

Forum: United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Issue #15-01: Addressing growing international tensions in Iran and the Persian Gulf.

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Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Iran has long been subjected to political and social turmoil. A major event which acted as a catalyst for international tensions between Iran and other nations was the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79, which saw the collapse of the reigning Pahlavi Dynasty monarchy and the rise of an Islamic Fundamentalist government led by the populist Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Prior to the Islamic Revolution, Iran was under the rule of the Shah and the monarchy who were largely supported by the United States of America and other Western powers. Foreign nations have been meddling in Iran since the overthrow of Iran's 35th prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, who ruled from 1951 until 1953, due to a coup orchestrated by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the UK's MI6 agency. Foreign intervention in Iran and the image of Iran as a puppet government of the United States sparked an anti-Western sentiment amongst the Iranian population and opposition leaders. This resentment towards the Western world served as the foundation for diplomatic standoffs such as the Iran Hostage Crisis and the Iranian Embassy Siege.

International tensions have been escalating at an alarming rate since the United States' decision to exit the Iran Nuclear Deal and reimpose sanctions on Iran. In July of 2015, the P5+1, the European Union, and Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Iran Nuclear Deal) which would highly restrict Iran's nuclear program in return for lifting economic sanctions imposed on Iran. However, the Trump Administration opted to exit the agreement and reimpose sanctions until Iran could renegotiate the deal with new regulations toward Iran's ballistic missile program and their alleged state-sponsored

terrorism. Trump's exit from the Iran Nuclear Deal has led to the breaching of many terms listed in the agreement, as well as military action developing in the Persian Gulf.

Definition of Key Terms

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

The prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology to nations who do not possess them. Nuclear non-proliferation also refers to advocating for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament of countries who possess nuclear weapons.

Uranium Enrichment

The process used to separate the uranium-235 isotope from natural uranium ore. The uranium-235 isotope is key for creating a nuclear weapon.

Centrifuges

A system of cylinders which rotate at high speeds in order to separate the uranium-235 isotopes from the natural uranium ore.

State Sponsored Terrorism

A country's deliberate use of terrorism or aiding of terrorist groups as foreign policy towards another nation or certain groups of people.

Islamic Fundamentalism

A religious doctrine and ideology which seeks to impose Sharia Law and literal interpretations of Islamic texts, such as the Quran, as the rule of law through an anti-secular Islamic State.

General Overview

Economic Conditions in Iran Before The Nuclear Agreement

International confrontations between Iran and foreign nations, primarily the United States (US), have occurred since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The first instance of major economic sanctions occurred during November of 1979 as a result of the Iran Hostage Crisis, where Iranian imports to the United States were embargoed and \$12 million dollars in Iranian assets were frozen under the administration of U.S President Jimmy Carter. 212 days after the crisis began, the US cut off all diplomatic relations with Iran, cut off food, aid, and closed all US institutions in Iran. Future sanctions against Iran were then justified under the Iran-Iraq Arms Non-Proliferation Act, passed by the US congress in 1992, where it became US policy to prohibit the transfer of goods to Iran and Iraq if there is reason to believe that such transfer of goods could aid said country's acquisition of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. The involvement of foreign investors in the Iranian economy was later investigated as a result of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, passed by the US congress in August of 1996, which required the United States to impose sanctions on foreign companies who invest more than \$20 million in Iran's oil or gas sector. This act was passed due to the fear that investment in Iran's petroleum industry could supply funds for Iran to develop weapons of mass destruction.

The United Nations Security Council saw the adoption of sanctions against Iran through Resolution 1929, which also banned Iranian ballistic missile tests and instituted an arms embargo. This resolution was then adopted by the European Union, which further sought to prohibit arms exports to Iran and ban the importation of Iranian crude oil, natural gas, and petroleum products. Sanctions from the United States and the international community were severely tightened in 2002 when the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) revealed that Iran was developing a nuclear program and had undeclared nuclear facilities enriching uranium. As a result of these economic sanctions, Iran suffered a deep economic recession. The banking and healthcare sectors were particularly hurt by these sanctions. In October 2012, the Iranian inflation rate was at 30% and the Rial, Iran's currency, plummeted by about 40%. The healthcare sector suffered as the supply of American and Western-made medicines for treating cancer, thalassemia, and kidney disease, amongst others, dwindled as a result of the

sanctions. According to a study by Gallup, 27% of the Iranian population was unemployed and 34% was underemployed. This economic hardship applied tremendous pressure on the Iranian government to negotiate its nuclear deal in exchange for sanctions relief.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Iran Nuclear Deal)

