The Transformation of the US Control System against the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Security Order Network of West Asia

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Abstract

The control of regional threats has consistently been a crucial aspect of the United States' strategy in various regions. With the adoption of anti-hegemonic policies by the Islamic Republic of Iran in West Asia, the U.S. regional threat-control strategy has been specifically designed and implemented against it. The strategy to contain Iran has undergone a fundamental transformation in response to shifts in the security landscape of West Asia. Understanding this transformation is essential for obtaining a more accurate grasp of the U.S. containment strategy, which in turn facilitates the development of more effective countermeasures and neutralization tactics. The central research question of this study is: How has the U.S. control system against the Islamic Republic of Iran evolved, and what are its underlying causes? In addressing this question, the following hypothesis is proposed: The U.S. control system against Iran has shifted from a straightforward, linear, resource-oriented framework to a complex, multi-layered network-based control system. This change is deeply rooted in the transition of the regional order from a simple structure to one that is increasingly complex and chaotic. The research methodology employed in this article is deductive; sources and data were collected through document-based and library research.

Introduction

The control of regional threats has consistently been a fundamental principle of U.S. foreign policy across various geographical areas. This approach to managing threats represents an evolving strategy that has undergone continual change throughout different historical periods. Adapting to regional challenges has been a hallmark of the U.S. threat-containment strategy since the end of World War II. The tools employed within the U.S. control framework are diverse and can be classified into "hard" and "soft" categories. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, the United States adopted a strategy of military unilateralism aimed at expanding its geopolitical influence in the West Asian region during the decline of the Soviet Union. However, this strategy encountered challenges due to the rising costs associated with an increased military presence and the growing geopolitical complexities of West Asia. In response to China's growing power in East Asia, the U.S. subsequently shifted its focus toward China under the strategy known as the "Pivot to Asia."

The primary strategy employed in the past has been direct military engagement by intervening states to further their objectives in conflict regions. This approach has been a consistent feature throughout the history of warfare and international relations. Over the centuries, as military industries have expanded and developed, the nature of this strategy has evolved; however, its fundamental logic remains unchanged. Contemporary examples such as the Vietnam War, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the U.S. occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq illustrate that this strategy can be exceptionally time-consuming and costly. As such**,** many modern strategists view this approach as a strategic blunder committed by both the Soviet Union and the United States.

During the latter half of the Cold War, two significant developments reshaped the global security landscape: the era of decolonization, which resulted in the emergence of numerous independent nations, and a mutual understanding between opposing sides (the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.) that direct conflict was not an option. Consequently, attention to regional areas and their dynamics became increasingly important, and major powers began to formulate new security strategies aimed at managing the complexities of different regions. However, these strategies have encountered numerous ambiguities and inefficiencies due to the intricate and interconnected nature of regional orders. Consequently, the control systems established by major powers have faced challenges from emerging actors and unforeseen events.

For instance, the U.S. regional strategy in West Asia following the Cold War confronted a series of new geopolitical challenges. The rise of non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, along with their prolonged resistance against the U.S. - culminating in the withdrawal from Afghanistan - underscores the vulnerabilities of the traditional American approach to regional control. Additionally, the emergence of new security threats such as ISIS in the Levant has posed significant challenges for global powers in addressing these issues. The rapid expansion of these threats into neighboring areas further highlights the ambiguities and limitations in the threat-management strategies of major powers and their lack of preparedness when confronted with novel security phenomena.

Following the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the breakdown of the patron-client relationship between the United States and Iran, American animosity towards Iran extended beyond mere regional competition in West Asia. Iran began to be viewed as a significant threat to U.S. regional interests, and its containment became a central tenet of Washington's strategy in the area. A historical overview of U.S. efforts to contain Iran reveals a landscape marked by numerous fluctuations. This study seeks to address the following research question: How has the U.S. control system regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran evolved, and what factors have driven this change? The hypothesis proposed in response to this inquiry suggests that the U.S. control framework has shifted from a straightforward, linear, resource-oriented approach to a complex, multi-layered, network-based control system. This evolution can be traced back to the transition from a simple to a more intricate and chaotic regional order. The research methodology employed in this article is deductive, with data and materials collected through document-based and library research.

