with end to violence, limited progress in economic, political and law enforcement terms (later endangered by international drug trade).
- (5) Removed a major threat to the region's stability (i.e., introduction into the Cold War).

NOTE OF IMPORTANCE TO U.S. IN THE MIDDLE EAST BASED ON ABOVE EXAMPLES:

- (1) While both areas above had political, economic and (in case of Balkans) ethnic/religious fissures not dissimilar to CENTCOM AO, successful U.S. led strategies did not involve, beyond marginal programs and commitments, major transformational economic, political and reconciliation assistance from outside. Such initiatives while present were in every sense very secondary—author was briefly responsible for program for Bosnia. (The major exception to this was the promise of EU membership and associated EU programs and funding for Balkan nations; but this was a promise and little development occurred in the 1990s or immediately after peace.)
- (2) The major 'tools' used by the U.S. and its partners and allies in both regional conflicts were military (usually support for states under stress or, in case of Kosovo and Nicaragua, insurgents, but twice direct U.S. bombing campaigns as well as deployment of NATO peacekeepers twice) and diplomatic.
- (3) U.S. succeeded in great part because it was able to keep any outside power from intervening to undercut U.S.-led initiatives (Balkans) or neutralize (Central America) such intervention due to distance, U.S. resistance, etc. In cases where that was not so—Korea 1950,

Vietnam, Afghanistan post 2001, Iraq post 2003 (or in the case of the USSR, Afghanistan 1980-88) success in internal conflicts has been much more elusive.

- (4) Finally, in both regional conflicts U.S. goals were not “transformational,” but rather limited. Main ‘ask’ was for states to stop intervening in outside activities (Kosovo and Nicaragua partial exceptions as they involved change of status).

Dr. Skye Cooley and Team

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Oklahoma State University

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1. What are Iran’s key interests and objectives as presented in Iranian media with regard to the region, and how do these relate to US regional interests and objectives presented by Iranian media?

Iran’s key interests in Iranian Media.	Describe Iran’s interest and the driving factors behind it as presented in media. (Themes Presented as well)	Does this key interest align or contrast with US interests as presented in media?
<p>Present U.S. Actions Related to Nuclear Agreement as Demonstration of Victimization of Iran.</p>	<p>Iranian media present U.S. rhetoric and actions concerning the nuclear agreement as related to, and retaliation for, failed U.S. efforts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to prevent Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia from stabilizing the area in conditions favorable to Iran. U.S. cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Israel is shown as intentionally in opposition to Iranian efforts to engage the international community economically and designed to limit/delegitimize Iranian influence.</p> <p>Key Associated Narratives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>U.S. taking Hostile Actions toward Iran.</i> 2. <i>Iran’s Commitment to Nuclear Deal and</i> 	<p>Direct contrast is presented. Iran is presented as a cooperative partner who has abided by the agreement, while the U.S. is shown as backing out of the agreement due to its failings at creating pro-Western spaces in the Middle East with its Arab and Israeli allies.</p> <p>The U.S. is shown as now wanting to completely isolate Iran economically and to present in a negative light to the international community.</p> <p>Key Associated Narratives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>U.S. Desire to Isolate Iran, Disrupt Domestic Politics of Iran.</i> 2. <i>U.S. Desire to Damage Iran through Sanctions, Present Iran as Bad Actor to International Community with Terrorism</i>

	<p><i>Respect for Other Nations.</i></p> <p>3. Iran’s Want for Business & Energy Development with Europe and Other Nations.</p> <p>4. U.S. as a Dangerous International Actor.</p> <p>(For details, see appendix)</p>	<p><i>Linkages.</i></p> <p>3. Trump Desire to Break from All Obama-Era Agreements</p> <p>4. U.S. Working with Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Other Arab Nations on Strategic Plan</p> <p>(For details, see appendix)</p>
<p>Present Yemen Conflict as a U.S. and Saudi Led War on Houthi Legitimacy Resulting in a Humanitarian Crisis.</p> <p>Present Iran as a Stabilizing Presence.</p>	<p>Iranian media present the successes of the “Axis of Resistance” against U.S., Saudi Arabian, Israeli, and Arab attempts to diminish Iranian influence. Iran’s interests are shown as supportive of the Houthi, though not necessarily as suppliers of arms.</p> <p>Yemen is shown as an example of failed U.S.-Saudi Arabian intervention, where both are willing to commit atrocities to restore Hadi to power.</p> <p>Iran is presented as supportive of Houthi success and as repeatedly calling for peace along with other international actors and the UN.</p> <p>Key Associated Narratives <i>Demonstrate Victories of Axis of Resistance and Repeated Failures of Saudi Arabian and U.S. objectives in Middle East</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Iran as a Peaceful, Stabilizing Regional Actor; Houthi celebrated in Yemen.</i> <i>Show Yemen War as a War Against Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia goals part of a larger</i> 	<p>Direct contrast is presented.</p> <p>Iranian media present the U.S. and Saudi Arabian interests as failing across the region.</p> <p>U.S. is presented as closely aligned with Saudi Arabia, and a direct orchestrator of Arab plans in the region. Both are shown as wanting to prevent the Houthi from becoming another Hezbollah.</p> <p>Yemen is presented as needed proxy state for both Saudi Arabia and the U.S. and Hadi’s restoration to power is a central component to that. UAE is shown as coordinating with the U.S. for oil interests.</p> <p>Ultimately, the U.S. wishes to divide Arab nations amongst themselves, and expand pro-Western proxies.</p> <p>Key Associated Narratives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Wishes to Restore Hadi to Power in Yemen and Support Pro-Western States/Actors at Whatever Cost. U.S. Blames Iran for Houthi Attacks on Saudi Arabia, Link Iran to Terror and Destabilization, Link Iran to Weapons Smuggling U.S. Wishes to Prevent Another Hezbollah from Gaining Power in Yemen. Gain regional power through Saudi

	<p><i>U.S. Strategy in the Region.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <i>Show Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen as a result of Saudi Arabian and U.S. Aggression to Reinstall Hadi to power. Show Arab Coalition as Attacking Civilians.</i> 4. <i>Show U.S. and Saudi Arabia in Weapons Agreements. Saudi and US Aggression to Blame for Houthi Missile Attacks. Iran Denies role in Providing Missiles to Houthi.</i> 5. <i>Show U.S. and Saudi Arabian Actions in Yemen as Leading to Terrorist Groups Operating in Yemen</i> 6. <i>Show Dysfunction of Arab-Coalition; Saudi Crowned Prince Young, Merciless, & Reckless</i> <p>(For details, see appendix)</p>	<p>partnership.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. U.S. has Predesigned Plans to Control Oil in Yemen <p>(For details, see appendix)</p>
<p>Present Lebanon as Being Threatened by U.S., Saudi Arabian, Israeli Alliance.</p> <p>Present Hezbollah as a Legitimate Political Force, One Actively Preventing Terrorism.</p>	<p>The Iranian media show Iran influence and relationships in Iran are intentionally being interfered with by Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and Israel in an effort to limit Iran’s expanding influence. This interference is shown as calculated, dangerous, and against the actual will and best interest of the Lebanese people.</p> <p>Iranian media present Hezbollah as a stabilizing political force, one actively preventing terrorism. New U.S. administration has emboldened the young Saudi Arabian crowned prince to take more aggressive steps in confronting Iran; Hariri’s political fiasco is an illustration of this, as is Saudi Arabian</p>	<p>Iranian media present the U.S. as orchestrating unity between Israel and Arab nations by depicting Iran, and its extending influence, as a common threat. U.S. actions against Hezbollah and Saudi Arabian actions in Lebanon with Hariri are seen as part of a strategy to destabilize areas of Iranian influence. Saudi Arabia, in particular, as aligned with U.S. strategy, intentionally entices Israel to attack Lebanon.</p> <p>Key Associated Narratives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>U.S. as Coordinating effort with Saudi Arabia and Israel to limit Iran influence in Lebanon.</i> 2. <i>Sanctions on Hezbollah Designed to Halt Nuclear Deal, Over Failures in Syria.</i> 3. <i>U.S. Supports Israel and presents Iran as a Unifying threat</i>

