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FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSES OF THE UNITED STATES AND IRAN REGARDING THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR, 2011-2015

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis offers a detailed and systemic analysis of the recent foreign policies on Syria crafted by the United States and Iran. In particular, it identifies the major ways in which key institutions from both countries' political systems represent various aspects of the Syrian civil war before comparing the similarities and differences among these representational practices. It argues that, between 2011 and 2015, both countries' foreign policies used humanitarian concern in order to legitimise their respective postures on Syria, though the pursuit of their respective national interests widened the scope for new opportunities to act, including the use of armed force, in the Middle East. Drawing on Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis as a means of framing its analysis, the thesis finds that diplomatic language expressing views on matters of war and peace is seldom a-political and can be shaped significantly by institutional practices and socio-cultural contexts.

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Abbreviations

AIOC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
BP	British Petroleum
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDHRI	Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (United States)
EU	European Union
FNC	Fox News Channel
FSA	Free Syrian Army
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IR	International Relations
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
ISNA	Iranian Students' News Agency
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
UIDHR	Universal Islamic Declaration on Human Rights (1981)
UN	United Nations
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US/USA	United States of America

Glossary of Non-English Terms

Alawite	Branch of Shia Islam
Jihad	Holy War to Defend Islam
Majles	Iranian Parliament
Nowruz	Iranian New Year
Shariah	Islamic Law
Ulama	Muslim Religious Scholars
Ummah	Islamic Community
Velayat-e Faqih	The Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist

Introduction

Although the United States of America (US) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) share a common enemy in the Islamic State—also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham or by its Arabic acronym Daesh (ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fīl-ʿIrāq wash-Shām)—Washington and Tehran have contrasting positions in relation to Syria. This thesis explores this often-contending diplomatic thinking, rhetoric and action regarding the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011 and is ongoing.

Thesis Focus and Scope

This thesis focuses on Iranian foreign policy because Tehran has very strong links with Hezbollah, one of the armed groups directly engaged in hostilities as an ally of Bashar al-Assad, President of Syria. As such, Iran is an external actor that has enormous influence on the course of the war. Its role is particularly important for the maintenance of Assad's hold on power. Iran is, moreover, a decisive actor in Middle Eastern affairs more generally and there is heightened anxiety over the development of its nuclear program among some western security analysts (see Carpenter & Innocent, 2007; Lowe & Spencer, 2006). From a regional perspective, Iran functions as one of four key pillars providing stability. After the Arab Spring, however, Egypt—another of these pillars—experienced a decline in its regional influence as it continues to deal with a series of internal crises. Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the other two pillars providing stability in the region, vie with Iran for influence over the newly-created power vacuum. Saudi Arabia is, of course, an ally of the US and a major importer of weapons from the United Kingdom.

The thesis also examines US foreign policy because Washington wants to curb Iran's influence in the region, including by removing Assad from power. Although Iran does not (yet) pose a meaningful threat to US homeland security, it does pose a threat to the national security of US allies in the region, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia. The US also has a longstanding interest in the region's natural resources, which are needed to help fuel the US's heavily industrialised economy. The US has used its war on terror as a justification to pursue its politico-economic interests in the region, as exemplified in its 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq (see DeFronzo, 2013).

This dual focus on the United States and Iran does not imply that there are no other important actors involved in Syria's war, however. Russia is a strong and powerful ally of Syria. It provides strategic and technical advice, and air support, including an effective strike-force capability. Russia also operates a military base in Tartus, a port-city within Syrian territory. As a former superpower, Russia saw its global power wane in the aftermath of the Cold War. More recently, however, President Vladimir Putin has taken an at times aggressive foreign policy stance, particularly with respect to Georgia, the Ukraine and the Crimea. So much so that Russia now appears to be something of a resurgent regional power, looking to demonstrate its military might where it can on the periphery of its sphere of influence while increasing its say over the conduct of world affairs more generally. Therefore, while Russia is without doubt an important actor involved in the Syrian civil war, it is not the focus of this thesis for reasons of space and my own lack of Russian language ability. Moreover, Syria does not appear to loom large in Chinese foreign policy, which seems more focused on its near east and, increasingly, on developing countries in Africa. Beijing's influence on Assad is much less than Moscow's. Other states within the region play important roles too, but the influence of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey seems less than that of Tehran. Besides, the positions taken by Riyadh and Ankara play a subordinate role to Washington's direction.

The thesis examines certain aspects of the Syrian civil war that are represented in the foreign policy discourses of the US and Iran. I selected the Assad Government as one such aspect because it is, and was at the time, the legitimate authority in Damascus. It also controls a powerful military force and has strong links to Iran as well as Russia and China. I then selected moderate and radical opposition groups because these armed groups are internal actors that play key roles in the unfolding Syrian civil war, along with the Assad Government. The moderate opposition, such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), was supported by the Obama administration. Meanwhile, Iran and the US take a negative stance on the radical opposition, such as the Islamic State. I also selected sectarian violence as another key aspect of the conflict because this civil war can, in part, be explained by sectarian strife between Shiites and Sunnis. The al-Assad family is the Alawites, a branch of Shia Islam, but most of the opposition groups are Sunnis. Lastly, I selected foreign involvement because many countries, including Iran and the United States, have different positions in relation to Syria's civil war. It is significant because their differing views on this civil war make the situation in Syria more complicated and protracted. Needless to say, while these five aspects of the war are

commonly found throughout the respective foreign policy discourses, not every aspect features in every foreign policy statement.

Primary sources examined in this thesis were chosen on the basis of their relevance to the foreign policies of the United States and Iran concerning Syria's civil war. Most of the documents examined here were produced by the key foreign policy institutions within each country's respective political system. Most of these official documents have been specifically designed to express a particular view on an aspect of the Syrian war. The only documents not produced by these institutions are media reports that cover the foreign policies of either the US or Iran. Taken together, these documents are the most relevant textual artefacts not only concerning, but perhaps also constituting, the foreign policies of the United States and Iran regarding the Syrian civil war between 2011-2015.

The chronological scope of this thesis is, as mentioned, limited to the years between 2011 to 2015. This period covers the start of the civil war up until the point when Russia began to assert its influence over Assad in ways that might be seen as decisive. The five years examined here are the years most relevant to US engagement in this vexing issue. By critically examining the recent foreign policy discourses of the US and Iran on Syria, this thesis serves as a foundation from which to obtain a better understanding of the ways in which the Syrian civil war escalated into an international armed conflict. The significance of this thesis also lies in its capacity to explain and trace the social and political changes rippling through the Middle East as a consequence of the Syrian civil war—as witnessed, for instance, in the spread of the Islamic State from Syria to Iraq and then in its decline as a military force.

Research Question

This thesis's central research question is: how do the United States and Iran justify their respective foreign policies on Syria? In response to that question, this thesis offers a detailed and systemic analysis of the recent foreign policies on Syria crafted by the United States and Iran. The analysis of primary-source documents occurs in two phases, the first of which deals with material expressing humanitarian concern. By humanitarian concern, I mean what Matthew Gibney (2004) means when he says that humanitarianism involves helping others in desperate need when the costs of doing so are low. I identified humanitarian concern as a potential justification for US and Iranian foreign policies on Syria because it features as a major theme within the liberal tradition of disciplinary International Relations. The second

phase deals with material signalling the importance of national interests and realpolitik. As Rathbun explains, "realpolitik, the pursuit of vital state interests in a dangerous world that constrains state behavior, is at the heart of realist theory" (2018, p. 7). Thus, my use of humanitarian concern and national interests as potential justifications of foreign policy is grounded in mainstream International Relations (IR) theory.

Once this primary-source material was collected, it was then collated into two sets of textual statements, the first of which included statements that tended towards expressing humanitarian concern, the second included those statements emphasising the importance of national interest. Comprising an empirical record of sorts, both sets of statements were then subjected to detailed analysis. Drawing on Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), four analytical questions were developed and explored. More specifically, focusing at the level of text production and consumption, the project asked: (1) how is the Syrian Civil War represented in the foreign policies of the United States and Iran and (2) what actions are made possible by those representations? Focusing at the level of discursive practices, the research project also asked: (3) what are the commonalities and differences among the texts produced within various institutions within the respective political systems of the United States and Iran? And, finally, the project focused at the level of socio-political context and asked: (4) what are the material and ideational conditions giving rise to the foreign policies of the United States and Iran?

As a result of that analysis, the thesis identifies the major ways in which key institutions from both countries' political systems represent various aspects of the Syrian civil war before comparing the similarities and differences among these representational practices. It argues that both countries' foreign policies use humanitarian concern in order to legitimise their respective postures on Syria, though the pursuit of their respective national interests widens the scope for new opportunities to act, including the use of armed force, in the Middle East. Drawing on Fairclough's CDA model as a means of framing its analysis, the thesis finds that diplomatic language concerning matters of war and peace is seldom a-political and can be shaped significantly by institutional practices and socio-cultural contexts. These socio-cultural contexts can comprise any number of material and ideational factors. For the purposes of this thesis, however, after having read widely in the scholarship on US and Iran foreign policy more generally I have chosen to use the most obvious ideational factors, which I deem to be theocracy, Shiism, democracy, Christianity and human rights issues in particular,

and the most obvious material factors, which I deem to be hegemony, political geography, political economy and alliances in particular. Other factors might appear more obvious to other analysts, though the ones selected here ought to be familiar to most scholars of international relations.

Having now explained the significance of the research project and outlined the thesis's key research question, this introduction ends by describing the organisation of the thesis to follow. Chapter 1 describes the real-world problem of the Syrian civil war, including its very important international dimensions. The ensuing thesis consists of two main parts. Part I concerns recent US foreign policy on Syria, paying particular attention to the language emerging from within the White House, US Department of State, US Mission to the United Nations, as well as in media reporting from Fox News Channel. Part II deals with Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria and considers the language that emerges from the Office of the Supreme Leader, the Iranian Presidency, Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the IRI Mission to the United Nations as well as from Iranian Students' News Agency reports. This text is subjected to a detailed and systemic analysis, which is framed by a particular model of Critical Discourse Analysis. This methodology is explained in greater depth in Chapter 2. The analytical findings of Parts I and II are then presented and discussed in the penultimate chapter. The thesis concludes by reflecting on the implications of those findings for scholars advancing knowledge on contemporary armed conflict in general and the Syrian civil war in particular as well as on US and Iranian foreign policy.

Ch. 1 Background of the Syrian Civil War

The myriad of complex problems associated with contemporary armed conflict continue to preoccupy a broad range of scholars (see Alley, 2004; Duffield, 2007; Fabre, 2012; Kaldor, 2001; Owens, 2015; Vasquez, 2009) and remain the focus of several highly-respected research centres, such as the Peace Research Institute Oslo (Norway), the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at Uppsala University (Sweden), and the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (Germany), among others. These centres collect and collate sets of empirical data on various aspects of contemporary armed conflict, including the onset and duration of intrastate conflict, conflict sites, battle deaths and religious cleavages in civil wars.

Notwithstanding the signal importance of contemporary armed conflict in general, this thesis is primarily concerned with the Syrian civil war in particular. This war, which began in 2011 and, as at the time of writing, continues to rage with no obvious end in sight, deserves sustained scholarly treatment for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the war's outcome could alter the balance of power in the Middle East region. In particular, if President Bashar al-Assad remains in power, then the influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region will likely be maintained. However, if Assad is removed from office, then Saudi Arabia or Turkey might increase their influence over Middle Eastern affairs at Iran's expense. Secondly, this war presents an ongoing opportunity for the United States of America to play an increasingly assertive role in the region, particularly as it seeks to contribute to Israel's national security, a key ally of the US. This heightened engagement is significant given the US's superpower status and its record of involvement in the region. At the same time, however, the civil war illustrates a dilemma lying at the heart of US engagement in Syria; namely, that the fall of Assad from power will not necessarily lead to the installation of a pro-US government in Damascus. Thirdly, the refugees fleeing this conflict generate and exacerbate divisions within Europe about how to deal with mass irregular migration. For many, the scale of human suffering is enormous and is reason enough to take measures curtailing the fighting. Fourthly, this civil war created the conditions for extremist views to flourish, particularly radical Sunni Islam views, which have been used to justify brutal violence against fellow human beings and the destruction of religious and cultural monuments that give meaning to human existence.

These views and the related violence resulted in the establishment of a new state, though the reach of that state has declined in recent months. Fifthly, the use of chemical weapons raised serious concerns over egregious violations of human rights and the indiscriminate use of violence. The use of these prohibited weapons and the deliberate targeting of non-combatants, especially civilians, breach international humanitarian law and are of concern not only to western governments but also to global civil society movements. These breaches also expose the limitations of international organisations, including the United Nations (UN) and its Security Council, and the rule of international law to prevent outbreaks of, and ameliorate the suffering of those caught within, contemporary armed conflict more generally.

Drawing on a burgeoning pool of scholarly literature, the first section of this chapter describes various dimensions of the Syrian civil war. Each of these dimensions were chosen because they cast important light on the conflict and enhance our understanding of the possible causes and conduct of the war. More specifically, the following section examines the war's origins in the Arab Spring and the failure of Syria's political reform as well as the differing roles played by social media, sectarian strife and the military. The second section then examines the conflict's international dimensions, particularly the potentially decisive roles played by the US and Iran, in order to set out the underlying real-world problem that concerns this thesis.

Syrian Civil War

The roots of Syria's civil war can be traced partly back to the Tunisian Revolution, also known as the Jasmine Revolution, which began in December 2010 and became the starting point for popular protests across North Africa and the Middle East (see Rogan, 2013). Before long, popular protests occurred in Egypt and Libya, and there were anti-government demonstrations in Syria by March 2011. Protestors armed and protesting subsequently grew into civil war as the Syrian government began launching large-scale military operations to suppress the demonstrations. One of the internal reasons for the anti-government demonstrations in Syria is the long-term hold on power and the continuation of the dictatorship via the father-to-son handover from Hafez al-Assad to Bashar al-Assad. However, there is also another dispute in the form of sectarian strife between Shiites and Sunnis behind the matter. In other words, minority Shiites rule majority Sunnis in Syria, and the al-Assad family belongs to the Alawites, a branch of Shia Islam.

The Arab Spring registered differently in Syria than it did in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. For starters, the dictators of Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen all fell from power when confronted by widespread and sustained protest against their authoritarian rule. Even though these despots had sufficient military and police capabilities to temporarily quell the dissent, military leaders in Tunisia and Egypt did not actively support their respective rulers whereas in Yemen only some of the military commanders took action to pacify unrest. Moreover, fear of intervention by powerful members of the international community may have tempered recourse to the use of lethal armed force. In other words, the international community's call for democratic transformation perhaps resounded more loudly than the more localised clamor for change. In this respect, the case of Libya was instructive. On 17 March 2011, the UN Security Council authorised Resolution 1973, which in turn authorised the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to use armed force in support of rebel groups (UN Security Council, 2011). As is now well documented, however, NATO went further, exceeding its mandate by assisting in regime change. Gaddafi was killed in the process. In addition to having the partial benefit of hindsight—the respective toppling of dictators in Tunisia during January 2011, in Egypt during February 2011, in Libya during October 2011 and in Yemen in February 2012—Assad differed from these four fallen dictators because he has powerful friends that can prevent foreign intervention in Syria through either their use of armed force or their use of the veto in the UN Security Council. Between October 2011 and April 2018, Russia cast such a veto on twelve occasions; China did so on six occasions (UN Security Council, 2018).

One of the prime factors contributing to Syria's decent into civil war is what Hinnebusch calls "Bashar al-Asad's authoritarian upgrading" (2012, p. 112). After inheriting an authoritarian regime from his father, Hafez al-Assad, Bashar al-Assad embarked on a programme of economic reform and his efforts were successful to some degree. A coalition comprising the government's power brokers and so-called "crony capitalists" became a cornerstone of his reform agenda, which had the implicit support of the bourgeoisie. By fostering a class of capitalist elite, the government sought to endure beyond the transition from socialism to a more liberalized, market-based economy (Hinnebusch, 2012, p. 101). However, at that pivotal moment Assad failed to undertake much-needed political reform and his limited political adaptation did not sufficiently respond to the need for major social change. Instead, the government refused to accept the opposition's demands for political

transformation while failing to foster a bourgeois party.

The Assad government attempted to use the internet as a means of legitimising its rule. Since the uprising, however, the internet became a significant tool for demonstrators to express their opinions to the outside world. The opposition also relied a great deal on social media tools as a means of communicating with their followers, disseminating images and ideas of resistance and defiance, and coordinating their protest activities—all while competing against state-control broadcasters (Cottle, 2011). In particular, 2010 and 2011 were "golden years" for social media users, particularly in some Arab countries where Facebook and Twitter were used frequently by protestors as a major communications platform (Ahmad & Hamasaeed, 2015, p. 287). Of course, access to social media alone does not make for a successful demonstration as other factors, such as unemployment and other political grievances, prompted people to rise up against the government too. While social media platforms played an important role in expediting the overthrow of both the Ben Ali and Mubarak governments in Tunisia and Egypt respectively, the Syrian case is distinct in this respect from other Arab Spring revolutions. This is largely because the Syrian authorities conducted their own information campaigns using social media platforms and deployed sophisticated surveillance technologies to impede and outwit their adversaries (Shehabat, 2012).

Anti-government protests in Syria can be understood in sectarian terms, especially as movements of majority Sunnis demonstrated against the power held by the minority of Alawites (Akhawan Kazimi & Waisi, 2012). In this sense, the Assad government faces an insurgency drawn from its Sunni majority. Although strengthening the state's capacity to manage and control the population is one way of mollifying these "sectarian furies" (Byman, 2014, p. 80), the Syrian government failed to do so in 2011. Instead, its efforts to quell peaceful protest quickly escalated into armed violence leading to a full-blown civil war that, by 2014, had claimed more than 120,000 Syrian lives, created over two million refugees and over six million internally displaced persons within the country's borders (Byman, 2014). This war has also drawn foreign fighters from across the region. The Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah and Shia fighters from Iraq, for instance, assisted the Assad government in its implementation of repressive policies whereas Jihadists and Sunni fighters from Saudi Arabia and North Africa traveled to Syria in order to oppose the Syrian authorities with force.

Syria's civil war has not only diminished the prospects for major political reform and the establishment of democratic institutions and practices in the country, but it has also

strengthened the Assad government's capability to suppress armed uprisings (Heydemann, 2013). The Assad government will very likely endure for the foreseeable future because it remains strong militarily and enjoys the support of other minorities, in addition to the Alawis, who remain fearful of an Islamic revolution and many Sunni who remain fearful of escalating and endless civil war (Landis, 2012). In spite of its Arab nationalist rhetoric, the Syrian authorities are clearly conscious that close ties with family, clan and sect strengthen their rule. They believe "it takes a village to rule Syria" (Landis, 2012, p. 73). While a political compromise between the Syrian authorities and the opposition might very well be the best possible outcome for both sides, neither side appears to have an interest in reaching a peace agreement (Robinson, 2012).

Unlike the situation in Egypt, there was no soft option for Syria's leadership. The relationship between the Syrian state and the Syrian people became increasingly hostile, reflecting a zero-sum logic that informed the state's effort to end protests. Damascus had earlier tried to appease protestors, including through a repeal of martial law, though that was insufficient to quell dissent (Stacher, 2012). The anti-government demonstrations in Syria turned into armed protest because the Assad government used violence to suppress resistance. Somewhat ironically, the armed protest may have hindered the movement's ability to achieve its primary objective of removing Assad as the opposition lost legitimacy in the eyes of many observers. Moreover, some of the opposition groups, especially those formed beyond Syria and after the initial uprising, remain heavily dependent on financial and material support provided by Saudi Arabia and Qatar as well as by the United Kingdom, France and the US. This support undermines these groups' independence and integrity (Tokmajyan, 2015). Even though the Syrian civil war is characterised by its many contending ideologies, such as moderate and radical Islam (Ajorlou, 2012), the ideological differences among various Syrian opposition groups render this conflict ever more complicated. As al-Gharbi suggests, "policy makers must carefully consider the best outcome for the conflict and then build meaningful international consensus and commitment to actualize it" (2013, p. 65), though they must also consider the will and interests of Syrian citizens in the process. International donors should similarly focus their efforts to strengthen Syria's domestic civil society (Hogger, 2014).

International Dimension

The Syrian civil war appears intractable because many countries, including the United States and Iran, are implementing various policies which not only reflect their particular values but also advance their specific interests. This second section focuses on this international dimension of Syria's civil war as the immediate real-world problem concerning this thesis. As mentioned at the beginning of the thesis's introduction, a number of states are involved in the Syrian conflict, including Russia and China as well as Saudi Arabia and Turkey. But this section examines the two most important external actors in this war: namely, the US and Iran. More specifically, it considers the impact that this war has had on the relationship between Damascus and Tehran as well as on the wider region's security dynamic. It also considers the role played by the US in this civil war to date and offers some reasons explaining why the US has stopped short of leading a military intervention into the war-torn country, as it had done in both Afghanistan and Iraq. This sets the scene for the two main parts of the thesis to follow.

Tehran is a powerful supporter of the Syrian government, which is an important conduit for Iranian economic and military assistance to the Lebanese Shiite group, Hezbollah. The Syrian government is also perceived to be part of Iran's so-called resistance front against Israel and Saudi Arabia (Ayoob, 2012). In particular, Iran has highly developed relationships not only with Syria, but also with various non-state actors operating within the region, including Hezbollah and Hamas, all of which form part of the so-called "Resistance Axis" (Nerguizian, 2013a, p. ii). Syria is also a key ally of Iran in its geostrategic confrontation with the United States and its sectarian strife with Sunni groups. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei's approach to the Syrian crisis can be condensed into three points: firstly, Syria's importance lies in its ability to empower Hezbollah; secondly, Khamenei encourages Assad to remain steadfast because he does not want terms dictated to him; and thirdly, Khamenei believes Assad's downfall would only encourage the United States to pursue regime change in Tehran (Milani, 2013). Iranians have come to regard Syria as an important ally against the menace of the Islamic State too. Because the Iranian government wants to transfer weapons and equipment to Hezbollah via the Assad regime, Tehran will probably support Assad for as long as the war continues (Terrill, 2015). Iran's strategy to preserve the Assad regime may also extend to supporting any remnants of the government in the Alawite-majority areas after the government is overthrown. Iran may similarly seek to foster connections between any remnants of the Syrian Army and pro-government militias (Fulton, Holliday, & Wyer, 2013).

There are appreciable tensions between Syria's nationalistic ambitions and the impact of those ambitions on the dynamics of regional security. It appears, for instance, that Assad tried to transform an attempted revolution into a vicious existential, sectarian war between Sunnis and Alawites in order to maintain some of his allies (Totten, 2013). Moreover, regional and global powers have different goals concerning the Syrian civil war (Keshavarz Shokri & Sadeghian, 2014). To be sure, the political geography of the Middle East is formed by the interests of regional and global powers and is, consequently, extremely complicated (Demir & Rijnoveanu, 2013). The political turbulence, economic pressure and sectarian violence in the Middle East give rise to complex patterns of competition (Nerguizian, 2013a). Iran and some Gulf states compete over Syria, for instance. Whereas Iran supports the Assad government, the Gulf states assist the moderate rebels in order to ensure their political survival. The ongoing and intense rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia in particular continues to shape the war in enduring, indelible ways, exacerbating the conflict (Hokayem, 2014).

What happens in Syria could not only have regional, but also global ramifications because of the Assad government's ties with Russia and China, in addition to the opposition's links with Western countries, such as the United States and some of those within Europe. There is considerable disagreement between Western countries, the United States in particular, and both Russia and China in relation to the Syrian civil war. The United States has, at certain moments, appeared to adopt the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, asserting that the international community must intervene where a government commits atrocities against its own population. Moscow and Beijing, however, continue to assert the long-standing sovereign prerogatives around which the Westphalian system of states was built—namely, that the domestic affairs of a sovereign state are a matter for that state and none other (Carpenter, 2013).

The Syrian civil war has been internationalized by external actors seeking to protect Syrian citizens and foster a lasting peace agreement. Western countries, such as the United States and some within Europe, support selected moderate rebels whereas Iran, Russia and China uphold the Syrian government. In fact, the Syrian civil war has become something of a proxy war between rival power blocs (Taheri, 2013). Russia and Iran continue to provide the Syrian government with arms and military advice while Turkey and several Sunni Arab states maintain their supply of funds and arms to the moderate opposition. Russia's support of

Assad is influenced by its concerns for global positioning, along with its commercial weapon sales. Iran's support is similarly affected by concerns for regional hegemony, with particular attention paid to countering the influence of regional rivals, specifically Saudi Arabia and Turkey (Crosston, 2014).

Some western countries probably desire Assad's demise (Moradi, 2013). Such countries may well have considered military intervention in the Syrian crisis, using as a pretext their respect for either international humanitarian law or the so-called Responsibility to Protect Syrian citizens or the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Yet important political intentions lie behind such humanitarian interventions (Raisi Dazki & Kaffash Nayyeri, 2015). Some countries, which are opposed to the Assad government, such as the United States for example, have tried to send weapons to the rebels to help overthrow the Syrian government (Tadayoni & Kazerouni, 2016). The ongoing attempts of such countries, including not only the United States but also some regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, to topple the Assad regime make the Syrian crisis even more protracted (Niakouee & Behmanesh, 2012). Since the Assad government is one of Iran's closest allies, regime change in Syria could be a means for some countries to limit Iran's influence in the Middle East. Such interventions are never entirely motivated by humanitarian objectives (Howorth, 2013), then, connected as these frequently are to the interests of certain great powers.

The United States has its regional allies that provide varying degrees of assistance to anti-Assad groups, many of which seek to undermine Iran's power and influence in the region (Nerguizian, 2013b). Mousavian (2013) asserts that it is important for Iran and the United States, as the key power brokers in the region, to cooperate with each other. This will not only advance the national interests of both countries but also contribute to stability in the Middle East. To achieve this, however, it is necessary for Washington to recognise and accept the fundamental characteristics of Iranian policy. Iran's major foreign policy involves preserving the Islamic Republic, thereby ensuring some degree of ontological security. The Islamic identity governing Iranian society has played a significant role in determining Iran's foreign policy (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2009b). The main priority for Iranian foreign policy is to enhance ontological security, which means the continuation of the Islamic identity and its frameworks for producing life's meaning (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2009a).

Washington is understandably cautious about becoming directly involved in hostilities on the ground and is reluctant to become embroiled in another Iraq-like scenario (Totten, 2013). US

direct involvement in hostilities has mainly been limited to providing both nonlethal and lethal forms of support to certain opposition groups, as well as humanitarian assistance within Syria and its neighbors while using diplomacy to push for a negotiated transition (Blanchard, Humud, & Nikitin, 2014). Using these measures, the US tries to prevent the Syrian civil war from engulfing the region and to limit the religious conflict between Shiites and Sunnis for the sake of peace and stability in the Middle East (Sorenson, 2013). There are, according to Howorth (2013), at least three important reasons that explain the reluctance of the US to lead a military intervention into the war-torn country. Firstly, Syria's military is well-armed even though its size is relatively small by international standards. Any international intervention would meet stiff resistance. Secondly, Syria is a very complex polity with many different sectarian elements and the opposition is immensely diverse, meaning it would prove difficult for Western countries to know exactly who was engaged in this conflict. And thirdly, Syria enjoys strong support not only from Iran, but also Russia and China, two veto-welding permanent members of the UN Security Council.

In summary, the Syrian civil war cannot be understood simply as a civil uprising caused by an authoritarian dictatorship; rather, it must be understood in terms of a number of complex and, in some instances, long-standing factors. The Syrian civil war involves complicated sectarian issues that transcend state boundaries, impacting directly on the different positions of various countries in the region and beyond. Furthermore, the foreign policies of the United States and Iran appear to be key factors prolonging this conflict.

Ch. 2 Methodology

This chapter explains the research and analytic methodologies used in the preparation of the ensuing thesis. It opens by describing the main elements of a particular model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) put forward by Norman Fairclough. It then situates that model in the broader theoretical perspective of poststructuralism. The chapter goes on to discuss various topics to which CDA has been applied by other scholars before describing the particular research and analysis processes underpinning this thesis, including a brief account of the field research undertaken in Iran during 2016. It concludes by suggesting that this thesis advances knowledge of CDA not only by applying Fairclough's model to the topic of the Syrian civil war's international dimensions, which no one else has yet done, but also because it modifies and refines that model. Moreover, the thesis is the first piece of scholarship to confront and overcome several thorny issues arising from the translation of primary source material into English for the purposes of this kind of analysis.

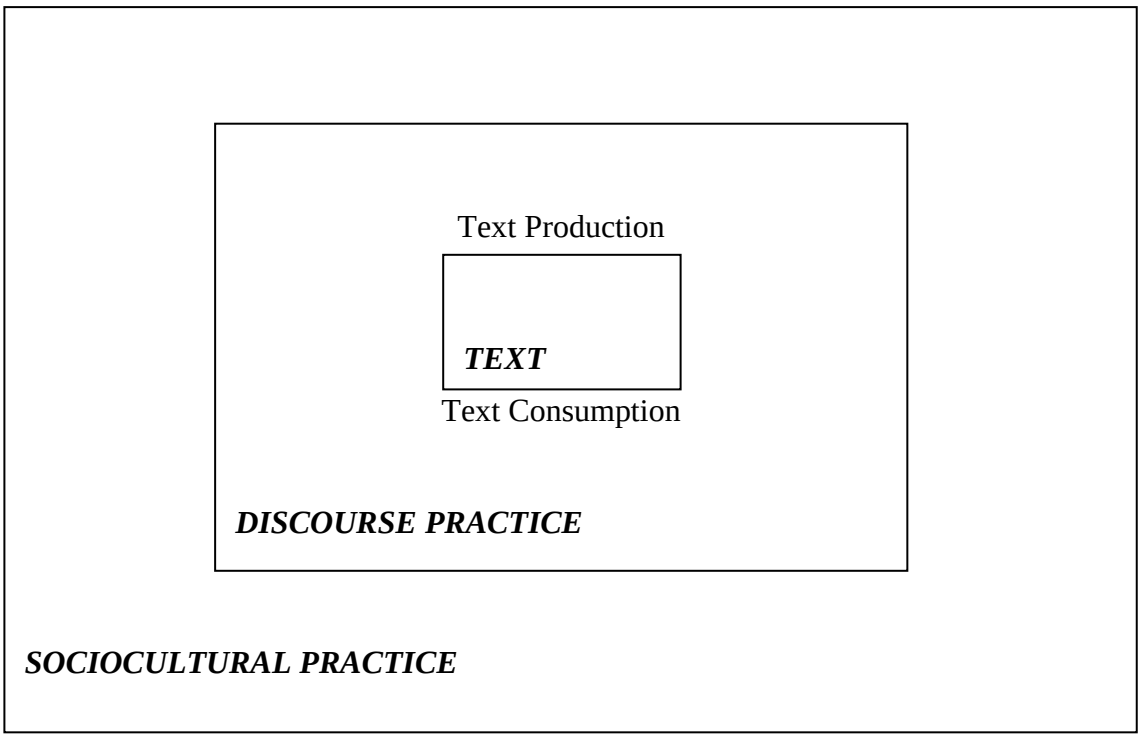
Critical Discourse Analysis

The basic methodologies of CDA were first developed in the 1980s by several scholars, including, most notably, Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk and Ruth Wodak. Although CDA is more than the sum of its parts, it is worthwhile to examine the meaning of its key terms. Here, 'critical' refers to an approach used to get below the surface of appearances in order to reveal otherwise concealed connections, intentions and meanings (Fairclough, 2001b). 'Discourse' refers to spoken and written language which, imbued with common values and ideologies, is a general social practice shaped by a particular set of political institutions, rules and related norms of behavior (Fairclough, 2001b; see also Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). 'Analysis' refers to a cognitive process whereby a thing is broken down into its constituent pieces so that the relationship among those pieces to one another and to the whole is more easily comprehended. For scholars using CDA methodologies, this analytic process is concerned with describing a text's formal properties, interpreting the causes and consequences of that text as discursive practice, and explaining the relationship between that text, those practices and its underlying socio-cultural context (Fairclough, 2001b).

These days, CDA often refers generally to the methodologies used by those scholars who critically examine linguistic forms of communication as part of broader social inquiries (Wodak, 2001). Indeed, CDA differs from other approaches to discourse analysis precisely because it provides a method of shifting the analytic focus from a close reading of a primary-source document towards the key political institutions and discursive practices giving rise to that document as well as to the underlying context, while paying particular attention to the role played by language in various social settings (Fairclough, 2001a).

Various CDA models exist. Some of those models were considered during the planning phase for this research project. Among the strongest of these alternatives is one advanced by van Dijk (2002). That social cognitive model focuses on embedding textual analysis in the broader underlying socio-cultural context, but emphasises the role played by ideology, especially where ideological differences are used to create and sustain particular social groupings. Although it is similar in many respects, Fairclough's CDA model was, however, the favoured methodology for this thesis. It was preferred ahead of all others, including van Dijk, because it was designed specifically to analyse language in a way that foregrounds institutional as well as sociocultural practices; it offered a sensible fit with the focus of my thesis's research question—namely, to fully explain the meaning of two contending foreign policies on the unfolding civil war in Syria, both of which sought to convince not only domestic audiences, but also members of the diplomatic community. Fairclough's CDA model offers three distinct, but mutually supporting, focal points for analysis (Janks, 1997). This was attractive because it offered the potential for a more comprehensive explanation of these foreign policies. Another consideration was the relative newness of CDA, which remains, in important respects, somewhat experimental. Despite its relative newness, this methodology has also been used successfully to provide accounts of a range of political topics, as demonstrated later on in this chapter. Fairclough's three-dimensional model for CDA is presented here as Figure 1.

Figure 1 A framework for CDA of a communicative event



Source: Fairclough (1995b, p. 59).

The purpose of this three-dimensional model is to facilitate three different, but related, analytical processes or phases (Fairclough, 1995a). The first phase involves textual analysis based upon a "linguistic *description* of the language text" (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 97). In so doing, Fairclough has followed the lead of systemic linguistics in assuming that "language in texts always simultaneously functions ideationally in the representation of experience and the world, interpersonally in constituting social interaction between participants in discourse, and textually in tying parts of a text together into a coherent whole (a text, precisely) and tying texts to situational contexts" (1995a, p. 6; see also Halliday, 1978). The second phase involves what Fairclough describes as an "*interpretation* of the relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text" (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 97). The third phase explains the mediatory role discourse practice plays between instances of text production and the broader socio-cultural context (Fairclough, 1995a). Social life can be seen here, Fairclough suggests, as a series of overlapping and mutually-supporting diverse social practices (Fairclough, 2001a). Thus, Fairclough's model draws upon linguistic analysis, which emphasises textual analysis, and upon critical social theory, which emphasises context. For Fairclough, CDA is "based upon the assumption that language is an irreducible part of

social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2).

A unique characteristic of this three-dimensional model is that it draws on Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia in order to illuminate the multiple ways in which discursive practices produce texts, which are also built upon other texts even where those texts might belong to varying genres (Fairclough, 1995a). As Bakhtin puts it, "we are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life" (2001, p. 258). Language is, in other words, produced through a dialogic process in which every text and speech act has its origins in some prior utterance (Lodge & Wood, 2008). As we shall see in Parts I and II of this thesis, Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia helps distinguish sources arising from within the various political institutions giving voice to the contending foreign policies of the United States and Iran.

Another unique feature of Fairclough's CDA model is its use of hegemony, which is a particular way of understanding not only the distribution and use of power within capitalist societies, but also the ways in which that power relies on the consent of those less powerful, usually secured not on the basis of brute force but on an ideological commitment (Fairclough, 2003; see also Sheldon, 2001). According to Fairclough, "the theory of hegemony highlights both how power relations constrain and control productivity and creativity in discourse practice, and how a particular relatively stabilized configuration of discourse practices ('order of discourse') constitutes one domain of hegemony" (1995a, p. 2). This is especially important when it comes to understanding the deeper socio-cultural context, which is constituted by evolving configurations of material and ideational power. Unlike Fairclough, however, this thesis develops the concept of hegemony beyond Gramsci's uses to the point where it refers to a status "based on the possession of structural power, particularly the control of economic and military resources, enabling the hegemon to shape the preferences and actions of other states" (Heywood, 2011, p. 221). The hegemon, in other words, is the political actor that sets the rules for international life and then enforces those rules. As we shall also see in Parts I and II of this thesis, this notion of hegemony helps illuminate some of the reasons for the differences in the foreign policies of the United States and Iran on Syria.

The recent foreign policies of the United States and Iran on Syria are conveyed through language and this language is saturated by the political values and opinions of various foreign policymakers. In order to better understand the complexities of these two foreign policies, and through those contrasting policies the underlying problem of the Syrian civil war, this thesis employs CDA as a conceptual model and analytical framework. This thesis adopts, by and large, Fairclough's model in order to conduct an analysis of text at the micro level and analysis of context at the macro-level. It also specifically deals with "institutional, political [...] and media discourses (in the broadest sense) which testify to more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict" (Wodak, 2001, p. 2).

To answer the central research question, it is necessary to analyse the primary sources in relation to the foreign policies of the United States and Iran. To achieve this, this thesis adopts Fairclough's CDA model because this model enables multiple analysis including socio-political context. Based on this model, the four analytical questions were developed and explored. More specifically, focusing at the level of text production and consumption, the project asked: how is the Syrian Civil War represented in the foreign policies of the United States and Iran; and what actions are made possible by those representations? Focusing at the level of discursive practices, the research project also asked: what are the commonalities and differences among the texts produced within various institutions within the respective political systems of the United States and Iran? And, finally, the project focused at the level of socio-political context and asked: what are the material and ideational conditions giving rise to the foreign policies of the United States and Iran?

This is where I further refined Fairclough's model. Rather than use his very broad notion of socio-political context, I identified several material and ideational conditions that form part of that context. Material and ideational conditions are commonly used by scholars advancing knowledge through Marxist paradigms and/or Foucauldian approaches. Through my reading of relevant scholarship and other general secondary sources, I identified theocracy, Shiism, democracy, Christianity and human rights as significant ideational conditions that were evident in the broader socio-political contexts of these foreign policy discourses. I similarly identified hegemony, political geography, political economy and alliances as important material conditions evident in those contexts. These should be familiar to most scholars of International Relations, though, of course, other analysts may favour alternative conditions.

Poststructuralism

Like CDA, poststructuralism concerns the importance of language to human activity, especially as language is vital to the ways in which humans make sense of world affairs and how they share their ideas, though it is never a-political, value free or non-ideological (Hansen, 2014). Shapiro goes further to suggest that "representations do not imitate reality but are the practices through which things take on meaning and value; to the extent that a representation is regarded as realistic, it is because it is so familiar it operates transparently" (1988, p. xi). Poststructuralists hold that "foreign policies always imply a particular representation of our and others' identities, and that identities have no fixed meaning, but are constituted in language" (Hansen, 2014, p. 169).

Poststructuralism illuminates highly discriminatory systems, structures and processes by casting light on the relationship between power and knowledge (Peters & Burbules, 2004). Poststructuralism, again like CDA, engages with the notion of discourse, which Michel Foucault defined as "a linguistic system that orders statements and concepts" (Hansen, 2014, p. 172). Foucault further explained the concept of discourse as follows:

> We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation [...] it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history [...] it is, from beginning to end, historical - a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complicities of time (1972, p. 117).

Poststructuralists often produce critical analyses of the past and the present, focusing on changes, transformations and discontinuities taking place at the level of systems and institutions. Poststructuralists also often express a desire to entrench democratic practices while critiquing the politics of modernity, especially the impact of the Enlightenment, and the ways in which the modernist project constructs political identity in terms of binary oppositions whereby one group is also placed in a subordinate role (Peters & Burbules, 2004).

Poststructuralism thus raises questions in relation to ontology and epistemology because it adopts a critical perspective on world politics (Hansen, 2014). Ontology is the theory of being. An ontological position indicates a researcher's perspective on the nature of the world. Therefore, a central ontological question is: "What is the form and nature of reality and,

consequently, what is there that can be known about it?" Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. An epistemological position indicates a researcher's view of what we can perceive of the world. A central epistemological question is: "What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known?" (Furlong & Marsh, 2010, p. 185).

By testing some of the assumptions that mainstream scholars of international relations make about the importance of the state to world politics, poststructuralists challenge the common characterisation of the state as a rational actor. Poststructuralism differs from those mainstream approaches, which are usually based on a positivist epistemology. Instead, poststructuralists tend to adopt a constitutive epistemology since the systems and structures ordering world affairs are always in the process of changing through various exertions of human agency (Hansen, 2014). According to Jim George, "a discourse makes 'real' that which *it* prescribes as meaningful" (1994, p. 30) and mainstream scholarship, such as Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State and War* (1959) and *Theory of International Politics* (1979), "stand as major indictments of an International Relations community that, closed to critical reflective capacity for so long, has accorded such high status to works of so little substance. They stand, in this regard, as a testament to the continuing legacy of a closed modernist discourse in the period of Realist dominance in International Relations" (pp. 119-120). And, according to Shapiro, those writers who uncritically reproduce dominant narratives based on the claims of the nation-state over its constituency must also account for the "states' ambiguous spatiotemporality, which is reflected in the hyphenated term *nation-state* [... which pretends to...] embod[y] a coherent culture, united on the basis of shared descent or, at least, incorporating a 'people' with a historically stable coherence" (1999, p. 121).

Coming to age during the early and mid-1980s—that is, at about the same time as CDA was being developed—poststructuralism in disciplinary International Relations (IR) encouraged the view that the ending of the Cold War lay in changing the ways in which the so-called enemy was constructed by leaders from both the East and the West. The Cold War is now long since over, but poststructuralism remains concerned with high politics and its cognate themes of security, international armed conflict and the use of armed force in international affairs, including the construction of particular security challenges (Hansen, 2014). For R.B.J. Walker, "the concept of the 'enemy' invokes a very complex theme within Western culture concerning 'the Other' [...] we have truth, reason and God, they have superstition, barbarism and the devil" (1987, p. 57). The face of the enemy may change, but its shadow always

remains threatening in the distance.

Just as there is criticism of other theories of international relations, so too is there criticism of poststructuralism. Critics have pointed out that poststructuralism is usually conveyed in language that is almost incomprehensible and sometimes this is a deliberate technique used to mask its lack of substance. Poststructuralism, moreover, pays little attention to the materiality of world politics and thus misses much of what really matters. Very few, if any, poststructuralist accounts have direct policy relevance (Hansen, 2014). However, poststructuralists counter these criticisms by arguing that the neo-realist and neo-liberal mainstream analyses are too often ahistorical and "marginalizes non- and trans-state actors, stateless people, and those persecuted by 'their own' states" (Hansen, 2014, p. 169). Ashley (1987) goes as far as to suggest that neo-realists, with their fixed notions and dogmatic certainties, are the ones whose accounts miss the fundamentals of modern political life. The same could be said of neo-liberals caught in the intellectual binds of their own commitment to empiricism.

Notwithstanding such criticism, poststructuralism constitutes an important body of knowledge for those scholars working with CDA, myself included. While I contemplated adopting a realism perspective and a related balance-of-power model to analyse US and Iranian foreign policy, focusing on the Cold War era, the post-Cold War period, and the current war on terror, I preferred poststructuralism because of its attention to language. Poststructuralism is a useful, though not unproblematic, theoretical basis for CDA because poststructuralists hold that language is essential to understanding world politics. While there are, of course, appreciable limits to various types of 'objective' analyses based on observations, experiments and verification, I do not agree with the post-positivist claim that one can never access the underlying reality unmediated through one's subjective perception (Dunn & Neumann, 2016). I do believe, as does Fairclough, that there is an accessible underlying reality in the shape of a socio-cultural context. Jørgensen and Phillips also emphasise that "discourse analytical approaches take as their starting point the claim of structuralist and poststructuralist linguistic philosophy, that our access to reality is always through language" (2002, p. 8). More specifically, with language, we create "representations of reality that are never mere reflections of a pre-existing reality but contribute to constructing reality" (p. 9).

Critical Discourse Analysis—Current Scholarship

This brief section presents a survey of the scholarly literature that uses CDA as a means of making sense of a variety of important political issues. Politics can, of course, be defined in at least two ways: firstly, politics can be understood as power struggles between those who seek to dominate and those who seek to resist; and secondly, politics can be understood as the practices and institutions that enable cooperation and the resolution of conflict, clashes and tension (Chilton, 2004). The news media are, in an important sense, political because its products are frequently used as a means of influencing public opinion and it helps reproduce certain dominant ideologies (van Dijk, 1988) and narratives (Shapiro, 1988).

Some scholars have used CDA as a means of better understanding and explaining the conduct of political leaders of various persuasions. Fairclough (2001b) dealt with the rise and spread of Thatcherism, the political discourse specifically related to the Thatcherite trend in British Conservatism. Thatcherism has been marked as "an 'authoritarian populism', a designation which tries to capture the new mix of political elements that it has attempted to put together" (p. 146). Fairclough analysed the relationship between politics and the media through the discourse of Thatcherism, where ideologies are linked with language in this process. Shayegh and Nabifar (2012) analysed Obama's speeches extracted from seven different interviews. More specifically, these authors explored how socio-political relations of power and ideological loading have been revealed in the political discourse of US President Barack Obama. Their study underscores "some of methods Obama uses to hint [at] the degree of power to his addresses". These authors found "Obama mostly uses material process which shows what the government has achieved, what they are doing and what they will do". The US president was also found to mostly use "'I' and 'we' pronouns, more religious statements, more persuasion, and longer turns in his interviews" (p. 3481).

Other scholars have used CDA to examine situations of armed conflict. Hayward (2008) analysed political discourse as a mechanism of conflict and peace, using the Northern Ireland case. More specifically, that author identified three stages in conflict and its transformation in which political discourse can perform a significant role: firstly, during the development of a negotiation framework; secondly, during the negotiation of an agreement; and thirdly when parties establish common ground upon which to move forward. Hayward emphasised that "discourse analysis is a vital resource for deepening our knowledge of why, how and when violence can erupt and peace can be built" (p. 1). Hayward's study showed that political

discourse is closely related to the transition out of conflict. Bayulgen and Arbatli (2013) examined Cold War–styled rhetoric in the relations between the US and Russia by investigating the 2008 Russia–Georgia war. Even though the Cold War is long since over, "its legacy still permeates the discourse among politicians, the media, and consequently the public at large in both Russia and the United States" (p. 513). These authors noted that "the media construction of crises and the consequent public opinion have had a significant effect on triggering and perpetuating the Cold War mentality that continue[s] to influence relations between the two countries" (p. 514). The foreign policy decision-makers use the media and public opinion to decide their political agenda. Hansen (2006) analysed the Western debate over the Bosnian war using British and American policy discourses. This study is based on poststructuralist discourse analysis. According to Hansen (2006), "the intertextuality of foreign policy discourse makes it vital that the particular construction of authority and knowledge within prominent genres are integrated into the analysis" (p. 216). Fierke (2007) also observed that "a constitutive analysis makes it possible to identify the discursive and political linking of identity and foreign policy" (p. 784). In this regard, Čarapić (2007) emphasised that "offering a post-structuralist theory of the relationship between identity and foreign policy, [Hansen's] volume provides an introduction to critical discourse analysis and critical perspectives on international relations" (p. 677).

Moreover, Kandil (2009) examined the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Arab, British and American media in his PhD thesis. By using news reports from *Al-Jazeera Arabic*, *BBC* and *CNN*, Kandil organised his materials to show three different points of view on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More specifically, that author studied "how media discourse can be framed in different ways to serve the political stance adopted by different media outlets" (pp. 104-105). Kandil found that news media have "points of view that are shaped by many different factors, and these points of view are reflected in the texts they present to their audience" (p. 160). The interesting methodological feature of that study is the combination of CDA and corpus linguistics; if CDA relies on qualitative methods, corpus linguistics includes statistics to expedite quantitative analysis of the same media sources. Roy (2012) analysed *The New York Times*' representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2009 and 2011. According to that author, "the analysis of the editorials, op-eds, and letters to the editor reveals that media representation of conflicts has deep implications for intercultural communication and relations" (p. 556). This research showed that *The New York Times*' texts

regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict “predominantly represented the American or the Israeli points of view. There are very few voices from Palestine or any commentary from Palestinian-Americans” (pp. 567-568).

Other scholars have relied upon CDA to bolster their accounts of international security issues. KhosraviNik (2015) examined the political discourse on Iran's nuclear programme in the *Kayhan* newspaper, the conservative Iranian daily. More specifically, that author explicated “how the newspaper texts may come to be perceived within an Iranian socio-political context” (p. 52). The discourse on the nuclear programme shows some broad confrontational lines between Iran and the West. KhosraviNik showed *Kayhan*'s perspective on Iran's nuclear issue, using various political topics such as Iran's defiance and strength, Iran's rights, and the nuclear programme and Western threats. The *Kayhan*'s discourse on Iran's nuclear programme represents “some of the overall trends of the macro discourse of the Islamic Republic establishment” (p. 70). Shojaei, Youssefi and Hosseini (2013) analysed how three cases of ideologically-controversial international security concerns are represented and interpreted in western printed media. The controversial topics taken into account “included Iran Nuclear Program, Iran Sanctions, and Syria Crisis for which the ideological stances of Iranian officials and most of the western countries strongly differ” (p. 858). This research demonstrated that linguistic tools are one of the most important items, which bring about a biased representation of news articles. Moreover, the results of their analysis showed that “the language of western newspapers - and particularly American and British ones - is highly ideological while representing the news of conflicting ideas between Iran and western countries” (p. 867).

CDA has also been used by scholars wishing to make sense of Middle Eastern politics. Van Dijk (1998) dealt with an op-ed article in the *Washington Post* on Gadhafi. That article shows the American ideological perspective on the world. Van Dijk found that “opinions may be organized following an ideological pattern that polarizes ingroups and outgroups, Us vs. Them. This principle also has a number of corollaries in the form of maxims, such as 'The Enemy of Our Enemy is Our Friend'” (p. 57). In this instance, “the basic dual ideologies used are the familiar ones of Western superiority and Arab inferiority, whereby *We* are associated with positive values such as democracy, rationality and non-violence, and *They* with dictatorship, violence and irrationality” (pp. 57-58). Sheyholislami (2008) analysed “the interrelationships between national identities, discourses, and communication technologies in

the context of Kurdish people" (p. iii). That author stated that "investigation of Kurdish media discourses in processes of identity formation reveals that Kurdish identity is simultaneously pan-Kurdish and regional, cultural and political, individual and collective" (p. 371). A key feature of this research is that it deals with satellite television and the internet as new communicative platforms. Sheyholislami's PhD thesis shows that media discourse has a large influence on identity formation.

Of particular relevance to this thesis, however, is the recent work of Amin and Jalilifar (2013), who used CDA to investigate three newspapers of *Arab News* from Saudi Arabia, *Tehran Times* from Iran and *Today Zaman* from Turkey. Their research reveals how these ideologies are expressed differently in the texts regarding the Syrian civil crisis in 2012. The authors noted that the three newspapers concentrate on different features of political reality. For example, the *Arab News* believes that "what is happening in Syria is the consequence of the regime's oppression and its evil doings backed by Russia and Iran" (p. 13). However, according to Iranian journalists, "those who are fighting against Al-Assad are not Syrian common people but terrorist groups supported by United States, Saudi Arabia, and some other West[ern] and Arab governments" (p. 15). Contrary to the Arab and Iranian press, Turkish newspaper writers believe that "Turkey's position in the region and particularly in [the] Syria[n] crisis is unique and, unlike other countries who are only seeking their own interest, Turkey follows a policy which benefits the entire region" (p. 16).

