

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

Based on the second and third chapter of this research, there are several noteworthy key findings of this research. The first key finding is that the US is resorting to the use of force towards Iran through the employment of military muscle towards Iran in the region on top of its economic and diplomatic pressures on Iran. The use of force is more extensively implemented following US unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA, which caused a considerable disappointment by other parties of the JCPOA, including Iran and the EU. Shortly following the withdrawal from JCPOA, the US reintroduced sanctions and waged a maximum pressure campaign towards Iran. On top of that, the US has also been stepping up its military muscle in the region with various military deployments aimed at Iran. Often, these moves are dangerous and potentially lead to escalations. Such was the case of planned US strike on Iranian missile defense facilities in 2019 which was canceled by the president on the last minute, and the assassination of Qasem Soleimani, a top ranking IRGC officer, in Iraq in early 2020. These actions sum up US use of force which is often the character of US approach towards Iran following its unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA.

The second key finding is that there is a degree of offense dominance regarding US regional politics and nature of military deployment in the Persian Gulf. The US politics in and around the Persian Gulf gained offense-dominance through military, geography, and diplomatic factors. Militarily US force posture and the nature of deployment, combined with technological superiority of the US military in and around

the Persian Gulf suggest that conquest is relatively easy, although not in the absolute sense, for the US military in the region. Thus, the US is at an advantage which would enable for military operations that would otherwise be of higher risk. Geography also helps to shape US offense-defense balance towards offense, this is due to the nature of the nature of Persian Gulf which is a chokepoint for international supply oil which at the same attracts regional (and extra-regional) powers to maintain its influence in the region, including the US. Because the region attracts regional powers, it is the meeting point between the US military in the region and Iran. This close proximity, in addition the climate of the Persian Gulf, allows for effective operationalization of military technology. Finally, the lack of diplomatic arrangements such as regional defensive alliances and regional collective security systems. For the most part, the lack of diplomatic arrangements are caused by deep divisions and lack of common threat assessment of Gulf powers. Additionally, the very same lack of cohesion resulted in Gulf Arab states to not be able to balance Iran enough which leaves the US to do the job.

The third key finding is that the offense-dominance of US politics in the region has a considerable impact on the politics of Middle East, and the Persian Gulf in particular. The ten dangers of offense-dominance which came about as an effect of offensive tendencies show us several behavioral tendencies of regional powers in responding to the ongoing dynamics of power-relation in the region and US offensive tendencies. Few notable behavioral tendencies is that of Iran and Israel. Iran for its own part has been slowly closing the technological gap with the US and Gulf Arab countries alike. Additionally, Iran has also been extensively supporting its non-state proxies in

the region to secure strategic objectives in the region. With the ongoing power-relation in the region, Israel has also stepped up its activities in countering Iranian threats, mainly proxies, by launching pre-emptive strikes on Hezbollah and other Iran-backed proxies in Lebanon and Syria.

Based on the key findings laid out above, this research concludes that the US tend to have an offensive advantage in the Persian Gulf. This offensive advantage tend to influence the US to resort to the use of force towards Iran in the region. Military, geographic, and diplomatic factors play key roles in determining US offensive advantage which enables to put the US in a position where the use of force is advantageous in countering Iran.

Finally, there are several aspects of this research that could hopefully be improved or inspire further research regarding similar topics. First, this research mainly focus on the US offense-defense balance in the region and does not thoroughly consider the offense-defense balance of other regional players such as the Gulf Arab states and Israel. Secondly, while admitting that there is a behavioral shift of the US towards the matter of US-Iran relations, this research does not focus on the idiosyncratic aspects of US use of force on Iran. It is greatly expected that this research would be able to contribute to the series of research regarding the topic of US – Iran relations and, at the same time, inspire other research of similar topics.

