UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND THE IRANIAN BOMB:

A THREE-PRONGED RECCOMMENDATION

by

William Cooke McLean

Baker Scholar Project

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The Howard H. Baker, Jr. Center for Public Policy

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

Introduction

U.S. interest in and attention to Iran's nuclear development can be traced back to the Atoms for Peace Program in the 1950's, but for nearly a decade now, the Iranian nuclear program of has been at the center of international attention. Iranian efforts in nuclear energy research and development seem to support their desire to achieve the capability to produce highly enriched uranium, the principal ingredient in a nuclear weapon, but absolute evidence that proves the development of the other aspects of a militarized nuclear program is lacking.

The pursuit of uranium enrichment in and of itself would not be a violation of the current Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the international treaty put in place to combat the spread of nuclear weapons beyond the five established nuclear weapon states with the eventual goal of getting to a "global zero" with the abolition of all nuclear weapons. Given Iran's adherence to the universal full-scope safeguards and additional protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), its enrichment pursuits would be above reproach. Unfortunately, it has been continuously found to be in violation of the IAEA compliance provisions and is suspected to be close to attaining a nuclear weapons capability.

As a non-nuclear weapons state signer of the NPT, Iran affirmatively has the legal right to the ensured access to peaceful uses of nuclear technology, but it has banned any outside inspectors thus it remains unclear whether or not they have more sinister plans. Iran's leadership insists that its goal in developing the nuclear program and enrichment capability is to generate electricity without dipping into its oil supply, which they prefer to use as a considerable source of income, and to energize their medical reactors.[1] However, Iran's noncompliance with the universal full-scope safeguards and additional protocol, their illusory behavior regarding the

[1] Institute for Science and International Security. "IAEA Fears Iran Working Now on Nuclear Warhead." *Voice of America.* Washington, D.C., December 14, 2009. Web.

progress of its uranium enrichment technology, and the unconvincing economic arguments made to justify the pursuit has provoked broad international opposition to the program.[2]

Dealing with Iran's nuclear and missile programs are among the most complex and most consequential of all international issues facing policy makers today. While the theocratic government in Tehran has repeatedly claimed that it seeks only to develop civilian nuclear power to augment their natural resource advantage, most of the world remains skeptical. There is no evidence that Iran has indeed crossed the nuclear threshold, however as Dr. Caravelli states,

> Because the technology used to enrich uranium to three percent to five percent in the isotope 235, the enrichment level used for nuclear power reactors, is the same technology that is required to enrich uranium to higher levels suitable for a nuclear device, nations such as Iran could, if they choose, develop enrichment technology to a certain level under a 'peaceful nuclear energy program' while reserving the option of 'breaking out' at a future date with a program of higher-level enrichment.[3]

Moreover, the talk of "trigger points" with respect to a U.S. or Israeli response may help to incentivize Iran to develop their capability right up to the crossing of those deadlines or "trigger points" until their infrastructure fortifications are complete. This "breakout option" postulates that Iran's nuclear program facilitators would have all of the components of a nuclear weapon fully developed, in place, and once given the order, could assemble and threaten to launch a weapon in the most expedient manner. Dr. Caravelli goes on to postulate how difficult it would be to predict when Iran crosses that nuclear threshold and the "breakout option" contributes to the difficulty of such an endeavor. Such a step is not even inevitable, however, and whether or not Iran meets the speculated ambitions of becoming the next militarized nuclear power will depend greatly on not only their internal politics, but the non-nuclear state will also

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[2] Posen, Barry R. "A Nuclear-Armed Iran: A Difficult but Not Impossible Policy Problem." *A Century Foundation Report*. 2006. Web.

[3] Caravelli, Jack. *Nuclear Insecurity: Understanding the Threats from Rogue Nations and Terrorists*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008. Print.

have to overcome a combination of technical hurdles, economic disincentives, and military and diplomatic pressure.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the IAEA, through diplomacy, have attempted to address this critical issue to no avail even after the UN General Council passed a Resolution in 2006 demanding that Iran suspend its enrichment and submit to important arms control measures.[4] Iran's steadfastness in the face of these organizations may be attributed to the absence of their ability to commit a credible military threat to Iran, one may think, but even nations with that ability have gained little in their attempts as well. Since 2003, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom – all with the support of the United States – have been party to negotiations aimed at suspending any further Iranian nuclear enrichment, but nevertheless their diplomacy has been unsuccessful thus far and there is no indication of Iranian deviation in the foreseeable future.[5]

Nevertheless, considering the both the overlap in the development of a peaceful nuclear program and a militarized one and the ambiguities in the NPT which allow a non-nuclear weapons state signer, such as Iran, to be granted a certain amount of leeway with respect to its nuclear development, if the authorities responsible for enforcing and inspecting the compliance of the NPT do not have the ability to invoke military consequences for noncompliance, such as the UNSC and IAEA, then the NPT cannot be expected to carry much weight when the desire for a militarized nuclear program exceeds a certain threshold. The NPT in this regard, it seems, is inherently weak and lacked teeth from the start and its renegotiations could possibly serve as a "jumping off" point in which to combat the opportunity for the current issues with Iran to

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[4] Crane, Keith. "Iran and International Sanctions: Elements of Weakness and Resilience." *Iran's Nuclear Programme: Strategic Implications*. Ed. Krause, Joachim. New York: Routledge, 2012. Pgs. 111-122. Print.