Finally, Li (2009) investigated how meanings about national identities and ideologies are created in the discourse of American and Chinese newspapers. Li emphasised that China is constructed as a state with different identities in both media sources' discourses in relation to national conflicts between the two nations. While China is depicted in hyper-nationalistic terms by *The New York Times*, *China Daily* showcases this attitude as a heroic but peaceful struggle against western aggression. Moreover, China's cosmopolitan stance is seen to indicate rival aspirations to world hegemony by the *The New York Times* whereas the *China Daily* is more sanguine about China's adherence to international rules and norms.

In summary, the above survey demonstrates the wide range of political topics which scholars have explored by using CDA. This suggests that, although CDA is a somewhat new research methodology in political science and international relations (Burnham, Gilland Lutz, Grant & Layton-Henry, 2008), and although there is no research into the foreign policies of regional and global powers regarding the Syrian civil war based on CDA, its recent record of use

signals its promise to highlight the ways in which two important foreign policies on Syria are shaped by differing institutional and sociocultural practices. This thesis attempts to address that gap in the scholarly literature on the Syrian civil war by critically examining the recent foreign policies of the United States and Iran on Syria by using a CDA methodology.

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary sources are, according to Vromen, "original documents produced by political actors ranging from executive, parliamentary or judicial arms of governments, policy-making agencies or non-government organizations" (2010, p. 261). Generally, primary sources are considered "to be documents that reflect a position of an actor and do not have analysis in them (such as a secondary source like a scholarly journal article)". However, there are exceptions to this, "such as newspaper articles and organizational research reports (for example, a World Bank report) which contain analysis but can also become the object of text analysis by studying the meaning they give to the political context they originated from" (p. 262). Fairclough (2001b), in particular, asserts that "the media operate as a means for the expression and reproduction of the power of the dominant class and bloc" (p. 43). While scholarship concerning the civil war in Syria might also be primary-source material, especially as it is produced in universities, which are institutions that are also situated within a particular set of material and ideational conditions, it was not prioritised in this thesis for reasons of space.

The selection of primary-source materials for analysis in this thesis was relatively straight forward. The thesis's immediate concern with the foreign policy discourse of the US and Iran led to a focus on official documents, the UN archives and various media sources reporting on the respective policies. More specifically, the documents selected for examination in Part I of this thesis were produced by the White House, the US Department of State and the US Mission to the United Nations, the main organisations involved in setting and conducting US foreign policy. Similarly, documents produced by the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, Iran's Presidential Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran and the IRI Mission to the United Nations were selected for examination in Part II of this thesis. This selection of institutions is not controversial; rather, omitting a consideration of any of these organisations may well raise questions of undue selectivity.

Two news media organisations—specifically, the *Iranian Students' News Agency* which takes a relatively reformist view of events, and the *Fox News Channel* which takes a markedly critical stance toward the Obama administration—were also selected because media reporting is another form of speech act that can be analysed to find traces of official representations and power configurations. The media is, of course, deliberately used by key political institutions to increase the reach of their messages. Other analysts might well choose different news media organisations to examine; I selected these two because I thought their prominence within their respective political systems might be illuminating.

Most of this primary-source material was gathered from the relevant official sites on the world-wide web. Basically, I used the keyword 'Syria' to search for and select the primary sources in relation to the foreign policies of the United States and Iran regarding Syria's civil war. I then looked for the passages that referred specifically to any of the five key aspects of the civil war in Syria; namely, the Assad Government, moderate and radical opposition groups, sectarian violence and foreign involvement.

As a result over 300 separate extracts of text were selected for detailed analysis from 60 specially selected primary-source documents concerning US foreign policy. Those 60 documents were whittled down from an original set of 100 documents. I prioritised documents that appeared to engage more with the underlying conflict. Over 270 separate extracts of text were also selected for detailed analysis from 60 primary-source documents concerning Iranian foreign policy. These 60 documents were also whittled down from a large pool of 100 documents, on the same basis of priority as outlined above. More specifically, when it came to selecting documents produced by each of the four main foreign policy organisations within the US political system, I selected the fifteen sources for each organisation that I thought offered the most complete treatment of Syria. In the case of Iran, I only selected the twelve richest documents for each of the five main foreign policy organisations within the Iranian political system. This was to ensure there were an equal number of documents for both political systems.

Once I had collected these documents and prioritised those passages, I then sought to categorise statements into either 'national interests' or 'humanitarian concerns' in order to test my assumption that these would be appreciable and frequent justifications for the foreign policies of the US and Iran towards the Syrian civil war. And, indeed, it was. I was then able to analyse both sets of primary-source material in terms of its representation of the Syrian

civil war and I performed this analysis for each of the foreign policy institutions within both countries' political systems. And that analysis is presented in the chapters of Parts I and II of the thesis.

In addition to examining primary-source material, the thesis relies heavily on (and advances) existing scholarship. As secondary sources, peer-reviewed journal articles and monographs published by reputable university presses are important because they introduce diverse viewpoints about the foreign policies of the United States and Iran. However, according to my Massey University Library resource consultation, such sources written in Persian were not available via any online databases to which the university had a subscription, or through the library's inter-loan service. Thus, it was necessary for me to visit Iran in order to collect relevant scholarship written in Persian, but not available outside of Iran, as a means of offsetting the readily available scholarly sources written in English. In my view, Iranian scholars are better linguistically equipped to deal with the nuances and subtlety of Iranian political culture when they write in Persian. This secondary-source material, collected from field research, informs Chapter 1's discussion of the Syrian civil war and the discussion on material and ideational conditions that takes place in the conclusion of Part II of this thesis.

Field Research

Part of this project involved a period of field research in Iran. I applied for, and received, an official study visa with which to enter Iran. As part of that application process I consulted with the School of International Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran and was advised that it was necessary for me to enrol in a Persian language class in order to obtain a visa. This was opportune because I could further develop my Persian language ability. My fieldwork was thus divided into three parts: a Persian class at the School of International Relations in Tehran, data collection from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Library of Iran, and observations in Tehran and Qom.

This fieldwork was carried out from September 17 to October 5 in 2016 and was financially supported by my primary supervisor, Dr Nigel Parsons, and the School of People, Environment and Planning at Massey University, specifically in the form of the Graduate Research Fund and a one-off contribution from the School's general funds. My wife, Jeong Yun Jo (staff member at the Institute of the Pacific United New Zealand), also accompanied me as a research assistant. She holds a master's degree in economic development and

planning from Iran and a bachelor's degree in Persian from Korea, and was very well placed to support this project. During the fieldwork in Iran, I exchanged views with her on the Persian classes, data collection and field observations.

During my time at the School of International Relations I participated in Persian classes with Special Purpose (PSP) that covered Iran's socio-cultural characteristics, history, political and religious structure and tenets, and their reflections in Iran's political behaviour in national and international arenas. These classes were ably led by Dr Seyed Ali Pakdaman (former ambassador to Argentina, Director of Persian Language Department, School of International Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran) and Dr Amir Hossein Samadi Bahrami (Director of the Department of International Languages, School of International Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran). The PSP provided valuable insights into the socio-cultural context of Iran's foreign policy and the Persian classes became something of a foundation for improving my appreciation of Iranian foreign policymaking.

Data collection relied on access granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Library at the School of International Relations. I collected a tranche of scholarly secondary sources written in Persian concerning Iranian foreign policy. These documents are listed in Appendix I and feature throughout the chapters of Part II of this thesis.

My observations of Iranian life took place during visits to Tehran and Qom. In Tehran I visited the Grand Bazaar in order to observe the economic conditions there after the Iran nuclear deal of 2015. In particular, the bazaar has played a crucial role in recent Iranian history. For instance, the *bazaaris* (merchants and artisans) gave financial and political support for Islamic clerics against the secular Pahlavi regime in the late 1970s. I also visited Golestan Palace, Sa'ad Abad Palace and Niavaran Palace to study Iranian political history, the Qajar and Pahlavi Periods in particular. The Qajar dynasty (1794-1925) suffered aggression by foreign powers, such as Britain and Russia, and the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) promoted Western culture and ideas, rather than Islamic traditions. These historical circumstances eventually led to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Lastly, I visited the holy city of Qom to look closely at the religious tradition of Iran and Shia Islam. Shiism was the dominant ideology of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and Qom is the centre of Shia learning in Iran. My visits to Tehran’s Grand Bazaar, Golestan Palace, Sa'ad Abad Palace, Niavaran Palace and the holy city of Qom are described in slightly more detail in Appendix II.

Translation

The translation into English of primary-source material written in Persian was complex and time consuming. Six months of my four year PhD programme was devoted specifically to undertaking translation and first-line analysis; this equates to about 500 working hours spent on translation alone. In practice, this phase of the research project involved searching for a wide range of possible primary-source documents, reviewing each document in order to identify the most appropriate sources dealing with the civil war in Syria before identifying the particular passages that conveyed a representation of the war. At that stage, the translation of those passages began and led to the textual analysis. Translation is, of course, more complex than merely exchanging particular words from Persian into English. It requires an understanding of Persian and English grammar and some degree of cultural awareness of the topic described. In every translation, there is an element of interpretation; and that takes time and careful consideration, especially as I am not an expert translator. In order to mitigate the risk of crafting some imperfect sentences in English, extra time was scheduled in the drafting of this thesis for proofreading.

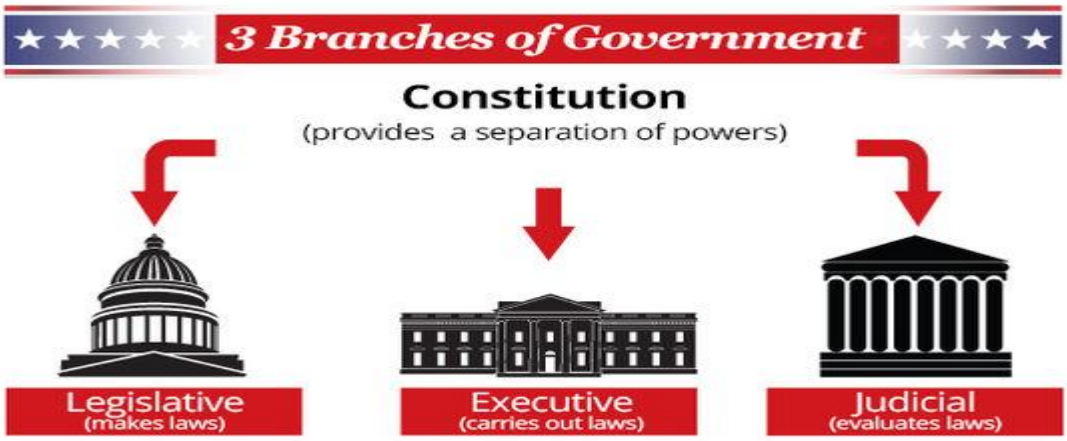
Finally, although Iranian leaders' speeches are sometimes available in multiple languages, including in English, the translated versions of Persian documents prepared specifically for this thesis are preferable to those officially translated versions because the latter are sometimes created with different audiences in mind. This means that foreign language versions can sometimes emphasise issues and objects that are of interest to external audiences, and can therefore contain subtle differences and nuances to the message intended for a domestic audience. Having now introduced and explained my research and analytical methodologies, the thesis now turns to its substantive analysis, starting with US foreign policy on the Syrian civil war.

Introduction to Part I: US Foreign Policy

The first main part of this thesis deals with US foreign policy on Syria between 2011 and 2015. Drawing on the CDA model developed by Fairclough, which is outlined above, the four main chapters comprising Part I offer a detailed and systemic textual analysis of numerous significant documents produced by key 'foreign policy' institutions within the US political system. In other words, each chapter's textual analysis is framed by the discursive practices of an important US foreign policy organisation.

The US political system was designed specifically to preclude the concentration of various modes of power within a single person or position (Radin & Boase, 2000). In fact, this entire system of government emerged, at least in part, as reaction to the inherent tyranny of monarchs. In this regard, the separation of legal, juridical and executive powers, and the establishment of various checks and balances on those powers, is an entrenched and fundamental principle of the US political system. To be more specific, this separation of powers means that "the legislative, executive, and judicial powers are constitutionally located in separate and discrete institutions" (Rushefsky, 2008, p. 22). As Rushefsky also explains, those checks and balances mean that "each institution has to share some of those powers with the other institutions and therefore can thwart [the] actions of the other branches [...] the president can [for instance] veto legislation, Congress approves presidential appointments, and the courts can declare actions by Congress as unconstitutional" (2008, p. 23). The separation of powers in the US political system is presented here in Figure 2.

Figure 2 The separation of powers in the US political system



Source: The Daily Express (2016), Retrieved from https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/729708/us-election-2016-senate-house-of-representatives-political-system-explained-how-work.

The Presidency is the highest position within the US political system and elections for this post take place every four years. According to Article II, Section 2 of the US Constitution, "the President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States" (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2016, p. 13). The President also enforces federal law. While the US Constitution does not require the establishment of a Cabinet, it has become an established practice—dating back to George Washington—for presidents to establish one in order to offer him advice and implement his instructions (Meese III, 2002). Cabinet members, including the Secretary of State, are appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. The US has a decentralised bureaucracy also influenced by the concept of the separation of powers. In addition to those many departments managed by cabinet secretaries and operating under the authority of the president, Congress has established many autonomous regulatory commissions. Even though the president appoints certain individuals to serve on those commissions, he does not have the power to remove those individuals or interfere with their discharging of their lawful responsibilities (Heywood, 2007).

As the country's chief diplomat, the US president has the main responsibility for setting the overall direction of his Administration's foreign policy. In light of this, the primary-source documentation produced by the White House offers a strong foundation for analysing US foreign policy discourse. With regard to the Syrian civil war, the Obama Administration insisted, for instance, that President Bashar al-Assad should step aside in order to establish

democracy in Syria. In his 2012 State of the Union speech, the president said that: “We will support policies that lead to strong and stable democracies and open markets, because tyranny is no match for liberty” (The White House, 2012a). The foreign policy discourse emerging from the White House is the specific focus of Chapter 3.

The US Department of State is responsible for managing the US’s foreign relationships as a means of promoting the country’s long-term security and prosperity (Storey, 2007). As the head of that department, the US Secretary of State advises the president on foreign policy issues and plays a leading role in conducting foreign policy. Therefore, the documentation produced by the US Department of State provides another useful source for analysing US foreign policy discourse. Former Secretary of State, John Kerry, gave a speech on the Syrian civil war in 2013. In that speech, Kerry clearly asserts the US position against the Assad Government when he stated that: “President Obama has been absolutely clear: The United States is committed to a democratic, unified post-Assad Syria. The President directed me to step up our efforts with respect to the opposition in particular” (US Department of State, 2013a). Chapter 4 focuses on the foreign policy discourse emerging from with the US Department of State.

As an important extension of the US Department of State, the US Mission to the UN holds a permanent seat on the Security Council. This seat places it at the centre of the Council, which has been granted the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and that means that the US Mission can use a veto to stop any substantive resolution. The US Mission to the UN does, however, follow the lead of the US President and his Secretary of State. Its importance to this study lies not only in its position on the Security Council, with its power of veto, but also in its ongoing proximity to the world’s diplomatic community. Helping to conduct US foreign policy among UN member-states, US Ambassadors to the UN make important statements, such as Susan E. Rice’s provactive speech on the situation in the Middle East, when she said: “The Asad regime’s crimes have won a chorus of condemnation from the region, including the Gulf Cooperation Council, which demanded an immediate end to what it called Asad’s 'killing machine'” (US Mission to the UN, 2011a). These speeches and other remarks are considered more fully in Chapter 5.

The Fox News Channel (FNC) is a privately-owned commercial enterprise. This means it is not a political institution in the sense that the presidency or the bureaucracy are US political institutions. While not formally part of the US political system, FNC remains important as it,

and other members of the fourth estate, provide oversight over the decisions and actions of the American political system by offering a further set of checks and balances on the use and abuse of power. This oversight can be seen in the following report when it offers a critical perspective on US foreign policy in the Syrian crisis: “The Obama administration has fussed and fluttered, blabbed and gabbed, and ultimately done nothing for the people of Syria. The death of more than 17,000 Syrians is a stain on Obama's hands” (Fox News Channel, 2012c). Not all coverage is hostile, however, as much of FNC reporting endorses the US approach to the Middle East in general and the Syrian civil war in particular, as the following extracts illustrates: “We can make sure we know where Assad’s chemical weapons are stashed and work with our allies in the region to seize or destroy them before they fall into the hands of forces that would use them against us” (Fox News Channel, 2013c). The news reporting produced by FNC on the civil war in Syria is analysed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Having analysed a plethora of documents produced by these foreign policy institutions and, in particular, having paid close attention to the ways in which these documents represent the civil war in Syria, including the new possibilities for action that those representations open up, Part I closes by examining the relationship between the institutions’ discursive practices and the underlying socio-cultural context which comprises both ideational and material conditions. There is much in this part of the thesis that is original. CDA has not, at least to my knowledge, been used to analyse the international dimension of the Syrian civil war or, more specifically, US foreign policy on Syria. Part I of this thesis, moreover, is the first sustained research examining the commonalities and differences among key US foreign policy organisations and no other academic research has, to date, explored this policy in terms of humanitarian concern and national self-interest.

Ch. 3 The White House

Far more than a mere residential home built from bricks and mortar, the White House is a major political institution in its own right. It is synonymous with the power held by the US president who, residing at the summit of the US political system, has the main responsibility for shaping and articulating the overall direction of US foreign policy. Drawing on two of the three key elements of Fairclough's CDA model, this chapter offers a detailed analysis of text extracted from fifteen important official documents released by the White House.[1] The chapter is divided into two sections; the first of which deals with selected text that reflects humanitarian concerns, whereas the second section deals with text that reflects the US's pursuit of its national interests. Both sections focus on the ways in which the US president represents key aspects of the Syrian civil war—specifically, the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition, sectarian violence and foreign involvement—during the five years from 2011 to 2015. The chapter also identifies several new possibilities for action created by the president's representational practices, including, specifically, support for the moderate opposition within Syria as well as direct military action against both Assad's Government and the Islamic State. The chapter finds that the president's foreign policy discourse on the Syrian civil war conveys significant humanitarian concern and expresses the need to protect and advance US national interests.

[1] These official White House documents are, specifically: *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* (The White House, 2011a); *Statement by President Obama on the Situation in Syria* (The White House, 2011b); *Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address* (The White House, 2012a); *Statement by the President on Syria* (The White House, 2012b); *Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria* (The White House, 2012c); *Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address* (The White House, 2013a); *Statement by the President on Syria* (The White House, 2013b); *Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria* (The White House, 2013c); *Statement by the President on U.S.-Russian Agreement on Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons* (The White House, 2013d); *Weekly Address: Pursuing a Diplomatic Solution in Syria* (The White House, 2013e); *President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address* (The White House, 2014a); *Statement by the President on Airstrikes in Syria* (The White House, 2014b); *Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address* (The White House, 2015a); *National Security Strategy* (The White House, 2015b); and *Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to Actions of the Government of Syria* (The White House, 2015c). Unless otherwise stated, all of the primary sources cited in this chapter come from the White House.

Presidential Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

This first section presents a detailed analysis of text which, extracted from fifteen important official documents expressing US foreign policy on Syria released by the White House, convey humanitarian concerns. In particular, it examines the ways in which the US president represents key aspects of the Syrian civil war—specifically, the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition, and foreign involvement—during the five years from 2011 to 2015. It finds that these representational practices not only reflect, but also re-inscribe, certain ideational conditions that help comprise the socio-cultural context within which the White House operates.

Assad Government

Having closely examined the relevant documents produced by the White House, I found a plethora of evidence illustrating the ways in which the Assad Government is represented by the US President. The White House describes the local efforts to transition to democracy in Syria, as follows:

> The United States has been inspired by the Syrian peoples' pursuit of a peaceful transition to democracy. They have braved ferocious brutality at the hands of their government (2011b);
>
> They have spoken with their peaceful marches, their silent shaming of the Syrian regime, and their courageous persistence in the face of brutality—day after day, week after week (2011b); and
>
> Over the past two years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad has turned into a brutal civil war. Over 100,000 people have been killed. Millions have fled the country (2013c).

These three examples highlight the plight of ordinary Syrians civilians who want nothing more than to live in peace within democracy. For the US President, these citizens are conducting themselves appropriately, but suffer unnecessarily, and this implies the Assad Government does not govern in the interests of its people.

The White House has called for President Bashar al-Assad to step aside so that democratic change can take place in Syria. This is conveyed in the following text:

> In Syria, I have no doubt that the Assad regime will soon discover that the forces of change cannot be reversed, and that human dignity cannot be denied (2012a);

> A transition in Syria to a political process that will forge a credible path to a future of greater freedom, democracy, opportunity, and justice (2012c);
>
> The only lasting solution to Syria's civil war remains political—an inclusive political transition that responds to the legitimate aspirations of all Syrian citizens (2015b, p. 10); and
>
> We will continue to pursue a lasting political solution to the devastating conflict in Syria (2015b, p. 26).

According to the US President, the forces of democratic change—once they take hold in the imaginations of the population—quickly become irreversible. It will only be a matter of time before democracy is established in Syria. The White House even goes as far as to suggest that now is the right time for the Assad Government to relinquish its power: "We have consistently said that President Assad must lead a democratic transition or get out of the way. He has not led. For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside" (2011b). Underpinning these specific texts, and US foreign policy more generally, is an enduring commitment to democracy, not dictatorship, as the preferred form of government.

The White House also illuminates the Assad Government's brutal repression of its own people. According to the US President, "the Syrian Government murdered hundreds of Syrian citizens, including women and children, in Homs through shelling and other indiscriminate violence, and Syrian forces continue to prevent hundreds of injured civilians from seeking medical help" (2012b). The President's view reverberates throughout these other examples:

> The future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President Bashar al-Assad is standing in their way. His calls for dialogue and reform have rung hollow while he is imprisoning, torturing, and slaughtering his own people (2011b);
>
> The United States condemns the Asad regime's use of brutal violence and human rights abuses and calls on the Asad regime to step aside (2012c);
>
> All told, well over 1,000 people were murdered. Several hundred of them were children—young girls and boys gassed to death by their own government (2013b); and
>
> A dictator must not be allowed to gas children in their beds with impunity. And we cannot risk poison gas becoming the new weapon of choice for tyrants and terrorists the world over (2013e).

The White House characterises President Bashar al-Assad as an authoritarian dictator whose brutal use of violence undermines his legitimacy to rule in Syria. In this light, Assad has no business remaining in power and should step down immediately. This sentiment is reiterated when the US President stated that the "Syrian government has responded with a sustained onslaught. I strongly condemn this brutality, including the disgraceful attacks on Syrian civilians in cities like Hama and Deir al Zour" (2011b) and that "the regime's brutality and repression of the Syrian people, who have been calling for freedom and a representative government, not only endangers the Syrian people themselves, but also is generating instability throughout the region" (2015c).

Building on its depiction of the Assad Government's brutal authoritarianism, the White House draws attention to the serious human rights violations taking place in Syria. That the Assad Government's conduct is, in this respect, unlawful is captured in the following text:

> Assad must halt his campaign of killing and crimes against his own people now. He must step aside and allow a democratic transition to proceed immediately (2012b);
>
> The suffering citizens of Syria must know: we are with you, and the Assad regime must come to an end (2012b); and
>
> I decided that the United States must take action to deter the Syrian regime from using chemical weapons, degrade their ability to use them, and make clear to the world that we will not tolerate their use (2013d).

The White House illustrates that these human rights violations, the very existence of which are an affront to the set of inalienable human rights most Americans hold dear, are a value so strongly held that it remains a cornerstone of US foreign policy.

Moderate Opposition

Drawing on a close examination of relevant White House documents, I found the following evidence of the ways in which moderate opposition groups operating in Syria are represented by the US President:

> We'll keep the pressure on a Syrian regime that has murdered its own people, and support opposition leaders that respect the rights of every Syrian (2013a);

> We'll continue to support the Syrian people through our pressure on the Assad regime, our commitment to the opposition, our care for the displaced, and our pursuit of a political resolution that achieves a government that respects the dignity of its people (2013b); and
>
> The majority of the Syrian people—and the Syrian opposition we work with—just want to live in peace, with dignity and freedom (2013c).

The White House depicts these moderate oppositional groups, which include certain non-state armed groups, such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), as respecting the rights of Syrian citizens and, as such, as worthy recipients of US support and assistance. This support and assistance reflects the White House's deep commitment to protecting the human rights of people around the world.

Radical Opposition

The White House has also referred to the harmful and destabilising role played by the Islamic State in Syria, proclaiming that "the people and governments in the Middle East are rejecting ISIL and standing up for the peace and security that the people of the region and the world deserve" (2014b). In so doing, the White House condemns the radical opposition committing atrocities against civilians just as it condemns the Assad Government for its serious human rights violations. This also underscores the deep commitment to protecting human rights informing US foreign policy.

Foreign Involvement

The White House depicts the United States and its involvement as a benign and welcome influence in Syria: "The United States and our international partners support the Syrian people in achieving their aspirations and will continue to assist the Syrian people toward that goal" (2012b). Moreover, the White House shows that the US is a strong proponent of democracy and desires a transition to democracy in Syria in particular and the Middle East and North Africa more generally, as the following examples attests:

> Our approach to political change in the Middle East and North Africa illustrates that promoting representative and accountable governance is a core tenet of U.S. foreign policy (2011a, pp. 4-5);
>
> What the United States will support is an effort to bring about a Syria that is democratic, just, and inclusive for all Syrians. We will support this outcome by pressuring President Assad to get out of the way of this transition (2011b); and

> We will support policies that lead to strong and stable democracies and open markets, because tyranny is no match for liberty (2012a).

These representations show the depth of the United States' rhetorical support for those attempting to establish democracy in Syria. The White House emphasises, specifically:

> While it's ultimately up to the people of the region to decide their fate, we will advocate for those values that have served our own country so well (2012a);
>
> Change is inevitable in the Middle East and North Africa, as it is in all places where the illusion of stability is artificially maintained by silencing dissent (2015b, p. 20); and
>
> We will continue to push for reforms in authoritarian countries not currently undergoing wholesale transitions (2015b, p. 21).

These examples further underscore the US's credentials as both proponent and defender of democracies, in a rhetorical sense at the very least. The White House also explicitly refers to the United States' efforts in Syria, including its cooperation with certain members of the international community, as humanitarian when its stated that "America has worked with allies to provide humanitarian support, to help the moderate opposition, and to shape a political settlement" (2013c).

In order to further proclaim the inevitability of democratic change, the following examples taken from White House documents show that the US position on Syria opposes authoritarian dictatorships by supporting the citizenry. Here are three illustrative instances of this:

> In the Middle East, we will stand with citizens as they demand their universal rights, and support stable transitions to democracy (2013a);
>
> We have a duty to preserve a world free from the fear of chemical weapons for our children (2013e); and
>
> We will continue to work with the international community to usher in the future the Syrian people deserve—a future free of dictatorship, terror and fear (2014a).

US foreign policy on Syria, the White House explains, is animated by its concern for civilians targeted by Assad's military forces and subject to his stockpile of chemical weapons. The United States cannot turn a blind eye to such a blatant disregard of human rights, as the following series of examples show:

> The United States opposes the use of violence against peaceful protesters in Syria, and we support the universal rights of the Syrian people. We have imposed sanctions on President Assad and his government. The European Union has imposed sanctions as well (2011b);
>
> We will stand against violence and intimidation. We will stand for the rights and dignity of all human beings—men and women; Christians, Muslims and Jews (2012a);
>
> I've told you what I believe, that our security and our values demand that we cannot turn away from the massacre of countless civilians with chemical weapons (2013b);
>
> The situation profoundly changed, though, on August 21st, when Assad's government gassed to death over a thousand people, including hundreds of children. The images from this massacre are sickening: Men, women, children lying in rows, killed by poison gas (2013c);
>
> When, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to death, and thereby make our own children safer over the long run, I believe we should act (2013c); and
>
> The use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world is an affront to human dignity and a threat to the security of people everywhere (2013d).

These statements show the depth of humanitarian concern underscoring the US president's denouncement of the Syrian civil war's major protagonists—Assad and, more recently, the Islamic State. US presidential attention on Syria is thus informed, to a large degree, by a deep humanitarian concern for the wellbeing of Syrians and for their universal rights as human beings. And, by stating that "the international community must work to protect the Syrian people from this abhorrent brutality" (2012b), the White House also signals that it will seek to build a coalition of support against the illegal behaviour of the Assad Government.

In summary, the above analysis illustrates that much US foreign policy discourse on Syria found in White House documents is based on the US president's deep and enduring commitment to democracy and individual human rights. The ideas of democracy and human rights, and their widespread acceptance within America, much of the western world and Syria especially, offer a solid foundation for US foreign policy on Syria to be justified on humanitarian grounds by the US president. But, as the next section of this chapter demonstrates, the pursuit of national interests is also a powerful influence for this important US foreign policymaker because it has resulted in three particular actions, each of which carries significant political risks for the US President.

Presidential Representations and National Interests

This second section examines the ways in which the US President represents key aspects of the Syrian civil war—specifically, the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition, sectarian violence and foreign involvement—during the five-year period between 2011 and 2015. It presents a detailed analysis of text, extracted from official documents released by the White House examined above, which conveys the pursuit of US national interests. This section finds not only that these representational practices reflect and re-inscribe certain material conditions that comprise, in part, the socio-cultural context within which the White House operates, but also that the President's action is animated by his pursuit of US national interests.

Assad Government

A close examination of relevant White House documents, especially those that reflect the US pursuit of its vital interests, yielded further evidence of the ways in which the US President represents the Assad Government. In one example the White House points to Damascus' links to terrorism: "The President took these actions to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism" (2015c). This exact language was used three years earlier too: "An unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States" (2012c). In another example, the White House signals Assad's status as an international pariah that "has now been condemned by countries in all parts of the globe, and can look only to Iran for support for its brutal and unjust crackdown" (2011b). The unlawful behaviour of the Assad Government is unacceptable to Washington and having called for President Bashar al-Assad to step down from power, Obama announced that "after careful deliberation, I have decided that the United States should take military action against Syrian regime targets" (2013b). In doing so, the White House seek to entrench its hegemony in global affairs in general and to exercise its influence in the Middle East in particular.

Moderate Opposition

The White House further depicts moderate oppositional groups, which are operating within Syria, as a positive actor in the civil war. According to the US President, for example: "In Syria, we'll support the opposition that rejects the agenda of terrorist networks" (2014a) and

"the day after any military action, we would redouble our efforts to achieve a political solution that strengthens those who reject the forces of tyranny and extremism" (2013c). To that end, the US Government supports selected moderate rebels in the Syrian civil war. This is signalled in the following extracts:

> We will move forward with our plans, supported by bipartisan majorities in Congress, to ramp up our effort to train and equip the Syrian opposition, who are the best counterweight to ISIL and the Assad regime (2014b);
>
> We're also supporting a moderate opposition in Syria that can help us in this effort, and assisting people everywhere who stand up to the bankrupt ideology of violent extremism (2015a); and
>
> We are working with our partners to train and equip a moderate Syrian opposition to provide a counterweight to the terrorists and the brutality of the Assad regime (2015b, p. 10).

Yet this support to various non-state armed groups is not merely to help protect the Syrian civilians targeted by Assad's forces, but also, and more importantly, because these opposition groups are combating the Islamic State, that radical Sunni Islamist group using extremely brutal violence. In other words, the active support provided by the US to the moderate opposition in the Syrian conflict is part and parcel of the broader and more concerted efforts to protect US national interests by exercising its influence in the Middle East region.

Radical Opposition

The White House also gives focus to the rise and spread of radical Sunni Islamist groups, especially the Islamic State, which is described as a very dangerous and detrimental influence in the Middle East. As the following two extracts demonstrate, the US President considers the Islamic State to be a fully-fledged enemy of the United States: "In all our efforts, we aim to draw a stark contrast between what we stand for and the heinous deeds of terrorists. We reject the lie that America and its allies are at war with Islam. We will continue to act lawfully" (2015b, p. 9), though "where necessary, through a range of capabilities, we will continue to take direct action against those terrorists who pose the gravest threat to Americans" (2013a). The White House goes further still to warn that "we're going to do what's necessary to take the fight to this terrorist group, for the security of the country and the region and for the entire world" (2014b). Underpinning this war-mongering rhetoric, the White House's stance against

the radical opposition in the Syrian conflict is driven by the President's concern for the national security of the United States and constitutes part of the broader effort to maintain its global hegemony and related influence in the Middle East.

Sectarian Violence

The White House has expressed concern over the drivers of, and consequences following, the sectarian strife occurring in Syria. This is conveyed in the following two extracts: "Nowhere is the violence more tragic and destabilizing than in the sectarian conflict from Beirut to Baghdad, which has given rise to new terrorist groups such as ISIL" (2015b, p. 26) and "in that part of the world, there are ancient sectarian differences, and the hopes of the Arab Spring have unleashed forces of change that are going to take many years to resolve" (2013b). This concern with sectarian violence arises because Shia-ruled Iran cooperates with both the Iraqi and Syrian governments in its fight against radical Sunni Islamist groups. While this means that the United States shares a common enemy—in the form of the Islamic State—with Iran, the United States and Iran are not allies in any meaningful sense. Moreover, the extracts cited above show the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria, and the rise and spread of the Islamic State impact on the US's assessment of its own national interests and become part of the US's more sustained pursuit of global hegemony and, specifically, its influence in the Middle East.

Foreign Involvement

The White House portrays Iran, the Lebanese Shiite group, Hezbollah, and the Palestinian Islamic movement, Hamas, as malevolent forces in Middle Eastern affairs. Consider the following examples:

> Iran and Syria remain active sponsors of terrorism, and we remain committed to opposing the support these state sponsors provide to groups pursuing terrorist attacks to undermine regional stability (2011a, p. 18); and
>
> Hizballah, HAMAS, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) remain opposed to aspects of U.S. foreign policy and pose significant threats to U.S. strategic interests as regional destabilizers and as threats to our citizens, facilities, and allies worldwide (2011a, p. 18).

Just as Iran and Syria are shown to actively sponsor terrorism, Hezbollah and Hamas are shown to destabilise the region. Furthermore, the relationships among these state and non-

state armed groups have a direct impact on Washington, as Iran is viewed as an anti-American state assisting the Assad Government in its waging of the civil war in Syria, and Hezbollah cooperates with Iran in order to assist the Assad Government.

According to the White House, this particular consortium of regional powers poses two separate but related serious threats to US national security. Firstly, as the US President explained: "after careful deliberation, I determined that it is in the national security interests of the United States to respond to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons through a targeted military strike" (2013c) and "our efforts to remove and destroy chemical weapons in Libya and Syria reflect our leadership in implementation and progress toward universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention" (2015b, p. 11). The use of chemical weapons, even in a country as far away from Washington as Syria, undermines the norms surrounding the prohibited use of these tools of violence, which in turn undermines the rules-based order underpinned by US military force.

Secondly, again as explained by President Obama, "last night, on my orders, America's armed forces began strikes against ISIL targets in Syria" (2014b). The President signalled his longer-term objective, as captured in these two examples:

> In Iraq and Syria, American leadership—including our military power—is stopping ISIL's advance (2015a); and
>
> We will continue to hunt down terrorists and dismantle their networks, and we reserve the right to act unilaterally, as we have done relentlessly since I took office to take out terrorists who pose a direct threat to us and our allies (2015a).

The rise and spread of terrorist groups anywhere in the world, but in the Middle East especially, is of grave concern for the White House ever since the tragic events of 11 September 2001. In this respect, the fight against the Islamic State is an important part of the so-called war on terror.

While diplomacy is ultimately crucial to addressing these security concerns, there is an important role for military force to play, the White House explains, and such force would, of course, be legitimate in their eyes. The following series of brief examples illustrate this point:

> A failure to stand against the use of chemical weapons would weaken prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction, and embolden Assad's ally, Iran—which must decide

> whether to ignore international law by building a nuclear weapon, or to take a more peaceful path (2013c);
>
> If diplomacy fails, the United States remains prepared to act (2013d);
>
> In part because of the credible threat of U.S. military force, we now have the opportunity to achieve our objectives through diplomacy (2013d);
>
> We'll keep working with the international community to see that Assad gives up his chemical weapons so that they can be destroyed (2013e);
>
> Since this plan emerged only with a credible threat of U.S. military action, we will maintain our military posture in the region to keep the pressure on the Assad regime (2013e);
>
> I call on this Congress to show the world that we are united in this mission by passing a resolution to authorize the use of force against ISIL. We need that authority (2015a); and
>
> Joined by our allies and partners, including multiple countries in the region, we employed our unique military capabilities to arrest ISIL's advance and to degrade their capabilities in both Iraq and Syria (2015b, p. 10).

Any intervention by the US into the Syrian conflict is, at least in part, driven by fears and anxieties surrounding the existence and use of chemical weapons and the rise of transnational terrorism. In this sense, US foreign policy regarding the civil war in Syria reflects a larger concern around demonstrating the country's credible threat to use force, if necessary, in international affairs. This preponderance of material power is the direct result of the US being the world's only remaining superpower.

After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the United States had difficulty controlling the sectarian conflict between Shiites and Sunnis because of its lack of understanding of Islamic culture. Also, the Obama administration showed a distinct unwillingness to intervene militarily in the Syrian civil war because of Syria's complexity. However, the president's rhetoric cited above reveals the importance of protecting and advancing US national interests to its foreign policy on Syria. The support provided by Tehran and Damascus to terrorist groups, and the rise and spread of the Islamic State, are pressing challenges to US national security interests. At the heart of the US foreign policy on the civil war in Syria lies the desire to preserve and further entrench US global hegemony and its related regional influence in the Middle East.

The Obama Administration's calls for President al-Assad to step down from power, its authorisation to provide support and assistance to moderate opposition groups, and its military attacks on Assad's military and on the Islamic State also reflects the political economy of the United States. This concerns, more specifically, the desire of the US to secure access to the valuable natural resources distributed throughout the Middle East. This is evident in the following extract: "In the Middle East, we will dismantle terrorist networks that threaten our people, confront external aggression against our allies and partners, ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world, and prevent the development, proliferation, or use of weapons of mass destruction" (2015b, p. 26). The importance of political economy to US foreign policy is, at the same, evident in the sanctions regime applied by the US; the White House explained that "[Executive Order] 13338 authorized the blocking of property of certain persons and prohibited the exportation or re-exportation of certain goods to Syria" (2015c).

Moreover, US engagement in the region is driven, at least in part, by Washington's desire to maintain its alliance network in the Middle East. For this reason, the White House is quick to emphasise the peril confronting its longstanding allies in the region. Washington is "clear-eyed about Iran's support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, which threaten our allies" (2014a). Moreover, the White House has also explained that "we have a chance to negotiate a comprehensive agreement that prevents a nuclear-armed Iran, secures America and our allies—including Israel, while avoiding yet another Middle East conflict" (2015a). This underscores the US commitment to its alliances in the region, which is reiterated in the following series of extracts:

> We will stand steadfast with Israel in pursuit of security and a lasting peace (2013a);
>
> It risks making a mockery of the global prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. It endangers our friends and our partners along Syria's borders, including Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq (2013b);
>
> Our ally, Israel, can defend itself with overwhelming force, as well as the unshakeable support of the United States of America (2013c);
>
> A Jewish state that knows America will always be at their side (2014a);
>
> We were joined in this action by our friends and partners—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain, and Qatar. America is proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with these nations on behalf of our common security (2014b);

> Instead of getting dragged into another ground war in the Middle East, we are leading a broad coalition, including Arab nations, to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist group (2015a); and
>
> We are therefore investing in the ability of Israel, Jordan, and our Gulf partners to deter aggression while maintaining our unwavering commitment to Israel's security, including its Qualitative Military Edge (2015b, p. 26).

The very significant need for the US to foster and maintain its network of alliances, which are key to its ability to wage its war on terror, drives US foreign policy on Syria. The state of Israel occupies a sacred place in the American foreign-policy imagination (Gray, 2008), though a range of regional actors remain important allies and feature heavily in US assessments of events unfolding in the Middle East.

Here, then, the above analyses offered in this chapter's second section reveal that US foreign policy discourse on Syria, which is expressed in numerous White House documents, is partly driven by Washington's pursuit of its national interests. These interests are, more specifically and most notably, the entrenchment and exercise of its status as global hegemon, its political economy, and the fostering and extension of its alliance network within the Middle East region.

Conclusion

Having closely examined various official documents released by the White House between 2011 and 2015, I distinguished among those statements which helped the US President express a humanitarian concern in his foreign policy on Syria and those which spoke to the pursuit of US national interests. I did this in an attempt to answer part of this thesis's key research question: namely, how does the United States justify its recent foreign policy on Syria? Based on the results of the textual analysis conducted above in this first chapter of Part I, the following table 1 shows that US foreign policy on Syria not only offers a representation of the major aspects of the Syrian civil war, but also relates that representation to underlying ideational (democracy and human rights) and material (hegemony, political economy and alliances) conditions that, together, help constitute the socio-cultural context within which the White House operates.

Table 1 Collation of the primary sources of the White House

	HUMANITARIANISM	NATIONAL INTEREST
Assad Government		
- Removal of Assad	Democracy and human rights	Hegemony
Moderate Rebels	Human rights	Hegemony
Radical Rebels	Human rights	Hegemony
Sectarian Violence		Hegemony
Foreign Involvement		
- United States	Democracy and human rights	Hegemony, political economy and alliances

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the White House (2011-2015).

The analysis, which is summarised in the table above, also demonstrated that, while US foreign policy on Syria expressed several humanitarian concerns, the pursuit of national interest lay at the heart of those decisions to take action either by providing support to the moderate opposition or by using force against the Assad Government and the Islamic State. Representations expressing humanitarian concerns do appear to have opened up space for certain new possibilities for action, but the pursuit of national interests prompted the decision to act, including the use of armed force, taken by the US President. As we shall see in the next chapter, this analysis also demonstrates the primacy enjoyed by the US President in setting the direction of his country's foreign policy.

Ch. 4 US Department of State

Sometimes referred to as Foggy Bottom due to the location of its headquarters in Washington, the US Department of State is the institution responsible for carrying out US foreign policy. The Secretary of State, a key presidential appointment, also serves as one of the President's trusted advisors on the various roles played by the US in world affairs. This chapter, the second in Part I of this thesis, offers a detailed analysis of texts extracted from fifteen documents concerning the Syrian crisis produced by the US State Department during the five years from 2011 to 2015.[2] Like the previous chapter, this chapter is divided into two sections: the first section examines textual representations that convey a humanitarian concern whereas the second section examines textual representations that point to the pursuit of national interests. Framed in terms of Fairclough's CDA model, this textual analysis coheres around the State Department and its discursive practices that produce textual representations of various aspects of the Syrian civil war, specifically the Assad Government, moderate and radical opposition groups, sectarian violence and foreign involvement. This critical examination of these primary-source documents considers the possibilities for action, examined in the previous chapter, which were created by the US President. This chapter concludes that the rhetoric used by the State Department expresses some humanitarian concern while its discourse on the Syrian civil war is also driven by the pursuit of US national interests.

[2] These official State Department documents are, specifically: *The Human Rights Council's Special Session on Syria* (US Department of State, 2011a); *Arab League Suspends Syria* (US Department of State, 2011b); *Sharp Escalation of Regime Violence in Syria* (US Department of State, 2012a); *Country Reports on Terrorism 2011* (US Department of State, 2012b); *Remarks at the Friends of the Syrian People Ministerial Meeting* (US Department of State, 2012c); *Remarks with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and Syrian Opposition Coalition President Moaz al-Khatib* (US Department of State, 2013a); *Country Reports on Terrorism 2012* (US Department of State, 2013b); *Statement on Syria* (US Department of State, 2013c); *Remarks at the Friends of the Syrian People Ministerial* (US Department of State, 2013d); *Geneva Conference on Syria* (US Department of State, 2013e); *Christians under Threat in Syria* (US Department of State, 2014a); *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013* (US Department of State, 2014b); *Allegations of Chemical Weapons Use in Sarmin, Syria* (US Department of State, 2015a); *Country Reports on Terrorism 2014* (US Department of State, 2015b); and *Remarks at a Meeting on International Peace and Security and Countering Terrorism* (US Department of State, 2015c). Unless otherwise stated, all primary-source material cited in this chapter comes from the US Department of State.

Bureaucratic Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

Presenting a detailed analysis of text extracted from fifteen official documents produced by the US Department of State between 2011 and 2015, this first section examines the ways in which bureaucrats express humanitarian concern over the situation in Syria through their representations of the civil war in Syria; namely, the key aspects of the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition groups, and the role played by foreign involvement. It finds that these bureaucratic representational practices resemble the president's rhetoric in that both not only reflect, but also re-inscribe, certain ideational conditions that help comprise the socio-cultural context within which the State Department is situated and functions.

Assad Government

A close examination of various State Department documents revealed a familiar representation of Assad's Government. Following the direction set by the White House, the US Department of State echoed the US President's call for President Bashar al-Assad to relinquish his rule over Syria. This can be readily seen in the following two extracts: "In order to end the bloodshed and give the Syrian people a chance to meet their long-deferred aspirations, Syria needs new leadership" (2013e) and "the Security Council must act and make clear to the Syrian regime that the world community views its actions as a threat to peace and security. The violence must end, so that a new period of democratic transition can begin" (2012a).

The State Department also depicts the struggle of ordinary Syrian civilians confronted with the brutal violence of an authoritarian dictator, as illustrated in the following statements:

> This horrific conflict began as a peaceful protest by Syrians who aspire to live in a country where freedom, dignity, and equal treatment under the law are protected: (2013e); and
>
> Today's resolution—passed with an overwhelming majority by members from all regions of the globe—unequivocally indicates that the use of force by the Syrian government to quell peaceful political demonstrators is unacceptable (2011a).

Both these sets of statements reflect the bureaucrats' commitment to democracy, which is an idea highly-valued by most Americans and many others around the world.

The State Department, moreover, gives focus to Assad's victims as a means of contrasting the illegal behaviour of the Assad Government during the Syrian crisis and to undermine his legitimacy to rule. Consider the following series of examples:

> Ballistic missiles are used against people, innocent people, and Assad is using his air force to reign down terror, dropping various kind of bombs, some very questionable, on the people of his country (2013a);
>
> Last Sunday, tragically, the regime's violence led to the loss, in one moment, of 30 innocent children (2013a);
>
> We have, all of us, come to know too well an Assad who kills indiscriminately, who bombs women and children, Scud missiles on hospitals, artillery destroying students in a university (2013d);
>
> Millions of people displaced, millions of people refugeed, huge tensions on the surrounding countries, all of it for Assad to stay in power—a man who has lost any legitimacy to govern (2013d); and
>
> Syria continued to use toxic chemicals, including chlorine, as a weapon against its citizens. Syria's behavior raises serious questions about the regime's willingness to comply with its Chemical Weapons Convention and UNSCR 2118 obligations (2015b, p. 288).

This rhetoric from American bureaucrats encapsulates the essence of humanitarian concern; that is, the impulse to render assistance to those in desperate need when the costs of doing so are relatively low (see Gibney, 2004).

The unlawfulness of Assad's use of military force, particularly its indiscriminate nature, is portrayed by the US bureaucracy in order to further signal Assad's outlaw status and to highlight Iran's ongoing assistance to the Assad Government in the Syrian conflict. The following extracts clearly illustrate this point:

> The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms the escalation of the Syrian regime's violent and brutal attacks on its own people (2012a);
>
> Increasing pressure in all these ways is critical because no transition plan can progress so long as the regime's brutal assaults continue (2012c);
>
> In 2013, Iran continued to provide arms, financing, training, and the facilitation of Iraqi Shia fighters to the Asad regime's brutal crackdown, a crackdown that has resulted in the death of more than 100,000 civilians in Syria (2014b, p. 229);

> The Assad regime continues to terrorize the people of Syria through indiscriminate airstrikes, barrel bombings, arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, murder, and starvation (2015a); and
>
> People in a country looking for a future who were instead met with repression, with torture, with gassing, with barrel bombs (2015c).

The examples above convey, in various ways, the nature and scale of the human rights abuses occurring in Syria under Assad's rule. In so doing, the Department of State denounces the behaviour of the Assad Government and its use of brutal violence to oppress ordinary, peace-loving citizens. Concern for the wellbeing of these civilians expressed by the Secretary of State illustrates the US's self-appointed role as a protector of individual human rights. And, on occasion, the Department of State has expressed special concern for the plight of Christians, such as when it lamented the fact that "while the Assad regime attempts to paint itself as a protector of Syria's minorities, it has brutally cracked down on dissent from all segments of society. The regime has arrested Christian worshippers, human rights advocates, and peaceful dissidents" (2014a). This special concern speaks to the important role Christianity has played in shaping the development of the entire US political system.

Moderate Opposition

The State Department also follows the direction set by the White House when it comes to supporting moderate opposition groups, including the FSA in particular. The State Department goes further, however, by suggesting some members belonging to the moderate opposition are worthy, authentic representatives of the oppressed Syrian population. This is illustrated in the following statements:

> President Obama has been absolutely clear: The United States is committed to a democratic, unified post-Assad Syria. The President directed me to step up our efforts with respect to the opposition in particular (2013a);
>
> We want to see the coalition lead the way by ramping up its ability in order to be able to provide assistance, deliver services, and respond to the needs of the Syrian people (2013a); and
>
> Through our close partnership with the Syrian Opposition Coalition, the legitimate representative, we believe, of the Syrian people, we can lay the foundation for a peaceful Syria where all Syrians have a say and a shape in a shared future (2013d).

These statements convey the desire of the Secretary of State to support democratic transitions around the world, but particularly in Syria, because the US believes that democracy is an inherent good unto itself.

Radical Opposition

According to the US Department of State, the Islamic State commits atrocities and its war is a massive humanitarian disaster. The Islamic State is, more or less, an enemy of mankind and deserves to be denounced as such by the wider international community. "ISIL has demonstrated time and again its disregard for Syrian lives", the State Department protests, "and it continues to commit atrocities against the Syrian people" (2014a). The State Department also posits that "the humanitarian disaster that we are witnessing in and of itself should be enough reason to take on ISIL" (2015c). The denouncing of this human rights violator signals the State Department's deeply-held view that every individual holds certain inalienable rights, such as the right to life and the freedoms of speech and of religion. Moreover, the State Department again expresses its special concern for the fate of Christians falling captive to the Islamic State's war-fighting machine. In particular, the State Department has mourned that "the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) announced it will force Syrian Christians to either convert to Islam, remain Christian and pay a tax, or face death. These outrageous conditions violate universal human rights" (2014a). In so doing, the State Department again foregrounds the significant role religion played in shaping the secular US political system.

Foreign Involvement

In order to implement President Obama's desire for regime change in Damascus, the State Department offers a representation of itself calling for members of the wider international community to encourage and support Syria's transition to democracy. This is demonstrated in the following statements:

> As today's Arab League decision demonstrates, the international pressure will continue to build until the brutal Asad regime heeds the calls of its own people and the world community (2011b);
>
> We are focused on determining what we can do to try to hasten the end of this regime and to provide the circumstances for an effective process of transition and reconciliation (2012c);

> We are united in support of the Syrian people and in our absolute resolve to see the end of the Assad regime and a transition to a democratically-elected, representative government that gives the Syrian people a path forward (2012c);
>
> What we need to do is to follow through on what each of us can contribute to the end of the Assad regime and the beginning of a new day for Syria (2012c); and
>
> While it is ultimately up to the Syrian people to form a new government and bring an end to the conflict, the United States and our partners can help get them there (2013e).

