

QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

IRAN FOREIGN POLICY: HUMANITARIAN SOFT POWER AND THE SEARCH

FOR STATUS IN GHANA

BY

SALISU MOHAMMED

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COMMITTEE PAGE

The members of the Committee approve the Dissertation of
Salisu Mohammed defended on 27/12/2022.

Professor. Mahjoob Zweiri
Dissertation Supervisor

Dr. Nikolay Kozhanor
Internal Examiner

Professor Youcef Bouandel
Committee Member

Professor. Simon Mabon
External Examiner

Approved:

Ahmed Elzatahry, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

ABSTRACT

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Title: Iran Foreign Policy: Humanitarian Soft Power and the Search for Status in Ghana

Supervisor of Dissertation: Professor Mahjoob, Zweiri.

While each of the dominant literature on Iran foreign policy offers segmented contributions to the Islamic Republic's relations with the outside world – and accordingly present contradictory directions for Iran – African Policy – none of them concurrently encapsulates the growing status of Iran in the West African sub-region, using humanitarian soft power tool. This dissertation, therefore, offers a comprehensive account of the growing status of Iran in West Africa using Ghana as a case study for a rough generalization, through a comprehensive analysis of the post- 1979 Iran's diplomatic onslaught in West Africa and the pragmatic approach which seeks to exert influence over the foreign policy decision making process. This aspect of the dissertation focuses on two main concepts upon which the study traverses: soft power and humanitarianism. A proper understanding of how these two conceptual frameworks interplay is essential for comprehending the fundamental architectural base of Iran foreign policy towards Ghana, particularly, the search to assert its status in the West African country.

From the construction and running of schools, to operation of hospitals, to supporting the development of the agricultural sector, the Ahl Bait foundation, the Iranian quasi-government humanitarian institution has ever-present actor in Iran foreign policy towards Ghana; yet the socio-politico impacts of its humanitarian activities on Iran's growing status in Ghana and by extension, West Africa, is yet to be ascertained. Like the undertaking of humanitarian works to

attaining soft power, the use of soft power to asserting status has been a constant in Iran foreign policy and international politics as a whole. Far from the criticisms of ‘not being too soft’ (i.e., not very effective), soft power remains the best option to establishing and asserting a country’s status in a particular geographical area of the world – especially when the dominant epistemology, hard power, cannot capture the prevailing reality of the contemporary global political order.

The second part of the dissertation analysis the interplay of the Ghanaian executive arm of government, the legislative branch, and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the making and growing of the status of Iran. The chapters that come under this section uses the problem of Iran’s search for status in Ghana to define a humanitarian soft power approach to contemporary Iran’s foreign policy towards the West African sub-region. The dissertation concludes by locating the form and nature of Iran’s humanitarian works in Ghana, reasons for using humanitarian soft power tool without resorting to proxy militant allies as it is the case in the West and Central Asia and recommends further studies on why the humanitarian works of the other Persian Gulf States in Ghana appear the same and, perhaps, even counterproductive in their foreign policy missions.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my lovely wife, Ramatu Abdul Ganiyu, and my two children, Razi and Rushdi. I appreciate your patience, kindness and moral support which helped me chart this path for myself.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Iran: The Search for Status in Ghana

Iranian foreign policy officials, academics, and people of the country's media fraternity have grown comfortable with the notion of the Islamic Republic establishing 'para-military proxies', an approach that can solidify the country's strength and influence when constructing its relations with the world at large. Since the establishment of the theocratic government in 1979, the Islamic Republic has been able to establish non-state military proxies in some regions of the world, as global affairs and the international structure present a clear categorization of states and non-states actors, and how to relate with them. The Iranian *Shi'a* [theocratic] government allowed for a relatively easy establishment of proxies, based on ideological opposition to the *Sunni* monarchical governments and western liberal democracies and easy categorization of allies and 'enemies' or competitors. Considering the ramifications of the politics in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East in general, and with the emergence of globalization and regionalization where the USA accords exceptional protection and primacy to Israel and Saudi Arabia respectively, a single strategy has become elusive for the Iranians. As the efforts to suppress and get it isolated in the contemporary global political order continues vigorously, it is perhaps imperative to argue, that there has been an establishment of socio-political status (if not a grand one) by the Islamic Republic of Iran in strategic regions of the world, a successful story of its foreign policy.

One of the main complicating factors about Iran's foreign policy is that it evolves not just from the diplomatic craft and the attitude of the incumbent president; but out from the theocratic political process; what the Supreme Leader wants,

or at least what key personalities in the revolutionary guard believe he [the Supreme Leader] wants. As far back as the early 1990s, scholars were arguing that the regional and global underpinnings of Iran's foreign policy were gravely in need of fresh consideration. The widely sensed failure of Iran's foreign policy of exporting the notion of the 'Islamic Republicanism' especially to the neighboring Middle Eastern countries during the 1980s spurred non-traditional government institutions and other segments of the Iranian public to share policy control with the regime. Again, disenchantment with the notion of 'militant proxies' (which are sometimes argued to be undertaking aggressive acts within and outside the Persian Gulf on behalf of Iran) also explains the regime's readiness to 'amend' course in its foreign policy architecture.

Writing in 2016, Akbarzede and Conduit explained how excessive bite of incessant sanctions and continuous international isolation of the Islamic Republic led the Rouhani administration to change course in Iran's foreign policy. Thus, unlike Mohammad Khatami's liberal but pragmatic style or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's ideological but populist stance, Hassan Rouhani pursued a centrist pragmatic vision in embarking on Iran's foreign policy (Akbarzede and Conduit, 2016). The authors posit, that contrary to popular believe, Iran's foreign policy is not completely formulated within the context of ideology or say Islamic discourse, rather it fluctuates between revolutionary idealism and pragmatic realism (Ibid.). Pragmatism has for long been part and parcel of Iran's foreign policy initiatives and has often been resorted to as in the case of its détente with the U.S.A., or the moral and material support it renders some militant groups in the region, all of which contradict its ideological stand (Akbarzede, 2016). This outreach or global assertiveness was often backed by soft power activities,

especially through the extensive networks of charitable foundations Iran operates across the world (Akbarzadeh and Conduit 2016).

On his part, Kenneth Katzman (2016) identifies three factors that singularly and competitively influence the foreign policy of Iran. The first goal of Iran's foreign policy, he argues, is to overturn a power structure in the Middle East which currently favors the United States' allies of Israel and Saudi Arabia. To this effect, Iran considers its support for certain religious- oriented militant groups as support for the "oppressed" and asserts that Saudi Arabia has been instigating regional tensions and relentlessly working to marginalize Iran's participation in Middle Eastern affairs (Katzman, 2016). Consequently, Iran is actively working against Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), which opposes Asad of Syria and the Abbadi government in Iraq (Katzman, 2016). Iran also expelled some Al Qaeda activists who it gave sanctuary to after the September 11, 2001, attacks against the United States (Ibid.). Katzman explains, that while it is not clear why Iran allowed Al Qaeda senior operatives to transit or reside within its territory, it may be that Iran might have considered them as advantage against the United States or Saudi Arabia. Further, Iran supports some Sunni Muslim groups that promote Tehran's interests. Two Sunni Palestinian organizations, Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad—Shiqaqi faction, have received Iranian support in part because they are antagonists of Israel (Katzman, 2016).

The second factor influencing Iran's foreign policy is the projection and promotion of the *Shi'i* brand of Islam and the determination to thwart the spread of the Saudi-led *Sunni* sect (Katzman, 2016). Khomeini in 1979 shed light on the credo of the Iranian foreign policy which is to export the country's successful revolution to every nook and cranny of the world in order to liberate people

especially the poor and dejected people of the Third World countries that continue to suffer the neo- colonization and imperialism of the West (Khomeini, 1979). He further clarified that, the successive revolution undertaken by Iran is not an achievement exclusive to the Islamic Republic or to only its people, because the Islamic faith was revealed to all mankind, not only to Iran. Therefore, a positive Islamic movement cannot be limited to just the country where it happened, not even to only Muslim majority countries, for such acts represent the Prophet's mission on earth (Ibid.). The leader of the Islamic Republic, in Iranians' estimation, has the responsibility to lead and guide the world towards perfection and prosperity and to safeguard the security and independence of humankind.

To achieve this objective, successive Iranian governments have resort to a triangular foreign policy tool towards its neighbors is aimed at asserting influence over them, support the political [op]position of *Shi'a* minorities in the Arab Gulf countries, and equip some para-military groups in the region with military accoutrements and intelligence. As indicated by Rakel (2017), the Islamic Republic exerted enormous efforts to export its 1979 revolution to its neighboring Arab states through rhetoric, moral and material supports, and internal interferences with a patent example being its growing influence in Syria, Iraq, and Gaza, and the total disregard of Iranian pilgrims to Saudi security officials. Ayatollah Khomeini constantly called for a shared responsibility in the arrangement and organization of the annual pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia in a way that sought to take away the Gulf Kingdom's de facto leadership of the Muslim world.

In fact, since the early 80s Iranian pilgrims have been disobeying rules set out by Saudi authorities during hajj. Consequently, Iranian pilgrims clashed with Saudi

religious police from the early to the late 1980s, forcing the Al-Saud rulers to accuse Iran of trying to annex the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and pronounce their supreme ruler the [de facto] leader of the Muslim World. (Ekhtiyari Amiri et al. 2011). Despite putting a ban on all forms of political activism and pronouncements, Iranian pilgrims continued to chant politically oriented slogans such as ‘death to Israel’, ‘American Islam’ and ‘death to America’, to signify the political merry-making between the USA and the Al-Saud rulers (Eva Rakel, 2007). Such clashes demonstrated the growing hostilities and ideological differences that has existed between the two littoral powers of the Persian Gulf sub-region.

The clashes during hajj cum the coup attempt in Bahrain in 1981 by the Iran-sponsored Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) made virtually all the conservative Gulf rulers to perceive Iran as the greatest threat to their survival than Saddam Hussein (Chubin, 1992). The Saudi leadership which has always considered Iran’s revolutionary guards as ‘terrorists of the Gulf’ interpreted the attempted coup de tat as a further justification for its supports for Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi armed forces (Ekhtiyari, 2011). The *Sunni*-oriented tiny emirates governments who felt threatened by the Iranian political system responded to the Saudi’s call.

Last but not the least, Iran’s foreign policy is directed at influencing the policies and actions of big powers —either as partners or antagonists — that are active in the Middle East (Katzman, 2016). To this end, Iran attempts to protect itself from US’s efforts to intimidate it or invade it for a regime change. Such posture is a further representation of Iran’s enhancement of its international prestige or a constant demonstration of “greatness” evocative of the pre-modern Iranian empires

(Katzman, 2016). Clearly, an emerging power with a long and rich history, Iran has since considered itself superior to its neighboring Arab states. Further, aside from the concomitant spillovers of the 1979 Islamic revolution in 1979, the Iranian government has consciously worked towards asserting its *ideo/politico* influence over the Gulf Arab States. These Iranian hegemonic activities are the bane of tensed relations that exist between it and its neighbors.

Thus, whether it is in search of ‘prestige’ and ‘greatness’ among the comity of nations; or it’s the desire to mitigate the influence of USA and its allies within and outside the Middle East, these competing factors direct us at establishing how Iran is bent on growing its status and exerting its influence in Ghana. Although academic literature abounds on the influence of military power in establishing status in foreign policy, there remains little consensus as to the levels of influence of soft power in establishing and maintaining status in contemporary geo-global politics. This is a gap in the literature the dissertation aims at helping to fill. There is a consensus that interactions among nations are all about trying to gain and maintain advantage over others through the instrument of foreign policy. Foreign policy refers to actions outlined by policy makers to promote some change in policy attitude or actions of another state or non-state actor (Holsti, 1995). It is designed to cause an alteration or maintain current conditions and practices in international politics. Lippmann (1943) argues that a state’s commitment to its foreign policy must back it with its capabilities. These capabilities, according to Lerche (1967), are made-up of both tangible and intangible factors. The tangible factors include geography, population and manpower, natural resources, industrial and agricultural production, and military organization and strength. The political, economic, and social structure, education

and technological level and national moral make up the intangible factors. In recent times, however, economic concerns seem to take precedence over security concerns (Person and Rochester, 1984). Wealth is a prerequisite for engaging in foreign policy actions, although it carries its own problems, prospects, conditions, and attitudes. States play active or passive role in world affairs depending on the size of its economy. Wealthy countries usually engage in foreign direct investments, direct aid and/or humanitarian activities that lead to some form of dependency by the receiving country.

International politics like all other politics is a struggle for power, whatever some other objectives there may be, power is the final goal (Morgenthau, 1960). Statesmen think and act in relation to interest defined by power, and the historical antecedents support this assumption (Ibid.). According to Dougherty et al. (1990), power has both military and non-military components. Realists in their analysis of power consider not only military capabilities but also technology, population, and political leadership. They place issues of military top of their priorities, as it is crucial for the survival of the state in a hostile international environment. Economics and other capabilities are, therefore, relegated to the background. Realists' mania with military power stems from the experience of its writers who were influenced by the wars they witnessed during their era of writing. Nonetheless, realists' fundamental principle of conceiving international politics as essentially conflictual and, therefore, interactions between states is all about advancing their national interest remains relevant. In effect, whether it is a direct demonstration of military strength or use of undue influence of financial muscles, states aspire to wield power as much as possible.

Political realism's essence is that leaders pursuing policies rely on their national power aimed at achieving national interest. Thus, interest remains essentially the essence of politics regardless of time and place and it is synonymous with the survival of the state. Interest, which determines political action in a specific historical epoch, is dependent on political and cultural setting within which foreign policy is made. The exercise of power is, therefore, understood within the political and cultural setting under which it is utilized. The content of power, and how it is applied, is dependent on the prevailing socio-political circumstances. For if the unearthing and possession of iron by empires of antiquity confers power on them, it serves the same purpose as the territorial ownership of immense energy reserves in modern times. Thus, the shrewdness in Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana can be understood, as responding to the dynamics of the geo-regional West African politics influenced by the global hegemony of the USA and its Middle Eastern allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel.

In international politics power is the ability to influence the behavior of others for some specific objectives. This can be achieved through coercing or threats or through attraction and co-option (Nye, 1990). The latter, which Nye describes as soft power, is the ability of a state to get other states to want the final results it aims at achieving (Ibid.). It is a process of shaping the preferences of other states by attracting them through activities that appeal to them (Ibid). In recent times' soft power has been employed as a tool to influencing public opinion through economic muzzles. Nye argues, that whereas with soft power "the best propaganda is not propaganda",¹ It is via the instrument of public diplomacy

¹ Nye, 2012. p.23

that soft power is diffused abroad”.² Public diplomacy can be equated to the political rendition of “power of information” because, with the continued expansion of information and influx of new communication technologies by the day, the ability of state and non-state actors to unilaterally control their credibility and reputations shrinks (Nye, 2008). International actors must, therefore, find alternative means to maneuvering through negative publicity in order to build and maintain their soft power.

According to Nye, soft power tools that can aid a country to outstrip bad publicity in contemporary global politics hinges on three resources that a country may or may not possess. These are the spread of the culture of the state in geographical areas where it appears attractive to the locals, the political values which it holds high in practice back home and abroad, and the foreign policies it rolls out which is considered by other states as legitimate and morally uplifting (Nye, 2011). This point is corroborated by Codevilla who opines, that “Soft power does not necessarily have universal applicability in a targeted state ... rather, different parts of populations are attracted or repelled by varied ideas, images and prospects”.³ Writing on indirect (i.e., covert) form of power, Kemper listed them to include the whole panoply of manipulations such as deceiving and outright lying, which bring about the actor’s compliance voluntarily, but on a false basis. In the form of gossip or rumor, lies may also be told about the actor to others, who will then scorn the actor and damage his or her reputation, thus, reducing his or her opportunities. The target is now weakened and made more likely to conform to the wishes of the actor who initiated the manipulation.⁴ The tools to

² Nye, 2008. p.95

³ Codevilla, 2007. p.214

⁴ Kemper, 1981. p.9

transmitting a state's culture abroad in a bid to generating soft power includes economic activities, inter-personal communications, official visits between elites or senior government officials, and educational and/or cultural exchanges (Ibid.). States can wield soft power by simply making available material and financial supports on humanitarian basis through the official development assistance (ODA) or through a foreign direct investment (FDI), in addition to using diplomatic channels (Ibid.). Thus, the operations of cultural and educational programs such as the Confucius Institute of China also help in projecting the image of a particular state to the international community (Bates, 2007).

The examples above provide a crucial foundation for our discourse on Iran's humanitarian soft power and the search for status in Ghana. The ability of the Islamic Republic to establish a grand status in Ghana despite the negative propaganda being pursued by the USA and its Middle Eastern allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel lends credence to Nye's argument, that "with soft power, the best propaganda is not propaganda".⁵

Dissenting argument advanced is soft power alone does not grant a country the power and dominance it so requires. For example, the former US President George Bush's consistent use of the phrase "you are either with us or with the terrorists" was, as a matter of fact, an expression of hard power (Mattern, 2005). Although there was no direct use of military action nor explicit signal of intimidation to other countries to join forces with the US coalition, Matterns (2005) argues, that there was a tacit use of representational force, or put succinctly, there was a force majeure (emphasis mine). An intimidation of this kind, Matterns (2005) states, threatens US's global partners, compelling them to submit to its wishes

⁵ Nye, 2012, p.7

or risk being tagged as evils. “This being the case, soft power is therefore not so soft”.⁶ While Mattern’s argument against soft power appears convincing, we shall argue in our dissertation, that soft power remains the best tool to establishing and maintaining status in an external geographical territory in contemporary global politics. For whereas power in bi/multilateral relations is when actors are able to “realize their own will...even over the resistance of others,”⁷ status is when “actors willingly and gladly defer to, accept, approve, support, respect, admire, and ultimately, love others without compulsion or coercion”.⁸ In effect, actors with high status are accorded some level of acceptability, privileges, and rewards by the actor(s) in the relationship (Theodore, 1981). Overall, “status and power constitute the sum and substance of sociopolitical relations, what actors do with, to, for, and against each other”.⁹ The ability of the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish and grow its status in Ghana where the USA and its Middle Eastern allies - of Saudi Arabia and Israel – are fervently and sedulously present lends credence to Nye’s argument, that “with soft power, the best propaganda is not propaganda”.¹⁰ Iran’s strategic humanitarian projects and social interventions boost its approval and acceptability rates in Ghana. The Ghanaian economy remains in urgent need for development assistance, and Iran has effectively capitalized on its comparative advantage in education, healthcare, and agricultural advancement to meet these demands.

As the case of Iran’s strategic humanitarian activities in Ghana reveals, development as a soft power can enhance and assert a country’s status in geographical territory

⁶ Mattern, 2005. p.586

⁷ Weber, 1978. p.181

⁸ Kemper, 1981. p.9

⁹ . Ibid

¹⁰ Nye, 2012. P.6

thousands of miles away from its location of origin. Our dissertation, therefore, aims to advance the argument for soft power in attempt to provide in-depth explanation of Iran's growing status in Ghana, especially when the dominant epistemology, hard power, cannot capture the prevailing reality in its relationship with the West African country.

The growing status of Iran in Ghana has seen some level of consistency with patterns of cooperation and supports. The bilateral relation has shown some tremendous improvements since the early 1960s, as both Iran and Ghana experienced different forms of governance within the period. However, these relational improvements anchor on changeable domestic, regional, and global circumstances. Over time, and especially since Iran's Islamic revolution of 1979, Ghana has benefitted phenomenally from the humanitarian activities of Iran. Some Muslim social pundits have described Iran's humanitarian activities in Ghana as 'savvy humanitarianism' that has even given birth to a poignant accolade, '*Gharan*' (a contraction of Ghana - Iran).

Iran has moved from a rather relaxed attitude in its relationship with Ghana to one of exercising stronger leadership of 'South – South Partnership'. Since the early 1990s, Iran has consistently advocated and stressed the importance of economic cooperation with Ghana. Also, worth noting is the extension of Iran's role in the use humanitarian works to foster diplomatic cooperation in the sub-region. The educational, health, and agricultural projects undertaken in Ghana is made possible through well-planned policies to foster closer ties with the country. Thus, for Ghana to be able to forge closer cooperation, collaboration and attract more of Iranian social interventions there is the crucial need for the country to continue according the Islamic Republic some level of status.

To appreciate the present and possible future course in Iran – Ghana relation, we must, first and foremost, embrace the recent past to comprehend the trajectory of the construction of the relation. To do this, certain trends and traditions would be more apparent and visible, as possible designations for appraising their current relation. The preceding background has shown that while ties between Iran and Ghana occurred in different transnational spaces, arguably the least understood is the sphere of humanitarian activities being undertaken by the Islamic Republic. One of Iran's tactics to establishing a rapport with Ghana has been the employment of strategic humanitarian works, which, besides evoking Iran's generosity, makes education and health facilities easily accessible and affordable to thousands of ordinary Ghanaians, broadens and widens the acceptability rate of the Islamic Republic to the governments and people of Ghana.

Literature Review

To put this study in its proper context, several selected scholarly works were reviewed. The review of the literature is structured in two parts and is mainly contextual and integrative. We began with literature on Iran foreign policy where our attention focused on studies capturing Iran's relation with its immediate Gulf (and Middle East) neighbors, the United States of America, the countries in the European Union, and its recent dynamics. In the second part of the review, our concern was on scholarly works that descriptively and exploratory analyzed Iran - African relation.

Academic interest in relation to Iran's foreign policy has sparked up in recent years (DeLand, 2001). This rise in academic interest has run parallel to growing

influence of Iran in global politics and has become more apparent to scholars that Iran has become an important player especially in the geo-strategic region of the Persian Gulf. Many recent studies have identified with the 'coalition' concepts initially wrote about by Sariolghalam in 2005. Sariolghalam's work set the academic stage for Iran's coalition foreign policy strategy and non-submissive posture. It provided empirical framework for understanding Iran's foreign policy and lay bare Iran's success story in establishing alliances with certain countries in its neighboring southern, eastern, and northern regions, together with selected Islamists groups to promote its foreign policy strategic goals.

Explaining how vitally important the individual variable is in the foreign policy decision-making process of Iran, Sariolghalam (2005) postulates, that the legal supremacy of individuals over systems in Iran's political structure plays a pivotal role in designing and executing Iran's foreign policy. He further indicates that the basic principles of Iranian foreign policy hinges on the country's strategic location, natural resources, Iranians nationalistic attitude, sovereignty, and the Islamic revolution.

Previous studies on Iran foreign policy have focused on factors influencing its foreign policy decision making in pre and post 1979 Islamic revolution. Soltani and Amiri (2010) outline the asynchronous and synchronous natures of the foreign policy of Iran, its theoretical approaches since 1979 anchoring on realism, ideologism, pragmatism, and reformism. Although religious ideology has dominated the country's foreign policy since the Islamic revolution, different situations made various governments to change course and priorities in their [specific] foreign policy (Soltani and Amiri, 2010). The realist approach began during Mehdi Bazargan's regime and ended with the siege of the American

embassy in Tehran (Ibid.). The authors explain that the regime at that time tended to a large extent, to turn against ideological priorities and lead Iran foreign policy based on national interests. Consequently, the government of Iran respected major international regularities, scaled back on its intervention policy, and improved its relations with the world. Soltani and Amiri (2010) argue that the realist approach failed and was short lived due to the political differences between Bazargan and Imam Khomeini, a situation that led to the dominance of the ideological approach from 1981 to 1989. Ideological approach is the projection of Islamic principles and assumptions as tools to making foreign policy decisions (Soltani and Amiri (2010)). In other words, idealists were of the conviction that all statesmen have had to behave in accordance with the dictating principles and values of the theocratic regime. Invariably, the regime ignored the international environment in most of its external behaviors, replacing the prevailing international political system with ideological ethos. The adherents of the ideological approach made conscious efforts to exporting the Islamic revolution to other countries in and outside the Middle East within the shortest possible time (Soltani and Amiri (2010)).

Hashemi Rafsanjani, However, turned to pragmatist approach after the Iran – Iraq War. His eight years’ tenure anchored Iran on geo-political demands with little attention paid to ideological principles (Soltani and Amiri (2010)). Corroborating this point, Akbarzadeh and Conduit (2016) explain how Iran foreign policy has been “fluctuating between revolutionary idealism and pragmatic realism”.¹¹ They indicate that pragmatism has long been an integral aspect of Iran’s external activities such as its détente with the US or consistent support for

¹¹ Akbarzader, 2016, p.72

militant forces in the Levant, neither of which has direct connectivity to its ideological mantra (Akbarzede & Conduit, 2016). Thus, the Islamic Republic's foreign policy is a creation of different competing variables including ideology of the Islamic revolution; perception of threats to its theocratic regime and its national interests (Katzman, 2016). So, as against Mohammad Khatami's pragmatic approach or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's populist stance, Hassan Rouhani has so far pursued a centrist pragmatic approach in the country's foreign policy (Akbarzede & Conduit, 2016). According to the authors, Iran compliments this outreach with soft power initiatives using its extensive regional network of charitable foundations.

In addition to recounting the process of establishing rapprochement with Western powers, Shanaban (2015) examine major changes in Iranian foreign policy since Rouhani ascend to power in 2013; focusing on enhancing relation with its immediate Arab neighbors through noninterventionism. Despite the reformism nature of Rouhani, foreign policymaking in Iran is largely regulated by the supreme leader with an unflinching supports and influence of the Revolutionary Guard (Shanaban, 2015). Thus, although Rouhani's foreign policy is strikingly distinct from that of Ahmadinejad, both policies aim at maximizing Tehran's regional influence (Ibid.). The difference, however, is Rouhani's priority on strengthening Iran's economy, as the key to expanding the Islamic Republic's role among the comity of nations (Shanaban, 2015). This is because, improving the economic situation of the country would correspondingly maintain domestic support for the regime and enhance Iranian influence in the Middle East regional affairs (Ibid.).

In the same strand, Iran foreign and security policy is a blend of ideological

and nationalistic objectives, although the considerate value of the duo has appeared less crucial to a more standard political consideration in recent times (Byman, Daniel, et al. 2001). Therefore, despite the influence of religion, nationalism, ethnicity, economics, and geopolitics in foreign policymaking of Iran, so too have matters of security and ambitions of some influential leaders. As a result, Iran appears now to be favoring cautious policies than ideological and nationalistic ethos dictate (Ibid.). The desire to preserve regional stability and improve the economy forced the Islamic Republic to pursue some form of rapprochement with neighboring governments, even at the expense of the principles of the revolution (Ibid.).

This reviewed literature identifies the ideological and non-ideological stimuli to Iranian foreign decision-making process. It reveals Iran's foreign policy dynamics as creation of overlapping, and often contradictory factors. It affirms, that Iran's official outfits in charge of conducting foreign policy initiatives are the Supreme Leader, the elected president, the Guardian Council, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Supreme National Council (SNSC) and the *Majlis* (Rakel, 2007). Put differently, foreign policy decision-making processes interplay between the foreign minister, to the president, to the SNSC, with the buck stopping on the Supreme Leader's desk (Rakel, 2007). Although there is not much difference in their policies, the Iranian political system has passed through four different phases described by Rahimi as period(s) of "Khomeinism (1979-1989), re- constructionism (1989-1997), factionalism (1997-2005) and neo-Khomeinism (2005 till date)".¹²

The second part of our literature review revolved around Iran's relation with

¹² Rahimi, 2009. p.39

Africa, an aspect that has also received its fair share of scholarly analysis. A general survey of the major literature on the studies covering the immediate decades of post Islamic revolution, reveals plausible conclusions about Iran making inroads in Africa (Lefebvre, 2008 & 2012; Warner & Gallo, 2013; Lob, 2016; Fátima, 2017; Najla, 2017; Manjang, 2017; Feierstein & Greathead, 2017; Bahi, 2018; Segell, 2019). Lefebvre (2008) provided four different periods to explain Iran's desperation to securing its interests in sub-Saharan Africa. These are: i) Shah and his policy of containment, 1953-1979; ii) the Islamic Republic 'offensive diplomacy,' 1980-2001; iii) Iran determination to 'escape' international isolation, 2002-2010; and iv) the Saudi Iranian protractive conflict, 2011-2018 -. Indeed, in the view of Lefebvre (2008), Iran's policy toward sub-Saharan Africa shifted from preserving a pro-West political structure under Sha's regime to politics of disorderliness under the theocratic regime. By 1984, Iran had established strong ties with radical Muslim student organizations and sent hundreds of them from Ghana and other West African countries to Iran for ideological training (Lefebvre, 2008). Despite its devastating war with Iraq and economic pushback by the neighboring Arab States, Tehran had eighteen resident embassies in sub-Saharan Africa by 1984 (Ibid.). According to Lefebvre (2008), the CIA Directorate of Intelligence noted back in 1984 that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Libya are fiercely competing for influence and control of sub-Saharan Africa. The report indicates Iran had overtaken Libya and closing the gap with Saudi Arabia as source of external support in the region. Around that same time, Tehran succeeded in sending high-powered government delegations to West African countries to push for Iran's stance as a member of the Non- Aligned Movement (Lefebvre (2008).

In support of his earlier work, Lefebvre (2012) elaborates on the unpalatable reality as Iran capitalized on Eritrea's political isolation by the western powers to maintain absolute grip in the southern Red Sea region. In the face of this challenge, Iran employs its warships in fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia and have been using Eritrea's southern port of *Assab* for the operation (Lefebvre, 2012). Although Iran's deployment of its navy in the area is sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council and the Law of the Sea Treaty (UNCLOS), the USA and its allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel continuously expressed worry about Iran's political activities in the area (Lefebvre, 2012). While Israel accuses Iran of smuggling weapons to Sudan and to *Hamas* in Gaza via Egypt's Sinai, Riyadh and Sanaa accuse it of shipping arms to the Houthi rebels across the red sea. It is Lefebvre (2012) conviction, that Tehran's 'offensive' diplomacy and Eritrea's strategic cooperation with it enabled the former to upscale its political and military influence in the Horn of Africa and has successfully outflanked all the US Middle Eastern allies in that sub-region and reaffirmed its influence (Lefebvre, 2012).

As a rising power, Iran considers it a necessity to building durable relationships globally. To this effect, Iran and Saudi Arabia are in a race to entrenching their dominance, influence, and strengthening the bilateral and multilateral relations in the African continent (Bahi, 2011). Since the success of the Islamic revolution, Iran keeps pushing to assert influence in Africa through high-level bilateral meetings and a network of contacts and connections leading it to gaining observer status in the African Union (AU).¹³ Their rivalry has intensified in recent

¹³ The 37th summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in 2001 marked the birth of a new organization known as the African Union (AU) which was adopted by 50 of the 53 member countries. Consequently, on Monday 8th July 2002, African leaders formally marked the end of the

years leading to three major global developments, a rising tension with the USA, a recent unprecedented Saudi Arabia's assertive foreign policy under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Iran's persistent support and employment of militias and proxies for its regional and global interest (Bahi, 2018). Against all odds, Iran has so far successfully tipped the regional balance of power in its favor.

Iran's strategic maneuvers in the Horn of Africa and the countries on the Red Sea by establishing anti-Western axis within these countries aims to improve its political dominance and diplomatic influence in the sub-region (Manjang, 2017; Najla, 2017; Feierstein and Greathead, 2017; Bahi, 2018). According to Manjang (2017), the retreatment of Saudi Arabia from the horn of Africa and the red sea between 1960s to early 1990s led to the current Iranian dominance of the region. The current rivalry, thus, juxtaposes Iran's determination to suppress the old glory of Saudi Arabia in the horn and the latter's resolve to recapture political and strategic dominance of the area from Iran is unattainable. Thus, the growing Iranian dominance in the Horn of Africa has negatively affected the interest of some Arab countries as much as Israel in the region (Najla, 2017). Feierstein and Greathead (2017) mention the formation of strategic alliances by Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Horn and sub-Saharan Africa as a deployment of soft power tool to enhancing their diplomatic ties in the region. According to the authors, Iran is craving to expand its dominance in West Africa through the

OAU and the birth of the AU in its place. The reason for the change is to make the union responsive to contemporary challenges facing African countries. Further, the decision to adopt a new governing act guiding the union suggest a determining posture among African leaders who have realized that AU was the best way for Africans to hasten the process of continental economic and integration. As opined by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan during the inauguration of the 'new union' "This historic effort will require leadership, courage and willingness to depart from the ways of the past if it is to do for Africa what the EU has done for Europe".

formation of Hezbollah-styled proxy militant groups. There have been substantial financial benefits to sub-Saharan countries from the two rivalry Gulf States and are currently drawn into the protracted Middle Eastern conflicts. Although Saudi Iranian rivalry in the horn and East Africa has been a game for power domination, in West Africa, Riyadh and Tehran are mainly engaged in the promotion of their unique form of Islam (Feierstein and Greathead).

Away from the analysis of Iran – Saudi rivalry in the Horn of Africa, Warner and Gallo (2013) offer in-depth analysis of the contemporary developmental discourse of Iran - African relation. They recount ways in which Iran and African states engage with each other diplomatically, particularly on their rapport revolving the rhetoric of ‘Third World’ or ‘global South’ solidarity. Just as most

developing countries tend to forge differential relationships with advanced countries to consolidate political power and diplomatic capital by playing to Third Worldist predilection in Africa. Similarly, Iran has tried to cement its relations with Africa using anti-Western, anti-imperial rhetoric, and pro-South game to Africa. Further, because Iran seeks to exert its hegemony on the African continent, it keeps contriving itself as an equal partner to African countries. This tendency is more obvious in Iran which has used the rhetoric of Global South to project its geopolitical goals and national interest in sub-Saharan Africa, while African countries have also resorted to the singing of same mantra in order to keep receiving the requisite supports from Iran (Warner, and Carol. 2013).

Chimarizeni’s (2017) single out the current state of Iran’s economic situation as the centripetal force pushing the Islamic Republic towards Africa. Iran seeks

political and diplomatic support to lessen the economic pains posed by incessant sanctions. Both Iran and Africa as a 'Union' have been part of the non-alignment movement, upholding same mindset of offsetting western imperialistic tactics to strengthening their relationship (Chimarizeni, 2017). Iran has always used rhetoric against the West throughout its economic cooperation with African states, as catalyst to goad that relationship and spur her diplomatic onslaught in the region (Ibid.). These activities have paid off and Iran is currently an accredited observer member of the African Union (Ibid.).

By [re]defining Iran – African development paradigm, Lob (2016) discusses the Islamic Republic's flagship Construction Jihad program, a rural development project focusing on sub-Saharan Africa since the 1980. By this flagship activities, Iran resorts to development programs to maximize its long-term foreign and security policies by strengthening diplomatic and commercial relations with Africa despite international isolations causing it serious economic constrains.

Segell (2019) propounded the concept of neo-colonialism of Turkey and Iran in Africa and the growing asymmetrical relation between them. Neo-colonial activities of the two Middle Eastern superpowers (Turkey and Iran) in Africa is active, ongoing, and surging forward by the day (Ibid.). Whiles Turkey engages in neo-colonialist economic activities in Africa (for gold); Iran is more concerned with neo-colonialist religious practices in Africa (for g-d) (Segell, 2019). In both cases, the objective is furthering their status in the region (Ibid.)

Zweiri and Manjang (2020) identify certain regional and international factors that affected Iran's foreign policy towards the West African country of Senegal from Ahmadinejad's regime to Rouhani's administration. They cited Ahmadinejad's confrontational leadership style, biting of the incessant

international sanctions on Iran effective 2006, and the 34- day-long Israel – Hezbollah War in 2006 as centripetal forces that affected contemporary Iran – Senegal relation.

