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BETTER OPTIONS AVAILABLE

HOW TO STOP IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

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Abstract

As Iran continues to develop a nuclear capability, the U.S. continues to speak of the means to prevent it from occurring. While espousing a line of increased sanctions and isolation, the 'all options on the table' continues to be spoken as the ultimate means of halting Iran's nuclear program. This option is fraught with complications. A military attack could have a short term effect on the program by destroying known facilities; however the chances of long term success are not guaranteed. Targeting has inherent difficulties, such as finding the full extent of Iran's nuclear program (which is certainly not clear at this time) and then developing a plan to destroy the facilities through self protection measures. A military attack would also have secondary effects on other U.S. strategic aims such as the free flow of oil, reducing terror in the region and instigating a regime change within Iran.

Aside from the military option being a bad one, the current strategy of isolating Iran as a punishment is equally ineffective. Where the U.S. has withdrawn diplomatically and economically, other countries have been more than willing to fill the void and exert their influence in the region. This policy has done little than remove the U.S. further away from the Iranian decision making process and reduces their ability to influence policy. A more effective strategy would be to engage Iran by slowing reintroducing diplomatic relations and opening a dialogue on issues of mutual benefit. It would also benefit both sides by reopening economic relations thereby creating access of vital products for both sides.

BETTER OPTIONS AVAILABLE:
HOW TO STOP IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In August 2002, when Alireza Jafarzadeh revealed evidence that Iran had a secret nuclear program,[1] relations between Iran and the US took a decided turn for the worse. The activity had clearly been ongoing for many years and was a direct violation of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT),[2] casting serious doubt on the legitimacy of the Iranian nuclear program. The result seemed to confirm what many already believed; that Iran was attempting to develop nuclear weapons. Senior leaders of Iran asserted the program was for peaceful purposes and that enriching uranium for peaceful purposes was an inherent right provided for under the NPT. According to the US leadership, Iranian actions remain a threat[3] and that allowing Iran to develop a nuclear capability would have grave consequences. Despite global opposition to a tougher stance, the US has maintained a hard-line approach that insinuates a military response is possible. President Bush stated that all options remain available to ensure Iran complies with international demands and used Iraq as an example of their willingness to use force to ensure US security objectives are achieved[4].

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1 Alireza Jafarzadeh is a spokesman for the National Council of the Resistance of Iran and on 14 August 2002, announced to the world of proof that Iran had secret nuclear program. This program included a heavy water production facility in Arak and a uranium enrichment plant in Natanz, both of which had been unknown to US intelligence agencies. Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iranian Threat: President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 141.

2 Iaw Article 8 of the Safeguard Agreement between the IAEA and Iran, Iran must provide all information concerning nuclear material within Iran. International Atomic Energy Agency, "The text of the Agreement between Iran and the Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," 13 December 1974, Article 8. http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc214.pdf; Internet; accessed 23 March 2008.

[3] Speaking at a security conference in Bahrain, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates said that Iran is pursuing destabilizing foreign policies and is trying to foment instability and chaos in the Middle East. Challiss McDonough, "US Defense Chief still considers Iran a Threat, despite new Intelligence Estimate," VOA 8 December 2007. News service on-line; available from http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-12/2007-12-08-voa32.cfm?CFID=300163886&CFTOKEN=86379713; Internet; accessed 24 April 2008.

[4] MSNBC, "Bush hints at using force against Iran," 13 August 2005, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8933866/; Internet; accessed 26 March 2008.

The intent of this paper is not to discuss the issue of a nuclear Iran or the legalities of conducting an armed attack into a sovereign nation, but that the military option implied is fraught with problems. It would unlikely stop Iran from eventually attaining a nuclear capability and have detrimental effects on other US strategic objectives. It will also contend that by engaging Iran diplomatically and economically, it would have more success in achieving their overall strategic aims than the current isolationist policy. This paper will provide some insight into some of the deficiencies of the military option by first looking at its potential for success and then how secondary effects could impact on competing US objectives in the region. Finally, it will suggest that after almost 30 years it is time to consider a new strategy and that a policy of engagement will be much more effective than the current isolationist strategy.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE MILITARY OPTION

Conducting an attack to stop nuclear development has precedence when Israel destroyed Iraq's Osiraq nuclear reactor in 1981. Aside from the legal aspects of conducting military operations against a sovereign nation, there was considerable discussion whether the attack actually achieved its aim; stopping Saddam from developing a nuclear capability. History will show that it did not. Questions must then be asked when considering a US attack into Iran. Iran had the advantage of learning and applying lessons from Iraq. Thus ending Iran's nuclear program will be very difficult to accomplish due to targeting issues and global support, while effects would be detrimental to other U.S. strategic objectives, such as maintaining the flow of oil from the region, facilitating regime change and affecting Iran's support for terrorism.

