

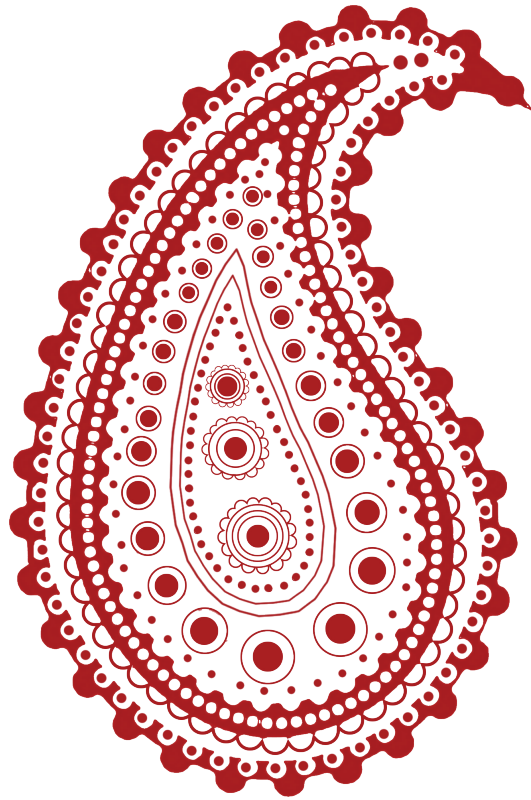
DĀNESH

THE OU UNDERGRADUATE
JOURNAL OF
IRANIAN STUDIES



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA®
College of International Studies
Department of International and Area Studies

Volume 1 (2016)



Iranian Studies Program

*The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA®
College of International Studies*

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Volume 1 (2016)

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From the Faculty Advisor

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this inaugural issue of *DĀNESH: The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies*. The initiative for this journal grew from the hard work and dedication of undergraduate students in the University of Oklahoma's Iranian Studies Program. In particular, I would like to acknowledge **Andrew Akhlaghi** (MA 2016) and **Elena Gharipour** (BA 2016) for their tireless effort in leading this project from its inception, in the spring of 2015, to the publication of this inaugural issue.

Since the founding of the OU Iranian Studies Program in 2011, our goal has been to promote knowledge regarding all aspects of the history, culture, society, and politics of Iran and the Persianate world. As the program has grown over the past five years, the work of OU undergraduate students in the field of Iranian Studies has become truly outstanding. The publication of *DĀNESH*, a peer-reviewed journal published under the auspices of the OU Iranian Studies Program and the OU College of International Studies, is dedicated to highlighting the research of a growing undergraduate program in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. As we continue to mature, we are confident that the vitality of the program will be reflected in the pages of this journal.

The name of the journal, *DĀNESH*, comes from the Persian word meaning *knowledge*, *learning*, and *wisdom*. We believe this is a fitting name for a journal that seeks to foster deep and compassionate understanding of one of the world's most culturally rich and historically complex civilizations. It is with this goal in mind that we inaugurate the publication of *DĀNESH*.

Afshin Marashi
Farzaneh Family Chair in Iranian Studies
Director, OU Iranian Studies Program

From the Editors-in-Chief

We are extremely proud to have been a part of this project. We are proud of both the quality of research in the journal and to have been part of such a wonderful process. Each of these papers addresses an important aspect of U.S.-Iranian relations. We hope that these papers will provide much needed context and perspective to the ongoing debates on U.S.-Iranian relations.

We are also privileged to have had such a positive experience editing the journal. Our associate editors worked extremely hard on each of these papers and they were a joy to work with throughout the process. Ultimately, any journal is only as strong as the writers and in this regard we were very fortunate. All of the writers came into this process with the utmost professionalism. We are also indebted to the University of Oklahoma Libraries for helping us archive and host the journal through the SHAREOK system.

The quality and overall process of making the journal are a reflection of the kind of academic environment in the Iranian Studies program and the University of Oklahoma. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the crucial role of Dr. Afshin Marashi. Without his guidance and dedication to the Iranian Studies program, none of this would have been possible.

