Obama's Second Term Policy on Iran: US Coercion Diplomacy and Iran's Regional Capabilities

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Abstract

The US as a global superpower has worked hard to shape regional trade, security, socio-economic and political dynamics in the Middle East at least since the end of World War II. Given different geostrategic interests of US and Iran and their engagement with the region Iran's levels of engagement and its objectives has been increased in several years ago. Since September 11 that US oriented international system towards hegemony and imposed limitations on Iran's ability to project regional influence, level of conflict among Iran and US has escalated increasingly. Containment and coercion diplomacy are the old polices which US strategists have used against Iran in different Administrations. Obama intents to keep on this policy in his second term office. But Iran enjoys high regional capabilities and Tehran can resist against this aggressive policy although with some considerable costs.

Keywords: Containment Policy, Coercion Diplomacy, Engagement, Middle East Policy, Iran Regional Capabilities, Escalation of Crisis.

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Introduction

The US and Iran have different geostrategic interests and their reasons for engagement with the region are not easy to compare. The US is a global superpower that has worked hard to shape regional trade, security, socio-economic and political dynamics in the Middle East at least since the end of World War II. In parallel of US policy, Iran's levels of engagement and its objectives has been increased in several years ago.

This is due largely to the realities of geography and the real world limitations of Iran's ability to project influence and shape events beyond its immediate Persian Gulf sphere of influence. Obama intents to keep on this policy in second term office: More over continuity of containment, Obama attempts to use coercion diplomacy for persuasion of Iran and changing its Middle East and nuclear policy.

A new realistic Approach has been used in writing this article. In his second term in office, Barak Obama attempts to use structural Balance pattern in dealing with Iran. There for, this Article's assumption high lights the issue that," Barak Obama is using the policy of escalating anti – Iran sanctions as well as taking measures to reduce Iran's geopolitical ties with its regional allies. But Iran enjoys high regional capabilities and Tehran can resist against this aggressive policy although with some considerable costs. Meanwhile a weakened Iran could emerges new and unpredictable threats against US interests in the region.

1- Indication of Obama's policy in the Middle East

The Arab-Israeli peace process has increasingly become a core US strategic interest in the region, in no small part as a result of recent US military involvement in the region and a desire to reshape Arab and Muslim perceptions of the US in the broader Arab and Muslim Middle East. Iran always criticizes of US policy toward Middle East crisis. The US has also grown increasingly concerned with the role played by armed non-state Islamist movements including Palestinian Hamas and Hezbollah in Lebanon in regional security politics. In short, US interests are predicated on supporting geopolitical forces that favor long term stability and the protection of US interests in the Middle East (UN Security Council, 2011:22).

While US efforts to support democratic development are not unimportant, US interests remain largely centered on traditional hard power interests. These include energy security, sustaining strategic partnership with key regional allies and supporting favorable stability in a region that has experiences deep instability in the Post-World War II period. Most of the current pattern of US and Iranian competition is affected by the fact that Israel is one of the US's most important Middle East allies (Jervis, 2013:28).

Few countries have faced as many existential military crises in modern times as Israel. This has led to a continuing arms race where Israel has developed and maintained a decisive qualitative military edge over its Arab neighbors with continued US support. The US has also made it clear to regional states that American support for Arab-Israeli peace efforts rests on the preservation of Israel's security and US commitments to support Israel against an Iranian Middle East policy (Parsi, 2007:12).

US and Israeli perceptions of Iran do differ in detail and each assessment of the scope and scale of the regional threat posed by Iran. While recent upheaval in the Arab world is likely to present a clear and present challenge to US policy in the Middle East, it does little to diminish the perception in Israel that Iran's development of a nuclear capability presents the most important strategic threat to Israel today. According to one Israeli assessment, Iran already has the means to make a nuclear weapon system, however it still lacks a viable delivery method (Sharp, 2009:33).

The US also has a strong preference for Israel to have truly favorable bilateral relations with regional states, but now only a cold peace exists between Israel and the two Arab countries, namely Egypt and Jordan. In US Middle East policy, Israel has both sought to secure a political order that favors Israel's security. Israel and the US share an interest in seeing the emergence of a Syria under the current leadership or otherwise that takes serious stakes to downgrade its ties to Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas as well its role as a resistant front against Israel.