The commitment to establish democracies anywhere, already so prevalent in many of the statements comprising US foreign policy so far examined in Part I of this thesis, is clear to see here too.

The US Department of State also portrays its own engagement and cooperation with the Arab League on the specific question of Syria in a very positive light. Consider the collegial tone expressed in following series of statements:

> The Arab League took a strong and historic stance aimed at stopping the violence in Syria and protecting Syrian civilians. The United States commends the principled stand taken by the Arab League (2011b);
>
> The regime has failed to meet its commitments to the Arab League to halt its acts of violence, withdraw its military forces from residential areas, allow journalists and monitors to operate freely and release prisoners arrested because of the current unrest (2012a);
>
> For the last several months, we have steadily increased our non-lethal assistance to more than $127 million, and that aid is providing food now, medical kits now, and support for local leaders who are trying to lay the groundwork for a stable and a democratic future (2013a); and
>
> We have to continue our efforts to alleviate the immediate hardships that terrorists are causing. While we've been pushing humanitarian relief into areas, the international community absolutely has to do more (2015c).

The State Department's multilateral diplomacy demonstrates the extent to which it has used all of the non-violent measures available to US foreign policymakers.

Yet, at the same time, the Department of State not only emphasises the intensity of, and urgency surrounding, the deplorable humanitarian situation involving innocent civilians placed in harm's way, but also illustrates various instances where the international

community is expressing its concern. There are many examples of this in the documents produced by the State Department, among the most useful for analysis are the following:

> Today the UN Human Rights Council took urgent action to shine a light on the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria and condemn the continued human rights abuses by the Syrian government (2011a);
>
> The international community has spoken and expressed its outrage at the violence used by the Syrian government to deny its population their universal human rights, including the freedoms of expression and assembly (2011a);
>
> The Council's forceful statement, coupled with its decision to establish an urgent investigation led by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ensures that the international community will remain actively engaged in the human rights crisis in Syria (2011a);
>
> The United States reiterates its calls for an immediate end to the violence, for free unfettered access for human rights monitors and journalists to deter and document grave human rights abuses and for Asad to step aside so a peaceful transition can begin (2011b);
>
> Tomorrow, I will attend a United Nations Security Council meeting on Syria where the international community should send a clear message of support to the Syrian people: we stand with you (2012a);
>
> Our concern with the cause of the defenseless people of Syria is about choices that will directly affect our role in the world and our interests in the world (2013c);
>
> The United States is deeply disturbed by reports that the Assad regime used chlorine as a weapon again, this time on March 16 in an attack on the town of Sarmin. We are looking very closely into this matter and considering next steps (2015a); and
>
> The Assad regime's horrifying pattern of using chlorine as a chemical weapon against the Syrian people underscores the importance of investigating this allegation as quickly as possible, holding those who perpetrated such abhorrent acts in violation of international law accountable (2015a).

Each of the extracts above express concern, which permeates throughout the foreign policy of the United States, to protect Syrian civilians from the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Assad Government. The State Department again expresses its special concern for the plight of Christians exposed to the wrath of the Islamic State, as evidenced in the following statement: "The United States deplores continued threats against Christians and other

minorities in Syria, who are increasingly targeted by extremists" (2014a). This special concern for Christians echoes the important influence religion has on the development of the US political system.

In summary, then, the analysis offered above shows that the ideas of democracy, human rights and Christianity provide a strong basis for humanitarian concerns to inform much of the US foreign policy on Syria conveyed through various documents released by the US State Department. Yet the next section goes further by exploring the extent to which the pursuit of national interests informs US foreign policy on Syria expressed in those same documents.

Bureaucratic Representations and National Interests

This second section re-examines those same fifteen primary-source documents, dealing with the civil war in Syria, which were produced by the US Department of State between 2011 and 2015. However, this section gives focus to the pursuit of US national interests by offering another detailed analysis of text extracted from those documents where these convey representations of key aspects of the Syrian civil war, specifically the Assad government, the moderate and radical oppositions group, the impact of sectarian violence, and the various engagements by members of the international community. This section not only finds that these bureaucratic representational practices follow in the wake of the US President's rhetoric, but also that these representations reflect certain material conditions constituting part of the socio-cultural context within which the US State Department is situated.

Assad Government

Continuing to call for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad and his removal from power, the US Department of State emphasises the anti-Americanism expressed by the Assad Government, pointing to Damascus' close ties with both Iran and the Lebanese Shiite militia, Hezbollah. According to the State Department, the "longer the Assad regime continues its attacks on the Syrian people and stands in the way of a peaceful transition, the greater the concern that instability will escalate and spill over throughout the region" (2012a) and, moreover, "designated in 1979 as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, Syria continued its political support to a variety of terrorist groups affecting the stability of the region and beyond, even amid significant internal unrest" (2012b, p. 174). Consider, too, the import of the following extracts:

> Syria provided political and weapons support to Lebanese Hizballah and continued to allow Iran to re-arm the terrorist organization (2013b, p. 199);
>
> Iran has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in support of Hizballah in Lebanon and has trained thousands of its fighters at camps in Iran. These trained fighters often use these skills in support of the Asad regime in Syria (2014b, p. 229);
>
> What is clear is that the Assad regime continues to flout international standards and norms, including, if these latest allegations are verified, the Chemical Weapons Convention (2015a); and
>
> A chemical weapons attack through the use of chlorine would not only be the latest example of the regime's brutality towards the Syrian people, but also a direct violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2209 (2015a).

Taken together, these statements, which suggest Assad uses his government to sponsor terrorism while flouting the rules and norms around which the international community coheres, seek to foster and galvanise the wider international community's support for regime change in Syria.

Furthermore, the US State Department seeks to undermine Assad's credibility and legitimacy to rule in Syria. It suggests that without the international community taking concerted efforts Damascus will strengthen its relationship with Iran and Hezbollah and, moreover, without regime change the Islamic State will not be defeated. This is conveyed in the following series of examples:

> The failure of the Assad regime, once again, to heed the call of regional states and the international community underscores the fact that it has lost all credibility (2011b);
>
> As part of a broader strategy during the year, the regime has attempted to portray Syria itself as a victim of terrorism, characterizing all its armed opponents as 'terrorists' (2013b, pp. 199-200);
>
> This is a transitional government that must be chosen by mutual consent. And there isn't anybody in the world who believes that Assad would ever get the consent to be part of such a government (2013d);
>
> The Asad regime's relationship with Hizballah and Iran continued to grow stronger in 2013 as the conflict in Syria continued (2014b, p. 231);

> President Bashar al-Asad remained a staunch defender of Iran's policies, while Iran has exhibited equally energetic support for Syrian regime efforts to defeat the Syrian opposition (2015b, p. 288);
>
> One thing is certain: The vast majority of states around this table know that the ISIL forces, ISIL itself, cannot be defeated as long as Bashar al-Assad remains president of Syria (2015c); and
>
> The resignation of President Assad is a precondition for an end to the Syrian civil war for the State Department and "Assad regime must be held accountable for such atrocious behavior" (2015a).

These extracts, analysed above, signal that national security concerns feature significantly in US foreign policy on Syria as expressed by the US Department of State. This helps buttress the decision by the US to take some form of decisive action against Assad. Concern over the destabilising and threatening nature of the Assad Government expressed in these representations reflects the hegemonic status enjoyed by the United States and the influence it wishes to wield over Middle Eastern affairs.

Moderate Opposition

The US Department of State portrays selected moderate rebels, which are engaging in the Syrian civil war, in a positive light, especially the FSA. According to US officials, "we continue to admire the courage and the resilience that has been demonstrated for four long years of struggle by the legitimate opposition to Assad" (2015c). Moreover, the Secretary of State has commented that the "Syrian Opposition Coalition's recent endorsement of Geneva 2 is a critical part of that effort, and I want to commend them for their support" (2013d). There is a long-term view taken here too, as indicated in this statement: "As we invest in the political track, the United States of America will remain steadfast in our efforts to have an impact on the balance on the ground. And we will continue to support the opposition, hopefully thereby moving us closer to a negotiated settlement" (2013d). These statements reflect the aspirations and intentions of the US as a global hegemon seeking to exercise and expand its influence in the Middle East region by calling for the removal of the anti-American Assad Government. They endorse the decision, taken by the US president, to support these moderate groups.

Radical Opposition

Certain statements made by American bureaucrats about the radical oppositional groups fighting in Syria, most notably the Islamic State, also reflect the hegemonic status enjoyed by the United States. In particular, the following examples demonstrate the intention of the US State Department to expand its influence in the Middle East by blocking the spread of radical Sunni Islamist groups:

> We all oppose the atrocities that they commit, and we all want to end the suffering that they continue to inflict (2015c);
>
> The United States is coordinating closely with a number of like-minded nations and partners to prevent Syria's stockpiles of chemical and advanced conventional weapons from falling into the hands of violent extremists (2014b, p. 232); and
>
> It is a vision that rejects terrorism and rejects extremism. It is a vision that is pledged to never use chemical weapons. It is a vision that is committed to a political solution, first of all (2013a).

These examples not only denounce radical Sunni Islamist groups for the atrocities they commit, but also justify the hostile stance taken by the US government against violent extremist groups.

Sectarian Violence

Unsurprisingly, then, the US State Department also draws attention to the increased prospects enjoyed by the Islamic State for as long as the Alawite-dominated Assad Government remains in power, exacerbating sectarian cleavages between Shiites and Sunnis. It states that the "Syrian people have a long history of tolerance and co-existence, but both the regime and ISIL are fueling sectarian strife to justify their brutality" (2014a). This represents an important opportunity to exercise it's influence in the region as the sole remaining superpower and global hegemon.

Foreign Involvement

The US Department of State describes other actors' engagement in the Syrian conflict as a malevolent force in Middle Eastern affairs. Iran, in particular, is often singled out as a destabilising factor for the region, but also one that directly threatens the national security of the United States. For starters, Iran's nuclear programme is a matter of grave concern to the

Secretary of State, as indicated in the following extract: “This matters also beyond the limits of Syria’s borders. It is about whether Iran, which itself has been a victim of chemical weapons attacks, will now feel emboldened, in the absence of action, to obtain nuclear weapons” (2013c). Yet it is Iran’s links with Hezbollah which are more often the subject of criticism. Consider the ensuing series of statements:

> Designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism in 1984, Iran remained an active state sponsor of terrorism in 2011 and increased its terrorist-related activity, likely in an effort to exploit the uncertain political conditions resulting from the Arab Spring (2012b, p. 172);
>
> Since the end of the 2006 Israeli-Hizballah conflict, Iran has assisted in rearming Hizballah, in direct violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 (2012b, p. 172);
>
> Iran provided financial, material, and logistical support for terrorist and militant groups in the Middle East and Central Asia (2013b, p. 196);
>
> Iran used the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) and militant groups to implement foreign policy goals, provide cover for intelligence operations, and stir up instability in the Middle East (2013b, p. 196);
>
> Iran has historically provided weapons, training, and funding to Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups, including the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), although Hamas’s ties to Tehran have been strained due to the Syrian civil war (2014b, p. 229); and
>
> Iran increased its assistance to Iraqi Shia militias, one of which is a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), in response to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) incursion into Iraq, and has continued to support other militia groups in the region (2015b, p. 285).

By describing Iran as a destabilising force in Middle Eastern affairs, the United States seeks to limit Iran's considerable influence in the Middle East.

The State Department goes further, however, attempting to use its representations of foreign intervention to drive a wedge between Iran and Russia, two key supporters of the Assad Government who also have strong anti-American views. The State Department thus explains that “what’s keeping him [Assad] afloat is money from Iran and assistance from Russia and the failure of countries represented here to tighten and enforce sanctions” (2012c). The State Department tries to persuade members of the wider international community to join the US and support its foreign policy objectives in the following extracts:

> The President has been clear: Any action that he might decide to take will be a limited and tailored response to ensure that a despot's brutal and flagrant use of chemical weapons is held accountable (2013c);
>
> We are committed—we remain committed, we believe it's the primary objective—is to have a diplomatic process that can resolve this through negotiation, because we know there is no ultimate military solution (2013c);
>
> The international community cannot turn a blind eye to such barbarism (2015a);
>
> Iran views Syria as a crucial causeway in its weapons supply route to Lebanese Hizballah, its primary beneficiary, and as a key pillar in its 'resistance' front (2015b, p. 285);
>
> Coalition air operations are grounded in well-established military procedures, firmly based in international law, and the requests of neighboring states for collective self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter (2015c); and
>
> Make no mistake, the answer to the Syrian civil war cannot be found in a military alliance with Assad (2015c).

To the same end, the State Department also cautions the international community that "we must not and will not be confused in our fight against ISIL with support for Assad" (2015c). Furthermore, US officials seek to foster consensus for its foreign policy among the wider international community, which is concerned with recognising and, at times, conferring legitimacy to rule within the system of sovereign states. The above extracts reveal that the US State Department, taking its lead from the direction set by the US President, is courting the wider international community to support its policy on Syria, including its military strikes against Assad's military and the Islamic State. This is another example of the US seeking to extend its influence in the Middle East region and entrench its status as a global hegemon.

Yet the State Department also describes the role played by the United States in establishing and administering economic sanctions targeting the Assad Government. In particular, it has explained that the "second meeting of the sanctions working group in Washington last month called for all states to take additional steps to freeze the assets of regime officials, restrict transactions with the commercial and central banks, and embargo Syrian oil" (2012c) and that these sanctions are being effective as "Syria's currency and foreign reserves have collapsed. Sanctions on oil alone have deprived Assad of billions of dollars in lost revenues, and his ability to finance his war grows more difficult by the day" (2012c). In so doing, these

statements reflect the significance of the political economy in shaping the range of options available to implement US foreign policy on the Syrian civil war.

Moreover, various statements made by the Department of State illustrate the importance of cooperation among other international actors operating in the region in order to eliminate the stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. According to the State Department, for instance, "President Bashar al-Asad continued to express public support for Palestinian terrorist groups as elements of the resistance against Israel" (2012b, p. 174). Consider the concerns raised in the following statements:

> It matters to Israel. It matters to our close friends Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon—all of whom live just a stiff breeze away from Damascus. It matters to all of them where the Syrian chemical weapons are (2013c);
>
> I want to support what Minister Davutoglu just said, because the Friends of Syria has been a very useful device to build pressure against the Syrian regime and to build international support for the Syrian people (2012c); and
>
> We will be continuing our flights out of Incirlik base in Turkey to apply constant pressure on strategic areas held by ISIL in northwest Syria (2015c).

These statements reveal the importance of measures taken to help protect US allies and the extent to which the US reliance on its alliance network also shapes the variety of means available to implement US foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East.

Conclusion

This chapter, the second in Part I of this thesis, closely examined various official documents released by the US Department of State between 2011 and 2015. Its two sections distinguished between statements of US foreign policy on Syria helping the Secretary of State, on the one hand, to express humanitarian concern and those, on the other hand, speaking to the pursuit of US national interests. This was done in an attempt to answer part of the thesis's key research question—that is, how does the United States justify its recent foreign policy on Syria? The following table 2, which contains a summary of the textual analysis conducted above, shows that US foreign policy represents the major aspects of the Syrian civil war, and that those representations reflect underlying ideational (democracy, human rights and Christianity) and material (hegemony, political economy and alliances) conditions constituting the socio-cultural context within which the State Department is situated.

Table 2 Collation of the primary sources of the US Department of State

	HUMANITARIANISM	NATIONAL INTERESTS
Assad Government		
- Removal of Assad	Democracy, human rights and Christianity	Hegemony
Moderate Rebels	Democracy	Hegemony
Radical Rebels	Human rights and Christianity	Hegemony
Sectarian Violence		Hegemony
Foreign Involvement		
- United States	Democracy, human rights and Christianity	Hegemony, political economy and alliances

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the US Department of State (2011-2015).

Like the previous chapter, the analysis in this chapter showed that the pursuit of national interest, which animated the US President's decision to take action by providing support to the moderate opposition and using force against the Assad Government and the Islamic State, was accompanied by humanitarian concerns conveyed through US foreign policy on Syria. While those representations expressing humanitarian concerns may have opened up space for new possibilities for action, it was the pursuit of national interests that appears to have prompted decisions to act. While many commonalities exist between the discursive practices of the White House and those of the US Department of State—largely because the latter is subordinate to the former within the US political system and, consequently, its bureaucrats seek to implement the direction set by the President—key differences are caused, in part, by the composition of the State Department's audience. Whereas the US Department of State engages with the wider international community of states and global civil society, the US President must also consider his domestic audience at all times as well. The primacy enjoyed by the US President in setting the direction of his country's foreign policy also shapes the textual representations made by the US Mission to the United Nations, which is the object of analysis in the next chapter.

Ch. 5 US Mission to the United Nations

The US Mission to the UN is an important component of the US Department of State. The US Mission occupies a permanent seat on the Security Council, which places it at the centre of the organ primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security, including leading the international community's responses to contemporary armed conflict in general and the Syrian civil war in particular. As a permanent member of that Council, the US Mission can cast its veto over any substantive resolution. Taking its cue from the direction set by the US President and acting in accordance with the approach taken by the US Secretary of State, the US Mission to the UN deserves special consideration as part of the US political system. This is due not only to its position on the Security Council and its concomitant power of veto but also to its ongoing proximity to the world's diplomatic community and secretariat staff of the international organisation. Drawing on two of the three key elements of Fairclough's CDA model, this chapter offers a detailed analysis of text extracted from fifteen important official documents released between 2011 and 2015 by the US Mission to the UN.[3] It focuses on the ways in which the US Ambassador, and her diplomats, represent key aspects of the Syrian civil war—specifically, the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition, sectarian violence and foreign involvement. It also deals with those already-mentioned possibilities for action created by the US president's representational practices, including, specifically, support for the moderate opposition within Syria as well as direct

[3] The official documents produced by the UN Mission to the United Nations drawn on here are, as follows: *Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Security Council Adoption on the Situation in the Middle East (Syria)* (US Mission to the UN, 2011a); *Statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the Syria Human Rights Resolution in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee* (US Mission to the UN, 2011b); *Statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the UN General Assembly Resolution on Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2012a); *UN Security Council Presidential Statement on Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2012b); *Statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the UN General Assembly Resolution on Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2012c); *Statement by Spokesperson Erin Pelton on Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2013a); *Statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the UN Investigation into Chemical Weapons Use in Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2013b); *Statement in the UN General Assembly by Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo, U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the Resolution on Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2013c); *Remarks by Ambassador Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Acting U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at an Informal General Assembly Meeting with the Syria Commission of Inquiry* (US Mission to the UN, 2013d); *Remarks at a Briefing by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the Final Report by the UN Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2013e); *Explanation of Vote at a Security Council Session on Humanitarian Access in Syria by U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Samantha Power* (US Mission to the UN, 2014a); *Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, after a Security Council Vote on a Resolution on Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2014b); *Remarks at a Security Council Session on the Humanitarian Situation in Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2015a); *Explanation of Vote at the Adoption of Resolution 2209 on Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2015b); and *Remarks at the United Nations Security Council Meeting on Syria* (US Mission to the UN, 2015c). All sources cited in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are from the US Mission to the UN.

military action against both Assad's Government and the Islamic State. The chapter finds that the diplomatic discourse on the Syrian civil war is just as concerned with protecting and advancing US national interests as it is with the desperate humanitarian situation in Syria. This is an important recurring theme emerging from the first three chapters of this part of the thesis.

Diplomatic Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

This first section examines the ways in which US diplomats represent key aspects of the civil war in Syria—namely, the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition groups, sectarian violence and the role played by foreign involvement—by presenting a detailed analysis of text extracted from fifteen important official documents, produced by the US Mission to the UN between 2011 and 2015, which express humanitarian concern about the wellbeing of Syrians caught up in the crisis. It finds that certain ideological conditions inform these representations. It also finds that these representational practices not only reflect and re-inscribe the primacy enjoyed by the US President in setting his country's foreign policy, but are also consistent with the approach taken the US Secretary of State. The key differences among these various representations lie in the different location of each institution within the US political system and the specific audiences with which they routinely engage.

Assad Government

Even though Iran disagrees with the United States, the US Mission to the UN reiterates the portrayal of Assad as a brutal authoritarian dictator, which was previously described by both the White House and the US Department of State. The Mission's statements call attention to the fact that "the Assad regime, drawing upon an arsenal of heavy weapons, aircraft, ballistic missiles, and—potentially—chemical weapons, has killed or injured untold numbers of civilians who for many months manifested their opposition purely through peaceful protest" (2013c). The Mission also explains that "those who oppose this [failed] resolution and give cover to a brutal regime will have to answer to the Syrian people—and, indeed, to people across the region who are pursuing the same universal aspirations" (2011a) and that "today, the United Nations General Assembly spoke up for the people of Syria and against the Asad Regime, which has repeatedly gone to horrific lengths to silence dissent" (2011b). In so doing, the Mission continues to depict the Assad Government as a threat to the safety and wellbeing of the Syrian people. This representation of the Syrian people as innocent, but for their

peaceful protest, underscores the extent to which they deserve humanitarian support from the diplomatic community.

Reproducing Obama's calls for President Bashar al-Assad to step aside and let go of power in Syria, the US Mission also urges the diplomatic community to assist with the potential transition to democracy. This is evident when the Mission stated that "it is clear that we need a Syrian-led peaceful political transition" (2013c) and in the following two extracts:

> A Syrian-led political transition leading to a democratic, plural political system, in which citizens are equal regardless of their affiliations, ethnicities or beliefs, including through commencing a comprehensive political dialogue between the Syrian government and the whole spectrum of the Syrian opposition (2012b); and
>
> This is about whether this Council, during a time of sweeping change in the Middle East, will stand with peaceful protestors crying out for freedom—or with a regime of thugs with guns that tramples human dignity and human rights (2011a).

Here, we can see the Mission using its representation of the civilians' humanitarian plight, contrasted against the brutality of the authoritarian regime, as a means to foster support for democratic change. This approach is underscored by American diplomats' deeply-held commitment to democracy as the preferred model of governance.

The Mission, moreover, continues to describe the Assad Government's callous use of violence against civilians as a means of undermining that government's credibility and legitimacy to rule in Syria. As the US Ambassador explains, "although more people in Syria need humanitarian aid than ever before, the Assad regime also seems more intent on denying aid and causing civilian harm than ever before" (2015a) and "despite having acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Assad regime has again demonstrated its brutality by turning to chlorine as another barbaric weapon in its arsenal against the Syrian people" (2015b). US diplomats go even further to single out for criticism Russia, a fellow veto-welding power, for rejecting the following language at the Security Council: "The members of the Security Council also condemned the Syrian government's continued, indiscriminate use of heavy weaponry against civilians" (2013a). The Mission also emphasises the scale and intensity of the humanitarian crisis unfolding as a direct result of the policies and actions of the Assad Government. This is conveyed by the following series of examples:

> The heinous, sustained attacks on innocent civilians that the Syrian regime continues to launch on a daily basis (2013a);
>
> This report authoritatively confirms what we already know—chemical weapons have been used in Syria to kill hundreds of people (2013e);
>
> Whatever has or has not transpired in this Security Council for the last three years, the Syrian people have had the grave misfortune of living in the real world (2014a);
>
> I refer to him and his security forces, who pummel civilian neighborhoods with barrel bombs; his snipers who delight in picking off children who are walking with their parents, so as to watch both suffer unbearably (2014a); and
>
> In the year since the resolution was adopted, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Assad regime has dropped at least 1,950 barrel bombs, which have killed at least 6,480 people, 95 percent of whom were civilians (2015a).

The implication here is that the diplomatic community could be doing more to rescue the Syrian people from Assad's relentless brutality.

According to the US Ambassador, the violence of the Assad Government is an affront to the norms of behaviour expected by the international community, particularly the diplomatic community operating within the UN. More specifically, the Mission stated that:

> The Asad regime has deliberately unleashed violence, torture, and persecution against peaceful protesters, human rights defenders, and their families (2011a);
>
> Today's measure, co-sponsored by 61 states, including the United States and key Arab partners, condemns human rights abuses by the Syrian regime, including the killing, arbitrary imprisonment, and torture of civilians, including children (2011b);
>
> The United States accepted all elements of the Russian draft statement and merely requested the addition of language concerning the regime's brutal attacks against the Syrian people (2013a);
>
> At long last the Security Council has spoken clearly and unanimously about the devastating humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Syria (2014a);
>
> This real world is what was recounted recently by the Secretary General when he informed this Council of the unspeakable abuses being committed against children, including kidnapping, sexual violence, beatings with whips, electric shocks, and imprisonment without cause (2014a); and

> There is other unfinished work from that resolution including ending the systematic targeting of medical facilities and schools and the monstrous use of barrel bombs against civilian areas (2014b).

These statements not only embody a concern for the serious human rights violations occurring in Syria, but also reflect the deeply-held idea that the US is a key protector of individual human rights within global politics.

Moderate Opposition

The US Mission to the UN presents certain moderate opposition groups, which are fighting in the Syrian civil war but which are sometimes also referred to as rebels, in a favourable light because the US Government actively supports them. It presents these rebels to the diplomatic community as a force to at least partly confront Assad and, as signalled in the following statement, a key actor that can help curtail this ongoing humanitarian emergency: "Let's ask ourselves who has helicopters in Syria? Certainly not the opposition. Only the regime does and we have seen them use their helicopters in countless other attacks on innocent Syrians using barrel bombs" (2015b). This representation is entirely consistent with the value placed on the inalienable and universal individual human rights by many Americans and the self-appointed status of the US as a protector of those rights.

Radical Opposition

Conversely, the US Mission to the UN describes radical Sunni Islamist groups involved in the fighting in Syria as regular violators of those important human rights. As the US Ambassador states: "I refer to terrorist groups, like al-Nusra and ISIL, who in the name of revolution have—in parts of Syria—imposed a new terror on Syrians, supplementing Assad's dictatorial fanaticism with religious fanaticism" (2014a) before lamenting that "in December, four mass graves were discovered in Deir ez-Zor, containing the bodies of some of the hundreds of people abducted by ISIL months before" (2015a). The Ambassador echoes the US president and his Secretary of State when explaining that "now, terrorist groups like ISIL have committed horrific abuses against Syrians, and we must be absolutely adamant and united in our condemnation of those horrors, which are on the rise" (2015a). These three statements reveal the horror evoked by the brutality and extreme depravity of the Islamic State's human rights abuses, an affront to the key ideals upon which the US political system

was founded, but also crimes so serious that they are of grave concern to the diplomatic community.

Moreover, the US Mission to the UN singles out Christian groups for special concern when it stated that: "We condemn in the strongest possible terms ISIL's attacks on February 23 on Assyrian Christian villages in the northeast Syrian province of Hasakeh, where they kidnapped hundreds of civilians, including women, children, and older persons" (2015a). Statements such as these hint at the important role played by religion in informing and shaping the evolution of the US political system.

Sectarian Violence

Like the White House and the US Department of State, the US Mission to the UN expresses concern over the impact that sectarian strife will have by deepening religious cleavages between Shia-ruled Iran and the Lebanese Shiite militia, Hezbollah, which, as mentioned, assist the Assad Government in the Syrian civil war on the one hand, and Sunni believers on the other. In particular, the US Ambassador noted that "recent military action by the Syrian regime in Qusayr, Homs, and elsewhere, assisted by Hezbollah and Iran, has killed thousands of civilians and caused tremendous humanitarian suffering" (2013d). This human suffering is an affront to deeply-held US ideals and values, and representing this deepening social divide is another means of fostering humanitarian concern among members of the diplomatic community.

Foreign Involvement

The US Mission to the UN conveys—and does so, unsurprisingly, in a positive light—the efforts of the US Government to foster unity of purpose among the wider international community on the question of Syria. This is reflected by the following statements:

> The United States continues to believe that the best way forward is a political solution based on the Geneva Action Group Communiqué of June, 2012—that is, a transfer of power to a transitional governing body with full executive powers based on mutual consent (2013d);
>
> The truth is that nothing would do more to bolster the fight against the terrorists than a broadly supported diplomatic process that gives the Syrian people a real choice—not a choice between Assad or Daesh, but between war and peace (2015c);

> The U.S. will continue working with the international community to press for an end to the violence and human rights abuses in Syria (2011b);
>
> We welcome the Syrian Opposition Coalition's June 5th decision to assist the Commission in the fulfillment of its mandate, including in opposition-controlled areas, and we hope this commitment will allow the Commission to gain greater clarity of abuses on the ground (2013d);
>
> Our goal here today is to ensure that help is received by people who will die without it—and that innocent civilians are not killed while waiting for that assistance to arrive (2014a);
>
> The sustained violence has created a severe humanitarian crisis with more than 1.4 million refugees and 4.25 million internally displaced persons within Syria (2013c); and
>
> In the August 21 attack in Eastern Ghouta alone, which the U.S. assesses with high confidence was carried out by the regime, over 1,400 people were killed, making it the worst chemical weapons attack the world has seen in more than 25 years (2013e).

The US Government's concern is well placed, moreover, as the "only question is how many more women, men and children—from demonstrators on Syria's streets to those taking shelter in homes and hospitals—will suffer or be killed by Assad before that transition begins" (2012a).

The US Mission also draws attention to its efforts to foster support for its policies within the wider international community, particularly at the UN. The Mission heralds, for example, the fact that "the United States will continue to work with like-minded partners both at the United Nations and elsewhere, including with the over 130 countries who supported today's resolution, to advance Syria's transition, provide humanitarian support to those in need, and unify and strengthen the political opposition" (2012c).

Other statements made by the US Mission convey the action of the United Nations so far. Consider the appreciative and encouraging tone of the following extracts:

> By overwhelmingly adopting its first-ever resolution on Syria's human rights abuses, the General Assembly's Third Committee has sent a clear message that it does not accept abuse and death as a legitimate path to retaining power (2011b);
>
> This resolution strongly condemns Assad's 11-month campaign of murder and torture. It demands an end to the killing machine. It demands that the Syrian government release all political prisoners (2012a);

> A rapid transition to democracy in Syria has garnered the resounding support of the international community. Change must now come (2012a);
>
> Today, the UN General Assembly sent a clear message to the people of Syria: the world is with you (2012a);
>
> The Security Council underscores the central importance of a peaceful political settlement to the Syrian crisis (2012b);
>
> Today's General Assembly resolution, supported by an overwhelming majority of UN member states, strongly condemns the Syrian authorities' increasing use of heavy weapons and its ongoing and intensifying human rights abuses (2012c);
>
> The General Assembly demanded once more that the first step in the cessation of violence be made by the Assad regime (2012c);
>
> Importantly, the resolution also welcomes the Arab League's July 22nd decision, which calls for Assad to step down and for a transitional government to be formed (2012c);
>
> Adopting this resolution will send a clear message that the political solution we all seek is the best way to end the suffering of the people of Syria (2013c);
>
> We adopt this resolution today a year and a half after this Council adopted a binding resolution in the wake of a horrific, gruesome chemical weapons attack that left more than a thousand civilians and hundreds of children killed (2015b); and
>
> By approving Resolution 2254 today, this council is sending a clear message to all concerned that the time is now to stop the killing in Syria and lay the groundwork for a government that the long-suffering people of that battered land can support (2015c).

Echoing the calls from the US President and his Secretary of State that President Bashar al-Assad should step down from power, the US Ambassador to the United Nations seeks to build diplomatic support within the UN and among the diplomatic community for a transition from authoritarian rule to the establishment of democracy in Syria.

The US Mission also relays the concern expressed by the international community at Assad's violence targeting civilians and the resulting gross human violations. This is illustrated by the following series of statements:

> This resolution also authorizes the UN to cross conflict lines between regime and opposition forces to deliver aid, and the Syrian regime, which is systematically denying cross line humanitarian assistance, must heed this obligation (2014b);

> The Security Council reiterates its call for the Syrian authorities to allow immediate, full and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to all populations in need of assistance, in accordance with international law and guiding principles of humanitarian assistance (2012b);
>
> The Security Council calls upon all parties in Syria, in particular the Syrian authorities, to cooperate fully with the United Nations and relevant humanitarian organizations to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance (2012b);
>
> We came here, as representatives from around the world, to do what we could to try to help people who are in desperate need of help to live and breathe as we do (2014a);
>
> It is remarkable to the world that it has taken three years for the Security Council to recognize basic facts and to call for such basic principles of humanity, simply that Syrians in need should not be held under siege (2014a);
>
> As we sit here today, nearly 11 million Syrians are struggling to survive the worst humanitarian crisis in the world (2014b);
>
> The recently released UN Commission of Inquiry report on Syria documents many attacks on civilians. One of them occurred on Aleppo's al-Shaar neighbourhood on November 6th (2015a); and
>
> Let us proceed with confidence from here and a determination to end this war, eliminate the terrorist threat, and enable the people of Syria to return safely to their homes (2015c).

The US Government's engagement with other parts of the wider international community is also represented in the official documents, as follows:

> During this season of change, the people of the Middle East can now see clearly which nations have chosen to ignore their calls for democracy and instead prop up desperate, cruel dictators (2011a);
>
> The High Commissioner for Human Rights has already warned that the Syrian government's appalling actions might amount to crimes against humanity (2011a);
>
> An overwhelming majority of UN member states have backed the plan put forward by the Arab League to end the suffering of Syrians. Bashar al-Assad has never been more isolated (2012a);
>
> Humanitarian workers seeking to assist injured individuals should be given complete access to provide medical care and assistance as needed (2013b);

> We're alarmed by the steadily increasing death toll, which the Secretary-General said last week has now surpassed 100,000. The Commission's reporting highlights the horrific situation that exists in Syria today (2013d);
>
> These humanitarian agencies will increase the supply of life-saving aid, including food to eat and medicine to care for the sick and injured (2014b); and
>
> It is estimated that 12.2 million people need humanitarian assistance in Syria. At this time last year, 9.3 million people were said to need humanitarian assistance. That's nearly three million more people who need aid to survive, in just a year (2015a).

These representations of foreign interventions, particularly the US Government's own efforts, reflect the progress made so far, but do so as a means of fostering further support from the diplomatic community and building on its momentum to resolve the Syrian question.

The above-offered analysis illustrates that the ideas of democracy, human rights and Christianity each shape the humanitarian concern expressed by American diplomats engaged in US foreign policy discourse on Syria. Yet, as this next section demonstrates, while this humanitarian concern may find full expression within the UN's conference rooms, emphasis on national interests is somewhat muted here because the intended audience for these statements is heavily invested in cooperation and consensus as well as in promoting the role of international institutions, such as organisations and law.

Diplomatic Representations and National Interests

This second section continues the chapter's examination of the ways in which US diplomats represent key aspects of the civil war in Syria; namely, the Assad Government, the radical opposition and the role played by foreign involvement. It offers a detailed analysis of text extracted from the same fifteen official documents examined above, though the statements selected here reveal the significance of the pursuit of US national interests. Certain material conditions emerge as important shapers of US foreign policy. The section finds, moreover, that the representational practices of US diplomats posted to the UN reflect the primacy enjoyed by the US President in setting his country's foreign policy while being consistent with the approach taken the US Secretary of State. The key differences among these various representations continue to lie in the different location of each institution within the US political system and the specific audiences with which they routinely engage.

Assad Government and the Radical Opposition

Few of the documents produced by the US Mission to the UN, which reveal the significance of US national interests, give focus to the belligerent actors involved in the Syrian civil war. In this respect, the US Mission differs from other parts of the US political system, perhaps because American diplomats think their humanitarian rhetoric will be better received by the wider international community than remarks revealing their pursuit of national interests. The US Mission does, however, gives focus to the Assad Government's unlawful use of chemical weapons: "The Syrian regime's use of any toxic chemical as a weapon is prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention and constitutes a violation of resolution 2118" (2015b). Moreover, these documents do express the "hope that a nationwide ceasefire can go into effect, excluding only Daesh and al-Nusrah and any other group that we might decide at some time to designate" (2015c). These representations of actors involved in the civil war in Syria, albeit minimal compared to other expressions of US foreign policy through other institutions, reflect the US's efforts to maintain and entrench its status as global hegemon and to expand its influence in the Middle East by blocking the spread of radical Sunni Islamist groups.

Foreign Involvement

The diplomats of the US Mission to the UN also present the United States Government as a benevolent and constructive partner seeking to build support among the diplomatic community for any intervention in the Syrian crisis to prevent the further stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. This is amply demonstrated in the following series of statements:

> The United States welcomes today's announcement by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon regarding an investigation into the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria (2013b);
>
> The United States supports an investigation that pursues any and all credible allegations of the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria, and underscores the importance of launching this investigation as swiftly as possible (2013b);
>
> As the UN proceeds with these efforts, we will also continue to work closely with our partners to obtain further information regarding any and all credible allegations of the potential or actual use of chemical weapons in Syria (2013b);
>
> The United States strongly and unequivocally condemns any use of chemical weapons (2013e);

> We are well on our way to achieving our shared goal of eradicating Syria's chemical weapons program by the middle of next year (2013e); and
>
> I call upon all Council members, and all members of the international community, to join in pressing Damascus—and any actor who fails to comply—to fulfill the terms of this resolution on a comprehensive and urgent basis (2014a).

At the same time, the acting US Ambassador depicts Hezbollah as a destabilising force in Middle Eastern affairs when she states that "we again condemn Hezbollah's direct role in hostilities, which escalates violence inside Syria, incites instability in Lebanon, and inflames regional tensions" (2013d). The US Ambassador also cites the rise and spread of terrorism as key reasons for the military action taken by the US Government when stating that "we know that Daesh can never be allowed to gain control in Syria. So we have a global imperative here to deal with a terrorist entity, but also to end the civil war and to bring legitimacy back to the governance of Syria" (2015c) and that "we are determined, with our coalitional partners, to degrade and defeat the terrorist organization known as Daesh" (2015c).

All of these examples signal that US foreign policy on Syria, at least to the extent that it is being implemented by the US mission to the UN, is driven by the US desire to maintain its status as hegemon in world affairs and its ability to exert influence within the Middle East region.

Finally, the statements made by US Mission to the UN also give focus to the importance of other actors operating within the Middle East region. The US Ambassador, for example, explained that "the Asad regime's crimes have won a chorus of condemnation from the region, including the Gulf Cooperation Council, which demanded an immediate end to what it called Asad's 'killing machine'" (2011a) and that "last week in Riyadh, with the support of His Majesty King Salman and his government, a broad cross-section of Syrian opposition representatives came together to form a high committee for negotiation" (2015c). This reflects the importance of the US alliance network in the Middle East. Here, then, the above analysis reveals that US foreign policy discourse regarding the Syrian civil war is shaped by the US pursuit of hegemony and the US commitment to its alliances. This is evident even though the number of statements expressing this is relatively low, since the intended audience of the diplomatic community value cooperation ahead of self-interest.

Conclusion

Just as the previous chapters in Part I of this thesis have shown that the pursuit of US national interests accompanies humanitarian concern, so too has the analysis offered in this chapter. And, as table 3 below shows in its summary of this analysis, certain ideational and material conditions have shaped these diplomatic representations of the civil war in Syria.

Table 3 Collation of the primary sources of the US Mission to the UN

	HUMANITARIANISM	**NATIONAL INTEREST**
Assad Government		
- Removal of Assad	Democracy and human rights	Hegemony
Moderate Rebels	Human rights	
Radical Rebels	Human rights and Christianity	Hegemony
Sectarian Violence	Human rights	
Foreign Involvement		
- United States	Democracy and human rights	Hegemony and alliances

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the US Mission to the UN (2011-2015).

However, in spite of this commonalty, a key difference between the discursive practices of the US Mission to the UN and the White House and the US Department of State lies in the particular audience in New York, that is, the representatives of the world's diplomatic community. This audience does not value Washington's realpolitik, but rather, does value cooperation, dialogue and consensus. It values the roles played by institutions, such as international organisations and the rule of international law.

Ch. 6 US Media

As a privately-owned commercial enterprise, the Fox News Channel (FNC) is not a political institution in the sense that the presidency or the bureaucracy are a formal part of the US political system. That does not mean it is unimportant, however. Rather, as part of the fourth estate, US news media organisations, including FNC, offer a form of oversight over the operations of the machinery of government, thereby providing further checks and balances on the use of power. This chapter draws on Fairclough's CDA model, particularly the two elements of text production and discursive practices, as a means of framing its analysis of fifteen media reports, published between 2011 and 2015, that concern various aspects of the Syrian civil war.[4] Like the preceding chapters in Part I of this thesis, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with media reporting that reflects strong humanitarian concerns for the people of Syria whereas the second section examines those reports that signal the pursuit of US national interests. While both sections demonstrate the ways in which various aspects of the civil war in Syria are represented by FNC to its audiences, both domestically within the US and internationally, the chapter also considers its treatment of the new possibilities for action created by official discursive practices. While much of the media reporting examined here offers a pious reproduction (see Shapiro, 1988) of official US foreign policy on Syria, criticism of President Obama frequently appears. Nevertheless, this chapter, the last of the main chapters in Part I of this thesis, finds that the FNC's representations of the Syrian civil war are informed by the pursuit of US national interests and by humanitarian concerns.

[4] These media reports are, specifically: *It's Time to Bring Assad's Regime in Syria to an End* (Fox News Channel, 2011a); *The Peaceful Way to Bring Down Syria's Assad* (Fox News Channel, 2011b); *Obama's Deafening Silence on Syria* (Fox News Channel, 2012a); *No Easy Solution for Syria* (Fox News Channel, 2012b); *Brutal Syria Conflict is Obama's Shame* (Fox News Channel, 2012c); *US Officials Say More are Becoming in Favor of Arming Syria Rebels* (Fox News Channel, 2013a); *The Only Way Forward on Syria* (Fox News Channel, 2013b); *Arming Syria's Rebels Not the Answer, Here's What US Must Do* (Fox News Channel, 2013c); *Obama's Hesitation on Syria Threatens U.S. Prosperity* (Fox News Channel, 2013d); *A Real Choice for Syria* (Fox News Channel, 2013e); *Obama, Kerry Surrender Syria and the Middle East to Iran* (Fox News Channel, 2014a); *Syria's Christians Face New Threat - 'Convert, Submit to Islam or Face Sword'* (Fox News Channel, 2014b); *ISIS Control of Syria Reportedly Expands since Start of US-led Airstrikes* (Fox News Channel, 2015a); *US Has Screened about 1,200 Moderate Syrian Rebels for Training* (Fox News Channel, 2015b); and *US Officials: Iran Invited to Next Round of Syria Talks* (Fox News Channel, 2015c). All of the primary sources cited in this chapter are taken from the Fox News Channel, unless otherwise stated.

Fox News Channel's Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

This chapter's first section offers a detailed textual analysis of fifteen media reports released by FNC between 2011 and 2015 which, focusing on the civil war in Syria, express humanitarian concerns. In particular, this section demonstrates the ways in which FNC represents the Assad Government and the moderate and radical oppositions—as the central belligerents involved in the fighting—and sectarian violence and foreign involvement, as key aspects of the Syrian civil war. The analysis below indicates that the representations offered by this US media organisation reflect and re-inscribe the same ideational conditions shaping the representations offered by White House, the US State Department and the US Mission to the United Nations, though there is some evidence here of critical engagement with US foreign policy.

Assad Government

Having examined numerous media reports issued by FNC, I found a lot of material describing the Assad Government. These reports show, for example, Assad's brutal oppression of peaceful protest in Syria. Consider the following extracts: "Friday prayers in mosques are followed by peaceful demonstrations, to which the regime reflexively responds with brute force, leading to dozens of dead protestors" (2011a) and "in the months since Syrian president Bashar Assad first began gunning down democratic protesters in March, the United Nations reports that the death toll has reached over 2,200, and the number grows every day" (2011b). Reporting by FNC also conveys the illegal behaviour of the Syrian government when it writes: "They are the hundreds of Palestinians bussed by the government to the Israeli border in a cynical effort to deflect attention from its campaign of murdering its own citizens" (2011a) and "Assad can participate in a 'political transition,' but would have to leave power at the end of the process if Syria could ever move on from a war that has killed at least 250,000 people and forced more than 11 million from their homes" (2015c). In so doing, this US media organisation echoes the Obama Administration's call for President Bashar al-Assad to step aside in Syria.

Reporting from FNC goes further still to suggest that Syrian people should be rescued from Assad's despotic rule, representing as they do the face of the humanitarian crisis in the Syrian civil war. This is illustrated by the following extracts:

> Then, on Saturday, the funerals, and accompanying demonstrations, are followed by more deaths resulting from the Syrian policy of shoot first, ask questions later (2011a);
>
> The reflexive response for a regime that has shown no tolerance for any dissent is disturbingly predictable. It likely will involve more carnage, which explains why Syrians are fleeing the northern towns (2011a); and
>
> For Syria is a ticking time bomb that could detonate at the very least the ethnic massacre of scores of thousands of people: It could even unleash a Middle East-scale war pulling in Turkey, Israel and Iran (2012b).

Representing the Assad Government's human rights abuses in this way, these extracts reflect the official depiction of Assad as a brutal dictator by the US President and the bureaucracy, implicitly endorsing US foreign policy on Syria, which as explained in the preceding chapters, involves establishing democracy in Syria. Indeed, one news report surmises that: "It's a wonder the country is functioning at all, with so many living in fear of their government" (2011a). This also reflects the importance of human rights as an ideational condition underpinning the vitality of the fourth estate.

Moderate Opposition

A close examination of FNC reporting on Syria also reveals representations of the moderate opposition, particularly the FSA. Again, the reporting follows the lead of official US policy and the assistance it provides when it stated that the "current FSA and other opposition groups can be invited to aggregate in this region. This pluralist 'smaller Syria' would become the basis for liberation of the country—and the establishment of a pluralistic and peaceful society for all Syrians" (2013e). Underscoring this support of US foreign policy on Syria is a shared commitment between FNC reporters and US officials on the importance of individual human rights.

Radical Opposition

These reporters also follow the lead of US officials by describing radical Sunni Islamist groups negatively, especially when it comes to these groups' treatment of Christian minorities in the areas under their control. This is evident in the following series of extracts taken from FNC reporting:

> 'Convert. Submit to Islam. Or face the sword'. In recent days, the besieged Christian community in Raqqa—a city in northern Syria—has faced those three stark alternatives (2014b);
>
> The terrorist group known as ISIS—the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant—made their demands after seizing control of the region. They required the local Christians to renounce their faith and embrace Islam, assent to extreme subjugation, or face death (2014b);
>
> Raqqa's Christians are now subject to an extreme version of Islamic Shariah law, which among other things forbids them to repair their war-torn churches, worship or pray in public, ring church bells, or wear crosses or other symbols of their faith (2014b); and
>
> Can you imagine a gang of hateful, heavily armed terrorists showing up at your door? Your terrified family is with you, and maybe a few friends. An angry spokesman orders all of you to choose—at gunpoint, then and there—to convert to Islam, surrender, or die (2014b).

The importance attached to protecting Christian communities and the significance of Christianity to the US political system and its political culture are in evidence here.

Sectarian Violence

Reporting by FNC also draws attention to the conduct of the fighting in the following extract: "The Syrian civil war is now down to a fight between the mass murdering, chemical-weapons-using Assad government, and the Al Qaeda-affiliated, radical extremists" (2013c). This example shows the concern for individual human rights shared by FNC reporters and those key US foreign policymakers.

Foreign Involvement

Moreover, FNC reporting offers representations of Iran's engagement in the Syrian civil war, particularly its active support of the Assad Government. In particular, it reports that: "Iran has critical influence on the Syrian regime and could play a strong role in getting Bashar al-Assad and his government to accept a political transition" (2013b). At the same time, FNC reporting offers frequent and detailed representations of the US's engagement in the armed conflict. Consider the following extracts which foreground the humanitarian concern animating recent US foreign policy on Syria:

> The two-year civil war has left an estimated 70,000 people dead and hundreds of thousands of refugees (2013a);

> The U.S. has provided humanitarian aid to the Syrians and helped bolster the defenses along the borders in neighboring Turkey and Jordan, but has preferred to let other nations send in more lethal assistance (2013a);
>
> Americans don't like to stand by while innocent people are killed and watch a human disaster unfold. It goes against our very fiber. We feel compelled to *DO* something (2013c);
>
> Secretary Kerry should have a green light from the Obama administration to offer a comprehensive diplomatic settlement among all parties, while continuing to offer generous humanitarian aid to millions in need (2013b); and
>
> We can provide humanitarian assistance to refugees who are living in refugee camps throughout the region (2013c).

The concern for Christian minorities previously expressed by the White House and the US Department of State is also conveyed in FNC reporting. This concern is captured in the following two examples:

> With U.S. and western help, the Kurds, Christians and Arabs who populate this region can establish a liberated zone with its cities and rivers and expanded airports that should serve as the receiving area for aid (2013e); and
>
> Those in the U.S. who are concerned about aiding two menacing forces can partner in this al Hasaka region with free and independent Kurds, Christians and Arabs (2013e).

This, of course, reveals the significance of Christianity to American political life.

Significantly, however, FNC does not always offer a pious reproduction of US official policy on Syria and its involvement in the civil war. Rather, it does offer some criticism of the Obama Administration's handling of the evolving situation. Consider the critical tone of the following series of extracts:

> One of the great mysteries of American foreign policy concerns the way President Obama has stayed mostly silent during the slaughter in Syria (2012a);
>
> After first coddling Syrian butcher Bashar al-Assad and calling him a reformer, the White House has turned its head from the carnage (2012a); and
>
> The humanitarian crisis and the Arab nation's noxious role as a helpmate to Iranian terrorism argue for at least strong verbal support, yet Obama is not even leading from behind. He's missing in inaction (2012a).

Here, then, the above analysis signals that, like the more formal parts of the US political system, media organisations reporting on the civil war in Syria is informed and shaped by a profound commitment to various ideas. Three ideational conditions, specifically democracy, individual human rights and Christianity, are a powerful influence over the humanitarian concerns expressed in the coverage provided by FNC. Yet, as the final section of this chapter illustrates, FNC reporting is also informed and shaped by certain material conditions that promote action in the name of protecting and advancing US national interests.

Fox News Channel's Representations and National Interests

This second section explores the ways in which FNC reporting represents the moderate and radical opposition, sectarian violence and foreign involvement in the civil war in Syria between 2011 and 2015 where the pursuit of US national interests come to the fore. This section finds that, despite criticism directed at the summit of the US political system, much of the FNC reporting analysed below results from discursive practices which both reflect and help reproduce certain material conditions that form part of the underlying socio-cultural context that give rise to US news media organisations.