1. Regional Network Order

Different geographical regions within the international system exhibit distinct characteristics, components, and layers. The concepts of order and order formation are essential for understanding the significance and influence of regions in the global power cycle, as well as the ways in which external powers engage with these regions. Russett (1967) defines a region as a spatial unit characterized by geographical proximity, social and cultural homogeneity, shared orientations and institutions, and economic interdependence. Deutsch (1957) views a region as possessing a high degree of mutual interdependence across various dimensions, including the transnational economy, along with

political and social commonalities. Thompson (1973) describes a region as a collection of states connected by geographical proximity, featuring high levels of mutual interaction and shared perceptions regarding a range of phenomena.

Old regionalism, which emerged in the 1950s, was ultimately set aside in the 1970s. It was primarily examined within the context of the bipolar Cold War system. In contrast, new regionalism is currently navigating a transitional phase characterized by several key features: (1) a drive toward a multipolar system and a redistribution of power; (2) a decline in U.S. hegemony, marked by its shift toward regionalism and the opening up of regions; and (3) the erosion of the Westphalian system, giving rise to a multitude of connections across various sectors and between state and non-state actors (Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998, p. 66). New regionalism represents a global, inclusive, multifaceted, and multidimensional phenomenon. In this context, developments at different levels influence one another, and globalization plays a crucial role, with regionalism and globalization interacting to generate processes that lead to systemic change (Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998, p. 72). From a network perspective, regions are understood to exist within a complex web of overlapping interactions that continuously evolve and transform their relationships (Acharya, 2014, p. 30).

The application of a network approach to analyzing the orders and control mechanisms of state units has provided a more precise and comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to the formation of emerging regional phenomena. This approach has also proven beneficial in enhancing states' control systems to effectively address regional crises and various forms of insecurity. By offering conceptual tools and valuable analytical assumptions, the network approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the structure of interactions and the multi-level, multidimensional order at both regional and global levels - tools that have been underutilized in the study of international relations:

Generally, theories in this context can be classified into two primary types:

1- Agent-based theories: In these, entities come first, and relationships result from the characteristics of the agents.

2- Relational theories: In these, units derive their importance and functional roles from interactions among them (Gilde, 2014, p. 50).

The network approach falls under the second category, known as the relational perspective. This approach draws on complexity theory, emphasizing that relationships among components are fluid

and dynamic, in contrast to the rigidity often found in simple systems approaches. It integrates analytical dimensions of complexity theory within its framework. There is a significant theoretical and conceptual alignment between complexity and network approaches; indeed, the network approach incorporates elements of complexity theory to explore the fluidity and intricacies of political and international systems.

Network formations necessitate a minimum level of convergence and connection among their nodes. This convergence also requires cooperation among the various units and nodes within the network. Thus, a pertinent question arises: under what conditions do these units choose to adopt policies of convergence and integration? Within the field of international relations, three primary theoretical frameworks emerge in response: power and geopolitical theories, economic theories, and ideational theories (Ghasemi, 2010, p. 161). Nodes and their interconnections are examined as interdependent units, moving beyond an individualistic approach. These nodes and connections function similarly to neural networks, serving as centers for power transmission and influence throughout the system. The interactions among these nodes can be classified into symmetrical and asymmetrical relations, as well as those exhibiting positive (stabilizing) and negative (destabilizing) characteristics (Burton et al., 2009, p. 70). The functioning and survival of the network hinge on the interactions and connections among its nodes. Given the unequal and dispersed distribution of power within networks, some nodes occupy central positions, while others have asymmetrical or marginal influence. In such networks, actors with a high degree of centrality possess greater opportunities to shape constraints, impose sanctions, and employ coercive measures (Hafner and Montgomery, 2006, p. 11).

The hierarchical regional order within the network approach retains its pyramidal structure of power distribution, yet it also introduces a degree of flexibility and dynamism to better account for regional conflicts and crises. This is achieved by incorporating factors related to networked interactions and the transitional, cyclical nature of hierarchical orders. Similar to the global order network, the regional order network consists of an extensive array of communication nodes among various units operating at different thematic levels. Each actor seeks to manipulate these nodes to safeguard its interests, enhance its points of strategic stability, and ascend within the power hierarchy. In summary, the hierarchical networked regional order can be understood as a collection of actors

arranged hierarchically within the regional power pyramid, engaged in both competition and cooperation to climb higher by cultivating consent and reinforcing their roles within the region. The interaction between regional and global networks causes fluctuations in the power structure, influenced by dynamics that extend beyond regional interactions.

