



US-IRAN RELATIONS: PRE-ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The present history of international relations between the United States and Iran (formerly known as Persia and presently recognized as the Islamic Republic of Iran) is strain fully unfriendly and adversarial. However the relations between them have not always been this way and the two countries used to enjoy a positive and largely friendly relationship until up to 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. In order to have an appropriate assessment and understanding of US-Iran Relations, the contours of their relationship historically have to be explored.¹

KEY WORDS: Eisenhower Doctrine Super Powers Rivalry, Constitutional Revolution, White Revolution.

INTRODUCTION

Political relations between Persia (Iran) and the United States "began when the Shah of Persia, Nassiruddin Shah Qajar, officially dispatched Persia's first ambassador, Mirza Abol-Hasan Shirazi, to Washington D.C. in 1856."² Samuel Benjamin was appointed by the United States as the first official diplomatic envoy to Iran in 1883.³ However the non-official relations began before 1856. US citizens used to travel to Iran since the early-to-mid 1880s. The nature of their relationship in the beginning was socio-cultural and religious. As early as 1829 the first American missionaries were sent to Rezaieh to work among the Christian Assyrians and were followed by others who preached Christianity and established churches. For this purpose Justin Perkins and Asahel Grant were the first missionaries to be dispatched to Persia in 1834 via the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.⁴ More importantly, they built schools and hospitals in Azerbaijan and other provinces. These early activities created base for subsequent educational and cultural relations between Iran and the United States in spite of Reza Shah's nationalist onslaught against foreign schools during the interwar period. They stimulated Iranian interest in the American educational system, have been followed during the 1960s and 1970s by

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²Graham E. Fuller, The center of the universe: the geopolitics of Iran, A Rand Corporation research study, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991, p. 19.

³The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment, David W. Lesch, 2003, ISBN 0-8133-3940-5, p.52).

⁴Nikki R. Keddie and Yann Richard, Roots of revolution: an interpretive history of modern Iran, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, p. 86.

the establishment of Iranian schools and colleges after American models, and have constituted the historical background for the education of many thousands of Iranian students in American institutions. During the 1970s, their number had reached the all time high of 15,000 students in the United States.⁵

CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

Amir Kabir, Prime Minister under Nasiruddin Shah, also initiated direct contacts with the US government. By the end of the 19th century, negotiations were underway for an American company to establish a railway system from the Persian Gulf to Tehran. The good will toward the United States created as the result of American private educational efforts was reinforced subsequently by W. Morgan Shuster's gallant resistance to Russian pressure in December 1911 while in the service of the Iranian government, by the American championship of Iranian nationalist self-assertion against the Anglo-Iranian agreement of 1919, and by the American economic mission headed by Dr. A. C. Millspaugh during 1922-27,⁶ and by the sacrifice of Howard Baskerville in 1909, who lost his life supporting the Constitutionalists during the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 while fighting the Royalists and the forces of the Qajar king, Mohammad Ali Shah's elite Cossack brigade and is remembered as saying: —the only difference between me and these people is my place of birth, and this is not a big difference.⁷ This tradition of good will between the two countries fitted in well with a long established pattern of Iranian foreign policy, namely, preservation of Iran's independence by reliance on a third power as a lever against the encroachments of Britain and Russia. But the Iranian interest in involving the "distant and disinterested" United States in Iran in the early 1920s as a counterweight against the two rival powers failed to materialize largely because of American isolationist tendencies during the interwar period.

The decade between the German invasion of Russia and the nationalization of the oil industry in Iran was on the whole marked by the reluctance of the United States to become too deeply involved in Iran on the one hand and the desire of Iran to involve the United States as deeply as possible on the other.