Overall, the reviewed literature confirms stability in Iran’s foreign policy and emphasizes the country’s autarky, domestication, exceptionalism, nationalism, and resistance spirit (Sariolghalam, 2005). Second, it affirms the protracted tension between Iran and USA on one hand, and Iran and USA allies of Israel and Saudi Arabia on the other. The literature also affirms Iran’s continuous use of humanitarian soft power as a major foreign policy tool. The reviewed works will, therefore, serve as basis for our discourse on Iran’s search for status in Ghana where the USA and its Middle Eastern allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel keep pushing for its isolation. Moreover, the reviewed literature offers us the trajectory of Iranian relations with countries in Africa. It provides us with the tools to analyzing Iran foreign policy towards specific sub-regions of the African continent.

However, the reviewed works are [de]limited in two ways. First, while the literature necessarily made some relevant allusions to Iran’s foreign policy towards West Africa, they did not purport to engage in a full-scale discourse on that. The focus has remained on the Horn and East Africa except for Zweiri and Manjang’s book chapter that briefly examined Iran’s foreign policy towards Senegal. Second, the works largely revolved around Iran’s ‘offensive’ or ‘militancy’ diplomacy and its protracted rivalry with Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Considering these [de]limitations, the gap in how Iran has employed humanitarian works to establish and grow its status with West African countries remains wide.

This study attempts to contribute to this dearth of research by illuminating the connection between Iran's humanitarian soft power to its growing status in the West African country of Ghana.

Arguably, the most exciting contribution to knowledge this research project would make, is its discourse of South – South development Cooperation. The study of economic development in general and humanitarian works in West Africa tends to focus disproportionately on the Global North – Global South Cooperation. Thus, literature abounds on the humanitarian works of the USA, the United Kingdom, Germany, etc. in West Africa; and how these Global North countries use such social interventions as a soft power tool in cementing relations with West African States. Although some few literatures exist about the charity works of the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in West Africa, the discourse is in relation to their promotion of Salafi/Wahhabi form of Islam and not a conventional development agenda (Kaag, 2014; Gerald and Craig, 2017). As a result, research on South – South Development Cooperation is particularly significant as it allows for deeper insights into the key aspects of the humanitarian activities of the Gulf State of Iran and extends the literature beyond Global North – Global South development discourse.

Aims and Core Hypothesis

The objective of this dissertation is to discuss Iran's growing status in Ghana against the background of a soft power tool. That is, using strategic humanitarian works that have raise the acceptability rate of Iran in the West African country of Ghana. Some readers may wonder what is so unique about the humanitarian

activities of Iran because Ghana, like the other [West] African countries, has always depended on foreign supports be it direct aid or the humanitarian activities of international non- governmental organizations. However, since the early 1980s, the form and shape of Iran's humanitarian works have become increasingly 'savvy' and 'conspicuous', as their impacts on ordinary Ghanaians have subjected policy making to the increasing influence of lobbyists: civil society organizations, and public and private policy think tanks. These strategic humanitarian works of Iran have had (and continue to have) strong impact on Iran's status in Ghana and how the social setting of the latter has perceived the former and [re]acted towards it.

This dissertation will advance the political concepts of humanitarianism and status to attempt a more complete explanation of Iran foreign policymaking. Since positivist social science focuses on testing, certain hypothesis needs to be stated and subsequently tested over the course of the dissertation. Research questions designed to allow hypothesis to be tested will be stated, below.

As Ghana experiences myriad of economic challenges, so too have the rates of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and their concomitant social vices. The flagship Iran's idea of South – South Cooperation in West Africa as a catalyst for development leads to the belief that a Global South country (like Iran) can cause an impact on the development of another Global South country (like Ghana), or put another way, in the realm of Ghana's development agenda, can bring a big relief to the national government. The dissertation will test this hypothesis, to ascertain whether this is accurate for Iran's status in Ghana or not.

Some core assumptions, trends and traditions continue to inform Ghana's relation with other states in 'normal' times (that is, except for some sociopolitical

shocks and crisis) that require internal source of influence to withstand and make it almost insurmountable. For this reason, this dissertation will identify forces evident in Ghana's socio/politico settings and ascertain whether they continue to exert influence over the growing status of Iran in the country. What is unclear is how much domestic forces influence Ghana's policymaking process, and what type(s) of influence these forces bring to bear on that. In recent history, and as indicated by many political scientists, it is becoming increasingly the case, that "less and less does foreign policy evolve from a professed and coherent world view...more and more does it reflect a test of strength among competing domestic forces".¹⁴ Therefore, the tracks that clearly marks the running path of the public and private realm in contemporary geopolitics is now so faint due to the tight connection that exist between the state and interest groups in policymaking (Parmer, 1995). This dissertation, therefore, argues that humanitarian works often makes "donors to occupy positions that give them substantially more active choice than recipients about how to define the philanthropic transaction and how to take part in it"¹⁵ is, in the case of the Islamic Republic, a valid theory inclusion in the study of its foreign policy. Although it cannot stand on its own, it can inform a soft power theory of Iran foreign policy. If Iran's foreign policy towards Ghana is heavily influenced by its [humanitarian] soft power, is it the realist claim that hard power dominates the decision process of international politics and therefore soft power is not 'that soft'? This question is of particular interest to this study and poses several further questions about Iran foreign policy towards Ghana. If the USA and its Middle Eastern allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel are constantly engaging in vicious propaganda campaign to get Iran

¹⁴. Rosenfeld, 1974, p.267

isolated and ostracized by Ghana, would Iran's interest rise to the task, taking over the responsibility of embarking on strategic humanitarian interventions? How much of an impact do Iran's humanitarian projects have on the Ghanaian state, and what sort of alternative results can arise without it? Does the government of Ghana take cognizance of the positive social impacts Iran's humanitarian activities continue to have on the citizenry? If this is the case, will relation with Iran be suboptimal, based on vicious propaganda peddled by USA and its Middle Eastern allies; or factual sources of information and intelligence (civil society organizations, interest and pressure groups)? The reality, as would be explained in this dissertation, is that with soft power, "the best propaganda is not propaganda".¹⁶ Moreover, this dissertation advances a neutral position on the soft power of Iran's foreign policy in Ghana, as the impact of strategic humanitarian works could be wholly positive. Despite the role humanitarian activities play in enhancing the status of a country, it remains the contention of this dissertation that civil societies, interest groups, and the media remain central to the growing status of a 'foreign' country. With the growing status of Iran in Ghana – despite the virulent campaign against it by the USA, Saudi Arabia, and Israel – it is both timely and necessary to understand the reasons by which Iran's humanitarian soft power percolate through the Ghanaian system, crystalizing into influence, a grand status. Therefore, this dissertation aims to test the hypothesis that the USA and its allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel have had much more difficulty in getting Iran isolated in Ghana with its interest shut. The core research question, therefore, anchors on 'what' and 'how'. Specifically, what is it about Iran's humanitarian works that binds it together with Ghana making it to be experiencing a growing status?

Research Question

This dissertation revolves around three specific research questions, one empirical and two, analytical. The empirical question seeks to develop our understanding of Iran's soft power, its form and shape. The following two questions employ the basis of establishing Iran's growing status in the country. The three questions, therefore, are:

1. What are the dominant formative projects that constitute Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana; and the socio-political impacts that translate into an international relation posture, dubbed, status?
2. What socio/political factors play and interplay to balance the traditional Ghanaian establishment of bilateral relations with other countries should tell us about the nature of Iran's status in Ghana?
3. What domestic factors have remained such a persistent problem for Iran's tradition of deploying humanitarian soft power in Ghana?

Thesis Structure

The provision of strategic humanitarian works by the of Iran in Ghana which is battling with myriads of socioeconomic challenges enables it to launch tirades against western nations and ride on South – South rhetoric as a catalyst to spurring on that relationship. It is a fact, that Ghana needs Iran to continue the humanitarian works it has been doing for the past decades. So, just as it is necessary to look to the future, it is also important to reverse to the past in reviewing the trajectory of Iran – Ghana relation vis-à-vis the former's humanitarian works in the latter's social sphere.

works affect the government and people of Ghana, and how it has led to the rise in Iran's status in the country. It is for this reason that the chapter topics have been chosen, as follows: **CHAPTER ONE** presents an overview of the existing literature, aims, hypothesis, research questions, and the structure of the dissertation. The second part of the chapter demonstrates the methodology adopted for the study. **CHAPTER TWO** outlines realist theory (with focus on national interest and power), national attributes theory, social exchange theory, and relate them to Iran foreign policy towards Ghana. The second part of the chapter makes analysis of key concepts of the study: humanitarianism and status. **CHAPTER THREE** recounts the Middle Eastern conflict and rivalry and how it is metamorphosing on Ghanaian soil. The chapter begins with a historical overview of Iran – Ghana relation in pre and post Islamic revolution until date, highlighting key points that have become inherent in Iran foreign policy towards Ghana as a success or otherwise. Here, Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia and Israel are reviewed. Foreign policies of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel towards Ghana are also examined, and circumstantial events surrounding the Lebanese community in Ghana is also assessed. **CHAPTER FOUR** of the dissertation accounts for Iran's strategic humanitarian works in Ghana. The chapter utilizes key projects that have been undertaken by Iran to ascertain how and why the Islamic republic enjoys high acceptability rate in the country. **CHAPTER FIVE** addresses the role and influence of some interest groups and their contributions to Iran's growing status in Ghana. The activities of governmental and non-governmental foreign policy institutions, interest and pressure groups, their form, operations, and tactics will be analyzed. **CHAPTER SIX**, the concluding chapter of the dissertation, draws together and synthesis the conclusions from all previous

chapters to answer explicitly the research questions, address the hypothesis presented, and attempt to ascertain the key humanitarian projects undertaken by Iran in Ghana, and the impact of the humanitarian soft power on the growing status of the Islamic Republic in Ghana.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodology employed to elicit data needed to describe the status of Iran in Ghana vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic's foreign policy towards the West African country. Since the study is about a sociopolitical phenomenon that concurrently interplays and experienced, it was of vital importance to gather data concerning the thoughts and opinions of the necessary actors and players. This process helped us to pursue a descriptive analytical route to answering the research questions and test the hypothesis posed through a review of official documents and secondary literature of varying length. Sandelowski (2000) explains, that descriptive-based qualitative research is used in producing a low—inference description of a phenomenon. Although every academic research involves some form of interpretation, the descriptive qualitative research endeavors to lessen deductions made in order to remain 'closer' to the original data. According to Sandelowski (2000), researchers embarking on such studies seek validity, an acceptable account of events that might prove the researcher and the participants observed the same event and agreed to its accuracy, its interpretative validity, or an accumulative account of meanings participants ascribe to the observed phenomenon. This method accorded me the opportunity to provide complex textual description of how the government and people of Ghana

perceive the subject matter of this research, incorporate that with the primary data, analyze it and making bare the conclusive findings.

By means of this methodology, I succeeded in probing into the individual opinions of the participants and elicited their thoughts and opinions as they have directly and/or indirectly studied and/or observed Iran – Ghana relation for years. Data were obtained through purposive face-to-face interviews. Apart from its flexibility, purposive face-to-face interview enabled me to seek clarifications, correct certain misunderstandings, and helped me made prompt probe into the discussion. The interviews were structured and ‘guide questions’ were sent in advance to participants with a copy of my IRB (**See Appendix I**). This accorded participants enough time to think through the context of Iran – Ghana relation and thereby paved way for me to get detail responds in understanding the prevailing issues. I also adopted an ethical framework in dealing with issues of privacy for the participants (Patton, 2002). To do that, I obtained from each of the participant an informed consent that helped them understand and accept the following:

1. The purpose of the interview.
2. The intended use of the information obtained in the interview.
3. The main questions to be asked.
4. The handling and confidentiality of responses.
5. The risks or benefits involved for the participants.

The informed consent was presented as a written agreement and was signed by me (the researcher/interviewer) and the participant/interviewee (**See Appendix II**). During the interviews which was conducted in English language, I asked my participants to respond to open ended questions and encouraged them to express themselves freely and without reservation. Open-ended questions created the trajectory of the discussion and allowed the participants to take any direction they deemed fit (Seidman, 1998).

Selection of Participants

For this research project I adopted a criterion-based sampling method where participants belonging to a pre-defined group were selected (Trochim, 2007). The participant must:

- 1- have deep understanding, knowledge, and experience in the phenomenon under study, 'which is Iran – Ghana relations.
- 2- be willing to participate in an interview that lasted for at least an hour.
- 3- grant the investigator the right to at least take note of the interview, and to publish the data in a dissertation (Moustakas, 1994).

Profile of Participants

Category one of the participants served as senior officials in the Ghana foreign service. Among these participants, four previously served as ministers of foreign affairs, and one was a former Ghana resident ambassador to Iran. Each of these distinguished former diplomats worked in the Ghanaian diplomatic circle for more than 10 years. Although they are retired, their rich experiences are still

being tapped by successive Ghanaian governments and regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union.

Category two comprises two sitting members of parliament and two retired members of parliament. While the sitting members of parliament are currently serving on the committee on foreign affairs of the Parliament of Ghana, the retired two were former members of the same committee. The committee on foreign affairs together with the general house play an oversight responsibility on the executive arm of government in its foreign policy, bi/multilateral initiatives. The committee wields a constitutional power to summon the minister of foreign affairs before it to answer questions related to Ghana's bi/multilateral relations.

Category three are distinguished academics who belong to public international relations and foreign policy institutions, a graduate based programs which trained Ghanaians and international students (civilians and security personnel) to pursue masters and doctoral degrees. These four participants are at a rank of professorship who have wide array of publications, holding leadership positions in the academic institutions, serving as consultants to the Ghana Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, and are regular discussants in the mainstream media outlets on matters related to international politics, Ghana's foreign policy and bi/multilateral relations. Category four of my participants constitute senior members of non-governmental think tanks with special focus on international relations, foreign policy, and security issues. Think tanks act to fill the loopholes in government policy. Through alternative policy ideas and lobbying, think tanks organize forums, symposiums, lectures, etc. to explain why they support or disagree with a particular government policy. They may present a common

front by way of letters to parliamentarians to legislate in a particular way that will positively affect the interest of the citizenry. These experts have obtained doctoral degrees in their fields of endeavor and are known for their views and opinions about international politics, Ghana's foreign policy, and security in the sub-region.

Category five are two veteran journalists who, besides serving as editors-in-chief for premier newspapers for many decades also own their own media outlets. Whereas one considers himself a Sunni Muslim, the other is a non-Muslim. Both are known for their passionate views on politics in the Middle East and their staunch supports for the Palestinian cause and Iran's international behavior.

Category Six is made up of interest or pressure groups. Pressure groups are organized groups of people who seek to influence or cause a change in governmental policy and decisions in favor of its members. In addition to putting pressure on government to change certain decisions that they believe can affect their general interests, pressure groups also serve as channels of communication between their members and the government. These interest or pressure groups are those that have direct or indirect interests in Iran's humanitarian projects that has some form of bearing on slum dwellers and poor Muslim communities in Ghana. They include leading member(s) of the Council of Muslim Chiefs (CMC), Ghana Muslim Students Association (GMSA), Ghana Academy of Muslim Professionals (GAMP), and Ghana Muslim Mission (GMM). The CMC is an umbrella organization of all the traditional Ghanaian Muslim rulers and/or tribal leaders. Membership of GMSA comprises all Muslim students of all the secular educational ladder of the country. The GAMP is a Muslim intelligentsia organization made of Muslim graduates who are currently working in

various sectors of the economy, and who were once executive/members of GMSA. Ghanaian Muslims with varied educational, economic, and social background make up the membership of the GAMP. What binds them together in the organization is Islamic proselytization and the protection and promotion of the welfare of Ghanaian Muslims. In addition to advocating and lobbying, these organizations often resort to the court and street demonstrations to fight for their interests.

Category seven of my participants constitutes two Ghanaians working with Iranian institutions as senior staffs. These two officials have respectively been working with the Ahl Bait Foundation in Ghana and the Iran hospitals for more than two decades each.

It was intentional that the participants came from different occupational background. This provided a variety of descriptions on the thoughts, opinions and/or experiences of Iran – Ghana relations. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in referring to participants who chose to remain anonymous. Alphabetical letters with numbers were assigned to such participants in lieu of real names and occupational reference. The profile of the participants is summarized in the table(s) below. Table 1 shows senior Ghanaian diplomats who served as ministers of foreign affairs with one who served as a former ambassador. Table 2 depicts current and former members of parliament who served on the committee on foreign affairs. Table 3 denotes senior academics in Ghanaian public tertiary institutions. Table 4 presents experts on foreign policy and security issues working with think tanks. Table 5 presents pressure groups with direct or indirect interests in Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana. Table 6 shows veteran Ghanaian media personalities with interest in politics of the Middle East. Table 7

highlight two Ghanaian senior staffs working with Iranian institutions in Ghana.

Table 1. *Former Ghanaian Diplomats*

Participants	Occupation	Institution	Status
A001	Minister	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Retired
A002	Minister	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Retired
A003	Minister	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Retired
A004	Minister	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Retired
A005	Ambassador	Ghana Embassy in Tehran	Retired

Table 2. *Current and Former Ghanaian Legislators*

Participants	Occupation	Institution	Status
A006	Committee on Foreign Affairs	Parliament of Ghana	At post
A007	Committee on Foreign Affairs	Parliament of Ghana	At post
A008	Committee on Foreign Affairs	Parliament of Ghana	Retired
A009	Committee on Foreign Affairs	Parliament of Ghana	Retired

Table 3. *Senior Ghanaian Academics*

Participants	Occupation	Institution	Status
A010	Professor of Security Studies	Council of Foreign Affairs	At post
A011	Professor of Security Studies	Council of Foreign Affairs	At post
A012	Professor of Foreign Policy	Council of Foreign Affairs	At post
A013	Professor of Foreign Policy	Council of Foreign Affairs	At post

Table 4. *Ghanaian Think Tankers*

Participants	Occupation	Institution	Status
A014	Foreign Policy Expert	Council of Foreign Relation	At post
A015	Foreign Policy Expert	Council of Foreign Relation	At post
A016	Foreign Policy Expert	Center of Defense Studies	At post
A017	Foreign Policy Expert	Center of Defense Studies	At post

Table 5. *Ghanaian Interest Groups*

Participants	Occupation	Institution	Status
A018	Senior Member	Ghana Muslim Students Association	At post
A019	Senior Member	Ghana Academy of Muslim Professionals	At post
A020	Senior Member	Council of Muslim Chiefs of Ghana	At post
A021	Senior Member	Ghana Muslim Mission	At post

Table 6. *Ghanaian Media Practitioners*

Participants	Occupation	Institution	Status
A022	Editor-in Chief and Proprietor	Television Station and Newspaper	At post
A023	Editor-in Chief and Proprietor	Newspaper	At post

Table 7. *Ghanaian Officials in Iranian Institutions*

Participants	Occupation	Institution	Status
A024	Administrative Staff	Ahl Al-Bait Foundation	At post
A025	Administrative Staff	Iran Hospital	At post

Conduct of Interviews

The focus of the interviews was to engross my participants to extract their thought, opinions, and experiences relative to the research questions (Merriam & Associates, 2002). None of the participants agreed to audio recording of the interview. The interview which lasted from sixty minutes or more comprised of three sections corresponding to the three research questions of the dissertation. In five instances, I conducted follow-up interviews via phone for the purpose of getting further clarification on some issues.

The focus of the interviews was to engross my participants to extract their thought, opinions, and experiences relative to the research questions (Merriam & Associates, 2002). None of the participants agreed to audio recording of the interview. The interview which lasted from sixty minutes or more comprised of three sections corresponding to the three research questions of the dissertation. In five instances, I conducted follow-up interviews via phone for the purpose of getting further clarification on some issues.

The first section of the interview focused on participant's thoughts and opinions on Iran – Ghana relations. They were asked to talk about Iran – Ghana relations in the light of the contemporary geo-global politics. During the process, participants were asked about their perception of Iran foreign policy towards its Middle Eastern neighbors and the Western world, and how in their estimation such policies are reflecting or impacting Iran – Ghana relation.

The second part addressed the lived experiences of the participants vis-à-vis Iran's engagement of providing education, health, and agricultural services in Ghana. I entreated them to comment on their lived experiences of the Iranian humanitarian projects and the extent of impact the projects are having on the government and people of Ghana. Questions were mooted to solicit their reactions to the various aspects of the projects that may have affected their thoughts and opinions relative to the humanitarian works. The last section required the participants to reflect on the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia on one hand, and Iran and Israel on the other, and the reflective impacts of their relations in Ghana. This addressed the experience and professional connections between the participant's work and the phenomenon. Similar ideas that evolved corresponding to each of the three research

questions were grouped in themes, transcribed into meaningful clusters, and then summarized in the analysis. After categorizing them into meaningful clusters, the data went through rigorous delimitation process which Moustakas (1994) describes as “imaginative variation.” This is a process where unrelated, repetitive, and overlapping data were removed (Patton, 2002). Collected data was sieved and only the appropriate and related information was organized into meaningful groups and critically perused from different viewpoints (Moustakas, 1994). From the sieved data, themes began to evolve and were developed to serve as the nexus that connect all the responses from the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of participants. The final step was the fusing of the synthesized themes and foundational descriptions which provided a synthesis of the essences of their thoughts, opinions, and experience. At this stage, related familiar themes emerged which gave a new meaning or essence to the phenomenon under discussion. In doing this, I tried as much as possible to refrain from judgment or a simple way of perceiving things (Patton, 2002). In this context, I set aside my preconceived interpretation of the phenomenon based on my personal experience. Objectivity was obtained by removing my personal involvement in the phenomenon and considered the phenomenon from the participants’ perceptions, thoughts, and opinions.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The issue of validity in a descriptive study is difficult to ascertain. Lincoln and Guba (1985) preferably adopted the term “trustworthiness” instead of validity to incorporate credibility, dependability, and confirmability in such research study, bearing in mind that qualitative research

aims for understanding and not generalization (Ruona, 2005). Literature provided in-depth description of Iran – African relations while the interviews contained the descriptions of how Ghanaians are reacting to the subject under study. This makes it easier to understand the rationale behind Iran’s growing status in the country.

The note I took during the interviews enabled me to reproduce with precision the thoughts and opinions of the participants. Where there was the need for further clarification, I talked through with the participants by means of telephone conversations issues that needed clarification. This “further clarification” processes ensured that the participants’ thoughts, opinions, and experiences as they wanted it to be divulged were revealed and typified. The whole process amplified the realization and fulfillment of validity as it identifies participant’s comments thorough context (Seidman, 1998).

The responses were explicit which provided avenues for readers to judge the soundness of the participant’s claims (Ruona, 2005). By quoting and paraphrasing, only the related responses were clustered together and as such it strengthened and made sense the authenticity of all responses of the participants. This indicated credibility in the study. Despite the categorization and the professional disparity of the respondents, there is consistency in the findings. Similar themes evolved regardless of whether the participant worked in institutions with direct or indirect relation with Ghana’s foreign service, foreign policy academic institutions, foreign policy think tanks, interest groups, or the media. This demonstrate that the results are trustworthy and reliable considering the objective, methods, and analysis of the study, and the information gathered (Ruona, 2005). The objective of the whole process was to

Help in illustrating the true state of Iran's status in Ghana. We also made use of official documents of the Ghana Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. Although there were not many records on Iran, we utilized the few available.

For secondary sources, the research drew on a broad range of published literature: primarily scholarly text and journal articles. These sources provided a mix of timely scholarly discourses and more extensive and in-depth analysis that was beneficial from hindsight. I obtained these sources from the libraries of Qatar University, Georgetown University (Qatar campus), the Library of the Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy, University of Ghana, and online sources in *pdf* format. Preference was given to recently published works given the increasing possibilities the authors of the works are more abreast with Iran's behavior in contemporary geo-global politics. Given the descriptive nature of the research questions of this dissertation – that is, its focus on *what* and *how*, these sources are essential and invaluable for creating a complete picture as possible of Iran's growing status in Ghana.

Limitations of Methodology

This dissertation has five main limitations. First, there is the possibility of 'statistical' limitation(s) to the twenty-five sample size interviewees used in the primary data collections. Related to this is the fact, that the interview sampling demonstrates some bias towards former Ghana government officials with current Ghana government officials underrepresented. Second, I did not get the chance to interview Iran's Ambassador, the director of the Iran hospital, and the

President of Islamic University College, Ghana. This made it impossible to obtain some pertinent details that could have broadened the scope of our discourse. Third, as a study that adopted qualitative research method, the researcher holds the main instrument for the interpretation of the data elicited. Thus, value judgement and bias interpretations are plausible problems, consciously or unconsciously. Last, some of the secondary literature I relied on in this study are journal articles. Although journal articles are beneficial for being succinct and straight to the points, pertinent details related to the subject under discussion could be missing. For scholarly books they can quickly become dated or superseded by newer volumes (hence the bias for recent publications as much as possible) when discussing contemporary socio-political events.

Notwithstanding the above limitations, we utilized available data with circumspection which made it possible for the work not to suffer significantly as to negate the objectives that we set out to achieve. For example, data elicited through interviews were interpreted using qualitative descriptive method that helped in minimizing inferences made to remain 'closer' to the original data. Further, limitations on secondary sources of published texts were highly minimized by our careful inferences and deductions. In other words, we did not take any of the secondary sources on their own and each one stood alongside other sources.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this chapter to present a skeletal frame of work on which the research work is developed, beginning from the background study to the

three research questions the dissertation anchors on. A review of relevant works on the broader area which the current study traverses is presented systematically to clarify the relation between the proposed study and the previous ones. Various methods employed in the study have also been explained. The next chapter begins the explanation of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks upon which the study is premised.

CHAPTER 2: IRAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS GHANA, THE CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

Introduction

The terms foreign politics and international politics are consciously used transposable here. International relation or foreign politics constitute the behavior of states towards one another and the way they relate with each other. In a contextual framework, international politics refers to the relations between states actors and non-state actors such as organizations, associations, and individuals. Although essentially denoting political relations, international politics also include economics, military, and cultural relations that affect the interests of state and/or non-state actors in the global system. International politics, therefore, means the totality of all aspects of relations between sovereign states like Iran and Ghana. For foreign policy, it constitutes specific acts of decisions made by official representatives of state or non-state actors serving as broader guidelines of charting a path among various choices in specific situations in the international affairs (Pearson and Rochester, 1984). Holsti (1995) refers to foreign policy “as ideas or actions designed by policy makers to solve a problem or promote some change in policy attitude or actions of another state or states or non-state actors”.¹⁷ The theoretical framework for this dissertation draws on theories emanating from international relations and foreign policy analysis. The realist’s theory and the national attribute theory, which is useful for explaining how states behave in the international system, will best suit this study.

¹⁷. Holsti, 1995. p.80

Realist Theory

The oldest and the most used theory of international relations is Realism. Realism as a theory of international politics traces its traditions to the writings of Thucydides, Hobbes, Machiavelli, and Rousseau. In recent times, the works of Morgenthau, Spykeman and Schuman have all added valuable insights to the realism tradition. Although different strands of realism exist today, their core underpinnings remain essentially the same. For this dissertation, aspect of Hans Morgenthau's and Thomas Hobbes principles of political realism have been used. The aspect of Morgenthau's work that has been used include international politics and concepts of power, national interest, political actions, and moral rationality in foreign policy making. Viotti and Kauppi (1987) note, that realist tradition draws upon Thomas Hobbes's conception on nature and the condition of Man. Human nature is constant and cannot easily be modified. Man is an insatiable creature who satisfies one end only to start anticipating other ends, Man wants not just to satisfy some passions, but to superfluously satisfy whatever end may attain him more and only pleasure without any kind of pain. Meaning, in the state of nature where there is no supreme authority to regulate the selfish interest of Man, Men will be pitted against Men. Thus, in the absence of social control, Hobbes postulates, that

Man is governed by his reasons to the service of his passions. These passions are mainly the desire of gain, safety, and glory. To achieve these passions, Men will relentlessly seek power and more power to secure the power they already wield. Men will therefore live in a perpetual state of war of all against all. When this happens, the life of Man will be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.¹⁸

¹⁸. Quoted in, Stephen, 1961

The behaviors of individuals in the mythical state of nature are extended to the relations among nations in international politics (Viotti and Kauppi, 1987). Interactions among nations are all about trying to gain and maintain advantage over others through the instrument of foreign policy. International politics like all other politics is a struggle for power, whatever the ultimate aims there may be, power is the immediate goal (Morgenthau, 1960). States, therefore, must rely on their power to survive. The quest for power, thus, becomes the mainstay of international politics, as the concept of power is as ancient and ubiquitous as any that social theory can boast of (Dahl, 1957). Viotti and Kauppi (1987) define power as “an attribute of the state that is the sum of its capabilities whether considered alone or relative to other states”.¹⁹ Power is seen as a key attribute of the state that is not defined in isolation but put side by side to that of others. Morgenthau also defines power “as Man’s control over the minds and actions of other Men”.²⁰ According to Dougherty et al. (1990), power has both military and non- military components. Realists in their analysis of power consider not only military capabilities but technology, population, and political leadership. They place issues of military top of their priorities as it is crucial for the survival of the state in a hostile international environment. Economics and other capabilities are relegated to the background. Realists’ mania with military power stems from the experience of its writers who were influenced by the wars they witnessed during their era of writing. The end of Napoleonic years saw the creation of the Vienna Congress and the Concert of Europe.

¹⁹. Viotti and Kauppi, 1987. p.81

²⁰. Morgenthau, 1960. p.11

These institutional frameworks could not stop the First World War. Therefore, in the ashes of the First World War saw the formation of the League of Nations. The League of Nations, like the other idealists' mechanisms failed again to stop the world from sliding into the Second World War (Pease, 2000). During the interwar years the world witnessed how victors of democracies in Germany could not stop the Nazi's from jamming weaker states of Europe. Their extermination of minorities during the holocaust made laughable the ideals of liberalism (Gros, 2006). Although rebuttals of realism have come from post war Europe, France other than rearming after the Second World War, put down its swords and ended the centuries of war between Europe's warring countries in order to kick start the formation of the European Union (EU). Opponents of realism often accuse it of ignoring human agency, and Man's desire to find common grounds regardless of structural limitations (Gros, 2000).

Therefore, realists' fundamental principle of conceiving international politics as essentially conflictual and, therefore, interactions between states is all about advancing their national interest remains relevant. Thus, foreign policymakers formulate and implement policies in terms of national interest which is synonymous with the survival of the state. National interests are cardinal elements, inherent needs, working guidelines, or furthestmost benchmark in line with which state frame their national goals objectives, prescribes its concrete objectives, and formulate its foreign policies, strategies, and diplomatic tactics to preserve and enhance its states and welfare in its relationship with other nations (Plischke, 1988). Political realism's essence is that leaders pursuing policies rely on their national power that is aimed at achieving national interest. Interest, therefore, remains essentially the essence of which power is utilized.

Correspondingly, the content of power and how it is applied is dependent on the prevailing political and social circumstances. For if the unearthing and possession of iron by empires of antiquity confers power on them, it serves the same purpose as the territorial ownership of immense energy reserves in contemporary times. Thus, the shrewdness in Iran's humanitarian activities in Ghana can be understood as responding to the dynamics of the geo-regional West African politics influenced by the global hegemony of the USA and its Middle Eastern allies of Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Realists are also concerned about the role of values and norms in ordering international politics. Although actions of states in international politics have moral and ethical consequences, interest remains the never-ending touchstone by which political action must be judged (Hastedt and Knickreh, 1994). Morgenthau asserts, that the highest moral duty of the state is to do good for its citizens. Thus, whereas an individual can sacrifice him/herself as a moral right, the state has no right to allow morality to come in its way of successful political action. Whereas ethics judge action by its conformity with moral law, political actions are judged by its political consequences. Successful statesmen in modern times couched their foreign policies with national interest as their ultimate standard and, thus, none of the moralists have been able to achieve their foreign policy goals. There can be no compromise in choosing either moral principles or national interest; the statesman must choose one as the ultimate standard in making foreign policy decision. While the realism theory with its national interest's dominance may have strong components for studying international relations and foreign policy, it is flawed for the purpose of studying how Iran is deploying humanitarian soft power in search of status in Ghana.

National Attributes Theory

Foreign policy is designed to cause an alteration or maintain current conditions and practices in international politics. Lippmann (1991) argues that state's commitment to foreign policy must be backed by its capabilities. The capability is made up of both tangible and intangible factors. The tangible factors include geography, population and manpower, natural resources, industrial and agricultural production, military organization and power (Lerche, 1967). The political, economic, social structure, education and technological level, and national moral make up the intangible factors (Ibid.). Sullivan (1976) defines national attributes to include "anything that describes the makeup of a nation differentiating one state from another in terms of political, social, economic or as some might argue psychological characteristics".²¹ Person and Rochester (1984) consider military attributes, economy, demographic features, and governmental attributes as making up important national attributes that contribute to the making and unmaking of foreign policy. Domestic determinants are those attributes, characteristics, conditions, and processes which together with foreign determinants help to shape foreign policy acts (Lentner, 1974). Lentner (1974) distinguishes between three types of domestic determinants of foreign policy. They are i); highly stable determinants made up of geography, size and location, terrain, climate, and resources, and ii); moderately stable determinants composed of political style, leadership, and process and iii); the unstable determinants made of the perceptions, attitudes and accidents that shape foreign policy.

²¹. Sullivan, p.103

Economic capability of the state is also an important national attribute that influences the making of foreign policy. Economic concerns in recent times seem to take precedence over security concerns (Person and Rochester, 1984). States play marginal or active role in world affairs depending on the size of its economy. Wealth is a prerequisite in engaging in certain foreign policy actions as it carries its own problems, prospects, conditions, and attitudes. Wealthy countries usually engage in foreign direct investments, direct aid and/or humanitarian activities which lead to some form of dependency by the receiving country. Wealth is a benchmark for measuring a country's influence and/or status in international politics either as an aid receiving or aid donating country. Wealth indicates the extent of a country's level of independence in the making of foreign policy (Lentner, 1974).

Variations in foreign policy cannot only be traced to economic factors but also the demographic features of the state. Homogeneity of a country's population, size, motivation, and skills are important levers that help shape the foreign policy behavior of a country. A country's assertiveness and ability to influence others is affected by its demographic features (Person and Rochester, 1984). Countries with large geographical areas are well secured as in times of war are difficult to hold and wholly occupy. Climate conditions also affect the kind of developmental activities that can take place in a country. Climate conditions in Russia served as an impediment to other European states during the European Wars. The terrain in Vietnam had an impact on the course of the war with the USA in the early 1970s. Size and geographical location serves as benchmarks in helping countries find their identity. Countries with larger landmass often assume more prominent roles in global affairs (Lentner, 1974).

In fact, landlocked countries usually do not pursue aggressive foreign policies towards neighboring countries that have access to the sea. States that do not have the luxury of natural resources do not make foreign policies that provoke countries that are key to the provision of such resources they lack (Holsti, 1991).

The size of the population, age distribution, geographical distribution of population, integration, skills level, and developmental characteristics impact and shape the way states interact with external environment. The size of the country's population often gives an indication of the number of working force available, the military size and capability. Countries with large productive population serve as useful tools for supporting economically viable exercises. Underdeveloped countries normally pursue policies that are targeted at gaining assistance in the development of their human and natural resources. The strength and weakness of a country's military are determining factors in its foreign policy decision making. States often balance commitment with capability of its military. The military capacity establishes how peaceful, provocative, or aggressive a country's foreign policy will be. The numbers of people in the military, level of training or equipment are not the only factors that determine a country's military prowess. The extent to which foreign support is sought for the military and the level of internal stability are all important in assessing a nation's military capability. Nuclear capabilities are considered great assets to the military considering its destructive nature. However, the extent to which the military capability influences foreign policy behavior has dwindled in recent times. The development of a military capacity is dependent on a nation's economic strength and the willingness of policy makers to utilize economic resources to strengthen the military (Coplin, 1991).