Andrew Akhlaghi
Elena T. Gharipour
Editors-In-Chief

Iran-Contradiction: The Implications of the Arms-for-Hostages Scandal for U.S.-Iranian Relations

Monica Haddock

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The legacy of the Iran-Contra scandal in the United States is irrefutable. Not only did Iran-Contra tarnish the Reagan administration, traumatizing the federal bureaucracy with criminal indictments, but it also exposed “the chronic tension between America’s democratic domestic political system and its nondemocratic national security system.”¹ However, its overall repercussions for Iran remain more opaque. This paper seeks to ameliorate this lopsided coverage. This paper will examine the implications of the Iran-Contra affair on U.S.-Iranian relations in response to the following inquiries: Was the ostensible U.S. goal to sustain Iranian moderates merely window dressing? Which factions actually benefited from American military largesse? Was the U.S. responsible for the later political ascendancy of the pragmatists? And how did the conduct of foreign policy proceed afterward?

The Iran-Contra Affair first captured the popular imagination through Al-Shiraa’s anecdotal account of the bewildering choice of gifts the May 1986 Tehran delegation sought to woo its Iranian interlocutors with: an autographed bible and allegorical cake. According to Oliver North, the chocolate confection, which was later unceremoniously devoured by Revolutionary Guardsmen (during Ramadan nonetheless), was actually intended for the arms dealer Ghorbanifar’s mother. During the flight, a key had fallen into the icing and North opted to leave it there to conceal the dent with a deliberate looking flourish.² This purported symbol of reconciliation succinctly describes the actual relegation of détente to an afterthought during this chain of events.

To address these queries, this paper will focus solely on the eastern theatre of operations and analyze the significance of the Iran-Contra affair within a trio of contexts: its germination via initial arms transactions under Israeli auspices, the blossoming of the scandal through greater American control over project management, and the aftermath from the end of the Reagan administration through the presidency of Rafsanjani. To conclude, this paper will make suggestions to improve future diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran based on this experience.

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¹ Kenneth E. Sharpe, “The Real Cause of Irangate,” *Foreign Policy* 68 (1987): 19.

² Oliver North, *Under Fire: An American Story* (New York: Harpers Collins, 1991), 41-42.

The evidence suggests that the Iran-Contra affair was an overt manifestation of the U.S. strategy to liberate hostages held in Lebanon by Iranian proxy groups and that the tactics employed actually undermined the stated aim of bolstering the moderate Iranian opposition. Nonetheless, indigenous factors, such as the need to consolidate the revolution and military contingencies, contributed to the later preeminence of pragmatists in the Islamic Republic, in spite of U.S. interference. American ambivalence and subsequent strategic calculations would actually serve to undermine this precarious political position in Iran.

Initial Exchanges and their Geopolitical Context (1979-1986)

After overthrowing the Pahlavi dynasty, Ayatollah Khomeini sought to establish a universal Islamic political order by exporting the revolution. According to Khomeini, Islam is not peculiar to certain states or even Muslims, but should strive to encapsulate all of humanity.³ In practical terms, this notion has been implemented through the destabilization of neighboring countries via sponsorship of the political party and militia Hezbollah. This blatant rejection of nationalist prerogatives within the established international order was egregiously manifested by its utter contempt for the standard principle of diplomatic immunity during the American Embassy hostage crisis.⁴ Such blatant defiance of the status quo seemed to preclude the possibility of normalization between these two nations. For U.S. spectators, the conduct of post-revolutionary Iranian foreign policy was tantamount to terrorism and forbade the political possibility of negotiation without regime change.

This radically unprecedented ideology prompted the United States to intercede on behalf of Iraq during the First Persian Gulf War (1981-1988), in spite of professed neutrality. To U.S. policy makers, the Iranian military offensive into southern Iraq presented an ominous specter of an expansive Shia crescent that could jeopardize the flow of oil and inhibit commerce in the Hormuz strait. Thus, the subsequent rapprochement with Baghdad, accomplished through gestures such as the facilitation of arms shipments via third parties and generous U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.) credit provision for agricultural commodities, represented a distinct tilt toward Iraq.⁵ This containment strategy toward Iran merely bolstered the new regime (by promoting national unity through opposition) and incentivized support for militant proxies abroad to project its influence.