	<p>cooperation with Israel.</p> <p><u>Key Associated Narratives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Israeli Aggressions May Lead to War. Saudi Arabia wants Israel to Attack Lebanon.</i> <i>Lebanese people seek close ties with Iran.</i> <i>Lebanon as Stable with Hezbollah, Safe, and Reduced Instances of Terrorism</i> <i>Saudi Arabia using Hariri as a Political Tool Against Hezbollah.</i> <p>(For details, see appendix)</p>	<p><i>to Arabs and Israelis. Incite Israel to Attack Lebanon.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>U.S. has Larger Regional Plans that Include the Support of Kurdish State. Actions in Lebanon Help to Further that End.</i> <p>(For details, see appendix)</p>
<p>Present Iran as Victorious in Its Efforts in Syria.</p> <p>Need for Stability in Syria against Efforts to Undermine Assad.</p>	<p>Iranian media presents Iran as supportive of Syrian President al-Assad. Iran is presented as an actor working towards stability as the U.S., Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Israel have conflicting actions in support of potential terrorist organizations to fulfill their objectives.</p> <p><u>Key Associated Narratives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Iran supportive of the Administration of President Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian Civil War</i> <i>Iranian efforts in Syria and Yemen aimed to bring regional stability against efforts by Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the U.S. to undermine the entire region.</i> <i>Israel openly attempting to undermine Iran efforts in Syria.</i> <p>(For details, see appendix)</p>	<p>Iranian media present the U.S. as actively opposed to Iran in Syria and as supportive of Syrian Kurdish forces. U.S. seeks to show Iran as destabilizing force in Syrian reconstruction.</p> <p><u>Key Associated Narratives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>U.S. is presented as opposing Iran and their efforts to make peace in Syria.</i> <i>Trump Attempts to Link Iran to all issues in the Middle East; including Syria.</i> <i>Trump links Iran and North Korea as risks to U.S.</i> <i>U.S. to consider Kurdish claims in Syria.</i> <p>(For details, see appendix)</p>

Project design:

Qualitative analysis examining Farsi media; Details listed in Appendix

Appendix:

Response Issues Across Iranian Media

Issue: Nuclear Agreement

Search term: Trump Nuclear

Total Search Items: 172 stories

Sample: 60 (CL= 95%, CI= 10)

Iran media presents much of U.S. abandoning of nuclear agreement as related to, and retaliation for, failed U.S. efforts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to prevent Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia from stabilizing the area in conditions favorable to Iran. U.S. cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Israel is shown as intentionally in opposition to Iranian efforts to engage the international community economically and designed to limit/delegitimize Iranian influence.

Iran Strategic Interest:

- **U.S. Hostile Actions toward Iran-** Media presents the aggressiveness of the U.S. toward Iran is as a great concern; specifically, in hindering its ability to do business and cooperate with other nations, as well as to the stability of its own internal political alignments. U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Israel shown actively cooperating to portray Iran negatively. U.S negative actions and stances toward Iran shown as benefiting Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates. Linking Iran to terrorism in an effort to undermine the nuclear agreement.
 - Nuclear non-proliferation standards being by U.S. unilaterally.
 - U.S. interfering in Iranian domestic affairs as a result of strained relations.
 - U.S. and other enemies of Iran use natural disasters in an attempt to rouse Iranian population toward insurrection.
 - U.S. creates intentional obstacles in Iran’s ability to participate with other willing economic partners across the globe. Sanctions damaging ability to work with other nations and companies.
 - Trump administration attempting to force UK and other European nations to adopt sanctions and harsh policies toward Iran.
 - Iranian leadership under pressure because of Trump sanctions and other domestic reform disruptions.
 - U.S. wishes to isolate Iran. Abandoning of nuclear agreement and refusal to confirm Iran’s commitment, and instead presenting Iran as a nation linked to terrorism.

- **Commitment to Nuclear Deal and Respect for Other Nations-** Media demonstrate Iran’s commitment to the nuclear deal and the recognition of that commitment by all participants aside from the U.S. The international community is shown in support of the

agreement and of Iran's compliance. Nuclear deal seen as culmination of 13 years of diplomacy toward Iran joining international community. Iran has passed hundreds of inspections.

- Repeatedly mentions Iran's compliance with nuclear deal and Iranian willingness to cooperate.
 - Iranian media attempts to demonstrate U.S. actions are illegal concerning the nuclear treaty and that other nations are aware of this and support Iran.
 - Iran willing to abide by international norms to participate in economic development.
 - Confusion on how to interpret Trump's actions towards Iran strategically in relation to sanctions and abandoning of the nuclear agreement.
 - Belief that U.S. actions toward Iran over nuclear deal may isolate U.S. influence.
 - Russia and United Kingdom demonstrate commitment to Iran's compliance in nuclear agreement.
 - Nuclear deal represents 13 years of diplomatic efforts.
 - Iran and Europe to continue cooperation despite U.S. efforts to undermine nuclear deal and demonize Iran.
 - Incentives for cooperation in nuclear agreement far outweigh any incentive to back out of the agreement.
 - Iran a moderate actor and committed to acting towards stability and acting in accordance to its international obligations.
- **Business & Energy Development with Europe and other Nations-** Energy sector development and commercial trade related to oil and gas, and the development of solar power through partnerships highlighted through Iranian media. Nuclear compliance is linked with want to participate in international economic community. Presents Europe as a ready trading partner and that U.S. illegal actions over the nuclear agreement will lead to greater commitment and investment by European actors.
 - Willing European partners: \$20 billion in energy contracts with Russia and Europe through 2018. Developing oil and gas fields, partnering with European nations in modernizing technological development in energy sector.
 - Commercial development underway with Europe, India, Turkey, South Korea, Russia and other nations, despite U.S. attempts to undermine.
 - \$2.5 billion-dollar contract with Norway in solar development.
 - Europe will potentially invest more capital in Iran as a result of Trump administration's actions over nuclear agreement.
- **U.S. as a Dangerous International Actor-** Shows aggressive Trump administration with few clear policies. U.S. with a history of ill-thought through policies and actions in the Middle East that have led to violence in the region. Trump's actions complicating relations in Middle East. Iran, Turkey, and Baghdad need to cooperate in thwarting U.S. efforts toward Iraqi Kurdistan independence. Division created over nuclear agreement another example of dangerously erratic U.S.
 - Trump renounces all Obama-era agreements (Paris Agreement as an example), takes hostile stance toward China and North Korea, argues for dismantling NATO, and actions toward Iran part of continued recklessness.
 - Trump calls nuclear deal an embarrassment.
 - U.S. and Israel taking dangerous and divisive approaches in dealings with Hezbollah in Syria and Lebanon.