Moderate Opposition

While my examination of the primary-source documents foregrounding US national interests did not, surprisingly, reveal any representations of the Assad Government (possibly because FNC audiences care more about the fate of other human beings than they do about despotic rulers), FNC reporting did offer a depiction of the moderate opposition. This representation mirrored the depiction offered by the US President and the bureaucracy, presenting the FSA in particular as a necessary and worthy recipient of US assistance. Consider the supportive tone of the following series of extracts:

> Discussions within the Obama administration in favor of providing arms to the Syrian rebels are gaining ground amid new indications that President Bashar Assad's regime may have launched additional chemical weapons attacks (2013a);
>
> There are discussions underway on how to bolster humanitarian assistance and how to engage even more closely with the opposition forces (2013a);
>
> The U.S. plans currently call for the arming and training of moderate rebels in Syria, associated with neither ISIS nor Assad. However, that plan is still some time from coming to fruition (2015a);

> The U.S. has screened about 1,200 moderate Syrian rebels who could participate in a new training program so they eventually can return to the fight against Islamic State insurgents who have taken control of large portions of Syria (2015b);
>
> The rebel fighters, who come from several moderate groups in Syria, will get training on basic military equipment and skills, including firearms, communications and command and control abilities (2015b);
>
> Once the Syrian fighters are trained, they might be able to help provide information to coalition forces conducting airstrikes against Islamic State militants (2015b);
>
> Congress passed legislation authorizing the military to arm and train moderate Syrian rebels, providing $500 million for the U.S. to train about 5,000 rebels over the next year (2015b); and
>
> Since last month, Russia has launched hundreds of airstrikes targeting what it says are the Islamic State and other terrorist groups. The Obama administration, NATO and others say most of the bombs are landing on moderate rebel militias, some backed by the CIA (2015c).

These extracts reveal that FNC implicitly support the US Government's intention to expand its influence in the Middle East in the name of the elimination of chemical weapons and counterterrorism while entrenching its status as global hegemon.

Radical Opposition

Reporting by FNC that offers representations of the Islamic State, however, express criticism of the US President's handling of the situation. This is illustrated by the following two extracts: "The Islamic State terror group reportedly has increased the amount of territory they control in Syria as the U.S.-led bombing campaign approaches its four-month anniversary" (2015a) and "the Journal reports that ISIS' expansion of control can partially be attributed to the U.S. focus on Iraq, where it is working closely with Baghdad to roll back gains made by ISIS last summer. However, as a result, ISIS fighters are flowing into Syria unchecked" (2015a). In so doing, FNC offers strong support for recent US foreign policy and endorses the US intention to increase its influence in the Middle East by blocking the spread of radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, including through the ongoing use of armed force.

Sectarian Violence

The coverage of the civil war in Syria provided by FNC pays attention to sectarian strife between Shiites and Sunnis, reminding its audience that Shia-ruled Iran and the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah support the Alawite-dominated Assad Government in this conflict. As one report explains: "all of these positions could lead to war with Iran and Hezbollah—or in view of this administration's natural tendency toward retreat could culminate in another victory for radicals" (2013e). This reveals FNC actively supports US foreign policy on Syria, especially where it enables the US to maintain its status as a global hegemon and to expand its influence in the Middle East by removing the anti-American Assad government.

Foreign Involvement

Reporting by FNC gives focus to the role played by Iran in fuelling the civil war, as the following extracts demonstrate:

> As the weeks go by, and the intensity of the repression rises, with the regime using tanks and helicopter gunships to slaughter Syrians, as well as counsel from its ally, Iran, so, too, have the levels of defiance and courage surged (2011a);
>
> It stands to reason that regardless of the result, any Iranian involvement in the Syrian negotiations will strengthen the reign of Bashar Assad or his ilk and help to perpetuate the genocide of the Syrian people (2014a);
>
> Iran has backed Assad's government throughout the conflict, fighting alongside the Syrian military, and is seen by Western-backed rebels and U.S. partners in the region as a major source of the bloodshed (2015c);
>
> Time is running short for all who have supported Assad, tacitly or explicitly, to explain themselves. Among them, first and foremost the Iranians, for whom Assad is a key client (2012c); and
>
> Any realistic Western efforts to end the violence have to recognize the mortal terror and desperation driving the regime in Damascus and the implacable determination of the governments in Tehran and Moscow to support it to the last breath (2012b).

The US media giant also shows the cooperation between Hezbollah and Iran that assists the Assad Government. This is illustrated by the following extracts: "Nor can we forget Hezbollah, which leads Lebanon's government and reportedly has hundreds of its terrorist number among those fighting to preserve the Assad regime" (2012c) and "if Assad were to

fall, then Syria's old ally Hezbollah, the Shi'ite Party of God in Lebanon, would be suddenly isolated and ripe for the plucking by Israel to the south and its many internal enemies in Lebanon. The Iranians are determined not to let that happen" (2012b). In so doing, FNC reporting casts a unsympathetic light upon Iran's considerable influence over the Assad Government. These representations indicate that FNC support US foreign policy on Syria, particularly where the US Government pursues its status of global hegemony and seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East.

Reporting on the situation in Syria by FNC also shows both Russia and China supporting the Assad Government in its war. Consider the following three extracts:

> A possible U.N. Security Council resolution to condemn the Syrian crackdown, proposed by France and Britain after weeks of delay because of Chinese and Russian opposition, would be another important statement of international concern (2011a);
>
> The Russians who have armed and protected Assad as his people rose against him, blocking every attempt at Security Council action, throwing spanners into the wheels of the 'friends of Syria' group (2012c); and
>
> The Russians, like the Iranians, don't want Bashir Assad to go at all. They regard him as a primary and dependable ally in a world where they can't take reliable, dependable allies for granted anymore (2012b).

These remarks are entirely consistent with the overall thrust of official US foreign policy, which reflects a desire to maintain its status as a global hegemon by balancing against Russian and Chinese efforts to support the Syrian government.

Media reporting on the Syrian civil war also provides coverage of US interventions, as the following series of extracts show:

> Officials say there is a growing realization that, under increasing pressure from Congress and other allied nations, the U.S. might soon have to do more for the Free Syrian Army (2013a);
>
> Obama signaled Tuesday he would consider U.S. military action against Syria if 'hard, effective evidence' is found to bolster intelligence that chemical weapons have been used in the civil war (2013a);
>
> The U.S. diplomatic agenda with Iran should be broadened beyond the nuclear issue to address the crisis in Syria (2013b);

> We can make sure we know where Assad's chemical weapons are stashed and work with our allies in the region to seize or destroy them before they fall into the hands of forces that would use them against us (2013c);
>
> In the Middle East, tribal politics and insidious power grabs are par for the course. Thus, the only effective way to deal with regional hegemons like Iran is from a position of strength, not appeasement (2014a); and
>
> The U.S. military has been launching targeted airstrikes against the Islamic State group in Iraq since August, and expanded the campaign into Syria in September (2015b).

This coverage of US foreign policy on Syria is sympathetic to, and supportive of, US interventions in the Syrian conflict where these occur in the name of the elimination of chemical weapons and counterterrorism, particular on those occasions when the US Government assists selected moderate rebels, such as the FSA, as a means of opposing the Assad Government and radical Sunni Islamist groups.

Reporting by FNC also gives focus to the conduct of America's allies in the region. The tone of the following extracts indicate a general support of the US government's reliance on its alliance network in the Middle East. Consider the following extracts:

> One of the Syrians who breached the Golan Heights border fence was found later in the day strolling in Tel Aviv. All who illegally crossed into Israel were found and returned to Syria with stern warnings not to try again (2011a);
>
> Turkey's decision to host a gathering of Syrian exiles, and the decision by some who daringly crossed the border from Syria to participate, reflects a growing impatience with the regime's obstinacy (2011a);
>
> Islamists, whether Shi'a or Sunni, are a threat to the United States, Israel, and global security as a whole (2014a); and
>
> Washington had held out the possibility of Iran joining the discussions in future, but is only now offering Tehran a seat after days of behind-the-scenes negotiation, particularly with its regional rival Saudi Arabia (2015c).

Even though the FNC representation of these foreign interventions in the Syrian civil war reflect those material conditions which inform and shape other political institutions responsible for setting and conducting US foreign policy, not all of its reporting is a pious reproduction of official policy. There is, in other words, some criticism of the Obama

Administration's treatment of the unfolding situation in Syria. The following extracts offer the harshest criticism of the US President and his Secretary of State:

> President Obama is fond of red lines and making threats—to Iran, to North Korea, to Syria. His credibility is already damaged (2013c);
>
> The president wanted this limited strike to force a weakened Assad to negotiate a settlement to the conflict. But seasoned observers know there will be no mediated solutions to this conflict. It has gone too far and divisions are too deep (2013e); and
>
> Iran has been the puppet master behind Assad's killing machine, and yet Secretary Kerry welcomes them to the table with open arms, saying that we are 'happy' to have 'Iran be helpful' (2014a).

Moreover, FNC also draws attention to the negative social impact flowing on from Obama's sanctions targeting Damascus, as the following series of extracts demonstrates:

> The International Institute of Finance predicts that Syria's economy, already limping along under existing sanctions, will contract by 3 percent this year (2011b);
>
> The U.S. and its European allies will want to persuade Chinese, Russian, and Indian energy companies to suspend their operations in Syria, at least until the violence comes to an end - an implicit, if not explicit, commitment to a post-Assad government (2011b);
>
> After an ongoing military campaign to uncertain ends in Libya, Washington and most European capitals understandably have no appetite for conflict in Damascus. But that doesn't mean we're without leverage. Assad has pressure points, and all we have to do is squeeze them (2011b);
>
> Imminent military action, especially in the Middle East, encourages fears of shortages and panic in oil markets (2013d);
>
> With mounting evidence that Syria used chemical weapons, oil prices have again jumped, and a prolonged debate in Congress could push gasoline above $4.00 (2013d); and
>
> Should the Congress approve military force, Iran could attack Israel or cut back on oil production, permanently pushing up prices. However, once U.S. strikes begin, if those consequences don't materialize, oil prices should fall back (2013d).

Despite its criticism of Obama, FNC reporting on this aspect of the Syrian civil war is shaped by the realities of the US political economy.

To sum up then, the analysis of FNC media reporting on the civil war in Syria between 2011 and 2015, conducted above in this section, demonstrates that the US-based media organisations do, to some extent, reproduce official US foreign policy on Syria, although there are frequent criticisms of President Obama's performance as the country's chief diplomat. The reason for this pious reproduction lies not in some sycophantic desire of the fourth estate to ingratiate itself with those welding executive and bureaucratic power in Washington, but rather, because US media organisations in general, and FNC in particular, are shaped by the very same material conditions that gave rise to the more formal institutions of the US political system. In other words, FNC reporters have in common with certain US politicians and officials the desire to see the US maintain its hegemonic status in global affairs, continue to benefit from and exploit its political economy, and maintain and extend its alliance network across the Middle East region.

Conclusion

Examining fifteen news media reports issued by FNC between 2011 and 2015, this chapter distinguished those reports which tended to justify recent US foreign policy on Syria in humanitarian terms from those reports that emphasised the importance of protecting and advancing US national interests. This allowed the chapter to address this thesis's key research question and the table below offers a summary of the detailed textual analysis presented above. It shows that FNC offered representations of the key aspects of the civil war in Syria—namely, the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition, sectarian violence and foreign involvement—and that these representations reflect both ideational conditions in the form of democracy, individual human rights and Christianity, and material conditions in the form of global hegemony, political economy and alliances.

Table 4 Collation of the media sources of the Fox News Channel

	HUMANITARIAN CONCERN	NATIONAL INTEREST
Assad Government		
- Removal of Assad	Democracy and human rights	
Moderate Rebels	Human rights	Hegemony
Radical Rebels	Christianity	Hegemony
Sectarian Violence	Human rights	Hegemony
Foreign Involvement		
- United States	Democracy, human rights and Christianity	Hegemony, political economy and alliances

Source: Author, based on the media sources of the Fox News Channel (2011-2015).

This chapter's analysis demonstrates not only that FNC reporting largely reflects official US foreign policy on Syria, but also that the pursuit of national interests accompanies concern expressed for the civilians caught up in the fighting. While FNC has many discursive practices in common with other institutions within the US political system, its reporting is created with a particular domestic audience in mind. While the foreign policymaking community within the US political system engage with the wider international community, FNC seeks to reach, and build, its market of news consumers within America. Having now completed a detailed and systemic analysis of recent US foreign policy on Syria, Part I of this thesis now closes by describing the ideational and material conditions that comprise the socio-cultural context that gives rise to the US political system and its foreign policy practices.

Conclusion to Part I:
Socio-Cultural Context of US Foreign Policy

Taken together, the four main chapters of Part I offered a detailed and systemic analysis of text produced by key institutions within the US political system. These preceding chapters produce knowledge that is original in that, firstly, it has used CDA to analyse the international dimension of the Syrian civil war—specifically US foreign policy on Syria—and, secondly, it presents the first sustained examination of humanitarianism and national self-interest emanating out from among key US foreign policy organisations. Rather than using discursive practice as a framing device to conduct more textual analysis, the conclusion to this Part now shifts its focus to examine the socio-cultural conditions that give rise to the possibilities of those institutions and their respective representative discursive practices. To that end, it explains 'democracy,' 'human rights' and 'Christianity' as three key ideational conditions and 'hegemony,' 'political economy' and 'alliances' as three key material conditions which, to varying degrees, inform and shape the foreign policy emerging out of the US political system. It then draws Part I of this thesis to a close.

Ideational Conditions

Outlining three key ideological features that form part of the underlying context of US foreign policy, this first section is divided into the following subsections: US democracy traditions and practices; individual human rights; and Christianity as American Puritan roots and American exceptionalism.

Democracy

The quintessential idea of a government of the people, by the people, for the people took hold in the American imagination as the country was being established. American democracy provided for the separation of powers with various checks and balances while allowing for self-government. Alexis de Tocqueville, one of the greater observers of American democracy, was deeply impressed by the effective and stable political system he saw operating in nineteenth Century America, especially when compared to European political systems which seemed archaic, semi-feudal and aristocratic (Craiutu & Jennings, 2004). The separation of

Church and State produced something of a harmony between religious organisations and democratic institutions, preserving certain freedoms and ensuring various tolerances, which contributed to a relatively stable social order (Hidalgo, 2007).

Yet the virtues of American democracy were not always equally distributed. In 1963, when Martin Luther King Jr. said "'now is the time to make real the promises of democracy,' he was calling up the spirit of a struggle that had defined American history since well before Reconstruction or the Revolution of 1776" (Manski, 2015, p. 4). In the 1960s, the spirit spread to the United States and around the world, and democracy movements arose. Some of the attraction lay in the ability of stable democracies to protect the rights of minority and marginalized social groups (Rieffer-Flanagan, 2014).

For decades, one of the central features of US foreign policy was democracy promotion. When the United States heralds the idea of democracy, it often means a system of government whereby ordinary citizens possess the power to hold to account those they elect to positions of authority. This incorporates a wide meaning of citizenship covering a wide voter enfranchisement regardless of an adult citizen's skin colour, sex, gender, religion or class (Rieffer-Flanagan, 2014). Washington has engaged in various programmes to bolster democracy around the world. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Obama administration would offer rhetorical support for democracy promotion across the world.

Individual Human Rights

In the late eighteenth century, the United States became an independent nation-state after its secessionist struggle for freedom against British colonialism. The first leaders of the United States believed that all individuals were in possession of various inalienable rights, which were natural in the sense they are not created or cancelled by any government, and are distributed universally throughout all of humanity. This concept of human rights was not only reflected, but also enshrined, in the American political tradition. The *Declaration of Independence*, a key foundational document for the US political system, recognizes that all men are created equal, possess rights, especially the right to life, the right to liberty and the right to pursue happiness, whatever form that may take (Boboc-Cojocaru, 2013).

Afterwards, the *United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), promulgated in 1948, heralded the start of a new era in international relations. It was an era born amidst the death and carnage of the Second World War that sought to remake the world

as a place of freedom, justice and peace. Drawing upon the traditions of liberal thought, with its emphasis on individualism, this new era developed international norms around certain freedoms from state practices, such as arbitrary arrest, confiscation of property or censorship (Ahmed, 1994). In addition, Article 18 of the UDHR states that "'Everyone has the right to freedom of [...] religion,' including 'freedom to change his religion [...] and [...] to manifest his religion [...] in teaching, practice, worship and observance'" (Lagon & Schulz, 2012, p. 30). In light of this, discrimination on the basis of creed is to be prohibited.

Christianity

The separation of Church and State does not mean that religion has no role in American political life. It some respects it is an outlier that deserves particular attention (Rasmussen, 2011). In the early seventeenth century, the Puritans left England and came to America to escape religious persecution. That those who settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were known as the so-called Pilgrim Fathers and signalled the significance attached to their religious duty. As Puritan leader, John Winthrop viewed their life's mission as constructing a "city on a hill" (Longley, 2003, p. 34), as a religious utopia and exemplar for the rest of the Christian world. Since these Pilgrim Fathers were prevented from worshiping the *Bible* in a way that was consistent with their inner light (Longley, 2003), they fled to America to seek religious refuge from the oppression of the state church in England. While the Pilgrim Fathers saw themselves as "the new chosen people, stepping in to the position of divine covenant partner once held by the Israelites", unlike the Israelites, they believed that Christ's grace would allow them to fulfill their spiritual mission (Kaveny, 2013, p. 63).

The idea of America's privileged relationship with God has played a significant role in the US politics, particularly in times of crisis. For example, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, "the association of exceptionalism with unilateralism became widespread, especially in the Bush administration's policies and rhetoric about terrorism and the Iraq War" (Silk, 2012, p. 36). In this context, what justified this unilateralist exceptionalism was a conviction, held by George W. Bush and others, that the use of armed force against Iraq was approved by God (Silk, 2012). In the long aftermath of 11 September 2001, the importance of religion to US politics was increasingly recognized (Rasmussen, 2011).

Material Conditions

This second section is also divided into three subsections, one each dealing with hegemony, political economy and alliances. The first subsection, which deals with hegemony, examines the foreign policies of the Bush Administration (2001-2009) and of the Obama Administration (2009-2017). The second subsection explores political economy and, in particular, explains the links between oil and war in the Middle East, an area of heightened significance for the US economy reliant on the Persian Gulf for its oil imports. Dealing with the US alliance network, the final subsection pays particular attention to the political circumstances of Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey, which are key allies of the United States.

Global Hegemony and Regional Influence

With the Cold War over, the United States became the world's only superpower. However, at the start of the 21st century, the US government was faced with new challenges from radical Islamic groups in the Middle East, such as the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Meanwhile, the Obama Administration's policy in the Middle East was managed in the context of the US 'pivot towards Asia'. From the beginning, the Administration underlined the significance of Asia for the US interests. However, the Arab Spring forced Obama to reconsider his approach to the Middle East, driving the region back to being a priority in US foreign policy concerns (Krieg, 2016). It is in this context that the US policy across the Middle East must be understood, including the foreign policies of the Bush and Obama Administrations in particular.

<u>Foreign policy under the Bush Administration</u>

The 9/11 attacks, planned by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda, provided the opportunity for the US to break from the general prohibition on the use of armed force in international affairs. The attacks opened up the space necessary to consider taking pre-emptive strikes as measures to protect the United States from subsequent attacks. This notion of pre-emption became the basis for the US invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. According to US President George W. Bush, the US was fighting “'a struggle of historic proportions' in which 'the wisest use of American strength is to advance freedom'” and that “the United States must stay 'on the offensive' to advance liberty in the broader Middle East” (Taheri, 2005, p. 298).

The roots of US hegemony dates further back than the beginning of the so-called war on terror or the ending of the Cold War. Rather, US pre-eminence in world affairs dates back to the ending of the Second World War. In 1945, the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt committed the US to guaranteeing Saudi Arabia's security in exchange for access to Saudi oilfields. Along with securing oil, US support to conserve the status quo arrangement in the Middle East was also driven by an ongoing commitment, made by successive administrations, to come to Israel's defence in times of need. However, the 9/11 attacks in 2001 altered US foreign policy on the Middle East as the Bush Administration concluded that US national security required a fundamental shift in the region's governance. In this respect, US foreign policy on the Middle East transformed from a conservative approach to the status quo arrangements to an agitator for transformational change (Taheri, 2005).

The Bush Administration attempted to justify the US invasion of Iraq with two reasons: firstly, Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD); and secondly, Saddam Hussein had ties with al-Qaeda terrorists. However, in reality, Iraq had no WMDs and there was no evidence of a connection between al-Qaeda and Iraq (Ramazani, 2008b). With regard to the Bush Administration's policies in the Middle East, Pressman (2009) pointed out that many problems are to be found in his efforts. For instance, when Iran looked for a diplomatic rapprochement with the Bush administration in 2003, the US did not pay attention. Eventually, the Bush administration missed the opportunity to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomacy. Also, an Israeli attack against Hezbollah in July and August 2006 followed by US-led diplomacy provoked a humanitarian crisis in Lebanon. Besides, the US did not demand a ceasefire for weeks.

According to Aistrope (2016), effective counter-radicalisation efforts require strong communication and mutual understanding. However, Bush Administration officials and neo-conservatives were focused on the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and the result was disastrous: thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed, millions become refugees or were displaced (Ramazani, 2008b). Furthermore, neo-conservatives were confident that the overwhelming power of the US military would compel Iran to cower. However, it was a crucial miscalculation (Carpenter & Innocent, 2007). Rather, the Bush administration's policies in the Middle East made Iran a regional power by removing two hostile neighbouring regimes, the Taliban regime and Saddam Hussein.

Foreign policy under the Obama Administration

After the experience of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Obama Administration sought to formulate a new direction in American foreign policy. To begin with, Obama was adamant that unilateralism had to be limited in international affairs. In other words, his new foreign policy relied on cooperation with other nations. In addition, unlike his predecessor, Obama undertook to engage with America's foes. He argued that the Bush Administration had relied too much on the use of armed force and too little on diplomacy and dialogue, thereby damaging the country's reputation as a good international citizen (Gerges, 2013). Moreover, the Obama Administration regarded the occupation of Iraq as a disastrous misjudgement that not only created a violent mix of internal armed conflict, terror and human suffering, but also buttressed Iran's considerable influence in the region (Lynch, 2015). Krieg asserts that "surrogate warfare appears to be the compromise Obama has found as a way of dealing with the Bush legacy" (2016, p. 98). This strategy offers an alternative way of maintaining the US power in the region. For example, the United States has supported the moderate opposition, such as the FSA, in the Syrian civil war. Also, north of Iraq, the Kurdish Peshmerga forces have been backed by the United States in the fight against the Islamic State.

When the Arab uprisings occurred, the Obama Administration embraced pro-American governments, such as Egypt, because the US needed their assistance in combating terrorism, restricting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, accessing natural resources and supporting Israel in Arab-Israeli tensions (Gerges, 2013). Also, it rarely referred to the brutal repression of demonstrations in Bahrain because of anxiety about alienating its Gulf partners (Lynch, 2015). In this regard, Gerges pointed out that the US diplomatic response to the Arab Spring stemmed from "misguided concepts and premises about the structure of Middle Eastern societies and politics - in essence, too much emphasis on high and elite politics and not enough on the weight of social movements and public opinion" (2013, p. 306).

Although the Obama Administration insisted that Assad should step down for the Syrian conflict to be resolved, it did not have a desire for a full-scale military intervention because there was widespread concern about the rise of radical Islamic groups in the Middle East (Gerges, 2013). Furthermore, in an off-the-cuff remark Obama set a hypothetical 'red line' which, if crossed by the regime's use of chemical weapons, would trigger a serious consideration of the use of armed force. However, when evidence of chemical weapons use in Syria emerged, Obama preferred to support a Russian-led agreement to eliminate those

weapons from Syria (Allin, 2014). For Krieg (2016), this episode emphasises that the United States posture concerning Middle Eastern affairs has been defined by a lack of substantive engagement, especially since the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991.

Political Economy

For a long time, American policymakers have urged that the excessive consumption of oil in the US should be restrained and that its dependence on foreign oil, especially Middle Eastern imports, should be reduced (Bahgat, 2006). Painter pointed out that understanding how oil fuelled "the 'American century' is fundamental to understanding the sources, dynamics, and consequences of U.S. global dominance" (2012, p. 24). Even though American energy independence grows, securing oil remains important to the US foreign policy for now and for the future. Also, private oil companies in the US have played an important role in the discovery and exploitation of oil reserves in several Middle Eastern countries (Bahgat & Sharp, 2014).

During Mohammad Mosaddegh's term as Iranian Prime Minister in the early 1950s, there was a great battle over the control of oil wealth in the Middle East. Coming to power in 1951, Mosaddegh was popular among voters for his calls to cease granting future oil concessions to foreign companies and to nationalise existing concessions that had been granted to British oil companies. Once in power, Mosaddegh nationalised British Petroleum (BP), which was owned by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). AIOC was quickly replaced by the National Iranian Oil Company and Iranian employees replaced foreign experts (Gray, 2010). However, it was not long before Mosaddegh's government was overthrown in a coup sponsored by the United States and Britain in 1953.

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the US President Jimmy Carter announced that the Persian Gulf is a main national security interest of the United States (Bahgat & Sharp, 2014). Ten years later, in 1990, maintaining access to oil in the Persian Gulf was still a major goal of the United States (Painter, 2012). More specifically, when Saddam Hussein conquered Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia's security, an international military coalition led by the United States expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait and strengthened the security of friendly Arab countries in the region.

Oil interests were an obvious factor in the decision to take the US into a war with Iraq in 2003. US policymakers considered that regime change would eliminate the threat posed by Iraq to the security of those in the Persian Gulf. Also, increasing Iraqi oil production would decrease the dependency of the United States on the resources held by Saudi Arabia (Painter, 2012). In order to avoid its role and responsibility for the sufferings of Iraqis following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Bush Administration used a rhetoric of "liberation" and "freedom" to cover its desire to control access to the country's oil reserves (Le Billon & El Khatib, 2004, p. 114).

The US economy cannot be separated from the international economic system and the world economy is fuelled by petroleum (Bahgat, 2006). Regarding energy supply security, Şen and Babalı mentioned that the Gulf oil supply is the solution to "a robust world economy and its growth. Security of supply of this oil and its unhindered free flow to the world markets is [a] vital issue in the stability of the Gulf region and oil importing countries of the world" (2007, p. 1523). Middle Eastern oil has motivated foreign interests since the early twentieth century and its allure has been especially powerful for the United States (Jones, 2012). Oil and war are, therefore, interrelated in the Middle East.

Alliances

The United States has various interests in the Middle East. According to Byman (2015), they include ensuring the stable flow of oil to world markets and preventing nuclear proliferation. These interests are also connected to the security of US allies. If the US partners become unstable, oil production will be interrupted and terrorist threats will increase in the region. If hostile regimes come to power, they might pursue nuclear weapons and threaten Israel. Thus, the stability of US allies is a vital issue in US foreign policy.

Israel

What began as local ethnic strife between Palestinian Arabs and Zionist Jews turned into a conflict between a number of Arab countries and Israel in 1948. Afterwards, it has escalated into the battle between the Muslim world and Israel (McConnell, 2010). Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982 after being encouraged by a Reagan Administration seeking to foster anti-Soviet fever anywhere in the world, including in the Middle East (Beinin, 2003). However, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon prompted Iranians to enter the country. Iranian

revolutionary guards also encouraged the formation of the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah. As a result, the Israeli incursion into Lebanon radicalised the Lebanese Shia community.

Prior to that, however, in the late 1960s the Johnson Administration had clearly signalled the intention of the United States to equip Israel with the then state-of-the-art F-4 Phantom fighter planes, ensuring Tel Aviv held an advantage over its Soviet-backed Arab neighbours (Holt, 2014). Then the Camp David Accords in 1978, signed in the United States by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, not only secured the peace between Egypt and Israel, but also shattered the close Soviet-Arab alignment. Thereafter, the United States and Israel agreed to tighten the relationship between the two countries. Indeed, Israel has been the leading recipient of the US security and defense aid since the 1970s, when the Nixon Administration markedly increased military assistance to the country (Berrigan, 2009).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, anti-communism declined in importance. However, the United States has maintained close ties with Israel. According to Miller (2014), supporting the proliferation of democracies was a key pillar of the US strategy as democracies contributed to international stability and peace. In this respect, Israel is a stable democracy in the region and, therefore, Tel Aviv is a valuable partner for Washington, especially as it can counterbalance Iranian aggression, curtail Tehran's regional influence and even take action to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapons capability. Tel Aviv perceives Tehran's growing regional power as a threat.

Saudi Arabia

In 1933, Saudi Arabia granted American business interests exclusive oil exploration rights in its eastern regions for 60 years (Bahgat, 2006). Then, in 1948, Saudi Arabia enjoyed a huge success with the discovery of the Ghawar oil field, which is one of the world's greatest oil fields. Since the 1940s, the ties between Washington and Riyadh have been an important part of the US foreign policy. Saudi Arabia's religious fervour helped keep communist influence at bay and keep the "oil-rich country" within the US sphere of influence (Bronson, 2005, p. 121).

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the relations between Saudi Arabia and the US were further strengthened. More specifically, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, Saudi Arabia served to establish the US military presence in the Middle East by inviting the

US forces into its territory to protect the oil fields against Saddam Hussein's forces (Baxter & Simpson, 2015). However, the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 strained the relations between Washington and Riyadh due to the fact that most of the hijackers were Saudi nationals (Hoveyda, 2002). While the so-called "9/11 Commission" did not find any evidence that indicated official support from the Saudi Government, a large number of Americans still think the Saudi government played a role in the attacks occurring on September 11, 2001 (Gause III, 2016, p. 114). Before the 9/11 attacks, the biggest crisis in the relations between Washington and Riyadh was the Arab oil embargo during the Arab-Israeli war in 1973. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that the relationship between Washington and Riyadh would sour any time soon because their mutual interest in oil supply and demand and regional and global security remains strong (Long, 2004). Saudi Arabia sees Iran as a regional threat and, therefore, the Saudi government disagrees with the Iran nuclear deal in 2015. Undoubtedly, sectarian issues play a central role in the tensions between Riyadh and Tehran, yet "the competition between the two states is also about simpler concerns—resource control, regional influence and military capacity" (Baxter & Simpson, 2015, pp. 144-145).

Egypt

Unlike Saudi Arabia, Egypt employed a pro-Soviet policy after the Egyptian revolution of 1952 that toppled the monarchy. However, in the 1970s, President Anwar Sadat shifted Cairo's foreign policy towards the US camp. Then, his successor, Hosni Mubarak, continued to maintain the close relations with Washington. Since then, the US government has given significant military and economic aid to Egypt. Meanwhile, Egypt offers US ships easy access through the Suez Canal. Moreover, Cairo cooperates in Washington's global counterterrorism strategy (Bahgat & Sharp, 2014).

In 2011, anti-government demonstrations in Egypt drove Hosni Mubarak to resign after nearly 30 years in power. Initially, the Obama Administration expressed its support for President Mubarak (Rieffer-Flanagan, 2014) as Mubarak's government was the key partner and ally of the United States in the region, standing against Iran's regional power. However, the US government realised that events were beyond its control and that Mubarak's rule was unlikely to endure preferred (Lynch, 2011). Thus, Obama's support shifted, albeit gradually, from Mubarak, to reform, and then to conceding the end of Mubarak's rule (Fabbrini & Yossef, 2015).

In 2012, the presidential election ended in a victory for the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammad Morsi. However, Egypt's military ousted the Islamist president Morsi in July 2013. Although the military coup lacked legitimacy, it did not significantly alter the relations between Egypt and the United States (Rieffer-Flanagan, 2014). According to Sharp (2014), Mohammad Morsi "had developed a reputation both at home and abroad for failing to either deal effectively with the economy and for seeking to concentrate Islamist power at the expense of other segments of Egyptian society" (pp. 49-50). Egypt's strategic importance and its close ties with the United States make political stability in Egypt an important matter for the US national interests.

Turkey

Turkey was a close ally of the United States during the Cold War, particularly during the era of Adnan Menderes' rule (Dağcı, 2012). For the US, Turkey was crucial in containing the Soviet power in the Persian Gulf because of its geographical location between the Middle East and the Soviet Union. Yet in the 1960s and 1970s, Turkey became less willing to support the US policies across the Middle East. For example, Turkey denied the US military access to bases and other facilities during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 (Altunışık, 2013). Then, in the post-9/11 era, the US heralded Turkey as "model of 'moderation' to the Islamic world" (Altunışık, 2013, p. 171). Moreover, during President Obama's first term, a diplomatic crisis between Washington and Ankara arose in 2010 following the "Obama administration's reluctance to address Turkey's concerns and priorities in some thorny issues including Israeli army's raid [on] a Turkish vessel carrying humanitarian cargo to Gaza in international waters" (Çakmak & Güneysu, 2013, p. 206). Another diplomatic crisis between the two nations in 2010 was "the Tehran Joint Declaration signed in Tehran by Iran, Turkey and Brazil regarding the swap of the nuclear fuel" (Dağcı, 2012, p. 9). Afterwards, Turkey, along with Brazil, vetoed UN Security Council Resolution 1929, which anticipated a sanctions regime targeting Iran (Dağcı, 2012).

While these crises caused the tensions between Turkey and the US, the Arab uprisings created a new dynamic for close cooperation between the two countries (Ustun & Kanat, 2013). The Middle East has become ever more divided along the axis of US and Iranian power since 2011 (Martin, 2013). The Syrian civil war has also become a proxy war between the two blocs. The Obama administration initially relied on Erdoğan to put pressure on Assad

to remove him from office (Gerges, 2013). Considering this fact, regional instability has been a key driver of the cooperation between Washington and Ankara.

* * * * *

Part I of this thesis began by introducing four key institutions within the US political system. Each substantive chapter then, respectively, examined a political institution and its discursive practices, focusing on a detailed textual examination of a plethora of official documents. Taken together, the main chapters of Part I have responded to the research question: in what ways is US foreign policy on Syria justified? The preceding analysis found that there were two main justifications offered: the first was based on a humanitarian concern for the wellbeing of Syria's civilian population whereas the second was the protection and promotion of US national interests. Where there are differences among the discursive practices of each political institution, these differences reflect the varying primary audiences of each institution. This Conclusion has situated those political institutions, with all of their commonalities and differences, in various ideational and material conditions that shaped those discursive practices. By elaborating details of those conditions this thesis adds to Fairclough's model of CDA. The thesis now shifts its focus from the foreign policy of the United States to Iranian foreign policy on Syria and five important Iranian political institutions. It offers an analysis of text produced through the discursive practices of these institutions before Part II concludes by discussing the ideational and material conditions that comprise the socio-cultural conditions give rise to those institutions.

Introduction to Part II: Iranian Foreign Policy

The second part of this thesis deals with Iranian foreign policy on Syria between 2011 and 2015. Following in the wake of the chapters comprising Part I, which focused on US foreign policy, the five main chapters of Part II similarly draw on Fairclough's CDA model as a means of framing a detailed and systemic textual analysis of various documents produced by key 'foreign policy' organisations within Iran's political system. Unlike the secular political system explored above, however, Iran's political system coheres around a spiritual ideology implanted by the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which asserted the primacy of Islam over all political matters, including as a code that informs and shapes the functioning of political institutions, and placed an Islamic figure at the summit of the political system (Andersen, Seibert, & Wagner, 2007). Since the Revolution, Iran has been steeped in Islamic symbols, including its transformed educational system "aimed at purging Western influences and making people better Muslims, and college entrance examinations stressed religious education and attitudes" (Andersen, Seibert, & Wagner, 2007, p. 152). Symbols of American influence, such as entertainment and clothing, were excoriated as anti-Islamic. Islamic dress became standard in post-revolutionary Iran. The following chapters of Part II give focus to the discursive practices of each of Iran's major political institutions involved in providing direction, and conducting and commenting on Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria.

According to Article 57 of Iran's Constitution, the Supreme Leader has "the authority over legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government. He determines and controls the principal policies of the Islamic republic" (Abghari, 2007, p. 250). There is no equivalent position within the US political system. Although Iran is governed through separate executive, legislative and judicial powers, these powers are subject to the "authority of the command (*velayat-i amr*) and religious leadership (*imamat*)" that rests with the so-called community of believers as well as with the tenants of Sharia law (Papan-Matin, 2014, p. 175). An Assembly of Experts chooses Iran's Supreme Leader. The role of the Supreme Leader in the Iranian Constitution is founded on the ideas of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, appoints key leadership positions within the judiciary, Guardian Council, armed forces, and public communications, and confirms the President's election (Beeman, 2016). As Iran's Supreme Leader, Khamenei is the

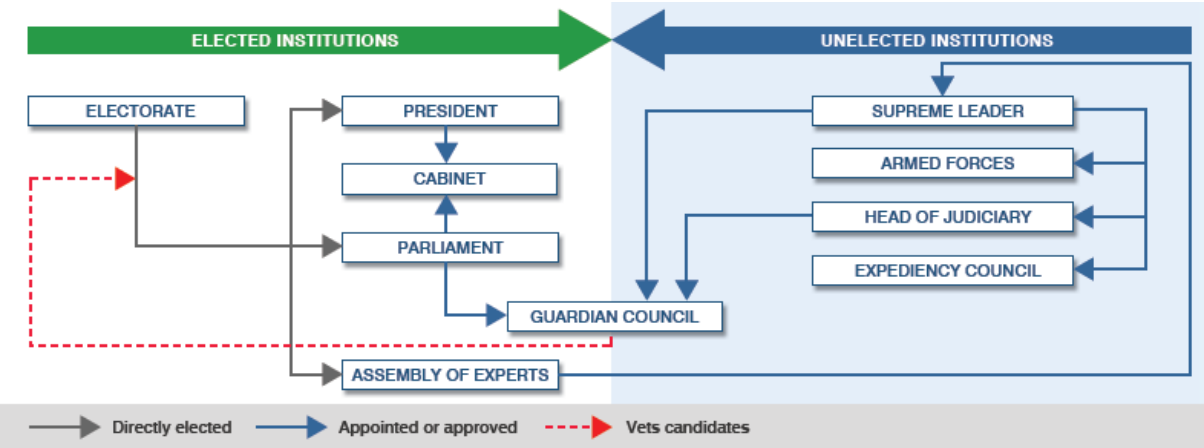
commander-in-chief of Iran's armed forces and has the final word on foreign policy matters. In light of this, the primary sources of the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader offer a strong foundation for analysing Iranian foreign policy. It is noteworthy that the foreign policy discourse of the Supreme Leader assumes a particularly strong religious overture, evident in the following example: " جهاد اسلام در واقع کمک به ملّتهایی است که پشت پردهی سیاستهای استعماری و استکباری و استبدادی قرار داده شدهاند [In Islam, jihad is assistance to the people who exist behind the curtains of colonial, arrogant and despotic policies]" (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2014b). Despite the primacy enjoyed by the Supreme Leader, the Iranian Constitution does give some significant concessions to democracy. The Constitution does, for example, grant the general electorate, which comprises all Iranian adults, the power to select not only the President but also the *Majles* (Iranian Parliament), the provincial and local councils, and the Assembly of Experts (Abrahamian, 2008). The foreign policy discourse of Iran's Supreme Leader is the subject of more detailed analysis in Chapter 7.

According to Article 113 of Iran's Constitution, "after the leadership, the President of the Republic is the highest official of the country. He is responsible for executing the Constitution and heading the executive power, except in instances that are directly related to the leadership" (Papan-Matin, 2014, p. 187). The President selects the Cabinet of Iran, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which is then confirmed by the *Majles*, though as mentioned the Supreme Leader controls decision-making on security, defence and foreign policy issues. Although the Supreme Leader controls the principal policies of Iran, the President can play an important role in shaping Iranian foreign policy. For instance, both the radically conservative former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) and the more moderate current president Hassan Rouhani (2013-present) served under the same Supreme Leader, but the foreign policies of their respective administrations were vastly different. More specifically, Iran resumed uranium enrichment after the election of Ahmadinejad as president in 2005. In contrast, the Rouhani Government places economic and social wellbeing ahead of the country's nuclear ambitions (Monshipouri, 2016). There are also appreciable differences in the ways in which the respective Ahmadinejad and Rouhani administrations support the Assad Government in the unfolding civil war in Syria. As Monshipouri (2016) explains, Ahmadinejad promised to fight the West's ongoing cultural invasion of Iran by promoting traditional Islamic ideas, values and practices whereas Rouhani represents a break with that approach. The following two extracts—the first is taken from Ahmadinejad's speech in the

66th session of the UN General Assembly, the second describing Rouhani's meeting with the Syrian Prime Minister—illustrates this difference: " اصرار دارند شيوه زندگي و باورهاي خود را به ديگران تحميل كنند [They insist on imposing their way of life and beliefs on others]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2011a) and " جمهوري اسلامي از همه همسايگان خود خواسته است تلاش‌هاي انسان دوستانه را براي كاستن از آلام مردم سوريه بكار بندند [The Islamic Republic has asked for humanitarian efforts from all its neighbours to reduce the suffering of the Syrian nation]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013c). The documents released by Iran's Presidential Office, and some documents released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran that concern former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's foreign policy on Syria, provide another useful set of primary sources for analysing Iranian foreign policy discourse. These documents are the subject of analysis in Chapter 8.

Here, then, Iran's political system consists of elected institutions and unelected institutions and, to help put these institutions in a relational context, a diagram is presented below in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Iran's political system



Source: The BBC (2009), Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8051750.stm.

In 2015, Iran's Foreign Minister took part in the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, plus Germany). It goes without saying that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran plays a major role in conducting Iran's foreign policy. The following example shows Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif commenting on terrorist groups in Syria and underlining Iran's staunch position against radical Sunni Islamist groups: " گروه های تروریستی که دستشان به خون مردم مظلوم سوریه آلوده است در

آینده کشور سوریه نقشی نداشته باشند [Terrorist groups which have the oppressed Syrian people's blood on their hands will have no role in Syria in the future]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2015b). Consequently, the official documents produced by bureaucrats offer another useful primary source for analysing Iranian foreign policy on Syria. The foreign policy discourse of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran is explored in further detail in Chapter 9.

Unlike its US counterpart, the Iranian Mission to the United Nations holds neither a permanent seat in the Security Council nor wields a veto power. Following the direction set by the Supreme Leader and, to a lesser extent, the Iranian president, the Iranian Mission extends the diplomatic reach of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs by presenting Iran's foreign policy to the diplomatic community, including UN member-states, located in New York. To this end, the former Ambassador of Iran to the United Nations, Mohammad Khazaee, made the following statement on the situation of human rights in Syria: "There is a growing concern that the operations of terrorist armed groups will pose further threat and danger to the regional security and stability" (IRI Mission to the UN, 2013d). Chapter 10 closely examines this kind of diplomatic rhetoric.

Like the Fox News Channel, the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) is not formally part of its country's political system. It does, however, reflect much of the content and tone of official policy, offering something of a pious reproduction of official representations of the Syrian civil war. Unlike FNC reporting, ISNA reporting does not overtly criticise any aspect of Iran's foreign policy. This is demonstrated in the following example of a news report covering a meeting between Iran's deputy foreign minister and the Chinese assistant foreign minister, which endorses Iranian foreign policy: " معاون عربی و آفریقای وزارت امورخارجه کشورمان در ارتباط با مسائل منطقه، مبارزه با تروریسم و افراط گرایی را از جمله موضوعات قابل همکاری بین دو کشور دانست [The Iranian deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs considered regional issues and the fight against terrorism and extremism including the issues of cooperation between two countries]" (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2014b). ISNA reporting is subjected to a greater degree of analysis in Chapter 11.

The ensuing five main chapters comprising Part II of this thesis present a detailed textual analysis of 60 primary-source documents that convey representations of the Syrian civil war offered by the Iranian political system. These representations open up certain possibilities for action. At the same time, the discursive practices of each of Iran's key foreign policy organisations examined above are also informed and shaped by an underlying socio-cultural

context and this context includes various ideational and material conditions. Part II closes by examining those conditions. In so doing, the thesis continues to break new ground by subjecting the nuances within Iranian foreign policy to a sustained examination based on Fairclough's CDA model. Part II of this thesis further strengthens its claims to originality by applying CDA to primary documents written in Persian, which the author has translated into English here. Indeed, the thesis brings these translations of primary-source material into the academic literature so that subsequent research might benefit.

Ch. 7 Office of the Supreme Leader

Unlike the US political system where an individual elected to the presidency enters the White House to preside from the summit of American power, a spiritual authority leads the Iranian political system. The Office of Iran's Supreme Leader not only sets the overall direction and tone of Iran's engagement with the world, but also has the final word on Iran's foreign policy on Syria. This first main chapter of Part II of the thesis offers a detailed analysis of twelve documents, produced by the Office of the Supreme Leader between 2011 and 2015, which signal the direction set for Iran's foreign policy on Syria.[5] Divided into two sections, the ensuing chapter draws on Fairclough's CDA model as a means of examining and interpreting extracts of text that reflect, firstly, a humanitarian concern for the Syrian people and, secondly, the significance of Iran's pursuit of its national interests. As previously mentioned, I have translated into English these extracts of texts written in Persian. Taken together, these extracts demonstrate the ways in which the Supreme Leader represents key aspects of the Syrian civil war, specifically the Assad Government, moderate and radical opposition, sectarian violence and foreign involvement. This chapter concludes that the Supreme Leader's foreign policy discourse concerning the current situation in Syria is driven in part by

[5] *رهبر معظم انقلاب اسلامی در دیدار مسئولان نظام* (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1390)
[*Supreme Leader's Meeting with the Authorities* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2011)];
رهبر معظم انقلاب در پیام به مناسبت حلول سال 91 تاکید کردند (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1391الف)
[*Supreme Leader's 1391 Message* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2012a)];
تاکید رهبر معظم انقلاب در دیدار نخست وزیر ترکیه (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1391ب)
[*Supreme Leader's Meeting with the Turkish Prime Minister* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2012b)];
در دیدار نخست وزیر عراق مطرح شد (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1391پ)
[*Supreme Leader Had a Discussion with the Iraqi Prime Minister in the Meeting* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2012c)];
رهبر انقلاب در جمع مسئولان نظام و میهمانان کنفرانس اسلامی (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1391ت)
[*Supreme Leader's Meeting with the Authorities and Guests of the Islamic Conference* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2013a)];
رهبر معظم انقلاب در پیام به مناسبت حلول سال جدید (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1391ث)
[*Supreme Leader's New Year Message* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2013b)];
فرمانده معظم کل قوا در آستانه روز ارتش جمهوری اسلامی (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1392الف)
[*Supreme Leader's Meeting with the Army Commander on the Eve of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army Day* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2013c)];
دیدار مسئولان، سفرای کشورهای اسلامی و جمعی از اقشار مختلف مردم (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1392ب)
[*Supreme Leader's Meeting with the Authorities, Ambassadors of Islamic Countries, and People from Various Groups* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2013d)];
رهبر معظم انقلاب در دیدار نمایندگان مجلس شورای اسلامی (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1393الف)
[*Supreme Leader's Meeting with Members of the Parliament of Iran* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2014a)];
بیانات در دیدار اعضای مجمع عالی بسیج مستضعفین (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1393ب)
[*Supreme Leader's Speech in the Meeting with Members of Supreme Council of Mobilisation of the Oppressed* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2014b)];
رهبر معظم انقلاب در دیدار نخست وزیر عراق (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1394الف)
[*Supreme Leader's Meeting with the Iraqi Prime Minister* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2015a)]; and
رهبر معظم انقلاب اسلامی در دیدار رئیس جمهوری روسیه (پایگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر مقام معظم رهبری، 1394ب)
[*Supreme Leader's Meeting with the Russian President* (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2015b)]. Unless otherwise stated, the primary-source material cited in this chapter is taken from the Office of the Supreme Leader.

his desire to further Iran's national interests and in part by a genuine concern to ameliorate the suffering experienced by ordinary Syrian civilians.

Supreme Leader's Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

This first section examines those documents which, released by the Office of the Supreme Leader between 2011 and 2015, appear to justify Iran's foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern. By examining the ways in which the Supreme Leader represents key aspects of the civil war in Syria, beginning with the Assad Government and sectarian violence before addressing foreign involvement, this section shows that these discursive practices reflect certain ideological conditions that feature in the socio-cultural context underpinning the entire Iranian political system.

Assad Government

As a staunch supporter of President Bashar al-Assad, Iran's Supreme Leader depicts Syria's civilian population as the victim of foreign exploitation rather than as an object of the Assad Government's brutal repression. As the following extract illustrates, these foreigners are from the West and pay little regard to the will of the Syrian people: " دنیای امروز مملو از دزدان غارتگر عزت و حیثیت و اخلاق بشریت است [Today, the world is full of plunderers who steal human honour, dignity and morality]" (2014a). In so saying, the Supreme Leader signals his concern for the basic human rights of the Syrian people, which are being manipulated by the West, especially the United States. The Supreme Leader goes further, however, by proclaiming that these civilians are deserving recipients of Iran's support as: " تنها راه ایستادگی در مقابل جبهه ضدبشری استکبار را استمرار تفکر «مبارزه» با این جبهه دانستند [The only way to resist the arrogant and inhuman group is to continue to struggle with this group]" (2014a). This demonstrates that Iran not only openly assists the Assad Government in the Syrian civil war, but also opposes Western interference in the country. The Supreme Leader does so for a variety of reasons, including to protect and advance his commitment to Shiism.

Sectarian Violence

The Supreme Leader also expresses his concern over the impact that sectarian violence may have on Shia living within the Middle East. He says, for instance: "واقعيت قضاياي سوريه، يك جنگ نيابتي با دولت سوريه از طرف برخي دولتها به سردمداري امريكا و برخي قدرتهاي ديگر و با هدف تأمين منافع رژيم صهيونيستي و ضربه زدن به مقاومت در منطقه است [The Syrian issue is a proxy war being waged

against the Syrian government led by some states, the US and some other powers, with the goals of securing the interests of the Zionist regime and inflicting a blow on the resistance in the region]" (2012c). The Supreme Leader thereby demonstrates his firm stance against the United States, Israel and any pro-American Sunni Arab countries involved in the Syrian civil war because these governments challenge and threaten the Lebanese Shiite militia, Hezbollah, and the Assad-led Alawi minority at the helm of the Syrian Government. In so doing, the Supreme Leader reveals his deeply-held commitment to Shiism and his firm grasp on Shiism's core concept of resistance.

Foreign Involvement

Iran's Supreme Leader represents foreign involvement in the Syrian civil war in such a way that places blame for the protracted strife squarely on Western countries located beyond the region. This is evident in the following extract: " امروز دنیای اسلام دچار مشکلات بزرگی است. ما در منطقه‌ای قرار گرفته‌ایم که متأسفانه در متعددی از کشورهائی که پیرامون ما هستند، مشکلاتی وجود دارد، که غالباً هم این مشکلات تزریق شده و تحمیل شده‌ی از سوی دیگران و از سوی بیگانگان است [Today, the Islamic world is faced with big problems. Unfortunately, we are located in the region in which there are many problems in the countries around us. Mostly, these problems have been injected and imposed by foreigners]" (2013d). Here, the "Islamic world (دنیای اسلام)" is emphasised, reflecting the Supreme Leader's commitment to Iran's theocracy.

The Supreme Leader goes on to criticise the United States for its selective—if not hypocritical—stance on individual human rights. Consider the following two extracts: " آمریکا و دیگر مدعیان حقوق بشر در قبال کشتار مردم بیگناه پاکستان، افغانستان، عراق و سوریه سکوت میکنند [The US and other countries, which demand human rights, remain silent about killing innocent people in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria]" (2013c) and " بر همین اساس معتقدیم که آمریکا و جبهه مقابل جمهوری اسلامی ایران، غیر منطقی هستند [On this basis, we believe that the US and the group which is opposed to the Islamic Republic of Iran are irrational]" (2013c). These extracts signal, the Supreme Leader insinuates, the failure of US foreign policy in the Middle East. He also emphasises the damage that this military intervention causes. Consider the negative tone expressed in the following two extracts:

> این مجموعه های نظامی در هر جایی که حضور پیدا میکنند مایه فساد اخلاقی و فشار بر مردم و کشتار آنان هستند
>
> [Wherever these armies appear, they cause moral corruption, the suppression of people, and killings] (2013c); and

به راحتی مرتکب جنایت می شوند و به آرمانهای بشری خیانت و در نقاط مختلف دنیا جنگ افروزی می کنند

[They commit a crime easily and they betray human aspirations, and they wage war in different places across the world] (2014a).

