

Iran's Israel Policy

Iran-Israel Conflict

1. Iran-Israel do not border each other and they're well over a thousand miles from each other
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2. Iran-Israel have no major bilateral claims toward one another
 3. Historical memory of Persian-Judaic interactions is largely positive
 4. Streets in Israel are named for Cyrus the Great, who allowed the Jews to return to Judea from their Babylonian exile in 538 BC.
 5. Large Arab neighbors of Iran, like Iraq or Saudi Arabia, might be considered its natural competitors, Israel cannot.

Israel and Iran dealt with an acute security challenge

- A massive, largely hostile region unified by a common religion and a common antipathy.
 - All four of Israel immediate neighbors were Arab, backed by Arab & Muslim-majority states beyond them.
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- Israel's natural posture was therefore to try and find fissures among its potential foes.
 - Prime Minister David Ben Gurion forged alliance with non-Arab countries in the Middle East as a counter-balance to the Arab states.
 - [The Periphery Doctrine](#)



Greece

Turkey

Georgia

Azerbaijan

Turkmenistan

Tajikistan

Syria

Afghanistan

Pakistan

Lebanon

Iraq

Iran

Israel

Jordan

Persian Gulf

Gulf of Oman

Riyadh
الرياض

United Arab
Emirates

Saudi Arabia

Oman

Mecca
مكة

Red Sea

Yemen

Arabian Sea

Eritrea

Djibouti

Gulf of Aden

Ethiopia

Sudan

South Sudan

Central
African
Republic

Libya

had

n Sea

Mediterranean Sea

Caspian Sea

Istanbul



The Periphery Doctrine

- **The Periphery Doctrine (TPD):** (Alliance with countries who had common orientation toward the West):
 1. **Pre-revolution Iran** (A non-Arab but Muslim state)
 2. **Turkey** (A non-Arab but Muslim state)
 3. **Ethiopia** (A non-Arab Christian state)
 4. **Maronites** in Lebanon
 5. **Kurds** in Iraq
- Israel was surrounded by radical Arab states and these Arab states sought the total destruction of Israel.
- A way of offsetting the diplomatic/economic boycott of the Arab World
- A traditional balance-of-power strategy aimed at countering pan-Arabism.

The Periphery Doctrine

- The TPD countries were pro-American, and had long standing conflict with Arab states:
 1. Turkey with Syria
 2. ~~Iran with Iraq~~
 3. Ethiopia with Sudan
- **Iran** sensed that the Soviet noose was gradually tightening around it, and hoped to counter both Nasserist Pan Arabism and Soviet influence in the Middle East with the help of Israel.
- **Israel** viewed Iran as an important country in the region (due to its strategic location, its size and economic power); it was also a Muslim state; and it had no reason for conflict with Israel.

Israeli-Iranian Cooperation

- Iran-Israel formed a close ties and strategic partnership
- Iran granted the Jewish state a de facto recognition
- Official relations formed. Israel had two successive ambassadors to Tehran.
- Close economic and military cooperation
- Robust trade in oil: a prime concern for Israel under a crippling Arab boycott.
- The basic logic was simple: My enemy's enemy can be my friend, and Iran and Israel shared common Arab foes

1979 Islamic Revolution

- The revolution upended these relations dramatically.
 - Ties cut off:
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1. Ideological considerations
 2. Anger over Israel's ties to the Shah
 3. Sympathy toward the Palestinians
 4. A generalized and foundational antipathy toward the West
- Israel was entitled by Ayatollah Khomeini as “Little Satan”
 - Israel became a central focus of ideological, religion-infused hatred.

Iran's Axis of Resistance

- Iran became a central backer of Arab “resistance” to Israel.
- Iran became more Palestinian than the Palestinians.
- A street in Tehran was named for Khalid Al-Islambouli, the assassin of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who first signed peace with Israel.
- Iran opposed all peace negotiations between Arabs and Israelis (the Palestine Liberation Organization’s (PLO) Oslo Accords of 1993).
- Iran fostered the creation of the Lebanese Hezbollah, and backed Sunni Islamist Palestinian groups, (Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Hamas).