Following a resumption of diplomatic ties with Baghdad, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld claimed that an arms interdiction effort against Iran was necessary to placate Saddam by demonstrating that his new allies sought to end the conflict, rather than perpetuate it in order to neutralize him.⁶ Therefore, the State Department launched Operation Staunch, which branded Iran as a sponsor of terrorism and sought to substantially curtail its import of arms through U.S. allies. Subsequent Israeli attempts to

³ R.K. Ramazani, "Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran's Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal* 58, no.4 (2004): 555.

⁴ Henry Kissinger, *New World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 154.

⁵ Maryam Panah, *The Islamic Republic and The World: Global Dimensions of the Iranian Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 89-90

⁶ Kenneth R. Timmerman, *Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq* (London: Bantam Books, 1992), 190-191.

circumvent these strictures with tacit U.S. executive approval precipitated the Iran-Contra affair. However counterintuitive, Israel ignored the vociferously anti-Zionist rhetoric in Tehran by pursuing a peripheral strategy, which sought to court non-Arab states to assuage its relative isolation in a hostile region. This stance acknowledged the fact that Tehran's religious posturing was for domestic consumption and often belied a pragmatic foreign policy with frequent recourse to *realpolitik*.⁷ In realization of Sadaam Hussein's fears, cooperation with the scheme was sold successfully to the U.S. due to U.S. hegemonic aspirations in the Persian Gulf, which stood to benefit from a prolonged stalemate.

The seminal Israeli plot to transgress Operation Staunch was hatched during the Hamburg meetings of July 8, 1985 between David Kimche (of the Israeli foreign ministry), Al Schwimmer (an Israeli arms dealer with ties to Shimon Peres), Yaacov Nimrodi (a former Israeli military attaché to Iran), Adnan Khashoggi (a Saudi entrepreneur), and Manucher Ghorbanifar, an Iranian arms dealer. Prime Minister Peres refused to proceed without U.S. endorsement, so Michael Ledeen, an NSC consultant, was established as an intermediary. As an incentive, Ghorbanifar vouched for the moderation of hypothetical recipients and dangled the possibility of William Buckley's (the captive Beirut CIA station chief) release. Ghorbanifar was notorious for his inordinate failure to pass polygraph exams for CIA recruitment, so his credibility was established by the production of a senior Iranian official- Hassan Karoubi- with ties to both Khomeini and Rafsanjani.⁸ U.S. intelligence on Iran was negligible following the disintegration of diplomatic ties and this subsequent naïve reliance on self-serving third parties served to sabotage tentative relations from their onset.

Ghorbanifar's claims were further buttressed by the Iranian response to the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 by Hezbollah. To curry favor with the U.S., both Rafsanjani and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati collaborated with Syrian officials to orchestrate the release of hostages.⁹ The perpetrator, Imad Mughniyah, was also complicit in the Beirut kidnappings. This episode prodded recalcitrant U.S. officials, such as Secretary of State Schultz, to support the Israeli initiative. President Reagan granted authorization to Robert McFarlane, his National Security advisor, to pursue it further.¹⁰ Aware of the political repercussions to Jimmy Carter for failure to solve the Embassy crisis, the fate of the hostages was the main concern of President Reagan, not rapprochement with Iran per se. Thus, by maintaining that the goal of negotiations was *détente* rather than mutual concessions, such covert diplomacy delegitimized the overall process and was politically untenable.

On August 30 1985, with U.S. approval, Israel delivered the first batch of 100 TOWs (Tube launched, optically tracked, wire-guided, anti-tank missiles) to Iran, which was soon accompanied by an additional shipment of 408 missiles. Mutual misgivings regarding the sequence of payment and delivery between the American-Israeli

⁷ Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, "Islamic Realpolitik: Two-Level Iranian Foreign Policy," *International Journal on World Peace* 26, no.4 (2009): 8.