REFERENCES

2018. AAP-06 NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions, Edition 2018.
2019. "Amid tensions with Iran, White House mulls U.S. military request to send more forces to the Middle East." Washington Post.
- Azizi, Hamidreza, Vali Golmohammadi, and Amir Hossein Vazirian. 2020. "Trump's "maximum pressure" and anti-containment in Iran's regional policy." Digest of Middle East Studies.
- Barzegar, Kayhan. 2010. "Balance of Power in The Persian Gulf: An Iranian View."
- BBC News. 2019. "Iran Seizes British Tanker in Strait of Hormuz." July.
- Borak, Donna, and Nicole Gaouette. 2018. "US Officially Reimposes All Sanctions Lifter under 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal." CNN.
- Bryman, Alan. 2012. Social Research Methods. New York: Oxford Univeristy Press.
- Coffey, Luke, and James Philipps. 2020. "The Middle East Strategic Alliance: An Uphill Struggle." Douglas and Sarah Foundation for Foreign Policy.
- Cordesman, Anthony. 2019. "he Gulf and the Challenge of Missile Defense." Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- Cordesman, Anthony, Abdullah Toukan, and Max Molot. 2019. "The Gulf Military Balance in 2019: A Graphic Analysis." Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- Davari, Arash. 2020. "U.S. - Iran Relations under Maximum Pressure: A Narrow Path to Negotiation." Grown Center for Middle East Studies.

Davenport, Kelsey. 2018. "The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a Glance."
Arms Control Association.

Davenport, Kelsey. 2018. "The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a Glance."
Arms Control Association.

Davenport, Kelsey. 2017. "Understanding the U.S. Compliance Certification and Why It Matters
to the Iran Nuclear Deal." Arms Control Association.

Davenport, Kesley. 2017. "Understanding the US Compliance and Why It Matters to The Iran
Nuclear Deal." Arms Control Association.

Defense Intelligence Agency. 2019. "Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and
Securing Regional Dominance."

Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson. 2019. "Factsheet: Designation of the Islamic
Revolutionary Guard Corps."

2019. DOD Statement on Deployment of Additional U.S. Forces and Equipment to the Kingdom
of Saudi Arabia. U.S. Department of Defense.

Donna Borak, Nicole Gaouette. 2018. "US Officially Reimposes all Sanctions Lifted under 2015
Iran Nuclear Deal." CNN News.

Edelman, Eric, and Charles Wald. 2018. "Comprehensive US Strategy toward Iran after
JCPOA." JINSA's Gemunder Center Iran Task Force.

Evera, Stephen van. 1998. "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War." International Security 5 -
43.

Farzin, Nadimi. 2019. "Clarifying Freedom of Navigation in the Gulf." The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

2019. "Four ships 'sabotaged' in the Gulf of Oman amid tensions." BBC News.

Glaser, Charles L., and Chaim Kaufmann. 1998. "What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It? (Offense, Defense, and International Politics)." International Security.

Goldberg, Jeffrey. 2016. "The Obama Doctrine." The Atlantic.

Hickey, Samuel. 2020. "A Quick Guide to the JCPOA Dispute Resolution." Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

Hickey, Samuel. 2020. "A Quick Guide to the JCPOA Dispute Resolution Mechanism." Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

Hudson, John, Missy Ryan, and Erin Cunningham. 2019. "'We were cocked and loaded': Trump's account of Iran attack plan facing scrutiny." The Washington Post.

III, Boland. 1992. "Geography, National Power, and Strategy." Global Security.

International Institute for Strategic Studies. 2019. "Iran's Network of Influence."

2019. "Iran is Secretly Moving Missiles into Iraq, U.S. Officials Say." The New York Times.

2020. "Iran plane crash: Ukrainian jet was 'unintentionally' shot down." BBC News.

2019. "Israel on edge after Syria strikes, Lebanon 'drone attack'." DW News.

2020. "Israel strikes Syrian army bases after Golan Heights attack." BBC News.

n.d. "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action."

Joobani, Aghaie, and Mohammadhossein Daheshvar. 2020. "Deciphering Trump's "Maximum Pressure" Policy: The Enduring Challenge of Containing Iran." *New Middle Eastern Studies* 27 - 37.

Julia, Barnes. 2019. "U.S. Cyberattack Hurt Iran's Ability to Target Oil Tankers, Officials Say." *The New York Times*.