Is Success Plausible?

The first issue to consider is the plausibility of a successful attack. Two factors that can affect success are targeting the capability and external support for any military attack. Targeting is inherently difficulty; you must be able to identify the target, but also address a facility's inherent self defence capability. To start with, Iran's nuclear capability is not well understood. This means that targeteers do not understand the full extent of the nuclear program and as a result, the option deals with false promises that

offer no assurances that the program would be irreversible or even substantially set back.[5] The ability to identify covert nuclear programs has historically been an intelligence failure. The international community remains surprised each time a nuclear capability is announced; Iran was no different. Despite economic sanctions and the watchful eyes of the world, Iran was able to surreptitiously construct a uranium enrichment facility and heavy water capability,[6] with confirmation only coming to light through revelations from an exiled opposition group. It's impossible to say there's an unequivocal understanding of Iran's nuclear program and thus no way to accurately assess how effective attacking known facilities would be. What other facilities would continue to work towards the end?

The other complicating factor for targeteers is how to actually destroy the target. Having learned lessons from Osiraq, Iran separated their facilities and buried them, while increasing air defence measures to prevent aerial attacks.[7] Natanz is over fifty feet underground and surrounded by dozens of anti-air placements, a necessary measure for security problems according to Iranian officials.[8] Identification is not only required for targeting, but the plan must take into account the physical defences and geographical consideration in order to achieve success. This lack of understanding of Iran's nuclear program and implemented defensive measures will make targeting problematic and have a significant impact on the probability of success.

The second factor to consider is where support will come from. The world clearly has concerns about a nuclear Iran and while unable to agree on how to address the situation, most believe a military solution is not the way to go. Increasing troop demands

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[5] David Albright and Jacqueline Shire, "A Witches' Brew?" *Arms Control Today* 37, no. 9 (November 2007): 10; http://proquest.umi.com; Internet; accessed 25 March 2008.

[6] Joshua Rovner, "Preparing for a Nuclear Iran: The Role of the CIA," *Strategic Insights* IV, no. 11 (Nov 2005). Journal on-line; available from http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/nov/rovnernov05.pdf; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

[7] Iran's major enrichment site at Ce/TT0.T572(Da 05(h)-4(e Roler alt; a Rola3D Rol008.layndihe)608.e Roli)8(pucla Ro

and a lack of exit strategy for both Iraq and Afghanistan have reduced global support for additional military operations. Nations have no resources to commit to existing conflicts and thus are reticent to get involved in another conflict. Support may be more forthcoming with UNSC legitimacy, but that requires the support of Russia and China. While supporting resolutions that outline specific sanctions against nuclear technology, both remain firmly opposed to a military response. US and Russian relations continue to diverge since announcing the US missile defence system on Russia's borders. Russia has taken a more hardened approach toward US policies and seeing no objective data that Iran is constructing nuclear weapons, issued a strongly worded warning against the use of force in the region.[9] Without Russian concurrence there will be no UNSC resolution, making any offensive a 'coalition of the willing'; however, support appears limited here as well.

Most nations in the Persian Gulf vocally oppose a military response. Regionally, U.S. public support has been decimated by the Iraq invasion and the perceived sArab-Israeli dispute.urrenion.

Cooperation Council (GCC). Nations are concerned about being drawn into the conflict and that the US hard stance will bring about an Iranian retaliation.[12] Qatar has stated they will not participate in any military attack, nor permit attacks to originate from their soil.[13] UAE has similarly said they will not allow any force to use their territories for military, security and espionage activities against Iran."[14] Valuable U.S. intelligence assets fly out of UAE and air operations are coordinated from the CAOC in Qatar. Couple that with the naval component headquartered in Bahrain, conducting any military operation without the support of these countries would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. The scope of the support *against* a military attack is highlighted by recent comments from the Afghan President and Iraqi Prime Minister who both publicly reiterated their views of Iran as a friend and a positive influence for stability in their countries, indicating it's not Iran they fear, but an Iran/U.S. confrontation.[15] There is a clear distaste within the region for a military attack and any successful attack will require this regional support. Without this support, the operation becomes much more complex and chances of success are significantly reduced.