Both Israel and the US have sought to support in different ways and sometimes at cross purposes the Palestinian Authority under Fatah's leadership as a bulwark against Palestinian groups aligned with Iran and Syria, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In the wake of Syria's military exit from Lebanon in 2005, Israel has also been

favorable to the emergence of political forces in Beirut with close ties to the US and the West in the hope that threat posed by Iran's leading ally in Lebanon, the Shi'a group Hezbollah, could be degraded; thus undermining Iran's asymmetric edge in the Middle East (Goodarzi, 2009:41).

2- Global energy and Iran's geopolitical priority in Persian Gulf

At the level of the broader Middle East, the US has sought to contain Iranian influence and hegemonic aspirations rather than confront Tehran directly through preemptive action. The US remains concerned about the risk Iran poses to Israel, but the US view of the threat the Islamic Republic poses is focused more broadly on the threat Iran poses to the Persian Gulf and the world's energy exports, and on the threat posed to stability and security across the Middle East by Iran's regional allies Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas (Stigset, & Gelu Sulugiuc, 2011:32).

Egypt has been exporting natural gas to Lebanon, Jordan and Syria via the Arab Gas Pipeline since the mid-2000s. Egypt also began supplying natural gas to Israel in 2009 a move many Egyptians appeared to disapprove of and that remains highly unpopular. The US has broader strategic interests in the Middle East, although the impact of US and Iranian competition on these interests has so far been limited. These interests include the security of regional trade and energy infrastructure and the preservation of bilateral and multilateral energy ties in the region. (Parsi, 2007: 35).

While the volume of oil passing through Suez Canal has been far below maximum capacity in recent years in part due to Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cuts in production, the security of the Suez Canal and guaranteeing the free flow of trade through its waters remains critical to stability in global energy and commodities markets. That the Canal allows for the passage of some 8 percent of global seaborne trade is equally critical. The Suez Canal and the adjacent Suez Mediterranean pipeline are an important part of Mediterranean energy infrastructure. The Canal has sufficient capacity to accommodate the movement of some 2.2 million barrels per day of oil, while the SUMED can support a volume of 2.3 million bpd of oil for a combined total capacity of 4.5 million bpd. (Sharp, 2011:18).

3- US confrontation with resistance front

Iran will continue to use the Palestinian question as a means of foiling US regional interests and barring US threats against its regime. It will promote Iran's role as a leading defender of the Palestinians chiefly through groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. This, and the recent instability and popular protests in the Arab world, give the US even more of an interest in removing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an arena of competition between the US and Iran (Parsi, 2013: 3).

In recent years, Iran has played a far more serious role in its dealings with Hezbollah and Hamas, and in cooperating with Syria. Hamas and other Palestinian groups do not have the resources or the levels of external aid from Iran and Syria to pose a critical threat to Israel, especially given US-backed Israeli efforts to create effective countermeasures to rocket fire. However, Hezbollah is a growing threat against Israel. It has the support of the majority of Lebanon's most populous community, the Shi'a, and enjoys quasi-autonomy in its area of operations in South Lebanon. It has rocket and missile capabilities that can rival most Arab military forces and the organizational wherewithal and training to present a far more decisive organized threat, not only to Israel but US regional hegemonic aspirations.

But regional observers do not think that Hezbollah can defeat Israel in a future conflict. Israel, the US and key regional allies are not facing truly existential threats from armed groups that ultimately rely on open-ended conflict as a means of legitimizing their roles and continued existence. They do, however, pose a risk to US preferences on regional stability and its goal about the development of the Arab-Israeli peace talk, which in turn cause US concerns about their future development and roles in regional security politics (Azar, & Kate Shnayerson, 1984:37).

The US also delivers all assistance earmarked for Israel in the first 30 days of a given fiscal year, unlike other countries that receive staggered installments of aid at varying times. Israel has been the top recipient of US military aid since 1976 and the largest cumulative recipient since World War II. Israel also has access to a number of other benefits that other countries in the region do not have access to, such as the ability to use US military aid dollars for research and development in the US or use 26.3% of annual aid funds towards military purchases from Israeli industry (Menashri, 2000:18).