[5] Posen, Barry R. "A Nuclear-Armed Iran: A Difficult but Not Impossible Policy Problem." *A Century Foundation Report*. 2006. Web.

escalate. Major concessions will be have to be made on both sides, existing nuclear weapon programs may have to vastly reduce their inventories, but time is running out for an amicable diplomatic solution to this international issue and averting a nuclear Iran or avoiding a large scale international conflict may be worth the reduction.

As negotiations have failed, interested powers such as the United States, the European Union, and Iran's neighbors face policy questions about what to do going forward. They must determine if the political coercion and economic sanctions thus far have been effective and if they should or could be ratcheted up even further; if a preventive attack is worthwhile for the policy objectives that are currently in place, and if that preventive attack is in fact deemed worthwhile is it even feasible for the wanting state to carry out; or is it reasonable and appropriate for these powers to develop strategies of containment and deterrence to coexist with a nuclear-armed Iran given their successful development of a militarized nuclear program accompanied by an effective delivery system.[6]

Background

As previously mentioned, Iran has a protracted history in the development of its nuclear program while U.S. interest in that program can be traced back to the 1950's. Under the support of the Atoms for Peace Program the United States signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with Iran and, until the fall of Shah Reza Pahlavi in 1979, the United States provided various types of training and technical assistance to Iran.[7] Russia, South Africa, Pakistan, and China have also held important roles in the progress of Iran's nuclear program to date and, with the exception of South Africa, hold important points of leverage, both diplomatically and economically, on the outcome of the program in its current state. Much of these cooperative endeavors were not with a

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[6] Ibid. Pg. 7

[7] Caravelli, Jack. *Nuclear Insecurity: Understanding the Threats from Rogue Nations and Terrorists*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008. Print.

direct intent of proliferation, but one of the inherent problems of nuclear technology in general is its duel use. A well-intended technology transfer to a civilian nuclear program or the right of access to a non-nuclear state signor of the NPT can indirectly support weapons-related research. A consequence that the Shah assuredly understood and may well have harbored his own plan, based on his seemingly benign cooperative relationships with the United States as well as other nations, to develop at least a nuclear weapons option.[8]

After the Shah was overthrown in 1979, U.S. suspicions about Iran's nuclear ambitions increased when anti-U.S. sentiment began to popularize in Iran under Grand Ayatollah Sayyed Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini's regime. This sentiment is exemplified by the hostage crisis in which Iranian students seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran conceivably in response to President Jimmy Carter allowing the deposed former ruler of Iran, Shah Reza Pahlavi, to enter the U.S. for medical treatment. It has been hypothesized that the popular belief in Iran at the time was that this was the first step in an egregious attempt by the U.S. to return power to the overthrown Shah. An unsubstantiated claim, however, that has not since been confirmed.

The severed diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran has hardly recovered and has since largely been classified as a protracted conflict.[9] It was not until President Bill Clinton's time in office that a concerted U.S. diplomatic strategy was designed with the purpose of ending or slowing Iran's path toward a nuclear weapon.[10] And according to the Institute of Peace, "any prospect of improvement was complicated by sanctions dating back to the 1979 U.S. Embassy takeover and an American public intensely distrustful of the Islamic Republic's policies. Iran was also reportedly the major patron of Lebanon's Hezbollah, which actively opposed the Middle East peace process and engaged in regular clashes with Israeli forces in

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[8] Ibid. Pg. 95
[9] Khan, Saira. *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted Conflict and Proliferation.* New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.
[10] Ibid. Pg. 103

Lebanon, a strong ally to the U.S."[11] Since then, the administrations of President George W. Bush and President Barak Obama have subsequently expended considerable effort on the Iranian problem but a lack of compromise has led to the military pressures and economic sanctions that are in place today.

To date, the United States, United Nations, and the European Union hold sanctions against Iran with a history of U.S. sanctions going back to the hostage crisis of 1979. Billions of dollars worth of Iranian assets have been frozen over the years and virtually all trade and investment activities with Iran by any U.S. citizen have only been continuously banned since 1997. In 2010, the United States passed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act, which enacted the most stringent trade restrictions for U.S. firms to date with violators facing a fine of up to $1 million and 20 years imprisonment.[12] U.S. citizens may not even export goods or services to a third country knowing that they are intended for Iran. Sanctions aimed at Iran's financial sector restrict "servicing accounts of the government of Iran,"[13] including the country's central bank, and prohibit groups that do business with financial institutions in Iran from holding accounts in the United States. In 2011 the United States evoked further measures, including tightening restrictions on companies that provide Iran with equipment and expertise to run its oil and chemical industry and sanctions targeting powerful governmental groups such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Basij Resistance Force, and several individuals.[14]

