In memory of my father, Mohsen Goodarzi, patriot, diplomat, and above all, humanist.
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABC American Broadcasting Corporation
ACC Arab Cooperation Council
ADP Arab Democratic Party
AFP Agence France-Presse
AMU Arab Maghreb Union
AWACS Airborne Warning and Control System
CAIS Centre for Arab and Iranian Studies
CENTO Central Treaty Organization
CIA Central Intelligence Agency
DFLP Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DPA Deutsche Presse Agentur
EC European Community
GCC Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP gross domestic product
IAEA International Atomic Energy Agency
ICP Iraqi Communist Party
IDF Israeli Defence Forces
IISS International Institute for Strategic Studies
INA Iraqi News Agency
IPC Iraq Petroleum Company
IRGC Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps
IRNA Islamic Republic News Agency (formerly Pars Agency)
IRP Islamic Republican Party
IUF Islamic Unification Front
KDP Kurdistan Democratic Party
LCP Lebanese Communist Party
MNF Multinational Force
NAM Non-Aligned Movement
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSA National Security Agency
OIC Organization of the Islamic Conference
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
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<td>PBS</td>
<td>Public Broadcasting Service</td>
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<td>PLA</td>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Army</td>
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<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestine Liberation Organization</td>
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<td>PNSF</td>
<td>Palestinian National Salvation Front</td>
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<td>POW</td>
<td>prisoner of war</td>
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<td>PSP</td>
<td>Progressive Socialist Party</td>
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<td>PUK</td>
<td>Patriotic Union of Kurdistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>RASD</td>
<td>Republica Arabe Saharaui Democratica (Saharan Arab Democratic Republic)</td>
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<td>SAM</td>
<td>surface-to-air missile</td>
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<td>SANA</td>
<td>Syrian Arab News Agency</td>
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<td>SAVAK</td>
<td>Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar (Shah's secret police)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Supreme Defence Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEAL</td>
<td>SEa, Air and Land</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>South Lebanon Army</td>
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<td>SSNP</td>
<td>Syrian Social Nationalist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWB</td>
<td>Summary of World Broadcasts</td>
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<tr>
<td>TWA</td>
<td>Trans World Airlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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<td>UAR</td>
<td>United Arab Republic</td>
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<td>UKP</td>
<td>United Kurdish Party</td>
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<td>UNIFIL</td>
<td>United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon</td>
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<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>US Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>USS</td>
<td>United States Ship</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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Introduction

Alliances are central to any analysis of Middle East politics. Tribes, clans and small communities have found security in them since the dawn of civilization. Indeed, for thousands of years, since the ancient empires of the Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians and Persians, alliances have been a common feature on the Middle East’s political landscape. Recurrent struggles between various regional, and later extra-regional, powers like the Greeks, Romans and Mongols determined the course of Middle East history for more than two millennia until the rise of modern nation-states in the region during the early half of the twentieth century.

In the decades just before and after the Second World War, the rise of modern nationalism in the region, the gradual retreat of Britain and France and the onset of the cold war ushered in a period of intense political and ideological rivalry among the various radical and conservative states in the Middle East. The newly-created state of Israel’s defeat of the Arabs in the 1948 Palestine War, the appeal of radical Arab nationalism, and archaic political systems exacerbated and polarized the situation. Also, the region’s vast oil reserves and geopolitical importance – at the crossroads between Europe, Africa, Asia and the Indian subcontinent – increased the Middle East’s significance to the superpowers and led to continued outside interference in the area. Concomitantly, in jockeying for influence and aid to boost their own regional and international power and position, many regional actors wanted to exploit the bipolar system by cultivating close ties with either Washington or Moscow. Others tried to enhance their security by forging alliances with regional actors that wanted to minimize the foreign presence in the Middle East. The volatile and precarious conditions in the region led to the formation of many short-lived alliances.

In a landmark study on alliance theory and alliance formation in the Middle East, Walt identified 33 different alliances in the region from 1955 to 1979 alone. The general trend has been for regional actors to form alliances to diminish a threat posed by another regional power or alliance. They will overcome their ideological differences in the face of an immediate threat, for such factors assume
more significance in the absence of a security challenge. However, there is clear evidence that they are more likely to form alliances with extra-regional actors that are willing to support their political objectives. Interestingly, as the record during the cold war clearly demonstrated, ideological factors were more salient in alliances between Middle Eastern states and their superpower patrons.