The Supreme Leader goes further too, suggesting that the foreign intervention by extra-regional actors is the key cause of despondency among the Syrian people when he stated that: " بسیاری بودند که در مقاطعی، از آینده‌ی کشور مأیوس میشدند [There were many people who occasionally felt hopeless regarding the future of the country]" (2013d). Opposing the military adventurism undertaken by certain belligerent foreign countries, Iran insists on a political solution based on the will of the Syrian people. These representations of foreign interventions are, furthermore, motivated by a concern for Islamic human rights.

The Supreme Leader also illuminates the malevolent intent behind the US's military interventions in the region. Put simply, US foreign policy in the Middle East and North Africa is described as a form of dictatorship just as Western policy towards the Islamic world is described as a form of domination. This is aptly demonstrated in the following series of extracts:

هرجا حرکتی علیه امریکا و صهیونیسم روی دهد و هر ملتی که بر ضد دیکتاتوری بین المللی امریکا و دیکتاتورهای داخلی قیام کند با حمایت ملت فهیم ایران روبرو خواهد شد

[A movement which occurs against the US and Zionism anywhere, and every nation which rises up against the US international dictatorship and internal dictators would receive the support of the wise Iranian nation] (2011);

بعد از دهها سال فشار و سلطه غربیها بر دنیاي اسلامي، اینك مسلمانان احساس مي كنند كه اسلام، زمینه ساز تحقق عزت، سربلندي و استقلال آنها است

[After decades of the pressure and domination of the West over the Islamic world, now Muslims feel that Islam paves the way for them to achieve glory, dignity and independence] (2013a);

رهبر انقلاب اسلامی با اشاره به نگاه ابزاری قدرتهای مسلط دنیا بویژه آمریکا به کشورهای منطقه خاطر نشان کردند: آمریکاییها هیچ ملتی را به عنوان ملت مستقل قبول ندارند

[The Supreme Leader pointed out the instrumental view of dominant world powers, the US in particular, to the regional states: Americans do not recognise any nation as an independent nation] (2012b);

در رأس آن امریکا که پنجه های خود را بر جسم و روح و فکر بشریت گسترانیده است

[This group is headed by the United States which has stretched its tentacles towards the human body, spirit and thought] (2014a); and

كشورهاي منطقه و همچنين همه گروهها و جريانهاي داخل عراق بايد بدانند كه امريكاييها شريك قابل اطميناني نيستند و هر زماني كه لازم بدانند، قطعاً تمام قول و قرارهاي خود را زيرپا خواهند گذاشت و خيانت خواهند كرد

[The regional countries and all Iraqi internal groups and factions must know that Americans are not trustworthy partners, and always need to know that they will certainly trample on all their promises and that they will betray the trust] (2012c).

These extracts show that the Supreme Leader's rhetoric reflects his commitment to Shiism, which helps provide a humanitarian justification for reacting to and coping with the US as the world's sole superpower. Indeed, as all of the above analyses show, where the Iranian Supreme Leader seeks to justify his foreign policy on Syria in humanitarian terms he demonstrates his own deep commitment to theocracy, Islamic human rights and Shiism.

Supreme Leader's Representations and National Interests

This second section examines a range of documents released by the Office of the Supreme Leader between 2011 and 2015. Unlike the previous section, which focuses on the Supreme Leader's humanitarian concerns, the documents considered here reveal the importance placed by the Supreme Leader on pursuing Iran's national interests. By examining the ways in which the Supreme Leader represents the Assad Government and the moderate and radical opposition, as well as the sectarian violence and foreign involvement, each as key aspects of the civil war in Syria, this section shows that these discursive practices reflect certain material conditions that, accompanying the ideological conditions identified above, feature in the socio-cultural context underpinning the entire Iranian political system.

Assad Government

Pointing to the democratic rights and responsibilities enjoyed by the Syrian population, the Supreme Leader gives focus to the Assad Government's legitimacy to rule Syria, as demonstrated by the following extract: " رئیس‌جمهور سوریه در انتخاباتی سراسری رأی اکثر مردم سوریه را با دیدگاههای «سیاسی، مذهبی و قومی مختلف» به‌دست آورده و امریکا حق ندارد این رأی و انتخاب مردم سوریه را نادیده بگیرد [The Syrian president has won the majority of the votes from the Syrian people with various political, religious and ethnic views in the presidential election, and the US has no right to ignore these votes and the choice of Syrian people]" (2015b). The Supreme Leader does concede, however, that this imperfect democracy needs improvement when he stated that: "ما از اصلاحات در سوریه همواره حمایت می کنیم و اصلاحاتی که در سوریه شروع شده، باید ادامه یابد

[We always support reforms in Syria and ongoing reforms in Syria must be continued]" (2012b).

Furthermore, offering a strident and unapologetic defence of Syria's sovereignty, the Supreme Leader emphasises the large extent to which the Assad Government deserves Iran's support. This is demonstrated in the following extracts: " مهمترین مسئله در شرایط حساس منطقه این است که کشورهای مستقل، تصمیمهای صحیحی بگیرند [The most important issue under the sensitive circumstances of the region is that independent nations make correct decisions]" (2012b) and "جمهوری اسلامی ایران از سوریه به دلیل حمایت از خط مقاومت در برابر رژیم صهیونیستی دفاع خواهد کرد و با هر گونه دخالت نیروهای خارجی در امور داخلی سوریه به شدت مخالف است [The Islamic Republic of Iran will defend Syria because of its support for the resistance line against the Zionist regime and is strongly opposed to any foreign military intervention in the internal affairs of Syria]" (2012b). In so saying, the Supreme Leader reveals that Iran's stance on the Assad Government is also a position against the United States and Israel, particularly their aggression against both the Lebanese Shiite militia, Hezbollah, and the Assad-led Alawi minority at the helm of the Syrian government. Consequently, these examples of the Supreme Leader's rhetoric reflect the realities of Iran's political geography and the vital importance of the so-called Shia Crescent, which stretches from Iran to Hezbollah, through Iraq and Syria.

These largely positive and somewhat flattering representations of the Assad Government—that is, as a deserving beneficiary of Tehran's support—also reveals the importance that the Supreme Leader places on Iran's alliances. Consider the following extracts, which cast the United States and Israel as malevolent influences fuelling the civil war in Syria by undermining and antagonising its legitimate ruler:

> در قضیّه‌ی حرکت به سوریّه برای جنگیدن با رژیم اشغالگر قدس
>
> [The issue of participation in the Syrian conflict is to fight against Israel's regime of occupation] (2014b);
>
> نقشه بلندمدت امریکا برای منطقه به زیان همه ملتها و کشورها به‌ویژه ایران و روسیه است و باید با هوشمندی و تعامل نزدیکتر، آن را خنثی کرد
>
> [America's long-term scheme for the region is harmful to all nations and countries, Iran and Russia in particular, and it must be thwarted through wisdom and closer interaction] (2015b);
>
> اما ماهیت حوادث سوریه با ماهیت حوادث دیگر کشورهای منطقه متفاوت است
>
> [However, the nature of the Syrian incidents is different from the incidents of other regional countries] (2011); and

ملتها میتوانند با حکمت نخبگانِ خودشان و با هدایت پیشروان و پیشوایانِ خودشان و عقلای قوم، راههای خلاص را پیدا کنند؛ اگر بیگانه‌ها بگذارند، اگر تزریق نفاق نکنند، تزریق دودلی بین مردم نکنند

[If foreigners do not intervene and if they do not inject discord, the nations can find the ways of freedom with their outstanding wisdom and with the guidance of their leaders and the intellectual class] (2013d).

These extracts, some of which allude to other former dictators in Tunisia and Egypt, seek to present Assad in the best of all possible lights.

Moderate Opposition

Unlike Washington, which actively supports certain armed groups, including the FSA, Tehran views the so-called moderate opposition as a key destabilising influence within Syria. This is evident in the following extract: " ایشان کمکهای باواسطه و بی‌واسطه امریکایی‌ها به گروههای تروریستی از جمله داعش را از دیگر نقاط ضعف آشکار سیاستهای امریکا خواندند [The Supreme Leader stated that Americans' indirect and direct assistance to terrorist groups including the Islamic State is another evident weakness of the US policies]" (2015b). Iran's opposition to US intervention is part and parcel of Iran's pursuit of hegemony in the Middle East. Moreover, the Supreme Leader's depiction of these groups as murderous also reflects the political geography of Iran, as the following extract suggests: " تروریستهای مورد حمایتِ آشکار و پنهان آمریکا نیز در عراق و سوریه، مردم را می کشند [Likewise, the terrorists who are supported by the US both overtly and covertly kill people in Iraq and Syria]" (2013c).

Radical Opposition

The Supreme Leader depicts the Islamic State as a temporary scourge affecting both Syria and Iraq. The Supreme Leader has, for example, stated that: " رهبر انقلاب اسلامی وجود تروریست‌ها در عراق را یک اتفاق گذرا دانستند [The Supreme Leader considered the existence of terrorists in Iraq as a short-lived event]" (2015a) and " دولت جمهوری اسلامی ایران کماکان به حمایت های خود از دولت و مردم عراق ادامه می دهد [The Iranian government will continue to support the Iraqi government and people as before]" (2015a). Iran's cooperation with the Iraqi government in the fight against the Islamic State reflects Iran's political geography, though the following comment reflects the importance of Iran's alliances in its decision to confront the radical opposition operating in Syria: " ایشان با تأکید بر اینکه ایستادگی ملت و دولت عراق در مقابل تروریست ها، تأمین کننده امنیت کشورهای منطقه است [The Leader emphasised that the resistance of the Iraqi people and government against terrorists would guarantee the security of regional countries]"

(2015a). From the Supreme Leader's perspective, both moderate and radical opposition groups are followers of Sunni Islam and are, therefore, considered rivals and a reason to maintain the Shia crescent, through any available means, including the use of armed force.

Sectarian Violence

The Supreme Leader has expressed his serious concern over the potential for sectarian strife to deepen the religious cleavages among the societies of the Middle East. Consider the alarmed tone of the following series of extracts:

> رهبر انقلاب اسلامی، در همین زمینه با یادآوری توطئه های گوناگون دشمنان اسلام در قبال پیروزی انقلاب اسلامی خاطرنشان کردند: ایجاد اختلاف، نفوذ، ترور، «درگیریهای قومی مذهبی»، فتنه انگیزی و تحریک دشمن خارجی به حمله به ایران
>
> [In this context, the Supreme Leader noted different plots of the enemies of Islam against the victory of the Islamic revolution: making discord, infiltration, assassination, ethno-religious conflicts and the foreign enemy's imposition of war against Iran] (2011);
>
> جمهوري اسلامي ايران، پيشرفت و اقتدار عراق را به نفع خود مي داند و معتقد است كه روابط دو كشور مي تواند يك الگو و نمونه در منطقه باشد
>
> [The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the progress and influence of Iraq of benefit to Iran and believes that the relations between the two countries can be a role model in the region] (2012c);
>
> تنها راه مقابله با توطئه ايجاد اختلاف، احساس اتحاد ميان مسلمانان و همچنين در ميان گروهها، مذاهب و جناحهاي مختلف داخل هريك از كشورهاي اسلامي است
>
> [The only way to confront the plot to make discord is the feeling of unity among Muslims and among the various groups, sects and factions within each Islamic country] (2013a); and
>
> یا به عنوان اختلافات مذهبی مردم را به جان یکدیگر انداختند، یا به عنوان اختلافات قومی برادران را در مقابل هم قرار دادند
>
> [They have pitted people against each other in religious disputes and ethnic conflicts] (2013d).

The so-called Shia Crescent, stretching from Iran to Lebanon and through to Iraq and Syria, is important for Iran's political influence in the Middle East. This representation of sectarian strife thus reflects the significance of Iran's political geography.

Foreign Involvement

The Supreme Leader is at pains to point out that Middle Eastern issues should be resolved by Middle Eastern countries, as the following extracts attest:

جمهوري اسلامي ايران به عنوان رئيس جنبش عدم تعهد و عراق به عنوان رئيس اتحاديه عرب،مي توانند از ظرفيت اين نهادها براي تأثيرگذاري جدي و صحيح در مسائل منطقه اي استفاده و نقش ايفاء كنند

[The Islamic Republic of Iran as head of the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) and Iraq as head of the Arab League can use the capacity of these organisations to positively influence regional issues] (2012c);

امروز هم راه علاج این است که خود ملتها تصمیم بگیرند، دیگران دخالت نکنند، بیگانگان دخالت نکنند

[Today, the remedy lies in the facts that the nations should make their own decisions and that foreigners should not interfere] (2013d); and

رهبر انقلاب اسلامی، حل صحیح موضوع سوریه را بسیار مهم و در آینده منطقه تأثیرگذار برشمردند

[The Supreme Leader said the correct solution of the Syrian issue is very important and will have an influence on the region in the future] (2015b).

The Supreme Leader very clearly represents the United States, emblematic of the West, as the enemy of Iran in particular and a malevolent influence in the region more generally. This is exemplified in the following series of extracts:

آن کسانی که اهداف بدخواهانه‌ای درباره ی ملت ایران و ایران و ایرانی در سر مي پرورانند، در کشورهای غربی دچار مشکلات گوناگون هستند

[Those in the West who pursue malicious objectives against Iranian people and Iran have various problems] (2012a);

حضرت آيت الله خامنه اي، شكل گرفتن احساس توانايي ايستادگي در مقابل استثمار و استكبار دولتهاي غربي، در ميان مسلمانان، و وادار كردن غربيها به عقب نشيني را از بركات بيداري اسلامي برشمردند

[Ayatollah Khamenei described the capability of Muslims to resist the exploitation and arrogance of Western governments and to force the West to retreat as the blessing of the Islamic awakening] (2013a);

دنياي استكبار از همان ابتداي حركت بيداري اسلامي تلاش كرده است تا در مقابل آن مشكل و سد ايجاد كند

[From the beginning of the movement of the Islamic awakening, global arrogance has tried to create obstacles in its way] (2013a); and

آنچه که دشمنان ما هدف گرفته بودند، صحنه‌ها و عرصه‌های مختلف بود؛ عمدتاً عرصه‌ی اقتصاد و عرصه‌ی سیاست بود

[Our enemies had targeted various areas; mainly economic and political areas] (2013b).

Iran’s Supreme Leader takes aim at America’s allies in the region too:

بیداری عظیم اسلامی در مصر و تونس و دیگر کشورها نشان می دهد موازنه ظالمانه و تحقیرکننده ای که غربی های سلطه گر و حکام وابسته، در 150 سال اخیر بر ملتهای منطقه تحمیل کرده بودند به هم خورده و فصل جدیدی در تاریخ منطقه آغاز شده است

[The Islamic great awakening in Egypt, Tunisia and other countries shows that the tyrannical balance and degrading treatment that hegemonic Western countries and dependent rulers had imposed on regional nations in the last 150 years have collapsed and that a new epoch has begun in the regional history] (2011);

دشمنان ما از اوائل سال، حرکت خصمانه ی خودشان را در عرصه ی اقتصادی نسبت به ملت ایران آغاز کردند؛ اما ملت ایران، مسئولین، آحاد مردم، دستگاه‌های مختلف، با تدبیرهای هوشمندانه ای توانستند با این تحریمها مقابله کنند

[From the beginning of the year, our enemies started their hostile action against the Iranian nation; however, Iranian people, authorities and various organisations could cope with these sanctions by adopting clever measures] (2012a);

وظيفه خطير نخبگان ديني، سياسي و دانشگاهي جهان اسلام تشريح طراحي دشمن براي امت اسلامي و تلاش جدي براي تحقق شعار اتحاد اسلامي است

[The great responsibility of the religious, political and academic elite in the Islamic world is to explain the plan of the enemy to the Islamic community and make a serious effort to fulfil Islamic unity] (2013a); and

جمهوری اسلامی ایران از اتحاد گروههای مبارز و انقلابی عراق حمایت می کند و لازم است که مردم و مسئولان عراقی هوشیارانه مراقب اختلاف افکنی بیگانگان باشند

[The Islamic Republic of Iran supports the union of combatant and revolutionary groups in Iraq and it is necessary for Iraqi people and officials to vigilantly watch for discord made by foreigners] (2015a).

This depiction of the US as a malevolent actor in the region is further expressed in the following statements made by the Supreme Leader:

گفتند و تصریح کردند که میخواهند ملت ایران را به‌وسیله‌ی تحریم فلج کنند

[They announced that they want to cripple the Iranian nation by sanctions] (2013b);

از یک جهت همت آنها این بود که ملت ایران را منزوی کنند، از جهت دیگر ملت ایران را دچار دودلی و تردید کنند

[On the one hand they tried to seclude Iranian people, and on the other hand they tried to throw Iranian people into hesitation and scepticism] (2013b);

امروز، تمدن غرب بواسطه تناقض ها، بی منطقی ها، زورگویی ها و بی اعتنایی به اصول انسانی در معرض سقوط و سرنگونی قرار گرفته است

[Today, Western civilisation is on the point of collapse and ruin due to its contradictions, irrationality, coercion and indifference to humanitarian principles] (2013c); and

مسئله‌ی ما با آمریکا، مسئله‌ی استکبار آمریکایی است؛ مستکبرند، متکبّرند، زورگویند، زیاده‌طلبند

[Our issue with the US is about American arrogance; they are arrogant, conceited, coercive and greedy] (2014b).

The Supreme Leader's view of the American influence in the region is strongly expressed in the following extracts that offer a representation of western intervention: " حضرت آیت الله خامنه ای افزودند: آمریکاییها با همه کشورها اینگونه رفتار می کنند و بنابراین همواره باید در تصمیم گیریها مصالح کشورهای اسلامی در نظر گرفته شود [Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said: Americans treat all countries in this way, and therefore the interests of Islamic countries must be taken into account in making decisions at all times]" (2012b); and " درباره سوریه هر راه حلی باید با اطلاع و موافقت مردم و مسئولان این کشور دنبال شود [With regard to Syria, any solution must be pursued with the awareness and agreement of people and officials in this country]" (2015b). While the above extracts represent Western foreign policy in the Middle East, which Iran opposes in accordance with its pursuit of regional hegemony, Iran's antipathy towards Israel, one the US's key allies in the region, is clear when the Supreme Leader said: " دشمن درجه‌ی یك امت اسلامی و ملت ایران - یعنی رژیم صهیونیستی - در محاصره قرار گرفت [The biggest enemy of the Islamic community and the Iranian nation, namely the Zionist regime, has been besieged]" (2012a). Iran's negative representation of Israel reflects its political geography because Israel is considered an oppressive military power in the region, armed with nuclear weapons and backed by the United States.

Here, then, the above textual analyses of extracts, which are taken from various documents produced by the Office of the Supreme Leader, presented in section two of this chapter, reveal at least three key material conditions that shape the Iranian pursuit of national interests; these are, in particular, Iranian's pursuit of regional hegemony, its political geography and its key alliances.

Conclusion

Having paid close attention to the content of various official documents released by the Office of the Supreme Leader between 2011 and 2015, I distinguished among those statements expressing a humanitarian concern for the people of Syria from those statements demonstrating an intention to pursue Iran's national interests. By so doing, this chapter helps answer a part of a key research question of this thesis: namely, how does Iran justify its recent foreign policy on Syria? Based on the results of the textual analysis conducted above in this first chapter of Part II, the following table shows that Iranian foreign policy on Syria

not only offers a representation of the major aspects of the civil war occurring in that country, but also shows that those representations reflect underlying ideational and material conditions that, together, help constitute the socio-cultural context within which the Supreme Leader rules over Iran.

Table 5 Collation of the primary sources of the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader

	HUMANITARIANISM	**NATIONAL INTEREST**
Assad Government		
- Support for Assad	Human rights and Shiism	Political geography and alliances
Moderate Rebels		Hegemony and political geography
Radical Rebels		Political geography and alliances
Sectarian Violence	Shiism	Political geography
Foreign Involvement		
- Iran	Theocracy, human rights and Shiism	Hegemony and political geography

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader (2011-2015).

The analysis, which is summarised in the table above, reveals that the Supreme Leader expresses humanitarian concerns over the situation in Syria as he portrays the pursuit of Iran's national interests, which lies at the heart of his decision to support the Assad Government while using force against both the moderate opposition and the Islamic State. As the next few chapters illustrate, the Supreme Leader sets the direction of his country's foreign policy, a direction that the Iranian President follows.

Ch. 8 Iranian President

Even though the presidency does not preside over the entire Iranian political system with the same kind of authority as that enjoyed by the Supreme Leader, the president is Iran's highest elected official. Hence, the president plays an important role in articulating Iran's foreign policy. This chapter offers a detailed analysis of text, which has been extracted from twelve documents produced by either Iran's Presidential Office or its Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2011 and 2015.[6] Like the Persian extracts featuring in the previous chapter, the extracts used here were translated into English by the author. This chapter is also divided into two main sections. The first section analyses the president's representations of the various aspects of the Syrian civil war, which appear to justify Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria by humanitarian concerns. The second section analyses similar representations, but these representations appear to justify that policy in terms of pursuing Iran's national interests. The chapter finds that Iran's pursuit of national interest is a powerful driver of Iranian foreign policy on Syria, as is the appreciable concern for the wellbeing of the Syrian population.

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[6] The documents produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cited here concern the Ahmadinejad Administration:
متن کامل سخنان رییس جمهور در شصت و ششمین نشست مجمع عمومي سازمان ملل (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1390الف)
[*Full Text of the Iranian President's Speech in the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2011a)];
احمدی نژاد در جشن جهانی نوروز مطرح کرد (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1391الف)
[*Ahmadinejad Had a Discussion in the International Celebration on the Iranian New Year* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012a)];
دیدار کوفی عنان با رییس جمهوری اسلامی ایران (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1391پ)
[*Iran's President's Meeting with Kofi Annan* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012c)];
رییس‌جمهور نتایج سفرش به اندونزی و ویتنام را تشریح کرد (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1391ث)
[*Iran's President Described His Visit to Indonesia and Vietnam* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012e)];
دیدار نخست وزیر سوریه با رییس جمهور (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1391ح)
[*Iran's President's Meeting with the Syrian Prime Minister* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013b)];
دکتر روحاني در دیدار نماینده سازمان ملل در امور سوریه (رياست جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1392الف)
[*Dr Rouhani's Meeting with the United Nations Special Representative for Syria* (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013a)];
رییس‌جمهور در دیدار رییس مجلس لبنان عنوان کرد (رياست جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1392ب)
[*Iran's President Had a Discussion with the Speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon in the Meeting* (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013b)];
رئیس جمهور در دیدار نخست وزیر سوریه تأکید کرد (رياست جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1392پ)
[*Iran's President's Meeting with the Syrian Prime Minister* (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013c)];
پیام تبریک رییس جمهوري به بشار اسد (رياست جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1393الف)
[*Congratulatory Message from Iran's President to Bashar al-Assad* (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014a)];
رییس جمهوري در نشست خبري نیویورک (رياست جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1393ب)
[*Iran's President at a Press Conference in New York* (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014b)];
رییس جمهوري در پیام نوروزي سال 1394 (رياست جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1394الف)
[*Iran's President's 1394 Message* (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015a)]; and
دکتر روحاني در دیدار رییس جمهوري روسیه (رياست جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1394ب)
[*Dr Rouhani's Meeting with the Russian President* (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015b)]. All primary sources cited in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, come from Iran's Presidential Office or its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Presidential Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

This first section examines the ways in which the Iranian president represents two key aspects of the civil war in Syria, specifically the Assad Government and involvement by foreign governments. These representations are conveyed by certain statements which, subjected to detailed analysis below, were found in a range of documents produced by the President's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2011 and 2015. These statements appear to help justify Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria on the grounds of humanitarian concerns. The section finds that these representational practices reflect the President's commitment to Islamic human rights, Shiism and theocracy, each an ideational condition comprising, at least in part, the socio-cultural context underpinning the Iranian presidency.

Assad Government

Insisting that a diplomatic solution to the civil war be grounded in the will of the Syrian people, the Iranian President represents ordinary Syrians as the bearer of certain rights. He says, for instance, " تأکید بر رعایت حقوق همه مردم از جمله سوریه [Emphasis on respect for the rights of all people including the Syrians]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012c). While the above example reflects the President's concern with Islamic human rights, the following extract signals the seriousness of this concern, which is based on a firm commitment to Shiism. Consider the following: " رییس جمهوری با بیان اینکه جمهوری اسلامی ایران آماده همکاری و کمك در راستای اجرای عدالت و احقاق حقوق اساسی مردم است [Iran's president said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready for cooperation and support for the implementation of justice and the realisation of people's basic rights]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012c).

Foreign Involvement

The Iranian President takes aim at the West, and in particular the United States, by depicting the way in which the processes of Westernisation corrode Islamic values. This is evident in the following remark: "اصرار دارند شیوه زندگي و باورهاي خود را به دیگران تحمیل کنند [They insist on imposing their way of life and beliefs on others]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2011a). This negative representation of the United States reflects the fact that Iran is a theocratic state that promotes Islamic values. The President's concern for the wellbeing of the Syrian people is expressed in the following way: " همه انسانها حق دارند رحمت ایزدی را در نوروز و زندگی خود احساس کنند [All human beings have a right to feel divine mercy in Nowruz (Iranian New Year) and

in their lives]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012a). Opposing foreign military intervention, the Iranian President emphasises the human rights of Syrian people in relation to the Syrian civil war. The above analyses reveal some of the key ideational conditions that inform and shape the humanitarian justification of Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria. These conditions are, specifically, theocracy, Islamic human rights and Shiism.

Presidential Representations and National Interests

This second section offers a detailed textual analysis of various statements drawn from twelve documents produced by the President's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2011 and 2015. These documents articulate recent Iranian foreign policy on Syria in a way that appears to justify that policy in terms of the pursuit of national interests. The analysis of those statements illustrates the ways in which the Iranian president represents key aspects of the civil war in Syria, specifically the Assad Government, the moderate and radical oppositions, sectarian violence and foreign involvement. The section finds that Presidential representational practices reflect the importance of material conditions, particularly regional hegemony, political geography and alliances. In addition to the ideational conditions mentioned in the previous section, these material conditions help comprise the socio-cultural context underpinning the Iranian presidency in particular and the Iranian political system more generally.

Assad Government

The Iranian President presents the Assad Government as a key factor in any enduring political solution to the civil war in Syria, as the following extract shows: " هیچ راه درستی جز توقف درگیری، تفاهم ملی و برگزاری انتخابات در سوریه وجود ندارد [There is no right way except stopping conflict, national reconciliation and holding elections in Syria]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013b). This presentation of Assad's Government as essential to Syria's peaceful future is informed by the Iranian President's commitment to Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony as Iran wants to consolidate its influence by maintaining close relations with the Assad Government.

Desiring to play a leading role in ending the Syrian civil war by supporting one of its key allies in the region, the Iranian President depicts the Assad Government as a primary provider of security for its citizens. Consider the following extracts:

هرکس با جنگ به قدرت برسد، نمی‌تواند امنیت پایداری را در سوریه ایجاد کند

[Anyone who wins the war cannot establish sustainable security in Syria] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012e);

آمادگي كامل داريم تا براي تقويت اشتراک نظر بين همسايگان سوريه جلساتي برگزار شود

[We have complete readiness to host meetings to consolidate consensus among Syria's neighbours] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013a); and

نتايج اين انتخابات نشان دهنده اعتماد مردم سوريه و عزم آنها براي حركت به سوي ثبات، امنيت و وفاق ملي است

[The results of these elections show Syrian people's trust and their determination to move towards stability, security and national unity] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014a).

This focus on Syria, its people and its neighbours is informed by an appreciation of Iran's political geography as the Syrian government plays a crucial role in connecting Iran with Hezbollah.

The Iranian president also portrays the Assad government as a deserving beneficiary of his support and protection during the Syrian civil war. This is illustrated in the following two extracts: " جمهوري اسلامي ايران آمادگي كامل دارد تا در عرصه‌هاي مختلف در جريان هر تحرک و تلاشي براي ثبات در سوريه نقشي مثبت ايفا نمايد و تفاوتي ندارد كه اين تلاش تحت عنوان اجلاس ژنو 2 يا هر تحرک ديگري صورت گيرد [The Islamic Republic of Iran has complete readiness to play a positive role in any current movements and efforts to bring stability in Syria including the Geneva II conference or any other movements]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013a) and " پيشرفت، رفاه و عزت خود را در نابودي، فقر و تحقير ديگران جست‌وجو مي‌كنند [They seek their improvement, welfare and honour through the destruction, poverty and humiliation of others]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2011a). In these extracts, "to bring stability in Syria (براي ثبات در سوريه)" means a diplomatic solution to the Syrian crisis while "others (ديگران)" stand for anti-American countries, such as Syria. This opposition to Western interference in Middle Eastern affairs drives Iran's need for alliances within the region.

According to the Iranian President, the Assad Government will play a key role in any diplomatic solution to this ongoing crisis. Consider the sympathetic and constructive tone in the following extracts:

راه‌حل اساسی و درست در ارتباط با سوریه تفاهم ملی است

[The basic and right solution in connection with Syria is national reconciliation] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012e);

این بهترین مسیر براي به پایان رسیدن سریع‌تر خشونت‌ها در این کشور است

[It is the best way to end the violence quickly in this country] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013a); and

معتقديم بايد از طريق گفتگو و راه حل‌هاي سياسي مشكلات اين كشور را حل و فصل كرد

[We believe that the difficulties of this country must be resolved by dialogue and a political solution] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013b).

The Iranian President shows the Assad Government and Syrian citizens as necessary partners in the search for peace, and as political actors worthy of Tehran's support. This is conveyed by the following extracts:

نوروز مردم را به دوستی و عدالت دعوت می کند

[Nowruz (Iranian New Year) invites people to friendship and justice] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012a);

رییس جمهور بر گسترش روابط تهران – دمشق در عرصه‌های مختلف نیز تأکید کرد

[The Iranian president also emphasised the expansion of the relations between Tehran and Damascus in various areas] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013b);

ابراز اميدواري كرد روابط دوجانبه تهران و دمشق در همه زمينه‌ها تحكيم و توسعه يابد

[He expressed hope that the bilateral relations between Tehran and Damascus in all areas will be developed] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013c);

پيروزي ملت سوريه و جنابعالي را صميمانه تبريک مي گويم

[I sincerely congratulate the victory of the Syrian nation and your good self] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014a); and

ما دوستانمان را در مبارزه با تروریزم تنها نگذاشتیم

[We never left our friends alone in the fight against terrorism] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015a).

The importance of Iran's alliance within the region is plain to see in the above remarks.

Moderate Opposition

The Iranian President presents the moderate opposition as an extension of US foreign policy in the region and, as such, these so-called rebels are a key driver of the armed conflict. In particular, the Iranian President has said that: " احمدی نژاد با بیان اینکه قطعاً فشارهای اروپا،آمریکا و اسلحه ناتو نمی‌تواند مسایل و مشکلات را حل کند [Ahmadinejad said that the pressure imposed by Europe and the United States, and the weapons served by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) certainly cannot resolve the problems and difficulties]" (Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of Iran, 2012c). Such a representation of the moderate opposition is consistent with Iran's pursuit of its regional hegemony.

Radical Opposition

In addition to his negative portrayal of the moderate opposition, the Iranian President also depicts the Islamic State, the most radical group among the opposition, as a security threat not only to Assad's Government and the Syrian people, but also to the region. In this respect, the President casts Iran in a very positive light as it takes action against the group. More specifically, the President has remarked that " ايران پيشتاز مبارزه با تروريسم در منطقه است [Iran is a pioneer in the combat against terrorism in the region]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014b) and that "قهرماني اين ملت در برابر تروريزم، افراطيگري و خشونت [The heroic achievement of this nation against terrorism, extremism and violence]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015a). The threat posed by the Islamic State is so great that the Iranian President calls for more collective action. Consider the following series of extracts:

> معضل تروريسم و افراطيگري براي همه جهان و بخصوص ملتهاي منطقه خطرناک خواهد بود
>
> [Terrorism and extremism will be dangerous for all countries, especially for regional states] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013c);
>
> امروز همه وظيفه داريم در برابر اين خطر بزرگ منطقه اي و جهاني، برنامه ريزي درست كرده و ريشه هاي تروريسم را شناسايي كنيم
>
> [Today, all of us have an obligation to make a plan against this regional and global menace and identify the roots of terrorism] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014b); and
>
> اين كمک را تا ريشهكن كردن افراطيگري و تروريزم در منطقه و جهان ادامه خواهيم داد
>
> [We will continue to help until extremism and terrorism are eradicated in the region and around the world] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015a).

Whereas these examples reveal the President's appreciation of Iran's political geography, as the explosive rise of the Islamic State was accompanied by its intention to redraw the political map of the Middle East, he also appears mindful of the important role actors located beyond the region must play to confront the scourge constituted by the Islamic State, as the following statement shows: " تهران و مسكو بايد گامهاي جدي خود را در مقابله با تروريزم تعميق بخشند و با مشاركت ديگر كشورهاي منطقه براي ريشهكني اين پديده شوم همكاري كنند [Tehran and Moscow must deepen their serious steps against terrorism and cooperate with other regional countries to eradicate this inauspicious phenomenon]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015b). By mentioning

the support provided by Iran and Russia to the Assad Government's response to the Islamic State, the Iranian President reveals the importance of Iran's alliances to the conduct of Iran's foreign policy on Syria.

Sectarian Violence

The President of Iran conveys a sense of the dangers accompanying the intense sectarian violence occurring in Syria. He shows the violence as a by-product of foreign interference, as external actors benefit from a deepening divide among Shiites and Sunnis in particular, when he remarked that: " قدرت‌ها همواره از ايجاد اختلافات مذهبي و قومي به نفع خود بهره‌برداري مي‌كنند [Powers have always benefited from making religious disputes and ethnic conflicts in their own favour]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013b). The President also states that: " در همه جاي منطقه، هر كجا كه دوستان ما و كشورهاي منطقه در فشار تروريزم قرار گرفتند آنها را ياري كرديم [We helped our friends and regional countries in all areas that they were threatened by terrorism]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015a) and "همكاري‌هاي چند جانبه درباره اين معضل منطقه‌اي را ضروري خواند [He urged multilateral cooperation in this regional problem]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015b). In so saying, the Iranian President reveals that Shia-ruled Iran wants to expand its influence by maintaining close relations with its allies and that these representations also illustrate an appreciation of Iran's political geography at a time when there is an intense Sunni resurgence.

Foreign Involvement

Unsurprisingly, the Iranian President conveys Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria in a very positive light, emphasising the peacefulness of its constructive approach to the civil war tearing its ally apart. This is demonstrated in the following series of extracts:

> تمام تلاش‌ها و مساعي خود را به كار گرفت تا از تحميل جنگ به منطقه و به سوريه جلوگيري كند
>
> [Iran has made all its efforts to avoid imposing war on the region and on Syria] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013c);

> ملتهاي ضعيف در برابر آنان اميدي به استيفاي حقوق قانوني خود ندارند
>
> [Weak nations do not have hope to restore their legal rights against them] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2011a);

> دعا می‌كنيم شرايط نابسامانی كه عده‌ای قصد دارند بر سوريه تحميل كنند، با روحيه اميد، نشاط و همدلی ملت سوريه هر چه زودتر به پايان برسد

[We pray that chaotic situations, which certain countries impose on Syria, will be ended as soon as possible with the spirit of hope, and the vitality and harmony of the Syrian nation] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013b);

اجرای هرطرح و راهکاری در سوریه باید فارغ از فشارها و دخالت‌های دیگران باشد

[The implementation of any plans and strategies in Syria must be free from the pressure and interference from others] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012c);

جنگ راه‌حل درستی نیست

[War is not a right solution] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012e);

تأكيد بر راه‌حل سياسي به منظور حل و فصل مشكل سوريه

[Emphasis on a political solution for the settlement of the Syrian problem] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2015b);

پیام جهانی نوروز پیام همبستگی ملل برای عشق و صلح جهانی است

[The message of Nowruz (Iranian New Year) is the solidarity of nations for love and world peace] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012a); and

مسير انسجام ملت و سازندگي اقتصاد سوريه با وحدت و قوت پيموده خواهد شد

[The way to national solidarity and the construction of the Syrian economy will be paved with unity and strength] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014a).

The Iranian President presents the interventions of the West and, in particular the United States, in less flattering terms. In fact, he goes as far as to place the blame for the ongoing civil war at the feet of the Americans when remarking that:

در سالهاي اخير با حضور و مداخلات نظامي خارجي شاهد تشديد معضلات و مشكلات و كاهش ثبات منطقه‌اي هستيم

[In recent years, we have witnessed intensifying problems and difficulties, and reducing stability in the region with foreign military intervention] (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013b);

کسانی که تحت فشار قدرت‌های بزرگ قرار دارند

[Those who are under the pressure of the great powers] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012c);

براي ديگران ارزش و حقي قائل نيستند و به خود اجازه مي‌دهند حقوق همه ملتها و دولتها را زير پا بگذارند

[They have no respect for the value and rights of others, and allow themselves to override the rights of all nations and governments] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2011a); and

دخالت نظامي و تخريب زيرساختهاي كشورها

[Military intervention and the destruction of their infrastructure] (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2011a).

In particular, the West's use of armed force and other means of coercion are shown to be counter-productive as: "با بمباران چند نقطه، تروریسم از بین نخواهد رفت [Terrorism will not be diminished by bombardment on several places]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014b) and "تحریم به ضرر همه ملت ها و دولت هاي تحریم کننده و تحریم شونده است [Sanctions are harmful for both imposing countries and imposed countries]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2014b). According to the Iranian President, "هرگونه خشونت در این کشور باید متوقف شود[Any type of violence in this country must be stopped]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012c).

The Iranian President also offers a negative representation of the US's allies in the region, especially the destabilising role played by Israel when he remarked, for instance: " در طول 65 سال گذشته هر معضل و مشکلي در منطقه پیش آمده، ردِ پاي صهیونیست‌ها در آن مشاهده مي‌شود [Over the past 65 years, any problems and difficulties in the region have been seen in the traces of Zionists]" (Iran's Presidential Office, 2013b) and " هرچه زودتر توطئه‌ها و خباثت‌ها علیه ملت بزرگ سوریه پایان یابد [The conspiracies and vices against the great nation of Syria will be ended as soon as possible]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013b).

Here, then, the statements above, which are critical of Western interventions into Middle Eastern affairs, are informed to a large degree by Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony as Shia-ruled Iran wants to consolidate its regional influence by maintaining close relations with the Syrian government. These representations are shaped by the President's appreciation of Iran's political geography and, more specifically, the shadow cast upon it by both Israel and the Sunni resurgence. Thus, the detailed textual analyses offered in this second section of this chapter signal three material conditions that inform and shape Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria: namely, Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony, its appreciation of political geography and its need for alliances. These three material conditions are a powerful force driving the President's pursuit of Iran's national interests.

Conclusion

This chapter examined in detail representations of the Syrian civil war, paying close attention to the content and tone of various official documents released by the President's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2011 and 2015. In order to answer part of this thesis's key research question—namely, how does Iran justify its recent foreign policy on Syria?—the chapter distinguished among those statements expressing a humanitarian concern for the people of Syria from those statements demonstrating an intention to pursue Iran's

national interests. The following table contains a summary of the results of the textual analysis conducted above. More specifically, it shows that Iranian foreign policy on Syria not only offers a representation of the major aspects of the civil war occurring in that country, but also shows that those representations reflect underlying ideational and material conditions that, together, help constitute the socio-cultural context within which the Iranian presidency operates.

Table 6 Collation of the primary sources of Iran's Presidential Office

	HUMANITARIANISM	**NATIONAL INTEREST**
Assad Government		
- Support for Assad	Human rights and Shiism	Hegemony, political geography and alliances
Moderate Rebels		Hegemony
Radical Rebels		Political geography and alliances
Sectarian Violence		Political geography
Foreign Involvement		
- Iran	Theocracy and human rights	Hegemony and political geography

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of Iran's Presidential Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran (2011-2015).

The table reveals that as the President expresses some humanitarian concerns over the Syrian people he also pursues Iran's national interests by supporting the Assad Government through the use of armed force against both the moderate opposition and the Islamic State. Finally, the reason why the discursive practices of the Iranian president differ from his American counterpart lies in the religious character of Iran's political system, which is ruled by the Supreme Leader who is a much venerated Islamic scholar. The Iranian president's discursive practices do, however, share some commonalities with the White House as both are deeply engaged with the political realities of international life.

Ch. 9 Iranian Foreign Ministry

When conducting their country's foreign policy, the bureaucrats belonging to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs follow the direction set by the Supreme Leader and the Iranian president. This third chapter of Part II of the thesis offers a detailed analysis of text extracted from twelve documents produced by the Ministry's bureaucrats between 2011 and 2015.[7] Each of these documents address the recent situation in Syria and were translated from Persian into English by this author. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first examining extracts that appear to justify Iran's foreign policy on humanitarian grounds, the second dealing with extracts that show the importance of Iran's pursuit of its national interests. The CDA model developed by Fairclough is used again here to analyse the discursive practices which produce certain representations of the civil war in Syria. This chapter concludes that the foreign policy discourse emanating out from the Ministry of

[7] *وزیرخارجه :اتحادیه عرب در تعلیق عضویت سوریه در این اتحادیه عجله کرد* (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1390ب)
[*Iran's Foreign Minister: The Arab League Made a Decision in Haste to Suspend Syrian Membership* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2011b)];
مصاحبه مطبوعاتي مشترك كوفي عنان با وزیرامورخارجه کشورمان (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1391ب)
[*The Joint Press Conference by Iran's Foreign Minister and Kofi Annan* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012b)];
بیانیه وزارت امورخارجه درباره اعلام آتش بس در سوریه (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1391ت)
[*The Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Truce in Syria* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012d)];
تشریح جزئیات طرح جامع جمهوری اسلامی ایران برای حل بحران سوریه از سوی دکتر صالحی برای سفرا و روسای نمایندگی های خارجي مقیم تهران (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1391ج)
[*Dr Salehi's Explanation for the Comprehensive Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran for Resolving the Syrian Crisis to the Ambassadors and Diplomatic Missions of Foreign Countries to Tehran* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012f)];
دیدار دکتر صالحی با اخضر ابراهیمی (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1391چ)
[*Dr Salehi's Meeting with Lakhdar Brahimi* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013a)];
صالحی: برخی با تکرار اشتباهات اوضاع سوریه را پیچیده تر می کنند (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1392الف)
[*Salehi: Some Countries Make the Syrian Situation More Complicated with Repeating Mistakes* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013c)];
متن سخنرانی وزیرامورخارجه کشورمان در اجلاس بین المللی سوریه : «راه حل سیاسی، ثبات منطقه ای» (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1392ب)
[*The Text of the Iranian Foreign Minister's Speech at the International Conference of the Friends of Syria: The Political Solution and Regional Stability* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013d)];
نشست خبری مشترک وزیر امور خارجه با فرستاده ویژه دبیرکل سازمان ملل در امور سوریه (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1392پ)
[*The Joint Press Conference by Iran's Foreign Minister and the UN Special Representative for Syria* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013e)];
اظهارات دکتر ظریف در جمع خبرنگاران پیش از ترک عشق‌آباد (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1392ت)
[*Dr Zarif's Remarks to a Group of Journalists before Leaving Ashgabat* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2014a)];
بیانیه وزارت امور خارجه در خصوص انتخابات ریاست جمهوری در سوریه (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1393)
[*The Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Presidential Election in Syria* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2014b)];
دکترظریف در دیدار با رئیس مجلس سوریه (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1394الف)
[*Dr Zarif's Meeting with the Syrian Parliament Speaker* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2015a)]; and
اظهارات دکترظریف در بدو ورود به نیویورک، در جمع خبرنگاران داخلی و خارجی (وزارت امور خارجه جمهوري اسلامي ايران، 1394ب)
[*Dr Zarif's Remarks to Domestic and Foreign Journalists upon Arrival in New York* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2015b)]. Unless otherwise stated, all of the primary sources cited in this chapter are taken from documents released by the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Foreign Affairs is driven partly by the pursuit of Iran's national interests and partly through the humanitarian concerns raised in many of these documents.

Iranian Bureaucratic Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

This first section of Chapter 9 presents a detailed analysis of text extracted from documents produced by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2011 and 2015. In particular, it examines the ways in which this bureaucratic institution conveys its concern over the deplorable humanitarian situation in Syria through its representation of the Syrian civil war. It finds that these representational practices, focusing specifically on the Assad Government, the radical opposition and the role played by foreign involvement, both reflect and reproduce certain ideational conditions which partly comprise the socio-cultural context within which the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs operates.

Assad Government

Like the Iranian President, Iranian bureaucrats tend to present Syria's civilians less as victims of the armed violence and brutal repressive measures, and more as an integral part of the enduring solution to the problem of internal armed conflict. This is demonstrated by the content and tone of the following extracts:

> در فرآیند تحولات منطقه باید به خواسته ها و مطالبات مردم در کشورهای مختلف پاسخ داده شود
>
> [In the regional development process, the wishes and demands of people in their countries must be answered] (2013d);

> این راه حل را تنها مردم سوریه می توانند به آن کمک کنند
>
> [Syrian people can only help this solution] (2013e);

> وظیفه کشورهای منطقه و جمهوری اسلامی ایران این است که برای رسیدن به راه حل به سوری ها کمک کنند
>
> [The duty of regional countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran is to help Syrian people reach a solution] (2013e);

> امید مي رود این تحول به تقویت روند آشتی داخلی و هم افزایی در جهت تامین منافع مردم سوریه و خروج نهایی از بحران و برقراری صلح و ثبات و آرامش بینجامد
>
> [It is hoped that this development will lead to strengthening domestic reconciliation and also advancing the interests of Syrian people, and getting out of the crisis and establishing peace, stability and tranquillity] (2014b);

> جمهوری اسلامی ایران از ابتدا بر این نکته تاکید کرده است که تعیین سرنوشت و آینده کشور سوریه بعهده مردم این کشور است

[From the beginning of this issue, the Islamic Republic of Iran has emphasised the responsibility of Syrian people to determine Syria's fate and future] (2015b);

به اعتقاد ما مردم سوریه مثل سایر کشورهای دیگر از تمامی حقوق برخوردارند از جمله آزادی احزاب، آزادی انتخابات

[We believe that Syrian people, like people in other countries, have rights to enjoy freedom including political parties and elections] (2012b); and

کشته شدن حدود 100 نفر در روز در سوریه اقدام غیر قابل قبولی است

[It is unacceptable that about 100 people are killed a day in Syria] (2013c).

The will of the Syrian people and the democratic governance of the Assad Government are the key to the political solution, as suggested by these extracts, while, at the same time, revealing the significance placed on Islamic human rights by Iran's bureaucrats.

Radical Opposition

While I found no significant representations of the moderate opposition in the bureaucratic documents I examined for this section, radical Sunni Islamist groups, especially the Islamic State, did appear. The following is a illustrative example: " گروه های تروریستی که دستشان به خون مردم مظلوم سوریه آلوده است در آینده کشور سوریه نقشی نداشته باشند [Terrorist groups which have the oppressed Syrian people's blood on their hands will have no role in Syria in the future]" (2015b). The tone of this extract is again informed by a deep commitment to Islamic human rights.

Foreign Involvement

Iranian bureaucrats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs depict Tehran's interventions in the region as benevolent and peaceful, as is illustrated in the following statements:

آمادگی جمهوری اسلامی ایران را برای همکاری و کمک به حل و فصل این مشکل اعلام داشت

[He stated the Islamic Republic of Iran's readiness for cooperation and support to resolve this problem] (2013a);

جمهوری اسلامی ایران در سالیان گذشته همواره جزیی از راه حل بحران های منطقه ای بوده است

[The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been part of the solution to regional crises over past years] (2013d);

جمهوری اسلامی ایران نقش مهمی در منطقه دارد

[The Islamic Republic of Iran has an important role in the region] (2014a);

جمهوری اسلامی ایران به عنوان میزبان اولین نشست مشورتی پیرامون سوریه در تهران پیشنهاد برقراری آتش‌بس در این کشور را مطرح نمود

[The Islamic Republic of Iran as the host of the first consultative meeting on Syria in Tehran proposed a truce in this country] (2012d);

مواضع روشن کشورمان نسبت به این مسئله از ابتدای این بحران

[Our country's clear position on this issue from the outset of the crisis] (2013a);

امیدواریم بتوانیم با کمک کشورهای منطقه به سوریه کمک کنیم

[We hope that we can help Syria with the help of regional countries] (2013e); and

جمهوری اسلامی ایران در آن نقش خطیری دارد

[The Islamic Republic of Iran has a crucial role in regional issues] (2013e).

Iran's bureaucrats also present Tehran as a constructive partner engaged with the wider international community, ranging from governments located within the region to major powers located beyond the region and the representatives of the United Nations. Consider these examples:

همچنین در جریان دیدار دکتر احمدی‌نژاد با اردوغان نخست وزیر ترکیه در باکو طرفین بر اهمیت برقراری آرامش در سوریه و اجرای آتش بس تاکید کردند

[Also, both Dr Ahmadinejad and the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasised the importance of peace in Syria and the implementation of the ceasefire during their meeting in Baku] (2012d);

تهران به عنوان جزئی از راه حل بحران سوریه از تلاش های مسکو در برگزاری کنفرانسی بین المللی با مشارکت تمامی جهات استقبال می کند و آن را گامی مهم در جهت حل مسالمت آمیز بحران سوریه به شمار می آورد

[Tehran as part of the solution to the Syrian crisis welcomes Moscow's efforts to hold an international conference with the participation of all sides and it is considered as an important step towards the peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis] (2013d);

اخضر ابراهیمی نیز با تقدیر از طرح جمهوری اسلامی ایران در این خصوص، تصریح کرد کشور شما در منطقه مهم است و از جایگاه و نفوذ جمهوری اسلامی ایران در منطقه می توان در راستای مصلحت منطقه استفاده کرد

[Lakhdar Brahimi also thanked Tehran for the Islamic Republic of Iran's plan for Syria and stated that Iran is an important country in the region and that the role and influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran could be used to serve the interests of the region] (2013a);

اگر ایران برای اجلاس ژنو 2 دعوت شد، با عزم راه حل سیاسی و از طریق گفتگو در این اجلاس شرکت می کند

[If Iran is invited to the Geneva II conference, we would participate in the conference with determination for a political solution through dialogue] (2013e);

از این رو نتیجه بحران سوریه و چگونگي تعامل جامعه بین المللي با آن مي تواند تأثیر قابل ملاحظه اي بر ایجاد رویه هاي جدید بین المللي و مدل چگونگي پاسخ جامعه بین المللي به منازعات داخلي در آینده، داشته باشد

[Therefore, the result of the Syrian crisis and the way that the international society would choose to interact with this issue can have a significant role in the establishment of new international approaches for dealing with future internal conflicts] (2012f); and

باید مشکل سوریه را به صورت منطقی و قانونی و مطابق قوانین بین‌المللی حل کنیم

[We must resolve the Syrian issue in a logical and legal way in accordance with international law] (2013c).