There seems to be a debate about the extent to which foreign policy is influenced by governmental attributes. One side of the argument are of the opinion that national interest is determined by the elites and the domestic politics have little role to play in foreign policy behavior. Others argue that the type of government a country practices affect the kind of foreign policy pursued. Supporters of this school of thought argue that the type of government whether constitutional democracies (presidential and parliamentary systems), autocratic systems (authoritarian and totalitarian), military dictatorship, political party systems, and traditional monarchies (example Saudi Arabia), modern theocracies (example Iran) have an impact on the kind of foreign policy to be sought for.

The applicability of the national attribute theory signifies the behavior of Iran in the Gulf sub- region as a country endowed with tremendous natural resources guaranteeing the country's source of income for its humanitarian works abroad. In particular, the national attributes theory also gives credence to Iran's relatively huge population size that is ready to be conscripted for military services at any time. The quality of its population size also demonstrates Iran's deployment of its citizens to Ghana to man Iranian schools, health centers, and agricultural depots where services are provided to the ordinary Ghanaian populace.

However, while the national attributes theory can help in explaining Iran's ability to establish a 'hard' or 'soft' power for itself, it falls short of showing how it could gain a status in an independent geographical sovereign territory like Ghana. Therefore, to better understand how Iran's humanitarian activities are impacting its growing status in Ghana; this study will draw on the theory of social exchange and, subsequently, the concept of humanitarianism.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is a comprehensive conceptual paradigm that extend across several social scientific disciplines, such as social psychology, management, anthropology, and political sociology. Despite its name, social exchange theory does not anchor on a single framework; rather, it can be, properly comprehended within a group of conceptual models (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). With respect to this, virtually all the social exchange theories share similar features. They regard social life as encompassing concatenation of treat social life as involving a series of continuous processing of transactions between two or more parties (Mitchell, et al, 2012). Objects are exchanged through a trade-off of relevance and objectivity, whereby one party subsequently repays the good deeds of the other party in the transaction (Gouldner, 1960; Gergen, 1969). Social exchange theory suggests that, in reaction to positive initiative of supports, receiving states will tend to payback with something valuable by returning with a more favorable behaviors and/or fewer negative responses. Put differently, responses of the receiving state can be categorized in two main terms: relational responses and behavioral responses (Ibid.). And often, one causes the other. As exchanges occur across a passage of time, they incorporate interchange of both acknowledgement and convincing reliance. The consequence being the outturn that consist of both contractual and relational connection. A central premise of social exchange theory is, “parties enter into and maintain relationships with the expectation that doing so will be rewarding”.²² A final approach reconciles those opposing views by framing charitable acts as characterized by reciprocity.

²². Lambe, 2001.

social act. Reciprocity indicates the dynamic by which the donation of an object necessitates the return or exchange of ‘something’ immediately or later (Simmel, 1950; Martin, 2017). As strongly opine by Mauss (2000), reciprocity happens between groups, and because the donated object is inalienable from the donor, the presentation of a humanitarian act initiates a cycle of giving and receiving. Central to my dissertation of Iran’s search for status in Ghana through humanitarian works is the notion of reciprocity anchors on trust. Reciprocity exists as a basic element of state behavior. Trust extended to a known or an unknown party is based on the expectation of reciprocity (Berg, et al, 1995; Arrow, 1974; Gouldner, 1960). Once trust is gain, status is automatically achieved. Thus, this dissertation supports the view, that despite the consideration of altruistic humanitarianism as a purely philanthropic acts, humanitarianism is a major foreign policy tool, and plays important role in negotiations, and contributes to the establishment of relational governance and trust between states.

Humanitarianism

The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines humanitarianism “as an active belief in the value of human life, whereby humans practice benevolent treatment and provide assistance to other humans, in order to better humanity for moral, altruistic and logical reasons”.²³ The meaning of humanitarianism is, therefore, beset with disagreement among social science scholars, particularly in relation to

who the donor(s) and the recipient(s) are, and the motivations behind the donated object that makes it philanthropic in nature. Some scholars concern themselves with the scale of the donated object, whereby humanitarianism sometimes is [de]limited to assistance that provide a solution to a recognized social problem. Humanitarianism that gets to the root of the problem is opposed to charity, which largely consist of smaller gifts intended only to alleviate symptoms (Ostrower, 1995).

Thus, understanding the socio-politico study of humanitarianism requires attention to its location within the interdisciplinary fields of the social sciences and broader debate over the nature of the humanitarian works in the concerned society. Scholars from different arrays of disciplines such as economics, sociology, psychology, and political science have strived to make sense the bewildering act of humanitarianism, in which [state] actors decide voluntarily to provide tangible, or intangible supports to a recipient without expectation of direct return. Here, scholars offer three competing perspectives: humanitarianism as altruism, self-interest, or reciprocity (Adloff, 2016). These frameworks vary in the extent to which they attribute humanitarianism to individual or state motivations. The first approach frames humanitarianism because of the donor's altruism. Initially proposed by Comte, altruism is defined as [a psychological] behavior "motivated mainly out of a consideration for another's needs rather than one's own".²⁴ A second perspective, draws from the discipline of economics, harmonizes the seemingly contradictory act of humanitarianism with the utility-maximizing version of rational choice theory (Smith, 2010).

²⁴. Piliavin, and Charng. 1990. p.33

individuals embark on charitable activities to others in anticipation of gaining prestige, including the 'honor' of giving or the attainment of some form of status from their peers (Andreoni & Payne, 2013). Similarly, sociologists and political scientists (or better put, political sociologists) rely on humanitarianism to posit that any type of gift results from the donor's anticipation of the reward that follows (Blau, 1964).

Humanitarian works are undoubtedly essential to addressing the socioeconomic challenges of individuals and societies. This could be in the form of financial, material, and logistic supports provided to dealing with real or perceived problems in the short or long-term basis. Typically, short-term aids come in response to humanitarian relief efforts for peoples and societies affected by natural and man-made disasters. The function of humanitarian supports comprises initiatives undertaken to satisfy essential human needs and to ensure the social well-being of the affected people. Social well-being is characterized by access and delivery of basic essential needs and services (e.g., water, food, shelter, sanitation, and health services), and the rehabilitation of a social structure and the general public sphere. Among the people in need of these assistances are the homeless, refugees, victims of disasters, wars, and famines. The primary objective of short-term humanitarian aids is to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity ((Andreoni & Payne, 2013; Blau, 1964).

Many people in the world are living with one socioeconomic problem or the other. Therefore, people across the globe come together in organized groups to help provide for the needy, homeless, hungry, and other people(s) in need of assistance. For example, while some strive to provide support to distressed

children in societies engulfed with draught or famine, others reach out to the poorest region of the world and help the inhabitants in rebuilding, by equipping them with the requisite information and tools to learning how to survive. Other individuals and groups travel to remoteness part of the world as volunteers striving to bring help and aid in the forms of education, health, youth, and community development. Doctors Without Borders, for example strive to bring medical attention, surgical procedures, and vaccinations to children, etc. for countries that have been ravaged by detrimental factors in the environment. These kinds of humanitarian aids that come from either international government, national or international non-government organizations aim to bring short-term relief to victims until the [national] government and other institutions can provide long-term relief. It may, therefore, be distinguished from long-term developmental aid that seeks to address the underlying socioeconomic factors that may have led to underdevelopment of human capacities, societal retrogression and cause a national crisis in a state.

Long-term assistance, aim to [re]construct a country's infrastructure and institutions, is often a key part of bilateral relations. This assistance ensures that the country can develop its human capacity, strengthen its institutions, and ensure the socioeconomic development of the state. Thus, long-term humanitarian aids largely revolve around [re]construction of state infrastructures such as roads, hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers and other social welfare projects, to facilitate the transportation of foods and supplies, accessibility to educational opportunities, health facilities, and ensuring the general development of the economy. Since there is a connection between underdevelopment and propensity to crimes, such long-term humanitarian assistance could

help in preventing or mitigating social vices. For the structural factors contributing to social menace include, but not limited to, extreme poverty, economic stagnation, poor government services, and individual (economic) incentives to committing crime. Such durable humanitarian assistance attempts to reduce inequalities between groups and reduce economic incentives to engaging in social vices by providing support to the underprivileged. Humanitarian support is, therefore, considered “[A] fundamental expression of the universal value of solidarity between people and a moral imperative”.²⁵ The following are the main actors in humanitarian aid and development assistance:

First, International Organizations (IOs) and Regional Organizations (ROs) or Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs). The most important of them all in the provision of humanitarian supports and development assistance is the United Nations and its various agencies which are funded by the member states. In providing the requisite supports to distressed communities, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) of the United Nations coordinate to providing supports in times of global emergencies. The five UN entities that have primary roles in delivering humanitarian aid are the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Refugee Agency, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the World Food Program, and the World Health Organization. Second, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are increasingly playing key roles in the provision of humanitarian aid and development assistance. NGOs seek financial, material, and logistic support from individual philanthropists, corporations, and private and government

²⁵. “The State of Art of Humanitarian Action”, 2014

institutions which they channel to those in need. This could be a locally established NGO or an internationally recognized NGO with a local bureau like the Ahl Bait Foundation of Iran which has a permanent office in many countries including Ghana. Before turning to the next chapter, it is imperative for us to throw some lights on the last concept underpinning this study: status.

Status

Status is a socially defined position in a social system such as mother, father, child, teacher, etc. Sociologists have used the term 'status' to refer to an individual's rank or position in a given society with the roles they are expected to play and the privileges that come with it. They categorized status into two main: ascribed and achieved. Ascribed status, they explain is those that come with birth, or as some of them prefer to call it, natural. Thus, the status of mother, father, and siblings are examples of ascribed status. Achieved status, on the other hand, are those that come with effort, or as some sociologists put it, nurture. Some examples of achieved status are to being a wife, a husband, an employee, as it constitutes a matter of choice. Since the writing of Ralph Linton (1936), status and role have become major concepts in sociology. Linton (1936) refers to 'Status' as a position in a social structure which involves designation of rights and obligations, while he presented 'Role' as the regular and repeated behavioral-orientated expectation of the members of that society. In every human society or organization, therefore, every individual has certain function of activity with which he or she is associated and which comes with some degree of power or prestige. Whereas the function or activity undertaken by the individual is described as 'role', the level of influence or power associated with that role is 'status'.

‘Roles’, are, therefore, related with ‘statuses’ (Linton, 1936). In essence, ‘status’ and ‘role’ are interrelated concepts for the same phenomenon. This is why Linton infer, that “role is the dynamic aspect of status”, or the behavior ascribed to a status (my emphasis). Put succinctly, status and role are two sides of a coin which makes them inseparable. Thus, statuses and roles are defined in the context of social statuses and roles performed by other members of the society. Social psychologists have successfully established, that human by nature deeply care about their status as private individuals and about the status of the social group they identify with (Taifel, 1978; Taifel and Turner, 1979). Human beings want to feel good and proud about themselves and their societies or associations.

Inferring these sociological and social psychological arguments to the realm of global politics, Larson and Shevchenko argue, that governments and people of powerful countries (and emerging powers like Iran – my emphasis) do care about their country’s status among the comity of nations. States aspire to bolster their international standing in order to stretch their power and influence (Renson, 2017). He explained, that “states seek status ...because it is a valuable resource for coordinating expectations of dominance and deference in strategic interactions”¹⁴. Renson (2017) further explains that status cannot be attained automatically from the power base of a country; rather, it is largely dependent on the recognition from other states. In a nutshell, status is a perceptual and social phenomenon; it is manifested through a two-way relation (Renshon, 2017).

Since the concept of status appeared in varied frameworks of academic discourse, a consideration of the concept as a political commodity in foreign policy is the order of both domestic and international politics. In domestic politics, “status is recognition in

26. Renshon, 2017, p.45

a hierarchy that lets those who hold it stake preferential claims on the political resource of the state or the political process itself”.¹⁵ In international politics, states seek preferential access to certain political actions of a foreign country for obvious reasons. Contemporary global politics deeply antagonistic and sharply hostile between state actors, the use of status to obtain special privileges over other state(s) is hardly a novel theme. Such special privilege “gives a group official public status of the highest order, and groups who enjoy it have an advantage in pressing their claims against government over other groups who do not”.¹⁶ States have two main ways to obtaining status within its territory or in an external territory, through hard power or soft power. As such, the decision to militarily intervene in another country is contingent upon rational choice analysis, although prevailing domestic politics also counts. Others are of the view that, the search for ‘status’ is mostly the reason states resort to the use of hard power including military interventions. In all these, honor, and prestige (i.e., status) have influenced states recourse to war than wealth and security (Lebow, 2012). In fact, Lebow (2012) argues that honor and prestige (i.e., status) as motivating factors constitute 62% of all the wars the world has witnessed.

²⁷. Brodie, 1996, p.253

²⁸. Knopff and Morton, 1992. P.19

Deducing from Hobbes' 'Man in the state of nature' Max Weber argues that states strive for superior military power just to attain 'power prestige' (or, *machtprestige*) which he defined as "the glory of power over other communities."²⁸ For Morgenthau, this 'prestige' is "the reputation for power," indicating that states often embark on all-out war just to "impress other nations with the power [its] own nation actually possesses, or with the power it believes, or wants the other nations to believe, it possesses."²⁹ Along these lines, it was clear to international relation and foreign policy experts, that the US invasion of Vietnam in 1971 was to reassert its status in that country and within the Indochinese sub-region. US's embroilment in Vietnam conflict was propelled by many factors, comprising ideology, Cold War strategy inheriting a colonial legacy from the 4th Republic of France, one of its major allies to boot (Gibbons, 2014). The principal objective was to cramp communist aggrandizement in Indochina as they were convinced that will easily lead to communist gaining absolute control in Malaya, Laos, Thailand, and all of what later became Vietnam. For anything other than that "would have resulted in a change in balance of power throughout Asia".³⁰ The recent Saudi-led war in Yemen has spawned claims for hard power forms of status (Darwich, 2018). These hard power forms of status are often quick and may be wide in scope, but they carry serious security backlashes and repercussions. Given that the state under attack will be hard-pressed to protect and defend its territory by any means possible, as the Vietnamese did to the USA in the early 1970s and the Yemini/Houthis are currently doing to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

²⁸. Weber, 1964, p.43

²⁹. Morgenthau, 1948, p.172

³⁰. Gibbon, 2014. p.847

Status in international politics is a socio/politico rank or grade of a country in a specific geographical area. It occurs when “actors willingly and gladly defer to, accept, approve, support, respect, admire and, ultimately, love others without compulsion or coercion”. [State] actor with high status receives benefits, privileges, and rewards from the other actor(s) in the relationship (Theodore, 1981). “Great power status carries with it the expectation that less powers will defer to its wishes on foreign policy, and consequently exploit such privileges to gain material and strategic benefits”.¹⁷ In a similar vein, Murray (2019) notes that high status enables the hegemonic state to attain its targeted interests without the need to resort to the use of force. Status, in essence, can be considered as an influence multiplier (Ibid.)

Economic assistance has become a major tool to establishing status in contemporary foreign policy. This is when countries offer some form(s) of economic supports through their foreign diplomatic missions or their development agencies to a needy country. In fact, potential beneficiaries of the humanitarian projects in the receiving state would often express appreciation and acknowledge how the donor country has brought purpose and relief to them and their society. Again, governments and citizens could be, and often are, influenced by the philanthropy of the donor country. Although the subject of international relation considers humanitarian assistance under the heading of global development agenda, a logical comparison to status creation can help expand the orifice of discourse on the concept. When the subject of humanitarianism is discussed, it is very easy to

¹⁷. Larson, & Shevchenko. 2003, p. 64

associate it with pure liturgical philanthropic activities aim at benefitting just the receiving society.

However, as we have seen under the social exchange theory, humanitarianism consists of mutual benefits, developing the SOCIAL status of the receiving state and establishing the POLITICAL status of the donor country. Therefore, perseverance in the provision of humanitarian assistance is critical for a successive foreign policy. However, because such an activity is not a race, the outcome may take decades to show as the real government approach will require using diplomatic, cultural, and economic measures to achieving the desired end. Reciprocal respect and cultural consciousness present the most important fundamentals and potential bet for achieving the stated objectives. “Developing mutual respect, rapport, and cultural awareness among multinational partners takes time, patience, and the concerted efforts of leaders at all levels of command”.³² The relationships developed by the senior political personnel of the host nation, the personnel of the media fraternity, leaders of civil society organizations, and personnel of special interest groups will ultimately determine the success or failure of the relationship. These relationships are not temporary in nature and would be relied upon most of the time to [re]solving present and future obstacles that transcends humanitarian assistance. The Islamic Republic of Iran is famous for using proxy militant groups to projecting foreign policy and achieving its national interests. The proxy militancy role is not new for the theocratic State, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen are a prime example of Iran’ use of proxy militancy (‘hard’ power) to flexing its muzzles and asserting its status.

³². Bouie, 2012, p.5

However, as the country and its political leadership confront the current challenges of economic and diplomatic sanctions in an interconnected world that has no digital borders, especially the durable relation West African countries have with their [western] colonial masters, the use of militancy lacks the required flexibility and leverage needed to establish the anticipated status the Islamic Republic seeks in the sub-region. Thus, the strategic humanitarian works the country is undertaking in the sub-region is a historic example of how Iran is using ‘soft power’ operations to corroborate a largely ‘hard power’ campaign in its immediate Middle East region. Such strategic humanitarian activities allow Iran to employ material and human resources available to it in supporting the larger Ghanaian society capitalizing on the myriad of socioeconomic problems facing the West African country.

In the context of this research work, the focus is on how Iran has used humanitarian assistance to project its status in Ghana through soft power actions connected to development objectives supporting the vision of the West African country. “Where is our closest development Gulf partner?” is often the first question mooted by traditional Ghanaian Muslim leaders, Muslim political actors, and Muslim social pundits during times of need. This question is important because it speaks to the point that Ghanaians identify Iran’s generosity as a symbol of soft power projection. As the topic moves from generosity to diplomacy, the efficacious return of humanitarian assistance as it relates to the other elements of national power is considered.

Humanitarian Assistance is a soft power tool that is available to states and can potentially extend their operational reach to the contemplated outcomes of status effects. Thus, the use of

humanitarianism is radically profound and more than just a soft power tool. Humanitarian works will continue to be political in nature and may require more engagement by national government in an interventionist role but will lend themselves to Iran's supporting Ghana in a soft power role. As a vital element of foreign policy, Iran continues to employ its national attributes to project soft power in shaping the Ghanaian society's support for its values and interests. Such strategic humanitarian assistance, as an intentional pre-meditated operation, accords Iran the ability to gain status in Ghana through soft power. Consequently, Iran's strategic humanitarian projects and social interventions boost its image and acceptability rate in Ghana.

Conclusion

It has been established, that humanitarian works are an integral parts of soft power tool in contemporary international politics. Under the rubrics of 'hard power' which Iran often adopt, the realists' theory becomes the necessary discourse in explaining that tangent. The realists' theory holds that the hostile international setting suggest only military power guarantees the continuous existence and survival of a state. Although various explanations of the theory have been offered, Hobbes' narrative of human nature and its comparison to states' behavior and Morgenthau's national interest discourse formed the bane of our theoretical discussion. The national attributes theory expatiates on the nature and nurture of a state and how those traits assist in its foreign policy decision making. Compared with the realists' theory, national attributes theory not only extends the research scope from the possible use of 'hard power' by states to the adoption of 'soft

power', but also demonstrate the inner link between a country's humanitarian activities and the projection of its own human resource (citizens) on the grounds, which is an aspect of attraction to the recipient states.

However, as both theories fell short of proper discourse on Iran's search for status in Ghana using (humanitarian) soft power, the dissertation resorted to discourses on the theory of social exchange and the concept of humanitarianism. These conceptual and theoretical frameworks are better placed to help us understand why the Islamic Republic of Iran engages in strategic humanitarian projects in Ghana and the possible reciprocated benefits it stands to gain.

CHAPTER 3: PLAYING THE MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS IN GHANA

Introduction

Among the issues that have profoundly shaped the Middle East in modern times, arguably, none will prove as important as Iran – Saudi relations on one hand and Iran - Israel relations on the other. However, no other issue seems to attract as much attention as the United States (U.S.) factor in the conflict. The Iranian revolution of 1979 marked a defining moment in its relations with the U.S. and its Middle Eastern allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel. Muzzle flexing and exhibition of bravados have characterized the already hard feelings (or most probable, cautious peace) that exist between them. The thirst for political dominance in the Middle Eastern region influences the overlapping relation between them. The question of alliance has long been associated with domination and political expansionism leaving the lingering question of whether there could be a normal relation between Iran and the U.S. on one hand, and Iran and Saudi Arabia and Israel on the other. To understand the relations that exist between Iran and Saudi Arabia/Israel is to understand the concomitant U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East. Ignoring this reality in our discourse would be a mistake causing [a]symmetric understanding of politics and conflict in the region. Thus, for a well-grounded discussion on contemporary Iran – Saudi/Israeli relation, there is the absolute need for an equal measure of understanding the role the U.S. has played in the region since it took over from Britain in the early 1970s. Strong arguments are often made to explain the checkered nature of the U. S's role since then. A study of the conflictual relations between the three regional powers in contemporary times should, therefore, proceed from a clear understanding of

how the U.S. has contributed to shaping their tensed relations. This chapter aims at discussing the nature of the conflict that exist between Iran and Saudi Arabia/Israel; the U. S's role in sustaining the conflict; and how this Middle Eastern conflict is morphing in Ghana.

Iran – Saudi Arabia Relation

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the powerful countries in the Middle East. The combination of its population, strategic geographical location and enormous natural resources makes it the most powerful in the Gulf Sub-Region. Iran is bordered by the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf in the south, where its seacoast runs for 2,043 kilometers. It is on the edge of these waters that Iran is connected to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman (Downs, 2012). This geographical proximity creates friction between Iran and its conservative Gulf Arab States which feel insecure from its perceived interferences. Controversies surrounding Iranian desire to exert its political cloud over its Gulf Arab neighbors began many decades ago. The controversies range from its claim over most land and island that form part of the territorial boundaries of the tiny Gulf Arab Emirates especially Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

Bahrain is a great example of this phenomenon, both in terms of religious ideology and power politics. In fact, as far back as 1928, “many travelers from Muscat, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Dubai arrived at Iranian ports only to have their identity documents torn up or confiscated and to receive new Iranian

Bahrain is a great example of this phenomenon, both in terms of religious ideology and power politics. In fact, as far back as 1928, “many travelers from Muscat, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Dubai arrived at Iranian ports only to have their identity documents torn up or confiscated and to receive new Iranian documents from the officials”.³⁴ Much of the rancor and animosity is, however, with Saudi Arabia which considers itself [the de factor] leader of the Gulf Cooperation Council States. So, “when it comes to the Persian Gulf power structure, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been in a virtual Cold War, with each taking steps to bolster its influence in neighboring states while simultaneously chipping away at the other’s perceived power”.³⁵ This insecurity explains the consistence promotion of politically destabilized activities in the neighboring small states seeking to exert their influence (Downs, 2012). This competing need for safety, security, and glory between the two riparian powers explains their incessant animosity. Thus, despite the familiarity and fraternal feelings that tends to draw Iranians and Saudis together, there has often been some latent rivalry occasionally creating clumsy situations between the two littoral powers. It would probably be pertinent to recognize the warm and friendly relations that existed between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the early 1950s, almost two decades before British ‘withdrawal’ from the region. Nevertheless, the relations strained partly because of America’s hegemonic foreign policy in the region. The current relations that could best be described as mutually antagonistic, hostile, and mundane degenerated into the level of name-calling after the success of the Islamic revolution of 1979. Since then, Iran and its relations with Saudi Arabia has been marked with recrimination, antagonism, resentment, and suspicions.

³³. For details discussion on this, see Alvandi. 2012. Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah:

³⁴. Mueller, 2015. p. 583.

³⁵. Downs, 2012. p.211

This sour relation between the two littoral powers does not give any glimmer of hope to the other smaller conservative Gulf Arab States.

Expectedly, the political cleavages between the two worsened after the success of the 1979 Islamic revolution. As the credo of the Iranian foreign policy at the time was to export the successive Islamic revolution to the immediate region in the short term and the world at large in the long term (Khomeini, 1979). Khomeini explained that the Islamic revolution is not an exclusive property of Iran, for just as the Islamic faith is meant to save humankind, so is the Iranian Islamic revolution (Khomeini, 1979). The leader of the Islamic Republic, in the Iranians' estimation, has the responsibility to leading and guiding the world towards prosperity, justice, and safeguarding the security and independence of humankind. For the new administration of the Islamic Republic, therefore, "export of the Revolution" was more important than political stability and economic development".³⁶ In fact, since the early 80s Iranian pilgrims have been disobeying rules set out by Saudi authorities during hajj. Consequently, Iranian pilgrims clashed with Saudi religious police from the early to the late 1980s, forcing the Al-Saud rulers to accuse Iran of trying to annex the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and pronounce their supreme ruler the [de factor] leader of the Muslim World. (Ekhtiyari Amiri et al. 2011). Despite putting a ban on all forms of political activism and pronouncements, Iranian pilgrims continued to chant politically oriented slogans such as 'death to Israel', 'American Islam' and 'death to America', to signify the political merry-making between the USA and the Al-Saud rulers (Eva Rakel, 2007).

³⁶. Ibid.

The clashes during hajj cum the coup attempt in Bahrain in 1981 by the Iran-sponsored Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) made virtually all the conservative Gulf rulers to perceive Iran as the greatest threat to their survival than Saddam Hussein (Chubin, 1992). The Saudi leadership which has always characterized Iran's revolutionary guards as 'terrorists of the Gulf' interpreted the attempted coup as a further justification for its supports for Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi armed forces (Ekhtiari, 2011). The *Sunni*-oriented tiny emirates governments who felt threatened by the Iranian political system responded to the Saudi call.

The skirmishes and confrontations reinforce the patent ideological tensions in the relations between the two littoral powers in the gulf sub-region. The nature of the conflict between the two is tantamount to a situation where one identifiable of people are continuously and consciously involved in patent hate towards another group of people because those group (of people) are also striving to achieve what seems to be conflicting goals (Dougherty, and Pfatzgraff, 1971). On his part, Laue (1992) considers this kind of protracted conflict as a natural competition between two or more parties struggling to exert their power, prestige, and status. Laue goes further to say, that group of hostile factions engage in protracted conflict are always convinced of their incompatible goals, and thus, aim at outflanking and weakening the opponent (Ibid.). Clearly, both Iran and Saudi Arabia aim at frustrating, derailing, damaging, and defeating the other to realize their national interest. Their parochial national interests played out loudly when the Arab spring waged through the Middle East in 2011, as the two regional powers were constantly and

consistently on opposing side. Saudi Arabia suppressed it in Bahrain, morally, financially, and militarily, accommodate it in Yemen, and backed it in Syria, a development that presented Saudi's unethical leadership in the region (Fürtig, 2013). On the other hand, Iran strenuously tried to downplay the Shiite dimension of the revolution and levelled series of accusing figures at the Saudi leadership for its continuous opposition to the highly perceptible call for change in the Arabian Peninsula in a bid to protecting its kingship rule and the interest of its western allies (Hanau-Santini, 2011).

Iran – Israel Relation

The last four decades have been particularly disturbing, as well as challenging, from the perspective of both the Middle Eastern region and the world at large. Analyst of Iran – Israeli conflict are divided on their root causes are essentially ideological, others refer to ethnic superiority. The absence of unanimity only underscores the complexity of the conflict as the differences of resolving them. However, there is a broad consensus among scholars that, in many ways, the protracted Iran – Israeli conflict hinges on a 'duo – factor authentication'. The fullest case of thirst for regional dominance by the two states has received its fair share of attention. The argument is that Iran - Israeli tension has to do with regional power struggle and not a cascading effect of a racial or ideological supremacy (Parsi, 2007). Although Iran did not explicitly oppose the existence of Israel when it was created in 1947, it did not openly threaten its existence until the Oslo accord was signed in 1993. Parsi (2007) debunks the prevailing notion of characterizing Iran - Israeli

tension as ideological, arguing that many Middle Eastern analysts have [un]consciously not taken notice of the vital shared interest between the two non-Arab powerhouses in the Middle Eastern region and the need to characterize their structurally tactical conflict as an ideological rivalry (Parsi, 2007). It is, therefore, imperative to underscore the fact that the hostility between Iran and Israel has always been there but have been suppressed for the parochial [security] interest of the two states (Parsi, 2007). Both countries viewed the majority neighboring Arab countries as a threat that can only be thwarted by avoiding confrontation between [the two of] them (Ibid.).

Other argument anchors on racial and ideological supremacy as the primary cause of Iran - Israeli conflictual relation (Haas, 2012). The year 1947 symbolizes a torrent political development in the Middle East and set the tone for the nature of relationships that will exist between Israel and the Arab countries on one hand, and Israel and Iran on the other. Since the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine between Arabs and Jews in 1947, starting with Britain's support for the Zionist movement, the development "opened the floodgates on both a dream and a nightmare".³⁷ As the home to the *al-Aqsa* Mosque,³⁸ and the ascension place of the Prophet Muhammad to the heavens, Palestine remains the second sacred land to global Muslims. The desire to guarantee its existence in the hostile *Arab/Islamic* environment goads the expansionism tactics Israel has pursued since its gallant victory over Arabs in the 1967 war.

³⁷. Downing, 1978. p.19.

³⁸. In the first years of Islam, Muslims were facing the direction of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine when observing their prayers. This continued until they were later ordered by God to face the Ka'ba in Mecca. See Qur'an 1:114

Israel and Egypt,³⁹ Iran saw itself as the viable alternative to containing the growing military strength of the new [Israeli] state, and to support in protecting and defending the rights of Palestinians (Dowing, 1978). Speaking at the epic of the Islamic revolution in 1979, Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini accused Israel and its Western allies of threatening the Islamic culture of Palestine. The rise to power of Khomeini with the success of the Islamic revolution in 1979 broke the cautious peace between the two states. War drums were daily beaten, and both sides accused each other of treason and espionage. Whereas the foreign policy of the Islamic republic is largely driven by ‘*Islamipublic*’ mindset, Israel holds an unflinching resolve to asserting its *Jewish* identity. The stalemate got to its peak when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad assume the mantle of leadership in Iran in 2005. Giving his speech during an extra-ordinary meeting with leaders of Muslim majority countries, Ahmadinejad called for the destruction of the Zionist State that has been planted amongst Muslims (Young, 2006). He explains, that Iran seeks durable peace and stability in the region, but this is only achievable if Israel halt all its blatant abuse of Palestinians and an internationally recognizes Palestinian state with the whole of Jerusalem as its administrative capital.⁴⁰

Ahmadinejad strongly echoed Iran's long-standing policy of refusing to recognize Israel as a state with global legitimacy and entreated the Jewish people who migrated to Israel to return to their

³⁹. For an in-depth understanding of the concept of ‘normalization’ in Egypt – Israel relation, see Marie-Christine Aulas. 1983. *The Normalization of Egyptian-Israeli Relations*.

⁴⁰. “President Ahmadinejad Interview: 60 Minutes”. 8 August 2006.

⁴¹. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: *The Countdown for the Decline of America’s Demonic Power Has Begun*.

"fatherlands" (Glenn, 2011). He opined at the United Nations summit on global food security in 2008 that, "... European peoples have suffered the greatest damage from Zionists and today the costs of this false regime, be they political or economic costs, are on Europe's shoulders".⁴² Clearly, the politics of ideological interest and racial dominance has been a thorny issue at the center stage of Iranian – Israeli conflicts. This is what Stedman (1991) means when he states, that the moment conflict assumes violence level; parties to the conflict come to see each other as a threat and refuse to accept any settlement that does not eliminate the opponent. And where all available peaceful channels of resolving conflict become unproductive and factions involved begin to resort to unconventional means, such a conflict becomes protractedly chronic (Ibid.).

The USA Factor in the Iran – Saudi Arabia/Israel Conflictual Relation

As a superpower with vast interest in the Middle Eastern region, the U.S. continues to capitalize on the existing tensed relations between the trio regional rivals to its national and strategic interests. The U. S's interest particularly in the Persian Gulf is uncompromising and it has been exerting its global influence in the sub-region since the British 'pulled out' in 1971. The energy-guzzling USA has been at the forefront among other global powers who have readied to prey on the region's rich energy resources. The insatiable demands for energy by the U.S. suggest its unique interest in the region. The situation can be examined within the frameworks predicated on the theory of human needs. Human needs are a source of explanation of human behavior and social interaction.

⁴². Stewart, Phil (3 June 2008). Ahmadinejad Calls Israel "false regime" of Zionists.

Burton (1989) views human needs as essential needs, the satisfaction of which is required in order to guarantee a 'normal' (non-deviant) individual behavior. He adds that the concept of basic needs offers possible method of grounding the field of conflict analysis. Burton further postulates that in addition to the obvious natural needs of food and shelter, there are certain primary needs of the human species that include recognition, security, identity, and autonomy, all of which relate to growth and development (Burton, 1989). In his view, such developmental needs must be created if societies are to remain materially devoid of violence. The reason being that while individuals respond to opportunities for the growth and development of their lives, they ferociously refuse to accept the lack of existential needs such as security and dignity. The context of these kinds of human needs pave way for grounding the field of conflict analysis (Ibid.).

The need to satisfy individual needs are extended to the relations among nations in international politics (Viotti and Kauppi, 1987). As opined by Morgenthau, "the highest moral duty of the state is to do good by providing for the needs of its citizens".⁴³ However, whereas an individual can sacrifice him/herself not to engage in certain immorality in a bid to obtaining his/her needs, a state has no right to allow morality to come in its way of successful political action. Whereas ethics judge action by its conformity with moral law, political actions are judged by its political consequences. Successful statesmen couched their national policies with its interest as their ultimate standard and thus none of the moralists have been able to achieve their stated goals. There can be no compromise in choosing either moral principles or national interest; the statesman must choose one as the ultimate standard in making foreign policy decision. States, therefore, act

rationality in the pursuance of their interests and do not allow issues of morality to impede them in achieving them.

In his analysis of the resurgence of the interest of the American administration in the Middle East energy resources, Volman (2003) points out that the Bush administration earmarked the Persian Gulf oil as a 'strategic national interest', and a resource the U.S. might choose to use military force to control. According to him, "this attention to Gulf oil is a direct consequence of the Bush administration's new strategy to ensure U.S. national energy security".⁴⁴ According to Volman (2003), the administration's new strategy hinges on the conclusions of the May 2001 report of the

U.S. President's National Energy Policy Development Group, chaired by Vice President Richard Cheney and known as the Cheney Report (Volman, 2003). According to the report, the only way to satisfying the growing demand of American domestic and manufacturing consumption for energy and maintain American prosperity is to ensure that the U.S. has reliable and unhindered access to oil and gas (Volman, 2003). Without abundant oil and gas, President Bush warned, America will face serious threat to its economic well-being and by extension its national security (Volman, 2003).