- U.S. constantly breaching its international agreements and obligations.

U.S. Strategic Interests:

- **Isolate Iran, Disrupt Domestic Politics-** U.S. taking actions to politically and economically isolate Iran.
 - Largely portrayed as related to Trump's aggression, misunderstanding of Iranian politics and history, and his need for domestic policy wins ahead of international concerns.
 - Intentionally taking actions with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel to create spaces for political rivals to emerge in Iran.
 - U.S. in support of Kurdish independence.
 - U.S. to redefine full range of security cooperation, plans, and status of its troops in order to support new Trump strategy towards Iran.
- **Damage Iran through Sanctions, Present Iran as Bad Actor to International Community-** Attempts to link Iran to terrorism and as a threatening international actor shown repeatedly. U.S. failures in Syria seen as part of the effort to isolate Iran influence after success of Iran, Russia, Hezbollah in Syria.
 - Unilateral actions toward Iran over missile programs
 - Dismissal of nuclear treaty illegally, imposition of new sanctions
 - Forcing other nations to adopt harsh stances toward Iran
 - U.S. and Israel presenting Iran as a regional threat and terrorist nation.
 - Accuses Iran Revolutionary Guard of terrorist activity.
- **Break from All Obama Era Agreements-** Part of the explanation for Trump's actions is that he is committed domestically to undermining all Obama era policies. Trump's concerns are with his own internal ratings and his actions reflect his want to demonstrate his own strength as president.
 - Nuclear deal coupled with Paris Climate agreement and other Obama era pledges Trump wishes to eliminate.
 - Trump dangerous and selfishly concerned with domestic ratings.
 - Trump denounces nuclear agreement as "bad deal" "worst deal in history" etc...
 - Claims Obama era nuclear agreement is fraudulent
- **Working with Saudi Arabia, Israel and other Arab Nations toward Strategic Plan-** alliances with Sunni Arabs and Israelis to limit Iranian influence in the Middle East and to actively disrupt Iranian efforts at regional stability. Pulling out of nuclear agreement and labeling Iran as a terrorist supporting state part of strategic plan for regional power.
 - U.S. has larger plan for regional power and is using Arab state alliances to accomplish it.
 - Containment of Iranian influence a key to pro-Western nation building.

Issue: Yemen Crisis

Search term: Yemen Hadi

Total Search Items: 273 stories

Sample: 70 (CL= 95%, CI= 10)

Iran Strategic Interest:

- **Demonstrate Victories of Axis of Resistance and Repeated Failures of Saudi Arabian and U.S. objectives in Middle East.**
 - Shows U.S. and Saudi Arabia as failing in a number of strategic actions in the Middle East; including Yemen, Lebanon, and Syria.
 - Shows Saudi Arabia as struggling with corruption and strains of new leadership.
 - Claims these failures are accelerating Western loss of legitimacy in the Middle East.
 - Goal of West in Yemen is to restore Hadi, but this cannot be accomplished because of the grassroots nature of the violence, shows the rise of the Houthis and vulnerability of Mohammed bin Salman

- **Iran as a Peaceful, Stabilizing Regional Actor; Houthi celebrated in Yemen.**
 - Show Iran as accomplishing world peace through the guiding, uniting, consolidating security, Peace and peaceful coexistence, the resolution of disputes, the maintenance of the regime, the stability of the international system, guided by principles of Islam
 - Articles linking Shiite science and politics as aligned with spiritual principles of Islam while being applicable in modernity.
 - People gather to celebrate Houthi takeover in Yemeni capital.
 - Claims Iran open supports Houthi, but does not give them weapons.
 - Calls for Houthi representatives to negotiate for them internationally while the war is taking place.

- **Show Yemen War as a War Against Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia goals part of a larger U.S. Strategy in the Region.**
 - Claims that the war in Yemen is not an internal disruption but an intentional attempted coup led by Saudi Arabia to put Yemen back under its control.
 - Shows Saudi Prince as making statements that war in Yemen is to prevent another Hezbollah from taking root.
 - Saudi Arabia wants control over Yemen because of the insecurity of its new leadership in facing political opposition at home.
 - Saudi Arabia puts importance of Yemen even over being enemies with Israel.
 - Saudi Arabia is shown as a historic enemy of Yemen.
 - Claims U.S. is real actor behind war in Yemen and the Arab-military coalition, that the conflict was part of an American strategy.

- **Show Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen as a result of Saudi Arabian and U.S. Aggression to Reinstate Hadi to power. Show Arab Coalition as Attacking Civilians.**
 - Shows UN calling for end to Yemen blockade.

- Shows targeting of Saudi Arabian forces on Yemen have inflicted massive suffering on innocent Yemen civilians. Prevents aid workers and relief workers from helping Yemen.
 - Claims Saudi Arabia and its allies are military aggressors, consequences kill children and displace hundreds of thousands, exacerbates famine crisis for millions.
 - Claims Saudi Arabian and U.S. goals are to suppress Yemeni people and restore proxy state under rule of Hadi.
 - Shows U.S. and Saudi Arabia as reckless actors whose policies are failing.
 - Claims hospitals, clinics, and government buildings being attacked mercilessly by Saudi-led Arab coalition.
 - Yemen worst humanitarian crisis in the world.
 - Arab military coalition blacklisted by U.N. over war crimes in Yemen.
 - Claims Arab coalition intentionally targeted citizens and destroyed civilian homes.
 - Shows Saudi led coalition continuing to attack in Yemen as UN calls for ceasefire and condemns the humanitarian crisis.
- **Show U.S. and Saudi Arabia in Weapons Agreements. Saudi and US Aggression to Blame for Houthi Missile Attacks. Iran Denies role in Providing Missiles to Houthi.**
 - Points out \$350 billion-dollar arms agreement between U.S. and Saudi Arabia; including a failed US missile defense system.
 - Iran denies arming Houthi with weapons used to attack Saudi Arabia, notes Saudi and US actions in Yemen to restore Hadi have killed thousands.
 - Continuously shows Houthi's attack on Saudi Arabia as legitimate, but that Iran is neither responsible nor the actor providing weapons.
 - Shows Russia as attempting to calm tensions and hold negotiations before crisis escalates further between Houthi and Saudi Arabian forces.
 - U.S. supplied weapons and bombs dropped on Yemen citizens.
 - Show US as hypocritical, condemning Iran over weapon supplying to Houthi while it provides weapons to Saudi Arabia.
- **Show U.S. and Saudi Arabian Actions in Yemen as Leading to Terrorist Groups Operating in Yemen**
 - Report on car bombs exploding and other terrorist attacks in southern Yemen as a result of security breaches of Haid forces and disruption caused by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.
- **Show Dysfunction of Arab-Coalition; Saudi Crowned Prince Young, Merciless, & Reckless**
 - Sudanese leadership under pressure over neutrality in Qatar; Sudanese troops bearing brunt of loss in Yemen.
 - UAE only interested in maintaining oil supply lines in its engagement in Yemen.
 - Young Crown prince in Saudi Arabia going against moderate policies of his father, massacring people in Yemen.
 - Shows Saudis and Emirates as intentionally conspiring to divide Arab nations.
 - UAE to plunder Yemen oil fields.

