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The Trust Factor of Oman's Diplomacy in the US-Iranian Conflict

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Abstract:

To understand Oman's role in regional negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution is to appreciate its foreign policy. Oman's foreign policy is evaluated to understand how it has been formed and in what way this has impacted its political stances throughout the years of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said's reign. In a turbulent region, Oman has consequently been asked on several occasions to serve as a negotiator or mediator. This research examines how Oman has done it. The US-Iranian conflict is presented to answer the raised question, along with many areas in relation. Emphasizing on trust as a vital element to a successful intervention, Oman's peacemaking diplomacy under an independent, pragmatic, and moderate manner is elaborated. The durability of Oman's position in regional and global negotiation and mediation is finally measured, presenting the impact of such on its security needs and regional stability.

Keywords: Trust, Oman, Diplomacy, US, Iran.

عامل الثقة في الدبلوماسية العمانية في الصراع الأمريكي الإيراني

الملخص:

من أجل فهم دور سلطنة عُمان في المفاوضات الإقليمية والوساطة وحل النزاعات يجب تقدير سياستها الخارجية، والتي سيتم تقييمها من أجل فهم كيفية نشأتها وتشكلها وأثر ذلك على مواقفها السياسية طوال سنوات حكم السلطان الراحل قابوس بن سعيد. وتقع

عُمان في منطقة مضطربة، وقد طُلب منها في عدة مناسبات أن تعمل كمفاوض أو وسيط في الصراعات الإقليمية. سيبحث هذا البحث في كيفية قيام السلطنة بالوساطة الدولية، خاصة في الصراع الأمريكي الإيراني، إلى جانب بعض القضايا المتعلقة بذلك. يؤكد هذا البحث على عامل الثقة كعنصر مهم للتدخل الناجح لحل النزاعات، والذي إعتمدت عليه عُمان لتطوير "دبلوماسية صنع السلام" إعتماداً على منهج مستقل وواقعي ومعتدل. ومن خلال هذا البحث تم قياس مدى استدامة مكانة سلطنة عُمان في المفاوضات والوساطة الإقليمية والدولية وتأثير ذلك على متطلباتها الأمنية واستقرارها الإقليمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثقة، عُمان، الدبلوماسية، الولايات المتحدة، إيران.

Introduction:

Being repetitively recognized in the international community as a discreet Gulf mediator and a regional power broker, an often-asked question than not is why Oman? This further exemplifies on what Oman has done in the region that others have not, or perhaps what Oman can do that others cannot. Tracing back to 1970 when the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said first assumed power, Oman's foreign policy was quickly put to check after having been threatened and shaken since the notable absence of an Omani unity and independence instigated major uncertainty and insecurity for the Sultanate[1]. From then onwards Oman for almost half a century has exhibited a foreign policy remarked for being regionally unique considering its independence, pragmatism, and moderation. Yet still, when referring to the

interests of Oman's foreign policy, what does it mean to be independent, pragmatic, and moderate? It simply means Oman maintains its freedom of action through achieving accommodation with regional and global powers through signifying flexibility and additionally avoiding radical positions while continuing to support a stable regional political-military status quo[2].

But why is Oman so keen on shaping foreign policy as such and further maintaining it? Well in a turbulent region witnessing constant unrest and conflict, Oman's foreign policy reflects proficient diplomacy, it is a persistent reminder and display of how international gateways become unlocked and continue to open through a balancing act of interests, an exhibition of tolerance in the approach of contrasts, and too, a determined pursuit for mutual and shared benefits[3]. Trends influencing this Omani diplomacy indicate that Oman's foreign policy has been thoroughly personalized by the direction of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said[4], who in addition to having experienced a civil war and a communist conflict within; considered Oman's strategic location on the Strait of Hormuz and amid rivals, Saudi Arabia and Iran, as an opportunity as much a threat shaping its foreign policy in an independent manner whilst attaining good relations with all, even those once enemies, and firmly believing that peaceful negotiation is vital to the inclusive and abiding

goals of the Sultanate's long-term security and prosperity[5]. Resulting in careful yet positive neutrality[6], such an approach towards conflict has made Oman a pioneer in mediation and global diplomacy is now referred to by the region's most historic political cases and conflicted parties.