This general lack of support is not restricted to the Gulf region. European leaders are unconvinced that economic isolation or military action will have the necessary effect or be worth the cost. Desiring a more give and take approach, they believe the U.S. stance to be unrealistic.[16] Attempting to renew relations with the U.S., the French hinted at their own military response, but later rebutted these comments as a misunderstanding.[17] Britain's new leadership remains committed to the U.S., but is

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[12] "Persian Gulf Arab Allies Reject role in any attack on Iran," The Associated Press, 29 March 2007, [news service on-line] available from http://www.iranian.ws/cgi-bin/iran_news/exec/view.cgi/27/21212; Internet; accessed 4 February 2008.

[13] Meena Janardham, "GCC Countries Complicate US' Iran Plans," *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 16 April 2008. [news service on-line] available from http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=37362; Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

[14], "Persian Gulf Arab Allies Reject role…

[15] Tony Karon, "US Tough Talk on Iran: A Sign of Isolation," *Time*, 16 August 2007, [magazine on-line]; available from http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1653490,00.html; Internet; accessed 15 January 2008

[16] Ibid.

[17] French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner announced that France had to prepare for the worst in order to stop Iran from attaining nuclear weapons and that "the worst is war". Both he and President Sarkozy commented that those words were misinterpreted and that the message was intended to be one of

trying to bring troops home and will unlikely provide the unwavering support seen between Bush and Blair.[18] Other European leaders are even less enthusiastic, thus making a unanimous EU decision nearly impossible. A recent Globescan poll[19] showed European support – Britain (5%), France (7%), Germany (3%) and Russia (3%) – for military operations was very low. Popular support within nations could affect troop contributions, regardless of the tacit support of politicians. Interestingly, this poll also showed support for a military response has minimal support at home as well. Since 2006, support for tougher measures against Iran had declined by 6% in the U.S. to 60%, while numbers in Canada were down 7 % to 45%. Only 10% of Canadians thought a military response was appropriate, while that number was 15% in the U.S. It would seem that there is little support in any country to actually conduct a military attack. Without external support, be it political, moral, logistical or through troop contributions, the potential for success is seriously diminished.

As seen, it would seem very difficult for the U.S. to conduct an attack into Iraq and definitively stop Iran's nuclear program. Iranian defences and a general lack of understanding on the extent of the program make targeting problematic. Couple this with the growing global anxiety and distaste for more conflict, finding the necessary support to ensure success would be difficult. Even if one assumes that an attack successfully destroys its targets, another factor to consider is whether it will achieve the strategic objective of stopping Iran's nuclear program.

Will it achieve the aim?

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peace. France's position remained one of negotiation and increased sanctions. Reuters, "Frances' Kouchner: Iran remarks message of peace," 18 September 2007, [news service on-line]; available from http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSL1874551420070918; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

[18] Economist. "What to do about Iran?" 12 November 2007. http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10125367; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

[19] The Globescan poll was conducted in 31 countries to determine the support for continued UN efforts against Iran. For the poll, **softer** measures included "not pressuring Iran and using diplomatic relations", while **tougher** measures were "imposing economic sanctions and authorizing a military strike. Globescan, "Declining Support for Tough Measures against Iran's Nuclear Program," http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbc_iran/; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

History has shown that it is very difficult to stop a determined state from developing a nuclear capability. Amid international pressure and sanctions, Israel, Pakistan, India and North Korea all achieved a nuclear capability. Can a military response succeed where sanctions failed? It was assessed that the destruction of the Osiraq reactor affected Iraq's timeline for developing a nuclear capability, but the effects were short term and did not prevent Saddam from continuing his nuclear program. He turned to a clandestine uranium enrichment program by dispersing it throughout the country and moving it underground, hiding the extent of their progress from the IAEA[20] and the intelligence community. When Iran initiated their program, they did not miss these lessons and implemented the same defences; decentralized and protected. As seen by the targeting issues, these factors mitigate against the cessation of Iran's nuclear program, even if known sites are destroyed. If the option only has short term effects and does not attain the objective, then perhaps another strategy should be considered. This is significant, particularly since this strategy has second order effects that would be detrimental to other regional objectives, such as oil flow, regime change and support for terrorism.