In the 1950s and 1960s, conservative, pro-Western monarchies formed defence pacts against the radical, nationalist, republican governments that emerged in Syria, Egypt and Iraq. The latter prematurely attempted to form political unions and assumed a confrontational stance against Israel and its allies. However, the Arab defeat in the 1967 Six Day War discredited the radical camp, diminished the importance of ideology and regime structure in alliance formation, and eventually gave way to more pragmatic alignments against common threats. This was epitomized by the formation of the short-lived ‘Arab Triangle’ consisting of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia in the early 1970s, and its bid to demonstrate Arab dissatisfaction with the post-1967 status quo and US policy by launching the 1973 October war. The emergence and evolution of the Syrian–Iranian axis over the past quarter century is a fascinating and rare example of an enduring alliance. After the overthrow of the Iranian monarchy in 1979, the new revolutionary Islamist regime and the secular Arab nationalist government in Syria cultivated close bilateral relations and eventually formed an alliance in response to the direct challenges posed by Iraq, Israel and the USA in the Levant and Persian Gulf during the 1980s and beyond.

The Syrian–Iranian axis is one of the most intriguing developments in modern Middle East politics. In the turbulent 1980s, the nature and longevity of the Tehran–Damascus partnership baffled many scholars and observers. Many were quick to write it off as a short-term, opportunistic alliance against Iraq, or describe it as a marriage of convenience that would dissolve rapidly once Iran ceased to deliver oil to Syria. Pointing to many differences in their respective ideologies, as well as their social and political foundations, most analysts expressed surprise at how a revolutionary, pan-Islamic theocracy like Iran could form an alliance with a secular, pan-Arab socialist republic like Syria. Moreover, while Ba’thist Syria claimed to be an ardent supporter and the rightful leader of the pan-Arab cause, revolutionary Iran advocated Islamic universalism and, during the Khomeini era, purportedly rejected the concept of the nation-state. Also, although Syria traditionally maintained strong ties with the
USSR and was a primary recipient of Soviet military aid in the 1980s, Moscow’s relations with Tehran’s ruling clerics were strained intermittently after the establishment of the Islamic Republic. In this book, I aim to provide an in-depth analysis of the forces that led to the emergence and consolidation of the Syrian–Iranian alliance during a turbulent decade in the modern history of the Middle East. The alliance between the two states, which has lasted for more than 25 years, has been an enduring feature of the political landscape of this troubled region. Moreover, since its inception, it has had a significant impact on moulding events and bringing about major changes in the contemporary Middle East. I show that, contrary to prevailing views (formed by the Syrian and Iranian regimes’ authoritarianism and unpopularity in the West and in parts of the Arab world), the alliance between them has been essentially defensive and emerged in response to acts of aggression orchestrated by Iraq (1980) and Israel (1982), in both cases with the prior knowledge and tacit support of the USA. Because my research revealed three distinct phases in the evolution and institutionalization of the Damascus–Tehran axis, I devote one chapter to each of these stages.

In this brief introduction, I provide a general conceptual framework for understanding the genesis and longevity of the Syrian–Iranian nexus. In Chapter 1, which covers the emergence of the alliance between 1979 and 1982, I show that while the initial impetus for the relationship came from the overthrow of Iran’s conservative, pro-Western monarchy in 1979, Iraq’s invasion of Iran in September 1980 brought Syria and Iran closer together, with Syria providing valuable diplomatic and military aid to help Iran stave off defeat and expel the Iraqi invaders. In Chapter 2, I examine the period between 1982 and 1985 when Israel invaded Lebanon for a second time and challenged Syria in its backyard. Here, in 1983–85, Iran lent support to Syria by mobilizing Lebanon’s Shiites to drive out Israeli and Western forces. In Chapter 3, I cover a critical and problematic phase in the development of the alliance when the two allies developed conflicting agendas, which by 1985 had created tensions between them. However, by the late 1980s, through continued bilateral consultations in which they were able to prioritize their respective objectives without impinging on the interests of the other, they were able to redefine the parameters of cooperation and consolidate their relationship on a more mature basis. Finally, in the fourth and concluding chapter, I look at the reasons why the alliance lasted beyond the 1980s into the twenty-first century.
Although Agha and Khalidi (1995) and Ehteshami and Hinnebusch (1997) shed light on certain aspects of the alliance, they focus primarily on its continued importance in the 1990s and provide only a general overview of the formative years of the Tehran–Damascus nexus. I, however, aim to trace in detail the origins and development of the strategic partnership between Damascus and Tehran from the toppling of Mohammad Reza Shah in early 1979 until the Syrian–Iranian intercession to halt Amal–Hezbollah clashes in Beirut and the end of the first Persian Gulf war in mid-1988. Besides providing an empirical survey with a chronology of events, through analysis, I intend to distinguish three phases in the evolution of the alliance and explain their significance both in terms of how they affected bilateral relations between the two states, as well as their regional implications in the volatile environment of 1979–88.