Oman's Foreign Policy to Action:

I. Standing Solely and Strong

With foreign policy principles of non-alignment and non-interference in any state's internal affairs, Oman expected other states to not interfere in its internal affairs either as it was very much focused on maintaining good relations with its neighboring countries and the world. This started to be evident in Oman's stance through the region's diverse[7] turmoil over the first couple of decades of applying its foreign policy, reflecting the opportunity for peacemaking and dialogue as key to conflict resolution in early turbulent times of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said's reign. Specifically, in 1978 when Egypt was condemned for being the first Arab state to recognize Israel, Oman chose not to break diplomatic ties with Egypt as the latter had then signed the Camp David peace treaty with Israel under American provision bringing the Arab and Islamic world to disbelief[8]. Oman hereby demonstrated an independent approach towards peace

attainment which other Arab states disagree with and condemned Egypt for its move.

Oman yet continued to prove its independent foreign policy principles in the following year of 1979 when the Shah of Iran was overthrown by Ayatollah Khomeini, choosing to keep the already established ties with Iran intact, especially after having once gotten Iranian military intervention to fight the Communist-supported Southern war in Dhofar between 1972 and 1975[9]. This hereby emphasized the trusting foundation built between the Omanis and Iranians. Staying true to its foreign policy principles, Oman led by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said had too proposed a plan of protection following the Shah's removal for $100 million on the Strait of Hormuz in the prevention of a possible antagonism considering its strategic location[10]. However, the five other Gulf states being conservative have disregarded the idea which was then turned to the United States in 1980 resulting in a first of a kind Facility Access Agreement between an Arab state and the United States[11]. Ultimately, the military agreement with a Western great power of such represented the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said's capability and willingness to deliver what he believed is crucial in maintaining the Sultanate's eternal security needs.

II. Gaining Trust from Early On

While strengthening its relation with Western allies such as the United States, Oman was still able to maintain good relations with Iran seeing their shared interest of internal and external security, balancing an equation most states in the region found impossible to obtain. This further emphasized Oman as a trusted neighbor, ally, and friend that has verified from early on its commitment to being independent, pragmatic, and moderate at the expense of no state including itself. In the following year of 1981, the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council had come about as a result of the continuing Iraq-Iran war[12]. The six Gulf states including Oman came together cooperatively in a security effort seeing the region's unrest drawn from the two major conflicted parties. Even so, Oman chose not to take a side in this conflict and aligned with neither Iraq nor Iran whilst participating in all GCC associated regional security operations, being able to hold its regional relationships and Western security ties. After the Iraq-Iran war, however, the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said tried to bring both conflicted parties into negotiations which were to no avail[13].

Matters were henceforth escalated with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Since both Oman and Kuwait were member states in the GCC, Oman had a responsibility as much as the other Gulf member states towards protecting the sovereignty of

Kuwait. Omani forces were, therefore, participants in the United Nation's liberation efforts, granting the United States through the Facilities Access Agreement of 1980 that had been renewed in 1990, admission to prepositioned supplies and facilities within Omani grounds[14]. Sustaining diplomatic ties meanwhile with both parties, Iraq and Kuwait, Oman was endeavouring once again to present prospects for crisis resolution[15]. Though, such efforts faced failure causing Oman to break its foreign policy's principle of non-alignment in a pragmatic manner justifying that the rule of law demanded official alignment in opposition to an Arab government, that being Iraq.

Continuing to stand alone and transmit a deeper message through its foreign policy, Oman became the first Gulf state to ever welcome an Israeli prime minister in 1994, Yitzhak Rabin, breaking all odds after having invited official representatives of the Israeli government to a multilateral-track negotiations conference on water desalinization[16]. This stance primarily defined Oman's position on peacemaking and conflict resolution as a long-term practice, providing prospect while gaining respect as well as trust from the international community for its independence and transparency.