Israel's Primary Approach to the Islamic Republic

- Despite the Iranian rhetoric, Israel did not see it as an enemy, yet.
- Iran's was fighting Saddam Hussein, Israel's sworn enemies
- Israel was a key player in the Iran-Contra affair
- Hope for the possibility that the Iranian regime might change its attitude toward Israel

Key factors shaped Iran's behavior toward Israel

- Iran-US conflict: Iran views U.S. and Israeli interests regarding Iran identical, especially given the perception of Israel's influence in U.S. decision-making.

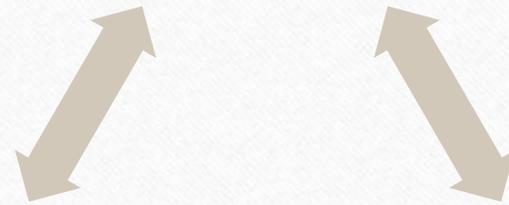
- Israel is involved in covert warfare against Iran to undermine its Stability (**i.e.** The Stuxnet attacks and the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists).
- Blaming Israel & the US for fomenting internal instability in Iran.
- Accusing Israel of supporting anti-revolutionary groups (the MKO, the Green Movement, and Kurdish and Baluchi rebels).
- From Iran's perspective, past Israeli involvement with Kurds translates into present support.