What about second order effects?

A nuclear Iran is not the only U.S. interest in the region and a military attack would have consequences on the strategic objectives, which would require additional consideration prior to attacking. The most important issue revolves around oil and its effect on the global economy. If forced into a desperate situation, Iran is well positioned to pressure oil supplies. While understanding that Iranian revenues are heavily reliant on oil, it is conceivable that they could restrict access to the world's most important oil chokepoint, the Strait of Hormuz. With roughly 40% of all sea-borne oil trade traveling through this strait,[21] it could seriously affect the safe flow of oil with its own military

[20] United States, Central Intelligence Agency, *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD* 2, (Washington DC: September 30, 2004), 5. Document on-line; available https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/iraq_wmd_2004/index.html; Internet; accessed 18 April 2008.

[21] United States. Department of Energy, *World Oil Transit Chokepoints*, (Washington DC: January 2008). Document on-line; available from http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/pdf.pdf; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

forces. Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, oil prices have tripled due to the absence of Iraqi oil[22] and closing the Strait of Hormuz would affect oil exports from Iran, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE as well. Alternate land routes are available, but at greater cost and certainly unable to make up the lost delta. Virtually all of the world's excess oil capacity is held in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE and would not be available during this crisis. The mere threat of closure would send oil prices skyrocketing,[23] with the economic consequences clearly running counter to U.S. strategic interests.

> "It has been estimated that a 3-month closure of the Strait of Hormuz, without any offsetting oil export procedures or market intervention, could cost the United States a 4 to 5 percent drop in GDP, with up to 2 percent added to the unemployment rate and 7 percent added to the inflation rate."[24]

An alternative to closing the Strait of Hormuz is to affect the oil supply by targeting the oil infrastructure of OPEC neighbours. Saudi Arabia, as the indispensable nation of oil, has excess capacity to export, but even with built-in redundancies, protracted damage could cause a deficit of millions of barrels of oil a day.[25] Sabotage in Iraq's oil infrastructure has prevented foreign investment amid safety fears and contract risk[26] and if similar activity was orchestrated in Saudi Arabia, fears could impact oil prices without affecting Iranian oil exports. If Iran chose either option, it would put the U.S. in a precarious position from both national and international pressures. While it is questionable if, or for how long Iran could keep the strait closed, the second order consequences of a military attack are significant and could force the U.S. to rethink this strategy.

Another strategic aim of the U.S. in Iran is one of regime change, committing resources to transform Iran from within. Washington spends upwards of $75 million dollars through Voice of America and Radio Farda broadcasts to promote democracy and

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[22] Stephen Mufson. "A Crude Case for War?" The Washington Post, 16 March 2008. [newspaper on-line]; available from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/14/AR2008031403677.html; Internet; accessed 16 April 2008.

[23] Dagovert Brito and Amy Myers Jaffe, "Reducing vulnerability of the Strait of Hormuz," *In Getting Ready for a Nuclear Iran*, ed Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, 209. …

[24] Ibid., 209.

[25] Ibid., 209.

[26] Stephen Mufson. "A Crude Case…

support NGO's and Human Rights organizations. This money also goes to opposition and dissident organizations, with allegations this money also supports sabotage operations against the theocratic regime.[27] The success of this strategy relies on the people acknowledging a better way of life exists than they currently have in Iran and will work toward a regime change. Many are biding their time until a change can be made, but that time will unlikely be after an American attack.

> "If the history of military incursion and the Iranian nation teach us anything it is the fact that intervention is likely to solidify support for the current regime. The idea that the Iranian people would react to a military strike by advocating the overthrow of the existing regime is delusional."[28]

As opposed to being a catalyst for regime change, a more likely scenario of a military attack would be the alienation the population, causing them to rally behind the current government. This effect would also run contrary to the U.S. desire for a change the government of Iran. Again one must consider the secondary effects that attacking Iran will have on other American strategic objectives.