Sultan Qaboos Vision:

1. Individual Factor

Some scholars have recently paid attention to the influence of policymakers' personality in the management of the state's foreign policy and therefore its international relations. The recent results of the cumulative studies on the charismatic impact of the head of state have proved the importance of considering the head of the state's personality in studying foreign policy. This is not to argue that such an argument is not subjective to controversial contradictory ideas, still, there are political scholars- mostly realists- who argued that the influence of the factor of personality in the foreign policy of the state is temporary and ends with the death of the leader. Political leaders operate within an internal and external environment that influences their foreign policy. Yet, the leader is an important party to the political system and that his\her character is a key factor in the decision-making of foreign policies. Therefore, to get a comprehensive understanding of the state's public policy of the state, it is important to consider the "leadership factor" which most of the contemporary political behavioural theories have built their argument on- relying upon three major angles: (a) the psychological and intellectual composition of the personality, (b) its social and political socialization, and (c) the internal and external environment of the state.

Political studies and literature have focused on the fact that the influence of personality factor often appears strongly in two areas. First, either in dictatorships, where the devolution of power becomes difficult and driven by exceptional circumstances, then the leader's personality meshes with power to the extent that it becomes impossible to separate them. Second, in countries where leaders with charismatic personalities pass through the power -not permanently- they always try to be under the requirement of legitimacy and its limits.

Based on foregoing, the Omani political system appears to be governed on uniqueness rules "legalized" by the basic law, but in reality, it is technically governed by the power of its leader's personality and his superior ability to run the state apparatus comprehensively. Therefore, Oman as a state and its foreign policy -in the same context- is managed by the principle of Al-Shura which came from both the sacred constant and the functional qualifications of the modern state's concept. This might be seen in the constant communication between the Sultan and his people in the form of an open parliament. Moreover, the psychological and intellectual components of the Sultan have influenced the state's foreign policy.

Sultan Qaboos, the eighth Sultan, descended directly from Imam Ahmad bin Said, the first founder of the Busaid family and the

most respected Imam in Oman. He was known to be a strong combatant and skilful leader, and he worked hard until he united Oman and eliminated civil wars. Such historical roots along with his education under enlightened Omanis have had a significant impact on building the character of Sultan Qaboos. In this way, the personality of the Student Qaboos has been crystallized and he became prepared psychological, physical and educationally. All this was reflected on the charisma of the Sultan, and he built the modern state of Oman as per what he had learned about civilization, science, discipline, responsibility and realism. Consequently, as Sultan Qaboos enjoyed the breadth of knowledge and communication with world issues and developments, he made Oman's foreign policy a prudent, neutral and forward-looking policy[17].

In his book "Journalists in His Majesty's Royal Court, 1971-2011,"Abu Aoun (2015) conducted that the Sultan Qaboos political vision was based on three main features related to the regime in Oman. These features constitute the general framework of the political vision in ruling the country nationally and internationally: (1) moderate vision; religious thought, (2) balanced vision; political thought (negotiation, cooperation and non-intervention), and (3) revolutionary vision; intellectual thought (combine authenticity and modernism). The result shows

that moderate vision as an approach of ruling took the lead, in which it represented 52.77%, while balanced vision represented 38.88%. The Revolutionary vision constituted the lowest proportion of 8.33% as it requires long decades to be settled in society[18].

2. Balanced vision: political thought (negotiation, cooperation and non-intervention)

Although Some Scholars have identified three major features characterized Oman's foreign policy in the era of Sultan Qaboos which can be discussed under the "Balanced vision". Firstly, the tendency to peace and negotiations and distance from conflicts and disputes. The Sultanate played a major role in bringing the views closer during the regional conflicts, and perhaps the most important role was its attempts to calm and mediate during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. Oman is also following this approach in dealing with crucial issues in the region, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Omani stance, along with those of other Arab countries, was unique among the Arab positions on the Egyptian-Israeli peace initiative in the 1970s and refused to cut diplomatic relations with Egypt after the Baghdad summit in 1978. It also played a major role in the nuclear deal between Iran and 5+1 permanent members.