In return for the lifting of its crippling economic sanctions, Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, with the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, Germany, and the European Union. The agreement, reached in Vienna in July of 2015, highly restricts the ability of Iran to produce a nuclear weapon. Crucially, the deal reduces Iran's stockpile of uranium by 98%, from about 10,000 kg of uranium to 300 kg (660 lbs). In addition to the reduction of Iran's uranium stockpile, the agreement highly limits the quantity of nuclear centrifuges--required to enrich enough uranium to make a bomb--Iran may have. Iran's supply of centrifuges would be reduced from almost 20,000 centrifuges to 5,060 centrifuges until 2026. In addition to these restrictions, Iran's centrifuges would only enrich the uranium by 3.67%, which is enough to produce fuel for nuclear power plants, but far from the 90% enrichment required to classify as "weapons grade" uranium which can be used to produce a nuclear weapon. To ensure that Iran follows all the guidelines set forth in the JCPOA, the United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would be assigned to monitor and audit Iranian nuclear activity and verify that no enrichment is happening in an undercover location. The Iranian government also had 24 days to comply with IAEA requests, where failure to do so could result in penalization by the members of the agreement. As previously mentioned, the UN, the US, and the EU agreed to lift the immobilizing sanctions on Iran, which cost Iran \$160 billion dollars between 2012 and 2016. This provided Iran with an economic boost, with the International Monetary Fund reporting that the Gross Domestic Product of Iran grew by 12.5% within the first year of the agreement's implementation. Oil exports, which account for 80% of Iran's exports, more than doubled from 1.1 million barrels per day in 2013 to 2.5 million barrels a day in 2018.

Despite being unanimously approved and endorsed in Resolution 2231 by the Security Council, the Trump administration decided to withdraw from the JCPOA on May 8th, 2018 and impose unilateral economic sanctions with the intention of creating a new

deal with Iran. This deal would include the strict regulation of Iran's ballistic missile program, making specific clauses of the JCPOA permanent, the removal of Iranian presence in Lebanon, and the cutting of funding to Islamic fundamentalist groups such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hezbollah. Although Iran continued to comply with the terms of the agreement, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced on May 8th, 2019 that Iran would continue with higher enrichment of uranium if the remaining signatories of the JCPOA failed to negotiate new terms for the deal after 60 days. President Rouhani also mentioned how Iran would stop its exports of excess uranium and heavy water, violating the terms of the 2015 deal.

Accusations of Iranian State Sponsored Terrorism

One of the major reasons for the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA is the sponsoring and funding of Islamic fundamentalist militias by the Iranian government and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), generally within the larger context of the Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict. US President Donald Trump stated that "The Iranian regime is the leading state sponsor of terror. It exports dangerous missiles, fuels conflicts across the Middle East, and supports terrorist proxies." Hezbollah, Arabic for "Party of God", is a prominent Shia Islamist group backed by Iran; the alliance dates back to when Israel invaded Iran in 1982. Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, stated that "Hezbollah's budget, salaries, expenses, and its food, drink, weapons, and missiles are funded by the Islamic Republic of Iran. As long as there is money in Iran, then [Hezbollah] has money." Iran has assisted Hezbollah in growing their rocket arsenal from an estimated 120,000 projectiles in 2006 to more than 150,000 projectiles. Estimates on Iranian funding to Hezbollah range from \$100 to \$200 million. Hezbollah is recognized by the United States, Israel, Canada, the Netherlands, Argentina, and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries as a terrorist organization. Iran and Hezbollah have been linked to multiple terrorist attacks across the globe such as the 1983 bombings of the US embassy in Beirut which killed 63 people, the 1996 bombings of Khobar Towers, and the 1994 bombing of Alas Chiricanas Flight 901 in Panama which resulted in the death of 21 people, 12 of whom were Jews. Hezbollah has targeted Jews and the State of Israel several times, such as seen in the 1994 car bombing of the AIMA (Argentine Israelite Mutual Association) Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. The bombings resulted in the death of 85 people, making it Argentina's

deadliest terrorist attack.