As a result of the lack of transparency and noncompliance with UN and IAEA inspectors regarding the additional protocol provisions within the NPT, the Security Council has

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[11] Riedel, Bruce O. *Iran Primer: The Clinton Administration*. The United States Institute of Peace. Web. April 2012.
[12] "What You Need to Know About U.S. Economic Sanctions: Iran." U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. N.P. Washington, D.C. January, 23, 2012. Web. April 2012.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Levs, Josh. "A Summary of Sanctions Against Iran." CNN. N.P. January 23, 2102. Web. April 2012.

convincingly passed multiple resolutions since 2006 incurring even further sanctions on Iran from the international community. Aside from the overt prohibition of the import of nuclear weapons making material, helicopter gun ships and missiles were also cited as contraband and the Council prohibited their export to Iran in a 2010 resolution. Despite Iran's claims that their nuclear pursuits are purely civilian in nature and legal under the NPT, the most recent UNSC resolution has called upon all UN states to block Iran's import and export of "sensitive nuclear material and equipment," to freeze the financial assets, and restrict the international travel of those deemed to be involved in Iran's nuclear activities.[15]

Sanctions imposed by the European Union recently are reported to have had the greatest impact on the average Iranian citizen, a demographic that could eventually bring change to Iran through a shift in priorities and national sentiment once the general population feels the impact of it's governments choices on their own finances. Banning the import of Iranian crude oil and petroleum products, freezing all of the financial assets of Iran's central bank in European Union markets, and blocking trade in gold, diamonds, and precious metals with Iran most certainly will have an effect on Iran's economy.[16] The path for outside economic sanctions alone to take root and initiate the kind of change that is intended is a long and strenuous one and may result in extended recessionary periods as the world economy is delicately recovering from its own economic downturn. Hopefully the measures put in place in 2010 that restrict the import of "equipment that might be used for internal repression" coupled with the sanctions directly aimed at the Basij, the Revolutionary Guard, and other internal civil unrest enforcement entities will have the greatest impact as Iran gets set to have a presidential election in 2013.

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[15] "Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006)," United Nations. N.P. Web. April 2012.

[16] Press Release. "Factsheet: The European Union and Iran" Council of the European Union. Brussels, 23 April 2012. Web. April 2012.

The Implications of a Nuclear Iran

In Jack Caravelli's analysis of the Iranian nuclear weapons program in his book, *Nuclear Insecurity*, he lists the potential threats and implications of a militarized nuclear Iran. His time as a CIA analyst and as a diplomat and the U.S. Department of State's Director of Nonproliferation, Dr. Caravelli has developed an extensive and well thought out series of questions to consider when contemplating the implications of a nuclear Iran. To which only an additional two points should be added. His questions of note are the following:

> (1) In an already badly troubled region, what changes would likely occur in U.S. relations with various Middle East nations that would be within range of Iranian missiles that would be nuclear armed? Would those nations seek closer political or security ties to Washington or, alternatively, seek more independent policies?
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> (2) How would Tehran assess its newfound capabilities? Would it pursue more regional policies that eschew brandishing its weapons or pursue more overtly aggressive policies by using its nuclear might as a political weapon or to support other policy options such as even more expanded support to terrorist organizations in the region such as Hezbollah? Little is known about Iran's thinking on the linkage between nuclear capabilities and political objectives.
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> (3) Even if Iran did not seek to provide nuclear materials or weapons to other states or terrorist groups, would it develop an appropriate level of security measures to protect those assets from theft or diversion?
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> (4) Would Arab states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia come under severe domestic pressure to undertake efforts to match Iranian nuclear capabilities, further undermining the already shaky NPT?
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> (5) What are the implications for the region if Iran, a Shi'a dominated society, becomes a nuclear power in a Muslim world where Sunni domination, both in terms of population and political influence, long has been predominant?
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> (6) How would Israel respond to or confront a threat described by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1997, and other Israeli prime ministers as "existential?" That threat could arise not only from direct military action but also

from Tehran's possible willingness to provide nuclear materials or weapons to terrorist groups.[17]

Although Dr. Caravelli's considerations are astute, due to the rapidly changing environment of international events two additions should be made to his list. For example, given the developing situation with Syria – the scale of which was potentially unknown to Dr. Caravelli when he authored his book – and their historical relationship with Iran, the implications of Syria gaining a nuclear ally is worth thinking about. So, with Iran being Syria's biggest regional ally, how would a nuclear Iran affect the current pressures for a regime change in Syria and would it embolden Bashar al-Assad to further devastate his domestic opposition? Additionally, due to the longstanding accusations of Iran contributing funds, weapons, and manpower to known terrorist groups, would Iran become even more emboldened with respect to its alleged contributions to know terrorist networks? Could Iran become a more prominent safe haven for those terrorist groups or terror supporters?