Secondly, maintaining balanced relations with neighbouring countries and distance itself from conflicts. For instance, Oman has not made clear statements regarding the events of the Arab Spring, which changed the face of the region. Instead, Oman tried to bring conflicting parties back together, for example, intervened to resolve the border problems between Iraq and Kuwait. This Omani attitude has been driven by historical dimensions; the country has witnessed numerous interventions by external and surrounding powers for long periods. The policy of neutrality and openness to all was the main guarantor of the country's peace and security. Such a policy-protected the country from engaging in regional conflicts, especially after the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 that reshaped the nature of the conflict in the region. This policy defiantly came from Sultan Qaboos political thought of peace and cooperation and has been reflected in his vision toward foreign policy.

The last feature of this vision is interdependence and engagement with various parties. This can be seen in Oman's ability to maintain relations with two conflicting parties in the region, Iran and KSA. Oman maintains good relations with Iran and has established many joint projects with them, at the same time maintaining good relations with KSA and other GCC countries. Additionally, Oman has also engaged in security

relations with powerful countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. This has contributed to the Sultanate's adoption neutrality, isolated itself from conflicts, and even participates in the resolution of these conflicts thanks to its good relations with various parties.[19]

3. Revolutionary vision: intellectual thought (combining authenticity and modernism)

The feature of Omani renaissance was characterized by uniqueness and a degree of progress that do not overstep important stages. Instead, Omani renaissance was developing gradually, in a way that allows each developmental phase stage an appropriate time to accomplish. For that reason, it has succeeded in overcoming all the obstacles encountered, because the leadership of this Renaissance - with his patience, perseverance, self-confidence and his vision towards the requirements of such a development- was aware of the nature of each stage. Sultan Qaboos' morality, level of education, and religious faith have played a major role in expanding his awareness on the importance of merging cultural heritage with the culture of the modernity and its scientific and technological tools. This has had the greatest impact in providing the necessary environment for the emergence of Omani modern renaissance and its reasons for continuity. Omani renaissance

has benefited from this balance between authenticity and modernity, which was established by Sultan Qaboos.

Even though Sultan Qaboos changed the face and orientations of Omani foreign policy completely, he did not forget his cultural and religious heritage. During the formulation of his vision, he took into considerations his predecessors' foreign policies along with Islamic principles in adopting good-neighbour policy and respecting others sovereignty. This can be seen in his speeches as he stated once "we are determined fully to perform our role in the international field, following our policies which we have adopted from the beginning, positively and clearly. These policies are based foremost on our firm belief in the principles of peaceful coexistence among the nations; good neighbourliness between countries; non-interference in others internal affairs; and mutual respect for national sovereignty[20].

The Hostage Negotiator:

I. A Soft Power Superpower

Having laid its foot down proficiently, Oman had harmlessly earned its widespread reputation as a trusted party in action when demonstrating its foreign policy given the crucial regional challenges presented. The late Sultan Qaboos bin Said had now built a foundation for future practices and combating turbulence as a soft power Superpower, implementing negotiations and

mediations to minimize armed conflict and where applicable. Oman's ability to reach its goals by attracting others as opposed to coercing them is what signifies the core definition of soft power[21]. To obtain international support, it is vital to possess both cultural and political standards and foreign policies in which other states view as legitimate while also having moral authority[22]. As Oman has done just so, in an age of global information a country's ability to win over the minds and hearts of others is centrally significant instead of the classic exercise contingent on carrots and sticks to execute influence[23]. Besides the preferred outcomes of soft power, the message that Oman's practice of soft power accentuates on is the necessity and need of non-coercive influence achieved primarily from the facilitation of foreign policy objectives that eliminate the need to resort to material, hard power, as well as economic sanctions in conflict resolution[24].