Conflict between Israel and Hezbollah is prevalent, as seen in the 2006 Lebanon war fought between Hezbollah paramilitary forces and the Israeli Defence Forces. Iran has been portrayed as working to surround Israel with missiles and military force, as seen through their support of Hamas, a Palestinian Islamist movement in the Gaza Strip. Hamas' representative to Iran, Khalid Al-Qadoumi, stated: "Our relationship with Tehran has witnessed several phases, as our strategy with Tehran is based on confronting Israel, our common enemy." Iran is also a prominent supporter of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. In January of 2013, Syrian state media revealed a \$1 billion dollar loan agreement with Iran. Syrian officials then announced that Iran would provide Syria a \$3.6 billion dollar loan to finance the purchase of petroleum related products. Iran has also been linked to aiding the creation of Jaysh al-Sha'bi, a paramilitary Syrian militia composed of around 50,000 soldiers. Additionally, Iran has allegedly dispatched forces from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to aid the Syrian military and Iranian scientists to help in the development of Syria's chemical weapons program.

Growing Military Presence in the Strait of Hormuz

On May 7th, 2019, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo abruptly cancelled a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel due to an unprecedented meeting with top Iraqi officials in Baghdad over an apparent threat to US troops and officials in Iran. This surprise meeting came during a period of military confrontations in the Persian Gulf between the US, its Middle Eastern allies, and Iran. More specifically, these confrontations occurred within the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic location between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman which provides the Persian Gulf's only access to the open ocean. The Strait of Hormuz accounts for 40% of the world's oil tanker traffic. According to the US Energy Information Administration, approximately 18 million oil barrels and 300 million cubic meters of liquid natural gas exited the Strait per day in the first half of 2018. The Strait of Hormuz has hosted military and diplomatic standoffs since the Iran-Iraq war, which lasted from 1980 to 1988, when Iran warned it could close and mine the waterway. In April of 1988, American forces sank three Iranian warships and destroyed two Iranian surveillance platforms as a result of a mine in the Strait which sank an American warship. Perhaps the deadliest clash between the two nations in the Strait

occurred when an American warship shot down Iran Air Flight 655, which was mistaken for an F-14 fighter jet. The incident resulted in the death of all 290 passengers, including 66 children.

On May 12th, 2019, four oil tankers were sunk off the coast of Fujairah Emirate, near the Strait of Hormuz. Two of these tankers belonged to Saudi Arabia, one belonged to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the last belonged to a Norwegian company. With Saudi Arabia and the UAE being prominent allies of the US and enemies of Iran, the US claimed Iran was behind the unprecedented attacks. Without offering any evidence, a US official in Washington told the Associated Press that the American military team's initial assessment indicated that Iran or its allies used explosives to blow holes into the oil tankers. This incident came just a week after the Pentagon dispatched the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier, a B-52 bomber task force, and 12 jet fighters to the region. US National Security Adviser John Bolton stated that the move was meant to send a "clear and unmistakable message to the Iranian regime that any attack on US interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force." This military reaction was a response to more undisclosed American intelligence which supposedly showed that Iran and its proxies were planning to attack American forces in the region.

On June 13, one day after Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's arrival to Tehran in an attempt to mediate in the standoff, two oil tankers, one Japanese and one Norwegian, were attacked while transiting near the Strait of Hormuz. The United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and Germany accused Iran of being responsible for the attacks, but Iran firmly denied the allegations. In response to this incident, the United States authorized the moving of 1,000 troops to the area on July 17th. On the same day, Iran announced that it would surpass the uranium limit of 300 kilograms stockpile and 3.67% enrichment set by the nuclear agreement in 2015. As promised, these terms of the agreement were breached on July 1st. One of the most notable instances of military aggression in the Strait of Hormuz occurred on June 20, when Iranian forces and air defense shot down an unmanned US military drone near the Strait of Hormuz, which cost the Pentagon about \$123 million. While both the US and Iran confirmed the incident, they still disagree about the location of where the drone was shot down. The US claims the drone strike was illegal and unwarranted, as the drone was allegedly flying over international waters, but Iran claims the aircraft was flying in Iranian airspace.

On June 21, President Trump revealed he called off a direct attack on Iran 10 minutes before the point of no return. Trump tweeted, “We were cocked and loaded to retaliate last night on 3 different sights. When I asked ‘how many people will die?’, ‘150 people, sir’, was the answer from the General.” Almost a month later, on June 18th, the USS Boxer assault ship shot down an Iranian drone which had circled “approximately 1000 yards” away from the aircraft and was “threatening the safety of the ship and the ship’s crew,” as stated by President Trump.



Figure 1: Reference map for geographic location of previously mentioned parties.