Although Reza Shah's plea to President Franklin D. Roosevelt for American intercession against the Anglo-Russian invasion failed, the Iranian and American positions drew closer to each other subsequently. The United States responded sympathetically to the Iranian plea for British and Soviet assurances for Iran's territorial integrity and political independence, for evacuation of the Allied forces after the war, for consultation with Iran about the peace settlement, and for economic aid after the war as evidenced by Secretary Cordell Hull's influence on the Tripartite Treaty (1942) between Iran on the one hand and the Soviet Union and Britain on the other, and by the decisive American role (particularly the part played by President Roosevelt) in the formulation of the Tehran Declaration (1943).⁸

More importantly, the United States' moral support of the Shah's government against blandishments and pressures of the Soviet Union for oil concessions in 1944, and particularly the American diplomatic support of Iran within and outside the United Nations in favor of the evacuation of Soviet troops from northern Iran and against the Soviet interference in Iran's domestic affairs in 1945-46 left indelibly favorable imprints on the relations of Iran and the United States. Whether or not President Truman in fact did give Stalin an "ultimatum" to withdraw Soviet troops from Iran, the fact still remains that the role of the United States in bringing about that result was decisive. Iran's quest for American involvement transcended efforts at the diplomatic level. Every Iranian government sought to expand relations with the United States in military, technical and economic fields as well, in spite of opposition by the Soviet Union and by an odd mixture of domestic forces including some of the nationalists, communists, merchants and members of the landed aristocracy.

The failure of Dr. Millspaugh's second mission was rooted not only in the opposition by these forces, but also in the ambivalent attitude of the United States government toward the American economic

⁵James Risen, —A Secret C.I.A. History: How a Plot Convulsed Iran in '53 (and in '79),|| The New York Times, Sunday, April 16 2000, A1.

⁶ See, Nikki R. Keddie and Yann Richard, p-14

⁷Harry S Truman, Memoirs, vol. 1, Year of Decisions, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1955, p. 523.

⁸Ibid. p. 122.

mission.⁹ Until World War II, relations between Iran and the United States remained cordial. As a result, many Iranians sympathetic to the Persian Constitutional Revolution came to view the US as a "third force" in their struggle to break free of British and Russian dominance in Persian affairs. American industrial and business leaders were supportive of Iran's drive to modernize its economy and free itself from British and Russian influence.

The American ambivalence toward involvement in Iran was more graphically revealed by the United States' negative attitude toward Iran's repeated requests for credits during the crucial period between the Azerbaijan and oil nationalization crises. Under Secretary of State Acheson feared that if generous American aid was not forthcoming Iran might be dominated by the Soviet Union or divided into spheres of influence between Britain and the Soviet Union. But Washington, in Acheson's words, followed a "narrow concept" of economic policy toward Iran with the result that Premier Qavam's repeated requests and the Shah's own visit to the United States in 1949 produced only a meager \$25 million credit from the Export-Import Bank, one-tenth of the Iranian request. To be sure, the reluctance to pour "money down a rat hole" disinclined the United States to extend substantial and prompt aid to corrupt elites anywhere, but the Kuomintang analogy was probably a less significant factor in the case of Iran than the American preoccupation with Western Europe at the time. Iran had to await the mid 1950s when the American concept of security was extended beyond the NATO alliance to include the West Asia and when the United States was prepared to pay economically, as well as militarily, for creating an alliance system including Iran. In the meantime, the American failure to support Iran financially contributed to the complex of factors that led to the nationalization of the oil industry.¹⁰

OIL NATIONALIZATION CRISIS AND UNITED STATES

Ironically the path toward greater American involvement in Iran that the Shah had sought was paved by his rival Premier Muhammad Mussaddiqh. The veteran nationalist leader and his supporters had advocated within and out-side the Majlis the doctrine of "negative equilibrium" in Iranian foreign policy before the nationalization of the oil industry. His opposition to the Soviet demand for oil concessions in 1944 was balanced by a crusade against the British subsequently. The doctrine of negative equilibrium theoretically disallowed reliance on any great power, including the United States. But in practice, Dr. Mussaddiqh, as his predecessors, relied during the early phase of the nationalization dispute with Britain and Washington as evidenced by his acceptance of the Harriman mediation, the extension of the American Point Four program and American military aid.¹¹ This contradiction between theory and practice subjected him to severe criticism by the communists as well as purist members of the National Front.

