



The Cyrus Cylinder استوانه کوروش or Cyrus Charter منشور کوروش was discovered under the foundation of a Babylonian palace in 1879, making it perhaps the oldest time capsule on record. It commemorates Cyrus' victory over Babylonia in 539 BC and sets out the rights of subjects in his expanding empire. It is often commemorated as the oldest charter of human rights in the world.

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Note from the Editor

Is Biden Continuing 'Maximum Pressure'?

By Paul Barker

For over six months the Biden administration has not been able to keep one of its core foreign policy campaign promises: to rejoin the JCPOA. The great majority of Trump's 'maximum pressure' tactics remain in place in order to pressure concessions from Iranian negotiators. The longer the US and Iran remain out of compliance with JCPOA obligations, the more difficult it becomes to envision crossing that important bridge to a healthier political climate in the region. The Biden team and their counterparts in Iran are balancing complex and competing political pressures and realities. Nonetheless the Iranian presidential election came and went with no agreement on the path back to JCPOA compliance. [Ebrahim Ra'isi, a staunch hardliner](#), has been elected to the

Iranian presidency. Hopes for engaging Iran in the resolution of not only the nuclear threat but broader regional tensions are not dead, but they are dimmer than they were a few weeks ago. The Iranian rejection of direct talks with the US greatly slowed the negotiation process, as did an unhelpful law passed by the Iranian parliament in February. We will never know if better and more timely messaging from the Biden team might have brought dramatically better results.

Trump had sought to blow-up the nuclear agreement and encumber Iran with a dozen impossible-to-meet demands while Biden is continuing the pressure in pursuit of a more limited and achievable immediate objective: restoring the JCPOA in order to contain and push back Iran's nuclear capabilities and intentions.

Both the Iranians and the Americans still have a vested interest in the restoration of the JCPOA and the fruits of a more secure and economically prosperous region. Neither side has a viable Plan B. Will the new Ra'isi government in Iran be able to establish the needed rapport with the Biden team? Or will it take another 6 months? Or will it not happen at all, as too many hardliners want?

A big shift in the regional chessboard is happening as the US withdraws most of its military assets from Afghanistan. While few quibble with Biden's decision to end America's longest war, strong concerns are raised about the short timeframe for the departure of foreign troops and the absence of a regional framework to support calm within Afghanistan and along its borders. The likelihood of future instability in Afghanistan leading to large refugee flows, particularly to Iran and Pakistan is significant. It is unfortunate that the Biden and Rouhani teams were not able to repair the JCPOA before Biden announced his decision to withdraw from Afghanistan. The US and Iran worked together to create a post-Taliban governing structure in 2003, they should have been able to identify and build on shared interests for a stable Afghanistan in 2021.

As Afghan families which worked closely with the US military are brought to the US under the SIV program, there will be urgent needs for English teachers, particularly those with a good background in Persian or Pushtu. PC Iran TEFL teachers may wish to brush up on their skills!

JCPOA Update: Missed Opportunities

Negotiating with a Caricature of Iran Rather than the Country

Tom Huf, Babolsar, Mashhad, Tehran 1967-71, 2021/7/19

Also published by Massachusetts Peace Action

Since April 2021 and after six rounds of JCPOA negotiation in Vienna that started with optimism for a speedy agreement before the Iranian June 18 elections, progress has slowed. There is now speculation about possible failure to close the deal. Some US negotiators have recently voiced frustration that the talks could not continue indefinitely. The context forgotten by those looking at the short term, as the US is in the habit of doing, is that it is the US that has had no consistent policies toward Iran or for most of the Middle East in the past three decades. Iran has, over a longer time and certainly since the JCPOA, been consistent.

Both the US and Iran were making it clear after the inauguration that reversing the Trump policies quickly was both a substantive and symbolic signal about more than just the JCPOA. That US Foreign policy would return to the multilateral path that generated the 2015 deal was the stated goal. Biden, a longtime member and chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, put in place a team that was very experienced, widely respected, and would need little time to get up to speed. The team composition, led by Antony Blinken, Robert Malley and others who were part of the 2015 Vienna negotiations, signaled to observers that Biden would move forward quickly to implement his presidential campaign commitment to reenter the Nuclear Deal.

What has happened?