Alliances and Relationships in the Middle East

In order to understand the factors that drive the rising tensions between the United States and Iran, it is important to have a broader understanding of alliances and relationships in the Middle East. A real source of tension between the two countries is that the United States' key allies in the region are simultaneously Iran's biggest enemies, and vice versa. For example, Saudi Arabia is an important ally of the United States in the region: it is the largest consumer of US weapons, buying about 18% of total US weapon sales. Soon after taking office in 2017, President Trump's administration reversed a decision by former President Obama that would suspend the sale of \$500 million in bombs and other weapons to the Saudi military. During President Trump's first visit to Riyadh, he announced a series of weapon sales to Saudi Arabia that would be nearly

\$110 billion over a span of 10 years. While the United States benefits from the profit made in weapons sales, Saudi Arabia uses its newly reinforced military in an attempt to spread its influence over the Islamic world. This geopolitical struggle for influence is known as the Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict, commonly referred to as the Middle East Cold War. The series of proxy conflicts arises from the Islamic schism between the Sunni Muslim majority of Saudi Arabia and the large Shia Muslim population of Iran. Perhaps the most prevalent example of the Iran-Saudi Arabia Proxy conflict is the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the Yemen Civil War. The Yemeni crisis hosts a military conflict between the Shia Iranian-backed Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabia along with 8 other countries, forming a group known as the Saudi-led Coalition. Iran sends advanced weapons and military advancement to the Houthis and finances the operation through illegal shipments of fuel, as documented in an 85-page report by the Security Council. Saudi Arabia uses its military funding from the United States against the Houthis in order to prevent Iran from having such a strong presence near the Saudi border. However, it is the Yemeni civilians who end up suffering the most: the abundant displacement, famine, and disease crippling the country. 24 million Yemeni people, around 80% of the Yemeni population, require some form of humanitarian protection or assistance, as stated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Another source of contention between the United States and Iran is the State of Israel, due to the widely different views on Israel from both sides. Israel can be considered the closest ally of the United States in the Middle East, especially after the election of Donald Trump and the controversial reallocation of the US Embassy to Jerusalem. The US and Israel have previously worked together to fight Iran's nuclear endeavours through the development of a sophisticated malware system known as Stuxnet, which has cyberattacked Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has notably criticized the Iran Nuclear Deal and pressured the US into withdrawing. On the other hand, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has called Israel "a cancerous tumor" and a "fake regime" set up by Western powers. Israel sees Iran as a mortal threat due to Iran's support of anti-Israeli groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. As mentioned previously, Iran is also a supporter of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, which has opened up a new alliance with Russia. Since Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015, Iran has authorized Russian use of its military

bases for conducting operations in defense of the Assad regime. Russia's alliance with Iran extends to the Yemeni Civil War, as Russia defended Iran on February 26, 2018 by vetoing a Security Council resolution drafted by the United Kingdom which condemned Iran for supplying weapons to Houthi militias.