In 2007, the Bush Administration announced that US military aid to Israel would increase by $6 billion over the coming decade, reaching an annual aid level of $3.1 billion by FY 2018. Israel is heavily dependent on US Foreign Middle East Fund, which represents 21 to 22 percent of Israeli defense spending. In addition to offsetting the end of US economic support funds in FY2007, it is expected that increased levels of Foreign Middle East Fund will allow Israel to fund sophisticated US purchases, such as a possible sale of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft (Addis, 2011:100).

Views have differed over time as to whether the peace process was a US policy need. What is clear is that despite regional protests in 2011 across the Arab and Muslim world, the lack of Palestinian statehood remains a core issue for people across the region and an enduring lens through which US intentions and resolve are perceived. Successive US administrations have held the position that a lasting Arab-Israeli peace would be in the best interest of the US and the broader Middle East (Lis, 2010:45).

A number of interest groups have a stake in shaping how the US deals with the Arab- Israeli peace process, but the US military's position and views on the issue have become critical to the debate. This is in no small part thanks to the military's experience in Iraq dealing with the local and regional factors that drive and sustain conflict instability (Kirkup, 2011: 62).

Many senior US military officers consider US interests in the Middle East to be at risk so long as there is no lasting Middle East peace. In January 2010, General David Petraeus reportedly underscored in a report to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen the military's concern that Israeli -foot- dragging on peace efforts was detrimental to the US. It went on to underscore that the conflict was a core source of regional instability, that lack of movement on the peace track was harming US standing in the Arab and Muslim worlds, and that lasting Arab- Israeli peace was a critical American national security and strategic interest (Khalilzad, 2004:25).

American officers and officials think that Israel alone is not responsible for the lack of successes in the peace process but other regional state and non-state actors, including the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas have contributed at least as much to these failures over the years. They claim that the roadblocks to peace have

been exploited and aggravated by Iran for close to three decades. Any such criticism should be kept in perspective (Zanotti, 2011:92).

4- Iran's capabilities in the Middle East

Iran's support for Palestinian Islamist movements, key among them Hamas, and other regional forces opposed to Israel, including Hezbollah, remains a testament to the enduring regional utility of Iran's anti-Israel regional position. Iranian policy towards Israel reversed drastically after the 1979 Iranian revolution. For some, Iranian policy towards Israel was predicated more on ideological issues rather than pragmatic state interests (Malka, 2011: 78).

This view holds that Iran's approach to Israel remains rooted in a revolutionary narrative whereby Iran's leadership role of the anti-Israel regional camp could serve to advance the Islamic Republic's credentials as a major regional and Islamic power. While the ideological dimension is significant given Iran's support for Shi'a groups in Lebanon and Iraq, ideology may ultimately be subordinated to more traditional or pragmatic state interests. Post-revolutionary Iran has gone from being a status quo player to one actively seeking to expand its influence.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has contested the legitimacy of some of the region's Arab states, enhanced the Islamic Republic's geopolitical position and gained access to arenas that were closed to Iran under the Shah. Both have served to distance Tehran from the legacy of a robust Israeli-Iranian alliance under the Shah while deepening Iranian links with regional Islamist groups either Shi'a or Sunni. This was done, however, with an eye on avoiding the alienation of Asad's Syria, Iran's main Arab ally in the post- revolutionary period (Wolf & Frederic Wehrey, 2010:95).

About 34 years after the Islamic Revolution, Iran has consolidated its ties to Syria, Lebanon's Shi'a community and its support for Palestinian Islamist group and is likely to continue to leverage this regional role. Some western observers think this role is linked with Tehran's efforts to grow its regional geopolitical advantage (Sharp, 2011: 33).

Iran's views concerning Israel seemed to soften during the Khatami presidency, with officials indicating publicly that Iran may need to come to terms with Palestinian Authority aspirations for peace with Israel (Saab & Nicholas Blanford, 2011:62).