Limited Cooperation

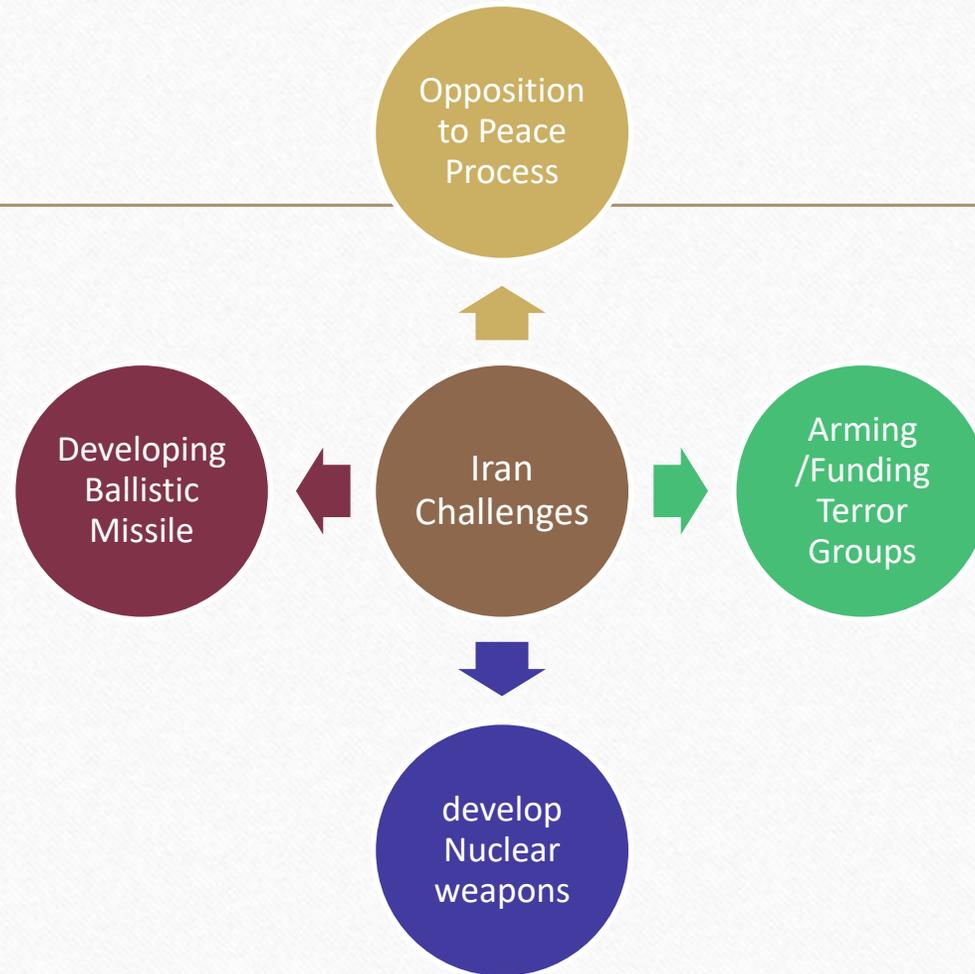
Iranians turn to
Israel for help

Israel hope for
alliance with Iran

Iran Contra
affairs



Israel Viewed Iran as a Challenge



Reverse Periphery Doctrine

- As a result of the major shift in Israeli-Iranian relations, Israel has had remarkable success in forging alliance with major Arab countries (Egypt and Jordan, and the Gulf countries [Saudi Arabia](#), Bahrain, the [U.A.E](#), [Oman](#)).
- These relations are far less developed or overt than the relations Israel had with the Shah's Iran.

- They are limited in scope and entail no embassies.
- But the logic is the same as it was in the 1950s, but in reverse: My enemy's enemy can be my friend and these Arab states and Israel share a common overriding foe: The Islamic Republic of Iran.
- They also share a common hostility toward Erdoğan's Turkey, (Israel's other main "peripheral" partner of old).
- **Other benefits:**
- Limiting the short-term damage of the continued Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- Allowing Israel to engage with world powers from a position of regional strength