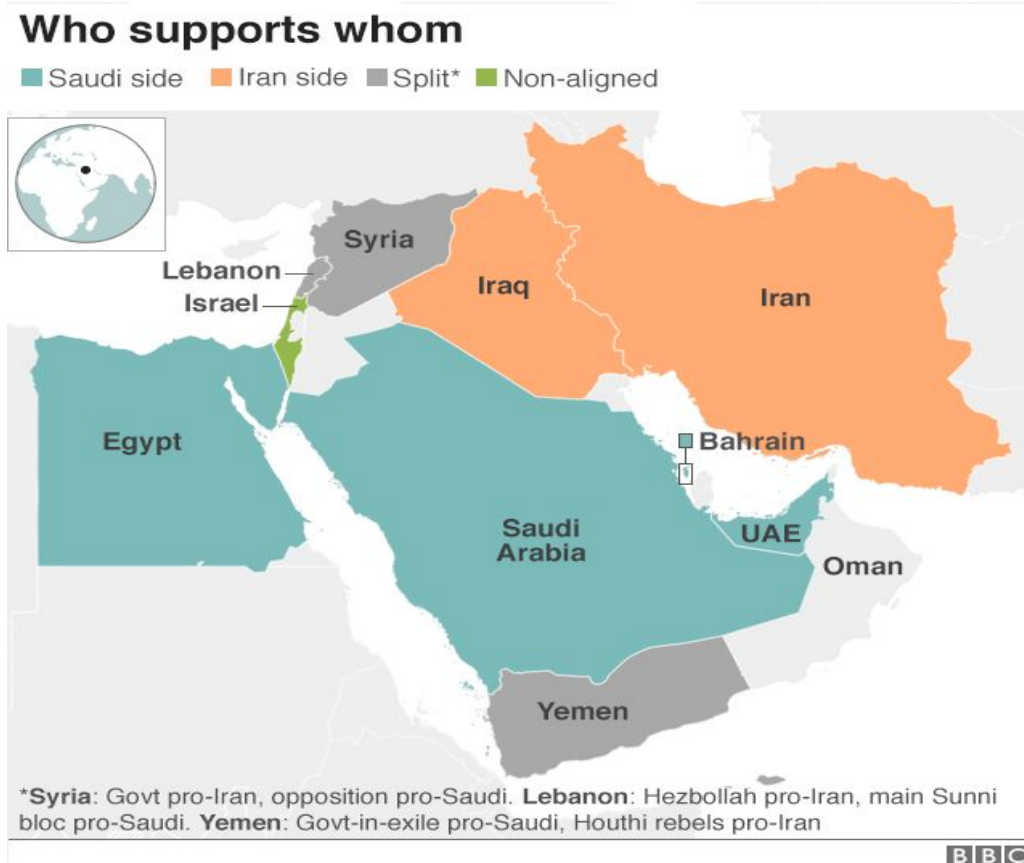


Figure 2: Reference map which demonstrates Iran's and Saudi Arabia's regional alliances.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran has served as the center of alarming diplomatic standoffs between the United States and its Sunni counterparts in the Middle East. The development of Iran's nuclear program sparked numerous sanctions and condemning statements from parties such as the United States, the UN Security Council, and European Union. This made Iran the

subject of the JCPOA, where massive diplomatic strides were made between Iran, the P5+1, and the European Union in order to restrain Iran's nuclear program and ease tensions between Iran, its regional enemies, and other international powers. Despite its efforts to maintain peace by signing the JCPOA, Iran has also acted as a catalyst for military confrontations and proxy wars in the Middle East. These conflicts include the funding and support of groups such as the Houthi rebels in Yemen as a part of the Yemeni Civil War, the regime of Bashar Al-Assad and pro-Assad groups such as Jaysh al-Sha'bi in Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in the Palestinian State against the Israeli government.

The United States of America

Tensions between Iran and the international community thoroughly escalated after the administration of Donald Trump decided to withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018. The United States based its decision on a disagreement over the duration and restrictions of certain terms in the nuclear agreement and the alleged indirect funding the deal provides towards Iran's support of its allies and proxies. Since the withdrawal from the nuclear deal, the United States has reimposed all previous sanctions on Iran before the nuclear deal and new sanctions which don't only target economic resources, but also individuals such as Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Aside from reimposing sanctions, the United States has also instigated military confrontations in the Strait of Hormuz and has retaliated against Iranian military activity in the Persian Gulf. Most notably, a United States drone was flying over the Persian Gulf region when it was shot down by Iranian air defense, which almost triggered direct military action against Iran by the United States. The United States also plays an important role of influence through the region by supporting Iran's regional enemies such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the UAE. The United States has been crucial to the campaign of the Saudi-Led coalition in Yemen through weapon sales.

Saudi Arabia

Even when taking into account the alarming tensions between Iran and the US, Saudi Arabia can still be labeled Iran's biggest enemy and regional rival due to their ongoing struggle to spread dominance and their respective Islamic agenda in the Middle East through multiple proxy conflicts. Saudi Arabia and Iran's geopolitical struggle sprouts

from religious differences arising from Prophet Muhammad's death. The Saudi government follows the Sunni belief that Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law, was the rightful successor to Muhammad and the first caliph. On the other hand, Iran is a Shia--which accounts for only 12% of Muslims worldwide--stronghold, and believes that Muhammad's successor should be his cousin and son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib. These religious tensions have pushed Saudi Arabia to condemn and restrain Iran in its campaign for Shia dominance. Saudi Arabia has joined the United States in claiming Iran is fully responsible for attacks against oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. Perhaps the largest Saudi effort to combat Iran's expanding influence is by forming the Saudi-led Coalition in order to prevent the threat of Iranian power in its border. The Saudi-led Coalition, launched in 2015 by Saudi Arabia and eight other countries, defends the government of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and combats Iranian-backed Houthi rebels through ground forces and air strikes.

Syria

The regime of Bashar al-Assad and the civil war taking place in Syria has acted as a cornerstone of tensions between Iran, its neighbors in the Middle East, and international powers. Syria can be considered as Iran's only consistent ally since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The Alawite Shia government of Assad has formed a strong alliance with Iran which has led to Iranian funding and aiding of Syrian militias in order to maintain Assad's power. Syria is also crucial due to its acting as a conduit of Iranian weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon. This serves as an incentive for Iran to preserve Assad's regime in Damascus. Another factor driving the alliance between Iran and Syria is the common animosity towards Israel. Syria has been referred to as "a golden ring of resistance against Israel" by Iran's former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. Taking into account the humanitarian disaster that is the Syrian Civil War, international tensions have escalated between Iran and other nations such as the United States and Gulf Cooperation Council States due to their support of Assad's ruthless regime.