- Shows Saudi Arabia as impeding peace in Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, and Pakistan.
- Claims Saudi Arabian ambition limited by its weak military, and that Iran does not actually fear a military force from Saudi Arabia.

U.S. Strategic Interests:

- **Restore Hadi to Power in Yemen. Support Pro-Western States/Actors at Whatever Cost.**
 - Shows U.S. and Saudi Arabia willing to take massive risks and to kill thousands, and risk humanitarian crisis for the restoration of Hadi to power.
 - U.S. providing weapons all across the region to support its own policies, with little regard to the region.
 - Claims U.S. is behind the war in Yemen as part of a larger strategy to create pro-Western spaces.
- **Blame Iran for Houthi Attacks on Saudi Arabia, Link Iran to Terror and Destabilization, Link Iran to Weapons Smuggling.**
 - Shows goal of U.S. and Saudi Arabia to focus on the provider of the weapons to the Houthi, rather than discuss why Houthi attacked in the first place.
 - Present Iran in violation of UN Security Council resolutions in relation to providing arms to Yemen rebels.
 - Claim Iran has committed a direct attack on Saudi Arabia using Houthi as a proxy for violence.
 - Shows US and Saudi Arabia as blaming Houthi attacks on Iran as part of a larger plan of destabilization of Saudi influence.
 - Shows detained Iranian sailors smuggling weapons.
 - Linking Iran to attacks in Bahrain supported by Qatar, linking Iran and violence and supporting of terrorist by other Arab states.
 - Sanction Iranian companies for funding Yemen rebels.
- **Prevent Another Hezbollah from Gaining Power in Yemen. Gain regional power through Saudi partnership.**
 - Shows that Saudi Arabia and the U.S. really just want to prevent the establishment of the Houthi as the legitimate leaders in Yemen.
 - U.S. and Saudi Arabia want regional dominance for pro-Western policies.
- **U.S. has Predesigned Plans to Control Oil in Yemen**
 - U.S. working with UAE to control Yemen oil fields
 - UAE's financial interest lead it supporting war backed by US in Yemen.

Issue: Syrian Conflict

Search Term: Syrian Civil War

Total Search Items: 299 stories

Sample: 73 (CL= 95%, CI= 10)

Iran Strategic Interest:

- **Iran supports the Administration of President Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian Civil War.**
 - Iran's continued support of the Syrians was confirmed by the President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani as he called the president of Syria to verify their part in the reconstruction of Syria. Additionally, confirmation is seen through Iran's presence in the Aleppo liberation.
 - Iran is identified in the media as "One of the main sponsors of the rule of Bashar" and is said, along with Russia, to play an "Important role" in the Syrian Civil War and reconstruction.
 - Bashar Al-Assad called for Iran to be an "Active participant" in the reconstruction of Syria, but Iran maintained that they were "supportive" Push back saying the Tehran was gave "all-encompassing support" for the Damascus government during the civil war.

- **Efforts in Syria and Yemen are aimed to bring regional stability. Efforts by Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the U.S. undermine the efforts and in turn cause more instability in the region.**
 - Iran is building military factories in Syria, but Israelis are attacking them.
 - The Presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey met in Sochi, referred to as the "Peace Triangle"
 - The "Summit" or "Peace Triangle" is regarded as critical and influential in the stabilization process of Syria in the media. This meeting is deemed beneficial in the efforts to bring peace to Syria and is considered a strong starting point for development.
 - Syria is openly asking Iran to be "an active participant" in the reconstruction of their country. Iran maintains that they are "supportive."

- **Israeli regime openly intends to prevent Iranian influence in the reconstruction of Syria.** Potential for work with ISIL to accomplish this prevention. Discussion of the justification for ISIS reactions and justification described as stabilizing balance.

- **Acknowledged defeat of ISIL as an "Honor for Islamic History."** Iran sees this as a victory.

- Kurdish conflicts and lack of reconciliation between Kurdistan and Iraq is called a new potential source of conflict for the Middle East over the next few years.

U.S. Strategic Interests:

- **U.S. is presented as opposing Iran and their efforts to make peace in Syria.**
 - U.S. is presented as “ready for war”
 - U.S. is presented in opposition to the Secretary general of the expediency council in the support of the Iranian Military advisors in the Syrian Civil War.
 - U.S. is presented as “targeting” the Turkish economy with the trial of Reza Zarab.
 - Changing the capital of Israel, presented as further complicating the regional efforts towards peace.
 - Said to support the role of insurgents in the conflict zones.
 - U.S. is often described as having no place in the Middle East and their interventions and motivations are call into question.
 - U.S. implementation of the broadcast network and support of Kurdistan is not appreciated by Iran in their efforts to stabilize the area.

- **Trump's strategy has been to do more than talk about the industry of nuclear weapons and present Iran as a more threatening actor in the Middle East.**
 - Pressure to place a Sunni leader in power once peace is reached in Syria.
 - U.S. is also speculated of working with Russia to appoint Farouk al-Shara (Sunni)
 - According to the New Yorker, Trump made a claim that he will allow Assad to stay in power until the 2021 election.

- **Iran and North Korea were labelled as “The forefront” of the eight highest level risks of 2018 as told by the U.S. Foreign Relations Council.**
 - Farsi Media is questioning the U.S.’s spending and strategic planning in terms of aggression and war potential. Using this to caution their audience of U.S. potential military actions and reactions.

- **Trump/U.S. support of Kurdish forces** is a concern in the Farsi Media narrative, sources say that Trump claimed to have put a stop to delivering weapons to the Syrian Kurdish forces, but then the U.S. established a television network to provide information to the Kurdish Workers Party in Syria.
 - Farsi media does not like the U.S. support of Kurdistan.

Issue: Lebanon

Search term: Hezbollah Lebanon

Total Search Items: 218 stories

Sample: 67 (CL= 95%, CI= 10)

The Iranian media show Iran influence and relationships in Iran are intentionally being interfered with by Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and Israel in an effort to limit Iran's expanding influence. This interference is shown as calculated, dangerous, and against the actual will and best interest of the Lebanese people. Iranian media present Hezbollah as a stabilizing political force, one actively preventing terrorism. New U.S. administration has emboldened the young Saudi Arabian crowned prince to take more aggressive steps in confronting Iran; Hariri's political fiasco is an illustration of this, as is Saudi Arabian cooperation with Israel.