In my research I relied mostly on secondary sources (books, periodicals, newspapers), transcripts of radio broadcasts, official government statements, and personal interviews with former government officials and Middle East experts. Given the closed and often secretive nature of decision making in the Syrian Ba’thist and Iranian Islamist regimes, and the importance and sensitivity of cooperative ties between them, it is improbable that responsible officials would have engaged in frank discussions on these matters or provided first-hand knowledge about bilateral relations between the two states. Indeed, inaccessibility to primary sources and interviews with current government officials in Damascus and Tehran remain the main obstacle to a complete and accurate picture of the nature and extent of Syrian–Iranian collaboration during the first decade of the alliance. The opacity of political decision making among these regimes’ key figures and bodies poses a formidable challenge to any outsider trying to understand the inner workings of these authoritarian governments. I try to compensate with an exhaustive survey and analysis of the available secondary sources and attempt to fill in some of the gaps and clarify certain inconsistencies by obtaining first-hand information from former senior government officials. These include former Iranian president Abolhassan Banisadr’s account of Syrian military aid to Iran in the early years of the Iran–Iraq hostilities (1980–81) and Tehran’s policy on the Syrian Muslim Brethren (Chapter 1); and former US assistant secretary of state (1981–89) Richard Murphy’s insights on the degree of Syrian–Iranian involvement in attacks on US assets in Lebanon in 1983–84 (Chapter 2).

My focus on the genesis and development of the Tehran–Damascus
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nexus during this decade may give the impression that the maintenance and augmentation of their strategic bilateral links was the main foreign policy consideration of Syrian and Iranian leaders between 1979 and 1989. In some respects, this was the case for both partners, especially Iran. The Iranian militants’ seizure of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979 (which plunged US–Iranian relations into an abyss and led to Iran's international isolation), and the Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980 meant that Khomeini’s regime became extremely dependent on Hafez Assad's diplomatic and military support. This was needed to stave off defeat and avoid regional isolation at a time when Saddam Hussein held the initiative, occupying large swathes of Iranian territory and trying to depict the war as an Arab–Persian conflict. With the expulsion of Iraqi forces from most of the areas they held in Iran by mid-1982 and the concurrent Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the pendulum swung the other way, with Syria requiring Iranian assistance to keep Iraq in check and mobilize Lebanon’s Shiites to expel Israeli and Western forces from its backyard between 1982 and 1985. As the Israeli threat receded with the withdrawal of Tel Aviv's troops to the self-declared security zone in mid-1985, and Arab disenchantment grew as Iran continued the Gulf War, Iran once again became dependent on Syrian cooperation and goodwill to maintain a foothold in the Levant and avoid total regional isolation. This situation continued until the cessation of hostilities with Iraq in 1988. Overall, Tehran valued its strategic alliance with Syria more between 1979–82 and 1985–88, particularly against the backdrop of the poor state of US–Iranian relations throughout the 1980s and the erratic nature of its ties with the USSR and western Europe during that period. For Syria, the years from 1982 to 1985 represented the height of its reliance on Iran to undo the achievements of its foes in Lebanon. At the same time, at the international level, Syria continued to place great emphasis on its close links with the USSR in the first half of the 1980s because of the latter's status as a superpower and as its main provider of military and economic assistance. However, with the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 and the gradual cooling of Soviet–Syrian relations in the second half of the 1980s, a subtle shift occurred in Syrian perceptions of Moscow. Damascus realized that it would have to diversify its political and economic ties internationally and, at the same time, rely more heavily on regional allies and proxies such as Iran and Lebanon’s Shiites to achieve its strategic and military objectives and to keep Israeli and Iraqi power in check. While my main focus is on the evolution of the Syrian–Iranian alliance, I also
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attempt to locate the bilateral relationship within the context of the changing regional and international environment of the 1980s. I show how Syrian and Iranian policymakers viewed the situation evolving around them and how they tried to utilize their strategic partnership to achieve their objectives.