While the current impasse appears to be significant, it is important to note that all of the senior players on both sides continue to put out positive and conditional press releases like Secretary of State Antony Blinken's recent statement that the situation is: "between the very hard and the possible".

More recently experts like Andrew Bacevich at the Quincy Institute have been calling the demonization of Iran a major foreign policy mistake that is being used to justify military rather than diplomatic action and needs to be corrected.

Fundamentals of the situation have not changed much since 2015 except that the deliberate election boycott of the Iranian election in June (less than 40% voted and 13 million "voted" with blank ballots) has placed more pressure on the government to improve the economic situation. Others speculate that the Iranian negotiators in Vienna were delayed to allow the incoming president Ra'isi to claim the credit and benefits of the breakthrough.

Chuck Hegel, former Senator and Defense Secretary, was recently quoted as believing that an agreement will be reached in the coming months. Such opinions are widely shared among Iran experts despite the fact that the US negotiating team persists in negotiating with a caricature of demonized Iran rather than the real country.

Starting with the Bush Axis of Evil name-calling then, after Obama, morphing under Trump into a false narrative about an imaginary country that is the source of all problems in the Middle East, the US team in Vienna is burdened with delivering a tough line that is not in the spirit of the original and simple message of the JCPOA. Resolving the Nuclear issue and then moving forward with other issues focused on integrating Iran into the international trade structure remain highly valuable objectives.

Once integrated Iran would have no incentive to cause trouble and every incentive to assist with other issues in the region. The fundamental benefits for all parties today are still as they were originally in 2015 – economic benefits and trade for the world's 18th largest economy with a population equal to that of Germany, and a verifiable protocol for the world for control of nuclear proliferation with respect to Iran.

Letting go of the policy of military control and leverage in the Gulf region, as many now advocate in the wake of the 20-year failed policy in Afghanistan, is still out of focus for the Biden team. As a result, Iran understands that the US, having driven Iran into the unnatural orbit of China for oil sales, is weakening its own long term China strategy. The simple return to the JCPOA would solve that problem.

There are now four issues around which the Vienna negotiations have become mired.

The first and most significant one is Iran's legitimate fear that the US could again extract concessions from Iran and again pull out of the agreement after the next election. Iran wants a guarantee this will not happen. This can't be resolved directly since the US can't offer such a guarantee.

Second is that Iran wants all sanctions lifted and the US insists on keeping some non-nuclear related sanctions in place.

Third is the disagreement about what Iran needs to do to make up for its progress on nuclear knowledge and capability that is irreversible – aside from the actual stockpiles of enriched uranium that are easily reversed.

Fourth is the US demand that Iran commit to follow-on talks that were not part of the original agreement.

These four complications are for some senior diplomats involved not impossible to resolve but do violate the original spirit of the agreement. In its initial conception the JCPOA was a very simple and straightforward initiative. It was viewed by many senior American diplomats and foreign policy experts to have been one of the best-crafted and verifiable international agreements in their long diplomatic careers.

The US exit from the JCPOA, made on the basis of non-nuclear issues explicitly excluded from the agreement about Iran did enormous damage not only by ending the JCPOA but to the credibility of the US as an international leader that could be trusted to honor our commitments. This brought about much international distress about how to deal with the US in any trade or security agreement and still presents the Biden Administration with the challenge of reversing damage to American credibility.

How these issues will be resolved in the coming months is not clear. Abandoning the caricature we have created and negotiating with the real Iran would be a good way forward.

Iranian Election and Implications for JCPOA

[Foreign Ministry Report Details “Framework” Agreement on the JCPOA](#), NIAC, 2021/7/12

[Iran notifies parties won't resume Vienna talks before August](#), Laura Rozen, 2021/7/14

Iranian delay in returning to Vienna talks could indicate Raisi team believes they can negotiate a better deal.

[Whither the Iran nuclear deal? Ask Ra'isi](#), AI-Monitor, 2021/7/16

Rouhani has transferred JCPOA file to Iran's new hard-line president, who just might close the deal.