In Volman's (2003) opinion, while most public attention has been concentrated on the involvement of new strategies in expanding and drilling within the USA, the Cheney Report itself makes clear that most of the additional oil that the U.S. wants will have to come from abroad (Volman, 2003). The American administration, Volman (2003) affirms, has clearly characterized this dependence on imported oil as a threat to national security, especially in regions dominated by powers hostile to the U.S. and its vital interests. The quest for energy security,

therefore, informs U. S's determination to maintain its influence in the Persian Gulf, and the Middle East in general. Although the shale revolution has since made the U.S. self-sufficient in oil production, the Americans continue to exert efforts in controlling the Gulf energy reserve to ensure reliable supply to its global allies, so they do not turn towards Russia and its Middle Eastern allies for supply.

Aside from its thirst for energy that is a matter of national security, the desire to keep projecting its hegemony in the Middle East punctuates the U.S. policies in the Persian Gulf. The concept of power is as ancient and ubiquitous as any that social theorists can boast of (Dahl, 1957). The international system that has states as its principal actors is anarchic, so there is the need for one supreme authority to deter prospective aggressors and ensure global stability. As the sole superpower, the U.S. considers this as its moral responsibility. The U. S's policy of containment since World War Two "...had often been based on a willingness to intervene directly in the governance of other countries and to site large bases abroad, sometimes even offering an ally a nuclear umbrella".⁴⁵ The objectives of these interventions differ, "some aiming to block enemies such as the Soviet Union while others aimed at securing resources."⁴⁶

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In the most recent years, Iran – U.S. relation has zigzagged from 'cautious peace' to near 'military collision'. The Obama administration championed cautious diplomacy with the Islamic Republic to the extent of signing the 'Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)⁴⁸ together with other western powers (Baabood, 2015). The Trump administration, however, pulled the U.S. out from the nuclear deal, stepped up pressure on Iran with sanctions and military threats. Trump egged on his pressure with a coterie of foreign spies leading to the assassina

⁴⁵. Cole, 2018. The Cost of Trumpism in U.S. Policy Towards the Middle East.

⁴⁶. Lin, 2016. p.4

⁴⁷. Rakel, 2007. p.2007. p.174

the extent of signing the ‘Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)⁴⁸ together with other western powers (Baabood, 2015). The Trump administration, however, pulled the U.S. out from the nuclear deal, stepped up pressure on Iran with sanctions and military threats. Trump egged on his pressure with a coterie of foreign spies leading to the assassination of Iran’s most powerful military commander, General Qasem Soleimani through a U.S. air strike in Iraq (Reuters, 2019.). In the same vein, Iran has pointed at the signature hand of Israeli MOSSAD as behind the killing of Iran’s top nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh on his home soil (Al Jazeera, 2019). It is in this context of protracted conflict and tensed relations between Iran and USA on one hand, and Iran and US allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel on the other, and the determination to get the Islamic Republic globally isolated, with its international outlook murky, that we need to locate the growing status of Iran in Ghana. The relationship stands in contradiction to what the U.S. and its Middle Eastern allies want it to be. But how is the conflict between the rival trio morphing in Ghana? The second section of this chapter deals with this germane question.

Iran – West Africa Relation

Because Ghana falls within the West African sub-region,⁴⁹ an overview of trends in the development of Iran – West Africa relations is crucial for grounding the subject of this chapter. Iran – West Africa relations has witnessed three major transitions. The first period was between the 1941 to the initial years of the 1960. Prior to the Bandung Conference which served very useful purpose in the assembling of countries of the Global South, certain events had served as catalysts in pushing the idea of South – South Cooperation between Iran and the West African

sub-region. Before the conference was held all West African countries were still under colonial rule and struggling for independence.⁵⁰ Overcoming the colonial challenges sent most West African countries into the arms of Iran. Thus, the relations, among other things, were borne out of Iran's desire to assist West African countries in their fight for independence. The target then was on Muslim majority West African countries of Mali, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, and Nigeria. Iran's booming oil industry yielding superfluous income suggested the capability of the country to offer the required support. Threading on this tangent, Iran provided a platform on which West African countries could comfortably rely. The struggle against colonization in West Africa from the 1950s impacted Iran – West Africa relations. Further, relations between Iran and West African countries accentuated during the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. As the Cold War furiously surge in the 1970s, Shah Pahlavi leans towards the West with the hope of stemming the tide of communism in the Persian Gulf. Making superfluous profit from the first oil shock, Shah Pahlavi used the oil dollar to expand Iran's relation with West African countries ostensible to get the countries therein to lean towards the west (Chimarizeni, 2017).

The second stage ranged from the early stages of 1980 to 1990. The ousting of Shah Pahlavi from power in 1979 and events unfolding during and immediately after the Islamic revolution further heightens Iran's desire to entrench its relations with West African countries. The second stage ranged from the early stages of 1980 to 1990.

⁴⁸. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is an agreement reached upon in Vienna on the 14th of July 2015 between Iran and the five members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.

⁴⁹. West African countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Togo.

conference was held all West African countries were still under colonial rule and struggling for independence.⁵⁰ Overcoming the colonial challenges sent most West African countries into the arms of Iran. Thus, the relations, among other things, were borne out of Iran's desire to assist West African countries in their fight for independence. The target then was on Muslim majority West African countries of Mali, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, and Nigeria. Iran's booming oil industry yielding superfluous income suggested the capability of the country to offer the required support. Threading on this tangent, Iran provided a platform on which West African countries could comfortably rely. The struggle against colonization in West Africa from the 1950s impacted Iran – West Africa relations. Further, relations between Iran and West African countries accentuated during the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. As the Cold War furiously surge in the 1970s, Shah Pahlavi leans towards the West with the hope of stemming the tide of communism in the Persian Gulf. Making superfluous profit from the first oil shock, Shah Pahlavi used the oil dollar to expand Iran's relation with West African countries ostensible to get the countries therein to lean towards the west (Chimarizeni, 2017).

The second stage ranged from the early stages of 1980 to 1990. The ousting of Shah Pahlavi from power in 1979 and events unfolding during and immediately after the Islamic revolution further heightens Iran's desire to entrench its relations with West African countries. The establishment of the Islamic Republic brought about a new regime which sought to export the Islamic revolution, marking the beginning of an expansionist policy combining Shiite ideology and anti-imperialism. The change in leadership meant an end to the liberalized era as Khomeini did not subscribe to the continual 'western-styled' foreign policy Shah

was pursuing with West Africa. Khomeini adopted a modernized theocratic approach that needed projects that are more humanitarian. Therefore, Iran's presence on the African Continent since 1980 has been driven by anti-Westernism/Americanism and efforts to spread Shiite ideology. Accordingly, the Islamic Republic joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and billed itself as a defender of oppressed countries contending with Western – especially US – domination. Foreign policy under Khomeini was more focused on economic pragmatism with a non-conflictual approach towards 'humanitarian diplomacy' directed by propaganda and ideological undertones. Iran – West Africa relations under Khomeini was substantive, as the latter was considered materially important to Tehran's search for status outside the Middle East.

Khomeini toured as many as eleven West African countries in a series of diplomatic missions promoting Iran's model for cooperation. He came out with a set of four principles that underpinned Iran's cooperation with West Africa. The four principles of equality and mutual benefit, emphasis on practical results, economic diversification and economic development clearly demonstrated.

Iran moved away from the very expensive programs of creating and/or supporting proxy militant allies that had hitherto been seen as key in Iran's ideological battle against the U.S. and its Middle Eastern allies. The West African sub-region was already battling with colonial legacy and did not want to be overwhelmed with the ashes of proxy militant groups. Thus, in the early foreign policy statement of Khomeini, there was the expressed intent of aiding, if only by uplifting the dignity of suppressed people everywhere (Khomeini).

⁵⁰. Ghana was the first West African country to gain independence, and this was on March 6, 1957.

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imperialism and the liberation of the continent.

Since 1979, successive Iran's governments have their foreign policy towards West Africa anchored on the core principles of foreign policy initiated by Khomeini. Except that, the implementation of these policies have differed as "a leader's vision, personal aspirations, temperament, prejudices,

force of personality, ideological persuasion, moral orientation, and perception of world issues tend to have a strong bearing on the manner in which these principles are put into action".⁵¹ These priorities of Iran in the early years of the revolution meant West Africa was core to Iran's interest since the sub-region needed 'free lunch' for growth. Support from Iran was now serving as a stimulus to humanitarian works. In 1986, while the Iran – Iraq War fiercely wages on, the then president of the Islamic Republic, Ali Khamenei, embarked on official working visit to Africa where he held talks with different African leaders on oil supplies, cooperation in the industrial sector, and Iran's support of the continent's agricultural sector. The state visit was undertaken with the objective of enhancing Tehran's relations with countries of the continent and shore up support against Saddam Hussein. on official working visit to Africa where he held talks with different African leaders on oil supplies, cooperation in the industrial sector, and Iran's support of the continent's agricultural sector. The state visit was undertaken with the objective of enhancing Tehran's relations with countries of the continent and shore up support against Saddam Hussein.

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⁵¹. Breuning, 2007. p. 79.

In a November 2009 UN vote on the human rights situation of Iran, almost all West African countries maintained their previous positions (which were primarily in support of Iran). Beyond the UN, Tehran has built an alliance with almost all the West African countries and encouraged and exploited an anti-Israel trend in the Muslim majority West African nations of the sub-region.⁵² Despite pursuing a foreign policy that followed the basic principles of the foundation laid by Khomeini which is confrontation and establishment and funding of militant proxies within and outside the Middle East, Ahmadinejad aim of visiting eight West African countries including Ghana from December 18 to 30, 2008 was “to enhance the mutual understanding between Iran and West African countries, strengthen traditional friendship between Iranians and the West African people”.⁵³ President Ahmadinejad mentioned two areas of focus on which Iran’s foreign policy towards the sub-region will be built: cultural and humanitarian diplomacy.

Iran Foreign Policy Towards Ghana

Iran and Ghana began some level of relation in 1961 through the formation of the Non–Aligned Movement (NAM),⁵⁴ as leaders of both countries were founding members of the movement. The movement was instrumental in projecting and championing commerce, investment, and exchange

⁵². The Muslim majority West African countries are Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, and Gambia.

⁵³. Ahmadinejad, 2013.

⁵⁴. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a forum of 120 developing independent countries that do not align with or work against any of the major power. Members of NAM represent close to two-thirds of the United Nations' member countries and represent 55% of the world population.

of technological know-how among countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean region, and Latin America (Zaccara, 2018; Acharya 2016). The relation was given a major boost when formal diplomatic relations and bilateral resident embassies were established in each other's capitals in 1982. Iran followed up with the establishment of the Iranian cultural consulate in 1986 with the objective of facilitating understanding of the Iranian culture and civilization in Ghana. This was followed by the establishment of the Agriculture and Rural Development center in 1989 with the objective of supporting Ghanaian farmers in rural areas. Iran hospitals were also established to provide accessible and affordable health services to the general Ghanaian public. The Iranian embassy, the Cultural Consulate, the Agriculture and Rural Development Center, and the Iranian Medical Mission are the four institutions operating within the Ghanaian social and political landscape.

Ghana's vulnerability and economic deterioration may have caught the attention of Iranian government to intervene. The economic quagmire and the prospective security ramifications situation prompted Ghana to open its doors for Iran's perceptive humanitarian interventions. The situation prompted Iran to turn to a classical humanitarian foreign policy to help better the growth and development of the country. In 1986, the Iranian cultural attaché inaugurated the *Ahl al-Bayt* Foundation in the capital, Accra, to render support for the expected humanitarian interventions. Humanitarian projects became an integral aspect of the foreign policy decision making during the successive governments of the Islamic Republic. Iran's priority to resuscitate Ghanaian rural folks and poor Muslim communities made it resist every provocation and open confrontation with Saudi Arabia and Israel in the country.

Thus, social development and human resource empowerment remained pillars to Iran's foreign policy in Ghana. Having successfully established such a durable diplomatic relation, Iran's foreign policy towards Ghana is largely focused on four main areas:

1. Establishing and maintaining durable relations with politically independent groups made up of Muslim and non-Muslim organizations.
2. Outflanking Saudi Arabia and its *Sunni* allies.
3. Cautiously projecting and promoting *Shi'ism* across the country.
4. Cementing the sphere of influence through its South – South Cooperation development agenda.

Saudi Arabia Foreign Policy Towards Ghana

An estimated 19% of the 30.8 million Ghanaians is Muslims,⁵⁶ and 90% of this is *Sunni* Muslims (Dumbe, 2018; Samwini, 2003). For centuries and under the banner of *Hajj* and *Umrah*,⁵⁷ Ghanaian Muslims have trooped to Saudi Arabia to perform the annual religious festivities which paved way for Saudi leaders to meet and interact with Ghanaian religious and political leaders. The Islamic University of Medina and other religious-oriented universities in the Gulf kingdom remain key vectors of Saudi's influence in Ghana. Since the 1950s, hundreds of Ghanaian youths are awarded generous scholarships annually for further studies in the Arabic/Islamic sciences in the

⁵⁵. In-depth discussion on Ghanaian Muslim communities is made in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

⁵⁶. Statistical Service of Ghana, "Population and Housing Census", 31 August 2020

⁵⁷. *Hajj* is a mandatory pilgrimage undertaken by capable Muslims to Saudi Arabia at least once in their lifetimes.

Umrah, on the other hand, is a voluntary pilgrimage undertaken by Muslims to Mecca according to specific dates of the Islamic lunar calendar.

Gulf Kingdom. The awardees upon return to homeland Ghana staunchly practice and promote the Salafi/Wahhabi form of Islam. Saudi Arabia's use of Salafi/Wahhabi sectarian brand of Islam as a foreign policy tool towards Ghana began with the establishment of its embassy in Accra in 1961 (Dumbe, 2018). The kingdom has succeeded, largely, in establishing networks of religious alliances in West Africa (Sounaye, 20). The networks that make up of influential Wahhabi scholars trained in the kingdom and different layers of religious organizations in the sub-region are the main vectors for Saudi foreign policy in Ghana. Although the religious desk at the Saudi Embassy in Ghana carries out funding for these individuals and organizations, details are sketchy, as data remain undisclosed. Nonetheless,

It is difficult to de-link the Saudi Government's diplomatic motive with Ghana vis-a-vis its religious agenda. While engaging with the Ghanaian Government on bilateral issues it further pursues its religious agenda in the Muslim communities through the Islamic Desk. This Desk is a sub-office within the Saudi Embassy in Ghana, which liaises with the state-affiliated religious centers in the Saudi Kingdom, such as the Muslim World League (MWL), the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) and the Fatwa Centre of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowment. It further coordinates the activities of Saudi NGOs with the Ghanaian Muslims. Thus, the Saudi religious agenda constitutes an integral part of its diplomatic relations with Ghana. To ensure and maintain its growing political influence, Saudi Arabia has taken strategic steps to making itself a prime actor in the west African sub-region. Its enormous charity projects and employment opportunities for mainly unskilled labors are some of the strategies the Gulf Kingdom has adopted in asserting its influence in West Africa. The Saudi Ministry of Endowment and Islamic affairs together with multiple privately run charity foundations in the kingdom sponsor various religious oriented projects in Ghana.¹⁸

¹⁸. Dumbe, 2018. Pp.77

On the whole, Saudi Arabian foreign policy towards Ghana is highly motivated by the need to

1. get Iran 'out'
2. get *Shi'ism* 'out'
3. get all Iranian-backed groups 'out'.

It is imperative to mention that some of the underpinning determinants of Saudi foreign policy towards Ghana were ripe long before hand. The Egyptian revolution of 1952 triggered President Nasser's policy of *Azharization* of West Africa. Nasser's campaign for African emancipation and support for most colonized West African countries unearth Egypt's African face in the region and the success of the *Azharization* policy. Within these same periods, Nasser promoted Afro – Arab

unity in the sub-region, produced and distributed thousands of his book which details his philosophy of Arab – Africa – Islam nexus.⁵⁹ Indeed, West Africa was the epic center around which the other two themes circles and overlap. This policy project by Nasser was the first of its kind by any Arab leader, and thus, it represents a landmark around which Afro - Arab solidarity revolved, and *Sunni* Islam took a root. Egypt embassies were opened in virtually all West African countries and Egyptian Islamic missionary scholars were sent in batches to various parts of Ghana and other West African countries to teach the *Sufi* form of Sunni Islam in traditional Islamic schools (the *Madrasas*). Therefore, despite the existence of some ideological differences between Egypt and Saudi Arabia's form of *Sunni* Islam, the desire of the latter to resist the spread of *Shi'ism* and its propagation in Ghana made it embrace the non-Wahhabi form of *Sunni* Islam the former has long promoted.

Israel Foreign Policy Towards Ghana

Israel's relations with West African countries date back to the early 1950s though some limited contacts existed prior to the state gaining independence in 1948 (Oded, 2010). Since its establishment, the State of Israel has kept some form of relation with Ghana. In 1957 when Israel opened its residence embassy in Ghana, it had only seven embassies worldwide – the United States, the Soviet Union, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Argentina (Bishku, 2017). As the first West African country to gain independence, Israel sought such early diplomatic relations with Ghana as a gateway to reaching other West African countries. Impressed with the intellectual abilities of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's prime minister and later president from 1960 to 1966, and his political stature, the then Israeli foreign minister, Golda Meir (1956 – 1966) established both official and unofficial bond with the former. Kwame Nkrumah who led the fight for Ghana's independence lived and studied with Protestant missions in USA that promoted the return of Jews to the 'Promised Land' and was highly influenced by a pro-Israel American activist, Marcus Garvey (Ibid.). The State of Israel was among the first countries outside of Africa to recognize Ghana's independence from Britain and the then prime minister, Golda Meir, attended Ghana's independence celebration on the 6th of March 1957. Thus, "It was a very familiar sentiment to Israelis at that time as that new state could sense and feel the challenges in Africa and identify with them very closely".⁶⁰

As a newly formed tiny nation located in a hostile Middle Eastern region, Israel was searching for friendlier countries across the world, and Africa remains a prime target. Ehud Avriel, one of the leading architects of Israel's diplomatic

onslaught in West Africa in and the former Israel's ambassador to Ghana described Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's sadness of the released Bandung resolutions. Thus, when Ghana gained independence in 1957, Ben-Gurion tasked him to immediately establish Israel's consulate there, explaining that Israel must endeavor to break away from the entanglement of the hostile neighboring Arab and Muslim majority countries and establish durable relations with the newly formed independent African States (Avriel, 1980). Ben-Gurion begged for immediate action on this because Israel could not continue to tolerate any development like that of its hostile relations with most of the Southeast Asian countries (Ibid.). In that sub-region, and especially after the Afro – Asian conference held in Bandung in 1955, Israel has been declared a rogue state and virtually all Israeli officials have been declared persona non grata (Ibid.). In his bid to offset any repetition of this, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion push for a more concrete steps especially when Israel has more to offer the newly independent African states to quicken their development aspirations (Ibid.).

From the late 1950s, Israel had helped the agriculture sector of Ghana with farming equipment, fertilizers, agriculture cooperatives and technical training (Bishku, 2017). This was followed with the establishment of Israel's Agency for International Cooperation (MASHAV) to offer financial, military training, and technical supports to Ghana.⁶¹ The mutual relation that existed between Israel and Ghana, however, came to a halt by the late 1960s. Israel's occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza-Strip, and its annexation of the Golan Heights after its gallant victory in the 1967 war with its Arab neighbors made West African countries to perceive it as a colonizing state. In the wake of the October War in 1973 that led to the annexation of some part of Sinai (of Egypt), African countries (except Malawi, Lesotho, and Swaziland) severed diplomatic relations

with Israel and turned towards a more pro-Arab alliance. Consequently, the Organization of African Unity (now, African Union) recognized the State of Palestine and further granted it a non-member observer status at all its summit, a privilege Israel had long lobbied for to no avail.⁶² The break of relation with Israel was sponsored by Egypt and vigorously supported by the mainly Muslim North African countries of Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco (Bishku, 2017). Despite the zigzag in relation and its vicissitudes, there is a renewed interest in recent times. Diplomatic relations between Israel and West Africa have since the 1980s gained momentum especially as some Arab countries signed rapprochement and established relations with Israel. By the late 1990s, Israel had succeeded in [re] establishing official ties with twelve West African countries. In 2009 the then foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, paid a state visit to Ghana in “[A]n attempt to woo the hearts of the West African country”.⁶³ In his visit to the sub-region in 2013, Lieberman indicates Israel’s intention to penetrate the West African sub-region in a strong and assertive manner, with mention of Ghana and Nigeria as lead countries in its mission in the sub-region (Bishku, 2017). The influence of these two former British colonies in the sub-region goads Israel’s focus on them. In 2014, the Africa – Israel Initiative was launched in Ghana with the aim of defending, protecting, and promoting the interests of the Jewish State within member countries of the sub-region (Ibid.).

⁶¹. MASHAV is a special international development cooperation agency in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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⁶². Since the ‘Organization of African Unity (OAU)’ was changed/renamed to ‘African Union (AU)’ in 2002, Israel did not regain its observer status despite submitting two official requests to become observer, one in 2003 and another in 2016. However, in 2021, after almost twenty years, Israel regained the observer status, albeit, under serious contestation by major and many of the union’s members. During the AU General Assembly Meeting in Addis Ababa in February 2022, Algeria and South Africa pushed for a vote to decide Israel’s status which was ‘unilaterally’ granted by the Chairperson. This decision has been postponed for the Union’s session in 2023.

⁶³. Collins, 2017. “Why is Israel’s Netanyahu Wooing Africa?”

(Africa News, 2017). Netanyahu further states, that “Israel is coming back to Africa, and Africa is returning to Israel” (Ibid.). As of 2019, Israel had resident embassies in 11 West African countries including Ghana. According to Yoram Elron, the deputy director general and head of Africa division at Israel’s foreign ministry, the reason Africa is among our priority territorial region “is it’s growing economic and political importance”.⁶⁴ Israel, therefore, seeks to get West African countries disengage from the position of the African Union where their votes have constantly gone against the global interest of Israel. This agenda may not be far-fetched considering the mixed reaction from governments in the sub-region vis-à-vis the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and siting of the US embassy thereof. Israel’s foreign policy towards Ghana is a subset of its broader policy towards the West African sub-region.

Israel has capitalized on violence and militant activities of *Jihadi* groups in recent times to broaden its horizon and widen its tentacles in the sub-region. The threat provides Israel a convenient environment to brand Iran and its proxy militant allies in the Middle East as projectors of global terrorism. In so doing, virtually all Israeli officials who visit West Africa refer to terrorist cells and organizations and the need for global unity in fighting them.

So, just like Saudi Arabia, Israel’s foreign policy towards Ghana anchors on suppressing Iranian influence and interest. To this end, ‘Islamic extremism’ and ‘war against global terrorism’ constitute Israel’s foreign policy linchpin. The US has residence diplomatic representatives in all West African countries and Israel often relies on this clout to negotiate its diplomatic fight against Iran in the region.

⁶⁴. Reed, 2016. “Israel Looks to Africa for New Allies”.

The Lebanese Community in Ghana

Lebanese immigrants in west Africa have been a post-1914 phenomenon with the Shi'ite adherents overwhelmingly dominating the arrivals (Akyeampong, 2006). The first Lebanese emigrants known to have arrived in the West Africa country of Senegal in 1860s appeared to have been deceived to this destination by private ship owners as the United States of America, his intended destination (Leighton, 1979). Emigration of Lebanese generally followed a localized pattern, where families and relatives from a particular locality in Lebanon settle in specific cities or towns in a West African country (Akyeampong, 2006). The route of Lebanese emigration was from Beirut to Marseilles, and then the favored trans-Atlantic crossing to North and South America. By 1960, the population of Lebanese immigrants in West Africa stood as follows:

Table 8. Population of Lebanese in West Africa as of 1960

Senegal	10,070
Portuguese Guinea	1050
Guinea	3,007
Sierra Leone	2,900
Liberia	4000
Ghana	2200
Ivory Coast	1,854
Nigeria	6150

Source: Bayly Winder. 1962.

background through assiduity, ingenuity, and education could become self-made men by amassing capital as money changers and lenders, interpreters, small-scale venture capitalists, agents of foreign commercial houses, and middlemen in domestic trade”.⁶⁵ They engaged in economic fields of endeavor -- like import and export, general merchants, provision merchants, motor vehicle distribution, sales of vehicle spare parts – which West Africans never delve in until quite recent (Akyeampong, 2006; Winder, 1962). In Ghana, the Lebanese population is scattered throughout the 16 administrative regions. Lebanese Ghanaian citizens and permanent residents together make up the largest group within the Arab population in the country. As at independence in 1957, the Lebanese in Ghana were estimated to be 2,200 (Winder, 1962) although this number has skyrocketed to close to 260,000.⁶⁶ Multiple generations of Lebanese have chosen Ghana as their homelands. Whiles some are descendants of migrants who arrived in Ghana in the early 19th century, many others trooped into the country in recent years. It is in Ghana that West African Lebanese began to establish formal schools for their children and non-Lebanese children.⁶⁷ Lebanese families in Ghana hold on to their native custom and traditions such as protecting communication in the colloquial Arabic (The, *Dārijjyya* or ‘Amiyya) and enhancing family values. Whiles an overwhelming majority of them are Muslims, 90% of them are *Shi’a* and 10% *Sunnis* (Winder, 1962). To ensure continuation of family background and shared interests in commercial activities, the Lebanese community largely marry from among themselves with the practice of endogamy reinforced.

⁶⁵. Fawaz, 1983. p.123

⁶⁶. Statistical Service of Ghana, “Population and Housing Census”, 31 August 2020.

⁶⁷. The Ghana – Lebanon Islamic Junior and Senior High Schools was established in the year 2000; the *Al – Rayyan International* School was also established in 2012; and the Madina Institute of Science and Technology was established in 2013.

Ghanaian cities and towns. Their businesses range from manufacturing, wholesale and retail of consumable goods, groceries, automobiles, hotels and restaurants, and financial services (Malki, 2013). For more than a century, Lebanese in Ghana have succeeded in penetrating the Ghanaian commercial landscape, serving as Godfathers to the import and export the country badly needs. The fundamental factor in the success of the Lebanese in Ghana is their exposure to global events, high rates of formal education, proficiency in English, French, and of course Arabic, and often, advanced training and expertise. On average, Lebanese in Ghana have high rates of home ownership, bigger houses, and higher income than the average native Ghanaian does. In the capital, Accra, there is a substantial number of high-profile Lebanese -businessmen and women, senior corporate executives, many upper and mid-level retail traders. In business related matters, there is a substantial number of high-profile Lebanese business liability companies. Three Lebanese-Ghanaian families that have distinguished themselves in the Ghanaian business landscape are the Laba, Kalmoni, and Fatal families. Whiles “[T]he Laba family owns several business concerns in Ghana such as Latex Foam, Acapulco, Pipes and Plastics, and Moon Beam,etc.”,⁶⁸ the Kalmoni family own the Japan Motors, Rana Motors, Silver Star (Benz) motors, etc., whiles the Fatal family have distinguished themselves by operating media conglomerates (television and radio stations) and companies that manufacture sewerage materials.

Lebanese business moguls and their business activities have for years been a concern to Israel and the US as they are seen to be bankrollers of *Hezbollah* back in homeland, Lebanon (Bishku, 2017). Elaborating on this issue, Bishku (2017) opines that the first major hurdles confronting Israel in West Africa is the

enormous supports Iran continues to receive from the Lebanese communities in the sub-region and substantive fundraising activities in support of Hezbollah. The second hurdle is when Israel's observer status was abrogated when the OAU became the AU in 2002 (Bishku, 2017).

Although Iran still holds its observer status ostensibly through the strong lobby of the Lebanese communities in the sub-region. As a result, whereas "Israel has been attempting to regain that status since and the Palestinians have been a nuisance in terms of having a forum to condemn Israeli actions, the Iranians and Hezbollah have presented a more formidable challenge involving security issues".⁶⁹ Consequently, Israel set up Visual Defense, a security company that gathers intelligence about Hezbollah affiliates in Ghana and the flow of people and goods between Lebanon and West African countries (Cessou, 2014). [Un]surprisingly, when the Middle Eastern Airline, Flight 141, crashed in 2003 moment after taking off in Benin, lead officer of the Visual Defense mentioned dozens of dollar-loaded bags in the flight bound to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

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⁶⁸. Akyeampong, 2006. p.310

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Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this chapter to present a facial contortion of the conflictual relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia on one hand, Iran and Israel on the other, and how the conflictual relations is morphing in their foreign policies towards Ghana. A review of relevant works on the broader area which the current study traverses is presented systematically to clarify the relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Iran and Israel. Thus far, we find out that, Iran - Saudi Arabia/Israel conflict is rooted in their quest to guaranteeing their security and ensuring political dominance and influence.

⁶⁹. Bishku, p.157

rivals continue to be exacerbated by the USA which has tremendous interest to protect in the Persian Gulf/MENA region. Also, in furtherance of its global foreign policy strategy, the US continues to accord Saudi Arabia and Israel primacy to the provocation of the Iranians and complication of the conflict. As a superpower determine to exert its power across the globe, the U.S. has capitalized on the protracted conflict between the Middle Eastern trio of rivals to maximize its energy security and national interest. However, while the U.S. continues to provide support and protection to Saudi Arabia and Israel, Iranian influence in the region (specifically in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen) has grown tremendously. The hitherto Middle East chess game has become a triangular with Iran falling out with Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the U.S. The development made Iran to increase help for Ghana battling for basic social facilities.

Clearly, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel have come to terms with the fact that, West Africa is no longer a land condemned to stagnation and marginalization. West Africa today is not the same as it was a century ago. Much has changed in its international relations and foreign policies. For the rival Middle Eastern trio, West Africa is politically considered for the numbers' game, as the voting pattern at the UN by the 16-member countries of the sub-region is always at stake for the country that plays its cards well. As demonstrated by the literature, Iran continues to be on top of the rivalry game. I argue that its savvy humanitarian works have led to this foreign policy success story.

Despite the fact this Middle Eastern conflict has long morphed in Ghana, Iran continues to exert influence within the West African country by outflanking the

USA and its allies. Therefore, before delving more into the '*why*' the growing status of Iran in the sub-region against all odds, we will be examining the humanitarian activities Iran has been undertaking in Ghana. What constitute the form and shape of the humanitarian works? What set apart Iran's humanitarian projects from the charity works of the Gulf Arab States? The next chapter seeks to answer these germane questions.

CHAPTER 4: IRAN HUMANITARIAN WORKS IN GHANA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SOUTH – SOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Introduction: The “South”

The [Global] ‘South’ is used to describe countries that have some similarities found in their sizes, levels of development, social, economic, and political structures (Fening, 1980). According to Brandt (1980), “[T]he South ranges from booming half – industrialized nations like Brazil to poor landlocked or island countries such as Chad or the Maldives”.⁷⁰ For Hansen (1980), the term South is a “shorthand for the world’s less developed or developing countries ranging from the suddenly rich but, yet, to industrialize oil states of the middle east to the so called forth world states.”⁷¹ Notwithstanding the wide array of definitions of the ‘Global South’, certain characteristics run across them. The South share a common predicament and their camaraderie on the world stage is ascribed to several factors including dependence on the global north, mutual interest of growth and colonial experience (Kegley and Wittkopf, 1993; Brandt, 1980).

The countries involved share a colonial legacy, i.e., most of the countries have gone through the experience of having been ruled by a foreign power from the tiny countries like Somalia, Togo, and Maldives to the huge territories of China, India, and Iran.

⁷⁰. Lees, 2020. p. 86

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The countries involved share a colonial legacy, i.e., most of the countries have gone through the experience of having been ruled by a foreign power from the tiny countries like Somalia, Togo, and Maldives to the huge territories of China, India, and Iran. The common past provided the countries in the global south with a uniform social and cultural veneer under which to function and collaborate on a common ground (Kimche, 1966). Again, geography plays a very important role in the description of the countries of global south. These countries are largely found in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The countries of the global south share common traits hinging on the more tangible economic factors. In terms of economics, the south is very homogeneous. Although most countries have weak economies largely dominated by exportation of primary products, there are also some industrializing countries like China, Malaysia, Iran, etc.

Events at the first Bandung conference of 1955 helped in fructifying the idea of South – South Cooperation (SSC) for the first time after the Second World War. This set the stage for the formation of various institutions, processes, and frameworks in promoting the ideals of SCC. The concept of SSC is, thus, not new, albeit it gained a lot of review and attention in recent history essentially for two main factors. First, the demise of the ideological battle between the USA and the USSR in 1990 and, second, the robust growth of the economies of some global south countries such as China, Russian Federation, India, Brazil, Iran, and

others (Ki-Moon, 2008). Such tremendous economic success of these countries had a significant impact on the development prospects of other countries in the South (Ibid.).

South – South Cooperation (SCC) is, thus, explained as a “broad concept that covers a wide range of collaborations among developing countries. It refers more specifically to, “cooperative activities between newly industrialized southern countries and other, less developed nations of the South”.⁷² SCC is primarily geared towards helping countries of the South to achieve self-sufficiency and form a strong collaboration that is more symmetric in nature compared to the asymmetric North – South relationship (Rosseels, et al, 2003). Although there have been increased interactions among several emerging economic giants of the South and other less developed nations, it is Iran’s South – South development agenda with countries in West Africa that seems to be attracting a lot of attention in recent years. Therefore, Iran’s humanitarian activities in Ghana are an extension of its South – South Development Cooperation Agenda.

The proliferation of social vices in underprivileged Ghanaian communities has led to a sharp increase in the scale of humanitarian assistance required to meet the pressing needs of the poor majority. This is partly due to the direct social transformation the works have brought to bear on the nation; and as a result, many resources that would have been invested in redeeming the prevailing challenges are now being diverted towards the provision of other pressing needs; and, consequently, efforts of durable development projects are revived.

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Any successful humanitarian activities would have different set of objectives. For example, some

⁷². Rosseels, et al. 2003, p. 8.

humanitarian projects are primarily intended to prevent the disastrous consequences of poor and/or slum communities before the health of the dwellers is threatened by pandemics. This requires prompt action either by assisting the targeted population with some form of immediate preventive treatments, or by preventing the deterioration of healthcare, agriculture, and educational infrastructures. Such social interventions enable the society to withstand the situation in a durable manner and, thereby, prevent the health of the population from deteriorating. Others may focus on broadening the formal educational capacities of the targeted population and widen their horizon to be able to deal with and prevent any prospective health crisis on their own. Because a major aspect of the Iranian humanitarian activities in Ghana revolves around Muslims communities, an overview of the trajectory of the realities of Ghanaian Muslim communities is crucial for grounding the subject of this chapter. Muslim communities in Ghana consist of formidable informal settlements and have the distinction of being the poorest communities in the country. Besides the congestion and the absence of basic social amenities, other characteristics of Muslim communities are the high illiteracy rate with its concomitant vices of unemployment, and social vices such as illicit drugs, violence, teenage pregnancies, thievery, etc. To understand the reason for this situation, there is the need to highlight certain historical account that led to this status quo.

Historical Relation Between Ghanaian Muslims and Secular Education

Ghana is located north of the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa bordering the Atlantic Ocean to the South, Côte d'Ivoire to the West, Togo to the East and Burkina Faso to the North. It has a geographical area of 238,537 square

kilometers. Per the 2020 population and housing census, the country's human strength stands at 31 million with Christians pegged approximately at 70%, Muslims at 19%, the traditional African Religion Practitioners at 5%, people with no religious affiliations at 5%, and the Eckanker and Buddhists making up the remaining 1%. Although Ghanaian Muslims are more than the rest of the other religious groups combined; they are overwhelmingly outnumbered by their Christian counterparts.