During 1980/1 and 1986/7 there were differences of opinion within the Iranian leadership about the extent and use of cooperative ties with Syria and, by 1984, Rif'at Assad had serious reservations about the strategic alliance with Iran. However, for three reasons, I decided not to concentrate on domestic factors. First, it is clear from the available evidence that throughout the 1980s and beyond, most key political decision makers in Tehran and Damascus firmly believed that perpetuating and strengthening the alliance was central to their foreign policies. Second, secretive decision making even now makes it difficult to ascertain what various members of the Syrian and Iranian leadership really think. Information on the main rifts or differences of opinion that were ultimately reflected in their domestic or regional policies are based on interviews and press accounts that appeared at the time in the Middle Eastern and Western media. Third, the available evidence and the authoritarian nature of the Syrian Ba'thist and Iranian Islamist systems suggest that domestic opinion was never taken into account. In fact, it was a non-issue, particularly for the Syrian government. Despite disapproval in the Syrian Ba'th Party and among the Syrian masses of the policy to support non-Arab Iran during its eight-year war with Arab Iraq, Hafez Assad and his inner political circle saw no need to alter their position to gain party approval or win domestic support. When the Iranian Islamist regime began to deliver oil to Syria and to expel the Iraqi army from much of its soil in 1982, the public gradually began to question the wisdom of crude shipments to Syria at a time when the Iraqi threat seemed to have receded and also opposed the continuation of the Gulf conflict. By the mid-1980s, with Syria failing to make timely payments for its oil purchases and the acute economic situation in Iran, some Iranian MPs became quite vocal in their opposition to continued shipments and to the logic of the alliance with Syria. However, despite some tensions in bilateral relations, Khomeini and his lieutenants would not be swayed and were determined to preserve links with their only significant Arab ally. Such is the nature of authoritarian doctrinaire regimes. Overall, my emphasis here is on the output and policies that emerged from the black box of Syrian–Iranian decision making.

In general, there is a wealth of information and analysis on the
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evolution of the Syrian–Iranian alliance during its first decade. Through careful research and analysis, I try to put the various pieces together and to shed new light on linkages between major events and crucial decisions that were made in Tehran and Damascus during one of the most turbulent periods in the contemporary history of the Middle East – especially those that regional analysts and scholars have overlooked or ignored. For example, in Chapter 2, I put the case that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on 6 June 1982 and the subsequent Syrian–Iranian consultations (7–17 June 1982) had a direct bearing on Tehran's fateful decision to continue the Persian Gulf conflict and invade Iraq in the weeks that followed. In Chapter 3, I show how US–Iraqi military operations against Iran in the Persian Gulf during the spring of 1988 (designed to turn the tide of the Gulf conflict) prompted Tehran to throw its weight behind Lebanon's Hezbollah in its violent confrontation with the rival, pro-Syrian Amal movement (albeit in a calculated and limited manner) and to try to maintain its precarious foothold in Lebanon. This bloody affair put the Syrian–Iranian alliance to the test since Tehran was overtly defying Damascus in its own backyard.