Iran Strategic Interest:

- Iranian concern over ambiguity of Lebanon central bank profits.
 - Numerous stories mention Iran's opposition to the ambiguity created over the profits of Lebanon's central bank.
- Israeli Aggressions May Lead to War. Saudi Arabia wants Israel to Attack Lebanon.
 - Three Israeli spies arrested
 - Numerous Syria strikes from Israel fly over Lebanon
 - Israeli drones over Lebanon
 - Israel threatens to destabilize Lebanon and the entire ME
- Lebanon seeking close ties with Iran
 - Shows support for Iran related to fighting Isis
 - Shows Iran as a strong regional power that Lebanon wants to build a relationship with.
 - Shows Lebanese support for Assad.
- Lebanon as Stable with Hezbollah, Safe, and Reduced Instances of Terrorism
 - Mentions reduction of terrorism
 - Mentions Lebanon as safer than the U.S.
 - Claims U.S. as against legitimate Lebanese decisions and willing to go to war. Claims Survival of Hezbollah is critical to Muslim political survival.
- Saudi Arabia Using Hariri Against Hezbollah
 - Saudi and U.S. using Hariri to position Hezbollah as a threat to Lebanon and Security
 - Saudi Arabia placing Hariri under political pressure as part of an attempt to limit Hezbollah

U.S. Strategic Interests:

Iranian media present the U.S. as orchestrating unity between Israel and Arab nations by depicting Iran, and its extending influence, as a common threat. U.S. actions against Hezbollah and Saudi Arabian actions in Lebanon with Hariri are seen as part of a strategy to destabilize areas of Iranian influence. Saudi Arabia, in particular, as aligned with U.S. strategy, intentionally entices Israel to attack Lebanon.

- Coordinate effort with Saudi Arabia and Israel to limit Iran influence in Lebanon.
 - New sanctions on Hezbollah members welcomed by Israel and Saudi Arabia.
 - U.S., Israel, Saudi Arabia in alliance against Iranian influence in Lebanon.
 - Fear over missile capabilities of Iran and its aspiration in Lebanon.
 - Saudi Arabia presenting Lebanon as an employee rather than a state, punishing its independence.
- Sanctions on Hezbollah Designed to Halt Nuclear Deal, Over Failures in Syria
 - Concern over Hezbollah influence in Syria leading to new sanctions against Iran.
 - Hezbollah ties justifying U.S. sanctions, despite Iran and Hezbollah in no violations.
 - U.S. sanctions on Hezbollah over U.S. failures in Syria
- Support Israel and present Iran as a unifying threat to Arabs and Israelis. Incite Israel to Attack Lebanon.
 - Moving of Embassy to Jerusalem seen as part of this effort.
 - Israeli spies passing information on Hezbollah in Lebanon.
 - Saudi Arabia wishes to see Israel attack in Lebanon.
- Support of Kurdish State
 - Both Israel and U.S. support of Kurdish state to challenge Hezbollah.
 - U.S. potentially in support of Kurdish state

Dr. Diane L. Maye

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

1. What are Iran’s key interests and objectives with regard to the region, and how do these relate to US regional interests and objectives?

Iran’s key interests	Describe Iran’s interest and the driving factors behind it	Does this key interest align or contrast with US interests?
Unhindered access to ports in Lebanon & on Mediterranean (land corridor across Iraq & Syria in Lebanon)	Economic/ Military/ support of Hezbollah	Contrast – creates tension with Israel, Sunnis across the region
“Shi’ite Crescent” (corresponding with the land corridor)	Political/ Religious	Contrast
Continuation of drug trade, human trafficking & organs into Europe & South America via shortest land route (Afghanistan-Iran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon)	Economic	Contrast – much of the trade is nefarious (human trafficking, drugs/heroin, organs)
Unhindered access & profit from key religious sites in Iraq	Religious Tourism/ Economic benefits	Neutral/ Contrast
Keep Iraqi militias dependent on Iranian weapons/ military advice	Military/ Safety/ Stop Iraq from becoming a threat	Contrast
Extraction of economic resources from Iraqis, Syrians, Yemenis, & Lebanese	Economic necessity	Contrast
Nuclear weapons, nuclear power, uranium enrichment capability	Military Deterrence/ Political Power & Prestige/ Economic benefits	Contrast
Surround Saudi Arabia by training Bahraini Shi’ia & supporting Houthi rebels in Yemen	Security/ Military	Contrast

Export Islamic Revolution	Political/ Religious	Contrast
REGIONAL HEGEMONY	Economic/ Political/ Military/ Religious	Contrast

2. What strategies and tools, other than kinetic force, has the US used in past conflicts with Iran?

Strategies (other than kinetic force) US has used with Iran	Was it successful? Please describe	Is this tool relevant to US interests WRT Iran or the region? How?
1953- 1979: Propping up a “Strong Man”	Yes and No: US & Great Britain had unfettered access to oil & the strategic location, but Iranian street grew tired of Shah’s extravagance & it propelled a revolution	Yes, if the U.S. wants to revert to propping up strong men to protect economic interests, but this is difficult in the current political environment.
1979 - 1980: Diplomacy & covert action (to return US diplomats)	No, covert military action failed, as did Carter’s negotiation tactics.	No, Iran never formally apologized for the overtaking of the U.S. embassy; a clear violation of international protocol.
1980 – 1981: Threat of force	Yes, hostages returned the day Reagan took office.	Yes.
1981 – 1990: Enabling regional conflict (between competing hegemony, Iran & Iraq)	Yes & No, this strategy enabled a regional conflict between Iran & Iraq- the U.S. played on both sides, which kept both players busy and dependent on U.S. interference.	This might be an interesting long-term strategy – if the U.S. were to enable a conflict between Saudi Arabia & Iran, then tacitly support both sides with the purpose of prolonging the conflict, but it has a malevolent undertone.
1991 – 2000: Propping Up a Weak Buffer Zone (post-Gulf War no fly zones over Iraq)	Yes, this worked for a time, but economic sanctions severely weakened the Iraqi populace.	Yes, this is probably the most ethical strategy – propping up a stronger (but not too strong) Iraqi government to act as a buffer zone between Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the Kurds, and Iran
2001 – 2012: ‘Strategic Pause’	Yes & No, while Bush put Iran on the axis of evil; Iranians saw an opportunity to intercede in Iraqi politics after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Once U.S. forces left the region, Iran had carte blanche to insert themselves into Iraqi politics.	No, this policy has been exhausted because it allowed the Iranians to become a regional hegemon and undermine U.S. interests.
2012 – 2016: Diplomatic Effort	Yes & No, the U.S. was able to negotiate the JCPOA and sidestep the Iranian support of	Iran is still vying for regional hegemony and undermining U.S. interests in the region.