Islam was introduced in Ghana in the 14th century by Malian merchants, although it was the *Hausa/Fulani* merchants who helped in strengthening the religion when they arrived from Nigeria around the early 1800s (Wilks, 2000). Through the process of integration, Islam became the major religion of much of the people of the northern regions of Ghana.⁷³ Thus, prior to the conquest of the north and subsequent establishment of the British colonial administration there, Islam was deeply entrenched both in the religious belief and in educational orientation of the Muslims who had a uniform Qur'anic education. "This tradition of learning survived up to the present, and every child in the Muslim community is required to attend.... the Qur'anic school (i.e., the *Madrasa*)".⁷⁴ The northern town of Salaga has, for the last decades of the eighteenth century, been described as a place where virtually all the inhabitants who are Muslims could write, read, and speak Arabic, symbolizing a striking example of educational levels the British colonial administration met when they conquered the northern territories of Ghana (Iddrisu, 2005).

Thus, the concept of education in northern Ghana, as elsewhere in Muslim communities later in the southern sector of Ghana, has historically been

associated with the teaching of the Qur'an and Islamic religious texts. Ghanaian Muslims had no connection with secular education because the system came with the missionaries primarily for evangelization purposes, which is to enable their converts to read the Bible. Sanneh observed that secular education "in the hands of the missionaries was often used as an instrument of conversion and nurture".⁷⁵ In fact, the declared intentions of Christian missionaries, 'especially the protestant', were to win back "the so many lost souls among the followers of the false prophet [of the Muslims]".⁷⁶ Elaborating on the phenomenon that has trended down to contemporary times, Hackett (1999) indicates, that "[M]any schools and college campuses in both Ghana and Nigeria are overwhelmed with religious groups seeking the souls of the young... [and] the evangelical and charismatic movements have long realized the potential of targeting the youth".⁷⁷

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⁷³. Northern part of Ghana consists of five regions: Northern Region, Upper West Region, Upper East Region, Savannah Region, and Northeast Region.

⁷⁴. Iddrisu, 2005. p. 56.

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Muslim leaders, therefore, did not allow missionaries to get in their way of practicing Islam. They perceived secular education that was being offered by the Christian missionaries as antithetical to Islam and harmful to Muslims (Kobo, 2016). The concentration, therefore, remained on Qur’anic/Arabic education, and Muslim communities were characterized by religious preference of (Islam), and enthusiasm for Arabic education and resistance to western values and cultural ethos (Peil, 1979).

Consequently, Ghanaian Muslims lagged their Christian counterparts in terms of access to education at the time of independence. In fact, while by 1840 the Methodist, the Anglican, the Catholic, and the Presbyterian Churches of Ghana had established both basic and secondary schools in various parts of Ghana (Graham, 1971), Ghanaian Muslims had not even one school running secular curricula as of 1970. The historically less patronage of secular education reflects the poor status of life as Ghanaian Muslims have traditionally not been part of government structure and have no job in the formal sectors of the economy.

Further, formal education as introduced by the missionaries in Ghana undoubtedly became one of

⁷⁵. Sanneh, 1983. p.127

⁷⁶. Ibid.

⁷⁷. Hackett, 1999. p.250.

the main factors that shaped the traditional social setting of the country. Consequently, just as the British colonial administrators were predominantly Christians, and had engaged in durable social activities within a larger segment of the country for more than a century, the Ghanaian socio/politico setting has effectively taken up the Christian culture at all levels and in all aspects (Quashigah, 2008).

Ghanaian Muslim Communities (a.k.a. The Zongo[s])

Ghanaian Muslims generally live in poorer neighborhoods called the *Zongo[s]*. In metropolitan areas, for example, a Muslim is nearly 90% time more likely to live in a *Zongo* where poverty rate is at its peak (Schildkrout, 1978). The name derives from the *Hausa* word, *Zango*, referring to the camping ground of caravan of traders that crisscross the West African sub-region in the 19th century (Pontzen, 2021). The itinerant traders who are of different ethnic and tribal backgrounds eventually settled in these camps to continue their commercial activities (Ibid.). Despite their diversity, Islam provides the people of the *Zongos* with a common ground and shared values to relate to one another, to intermarry, and to partake in each other's lives.

Zongos have become the isolated communities in the Christian-dominated southern territories of Ghana mainly inhabited by Muslims.⁷⁹ The classical Islamic concepts of *Dār al-Islam* and *Dār al- Harb* raked the demand to sequester Muslim communities sententious to practicing the Islamic faith.⁸⁰ “Today, *Zongo(s)* have become a vast network of settlements, and there is at least one *Zongo* in every urban center in Ghana”.⁸¹ There are other *Zongos* that were purposely carved by the British colonial authorities as temporal residential areas

for Muslims, but the areas have rapidly expanded due to influx of migrants from the northern territories to the southern part of Ghana in search of greener pastures as the structural adjustment policies of the country gained momentum from the 1980s onwards (Owusu, et al, 2011; Owusu & Afutu-Kotey, 2010). The Kumasi Zongo, for example, was established by colonial statute in 1904 when the British designated a ‘Mohammedan quarter’ of Kumasi’.⁸² The oldest and the largest Zongo communities in the administrative capital, Accra, are the Sabon Zongo⁸³ and the Nima (Zongo).⁸⁴

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⁷⁸. Pontzen, 2021. p 3

⁷⁹. For more on *Zongos*, see Schildkrout, 1978. People of Zongo:

⁸⁰. Dār al Islam denote a territorial boundary controlled by Muslims who are in a perpetual state of war with non-Muslims living outside it. For further discussion on this, see El Fadl, 2005. The Great Theft; and El Fadl, 2015. Reasoning with God

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⁸¹. Schildkrout, 1978. p.196

⁸². Allman, 1991. p. 18.

⁸³. For more on *Sābon Zongo*, see Pellow, 1991. *The Power of Space in the Evolution of an Accra Zongo*.

⁸⁴. The name ‘*Nima*’ has its etymology from the Arabic root word, ‘*ni’ma*’, meaning ‘blessing’. For more on the area, see Owusu, et al. 2008. *Slums of Hope and Slums of Despair*

⁸⁵. Pellow, 1988. p. 217.

On its part, *Nima* is a huge Muslim community in the north-east part of the capital of Ghana, Accra, which emerged in 1936 when groups of Hausa migrants from northern Nigeria were granted temporal permission by the British colonial government to take up residence on that portion of land which was then an outskirt. The streets are commonly narrow (two or three feet wide) and majority of the inhabitants are living cheek by jowl without access to basic sanitation and other social amenities. From hygiene to accommodation facilities, most of the inhabitants of this Muslim community live in a pity condition and engage in informal activities epitomizing the hub of poor living standard. Poor sanitations have been a thorny issue in the community exposing the residents in general and children frolicking around in particular to health-related risks. Taking a stroll within the *Nima* neighborhood uncloset a dejected community that requires urgent and tangible social interventions to address the worsening sanitation challenges, dilapidated public toilets, and a limited infrastructure for human development (Owusu, et al. 2008). The experience of dwellers of the *Nima* (*Zongo*) starkly illustrate that people living in poverty not only face deprivation but are also trapped in that poverty because they are excluded from the rest of society, denied a say, and threatened with violence and insecurity.

The isolation and economic inequality seen in large Muslim communities in cities has the exact replication of Muslim communities within the smaller geographies of towns and villages of Ghana. The problem of illiteracy within the *Zongos* is a deep and persistent one for successive Ghanaian governments. Muslim youths are about thrice as likely to be unemployed as non-Muslims, Muslims lag their non-Muslims peers in educational attainment and achievement, and Muslim communities tend to have higher than average crime rates (Owusu, et

al. 2008). Meanwhile, jobs are essential to improving Muslim communities, and increase employment would help people in these communities lift themselves out of poverty. Further, in view of the fact, that appalling standard of living is a significant decisive element caused by atrocious educational outcomes, and high rate of crimes correlate with high rates of unemployment, making job opportunities available to the youth would help improve educational achievement and reduce crime.

Successive Ghanaian governments' search for change and improvement in Muslim communities has not been without sweat and toil, as social issues therein sour, and Muslim illiteracy rate is quadrupled as the non-Muslims. As wide as this education gap is, it underrates the immensity of the challenge, because, running into such tenacious difficulties finding jobs, many would-be job seekers give up hope of finding one and engage in varied degrees of crimes. Once they do so, they are no longer counted as unemployed, even though they are technically jobless. Consequently, only education-rate gaps reveal the full magnitude of the problem of joblessness within Muslim communities in Ghana. Had Ghanaian Muslims attained same level of education as the non-Muslims, a chunk of Muslims would have been enjoying a decent life. The current unemployment rate gap is large, but the education rate gap is even larger. Illiteracy rate that reaches deep into Muslim communities is key to community development for different reasons. First, economic conditions are related to educational achievement. Lack of income has significant negative effects on children's education (Duncan and Magnuson 2005; Kalil 2010; Lee and Burkam 2002; Stevens and Schaller 2009). Second, economic conditions have correlated with issues of crime. A growing body of research suggests that lack of

education, unemployment, poverty, and social inequality lead to higher crime rate (Gould, Weinberg, and Mustard 2002; Machin and Meghir 2004; Lin 2008).

Thus, strong educational opportunities that target Muslim communities would improve economic conditions of Muslims in general and likely reduce crime rates of the country. The more educated a person is, the more likely s/he will attain a job and a good one subsequently. Indeed, the standard of life and living gap between Ghanaian Muslims and non-Muslims would bridge by increasing education, as argued earlier. It must, however, be stressed that even if Ghanaian Muslims are able to catch up with the non-Muslims educationally, unemployment disparities would not necessarily disappear, as Ghanaian Muslims are more likely to be unemployed than non-Muslims at every educational level.

Iran's Humanitarian Works in Ghana

The residential clustering of Muslim communities is important because of the low chances for residents therein to rise beyond those low social strata. The communities are chaotic, apocalyptic, and griming with rubbish-strewn sites. The situation has been difficult to deal with especially when the high communal poverty and way of living is associated with Islamic religious orientation. A concern about the potential implications of the gap in education and standard of life and living between the people of the Zongos and the rest of the non-Muslim communities led to the implementation of certain humanitarian projects by Iran to arrest the situations. As we shall see below, Iran's humanitarian activities

primarily focus on projects that lead to poverty eradication and better health conditions.

Education

Traditional Islamic education in the hands of Iranians is often used as an instrument of conversion into the Shi'i brand of Islam. However, secular schools as introduced by Iranians in Ghana undoubtedly became one of the main factors that shaped the traditional social setting of Muslim communities. Iran's educational projects in Ghana is not a wayward mistress of deracinated non-Shia Muslims, but the legitimate handmaid to transform a society of subservience into a progressive one. Further, it is the educational programs of Iran which directly or indirectly paved way for more tertiary education opportunities for Ghanaian Muslim youths. Education is undoubtedly the path to integral development and the future of any society depend on the enlightened members. The awareness of this has for a long time made Iran partner in running schools in Ghana through the activities of the *Ahl al-Bayt* Foundation. Education is undoubtedly the path to integral development and the future of any society depend on the enlightened members. The awareness of this has for a long time made Iran partner in running schools in Ghana through the activities of the *Ahl al-Bayt* Foundation.

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Iranian officials who arrived in Ghana in 1982 could not stand the shock of the state of Muslim communities. The ghastly condition of the communities sits in sharp contrast to the larger non-Muslim residential areas. 100s of children always playing in dirty ditches, lacking adequate food, security, and education. The arrival of the Iranian diplomatic missions in Ghana and the subsequent

establishment of the Iranian Cultural Center was, therefore, not only to establish *Hawza* learning centers for the propagation of the *Shi'i* brand of Islam, but also, to provide the requisite supports for the Ghana branch of the *Ahl Bait* Foundation to effectively execute projects inure to the national development of Ghana.

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Writing about the Ahl Bait foundation, Kobo indicates, that

Although a nongovernmental and nonprofit organization, the foundation is obviously linked to and serves as the cultural wing of the government of Iran. This organization has been in Ghana since the early 1980s and has been providing humanitarian services to Ghanaians in general, but Muslims in particular. Its clinic in Accra has expanded significantly since it opened in 1985. It is believed that its outpatient intake exceeds 200 patients daily, and it has a full-time staff of over 20 personnel, including nurses and doctors in residence. Most of the doctors were and still are Iranians, who provide non-tenured residency services. The foundation also owns and operates agricultural centers in northern Ghana, aimed at assisting farmers with scientific approaches to farming.⁸⁶

The Islamic University College, Ghana

The Islamic University College, Ghana (The IUCG) is a darling project of the Ahl Bait foundation which began official operation as a secular tertiary institution in the year 2000. The university is located in a pristine residential area of the administrative capital called East Legon. The need to build tertiary institutions by the foundation was precipitated by the increasing demand for university education in Ghana. Over the years, the infrastructure in the existing public universities in Ghana have not seen expansion although students' intake has increased tremendously. At the University of Ghana, for example, some department libraries that were built for just thirty students in 1948 currently have about seventy seats. The story in the lecture halls and students' halls of residents is even worse. It, therefore, came as no surprise when the private sector and non-governmental organizations were encouraged to complement the efforts of government. The mainland churches were quick to establish private universities in the state. Thus, the premier private universities in Ghana are: The Catholic University, the Methodist University, the Presbyterian University, the Anglican University, the Christian Service University, The Valley View University established by the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Central

University established by the International Central Gospel Church. As of 2020, there are 52 private universities own by various Christian missionary churches. In the year 2000, the *Ahl Bait* Foundation established the Islamic University College of Ghana (IUCG) to provide tertiary education in the liberal arts to the many Muslim youths who are unable to gain admission into highly competitive public universities, and who for religious consideration, would not consider the Christian missionary universities as alternative.

The Islamic University College, Ghana was granted interim accreditation by the National Accreditation Board with effect from 2001. On 10th April 2001, 15 students were given admission to do a 4-year Bachelor of Arts program in Religious Studies (Islamic option). In September the same year, a second batch of 42 students was admitted into the University College. In September 2002, accreditation was given for the University College to introduce a 4-year degree program in Business Administration with specialization in Accounting, Banking and Finance, and Marketing.⁸⁷

The university currently has four faculties, consisting of Religious Studies, Communication Studies Business Administration, and Education. Affiliated to the University of Ghana, the university's training ensured that degrees obtained by graduates matched market demand to aid their job search. Although the tuition and residential fees are the lowest in the country, Muslim students mainly from the Zongo communities and the northern parts of Ghana are admitted on a full scholarship.

⁸⁶. Kobo, 2016. p. 186.

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limited intake, financial difficulties, and religious convictions.

The understanding that secular education is directly related to economic emancipation is one crucial area that present an impetus for Iran's humanitarian intervention. The elevation of the rate of tertiary education allowed a wider demographic of Muslim youths (male and female) to obtain job in both the public and private sectors. "Although less than 2 percent of Ghanaian Muslims profess Shi'ism, the Ahlul-Bait Foundation has without doubt emerged among the leading providers of postsecondary education".⁸⁸ At the close of the 2020 academic year, about 5,620 have been awarded honorary first degrees in varied disciplines, with 92% of them being Muslims mainly from the Zongo communities profess Shi'ism, the Ahlul-Bait Foundation has without doubt emerged among the leading providers of postsecondary education".⁸⁸ At the close of the 2020 academic year, about 5,620 have been awarded honorary first degrees in varied disciplines, with 92% of them being Muslims mainly from the Zongo communities profess Shi'ism, the Ahlul-Bait Foundation has without doubt emerged among the leading providers of postsecondary education".⁸⁸ At the close of the 2020 academic year, about 5,620 have been awarded honorary first degrees in varied disciplines, with 92% of them being Muslims mainly from the Zongo communities

⁸⁷. Available on the website of the university: <https://www.iucg.edu.gh>

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Lady Fatimah Girls High School

The Lady Fatimah Girls Senior High School was established by the Islamic University College, Ghana, with the aim of providing quality and affordable secondary education to the girl child especially those from the deprived Zongo communities. The schools have been registered with the Registrar General's Department and Ghana Education Service (GES), respectively, as a private senior high school offering liberal arts programs in the meantime. The Lady Fatimah Girls SHS also runs regular and weekend programs in Islamic Studies under the auspices of the Lady Fatimah Islamic Training Centre in Tehran.

Realizing the looming danger in the high illiteracy rate of Ghanaian Muslim girls, the Islamic university college, Ghana, under the auspices of the *Ahl Bait* Foundation partnered with government in running secondary schools for girls from the Zongo communities. Considerable measures were, therefore, formulated to encourage Muslim parents to send their female wards to these schools for secular education. The Lady Fatimah schools provided more assurance for Muslim children to have secular education without being bombarded with Christian religious instructions. The comparative advantages of the schools, including proximity, informal organization, and community involvement, have long been acknowledged by the state.

⁸⁸. Kobo, 2016. p.187

Given that the Lady Fatimah schools appear to be a significant and growing segment of the secondary school sector in Ghana, what does it mean for Muslim girls' access to formal education? Prima facie, one can imagine how the robustness of Iran's intervention has encouraged Muslim girls' formal education. First, in such extremely poor Muslim communities, the cost of formal education also discourages enrollment, especially for the girl child. Thus, the growth in prominence of tuition free education, driven by free feeding in the schools has been helpful. Predictably, schools established by Iran from basic to university levels are experiencing teeming attendance and have succeeded in delivering the expected outcome.

The Imam Khomeini Libraries

Libraries are considered as treasure trove of knowledge and human experiences. Libraries still oversee to the role of obtaining necessary books, journals, periodicals, and assist in providing scientific information to their users. Public libraries are often readily available to prospective users in many societies, as their duties and responsibilities in proliferating formal education and literacy is indispensable and has long been acknowledged. According to Parvathamma and Reddy (2009), libraries are known for improving literacy through information and educational services. They serve as hubs for stimulating imaginative thoughts and broadening the human horizons of the people and making access to a common cultural heritage a reality (Ibid.).

Since independence in 1957, Ghana has placed premium on educational facilities

to develop the literary rate of the citizenry. This pursuit stimulates the establishment of libraries in cities and towns to aid in reading and learning. Although major residential areas of the country have library facilities by the mid-1980, no Muslim community across the country had one. Thus, in the Zongo residential areas, access to relevant books and convenient places crucial for reading and learning was particularly absent. In their resolve to assist in ameliorating the formal educational deficit of Ghanaian Muslims, the *Ahl Bayt* Foundation established several “Imam Khomeini Libraries” within the major Muslim communities in Accra, Kumasi, and the northern city of Tamale. Not only did these libraries served as learning centers for students in these communities who live in congested houses and cram rooms, they were also stocked with books for further research. The libraries that operated from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the weekdays and half day on Saturdays provided an enabling environment for pupils and students in the designated Zongo communities to study.

During the long holidays spanning the beginning of June to the later part of August, free classes are organized in selected subjects in the libraries for interested students. This initiative has not only enhanced the literacy rate of the dwellers of the Zongos, but has also helped in keeping school children busy and away from engaging in misdemeanors.

Vision 2030 and Iran’s Development of Secular Education in Ghana

The Ahl Bait foundation in Ghana has to its chest ‘Vision 2030 AND IRAN’S DEVELOPMENT OF SECULAR EDUCATION IN GHANA’, having successful established a university, pre-tertiary schools, and libraries. Vision 2030 is the

comprehensive planning document that dictates reform projects, proposed policies, partnerships, and programs personalized to meet the demands of contemporary Ghanaian economy. Vision 2030 was created in the wake of the report of 2010 ‘Population and Housing Census’ that indicate that only Twenty-Three Percent (23%) of dwellers of Zongo communities have attained high school education, and only Five Percent have some form of tertiary education. The policies and projects aim to assist in ameliorating the challenge by increasing enrolment of Muslim youths in the sixteen regions of the country. The main concerns of the first five-year Medium-Term Plan 2012-2017 are to embark on virulent campaign on the pulpit of Friday sermons for Muslim parents to send their wards to secular schools. Guarantees were given for scholarship opportunities offered by the Ahl Bait foundation for parents who will prove their inability to shoulder the cost of their wards’ education.

Specific medium-term goals include establishing branches of the Islamic University in the commercial city of Kumasi and the Muslim dominated northern regional capital of Tamale. In the same vein, the Ahl Bait foundation intends to build at least one Lady Fatimah Girls High School in all the sixteen regions of Ghana. Consequently, branches of the Lady Fatimah High School will also be established in yet to be identified localities.

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The plan also includes the fostering of educational programs such as early childhood development and special needs education into the existing basic education structural programs (both physical, mental, and Emotional). Special Information and Communication Technology educational resources shall be inculcated into the existing instructional structures and shall be endorsed strongly both financially and logistically.

their non-Muslim counterparts by offering more scholarships to triple enrolments from its current level. To achieve this objective, the current campus of the Islamic University College, Ghana will experience massive expansion of academic infrastructure and students housing facilities by 2025.

The Iran Hospitals

In partnership with the Red Crescent Society of Iran, the *Ahl Bait* Foundation has not only played an important role in providing quality education, but it has also been actively involved in health care development in Ghana. The foundation has been involved in providing health and relief services which aim at partnering the state in developing and promoting the dignity of Ghanaians in general and particularly, inhabitants of the poorer communities. Since 1985, the Iran hospitals has stand out as a major player in health delivery in Ghana. The Iran hospitals provide certain specialists services that existing Ghanaian public hospitals are not able to provide. It has committed to providing quality but affordable health care services to the citizens and residents in general consultation, ambulance services, dental and eye services, physiotherapy and ultra-sonographic services, and a pharmacy. Patients from certain poor communities are attended to at no cost with the required drugs dispensed to them free of charge.

Further, and in collaboration with the Ghanaian government, the Iran hospitals continue to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic through their special community outreach programs. Their emphasis is on HIV/AIDS prevention and care. By the year 2000 the hospital had trained 134 youth and 94 adults as Peer Educators.

These Peer Educators managed to pass on information about the prevention of HIV/AIDs and the care of people living with the disease – totaling about 52,500 across the country.⁸⁹ The Iran Hospital in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (of Ghana) continue to respond to the HIV/AIDs pandemic through numerous outreach programs. Again, seminars and workshops are organized for both who are HIV/AIDs positive and those who do not have the virus with the aim of reducing the stigma and discriminations associated with disease. To this effect, the Iran Hospital has trained hundreds of workers and facilitators for the ‘Outreach Campaign Vehicle’ program.

Similarly, and related to promoting healthcare of the less privileged areas, the Ahl Bait foundation is involved in providing quality and hygienic water for people in the rural communities. Since 1986, the foundation has embarked on public water supply and borehole projects to guaranteeing portable water for people in rural communities where there was no regular source of good drinking water. Thus, from 1997-1999, forty (40) already existing wet wells were fitted with hand pumps and fifty (50) boreholes were sunk and fitted with hand pumps.⁹⁰ In addition to these projects, the foundation operated tanker water supply services for some communities in the rural parts of Northern Ghana that are faced with severe water shortages and need urgent intervention.⁹¹

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Agriculture Development Program

It is doubtful that educational development alone is a powerful enough remedy to rectify the living standard disparities among a population. In the nation of 30 million people, agriculture alone employs close to 50% of the Ghanaian population, and most food production is in the hands of rural farmers (Barnet and Srivastava, 2017). Ghana's agricultural sector is among the least developed in Africa. Agriculture accounts for 23% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and has been one of the country's fastest declining sectors, shrinking at a relatively slow rate (Ibid.).

⁸⁹. Author's Interview with a Ghanaian senior staff of Iran Hospital, June 21, 2020.

⁹⁰. Author's Interview with a Ghanaian senior staff of Iran Hospital, June 21, 2020.

⁹¹. Ibid.

Observing such a damming situation facing Ghana especially in the mid-1980s, the Ahl Bait foundation focused on improving the sector through effective locally biased initiatives and focusing on peasant farmers in the rural areas to allow for their growth. The foundation's resident experts devised locally biased solutions built for making long-term impacts on Ghanaian rural peasant farmers. On several occasions, the Ahl Bait Foundation has responded to crises of farmers with generous interventions. The foundation intervened during the great depression and the recessions of the mid- 1980s. A prolonged level of high unemployment among Ghanaians, decade after decade, should be recognized as a national crisis as recessions. Given the intractability of major challenges facing Ghanaian farmers especially those of the northern territories who are mainly Muslims, the Ahl Bait foundation support targeted job farmers constantly experiencing low productivity. The program has led to a significant reduction in unemployment and improved communities plagued by persistent unemployment and poverty as well.

There is an increasing recognition in Ghanaian context too that providing free technical training to farmers does not automatically translate to increase productivity, but that additional incentive is required to support farmers in achieving such objectives. Thus, the Ahl Bait Foundation provides farming-specific support for farmers within disadvantaged areas as well as seed capitals to encourage large-scale yield. In addition, constraints to modern farming machines and equipment extend beyond costs and could be driven by cultural and behavioral factors. Responding to these non-cost elements require organization of workshops all of which the foundation has been doing periodically.

The foundation works with poor rural Ghanaian farmers to cushion them from subsistence to commercialization through variety of initiatives. These initiatives include supporting them with micro credits, prevailing market information systems, strong-agro-dealer networks, and relatively high use of modern equipment. In particular, the foundation supports rural farmers across the northern territories of Ghana to gain access to markets and build their capacity to recognizing stewards of their lands so they can expand their livelihoods by building assets. They also work with smallholder farmers, farmers' cooperative unions in the northern parts of Ghana, including those in the arid and non-arid areas.

The foundation further devises unique programs tailored to empowering Ghanaian women farmers – who dominate much of the agricultural sector but whose access to land, capital, and other resources remain limited – so they can play effective roles in advancing progress of their families and the society in general. This initiative by the Ahl Bait foundation is promoting gender equality and women's right so that all Ghanaians can contribute to, and benefit from, the socio-economic prosperity of the state.

The Ahl Bait foundation's fight against poverty in Ghana by supporting poor farmers is making progress, albeit slowly. In the northern territories of Ghana, the support of the foundation gives priority to providing urgent supports, including free seed capitals, and farming inputs, with a significant impact on training issues (land management issues, biodiversity, and commercial farming). This involves strengthening capacity of the rural farmers and pastoralist organizations through the framework of agricultural production literacy and advocacy. The advocacy program in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture

of Ghana have been working with rural farmers with a focus in the northern territories since 1986. The initiative has been geared towards encouraging poor rural farmers to actively participate in workshops designed to training farmers so they can up their games using modern farming methods. Through mentoring and training, the rural farmers were supported to gain better understanding the environmental and atmospheric landscape within which they are operating.

An evaluation by the foundation reveals the effect of their agricultural support on Ghanaian state. The Ahl Bait foundation introduced the Agriculture Development Program in Ghana since 1986 in response to the chronic droughts faced by the northern parts of the country along the Burkina Faso and Togo border. The foundation provides farmers with training in the technical skills needed for farming and work closely with employers to ensure that the training is relevant. In addition to technical skills, the foundation also provides machines, equipment, and some limited financial supports to farmers. All these is inuring to addressing food security and nutrition challenges of the country, while connecting farmers to markets through a commercialized farming mentality. Clearly, Iran's agriculture intervention has reached disadvantaged communities and has caused increase productivity with high income for poor farmers.

Conclusion

From the discussion, we established that Ghanaian Muslims have chosen to live in isolation of the general Ghanaian societies to guard against any western or secular infiltration of their practice of the Islamic faith. In so doing, Ghanaian

Muslims in pre- and post-independence Ghana focused solely on Arabic/Islamic education to the neglect of secular education. This situation distant them from the governance structure of the country and crippled their chances in getting into formal job opportunities in both the public and private sectors of the country. The development led to high unemployment rates and increased poverty, with their concomitant social vices. Since the mid- 1980s, however, the trend has changed tremendously with, among others, the interventions of the humanitarian projects of the Ahl Bait foundation of Iran.

Thus, humanitarian projects per se, no matter how magnificent and elegant they may be, do not necessarily touch the hearts and minds of the government and people of a country. To be effective and have overarching impact on the country, humanitarian works should be development- oriented and must be in tandem with the national vision of the receiving state. Unlike the other Gulf States, the contribution of Iran's humanitarian works to the development of Ghana has been significant. It is the hand work of the Ahl Bait Foundation which has intervened in the social dilemma of Ghana. The Ahl Bait Foundation made a concerted humanitarian effort needed to reduce socio-economic challenges that has left Ghanaian Muslims thrice as poor as non-Muslims. Under the humanitarian activities, the foundation significantly increases the number of educated Muslims by establishing pre-university schools and a university. By substantially increasing literacy rates, it helped in reducing poverty, improve educational achievement, and reduce crime rates. Muslim communities of *Zongos* have the highest number of people living in extreme poverty. The trend points to the need to rethink and rejig Iran's approach to poverty alleviation in Ghana as a whole. In rethinking Iran's current approach, there are important lessons that could

be learnt by other Gulf States.

The Ahl Bait Foundation has established schools, hospitals and have been engaged in providing agricultural services to Ghanaians. Their hospitals, for example, are known for their quality health services partly because of the presence of Iranian medics who are manning the facilities.

Politically, aside from the wider governmental recognition of their works, the Ghanaian public are fascinated by Iran's social intervention. And although the poorer Muslim neighborhoods have attained Iran's humanitarian interventions, they need not change at the same rate, or even in the same direction, as non-Muslims' communities.

The effects of the Agricultural development program have helped many farmers, though not those already in the commercial aspects of it. By expanding cooperation with farmers' unions, the Ahl Bait foundation is contributing to a fairer society for the many poor farmers in the most neglected and less privileged parts of Ghana. The overall goal of the Ahl Bait foundation's cooperation with farmers is the visions of Ghana in which all farmers have the opportunity to improve their lives and in which their annual harvests yield high income. Thus, Iran's approach to social development through direct support of farmers is helping Ghana to, simultaneously, tackle unemployment and poverty in Ghana. By supporting the poor Ghanaian rural farmers with the necessary supports, the Ahl Bait foundation has not only contributed to uplifting their lives and living, but they also have, and more importantly, contributed to the food basket of the country.

This chapter examined perceptive projects Iran undertook to lift the social status of the poorer Ghanaian population. In pursuing poverty alleviation in

Ghana, education plays a significant role beyond its traditional functions of capacity building. Education can directly work to reduce poverty through promoting community strength and engagement and using tertiary training as a springboard for development. The Iranian humanitarian interventions in Ghana have worked to lift the life and living standard of many poor Ghanaians out of poverty requires commendation. In short, the educational, health, and agricultural projects of the Ahl Bait Foundation show their genuine concern for mankind: heart, mind, and soul. Thus, the continued humanitarian activities of the Ahl Bait foundation are a struggle for the dignity of Ghanaians, a fight against poverty, illiteracy, diseases, and hunger.

As revealed in this chapter, Iran's humanitarian works have continued to contribute to the social growth and economic development of Ghana. Unsurprisingly, the works have also become a source of soft power tool in Iran's foreign policy towards Ghana. We indicated how its interventions in the educational, health, and agricultural sectors of the country have raised its status in the country. Socially, aside from the wider societal recognition Iran enjoys in Ghana, officials of the government have on many occasions made public pronouncements on Iran's contributions to the growth and development of Ghana.

Although the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Oman have embarked on numerous humanitarian projects in Ghana, humanitarian projects undertaken by Iran enjoys wider official recognition and appeal to the general Ghanaian populace. I argue that the reason for this is because these Gulf Arab States engage in similar humanitarian activities

inure to their Wahhabi/Salafi brand of Islam. Their humanitarian projects revolve around construction of mosques, Islamic schools (the *Madrasas*), digging of bore holes for the mosques and the *Madrasas*, and running orphanages on the same compounds of their *Madrasas*. On some occasions, the government, security agencies, and civil societies have raised concern as they consider these religious orphanages and *Madrasas* as incubations for Islamic extremism and terrorism.

So, what are the general perceptions of the government and people of Ghana towards Iran's humanitarian works in the country? How do they act, react, and interact with those humanitarian projects translating into a growing status of the Islamic Republic in Ghana? The next chapter seeks to answer these questions.

CHAPTER 5: IRAN HUMANITARIAN WORKS, GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF GHANA, STATUS

Introduction

Fundamental to the making of foreign policy of a state is national interest. National interest, therefore, becomes the starting point and the guiding compass of a state's foreign policy formulation (Yukaruc, 2017). Determination of national interest is also constrained by the prevailing interest of domestic forces cum the prevailing international politics. Thus, the interplay of internal and external forces influences the charting of what constitutes a country's national interest. In Ghana, decision making on bi/multilateral relation is a preoccupation of the government, this amply finds expression in the constitution of the country - (i.e., Articles 73, 74 and 75). Article 73 states, among others, that "the Government of Ghana shall conduct its international affairs in consonance with the accepted principles of public international law and diplomacy in a manner consistent with the national interest of Ghana".⁹² Articles 74 and 75 also appeared to invest in the Executive President, and to a larger extent, parliament, the power to determine and formulate foreign policy directions of the country. As indicated by Dueck (2010), executive presidents in conventional democratic countries are the major players when it comes to foreign policy, and the powers accords them by constitutions ensures their central role in making foreign policy decisions. Dueck (2010) argues, that although external factors are taken into consideration, "the triumph of one foreign policy tendency over another is crucially shaped by the president's own choices",⁹³ and that "foreign policy is what the

⁹². The 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, p. 62

⁹³. Dueck, 2010. p.5

president says it is". Some of the factors presumed to influence presidential decision making, among others, is domestic political interests especially in liberal democratic countries where general elections are organized periodically.

In Ghana, for example, in an instance where an executive president together with his/her political party ignores the interests and concerns of civil societies organizations (CSOs), s/he stands a better chance of losing the next general election. Thus, internal pressures from CSOs and other interest groups influence the formulation of the country's bi/multilateral relations. Put differently, the formulation and implementation of foreign policy is influenced largely by the executive president, think tanks, interest groups, the media and public opinion. CSOs in Ghana, by far, have performed better in terms of their contribution to making bi/multilateral relations and its implementation. CSOs serve as a channel of communication and a source of information for the members of the public. In Ghana where freedom of speech is constitutionally entrenched with the liberty to embark on picketing and demonstration without any hindrance from the government, CSOs continue to perform watch-dog functions on the executive president, cabinet ministers, and the other arms of government. Domestic and foreign policies of the government are, therefore, subjected to serious scrutiny through major programs on radio and televisions. The citizenry listens and read issues of significance to domestic and foreign policy decision making through these uncensored socio/politico programs published by the electronic and print media outlets.

A significant contribution of CSOs is, therefore, the creation of awareness on pertinent government stance on a particular domestic or foreign policy. The citizenry is made aware of whatever decisions the government takes. CSOs inform

and educate the public on important national issues which also contribute to the formation of public opinion in the state. Public opinion is the sum or aggregate views held by the people on an important national issue at a point in time. In Ghana where general elections are organized every four years with the press constantly and consistently scrutinizing government policies, a successful government in an election is the listening government and that is the one that pays attention to public opinion. The public, on the other hand, also convey their concerns to the government through public opinion. Public opinion provides important alternatives and suggestions as well as complements to government policies and programs. Through public opinion, certain decisions on bi/multilateral relations of the government are scrutinized, and suggestions are made to facilitate their implementation.

Iran's humanitarian activities within the socio/politico landscape of Ghana are phenomenal. For example, the unique efforts of Iranian citizens to integrate into the Ghanaian society and improve the living standard of the ordinary Ghanaian masses through the development and advancement of education, health, and agriculture is acknowledged. Thus, it would be wrong to assume that the government and people of Ghana have not taken notice of the impact Iran's humanitarian interventions have had on their country. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the thoughts and opinions of Ghanaians whose line of work has direct and/or indirect relation with Iran – Ghana relation. The three research questions explored were directed towards examining and uncovering the thoughts and opinions of the participants as they had and continue to observe, experience, and understand the phenomenon.

