

## Currents and Mirrors: A Lyrical Voyage through Power and Identity: A Personal Commentary and Review

Mohammad Reza Teimouri Sichani<sup>1\*</sup>, Helia Jalalirad<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Master's student in Computer Engineering and Information Technology, (E-commerce), Islamic Azad university of Isfahan Khorasgan.

<sup>2</sup> English Editor and Free English Literature Researcher

\***Correspondence:** Mohammad Reza Teimouri Sichani

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### Prologue: Setting Sail

Imagine history as an ocean at twilight. At the surface you see waves—oil tankers, migrants' boats, carriers laden with arms—moving across shimmering waters. Beneath, deep currents of ideology and identity swirl. Above, clouds of theory drift and clash, raining down policies devised in paneled rooms. In this story the United States, Iran and their neighbours are not static lands but ships and islands, catching winds of policy and fighting to chart their own courses as global tides shift.

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### The Great Current: Dominance and Decline

For decades the United States sailed at the centre of the Middle Eastern Sea. With Britain as its co-captain, it plotted courses through narrow straits and open gulfs, securing pipelines and ports, partnering with monarchies and republics to keep fuel flowing and markets stable. This dominance allowed Washington to marshal fleets, shape regimes and dictate terms. But time erodes even the strongest hulls. Wars far from home

drained resources: financial storms battered domestic confidence; and a rising chorus of critics at home and abroad questioned why this singular ship should lead. Into the widening space glided other vessels: China and Russia charted alternative routes, mediating disputes and investing in infrastructure rather than patrolling with destroyers. In the Persian Gulf, control over energy routes became a contested current rather than a single channel.

### **Winds of Thought: Ideas as Weather**

Back on shore, think tanks and commentators stirred the winds that filled sails. Once forums for cross ideological debate, these institutions hardened into partisan wind tunnels. Economists and policy advocates championed either unfettered markets or robust social programmes; security analysts argued for relentless intervention or cautious retrenchment. Their ideas shaped budgets, regulations and appointments, creating the weather patterns that guided statecraft. When Donald Trump took office, he rode a typhoon of populist discontent. His doctrine fused hardline immigration restrictions, muscular defence postures and transactional diplomacy. Supporters cast it as a necessary course correction; critics warned that closing harbours and raising walls undermined alliances and tarnished America's moral compass. Amid this tempest, policy expertise sometimes served more to justify predetermined courses than to navigate toward consensus.

### **Shadows on the Horizon: Iran and Its Proxies**

Across the sea lies the Islamic Republic of Iran, a vessel forged in revolutionary fire. Since 1979 it has steered a course both proud and embattled. Isolated by sanctions and suspicion, it learned to sail in shadows, extending its reach through flotillas of proxies. Hezbollah, militias in Iraq, and allies in Syria and Yemen became outriggers that stabilized and protected the central hull. They enabled Tehran to project influence and deter adversaries without direct confrontation. Yet this strategy also deepened regional rifts and invited counter currents, as neighbours and global powers saw each proxy as a threat to the broader maritime order. Meanwhile, within Iran the departure of scholars, engineers and artists—many lured by calmer waters abroad—undermined its capacity to innovate and negotiate. Leaders alternated between

confrontation and compromise, weighing ideological purity against practical survival in nuclear talks and sanctions relief. Modelling these negotiations reveals that success hinges less on external pressure than on the complex interplay of factions within Iran's own ship.

### **Reflections in the Desert: Regional Realities**

Beyond the Persian Gulf, the Middle East resembles a desert of shifting dunes. Colonial borders and broken promises created ridges of conflict, while oil deposits and water tables shaped settlements and survival strategies. Local leaders respond with improvisation and ambition. The United Arab Emirates, for instance, behaves like an oasis city: it diversifies its economy, normalises relations with once shunned neighbours, and hosts global forums on climate and trade. Its policies reflect recognition that in an era of multipolarism, one must welcome travelers from all directions. Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and smaller emirates each design their own caravan routes, seeking to balance relationships with Washington, Beijing, Moscow and Tehran. In this desert of politics, external powers sometimes appear as mirages: America's commitment can flicker like heat haze; China's benevolence may mask strategic thirst.

### **Cracking the Mirror: Identity and Exodus**

Beneath grand strategies lies the more intimate question of who belongs on which vessel. Inside the United States, Mexican immigrants and their descendants grapple with stereotypes and systemic barriers. Research shows that skin colour, education level and social status can dictate whether migrants face open arms or closed gates. The debate over their place in America's story echoes in the treatment of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and beyond. Similarly, Iran's brightest minds—scientists, doctors, artists—often feel compelled to leave, fleeing political repression and economic stagnation. Their absence hollows out the very hull that must weather sanctions and stagnation. On the global stage, these human journeys remind us that power is not only about oil and arms; it is also about the movement of people and the narratives nations talk about themselves.

## Epilogue: Navigating New Waters

The horizon ahead shimmers with uncertainty. Climate change, technological revolutions and demographic shifts create new currents that could alter familiar routes. American influence remains potent but no longer exclusive; Iranian ambitions endure but face internal limits; Chinese and Russian sails catch winds the West may not feel. Scholars and citizens must continue to read the charts, measure the winds of thought, and listen to the murmurs of travellers below decks. Only by acknowledging the interconnectedness of oil, ideas, proxies and people can we navigate toward a more just and stable sea. Our voyage continues, and each choice we make becomes a thread in the ever-evolving tapestry of history; a history in which politics, literature and institutions are interconnected

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