Karimi, Nasser, and Jon Gambrell. 2020. "Iran says Israel killed military nuclear scientist remotely." *Associated Press*.

Karsh, Efraim. 2002. *The Iran-Iraq War 1980 - 1988*. Osprey Publishing.

Katzman, Kenneth, and Kathleen J. 2020. "US-Iran Conflict and Implications for US Policy." *Congressional Research Office*.

Kenneth Katzman, Paul Kerr, Valerie Heitshuhen. 2018. "U.S. Decision to Cease Implementing the Iran Nuclear Agreement." *Congressional Research Service*.

Kershner, Isabel. 2015. "Iran Deal Denounced by Netanyahu as 'Historic Mistake'." *The New York Times*.

Khan, Khalid Masood. 2015. "The Strategic Depth Concept." *The Nation*.

Landler, Mark. 2018. *Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned*. May 8.

Lili, Eugenio. 2017. "Debating US Military Strategy in the Persian Gulf: What is the Way Forward?" *Revista Brasileira de Politica Internacional*.

2019. "Maritime coalition launched to protect Gulf shipping after Iran attacks." *Arab News*.

Martinez, Luis, Elizabeth McLaughlin, and Meridith McGraw. 2019. "Trump says Iranian shootdown of US military drone may have been a 'mistake'." ABC News.

McLaughlin, Elizabeth, and Luis Martinez. 2020. "Iran launches missiles at US military facilities in Iraq, Pentagon confirms." ABC News.

McLaughlin, Elizabeth, and Luis Martinez. 2019. "US civilian contractor killed, several troops injured in rocket attack on Iraqi military base." ABC News.

Miller, Benjamin, T.V Paul, James J. Writz, and Michael Fortmann. 2004. "The International System and Regional Balance in the Middle East." *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* 255.

Mulligan, Stephen. 2018. "Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal: Legal Authorities and Implications." Congressional Research Service.

Mulligan, Stephen. 2018. "Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal: Legal Authorities and Implications." Congressional Research Service.

2019. "New Commander Opens IMSC Command Center." Coalition Task Force SENTINEL Public Affairs.

Office of the Spokesperson. 2019. "Factsheet: Designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps." Department of State.

2019. "Oil tanker bound for Syria detained in Gibraltar." BBC News.

2020. "Qasem Soleimani: US kills top Iranian general in Baghdad air strike." BBC News.

Saunders, Christian. 2019. "Iran Military Power Statement." US Department of Defense.

Sharp, Jeremy. 2020. "Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention." Congressional Research Service.

Sokolsky, Richard, and Aaron Miller. 2019. "Saudi Arabia and Israel Are Pushing US to Confront Iran. Trump Shouldn't Take the Bait." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The New York Times. 2018. "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned."

2019. "Top Iraqi militia chief warns of tough response to US air strikes on Iraq, Syria-based groups." ABC news.

2019. "U.S. Tells Saudi Arabia Oil Attacks Were Launched from Iran." Wall Street Journal.

2019. "US Central Command Statement."

2020. "US-led coalition to withdraw hundreds of troops from smaller bases in Iraq." Stars and Stripes.

Wallin, Matthew. 2018. "US Military Bases and Facilities in the Middle East." American Peace Project.

2019. "What are Maritime Chokepoints?" Marine Insight.

White House Office of the Press Secretary. 2019. "'Statement from the National Security Advisor Ambassador John Bolton."

White House Office of the Press Secretary. 2017. "Remarks by President Trump on Iran Strategy."

Wintour, Patrick. 2019. "Iran hints at ship swap with UK amid de-escalation efforts." The Guardian.

Wolf, Albert B. 2018. "After JCPOA: American Grand Strategy Toward Iran." Comparative Strategy.

2019. "Yemen's Houthi Rebels Attack Saudi Oil Facilities, Escalating Tensions in the Gulf." The New York Times.

Yossef, Amr. 2019. "Upgrading Iran's Military Doctrine: An Offensive 'Forward Defense'." Middle East Institute.