Terrorism is another objective in the Middle East. In this case, a military attack could provide fuel to jihadist fires, further justifying the actions of radical movements. It would give rise to the likes of Usama Bin Laden who proclaims the U.S. is at war with Muslims. While clearly not the case, the logic does not stand scrutiny when you consider that the U.S. only forced economic sanctions on India and Pakistan, tacitly supported Israel's nuclear program, and continue dialogue with North Korea. Coupled with the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it could easily be interpreted as a war against Islam. Iran also has access to terror resources and could instigate an increase in the terror campaign[29] against U.S. and supporting interests around the world, again providing an effect contrary to one of the U.S. strategic aims.

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[27] Mehdi Khalaji, *U.S. Support for the Iranian Opposition*, Policy Watch #1258 for the Washington Institute (Washington 9 July 2007), [document on-line]; available from http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2634; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

[28] Christopher Hemmer, "Responding to a Nuclear Iran," *Parameters* 37, no. 3 (Autumn 2007): 44.

[29] Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iranian Threat: President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 141.

Upon a closer review of some issues associated with a military attack, two factors stand out; the possibility of success and how it would affect all strategic aims in the region. Without any guarantee of stopping Iran's nuclear program, the detrimental consequences of an attack on other U.S. strategic interests make this strategy suspect. Continued rhetoric referring to a potential military mission does little to improve the environment and for the most part has a deleterious effect upon other options. Accepting that a military is not the preferred option of the government, it is better to stop referring to this option and stick to the policy options of diplomatic and economic isolation. I would submit however, that these policy options have little chance of success either and that a more proactive and engaging strategy is required.

ISOLATION VS. ENGAGEMENT

"Few bilateral relationships today are marked by the degree of enmity, distrust, and mutual hostility that characterizes U.S.-Iranian diplomatic relations."[30] This is a good summation of U.S./Iranian relations. These two countries, or their leaders, dislike each other and interaction is typically restricted to inflammatory rhetoric. The U.S. severed diplomatic relations during the American hostage crisis and has since had no official representation from which to even start a dialogue. Economic relations were halted in 1995 when Presidential Executive Orders (EO) prohibited trade or any involvement in Iranian petroleum development.[31] Successive government have spent considerable time, effort and money restricting interaction with Iran, while simultaneously exerting pressure to isolate Iran from the rest of the world. This isolationist strategy has been in existence in various forms for almost 30 years, yet has yielded minimal results; Iran continues to develop a nuclear capability, continues to support terrorism and regime change does not appear any where in the near future. Other

[30] Richard Maher, *Informal Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Iran: A Sustainable Strategy for the Future?* Report Prepared for the International Studies Association 49th Annual Convention (San Francisco, 2008); [paper archive on-line]; available from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/5/4/5/3/p254537_index.html; Internet; accessed 16 April 2008.

[31] In 1995, President Clinton issued EO 12957 prohibiting US involvement any activity related to Iranian petroleum, which was immediately followed by EO 12959 which basically prohibited trade with Iran. This has been a consistent policy with only a minor relaxation when the US State Department agreed to import minor foodstuffs and Iranian carpets.

than isolating the two countries, little has been accomplished and opportunities for dialogue or cooperation are missed when presented. Unilateral sanctions have been ineffective and the failings exacerbated by nations that are willing to fill any void left by the U.S. It would seem that by removing themselves from Iranian interest, they have no leverage from which to influence policies and that a more effective means of exerting influence would be to become more involved in their affairs. Opening a direct dialogue and assisting their transition into the global arena would have a greater impact than completely ignoring them diplomatically and economically. While this strategy would unlikely see profound changes in the beginning, but would provide the basis from which negotiations can move forward. What follows are some of the misgivings of the current policy and benefits of engaging Iran both economically and diplomatically.