Considering the international complexity of a would-be response to Iran in their alleged quest for a nuclear weapon, policy makers in the United States, European Union, and United Nations must consider all of the options and implications before a policy, especially a military one, is advanced. With the increased globalization and integration of markets, the effects from the respective policy will undoubtedly be felt worldwide, particularly with an Iranian border heavily influencing the waterway in which roughly twenty percent of the world's oil passes through. Policies that are designed to frustrate the very reasons for Iran to be after nuclear weapons would obviously be the ideal policies to install, however, identifying those reasons is not a trivial exercise and, at this point, Iran's national security interests can only be speculated. Speculated using the last thirty or so years in reference, but speculated nonetheless. Iran's

[17] Caravelli, Jack. *Nuclear Insecurity: Understanding the Threats from Rogue Nations and Terrorists.* Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008. Print.

leadership clearly has a vested interest in keeping their highest prioritized national security interest secret.

Iran's National Security Interests

While currently Iran appears to be mildly stable politically, this could be deceiving as true political sentiment is hard to observe with a hegemonic government. The perceived stability could be fleeting as the election nears, but the degree to which instability significantly changes Iranian policy is unclear. With evidence that Iran's overall national security interests are broadly supported by a large section of the population, including the nuclear program, transition from the current regime may not adjust current pursuits.[18]

Regardless of the political evolution in the coming years, the current regime is heavily motivated by its perception of Iran's national security interests. These interests involve ensuring the survival of the current regime, protecting Iran and Iranian interests against external threats – in particular deterring a U.S. invasion of Iran – conceivably by neutralizing U.S. conventional military superiority, and maintaining Iran's influence and power in the Middle East.[19] Since the Iraq War, in fact, Iran is reported to see its position in the region as strengthened.[20]Arguably Iran's nuclear aspirations parallel a desire to expand their power on the international stage, but the maintenance of their regional influence is considered primary. An expansionary policy could materialize if a viable nuclear weapons program could be leveraged to that end.

To ensure the survival of the regime under the leadership of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is another focus of Iran's national security

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[18] Davis, Lynn E., Jeffrey Martini, Alireza Nader, Dalia Dassa Kaye, James T. Quinlivan, and Paul Steinberg. "Iran's Nuclear Future: Critical U.S. Policy Choices." *Project Air Force*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011. Web.

[19] Ibid. Pg. 7

[20] Wehrey, Frederic, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jefrey Martini, and Robert A. Gufey. *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010. Web.

strategy. As a result of the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq to remove the Taliban and Saddam Hussein from power, Iran's inner leadership circle has since felt that its Islamic regime is in grave danger. They feared that the United States would eventually use Iraq and Afghanistan as footholds through which to invade Iran and overthrow the current regime and the Islamic Republic as a whole.[21] The vast amount of troop deployments and continuous U.S. military presence on Iran's eastern flank, western flank, and in the Persian Gulf since 2001, through the declared end of conflict in Iraq and up to present day has attributed to Iran's threatened feeling. One could even suggest that the U.S. saturation of the region is a contributing factor to the Iranian feeling of need to protect itself by way of nuclear armament.

Iran's leaders are also concerned about the United States using Iran's domestic opposition to destabilize the regime.[22] With the recent internal dissident groups overthrowing rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen in a movement dubbed the "Arab Spring," the Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, purportedly view the uprising as U.S. sponsored and akin to the mass protests of the "velvet revolution" in the June 2009 Iranian presidential election.[23] A recent RAND Corporation report asserts that, "Iran's leadership, especially conservatives and fundamentalists who have come to increasingly dominate politics, thus believe that the threat from the United States is multidimensional, with the United States exerting political, military, economic, cultural, and ideological levers of power to challenge Iran."[24] Saudi Arabia – the self-proclaimed leader of the Sunni Muslim World – is also perceived

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[21] Thaler, David E., Alireza Nader, Shahram Chubin, Jerrold D. Green, Charlotte Lynch, and Frederic Wehrey. *Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads: An Exploration of Iranian Leadership Dynamics*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010. Web.

[22] "Leader Calls US, Zionists Iran's Worst Enemies," Fars News Agency. N.P. January 26, 2010. Web. April2012.

[23] Zamaneh, Radio. "Iran Intelligence Minister 'Identities' 80 Dissident Groups," December 23, 2009. Web.

[24] Davis, Lynn E., Jeffrey Martini, Alireza Nader, Dalia Dassa Kaye, James T. Quinlivan, and Paul Steinberg. "Iran's Nuclear Future: Critical U.S. Policy Choices." *Project Air Force*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011. Web.

to be another source of potential unrest by Iran's Shi'a hardliners as the Sunnis and Shi'as have been involved in perpetual conflict since the 1979 revolution.