Before delving into the specific aspects of the genesis and development of the Syrian–Iranian alliance, it is useful to identify and elaborate on several general concepts and theoretical explanations to understand the strength and longevity of the cooperative ties between revolutionary Iran and Ba'thist Syria. First, the alliance consists of only two members: it has never been a broad coalition of states with various and divergent interests. Since it is small, it is more viable. In the words of Holsti et al., ‘the smaller the alliance, the more cohesive and effective it is, and the more important the contribution of each member.’ Second, it has primarily been a defensive alliance aimed at neutralizing Iraqi and Israeli offensive capabilities in the Gulf and Near East, and thwarting American encroachment in the Middle East. In general, alliances with set and limited objectives are more stable and durable. Both Liska and Walt see defensive alliances as less fragile than offensive ones. In the latter case, once the opponent has been attacked and vanquished, the rationale for maintaining the alliance ceases to exist for the members, and they subsequently fall out over the fruits of their victory. Third, the two partners' priorities differ in the two arenas in which they cooperate. The Gulf region is the main area of concern for Iran, whereas for Syria it is the Levant. Over time, by continually consulting and modifying their aims, the two allies have come to recognize this reality and, in the process,
have tried to coordinate their policies and accommodate one another while still furthering their own interests. In other words, between 1985 and 1988 Iran finally acknowledged that Syrian interests took precedence in the Arab–Israeli theatre, and Syria in return deferred to its Iranian partner when vital matters regarding Gulf security were at stake for the Islamist government. Though not all their interests converged, through consultation Tehran and Damascus gradually harmonized their positions as far as they could. As Liska posits in Nations in Alliance, the more complementary the interests of alliance members, the more easily intra-alliance compromises can be achieved. Furthermore, the fact that Syria has carried the greater part of the burden in checking Israeli power, and Iran's main role has been to serve as a bulwark against Iraqi expansionism in the Gulf and beyond, has meant that the two partners fulfil different functions, thus reinforcing the rationale and utility of their strategic links. In other words, the more pronounced the differentiation of functions of the members, the more cohesive the alliance. Fourth, the mere fact that the alliance has endured for so many years (especially by Middle East standards), gives it considerable weight and importance. Interestingly, in Alliances and Small Powers, Rothstein argues that 'once an alliance has been created, there is positive value placed on continuing it, even if it seems to perform very few functions.' Furthermore, Kaplan builds on this point by postulating that longstanding alliances are characterized by greater unity and legitimacy. It is also worth noting that if a member wishes to abandon an alliance that has become institutionalized, it is prudent to find another viable arrangement that has at least equal utility. In other words, the member will pay an opportunity cost unless it joins or forms an alternative arrangement that is at least equally useful as the previous alliance.

Finally, another general point needs to be made about the role of ideology in maintaining an alliance. Ironically, a crucial factor in the longevity of the Syrian–Iranian axis is that the states have different ideologies; herein lies the paradox. Quite often, alliances between states that espouse the same transnational universalistic ideology are less likely to endure than those in which ideology plays a minimal role. This is particularly true of the Middle East where authoritarian regimes predominate and frequently use ideology as a tool to boost their political legitimacy and base of support domestically and in neighbouring countries. Revisionist ideologies such as pan-Arabism and Islamic fundamentalism have frequently been quite divisive
because they are used to project power and influence and to destabilize rival states. In the Middle East, the record clearly shows that states sharing a common ideology compete for the mantle of leadership rather than form durable alliances. Each state may claim to be the legitimate leader, and demand others to relinquish their rights and sovereignty to form a single political entity. The most poignant example of this phenomenon was the failure of the various unity schemes during the 1950s and 1960s involving Nasserite Egypt, and the radical regimes in Syria and Iraq. Walt supports this view in *The Origins of Alliances*. He asserts that alliances among Arab states and communist countries that have sought to form a single centralized movement have been unstable and short-lived. In the final analysis, common ideologies have often served as an obstacle to unity, prompting states to compete with one another rather than form durable alliances. Iklé also recognized this point in *How Nations Negotiate* when he opined that in certain instances, alliances not characterized by doctrinal unity will more easily resolve internal differences without disrupting the partnership.

In studying the Syrian–Iranian alliance it is apparent that Iran (a non-Arab nation) is not trying to champion Arab nationalism, unlike its Syrian partner, which considers itself ‘the beating heart of Arabism’. Syria, for its part, is not vying to lead the Islamic revivalist movement in the Middle East or elsewhere. Moreover, Iran refrained from supporting the Syrian Muslim Brethren in their ill-fated effort to overthrow the Ba’thist regime in Damascus during the early 1980s. In general, there has been neither ostensible competition on an ideological level (except in Lebanon during 1985–88) nor fear that one partner might upstage the other precisely because of their distinctly different ideological platforms. According to Dinerstein, ‘ideological dissimilarities will not disrupt alliance cooperation if none of the members is intent on political revolution in the others.’