	Iraq's PMU's in the fight against Islamic State, but Iran became much stronger in the process.	
2017 – Present: Aggressive Posturing	Ongoing	Ongoing

3. Can you name any particularly relevant examples of conflict short of open war outside the region that may be relevant to US-Iranian competition for regional influence.

- For each conflict event please indicate 1) the cause of conflict (nature of the issue at stake for both parties), 2) actions taken by parties to reach their objectives, 3) the outcome of conflict, 4) the extent to which the outcome of the conflict satisfied the interests of each side, and, 5) the effect that the conflict had on short and longer-term stability in its region.

1.) Conflict	2.) Actions taken by parties to reach their objectives	3.) Outcome	4.) Extent to which outcome satisfied interests	5.) Effect conflict had on stability in region
US-USSR Cold War (1945-89)	US: 'Spheres of influence'/ Containment/ threat of MAD USSR- Military build up	USSR: fell	US: successful position as global hegemon	Stability & Prosperity for Western Europe
US-North Korea (1953 – Present)	US: contain, isolate, work with regional allies NK: outside alliances/meddling/threat of force	Ongoing	Ongoing	Periods of tension NK: failing economy
US-China Taiwan Straights Crisis (1954-55)	US: Threat of nuclear strike (deterrence) China: Sought outside support from USSR	China: backed down	US: successful at neutralizing Taiwan	Taiwan: stability & economic prosperity
US-Cuba (1959 – Present)	US: contain, isolate, diplomatic efforts Cuba: outside alliances	Ongoing	Ongoing	Cuba: failing economy

US-Venezuela	US: Rhetoric Venezuela: rhetoric/ outside alliances	Ongoing	Ongoing	Venezuela: failing economy
US-Mexico	US: Border Security Mexico: rhetoric	Ongoing	Ongoing	Mexico: economic issues
US-Russia Cold War 2.0	US: Expand NATO Russia: psychological warfare; defend territory; interference; rhetoric	Ongoing	Ongoing	Heightened tensions in Eastern Europe

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III

National Defense University

BLUF – Conflict with Iran today is not a harbinger of perpetually conflicting relations, even though it remains necessary for the foreseeable future to define interests clearly and harden US positions in opposition to Iranian ambitions and actions. Chief among those is regional hegemony beginning with the Iraq, Syria, Lebanon Central Corridor. “Defense” of Shia in Yemen illustrates a border of conflict outside the traditional region of influence/control to minimize and redirect Saudi attentions away from the central corridor – example of breaking bottleneck (like 19th century Russia in Crimea). The current conflict with the US does not preclude a potential later broaching of areas of coordination with Iran against other common threats, to include a Saudi reorientation towards the PRC, and/or a deeper, more formal Turkish reorientation towards Russia. This New Great Game in the region makes Iran the adversary today, recognizing that conditions and polar alignments may necessitate a “warming” if Iran moves away from its primary anti-US rhetoric/stance towards a new primary, proximate and historical enemy.

Historical Example: 19th century Britain vs. Russia in Crimea over access to Black Sea, 1) Russian growing influence and intent to break out of bottleneck, historic claims to region – Iran today; British extended defensive lines and as part of Great Game – US today. 2) Oblique diplomatic alliances and pressure on Ottomans and regional players, nesting narratives in broader competition as well as inherent identity conflicts – weakened Russia’s position in with would-be regional partners. 3) Limited war but still maintained broader competition – key was limitation on conflict because part of both sides’ paradigms of great power politics, enabled eventual cooperation against greater threat in WW1 – democratic nation allied with absolutist monarchy (interests over wishful thinking). Region stabilized for a century due to larger conflicts; returned to the fore once Western attention and intentions no longer on par with Russian = Crimea annexed “without a shot”.

US attention and intentions to remain in the region determine how far Iran goes with Central Corridor. The problem is Russian support changes Iran’s calculation of risk and capabilities to make otherwise limited conflict into larger battlespace (diplomatic and military), threatening to bring in proxy battles as well.

Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy

Queen Mary, University of London

1. What are Iran's key interests and objectives with regard to the region, and how do these relate to US regional interests and objectives?

Iran's key interests	Describe Iran's interest and the driving factors behind it	Does this key interest align or contrast with US interests?
To be the dominant power in the middle east; to be a mighty counterweight to Saudi; to defend the dignity and essentialism of Shia Islam	The driving factors are a toxic mix of nationalism and religious sectarianism. It is this combination which makes them dangerous. Specifically they seek to buttress the Houthi, Hezbollah, Bashir Assad and use them as proxies in their struggle for supremacy.	A very complex and difficult question. There is a school of thought which maintains that Iran's interests do align with the US and the Saudis do not eg terrorists are Sunni not Shia unless they are ex-Shia. The claim is that the US has chosen the wrong friend and the wrong enemy. But this neglects history. Iran CHOSE the US as enemy because of they will not forgive the imposition of the Shah's regime even though it ended 40 years ago.

2. What strategies and tools, other than kinetic force, has the US used in past conflicts with Iran?

The US has never fought Iran directly but Iran did seek to destabilize the US in Iraq via for example supporting Shia militia and the Mahdi army and their attacks on the occupation forces.

Strategies (other than kinetic force) US has used with Iran	Was it successful? Please describe	Is this tool relevant to US interests WRT Iran or the region? How?
<p>Thus the US has 1) fought Iranian proxies; 2) Supported Iran's great sectarian antagonist, Saudi; classified Iran client Hezbollah as a terrorist force; 3) Pursued a mix of diplomacy, soft power, hard power (international sanctions) to lure Iran to the negotiating table over nuclear weapons and this worked- and as we know this involved turning a blind eye to Hezbollah's narco activities. 4) Supported Iran's nemesis Israel with substantial weapons aid. Thus the US has used a mixture of influence sources and this is how it should continue.</p>	<p>This mixture of influence sources was successful in that it scored a deal on Iran's nuclear weapons - which was the most intractable diplomatic problem of the early twenty-first century. Success lay in finding the right blend of coercion with seduction while rejecting the military option and providing Iran with face-saving devices for its domestic and middle eastern audiences. The trick was allowing both sides to claim victory, playing smart as in the Cuba missile crisis</p>	<p>Yes indeed, more relevant now than ever and the formula via which the US should proceed ie mix of persuasion and coercion, face saving devices, permitting Iran to proclaim little diplomatic victories etc. The imaginative use of soft power while NEVER revealing intimidation, weakness etc</p>

3. Can you name any particularly relevant examples of conflict short of open war outside the region that may be relevant to US-Iranian competition for regional influence.

- For each conflict event please indicate 1) the cause of conflict (nature of the issue at stake for both parties), 2) actions taken by parties to reach their objectives, 3) the outcome of conflict, 4) the extent to which the outcome of the conflict satisfied the interests of each side, and, 5) the effect that the conflict had on short and longer-term stability in its region.