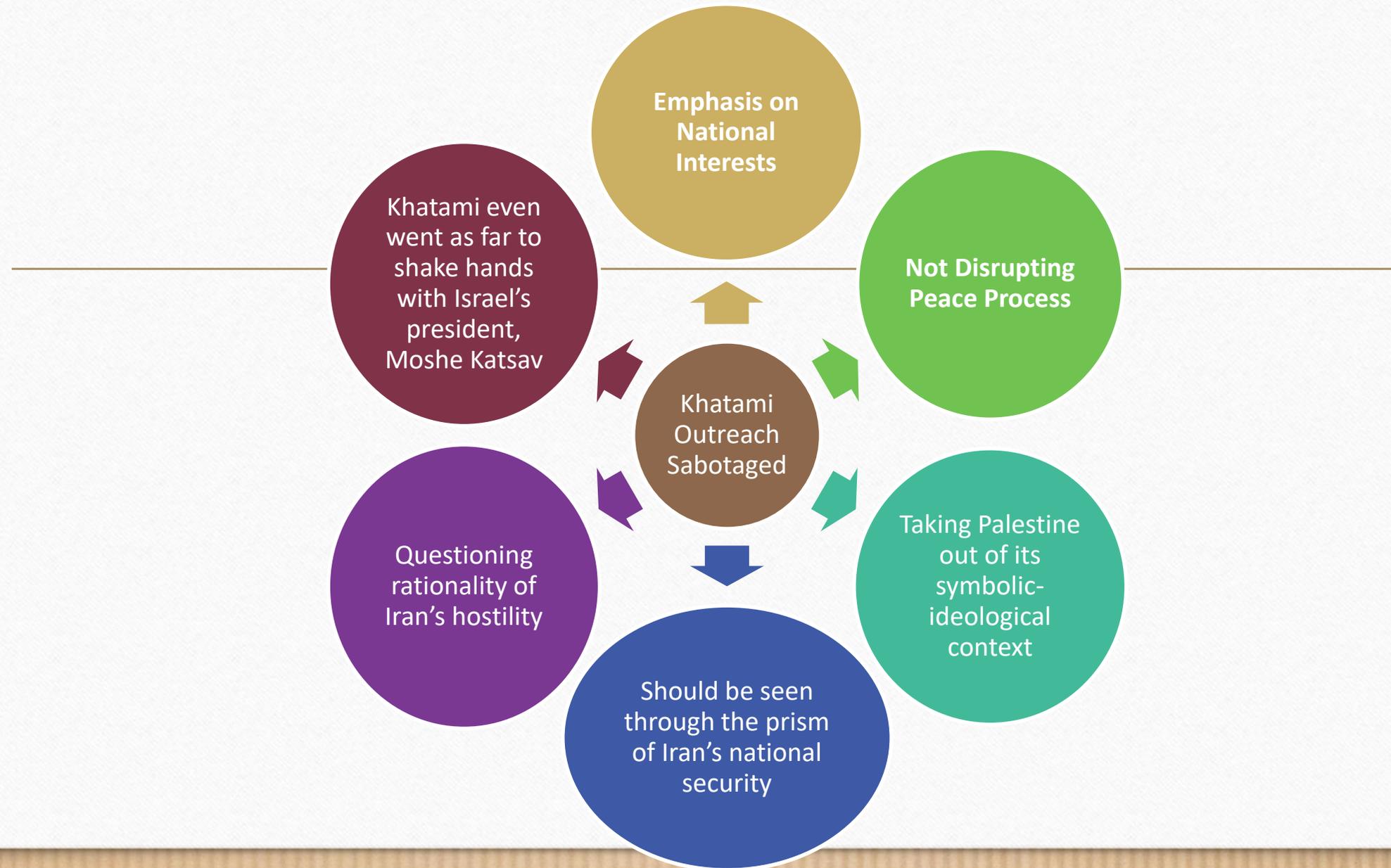
Benefits of enmity towards Israel

- Domestic Factor: hostile position toward Israel to attract domestic support among the religious conservatives (to secure the system) and the Islamic world aiming at gaining an Islamic and regional power.