During the earlier decade the American attitude toward the Mussaddiqh government diverged from the British. According to Eden, the United States had believed that "the only alternative to Mussaddiqh was Communist rule," whereas Eden himself felt that if Mussaddiqh fell, his place "might well be taken by a more reasonable Government." Eden's success in narrowing the gap between the American and British positions subsequently led to the hardening of the American attitude. The United States limited aid to Iran as well as insubstantial technical assistance, in spite of grave economic problems facing the nation, dealt the crucial blow to the Mussaddiqh government. President Eisenhower's letter of June 29, 1953, flatly rejected Dr. Mussaddiqh's urgent request for financial aid. His opportunity to play the United States against Britain and the two Western powers against the Soviet Union and the Tudeh party therefore disappeared as the American and British positions became nearly identical. Dramatic

⁹Harry S Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, *Years of Trial and Hope*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1956, p. 95. 9. William E. Warne, *Mission for Peace: Point Four in Iran* (Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956). See also Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p. 235.

¹⁰William E. Warne, *Mission for Peace: Point Four in Iran* (Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956). See also Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p. 235

¹¹See Harry N. Howard, "The Regional Pacts and the Eisenhower Doctrine," *THE ANNALS* 401 (May 1972), pp. 85-94

changes in the international system in general and in Iranian particular lay back of the American receptiveness to the British determination to bring down the government of Dr. Musaddiqh. During the war the principal American interests in Iran had been (1) to aid the prosecution of the war against Germany, and (2) to help Iran maintain its independence and territorial integrity vis-a-vis Britain and particularly the Soviet Union. After the war the American interest in the preservation of Iranian independence continued, but, as seen, preoccupation with the re-building of Western Europe overshadowed American concern with Iran.¹²

The oil nationalization crisis deepened American interest in Iran. By the time of the crisis the two poles of the international system had emerged sharply. The Cold War between Washington and Moscow intensified in the wake of the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, the Berlin Blockade, the Communist victory in China and the Communist aggression in Korea. The principal considerations underpinning the American concern in Iran were:

- (1) The Anglo-Iranian controversy might lead to the stoppage of the flow of oil to Western European allies of the United States,
- (2) The example of Iranian nationalization might have an adverse effect upon the United States oil interests in the Persian Gulf area,
- (3) The British departure from the south of Iran would mean the diminution of Western influence in the area, and
- (4) A breakdown of the Iranian economy in the face of turbulent domestic politics, particularly resulting from increasing Tudeh.

Influence, might drive Iran to a "Communist coup d'état" This last consideration was specifically related to the overall American interest in the containment of the Soviet Union and Communism. President Truman claimed that the United States had "no selfish interest" in the oil dispute, but George McGhee, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs, believed that quite apart from oil Iran was a "great and strategic prize," the control of which would put "the Soviet Union outside the communication routes connecting the free nations of Asia and Europe."¹³ The United States as the leader of "free nations" did have strategic interests in Iran. As the result of the settlement of the oil nationalization dispute in 1954, however, the American strategic interest in Iran was matched by the emergence of direct American interest in Iranian oil. For the first time the United States oil interest cut across the Persian Gulf, encompassing the two great clusters of oilfields on the Arab and Iranian sides of the strategic waterway. For the first time also the Shah's government finally succeeded in deepening the American stake in Iran, but the result was quite different from what it would have been if American involvement had taken place in the early 1940s. The difference was largely because of the changed international power configuration. The United States became involved in Iran not as a counterweight to Britain and Russia, but as the predominant superpower and the partner of Britain in a global East-West conflict. The rigid bipolar international system left no real room for a third great power on which Iran could rely to counterbalance the British and Soviet power. And the Shah's own traumatic experience with the Soviet-supported communist bid for the destruction of his regime in August 1953 seemed to foreclose at the time any other real option.