⁸ Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014), 63-67.

⁹ Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 115.

¹⁰ Byrne, *Iran-Contra*, 70-71.

partnership and Iranians had threatened to create a stalemate until Khashoggi advanced credit. These transactions secured the release of the U.S. hostage Reverend Weir from his Lebanese captors. In a subsequent presidential briefing, McFarlane stated that, “you would have to be a fool not to see that whatever our intentions were, the reality was apparently arms for hostages.”¹¹ Clearly, a sea change in Iranian politics was not the chief objective of these endeavors. This clumsy utilization of unofficial parties and the consequent chronic inability to communicate with clarity constantly threatened to derail proceedings by reigniting mutual historical suspicions. If greater diplomacy were the prime objective, proper channels would have been opened to ameliorate distrust and achieve greater parity in discussions.

In November 1985, the United States became more deeply embroiled during the abortive sale of 120 HAWK air-defense missiles to Iran, through the provision of logistical support via a CIA proprietary airline. Lamentably, crass opportunists in Tel Aviv attempted to pawn off outdated equipment in order to replenish their own arsenals with the American largesse. Not only did the missiles arrive with incriminating Star of David markings, but also one was even proven defective in a routine test. The Iranians had anticipated technologically advanced HAWKS that even Iraqi surveillance aircraft could not elude. These expectations were swiftly rebuked by the paltry arrival of 18 derelict missiles. To perpetuate the negotiations after such a grave affront necessitated a refund and the guarantee of future discounts.¹² Rather than build confidence, their clumsy execution merely fed Iran’s anti-American animus. In grappling with the persistent righteous indignation of Iranians over the U.S. orchestrated 1953 coup d’état, Western interlocutors must be weary of rekindling that sense of betrayal through sloppy execution of missions.

After the HAWK debacle, Lt. Col. North prepared a draft presidential finding to calm the fears of Schultz and Defense Secretary Weinberger over the illegality of prior sales under the Arms Export Control Act (AECA). As opposed to a previous December version, the aim of bolstering moderates within the regime was emphasized over hostages. Yet again, executive privilege was claimed to prevent disclosure to Congressional Intelligence Committees.¹³ With Reagan’s consent, the CIA officially joined the endeavor and the United States seized the initiative from the Israelis. Shortly thereafter, Operation Recovery was launched with a shipment of 1000 TOW missiles and the sharing of highly diluted intelligence.¹⁴ The provision of worthless military data further undermined the sincerity of the United States during transactions; even inaction would have been less corrosive than such an empty gesture. Despite being the primary concern of the finding, Iranian moderates were a secondary consideration in reality. This myopic pursuit of hostage liberation curtailed the purported aim of catalyzing reform in Iran by emphasizing expediency over long-term objectives.

¹¹ McFarlane’s Statements About His Contacts with President Reagan During Interview with the Special Review Board, 12/11/1986, National Archives, (accessed: November 15, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/declassification/iscap/pdf/2011-064-doc21.pdf>).

¹² Michael Arthur Ledeen, *Perilous Statecraft: An Insider’s Account of the Iran-Contra Affair* (New York: Scribner, 1988), 157-161.

¹³ Byrne, *Iran-Contra*, 154-155.

¹⁴ United States. *Presidential Commission on the Iran-Contra Affair: Report to the President* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1987), III 13-15.

The Culmination of Events (February 1986-November 1986)

The fate of the Nicaraguan Contras and Iranian negotiations became entwined through the infamous “diversion” of funds, which was allegedly concocted by Ghorbanifar in an inauspicious restroom dialogue with Oliver North to evade wire-tapping. Preoccupied with sustaining the anti-Sandinista movement against the congressional obstruction of the Boland Amendment, Lt. Col. North and his cohorts had resorted to seeking private donations to fund the rebellion. During their furtive exchange, Ghorbanifar insinuated that the retail price of weaponry to the Iranians could be severely inflated in order to create a covert slush fund to support the Contras, restock the depleted Israeli arsenal, placate middlemen, et cetera.¹⁵ This facet of the scandal, which predominated later press coverage, exposes later arms transactions as crude profiteering, rather than merely injudicious diplomacy.