Since the days of Khatami's presidency, however, President Ahmadinejad has refocused Iran's foreign policy on a clearly anti-Israeli narrative, defining Iran's role in resistance front in terms of a broader confrontation with the West. Iran's continued pursuit of a nuclear capability has also served to deepen the perception that Iran's struggle with Israel and opposition to Israeli interests remains deeply entrenched (Brzezinski & William Odom, 2008:86).

Iranian support for Hamas and Hezbollah, especially the latter in the context of the group's defeat in an open military contest in 2006, has been a source of legitimacy and influence. What is clear is that Iran has made good use of its contest with Israel to bolster its position. The mainly Sunni Arab Middle East remains broadly opposed to Israel, no thanks to the lack of momentum on the peace process and the perception that the US cannot be a neutral arbiter of the conflict.

Then Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddim went on to add that -the Iranian revolution gave appreciable help to the Palestinian cause and that it was normal that Iran should be backed by the Arab states. Today, the Syrian-Iranian axis remains a key part of Iran's regional efforts to thwart US, Western and Israeli interests in the Middle East. Iran's current ties to Syria go back to the early days of the revolution. Syria met the US embassy in Tehran's takeover by {Imam} Khomeini loyalists with a declaration of support for the move, which went on to call for greater Arab support for the new Iran (Grimmett, 2012:79).

Iran has found other ways to compete. In contrast to the conventional balance, the evolving asymmetric balance is far more fluid and contingent upon the pursuit of short and medium term objectives by regional players with limited resources and comparative disadvantages in the overall conventional balance. This aspect of the balance is a growing feature of the Israeli-Syrian-Iranian-Hezbollah balance, and any discussion of Iranian military capabilities would be incomplete without recognizing that Syria's struggle with Israel hinges on asymmetric and resistance defense and the role that Iran's ties to Syria play in this aspect of US and Iranian competition (Jones, 2013: 31).

Hamas has steadily developed its holdings of short-range rockets. However Israeli security measures, including the separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank have complicated Hamas' and other Palestinian groups' efforts to confront Israel. A 2010 report noted that

Hamas' longer range rockets could include dozens of 122 mm Grad or similar rockets, 230 mm Oghabs, and as many as 50 modified 240 mm Fajr 3 rockets that have the potential to strike Tel Aviv or Israeli nuclear facilities in the Negev (Genest, 2010:46). Hamas and Islamic Jihad successfully used this missile capability in 2012 November, in 8 Days War.

Every year since the 2006 war, some have predicted that another Israeli-Hezbollah war would herald the next major proxy contest between the US and Iran. The risk of conflict through regional surrogates and allies continues to present a clear and present danger to regional stability. The US would have to rely on its key regional ally Israel in any future conflict, while Iran would call upon its allies Hezbollah, Syria and Palestinian groups in Gaza.

While resistance defense is an important component in Iran and Syria's regional asymmetric strategy, its current posture would not have been possible without regional alliances. Russia, which has yet to completely support the rejuvenation of Syria's armed forces, has only limited impact on Syria's asymmetric regional capabilities. It is Iran, not Russia, the Palestinians or Hezbollah, that may be the most important source of support in the asymmetric balance with Israel. (Levy, 2011:29).

The Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006 showed that Iran and Syria could work together in resistance defense. It also showed that Syrian and Iranian transfers of advanced weapons like modern antitank guided weapons, light surface-to-air missiles, and a range of short- to long-range rockets and missiles could inflict casualties on the Israel army and limit its military freedom of action.

After 2006 war, Hezbollah did its best to lay the blame and the costs associated to the conflict on Israel and the US. Irrespective of where the blame on deaths and loss of property may lie, what is clear is that the country's Shi'a would be hard pressed to accept another large scale confrontation, especially one where Hezbollah is perceived – if only in part – to have started the conflict (Leverett, 2005:53).

Whether this will moderate Hezbollah's future behavior is unclear. There is at least anecdotal evidence that Hezbollah will seek to play up its role as a reactive deterrence force in Lebanon, rather than a proactive force for direct confrontation with Israel – a point the group loosely articulated in its 2009 political manifesto. Meanwhile Israel has

balanced strong language of a military response to any Hezbollah threat with the reality that it prefers managed security politics along the UN Blue Line of demarcation between Israel and Lebanon (Eisenhower, 1977:5) .