Clearly both are players in Afghanistan though there is no inherent reason other than pride as to why they should be rivals here. The Taliban, IS etc are Sunni. Examples of conflict short of open war: China v. Malaysia etc over Spratly islands etc; India v Pakistan over Kashmir; China v. India over their border; China v. Taiwan; Britain v. Spain over Gibraltar; Turkey v Greece over Cyprus etc.

8 February 2018

Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

Gulf Research Center and Sager Group Holding

Iran and Iraq are both examples that can be provided. Iran has tested US resolve on numerous occasions, for example, in terms of interference with free shipping through the Strait of Hormuz or through the arresting of US sailors on several occasions. In Iraq, the US went for the military option without hesitation in 2003. Thus, one has to only look in the region itself to find recent examples.

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Biographies

Ms. Alyssa Adamson

Alyssa C. Adamson was born and raised in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. She graduated from The University of Tulsa in 2016 with degrees in Communication and Art with a certificate in Advertising and distinction as a member of the Honor Student Class of 2016. Alyssa now attends Oklahoma State University in pursuit of her master's degree in Strategic Communication. Her thesis work will focus on the narratives told in Farsi media and U.S. media and how the framing of the dialogues takes place regarding Nation Branding. Alyssa is in the process of applying to Ph.D. programs across the country and plans to pursue a degree in Communication with a focus on Global Media.



Dr. John Arquilla



Dr. John Arquilla earned his degrees in international relations from Rosary College (BA 1975) and Stanford University (MA 1989, PhD 1991). He has been teaching in the special operations program at the United States Naval Postgraduate School since 1993. He also serves as chairman of the Defense Analysis department.

Dr. Arquilla's teaching interests revolve around the history of irregular warfare, terrorism, and the implications of the information age for society and security.

His books include: *Dubious Battles: Aggression, Defeat and the International System* (1992); *From Troy to Entebbe: Special Operations in Ancient & Modern Times* (1996), which was a featured alternate of the Military Book Club; *In Athena's Camp* (1997); *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy* (2001), named a notable book of the year by the American Library Association; *The Reagan Imprint: Ideas in American Foreign Policy from the Collapse of Communism to the War on Terror* (2006); *Worst Enemy: The Reluctant Transformation of the American Military* (2008), which is about defense reform; *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits: How Masters of Irregular Warfare Have Shaped Our World* (2011); and *Afghan Endgames: Strategy and Policy Choices for America's Longest War* (2012).

Dr. Arquilla is also the author of more than one hundred articles dealing with a wide range of topics in military and security affairs. His work has appeared in the leading academic journals and in general publications like *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Wired* and *The New Republic*. He is best known for his concept of "netwar" (i.e., the distinct manner in which those organized into networks fight). His vision of "swarm tactics" was selected by *The New York Times* as one of the "big ideas" of 2001; and in recent years *Foreign Policy Magazine* has listed him among the world's "top 100 thinkers."

In terms of policy experience, Dr. Arquilla worked as a consultant to General Norman Schwarzkopf during Operation Desert Storm, as part of a group of RAND analysts assigned to him. During the Kosovo War, he assisted deputy secretary of defense John Hamre on a range of issues in international

information strategy. Since the onset of the war on terror, Dr. Arquilla has focused on assisting special operations forces and other units on practical “field problems.” Most recently, he worked for the White House as a member of a small, nonpartisan team of outsiders asked to articulate new directions for American defense policy.

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois is Executive Vice President at NSI, Inc. She has also served as co-chair of a National Academy of Sciences study on Strategic Deterrence Military Capabilities in the 21st Century, and as a primary author on a study of the Defense and Protection of US Space Assets. Dr. Astorino-Courtois has served as technical lead on a variety of rapid turn-around, Joint Staff-directed Strategic Multi-layer Assessment (SMA) projects in support of US forces and Combatant Commands. These include assessments of key drivers of political, economic and social instability and areas of resilience in South Asia; development of a methodology for conducting provincial assessments for the ISAF Joint Command; production of a "rich contextual understanding" (RCU) to supplement intelligence reporting for the ISAF J2 and Commander; and projects for USSTRATCOM on deterrence assessment methods.



Previously, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a Senior Analyst at SAIC (2004-2007) where she served as a STRATCOM liaison to U.S. and international academic and business communities. Prior to SAIC, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a tenured Associate Professor of International Relations at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX (1994-2003) where her research focused on the cognitive aspects of foreign policy decision making. She has received a number of academic grants and awards and has published articles in multiple peer-reviewed journals. She has also taught at Creighton University and as a visiting instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Dr. Astorino-Courtois earned her Ph.D. in International Relations and MA in and Research Methods from New York University. Her BA is in political science from Boston College. Finally, Dr. Astorino-Courtois also has the distinction of having been awarded both a US Navy Meritorious Service Award and a US Army Commander's Award.

Mr. William Cabán

William Cabán is a staff advisor at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a subset of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Prior to this, he was employed as a regional analyst and lecturer for the Marine Corps University's Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL). Mr. Cabán also serves as an officer in the US Marine Corps Reserve. He has a background in intelligence, has served as a foreign area advisor, and has extensive experience in Security Cooperation and Foreign Internal Defense. His studies include a Bachelor's degree in geography, and a Post-Baccalaureate certificate in Geographic Information Science (GIS) from City University of New York, Lehman College, where he graduated with honors.

Dr. Skye Cooley



Skye Cooley (Ph.D., University of Alabama) is an assistant professor in the School of Media and Strategic Communications at Oklahoma State University. His research interests are in Russian political communication, global media and digital democracy, as well as civic deliberation online. Dr. Cooley holds certifications of accreditation in public relations (APR) and civilian service peace keeping operations (POTI). He has traveled actively through Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa; publishing and presenting research on international political communication.

Dr. Robert Hinck

Robert Hinck (Ph.D., Texas A&M University) is Professor of Organizational Communication at Monmouth College. His program of research centers on organizational rhetoric, particularly regarding international and diplomatic rhetoric, public diplomacy, conflict and negotiation, as well as global media. His research projects address concerns regarding the formation and sustainment of political cooperation among distinct political communities, and the rhetorical means by which they structure and manage internal and external stakeholders.



Ambassador James F. Jeffrey



Ambassador James F. Jeffrey is the Philip Solondz distinguished fellow at The Washington Institute where he focuses on U.S. diplomatic and military strategy in the Middle East, with emphasis on Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.

One of the nation's most senior diplomats, Ambassador Jeffrey has held a series of highly sensitive posts in Washington D.C. and abroad. In addition to his service as ambassador in Ankara and Baghdad, he served as assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor in the George W. Bush administration, with a special focus on Iran. He previously served as principal deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State, where his responsibilities included leading the Iran policy team and coordinating public diplomacy. Earlier appointments included service as senior advisor on Iraq to the secretary of state; chargé d'affaires and deputy chief of mission in Baghdad; deputy chief of mission in Ankara; and ambassador to Albania.

A former infantry officer in the U.S. army, Ambassador Jeffrey served in Germany and Vietnam from 1969 to 1976.