Regional networked orders consist of several order-based and order-producing processes created by state and non-state actors, forming a network of communication nodes characterized by varying densities across four layers: geopolitical, geoeconomic, geocultural, and geo-energy. Within this regional order network, connectivity among all four layers is facilitated through a system of communication nodes. State actors, through their networked interventions, have consistently sought to shape regional trends and dynamics to further their interests. The dual goals of containing threats and capitalizing on opportunities have rendered regions strategically appealing to global powers seeking to intervene.

2. Network Control System

Intra-regional intervening powers employ a networked control system within regional orders to manage threats posed by both state and non-state actors, taking into account the strategic environment in which they operate. This network control system comprises two fundamental components: the underlying principles of the control system and its operational elements. The principles of the control system are categorized into two distinct areas: the network approach to addressing threats and the agency of units, along with the principles of inaccessibility and containment, which aim to manage threatening entities. The network approach to threats is understood through the lens of how threats emerge within a framework of interconnected communication nodes, leveraging a network perspective to assess the agency and behavior of units.

In a network control system, the principles of containment and denial of access to power resources by threatening entities are paramount to its design. By manipulating communication nodes and establishing a network of prohibitions while securitizing the threatening unit, the control system can continue to function effectively and maintain its integrity. The components of the network control system consist of two key elements: the defense–offense balance and network power.

In this defense–offense balance, the controlling unit aims to tilt the offensive advantage in its favor against threats, thereby ensuring

a first-mover advantage, expanding its maneuvering space, and securing a dominant position. This concept encapsulates both the defensive and offensive postures of a unit when facing opposing forces. The balance between defense and offense reflects a condition in which environmental threats can influence the relative advantage of one side over the other. The dynamics of power within the regional network order can reach a point where the defense–offense balance concerning deterrent units becomes disrupted. For example, the onset of a geopolitical crisis can either strengthen or weaken this balance between two regional competitors. The rise of terrorist organizations and the emergence of nuclear and missile crises exemplify such disruptive phenomena.

Balancing the scales of defense and offense through network power - which includes a variety of hard, soft, and smart tools used to influence communication nodes - is a foundational principle in the design of such systems. Communicative and network power serve as crucial instruments for states to create a strategic balance among communication nodes within both regional and global networks, guiding power dynamics and extending their influence to establish a preferred security framework. Communication nodes beyond national borders are shaped by complex, interwoven interactions, resulting in what is referred to as collective mobilization. This concept pertains to the processes and mechanisms that connect the efforts of various actors to coordinate behavior through the distribution and projection of influence in global politics (Goddard and Nexon, 2016, p. 9). Furthermore, collective mobilization can also signify the pooling of resources among states and the sharing of associated costs (Nexon, 2009, p. 342).

3. Trends and Dynamics of Order Formation in the West Asia Regional Network

The security architecture of West Asia is shaped by a multi-layered and interdependent network encompassing geopolitical, geoeconomic, geocultural, and geo-energy sub-networks. These sub-networks consist of multiple units - states, non-state actors, and institutional mechanisms - whose interactions and processes collectively influence the evolution of regional order. Each sub-network operates through a dominant process driven by its central actors and power structures, while simultaneously interacting with the others in a complex web of mutual reinforcement and contestation. The interplay among these processes generates the

patterns, alignments, and tensions that define the strategic environment and security order of West Asia.

3-1. Geopolitical Confrontation of the Axis of Resistance and the Axis of US Regional Allies

During the Pahlavi period and within the broader Cold War confrontation between the Eastern and Western blocs, the West Asia region was essentially structured around two opposing alignments: U.S. allies and Soviet allies. Both blocs actively competed to shape the regional order, with the reconfiguration of that order serving as the strategic objective behind numerous military interventions, coups, and proxy confrontations.

Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979) and the subsequent emergence of the Axis of Resistance, the region's strategic landscape transitioned into a new bipolar configuration encompassing the Axis of Resistance and the U.S.-led regional alliance system. The Axis of Resistance comprises a network of state and non-state actors unified in their opposition to U.S. hegemony and its regional allies within the evolving security framework of West Asia. These actors employ a combination of hard and soft power strategies to challenge the prevailing order and project influence across the region. The ongoing confrontation between these two security blocs has been vividly manifested in multiple conflict arenas, including the Syrian civil war (since 2012), the Yemen war, political instability in Lebanon, and recurrent hostilities between Israel, Gaza, and Hezbollah. The weakening or dissolution of either bloc could fundamentally reshape the future geopolitical and security architecture of West Asia.