What is clear is that both Israel and Hezbollah have taken steps to both build up their capability to deter the other, and to prepare for the prospects of war. Since the end of the 2006 war, Hezbollah has undertaken new efforts to recruit and train new members, acquire longer-range rockets witted with guidance systems, build up its air defenses and tried to further advance its signals intelligence capabilities. In the event of war, the potential exists for Hezbollah to undertake both ground and seaborne commando operations within Israel. Combined with the group's growing missile capabilities, the battle space – both in Lebanon and Israel – is expected to be far larger than during the 2006 war (Perry, 2010: 69).

Israel in turn has bolstered the logistical autonomy of its combat units, strengthened its ground forces, and deepened its ability to carry out combined air, land and sea operations. Israel army has also taken steps to upgrade its urban war-fighting capabilities, anti-rocket defense systems, and the defense capabilities of its armored systems against guided missile attacks. If enacted, the 2008 - Dahiyah Doctrine [1] – which would see Israel targeting civilian infrastructure - could cause mass civilian casualties and infrastructure damage in Lebanon and similarly damaging retaliatory strikes against Israeli civilian targets (Ziadeh, 2011:84).

Again, every year since the 2006 war has been the year predicted to usher in the next major US-Iranian proxy war in the Middle East. While public statements on either side of the Blue Line favoring

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[1]) The Dahiya doctrine is a military strategy put forth by the Israeli general Gadi Eizenkot that pertains to asymmetric warfare in an urban setting, in which the army deliberately targets civilian infrastructure, as a means of inducing suffering for the civilian population, thereby establishing deterrence. The doctrine is named after a southern suburb in Beirut with large apartment buildings which were flattened by the Israel Forces during the 2006 Lebanon War. Israel has been accused of implementing the strategy during Operation Cast Lead.

continued calm are all too rare, neither side can afford another depleting conflict without a clear political and security outcomes. Whether that and the factors described above are reason enough to avoid another round of resistance defense may ultimately continue to be tested on an annual basis.

5- US and the future of Iran regional role

One of the pillars of the early alliance was the common threat posed by Saddam Hussein's Iraq. This led to significant intelligence cooperation and the execution of covert operations by both countries in Iraq in an effort to destabilize the Saddam regime. The Syrian-Iranian axis was initially shaped by both countries' regional isolation and common interests (Ehteshami, & Hinnebusch, 1997:19).

Syria also sought to strengthen its ties with Iran in order to play a larger role in Persian Gulf security politics, given the poor state of Iran-Persian Gulf relations during the 1980s. Syria also remained keen to scuttle any Saudi led effort to promote a settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 – a settlement that would have been at the expense of Damascus's position and interests (Zunes, 2004:125).

Today, the strategic partnership between Iran and Syria remains a cornerstone of Iran's policy in the Middle East, and Tehran is keen to preserve the alliance at significant cost. Most recently, Iran has supported Bashar Al-Asad in combating with militant groups that were armed to fight against Damascus. An alliance of western and some Arab countries beside Turkey support These militant groups.

While US military aid plays a major role in building and maintaining strategic partnerships in the Middle East, economic and development assistance are also important. The urgency and future role of US aid to the Middle East are also likely to take on greater significance in light of regional popular upheaval, which have been driven by broad grievances on income inequality, corruption, crony capitalism, the lack of opportunity and unrepresentative government. US expected failure to help address these persistent and emerging challenges could provide Iran with political ammunition in its regional contest with the US.

The US allocated $1.67 billion in Economic Support Funds for FY2010 and FY2011 respectively. This represents some 34-36% of the

value of Foreign Middle East Fund and 23-24% of total aid to the Middle East for FY2010 and FY2011. It is important to note, however, that economic aid levels are down when compared to previous fiscal years (Cleveland, 2000:18).