A conventionally strong Israel, the nuclear armed Pakistan, the envelopment by U.S. forces, and the bitter Sunni rival of Saudi Arabia are viewed as the primary security threats in Iran's objective of defending the homeland. As Iran has used unconventional forces and terrorist groups to further its national interests in the past, threats to those entities are also taken as threats to the homeland as they could affect regional dominance. Iran has substantial incentives to maintain their relationship and solidarity with Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas precisely for conserving regional influence. The hypothesis that Iran does not view the elimination of Israel as a fundamental foreign policy goal despite the regime's harsh rhetoric but views Israel only as an ideological and geopolitical threat may be controversial in the U.S., considering its own political rhetoric, however, there seems to be historical evidence that strengthens the hypothesis. Even further strengthened is the suggestion that Iran is far more threatened by the proximity and breadth of U.S. forces in the region.[25]

Additionally, a dominating Iranian national security interest is to maintain its regional influence and to sustain its professed right to act as the preeminent power in the Persian Gulf region. Iran will seek to increase its military support for its allies in the region, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Syria as it views itself the innate regional power player. In the near future, Iran will continue to set objectives aimed at maintaining that role.[26]

The relationships between Iran and its geopolitical rivals are unlikely to change in the near future, and if Iran is successful in attaining a nuclear weapon, the Sunni Arab states such as Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia may further add to the regional volatility by seeking to join

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[25] Ibid. Pg. 9
[26] Ibid. Pg. 11

Pakistan and Iran in the nuclear club. This outcome would be an all out threat to nonproliferation and the aspirations of a "global zero," and could easily spiral into a worldwide arms race that President Kennedy cautioned about in 1960. The "indications that 10, 15, or 20 nations will have a nuclear capacity"[27] becomes a very real scenario that would dwarf the current issues of the day.

Iran's national security interests are unlikely to change in the years ahead regardless of the short or medium horizon changes that could possibly take place. Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons could be viewed as serving those interests by deterring a U.S. invasion of Iran, neutralizing U.S. conventional military superiority, and expanding Iran's influence and power in the region. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of U.S. and international decision makers to influence the Iranian leadership in how it carries out these interests and how it weights the costs and benefits of developing nuclear weapons.[28]

The response of Iran to outside influences is also dependent on the assumption that Iran is a rational actor. There are strong positions on either side of the argument, however, the lion share of academia and military leaders and analysis believe that Iran "assesses costs and benefits in making foreign policy decisions and, therefore, can be expected to act rationally in the future."[29] The intricate arguments on either side are beyond the scope of this paper, but the prevailing point of view is that with respect to Iran's foreign policy over the last 30 years their motives "can be understood through the lens of Iran's interests in regime survival, maintaining territorial sovereignty, and expanding its regional influence."[30] Thus, by tipping the scale in the direction

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[27] Kennedy, John F. "The Third Kennedy-Nixon Presidential Debate." New York City. October 13, 1960. Presidential Debate.

[28] Davis, Lynn E., Jeffrey Martini, Alireza Nader, Dalia Dassa Kaye, James T. Quinlivan, and Paul Steinberg. "Iran's Nuclear Future: Critical U.S. Policy Choices." *Project Air Force*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011. Web.

[29] Ibid. Pg. 12

[30] Ibid. Pg. 12

of heavier costs or greater gains, Iran's foreign and domestic policy objectives can theoretically be influenced by outside actors.

Influencing Iran: Diplomacy

Even though Iran has largely made itself unavailable for direct diplomatic discussion and the past attempts at diplomacy have yet to induce the desired effect on its nuclear program, Iran is responding to the international diplomatic pressure in several ways. While Western states make an effort to pressure Iran from multiple angles, one of their first measures was to limit the influence that Iran has on world oil markets. In preparation for the follow on sanctions that could shrink or eliminate the European demand for oil from Iran, the U.S. and representative states from the European Union asked the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and specifically Saudi Arabia, to offset the gap in the oil trade by increasing its oil production. In response, Iran is again trying to leverage its perceived place of regional dominance to reverse OPEC's compliance with the Western requests and it is looking to minimize the expected economic damage by seeking new markets for its oil. Currently, the effects of OPEC's production offsets are unrealized as the policies remain young, but China and India are less ardent about the no oil trade policies of the West and have only somewhat limited their Iranian oil purchases. There is evidence that India and China have lessened those purchases, but it is not clear as to how much they have lessened or how long they will continue to do so.[31] Regardless, even without direct talks, an Iranian response can be observed. Coupled with limiting Iran's resources to be funneled toward its nuclear program, these results were the results sought with the West's indirect diplomatic policies.

Most European countries are not dependent on Iranian oil; however, there are a handful of countries that do import a significant amount of their oil from Iran. In the attempt to drive a

[31] Kam, Ephraim. "Iran's Response: Pressure for Pressure." *INSS Insight No, 318*. March 1, 2012. Web.

wedge between the countries that do rely on Iran for their oil needs and those that do not, Iran is threatening to no longer export oil to any European countries. In Iranian eyes, this signals that the proposed sanctions are in no way having an effect on Iran economically, that Iran will not bend to the will of any other state, and it preempts the Western sanctions so it appears to be Iran's decision to discontinue trade and not the other way around. Yet the Iranian policy contributes to the idea that a reactionary Iran is an Iran that is being affected by diplomatic policies, as the sustainability for an Iran that is not gaining heavily from the export of its oil is questionable.