Within this structure, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the principal supporter of the Axis of Resistance, has consistently articulated a regional security vision centered on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from West Asia, the eradication of the Israeli regime, and the liberation of Palestine. Conversely, initiatives such as the Abraham Accords and the normalization of relations with Israel by certain Arab states, coupled with the enhancement of Gulf military capabilities, underscore the perceived threat Iran poses to U.S. allies. These developments reflect their ongoing efforts to counterbalance Iran's regional deterrence and to deepen strategic alignment with Washington and Tel Aviv.

3-2. Geoeconomic Convergence of Geographical Clusters with the Global Capitalist System

The exportation of fossil fuels, dependence on single-product export portfolios, rentier governance, and high levels of imports and consumption are prevalent among state actors in the West Asia region. Over the past two decades, the Gulf states have sought to secure a stronger position within the global economy by intensifying their geoeconomic ties with the global capitalist system, particularly with NATO member states. In this context, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar have actively worked to expand and consolidate these geoeconomic connections.

Among the Gulf nations, Saudi Arabia stands out as a leading actor in strengthening its national economy through engagement with global economic resources. Through its Vision 2030 Economic Development Plan, Saudi Arabia aims to attract a net inflow of foreign direct investment amounting to approximately $103 billion, alongside domestic investment of around $450 billion. To facilitate this ambitious plan, the country has elevated the Public Investment Fund (PIF) to the rank of a Ministry of Investment, transforming it into one of the world's most prominent sovereign wealth funds and international investors. Additionally, Saudi Aramco and SABIC, the two giants of the Saudi oil and petrochemical industries, serve as major investors abroad.

As part of its Vision 2030 reforms, Saudi Arabia is actively seeking foreign investment in key growth sectors such as infrastructure, tourism, entertainment, and renewable energy. The country also aims to position itself as a major transportation and logistics hub linking Asia, Europe, and Africa. To realize this vision, it has launched a comprehensive infrastructure development package, including the creation of economic cities and special economic zones designed to serve as centers for petrochemical, mining, logistics, manufacturing, and digital industries. Considering the competitive capacities of domestic companies in these sectors, there is significant potential for our country's broader participation in these initiatives (Ferdowsipour, June 2023).

In 2020, Saudi Arabia introduced a new law allowing foreign companies to invest directly in its mining sector, thereby facilitating greater exploitation of its mineral and ore resources. Consequently, the kingdom aims to enhance its transport infrastructure and expand the capacity of its aviation sector to handle 50 million tons of cargo and 100 million passengers by 2030, in alignment with its National Transport and Logistics Strategy. This strategy also includes

initiatives to strengthen connectivity with neighboring Gulf Arab states, particularly through the integration of Iraq's Dry Canal Project, which stretches 1,200 kilometers to the Turkish border via a combined railway and road network (Ferdowsipour, June 2023).

3-3. Pluralistic Geo-energetic Synergy
Leveraging global investments and advanced technologies, the nations of the West Asia region have substantially expanded their investments in the fossil fuel industry, establishing it as the backbone of national economic strength while simultaneously pursuing energy diversification. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), one of the region's energy-rich nations, has successfully strengthened its oil industry through technologies acquired from Western companies. International oil firms from the United States, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, and other countries hold joint stakes of between 40% and 100% in Abu Dhabi's extensive oil concessions. Notably, the UAE exports more than 40% of its crude oil to Japan, its largest customer (Varich Kazemi, August 2022).

Due to geographical constraints that increase transportation costs, the United Arab Emirates exports only a limited quantity of oil and gas to the United States. Nevertheless, the UAE remains a key player in the international oil and gas market, ranking second globally in surplus oil production capacity, behind Saudi Arabia. Another Gulf nation, Kuwait, introduced its Vision 2030 plan in 2010, aiming to generate 15% of its energy from renewable sources by the end of the program. With a population of over four million, Kuwait consumes approximately 350,000 barrels of oil per day to meet its electricity generation and seawater desalination demands - underscoring the need for greater technological cooperation and investment with Western companies. Similarly, the UAE has set an ambitious goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 as part of its energy diversification strategy. Qatar's approach to carbon reduction is referred to as "Natural Vision" (Varich Kazemi, August 2022).