[Iran's Presidential Election Demonstrates Limits of U.S. Pressure Campaign](#), Assal Rad, 2021/6/24

[Against All Odds – Iranian Women Will Continue to Push for Change](#), Sussan Tahmasebi, 2021/6/22

The outgoing president failed to deliver on his bold promises to improve women's rights, and the next government is also unlikely to advance legal reforms or social and economic opportunities. But women in Iran will nevertheless fight for improved rights and more equality.

[Iran's New Hard-line President Ra'isi Could Be Dove in Hawk's Clothing,](#)

Tom O'Connor, Newsweek - June 23

[The bizarre case of 'blank votes' in Iran's elections,](#) Sarbas Nazari, 2021/7/6

In the face of an embarrassing record number of invalid votes cast in the latest elections, Iran's leadership continues to either look the other way or scramble for a justification.

Alternative Visions for Iran

[Would-be monarch of Iran to brief umbrella org for US Jewish groups,](#) Eli Clifton, 2021/7/6

The Conference of Presidents noted Reza Pahlavi's 'calls for regime change...' on the event invite.

[Iran Rebels See Hardliner Ebrahim Raisi as Chance to Bring Down Regime,](#) David Brennan, 2021/7/9

[Biden-linked expert backs regime change at event sponsored by Iranian militant group \[MEK\],](#) Eli Clifton and Matthew Petti, 2021/7/12

Michele Flournoy claims she was 'unaware' her hosts are part of a well-known former terrorist organization.

JCPOA Pitfalls and Prospects

[Biden's thorny Iran challenge is reaching a tipping point,](#) Kate Woodsome, 2021/7/22

[Government Spokesman Blames Iranian Law for Preventing JCPOA Deal,](#) NIAC, 2021/7/22

[Statement by the Foreign Ministers Of France, Germany And The United Kingdom,](#) 2021/7/6

[Why is Biden's Iran Policy the Same as Trump's?](#) Assal Rad, 2021/7/12

[U.S. accuses Iran of trying to deflect blame for nuclear talks impasse,](#) Nayera Abdallah, Arshad Mohammed and Matt Spetalnick, Reuters, 2021/7/17

[Biden Faces Intense Cross Currents in Iran Policy,](#) DAVID SANGER/ 2021/6/28

The airstrikes the president ordered on Iranian-backed militias show how he has to navigate between using force and pursuing diplomacy to revive the nuclear deal.

[US: Still 'serious differences' to resolve for Iran deal, talks won't go on indefinitely,](#) Laura Rozen, 2021/6/24

Iran's election of conservative Ebrahim Raisi "does not affect our determination to try to reach a deal or the pace at which we will go about pursuing it."

[Four steps to support Europe-Iran trade under a revived JCPOA,](#) Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj, 2021/6/24

Even if the JCPOA is restored, European companies will hesitate to trade in Iran. European and American officials should work together to give companies the comfort they need.

[**A conversation with Chuck Hagel on a US foreign policy in the Middle East,**](#)
Barbara Slavin, 2021/6/23

[**Rouhani Says JCPOA Deal “In Our Hands”,**](#) NIAC. 2021/7/9

[**Will Raisi follow Zarif’s path for reviving Iran nuclear deal?**](#) **Mark Fitzpatrick,**
2021/7/20

Outgoing Iran Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif’s final report on the Iran nuclear talks is self-serving in parts, but nonetheless charts a path to closing the JCPOA talks.

[**Who’s Who in the Biden Administration on Iran,**](#) **Allyson Socha, 2021/6/25**

[**War or peace? For Iran and the United States, it’s time to decide.**](#) **Diane Randal,**
2021/7/20

Regional Dynamics

[**No Clean Hands: Middle Eastern Powers’ Interventions, 2010–2020,**](#) **Quincy Paper No. 8, Matt Petty and Trita Parsi, 2021/7/10**

1. Iran is highly interventionist, but not an outlier. Six states have shown themselves the ablest to project armed power beyond their borders: Iran, Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. They are roughly equally interventionist - in fact, the UAE and Turkey have surpassed Iran in recent years.

2. Moreover, the U.S.’s own role deserves more scrutiny. Five of the six most interventionist powers in the Middle East are armed by the United States — and also enjoy significant political support from Washington. Fully a third of U.S. arms exports from 2010 to 2020, measured in trend indicator value, went to the major Middle Eastern powers considered in this study.