II. Trust Propensity

Moving further into the reign of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, trust propensity was the key of Omani soft power of negotiations and those referring to Oman. Categorized as dispositional trust, this kind of trust is often developed before the occurrence of negotiations as a characteristic carried by an individual from one situation to another where a person or team have the expectancy

that the word, promise, or written statement of another person or team of concern can be relied and depended on[25]. Defined by the extent to which an individual has high expectations of others, such kind of trust is present even with a person or group whom one has never interacted with before[26]. In resemblance to Oman, such propensity to trust had been formed through previous trust-related experiences and also when used in new circumstances that necessitate interchange with unknown parties, as trust propensity forecasts that a relationship of a trusting nature will develop among those parties involved. It hereby influences the way negotiators to think, reply, and communicate with the opposite side during negotiations knowing that trust is a vital element to constructive negotiations, as it may be either increased or decreased depending on the integrative or distributive behavior displayed by a negotiator[27].

III. Understanding Negotiations

Negotiations are viewed as an interaction of a social nature where codependent parties try to arrive at agreements to allocate resources or settle disputes[28]. Besides having trust propensity before negotiations, the trust may take a different form within the course of negotiations itself as is may grow and evolve between the involved negotiators facilitating a long-lasting relationship. As an independent variable, trust development during negotiations

allows for future dependence of all parties involved on each other. However, the failure to attain trust in the occurrence of negotiations will consequently threaten the application of the negotiated agreement and hence cooperation in the future. Throughout negotiations, the development of trust is the degree to which the parties involved; negotiators have more trust for one another at the end of the negotiation course than that at the start. Most importantly though, negotiations are when individuals attempt to reach a common agreement voluntarily[29]. But when it comes to political disputes and conflict, is it easy to compromise and voluntary seek resolution, especially considering the usual heavy weighted accumulations and root causes of political clashes? This in itself could be enough of a reason to seek voluntary resolution of de-escalation. Although voluntary participation is not always the case, with Oman's involvement parties are often more willing to get involved than not due to the already obvious reasons.

IV. Oman to The Rescue; Oman in Negotiations

With a focus on the US-Iranian relations, in 2010 this unresolved global conflict escalated dramatically. Iranian authorities had detained three American hikers, a female and two males, as hostages on the charges of drifting across the Iraqi-Iranian borderline. While the United States remained stranded and

paralyzed, Oman was the only gateway the United States had to engage with its opponent; Iran. To begin with, Omani-American relations were rooted from 1841 when Oman happened to be the first Arab state to acknowledge the United States. Since, the Omani-American diplomatic ties have grown through the different regional turbulence, having trust in Oman's ability to communicate with the Iranians like no one else in the region can. Knowing that this hostage deal could serve Oman as a weapon to its armaments, it would mainly counteract the threats impacting the region's stability and the rusting US-Iranian relations[30].

With an independent foreign policy and well-established relation with both countries, Oman played a contributory role in attempting to de-escalate tensions and reach a common ground for both parties. Becoming a negotiator on behalf of the United States, Oman knew that the Iranians didn't trust the United States intentions and so the most important foundation of this intervention was to clarify that it was intervening on a humanitarian basis and not to exhibit an American political stance against Iran[31]. As this occurred during the Obama presidency period, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton clarified that the United States has high expectations in Oman's capability to use its relation with Iran as it did so before, to bring Iranian officials to comprehend the inferences of their actions in this conflict. A

diplomatic telegram to Oman from the United Stated ambassador notified officials that Oman's ability to secure the release of the three American citizens detained by Iran will "remove an unhelpful irritant" between the two conflicted countries[32].

So, over three years, Oman's quiet negotiating efforts with Iran were to build emblematic steps into resolution, revealing that the Iranians were rather delicate to any indication that may mistake the Iranian allegations against the American hikers to be baseless[33]. Ambassador Schmierer who was the American ambassador to Oman at the time further discloses that Oman was able to build trust between the two by bringing the Americans to take specific measures in return of Iranian collaboration. Although small but fruitful, this included finding methods to ease visa procedures for students of Iranian citizenship studying at the United States, as well as enabling Iranian officials' admittance to Iranian citizens imprisoned in the American prisons. As a well-reputed influential party, Oman proposed this to the Iranians, indicating that it has been well-received and approved by them. The strategy Oman demonstrated in this specific case of negotiations was to gradually but harmlessly take small steps by sorting out minor obstacles to build confidence between the two at conflict, as resolving one thing at a time within an interest-based approach

would create a pathway for more to come. Instead of conveying negative messages back and forth, Oman focused on printing a positive impact from one party on the other within the long yet productive course of negotiations.

