

THE US-IRANIAN COLD WAR: FROM THE THREAT OF MILITARY INTERVENTION TO PEACEFUL RAPPROCHEMENT

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The world has witnessed an increase in US military intervention in the post-Cold War era. This study asks what drives intervention in one case rather than another. The factors contributing to a decision to strike Iran during the George W. Bush administration were identical to those of the Iraq War II, 2003. The two primary causes of war with Iraq, development of weapons of mass destruction and state sponsorship of terrorism, applied to Iran, especially during the period of 2006 to 2008. Also, a longstanding hostility toward the Islamic Republic led to the addition of regime change as a stated objective for the United States. The Bush administration was precluded from utilizing military force or a credible threat of doing so because of its overextension in Iraq and Afghanistan. We follow this historical review with an analysis of the current thaw in the US-Iranian Cold War, signified by the G5+1 nuclear agreement.

INTRODUCTION

The original impetus for this study is the apparent increase in military intervention by the United States since the end of the Cold War. In making a determination of why US decision makers chose to intervene in a given scenario (or crisis), we found that continuity, momentum, alliance pressure or partnership, and a workable plan of attack (based on confidence in success) were key factors. In asking why the United States had intervened, we also asked “why not?”, leading to closer examination of the case of Iraq during the George W. Bush administration. We follow our historical review

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