After the first installment of TOWs, preliminary official meetings were conducted in Frankfurt with Mohsen Kangarlou, “the Australian”. As an assistant to Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi, he was firmly apart of the radical faction the United States ultimately sought to eradicate. However, prior to the abolition of the monolithic Islamic Republic Party, such “extremists” comprised a reformist coalition with notable pragmatic figures, such as Rafsanjani and Velayati, against the conservatives.¹⁶ Discussions were monopolized by setting terms for the reciprocal acquisition of advanced weaponry and release of hostages. Despite the fact that successful arms transfers had failed to secure a release, the U.S. officials made another concession to a meeting on Kish Island (later relocated to Tehran).¹⁷ According to Ghorbanifar, President Khamenei would issue a conciliatory fatwa against terrorism prior to their visit.¹⁸ The general participation of diverse Iranian factions within the proceedings obfuscated which elements the U.S. officials were actually aiding. While it is conceivable that a lack of credible intelligence, due to the severely diminished U.S. presence in Iran, made it impossible to disambiguate the politics of the Islamic Republic, it is far more likely that the prevailing concern over the hostage crisis rendered U.S. politicians apathetic to the reform credentials of their Iranian interlocutors.

The U.S. delegation to Tehran in May 1986-composed of Robert McFarlane, Oliver North, George Cave (a former CIA operative), NSC Middle East expert Howard Teicher, Amiram Nir (the Israeli Counter-terrorism advisor), and a CIA communications specialist-was a fiasco. In a cable to Join Poindexter, McFarlane contemptuously captured the situation:

It may be best for us to try to picture what it would be like if after a nuclear attack, a surviving Tatar became Vice President; a recent grad student became Secretary of State; and a bookie became the interlocutor for all discourses with foreign countries.¹⁹

¹⁵ North, *Under fire*, 19-21.

¹⁶ Maziar Behrooz, “Factionalism in Iran Under Khomeini,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 4 (1991): 598-599.

¹⁷ Byrne, *Iran-Contra*, 166-167

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁹ United States, *Presidential Commission on the Iran-Contra Affair: Report to the President*, B-101.

The former NSC Advisor was indignant at their chaotic reception and the lack of equals with which to confer. However, the failure of the meeting arose from poor communication, not incompetence. From the Iranian perspective, this was merely a prosaic arms transaction of little historical consequence, in which the U.S. had failed to deliver as promised. McFarlane's impatience to leave after a hostage ultimatum was unmet failed to recognize the Iranian desperation to oblige them. These unrealistic demands blindly ignored the overall autonomy of Hezbollah.²⁰ Such American hubris, devoid of cross-cultural sensitivity and insistent upon unobtainable objectives, immediately condemned these embryonic negotiations to failure.

Among the Iranians present-Mohsen Kargarlou, Fereidun Mehdinejad (the head of IRGC intelligence), and First Deputy Prime Minister Mustafavi-Dr. Ali Hadi Najafabadi (the chair of the Majles Foreign Affairs Committee) alone escaped McFarlane's scorn. According to Najafabadi, Iranian reticence toward rapprochement could best be encapsulated by the televised broadcast of the fatal handshake between Brzezinski (NSC Advisor during the Carter administration) and Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, which resulted in the deposal of the latter. Although aloof from the proceedings, Ayatollah Khomeini, President Ali Khamenei, and Speaker Rafsanjani were all briefed on the encounter.²¹ During the deliberations, the mutual imperative of Soviet containment in Afghanistan was pursued as a potential avenue for cooperation.²² However, Iranian furtiveness betrayed a lack of commitment to long-term engagement. Rather than emphasizing corresponding regional goals as a foundation for future relations, a preoccupation with hostages led the United States to unwittingly sustain the revolutionary regime of its arch nemesis, through the necessity of collaboration with all factions.