3. There is no evidential support for the argument that the JCPOA caused an increase in interventionism driven by Iranian aggression. Iranian intervention remained consistent from the high-water mark of the Arab Spring onward, while other powers’ increasing interventionism was often totally unrelated to Iran. In fact, much of the regional escalation since 2011 has taken place in battlefields where Iran is not involved, but where Turkey, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are jousting for power.

[**Surprise: no one ‘bad guy’ responsible for violence in the Middle East,**](#) **Matthew Petti,**
2021/7/20

New report finds that Iran is not ‘on the march,’ but among multiple powers, some US-backed, destabilizing the region.

[**Iran cheers U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan — but fears what could follow,**](#)
Miriam Berger, 2021/7/10

[**The Budding Kurdish-Iranian Alliance in Northern Iraq,**](#) **Hannah Lynch, 2021/6/24**

In an effort to deter Turkish intervention, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party had partnered with Iranian-run militias in and around Sinjar. It’s a strategic alignment that only further complicates the post-ISIS future of the country.

[**Israel and the Persian Gulf: A Source of Security or Conflict?**](#) **Steven Simon, 2021/6/30**

[**Iran and Israel’s Naval War Is Expanding,**](#) **Anchal Vohra, 2021/7/19**

The collapse of Lebanon is intensifying a conflict in the Mediterranean that has mostly taken place in the shadows.

[Iran's Drone Revolution Takes Off](#), Amos Harel, 2021/7/16

Tehran's growing use of drones reflects an old Iranian ethos of combining technological progress with self-reliance. Meanwhile, Israel is taking drone warfare one step further.

[Will Bennett Ditch Netanyahu's Approach to the Iran Deal? Or Rabinowitz](#), 2021/7/21

[Raisi's Potential Regional Policy](#), NIAC, 2021/7/9

Afghanistan Crisis

There is a crisis developing on Iran's eastern border. As US troops withdraw from Afghanistan, thousands of Afghans who worked with and for our troops are being left behind, with their SIV visas caught in a bureaucratic nightmare. NPCA is joining with the Peace Corps Community for Refugees and Friends of Afghanistan (two NPCA affiliate groups) to urge the White House to expedite the exodus of these Afghans who we promised would not be left behind. To send a letter to the White House go to: www.congressweb.com/NPCA. To learn more visit nooneleft.org.

[Pakistan's Pyrrhic Victory in Afghanistan](#), Hussain Haqqani, 2021/7/22

Islamabad Will Come to Regret Aiding the Taliban's Resurgence

US Political Visions

[None of the Above](#), Podcast with Barbara Slavin, John Glasser, 2021/7/20

[American exceptionalism](#) – an interview with Professor Andrew Bacevich, 2021/7/13

[Ending forever wars must include economic warfare](#), Assal Rad, 2021/7/19

IAEA Access

[Controversy over IAEA Nuclear Inspections](#), USIP, 2021/7/7

[Iran's uranium gambit is a dangerous negotiating tactic](#), [Naysan Rafati](#), 2021/7/13

UNSCR 2231 Status

[UN Secretary General's report on implementation of UNSCR 2231](#), 2021/6/21

The report noted that:

- there was only one procurement channel request in the past 6 months and 8 procurement channel notifications for JCPOA-related projects
- there were no new allegations of missile transfers in violation of annex B of 2231
- there were no allegations concerning the transfer of dual-use nuclear related items in violation of annex B of 2231
- there were no reported activities inconsistent with asset freeze violations

There was an expected back and forth between UK/France/Germany/Israel and Iran/Russia over Iran's missile testing and whether or not that is permitted by Resolution 2231.

The Secretary General also used the report to encourage the use of INSTEX (Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges) and express support for restoration of the JCPOA.