As seen from Tehran there was no viable alternative to an alliance with the West just as there seemed to be any better solution for the settlement of the oil dispute than entrusting the control of the oil industry to a consortium of Western oil companies? To be sure, this fell far short of Iran's long-held aspiration for full control of its oil industry, but given the continued predominance of Western companies in international oil markets and Iran's own limited technical, financial and managerial capabilities, the arrangement with the consortium seemed to be the least of all evils under the circumstances.

¹²Mark Gasiorowski, —US Foreign Policy toward Iran during the Mussadiqh Era,|| David W. Lesch, *The Middle East and The United States*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1996, pp.51, 66.

¹³Ibid. op.cit. p. 65

There was little doubt in the minds of Iranian leaders in 1954 that the cherished goal of control of the oil industry must be realized as soon as favorable circumstances would allow. As it happened, however, Iran had to wait nearly 20 more years before it could make a new bid for the control of its oil industry. In the meantime the Shah set the goal of transforming the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) into an "integral international oil company" toward the long run goal of its becoming capable of running the industry when the time come.¹⁴

SUPER POWERS RIVALRY IN WEST ASIA AND EISENHOWER DOCTRINE

American penetration of the Iranian oil industry and Iran's alliance with the United States through the Baghdad Pact (1955), endorsement of the Eisenhower Doctrine, and a bilateral defense agreement (1959) were paralleled by unprecedented American aid to and investment in Iran. Although the beginnings of American technical-military and economic aid to Iran could be traced back to World War II, massive aid began only after the downfall of the Mussaddiqh government. Until 1953 total American economic and military aid to Iran amounted to less than \$30 million, whereas between 1953 and 1970 it exceeded \$2.300 billion.¹⁵ Besides aid, American investment in Iran began to climb rapidly only after American participation in the oil industry and the emergence of an US-Iran alliance. Investment by American firms had begun before, but the protection accorded them in 1955 by means of a comprehensive treaty between Washington and Tehran was unprecedented. Iran accepted, apparently without qualms, the American version of international law requirements that in case of expropriation or nationalization the compensation paid must be "prompt, adequate and effective." As a result American investment in Iran increased substantially, reaching a level of over \$1 billion by 1975.¹⁶

The rigidity of the bipolar international system and its effect on the character of the US-Iran alliance allowed Iran little maneuverability in the conduct of its foreign policy. For example, Iran did try to settle outstanding financial and boundary problems with the Soviet Union in the 1950s, but as a matter of fact it had only limited success. The pre-nationalization Soviet-Iranian cold war was intensified after Iran's accession to the Baghdad Pact, and reached a new peak after the breakdown of Soviet-Iranian negotiations (1958-1959) for a non-aggression pact and the conclusion of an Iran-US defense agreement. On two separate occasions afterwards Khrushchev attacked the Shah personally, charging that his agreement with the United States was to protect his throne against the Iranian people. Iran's regional relations fared no better. The Cairo Tehran cold war that intensified with Iran's participation in the Baghdad Pact culminated in the rupture of diplomatic relations between Egypt and Iran in 1960. The "Arab Cold War" was matched by the Arab-Iranian cold war and the latter more than the former ebbed and flowed largely according to the vicissitudes of Soviet-American rivalry in the West Asia.¹⁷

WHITE REVOLUTION

Overextension of American power and overdependence of Iran on the United States within the context of a rigid bipolar international system began to change increasingly in the 1960s with significant implications for US-Iran relations. In spite of increasing oil revenues and continued American aid, the Iranian economy was in the grip of rising prices, falling exchange reserves, pervasive waste, inefficiency and widely acknowledged corruption. The so-called reform government of Dr. Amin finally collapsed under the pressure of a budgetary deficit of some \$70 million. The Kennedy Administration was critical of the lack of basic socio-economic reforms and the heavy burden of the Iranian military establishment. Its refusal to bail out the Amin government partly contributed to its fall. The Shah's launching of the land reform programme was hailed by President Kennedy, it signaled the first of a six point reform program,

¹⁴William Burr, —A brief history of US-Iranian nuclear negotiations,|| Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, vol. 65, no. 1 January/February 2009, pp. 21–24.