The May 1986 Tehran Mission's objectives were further imperiled by government oversight. Due to the U.S. Army Logistic Command's failure to cancel Iran's subscription to their inventory catalogue, the grotesque price gouging of the proffered HAWK spare parts was inadvertently divulged to the Iranians. After various price increases were exacted to fund the contras or satisfy middlemen, such as Ghorbanifar and Khashoggi (who provided bridge-funding), the weapons tranche that sub-contractor Richard Secord originally paid the CIA \$6.5 million for, was sold to Iran for an astronomical \$25 million. Naturally, the Iranians were infuriated. Only through the skillful mediation of Ghorbanifar and Nir was the release of Father Lawrence Jenco obtained in July.²³ This hideously botched transaction further undermined diplomatic prerogatives by reconfirming Iranian suspicions of U.S. malevolence. Mishap aside, it was inevitable that both historically aggrieved nations would fail to be placated by a quid-pro-quo arrangement. However, a recurrent emphasis on immediate gains through token concessions- not longevity- came to characterize this novel U.S.-Iranian relationship.

Eager to ditch the much maligned Ghorbanifar, the United States prompted Albert Hakim (Secord's business partner) to establish an alternate channel: Ali Hashemi Bakhrmani, the nephew of Majles Speaker Rafsanjani and an IRGC officer. In their

²⁰ Ledeen, *Perilous Statecraft*, 219-222.

²¹ Byrne, *Iran-Contra*, 197-199.

²² United States, *Presidential Commission on the Iran-Contra Affair: Report to the President*, B 79-82.

²³ Ledeen, *Perilous Statecraft*, 231-232.

professed anxiety to isolate moderates with which to deal, the Americans failed to ascertain the standard practice of politics in Tehran, which mandated shrewd factional maneuvering and consensus for political survival. During his September 19-21 Washington D.C. visit, Bakhramani himself insisted upon Ghorbanifar's inclusion as an associate of Ayatollah Montazeri (Khomeini's heir apparent), whose participation was deemed vital for success. Despite his revolutionary connections, as a member of the conservative-bazaari alliance, Montazeri was actually in favor of détente for economic reasons. Regardless, the U.S. balked at the prospect. In addition to the standard arms-for-hostages dialogue, Bakhramani also discussed strategic aims in the Gulf, such as the ousting of Saddam. Rafsanjani was in charge of perpetrating the war and had forged a close alliance with the Revolutionary Guard in the process.²⁴ Despite the diplomatic trappings of Bakhramani's White House tour, it was obvious that Tehran's main priority was victory (even at the expense of ideology) and that the U.S. was irrefutably sustaining the reviled revolutionary regime's war effort. Forsaking the opportunity to pursue mutual strategic aims together, such as the containment of Iraq, both parties denied the possibility of meaningful rapprochement through fixation on immediate goals.

On October 6-8, a series of informal bilateral meetings were convened including Feredun Mehdinejad, whose presence indicated increasing solidarity amongst the Iranians. Unfortunately, Oliver North, Richard Secord, and George Cave were quickly diverted from the scene by the ominous crash of a C-23 courier plane carrying supplies for the Contras in Nicaragua threatened to breach operational security. Negotiations were summarily delegated to Hakim, who was forced to scrap North's ambitious sequential plan for arms transactions and hostage releases in favor of a nine-point accord highly advantageous to the Iranians. Although this plan was initiated by the shipment of 500 TOW missiles from Israeli stock (later replaced by the United States), it disintegrated once former arms deals were publicized.²⁵ The devolution of U.S. representation to a private businessman underscores the marginalization of diplomatic goals. Furthermore, U.S. pretensions of providing a bulwark to Iranian moderates were brutally rebuffed by the continuous participation of hardliners within the Revolutionary Guard.