There are extracts, however, that are critical of some actors in the region, such as " اتحادیه عرب در تعلیق عضویت سوریه در این اتحادیه عجله کرده است [The Arab League has made a decision in haste to suspend Syrian membership]" (2011b). This extract, in particular, shows Iran's negative stance on the Arab League's decision to suspend Syria as a member.

The analyses offered in this first section of Chapter 9—which examines extracts that appear to suggest that Iran's foreign policy on Syria is justified by those bureaucrats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in terms of humanitarian concern—finds that a deeply-held commitment to Islamic human rights informs representations of the civil war in Syria. However, as the next section demonstrates, while ideational conditions might shape some representations, a set of material conditions which drive the bureaucratic pursuit of national interests informs an array of others.

Iranian Bureaucratic Representations and National Interests

Exploring the ways in which the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs signals the importance of pursuing Iran's national interests, this second section presents a detailed analysis of text extracted from documents produced by between 2011 and 2015. It finds that these bureaucratic representational practices relating to the civil war in Syria, focusing specifically on the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition groups, sectarian violence and foreign involvement, both reflect and reproduce certain material conditions that comprise at least in part the underling socio-cultural context within which the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs operates.

Assad Government

The Assad Government is the subject of many representations featuring in the documents produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which appear to indicate that the pursuit of

national interests lies at the heart of Iran's foreign policy on Syria. Iran's bureaucrats show, for instance, that Syria is a functioning democracy when they stated that " بی شک این انتخابات که با رویکردي رقابتي و در چهارچوب معیارهاي دمکراتیك صورت گرفت نوید دهنده مرحله نوینی از ثبات و وفاق ملی در این کشور است [Undoubtedly, the election was a framework for democratic standards and promises the new phase of stability and national unity in this country]" (2014b). The Assad Government is presented as reasonable and just, particularly because " بشار اسد قول داده که قانون اساسي را بازنگري کند [Bashar al-Assad has promised to revise the constitution]" (2011b) and because " توقف خونریزی، تمرکز بر راهکار سیاسی و اقدامات مسالمت آمیز [An end to bloodshed with a focus on a political solution and peaceful actions]" (2013d). This favourable representation of the Assad Government reverberates throughout the following extracts:

> حمایت از برگزاری این انتخابات و نتیجه آن به عنوان یک حق مشروع و تصمیم داخلی
>
> [Support for holding this election and its result as a legitimate right and domestic decision] (2014b);
>
> دولت سوریه بارها اعلام کرده که خواسته هاي مشروع مردم این کشور را تامین خواهد کرد
>
> [The Syrian government has declared several times that it will meet the legitimate demands of the Syrian people] (2011b);
>
> تقدیر و حمایت از اقدام حسن نیت دولت و ارتش سوریه
>
> [The praise and support for the action of the goodwill of the Syrian government and army] (2012d);
>
> اگر هر تغییری در سوریه قرار است رخ بدهد باید توسط دولت سوریه انجام شود
>
> [If any changes occur in Syria, it must be done through the Syrian government] (2012b);
>
> راهکار سیاسی و گفتگوهای فراگیر ملی با مشارکت نمایندگان واقعی اقشار مختلف مردم، مناسب ترین روش برای برون رفت سوریه از بحران می باشد
>
> [The political solution and comprehensive national dialogue, with the participation of the real representatives of people from various groups, are the most appropriate way to overcome the Syrian crisis] (2013d); and
>
> تبریک این دستاورد بزرگ به ملت و دولت سوریه
>
> [Congratulating the Syrian government and nation on this great achievement] (2014b).

These statements reflect the importance of Iran's alliances and its political geography, which in turn drive its lethal and non-lethal support to President Assad.

Moderate Opposition

The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs presents the moderate opposition as an extension of US foreign policy by emphasising the large degree of support provided to the FSA by the US Government, for example. The following two extract are illustrative in this regard: "اعزام جنگجو، كمك مالي، تسليحاتي و اطلاعاتي به گروه هاي مسلح بي مسئوليت [Sending fighters, funds, weapons and information to irresponsible armed groups]" (2012f) and "ارسال تسهيلات به معارضين و مزدوران در سوريه [Sending facilities to the rebels and mercenaries in Syria]" (2013c). This negative depiction of the moderate opposition reflects the bureaucracy's appreciation of Iran's political geography as Shia-ruled Iran opposes Western interference in Middle Eastern issues, including Syria's civil war.

Radical Opposition

The documents released by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs show a radical opposition in decline. According to the Iranian bureaucracy, "ضرورت منافع ملی ما آرامش در منطقه ، روابط حسن همجواری و جلوگیری از افراط است [Regional peace, good neighbourly relations and avoiding extremes are necessary for our national interests]" (2013e) and "امروزه حامیان گروههای تروریستی منزوی شده اند [Nowadays, the supporters of terrorist groups have been isolated]" (2015a). These representations feature as part of Iran's cooperation with the Assad Government in the fight against radical Sunni Islamist groups and reveal a keen appreciation of Iran's political geography. These kinds of representations help justify Tehran's active support of Damascus, including the use of armed force in the region.

Sectarian Violence

The dangers of sectarian violence are not lost on Iran's bureaucrats. Consider the seriousness expressed in the following three statements:

> برخي درصدد اين هستند كه منطقه را دچار يك آشفتگي كنند
>
> [Some intend to create chaos in the region] (2011b);
>
> جمهوری اسلامی ایران حمایت مالی و تسلیحاتی برخی طرفها از گروههای مسلح بی مسئولیت و دامن زدن به توطئه شوم فتنه طائفی و مذهبی را تقبیح می کند
>
> [The Islamic Republic of Iran denounces the financial and arms support for irresponsible armed groups and the sinister plot to foment sectarian and religious strife] (2013d); and
>
> تروریسم همچون غده ای سرطانی در منطقه
>
> [Terrorism like a cancerous gland in the area] (2015a).

The implication behind this imagery is clear to see: radical Sunni Islamist groups should be eradicated from the area. These representations reflect the looming dangers inherent in Iran's political geography, though the following extract signals the importance of Iran's alliances within the region: " عدم جلوگیری از ورود حامیان و جنگجویان گروه تروریستی داعش از خارج به کشورهای عراق و سوریه از بزرگترین معضلات بین المللی محسوب می شود [The lack of effort to stop the influx of the foreign supporters and fighters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State into Iraq and Syria is considered as the biggest international problem]" (2015b).

Foreign Involvement

When I examined the documents, which were produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and indicated that the pursuit of national interests was used by bureaucrats to justify Iran's foreign policy on Syria, I found a few extracts that depicted the worsening Syrian civil war as a by-product of the conduct of external actors. The so-called West and the US in particular were presented as most culpable. Consider the following series of extracts:

> متأسفانه فضای بین المللی بدلیل رفتارهاي غیرمسئولانه، روز به روز در حال حرکت به سمت بي نظم تر شدن و در نتیجه، ناامن تر شدن است
>
> [Unfortunately, because of irresponsible behaviours, the international environment is becoming more chaotic day by day, and as a result, it is becoming more insecure] (2012f);
>
> متاسفانه اقداماتی که از سوی برخی کشورها در ارتباط با سوریه انجام می‌شود، در راستای گسترش خشونت و خونریزی بیشتر در این کشور است
>
> [Unfortunately, the measures taken by some countries in relation to Syria expand further violence and bloodshed in the country] (2013c);
>
> بعضا دستشان به خون مردم سوریه آغشته است
>
> [Sometimes, their hands are stained with Syrians' blood] (2014a); and
>
> متاسفانه تعیین پیش شرط ها از سوی برخی از قدرت های خارجی منجر به تداوم جنگ و خونریزی در طول چهار سال اخیر در این کشور شده است
>
> [Unfortunately, preconditions set by some foreign powers have led to ongoing war and bloodshed in this country in the past four years] (2015b).

Iranian bureaucrats go on to present Iranian foreign policy on Syria as rational and more likely to bring lasting peace than the American approach, which has contaminated some members of the wider international community. This is conveyed through the following statements:

هر گونه نظامی کردن این مناقشه می‌تواند فاجعه آمیز باشد

[Any militarisation of this conflict can be disastrous] (2012b);

زمینه برای رسیدن به وضعیت آرامش و ثبات پایدار به منظور شروع گفت‌وگوهای سیاسی در این کشور هموار گردد

[The ground for achieving the situation of peace and sustainable stability, in order to begin a political dialogue, will be paved in this country] (2012d);

گفتگوهاي ملي فراگير با حضور نمايندگان طيف ها و گرايش هاي مختلف اجتماعي ، سياسي و دولت سوريه به منظور تشكيل يك كميته آشتي ملي با فوريت دنبال شود

[Comprehensive national dialogue including the representatives of various social and political spheres and the Syrian government should be pursued urgently for the establishment of a national reconciliation committee] (2012f);

سوری بدون دخالت خارجی و توقف خشونت و انجام گفتگوی ملی را تنها راه برون رفت از این مشکل توصیف کرد

[Stopping violence and holding national dialogue without foreign intervention were explained as the only solution to the Syrian conflict] (2013a);

ما قبل از هر چیز خواستار توقف خشونت در سوریه هستیم

[First of all, we call for an end to violence in Syria] (2013c);

این اقدامات وضعیت در سوریه را پیچیده‌تر می‌کند

[This action makes the Syrian situation more complicated] (2013c);

متاسفانه بسیاری از گروه‌ها و کشورهای منطقه و بیرون منطقه به دنبال راه‌حل نظامی بودند

[Unfortunately, most of groups and countries in the region and outside of the region looked for a military solution] (2014a);

متاسفانه آقای بان‌کی‌مون بعد از اعلام دعوت از ایران تحت فشار قرار گرفت

[Unfortunately, Mr Ban Ki-moon was under pressure after announcing an invitation to Iran] (2014a);

آنها فهمیده اند که امنیت و نفوذ را نمی توانند با پول یا فروش اسباب بازی های جنگی در منطقه تأمین کنند

[They have understood that security and influence cannot be secured by money or the sales of war toys in the region] (2015a); and

معتقدیم مشکلات منطقه باید توسط کشورهای منطقه حل شود

[We believe regional problems must be resolved by regional countries] (2015a).

These representations reflect Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony and antipathy towards the United States and its unwanted presence and influence in the region.

In summary, the detailed textual analyses offered in this second section reveals that bureaucratic representations of the Syrian civil war, which appear to justify recent Iranian

foreign policy on Syria in terms of the country's pursuit of its national interests, are informed and shaped by Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony, its appreciation of its political geography and the importance of its alliance. These three material conditions help comprise the socio-cultural context that gave rise to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as to the other key institutions of Iran's political system.

Conclusion

In order to answer part of this thesis's key research question—namely, how does Iran justify its recent foreign policy on Syria?— this chapter examined in detail representations of the Syrian civil war expressed in various official documents released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2011 and 2015. It distinguished those statements expressing a humanitarian concern for the Syrian civilian population from those statements demonstrating an intention to pursue Iran's national interests. Containing a summary of the results of the textual analysis conducted above, the following table shows that Iranian foreign policy on Syria not only offers a representation of the major aspects of the civil war occurring in that country, but also shows that those representations reflect underlying ideational and material conditions that, together, help constitute the socio-cultural context within which the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is situated.

Table 7 Collation of the primary sources of the Iranian Foreign Ministry

	HUMANITARIANISM	**NATIONAL INTEREST**
Assad Government		
- Support for Assad	Human rights	Hegemony, political geography and alliances
Moderate Rebels		Political geography
Radical Rebels	Human rights	Political geography
Sectarian Violence		Political geography and alliances
Foreign Involvement		
- Iran	Human rights	Hegemony

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran (2011-2015).

The table reveals that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses some humanitarian concerns over the Syrian people and portrays the pursuit of Iran's national interests lying at the heart of

the decision to support the Assad Government and to use armed force against both the moderate opposition and the Islamic State. Whereas the Iranian president has a broad array of responsibilities, one of which concerns his country's foreign policy, the bureaucrats of Iran's Foreign Ministry are responsible only for implementing that foreign policy. But unlike their American counterparts at Foggy Bottom who take a secular view of the civil war in Syria, the Iranian bureaucrats adopt a sectarian perspective. Both are, of course, responsible for implementing their respective country's foreign policies by engaging with essentially the same members of the international community.

Ch. 10 Iranian Mission to the United Nations

The Iranian Mission to the United Nations extends the diplomatic reach of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although unlike the US Mission it does not hold a permanent seat in the Security Council or wield a veto power. This fourth chapter of Part II is divided into two sections. The first section deals with extracts that appear to justify Iran's foreign policy on humanitarian grounds. The second section concerns those extracts that show the importance of Iran's pursuit of its national interests. Taken together, these sections offer a detailed analysis of texts extracted from twelve documents—each of which address the recent situation in Syria—produced by Iranian diplomats between 2011 and 2015.[8] This analysis of discursive practices that produce representations of the civil war in Syria is framed by the CDA model developed by Fairclough. The analysis in this chapter suggests that the foreign policy discourse manifest in the documents produced by the Iranian Mission to the UN convey humanitarian concerns and in part reflect the pursuit of Iran's national interests.

[8] *Statement by H.E. Ambassador Eshagh Al Habib, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2011a); *Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazaee, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2011b); *Explanation of Vote after the Vote by the Islamic Republic of Iran on Agenda Item 34* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2012a); *Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazaee, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations at the Informal Meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2012b); *Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazaee, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2013a); *Statement by H.E. Mr. Golamhossein Dehghani Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations before the General Assembly of the United Nations Informal Meeting* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2013b); *Statement by H. E. Dr. Hassan Rouhani President of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the Sixty-eight Session of the United Nations General Assembly* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2013c); *General Statement by H.E. Mohammad Khazaee, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Resolution A/C.3/68/L.42* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2013d); *Statement by H.E. Ambassador Mohammad Khazaee, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2014a); *Statement by H.E Dr. Hassan Rouhani, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran before the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2014b); *Statement by H.E. Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the General Debate of the General Assembly of the United Nations* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2015a); and *Statement by H.E. Dr. Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Meeting of the Security Council* (IRI Mission to the UN, 2015b). All of the primary-source material specifically refer to in this chapter is taken from the Iranian Mission to the UN, unless otherwise stated.

Iranian Diplomatic Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

Presenting a detailed analysis of text extracted from documents produced between 2011 and 2015 by the Iranian Mission to the UN, this first section of Chapter 10 examines the ways in which this diplomatic institution conveys its concern over the desperate humanitarian situation occurring as part of the civil war in Syria. It finds that these representational practices—which focus, in particular, on the Assad Government, the radical opposition and foreign involvement—not only reflect but also reproduce the ideational conditions which partly comprise the underlying socio-cultural context within which the Iranian Mission to the UN operates.

Assad Government

Although Iranian diplomats do not offer much in the way of a depiction of the Assad Government, they do draw attention to the plight of the Syrian civilian population. Indeed, shoring up Assad's authority to rule Syria is the best way—according to Iran's diplomats—to protect the Syrian people from further harm. Consider the following statements:

> Our goal, therefore, should be focused on a process that leads to strengthening national unity, ensuring public order, national security, stability and prosperity of Syrian people (2012a);
>
> There are horrible reports on the worst forms of crimes that have been committed by extremists, including using civilians as human shields, no matter what ethnicity or religion they belong to (2013b);
>
> Some people entrapped in those cities are surviving by eating the leaves of the trees (2013b);
>
> Obviously, we all should help [the] Syrian nation to find peaceful political solution (2014a); and
>
> A tidal wave of refugees and migrants swamping Europe and tens of thousands of terrorist foreign fighters, moving between the region's hot spots and their own societies, are indicative of the rapidly globalizing nature of this crisis (2015b).

While these statements are consistent with Iran's desire for a political solution based on the will of the Syrian people ruled by an Assad-led government, the diplomatic concern for Islamic human rights lies at the centre of this representation of the humanitarian crisis flowing out from the Syrian civil war.

Radical Opposition

When examining the documents produced by the Iranian Mission to the UN, I found no representations of the moderate opposition. Iran's diplomats, however, do offer a representation of the radical opposition. According to Iranian diplomats, "terrorism and the killing of innocent people represent the ultimate inhumanity of extremism and violence" (2013c). This statement reflects an attachment to Islamic human rights because these groups are creating a humanitarian crisis through their continued fighting. Iranian diplomats use this rhetoric to emphasise the illegal behaviour of radical Sunni Islamist groups in the Syrian crisis.

Foreign Involvement

Iranian diplomats follow the direction set by the Supreme Leader and the President by representing the West, and the US in particular, as a malevolent force acting upon the Middle East in their own interests. This is conveyed by the critical tone in the following statement: "Today's anti-Westernism is the offspring of yesterday's colonialism" (2014b). This opposition to western influence is one means of promoting Islamic values and reflects a deeply-held commitment to theocracy. Indeed, Iranian diplomats echoed the Supreme Leader when they remarked that the "aspiration of peoples for democracy, rule of law, independence as well as their affection for Islamic values cannot simply be overruled" (2011b).

These diplomats also present Iran's involvement in Syria in a positive light, focusing on international collaboration and cooperation in search of peace and prosperity. Consider the following two extracts, for example: "Pending a peaceful settlement of the conflict, it is imperative that the international community make its utmost efforts to stop the humanitarian situation from deteriorating and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people" (2014a) and "the Middle East longs for development and is weary of war. It is the natural right of the peoples of the fertile lands of the Middle East to live in peace and prosperity" (2014b). The justness of Iran's posture is contrasted against the brutal violence unleashed by radical Sunni groups and left unaddressed by powerful members of the international community, as, for example: "Iraq, Syria and Yemen are all examples of crises being stoked through terror, extremism, violence, bloodshed, invasion and the indifference of the international community. They are similar examples displaying cases of displacement, homelessness and fleeing from the horrors of war and bombardment" (2015a). These statements show a concern for Islamic

human rights, particularly the rights of those vulnerable Syrians caught up in and sometimes deliberately targeted during the strife in Syria.

Here, then, this section of Chapter 10 offers a detailed analysis of various documents which were produced by the Iranian Mission to the UN and appear to justify Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria in humanitarian terms. The analysis reveals that at least two ideational conditions, namely a deeply-held commitment to Islamic human rights and to theocracy, have informed and shaped these diplomatic representations of the civil war in Syria.

Iranian Diplomatic Representations and National Interests

This second section of Chapter 10 examines the ways in which the Iranian Mission to the UN shows the importance of pursuing Iran's national interests. It presents a detailed analysis of text extracted from documents produced between 2011 and 2015 and represent key aspects of the Syrian civil war. It finds that these representational practices—focusing specifically on the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition groups, sectarian violence and foreign involvement—reflect and reproduce some of the material conditions that partly comprise the socio-cultural context within which the Iranian Mission to the UN was established and continues to operate.

Assad Government

Iranian diplomats present the Assad Government in a way suggesting it is worthy of Iran's, as well as the diplomatic community's, support in its search for peace and security because it offers the brightest prospects of establishing and maintaining stability in that area. Consider the following extracts:

> I would like to point out that at this stage, what is important is to prevent any slowdown in the international efforts to resolve the conflict in Syria through peaceful means (2013a);
>
> In [the] view of my delegation, the draft resolution L.42 is a deviation of all efforts that are currently pursued at the international level for a peaceful and political solution to Syrian crisis (2013d);
>
> We have been delivering assistance in helping facilitate and coordinate between the Syrian authorities on the one hand and the agencies of the UN system, especially UNOCHA, and other relevant agencies on the other hand (2014a); and

> My Government is pursuing its initiative for reconciliation and [an] end to bloodshed and calls on all parties to support a Syrian owned and led political solution as the only way out (2015b).

Iran's Mission to the UN reiterates its point—that any enduring solution to the conflict must be based on the will of Syrian people, which means under an Assad-led government—many times, as the following extracts attest:

> We should all work together for a comprehensive, effective and practical way to help a peaceful resolution of the present crisis in Syria (2012a);
>
> Our target should be concentrated on a process that will lead to a broader political reconciliation, strengthening national unity, ensuring public order, stability and prosperity of the Syrian people (2012b); and
>
> I should reiterate once again that the Islamic Republic of Iran is supportive of [a] constructive, unbiased, impartial and peaceful Syrian-led political process and we stand ready to play our role in that process (2012b).

Each of the statements cited above are informed by an appreciation of Iran's political geography, the so-called Shia Crescent stretching from Iran to Lebanon and through Iraq and Syria, which is of vital importance for Iran's political influence in the Middle East.

Iranian diplomats are eager to present the Assad Government in the best of all possible lights. They explain, for example, that the "Syrian government has taken some concrete steps within [the] reform process including the parliamentary election and constitutional revisions" (2012b) and that "the reform process underway by the Government is a positive response to the aspirations of the Syrians" (2012b). At the same time, these diplomats are quick to highlight the challenges confronting Assad and his government by other member-states of the United Nations. Perhaps most troubling for the Assad Government are the attacks from Israel, as the following statements signal:

> It is ironic that in the draft [resolution contained in document A/67/L.63] there is no reflection of recent Israeli regime attacks against Syria (2013a);
>
> I would like, here, to recall that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in a statement issued on 7 May 2013 strongly condemned Israel's recent acts of aggression against Syria (2013a);

> The recent attacks by the Israeli regime on some targets in Syria were vivid violations of the territorial integrity of Syria and violations of international law. Did the United States and United Kingdom condemn such acts? (2013b); and
>
> The draft [resolution L.42] does not reflect the recent Israeli regime attacks against Syrian sovereignty (2013d).

The illegal behaviour of Israel, a powerful regional antagonist—these diplomats imply—contrasts sharply with the conduct of Assad's Government. Indeed, the Iranian Mission to the UN is emphatic that "we should also let the people of Syria and the real opposition groups [...] find a solution for the crisis in a peaceful political process with the government, a Syrian led solution" (2014a). The representation of the Assad Government found in the statement cited above underscores the importance of Iran's alliance because Iran considers Syria as one of its key allies.

Moderate Opposition

The Iranian diplomats posted to the UN represent the moderate opposition, including the US-backed FSA, as extremely violent groups. This is demonstrated in the following four statements:

> The issue is that by considering this situation under the armed conflict, we explicitly recognize that there are armed groups in Syria fighting the Government forces and commit violence and destroy public building and [infrastructure] (2012a);
>
> There is also an urgent need for all those who are providing money, logistics and arms to the opposition groups to stop that immediately (2012b);
>
> Sending advanced arms to extremist and irresponsible groups fighting in Syria is of a major worrisome among them. Such actions only add oil to the fire and could lead to [enflaming] the violence in Syria and the region (2013b); and
>
> We must ask all countries involved in Syria, [e]specially Saudi Arabia to stop supporting violent extremist groups, financially and militarily and pull them out of Syria (2014a).

The content and tone of these statements reflect an appreciation of Iran's political geography as Shia-ruled Iran opposes foreign intervention in the Syrian conflict, backing instead the Assad Government.

Radical Opposition

Like their American counterparts at the UN, Iranian diplomats depict the Islamic State as a particularly gruesome terrorist organisation. This is conveyed in the following statements:

> There is now a growing concern that the operations by extremist armed groups with its possible spill-over into other areas in the region would pose further threat and danger to the regional security and stability (2013b);
>
> There is a growing concern that the operations of terrorist armed groups will pose further threat and danger to the regional security and stability (2013d);
>
> I am coming from a region of the world whose many parts are currently burning in fire of extremism and radicalism (2014b);
>
> I am astonished that these murderous groups call themselves Islamic (2014b);
>
> The gravest and most important threat to the world today is for terrorist organizations to become terrorist states (2015a); and
>
> The trend of foreign terrorist fighters travelling mostly to Iraq and Syria is still upward, amounting to nearly 30,000 from more than 100 countries since 2011, and doubling of volunteers in just the past 12 months (2015b).

The representations contained in these statements reflect an appreciation of Iran's political geography because the Syrian government plays an important role in connecting Iran with Hezbollah.

Sectarian Violence

The looming dangers of sectarian violence, and the deepening social cleavages between Shiites and Sunnis in particular, do not go unmentioned by Iran's diplomat at the UN.

> On Syria there are evidently attempts in creating sectarian sensitivity and denominational tensions and divisions, a known tactic used by hegemonic regimes. Such mischievous attempts are worthless and [a] vain attempt and would have no effects in the stability in the country (2011a);
>
> Any foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of Syria and fomenting divisions and sectarian differences among the people would jeopardize the peace and stability in the region (2011b);
>
> Fear of deadly confrontation of religious, ethnic and national identities (2013c); and

> Current crisis in Syria is gaining new dimensions, following of sectarian violence as well as growth of extremism and illegal acts by terrorist and extremist groups in this country (2013d).

This concern over the drivers of, and consequences following, sectarian violence point to the importance Iran's diplomats place on Iran's political geography. To be sure, these diplomats understand the sectarian strife unleashed by the Islamic State to constitute a threat to Shia followers in the region, a threat so serious that it must be countered through the use of armed force if the people of Syria and the legitimate ruler of that country are to be protected.

Foreign Involvement

Iran's diplomats portray Israel as a menace to Syria in particular and the entire Middle East region in general. This is demonstrated in the following series of extracts:

> It is a widely recognized fact that Israeli regime's clandestine development and unlawful possession of nuclear weapons poses a uniquely grave threat to regional as well as international peace and security (2011a);
>
> The Zionist regime has preposterously attempted to deflect the attentions from its long and dark catalogue of crimes and atrocities such as occupation, aggression, militarism, state-terrorism, and crimes against humanity (2011a);
>
> The people in Syria realize that the key to their independence and dignity is to keep their ranks united and remain steadfast in their resistance and struggle against Israeli occupation and aggressions (2011b);
>
> On the nuclear issue I should say that the Israeli regime's clandestine development and unlawful possession of hundreds of nuclear warheads and nuclear weapons arsenal is the only and unique threat to regional as well as international peace and security (2011b);
>
> Indeed, peace and stability cannot be achieved in the Middle East where the massive Israeli nuclear arsenals continue to threaten the region and beyond (2011b);
>
> Destabilizing the Middle East and promoting violence in this region eventually serves the interests of the Zionist regime and the criminal acts against the humanity, Muslims and Arab world (2012a); and
>
> The Israeli air strikes on 3rd and 5th May 2013 and other previous attacks were all blatant acts of aggression and a clear and serious violation of the norms and principles of the United Nations Charter (2013a).

These extracts show the extent to which Iran's diplomats consider Israel, an erstwhile ally of the United States, as a destablising actor in the region.

Iran's diplomats also portray the interventions of foreign governments located beyond the region as mischievous and counterproductive to the pursuit of peace. Here are some pertinent examples:

> The enemies of humanity did not and do not want the people in Syria to remain united, independent, and developed (2011a);
>
> On the case of Syria, any attempt to interfere in the Syrian internal affairs would only lead to deepening of political and social crisis with all its ramifications to the region as a whole (2012a);
>
> We regret that the whole process of calling the meeting of the General Assembly to debate the situation in Syria did not go through the proper procedures (2012a);
>
> We should be clear and steadfast in condemning any act of violence and terrorism in any form and manifestation. Foreign interferences and acts of violence and the incitement to terrorism would put more oil onto the fire (2012a);
>
> Without any doubt the only constructive approach in passing over these critical moments in Syria is a political approach and avoiding any military adventurism (2013b);
>
> Pursuit of expansionist strategies and objectives and attempts to change the regional balance through proxies cannot be camouflaged behind humanitarian rhetoric (2013c);
>
> Alternative approach for Syria crisis is political solution and cooperation among countries of region to make this dialogue and national reconciliation possible and not resorting to politicized approach of country specific resolution (2013d);
>
> We must not forget that the roots of today's wars, destruction and terror, can be found in the occupation, invasion and military intervention of yesterday (2015a);
>
> The people in Syria know that the key to their independence and dignity is unity and resistance against mischievous and subversive attempts (2011a);
>
> Nothing can justify the use of force and [acts] of aggression against a sovereign state and the aggressor must be held accountable for any consequences stemming from these condemnable and illegitimate acts which endanger regional and international peace and security (2013a);

> The age of zero-sum games is over, even though a few actors still tend to rely on archaic and deeply ineffective ways and means to preserve their old superiority and domination (2013c); and
>
> The strategic violence, which is manifested in the efforts to deprive regional players from their natural domain of action, containment policies, regime change from outside, and the efforts towards redrawing of political borders and frontiers, is extremely dangerous and provocative (2013c).

The use of force as a means of waging the US-led war on terror is shown here as rather futile too. Consider the following extracts:

> They do however have a single ideology: 'violence and extremism'. They also have a single goal: 'the destruction of civilization, giving rise to Islamophobia and creating a fertile ground for further intervention of foreign forces in our region' (2014b);
>
> We propose that the fight against terrorism be incorporated into a binding international document and no country be allowed to use terrorism for the purpose of intervention in the affairs of other countries (2015a);
>
> The present International Coalition is failing to achieve its goals (2015b);
>
> They should know that the smoke from the fire in Syria will, in one way or another, pollute the region as a whole (2012b);
>
> A mistake by one actor will have negative impact on all others (2013c);
>
> Militarism and the recourse to violent and military means to subjugate others are failed examples of the perpetuation of old ways in new circumstances (2013c);
>
> In fact, Syria is becoming a training camp for a new generation of armed, organized and ambitious violent extremists. This is another dangerous outcome of the Syrian crisis, resulted from foreign interventions (2014a); and
>
> Such effort can't be successful if we continue to be mired, as usual, in the swamp of power politics. It requires a new mindset away from the old paradigm of exclusion governed by a zero-sum mentality that has produced negative sum outcomes (2015b).

Unsurprisingly, Iranian diplomats present Iran's intervention in the Syria civil war as constructive and peaceful, which is illustrated when they state:

> In the tumultuous and chaotic region of the Middle East, Iran is one of the most tranquil, secure and stable nations. All the nations of the region have to keep in mind that we are in the same boat (2014b);
>
> We believe that addressing the legitimate demands of the people through a peaceful political process and away from foreign interventions is the only way out of crisis and avoiding violence (2011b);
>
> We need, therefore, to call on the opposition groups that the only way for the realization of political aspirations is through a peaceful Syrian-led political process (2012b);
>
> We have no doubt we can overcome the obstacles by wisdom and prudence as well as by the use of new and powerful capacities, and by relying upon our civilizational roots and our serious resolve (2015a);
>
> We have always believed that democracy cannot be transplanted from abroad; democracy is the product of growth and development; not war and aggression (2014b);
>
> Iran is also eager to show that we can all choose a lasting peace based on development and shared interests that will lead to a sustainable security rather than a volatile peace based on threats (2015a); and
>
> Iranians are prudent enough to recognize that we should not live in the past, and must engage in serious dialogue and regional cooperation. Because we truly believe that the security of our neighbors is our own security (2015b).

All of the statements cited above in this subsection reflect Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony because Tehran desires to expand its political leverage in the Middle East by backing Hezbollah in Lebanon via the Syrian government, whereas the United States hopes to limit Iran's considerable influence in the region.

In summary, then, the analysis of statements offered above in this section reveal at least three material conditions that have informed and shaped Iran's foreign policy discourse regarding the Syrian civil war. These material conditions—namely regional hegemony, political geography and alliances—feature significantly in the calculations of Iran's diplomats, foregrounding the importance of pursuing Iran's national interests.

Conclusion

Seeking to understand how Iran justifies its recent foreign policy on Syria, this chapter distinguished official statements made by the Iranian Mission to the UN, which express a humanitarian concern for the Syrian civilian population, from those statements which demonstrate an intention to pursue Iran's national interests. It then examined representations of the Syrian civil war contained in the various official documents between 2011 and 2015. A summary of the results of the textual analysis is contained in the table below. That table shows that Iranian foreign policy on Syria offers a representation of the major aspects of the civil war occurring in that country, reflecting underlying ideational and material conditions that, together, help constitute the socio-cultural context within which the Iranian Mission to the UN operates. Interestingly, all of the documents produced by these Iranian diplomats were written in English, signalling that the intended audience of these documents are the diplomatic community fostered within the United Nations.

Table 8 Collation of the primary sources of the Iranian Mission to the UN

	HUMANITARIANISM	**NATIONAL INTEREST**
Assad Government		
- Support for Assad	Human rights	Political geography and alliances
Moderate Rebels		Political geography
Radical Rebels	Human rights	Political geography
Sectarian Violence		Political geography
Foreign Involvement		
- Iran	Theocracy and human rights	Hegemony

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the IRI Mission to the UN (2011-2015).

According to above summary, Iran's pursuit of its national interests lies at the heart of the decision to support the Assad Government and to use armed force against both the moderate opposition and the Islamic State, even though the Iranian Mission to the UN also expresses humanitarian concern for the plight of Syria's civilians caught up in the fighting. While the Iranian Mission to the UN is an important part of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, it has a very specific audience in mind—that is, the diplomatic community based in New York. This also means that the Mission's means of conducting foreign policy differ from those used by the Ministry because the former relies heavily on dialogue and cooperation whereas the latter can

use threats and conflict. While Iran does not hold a permament seat on the Security Council, as the US does, it does have two allies within the five permament members in Russia and China.

Ch. 11 Iranian Media

The Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) is not formally part of the Iranian political system, though it does reflect much of the content and tone of official policy. Unlike the media reporting of the Fox News Channel, which was analysed earlier in Part I of this thesis, the reporting of ISNA does not appear to challenge or critique any aspect of Iran's foreign policy making processes and decisions. In this regard, ISNA reporting offers a pious reproduction (see Shapiro, 1988) of official representations of the Syrian civil war. Drawing on Fairclough's CDA model, this chapter analyses text extracted from twelve media reports concerning the civil war in Syria which were published by ISNA between 2011 and 2015.[9] As with earlier chapters in Part II, these extracts have been translated from Persian into English by this author. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first of which examines extracts taken from media reports that appear to endorse Iran's foreign policy in terms of humanitarian concern, the second deals with extracts taken from reports that appear to endorse that policy in terms of the pursuit of Iran's national interests, even where this

[9] *سخنگوي وزارت‌خارجه: ادعاي ارتباط حوادث سوريه با نيروي قدس فرافكني اتحاديه اروپاست* (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1390الف)
[*Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson: The Claim of Iran's Quds Force's Connection with the Syrian Issue is the European Union's Assumption* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2011a)];
سفير ايران در سوريه در ديدار با فاروق‌الشرع (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1390ب)
[*The Meeting of Iran's Ambassador to Syria with Faruq al-Sharaa* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2011b)];
صالحي در گفت‌وگو با ايسنا: براي پيشبرد طرح كوفي عنان بايد به دولت سوريه فرصت داد (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1391الف)
[*Salehi Told the ISNA (Iranian Students' News Agency): The Syrian Government Must be Given a Chance to Advance Kofi Annan's Plan* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2012a)];
تاكيد روساي جمهور ايران و لبنان بر لزوم ارائه راه‌حل سياسي براي رفع مشكلات سوريه (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1391ب)
[*The Presidents of Iran and Lebanon's Emphasis on the Need of a Political Solution to the Problems in Syria* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2012b)];
بروجردی:حمله به سوریه مساوی است با گسترش دامنه جنگ به رژیم‌صهیونیستی (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1392الف)
[*Boroujerdi: The Attack on Syria is Equal with the Spread of War to the Zionist Regime* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2013a)];
ایران ورود سناتور آمریکایی به سرزمین‌های سوریه را محکوم کرد (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1392ب)
[*Iran Condemned the US Senator's Trip to Syria* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2013b)];
واکنش ایران به اظهارات وزیر دفاع آمریکا درباره سوریه (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1392پ)
[*Iran's Response to the US Defence Secretary's Remarks about Syria* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2013c)];
افخم: بیانیه اتحادیه عرب درباره سوریه به بحرانی شدن اوضاع می‌انجامد (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1392ت)
[*Afkham: The Arab League's Statement on Syria Leads to a Crisis Situation* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2013d)];
دیدار امیرعبداللهیان با رئیس کمیسیون دفاعی مجلس ملی فرانسه (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1393الف)
[*Amir Abdollahian's Meeting with the Head of the French National Assembly's Defence Committee* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2014a)];
امیرعبداللهیان: همکاری مشترک تهران ، پکن و مسکو در قبال سوریه با جدیت ادامه دارد (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1393ب)
[*Amir Abdollahian: The Joint Cooperation among Tehran, Beijing and Moscow towards Syria Continues in Earnest* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2014b)];
ولایتی: همکاری ایران و روسیه در مورد سوریه سازنده بود (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1393پ)
[*Velayati: The Cooperation between Iran and Russia on the Syrian Issue was Constructive* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2015a)]; and
رایزنی امیرعبداللهیان با سفرای خارجی مقیم ایران در مورد سوریه (خبرگزاری دانشجویان ایران، 1394)
[*Amir Abdollahian's Consultation with Foreign Ambassadors in Iran about Syria* (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2015b)]. Unless otherwise stated, all of the primary-source material cited in this chapter is taken from the Iranian Students' News Agency.

includes the use of armed force. This chapter finds that ISNA's representations of the civil war in Syria are shaped partly by a common pursuit of Iran's national interests and partly by humanitarian concern for the plight of Syria's civilians.

Iranian Media Representations and Humanitarian Concerns

This section offers a textual analysis of various media reports issued by ISNA between 2011 and 2015. These reports have been selected for analysis here not only because they represent key aspects the civil war in Syria, specifically the Assad Government and involvement by foreign governments, but also because they express a humanitarian concern for the Syria's civilian population caught up in the fighting and sometimes deliberately targeted. This analysis will show that these representations of the Syrian civil war reproduce Iranian official foreign policy without engaging in any substantive criticism of Iran's foreign policy making processes. It will also show that ISNA operates within the same ideational conditions and socio-cultural context as does the institutions that formally comprise the Iranian political system.

Assad Government

Where ISNA reporting appears to endorse recent Iranian foreign policy on Syria by referring to a concern for the wellbeing of Syrian civilians, it offers few representations of the Assad Government. On the rare occasions when the Assad Government does feature in this reporting its representation follows the lead provided by the Supreme Leader, casting Damascus as a deserving recipient of Tehran's support. According to ISNA, for instance: "دولت و ملت سوریه از رشد و بلوغ سیاسي و اجتماعي کافي برخوردار بوده و خودشان توانايي حل مشکلاتشان را دارند [The Syrian government and nation have enjoyed enough political and social growth and maturity, and are capable of resolving their own difficulties]" (2011a) and "همکاری ایران و روسیه مقاومت مردم و دولت سوریه را تحکیم کرد [The cooperation between Iran and Russia strengthened the resistance of the Syrian government and nation]" (2015a). This reproduction of official representations of the Assad Government reflects a commitment to Islamic human rights by ISNA reporters who believe that the Syrian people should be left alone by foreigners so that they might determine the course of their own futures.

Foreign Involvement

Surprisingly, ISNA reporting does not offer depictions of moderate or radical opposition groups involved in conducting hostilities, nor does it present images of the sectarian violence when it appears to endorse recent Iranian foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern. It does, however, state that "دموكراسي و حقوق بشر صرفاً بهانه‌اي براي مداخله در سوريه است [Democracy and human rights are only an excuse for interference in Syria]" (2011b). ISNA again follows the direction set by official Iranian foreign policy as the interventions of the West in general and the United States in particular are criticised here and this criticism reflects ISNA's commitment to Islamic human rights. ISNA reporters consider Syria's Muslims to be a vital part of the *Ummah* and, as such, rightfully deserve protection from unjust Western interference.

Here, then, the above analysis demonstrates the large extent to which representations of the Syrian civil war made by Iranian media organisations are informed and shaped by a certain ideological condition: a commitment to Islamic human rights. This commitment to Islamic human rights features appreciably in the humanitarian concerns expressed in ISNA reporting.

Iranian Media Representations and National Interest

This second section examines the ways in which ISNA represents the Syrian civil war, particularly the key aspects of the Assad Government, the moderate and radical oppositions, the sectarian violence and foreign involvement. It draws on media reporting that was produced by ISNA between 2011 and 2015 and appears to endorse Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria in terms of the pursuit of Iran's national interests. This section finds no evidence of any criticism of official Iranian policy. It also finds that ISNA's discursive practices reflect and reproduce certain material conditions that form part of the socio-cultural context underpinning Iran's media landscape.

Assad Government

ISNA reporting characterises the Assad Government as a regime worthy of Syrian support. This is evident in the following statements:

> تأكيد بر لزوم كمك كشورهاي منطقه براي حل و فصل مسأله سوريه
>
> [Emphasis on the need of regional countries' help for the settlement of the Syrian issue] (2012b);

ایران در این راستا با کشورهاي مختلف در حال گفتوگو و مذاکره است

[In this regard, Iran is in conversation and negotiation with various countries] (2012b);

مشکل سوریه تنها با پیدا کردن یک راهحل مسالمتآمیز از طریق گفتوگو میسر است

[A possible solution to the Syrian problem is to find a peaceful solution through dialogue] (2013c); and

توصیه ما این است که طرح کوفي عنان جلو رود و در این راستا باید به دولت سوریه فرصت بدهند

[Our advice is that Kofi Annan's plan goes forward and that the Syrian government must be given a chance in this regard] (2012a).

These statements show ISNA's endorsement of Iran's stance supporting the Assad Government in the Syrian civil war, reflecting the importance of Iran's political geography and Syria's place within it.

ISNA also represents the Assad Government as a constructive partner for peace and stability in the region. Consider the approving tone in the following statements:

فاروق الشرع نیز در این دیدار، روابط تهران -دمشق را با اهمیت و داراي ابعاد استراتژیک دانست

[Faruq al-Sharaa also considered the relations between Tehran and Damascus as strategic dimensions with importance in this meeting] (2011b);

اکنون اقدامات خوبي در راستاي اصلاحات در این کشور صورت گرفته که ميتوان به تغییر قانون اساسي و برگزاري انتخابات مجلس اشاره کرد

[Nowadays, good measures have been taken in the country in the direction of amendments which can lead to changing the constitution and holding parliamentary elections] (2012a);

روساي جمهور ایران و لبنان با اشاره به شرایط حاکم بر سوریه بر لزوم حل و فصل مشکلات این کشور از طریق راهحلهاي سیاسي تأکید کردند

[With reference to the prevailing situation in Syria, the presidents of Iran and Lebanon emphasised the need for the settlement of the difficulties of this country through political solutions] (2012b);

همکاریهای ایران و روسیه سازنده بوده و این همکاری باعث شده است دولت و مردم سوریه به رهبری قانونی بشار اسد مقاومت کنند

[The cooperation between Iran and Russia has been constructive, and this cooperation has led to the resistance of the Syrian government and nation in support of the legitimate leadership of Bashar al-Assad] (2015a); and

در راستای احترام به حاکمیت و ارای مردم

[In respect for sovereignty and people's votes] (2015b).

These representations of the Assad Government reflect the importance ISNA attaches to Iran's alliance with Syria.

Moderate Opposition

ISNA reporting shows the strong connection between moderate opposition groups involved in the fighting and some elected representatives of the US Government, as the following statement attests: " ورود غیر قانونی و مغایر با کنوانسیون‌های بین‌المللی سناتور آمریکایی به داخل سرزمین‌های سوریه و دیدار وی با فرماندهان گروه‌های مسلح مخالف دولت آن کشور با ادعای دولت آمریکا مبنی بر پیگیری راه حل سیاسی برای حل بحران سوریه در تضاد است [The US senator's trip to Syria with the illegal entry and the violation of international conventions, and his meeting with the commanders of armed groups opposed to the Syrian government are against the US government's claim about the pursuit of a political solution for the settlement of the Syrian crisis]" (2013b). Following the lead set by the Supreme Leader, ISNA represents armed groups, especially the FSA, as an extension of US policy. In so doing, ISNA reporting reflects the importance of Iran's political geography while highlighting the extent to which Americans are engaged with some of the armed groups fighting the authorities in Damascus.

Radical Opposition

Radical opposition armed groups fighting in the Syrian civil war—fundamental Sunni Islamist groups and, in particular, the Islamic State—are depicted in ISNA reporting as terrorists who should be eradicated from the region through the use of force. Consider the following statements:

> ابراز تردید نسبت به رویکرد آمریکا برای مبارزه واقعی و ریشه ای با تروریسم
>
> [The expression of doubt about the US approach to the actual and fundamental fight against terrorism] (2014a);
>
> معاون عربی و آفریقای وزارت امورخارجه کشورمان در ارتباط با مسائل منطقه، مبارزه با تروریسم و افراط گرایی را از جمله موضوعات قابل همکاری بین دو کشور دانست
>
> [The Iranian deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs considered regional issues and the fight against terrorism and extremism including the issues of cooperation between two countries] (2014b); and
>
> مبارزه با تروریسم و پیشرفت روند سیاسی
>
> [The fight against terrorism and progress in the political process] (2015b).

Here, again, ISNA follows the lead set by the Supreme Leader and offers something of a pious reproduction of recent official Iranian foreign policy on Syria by emphasising that Shia-ruled Iran cooperates with the Syrian government in the fight against fundamentalist Sunni Islamist groups. Representations featuring in this reporting, moreover, reflect an appreciation of Iran's political geography because the Assad Government of Syria plays a pivotal role in connecting Iran with the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah.

Sectarian Violence

The potential for sectarian violence, which occurs as part of the civil war in Syria, to deepen religious divides and exacerbate related social cleavages finds expression in ISNA reporting. Not only is " جنگ اسلام در برابر اسلام که این توطئه خطرناکی است [Islam's war against Islam is a dangerous plot]" (2013a), but it is also "ایجاد شکاف بین مذاهب در منطقه [Creating a gap between religions in the region]" (2013a). Reflecting the official Iranian perspective, ISNA reporting also notes that " امریکا و هم پیمانان خود در ماجرای سوریه همه امکانات خود را به کارگرفته‌اند [The United States and its allies have used all their resources in the case of Syria]" (2013a). In other words, while the US Government and its allies, such as the Sunni Arab states of the Persian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia in particular, call on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down, Shia-ruled Iran continues to support the Alawite-dominated Assad government in the Syrian civil war. ISNA reporting not only reveals the importance of Iran's political geography to the country's foreign policymakers, but also highlights the regional geostrategic ambitions of its power rival in Riyadh.

Reporting by the ISNA also endorses the strategic approach pursued by Tehran when it states, approvingly, that " به اعتقاد جمهوری اسلامی ایران ، بهترین راهکار برای مبارزه با داعش و تروریسم در منطقه ، کمک و تقویت دولت‌های عراق و سوریه است که به صورت واقعی مشغول مبارزه با تروریسم هستند [The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the best way to combat, with the Islamic State and terrorism in the region, is to help the Iraqi and Syrian governments which are actually engaged in a battle with terrorism]" (2014a). This, too, reveals the importance that ISNA attaches to Iran's alliances in suppressing sectarian violence that seriously harms Muslims in the region.

Foreign Involvement

Reporting by ISNA conveys Iran's intervention in the Syrian situation in a positive and constructive light. Consider the extent to which the following statements support official Iranian policy:

> جمهوري اسلامي ايران ضمن احترام به حاكميت كشورها هرگونه نقشي در مسائلي داخلي آن كشور را كذب محض مي‌داند
>
> [The Islamic Republic of Iran respects the sovereignty of other countries, and denies any role in the internal affairs of the country] (2011a);
>
> تلاش های مشترک ما و شما مانع تبدیل شدن سوریه به لیبی جدید شد
>
> [Our joint efforts prevented Syria from becoming the new Libya] (2014b); and
>
> بايد يك راه‌حل سياسي براي حل بحران اين كشور ارائه شود
>
> [A political solution to the crisis in this country must be provided] (2012b).

Indeed, the reporting generally casts a positive light on Iran's foreign policies, as the following extracts attest:

> نقش و جایگاه مهم ایران در صلح و ثبات منطقه
>
> [Iran's important role in regional peace and stability] (2014a);
>
> ما امروز از اهتمام رهبران جمهوري اسلامي ايران در ايستادگي در كنار حكومت و مردم سوريه در اين شرايط سخت تشكر مي‌كنيم
>
> [Today, we express gratitude for the Iranian leaders' effort to stand alongside the Syrian government and nation in this difficult condition] (2011b); and
>
> نقش تاثیرگذار جمهوری اسلامی ایران در تحولات منطقه
>
> [The influential role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in regional developments] (2014b);

Furthermore, consider the extent to which ISNA reporting also supports Iran's call for a collective response from the wider international community:

> ما در مورد عراق، لبنان و یمن هم با یکدیگر همکاری داریم و تلاش می‌کنیم بحران‌ها را حل کرده و از دخالت بیگانگان جلوگیری کنیم
>
> [Iran and Russia also work together on the issues of Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen, and try to resolve crises, and prevent foreign intervention] (2015a);
>
> كشورهاي ديگر به ويژه كشورهاي منطقه بايد در جهت به نتيجه رسيدن طرح كوفي عنان كمك كنند كه در غير اين صورت منطقه با مشكل جدي روبرو خواهد شد
>
> [Other countries, regional countries in particular, must help the advancement of Kofi Annan's plan, otherwise the region will face a serious problem] (2012a); and

هر نوع تصمیم و اقدام باید در چارچوب خواست مردم سوریه و با محوریت سازمان ملل متحد، هماهنگی با دولت سوریه و در چارچوب قوانین بین المللی صورت پذیرد

[Any kind of decision and action must occur within the framework of Syrians' demands and the United Nations in coordination with the Syrian government and within the framework of international laws] (2015b).

In this respect, Iran's engagement with the international community is favourably represented, as the following statements reveal:

وی سیاست مشترک ایران، روسیه و چین در قبال سوریه را موفق دانست و بر ضرورت استمرار و تقویت این همکاری تاکید کرد

[The Iranian deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs considered that the joint policy of Iran, Russia and China towards Syria is successful and emphasised the need to continue and strengthen the cooperation] (2014b);

روابط ایران و روسیه تاثیر زیادی بر تغییر و ایجاد روابط منطقه‌ای و بین‌المللی دارد

[The relations between Iran and Russia have a great impact on the developments in regional and international affairs] (2015a); and

بر اساس مسئولیت بین‌المللی خود و در چارچوب مقررات بین المللی عمل خواهد کرد

[Iran will act based on its international responsibility and within the framework of international regulations] (2014a).

These statements reveal the significance of Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony because ISNA also desires Iran to expand its political leverage in the Middle East.

By the same token, ISNA reporting reflects official criticism of other foreign actors intervening in the civil war. This is evident in the following series of statements:

سخنگوي وزارت امور خارجه كشورمان ادعاي اتحاديه اروپايي در ارتباط دادن حوادث سوريه با نيروي قدس سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامي بدون ارائه هيچگونه سند و مدركي را بي اساس و فرافكني اتحاديه اروپايي ذكر كرد

[Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson mentioned that the European Union's claim about Iran's Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' connection with the Syrian issue without providing any evidence is the European Union's groundless assumption] (2011a);

فشارهاي غرب و آمريكا چيزي جز يک توطئه بزرگ عليه سوريه و جريان مقاومت نيست

[The US and Western pressure is a big conspiracy against Syria and current resistance] (2011b);

آمریکا گزینه‌های نظامی علیه سوریه را بررسی می‌کند

[The United States investigates military options against Syria] (2013c);

هیچ کشوري در منطقه تهدید علیه امنیت اسرائیل نباشد

[No country in the region is a threat to Israel's security] (2011b);

بهانه استفاده از سلاح شیمیایی عملیات نظامی علیه سوریه

[Military operations against Syria under the pretext of the use of chemical weapons] (2013a);

این اقدام مداخله‌جویانه که خلاف تمامی قوانین و عرف بین‌المللی است

[The meddlesome action which is contrary to all international laws and conventions] (2013b);

این‌گونه اقدامات و اظهارات تحریک‌آمیز فقط به پیچیده‌تر شدن و متشنج‌تر شدن بیش‌تر اوضاع در منطقه منجر می‌شود

[These provocative measures and remarks only make regional situations more complicated and strained] (2013c);

هیچ مجوز بین‌المللی برای دخالت نظامی در سوریه وجود ندارد

[There is no international permission for military interference in Syria] (2013c);

تحریک و تشویق به توسل به زور امری خطرناک است

[Encouraging resort to force is a dangerous issue] (2013d); and

سخنگوی وزارت امور خارجه ایران با اشاره به این که ابعاد هرگونه اقدام احتمالی نظامی علیه سوریه منطقه خاورمیانه را در بر خواهد گرفت

[Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson points out that any possible military action against Syria will spread across the Middle East] (2013d).