¹⁵Olivier Roy, *The failure of political Islam*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994, p.19.

¹⁶H. Bradford Westerfield, *Inside CIA's private world: declassified articles from the agency's internal journal, 1955-1992*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995, p. 241.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, op.cit., p-9

labeled the "White Revolution" by the Shah's regime. Despite pessimism in Iran and abroad, the combination of reform measures and particularly an economic stabilization program led to a significant upturn in the Iranian economy and the termination of direct American economic assistance to Iran in 1967. According to President Johnson, the termination of the aid program was "a milestone in Iran's continuing progress and in (US Iran) close relations."¹⁸ Not many years before 1967 the American military and economic aid programs in Iran had been regarded generally both in Iran and the United States as one of the "more inefficient and corrupted of American overseas aid efforts," but now the New York Times declared that Iran had reached "the take-off point."¹⁹

This remarkable beginning in Iran's economic recovery in the 1960s continued into the 1970s. For years before the explosion of oil prices Iran's increase in GNP in real terms averaged above 11 per cent. And after the sudden increase in oil prices it hit the spectacular rate of 42 per cent in 1974. The Fifth Development Plan (1973-78) envisaged at first \$69.6 billion expenditure, but it had to be scaled down subsequently partly as the result of the drop in oil revenues to \$17 billion instead of the \$20 billion predicted. The slowdown in spending, however, is also aimed at cooling the "overheated economy," that has resulted from the fast pace of development, and at fighting inflation which has been running at the rate of about 20 per cent.²⁰

The two economic problems of continuing concern to American friends of Iran are the fast pace of development and the mal-distribution of wealth. Iranian planners argue that (1) the overheating problem is not as great as it would seem considering the sudden rise of income from \$5 to 20 billion, (2) that the determination of "absorptive capacity" of the economy is a difficult "empirical problem," and (3) that Iran has been "bold," but not necessarily "adventurous" in plotting its economic development. Regarding the mal distribution of wealth problems the basic Iranian argument is that Iranian planners are aware of the problem, are working toward overcoming it by a variety of means including the allowance of workers' purchase of shares in factories up to 49 per cent, and that there is a real difficulty in avoiding economic imbalances of this kind in the current stage of Iran's economic development. Perhaps a more serious problem of daily concern to the masses is food shortages. In spite of progress in land reform and associated programs in rural cooperatives and farm corporations the problem of low productivity continues to haunt Iran.²¹

In spite of the persistence of these and other economic problems the point of interest here is that not only has the Iranian economy continued to grow rapidly since the termination of the American aid program, but also that growth has (a) increased Iran's economic cooperation with the United States and (b) assisted parallel American interests in West Asia and South Asia. The single most significant agreement for economic cooperation between the two countries was signed in March 1975, calling for \$15 billion of non-oil trade including the sale of eight nuclear power plants to Iran. Although \$5 billion of the total was the estimate of the value of American military sales to Iran over five years, the agreement envisaged significant economic activities including the establishment of an integrated electronics industry, the building of a major port, joint ventures to produce fertilizers, pesticides, farm machinery and processed foods, superhighways and vocational training centers. At the time of the signing of the agreement the United States also pledged cooperation to help Iran in setting up a financial center in Tehran for the West Asian region.²²

The consistent efforts of Iran at economic cooperation with Egypt, Syria and other countries cut across the Persian Gulf and the Arab-Israeli zones in the area. In the Gulf area Iran's medical assistance to 'Ajman, Fujayrah and Dubai and its commercial and economic efforts at cooperation with other Gulf

¹⁸See, H. Bradford Westerfield, p. 209

¹⁹ Ibid., op.cit., p. 211

²⁰Neta C. Crawford, —The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationship,|| International Security 24, no. 4, 2000: pp. 116-156.