The Economic Approach

Since the fall of the Shah, there have been 17 EO's, 6 Statutes, 2 Code of Federal Regulations and 11 Federal Register Notices outlining details on broad based sanctions against Iran. The message has been consistent as President Bush recently announced new sanctions against state-owned banks and organizations associated with the Revolutionary Guard;[32] but is the current policy effective? Current sanctions are indiscriminately applied across the spectrum and as the aim is not to punish the Iranian population, sanctions should be focused and targeted at the leadership. As early as 1997, there were indications that American merchandise was readily available through middlemen and sanctions only existed in the minds of Congress.[33] While the U.S. continues its program of isolation, excess demand continues to be filled through alternate means. "Chinese…Russian, Indian, European and even Canadian companies continue to do

[32] In an attempt to maintain pressure on the Iranian regime, Bush continued to push the UN to increase sanctions on Iran. The US has unilaterally targeted Iranian banks and organizations known to support terrorist networks and has subsequently approached allies to do the same. Helen Cooper, "US Plays its Unilateral Card on Iran Sanctions," *The New York Times*, 26 October 2007. [Newspaper on-line]; available from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/26/washington/26assess.html?hp; Internet; accessed 8 April 2008.

[33] Philip Taubman, "Editorial Observer; America's Hollow Embargo on Iran," *The New York Times*, 13 November 1997. [newspaper on-line]; available from http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E05E5DD1638F930A25752C1A961958260; Internet; accessed 8 March 2008.

business with many sectors of the Iranian economy."[34] Without the support of other countries, unilateral sanctions lose their bite and explain why sanctions have not had the desired effect. Being an economic non-player has only made it difficult to exert any influence over Iran, which ultimately increases political frustrations and makes the military solution more attractive.

Recognizing the limitations of economic isolation, the U.S. has attempted to convince partners to implement sanctions against Iran. With the European Union (EU) receiving almost 25% of Iranian exports and providing over 40% of imports, it is in a much better position to leverage activities.[35] The EU has called for tougher sanctions on nuclear related materials, but has limited their support to this specific area. As Iran's second largest oil customer, the EU has limited domestic reserves and no EU country has joined the U.S. in sanctioning Iranian oil. The EU remains unconvinced that increasing broad sanctions will be any more effective and division within the union makes it difficult to implement hard decisions. Without this multilateral support for broad sanctions, the U.S. policy will unlikely force Iran to stop their nuclear program. Having been used for over a decade with limited results, perhaps a different approach can provide more success.

A strategy to consider is one of economic engagement. Despite oil income of over $50 billion dollars per year, inflation in Iran is around 15 %, a rate among the worst in the world.[36] As a result of the ruling clergy's ideological economic issues, internal subsidies take upwards of one-third of the government budget.[37] High oil prices somewhat mask the inefficiency of the government's economic policy; however if oil prices decline, the effects of Ahmadinejad's policies will be felt by the population. With

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[34] Helen Cooper, "US Plays its Unilateral Card on Iran Sanctions," *The New York Times*, 26 October 2007. [Newspaper on-line]; available from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/26/washington/26assess.html?hp; Internet; accessed 8 April 2008.

[35] Economist, "How to get a Handle on the Axis," 12 April 2007, https://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9006616; Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

[36] Index Mundi, "Iranian Inflation Rate," http://www.indexmundi.com/iran/inflation_rate_(consumer_prices).html; Internet; accessed 9 April 2008.

[37] Economist, "They think they have right on their side," 22 Nov 2007, https://www.economist.com/world/africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10181134; Internet; accessed 15 January 2008.

this in mind, the U.S. could exert more influence within Iran by offering access to the economic power of the U.S. economy, potentially producing a positive impact on the country. Iran currently cannot access U.S. dollars and despite the recent rise of the euro's popularity as an international currency, the global economy still works in U.S. dollars. Leading into the 21st century, between 40 and 60 percent of international financial transactions were denominated in U.S. dollars and accounted for approximately two-thirds of the world's foreign exchange reserves.[38] Without access to U.S. dollars, Iran pays Dubai a 20% transaction fee to exchange funds to and from U.S. dollars. Iranian businessmen understand the implications of U.S. sanctions and the profound effect access would have on Iran's economy. Access to the U.S. economic machine could be a very attractive carrot for Iran that would allow the U.S. access and some ability to influence Iran; as it stands now, none exists.