Nuclear Security

[Iran: 'Sabotage attack' on civilian nuclear center thwarted](#)

Nasser Karimi and Isabel Debre, Associated Press - June 23

[Iran accuses Israel of June attack on civilian nuclear site](#), Isabel Debre and Nasser Karimi, 2021/7/5

[Iran says damage was limited in sabotage attack at nuclear site](#), Lexi Lonas, 2021/7/6

[European Powers Condemn Tehran's Uranium Moves: Iran Snapshot](#), Paul Wallace, 2021/7/7

[Iran's nuclear limbo continues as presidential inauguration approaches](#), Barak Ravid, 2021/7/7

[Iran's new step complicates negotiations](#), Daryl Kimball, 2021/7/8

In response to [Etemad](#), Daryl Kimball, a nuclear expert and executive director of the Arms Control Association in Washington, claims that Iran's decision is "unconstructive." "Iran's decision to start the conversion of uranium oxide enriched to 20% U 235 to uranium tetrafluoride and then to 20% U 235 enriched is a completely unconstructive step and continues to violate Iran's JCPOA commitments," he told Etemad. "If Iran wants the United States to return to fulfilling its obligations under the nuclear deal, the Iranian authorities should not engage in dual-core activities that are both peaceful and military." According to him, "this move will complicate the negotiations for the revival of the JCPOA, and consequently delay the possible lifting of sanctions, which have had a profound effect on ordinary people in Iran."

Kimball believes that the best way forward is for Iran to resolve the post-election dispute over the government's position on the nuclear deal, to work with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and to return to the Vienna talks. He added: "It is possible to reach an agreement on the fulfillment of obligations in return for the fulfillment of obligations, and it is a win-win result for both parties. Neither side can, in practice, guarantee that their future president will be fully committed to the commitments made in this agreement, but both sides can be confident that a return to implementation of the 2015 agreement, which was approved by the UN Security Council, is the best guarantee that, first and foremost, JCPOA-related sanctions are lifted, and, secondly, that Iran does not move towards activities related to the development of nuclear weapons."

Legislation: AUMF Repeal

[HR 256](#) to repeal the 2002 AUMF was passed by the House on 17 June 2021 by a vote of 268-161. The companion bill in the Senate, [SJ Res 10](#), would repeal the AUMFs of 1991 and 2002 and will be marked up in the coming week. The fact that President Biden supports the repeal of outdated and too often abused Authorizations for Use of Military Force makes successful repeal this year a distinct possibility.

The [National Security Powers Act \(S.2391\)](#), introduced yesterday by Senators Chris Murphy, Bernie Sanders, and Mike Lee, would (1) reclaim significant War Powers that the Constitution assigned to Congress but that Presidents have usurped over recent

decades; (2) repeal existing AUMFs; (3) require affirmative Congressional votes or hostilities would be defunded; and (4) require affirmative approval of foreign arms sales, and prevent Presidents from imposing sanctions unilaterally unless Congress approves. Rep. Jim McGovern is expected to introduce companion legislation in the House.

[Iran is a red herring in the debate over repealing the Iraq war authorization](#), Elizabeth Beavers, 2021/7/15

If Congress wants to vote on a new war against Iran, it should summon the political courage to do so.

[Who Authorized America's Wars? And Why They Never End](#), Andrea Mazzarino, 2021/7/16

COVID

[COVID-19 Delta Variant Hits Iran](#), Andrew Hanna, 2021/7/14

Industrial Action

[Rough Times in Iran Today](#), Thomas Ricks, Ph.D., 2021/7/1
RPCV Mashhad and Mahabad- Iran 3 1964-66

I was reading the June 22'21 PCIA bulletin and thought about Iran today in light of your commentary on "current events"- I liked the coverage but thought PCIA should be acknowledging the rough spots in living in Iran today. I'm referring to the present widespread labor strikes and slow-downs being carried out in Iran's major petroleum, textile, auto industrial sectors around the country with the accompanying tough handling of arrests, beatings, and imprisonment of striking workers and political dissidents that a couple of my Iranian friends in Tehran and Shiraz tell me about via phone calls over the past weeks.

They also mention the increasing lack of food and starvation. Protests being also brutally met in Iranian streets - arrests are still being made in those protests. The people in many parts of Iran are against the election of Ibrahim Ra'isi and the rumors about Ra'isi as the successor to the weak and aging Ayatollah Khamenei.

The news in many parts is not very cheery and I believe RPCVs would like to know about the sufferings outside the US sanctions that Iranians must endure in their daily lives.

[As Iran-U.S. Nuclear Talks Loom, Ebrahim Raisi Faces Protests, Economic Strife](#), David Brennan, 2021/7/21

['I Am Thirsty!' Water Shortages Compound Iran's Problems](#), Farnaz Fassihi, 2021/7/21

A prolonged drought worsened by climate change and government mismanagement has added a volatile new element to the swirl of challenges in Iran, ranging from the pandemic to U.S. sanctions.