Israel

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has stated Iran "will support and help any nations, any groups fighting against the Zionist regime across the world." Along with Saudi Arabia, the State of Israel is one of the countries facing extreme aversion from

Tehran. Iran does not recognize Israel and backs the Palestinian State. As President Rouhani mentioned, Iran has blamed Israel, calling it the perpetrator of tensions in the Middle East: "the root cause of problems in the region is the usurping occupation of Palestinian territories." Iran has several proxies in Palestine, such as the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, simply known as Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). PIJ is the second largest terrorist organization in The Gaza Strip behind Hamas. PIJ's sponsoring from Iran includes the supplying of weapons and training, as well as partnered operations with another Iranian proxy, Hezbollah.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah is one of Iran's largest proxies in the Middle East. Since the Iraq-Iran war, Iran has been Hezbollah's largest sponsor and a large influence over Hezbollah's political agenda and military operations. Hezbollah has also served as a point of contention between the United States and Iran as Donald Trump's administration demands Iran to withdraw support for Hezbollah and stop its operations in Lebanon. Iran's support of Hezbollah is a strategic maneuver to target Israel, as seen through the 2006 Lebanon War. The war was instigated when Hezbollah guerrillas attacked the Israeli border and killed eight Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, kidnapping two others. The 34 day conflict caused the death of 1125 Lebanese, 121 IDF soldiers, and 44 Israeli civilians.

Houthi Insurgency

The Houthi Movement, founded in 1992 by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, is an Iranian backed Zaydi Shiite rebel group which acts as a highly important combatant of the Yemeni Civil War. This Iranian proxy has control of Yemen's capital Sana'a and control the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah, through which 80% of the country's imports pass through. The Houthi movement played an important role during the Arab Spring by attempting to form a new government after the downfall of former authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh, which they then allied with in order to overthrow Yemen's new Saudi backed President, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The role of the Houthi Movement in the Yemen Civil War has increased tensions outside of Yemen. The Houthi slogan reads "God is great, death to America, death to Israel, curse on the Jews, victory to Islam." Much like how Iran funds the Houthi militias, the United States is involved by supporting the operations of the Saudi-led Coalition through massive

amounts of weapon sales.

Russia

The Russian Federation plays an important role in the rise of tensions between Iran and foreign countries due to Russia's alliance with Iran and controversial military intervention in Syria in 2015. Iran has previously assisted Russia in conducting operations in defense of the Assad regime. Russian President Vladimir Putin has also warned against a war between the US and Iran, stating that "it would be a catastrophe, at a minimum for the region" and that it could lead to a new wave of refugees. The involvement of a nuclear power in alliance with Iran in relation to the Syrian Civil War only escalates tensions in relation to the conflict.

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom (UK) has been a component of increasing tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, due to an incident on July 19, 2019 where two British-linked oil tankers were seized by Iran's Revolutionary Guards. In response to the attacks, UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said the UK was "absolutely clear that, if this situation is not resolved quickly, there will be serious consequences." Despite the attacks, the UK rejected military retaliation in the Gulf and instead opted for a diplomatic way to resolve the situation. The incident has also pushed the US to form a stronger alliance with the UK regarding the situation.

Kuwait

As a member of the Security Council, the Kuwaiti delegation has called for the easing of tensions in the Persian Gulf region through press releases. At the same time, Kuwait is a member of the Saudi-led Coalition and has supported the operation by supplying 15 fighter jets.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
August 19 1953	The United States and the United Kingdom stage a coup d'etat to replace Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh with the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.
December 10 1978	Millions of Iranian breakout in protest demanding the replacement of the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.
February 1 1979	Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returns to Iran to lead the new government, after 14 years of exile in France.
November 4 1979	Iranian students mark the beginning of the Iran Hostage Crisis by storming the US Embassy in Tehran and taking 90 people in hostage, 66 of whom were American. The demonstration called for the extradition of the Shah, who was getting medical treatment for cancer in the United States.
November 14 1979	US President Jimmy Carter passes sanctions that freeze \$12 million in Iranian assets and places an embargo on Iranian imports to the United States.
December 4 1979	The United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 457 which calls for Iran to release the hostages.
April 7 1980	US President Jimmy Carter cuts all diplomatic ties and closes down all US institutions in Iran. All US diplomats in Iran are ordered to leave Iran.
June 18 1992	The US Congress introduces the Iran-Iraq Arms Non-Proliferation Act which authorized banning the transport of goods from Iran to Iraq if there was any reason to believe that such transfer of goods could aid Iraq's acquisition of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons.