⁹⁴. Ibid. p.6

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To gain insights into the thoughts and opinions of the participants who have direct and/or indirect relation with Iran – Ghana relation and Iran's humanitarian activities in Ghana, in-depth interviews were conducted with twenty-five participants. These participants were selected according to the given criteria which included their status as current or former workers of some selected governmental or non-government entities with direct or indirect interest in Iran' humanitarian activities in Ghana, and have experience, knowledge, and understanding of Iran – Ghana relations.

The research questions were designed to primarily serve as parameters from which the shared thoughts and opinions of the participants will be clustered into meaningful points (Creswell, 1998). Based on the descriptive analysis of the interviews, essential themes are identified from the clusters from which textural descriptions are developed to making sense of the subject matter. Kemper's

(1981) definition of the concept of status was used as the conceptual framework into which the themes are integrated.⁹⁵ In analyzing the participants' thoughts and opinions, the researcher will be having a particular focus on those that reveal properties of the concept of status as defined by Kemper. Based on the seven properties of the concept, possible meanings of each of the statements will be examined and attention given to the themes that would be evolving. The seven properties of status in Kemper's definition bothers on a country's search for political dominance and social influence in its foreign policy towards a state or a non-state actor in an 'internal' or 'external' geographical territory.

The first theme, "Iran is a country that promote peace and stability in the West African sub-region and does not promote terrorism in any form in Ghana", reflects the ultimate objective (of deferring to Iran) by current and former Ghanaian diplomats, foreign policy academics, foreign policy think tankers, and interest groups, despite the initial prejudice some of the participants held of the Islamic Republic's bleak foreign policy of engaging in global terrorism. It highlights good image of Iran and corroborate decade of persistent public statement it has issued in declaring 'clean' relation with West African countries. In analyzing the participants' thoughts and opinions, the researcher will be having a particular focus on those that reveal properties of the concept of status as defined by Kemper. Based on the seven properties of the concept, possible meanings of each of the statements will be examined and attention given to the themes that would be evolving. The seven properties of status in Kemper's

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The second theme, "Ghana's establishment of diplomatic relation with Iran and maintenance of same till date by successive Ghanaian governments is a good decision" relates to the second property of status, acceptability. It provides a comparison of Ghanaians' acceptance of their country's durable and excellent relation with Iran and their favorable perception of the Islamic

⁹⁵. See p. 11 for Kemper's definition of the concept of status, and p.51 for a detail discussion on the concept of status.

Republic as against the negative global outlook some western media project about the country.

The third theme, “Iran’s humanitarian works are more progressive and holistically impactful on Ghanaians” gives an insight into the high level of approval of the humanitarian activities of the Islamic republic, and as a motivator to continue its quest for South – South Cooperation actualization in Ghana.

The fourth theme, “the creation of enabling environment by successive Ghanaian governments, traditional rulers, and major stakeholders for the execution of Iranian humanitarian projects” is an indicative of the support government and people of Ghana continuously accord Iran. Despite its desire to execute humanitarian projects in Ghana, the Islamic Republic could not have succeeded but for the supports it receives from the central government, and especially traditional rulers who by law, are owners of ‘the lands’.

The fifth theme, “Iran is one of the powerful countries in the Middle East with a strong military capability and deadly militant groups which makes it difficult for it to be attacked or invaded by the USA and or Israel or Saudi Arabia” is an affirmation of respect and veneration Ghanaians hold in high for Iran, another property of status.

The sixth theme, “Iran is a country with peculiar governance structure with remarkable resilience of so many international sanctions and resistance spirits to western global hegemony for the past decades” suggest another property of status, admiration.

The seventh theme, “we have seen and heard of Iranian citizens living in Ghana and working as doctors, nurses, teachers, agriculturalists” highlight Ghanaians’ love of the Islamic Republic’s commitment to Ghana’s socio-economic growth and development, and love is the last property of status.

Whiles analyzing the responses to each of the three research questions, I purposely focused on the evolving themes which has direct relevance to the properties of the concept of status. In presenting the interview results, therefore, the responses are clustered together in accordance with the themes rather than the three research questions.

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Figure 1:

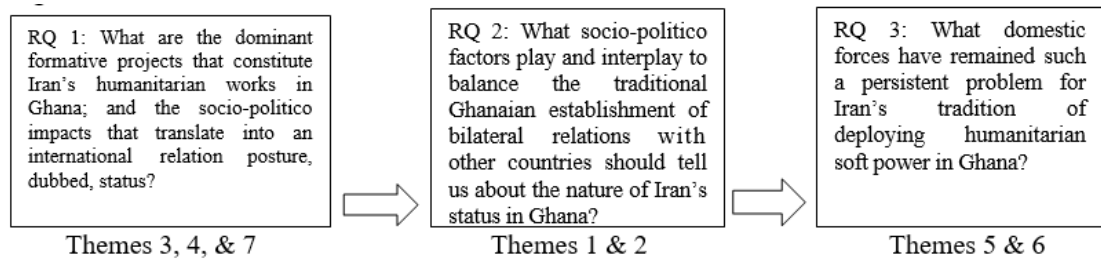


Figure 1: Diagram indicating where and how the themes evolved relative to each of the research questions.

INTERVIEW RESULTS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND RESULTANT THEMES

Reporting on Iran’s foreign policy is an area prone to prevailing global politics and not some little hyperboles. The tendency among domestic Ghanaian reporters appears to be to toe the line of the powerful western media that reflect the editorial ideology of their governments. Reporting about the Islamic Republic in the leading western media has, therefore, been influenced greatly by the “State Sponsor of Terrorism” theories, while overtly establishment of militant proxy allies feature more frequently as articles.

It is not just the Islamic Republic's actions and policies abroad that attract a wary or negative appraisal in the leading western media. Sariolghalam's (2005) wrote about "Iran's coalition paradigm and non-submissive posture", which, when coupled with the fact that Iran continues to approach the world through the prism of 'national greatness', often makes them appear cocky and hostile when dealing with 'others'. Katzman (2016) wrote about how this prickly sense of greatness makes the Islamic Republic appear susceptible to anger with the urge for confrontation. According to Katzman (2016), Such posture further represents an attempt to enhance Iran's international prestige or restore a sense of "greatness" reminiscent of the ancient Persian empires. Example is the ferocity with which Iranian pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia have for years turn on the Kingdom's religious police even if it is about a mere safety and security directives the latter was giving is full of reminiscences of the narratives. Despite all these, responds elicited from my participants, as shown below, indicate positive impressions and perceptions of Ghanaians about Iran. with which Iranian pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia have for years turn on the Kingdom's religious police even if it is about a mere safety and security directives the latter was giving is full of reminiscences of the narratives.

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THEME ONE: Iran is a country that promote peace and stability in Ghana reflects the ultimate objective of deferring to the Islamic Republic.

The responses given by the participants reinforced what has been summarized earlier in the beginning of this chapter. The participants have directly or indirectly studied Iran's activities in Ghana and have acquired knowledge and experience to that effect. The participants interviewed reported the futility of allegations and accusations of Iran as sponsoring and promoting terrorist cells in Ghana. My respondents described the allegations as baseless and fruitless, being perpetuated by the USA and its Middle Eastern allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel

for their individual and collective national interests. Although some of the participants showed knowledge of Iran sponsoring proxy militant groups within the Middle Eastern territory, they were quick to deny such being the practice of the Islamic Republic in its relations with Ghana and the countries in the West African sub-region. Maybe it is a blessing that there is such a wild global accusation of Iran (A010). For the accusation served as centripetal forces that drew some of us into researching about the activities of the Islamic Republic in Ghana and within the sub-region (A010, A011, A012). While the participant's knowledge about the subject varies, they agree that Iran does not engage in any form of terrorism in Ghana, overtly nor covertly. Because the participants came from different professional background, what they described illustrated the true picture of how Ghanaians perceive Iran. Referring to Kemper's definition of status as a foreign policy concept, the theme that evolved from the knowledge, thought, and opinion of participants revolves around 'deferring' to Iran. The need to be 'deferred to' provides the means for satisfying a state's quest for influence in its immediate or far away geographical area. This is a very critical stage because it sets the foundation for attaining other properties of status. The lack of being deferred to by a [much] less natural and human resource country like Ghana would have been compelling evidence of lack of influence of Iran within the West African sub-region. On the contrary, to be deferred to is a confirmatory evident of influence. Ghanaians have specific reasons for endorsing Iran as a country with peaceful mission in Ghana and within the West African sub-region. A010, a participant and a professor of international relations and security studies who has undertaken numerous research on security, terrorism, Islamism, and radicalism in West Africa for more than two decades is yet to be convinced of a

terrorist cell or militancy group being backed by Iran. Despite its success in establishing various kinds of *Shi'a* oriented *madrasas* and Islamic centers, no empirical evidence has been adduced to support the wild allegation of Iran promoting extremism and sponsoring terrorism in Ghana and within the sub-region (A001). (A010; A011; A012; A013), distinguished Ghanaian academics with decades of teaching and research about Jihadi movements are rather amused by the USA's comfortability in maintaining a strong relation with Saudi Arabia which has, for years, promoted hardline Wahhabi Islamic ideologies that has threatened the peace, security, and the stability of West African states. Iran-led *Shia* activities have posed no threat at all to the security of Ghana or any of the West African countries (A010, A011, A012, A013). A014 who leads a think tank that focuses on foreign policy and security of Ghana finds it hard to fathom the continuous labelling of Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism while it is not. I needed to research for years on Islamism and security so I can comprehend the reality of this issue (A016). Having worked in the Ghana foreign service rising to becoming a career diplomat, I tell you on record that Ghana has never believed in the global political propaganda of western governments labelling Iran a state sponsor of terrorism (A014 & A015).

THEME TWO: Ghana's establishment of diplomatic relation with Iran and maintenance of same till date by successive Ghanaian governments is a good decision relates to accepting Iran

Establishment of diplomatic relations between two countries is a resolution between two countries with accepted bilateral understandings often projected on a well-established communication channel, in this respect, opening of a

diplomatic mission. A decision to establish a resident embassy or consulate in a foreign country is the result of a variety of factors and representations of actors present in the region. It may be a preference influenced by geographical proximity, or a desire to establish relations with a growing power or an already established one, which has become extremely important. The opening of an embassy may also be motivated by economic factor. The portrayal of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a potential threat to countries of the West African sub-region is usually presented in great force, or in traditional terms: widespread political shenanigans. The argument often made by Saudi Arabia and Israel is that increased relation with Iran threatens the peace, stability, and security of the sub-region. However, there are growing number of Ghanaian foreign policy think tankers writing and speaking about Iran's daily contribution to the educational, health, and agricultural sectors of Ghana. In recent years, respected Ghanaian foreign policy and security analysts have publicly encouraged closer ties with Iran in an attempt to make *Iraniaphobic* prohibitively expensive.

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Ghana's four-decade of diplomatic relations with Iran were best described by the participants when they shared their thoughts and opinions. The insights shared by the participants demonstrate the comfortability of Ghanaians in their country's durable relation with Iran. During this portion of the interview, some participants became emotional and animated as they described their frustrations with the USA and Israel continue pressure on Ghana to publicly denounce Iran and scale back or completely sever relation with it. This issue corresponds to Ghanaians' desire to continue their acceptance of Iran as an important global player with a unique system of government. Without any hesitation, Ghanaians are appreciative of the phenomenal benefits the relation has brought to their country and feel the sufficiency of acceptability for it to continue. At this second property in Kemper's definition of status, Ghanaians are concerned with having an excellent relation with Iran where both countries continue to enjoy the related benefits to their national interests. Based on the descriptions of the concepts of status as explained earlier in this chapter, the acceptability property appears to be relevant for attaining influence. This is where Iran's satisfaction is at the highest level as it continues to hold on to this influence in achieving its foreign policy objectives. A001, a participant and a former Ghanaian diplomat, had a good reason for endorsing Iran as a country with peaceful mission in Ghana and in the West Africa sub-region. I joined Ghana's foreign service in 1981, just two years after the Islamic revolution. As one of the senior diplomats then, I still remember the pressure that was brought to bear on the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the government to sever relations with Iran and publicly denounce

it (A001). Despite the incessant diplomatic pressure, the government of Jerry John Rawlings under

which I served rather strengthened relation with the Islamic Republic by encouraging the establishment of resident embassies in each other's capital in 1982 (A001). (A003), a former Ghanaian distinguished diplomat joined the foreign service in 1984 when the Iran – Iraq War was at its peak. He shared his thought about the mounting pressure that was brought to bear on Ghana and other West African countries by Saudi Arabia to openly declare support for Iraq and severe relations with Iran. While the war went on, I keenly observed that there were varying degrees of lobbying by different western countries to get Ghana and other West African countries to denounce Iran (A005). A003 who served as Ghana's resident ambassador in Tehran from 1986 to 1991 remembers series of assurances African diplomatic missions in Iran kept giving the government of Ali Khamenei for the continuation of the existing bi/multilateral relations despite global diplomatic onslaught on their individual countries and collective union by the western powers and Saudi Arabia. Just like citizens of all states, concern for safety and security creates anxiety. However, exposure to the reality of global hegemonic politicking with its propagandist tendencies appear not to have favored those western countries' plans against Iran (A001, A002, A003, A004, A005).

THEME THREE: Iran's humanitarian works are more progressive and holistically impactful on Ghanaians gives an insight to approving Iran

Iran's commitment to supporting Ghana's growth and development agenda through humanitarian works is unique and a sign of approval by Ghanaians for the Islamic Republic to keep up the good work. The educational, health, and agricultural services being provided by the Ahl Bait foundation in Ghana has a

wider impact on Ghanaians as compared to the humanitarian projects being undertaken by the Gulf Arab States (A017, A018, A019, A20). For Muslim conservative parents who were hesitant of sending their wards to secular schools for fear of them being Christianized,

the schools established by Iran came as a rescue mission (A018, A019). Aside from providing quality secular education to Ghanaians in general and Muslims in particular, they are aiding the country's national vision of eradicating illiteracy by 2030 (A018, A019). Many of the Muslim girls currently enrolled in the Lady Fatimah High Schools may possibly would not have been in school but for the availing opportunity (A017, A020).

Besides, although Sunni Muslims constitutes more than 90% of the Ghanaian Muslim population, the activities of Ghana Muslim students Association are largely funded by Iranian institutions due to our inability to secure supports from other organizations (A017). Anytime we approached them for support, we are told their budgets are meant only for the construction of mosques and *Madrasas*, digging of bore holes, and taking care of orphans (A017). The Ahl Bait foundation and the Iranian Cultural Center have always responded positively to our request, no matter how small it sometimes came (A017).

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The provision of seed capital and farming materials in support of poor rural farmers in the remote parts of Ghana has not only raised the standard of life of the beneficiaries, but has also aided the agricultural development of the country (A0022). Born and bred in a village in the rural part of northern Ghana, I am aware of the enormous challenges peasant farmers are facing just to make a living (A022). Many of them were financially and logistically supported through the Ahl Bait Foundation's Agricultural and Rural Development Program, in addition to regular technical training they are taken through to enhance their farming skills (A022). These interventions have boosted their yields and increased their farming income.

THEME FOUR: the creation of enabling environment by successive Ghanaian governments, traditional rulers, and major stakeholders for the execution of Iranian humanitarian projects is an indication of providing supports to Iran.

In the succeeding interviews, execution of various Iranian humanitarian projects in Ghana has been described as a perfect indicative of the support successive Ghanaian governments, traditional rulers who are the owners of lands, and major stakeholders continue to accord Iran to enable it provide quality of life to the Ghanaian populace. Although some of the participants expressed curiosity about the prime areas most of the Iranian institutions and humanitarian projects are located, they showed optimism that it may be because of the government and traditional rulers' conviction of the importance of those projects. Thus, the responses given by the participants describing immense support the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to receive from Ghanaians are in two-fold: executing of Iranian humanitarian projects; and doing so within high-class residential areas of the country.

The Islamic University College of Ghana, the Lady Fatimah Senior High School, and the *Hawza* Islamic schools are all located at 'East Legon', a high elitist community of the Ghanaian capital, Accra. Both educational institutions have been successful in their own respective endeavors and have also been able to provide virtually free or low-cost education to Ghanaians in such a serene environment. The execution of the projects and the locations in which they are located are interconnected achievements, and one cannot be subordinated to the other, as making available such huge acres of lands to a foreign institution is rare and doing that in a prime area is almost impossible (A006 & A009). The drive to providing spaces of such magnitude to the Islamic Republic to execute humanitarian projects is fueled by the desire to offer national support to that country's activities. In short, for Iran, the result of being successful in its humanitarian activities is being able to uplift the social and economic well-being

of Ghanaians. Although it continues to provide the needed humanitarian projects for the Ghanaian citizenry, the national support it keeps receiving from the government and the people of Ghana is priority that gives utmost satisfaction to Iranian officials. Support, which has been described earlier as the major property of status, is a *sine qua non* for the Islamic Republic to be able to achieve its national interests. Put differently, it does not matter the significance of prospective humanitarian projects, if the government and people of the receiving country do not lend their supports, such projects cannot be executed.

THEME FIVE: Iran is one of the powerful countries in the Middle East with a strong military capability and deadly militant groups which makes it difficult for it to be attacked or invaded by the USA, Israel or Saudi Arabia denotes respect Ghanaians accord Iran.

To be considered a country with military capabilities and enormous natural and human resources is a recognition of affection Ghanaians accord Iran, culminating into respect. The quest for status, being the primary concern of Iran in Ghana, becomes the culmination of all the efforts toward gaining respect. A012 and A013 who are professors of foreign policy in Ghanaian tertiary institutions all expressed conviction of Iran being a strong country because of its enormous human and natural resource. The quest for status, being the primary concern of Iran in Ghana, becomes the culmination of all the efforts toward gaining respect.

To be considered a country with military capabilities and enormous natural and human resources is a recognition of affection Ghanaians accord Iran, culminating into respect. The quest for status, being the primary concern of Iran in Ghana, becomes the culmination of all the efforts toward gaining respect. A012 and A013 who are professors of foreign policy in Ghanaian tertiary institutions all expressed conviction of Iran being a strong country because of its enormous natural resources and a boisterous population. They also feel the Islamic republic has successfully withered away any form of external threat to its theocratic regime. Whereas there were 'international' military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya which ousted Taliban government one in 2001, Saddam Hussein's government in 2003, and Muammar Gadhafi's regime in 2011, the theocratic regime of Iran has remained more organized, despite the incessant threats by the USA since the Islamic revolution of 1979 (A012 & A013). Further, it will be difficult if not impossible for a weaker state to create and/or maintain durable alliance(s) with militant proxy groups within west and central Asia as Iran has done (A010 & A011). Consequently, the Americans and their Western and Middle Eastern partners are very much aware of the unprecedented level of chaos that will engulf the Middle Eastern region should they invade Iran (A010 & A011).

As expressed by Morgenthau (1960), international politics like all other politics is a struggle for power, whatever some other objectives there may be, power is the final goal. Thus, for Ghanaians to perceive Iran as one of the powerful states

in the Middle Eastern region is the highest level of respect accorded the Islamic Republic, a property of status as defined by Kemper (1981). With such a high level of respect, Iran's search for influence and dominance in Ghana is achieved. It is at this point that the Islamic republic feels firm and stable in its foreign policy towards Ghana. For influence is a combination of a country being feared and respected by others. Being accorded either one does not provide the influence as much as being fulfilled in both. And so long as "status and power constitute the sum and substance of sociopolitical relations, what actors do with, to, for, and against each other",⁹⁶ then actor(s) with high status are accorded some level of acceptability, privileges, and rewards by the actor(s) in the relationship (Theodore, 1981).

THEME SIX: The seventh theme, "we have seen and heard of Iranian citizens living in Ghana and working as doctors, nurses, teachers, agriculturalists.

Iran's use of its own citizens anchors on the core principles of the humanitarian works it is executing in Ghana. The dream of seeing Ghanaians on a path to growth and development blended with self-reliance spurred Iran on to seize every opportunity to encourage the deployment of Iranian citizens to Ghana (A023 & A024). It is almost axiomatic that Iranians' bravery, service precision, and volunteerism in the execution of humanitarian works expose them to Ghanaians' admiration. Strong admiration has been adduced to explain the nature of Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana. Much of the admiration from the participants is the avowed commitment of Iranian citizens who are residents in

⁹⁶. Ibid.

Ghana and serving as doctors, nurses, teachers, and agriculturalists. The deployment of Iranian citizens in the operationalization of health, educational, and agricultural projects has thrown bright light on Iran's humanitarian works. A019, a traditional Ghanaian paramount chief in the northern territory expressed his fascination of Iranian agriculturalists who have agreed to live in rural areas of Ghana where many Ghanaian agricultural technocrats refused to be posted to. "You will see them (the Iranian agriculturalists, he means) travelling to hinterlands to meet with rural farmers and inspect their farms" (A019). Similarly, Ghanaian patients who visit Iran hospital come in direct contacts with Iranian doctors and nurses, just as Ghanaian students come face-to-face with Iranian academics who teach them certain selected subjects (A018 & A020). Although most of the Gulf States engage in one form of humanitarian work or the other in Ghana, Iran's humanitarian activities are distinct not only because of its holistic benefits to the general Ghanaian society, but also because they appear to be the only one to have their own citizens in the forefronts of executing the projects (A006; A020). A005, a former Ghanaian minister of foreign affairs said, "Iran's deployment of its citizens in executing its humanitarian works in Ghana from 1986 to the present and spanning under five different Ghanaian presidents has remained largely unchanged in its basic tenets; the formation of the policy which has attracted the attention of both the government and people of Ghana and their admiration".

THEME SEVEN: Iran is a country with peculiar governance structure with remarkable resilience of so many international sanctions and resistance spirits to western global hegemony for the past decades suggest admiration for Iran.

The beginnings of 1980 saw a remarkable consolidation in the relationship between Iranians and Ghanaians. They have come to acknowledge each other more and more and re-oriented themselves on the need for better cooperation. In the words of A024, a Ghanaian senior staff at the Iran hospital in Accra, “Ghanaians’ affairs are being administered in the light of Ghana’s specific conditions by Iranian bureaucrats working hand-in-hand with Ghanaians”. The effort towards cooperation between the two peoples culminated in the love Ghanaians have for Iran as a country and Iranians as a people. Iran’s relations with Ghana is not only affected by its South – South Cooperation agenda, but also by its determination to salvage the poorer Muslim communities that have remained in bad states with characteristics that are posing social dangers to the larger Ghanaian societies (A018; A023; A024).

Scientific investigation springs from a very paradoxical source. It seems that the wish to ‘know’ stems from being an ‘outsider’. On the other hand, the ability to ‘know’ lies with the ‘insider’. This is why “[T]he non-believer will talk of religion as a blind man might of colors”.⁹⁷ The same applies to those who may wonder why the Sunni majority Ghanaian Muslims and even non-Ghanaian Muslims exhibit much love for Iran as a country and Iranians as a people. Put differently, the Saudi Arabian government may find it paradoxical the level of love Ghanaian Muslims who are mainly Sunnis have for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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A021 who is a veteran journalist and an editor-in-chief of a premier private newspaper contends, that "Iran's support base in Ghana has long moved from mainly Muslim communities to the larger Ghanaian society. Non-Muslim Ghanaians have come to appreciate Iran's tremendous contribution to the growth

⁹⁷. Evans-Pritchard. 1965., p.27

and development of Ghana”. A010 and A015 are fascinated with the extremely low tuition fees charged by the Islamic University College, Ghana, as compared to the other private tertiary institutions. This, according to them “has led to the spike in the enrollment of non-Muslim in the institution and the love being shown to the Islamic Republic” (A010; A015). It has also deepened the ties of friendship and the bonds of cooperation between the two countries, with the two peoples resolving to cooperate more in the areas of education, health, agriculture, and cultural exchange (A014). Touching on the love Ghanaians have for Iranians, A023, a Ghanaian senior staff working with the Islamic University College intimated, that “We are aware of the exceptional love Ghanaians have for Iranians, and so the Ahl Bait Foundation is determined to expand more on the areas of health and education, and agricultural projects”.

Summary of Interviews

Thus far, we have analyzed the interviews we had with twenty-five participants comprised of former senior Ghanaian diplomats, current and former members of parliament, senior foreign policy academics, think tankers, interest groups, and men from the media fraternity. There are two conclusions one can draw from the role of Ghanaian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Iran’s growing status in Ghana. First, CSOs act as an intermediary between the Ghanaian general public and the central government. Like all other countries, public policy research and analysis organizations and pressure groups, more commonly known as “CSOs”, play important roles in policy-making processes in Ghana. They, according to Haas “fill a critical void between the academia world and

the realm of government”.⁹⁸ And

“through their usually extensive roster of experts and academics, propose original options and ideas to help administrations (and opponents) generate policies to further their political goals – be it domestic or foreign policy; their rosters can also provide a ready pool of experts from which an administration can fill government posts; and they also help administration with mediation and attempts solutions to pressing issues, they also provide forums for experts and policymakers (including members of the press, universities, embassies, foreign policy bureaucracy, and business and financial communities) to meet and conduct detailed study and discussion on pressing matters of foreign policy and the national interest”.⁹⁹

In the recently released 2016 *Go to Think Tank Index Report*, CSOs continue to have an important contribution in formulating understandings of complex events in today’s world. The report indicates that policymakers need clear, reliable, accessible, and useful information about certain critical and sensitive decisions they are about to take from CSOs (McGann, 2016). Further, they are also interested in knowing the impact current policies are making, and the possible alternatives from CSOs that may generate lesser cost and consequences (Weithal & Luong, 2006).

CSOs put pressure on the Ghanaian governments to create the needed environment for the execution of Iran’s developmental projects in the country. They do this by encouraging and promoting people-centered arguments for the consideration of the executive and legislative organs of government. Thus, although domestic policies and bi/multilateral decision making in liberal democratic countries across the globe is largely taken by the executive president, small number of

For those who perceive CSOs as a *sin qua non* for quality foreign policy decision making process proffered some reasons, which include but not limited to, their promotion of good governance, transparency, accountability, and ensuring universal human rights. CSOs appear to play this important role in the foreign policy decision making of Ghana which has since 1992 embraced the liberal democratic dispensation.

Given the extensive range of CSOs positive posture towards Ghana – Iran relation and the latter’s humanitarian projects within the landscape of the former, one can reasonable observe the West African country wittingly responding to the call of maintaining excellent relation with the Islamic Republic against all odds. Various studies have proved that executive presidents under liberal democratic states are easily forced to abandon an unpopular foreign policy decision with a country widely loved and respected by the ordinary citizens. Example is Ghana where through good governance, vibrant CSOs and high civil engagement has been able to escape a miscalculated foreign policy decision. Hence the good news that Ghana for the past two decades has become somewhat receptive to the knowledge being produced by CSOs and are wittingly or unwittingly consuming it. Premier foreign policy CSOs such as the Council of Foreign Relations, Center for Security Studies, Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center and many others have for some years now call for the maintenance of excellent relations with Iran.

⁹⁸. Richard Haass is in his eighteenth year as president of the Council on Foreign Relations, USA.

⁹⁹. Ibid.

The connection between CSOs and the impact they make on the foreign decision-making process of the [executive] government has attracted the attention of academics. For those who perceive CSOs as a *sin qua non* for quality foreign policy decision making process proffered some reasons, which include but not limited to, their promotion of good governance, transparency, accountability, and ensuring universal human rights. CSOs appear to play this important role in the foreign policy decision making of Ghana which has since 1992 embraced the liberal democratic dispensation. Given the extensive range of CSOs positive posture towards Ghana – Iran relation and the latter’s humanitarian projects within the landscape of the former, one can reasonable observe the West African country wittingly responding to the call of maintaining excellent relation with the Islamic Republic against all odds. Various studies have proved that executive presidents under liberal democratic states are easily forced to abandon an unpopular foreign policy decision with a country widely loved and respected by the ordinary citizens. Example is Ghana where through good governance, vibrant CSOs and high civil engagement has been able to escape a miscalculated foreign policy decision. Hence the good news that Ghana for the past two decades has become somewhat receptive to the knowledge being produced by CSOs and are wittingly or unwittingly consuming it. Premier foreign policy CSOs such as the Council of Foreign Relations, Center for Security Studies, Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center and many others have for some years now call for the maintenance of excellent relations with Iran. Further, the level of interest in educational, health, and agricultural sectors in Ghana has grown with several social and political pundits within the CSOs adapting to being

niche discussants about it. This is visible in the way CSOs have related to the Ahl Bait Foundation for the past two decades; its contribution in developing education, health, and agricultural sectors of the country. Some specific Muslim pressure groups have also embarked on virulent campaigns in support of Iran and its humanitarian projects in Ghana. These Muslims' interest groups have coordinated with the Muslim caucus in the Ghanaian parliament and members on the committee on foreign affairs to ensure Ghana maintains a strong relation with Iran. Thus, the growing influence of Iran in Ghana characterized by a rising status is not accidental. It is as a result of the enormous supports, virulent campaign and decades of pressures mounted on the executive and legislative arms of government and other quasi state institutions by the CSOs.

The constitutional powers approach usually adopted by the Ghanaian CSOs often shakes the mainstream political class. The democratic values that Ghanaian national professionals profess to hold so dear are frequently tested by the pressure and forces of the civil societies through press conferences and releases, picketing and demonstrations, and legal actions. More importantly, while the CSOs may not influence actual policy, they can create a tone for policy debate. In this regard, they can influence the conduct of policymaking. An executive president or a member of parliament who ignores angry CSOs is likely to harm his/her political fortunes. Whereas an executive president or a parliamentarian who can articulate a policy position within a framework provided by the CSOs may reap a phenomenal benefit.

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The superior influence of the CSOs on the decision-making actors is contingent upon both the peculiar CSO projecting and leading the issue at stake, and what exactly the issue is all about. It is more likely that a suggestion from a CSO like the Council of Foreign Affairs comprising of veteran Ghanaian diplomats will be taken more seriously than an alternative view from pressure groups such the Ghana Muslim Students Association. Given the tendency for the former to put forward cogent policy argument for the government to ponder over, it is likely for them to serve as particularly strong source of policy prescriptions. However, the latter's tendencies to embark on nation-wide demonstration with much wider audiences have much potential to influence Muslim electorate towards a political party with 'favorable' alternatives. Nonetheless, the alternative policies presented by

pressure groups such as the unions of [Muslim] students to the government are often of considerable limiter on how much new ideas it provides, leaving their presented documents with shallow depictions of sound alternative to existing policies. Given the complex nature of foreign policy decision making, this suggests a very limited understanding of the politics involved.

There are times, though, when CSOs act as a valuable resource to the executive president and the foreign ministry bureaucratic system specifically, during times of diplomatic crisis, when the policy alternatives presented by CSOs provide quicker solution than that of official agencies. However, with the advancement of time and government begins to get better abreast with the unfolding event, the policies of the bureaucratic system may dwarf the efforts of the CSOs although their inputs are mostly taking into consideration. With these [in]formal partnership, the CSOs have become more important, and their roles encouraged, as the government turns them into partners for mobilizing public opinions to achieve the foreign policy goals of the state.

In concluding this chapter, it is imperative to state, that pressure and lobbying efforts by Ghanaian foreign policy CSOs have expanded considerably over the last two decades. The Ghanaian socio- politico landscape is buzzed with dozens of CSOs with interests in development matters and/or foreign policy issues. Taking cognizance of this cacophony of voices shouting and mounting pressure with ‘voting threat’, it is difficult for any Ghanaian government to ignore their demands, at least, not in whole. Therefore, the dominant framework in foreign policy decision making of Ghana remains the executive president with the established bureaucratic system, taking into serious

consideration the views and opinions of CSOs. Thus, the existing tradition – at least for the past three decades – in Ghana’s foreign policy decision making dialogues is effectively, manifestations of certain CSOs lobbying while some special interest groups issue threats. In the case of Iran – Ghana relation, the reader can see how the CSOs have used the former’s development-oriented humanitarian projects to justify the acceptability, love, support, respect, and adornment they accord it. Equally, as the only socio-political force, potential large-scale to gag the powers of the government, Ghanaian Muslim pressure groups are able to push their agenda as well, appealing to electoral base of the more Muslim communities, the Zongos. Perceived as a generous, altruistic, and sponsor of strategic humanitarian projects, Iran offers a target for lobbies and pressure groups that push development-oriented prescriptions and allows them to ignore the negative allegations and accusations levelled on the Islamic Republic by the USA and its Middle Eastern allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel.

The interview responses indicate different facets of CSOs as well as pressure groups treatment of key issues that make up the Iran – Ghana debate, and their influence on Ghanaian foreign policy decision makers. It was my conviction, undertaking this research project, that the CSOs can assist to steer the discussions and help frame the debate on Iran’s growing status in Ghana, and the interview responses support this view. That said, it is still hard to quantify the real level of impacts the CSOs make on foreign policy decision making of the country vis-à-vis Iran.

Overall, it is empirically clear that Ghanaians willingly defer to Iran by having positive perception about its global outlook, accept Ghana’s durable relation with

it, approve its humanitarian activities within Ghanaian societies, lend their support in executing those projects, accord Iran as a country and Iranians as a people the necessary courtesy of respect, in fact, admire their global non-submissive posture, and love the level of efforts Iranian citizens are exerting in the provision of

educational, health, and agricultural services in Ghana.

As such, Iran's growing status in Ghana is getting real than ever. Iran's continuous search for status influences its use of humanitarian soft power in Ghana. Its interventions in the educational, health, and agricultural sectors to uplift the status of poorer Ghanaian communities has paid off. Iran's humanitarian projects through the strategic planning and funding of the Ahl Bait Foundation have helped in changing the lives of many poor Ghanaian communities and rural folks. A look at the contemporary development in the relation between Iran and Ghana shows clearly that Ghana has become the 'virgin island' of Iran. The Islamic Republic has used its strategic South – South Cooperation agenda, commitment to development, and humanitarian aid to becoming an important and trusted friend to Ghanaians. Whereas its sectarian *Shi'a* activities in Ghana has caused some nervousness and sometimes open hostility between it and the leadership of the majority Sunni Muslims -, the leadership in Tehran has earned the respect and trust of the government and people of Ghana who are eager to do business with it. Thus, Iran continues to experience growing political influence in Ghana as a Persian Gulf State with substantial natural and human resources.

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CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION

Introduction

Qualitative research tools were used to elicit data needed to describe Iran's search for status in Ghana. Data were collected from twenty-five participants who agreed to share their thoughts and opinions regarding their understanding of Iran's foreign policy and its bilateral relation with Ghana. Participants were interviewed in person except for two former Ghanaian foreign ministers who are now residing in the northern Ghanaian city of Tamale, who, however, agreed to be interviewed via phone. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to be candid in expressing their opinions regarding their thoughts.

Summary of the Study

Before beginning this study, we conducted in-depth review of literature to establish the context of the study. Whereas literature abounds on Iran – African relation, a different approach was adopted, as the study veered away from the usual Iran's activities in the horn of Africa; or the protracted Iran – Saudi Arabia rivalry in Africa; the promotion of the Shi'i sectarian ideology; and the search for new markets opportunities to explain Iran's foreign policy towards Ghana, looking into the Islamic Republic's growing status in the West African country.