4. US Network Control System Against the Islamic Republic of Iran
As the regional order in West Asia has become increasingly complex, the United States' strategy and control mechanisms have likewise evolved, becoming more interconnected, adaptive, and sophisticated. The US control system operates across four identified sub-networks, linking them to reshape the networked security order in a way that preserves the defense-offense balance and strategic stability to its own advantage and that of its regional allies. This

intricate and interdependent nature of the security order in West Asia - combined with intensified direct interventions aimed at containing regional threats, reminiscent of earlier historical periods - has compelled the US control and deterrence system to adopt a more networked and multidimensional approach.

In its network control system targeting the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United States seeks to leverage the regional order to limit Iran's influence and constrain it to a defensive and underdeveloped position. This system consists of two interconnected sub-networks encompassing four interrelated domains: geopolitics, geoeconomics, geo-culture, and geo-energy.

The first sub-network comprises US regional allies who, in coordination with Washington and other partners, actively engage in the geopolitical and geoeconomic containment of Iran. This containment is driven by regional rivalries, differing threat perceptions regarding Iran, and US-imposed punitive measures. Collectively, these factors contribute to Iran's containment within the sub-network of America's regional allies.

The second sub-network is defined by the United States' direct military presence in West Asia, which involves both military operations and political initiatives aimed at curbing Iran's regional influence. Together, these two interconnected sub-networks seek to control the key communication nodes within the West Asian regional network, thereby managing and restraining Iran's regional deterrence capacity.

4-1. Sub-Network of Regional Allies

US allies in the Gulf and Levant regions maintain robust, multi-layered connections with Washington. The three trends outlined in the West Asian network order section indicate that the communication nodes of US regional allies are being reinforced through capitalist frameworks and security arrangements supported by the United States. These allies, particularly in the Gulf region, perceive Iran as a strategic competitor seeking to expand its regional influence, leading to threat perceptions shaped by a securitization process promoted by Western powers.

Consequently, US economic and political sanctions have made these regional allies cautious about circumventing sanctions or easing pressure on Iran. For example, Iranian officials involved in trade with Iraq have noted, "Due to pressure from the US Treasury, Iraq is unable to use its official currency to transfer funds to Iran. As a result, it must rely on the free-market currency, which incurs a

10% discrepancy from the official rate, ultimately disadvantaging Iranian traders. Additionally, Iran's funds held in the TBI bank in Iraq - designated for gas and electricity claims - are utilized for non-sanctioned goods, including seven types of industrial equipment, as well as medicine and food." (Iraq cannot use its official currency to transfer money to Iran, 22 June 2023).

Strengthening military ties with Gulf allies, supporting Saudi Arabia in the Yemen conflict, and backing Israel's actions in Gaza exemplify the United States' efforts to assist its regional partners in consolidating a coalition against the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the conflict between extremist groups and Bashar al-Assad's government - a campaign aimed at weakening the Axis of Resistance - Gulf states provided extensive intelligence, political, and financial assistance to the extremists attempting to oust Assad. In 2012 alone, Qatar contributed over $2 billion (not $2 million) to Syrian rebels, with those in Aleppo province receiving $150 per month (Khalaf & Fielding Smith, 2013: 11). Additionally, the Qatari government urged the UN Security Council in October 2016 to take prompt action to protect civilians in Aleppo and other affected Syrian cities.

At the onset of ISIS's emergence, more than 12,000 foreign fighters from 81 countries joined ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front through Turkey's northeastern border. In the broader context of Gulf intervention in the Levant, Saudi Arabia's arms deals with various terrorist groups further destabilized Syria's internal security architecture. At the beginning of the conflict, Saudi Arabia allocated 275 million Saudi riyals to support Assad's opponents. The kingdom also procured €806 million worth of arms from Eastern European countries, including Croatia and the Czech Republic, which were transferred to Assad's adversaries via the Jordanian border. During a meeting with Turkish security officials, Prince Abdulaziz proposed establishing a coordination center in Adana - located about 100 kilometers from the Syrian border - to facilitate arms deliveries to Assad's opponents through Turkey (Steinberg, 2013). Within this context, Qatar exploited sectarian discrimination against Sunnis to justify its military and financial backing (Ashford, 2015: 10). Furthermore, the support of the March 14 Alliance from Lebanon's borders for extremist groups, combined with the neutrality of Palestinian fighting factions in the Syrian civil war, enhanced the cohesion of the coalition opposing the government in Damascus (Hamoud, 2012).