August 5 1996	The US Congress imposes the Iran-Libya Act which required the US to impose sanctions on foreign companies who invest more than \$20 million into Iran's oil or gas industries. The act was introduced in order to prevent foreign investment from supplying funds for Iran to develop weapons of mass destruction.
August 2002	The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) reveals that Iran's secret nuclear program in development and exposes undeclared Iranian facilities enriching uranium.
December 2006	The United Nations Security Council introduces Resolution 1737, which imposes sanctions that prohibit the transfer of nuclear related technology to Iran and targets economic resources in Iran and individuals involved in Iran's nuclear program.
July 14 2015	The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, is signed between Iran, the P5+1, and the European Union. The deal highly restricted Iran's nuclear program in return for lifting economic sanctions on Iran.
May 8 2018	Under the administration of US President Donald Trump, the United States withdraws from the Iran Nuclear Deal and urges Iran to renegotiate a new deal.
November 5 2018	The United States reimposes sanctions on Iran's banking, shipping, and oil industries.
May 7th 2019	US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cancels meeting with German chancellor Angela Merkel due to a meeting in Baghdad with Iraqi officials over a threat to US officials in Iran.
May 13 2019	Four oil tankers are attacked in the Strait of Hormuz and Iran denies responsibility for attacks.
June 13 2019	Two oil tankers are attacked in the Gulf of Oman, near the Strait of Hormuz. A video which allegedly shows the involvement of Iran's

Revolutionary Guard Corps is released by US Officials, yet Iran denies involvement.

June 20th 2019

Iranian air defense shoots down a US military drone allegedly flying over Iranian airspace.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Throughout the last decade, the United Nations played an important role in restricting Iran through economic sanctions adopted in several resolutions in response to Iran's nuclear endeavours. The United Nations Security Council unanimously approved the ratification of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015. Although the United Nations has not taken direct action in response to the recent tensions between Iran, the United States, and Iran's regional enemies, the Security Council has attempted to mediate by urging maximum restraint in the Persian Gulf.

- **S/RES/1737** was adopted by the United Nations Security Council on December 27, 2006. This resolution imposed sanctions on Iran and certain entities that supported Iran's efforts in nuclear proliferation. RES 1737 demanded that all UN member states prohibit the transfer of nuclear and ballistic missile material that could aid Iran in its enrichment efforts and the development of nuclear weapons. The resolution also encouraged states to freeze economic resources and funds of individuals who are involved in Iran's nuclear program. It encouraged countries to enforce vigilance on individuals involved in Iran's nuclear program who are entering that country's territory. The resolution was unanimously approved by the Security Council.
- **S/RES/2231** was unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council on July 20th, 2015. This resolution endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and set forth the process the Security Council would take to lift sanctions such as the previously mentioned RES 1737. For example, this resolution maintains the arms embargo placed on Iran for five years and maintains the sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile program for eight years. The resolution also laid out the

groundwork if the reimposition of sanctions is necessary. The resolution requests reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Iran's implementation of the deal.

- On June 24th, the Security Council called for the end of tensions in the Persian Gulf through a press statement drafted by the Kuwait delegation. The press statement affirmed the Security Council's position regarding the recent tensions between the United States and Iran by condemning the attacks on oil tankers and calling them "a serious threat to maritime navigation and energy supply" and an overall threat to international peace and security. Kuwaiti Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi stated that the "The Council members urge concerned parties and all countries in the region to exercise maximum restraint and take measures and actions to reduce escalation and end tension."

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Perhaps one of the best examples of an attempt to decrease tensions between Iran and foreign nations was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Although the deal was objectively far from perfect, it was a major diplomatic achievement as it gathered multiple parties with a past of hostility to settle on a reasonable agreement. At its core, the Iran Nuclear Deal achieved the two major priorities of the United States and Iran. For the United States, the deal meant that Iran would not be able to acquire or gather nearly enough resources required to build a nuclear weapon for at least two decades. For Iran, the deal meant the removal of incapacitating economic sanctions and the ability to use nuclear weapons for peaceful purposes. Another effective part of the nuclear agreement was the International Atomic Energy Agency's ability to perform inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities if any site was deemed suspicious, which they constantly performed for the duration of the agreement to find no violations of the agreement. The deal not only decreased tensions between Iran and the United States, but major world powers like the rest of the P5+1 and The European Union. Most importantly, the international community could rest knowing that Iran could not get a hold of a nuclear weapon.