The loss of Syria as a strategic partner and asset in the Middle East could signal a significant downgrading of Iranian interests and strategic posture in the Middle East. Accordingly, Iranian support for the Al-Asad regime is only likely to increase as Tehran tries to stabilize its ailing ally. Assessing the true pattern of Iranian support to Syria is difficult and inaccurate under any circumstances. However, sufficient open source data exists to extrapolate at least fragments of what Iran is doing politically, economically and militarily to shore up its only major regional ally in the Middle East.

The US has an interest in preserving the qualitative edge and the support of its regional allies, including Egypt and Jordan but especially Israel. While Iran is not a physical part of the Middle East – nor does it have the resources to project forces to the region – it has continued to try and find means to erode Israel's supremacy in any and all aspects of the conventional military balance. The US and Iran actively compete in virtually every aspect of the military balance in the Middle East and in a range of capabilities from asymmetric capabilities to conventional and missile warfare.

In this condition, Iran has few regional allies and none that can project conventional power and deter the US and Israel on its behalf. As such, any discussion of Iran's place in the Middle East conventional balance is predicated on the military capabilities of its regional ally Syria. While Iran is not a direct arms supplier to Syria, it has provided its allies with funds and resources to develop its military capabilities.

The US does not deploy forces in the Middle East, and neither does Iran. Instead, US aid and Israel military industries along with Israel's military professionalism ensure Israel is superior to any regional threat. Some observers argue that Iran cannot help Syria to present a meaningful conventional ground forces threat to either Israel or US interests in the region.

While Iranian presence in the Mediterranean is rare, it can be a source for deterring US threats. In the first half of 2011, during a period of regional instability and popular upheaval in Arab states across the Mediterranean perimeter, the crossing of the Suez Canal by two Iranian

warships on route to Syria in February of 2011, was perceived by the US and its regional allies – especially Israel – as only the latest of a long line of regional provocations. The crossing also raised questions about the long-term implications of a change in leadership in Egypt a long standing pillar of US policy in the Middle East, not the least of which in the confrontation with Iran.

The US has adapted as a result of the evolving threats and challenges that have emerged since September 11, 2001. NATO member states, along with the alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue and Partnership for Peace continue to contribute forces and intelligence capabilities to Operation Active Endeavour'. Intended to deter terrorist groups and contribute to stability in the Mediterranean region, OAE's Maritime Component Command is headquartered in Naples, Italy. OAE's role is also critical to the security of regional energy infrastructure and liquid petroleum gas-type carrier vessels (Gelfand, 2009:47).

The Israeli Navy is a US partner in security operations in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Israel has relatively modern and effective submarines and surface forces, backed by effective airpower. It also has effective anti-ship missiles, as well as superior systems and targeting/electronic warfare capabilities. Israel's three *Dolphin*-class submarines are also modern vessels commissioned during 1999-2000. Its three *Sa'ar 5*-class corvettes are very modern ships with considerable long-range capability by local mission capability standards. Israel's eight *Sa'ar 4.5*-class missile patrol boats, commissioned during 1994-2002, have been regularly modernized. All of these *Sa'ar*-class vessels are armed with updated versions of the *Harpoon* anti-ship missile and have modern radars and electronic warfare suites (Parsi, 2013: 5).

Syria and Iran's relationship with armed sub-national organizations with an anti-Israel agenda, especially Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, is now a pillar of the asymmetric balance. While resistance defense is not new to the region, the development of increasingly sophisticated non-state conventional military capacity represents an evolutionary step in Syria's long-term policy of passive confrontation with Israel. Active non-state allies confront Israel in South Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories, rather than on the Golan Heights (Jervis, 2013:44).

It is clear that Hezbollah would never have emerged as a major force in Lebanon and the region without Syrian and Iranian arms transfers, training and financial support. Iran and Syria have helped non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah to develop capabilities that allow them to strike Israel from increasing distances. Iran is a critical supplier of rocket and missile systems and technological know-how to these groups. Nonetheless, Hezbollah allows Syria and Iran to project power in ways that Israel could not directly counter and without conditions that would prompt Israel to use decisive force against Hezbollah's sponsors (Jones, 2013:16).