It is evident that Iran's desire to do as it sees fit is not diplomatically unopposed. Displayed by their proposal to return to the negotiation table, Iranian plans are being influenced by Western diplomacy and they will soon feel the full effect of the harshest oil sanctions set to take place in July 2012. The proposal to return to the negotiations table could be a delay tactic used to gain valuable time to produce a nuclear capability and to fortify their nuclear infrastructure to mitigate the threat of a preemptive attack, but it represents a move in the right direction, and shows that diplomacy is having an effect. However, most intelligence sources agree that Iran is still close to a year away from enriching enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon and although the fortification of their nuclear infrastructure may protect their program from complete destruction, a preemptive attack may not come in the conventional form that Iran is expecting.

Even if the delivery of a preemptive attack did come in the expected conventional form, covering a nuclear facility in rubble can still delay or render the effected site temporarily inoperable. Moreover, Israel is suggesting that the time for negotiations is running out for Iran, and even though U.S. policy makers have not endorsed an attack by Israel, the threat can

possibly serve as a powerful incentive to get Iran back to the negotiation table where, hopefully, substantive discussions will take place. As long as Iran presents a serious attitude toward new discussions, it would behoove the U.S. and the world to reopen the avenues of communication. The renegotiation of the inherently weak NPT and the empowerment of the UNSC and IAEA could potentially be positive place to start. That way the U.S. and its allies could take a backseat to newly strengthened international enforcement of the two organizations, and Iran would feel that the issues at hand were less about religious and cultural ideologies, and more about the worldwide hopes for the complete reduction of all nuclear arsenals to a "global zero."

Influencing Iran: Sanctions

Many academic endeavors have devoted time and effort to research on the "rallying around the flag phenomenon" that occurs when a country can be unified in hardship through war or imposition of the will of another on a nation. "Sanctions that squeeze are more effective than threats that galvanize and unify,"[32] and there should be specific targets to an effective scheme of sanctions. Iran has a unique profile of vulnerabilities to exploit for the biggest impact on policy due to the imposed sanctions. Based on experience with imposing sanctions on other infant nuclear programs with a desire to militarize, effective steps should be taken to influence Iran's trade of dual-use technology, defined by technologies that contribute to the development of a particular weapons system and technology that is not related to the development of any particular weapons system, but rather to the development of military capabilities more generally,[33] oil

[32] Russell, Richard L. "Military Options for Preventing a Nuclear-Armed Iran." *Iran's Nuclear Programme: Strategic Implications*. Ed. Krause, Joachim. New York: Routledge, 2012. Pgs. 111-122. Print.

[33] Evans, Samuel A. "Defining Dual-Use: An International Assessment of the Discourses Around Technology, Presentation given to the ESRC New Directions in WMD Proliferation Seminar Series, 27 February 2006.

related exports, equipment related to the oil and gas industry, the financial sector, and the international travel of those people who are involved in the nuclear program in any way.[34]

Pakistan and Libya serve as examples of the effectiveness of embargoes on dual-use technologies in slowing or deterring nuclear programs. Although Pakistan eventually achieved its objective, it reported being severely delayed from the sanctions that contributed to the complete inability for Libya to go nuclear. While these embargoes can limit the imports of high-quality materials and equipment designed specifically for the enrichment of fissile material, due to the wide range of suppliers, the more generic equipment that could be used toward the development of nuclear weapons is harder to regulate. The international community would serve itself well if it could limit and track any and all such equipment that enters Iran, however, as it is with all embargoes – the policy is only as good as its enforcement.

Iran is currently a net importer of gasoline and has vast incentive to remain a net exporter of oil. The oil and gas sector represents a significant vulnerability to the Iranian economy, worthy of substantial attention with regard for effective embargoes. Structurally, Iran's oil and gasoline sector is in dire need of reform. Oil exports account for 65 percent of government revenues and oil, gas, and refined petroleum products account for 74 percent of exports.[35] Iran's overreliance on the sector and lack of trade diversification alone do not necessarily represent needs for restructuring, but coupled with global instability in the market, economic disincentives to popularize fuel efficient transportation from perpetual subsidies for domestic gas sales, and excess demand created by a population that has doubled since the

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[34] Crane, Keith. "Iran and International Sanctions: Elements of Weakness and Resilience." *Iran's Nuclear Programme: Strategic Implications*. Ed. Krause, Joachim. New York: Routledge, 2012. Pgs. 111-122. Print.

[35] International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2010a: "Islamic Republic of Iran, 2009 Article IV Consultation," *IMF Country Report* 10/74, March.

revolution in 1979 have all incurred a need for restructuring that Iran's parliament is just starting to address.