This initiative was ultimately doomed by the very same elite factionalism the U.S. desperately sought to avoid when radical students at the behest of Montazeri's supporters distributed fliers in denunciation of the Tehran delegation. Mehdi Hashemi, a radical Revolutionary Guard Commander, leaked the story to the Lebanese paper *Al-Shiraa* and it later became world news.²⁶ Humiliated, Rafsanjani adamantly denied the proceedings and was politically salvaged only through the direct intervention of Khomeini, who denied the need for an investigation in the Majles.²⁷ Ironically, the moderate forces, which the United States ostensibly sought to promote, were in fact jeopardized by the affair; it was the reprehensible Supreme Leader who actually buoyed the pragmatists out of military expediency.

Denouement (the End of the Reagan Era through Rafsanjani's Presidency)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 234-236.

²⁵ Byrne, *Iran-Contra*, 248-252.

²⁶ Ledeen, *Perilous Statecraft*, 136.

²⁷ Ramazani, "Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran's Foreign Policy," 556.

The public revelation of Janus-faced U.S. foreign policy threatened to compromise its strategic Arab alliances. This calamity was doubtless a considerable factor in the Reagan Administration's decision to provide a naval escort for Kuwaiti oil tankers, in order to restore confidence with the Gulf States.²⁸ Iran viewed such commercial vessels as legitimate targets due to the sheikhdom's sponsorship of Iraq throughout the war.²⁹ Escalating tensions between the U.S. and Iran culminated in the tragic destruction of a civilian aircraft by the U.S.S. *Vincennes*, which resulted in 290 casualties. Khomeini's belated acceptance of a UN sponsored truce was doubtlessly made to avert further military confrontation with the United States.³⁰ These skirmishes reiterated the hostile status quo between these two nations, seemingly nullifying the negligible progress made during previous negotiations. With such grossly disparate regional aspirations, any relationship between the United States and Iran was doomed to remain merely shallow and tactical.

Following the ceasefire, the notoriously fractious political landscape of Iran was further polarized by the death of Khomeini and the controversial succession of Khamenei. To reinforce his theologically precarious position, Khamenei discarded the role of non-partisan mediator adopted by his predecessor and instead courted the conservative right.³¹ This faction sought to preserve the integrity of Islamic culture against the mental colonization of the West and perpetuated the demonization of the U.S. According to Khamenei "war, bloodshed, destruction, [and] annihilation are the results of [the United States'] satanic behavior."³² Conversely, President Rafsanjani's pragmatic coalition eschewed ideology, and favored a more conciliatory tone to lure foreign investors for the sake of post-war reconstruction. The exigencies of war that necessitated hypocritical arms purchases from the "Great Satan" exposed the flexibility of revolutionary ideals.³³ However, such compromises were ultimately in service to domestic preservation and not necessarily indicative of political ripeness for normalization with the United States. American disapprobation could still be circumvented through wooing alternative investment.

Miraculously unscathed from the scandal, George H.W. Bush addressed Iranians directly during his famous "Goodwill Begets Goodwill" 1989 inaugural speech, regarding the plight of hostages in Lebanon. Rafsanjani indicated that he was amenable to securing their release in exchange for a reciprocal gesture from the United States. UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar served as a respectable liaison between Washington and Tehran, in contrast to the unscrupulous intermediaries employed during the Iran-Contra affair. Although Iranian prerequisites, such as the thawing of assets and territorial concessions from Hussein, threatened to retard progress, the Islamic Republic nonetheless proved instrumental in the release of two hostages-Robert Polhell and Frank

²⁸ Byrne, *Iran-Contra*, 335.

²⁹ Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

³¹ Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), 55.

³² David Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society and Power* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 188-189.

³³ *Ibid.*, 175.

Reed.³⁴ While the utilization of proper official channels marks a positive evolution in U.S.-Iranian relations, the stubborn persistence of quid pro quo arrangements had a pernicious effect on the diplomatic process.