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- Blame game: the U.S. and Israel have been blamed for practically everything to shift their problems and distract the population from their legitimate grievances.
 - Undermine the legitimacy and popularity of pro-American leaders:

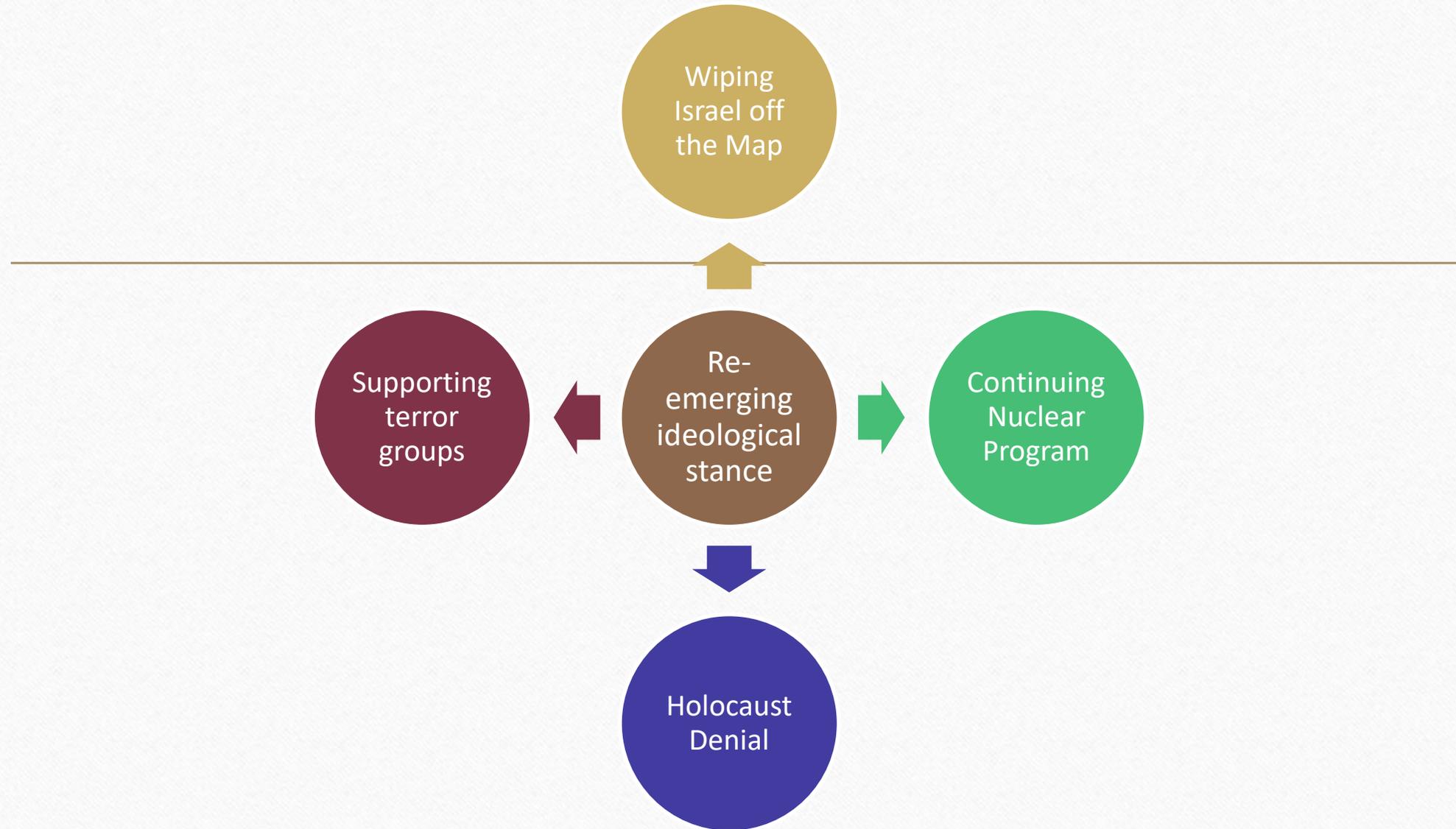
Rafsanjani Moderate Tune and its Failure