The other side of this problem, which can be further targeted by sanction policy, is the hindered supply caused by underinvestment due to financial constraints, technical shortages, and previous sanctions. President Ahmadinejad's own policies could also be working against him as he has partially nationalized the industry by reducing the power of the "oil mafia," dominated by allies of former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and replaced it with companies associated with the Revolutionary Guard.[36] An embargo on all oil and gas equipment could throw the oil and gas sector in Iran into a crisis that the Iranian government may have to address with more of its constrained funds. Thus diverting funds from its capital-rich nuclear program.

It is true that although many cases of civil unrest have been caused by the increase in prices, and even more with the increase in gas prices specifically, few have ever been directly correlated with a regime change. Iran itself has had its share of civil unrest due to rising gas prices; with the most recent in 2008, but if the second largest economy in the Middle East is hit with monumental gas shortages exacerbated by inadequate internal supply caused by historical underinvestment in refinement capability, excess demand, and the limited ability to import the refined commodity, Iran may be forced to rethink its allocation of funds for the development of a militarized nuclear weapons program. Even if Iran is successful in developing a nuclear weapon, this problem will persist, as sanctions are likely to remain. By the time Iran has developed the capability, given that it is still possible to do so under such conditions, a feedback loop may have been developed by its overreliance in the oil gas industry to fund the government and the

[36] Mohamedi, Fareed. *Iran Primer: The Oil and Gas Industry.* The United States Institute of Peace. Web. April 2012.

shortages in the industry due to the lack of government revenues, and Iran quickly dwindles into a failed state regardless of the newfound nuclear capacity.

In the meantime, before the full strength of the planed sanctions comes to bear on Iran, they are making every attempt to sharply reduce its outstanding gross debt. Although financial sanctions have made Iran suffer for its nuclear aspirations by contributing to slower rates of capital formation and lower rates of growth due to the lack of access to international financial markets,[37] the sanctions serve as more of an annoyance to the Iranian government and more of a restriction to the private Iranian citizen, much like the sanctions on travel. However, the implementation of these sanctions was needed as Iran's outstanding debt could be reduced at a faster rate without having done so. In turn, the July 2012 sanctions if enacted, will have a greater overall impact.

According to Ambassador James Dobbins, a previous high-ranking government official, Special Advisor to the President, and current director of the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center, there are at least four rationales for further sanctions on Iran:

> (1) Sanctions may promote positive change in the nature of the Iranian regime by punishing behavior that is looked on unfavorably by the international community.
>
> (2) Trade sanctions have deprived the Iranian military of easy access to more effective technologies.
>
> (3) Even if the current Iranian leadership ignores sanctions, the ensuing international opprobrium and economic costs serve as an example that may deter other countries that are contemplating acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities. If Iran develops a nuclear bomb without paying a price in terms of sanctions and international opprobrium, other countries would be more likely to follow the same path, leaving the world a more dangerous place. The threat of becoming an international pariah is one of the best reasons for pursing tougher international sanctions against Iran.

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[37] Crane, Keith. "Iran and International Sanctions: Elements of Weakness and Resilience." *Iran's Nuclear Programme: Strategic Implications*. Ed. Krause, Joachim. New York: Routledge, 2012. Pgs. 111-122. Print.

> (4) Sanctions provide an alternative to two even less attractive options: doing nothing in the face of Iranian efforts to develop a nuclear weapons capability or going to war to prevent it.[38]

Sanctions can be useful in cooperation with diplomacy and military or threatened military action, overt or covert, but their effects could take some time to realize. Mr. Dobbins astutely asserts in his third rationale that it would be irresponsible for the world community to not enact sanctions in response to an infant nuclear weapons program, and may serve as the middleweight of options to levy against such a program. With diplomacy being the lightweight and military action the heavyweight, economic sanctions especially let an opponent know that more is at stake than routine diplomatic discussions, and if the current course is stayed, war may be looming.

Influencing Iran: Military Action

In response to an overt attack on Iran's nuclear program, Iran may stall in its nuclear pursuits and the drive for the program may lapse, although this is not the likely scenario. The military option for the U.S. or any of its allies to conventionally attack should be the final option – not just for the prohibition of a nuclear Iran, but to prohibit Iran from using that capability. If both diplomacy and sanctions have failed and an attack from Iran is eminent, overt military action can be justified. This is mainly due to the possibility that a preemptive attack on Iran would strengthen the forces opposed to the normalization of their relationship with the U.S. and other Western states and would weaken the chances of ending the protracted conflict.[39] A preemptive conventional attack could induce a "rallying around the flag" effect, allowing the Iranian government to funnel even more funds towards the nuclear program even at the expense

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[38] Dobbins, James. "Iran Sanctions: Options, Opportunities, and Consequences," *Testimony Presented before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009. Web.

[39] Russell, Richard L. "Military Options for Preventing a Nuclear-Armed Iran." *Iran's Nuclear Programme: Strategic Implications*. Ed. Krause, Joachim. New York: Routledge, 2012. Pgs. 111-122. Print.

of the overall wellbeing of the general Iranian population under complete austerity measures. To its people, the current regime and its militarized nuclear weapons program would be completely justified if not widely embraced if a preemptive attack was carried out, and the Western hopes of de-escalation of the situation would be out of reach.