²¹James Risen, —Hypotheses on Misperception,|| The New York Times, Sunday, June 4, 1967, A4.

²²Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, Psychology and deterrence, Perspectives in security, Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985

states complement similar American activities during the 1960s and 1970s. More important, Iran's economic assistance to Egypt parallels American interest in assisting the process of economic liberalization and stabilization in that country. On the economic side it suffices to state here that its billion dollar agreement with Egypt in 1974 is to help finance the reconstruction of Port Said at the northern end of the Suez Canal, the widening of the canal, and the establishment of numerous joint ventures with Egyptian firms.²³

The fourfold increase of oil prices during the 1970s introduced the most serious economic issue between Iran and the United States, Iran has been among the OPEC members favoring high oil prices. Iran's decision in 1976 to cut the official price of heavy crude was in full conformity with OPEC policy and practice. What is of interest, however, is the fact that in spite of the persistence of the controversy Iran and the United States have not so far allowed it to disturb their basic friendly relations. The principal reason for this is the overriding importance of the new form of their common interest in regional security and stability.

However, Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact exacerbated the ancient Cairo-Baghdad differences, produced adverse effects within the Arab League, and at the same time placed Iraq in the camp of Secretary Dulles's "Northern Tier" states of Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. Iran's membership in the pact intensified Cairo-Tehran antagonism, pitted Damascus against Tehran, and simultaneously placed Iran, together with Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, in the camp of "reactionary" states. The destruction of the monarchy in Iraq in 1958 and the subsequent defection of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact Organization (since then Central Treaty Organization or CENTO) marked the beginning of the processes of change in American and Iranian security interests in the Persian Gulf area. Iran and the United States had perceived the Soviet threat to the region primarily in terms of direct, overland and southward pressures exerted against Northern Tier states, and by virtue of Turkey's membership in the Atlantic alliance, against the southern flank of NATO. Increasing Soviet rapprochement with the new regime in Baghdad, added to the Soviet arms sales to Egypt since 1955, increased the concern of the regional members of CENTO with its viability as a regional security organization. The United States willingness to sign three bilateral agreements with Iran, Turkey and Pakistan did little to overcome their security concern because the American undertakings in fact did not amount to increased commitments to their defense.²⁴

Iran's traditional dissatisfaction with American nonparticipation in the Baghdad Pact was intensified by the United States reluctance in the 1959 bilateral agreement to go beyond its commitment under the Eisenhower Doctrine. The swift events of the 1960s and early 1970s added further to Iran's regional security concerns. The negative American attitude toward aid to Pakistan during its 1965 conflict with India lay back of the emerging conviction in Iran in the early 1970s that CENTO was a "nice club" for discussing economic projects but was "not an effective alliance," and hence Iran had to rely increasingly on its own strength for defense. In the meantime other regional developments contributed to Iran's security concern beyond its eastern flank in South Asia. American preoccupation with the war in Vietnam continued to raise doubts about the wisdom of reliance upon the United States for security in regions of immediate concern to Iran. The British withdrawal from Aden in 1967 and the announcement in 1968 of the British decision to withdraw forces from the area "east of Suez" in 1971 intensified Iran's security concern in the Persian Gulf area.

Iranians believed that Iraq's defection from the Baghdad Pact had removed it as a buffer against the anti-Shah regimes in Cairo and Damascus, had brought the threat of Arab radicalism to Iran's doorstep, and, more important, had brought Soviet influence to the Gulf. The British withdrawal from the Gulf in view of the dim prospects at the time for a new regional security arrangement seemed to expose

²³See Nikki R. Keddie and Yann Richard, p. 277

²⁴Herbert C. Kelman, —Social- Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict,|| in Peacemaking in international conflict: methods & techniques, ed. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997.