- Viewing Israel in less ideological terms
- Arming terror groups decreased
- lessening of tensions with Israel could ease relations with the United States
- Ending opposition to Peace Process
- Failure of Moderate tune:
 - 1. Domestic Factor (Rafsanjani's hands were tied by Iran's fractious political system).
 - 2. Collapse of USSR (changed the way Israel and the United States viewed Iran)

Khatami: Crack in the Wall of Hostility

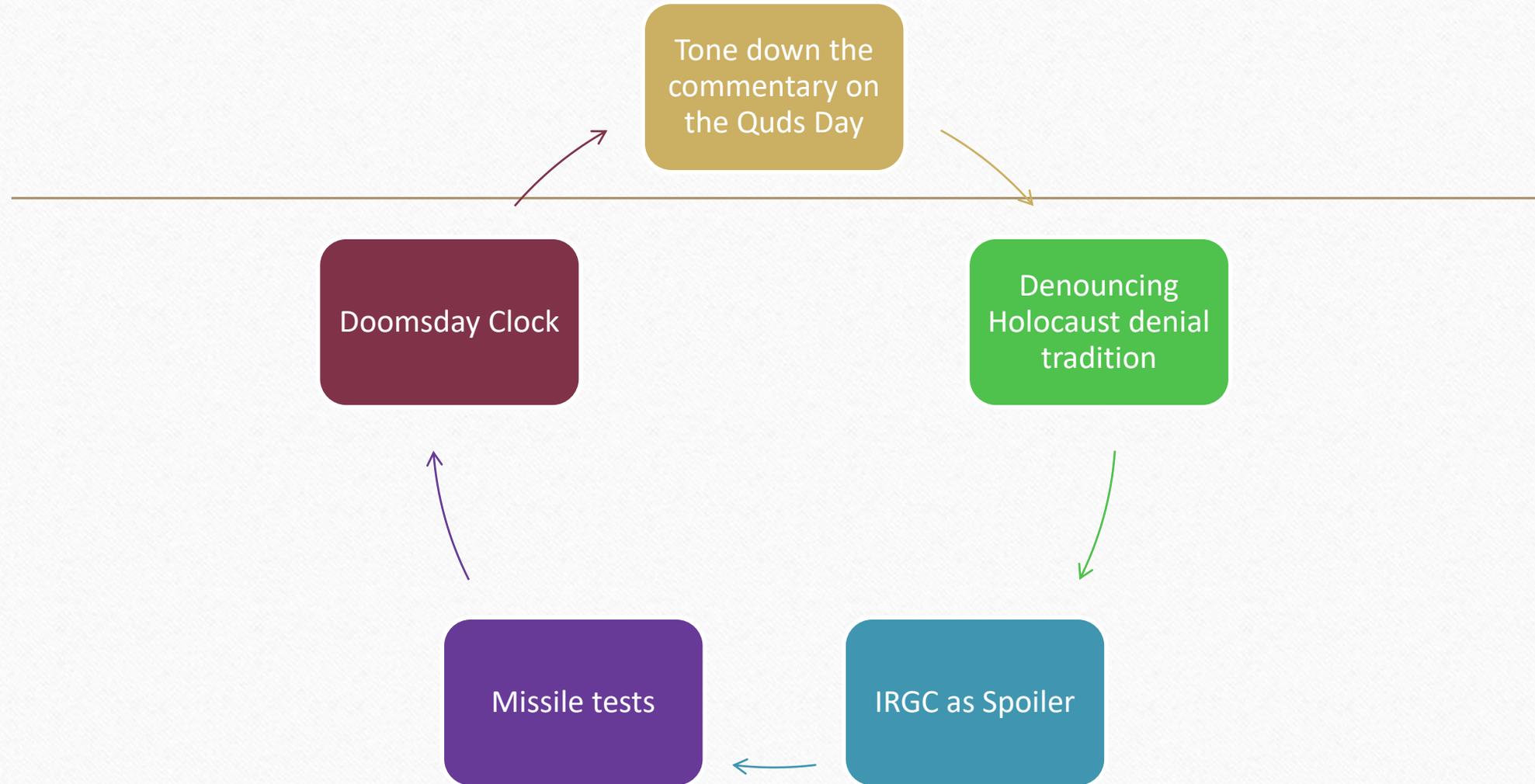


Ahmadinejad: Wiping Israel off the Map



Rouhani Presidency

Damage Control



Conflict in Syria

Shaping a new reality as the civil war draws to a close

- In the past, Iran operated in Syria via proxies!
- Four factors facilitating the expansion of Iran's influence:
 1. The routing of ISIS
 2. The reestablishment of Bashar al-Assad's rule across much of Syria
 3. US lack of interest in Syria, and turning a blind eye toward Iranian involvement in Syria
- Iran attempts to turn Syria into an Iranian forward base, to establish army bases for the IRGC-QF
- The [Iranian-Hezbollah-Syrian axis](#)
- These factors encouraged further Israeli military engagement.

Israel deterrent posture: coercive diplomacy

- Israel adopted a clear and firm deterrent posture designed to prevent Iran from establishing permanent base and weapons factory in Syria, and using Syria as a transit for advanced weapons
- To this end, it adopted “coercive diplomacy” approach, described as a credible threat to use military force
- Israel has stated clearly that it will not allow an Iranian military entrenchment in Syria, Israeli Air Force strikes against IRGC-QF Bases.

Israel deterrent posture: coercive diplomacy

- Neither side seems eager to escalate to full-scale conflict
 - Israel has a free hand to bomb Iranian installations in Syria and weapons shipments to Hezbollah.
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- But Israeli bombing raids cannot prevent Iran from achieving its essential objectives in Syria:
 1. Strong political influence in Damascus
 2. Secure lines of transit into Lebanon
 3. The enduring presence of Shiite militias in Syria

Why Russia Did not act to foil the IAF strikes?

1. IAF does not harm Russia's efforts to perpetuate Assad's rule
2. The IRGC built an extensive, smart system in Syria, aimed against Israel and Russia was kept out of the loop about the nature of this activity.
3. Suleimani adventurism is a big headache for Russia and the Assad regime.

4. Conflict of interest between Iran and Russia in Syria.
5. A small scale conflict between Iran and Israel keeps Iran in line.
6. Russia understands that in the process of reconstruction in Syria, it needs to recruit the wealthy Sunni Arab states. They in turn are making their assistance conditional upon limiting Iran's activities in Syria.
7. Iran's activities was about to harm Russia who's eager to translate its investment in Syria into achievements in the international arena.
8. In return for removing some of Iran's military capabilities from Syria, Russia hopes for relief from the Western sanctions

President Hassan Rouhani

Normalizers

- Symbols {
 - Eliminate offensive declarations
- Actions {
 - Keep Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad on a Leash

Opponents

- Symbols {
 - Use offensive rhetoric, i.e. Holocaust denial, “wiping off Israel from the map”
- Actions {
 - Restrain Hezbollah, Hamas

Possibility of Changing Status Quo