4-2. Sub-Network of Direct Presence

The direct involvement of the United States in West Asia is characterized by sporadic military operations and the establishment of military bases throughout the region. In this context, U.S. embassies in countries within the Levant and Gulf regions utilize diplomatic networks to strengthen the anti-Iran coalition. The presence of military bases in Syria, along with selective operations targeting resistance forces in Syria and Iraq, aligns with the strategic objective of maintaining continuous security engagement and generating tension within the Levant. The assassination of Martyr Qasem Soleimani by the U.S. military, which occurred following the weakening of ISIS, was intended to reduce Iran's influence on the security dynamics of the Levant. Some sources estimate that there are up to 38 U.S. military bases in West Asia. According to 2021 statistics, the U.S. operates 13 bases in Turkey, 12 in Bahrain, 10 in Kuwait, and 10 in Saudi Arabia (750 Military Bases of the Most War-Loving Country across 80 Countries, 24 December 2022).

The establishment of espionage bases along Iran's western borders, along with intelligence activities in neighboring countries, allows for direct access and the potential to disrupt the security and economic interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Additionally, the sale of arms to regional actors and oversight of their deployment constitutes another dimension of the U.S. presence in its regional containment strategy against Iran, complementing its military bases. Data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) indicate that 47% of U.S. arms exports are directed to West Asia, with 24% of that total going to Saudi Arabia, the largest purchaser of American weaponry (A New York Times exposé on the surge in the U.S. global arms market, justified by conflicts in the Middle East, October 18, 2023) (Hamoud, 2012).

Table (1): Countries with the largest share of the world's arms imports between 2018 and 2022

Arms importing country	Percentage of Arms Imports of Total Weapons in the World
India	11
Saudi Arabia	9.6
Qatar	6.4
Australia	4.7
China	4.6
Egypt	4.5

Arms importing country	Percentage of Arms Imports of Total Weapons in the World
South Korea	3.7
Pakistan	3.7

(Taken from the website: https://fairbd.net/largest-arms-importers/)

Conclusion and Suggested Strategies

The transformation in the US strategy to contain the Islamic Republic of Iran arises from changes in the regional order of West Asia. The increasing complexity and interconnectedness of the regional order have prompted a significant evolution in the US control system, shifting from a straightforward, linear approach centered on hard power to a more sophisticated networked control framework. The principles guiding this network approach to regional orders include a comprehensive communicative perspective, the principle of power linkage, thematic leveling, and the principle of complexity. These elements have been integral to the analysis and formulation of containment and deterrence strategies, given the intricate networking of the West Asian order. In this context, the US, among other nations, has structured its control system regarding Iran by applying these guiding principles.

The US network control system consists of two primary sub-networks: the sub-network of regional allies and the sub-network of direct presence. The sub-network of regional allies focuses on geopolitical and geoeconomic containment, emphasizing security and military isolation alongside the effective enforcement of economic sanctions. US regional allies benefit both security-wise and economically by aligning with these sanctions. Conversely, the sub-network of direct presence incorporates military bases, limited military operations, intelligence and espionage activities, as well as active diplomatic engagement in the region.

Given Iran's position within the US networked containment system and its multifaceted implications, the author suggests the following strategies:

- Leverage regional diplomatic networks: Employ constructive diplomatic engagement to alleviate the perceived threat posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. This can help reduce the costs associated with sanctions by framing Iran's regional presence in a manner that aligns regional allies with its interests.
- Enhance regional trade networks: By fostering interconnected trade relations, the impact of US sanctions can be mitigated,

creating new markets for Iranian goods, services, and expertise.

- Establish common security objectives: Form temporary security cooperations aimed at combating terrorism and addressing destabilizing forces in the region. This approach can help improve Iran's regional image among neighboring states.
- Strengthen domestic economic capabilities: By enhancing Iran's economic and commercial competitiveness within regional markets, the costs of sanctions imposed by the US can be increased.
- Assume a role as a security producer in West Asia: Implementing a neighborhood security policy is critical for enhancing the credibility and strategic leverage of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Given the prevalent economic and political insecurities in West Asia, there is an urgent need to deepen collective security initiatives.

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