This study was focused on the Islamic Republic's use of humanitarian soft power as against

militancy [hard power] to raising its status in Ghana. To achieve this aim, the work analyzed some of the constitutional provisions that reveal the interplay of domestic political actors in the foreign policy decision making of Ghana. This was done with the aim of ascertaining whether the actions, reactions, and interactions of these domestic socio-politico actors significantly cause the creating and growing of Iran's status in the country. In this concluding chapter, a summary of major findings is discussed. Based on the achievements chalked by Iran in its foreign policy architecture in Ghana, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations aimed not only at corroborating the findings of existing literature on the growing influence of Iran in Ghana, but also, and more importantly, reemphasizing our argument, that soft power is an effective tool to establishing and growing a country's status in an external geographical territory in contemporary global political order.

In the introductory chapter of this study, a number of existing works on Iran foreign policy and Iran – African relation were reviewed. The works made in-depth analysis of the determinants of Iranian foreign policy, Iran – Saudi Arabia/Israel conflictual relation in Africa, and how Iran has managed to outflank its middle eastern rivals in the horn of Africa. The background to the research problem, objectives of the study, the hypothesis and the research questions were discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Two of the study elaborated on the conceptual and theoretical issues upon which the study is premised. The realists' theory, the national attributes theory, the social exchange theory, and the concepts of humanitarianism and status were explained. The methodology that was employed for the study was also elaborated step after the other.

Chapter Three discussed the conflictual relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel, and how the US foreign policy towards the region shapes the already tensed relation between them. This chapter is very important because it laid the foundation for the discussion on how the conflict between the rival trio is playing out in Ghana.

Chapter Four recounts the trajectory of the Islamic faith in Ghana, gives a historical development of the Muslim communities in the country (the *Zongos*), made a critical overview of the development of secular education in Ghana and Ghanaian Muslims' relation with it, and laid bare Iran's humanitarian projects in ameliorating the situation.

In Chapter Five, a critical analysis was made to establish the reasons for the growing status of Iran in Ghana. The chapter presented the nature and form of Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana. To this end, we established that humanitarian works per se, do not automatically attract the 'attention', 'acceptability', and 'love' of the government and citizenry of a country. Rather, it is the strategic nature of the humanitarian works and level of impacts it makes on the different facet of the country's population. Interviews conducted with some selected individuals or organizations were also analyzed.

The brief history I have tracked in the preceding chapters establishes Iran's growing status in Ghana despite the competing strategies by its middle eastern rivals in the sub-region. Comparing that to existing literature, it is important to realize the strength of humanitarian soft power as against militant proxies that Iran is known with in the West and Central Asia.

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The study was conducted using Kemper's definition of status as the conceptual framework. This is where "actors willingly and gladly defer to, accept, approve, support, respect, admire and, ultimately, love others without compulsion or coercion", rather than hard power where "actors are able to realize their own will...even over the resistance of others".

The study revolved around three research questions that traversed through the thoughts and opinions of the participants as they are currently dealing with or have had the chance of dealing with Iran – Ghana relations. From the three questions, seven themes evolved. These themes summarized a commonality of thoughts and opinions expressed by each of the participants as they

responded to the inquiries in each of the research questions.

The themes embodied the essential elements in Iran – Ghana relations. While each participant had a unique thoughts and opinions, common themes revolved which were then compared to literature and related to Kemper's definition of status.

The themes which were ranked according to the different properties in Kemper's definition of the concept of status supported what was discussed in literature. However, it also gave new insights on what is happening in the minds of Ghanaian officials relative to their country's relations with the Islamic Republic and its Middle Eastern rivals of Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Although in literature, much about Iran's growing influence in Africa was discussed, literature focused mainly on the horn of Africa, and to a limited extent, the Central and South Africa. Further, literature failed to explain beyond militancy and/or aggressive approach, where strategic development-oriented humanitarian works with phenomenal benefits to ordinary citizenry has led to the growing influence of Iran in Africa.

This study has established that it is not militancy or aggressive foreign policy approach that are triggering Iran's growing influence in Ghana, otherwise, the Islamic Republic would not have been this 'popular' in a sub-region where the Muslim population is 50% and only about 7% of this profess the Shi'i brand of Islam. Humanitarian works are still Iran's goal because it is only through it, that the Islamic Republic expect to achieve its South – South development soft power agenda and gain more status.

Research Questions and Essential Themes

Next is a discussion of the findings that we obtained from analyzing the responses to the interviews. Whilst the discussions in the interviews were categorized under seven themes, in this discussion, the focus will be on the responses to the three research questions from which the themes were obtained.

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE: What are the dominant formative projects that constitute Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana; and the socio-politico impacts that translate into an international relation posture, dubbed, status? I was interested in finding out the kind of humanitarian projects Iran has been undertaking in Ghana. As explained in the literature, a phenomenal benefits of humanitarian projects are those that predominate and usually prevails over sectarian or parochial interest of the donor. It is also of interest to see a relation between the impacts of the humanitarian projects to the citizenry and the state, and what the repercussions would have been without such social interventions.

In Scheme A, Iran's humanitarian projects impact various segment of the Ghanaian population. This means that when the poor and the less fortunate citizens of Ghana can access education and health services at no or less cost, it is aiding in the eradication of illiteracy and building a vibrant and healthy manpower base of the state. The increase in enrollment in Iranian schools and outpatient services in Iran hospitals is a testament to this. A023, a senior staff at the Islamic University College, Ghana, reported that most of those admitted by the university were awarded full scholarship due to the financial difficulties of their families. Same is the case at the Lady Fatimah Senior High school which is

witnessing a high intake every academic year (A023).

In this case, Iranian schools in Ghana are providing not just quality education, but they have also become noble institutions with dedication and commitment to providing humanitarian services.

Many of these poor and less fortunate Ghanaian citizenries would have remained illiterate for the whole of their lives but for the schools being operated by Iranian institutions (A003, A005, A011, A014); or they may not be able to visit the existing public and private health facilities due to high cost of delivery. In either case, the desire to establish schools and hospitals was prompted by the realities of accessibility and affordability of educational and health facilities by the poorest of Ghanaian citizens, chunk of whom are the dwellers of the *Zongos* whose economic condition and social situation were discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four contained a description of the characteristics of Ghanaian Muslim communities – the *Zongos* -, which emphasis among others, that the parochial sectarian ideological interests are suppressed and subordinated by Iran to the general welfare of Ghanaians and the national vision of the Republic of Ghana. Based on the results of the interviews, the predominance of Iranian humanitarian projects over those of the other Gulf States was very noticeable. Some friends and family members of A017, A018, A019, A020, A021 would not have obtained university degrees but for the establishment of the Islamic University College, Ghana. They succeeded in chalking those feet because of the tuition free admissions offered them by the university.

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humanitarian works.

In the case of the female relatives and friends of A018, A019, A021, it was about health. They are always satisfied with the health delivery services Iranian hospitals are providing not only because of the quality of services that are accorded patients, but also because of the Islamic ethos that governs the operations of the hospitals. The meaning that can be attributed to the choice of the relatives and friends of A018, A019, A021 is that they prefer the conservative health delivery facilities where female doctors and nurses are always available to attend to female patients, something they claim happens in other hospitals just by coincidence. Therefore, since they got abreast with the health delivery services of the Iran hospitals, they have long abandoned the services of other health facilities (A018, A019, A021).

As discussed in Chapter Four, unemployment in the Zongos is comparable to the lowest living standard threshold as established by the Statistical Service of Ghana. The educational levels of the Muslim youth barely provided for a low job opportunity in the formal sector. Without taking other factors into consideration, educational levels are the major factors that determine good standard of life and living in most modern societies. Muslim youths lag the other segment of Ghanaian population in terms of formal education, skills, and vocation. This made their economic life more difficult. Thus, due to lack or low level of education, Muslim youths are not able to compete with other segment of Ghanaian population for the available job opportunities.

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The participants reported astronomical rise in healthy and vibrant Muslim youth idling around during the day for lack of education and job opportunities. They cited the social vices and security challenges in the Zongo communities, and difficulties which are hardly experienced in the non- Muslim communities. These social menace in the Muslim communities have made life quite unbearable. A017, having lived in Sabon Zongo and currently based in Nima, stated that the Zongo communities are not the place where one can live a life that is reasonable, according to the current knowledge he has acquired as a final year student at the University of Ghana. The high unemployment rate makes accessing regular health facilities difficult if not impossible. The people cannot access modern health care facilities because they must be ready to pay for more than what they earn in a month.

Being illiterates, unemployed and/or underemployed, leave no room for Muslim youth to enjoy decent life. A021 and A022 implied that successive Ghanaian governments cared very little in eradicating the prevailing social structures inhibiting the development of dwellers of the Zongo communities. According to A021 and A022, it seems like the intention of successive Ghanaian governments is for the inhabitants of the Zongo communities to remain illiterate, unemployed, and poor, so they would continue to be the source of supply for cheap labor for the difficult, dirty, dangerous, and demanding (4Ds) jobs. The reality is those who have not received higher education, will continue to be confronted with unemployment or underemployment with a full social dissatisfaction and the concomitants spillovers that come with it. Many Zongo people are financially hard up, for rising to the top of the social ladder is tough for those born and bred in the Zongos, said A017, A018, A019, A020. For the few who are educated, the change they are currently experiencing enabled them to maximize their situations and enjoy their lives. Most of the participants whose relatives and families obtained their degrees from the Islamic university college, expressed satisfaction and fulfillment for being able to uplift themselves out of poverty. These are achievements, they agreed, that could not have been attained but for the admission and full scholarship awarded them by the Islamic university.

In Scheme B, the repercussions of the non-existence of the Iranian schools and hospitals on the central government would have been devastating. In this category falls A013, A014, A015, A016, A018, A021. Consistent increase in illiteracy rate would have worsen the existing social menace the Zongos are bedeviled with. Due to the social-economic characteristics of the Zongos and other poor residential areas, accessing higher educational opportunities and health facilities was not a

promising venture in the communities. Lack of job opportunities and meagre wages which are insufficient for the provision of quality of life to the people, created the disillusionment that led to hopelessness especially to those who were desirous of pursuing education. As illiteracy and unemployment crises plagued the Zongos and other poorer Ghanaian communities, there was no other recourse for survival, but to either engage in illicit drugs, thievery, robbery, and other social vices that pose danger to the security of the country.

It was also uncovered in the interviews that for lack of broader educational opportunities some decades ago, Muslim youths who never enrolled or dropped out of school engage in various levels of social vices. This phenomenon has been discovered and mentioned in the literature. It illustrated the magnitude and intensity of the menace and the desperation of the youth to find any foul means to survive. Illiteracy rate continued to grow, and policies implemented by successive Ghanaian governments were largely unfavorable as Muslim parents feared the Christianization of their children in the mainstream public schools. The high illiteracy rate in the Zongos affected all aspects of life and worsened the unemployment situation. The effect continued to be exhibited and experienced among the older generation of Ghanaian Muslims.

This is because overwhelming majority of them engage in menial jobs as security guards, gardeners, head porters, etc. for survival. Although there were vacancies in public schools, they turned down such great opportunities to school for religious reasons. The determination of Muslims to protect their religious beliefs made them stay away from not only public schools with Christian

missionary background, but also public educational institutions which even had no missionary background. Meanwhile, successive governments have shown no serious interests in the matter, neither is there the required political will in getting the situation [re]solved. As a result, establishment of Iranian schools marked an increase in the enrollment of Muslim youths in secular- oriented schools. The opportunity is so great that even extreme conservative many Muslim families scornful of secular education have shifted their stance and have send their wards to the schools.

Regardless of the reasons, many underprivileged Ghanaian citizenries especially those from the poor Muslim communities are aware of the fate of the educational, health, and agricultural services provided by Iranian institutions. The situation has helped them out of misery, figuratively, through humanitarian works of the Ahl Bait foundation. It is, therefore, interesting to note that in both schemes, the social profits of establishing Iranian schools and hospitals are discernable.

All the participants agreed that Iran's humanitarian projects provide opportunity for individuals and societal growth. There are great opportunities for education, health, and agricultural development. Educational development promotes personal independence which builds confidence and self- esteem. A019 felt that the opportunity for his child to obtain Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from the Islamic university gave her the opportunity to grow by enabling her do things on her own which he claimed may not have been possible. For him this meant that his daughter is accorded the due respect which makes her feel more confident in everything she does.

A017 explained that his cousin who graduated from the Islamic university and currently working in the public sector feels co-equal with his colleagues who studied in other Ghanaian universities because he received the right quality education, albeit, at completely no cost. A017 believe that in all the Iranian schools, one can really obtain the right quality of education as exist in the Ghanaian public universities. He further explains that his cousin is consistently able to further his education at the graduate levels in any of the existing public universities in Ghana. This observation is reinforced by A019, who likewise believes that the Islamic university offers a lot of opportunities to prospective students to advance their studies anywhere within and outside Ghana. A018 state that his friend's younger brother is currently enrolled at the Islamic university not because he was not admitted by the University of Ghana, but because he just couldn't afford to pay the high tuition and hostel fees the institution is charging.

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A019 is the only participant whose daughters enrolled at the Islamic University College solely because he is happy and satisfied with the academic standard there and not because he couldn't afford to pay for tuition and hostel fees at the public universities. He, however, believes that due to the lack of favorable environment for Muslims to observe and practice their faith as they deem fit in public universities, he needed to encourage his daughters to enroll in the Islamic university. The Islamic University is a secular academic institution governed by Islamic ethos where quality education is delivered, and high moral lifestyle and modesty are major disciplinary measures needed to be adhered to by all students. Subjects of morality is highly stressed, as it's a *sine qua non* for individual and societal development (A019 & A023).

All students need to keep up with the task, said A019 & A023, all of whom directly know someone who graduated from the Islamic University and agreed that there is a lot of academic prospects for enrolling in the university. Their concept of academic prospects is all encompassing, from receiving quality education, to

having excellent moral upbringing, to modest lifestyles, and having an extremely cheap or free education. Although they admitted of being aware of the prestige that comes with enrolling in the existing Ghanaian public universities, they preferred the Islamic University for the tertiary education of their wards for religious, cultural, and most importantly, financial reasons. In summary, being a student in Islamic University, Ghana, Muslim students have a high evaluation of themselves, grow self-respect by enhancing their self-esteem. They all agreed that it is only in the Islamic University that Muslim students can organize series of Islamic cultural programs without the need to go through stringent university administrative protocols.

The timely intervention of Iran's humanitarian projects has caught the attention of state institutions, quasi state apparatuses, academics, civil society groups, and pressure groups. They all agreed that there would have been a 'disastrous consequence' to the Ghanaian state and the general Ghanaian societies if Iran had not intervened with their projects. All these have convinced them to be guarding against the interests of Iran's humanitarian projects by lobbying various state and quasi state institutions to support the sustainability and growth of those projects.

A019 is related with Iranians supports of poor farmers in the northern part of Ghana. Aside from the financial and logistic supports they are given; the poor rural peasant farmers have benefitted phenomenally from the intermittent training they receive from Iranian agricultural experts. In fact, he mentioned how the lives of the farmers have been better off due to the humanitarian supports of the Ahl Bait foundation. The Ahl Bait foundation has helped farmers in my district to push up

the quantity, quality, and value of what they are producing yearly (A019). According to (A019),

Working with farmers producing crops, fisheries, and rearing livestock in my hometown in particular, the Iranian foundation has helped in ensuring farmers in my hometown make maximum use of their lands. The Iranian agriculturalists resident in my hometown share their expertise on growing the most appropriate and profitable crops. They assist the farmers to gain access to high-quality inputs, improve the quality of the soil, conserve water in anticipation for climate shock. This innovative humanitarian work by the Iranian foundation has helped in reducing poverty by unleashing the ability of the rural farmers in my district to grow their incomes in an environmentally sustainable manner.

During the interviews, the researcher had in mind two characteristics of Kemper's definition of the concept of status which focused on 'approval' and 'acceptance' of Iran's humanitarian projects in Ghana. From the participants' responses, the theme of approval and acceptance prevailed. Regardless of what prompted the Ahl Bait foundation to invest in education, health, and agriculture, those projects have made a holistic impact on Ghanaians from different walks of life.

For the Islamic Republic, the sense of Ghanaians accepting and approving their humanitarian projects is expressed in a growing status which is a prime determinant in its foreign policy success. What drives Ghanaians to have a general acceptance of Iran's humanitarian projects and express their utmost approval of them is the demonstration of deferring to the Islamic Republic and acknowledging it as an important global political player.

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In reviewing the responses to research question one, I identified two factors that led to the pursuit of Iran's humanitarian projects in Ghana: 1); the determination to fill in the gap that exist in Ghanaian educational, health, and agricultural sectors and, 2); the desire to help in the emancipation of the poorer Muslim communities from their socio-economic quagmire. The Islamic Republic has largely succeeded in shaping its outlook to Ghanaians and changing their mindsets about it through progressive humanitarian projects. A014 is fascinated by Iranian nurses and doctors serving the populace. Consequently, what Ghanaians are seeing and

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¹⁰⁰. Nye, 2011. p.84.

¹⁰¹. Nye, 2012. p. 5

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: What socio/politico factors play and interplay to balance the traditional Ghanaian establishment of bilateral relations with other countries should tell us about the nature of Iran's status in Ghana?

In developing this research question, we were interested in unearthing how domestic forces navigate their activities to ensuring Iran's growing status in Ghana. It was also important in finding out how the differences in the nature and structure of those domestic forces impact the growing status of Iran. The status of a foreign country in a specific geographical area is contingent upon the extent to which the government and people of that 'locality' are determined to deal with it and protect the interest of that country. The achieved status provides the beneficial country normative ground to engage in activities in lieu to its foreign policy. Because in every country, social development process and its challenges lead to the formation of different social groups, foreign institutions are prone to pleasing some of these groups to guarantee their activities in the host state.

Civil society organization (CSOs) as social entities also achieve their social relevance by the extent to which their interests are maximized. Therefore, they device all means to ensuring the status of a foreign country that guarantees their interests. Interest groups in Ghana, particularly those that benefit directly or indirectly from Iran's humanitarian works, have played critical roles in Iran's growing status in Ghana. From media engagement, picketing and street demonstrations, civil activism have become the fulcrum around which the protection and defense of their interests revolves. The relevance of activism of these pressure groups gleams to the limelight in the run up to general election in Ghana.

Since 1992 when Ghana embraced the liberal democratic dispensation, general elections have been held every four years. Despite the multi-party nature of Ghana's liberal democracy, the country is experiencing a de facto two-party system where only two political parties, the National Democratic Congress, and the New Patriotic Party, have interchangeably won all the elections. The intensity of the rivalry between these two parties and the closeness of their political strength makes them scramble for the approval of social groups, whether they are in government or in opposition. In other words, every political party aspires to please the relevant pressure groups and avoid any form of confrontation with them.

Further, the need for all social groups to participate in policy making has been emphasized from public opinion perspective, particularly by CSOs in general. Ghanaian CSOs have succeeded in making their participations in national decision making central to the political ethos of the country and have accordingly been advocating for the participation of social groups. The democratic dispensation drastically altered the Ghanaian political space, enabling CSOs to assert themselves proactively in influencing government policies. Indeed, the 1992 Ghanaian constitution legitimizes social groups activism by enjoying the state to ensure effective participation in policy-making processes. As a result, successive Ghanaian governments have since 1992 become receptive and tolerant of social groups and engage them in decisions especially those that have the tendency to affect their interests.

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It is thus impossible to discuss Iran's search for status in Ghana without reference to certain CSOs which have direct or indirect interests in its humanitarian works. Interview results show that Iran as a country is generally revered by some selected Ghanaian CSOs because of the benefits they accrue from its humanitarian activities. Members of these CSOs view Iran as a defender of the global Muslim fraternity fighting the forces of oppression and hegemony. It is this implied responsibility that predisposes these CSOs to civil activism, as failure to 'act' suggest an approval of the behaviors of the perceived 'enemies' of Islam. This explains why since Iranian institutions arrived in Ghana, certain interest

behaviors of the perceived ‘enemies’ of Islam. This explains why since Iranian institutions arrived in Ghana, certain interest groups have constantly and consistently been ‘flirting’ with it. These interest or pressure groups are: The Council of Muslim Chiefs of Ghana; The Ghana Muslim Students Association; The Ghana Academy of Muslim Professionals; and The Ghana Muslim Mission.

All the senior executive members of these pressure groups noted a surge in Iran’s status in Ghana. Excellences were reported in Iran – Ghana relation, bilateral and multilateral, political and security, and social and economic relations.

Perhaps the most pronounced and the most significant one is Iran’s humanitarian works in Ghana. For the two former foreign ministers currently serving as senior executives of the council of foreign relation, their hands-on knowledge of the subject under study enabled them to describe the phenomenon more accurately. They talked about the timely interventions Iran’s humanitarian projects have made in Ghana of which these participants claimed to be very sufficient in providing for a good quality of life to the many poor Ghanaians especially the youth from the Zongo communities (A014 & A015). For these reasons and other good ones, there has been consistent advice to the government to maintain its excellent relation with Iran and keep it on a high pedestal. As a council that the government constantly consult in making foreign policy decisions, they have never supported any plan to downgrade or severe relations with Iran ((A014 & A015)). “We have on all relevant occasions advised against any plan to downgrade or severe relations with Iran” (A014 & A015). “This is to maintain the friendship/membership relation between Ghana and Iran as founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement and avoid endangering Ghana’s interests in the

Middle East” (A014 & A015).

Another participant who is a senior executive of the center for defense studies demonstrate the unflinching supports of foreign policy think tanks for the maintenance of Ghana – Iran relation. Although it is the president that takes foreign policy initiatives, such initiatives require backing of CSOs before it can be implemented (A016). “Considering the developmental projects being initiated by the Islamic Republic in Ghana, I doubt if any CSO will lend its support for any unfavorable decision by the president against Iran; unless it can be proven beyond reasonable doubt, that the national security of Ghana will be threatened without such an action” (A016).

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As someone who is regularly consulted on major foreign policy plans, I have always advised against any action or inaction that negatively affect Iran’s interest and tilt Ghana towards Israel and Saudi Arabia. Such may be a miscalculation that will injure Ghana’s economy which is largely controlled by the Lebanese community and threaten the security of Ghanaians in the Middle East (A012).

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A012 is a professor of foreign policy at the Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy which trained current and prospective career diplomats.

As someone who is regularly consulted on major foreign policy plans, I have always advised against any action or inaction that negatively affect Iran's interest and tilt Ghana towards Israel and Saudi Arabia. Such may be a miscalculation that will injure Ghana's economy which is largely controlled by the Lebanese community and threaten the security of Ghanaians in the Middle East (A012).

This position is corroborated by a senior member of the Center for Defense Studies, a Ghanaian foreign policy and security think tank (A016). A021, who is a respected veteran journalist and whose television stations [re]broadcast Iran's "press TV" programs from 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. on daily basis is confidence of Ghanaians continue support for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Council of Muslim Chiefs, the Ghana Muslim Students Association, the Ghana Academy of Muslim Professionals, and the Ghana Muslim Mission together make up the [un]official mouthpiece of Ghanaian Muslims. They have on many occasions issued a joint press statement indicating their stance on a national issue. Because their joint position is what the larger Muslim community adheres to, no government in power will dare engage in a confrontation with them.

A confrontation with them is tantamount to losing a major voting ground during the general election. Further, they have the tendency of resorting to other constitutionally sanctioned activities to protect their interests. The Ahl Bait foundation has the backing of all these groups as their humanitarian projects have impacted Ghanaians from all walks of life.

Relating this theme to another property in Kemper's definition of status suggest holistic supports Iran enjoys from prominent Ghanaian CSOs. With this high support level, Ghanaians are preoccupied in giving their backing for the continuity of the durable bilateral relations between their country and the Islamic Republic, transiting the latter to advancing its status in the West African sub-region.

This is what social exchange theorists mean when they postulate that, in reaction to positive initiative of supports, receiving states will tend to payback in kind by engaging in more positive reciprocating responses and/or fewer negative responses (Gouldner, 1960; Gergen, 1969). These positive responses are categorized in two: relational responses and behavioral responses (Ibid.). As exchanges occur over time between the donor and the receiving country, the consequential outcomes would include both contractual and relational bonding. The contractual and relational bonding create norms of solidarity and cements social relationships causing an establishment of a strong trust between the two parties/actors. As explained in Chapter Two, once trust is gain, status is automatically achieved. Thus, whiles Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana may appear on the face value as purely philanthropic and complete altruistic, it is an important foreign policy tool that the Islamic Republic has successfully used in cementing relations with Ghana.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE: What domestic factors have remained such a persistent problem for Iran's tradition of deploying humanitarian soft power in Ghana?

In responding to this research question, two themes emerged. The first theme is about Iran's protracted conflict with its Middle Eastern rivals, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. The participants portrayed the picture of the rivalry between them as a possible motivating factor for Iran's adoption of humanitarian soft power in Ghana. The desire of the Islamic Republic to provide quality of life to the poor and dejected Ghanaian populace was evident in all the responses. During this portion of the interview, some participants shared memorable experiences regarding the rivalry between the Middle East rival trio. A010 narrated his encounter with the agent of a very rich Middle Eastern country for him to publish a research work smearing Iran as a country sponsoring terrorist groups in the Muslim majority northern part of Ghana. He confessed to being offered huge sums of money but could not commit to the deal because he just couldn't make up an assumptive and speculative conclusion without backing it with empirical evidence. Then there was the case of A012 who, in addition to his academic work, is also a socio/politico pundit and a regular discussant on leading television and radio stations. Although he is a Muslim and a Sunni one at that, he could not come to terms with a 'contract' offered him by an official of a Gulf State between 2017 and 2018 to embark on a defamatory campaign against Iran. The plan was to use his media muzzles to roll out negative campaign against Iran for sponsoring terrorist cells aim at turning them into the West African version of *Hezbollah*. A022 engagement with politics in the Middle East and his constant criticism of Israel's apartheid system in the occupied Palestinian territories and Saudi's hostility in Yemen has made him a target of some Ghanaian religious groups.

For A011, Israel is a rogue state that relies on its security forces to enforce an apartheid system in Palestine by perpetuating and perpetrating human rights abuses with impunity. These are the reality of the pitiful consequences the dejected Palestinian people are subjected to by Israel and one of the reasons a strong Islamic country like Iran must endeavor to remain a force to reckon with in such a hostile Middle Eastern region (A011). Most of the participants showed understanding that the marriage of convenience between the U.S. allies of Israel and Saudi Arabia is to suppress Iran's influence in the Middle East and keep smearing its global outlook.

The second theme that was revealed with respect to this question indicates Ghanaian's frantic knowledge of Iran – U.S.A. tensed relation. This theme relates to the realist's theory where Morgenthau opines, that the best way to ensuring peace between warring countries is to keep preparing for war. Since 1979 till date, the U.S.A and Iran have traded war rhetoric and their relation came to a gridlock when President Trump became the U.S.A. President in 2016. Because of the US's strong interest in the Persian Gulf and their continuous military support to Israel and Saudi Arabia, Iran has resulted to proxy militant allies within the region in an effort to assert its power and strengthen its influence (A010; A011; A012; A013). Although such is the reality within the Middle Eastern region, same has not been replicated by Iran in Ghana nor the West African sub- region (A010; A011; A012; A013).

Listening to my participants, it is clear they have been following politics in the Middle East and they have a clear understanding of some western media's endeavor to taint Iran as a rogue state while portraying Israel and Saudi Arabia

as beacons of peace and development (A010, A011, A012, A013). Therefore, Iran had to strive to be a force to reckon with by drawing on its proxy militant allies in the Middle East while employing humanitarian soft power in Ghana to match their game (A010, A011, A013).

Conclusion

The chapter unveils the growing status of Iran in Ghana riding on its humanitarian soft power. The chapter reveals the unfazed posture of the governments and people of Ghana towards the negative allegations on Iran and the calls to isolate it. The positive impacts of Iran's humanitarian work to the government and people of Ghana have made the Islamic Republic a household name that is loved, respected, and deferred to. Ironically, instead of embarking on similar propagandist campaign of constantly and persistently smearing the image of its Middle Eastern rivals, Iran has focused on its humanitarian projects with its citizens in the forefront.

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As revealed by the national attribute theory, States play marginal or active role in world affairs depending on the size of its economy. Wealth is a prerequisite in engaging in certain foreign policy actions as it carries its own problems, prospects, conditions, and attitudes. Wealthy countries usually engage in foreign direct investments, foreign aid and/or humanitarian activities which lead to some form of dependency by the receiving country. Wealth is a standard for measuring a country's status in international politics either as an aid receiving or aid donating country. Wealth indicates the extent of a country's level of independence in the making of foreign policy (Lentner, 1974).

The applicability of the national attribute theory signifies the behavior of Iran in the Gulf sub- region as a country endowed with tremendous natural resources guaranteeing the country's source of income for its humanitarian works abroad. In particular, the national attributes theory also gives credence to Iran's relatively

credence to Iran's relatively huge population size that is ready to be conscripted for military services at any time. The quality of its population size also demonstrates Iran's deployment of its citizens to Ghana to man Iranian schools, health centers, and agricultural depots where services are provided to the Ghanaian populace.

Variations in foreign policy cannot only be traced to economic factors but also the demographic features of the state. Homogeneity of Iran's population, size, motivation, and skills are important levers that help shape the foreign policy behavior of the Islamic Republic. The country's large geographical area is well secured as in times of war are difficult to hold and wholly occupy. The size of its population, age distribution, geographical distribution of population, integration, skills level, and developmental characteristics impact and shape the way Iran interact with its neighbors and the larger external environment. The size of Iran's population often gives an indication of the number of working force available, the military size and capability.

Humanitarian works are undoubtedly essential to addressing the socioeconomic challenges of individuals and societies. Long-term development assistance, to reconstruct a country's infrastructure and institutions, is often a key part of bilateral relations. This assistance ensures that the country can develop its human capacity, strengthen its institutions, and ensure the socioeconomic development of the state. Thus, long-term humanitarian aids largely revolve around [re]construction of state infrastructures such as roads, hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers and other social welfare projects, to facilitate the transportation of foods and supplies, accessibility to educational opportunities, health facilities, and ensuring the general development of the economy.

Such durable humanitarian assistance by the Islamic Republic attempt to reduce inequalities between Ghanaian Muslim communities and the non- Muslims and reduce economic incentives to social vices by providing varied supports to them. Thus, Iran humanitarian supports are considered “[A] fundamental expression of the universal value of solidarity between people and a moral imperative”.¹⁰²

The first approach frames humanitarian activities as out of the donor’s altruism. Initially proposed by Comte, altruism is defined as [a psychological] behavior “motivated mainly out of a consideration for another’s needs rather than one’s own”.¹⁰³ A second perspective, draws from the discipline of economics, harmonizes the seemingly contradictory act of humanitarianism with the utility-maximizing model of rational choice theory (Smith, 2010). Therefore, Iran’s ‘gift’ to Ghana is not really a ‘gift’—voluntarily handed out for the benefit of Ghanaians, rather, it is an unusual version of an economic act of exchange (Becker, 1974). To make sense of this contradiction, this dissertation is arguing that Iran is offering such durable social humanitarian interventions in expectation of gaining prestige, honor and status from the government and people of Ghana.

In this regard, all social exchange theories treat social life as involving a series of sequential processing of transactions between two or more parties (Mitchell, et al, 2012). Objects are exchanged through a process of reciprocity, whereby one party

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¹⁰². “The State of Art of Humanitarian Action”,

¹⁰³. Piliavin, 1990. p.33

time between them, there have been concurrent transacting of both gratitude and trust between them. The result being outcomes that include both contractual and relational bonding which characterizes their current relation. Deducing from the central premise of social exchange theory, therefore, the dissertation concludes that Iran commenced its humanitarian works in Ghana with the expectation that doing so will be politically and strategically rewarding to the Islamic Republic.

A final approach reconciles those opposing views by framing humanitarian acts as characterized by reciprocity—in essence, a view of the support as a social act. Reciprocity indicates the dynamic by which the donation of an object necessitates the return exchange of ‘something’ immediately or later (Simmel, 1950; Martin, 2017). This is, therefore, acts of reciprocity happening between Ghana and Iran, and because the humanitarian projects of the Ahl Bait foundation are inalienable from the Iranians, the presentation of their humanitarian activities continue to initiate a cycle of giving and receiving between the Islamic Republic and Ghana. These acts of social humanitarian interventions have created norms of solidarity and cements social relationships between Iranians and Ghanaians, while at the same time growing the status of Iran in the West African country.

Equally, many social science scholars have explained, that relational control of humanitarianism is often an effective form of governance (Lambe, et al. 2001; Dwyer, et al, 1987). Central to my dissertation of Iran’s strategic humanitarian works in Ghana is the notion of reciprocity anchors on trust. Reciprocity exists as a basic element of Iran’s behavior towards Ghana. Trust being extended to Iran by Ghanaians is based on the expectation of reciprocity. Once Iran has the trust,

acceptability, love, respect, and adornment of Ghanaians, status is automatically achieved. Thus, this dissertation supports the view, that despite the consideration of altruistic humanitarian activities as a purely philanthropic acts, humanitarianism is a major foreign policy tool, and plays important role in negotiations, and contributes to the establishment of relational governance and trust between states.

Comparison of Findings to Existing Literature

Existing literature confirms durability in relations between Iran and Africa by emphasizing its autarky and exceptionalism in building these relations. The literature reveals ways in which Iran and African states engage with each other diplomatically, particularly on their rapport revolving the rhetoric of ‘Third World’ or ‘global South’ solidarity (Warner and Gallo, 2013). Because Iran seeks to exert its hegemony on the African continent, it keeps contriving itself as an equal partner to African countries by playing Third Worldist (Ibid.). The mutual relationship has been long because both Iran and Africa as a ‘Union’ have been part of the non-alignment movement, upholding same mindset of offsetting western imperialistic tactics to strengthening their relationship (Chimarizeni, 2017). Iran has always used rhetoric against the West throughout its economic cooperation with African states, as catalyst to goad that relationship and spur her diplomatic onslaught in the region (Ibid.). Through its flagship South – South development projects, Iran has succeeded in maximizing its long -term foreign and security policies and strengthened diplomatic and commercial relations with Africa despite international isolations causing it serious economic constrains (Lob, 2016).

Existing literature further reveals plausible conclusions about Iran making inroads in Africa and outflanking USA allies of Saudi Arabia and Israel (Najla, 2017; Feierstein and Greathead, 2017; Bahi, 2011; Lefebvre, 2008). Lefebvre (2008) quoted the CIA Directorate of Intelligence report of 1984 that indicates that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Libya are fiercely competing for influence and control of sub-Saharan Africa. However, the report indicates Iran had overtaken Libya and closing the gap with Saudi Arabia as source of external support in the region. As a rising power, Iran considers it necessary to building durable relations globally. To this effect, Iran and Saudi Arabia are in a race to entrenching their dominance, influence, and strengthening the bilateral and multilateral relations in the African continent (Bahi, 2011). Iran's strategic maneuvers in the Horn of Africa and the countries on the Red Sea by establishing anti-Western axis within these countries is aim at improving its political dominance and diplomatic influence in that sub-region (Manjang, 2017; Najla, 2017; Feierstein and Greathead, 2017; Bahi, 2018). Whiles these recent literature reveals Iran's growing status in East and the Horn of Africa, this dissertation has shown that same is what is happening in the West African country of Ghana. This dissertation is arguing that Iran has since overtaking Saudi Arabia by asserting its influence in Ghana.