These statements reflect the importance given to Iran's pursuit of hegemony because Iran wants to expand its political leverage in the Middle East by backing Hezbollah in Lebanon via the Assad government of Syria.

Furthermore, ISNA reporting is, like official Iranian foreign policy, critical of the various interventions made by some regional and external actors. According to ISNA, "موضع‌گیری اتحادیه عرب قبل از اعلام رسمی گزارش بازرسان سازمان ملل متحد نشانگر سیاسی بودن و نوعی قضاوت از پیش تعیین شده است [The Arab League's stance before the official announcement of the UN inspectors shows political intention and a kind of prejudgement]" (2013d); and "امیدواریم عقلانیت کافی در مقامات کاخ سفید وجود داشته باشد [We hope that the White House officials are rational]" (2013c). Here, ISNA reporters signal the extent to which Saudi Arabia's ambitions to transform Syria into a Sunni strong-hold drive the policies of the Arab League.

To sum up, then, the preceding analysis of ISNA's representations of the Syrian civil war in media reporting that appears to endorse Iran's recent foreign policy on Syria in terms of the pursuit of national interests demonstrates the large extent to which Iranian media

organisations reproduce official policy. There are no challenges to, or criticism of, Iran's foreign policy making process or its decisions. One possible reason for this pious reproduction of official policy is that the ISNA is shaped by the same material conditions that inform the foreign policy making institutions within Iran's political system. Put simply, ISNA reporters respond to the material conditions of Iran's pursuit of hegemony, its political geography and its alliances.

Conclusion

Having examined twelve media reports issued between 2011 and 2015 by ISNA, this chapter distinguished those reports which tended to justify recent Iranian foreign policy on Syria in humanitarian terms from those reports that emphasised the importance of pursuing Iran's national interests. This enabled the chapter to address this thesis's key research question and the table below offers a summary of the detailed textual analysis presented above. It shows that ISNA offered representations of the key aspects of the civil war in Syria—namely, the Assad Government, the moderate and radical opposition, sectarian violence and foreign involvement—and that these representations reflect both the ideational condition in the form of Islamic human rights, and the material conditions in the form of regional hegemony, political geography and alliances.

Table 9 Collation of the media sources of the Iranian Students' News Agency

	HUMANITARIAN CONCERN	NATIONAL INTEREST
Assad Government		
- Support for Assad	Human rights	Political geography and alliances
Moderate Rebels		Political geography
Radical Rebels		Political geography
Sectarian Violence		Political geography and alliances
Foreign Involvement		
- Iran	Human rights	Hegemony and political geography

Source: Author, based on the media sources of the Iranian Students' News Agency (2011-2015).

This chapter's analysis demonstrated that ISNA reporting uncritically reflects official Iranian foreign policy on Syria and it revealed that the pursuit of national interests is a significant driving factor in these representational practices, as is concern for the civilians caught up in

the fighting. While ISNA's discursive practices are very similar to those of other institutions within the Iranian political system, its reporting is for a particular domestic audience. In other words, while the foreign policymaking institutions within the Iranian political system engage with the wider international community, ISNA reporting seeks to reach, and build, its market of news consumers within Iran. As previously mentioned, ISNA is not formally part of the Iranian political system, though its reporting does tend to strongly support the country's official foreign policy, the government and the Supreme Leader. Unlike the Fox News Channel, in some ways its American counterpart, ISNA does not offer much in the way of criticism of Iranian foreign policy, including its recent policy on Syria. Having now completed a detailed and systemic analysis of recent Iranian foreign policy on Syria, Part II of this thesis now closes by explaining the ideational and material conditions that comprise the socio-cultural context that gives rise to the Iranian political system, its foreign policy and its discursive practices.

Conclusion to Part II:
Socio-Cultural Context of Iranian Foreign Policy

Drawing on the model of CDA developed by Norman Fairclough, the five main chapters of Part II of this thesis have framed a detailed and systemic textual analysis of 60 documents through the differing discursive practices of key institutions within the Iranian political system. These chapters are the first concerted effort—at least by any scholar that I am aware of—to use CDA as a means of interpreting the Syrian civil war's external dimensions, particularly the various roles played by Iran. These five chapters built on the approach and findings of the chapters of Part I, which focused on US foreign policy on Syria over the same period of time. Having done so, this conclusion to Part II now refocuses its attention to the third dimension of Fairclough's model; that is, the socio-cultural context. Part II has argued that there are at least three important ideational conditions that help comprise the context that underpins the Iranian political system. These ideational conditions are, of course, theocracy, Islamic human rights and Shiism. There are, however, three concomitant material conditions—regional hegemony, political geography and alliances—which also feature as part of the socio-cultural context.

Ideational Conditions

The ideological foundation of Iran's foreign policy can be divided into three parts: theocracy, human rights, Shiism. These concepts explain differences of diplomatic positions between Iran and the United States regarding the Syrian civil war. This section looks at the Islamic Revolution and the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist (*Velayat-e Faqih*) before exploring the issue of human rights violations occurring as part of the civil war, which have become the major concern of the international community, from an Islamic perspective. The section draws to a close by exploring the Shia roots of religion and Shia thought.

Theocracy

Unlike many of the world's other major faiths, Islam provides its followers with guidance for political and spiritual affairs (Omid, 1992). Unsurprisingly, in Iran secularism was often regarded with scepticism and the failure of the state policies was sometimes explained away

as the failure of anti-religious policies. In 1957, Mohammad Reza Shah established the secret police under the name of SAVAK (سازمان اطلاعات و امنیت کشور), which was supported by the United States. SAVAK soon acquired "a reputation for ruthlessness and omnipotence, and the mere mention of its name evoked fear among average Iranians" (Kamrava, 2005, p. 145). Meanwhile, Iran's religious institutions, which were relatively peaceful during the 1950s, become more rebellious during the 1960s and revolutionary in the 1970s (Omid, 1992).

The discontent of a religious group resulted in the uprising of 1963 led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. However, the uprising was suppressed by the military (Amineh & Eisenstadt, 2007). Subsequently, the Shah deported Khomeini to Bursa in Turkey, and then Khomeini moved on to Najaf in Iraq. The political repression made some students and intellectuals adopt an Islamic ideology (Parsa, 2011). In 1970 Khomeini gave a lecture series at the Shia holy city of Najaf on Islamic government in which he argued "that monarchy was contrary to Islam, and that God had revealed his laws to humanity so that they could guide Muslims. Therefore the application of divine law could not wait until the coming of the Twelfth Imam" (Chehabi & Schirazi, 2012, p. 176). Given the Twelfth Imam's absence, those who knew Islamic law well—that is, the *foqahā'* (jurists)—must stand up to provide guidance over Muslim political affairs while exercising certain executive powers (Chehabi & Schirazi, 2012).

With military and financial assistance from the United States, Mohammad Reza Shah's Western-style modernisation policy became increasingly distant from the Iranian people's cultural identity. Consequently, young people and intellectuals in Iran began to echo anti-Western views. Thus, it is not surprising that "the *ulama*, the guardians of Iran's cultural heritage, who had been weakened but not eliminated during the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah, became the leaders of the revolution. They represented not a single class but the whole nation" (Amineh & Eisenstadt, 2007, p. 146). After the Shah left Iran in 1979, the then exiled religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Iran. According to Ebrahimi (2010), an Islamic ideology plays an especially pivotal role in Iran's foreign policy orientation. For instance, when Khomeini described the United States as the 'Great Satan' he drew on a well-established paradigm as the US was seen by many throughout the world as a source of evil (Akbarzadeh, 2016). Also, according to Khomeini's view Iranian security is regarded as an integral part of the security of the Islamic world (Attarzadeh, 2009). The Islamic Revolution founded a new Iran grounded in Islamic principles. Nevertheless, it did

not eliminate most of the modern political institutions, including the constitution, the parliament and elections.

Islamic Human Rights

The concept of human rights has become an important issue in modern history. However, there is a debate between Islamic and Western perspectives on human rights. Thus, the notion of human rights is one of the most controversial issues in the socio-political context. From an Islamic perspective, Allah grants rights to human beings on the basis of their honour and dignity whereas from a Western perspective human rights are, although inalienable, acquired after a long history of struggle (Saeed, 2013). In the period following the United Nations' adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) in 1948, there has been a deep ambivalence in the Muslim world regarding the relevance of this Declaration for Islamic countries. In relation to this, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini mentioned that "what they call human rights is nothing, but a collection of corrupt rules worked out by Zionists to destroy all true religions" (Carle, 2005, p. 123).

The two most influential Islamic declarations on human rights are the *Universal Islamic Declaration on Human Rights* (UIDHR) in 1981 and the *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam* (CDHRI) in 1990. These statements claim that Islamic law (*shari'a*) provides for the equivalent set of rights guaranteed by the United Nations Declarations (Carle, 2005). More specifically, the UIDHR proclaims that "Islam gave to mankind an ideal code of Human Rights fourteen centuries ago" (Carle, 2005, p. 124) whereas the CDHRI provides an Islamic qualification on human rights—Article 24 stipulates, for example, that "all the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Shari'ah". In addition, Article 25 states that "the Islamic Shari'ah is the only source of reference for the explanation or clarification of any of the articles of this Declaration" (Mayer, 1996, p. 277).

A general area of difference between Islamic and Western concepts on human rights lies in the issue of whom or what embodies these rights: do they lie in the individual or across society? The UDHR certainly promotes the individual ahead of government. Meanwhile, Muslims face God as a community (*ummah*) and ought to live their collective lives in accordance with *shari'a*. As such, governments enforcing *shari'a* are obeyed because only the submissive society can achieve human perfection (Carle, 2005). As Ahmed (1994) explains further, Islam's central characteristic is that it eschews the separation of secular life

from the spiritual realm. Conversely, Christianity is characterised by the separation between temporal and spiritual authority. In contrast with Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, Jesus did not found a state and, therefore, "did not bequeath a system of law to regulate the affairs of the state" (p. 31).

Shiism

The Shiite and the Sunni are the two great denominations of Islam; most Arab countries are Sunni. The division between Shiites and Sunnis goes back to the beginnings of Islam, with the dispute about the Prophet Muhammad's rightful successor after his death. Shiites wanted the Prophet Muhammad "to be succeeded by Ali ibn Abi Talib, his son-in-law and cousin, and then by his descendants thereafter. What became the Sunni branch was content to have caliphs - the respected elders of the prophet's tribe - succeed him" (Cole, 2006, p. 20). Thus, the fundamental difference between Shiism and Sunnism is based on the issue of the leadership of Islam after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. This issue has had significant ramifications for Shia Iran, as leaders have always had "to receive the blessing of religious authorities in the country - they had to be viewed as the legitimate governors of Shi'a Muslims. Failure to secure this often proved costly to rulers, e.g., the late Shah of Iran" (Mirbaghari, 2004, p. 556).

Between 1972 and 1977, Iran's religious leaders were under constant attack from the Shah's government as the holy endowments were controlled by the state, whose secret agents infiltrated mosque meetings and prayer sessions (Bill, 1982). Furthermore, "the religious publishing houses in Tehran and Qom (e.g., *Sherkat-i Entesherat*) were closed down, religious student organizations on the nation's campuses were disbanded" (Bill, 1982, p. 25). The idea of resistance against oppression is an important theme in the history of Shia Islam as "the third Imam of Shia Hussein ibn Ali was ambushed on the banks of the Euphrates near Karbala by the forces loyal to Caliph Yezid whose legitimacy the Shia reject" (Akbarzadeh, 2016, p. 131). This is closely related to the culture of martyrdom, particularly as Hussein's murder, accompanied by the massacre of 72 of his companions, has been eulogised by the Shia over the years and has, more recently, been used to inspire dissidence and outright revolt against injustice, even when this means certain death (Akbarzadeh, 2016). Shia Islam became the dominant ideology of the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Shiism had political value long before the Iranian Revolution. Five centuries ago, Shah Ismail I established the Safavid Empire and declared Tabriz his capital. The Safavid era (1501-1722) was “a turning point in the evolution of Shiite theology because the Safavids established Shiism as the state religion and consequently created the first religiously legitimate government since the occultation of the Twelfth Imam” (Khalaji, 2011, p. 134). The Twelvers are the largest group of Shia Islam. They consider that 12 divinely ordained imams were Muhammad’s successors, beginning with the Imam Ali. The Twelfth Imam was Muhammad al-Mahdi; Twelvers believe Mahdi to be alive but in hiding. “Shi‘a political thought has focused mainly on the nature and origins of power during the imam’s absence, the limitations of the usurpation of power, and the accountability of the leaders,” Ben-Itzhak explains (2011, p. 571).

Material Conditions

The motivations for Iran's support of the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war can be divided into three parts: desire for hegemony, concern for political geography and the need for alliances. The origin of the history of Iranian diplomacy can be found in the ancient Persian Empire. The Achaemenid Empire (550-330 B.C.), founded by Cyrus the Great, reined over an immense territory ranging from the Indus River, to the Nile, to the Black Sea. Iranian aspirations to restore the former glory of the Persian Empire are reflected in contemporary Iranian foreign policy. The ensuing section of this conclusion to Part II looks at the foreign policies of Iran's former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) as well as current Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, both of which seek to maintain Iran's regional hegemony in the Middle East. This section goes on to explain the political geography of the so-called Shia Crescent, which is an important region for Iran's national interests, including Iran's political influence in the Middle East. Because the Shia Crescent stretches from Iran to the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah, through Iraq and Alawite-dominated Syria, it is potentially fertile ground for countering majority Sunni Muslims in the Middle East. The section concludes after it explains the political situations of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq, which are key allies of Iran.

Regional Hegemony

Iranian foreign policy is influenced by various factors. Katzman (2016) explained Iran's policy motivators by using four factors. The first is threat perception. Iran's leaders are

stimulated by the perception of threat from the US and Iran's regional antagonists, Israel and Saudi Arabia in particular. The second is ideology. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini called for "'independence, freedom and the Islamic Republic'. This became a rallying cry of the revolution" (Ramazani, 2008a, p. 1). The ideology of the Iranian Revolution established a clerical regime which integrates political and religious authority. The third is national interests. Iranian leaders, "stressing Iran's well-developed civilization and historic independence, claim a right to be recognized as a major power in the region" (Katzman, 2016, p. 2). The fourth is factional interests. Iranian foreign policy appears to be influenced by various political groups. For example, the moderates, led by current President Hassan Rouhani, advocate a pragmatic foreign policy and support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1. However, the hardliners such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) criticise the JCPOA. Contrary to the moderates and the hardliners, the reformists have been inclined to focus on promoting domestic reform. In this context, Iran's regional policy is explored, the foreign policies of the Ahmadinejad and Rouhani administrations in particular.

Foreign Policy of the Ahmadinejad Administration

According to the Iranian Constitution, Iran's laws and regulations are based on Islamic criteria. More specifically, Article 4 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that "all laws and regulations including civil, criminal [...] or otherwise shall be based on Islamic principles. This article shall apply generally on all the Articles of the Constitution and other laws and regulations" (Ghazi, 2011, p. 55). Also, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei makes the final decision on Iran's foreign-policy orientation. Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran's foreign policy has been under religious authority. In other words, Iranian foreign policy is fundamentally based on Islamic principles and jurisprudence, and also Islam shapes the ideological discourse of Iran's foreign policy (Dehshiri & Majidi, 2008-2009). In particular, the rhetoric of Iranian foreign policy became more hard-line when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a religious conservative, was elected President of Iran. Mansoori Moghaddam and Esmaeli (2011) pointed out that Iran's foreign policy discourse changed from 'Islamic democratic peace' to 'justice-based fundamentalism' after Ahmadinejad came to power in 2005. The new discourse stood for questioning international norms and adopting an offensive approach towards the West. In this regard, Ramazani (2009) emphasised that Iranian foreign policy is based on a strong desire for independence and resistance to foreign domination.

The foreign policy of the Ahmadinejad government had two key components (Barzegar, 2010). The first is an 'accommodating policy'. Iran sought to cooperate with the major Arab world actors, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, for dealing with Iran's new security environment as a result of the US presence in both Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. At the same time, the Ahmadinejad government pursued direct dialogue with the United States to manage a new emerging security dilemma. The second is an 'alliance policy'. Iran strengthened ties with friendly states, such as Syria, and with political movements, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine, in order to offset the US or Israeli armed threat and in order to discourage further US involvement in the Middle East. Along with this, the Ahmadinejad government sought to interweave the nuclear issue with complicated regional dynamics, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

During President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's term (1989-1997), Iran put priority on an 'accommodating policy', and the Khatami administration (1997-2005) continued this policy. However, Ahmadinejad changed the order of priority. Unlike his predecessors, Ahmadinejad stressed the importance of an 'alliance policy' and sought “to tie regional grievances to Iran's broader regional role and its nuclear program” (Barzegar, 2010, p. 181). In this context, Iran intensified its support for Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon. For example, in 2007, “Hamas was given a financial aid package worth $150 million. In Lebanon, Iran has given financial aid and military training leading up to, and after the Israeli invasion in 2006” (Dodson & Dorraj, 2008, p. 79).

Although Ahmadinejad gained considerable popularity in the Arab countries, his sharp rhetoric and radicalism caused new political fragmentation (Mozaffari, 2009). For instance, in 2006, Ahmadinejad intensified the rhetoric against Israel, “questioning the authenticity of the Holocaust and convening a conference in Tehran in which most of the guests were Holocaust deniers” (Dodson & Dorraj, 2008, p. 81). His holocaust denial was criticised by the reformists and did serious damage to Iran's image in the West.

Alongside radicalism, Ahmadinejad used the ensuing impasse with the international community over Iran’s nuclear program to bolster Iranian nationalism, activate his base of supporters and buttress his Administration’s survival (Dodson & Dorraj, 2008). However, the economic sanctions against Iran's nuclear programme harmed the country. In January 2006 Iran requested the seals on its nuclear facilities be removed by the IAEA before Ahmadinejad

stated that uranium enrichment activities would be resumed at Natanz. Khamenei subsequently mentioned the sanctions regime in March 2007, evoking the widely-held view that the West continues to undermine Iran's nuclear progress by all possible means, including through the establishment of economic sanction regimes, the threat of armed force, and various forms of political and psychological influence (Borszik, 2014). The sanctions imposed by the West had a detrimental effect on Iran's economy as "crude oil exports decreased sharply, the inflation rate increased, domestic production fell, unemployment grew, the currency decayed, and the prices of consumer goods rose" (Borszik, 2014, p. 4). These tough sanctions and international isolation made Tehran reconsider its nuclear strategy.

Foreign Policy of the Rouhani Administration

The Iranians elected the moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani as their new president in 2013. During the presidential election campaign, he promised his supporters to look for a way to end the economic sanctions on account of Iran's nuclear programme (Giles, 2015). His reformist rhetoric benefited from a growing desire among the public for change and he was supported by the reform camp. In addition, Rouhani was able to take advantage of the widespread rejection of former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Funke, 2013).

After his election, Rouhani convinced "the Supreme Leader to transfer the nuclear file from the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) to the foreign ministry under the direction of an experienced diplomat trusted by Rouhani and Khamenei" (Baktiari, 2014, p. 6). In this context, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was involved in nuclear negotiations. With respect to Rouhani's decision, there seemed to be two reasons: firstly, he would supervise nuclear negotiations directly; and secondly, he trusted Mohammad Javad Zarif, who had served in various posts in the Foreign Ministry, to handle Rouhani's agenda (Giles, 2015).

According to Zarif (2014), Iran seeks to improve its regional and global stature. In this regard, he mentioned the three major goals of Iranian foreign policy. Firstly, Iran will further develop its diplomatic relations through increasing its substantive engagement with a wide array of governments and international organisations. Secondly, Iran will vigorously protect the rights belonging to Iranian citizens wherever those citizens may be while actively promoting Iranian culture, values and democracy along with the Persian language. Thirdly, Iran will persist in its efforts to advance the objectives of oppressed people through the world, but especially in Palestine, while maintaining its staunch rejection of Zionist expansion in the Muslim world.

The Ahmadinejad administration regarded economics as just a matter of domestic policy. However, unlike his predecessor, Rouhani thinks that strengthening Iran's economy is essential to expanding its influence in the region. Also, the Rouhani government saw resolving the nuclear issue as a critical part to ending its international isolation (Shanahan, 2015). In 2015, Rouhani's policy led to the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1, lifting sanctions against Iran.

Although Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei agreed to move the nuclear file to the foreign ministry, he has continued "to maintain his skeptical attitude toward the United States, believing that Washington still intends to destabilize the Islamic Republic and is committed to a regime change in Tehran" (Baktiari, 2014, p. 6). In spite of the change of government in Iran, its foreign policy will not be changed dramatically because the Supreme Leader still wields a strong influence over key policy areas. In light of this, Iran is expected to continue its confrontation with the United States and Israel.

Political Geography

Iran's geostrategic position had been reinforced by the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, respectively, because the Bush administration (2001-2009) removed two hostile neighbouring regimes, the Taliban regime and Saddam Hussein (Parchami, 2012). In particular, Saudi Arabia considered the collapse of Hussein's regime as an opportunity for Shia empowerment and the enhancement of Iran's regional influence (Abolhassan Shirazi, 2015). In this regard, in 2004, Jordan's King Abdullah warned about "the emergence of an ideological Shiite crescent from Beirut to the Persian Gulf" (Barzegar, 2008, p. 87). Similarly, in 2006, Egypt's President Mubarak claimed that "most of the Shias are loyal to Iran, and not to the countries they are living in" (Bröning, 2008, p. 62). Shia Muslims make up 10-13 percent of the total Muslim population. By country, Shiites constitute nearly 90 percent of the population in Iran, 70 percent of Bahrain's population (70% of the population is Muslim, and of that up to 70% are Shia; plus, this is an estimate as there are no official statistics), 60-65 percent of Iraq's population, and 35 percent of the population in Lebanon. Also, Syria hosts Alawites, a branch of Shia Islam (10-12 percent) (Çakmak, 2015).

After the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, some rulers and politicians, such as those mentioned above, have attempted to divide Shia and Sunni across geopolitical lines. They have considered that Iran is seeking to establish a Shia-dominated geo-political region to

counterbalance the emergence of a Sunni-dominated bloc (Haji-Yousefi, 2009). Iranian leaders interchangeably deploy Islam and Shia, which tends to emphasise the claim that alternative branches of Islam are neither true nor legitimate. Moreover, Iran has recently developed its diplomatic relationships not only with the Shia-dominated government of Iraq, but also with certain Shia militia groups—coordinating, for instance, Hezbollah operations in Syria—as part of its strategic response to the challenge posed by the radical Sunni group known as the Islamic State (Akbarzadeh, 2015).

Alawite-dominated Syria has strong ties to Iran because these two nations have been threatened by the Sunni Arab majority in the region. The Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah has relied on military and financial assistance from Tehran, with Damascus as the logistics hub for connecting them. In addition, Iraq's Shia majority feels an attraction to the Shiites in Iran and repulsion for the Sunni minority that supported Saddam Hussein (Totten, 2015). According to Çakmak (2015), Iran is influential in Syria but it is not just because of sectarian affinity, but also because of geopolitical considerations between these two countries. In this regard, the main reason for the Iranian support for the Assad government in the Syrian civil war is Syria's strategic importance as a link between Iran and the Levant.

Iran seeks to discourage the United States and its many allies from resorting to the use of armed force against Iran while it strengthens Tehran's strategic ability to influence regional affairs (Parchami, 2012). In this context, the Syrian civil war has become a route for Iran to enhance its position as the centre of the Shia world, and consolidate the Shia Crescent. It is true that many Sunni Arab states see Iran as a threat. Yet, while Power asserts that "we are seeing the restoration of a new Persian empire, this time under a revolutionary Islamic (more specifically, Shia) label" (2015, p. 32), Barzegar argues that "Iran's presence in the region is a result of the need to make an alliance with friendly Shiite governments in response to security threats caused after the arrival of U.S. troops in the region" (2008, p. 88).

Alliances

Iran has constantly supported the Shiite-led governments in Syria and Iraq. However, Iran's regional policy is challenged by radical Sunni Islamist groups, the Islamic State in particular. Iran is currently fighting against the Islamic State that captured several cities in both Syria and Iraq. On the other hand, Iran asserts that "Israel is an illegitimate creation of the West and an oppressor of the Palestinian people and other Arab Muslims" (Katzman, 2016, p. 15).

In this context, Iran provides financial and military aid to political movements such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine that engage in armed action against Israel.

Syria

With regard to the Syrian civil war, the Obama administration insisted that President Bashar al-Assad should step down from power for a diplomatic solution to the conflict. On the contrary, Iran asserts that Assad's fate should be decided by Syrians and not by foreign powers. In addition, Iran aims to ensure that radical Sunni Islamist groups cannot easily attack Hezbollah from across the Syrian border (Katzman, 2016). To achieve this, it is necessary for Tehran to maintain close cooperation with the Assad regime.

Links between Iran and Syria preceded the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and involved Lebanon. More specifically, "Iranian revolutionaries were put in contact with Damascus through Imam Musa al-Sadr, who had recognized Syria's ruling Alawite minority as Shi'a Muslims and effectively legitimized their rule" (Samii, 2008, p. 38). During the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, Syria sided with non-Arab Iran and was isolated from most other Arab states. In this context, Syria closed the Iraqi oil pipeline through Syrian territory, receiving subsidised Iranian oil. "The election of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, at a time when Iran and Syria are increasingly being singled out by the US in a special 'axis' of troublemaking in the region", lent new impetus to the relationship in the 2000s (Lowe & Spencer, 2006, p. 22).

The close relations between Iran and Syria have offered Iranian leaders opportunities to use the Syrian government for backing Hezbollah in Lebanon. In addition to this, "an alliance with Syria would be ideal for revolutionary Iran's anti-American and anti-Israeli rhetoric". Equally, Syria has benefited from cooperation with Iran by relieving its economic and diplomatic isolation. Also, Syria uses "Iran's influence over Hezbollah to consolidate its grip over Lebanon" (Mansour, 2008, p. 948).

Lebanon

In the 1970s, feeling that "the Shi'a community needed to prepare to defend itself in a sectarian Lebanon that was sliding towards civil war", Imam Musa al-Sadr added "a military wing to his movement. It was called Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya - Brigades of the Lebanese Resistance - and was known by its acronym AMAL, or hope". Following Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, "a group of clerics and laymen seceded from AMAL and

established a militia to resist the Israeli occupation. This group became the nucleus of Hezbollah" (El Husseini, 2010, p. 806).

The Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in 1982 provided Iran with an opportunity to advance its anti-Israel agenda by supporting the formation of Hezbollah. Hezbollah had few weapons at the beginning, and therefore the IRGC took charge of Hezbollah's resistance operations (Jaber, 1997). The movement's logo is "clearly inspired by that of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in Iran, and it utilises the same terminology used by the Islamic regime" (Akbarzadeh, 2016, p. 130). Since then, Iran's financial and military support to Hezbollah has made it a powerful force in the Lebanese political system. Hezbollah now plays an important role in the decision-making process in Lebanon (Katzman, 2016). For instance, "Hezbollah is a member of the ruling coalition with ministerial portfolios, and it controls a swathe of territory in the south of Lebanon, in tacit agreement with the Lebanese government" (Kramer, 2006, p. 20).

From the beginning, Hezbollah had an intimate relationship with Iran because many of Hezbollah's clerics had studied under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in the religious cities of Qom in Iran and Najaf in Iraq. Iran provided Hezbollah with "valuable ideological and political aid in terms of Khomeini's endorsement of the movement, his theological justification of martyrdom (i.e., suicide) attacks, and Iran's lobbying for Hezbollah vis-à-vis Syria's government" (DeVore & Stähli, 2015, p. 351). Hezbollah has declared "Israel to be an illegal state based on Jewish exclusivity and founded through violence on Palestinian territory that continues to deprive the Palestinians of their patrimony and land" (Fuller, 2006-2007, p. 142).

In 1983, "an attack on barracks housing US and French military personnel in Beirut resulted in the deaths of over 240 US Marines". This act was attributed to "what was then a relatively new organisation, Hezbollah" (El Husseini, 2010, p. 803). When Hezbollah was established, its first goal was to drive Israeli forces out of Lebanon (Lowe & Spencer, 2006). To achieve this, between 1992 and 2000 Hezbollah engaged in attrition warfare in southern Lebanon, and eventually drove Israeli forces out of the country. During this time, a political consensus grew in Lebanon in favour of Hezbollah's doctrine of resistance (El Husseini, 2010). The intellectual foundations of Hezbollah were "belief in Islam, Guardianship of the Supreme Jurisconsult, and jihad (holy war). The Supreme Jurisconsult's nationality is irrelevant, meaning the Lebanese Shi'a could follow an Iranian". Also, Hezbollah views "defensive

jihad - Muslims' defense against aggression or occupation - as a duty" (Samii, 2008, p. 36). In this respect, Fuller (2006-2007) asserts that the connection between Iran and Hezbollah is solid, and will not be damaged easily by Washington or Tel Aviv. Therefore, the US has few options other than handling the reality of Iranian power and Hezbollah's significant role in Lebanon.

Palestine

Hamas took power in the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Although "it formally ceded authority over Gaza in June 2014 to a consensus Palestinian Authority government, Hamas retains de-facto security control over that territory" (Katzman, 2016, p. 16). According to Frankel (2012), Hamas' relationship with Iran and Hezbollah began in 1992, "when Israel expelled hundreds of Hamas leaders and activists to Lebanon during the middle of winter. Cared for at the time by Hezbollah, the Hamas leaders eventually met with Iranian Revolutionary Guard representatives in Lebanon and later in Tehran" (p. 59). After the Hezbollah-Israeli War of 2006, Hamas drifted further towards the Axis of Resistance, in part because Hamas regarded Hezbollah as a prime example of how to wage battle against Israel, but also on account of the need for alternative sources of financing under Israeli siege and international sanctions. As a result, Hamas could gain direct political and financial support from Iran (Hroub, 2006).

According to Bahgat (2007), the cooperation between Shia Iran and Sunni Hamas underlines Iran's role in the Arab-Israeli confrontation and the enmity between Iran and Israel. Under the Pahlavi regime, Iran had military ties with Israel to contain radical Arab nationalism as espoused by former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. However, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 brought an end to this security collaboration. The new Islamic regime in Tehran symbolically handed the Israeli embassy over to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. In this respect, "it is important to remember that opposition to the Shah's close cooperation with the United States and Israel was a major [driver of] the 1979 Islamic Revolution". The Iranian government now considers that "Palestinian rights will be restored only through resistance. The Sunni-dominated Hamas shares Tehran's position on the Arab-Israeli conflict and this common perception has laid the foundation for cooperation between the two sides" (p. 174).

Nevertheless, Hamas' connection with Iran and Hezbollah was "more a marriage of convenience than true ideological kinship. For example, Hamas operated differently in its

regional relations than Hezbollah, cultivating relationships with the Sunni world in a way that Hezbollah never could or would" (Frankel, 2012, p. 59). In 2012, their differing views on the Syrian crisis gave rise to a rift in the relationship. To be more specific, Hamas opposed the policies of the Assad regime to defeat the Sunni rebels militarily. Consequently, Iran reduced its aid to Hamas in the 2014 Gaza-Israel conflict. However, "some Hamas leaders have reportedly welcomed rebuilding the group's relations with Iran, perhaps because of financial difficulties the organization has faced since the military leadership in Egypt began closing smuggling tunnels at the Gaza-Sinai border in 2013" (Katzman, 2016, p. 16). In this regard, Mansour (2008) emphasised that "Hamas is a Sunni organization and many would argue for its incompatibility with Shiite ideology, but with no other options, Iran is increasingly attractive as a patron" (p. 957).

Iraq

Iran and Iraq were hostile to each other until Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed in 2003; the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) was "one of the bloodiest conflicts of the century with more than a million killed and a million wounded on both sides" (Salehzadeh, 2013, p. 31). From the Iranian perspective, "the devastation of eight years of war with Iraq and its aftermath were not only a traumatizing experience, but also presented the biggest threat to Iran's sovereignty in contemporary history" (Bazoobandi, 2014, pp. 5-6). However, after the fall of the Hussein-led Ba'thi regime in Iraq, the relations between Iran and Iraq entered a new stage. With the Shia majority now in power, the two countries' leaderships look at each other as allies.

Iraq today has been formed more deeply by Tehran than by Washington, and a Shia-led government is in power in Baghdad. During the 1980-1988 war between Iran and Iraq, Iran provided "embattled Iraqi Shia clerics a refuge and supported their efforts to form political movements and militias". Thereafter, "the Da'wa Party and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, supported and sheltered by Iran during the war, became [an] integral part of the politics of Iraq" (Ottaway, 2015, p. 14). Since 2005, All Iraqi prime ministers have come from the Dawa Party.

Alongside the Dawa Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI; now the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, ISCI) was important for the Iranian government because it had a militia wing, the Badr Brigades, trained by Iran's Quds Force, the external operations branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (پاسداران). Badr forces fought

against the Hussein regime during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s and then "supported the Shia uprising that started with the 1991 Gulf War. When Saddam Hussein succeeded in crushing the uprising, the Badr Brigades retreated back into Iran and only returned to Iraq in 2003" (Ottaway, 2015, p. 15). According to Bahgat (2007), Iran also maintains close ties with Iraqi Shia leaders Muqtada al-Sadr and Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. In light of this, Tehran has been "busy establishing a basis of influence next door that includes funding political parties and dispatching arms to Shi'ite militias" (Takeyh, 2008, p. 27).

* * * * *

Following on from the first part of this thesis, which concerned recent US foreign policy on Syria, Part II of this thesis began by introducing five key Iranian political institutions. Each of these institutions is responsible in various ways for Iran's foreign policy on Syria. The main chapters of Part II offered a detailed textual analysis of documents and reports produced by the discursive practices of those institutions. Taken together, these five chapters partly answered the research question on the ways in which Iran justifies its foreign policy on Syria, which informs this thesis. These chapters demonstrated that this policy was justified in terms of both humanitarian concerns and national interests. Only the pursuit of national interests, however, appears to have prompted Tehran's use of military force. Although the representations of the Syrian civil war emerging out from each of these five key political institutions have much in common, following as they do the direction set by the Supreme Leader, any appreciable differences can be explained by the variance among each institution's primary audience.

Ch. 12 Analytical Findings

Drawing on the preceding chapters of Parts I and II of the thesis, this penultimate chapter begins by considering the foreign policy discourse of Iran's Supreme Leader before comparing the discourses of both countries' respective presidents, bureaucrats, diplomats and news media organisations.[10] That comparative analysis provides the basis from which this chapter answers the thesis's analytical questions: namely, (1) in what ways is the civil war in Syria represented in the respective foreign policies of the US and Iran, and (2) what, if any, actions are made possible by those representations; (3) what are the commonalities and differences among the documents produced by various institutions within each respective political system; and (4) what are the material and ideational conditions that give rise to, and continue to shape, these recent foreign policies on Syria? As the Conclusion demonstrates, the answers to these questions go a long way towards addressing the thesis's central research question.

Iran's Supreme Leader

The Office of Iran's Supreme Leader relied heavily upon speeches and records of meetings to set the overarching direction of Iranian foreign policy on Syria. To be more specific, the discursive practices of the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei included speeches about the Iranian New Year, jihad (holy war) and Middle Eastern issues, including the Syrian conflict. Additionally, he explained the Iranian position regarding the Syrian crisis in his meetings with Iranian authorities, the army commander, members of the Iranian parliament, the Russian President, the Iraqi Prime Minister and the Turkish Prime Minister. In light of this, the Supreme Leader aims to justify Iran's foreign policy and strengthen Islamic solidarity.

As the textual analysis contained in the first section of Chapter 7 illustrated, Iran's Supreme Leader presented Syrian civilians as "innocent people (مردم بیگناه)." The West, including the United States, is portrayed as "plunderers (دزدان)" and "the arrogant and inhuman group (جبهه ضدبشری استکبار)" and US policy concerning the Middle East is described as "big problems (مشکلات بزرگی)", "moral corruption, the suppression of people, and killings (فساد اخلاقی و فشار بر

[10] For a summary of this analysis in tabular form, please see Appendix III of this thesis.

سیاستهای استعماری و استکباری و) and "colonial, arrogant and despotic policies (مردم و کشتار آنان)" استبدادی)." More generally, Western policy towards the Islamic world is presented as "the pressure and domination of the West over the Islamic world (فشار و سلطه غربیها بر دنیاي اسلامي)". US foreign policy in the Middle East is represented as "the US international dictatorship (دیکتاتوری بین المللی امریکا)." These representations of various aspects of the civil war in Syria are used to justify, on the basis of humanitarian concern, Iran's involvement in the conflict by actively supporting the Assad Government while opposing Western interference in the Middle East in general and opposing the US military intervention in the Syrian crisis in particular.

Documents produced by the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader that seek to justify Iran's foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern tend to reflect the Supreme Leader's profound commitment to Shiism, which is an ideological condition that forms parts of the socio-cultural context underpinning Iran's political system. The following extract is an excellent example that shows how this socio-cultural context manifests at the level of text: " جهاد اسلام در واقع کمک به ملّتهایی است که پشت پردهی سیاستهای استعماری و استکباری و استبدادی قرار داده شدهاند [In Islam, jihad is assistance to the people who exist behind the curtains of colonial, arrogant and despotic policies]" (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2014b). In this example, "colonial, arrogant and despotic policies (سیاستهای استعماری و استکباری و استبدادی)" means the US foreign policies in the Middle East.

According to the textual analysis contained in the second section of Chapter 7, documents produced by the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader present Bashar al-Assad's victory in the 2014 Syrian presidential election as "the choice of Syrian people (انتخاب مردم سوریه)" and the Assad Government's political efforts as "reforms in Syria (اصلاحات در سوریه)." US and Western policy in the Middle East is described as "contradictions, irrationality, coercion and indifference to humanitarian principles (تناقض ها، بی منطقی ها، زورگویی ها و بی اعتنایی به اصول انسانی)" and Western policy towards the Islamic world is presented as "the plot to make discord (توطئه ایجاد اختلاف)" and "exploitation and arrogance (استثمار و استکبار)." US foreign policy in the Middle East is portrayed as "Americans' indirect and direct assistance to terrorist groups (کمکهای باواسطه و بیواسطه امریکاییها به گروههای تروریستی)" and "American arrogance (استکبار آمریکایی)." These representations of the Syrian civil war were used by the Supreme Leader to justify Iran's support to the Assad Government, including the use of

armed force, while opposing Western interference in the Syrian crisis on the grounds that both are consistent with Iran's national interests.

Documents produced by the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader that justify Iran's foreign policy on Syria in terms of Iran's pursuit of its national interests tend to reflect the Supreme Leader's commitment to maintaining Iran's regional hegemony, which is a material condition that forms part of the socio-cultural context underpinning Iran's political system. The following extract is one example that shows how this socio-cultural context manifests in text: "بیداری اسلامی ملتهای منطقه، حرکتی در مسیر نبوی است و ملتهای مسلمان و ملت بزرگ ایران، با هوشیاری اجازه نخواهند داد امریکایی ها و صهیونیستها، با ایجاد اختلاف و حیله های دیگر، این حرکت عظیم را منحرف و یا بر آن موج سواری کنند [The Islamic awakening of regional nations is a movement in the path of the prophet, and Muslim nations and the great nation of Iran with consciousness would not allow Americans and Zionists to create discord and other strategies to divert this great movement or ride on the wave]" (Office of Iran's Supreme Leader, 2011). In this example, "to create discord and other strategies (ایجاد اختلاف و حیله های دیگر)" means plans to establish a pro-US and pro-Zionist regime in the region.

Presidents

While there is no position equivalent to the Supreme Leader within the US political system, the US President sits at the apex of American political power. The White House relies heavily on public comments, formal speeches, press releases, statements and other official documents to set the overall direction of US foreign policy on Syria. To be more specific, the discursive practices of the US President include his comments on the pursuit of a diplomatic solution in Syria and his formal speeches, including his annual message to Congress, on the Syrian crisis. Additionally, the US President has issued press releases about the continuation of the national emergency with respect to the actions of the Syrian Government and has made statements about the situation in Syria, airstrikes in Syria, the Syrian crisis and the US-Russian agreement on the framework for the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria. Lastly, official documents released by the US President have addressed national strategies for counterterrorism in particular and national security in general. Similarly, the discursive practices of Iran's Presidential Office involve press conferences, formal speeches, public comments and records of meetings as a means of articulating Iran's high-level foreign policy on Syria. To be more specific, the Iranian President has fronted a press conference on the war

against terrorism and his formal speeches have been about the Iranian New Year and the current world situation. The Iranian President has publicly commented on the Iranian New Year, the Syrian crisis and Bashar al-Assad's victory in the 2014 Syrian presidential election. Additionally, the Iranian President explained Iran's position regarding the Syrian crisis in his various meetings with the former UN Secretary-General, the UN Special Representative for Syria, the Syrian Prime Minister, the speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon and the Russian President.

As the textual analysis offered in the opening section of Chapter 3 illustrates, the White House presents the transition to democracy in Syria as "peaceful marches" and "peaceful protests." Moderate opposition groups involved in the fighting, such as the FSA, are presented here as "opposition leaders that respect the rights of every Syrian." The resignation of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria is envisaged as "the legitimate aspirations of all Syrian citizens" and the Assad Government's repression of the Syrian people is characterised as "ferocious brutality," "the disgraceful attacks on Syrian civilians" and "the use of violence against peaceful protesters." Additionally, the illegal behaviour of the Assad Government in the Syrian conflict is described in terms of "shelling and other indiscriminate violence," "imprisoning, torturing, and slaughtering his own people," "use of brutal violence and human rights abuses," "his campaign of killing and crimes," "the massacre of countless civilians with chemical weapons" and "abhorrent brutality." President Assad is also presented as "a dictator" and his role as "tyranny." These representations of various aspects of the Syrian civil war are used, in part, to justify the US involvement in Syria, including assisting the moderate opposition while opposing the Assad Government on the basis of the deplorable humanitarian situation on the ground. Conversely, as demonstrated by the textual analysis located in the first section of Chapter 8, official documents produced by Iran's Presidential Office describe Iranian interventions in the Middle East as "the implementation of justice and the realisation of people's basic rights (اجرای عدالت و احقاق حقوق اساسی مردم)" and as "humanitarian efforts (تلاش‌هاي انسان دوستانه)." Westernisation is presented here as "their way of life and beliefs (شيوه زندگي و باورهاي خود)." These representations of the Syrian civil war also provide justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict on humanitarian grounds, though the nature of Iran's involvement differs from their American counterparts.

Documents produced by the White House that seek to justify US foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern tend to reflect the President's deep commitment to individual

human rights, which is an ideological condition of the socio-cultural context for the US political system. The following extract shows the extent to which this ideational factor can manifest in text: “The Syrian regime’s policy of maintaining power by terrorizing its people only indicates its inherent weakness and inevitable collapse. Assad has no right to lead Syria, and has lost all legitimacy with his people and the international community” (The White House, 2012b). In this example, the White House criticises the “Syrian regime’s policy of maintaining power by terrorizing its people.” However, official documents that justify Iran’s recent foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern, which are produced by Iran’s Presidential Office, tend to reflect the Iranian President’s deeply-held belief in the importance of Islamic human rights. As the following example shows, this ideational factor manifests at the level of text: “ جمهوري اسلامي از همه همسايگان خود خواسته است تلاش‌هاي انسان دوستانه را براي كاستن از آلام مردم سوريه بكار بندند [The Islamic Republic has asked for humanitarian efforts from all its neighbours to reduce the suffering of the Syrian nation]” (Iran’s Presidential Office, 2013c). In this example Iran emphasises 'humanitarian efforts (تلاش‌هاي انسان دوستانه)' regarding the Syrian civil war.

According to the textual analysis contained in the second section of Chapter 3, the White House also presents moderate opposition groups as an “opposition that rejects the agenda of terrorist networks.” The illegal behaviour of the Assad Government is described as “its brutal and unjust crackdown”, “supporting terrorism” and “the Assad regime’s use of chemical weapons.” Also, radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are presented here as “the heinous deeds of terrorists” and “terrorist networks that threaten our people” while Iran and Syria are shown as “active sponsors of terrorism.” These representations of Syria’s civil war provide some justification for US involvement, including military intervention, through assisting the moderate opposition in the Syrian conflict on the one hand and by opposing the Assad Government on the other hand. However, as shown by the textual analysis offered in Chapter 8’s second section, Iran’s Presidential Office presents Bashar al-Assad’s victory in the Syrian presidential election in 2014 as “Syrian people’s trust (اعتماد مردم سوريه)” and “the victory of the Syrian nation and your good self (پيروزي ملت سوريه و جنابعالي).” US and Western policy in the Middle East is described here as “destruction, poverty and humiliation (نابودي، فقر و تحقير),” “weapons (اسلحه),” “imposing war (تحميل جنگ),” “pressure and interference (فشارها و دخالت‌ها),” “bombardment (بمباران)” and “conspiracies and vices (توطئه‌ها و خباثت‌ها).” Also, a political solution to the Syrian conflict is envisaged as “national

reconciliation and holding elections (تفاهم ملی و برگزاری انتخابات).” Lastly, radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are deemed to be a “regional and global menace (این خطر بزرگ منطقه اي و جهاني),” “extremism and terrorism (افراطي‌گري و تروريزم),” “this inauspicious phenomenon (این پدیده شوم)” and “this regional problem (این معضل منطقه‌اي).” These representations of various aspects of the civil war in Syria provide some justification for Iran’s ongoing support of the Assad Government, including the use of armed force, while opposing Western interference in the Middle East and the US involvement in Syria because such actions are consistent with Iran’s pursuit of its own national interests.

Documents produced by the White House that seek to justify US foreign policy on Syria in terms of the pursuit of US national interests tend to reflect the President’s commitment to preserving US global hegemony, which is an important material condition comprising the socio-cultural context underpinning the entire US political system. Consider the following extract, which illustrates the extent to which this material factor becomes manifest in text: “We are the United States of America, and we cannot and must not turn a blind eye to what happened in Damascus. Out of the ashes of world war, we built an international order and enforced the rules that gave it meaning” (The White House, 2013b). In this example, the phrase “out of the ashes of world war, we built an international order” implies that the US is the world’s sole remaining superpower. Conversely, documents produced by Iran’s Presidential Office that justify Iranian foreign policy on Syria in terms of the pursuit of Iran’s national interests tend to reflect the President’s commitment to maintaining Iranian regional hegemony. The following example shows how this material factor is manifested at the level of text: “ باعث اميدواري است كه كشورهاي مختلف به اين نتيجه رسيده‌اند بحران سوريه راه حل نظامي ندارد و بايد از طريق سياسي حل و فصل شود [It is promising that various countries have reached the result that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis and that it must be resolved by a political solution]” (Iran’s Presidential Office, 2013a). In this example, Iran emphasises that “there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis (بحران سوريه راه حل نظامي ندارد).” It means that Iran opposes the US military intervention in the Syrian civil war.

Bureaucrats

Following the direction set by those at the summit of American political power, the US Department of State’s discursive practices involve statements, press releases, formal speeches and other official documents as a means of conducting US foreign policy on Syria. In

particular, the State Department not only made a statement on the Syrian crisis, but also issued press releases on the UN Human Rights Council's special session on the Syrian crisis, the sharp escalation of regime violence in the Syrian crisis, the allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria, the Geneva Conference on Syria, and the Christians under threat in Syria. Additionally, the Secretary of State's formal speeches were about the situation in Syria, international peace and security and countering terrorism, the Syrian crisis and the Arab League's decision to suspend Syria. Lastly, there were official documents related to country reports on terrorism. The discursive practices of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs similarly use formal speeches, public comments, press conferences, statements and records of meetings as a means of conducting Iranian foreign policy in accordance with the direction set from above. More specifically, the Iranian Foreign Minister gave a formal speech on the settlement of the Syrian crisis and made public comments on the Arab League's decision to suspend Syria, Western interference in the Syrian conflict, and terrorist groups in Syria. Additionally, press conferences were held on the Syrian issue and the Geneva II Conference on Syria and the other statements were made about the truce in Syria and the Syrian presidential election in 2014. Lastly, the Iranian Foreign Minister explained his country's position regarding the Syrian crisis in various meetings with ambassadors of foreign countries to Tehran, the United Nations Special Representative for Syria, and the Speaker of Syria's Parliament.

As the textual analysis located in the first section of Chapter 4 demonstrated, the US Department of State presented Syria's transition to democracy as "a peaceful protest" and Syrians as "innocent people" and "the defenseless people." Additionally, radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are presented as a "humanitarian disaster." The resignation of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria is envisaged as "their long-deferred aspirations" and "a democratic, unified post-Assad Syria" whereas the illegal behaviour of the Assad Government is described as "violent and brutal attacks," "brutal crackdown," "grave human rights abuses" and a "horrifying pattern of using chlorine." Moderate rebels, such as the FSA, are presented here as "the Syrian Opposition Coalition, the legitimate representative." Representing the Syrian civil war in this way helps justify, on humanitarian grounds, the US's involvement in Syria, which takes the form of opposing the Assad Government while assisting the moderate opposition. Yet, the textual analysis offered in Chapter 9's first section demonstrated that the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs envisages a

political solution to the Syrian conflict as "the wishes and demands of people (خواسته ها و مطالبات مردم)," "domestic reconciliation (آشتی داخلی)" and "elections (انتخابات)." Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East is presented as "humanitarian assistance (کمك ها و خدمات انسان دوستانه)" and radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are described as "terrorist groups (گروه های تروریستی)." These representations of the civil war in Syria help justify, again on humanitarian grounds, Iran's opposition to the involvement of the US Government.

Furthermore, documents produced by the US Department of State that justify US foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern tend to reflect those bureaucrats' deeply-held commitment to individual human rights. The following example shows how this ideational factor is manifested in the text: "The Assad regime must stop using starvation as a weapon of war and immediately begin providing greater humanitarian access to besieged communities" (US Department of State, 2013e). In this example, the United States seeks to engage peacefully in the Syrian conflict by using a humanitarian justification. Conversely, documents produced by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that justify Iran's foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern tend to reflect a commitment to Islamic human rights. The following example shows how this ideational factor is manifested in the text: " جمهوری اسلامی ایران درخصوص ارائه کمك ها و خدمات انسان دوستانه به مردم سوریه از هیچ کوششي فروگذار ننموده است [The Islamic Republic of Iran has spared no effort in offering humanitarian assistance to Syrian people]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2013d). In this example Iran emphasises "humanitarian assistance (کمك ها و خدمات انسان دوستانه)" in relation to the Syrian crisis.