[Iran oil workers strike for better wages as economy suffers](#), Isabel Debre, 2021/6/30

[Police fire live ammunition, tear gas at protesters denouncing Iran's water crisis](#), Alijani Ershad, 2021/7/20

[Power Outages Lead to Protests](#), NIAC, 2021/7/9

[Iran power outage crisis leads politicians to slam their own policy](#), Seth Frantzman, 2021/7/5

This unprecedented overt critique about the country's problems apparently reveals the depth of the problem and Iran is not alone.

[Iran Suffers Twin Power & Water Crises](#), USIP, 2021/7/13

Iranian Economy

[U.S. Weighs New Sanctions on Iran's Oil Sales to China if Nuclear Talks Fail](#), WSJ, Benoit Faucon in London and Ian Talley, 2021/7/19

U.S. negotiators have been working with international partners to revive the 2015 deal limiting Tehran's nuclear program.

There are risks that fresh crude-oil sanctions could backfire, driving Iran to accelerate its nuclear program.

[Iran opens oil terminal to bypass strategic Strait of Hormuz](#), Al-Jazira, 2021/7/22

New terminal located near Jask port on Gulf of Oman, allowing ships headed into Arabian Sea and beyond to avoid narrow strait.

[Iran's recovery seen as modest with return to original nuclear deal – IIF](#), Reuters, 2021/6/27

Human Rights

[Raisi: Record on Crackdown & Human Rights](#), Hadi Ghaemi, USIP, 2021/7/20

[Iran's Hollywood Plot Exposes Its Paranoia](#), Robin Wright, 2021/7/19

A "pernicious" caper to abduct a dissident in Brooklyn is only the latest intelligence scheme to silence dissent and target Americans.

[Our never-ending Iranian hostage nightmare](#), Kate Woodsome, 2021/7/21

[The geopolitics of Iran's kidnapping plot](#), Atlantic Council, 2021/7/15

[Diplomacy Remains the Only Viable Path to Improve Human Rights in Iran](#), Jamal Abdi and Sina Toosi, 2021/6/29

[Biden administration rips Iran over delay in prisoner exchange talks](#),

Mychel Schnell, The Hill, 2021/7/18

History

["You're Gonna Have a Fucking War": Mark Milley's Fight to Stop Trump from Striking Iran](#), Susan Glasser, 2021/7/15

Inside the extraordinary final-days conflict between the former President and his chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

[Before the CIA Coup in 1953, the US and Iran had been old Friends](#), Daniel Potts, 2020/8/21

Media

[The Critical Role of Local Media, Re-Think Media and FCNL](#), 2021/7/14

[Haphazard US crackdown on websites included Iranian dissidents](#), Mathew Metti, 2021/6/26

Last week's DOJ dragnet included Shiite religious websites, even ones at odds with Tehran's regime.

[US seizes Iranian news sites under unclear circumstances](#), Isabel Debre, 2021/6/22

[U.S. Seizes Iran-Linked Websites at Key Point in Nuclear Talks](#), Lara Jakes, Farnaz Fassihi and Katie Benner; 2021/6/ 22

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Peace Corps Iran Association advances peace and understanding between Americans and Iranians through education, outreach and advocacy, and upholds the legacy of the Peace Corps in Iran.

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Peace Corps Iran Association advocates for peace and understanding through education, outreach, and cultural diplomacy.

PRINCIPLES: The Board of Peace Corps Iran Association has adopted the following Guiding Principles for our advocacy efforts toward improving relationships between Iran and the United States, and their peoples.

1. Understanding and acceptance of other people and cultures are the building blocks of friendship, inclusiveness and world peace. As citizens of a world power, Americans bear a special responsibility.
2. Tolerance and mutual respect form the foundation for peaceful interactions between countries and their citizens.
3. Bringing countries and their citizens into the global community through cultural and economic ties reinforces international cooperation and reduces the likelihood of armed conflict.
4. Negotiation and diplomacy are essential to resolving international issues.
5. Force is rarely justified in dealing with conflicts. Peace is built and sustained through voluntary agreement and consent.

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