Fortuitously, the ill-conceived Iraqi invasion of Kuwait further eroded Iranian intransigence by forcing Saddam to make favorable territorial concessions and accept the 1975 Algiers Accord in order to secure his eastern flank.³⁵ Although purportedly neutral during the conflict, the Islamic Republic lent airspace to the American military, expropriated Iraqi jets, increased communications with the United States for safety purposes, and abstained from promoting sedition amongst Iraq's restive Shia population.³⁶ This admirable conduct was repaid in scorn through the reconfiguration of the Gulf Cooperation Council defense network (via the Damascus Declaration), primarily in order to contain Iran's hegemonic aspirations. The disintegration of the accord later yielded bilateral security agreements with the United States, which consolidated its strategic presence in the Gulf.³⁷ Lack of U.S. accommodation to Iran politically undermined the pragmatists, as well as long-term prospects for regional peace and stability. If the United States had exploited the opportunity of enhanced military cooperation with Iran as a stepping-stone for future diplomatic relations, rather than reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's pariah status through miscalculated exclusion, then the impetus for support of militant proxies to project Iranian influence would have been removed.

Undaunted, Rafsanjani sought to enhance economic cooperation with the United States to facilitate future political rapprochement via the offer of a billion dollar oil contract to the American company, Conoco. However, this deal was thwarted by the frenetic lobbying efforts of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), in a dramatic reversal of its former Periphery Doctrine. With the existential Arab threat neutralized by the contemporary peace process, AIPAC endorsed a new cause celebre: Iranian containment. Public pressure prompted Bill Clinton to implement comprehensive sanctions through executive orders. These were later superseded by the Iran Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), which passed unanimously in Congress.³⁸ Once again, American strategic interests were subsumed by Israeli prerogatives. The revolutionary regime has since proven remarkably resilient in the face of seemingly insuperable odds. Such hostile sanctions are not only of dubious efficacy after decades of economic estrangement, but also serve to embolden the antagonistic global stance of the Islamic Republic.

Conclusion

As this broad survey of the eastern theatre of the Iran-Contra affair has demonstrated, this scandal transformed not only the American political landscape, but that of the Islamic Republic as well. Both parties were motivated by their immediate interests instead of meaningful rapprochement. Rather than topple the fanatical regime, U.S. machinations actually sustained it during a protracted war. Paradoxically, the Islamic Republic began to

³⁴ John W. Limbert, *Negotiating With Iran: Wrestling the Ghosts of History* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2009), 140-145.

³⁵ Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution*, 135.

³⁶ Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 142.

³⁷ Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution*, 137-138.

³⁸ Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 185-188.

initiate the desired reforms (especially pertaining to foreign policy) of its own volition for self-preservation. The ensuing normalization process was sabotaged by U.S. miscalculations. However, this saga can be quite informative on the proper way to engage Iran in the future.

Once diplomatic ties were severed between Iran and the United States in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, the State Department allowed Iranian expertise and Persian language skills to flounder.³⁹ This parlous fact only compounds cultural misapprehensions. To enable smooth negotiations, effective communication is essential. The training of a new coterie of experts, such as George Cave of the Tehran delegation, is critical to the demystification of Iranian politics. Greater cross-cultural proficiency would serve to elucidate the baffling behavior of superficially irrational actors. Such clarity could generate a more equitable relationship between the United States and Iran by diluting the contempt born from chronic misconception.

Furthermore, the stubborn reliance on quid pro quo arrangements to achieve détente is narrow and self-defeating. This format, characteristic of the Arms-for-Hostages scandal, was doomed to failure. Due to mutual historical grievances—such as the 1953 coup or American Embassy Crisis—each party feels entitled to compensation and balks at the necessity to make concessions. Additional logistical difficulties and divergent expectations only compound animosity. Rapprochement is best accomplished through joint cooperation over common interests. Contemporary to the Lebanese Hostage Crisis, the shared threat of Soviet expansion in Afghanistan, and desire to support the Mujahedeen resistance could have generated good will through collaboration.

Also, attempts to contain Iran and the subsequent zero-sum logic merely props up the regime through confrontational politics. Depriving the Islamic Republic of participation in international forums, such as the 1991 Madrid Conference, only gives it further incentive to sponsor Islamic belligerents in order to be heard.⁴⁰ Prevention is the best cure: to curb terrorism, Iran must be given a legitimate means of political expression, commensurate with its status.

³⁹ Limbert, *Negotiating With Iran*, 121.

⁴⁰ Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution*, 169.