the lower part of the Gulf and the strategic Strait of Hormuz to potential disruption. Iran's occupation of the islands of Abu Musa and the two Tunbs just before the British departure was followed by the extension of the Iranian security perimeter to the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean. Iran had watched with alarm the escalating Soviet naval visits to the Gulf ever since 1968, but the dismemberment of Pakistan as the result of the 1971 war with India, the building of Soviet port facilities at Umm Qasr in Iraq, and the Soviet-Iraqi treaty of economic and political cooperation drew Iran's attention to the maritime spheres lying beyond the Gulf. In principle the Shah wished to see the Indian Ocean immune from superpower rivalry, but he favored an American presence in Diego Garcia so long as the Soviets had a naval presence there.

ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT

Developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 1960s and early 1970s also began the processes of change in the Iranian conception of regional security with important implications for US-Iran relations. The Arab-Iranian rifts began to undergo dramatic changes with the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. To be sure, the prewar Iran-Israeli relations continued after the war, but a number of factors worked toward drawing Egypt and Iran closer together. Egypt's interest in undermining Iran-Israeli ties, in Arab and non-Arab oil money, and in pressuring Iraq by favoring Iran made President Nasir more receptive to mediation efforts of such countries as Kuwait for the resumption of diplomatic relations with Iran. Iran's interest in countering the enmity of the al-Bakr regime by reestablishing relations with Egypt, in neutralizing Soviet influence in Egypt, in encouraging Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen, in welcoming Egypt's increased interest in resorting to diplomacy as a peaceful means of settling the conflict with Israel, and in mollifying Egyptian opposition to its prospective occupation of the three Gulf islands were important considerations in softening the Iranian attitude toward Egypt. But Egypt's receptivity to the American initiative and finally the acceptance of the Rogers Plan were probably most influential in moderating the Iranian attitude in favor of Egypt.

It was no coincidence that President Nasir and the Shah resumed diplomatic relations after a decade in 1970. Nor was it a coincidence that in the October 1973 war Iran called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories, as it had done previously, airlifted medical supplies to Jordan, sent pilots and planes to Saudi Arabia to help with logistical problems, and permitted the over flight of some Soviet planes supplying the Arabs. Iran has steadfastly supported Secretary of State Kissinger's peace mission in the West Asia, and has accepted the great responsibility of sending peacekeeping forces to the Arab-Israeli zone of conflict as part of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.²⁵

CONCLUSION

The convergence of American and Iranian interest in regional security and stability extends beyond the Persian Gulf area. Iran and the United States had common interests not only in the uninterrupted flow of oil from the Persian Gulf through the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean to world markets, but also in encouraging forces of moderation and in neutralizing Soviet influence in the West Asia on the one hand, and in achieving a peace settlement between the Arab states and Israel on the other. Toward the achievement of these common objectives the United States has sought to assist in building up a "credible deterrent" by means of massive arms sales to Iran. The rigid bipolar international system during the 1950s had entailed overextension of American power in the world, overdependence of Iran on the United States, and overreliance of both upon an inflexible alliance. As the result of Soviet nuclear parity, the rise of centers of economic power in Japan and Western Europe, the rebellion of De Gaulle within the Atlantic alliance, the "Ostpolitik" of Brandt, the SALT talks, the Chinese nuclear tests, the Sino-Soviet dispute, and the disastrous war in Vietnam, the United States began, in the 1960s, to perceive increasingly the emergence of a more flexible and complicated international system. The Nixon Doctrine

²⁵Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crisis*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977.

took note of these new realities. Under it, the United States would honour its commitments to allies like Iran, would defend it if threatened by a nuclear power and at the same time would expect other nations, including Iran, to "assume greater responsibilities, for their sake as well as ours." This has made Iran a "Nixon Doctrine ideal" as it is apparently willing to defend parallel American interests in regions of immediate concern to Iran by reliance upon its own strength in situations short of nuclear war. To that extent American assistance to the Iranian military buildup is in effect to avoid direct involvement of the United States in the Gulf region.