Both Ba’thist Syria and Islamic Iran have been fiercely independent states and, throughout the years following the toppling of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran, found it expedient to cooperate to thwart Iraqi and Israeli designs in the region and to frustrate US moves that implicitly or explicitly supported Tel Aviv and Baghdad. In addition, Damascus and Tehran were wary of Washington’s attempts to advance its own agenda and make inroads in the Middle East at their expense. During 1982–85, Syrian President Assad was determined to resist the Reagan administration’s effort to bring Lebanon within the US–Israeli orbit and to push for a piecemeal approach to resolve the Arab–Israeli
conflict. Khomeini’s Iran shared Syria’s concerns in the Levant and sought to punish Iraq for its invasion of Iran in 1980 and, after 1982, much to the consternation of Washington and its Arab allies, tried to oust Saddam Hussein from power. Moreover, since the end of the cold war, US hegemony in the Middle East has reinforced the logic of an alliance between Syria and Iran. Deep-seated concerns in Tehran and Damascus over US adventurism and the occupation of Iraq in 2003 have strengthened their resolve to stand together and thwart US ambitions in the region.

In the following chapters, I will demonstrate that Syrian–Iranian cooperation during the formative years of the alliance had a major impact on shaping the course of events in the Middle East and transformed the region. The joint policies pursued by Tehran and Damascus also had a profound effect on the actions of the superpowers in the Middle East. Not only did Assad and Khomeini succeed in inflicting one of the very few foreign policy defeats that Reagan experienced during his two terms in office, but they also proved adept at enlisting Soviet support on a number of occasions to attain their objectives. Furthermore, they frustrated Saddam Hussein and Menachem Begin’s designs in the region. Careful, well-crafted strategies eventually led to the expulsion of the Iraqi army from Iranian territory by 1982, the withdrawal of US troops from Beirut in 1984, and the retreat of Israeli forces from most of the Lebanese territory they occupied by 1985 (and indeed the self-declared security zone by 2000). At the same time, despite their impressive achievements, there were limits to the Syrian–Iranian power in the region. As two middle powers that did not enjoy the backing of most regional states, and only received some qualified support from the USSR (until its demise in 1991), they were unable to alter the regional status quo in their favour, or determine the outcome of events on their own in the Levant and Persian Gulf. Although the Syrian–Iranian axis possessed limited offensive capability in regional terms, let alone on the international level, it was nonetheless a force to be reckoned with during the 1980s and beyond – one that has left an enduring mark on Middle East politics.
The 1979 Iranian revolution was one of the most important milestones in modern Middle Eastern history. The overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty not only brought major changes to Iran, but also ushered in a new era of politics at the regional level. The new regime under Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership radically altered the content and form of Iranian foreign policy. Overnight, imperial Iran, which had once pursued a strongly pro-Western status quo foreign policy, was transformed into a new republic committed to a purportedly universalistic religious ideology and bent on changing the political map of the Middle East.

The revolutionary changes in Iran during 1978/9 sent tremors throughout the region, particularly the Arab world. While they alarmed many regimes that had previously enjoyed close ties with the imperial government, many non-aligned and pro-Soviet governments welcomed it enthusiastically. Moreover, it gave a major boost to and served as a powerful source of inspiration for various Islamic, Third World and revolutionary movements and political parties in the region and beyond.

The overthrow of the Pahlavi throne naturally brought with it a reversal in the pattern of Iran's alliances and enmities. At a stroke, the country's new leadership terminated Iran's long-standing alliances with the USA and Israel. Consequently, though not inevitably, Iran's relationship with the pro-Western Arab states suffered. As a result of the changing nature of Arab–Iranian relations, inter-Arab political configurations and alliances were reconsidered and reshaped to meet the requirements or challenge of Iran's new Islamic revolutionary ideology and foreign policy.

Prior to the Shah's fall, most Arab governments viewed the political order in the Middle East as predominantly Arab. Non-Arab actors like Israel and Iran were confined to the margins of mainstream Arab