Dr. Randy Kluver

Dr. Randy Kluver (Ph.D., University of Southern California) is the Dean of the School of Global Studies and Partnerships at Oklahoma State University. Dr. Kluver conducts theoretically driven research on political communication (including rhetorical and new media approaches), and global and new media. His work explores the role of political culture on political communication, and the ways in which cultural expectations, values, and habits condition political messaging practices and reception in a variety of contexts.



Dr. Diane L. Maye



Dr. Diane Maye is an Assistant Professor of Security Studies and International Affairs at Embry- Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, and an affiliated faculty member at George Mason University's Center for Narrative and Conflict Analysis. She also served as a Visiting Professor of International Affairs at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy. Diane teaches undergraduate level courses in International Relations, Homeland Security, American Foreign Policy, Counterterrorism Analysis, Arabic, and Middle Eastern Affairs.

Prior to her work in academia, Diane served as an officer in the United States Air Force and worked in the defense industry. Upon leaving the Air Force, Diane managed projects in foreign military sales, proposal development, and the execution of large international communications and physical security projects for military customers. During the Iraq war, she worked for Multi-National Force-Iraq in Baghdad, managing over 400 bi-lingual, bicultural advisors to the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Department of Defense. She is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Naval Postgraduate School and earned her Ph.D. in Political Science at George Mason University.

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III is a professor of national security strategy at the US National Defense University. With a doctorate in Government and Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia, and two decades of research and work on post-Soviet regions and the Middle East, his expertise bridges scholarly and practitioner communities. To that end, he has published widely on strategic topics related to democratic development, conflict resolution, and special operations. He is a Fulbright Scholar and a regular advisor and contributor to several DoD and interagency projects, including multiple Joint Staff Strategic Multilayer Assessments, intelligence community workshops, and JSOC efforts supporting the joint warfighter in the areas of governance, human factors of conflict, and influence operations.



Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy



Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy is Professor of Communication at Queen Mary, University of London, UK and latterly director of their Marketing and Communications Group; Visiting Professor (2016-) in the Department of War Studies at King's College London, and a Quondam Fellow of Hughes Hall Cambridge University. Earlier in his career he taught for eleven years at Cambridge. Nicholas is the author or co-author or editor of numerous books on commercial

and political persuasion.

Ultimately his concern is with the 'engineering of consent'- the troubling matter of how public opinion can be manufactured, and governments elected, via sophisticated methodologies of persuasion developed in the consumer economy.

A co-authored book, *Theory and Concepts in Political Marketing*, was published in April 2013 with Sage. *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand* (Hurst) was published in September 2016, and a second volume – *Marketing The Third Reich: Persuasion, Packaging and Propaganda*- has been out since September 2017 with Routledge. 'Key Readings In Propaganda' (with Paul Baines, four volumes, Sage London 2012): Volume One: Historical origins, definition, changing nature. Volume Two: The psychology and sociology underpinning Propaganda. Volume Three: Propaganda in military and terrorism contexts. Volume Four: Advances and contemporary issues in Propaganda.

Other topics in propaganda are pursued in numerous journal articles such as *Selling Terror: The Symbolization and Positioning of Jihad* (with Paul Baines), *Marketing Theory* Volume 9 (2) (pp 207-221) 2009. *The Dark Side of Political Marketing, Islamist Propaganda, Reversal Theory and British Muslims* with Paul Baines et al, *European Journal of Marketing*.V44 3/4 2010. *Al Qaeda message evolution and positioning, 1998- 2008: Propaganda analysis re-visited*, Baines and O'Shaughnessy, *Public Relations Inquiry* pp 163-191 May 2014 .*Putin, Xi, And Hitler: propaganda and the paternity of pseudo democracy*. *Defence Strategic Communications* (the official journal of NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence) Vol 2 Spring 2017. *The Politics of Consumption And the Consumption of Politics: How Authoritarian Regimes Shape Public Opinion By Using Consumer Marketing Tools*. *Journal of Advertising Research*, June 2017, 57 (2).

His perspective has always been that persuasion is the hidden hand of history, its core dynamic. And certainly it is the case that propaganda has become again an important part of our global public and civic discourse.

Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

A Saudi expert on Gulf politics and strategic issues, **Dr. Abdulaziz Sager** is the founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, a global think tank based in Jeddah with a well-established worldwide network of partners and offices in both the Gulf region and Europe.



In this capacity, Dr. Sager has authored and edited numerous publications including *Combating Violence & Terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, *The GCC's Political & Economic Strategy towards Post-War Iraq and Reforms in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Feasible Solutions*. He

is also a frequent contributor to major international media channels and appears regularly on Al-Arabiya Television, France 24 and the BBC. In addition to his academic activities, Dr. Sager is actively engaged in track-two and mediation meeting. For example, he has chaired and moderated the Syrian opposition meetings in Riyadh in December 2015 and November 2017.

In addition to his work with the Gulf Research Center, Dr. Sager is President of Sager Group Holding in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is active in the fields of information technology, aviation services and investments. Furthermore, he holds numerous other appointments including on the Makkah Province Council, Advisory Board of the Arab Thought Foundation, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Faculty of Economics and Administration at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Ministry of Education, Geneva Center for Security Policy and German Orient Foundation. Dr. Sager has also sat on the advisory group for the UNDP Arab Human Development Report, and participates in the Think Tank Leaders Forum of the World Economic Forum and the Council of Councils of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Dr. Sager holds a Ph.D in Politics and International Relations from Lancaster University and an M.A. from the University of Kent, United Kingdom and a Bachelor Degree from the Faculty of Economics and Administration of King Abdulaziz University.

Dr. Ethan Stokes



Ethan Stokes (Ph.D., University of Alabama) is an assistant professor of in advertising and public relations in the College of Communication and Information Sciences at the University of Alabama. Dr. Stokes' research interests are in political communication, digital media, and open source intelligence systems. His work examines how narratives move and alter across global media

Dr. Sabrina Pagano

Dr. Sabrina Pagano is an experienced project leader and principal investigator, with 15 years of experience leading teams and projects both in academia and industry. She earned her Ph.D. in Social Psychology (minor in Statistics) from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a dual BA with highest honors in Psychology and Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has led and been an active contributor to work in both the government and commercial domains. Though supporting a wide variety of projects and proposals, her work at NSI has focused in four main areas, including providing support to DoD's Strategic Multilayer Analysis (SMA) projects, including rapid applied analysis for CENTCOM; serving as the Principal Investigator and Project Manager for a multi-year contract investigating progress in conflict environments; providing project oversight as the project manager for two AAA titles at a top gaming company, and as one of two developers of a corporate offering focused on enhancing dignity in interactions with customers and employees.



Prior to NSI, she served as the Director (Acting) of a growing behavioral sciences program, as well as a Faculty Fellow Researcher and Lecturer at UCLA. Dr. Pagano's work has spanned a wide variety of topics, with particular depth in intergroup relations, injustice, basic and moral emotions (e.g., empathy, moral outrage), and prosocial/antisocial behavior. She maintains an active knowledge base in the broad field of social psychology, and knowledge that spans multiple fields given over a decade of experience and leadership specifically on multidisciplinary projects.