While an overt preemptive attack should be held to the final contingency, covert military options should not be constrained to such conditions and should be explored to their fullest capability. Not only for previously stated reasons, but the fact that Iran has built its nuclear infrastructure in relatively populated areas, the logistics of carrying out an attack while minimizing collateral damage would be tricky.

The marriage of diplomacy, intelligence gathering, and covert action should dominate the policy maker's plan space and with open lines of communication, should be effectively utilized to exploit any given vulnerability deemed exploitable. To limit the need for a full-scale attack originating from Jerusalem, the Israelis and American should coalesce in their covert efforts, and potentially have. Examples of this are the rumors of an Israel/American team gaining the intelligence on how to exploit a vulnerability that was detected in Iran's big city electric grids, which are not "air-gapped" meaning that they are connected to the internet and therefore able to be infiltrated by a Stuxnet style cyber attack. A covert attack, which unconfirmed reports have suggested was already carried out, was meant to sabotage the uranium enrichment centrifuges at the Natanz nuclear facility in 2010. The operation was considered temporarily successful until it was detected, but dropped the centrifuge operational capacity at Natanz over the past year by thirty percent.[40]

The debate in Israel about what an Iranian counterattack would look like has most experts arguing that there would be either an uptick in the rocket and ballistic missile attacks on Israel's

[40] "Stuxnet worm hits Iran nuclear plant staff computers" BBC. N.P. September 26, 2010. Web. April 2012.

homeland, an increase in terror attacks on Israeli outposts abroad, or both. Proxy forces, Hezbollah and Hamas, would most certainly be called upon by Tehran, but the extent to which an Iranian conventional attack would come is unclear. In fact it is unclear if there would be a conventional response at all in the short run. However, a conventional response is not the fear. The fear is that the response, although it may be relatively delayed, would be nuclear attack from Iran facilitated by the invigorated enthusiasm brought forth by the preemptive attack itself.

Furthermore, the call for a preemptive attack does nothing more that temporarily delays the Iranian nuclear program and paints the rest of the world into a corner. All the gains from diplomacy and sanctions would be for not, and the attacking state and its allies would have to commit to an extended number of attacks on Iranian soil to further delay the program. While it should remain on the table as a viable option, all other options should be followed up first, as an attack on Iran could be a monumental drain on national treasure and international lives.

Conclusion

A nuclear-armed Iran is not an unimportant problem, neither for its regional neighbors nor the United States. It would assuredly be far better for Iran to give up the development of its militarized nuclear program and open its borders to international inspectors, than the alternative. However, current diplomatic efforts may fail and the imposed sanctions may not have the desired bite that the international community is hoping for. The question then arises as to whether the benefit of preventive war outweighs the benefit to a strategy of containment and deterrence.

Should Iran become a nuclear power, the risks may be able to be addressed with a renewed commitment of U.S. power to the stability and security in the Middle East. That renewal could come from renegotiated treaties, military shows of force and conspicuous exercises, and security alliances in the form of "nuclear umbrellas" that the U.S. extends to the most vulnerable

states in the region. The odds of success to a strategy of containment and deterrence should be carefully analyzed, and the U.S. should additionally seek the help of outside partners making this commitment as multilateral as possible, hopefully increasing those odds. It should be clear that the largest portion of the international community stands ready to hold Iran accountable, and that the use of its nuclear weapons, overtly or for diplomatic gain, would put Iran in danger of nuclear retaliation.[41]

The United States has successfully participated in a nuclear arms race with a vastly more capable adversary with respect to resources than Iran, and the strategy of deterrence and containment with the Soviet Union was ultimately a success. In fact, a policy of deterrence and containment with Iran would be significantly less costly than the in the Cold War and the odds would be more heavily in U.S. favor. Iran would be unable to match U.S. nuclear capability within any reasonable timeline, and would run risk of absolute destruction without a credible threat of the same.

Although a preventive war with Iran may be deemed a temporary success, it would most likely come with some short-term costs and long-term devastation. A diplomatic solution is obviously the ideal outcome, but it is unlikely that economic pressure alone will bring diplomatic success. Offering Iran a package of incentives and disincentives if they choose not to cooperate may at least signal their level of commitment and steadfastness to their nuclear pursuits. If Iran were to decline such an offer of incentives, their clarification purpose would assist the ultimate diplomacy of containment and deterrence.[42]

The United States, its allies, and the world community as a whole must meet persistence with persistence and fashion a combination of diplomatic measures, economic sanctions, and

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[41] Posen, Barry R. "A Nuclear-Armed Iran: A Difficult but Not Impossible Policy Problem." *A Century Foundation Report.* 2006. Web.

[42] Ibid. Pg. 23

military pressure to stymie Iran's nuclear desires. Otherwise, the policies of containment and deterrence will have to be installed and the power profile of the world's mightiest players will shift. Finding the right solution to the problem before it gets to that point is of dire importance, as the risk of worldwide proliferation then becomes real and the future becomes unknowable.

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