Despite the grand diplomatic efforts of the JCPOA, the agreement failed to address issues such as Iran's use of state-sponsored terrorism as foreign policy and the possible economic boost given to Iran by the agreement that could aid them in funding their respective proxies. For these reasons, the United States withdrew from the agreement and has instead proposed to renegotiate with Iran. At a White House press conference, Trump said "I do believe that they will probably end up wanting to meet, and I'm ready to meet any time they want to." The United States wishes for a new deal that introduces 12 new terms laid out by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Some of these terms include an end to Iran's support of extremist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas, the closing of heavy water reactions and pursuit of plutonium reprocessing, the end of Iranian support to Houthi rebels, the withdrawal of all Iranian forces in Syria, and the end of hostile activity against U.S allies such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the UAE. The Iranian government has refuted the idea of negotiating with the United States at all, as Supreme Leader Khamenei stated "Even if we ever, impossible as it is, negotiated with the US, it would never ever be with the current US administration." The United States has reimposed all the previous sanctions on Iran and has imposed new sanctions targeting top Iranian officials, with the intention of pressuring Iran into renegotiating the deal. It can be interpreted that Iranian officials are waiting for the United States 2020 Election and hoping for the defeat of Donald Trump in return for a President more tolerant of Iran's agenda.

Through a more diplomatic approach, a handful of nations have offered to serve as intermediaries between the United States and Iran. This was the case for Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who visited Tehran in an attempt to foster dialogue between the two nations. Japan has been a longtime ally of Iran, but even still Supreme Leader Khamenei denied negotiations between Iran and the US. The second nation to attempt mediating in the standoff is Iran's neighbor, Iraq. As an ally of both nations, Iraq believes it may successfully hold negotiations between the two powers. Iraq's foreign minister, Mohammed al-Hakim, stated "We are trying to help and to be mediators" and that Baghdad "will work to reach a satisfactory solution." Although the mediation process is slow and tedious, with enough pressure from outside nations and Iran's allies, there could be another deal between the United States and Iran. This task could be more achievable by diplomatically targeting more moderate officials of the theocracy such

as President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, instead of the conservative hard-liner Supreme Leader Khomeini.

Possible Solutions

The process of de-escalating tensions between Iran and foreign nations is a highly complicated task due to the several parties involved and the numerous proxies that escalate tensions. Some of these disputes range from Iran supporting militias such as Hezbollah and Hamas, to competing with rivals by fueling civil wars in the Middle East such as in Yemen and Syria. Large diplomatic standoffs such as military confrontations with the United States in the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's support of the Assad regime, and Iran's aiding of the Houthi Insurgency must be dealt with long-term solutions that include de-militarization and reduced funding of terrorist organizations. When dealing with large conflicts, such as the ones within the Iran-Saudi Proxy Conflict, the United Nations Security Council should aim to lay the groundwork for peace talks and agreements. The Security Council has the advantage of being an international body and not a party directly involved in the conflict, which opens up the chances for mediation. Due to the restrictive stance of negotiation for certain parties, resolutions should aim to first and foremost tackle the core of the tensions by outlining reasonable steps that parties can take. Armed confrontations such as those between the US and Iran in the Strait of Hormuz, and Hezbollah and Israel in the Israeli-Lebanon border require immediate attention such as a ceasefire. This could be done through talks such as those hosted by Egypt between Israel and Hamas, a proxy of Iran. The Security Council should seek to avoid imposing sanctions as that would only deepen tensions between the United States and Iran. The use of intervention by UN Peacekeeping Forces should be a last-resort measure to de-escalate an armed confrontation between Iranian proxies and other combatants. The goal of the Security Council is to preserve and maintain international peace and security through diplomacy, meaning it is vital for the Security Council to not only establish long term and short term steps to decrease tensions, but to ensure that measures are implemented that prevent disputes between Iran and foreign nations to arise again.

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Appendix

- I. Reference map which displays the geographical region of the Persian Gulf and the strategic location of the Strait of Hormuz.
<https://rootpolicy.org/2018/09/25/iran-close-strait-hormuz/>
- II. Reference map which demonstrates the different alliances and disputes in the Middle East within the context of the Iran-Saudi Proxy Conflict.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42008809>