This was successful and in parallelism to its foreign policy principles which aim to de-escalate conflict by all means, as it was too willing to pay a ransom to facilitate the release of the hostages which exhibits its reward power. Consequently, Oman paid a bail of $500 thousand to release Sarah Shourd, the female's hostage one year after being imprisoned[34]. The other two American male citizens were not released until another two years with a bail of $1 million also paid by Oman[35]. Among the eventual return of all the American citizens to the United States, a statement by Oman's Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that the deal would now encourage a reconcilement between both the Iranians and Americans while emphasizing regional stability[36], seeing it be Oman's main interest in starting the negotiations, to begin with. Nonetheless, why couldn't the United States with its great power and influence do it alone?

From a Hostage Negotiator to a Regional Mediator:

I. Root Causes of the US-Iranian Conflict

Considering that the three American citizens were detained for suspected spying, the conflict was not between Iran and

themselves, it was between Iran and the United States. The heavy weighted American Iranian conflict traces back to almost 40 years ago and is still ongoing[37]. It chiefly started with the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 where Iranian students invaded the American embassy in Tehran after the Shah had been exiled, taking all Americans present as hostages[38]. They aimed to pressure the United States into extraditing the escaped Shah to Iran to stand trial for crimes against the people as he was permitted into the United States to undergo treatment as a cancer patient. The tension and conflict in the hostage crisis grew deeper day by day as they've been wrongly captured for 444 days and were not released until the United States newly elected President at that time, Ronald Reagan, unfroze Iranian state assets[39]. Throughout the incident, all diplomatic ties with Iran were terminated by the United States and have been so since then, making it difficult to communicate or almost impossible to reach mutual understanding, demonstrating both aggressive avoidance and passive avoidance of conflict. In return, Iran exhibited a combination of passive-aggressive avoidance, indicating that the United States has more of a problem with it than Iran did with the United States.

This conflict may become a historical conflict seeing the escalation of events contributing to the intensity of the tensions

between the two countries along the years, yet predicted to develop. From 1980 when the United States had chosen to back Iraq up during its war with Iran, to only then have Iran labelled as a sponsor of terrorism in 1984, also imposing an arms embargo on it by 1995, and to additionally raise concern over Iran's development of nuclear weapons in 2003, the Barack Obama administration was finally able to deliver a breakthrough for the two countries bringing Iran to sign a nuclear agreement decelerating its nuclear weapon program down in return of lifting sanctions that have caused a stagnant Iranian economy[40]. The application of this interest-based approach raises a crucial question of how did the United States after exercising a power-based approach towards its conflict with Iran break all odds and come to such a result. Well once again, following the pattern of de-escalation, it is almost a no brainer that Oman helped create the common denominator in this complex equation as it has done in the American hostage release in 2010.

II. Oman After Rescue; Oman in Mediation

Unlike negotiations, mediation is the process through which an outside party, often non-related to a conflict or interest in an issue, is involved by engaging several spoken or physical methods calculated to direct or resolve the dispute between the two other parties at conflict via a peaceful manner[41]. Third

parties involved in mediation particularly eliminate the use of forceful intervention even if it were to end the conflict. Most importantly, like negotiations, mediation in an international context is a voluntary procedure that is initiated with the consent of all parties of concern. The durability of mediation is too dependent on the willingness of all parties involved to continue in such a process. On this basis, given Oman's singular history with Iran and its bilateral relations with the United States, Oman had become a mediator in the United States-Iranian nuclear deal. Both the Americans and Iranians trusted Oman and so secret talks on the nuclear deal started in Muscat in 2012[42]. The most important factor is that both parties were willing to engage in a series of face-to-face dialogue regarding the crucial matter. Lasting until 2015, these talks were effective enough to come to light as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was arrived at by Iran with the European Union and the P5+1[43].