According to the textual analysis contained in the second section of Chapter 4, documents produced by the US Department of State present moderate rebels, such as FSA, as "the legitimate opposition to Assad." The Assad Government's repression of the Syrian people is described as "the regime's brutality" and "barbarism" while the illegal behaviour of the Assad Government in the Syrian conflict is presented as "atrocious behaviour" and "the Syrian chemical weapons." Additionally, President Assad is described as "a despot." Also, radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are portrayed as "violent extremists" and Syria as "a State Sponsor of Terrorism." This representation of the Syrian civil war helps to justify the US's assistance to the moderate opposition, especially when it involves armed force, while opposing the Assad Government in the Syrian crisis. However, the textual analysis offered in Chapter 9's second section demonstrated that documents produced by the

Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs present Bashar al-Assad's victory in the 2014 Syrian presidential election as "a legitimate right and domestic decision (یک حق مشروع و تصمیم داخلی)" and "this great achievement (این دستاورد بزرگ)." US and Western policy in the Middle East are portrayed as "money or the sales of war toys (پول یا فروش اسباب بازی های جنگی)." Also, a political solution to the Syrian conflict is envisaged as "national unity (وفاق ملی)" and moderate rebels, such as the FSA, are presented as "irresponsible armed groups (گروه هاي مسلح بي مسئوليت)." Lastly, radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are described as "extremes (افراط)" and "a cancerous gland (غده ای سرطانی)." Representing the civil war in Syria in this way helps Iranian bureaucrats justify Iran's ongoing support to the Assad Government, including through the provision of military force, as well as its enduring opposition to Western interference in the region and US intervention in Syria.

Official documents produced by the US Department of State that justify US foreign policy on Syria in terms of the pursuit of US national interests tend to reflect American bureaucrats' commitment to maintaining the status enjoyed by the US as global hegemon. The following example shows how this material factor manifests in text: "To contain the growing threat from extremism and foreign fighters within Syria, and to ensure respect for Syria's territorial sovereignty, we cannot delay the work of establishing a transitional government" (US Department of State, 2013e). In this example "the work of establishing a transitional government" means the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. However, documents produced by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that justify Iranian foreign policy on Syria in similar terms tend to reflect Iranian bureaucrats' commitment to maintaining Iran's regional hegemony. The following example shows how this material factor is manifested in the text: "مخالف دخالت در امور داخلی کشورها از جمله سوریه هستیم [We are against interference in the internal affairs of countries including Syria]" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2012b). In this example "interference (دخالت)" means the US foreign policy concerning the Syrian civil war.

Diplomats

Following the overarching direction set by the US President and acting in accordance with the approach taken by the US Secretary of State, the discursive practices of the US Mission to the UN involve formal speeches and statements that further US foreign policy on Syria. More specifically, speeches at the United Nations drew attention to the humanitarian situation in

Syria, the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons, the Syrian regime's military action assisted by Hezbollah and Iran, humanitarian access in Syria, the humanitarian crisis in Syria, the Syrian regime's use of a toxic chemical as a weapon, and the situation in the Middle East. Additionally, statements were made about various resolutions on the Syrian crisis and the UN investigation into the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The discursive practices of the Iranian Mission to the UN also heavily involved formal speeches and statements as a means of furthering Iran's foreign policy on Syria. In particular, a speech at the United Nations concerned the prevention of armed conflict in Syria. Additionally, statements were made about the situation in Syria, the prevention of armed conflict in Syria, the situation of human rights in Syria, the chaotic situation in the Middle East, including combating violence and extremism, the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, violence and extremism in North Africa and West Asia, and the maintenance of international peace and security.

As the textual analysis offered in the first section of Chapter 5 demonstrated, the US Mission to the UN presented Syria's transition to democracy as "peaceful protest" and the Syrian people as "innocent civilians." Additionally, radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are presented as "religious fanaticism" and as "the terrorist threat." The illegal behaviour of the Assad Government in the Syrian conflict is portrayed as the "continued, indiscriminate use of heavy weaponry," "chemical weapons," "violence, torture, and persecution," "human rights abuses," "barrel bombs," "tremendous humanitarian suffering" and "appalling actions." President Assad is also described as heading "a brutal regime." These representations of various aspects of the civil war in Syria help American diplomats justify US opposition to the Assad Government on the basis of the deplorable humanitarian situation on the ground. However, the textual analysis contained in Chapter 10's first section demonstrated that the diplomats of the Iranian Mission to the UN also presented Syria's civilians as "innocent people" and radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, as "extremists" and "violence and extremism." US and Western policy in the Middle East is presented as "colonialism," however. Also, a political solution to the Syrian conflict is envisaged as "national unity." Representing Syria's civil war in this way enables Iranian diplomats to justify on humanitarian grounds their government's support of Assad and opposition to Western interference in the region, including US involvement in Syria.

Official documents produced by the US Mission to the UN that justify US foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern tend to reflect those diplomats' commitment to individual human rights. The following example shows the extent to which this ideational factor can manifest in text: "I met children whose parents had fled with them to Turkey because those kids were gravely malnourished, inhumanly denied food and medicine by the Syrian regime" (US Mission to the UN, 2014b). This example shows the United States intervening in the Syrian crisis in the name of the protection of human rights in Syria. However, similar documents produced by the Iranian Mission to the UN that justify Iranian foreign policy on Syria in comparable terms tend to reflect those diplomats' deeply-held belief in Islamic human rights. The following example shows how this ideational factor is manifested in text: "The human tragedy in Syria represents a painful example of catastrophic spread of violence and extremism in our region" (IRI Mission to the UN, 2013c). In this example, the Syrian civil war is expressed as 'human tragedy'. Additionally, in this sentence, 'violence and extremism' means radical Sunni Islamist groups.

Yet, according to the textual analysis located in the second section of Chapter 5, documents produced by the US Mission to the UN also presented the illegal behaviour of the Assad Government as "the Syrian regime's use of any toxic chemical" and "the Asad regime's crimes." Radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are portrayed as "the terrorist organization" and "a terrorist entity." These representations of the civil war in Syria enable American diplomats to justify their government's opposition to the Assad Government and actions, including the use of military force, because these actions are consistent with the pursuit of US national interests. Contrastingly, the textual analysis contained in Chapter 10's second section demonstrated that documents produced by the diplomats belonging to the Iranian Mission to the UN presented the Assad Government's political efforts as "the reform process." US and Western policy in the Middle East are described as "military adventurism," "war and aggression," "mischievous and subversive attempts," "archaic and deeply ineffective ways," "occupation, invasion and military intervention" and "this erroneous strategic approach." Also, a political solution to the Syrian conflict is envisaged as "a Syrian led solution" and "national reconciliation." Lastly, radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are portrayed as "extremism and radicalism" and "these murderous groups." Representing these various aspects of Syria's civil war enables Iranian diplomats to justify their government's ongoing support of the Assad Government in the Syrian conflict, which

sometimes involves the use of armed force, while opposing Western interference in the region and the US intervention in Syria because these actions are in Iran's national interests.

The documents produced by the US Mission to the UN that justify US foreign policy on Syria in terms of the US's pursuit of its national interest tend to reflect these American diplomats' commitment to preserving US global hegemony. The following example shows how this material factor is manifested in the text: "If Bashar Al-Assad and those under his command make the mistake of using chemical weapons, or fail to meet their obligation to secure them, then there will be consequences. Those responsible will be held accountable" (US Mission to the UN, 2013b). In this example, "consequences" imply the possibility of military action in the Syrian civil war. Conversely, the documents produced by the Iranian Mission to the UN that justify Iranian foreign policy on Syria in comparable terms tend to reflect a commitment by those diplomats to maintain Iran's regional hegemony. The following example shows how this material factor is manifested in the text: "Military aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq and improper interference in the developments in Syria are clear examples of this erroneous strategic approach in the Middle East" (IRI Mission to the UN, 2014b). In this example, US policy across the Middle East is expressed as an "erroneous strategic approach."

News Media

The discursive practices of the Fox News Channel involve news reports and leading articles which either endorse or criticise US foreign policy on Syria. News reports covered topics including US foreign policy in the Syrian crisis, the Islamic State's expansion of control in Syria and the invitation for Iran to attend Syria talks. Leading articles covered US foreign policy on the Syrian crisis, including calls for Assad's removal in Syria, a peaceful way to unseat Assad, and potential pathways forward on Syria as well as Obama's hesitation on the Syrian crisis and his deafening silence on the Syrian question. US strategic options regarding Syria and the situation of Syria's Christians also received coverage. In light of this, FNC aims not only to reflect the foreign policy of the United States, but also to occasionally criticise elements of US policy on Syria. The discursive practices of the Iranian Students' News Agency similarly involve news reports that convey Iranian foreign policy on Syria. News reports, for example, drew attention to the comments of Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson on the EU's claim of Iran's involvement in the Syrian issue, the US Defence Secretary's remarks about possible military intervention in Syria, a US Senator's trip to Syria and the

Arab League's statement on Syria. News reports also focused on the comments of the advisor on international affairs to the Iranian Supreme Leader about cooperation between Iran and Russia on Syria, the comments of Iran's Foreign Minister on Kofi Annan's plan for a political solution to the Syrian crisis, the comments of Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister on the Vienna peace talks on Syria, and the comments of the chairman of the Iranian parliament's national security and foreign policy commission on foreign military intervention in Syria. Additionally, news reports also covered the meetings between the Iranian and Lebanese Presidents, meetings between Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister and the Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister, and the head of the French National Assembly's Defence Committee, as well as meetings between Iran's Ambassador to Syria and Syria's Deputy President. There is no express or implied criticism of official policy here, however.

According to the textual analysis offered in the first section of Chapter 6, news reports issued by FNC characterise US foreign policy in the Middle East as "generous humanitarian aid" and "humanitarian assistance" while Syria's transition to democracy is presented as "peaceful demonstrations." Additionally, Syrian civilians are portrayed as "innocent people" whereas radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are presented as "a gang of hateful, heavily armed terrorists." The Assad Government's repression of the Syrian people is described simply as "carnage" and its illegal behaviour is presented as "its campaign of murdering its own citizens" relying on "the Syrian policy of shoot first, ask questions later." These representations of various aspects of the civil war in Syria are used to endorse, on the basis of humanitarian concern, US involvement in Syria, including opposing the Assad Government. This representation includes criticism of the Obama Administration's policy on the Syrian conflict, especially when Obama's policy on Syria is presented as "a stain on Obama's hands." As the textual analysis contained in the first section of Chapter 11 demonstrates, ISNA reporting presents US and Western policy in the Middle East as "an excuse for interference (بهانه‌اي براي مداخله)" and "the continuation of bloodshed (ادامه خونريزى)." These representations of Syria's civil war enable Iranian reporters to endorse Iran's opposition to Western interference in the region on the basis of their concern for the civilian population in harm's way.

News reports produced by FNC that endorse US foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarianism tend to reflect those reporters' deeply-held belief in the virtues of individual human rights. The following example signals the extent to which this ideational factor can

manifest in text: “The U.S. should offer generous humanitarian aid to accountable actors. Our priority in Syria should be to ease the suffering of Syrian civilians. At least 6.8 million are currently in need of humanitarian assistance” (Fox News Channel, 2013b). In this example, the United States seeks to intervene in the Syrian civil war in the name of protecting human rights. Additionally, unlike ISNA, FNC took a critical stance on its own government in the following example: “The Obama administration has fussed and fluttered, blabbed and gabbed, and ultimately done nothing for the people of Syria. The death of more than 17,000 Syrians is a stain on Obama's hands” (Fox News Channel, 2012c). This example shows that criticism of the Obama Administration's policy regarding the Syrian crisis is possible in the US political system where the fourth estate plays an informal but important role holding to account those who wield power. In contrast, news reporting produced by the ISNA that endorses Iranian foreign policy on Syria in terms of humanitarian concern reflects a deeply-held belief in Islamic human rights. The following example shows how this ideational factor is manifested in the text: “آن را مداخله صریح در امور داخلی سوریه و اقدامی در راستای گسترش دامنه بحران و ادامه خونریزی در آن کشور می‌دانیم [We consider it as clear interference in the internal affairs of Syria, and action in order to expand the scope of the crisis with the continuation of bloodshed in the country]” (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2013b). In this example, Iran opposes the US intervention in relation to the Syrian conflict to avoid “bloodshed (خونریزی).”

According to the textual analysis contained in Chapter 6’s second section, news reports issued by FNC describe the illegal behaviour of the Assad Government in terms such as “tanks and helicopter gunships to slaughter Syrians,” “the genocide of the Syrian people” and “Assad’s chemical weapons.” Iran is characterised as “the puppet master behind Assad’s killing machine” and Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East is portrayed as “a major source of the bloodshed.” Representing Syria’s civil war in this way enables FNC reports to endorse US foreign policy on Syria, particularly its opposition to the Assad Government through all necessary means, because it is deemed to be in the national interest of the American people. Some coverage of Obama’s administration is critical, however, as the Obama Administration’s policy on Syria is presented as “President Obama’s vacillation on Syria.” Yet, according to the textual analysis contained in the second section of Chapter 11, news reports issued by ISNA present Bashar al-Assad’s victory in the Syrian presidential election in 2014 as “the legitimate leadership of Bashar al-Assad (رهبری قانونی بشار اسد)” and “sovereignty and people's votes (حاکمیت و ارای مردم),” and the Assad Government’s political

reform efforts are seen as "good measures (اقدامات خوبي)." US and Western policy in the Middle East are presented as "foreign intervention (دخالت بیگانگان)," "a big conspiracy (یک توطئه بزرگ)," "the meddlesome action (این اقدام مداخلهجویانه)" and "possible military action (اقدام احتمالی نظامی)." Also, a political solution to the Syrian conflict is envisaged as "a peaceful solution (یک راهحل مسالمتآمیز)." Lastly, radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State, are represented as "terrorism and extremism (تروریسم و افراط گرایی)." These representations of various aspects of the civil war in Syria help Iranian reporters uncritically endorse Iran's foreign policy on Syria, especially its ongoing support of the Assad Government, its projection of military power, and its opposing of Western interference in the region and US intervention in Syria, because these actions are consistent with the pursuit of Iran's national interests.

News reporting by FNC that endorses US foreign policy on Syria because it serves America's national interests tends to reflect those reporters' firm commitment to maintaining the US's status as a global hegemon. The following example shows how this material factor is manifested in the text: "Those who know the realities inside Syria have been calling for American leadership and military aid since 2011, long before Al Qaeda came in to fill the vacuum and long before Tehran diplomatically, financially, and militarily took over Syria as a full-fledged client-state" (Fox News Channel, 2014a). This example provides justification for intervening in the Syrian civil war. In addition, unlike ISNA, the FNC expressed a critical stance on its own government in the following example: "President Obama's vacillation on Syria - first delaying military action and then booting the decision to Congress - poses grave threats to U.S. prosperity" (Fox News Channel, 2013d). This example again shows that criticism of the Obama Administration's policy on Syria is possible within the US political system. However, news reporting produced by ISNA that endorses Iran's foreign policy on Syria in terms of Iran's pursuit of its national interests reflect those reporters' commitment to the maintenance of Iran's regional hegemony. The following example shows how this material factor is manifested in the text: " ایران بارها اعلام کردهاست که بحران سوریه هیچ راهحل نظامی ندارد [Iran has announced several times that there is not a military solution to the Syrian crisis]" (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2013c). In this example, Iran disagrees with 'a military solution (راهحل نظامی)' in relation to the Syrian civil war.

Here, then, although the respective foreign policies of the US and Iran depict common features of the Syrian civil war, the war itself is represented here in contending ways. There is

a sense that some of the actors involved in the fighting are cast as villains while others appear as deserving victims and potential heroes. This variance is driven, to a large degree, by the differing strategic objectives held by each country, their geopolitical location and their relative power in world affairs. Having said that, however, Iran and the United States used the same rhetoric of 'innocent people' for intervening in the Syrian conflict. This rhetoric means the Syrian people and represents a humanitarian crisis in the Syrian conflict. Yet these two international actors have contrasting positions in relation to the will of the Syrian people. More specifically, 'the choice of Syrian people (انتخاب مردم سوریه)', 'Syrian people's trust (اعتماد مردم سوریه)' and 'a legitimate right and domestic decision (یک حق مشروع و تصمیم داخلی)' mean Bashar al-Assad's victory in the Syrian presidential election in 2014, and Iran used these representations for upholding the Assad government in the Syrian crisis. In contrast, 'the legitimate aspirations of all Syrian citizens' and 'their long-deferred aspirations' stand for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and the United States used these representations for opposing the Assad government in the Syrian crisis. Representing the civil war in Syria not only as a humanitarian crisis, but also as an issue of vital national interest makes taking military action possible, in addition to issuing strong rhetoric and diplomatic posturing.

The commonalities and differences among the documents produced by various institutions within each respective political system are, to a large extent, determined by a hierarchy of power that orders the foreign policy making institutions within each political system. Power flows downwards in both systems and each institution plays to a slightly different audiences. The material and ideational conditions that give rise to, and continue to shape, these institutions that articulate and implement these two competing foreign policies on Syria include theocracy, Islamic human rights, Shiism, regional hegemony, political geography and alliances for Iran, and democracy, individual human rights, Christianity, global hegemony, political economy and alliances for the United States. These underlying conditions give rise to the possibilities of the foreign policy statements examined in Parts I and II of this thesis. This is important because these underlying conditions can be overlooked by researchers and analysts.

Conclusion

This thesis addresses a central research question: namely, in what ways do the US and Iran justify their respective foreign policies on Syria? As explained at the outset of this thesis, the Syrian civil war was chosen here as a topic of enquiry in part because its outcome could change the balance of power within the Middle East, the refugees fleeing its violence—including the use of chemical weapons on civilians—have created tensions among European countries, and its carnage has created conditions for radial Sunni Islam to flourish. This internal armed conflict has important international dimensions too; the roles played by the US and Iran have been singled out here ahead of the many other external actors involved in the conflict because the former is the world's only superpower and has important alliances and economic interests in the region, while the latter remains a steadfast and powerful supporter of the Assad-led Syrian Government.

Some scholars take a narrow view of discourse, treating it as a synonym for text. This thesis, however, follows the work of Michel Foucault, who sees discourse as the conditions of possibility that give rise to thought and action. CDA is a model that enables analyses of various texts, including official documents, speeches and media reports; various institutions and their practices that produce those texts; and the material and ideational conditions that give rise to those institutions. CDA is not designed to better explain the array of options open to foreign policymakers. Rather, it is designed to explain how foreign policies, and actions that follow on from certain rhetorical gestures, are possible.

In order to answer the central research question, I adopted the CDA model developed by Norman Fairclough because it provides an analytical process that not only describes a text's formal properties, but also interprets that text as a product of a discursive practice and signals the relationship between that text, those practices and an underlying socio-cultural context. Furthermore, this CDA model provides a method that pays close attention to the use of language within specific social settings and the production of documents by certain political institutions. It enabled me to pose certain analytical questions of the primary texts: namely, in what ways is the civil war in Syria represented in the respective foreign policies of the US and Iran; and what actions are made possible by those representations? It also enabled me to pose certain analytical questions of discursive practices: namely, what are the commonalities

and differences among the documents produced by various institutions within each respective political system? Finally, it enabled me to pose an analytical question at the level of socio-cultural context: namely, what are the material and ideational conditions that give rise to, and continue to shape, these recent foreign policies on Syria? Put simply, Fairclough's CDA model was selected for this research project because it could help demonstrate that language, especially the diplomatic language used to express matter of war and peace, is never politically neutral, but rather, is always informed and shaped by the unequal configurations of power that abound in modern political life.

Before undertaking the analysis, I first collected my primary-source information. This involved selecting various official documents produced by key institutions within the US and Iranian political systems. It also involved selecting news reports produced by news media organisations that, while not formally part of the respective political systems, nevertheless play important auxiliary roles. These news reports contain traces of official representations of the Syrian civil war, signalling underlying configurations of power. During my information-gathering phase, I collected sixty documents concerning US foreign policy and, from those documents, selected 308 extracts of text for detailed analysis. I also collected sixty documents concerning Iranian foreign policy and, from these, identified 274 extracts of text for analysis. As the Iranian sources were written in Persian, I translated these into English. As mentioned at the end of Chapter 2, this was a complex and time-consuming process as translation involves much more than simply exchanging particular words from Persian to English. Instead, it required an understanding of Persian and English grammar as well as some degree of cultural awareness. Each translation was also, to put it simply, an act of interpretation. As a native Korean speaker, this was an especially daunting task.

This final section of the thesis draws on all of the preceding material in order to convey its key findings with respect to the ways in which the US and Iran justify their respective foreign policies on Syria. This section then closes out the thesis by reflecting on the implications of its findings for those scholars who are considering using CDA, exploring the international dimensions of civil war, or examining American or Iranian foreign policies.

Key Research Findings

This thesis found that both the US and Iran do, indeed, justify their respective recent foreign policies on Syria in two main ways: in terms of humanitarian concern and the pursuit of

national interests. The thesis also found that justifications relying on the pursuit of national interests were far more common in Iran's foreign policy than justifications based on humanitarian concern. The preponderance of national-interest justifications is demonstrated in the following table, which provides detailed information on the frequency with which statements, reflecting ideational or material conditions, further one type of justification ahead of the other.

Table 10 Frequency of justification type within Iranian Foreign Policy

	HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS	**NATIONAL INTERESTS**
Supreme Leader		
Theocracy	Speech (1 extract)	
Human rights	Meeting (5 extracts) Speech (1 extract)	
Shiism	Meeting (7 extracts) Speech (1 extract)	
Hegemony		Meeting (12 extracts) Speech (7 extracts)
Political geography		Meeting (9 extracts) Speech (2 extracts)
Alliance		Meeting (4 extracts) Speech (2 extracts)
Total: 51 extracts		
President		
Theocracy	Speech (1 extract)	
Human rights	Meeting (2 extracts) Comment (1 extract)	
Shiism	Meeting (1 extract)	
Hegemony		Meeting (10 extracts) Comment (3 extracts) Speech (3 extracts) Press conference (2 extracts)
Political geography		Meeting (6 extracts) Comment (2 extracts) Speech (3 extracts) Press conference (2 extracts)
Alliance		Meeting (6 extracts) Comment (3 extracts) Speech (2 extracts)
Total: 47 extracts		

Bureaucracy		
Theocracy		
Human rights	Meeting (4 extracts) Comment (5 extracts) Speech (4 extracts) Press conference (7 extracts) Statement (3 extracts)	
Shiism		
Hegemony		Meeting (5 extracts) Comment (4 extracts) Press conference (5 extracts) Statement (2 extracts)
Political geography		Meeting (3 extracts) Comment (3 extracts) Speech (2 extracts) Press conference (1 extract) Statement (1 extract)
Alliance		Comment (2 extracts) Speech (1 extract) Press conference (1 extract) Statement (2 extracts)
Total: 55 extracts		
Diplomats		
Theocracy	Statement (1 extract)	
Human rights	Speech (1 extract) Statement (10 extracts)	
Shiism		
Hegemony		Speech (4 extracts) Statement (29 extracts)
Political geography		Speech (2 extracts) Statement (21 extracts)
Alliance		Statement (7 extracts)
Total: 75 extracts		
News Media		
Theocracy		
Human rights	News report (4 extracts)	
Shiism		
Hegemony		News report (20 extracts)
Political geography		News report (16 extracts)
Alliance		News report (6 extracts)
Total: 46 extracts		
TOTAL	**59 Extracts**	**215 Extracts**

Source: Author, based on the primary and media sources of Iran (2011-2015).

The above table clearly demonstrates that national-interest justifications are used far more frequently than humanitarian-concern justifications within Iranian foreign policy on Syria. Yet this frequent recourse of national-interest justifications does not occur within US foreign policy on Syria, as the following table illustrates.

Table 11 Frequency of justification type within US Foreign Policy

	HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS	**NATIONAL INTERESTS**
President		
Democracy	Speech (4 extracts) Press release (1 extract) Statement (5 extracts) Official document (5 extracts)	
Human rights	Comment (2 extracts) Speech (8 extracts) Press release (2 extracts) Statement (14 extracts)	
Christianity		
Hegemony		Comment (2 extracts) Speech (9 extracts) Press release (2 extracts) Statement (9 extracts) Official document (7 extracts)
Political economy		Press release (1 extract) Official document (1 extract)
Alliance		Speech (6 extracts) Statement (2 extracts) Official document (1 extract)
Total: 81 extracts		
Bureaucracy		
Democracy	Speech (7 extracts) Press release (5 extracts)	
Human rights	Speech (11 extracts) Press release (11 extracts) Statement (1 extract) Official document (2 extracts)	
Christianity	Press release (3 extracts)	
Hegemony		Speech (12 extracts) Press release (7 extracts) Statement (3 extracts) Official document (14 extracts)
Political economy		Speech (2 extracts)
Alliance		Speech (2 extracts) Statement (1 extract) Official document (1 extract)
Total: 82 extracts		

Diplomats		
Democracy	Speech (6 extracts) Statement (11 extracts)	
Human rights	Speech (30 extracts) Statement (14 extracts)	
Christianity	Speech (1 extract)	
Hegemony		Speech (8 extracts) Statement (4 extracts)
Political economy *Alliance*		Speech (2 extracts)
Total: 76 extracts		
News Media		
Democracy	Leading article (3 extracts)	
Human rights	News report (3 extracts) Leading article (15 extracts)	
Christianity	Leading article (6 extracts)	
Hegemony		News report (14 extracts) Leading article (18 extracts)
Political economy		Leading article (6 extracts)
Alliance		News report (1 extract) Leading article (3 extracts)
Total: 69 extracts		
TOTAL	**170 Extracts**	**138 Extracts**

Source: Author, based on the primary and media sources of the United States (2011-2015).

While these tables indicate a key difference between US and Iran, it does not explain why this difference occurs. It could be a shortcoming of CDA, though this kind of statistical reasoning is not what CDA was designed to illuminate. Of course, humanitarian concerns and national interests are not always seen as opposite rationales within foreign policies, though they are often understood to be contending concepts. Significantly, the higher frequency of statements reflecting either national interests in the case of Iran, or humanitarian concern in the case of the United States, does not indicate that one is more important than the other. In fact, as categories, humanitarian concern and national interest are not strictly exclusive. Rather, it does acknowledge that both countries' foreign policies, between 2011 and 2015, used humanitarian concerns in order to legitimise their respective postures on Syria, though the pursuit of national interests widened the scope for new opportunities to act in the Middle East, including through the use of armed force. Moreover, the thesis also found that the

language used to articulate and convey these policies is seldom a-political and can be shaped significantly by institutional practices and socio-cultural contexts.

This thesis, and its analysis in particular, will be of interest to scholars using Critical Discourse Analysis for several reasons. Firstly, this thesis examined a new case in the form of the civil war in Syria, focusing specifically on the recent foreign policies of both the US and Iran but also including an analysis of media representations of the conflict. My anaylsis of the Syrian war also introduced five key aspects—the government, moderate and radical oppositional groups, sectarian violence as well as foreign involvement—each of which proved useful for better understanding the discursive practices used by certain political institutions. Secondly, the thesis applied a model of CDA to primary-source material that was written in Persian, which is something yet to be done elsewhere. Scholars using CDA in their work will also be interested in this thesis, thirdly, because its refined Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia into genres, such as speeches, press releases and strategy documents, which are frequently used by various political institutions involved in setting the direction for, and conducting, foreign policy. Fourthly, this thesis has also further developed the socio-cultural dimension of Fairclough's CDA model by dividing it into two parts—that is, ideational and material conditions—which are then subdivided into six more specific factors.

The thesis, and especially its findings, will also be of interest to those scholars producing knowledge on contemporary armed conflict. While much of the academic literature on various types of war conduct analysis is from either a realist or liberal theoretical perspective, this thesis took a perspective challenging that status quo. In so doing, the thesis generated a new interpretation of this rapidly internationalising civil war, enhancing our collective undertstanding of this unfolding human tragedy. Furthermore, unlike much foreign policy analysis, which tends to explain the causes, conduct and consequences of foreign policies, this thesis paid close attention to the ways in which two powerful states attempt to justify the content of their foreign policy, particularly where those policies are underscored by the use of military force. The thesis thus offers a fresh way to make sense of two of the most powerful actors in contemporary world affairs.

Finally, this thesis's research findings help open up spaces for further research. The Syrian civil war cannot be easily comprehended because many countries are implementing various policies for their own national interests regarding this civil war. Thus, it is necessary to analyse the foreign policies of regional and global powers concerning the Syrian conflict.

This study makes a modest but appreciable contribution to the body of knowledge in relation to Middle Eastern politics by using poststructuralism and applying a model of CDA. Furthermore, since this research project began there have been many changes in relation to the reaction of the international community to the Syrian crisis. First of all, Donald Trump took office as the President of the United States in 2017. Afterwards, President Trump not only criticised former President Obama's policy on Syria, but also announced the US withdrawal from the JCPOA Iranian nuclear deal of 2015. Hence, future research could usefully examine the foreign policy discourse of the Trump Administration in relation to Middle Eastern issues. Meanwhile, Russia and Turkey have become more involved in the Syrian crisis. More specifically, along with Iran, Russia supports the Assad Government whereas Turkey assists moderate rebels, including FSA, in the Syrian civil war. Hence, future research could also usefully investigate the foreign policy discourse of Russia and Turkey regarding the Syrian conflict. As the human cost of this civil war continues to rise, the urgency for more research in this area intensifies.

Appendix I Scholarly sources in Persian collected during fieldwork in Iran

فصلنامه روابط خارجي، سال اول، شماره 1
عنوان: درك سياست خارجي ايران
نويسنده(گان): پروفسور روح الله رمضاني
Quarterly Foreign Relations, 2009 (Issue 1)
Title: Understanding Iran's Foreign Policy
Author(s): Rouhollah Ramazani

فصلنامه روابط خارجي، سال سوم، شماره 1
عنوان: جايگاه ديپلماسي عمومي در سياست خارجي جمهوري اسلامي ايران
نويسنده(گان): پروين داداندیش، افسانه احدي
Quarterly Foreign Relations, 2011 (Issue 1)
Title: Public Diplomacy and Iran’s Foreign Policy: Evaluation and Recommendations
Author(s): Parvin Dadandish , Afsaneh Ahadi

فصلنامه سياست، سال چهل و يكم، شماره 1
عنوان: تحليلي بر سياست خارجي جمهوري اسلامي ايران در دوره رياست جمهوري محمود احمدي نژاد از منظر مدل پيوستگي جيمز روزنا
نويسنده(گان): جهانشير منصوري مقدم، علي اسمعيلي
Political Quarterly, 2011 (Issue 1)
Title: Analysis of Iran’s Foreign Policy during the Presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; from the Perspective of Coherence Model of James Rosenau
Author(s): Jahanshir Mansoori Moghaddam, Ali Esmaeli

فصلنامه روابط خارجي، سال دوم، شماره 3
عنوان: ايران و روسيه: متحد شرقي يا تهديد جنوبي؟
نويسنده(گان): دكتر جهانگير كرمي
Quarterly Foreign Relations, 2010 (Issue 3)
Title: Iran and Russia: Eastern Ally or Southern Threat?
Author(s): Jahangir Karami

فصلنامه پژوهشهاي سياسي جهان اسلام، سال پنجم، شماره 1 (پياپي 14)
عنوان: ميزان سنجي تاثير عنصر رقابت بر جنگ هاي نيابتي ايران و عربستان
نويسنده(گان): حبيب اله ابوالحسن شيرازي
Journal of Political Research in Islamic World, 2015 (Issue 1)
Title: Assessment of Competition Element Impact on Proxy Wars of Iran and Saudi Arabia
Author(s): Habibollah Abolhassan Shirazi

فصلنامه روابط خارجي، سال دوم، شماره 3
عنوان: سياست خارجي و آينده نفت و گاز كشور
نويسنده(گان): دكتر حسن روحاني
Quarterly Foreign Relations, 2010 (Issue 3)
Title: Foreign Policy and the Future of Oil and Gas
Author(s): Hassan Rouhani

فصلنامه مطالعات خاورميانه، سال هجدهم، شماره 3
عنوان: تحولات سوريه: ريشه ها و چشم اندازها
نويسنده(گان): حسين آجورلو
Middle East Studies Quarterly, 2012 (Issue 3)
Title: Syrian Developments: Roots and Prospects
Author(s): Hossein Ajorlou

فصلنامه روابط خارجي، سال چهارم، شماره 4
عنوان: بازيگران معارض در بحران سوريه: اهداف و رويكردها
نويسنده(گان): دكتر سيد امير نياكويي، حسين بهمنش
Quarterly Foreign Relations, 2012 (Issue 4)
Title: The Opponent Actors in the Syrian Crisis: Purposes and Approaches
Author(s): Amir Niakouee, Hossein Behmanesh

فصلنامه روابط خارجي، سال اول، شماره 1
عنوان: امنيت هستي شناختي در سياست خارجي جمهوري اسلامي ايران
نويسنده(گان): دكتر سيدجلال دهقاني فيروزآبادي
Quarterly Foreign Relations, 2009 (Issue 1)
Title: Ontological Security in the Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Policy
Author(s): Seyed Jalal Dehghani Firouzabadi

فصلنامه سياست، سال سي و نهم، شماره 3
عنوان: منابع ملي سياست خارجي جمهوري اسلامي ايران
نويسنده(گان): سيدجلال دهقاني فيروزآبادي
Political Quarterly, 2009 (Issue 3)
Title: National Sources of Iranian Foreign Policy
Author(s): Seyed Jalal Dehghani Firouzabadi

فصلنامه روابط خارجي، سال اول، شماره 4
عنوان: بررسي واسازانه نقش ايدئولوژي در سياست خارجي ايران و پيوند آن با واقع گرايي و آرمان گرايي
نويسنده(گان): دكتر شهروز ابراهيمي
Quarterly Foreign Relations, 2010 (Issue 4)
Title: A Deconstructive Study of the Role of Ideology in Iran's Foreign Policy and Its Linkages with Realism and Idealism
Author(s): Shahrouz Ebrahimi

فصلنامه بين المللي ژئوپليتيك، سال ششم، شماره 3 (پياپي 19)
عنوان: تنش زدايي نامتوازن در سياست خارجي ايران 88-1367
نويسنده(گان): دكتر طاهره ترابي
Geopolitics, 2010 (Issue 3)
Title: Unbalanced Détente in Iran’s Foreign Policy (1988-2009)
Author(s): Tahereh Torabi

فصلنامه راهبرد، سال بيست و چهارم، شماره 77
عنوان: مسئوليت بين المللي دولت هاي ارسال كننده تسليحات به گروه هاي تروريستي در سوريه
نويسنده(گان): عباس تديني، سيدمصطفي كازروني
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Title: International Responsibility of States Sending Weapons to Terrorist Groups in Syria
Author(s): Abbas Tadayoni, Mostafa Kazerouni

فصلنامه پژوهشهاي سياسي جهان اسلام، سال سوم، شماره 4 (پياپي 9)
عنوان: سياست خارجي و مواضع دولت هاي ايران و تركيه درباره بحران سوريه
نويسنده(گان): عباس كشاورز شكري، هاجر صادقيان
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Title: Iran and Turkey's Foreign Policy and Stances towards the Syria Crisis
Author(s): Abbas Keshavarz Shokri, Hajar Sadeghian

مجله دانش سياسي و بين المللي، سال دوم، شماره 2
عنوان: رويكرد اتحاديه عرب به بحران سوريه
نويسنده(گان): علي آدمي، رامين بخشي تليابي
Political and International Science, 2013 (Issue 2)
Title: Arab League Approach to Syria Crisis
Author(s): Ali Adami, Ramin Bakhshi Taliabi

فصلنامه تحقيقات سياسي بين المللي، سال ششم، شماره 21
عنوان: تاثير جهاني شدن حقوق بشر بر اصل عدم مداخله: با تاكيد بر بحران سوريه
نويسنده(گان): ليلا رئيسي دزكي، محمد كفاش نيري
Political International Researches, 2015 (Issue 21)
Title: The Impact of Globalization of Human Rights on the Principle of Non-Intervention: With Emphasis on Syrian Crisis
Author(s): Leila Raisi Dazki, Mohammad Kaffash Nayyeri

مجله دانش سياسي، سال چهارم، شماره 2 (پياپي 8)
عنوان: امنيت مداري در رويكرد سياست خارجي امام خميني(ره)
نويسنده(گان): دكتر مجتبي عطارزاده
Political Knowledge, 2009 (Issue 2)
Title: The Pivotal Function of Security in Imam Khomeini's Foreign Policy's Approach
Author(s): Dr. Mojtaba Attarzadeh

فصلنامه روابط خارجي، سال سوم، شماره 1
عنوان: تاثير تحولات جهاني پس از جنگ سرد بر سياست خارجي جمهوري اسلامي ايران
نويسنده(گان): محمود واعظي
Quarterly Foreign Relations, 2011 (Issue 1)
Title: The Impact of International Developments on the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Author(s): Mahmood Vaezi

فصلنامه شيعه شناسي، سال دهم، شماره 38
عنوان: علويان سوريه از شكل گيري تا قدرت يابي
نويسنده(گان): دكتر مسعود اخوان كاظمي، سارا ويسي
Shiite Studies, 2012 (Issue 38)
Title: Syrian Alawites, from Formation to Sovereignty
Author(s): Dr. Mas'ud Akhawan Kazimi, Sara Waisi

فصلنامه بين المللي ژئوپليتيك، سال چهارم، شماره 1 (پياپي 11)
عنوان: امكان سنجي گسترش روابط راهبردي ايران و چين از منظر نظريات اتحاد و همگرايي
نويسنده(گان): دكتر مسعود غفاري، شهروز شريعتي
Geopolitics, 2009 (Issue 1)
Title: Feasibility Study Iran-China Strategic Relations: An Alliance Theory Perspective
Author(s): Massoud Ghaffari, Shahrouz Shariati

Appendix II Places visited during fieldwork in Iran

• ***Tehran Grand Bazaar***

A bazaar is a type of marketplace, although many - such as Tehran's Grand bazaar - fulfill many additional functions rather than merely trade. Throughout its history, the Grand bazaar has played host to banks and financiers, mosques and guest houses. Tehran Grand Bazaar is a historical market situated in the capital of Iran, Tehran. Traditionally, the Tehran bazaar was split into corridors, each specialising in different types of goods, including copper, carpets, paper, spices, and precious metals, as well as small traders selling all types of goods. Today, modern goods are available as well, in addition to the many traditional corridor traders that still survive (Mirrazavi, 2016b).

• ***Golestan Palace***

Golestan Palace pronounced 'Kakheh Golestan' is the former royal Qajar complex in Iran's capital city. The Palace is all that remains of Tehran's Historical Citadel (Arg) which once glittered like a jewel. This historical Arg was built at the time of Shah Tahmasb I in Safavid period. It was reconstructed at the time of Karim Khan Zand and was chosen as the venue of the royal court and residence at the time of Qajar Kings. Nassereddin Shah introduced many modifications in Golestan Palace buildings during his reign (Mirrazavi, 2016a).

• ***Sa'ad Abad Palace***

With an area of more than 110 hectares, [the] Sa'ad Abad complex [lays] at the foot of the Alborz ranges, north of Tehran, situated to the west of Golab Dareh and east of Velenjak quarters. It was first the summer residence of Qajar kings, and then turned into Reza Shah's summer residence following expansion and annexation of some other quarters. On various occasions, villa-palaces and mansions were erected on the beautiful range among aged cypresses and aspens, in almost the vicinity of the remnants of aged and weather beaten Qajar mansions[,] the facades of which were constructed in bricks (Mehraby, 2010).

• ***Niavaran Palace***

Niavaran palace compound is one [of] two such places at the southern foothills of Alborz mountains located at North Tehran. The other one is Sa'ad Abad palace compound. Both of them were built [in the 19th century] when the city of Tehran [had not] extended [...] all the way to its [current northern boundary]. Naser al-Din Shah of Qajar dynasty first constructed his summer resort at [the] northern part of the city (Mehraby, 2013).

• ***The holy city of Qom***

The presence of the holy shrine of a scholarly and purified lady called Hadhrat Fatemeh Ma'soumeh (PBUH) at the heart of this city, which is considered as a rising place for Shias, especially Shia clerics, is one of those aspects, which set the city of Qom apart from other Iranian cities. Multitudes of Muslims from across the world, and even non-Muslims, travel to this city every year to conduct [a] pilgrimage and take spiritual advantage of this holy shrine (Kianinejad, 2016).

Appendix III Key analytical findings in tabular form

Both the United States and Iran use representations to justify their foreign policies regarding the Syrian conflict. However, there is another factor, that of national interests, behind their rhetoric, and CDA reveals the undisclosed objectives of their foreign policies. Drawing on the first-line analysis of the primary and media sources of Iran and the United States, Iran takes a positive stance on Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East, the Syrian people, Bashar al-Assad's victory in the Syrian presidential election in 2014, the Assad Government's political reform efforts and a political solution to the Syrian conflict. Whereas Iran takes a negative stance on the West including the United States, the US and Western policy in the Middle East, Western policy towards the Islamic world, Westernisation, moderate rebels such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State. Meanwhile, the United States adopts a positive stance on the US foreign policy in the Middle East, the transition to democracy in Syria, the Syrian people, the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria and moderate rebels, such as the FSA. Whereas the United States adopts a negative stance on the Assad government's repression of the Syrian people, the illegal behaviour of the Assad government in the Syrian conflict, President Assad in Syria, radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State, Iran and Syria, Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East and the failure of the Obama government's policy on Syria. The key representations of the primary and media sources of Iran and the United States are presented in the following tables.

Table 12 Representations of the Syrian civil war by the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**Iran's position**
The Syrian people	Innocent people (مردم بیگناه)	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	Positive
Bashar al-Assad's victory in the Syrian presidential election in 2014	The choice of Syrian people (انتخاب مردم سوریه)	Justification for upholding the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	
The Assad government's political reform efforts	Reforms in Syria (اصلاحات در سوریه)		
The West including the United States	Plunderers (دزدان) The arrogant and inhuman group (جبهه ضدبشری استکبار)		Negative
The US and Western policy in the Middle East	Big problems (مشکلات بزرگی) Moral corruption, the suppression of people, and killings (فساد اخلاقی و فشار بر مردم و کشتار آنان) Colonial, arrogant and despotic policies (سیاستهای استعماری و استکباری و استبدادی) Contradictions, irrationality, coercion and indifference to humanitarian principles (تناقض ها، بی منطقی ها، زورگویی ها و بی اعتنایی به اصول انسانی)	Justification for opposing Western interference in the Syrian conflict	
Western policy towards the Islamic world	The pressure and domination of the West over the Islamic world (فشار و سلطه غربیها بر دنیاي اسلامي) The plot to make discord (توطئه ایجاد اختلاف) Exploitation and arrogance (استثمار و استکبار)		
The US foreign policy in the Middle East	The US international dictatorship (دیکتاتوری بین المللی امریکا) Americans' indirect and direct assistance to terrorist groups (کمکهای باواسطه و بی‌واسطه امریکایی‌ها به گروههای تروریستی) American arrogance (استکبار آمریکایی)	Justification for opposing the US intervention in the Syrian conflict	

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the Office of Iran's Supreme Leader (2011-2015).

Table 13 Representations of the Syrian civil war by the White House

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**The US position**
The transition to democracy in Syria	Peaceful marches Peaceful protests	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	Positive
The resignation of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria	The legitimate aspirations of all Syrian citizens	Justification for opposing the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	
Moderate rebels such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA)	Opposition leaders that respect the rights of every Syrian The opposition that rejects the agenda of terrorist networks	Justification for assisting the moderate opposition in the Syrian conflict	
The Assad government's repression of the Syrian people	Ferocious brutality The disgraceful attacks on Syrian civilians The use of violence against peaceful protesters	Justification for opposing the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Negative
The illegal behaviour of the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Shelling and other indiscriminate violence Imprisoning, torturing, and slaughtering his own people Use of brutal violence and human rights abuses His campaign of killing and crimes The massacre of countless civilians with chemical weapons Abhorrent brutality Its brutal and unjust crackdown Supporting terrorism The Assad regime's use of chemical weapons		
President Assad in Syria	A dictator Tyranny		
Radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State	The heinous deeds of terrorists Terrorist networks that threaten our people	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	
Iran and Syria	Active sponsors of terrorism		

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the White House (2011-2015).

Table 14 Representations of the Syrian civil war by Iran's Presidential Office

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**Iran's position**
Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East	The implementation of justice and the realisation of people's basic rights (اجرای عدالت و احقاق حقوق اساسی مردم) Humanitarian efforts (تلاش‌هاي انسان دوستانه)	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	Positive
Bashar al-Assad's victory in the Syrian presidential election in 2014	Syrian people's trust (اعتماد مردم سوریه) The victory of the Syrian nation and your good self (پيروزي ملت سوريه و جنابعالي)	Justification for upholding the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	
A political solution to the Syrian conflict	National reconciliation and holding elections (تفاهم ملی و برگزاری انتخابات)	Justification for opposing the US intervention in the Syrian conflict	
The US and Western policy in the Middle East	Destruction, poverty and humiliation (نابودي، فقر و تحقير) Weapons (اسلحه) Imposing war (تحميل جنگ) Pressure and interference (فشارها و دخالت‌ها) Bombardment (بمباران) Conspiracies and vices (توطئه‌ها و خباثت‌ها)	Justification for opposing Western interference in the Syrian conflict	Negative
Westernisation	Their way of life and beliefs (شيوه زندگي و باورهاي خود)		
Radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State	This regional and global menace (اين خطر بزرگ منطقه اي و جهاني) Extremism and terrorism (افراطي‌گري و تروريزم) This inauspicious phenomenon (اين پديده شوم) This regional problem (اين معضل منطقه‌اي)	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of Iran's Presidential Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran (2011-2015).

Table 15 Representations of the Syrian civil war by the US Department of State

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**The US position**
The transition to democracy in Syria	A peaceful protest	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	Positive
The Syrian people	Innocent people The defenseless people		
The resignation of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria	Their long-deferred aspirations A democratic, unified post-Assad Syria	Justification for opposing the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	
Moderate rebels such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA)	The Syrian Opposition Coalition, the legitimate representative The legitimate opposition to Assad	Justification for assisting the moderate opposition in the Syrian conflict	
The Assad government's repression of the Syrian people	The regime's brutality Barbarism	Justification for opposing the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Negative
The illegal behaviour of the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Violent and brutal attacks Brutal crackdown Grave human rights abuses Horrifying pattern of using chlorine Atrocious behavior The Syrian chemical weapons		
President Assad in Syria	A despot		
Radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State	The humanitarian disaster Violent extremists	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	
Syria	A State Sponsor of Terrorism		

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the US Department of State (2011-2015).

Table 16 Representations of the Syrian civil war by the Iranian Foreign Ministry

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**Iran's position**
Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East	Humanitarian assistance (کمك ها و خدمات انسان دوستانه)	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	Positive
Bashar al-Assad's victory in the Syrian presidential election in 2014	A legitimate right and domestic decision (یک حق مشروع و تصمیم داخلی) This great achievement (این دستاورد بزرگ)	Justification for upholding the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	
A political solution to the Syrian conflict	The wishes and demands of people (خواسته ها و مطالبات مردم) Domestic reconciliation (آشتی داخلی) Elections (انتخابات) National unity (وفاق ملی)	Justification for opposing the US intervention in the Syrian conflict	
The US and Western policy in the Middle East	Money or the sales of war toys (پول یا فروش اسباب بازی های جنگی)	Justification for opposing Western interference in the Syrian conflict	Negative
Moderate rebels such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA)	Irresponsible armed groups (گروه هاي مسلح بي مسئوليت)	Justification for opposing the US intervention in the Syrian conflict	
Radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State	Terrorist groups (گروه های تروریستی) Extremes (افراط) A cancerous gland (غده ای سرطانی)	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran (2011-2015).

Table 17 Representations of the Syrian civil war by the US Mission to the UN

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**The US position**
The transition to democracy in Syria	Peaceful protest	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	Positive
The Syrian people	Innocent civilians		
The illegal behaviour of the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Continued, indiscriminate use of heavy weaponry Chemical weapons Violence, torture, and persecution Human rights abuses Barrel bombs Tremendous humanitarian suffering Appalling actions The Syrian regime's use of any toxic chemical The Asad regime's crimes	Justification for opposing the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Negative
President Assad in Syria	A brutal regime		
Radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State	Religious fanaticism The terrorist threat The terrorist organization A terrorist entity	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the US Mission to the UN (2011-2015).

Table 18 Representations of the Syrian civil war by the Iranian Mission to the UN

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**Iran's position**
The Syrian people	Innocent people	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	Positive
The Assad government's political reform efforts	The reform process	Justification for upholding the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	
A political solution to the Syrian conflict	National unity A Syrian led solution National reconciliation	Justification for opposing the US intervention in the Syrian conflict	
The US and Western policy in the Middle East	Colonialism Military adventurism War and aggression Mischievous and subversive attempts Archaic and deeply ineffective ways Occupation, invasion and military intervention This erroneous strategic approach	Justification for opposing Western interference in the Syrian conflict	Negative
Radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State	Extremists Violence and extremism Extremism and radicalism These murderous groups	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	

Source: Author, based on the primary sources of the IRI Mission to the UN (2011-2015).

Table 19 Representations of the Syrian civil war by the Fox News Channel

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**The US position**
The US foreign policy in the Middle East	Generous humanitarian aid Humanitarian assistance	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	Positive
The transition to democracy in Syria	Peaceful demonstrations		
The Syrian people	Innocent people		
The Assad government's repression of the Syrian people	Carnage	Justification for opposing the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Negative
The illegal behaviour of the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Its campaign of murdering its own citizens The Syrian policy of shoot first, ask questions later Tanks and helicopter gunships to slaughter Syrians The genocide of the Syrian people Assad's chemical weapons		
Radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State	A gang of hateful, heavily armed terrorists	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	
Iran	The puppet master behind Assad's killing machine		
Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East	A major source of the bloodshed		
The failure of the Obama government's policy on Syria	A stain on Obama's hands President Obama's vacillation on Syria	The criticism of the Obama government's policy on the Syrian conflict	

Source: Author, based on the media sources of the Fox News Channel (2011-2015).

Table 20 Representations of the Syrian civil war by the Iranian Students' News Agency

	Key representations	**Political objectives**	**Iran's position**
Bashar al-Assad's victory in the Syrian presidential election in 2014	The legitimate leadership of Bashar al-Assad (رهبری قانونی بشار اسد) Sovereignty and people's votes (حاکمیت و ارای مردم)	Justification for upholding the Assad government in the Syrian conflict	Positive
The Assad government's political reform efforts	Good measures (اقدامات خوبي)		
A political solution to the Syrian conflict	A peaceful solution (یک راه‌حل مسالمت‌آمیز)	Justification for opposing the US intervention in the Syrian conflict	
The US and Western policy in the Middle East	An excuse for interference (بهانه‌اي براي مداخله) The continuation of bloodshed (ادامه خونریزی) Foreign intervention (دخالت بیگانگان) A big conspiracy (یک توطئه بزرگ) The meddlesome action (این اقدام مداخله‌جویانه) Possible military action (اقدام احتمالی نظامی)	Justification for opposing Western interference in the Syrian conflict	Negative
Radical Sunni Islamist groups such as the Islamic State	Terrorism and extremism (تروریسم و افراط گرایی)	Justification for intervening in the Syrian conflict	

Source: Author, based on the media sources of the Iranian Students' News Agency (2011-2015).

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