Implications

The intent of this study was to describe Iran's foreign policy towards Ghana and illustrate how the Islamic Republic has employed humanitarian soft power to raise its status in the West African country. Interviews conducted provided the opportunity to discover the thoughts and opinions of Ghanaians whose line of duty directly or indirectly connected to the subject of the dissertation. Based on the findings from this study, strategic developmental humanitarian activities being undertaken by Iran's Ahl Bait foundation have been the springboard that has raised the image of Iran and brighten its outlook to Ghanaians. Iranian schools, hospitals, and agricultural projects have provided avenues for Ghanaians to develop themselves. However, the growing status of Iran cannot be attributed to only the love and support of ordinary Ghanaians. Senior Ghanaian diplomats, leading academics, experienced think tankers, veteran journalists, and Muslim opinion leaders have shown their approval of Iran's humanitarian projects in Ghana. The phenomenal benefits of Iran's humanitarian works to the social emancipation of Ghanaians from all walks of life has been discussed in Chapter Five. Although Ghanaian Muslims living in the Zongos are the most beneficial of the social interventions, the State of Ghana, on the hindsight, is the biggest beneficiary. The key implications of the study are as follows:

discussed in Chapter Five. Although Ghanaian Muslims living in the Zongos are the most beneficial of the social interventions, the State of Ghana, on the hindsight, is the biggest beneficiary. The key implications of the study are as follows:

1. Iran's status in Ghana has steadily grown despite the incessant negative campaign by the U.S.A. and its Middle Eastern allies of Israel and Saudi Arabia.
2. The desire and determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran to defend and protect its sovereignty, territory, people, and global image from its regional and global 'enemies' is not in doubt, regardless of which form the (verbal or physical) attack takes. However, the possibility of succeeding in this venture in Ghana by drawing on military maneuvers or proxy militancy as it has done within the Middle Eastern region is less. The socio- politico reality of the West African sub-region makes it impossible for the Islamic Republic to go on the tangent of militancy and exhibition of military bravados. Such would have eventually created a deficiency in its bi/multilateral relation with the countries in the sub-region with serious implications for its foreign policy adventure. As the U.S.A and other Western powers have tightened the noose on Iran's economic and diplomatic prospects, there is risk involved in the flourishing of militancy. The consequences of threat and coercion can further lead to serious diplomatic problems with the governments and people of the West African sub-region.
3. Straining diplomatic relations with countries in the West African sub-region has the potential to create serious diplomatic challenges on the global prospects of its foreign policy agenda.

Significance of the Study to Foreign Policy

This study was intended to contribute to the knowledge of Iran's foreign policy towards the West African country of Ghana. By exploring the thoughts and opinions of important Ghanaian actors with influence in Ghana's foreign policy decision making, data were obtained which provided for an insightful understanding of the socio/politico factors that influenced Iran's choice of using (humanitarian) soft power tool. From the perspective of former Ghanaian senior diplomats, the execution of humanitarian projects falls within the parameters of Iran's South – South developmental agenda (A003). The subject of foreign policy is very pronounced in this dissertation. Most of what can be read in literature, revolved around the foreign policy benefits Iran stands to gain from government and people of Ghana with its humanitarian projects.

Iran seems to be prompted by Ghana's desire to fill in the gaps in its educational, health, and agricultural sectors to ensuring the growth of its citizenry. Considering the overhead costs of executing such humanitarian projects, the desire to get back what was invested (the search for status) in Ghana is a very strong motivator. Objects are exchanged through a process of reciprocity, whereby one party subsequently repays the good deeds of another party (Gouldner, 1960; Gergen, 1969). Social exchange theorists argue that, in reaction to positive initiative of supports, receiving states will tend to payback in kind by engaging in more positive reciprocating responses and/or fewer negative responses. As such, Iran will go out of its way to engage in such progressive developmental projects that will enable it to assert its growing status in Ghana.

During the interviews, humanitarian projects being executed by the Ahl Bait

foundation appeared to be the prime mover of Iran's growing status, especially when the execution embodies the deployment of its citizens in the provision of education, health, and agriculture services. As expressed by participants, the projects being executed are progressive and phenomenally beneficial, behavioral factors that shape Ghanaians' love, affection, acceptance, approval, deferral, and respect for Iran. These, however, are socio/politico dependents and flourish only if the thoughts of them emanate from actors that had or continue to have influence in the foreign policy decision making of Ghana. It emphasizes that foreign policy decision making of states are not simply influenced by external factors but also domestic forces and realities. The Ghanaian socio-economic setting is so unbalanced for the growth and development of certain segment of the population. Therefore, such humanitarian interventions have become a necessity to uplifting the standard of life and living of those crops of people and eventually boost the development of the state.

The decision to open up for the intervention of international NGOs is primarily the result of an uncooperative environment where certain segments of the Ghanaian population are unable to maximize their role in the country. Within the confines of the poorer Ghanaian societies, Muslims are more stack to social, political, and economic development and are mostly unable to develop their potentials to be beneficial members of the larger Ghanaian society.

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The chaotic social system in the Zongo communities leads most youths through a tunnel that sends them out of the Muslim communities into the arms of gangs and bandits. Iran's intervention on a national level through the provision of educational, health, and agricultural services adduce different humanitarian theories such as those of social exchange theory where scholars concern themselves with the scale of the donated object, whereby humanitarianism sometimes is delimited to assistance that provide a solution to a recognized

social problem. Here, humanitarian projects that get to the root of a social problem is opposed to charity, which largely consist of smaller gifts intended only to alleviate symptoms (Ostrower, 1995). Considering the characteristic of the poorer Ghanaian Muslim communities as discussed in Chapter Four, providing a focused-base projects meaningful for the inhabitants may compensate for the socio/economic insufficiency in Muslim communities that may encourage the youth there to re-think their desire to engage in social vices and criminal activities. The high illiteracy and unemployment rates in the Muslim communities in Ghana that is causing precarious social problems in the country is in effect a defect in the Ghanaian structural system.

Ghanaian Muslim communities as discussed in Chapter Four, providing a focused-base projects meaningful for the inhabitants may compensate for the socio/economic insufficiency in Muslim communities that may encourage the youth there to re-think their desire to engage in social vices and criminal activities. The high illiteracy and unemployment rates in the Muslim communities in Ghana that is causing precarious social problems in the country is in effect a defect in the Ghanaian structural system. The high illiteracy and unemployment rates in the Muslim communities in Ghana that is causing precarious social problems in the country is in effect a defect in the Ghanaian structural system.

While successive Ghanaian governments continue to encourage both local and international NGOs to support in building educational and health institutions in the country, the issue of taking affirmative actions to specifically deal with the Muslims' case seemed to have been neglected. The high illiteracy and unemployment rates continue to burden the state. The lack of educational and job opportunities resulted in the increase of social menace in the communities. Some Zongo communities have been found to have no secular school (Owusu-Ansah, 2013). In some instances, Muslim students had to travel several miles on foot just to attend a secular school (Ibid.). This lack of schools in some Zongos further eroded the confidence of Muslim parents from sending their wards to secular schools as the farther the schools are the fearer of the children losing their Islamic faith. The opportunity of Ghanaian Muslims profiteering from Iranian schools have long manifest in the general Ghanaian social setting. The enrollment of Ghanaians in the schools has become prominent without religious or sectarian hindrance. The role of the Ahl Bait foundation in this case is to help retain the purpose and effectiveness of the schools by intermittently reviewing the status quo, putting in place measures that reinforce policies towards ensuring quality of education for Muslim children.

Conclusion

This study evaluates Iran's search for status in Ghana through the conceptual framework of soft power. In disputing the prevalent view that the USA's power is declining, Nye (2016) indicates, that the end of the cold war and the fall of the Berlin wall got the USA trying to find its feet in the world. This, according to Nye (2016), is because power was then seen as the "ability to do things and control

others, to get others to do what they otherwise would not”.¹⁰⁴ Nye, however, posits that hard power which lies in military strength or the size of a state during war has long shifted and is no longer attractive due to the interdependency of states in contemporary geo-global politics. Nye quoted Henry Kissinger who attributed the contemporary states interdependency to economics, communication development, and human aspirations. He agreed with Kissinger that satellites and fiber-optic cables that instantaneously connect people around the world have diffused military power and made it unattractive. The changing reality of military (hard) power and interdependency of states suggest the need to devise other most appropriate means for both state and non-state actors to attain their foreign policy objectives. Nye (2016) argues that power is “losing its emphasis on military force and conquest that marked earlier eras”.¹⁰⁵ In contemporary global politics, factors such as economic growth, level of education, technological development are more significant in international relations, just as factors such as raw materials, size of the population, and geographical location are becoming somewhat insignificant (Nye, 2016). Therefore, “[A] state may achieve the outcomes it prefers in world politics because other states want to follow it or have agreed to a situation that produces such effect”.¹⁰⁶

Dissenting argument advanced is soft power alone does not grant a country the power and dominance it so requires. Janice Mattern (2005) explains that the former U.S. President George Bush’s consistent use of the phrase “you are either with us or with the terrorists” was, as a matter of fact, an expression of hard power. Although there was no direct use of military action nor explicit signal of intimidation to other countries to join forces with the U.S. coalition, Matterns (2005) argues, there was a tacit use of representational force, or put succinctly,

there was a force majeure (emphasis mine). An intimidation of this kind, Matterns (2005) explains, threatens U.S.'s global partners, compelling them to submit to U.S. wishes or risk being tagged as evils. "This being the case, soft power is therefore not so soft".¹⁰⁷

Whiles Mattern's argument against soft power appears convincing, we argue in this dissertation, that soft power remains the most effective tool to establishing and maintaining status in a foreign territory in contemporary global political order. As Nye (2016) opines, hard power is dependent on the context, "who relates to whom under what circumstances, whereas soft power is more dependent upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers".¹⁰⁸ In other words, whereas power in a relationship is when actors are able to "realize their own will...even over the resistance of others,"¹⁰⁹ status is when "actors willingly and gladly defer to, accept, approve, support, respect, admire and, ultimately, love others without compulsion or coercion".¹¹⁰ Consequently, actor(s) with high status are accorded some level of acceptability, privileges, and rewards by the actor(s) in the relationship (Theodore, 1981). Overall, "status and power constitute the sum and substance of sociopolitical relations, what actors do with, to, for, and against each other".¹¹¹ Thus, despite the limitations of soft power, the concept is relevant to this study because it has helped in explaining other means of exerting power by advancing Iran's status in Ghana.

¹⁰⁶. Ibid.

¹⁰⁷. Mattern, 2005. p.586.

¹⁰⁸. Ibid.

¹⁰⁹. Weber, 1978. p.181.

¹¹⁰. Kemper, 1981. p.9

Soft power has helped in enticing and attracting Ghanaians to get familiar with Iranians and appreciate their cultural values. There is no doubt that playing hard power in the international system has paved the way for some few states to dominate global affairs. Powerful states such as the USA, Russia federation, the UK, France, China, etc. wield the power to determine what transpires in contemporary global affairs. Nonetheless, soft power accords less or medium powerful states like Iran to gain influence in a geographical territory far away from their location of origin through humanitarian activities which is a major foreign policy tool. "In today's global information age, victory often depends not on whose army wins, but on whose story wins".¹¹² This submission by John Arquilla quoted by McClory (2018) corroborates the point of this dissertation. Soft power is the way to let a winning story flourish. This is because by wielding it, "the best propaganda is not propaganda", further indicating that in this era of information age, "credibility is the scarcest resource".¹¹³

As further explained by Nye (2004), the use of soft power is where a particular country can achieve the objectives it set out in its foreign policy mainly because other countries which respect and appreciate its political values, adopt, and reproduce similar systems, and aim to achieve its level of success. Soft power, he explains further, "co-opts rather than coerces others – it has the ability to shape their preferences".¹¹⁴ Again, Nye firmly believes that "soft power is, in behavioral terms, the power of attraction and facilitated by material resources".¹¹⁵

¹¹¹. Ibid.

¹¹². McClory, 2018.

¹¹³. Nye, 2012. p. 5

¹¹⁴. Ibid.

In a different literature he authored, Nye clarifies this division between influence and attraction, stating that, “while soft power is not just the former, it is still a source of influence”.¹¹⁶

In the same strand, Nye believes that “it is via the instrument of public diplomacy that soft power is diffused abroad”.¹¹⁷ The author divided public diplomacy into two categories: namely broadcasting or the diffusion of particular information to enhance a country’s reputation and image; and action with states opting to employ physical resources abroad to develop their own state ‘brand’.¹¹⁸ Countries can increase the level of their soft power just by caring and showing concern to other states, generously organize international forums and getting representative of the international community to engage in dialogue (Vuving, 2009). In a more direct manner, states may wield soft power by constantly providing humanitarian support and/or direct aid, or engaging in foreign direct investment, or some kind of special initiatives through its diplomatic endeavors (Ibid.). Thus, public diplomacy is inherently related to the mantra of ‘information as power’ because, “as information and communication with advances in both technology and reach, the ability for a state to unilaterally control its own reputation and credibility becomes diminished”.¹¹⁹ States, in a nutshell, have to explore the techniques and channels of going around what can result into a negative publicity emanating from multifarious avenues, so as to gain related soft power. A developing country like Iran has succeeded in increasing its status by changing the way Ghanaians perceive them through a soft power tool. To be successful in these ventures, the Islamic Republic of Iran deployed its humanitarian works effectively and efficiently in Ghana.

Iran has shown that it is an emerging international power, an influential Persian Gulf State with enormous economic resources. While it has an extensive soft power toolset, each power tool is designed to extend welcoming gesture to Ghanaians to move closer to it. A look at the contemporary development in the relation between the Islamic Republic and Ghana shows clearly that the latter has become the ‘virgin island’ of the emerging Gulf powerhouse. Iran has used its assertive foreign policy, commitment to development, and humanitarian aid to become an important and trusted new friend of Ghanaians. Indeed, an understanding of power differentiates much of the theoretical ground within the field of foreign policy. In the view of Barnett and Duval, “the concept of power must continue to be the theoretical core of international politics as all politics is a struggle for power”.¹²⁰ This perspective is derived from their understanding that “the desire to dominate is a constitutive element of all human associations, thus indicating that international pressure and geopolitics is simply a struggle between independent units seeking to maximize their own power to control others”.¹²¹ While this aggressive foreign policy in Ghana has caused some nervousness and sometimes open hostility between the Islamic Republic and its Middle Eastern rivals of Saudi Arabia and Israel, the leadership in Tehran have earned the respect and trust of Ghanaian people who are eager to do business with it. Major challenges exist in the educational, health, and agricultural sectors of Ghana. The inability of this West African country to deal with the challenges from within, prompted massive humanitarian support from resource rich Iran to replenish and fill the gaps. The Islamic Republic, a Persian Gulf State that has abundance of energy resources has been a primary source for the needed supports. The country has invested heavily by operating schools at all levels, running specialist

at all levels, running specialist hospitals, and providing financial, logistic, and the technical know-how to farmers in the rural parts of Ghana. Thousands of Ghanaians especially those within the poor and rural communities have benefitted from the educational, health, and agricultural services being provided by the Islamic Republic. Such opportunity is brought about by the humanitarian works of the Ahl Bait foundation. While many have graduated with degrees from the Islamic University College, Ghana, others have continued to receive quality health services for free, an opportunity they could have missed but for the Ahl Bait foundation's humanitarian interventions. Many of the grandaunts have been employed in both public and private sectors, with job descriptions spanning through banking, communication, education, health, etc.

The context for this achievement can be found in the literature but the participants' responses to the research questions reiterate and recuperate the issue by detailing descriptions of their thoughts and opinions about the subject. The participants' expression of their thought and opinions clearly illustrated how the social reality and conditions in poor and rural Ghanaian communities drew the attention of the Islamic republic into providing the needed humanitarian interventions. They described the seemingly hopeless and helpless future of the dwellers of the Zongo communities leaving most of the youth with little option but to engage in social vices and criminal activities. The intervention has been extremely helpful especially when both the government and people of Ghana have directed their needs to international NGOs with offices in Ghana. Most international NGOs from the Persian Gulf showed interest in providing supports also, but only the Ahl Bait foundation directly delved into providing educational, health, and agricultural infrastructure and services.

Therefore, humanitarian works per se, no matter how elegant and magnificent they may be, do not necessarily inure to the growth and development of a country. So, the high approval of Iran's humanitarian projects by Ghanaians is an indicative example of how development-oriented humanitarian projects are sought after by West Africans. Humanitarian culture emphasizes an obligation for the larger public to benefit from executed projects. This comes primarily in the form of development-oriented projects which brings relief to a population of a country because of economic or social achievements. Ironically, the humanitarian works of the Persian Gulf countries of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman is directly linked to the promotion of the religious ideological orientation of these monarchical Gulf States (A0012, A0014, A0015). These Gulf Cooperation Council States engage without exception in the same traditional humanitarian projects of digging of wells, construction of mosques, and operating Islamic orphanages (A008).

Ghanaians' approval influences Iran's decisions and actions which are usually subordinated to global political gimmick to smearing the image of the Islamic Republic. The clout of Iran over its Middle Eastern rivals is very strong in the Ghanaian society. The dilemma which confronts Iran in raising funds due to incessant international sanctions makes most Ghanaians emotional. As expressed by my participants, the value of the benefits obtained from Iran's humanitarian projects in Ghana outweigh the works of the countries whose works, in fact, promote extremism and terrorism in the sub-region. Thus, Iran's foreign policy measures towards Ghana has shifted emphasis away from the use of proxy militancy to a focus on humanitarian works and the promotion of south – south concept of economic prosperity and social development.

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Equally important in considering Iran's humanitarian projects is the question of whether deployment of the citizens of the donor country matter in attaining soft

power. This has been a fundamental part of the national attribute theory which considers military attributes, economy, demographic features, and governmental attributes as important elements that contribute to the making and unmaking of foreign policy (Person and Rochester, 1984). It is without question that a country which is successfully able to draw on multiple layers of its national attributes can make a difference to the foreign policy success of the nation. Iran has relied extensively on its national attributes by drawing on extensive natural resources to bolstering its humanitarian activities in Ghana backed by its own quality human resources who have settled in the country to ensure the success of the humanitarian projects. It has also utilized its national attributes in building for itself a grand status by appealing to Ghanaians to come closer to it.

Thus, the era where the U.S.A. and its Middle Eastern allies used to influence how Ghanaians perceive Iran is over. The Islamic Republic has taken up its faith in dealing with Ghanaians and continues to outflank its global foes in the sub-region through a [humanitarian] soft power. Indeed, by wielding a soft power, "the best propaganda is not propaganda".¹²² Iran's move to boost its influence in Ghana demonstrate strong bi/multilateral relations with confidence, political instinct, by seizing series of moments on the sub-region's stage. A vocal defender of south making and unmaking of foreign policy (Person and Rochester, 1984). It is without question that a country which is successfully able to draw on multiple layers of its national attributes can make a difference to the foreign policy success of the nation. Iran has relied extensively on its national attributes by drawing on extensive natural resources to bolstering its humanitarian activities in Ghana backed by its own quality human resources who have settled in the country to ensure the success of the humanitarian projects. It has also utilized its national attributes in building for itself a grand status by appealing to

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This predisposition to surpass its sphere of influence, in many cases with satisfactory results — for instance, its "Dialogue of Civilizations" initiative that was accepted within the Islamic Conference and the United Nations (UN) in 2001 — is a factor to keep in mind in categorizing Iran as not only a regional power, in accordance with the previous classification, but also as a state with "great power" aspirations.¹²⁴

¹²². Nye, 2012. p. 5

¹²³. Zaccara, 2018, p.553.

The Islamic Republic's pragmatic foreign policy approach towards Ghana is what I consider as dealing with the country as it is, while making clear what it stands for, strutting the West African country with humanitarian projects that has led its governments and people to see it as a white knight of a social development order. In Ghana, Iranian leaders continue to display retail politics that Israel and Saudi Arabia rarely able to deploy. Iranian citizens are serving as teachers, doctors, nurses, and agricultural trainers serving the poorest and remotest areas. At home, the Islamic Republic is still battling a critical economic crisis, with worsening unemployment numbers. Nonetheless, Iranians generally are convinced by their governments' erratic global arrogant and non-submissive foreign policy posture. They are opposed, often violently, for any perceived external threat aim at sowing seeds of insecurity in the country and altering their [Shi'a] theocratic governance structure.

The themes that evolved from the responses were matched as appropriate, to each property in Kemper's definition of status. This provided a better understanding of Iran's motivation in obtaining soft power in Ghana. Soft power is a means to achieving (growing) status as shown in the properties in Kemper's definition. For the Islamic Republic of Iran, this means being accepted and loved by a population in a faraway geographical territory and at the same time being deferred to by individual countries within that territory. There is nothing more important than attaining such a (grand) status in contemporary international relations.

¹²⁴. Ibid.

For Iran, its growing popularity and influence among Ghanaians is an indication of a (grand) status it has attained within the sub-region. And actor(s) with such high status are accorded some level of acceptability, privileges, and rewards by the actor(s) in the relationship (Theodore, 1981). Overall, “status and power constitute the sum and substance of international relations, what actors do with, to, for, and against each other” (Ibid.).

Currently, a number of issues dominate discussion about Iran – African relations. Notable among them is the Islamic Republic’s causal stance on South – South Cooperation ideals such as fighting [western] imperialism and Iran’s inviolability of militant tendencies and, hence, its claim of non- intervention policy in West Africa. The central question the dissertation sought to investigate was: what foreign policy tool underpin Iran’s search for status in Ghana? Is it pragmatism in foreign policy driven by humanitarian activities, or it is underpinned by the mantra of South – South Cooperation which is Iran’s way of exerting power and influence beyond its immediate Persian Gulf/Middle Eastern region.

Relations between Iran and Ghana stretch as far back as the days of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. These relations have evolved over the years with its ups and downs, starting from the early 1950s when Iran’s relations with Ghana were purely on political ideology through the period of Non-Aligned Movement and struggle for independence. Formal diplomatic relations between Iran and Ghana were sealed from 1982 onwards. The establishment of the formal relation then was mainly influenced by religious ideology and the determination to export the tenants of the 1979 Islamic revolutionary. In relation to this, it is the emphasis of this dissertation that Iran’s interests in Ghana have moved from revolutionary ideology to a more pragmatic search for political dominance and social

influence. It is my affirmation that Iran's foothold in Ghana is guided by strategic humanitarian works which aim at tapping into the hearts and minds of the governments and people of the West African country. Iran's desire to outflank its Middle East rivals of Saudi Arabia and Israel informs its search for status. And the best way to achieve this is by deploying the famous South – South Cooperation and strategic developmental humanitarian projects.

Amidst the breathtaking dynamics of evolving West African sub-regional order due to Iran's influence and the metamorphosis in Iran – Ghana relations, how Iran as a powerful Middle Eastern country relates to a tiny poor country like Ghana is of utmost importance not merely as an interesting intellectual phenomenon, but because it will in no small way affect how future of both Iran and Ghana populace will be defined. This dissertation intentionally lumps together all West African countries because of the stark similarities in their socio-politico settings and homogeneous nature of Iran's humanitarian works thereof. The dissertation with its emphasis on Ghana and its relationship with Iran will help in understanding whether the former is a partner or a pawn in the latter's South – South development agenda.

Iran's onslaught on Africa in general seems to have aroused a lot of research works on the occurrence. Scholars widely agree on Iran's growing influence in the region in general. Unmistakably, there are opposing views on what the implications of Iran's growing socio-politico influence in Africa are. Reviewed literature focused on Iran – Saudi/Israel competition for political and security dominance in the Horn of Africa, and Iran – Saudi ideological rivalry in West Africa. Reviewed literature also show a vacuum in Iran's growing status in West

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humanitarian works with its soft power tendencies as a driving force to its growing status. The Islamic Republic's foreign policy towards Ghana consist of four principles: attaining durable relations with politically exposed independent groups of Muslim and non-Muslim organizations, outflanking Saudi Arabia and its Sunni allies, cautious projection of the Shi'a sects, and cementing the sphere of influence through its South – South Cooperation development agenda. Such a policy direction indicates the Islamic Republic's problem-free foreign policy within the West African sub- region.

Since 1990, the Iranian administration has switched from the mentality of exporting its Islamic revolution tenets to actively seeking a mundane political and security dominance. This, in reality, indicates a shift in the focus to 'achieving something' despite holding close to its chest, the 'theocratic government' card. To achieve this 'something' [status] objective, the Islamic Republic has employed pragmatic foreign policy tools to maneuvering itself in Ghana. These are the South – South Cooperation Policy, and the strategic humanitarian interventions. The establishment of the Ahl Bait foundation in 1986 has seen Iran's humanitarian projects in Ghana increasing by several folds. Iran's commitment to executing humanitarian activities in Ghana is manifested. Since 1990, the Iranian administration has switched from the mentality of exporting its Islamic revolution tenets to actively seeking a mundane political and security dominance. This, in reality, indicates a shift in the focus to 'achieving something' despite holding close to its chest, the 'theocratic government' card.

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allegations of Iran being a state sponsor of international terrorism and supporter of militant groups within the West African sub-region has largely been ignored by successive Ghanaian governments. The South – South Cooperation (SSC) initiative and humanitarian works are the Iranian foreign policy agenda by which Ghana is being more closely tied to the Islamic Republic. It consists of two parts: The 'SSC', which promotes and encourages trade, investment, and technology between Iran and Ghana, and 'Humanitarianism', which is not actually a direct inter-governmental program, but a means of penetrating the Ghanaian social settings. Iran is using the SCC and humanitarian initiatives as an opportunity to position itself diplomatically on the Ghanaian socio- politico ladder. There are clear synergies with the SCC and humanitarian initiatives that support greater economic connectivity across Ghana.

Efforts to ramp up social infrastructure projects three decades ago received a boost in Ghana with news that Iran will execute developmental humanitarian projects in the country through the Ahl Bait foundation. There are many projects that was implemented by the Islamic Republic through the Ahl Bait foundation to provide irrigation facilities and supply safe and accessible water to rural farming communities in the Northern Region of Ghana. In addition, the Ahl Bait foundation has worked very closely with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in identifying a number of priority agriculture projects for implementation. These initiatives and many others are contingent upon the government and people of Ghana to also promote an enabling environment characterized by acceptance, approval, and love for Iran.

The search for status in Iran's foreign policy towards Ghana informs the Islamic Republic's focus on development-oriented humanitarian works regardless of the

system of government being practiced in the country. The humanitarian activities of Iran in Ghana is having positive impacts on the [ordinary] people. The lack of ideological content in Iran's foreign policy towards Ghana means the issue of exporting the Islamic Republic's revolutionary tenets are relegated to the outflanking Saudi Arabia and its Sunni allies, cautious projection of the Shi'a sects, and cementing the sphere of influence through its South – South Cooperation development agenda. Such a policy direction indicates the Islamic Republic's problem-free foreign policy within the West African sub- region.

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The contemporary relation is seriously projecting South – South development partnership in the new global economic order. Iran – Ghana relation represents a distinct South – South dialectic. Second, together with China’s growing South – South [Economic] Cooperation with Africa, it challenges the Global North hegemonies and introduces multi-polarity in global politics. Third, Iran’s growing status in Ghana has outflanked the USA and its Middle Eastern allies competing interests in getting it isolated. Iran’s interactions with Ghana remains multidimensional. Beyond the traditional areas of security cooperation, foreign direct investment, and technical aid to the West African country, there is increased collaboration in humanitarian works and cultural exchange. Iran’s engagement with Ghana remains very apparent. Across the country, Iran’s courtship of Ghanaians is evident with numerous humanitarian projects. These projects largely revolve around education, health, and agriculture.

The main thesis of the dissertation is the examination of Iran’s search for status in Ghana riding at the back of its humanitarian projects. Thus far, the dissertation has established that Iran foreign policy towards Ghana is driven by political interest. As a powerful Middle Eastern country passionate to outflank its regional rivals across West Africa, Iran’s engagement with Ghana remains a grand design to “take full charge”. With its strategic geographical location, enormous natural and human resource, industrial and agricultural development, military organization and manpower, educational and technological levels, Iran possesses both tangible and intangible capabilities in exerting influence in Ghana. Indeed, pragmatic foreign policy driven by strategic humanitarian [soft power] projects is the underpinning factor in Iran’s growing status.

Recommendation for Future Studies

This study makes some important recommendations for future research into a peculiar reason(s) for the humanitarian works of the Gulf Arab States as well as the broader impacts of it on the receiving African states. Getting to understand the motives or the reasons behind Iran's humanitarian works as a foreign policy tool towards Ghana, it is my hope that the GCC States of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain will adopt a strategic and non-sectarian approach to executing their humanitarian projects to avoid receiving backlash in their external supports. It is also hoped that the GCC States will review their humanitarian architecture and supporting policies to match the growth and development plans of West African countries and their national visions. It is therefore suggested that future studies be made as follows:

1. Based on literature, humanitarian works of the above-mentioned GCC states within the West African countries is more prone to projecting the Wahhabi (sectarian) ideology. Most of such humanitarian projects have been misapplied by certain Salafi groups within the region by engaging in religious intolerance, Islamic extremism, and terrorism. Therefore, it would be interesting to have a similar study that would likewise probe deep into the motives of humanitarian works of the GCC states using qualitative research method that would provide information on:

a. What makes the GCC States focus mainly on construction of mosques, building of Islamic schools (*Madrasas*), digging of wells within the confines of the mosques/*Madrasas*, and running orphanages with a focus to rearing and training orphans to adopt their unique (Salafi/Wahhabi) brand of Islam?

2. A comparative study on the general satisfaction and approval of Ghanaians vis-à-vis humanitarian projects being executed by Iran and the GCC states in the country.

3. I have applied a critique of soft power articulated by Nye in reference to Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana as a foreign policy tool to attaining status. I have concluded that Nye's analysis is indeed conceptually relevant to Iran's humanitarian works in Ghana. However, this example may not hold for other geographical [sub]regions of the world. In fact, some international relation academics identify significant differences in the effects of soft power of global powers and semi-developed powers. Therefore, additional comparative study may positively prove Nye's discourse of soft power relative to humanitarian works of a Global North state and a Global South state.

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Appendix A: Qatar University Institutional Review Board Issued for this Study



Qatar University Institutional Review Board **QU-IRB**

QU-IRB Registration: IRB-QU-2020-006, QU-IRB, Assurance: IRB-A-QU-2019-0009

DATE: June 10, 2021

TO: Salisu Mohammed, PHD
FROM: Qatar University Institutional Review Board (QU-IRB)

PROJECT TITLE: 1749817-1 IRAN FOREIGN POLICY: HUMANITARIAN SOFT POWER AND THE SEARCH FOR STATUS IN GHANA

QU-IRB REFERENCE #: QU-IRB 1560-EA/21
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
DECISION DATE: June 10, 2021
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 6&7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Qatar University Institutional Review Board (QU-IRB) has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review according to Qatar Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) regulations. This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Qatar MoPH regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that Expedited Review approvals are valid for a period of one year and renewal should be sought prior to May 11, 2022 to ensure timely processing and continuity. Moreover, any changes/modifications to the original submitted protocol should be reported to the committee to seek approval prior to continuation.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

Documents Reviewed:

- Consent Form - CONSENT FORM.docx (UPLOADED: 05/6/2021)
- Other - QU-IRB Check List.pdf (UPLOADED: 04/25/2021)
- Proposal - PHD THESIS PROPOSAL.doc (UPLOADED: 06/3/2021)

- Qatar University - IRB Application - Qatar University - IRB Application (UPLOADED: 05/19/2021)
- Questionnaire/Survey - INTERVIEW.docx (UPLOADED: 06/7/2021)

- 1 -

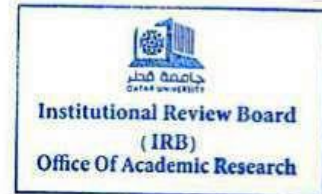
Generated on IRBNet

If you have any questions, please contact QU-IRB at 4403 5307 or qu-irb@qu.edu.qa. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Best wishes,



Dr. Ahmed Awaisu
Chairperson, QU-IRB



This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Qatar University's records.

Qatar University-Institutional Review Board (QU-IRB), P.O. Box 2713 Doha, Qatar
Tel +974 4403-5307 (GMT +3hrs) email: QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa

Appendix B: Consent Form Sent to Participants for my Interviews

CONSENT FORM

IRAN FOREIGN POLICY: HUMANITARIAN SOFT POWER AND THE SEARCH FOR STATUS IN GHANA

IRAN FOREIGN POLICY: HUMANITARIAN SOFT POWER AND THE SEARCH FOR STATUS IN GHANA

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that may affect your decision as to whether to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in the study, this form serves as the record for your consent.

You are being asked to participate in a research project examining Iran foreign policy towards Ghana. The study aims at uncovering reasons for the growing status of Iran in the West African sub-region, using Ghana as a case study. You were selected as a possible participant because you teach and research international relations, foreign policy, and security related subjects.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to respond to questions and share your experiences and/or opinions regarding Ghana's relation with the Islamic Republic. The interview session will take no more than one hour.

If you agree, your participation MAY or MAY NOT be audio recorded. Please tick as appropriate:

- (a) I agree to be audio recorded
- (b) I do not agree to be audio recorded

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study. However, the information and results that will be obtained may be useful to academic and non-academic institutions with interest in foreign policy and international relation within and outside Ghana.

Must I participate in the study?

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to withdraw from the research even after the interview, your office can inform me via my **WhatsApp Number +974 – 50196488**; or email me on sm1704933@student.qu.edu.qa Consequently, I will dispose of all the data related to your interview.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

I hold ethics of respect for your involvement in the research I am undertaking, and I make a categorical statement that any/all information you shall give is **purely for this academic exercise** and nothing else. Second, I recognize your right to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time.

Who do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

Qatar University Institutional Review Board sanctioned the study with approval number QU-IRB 1560 – EA21. For research-related problems or questions regarding participant’s rights or ethical compliance of the study, your office may contact the QU-IRB office at:

QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions, and received answers to your satisfaction. Please keep a (photo) copy of this consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____ Printed Name: Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____ Printed Name: Salisu Mohammed

Appendix C: Interview Guide Sent to Participants Ahead of the Interviews

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

QUESTIONS

Opening Remarks:

I am undertaking a research for my dissertation regarding *Iran Foreign Policy: Humanitarian Soft Power and the Search for Status in Ghana*. As an academic teaching and researching subjects related to international relations, foreign policy, and security, you are in the best position to describe your thoughts and experience about the subject. The response I receive from you and the other participants would be transcribed and summarized in the study only. Nothing you will say will be identified with you as a private individual unless you categorically say so. As we go through the interview, if you have any reservations about why I am asking certain questions, I will be glad to respond to it. Alternatively, if there is something you do not want to answer, I will sincerely respect that. If at any time during the interview you want to terminate the process, I will sincerely respect that. I will also be glad to answer any questions you will want to ask me before or after the interview.

Guide Questions:

1. How will you describe Ghana -Iran Relation?
2. Do you know of a senior Ghanaian official who ever embarked on an official visit to Iran
3. Do you know of any senior Iranian government official who ever visited Ghana?
4. Has there ever been a diplomatic cleavage between Ghana and Iran?
5. Do you know of a period of international pressure on Ghana to scale back or completely severe relation with Iran?
 - (a) If YES, was there a time Ghana considered taking such action? Sa (i) If YES, what was the outcome of the consideration?
6. Was there a time the activities of Iranian institutions in Ghana were of worrying concern?
7. Did Iran's role in the provision of health, education, and other social services in Ghana enhanced the good relation between Ghana and the Islamic Republic?
8. Has there ever been a reason for Ghana's to vote in favor of U N resolution to impose sanction on Iran?
 - (a) If YES, what was the reason
9. Do you perceive Iran's growing relations with West African countries a threat to the sub- region?
10. How will you describe future relations between Iran and the countries in the West African sub-region