6- The Role of sanctions in US containment on Iran

The fact that in 2008 Iran relied on oil exports for 80% of its total revenue and 40-50% of government revenue made Iran deeply susceptible to collapses in oil prices. In 2008-2009, shortfalls in revenue from energy exports left a $30 billion budget deficit in addition to $28 billion in foreign debts, forcing Tehran to rely on now- severely reduced foreign currency reserves. An inability to reform effectively, coupled with challenges in managing public spending further complicate Iran's ability to utilize its economic resources to their full advantage (Jervis, 2013: 38).

When comparing specific US versus Iranian trade with the region, it is clear that the US is the dominant player in all countries except Syria. Meanwhile, Iran maintained important trade relations with Turkey in 2010. However, how deep that bilateral relationship has become is yet uncertain: exports from Iran, driven mainly by natural gas transfers, accounted for 80% of bilateral trade (Zanotti, 2011:25).

While the conventional and asymmetric balances dominate US and Iranian security competition in the Middle East, socio-economic competition is important as well. This includes trade patterns with the region as well as economic aid. This section offers only a broad overview as later sections focus on US and Iranian interaction with specific economies. The discussion on aid also focuses mainly on US efforts as no equivalent transparent Iranian aid data exists for the purpose of comparison (Parsi, 2013:4).

The EU is also a major trade partner in the region. With the exception of Jordan which saw Saudi Arabia as its top trade partner in 2010, The EU was the leading trading partner of Israel, Lebanon, Syria

and Turkey. The EU's role was especially important for Israel and Turkey, where trade with the Eurozone accounted for 30.6% and 42% of all trade respectively. Even Iran counted the trading block as its largest trading partner in 2010.

While the EU is the leader in the Middle East in terms of trade, the US is a far more important trader than Iran. US industries have built deepening trade partnerships with countries such as Israel and Turkey, and the US has worked hard to build up bilateral trade with Jordan, a key regional ally that continues to maintain peaceful relations with Israel (Khalilzad, 2004:38).

Conclusion

This Article has concluded that Obama's policy is against resistance front. He takes effort to undermine Iran's ties with the Middle East revolutionary groups. Materialization of objectives as such may be feasible only through coercive diplomatic pressure and crippling sanctions imposed on Iran. But there are some harsh realities that show considerable costs of this policy for both parts.

1. both the US and Iran face an uncertain future in dealing with protests in Syria. The US position that Al-Asad must step down, may have little real world impact. Although the lack of US direct levers of influence in Syria is one factor, another is a fractured UN Security Council.
2. While Lebanon's warring factions may think that the US and Iran have their core interests at heart, it is important to remember that US-Iranian strategic competition is not driven by the internal politics of regional states. How the US crafts its foreign policy towards Lebanon continues to be informed by a number of age- old constraints. These include domestic political considerations, regional dynamics and international conflict.
3. In the post-Iraq invasion period, US policy was principally a function of denying US regional opponents, such as Syria and Iran, the mean to undermine US strategic interests in the region. As was mentioned above, these include preserving a regional order that favored broader US interests in the region and second that safeguarded Israel's national security. But US has suffered many costs in its Iraq policy with low gains.
4. The US cannot ignore the regional spillover effects should Syria

destabilize further and it needs to adopt a strategy based on containing Syrian instability. How events do and do not play out in Syria will have deep and unforeseen consequences on the precarious sectarian balance in Lebanon, the security of Israel along its northern and eastern flanks, the stability of Jordan at a time of increased internal unrest, and pressure along Turkey's southern flank as Ankara tries to contain increasingly assertive Syrian and Iraqi Kurdish groups.

5. A collapse in Syria controlled or otherwise may hold the promise of breaking Iran's umbilical cord to Middle East, but it also promises to expose both budding and strategic US allies to waves of uncertainty for years to come. So US can't ignore Iran's Policy on Middle East. US. Only can continuing sanctions on Iran. If Iran will be weak and powerless in Middle East, The balance will be changed and a new crisis appeared.

6. If Iran Plays a weak role in The Middle East development, the Power Balance will undergo changes, Which will lead to the US facing another Transition era crisis, like the Kuwait occupation. Washington, thereby, needs to take up Balance diplomacy vis-a-vis Tehran.

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