Ultimately, the deal was intended at presenting peaceful outcomes by placing a limit on Iran's nuclear program in return of lifting the imposed sanctions affecting its economy. The late Sultan Qaboos bin Said was chosen as an intermediary to this conflict by the United States, simply because who else can do it competently? The Americans trust Oman as an interlocutor to relay on since Oman's been to the rescue of both parties before.

The late Sultan then delivered the American request to Iran where his statement had a couple of essential arguments[44]. As addressed within a speech by the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei in 2015, the first one indicated that the United States will acknowledge Iran as a nuclear power, while the other indicated that the Americans will lift sanctions within six months of signing the deal, adding that negotiations with the United States were important to resolve the problem. Khamenei adds that Iranians expressed their lack of trust in the United States once again, for the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said to ask them to make an attempt anyway. In response, the Iranians agreed to take the attempt considering the respect they had for the late Sultan's foreign policy in securing the strategic location of Oman with Iran, and that's how negotiations on this matter were said to have begun; under the very apparent and appealing Omani diplomacy in mediation.

Differentiating Oman, the Negotiator, Mediator, and Facilitator

Although negotiations have been differentiated from mediation in the sense that a negotiating party has their interest to work by while a mediator is rather impartial and have no decision-making authority in the process of mediation, nor do they represent any party's interests, one thing both methods have in common is

facilitation. It is often argued that Oman in the dialogue process between the United States and Iran's nuclear deal served as a facilitator as opposed to a mediator. However, considering the given, in both conflicts requiring negotiations and mediation, facilitation was a key point of Oman's behavior in the processes. We have seen in the hostage negotiations Oman's willingness to facilitate the release of the detained, although it acted through its preventive diplomacy as a negotiator with the main interest of de-escalating tensions and securing a safe release of the hostages, knowing the impact of the contrary on Oman's security amid the region's stability if threatened. As a mediator, it did not pursue the parties into the decisions come to, but it did facilitate the start of the mediation process, being able to diffuse conflicts and disagreements that had stopped the United States and Iran from coming to talk sooner. A key point, in conclusion, is that mediation itself required some degree of negotiations, where Oman's past negotiating efforts based on exchanged interests with the parties involved, have led to it becoming a mediator of trust and capability as exhibited. Now despite the controversy over President Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran after being achieved by then-President Barack Obama, the main element of mediation is voluntary willingness and consent to engage in dialogue. So, it is inadequate to conclude that Oman

has failed in mediating the US-Iranian nuclear agreement, as the United States is no longer voluntarily interested in the proceeding which contradicts the concept of mediation, as it does negotiations. Taking its previous role as an arbitrator in a given conflict, one cannot rule out Oman's ability to yet help resolve the conflict between the United States and Iran, or at least minimize it as it has done before.

Conclusion:

As long as Oman maintains a foreign policy of independence, pragmatism, and moderation amid the principles associated to it, then the chances are Oman's lifecycle as a regional power-broker will continue to roll indefinitely. Even with the passing of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Oman's foreign policy had been shaped in a way that will enforce it to continue its pattern especially since it as a country gained the very crucial element of trust through accumulating years of practice, as trust is a reflection of respect. Not only would it be tragic to change such a foundation, it too will impact negatively on Oman's position in the region. Nevertheless, the orientation of Oman's foreign policy as mentioned has been molded through three critical components that can not bare change, causing the actions of the future leaders of Oman to be constrained and continue in the same mechanism[45]. These components include its strategic location,

the definite emergence of a post-petroleum economy, and the strongly rooted Ibadi principles of conservatism and tolerance, all in which make Oman's foreign policy what it is to the region and the international arena, also promised to be continued by the succeeding Sultan Haitham bin Tariq as addressed in his first given speech.

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