American economic involvement in Iran would also be an overt indication to the world that relations within the region are calming and a sign of stability. This could potentially bring in foreign investment from countries previously reticent to invest in Iran due to the instability and potential for conflict. This economic engagement could also be expanded to assist Iranian efforts for membership in the World Trade Organization, something Iran has been trying to do since 1995.[39] There are opportunities that the U.S. can implement that could benefit Iran economically, creating better relations and providing an opportunity to influence Iran to proceed on a track that does not include nuclear weapons. The U.S. economic machine has great influence and despite significant oil revenues, Iran does have economic issues to resolve. It is expensive and inconvenient to work in the global market without access to U.S. dollars and U.S. interest, participation and cooperative endeavours could have a dramatic effect on Iran's road to recovery and potentially provide some ability to influence Iranian policies. While this policy has no guarantees of stopping nuclear development, it is a much better alternative to using the military option and will allow the two countries to develop areas of mutual interest and concern and a place from which to start a dialogue.

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[38] Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 255.

[39] World Trade Organization, "Accessions: Iran," http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/a1_iran_e.htm; Internet; accessed 23 April 2008.

Diplomacy

The diplomatic strategy has been equally ineffective, suffering many of the same criticisms as economic isolation: little opportunity to influence Iranian political thought from the outside; and it doesn't work in isolation as other countries fill the void. Iran maintains diplomatic relations of varying degrees with over 90 countries,[40] including most of the U.S.'s strongest allies, each willing to step in wherever possible. While the international community is concerned about a nuclear Iran, they do not believe the situation to be as dire as the U.S. and are growing frustrated with a U.S. policy they believe is too hard and inflexible for any real progress to be made.[41]

U.S. leadership has offered to open discussions with Iran, but firmly asserts that 'not a single centrifuge can spin'. According to the IAEA, Iran has been cooperative and continues to address the confidence building measures, but uranium enrichment does continue.[42] In accordance with the NPT, enrichment it is permitted for peaceful purposes, a declaration Iran continues to make at the highest levels. This questions the legitimacy of U.S. demands and perhaps a more flexible response is required. As it stands now, the two sides are caught in a game of brinkmanship from which neither seems willing to back down. As a result, diplomacy is nonexistent and opportunities to move forward are missed.

As with the economic policy, the diplomatic approach requires more engagement, rather than isolation in order to achieve strategic aims. The Council of Foreign Relations reviewed the current strategy and suggested that a careful engagement strategy would better assist the U.S. in achieving its goals. Recommendations included: commencing an immediate dialogue to address areas of common interest; drop the 'grand bargain' as an unrealistic policy initiative; make better use of incentives instead of relying on punitive

[40] Iran. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Iranian Missions," http://www.mfa.gov.ir/cms/cms/Tehran/en/mission/mission1.html ; Internet; accessed 16 April 2008.

[41] Karon, US Tough Talk on Iran….

[42] International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provision of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006) and 1747 (2007) in the Islamic Republic of Iran: IAEA Board Report" http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2008/gov2008-4.pdf; Internet; accessed 24 April 2008.

measures; and stop the regime change rhetoric.[43] These recommendations speak to the changing environment within the region and the requirement for a changing diplomatic approach; one of engagement, not isolation.

It is complexing why there is such hesitation on the part of the U.S. to resume diplomatic relations with Iran. Acknowledging that Iran has a very poor record on the international scene, they are not the first nation at odds with the U.S. to develop a nuclear capability. During the Cold War, the U.S. maintained an open dialogue and constructive relations with both Russia and China, despite strong opposition to certain aspects of internal and international policies.[44] Similarly, while sanctions were imposed to varying degrees against Israel, India and Pakistan when their nuclear capabilities were revealed, diplomatic relations were maintained. Even in North Korea, a scenario more similar to Iran's, the U.S. continues to develop solutions through dialogue. It would seem that the logic behind the isolationism is more emotive than pragmatic. The U.S. should consider opening up diplomatic relations with Iran as a confidence building measures. By starting a dialogue on areas of mutual benefit and advancing towards the bigger issues as circumstances permit, there will at least be progress. Iraq and Afghanistan, where strategic interests are relatively convergent, offer perfect opportunities to develop the genesis of a relationship. Waiting for the big issues such as nuclear development and the Middle East Process to be resolved before starting negotiations is unrealistic as the big issues behind a 'grand bargain' are too large and emotional to deal with all at once.

The idea of a grand bargain came about when Iran offered to discuss all outstanding issues between the two countries and a willingness to start a dialogue to address each of them. Fresh off of an Iraqi victory, there was little U.S. interest in ceding any flexibility toward Iran; so nothing was done. Since then, the U.S. has offered to talk 'anytime, anywhere and about anything' but only after the nuclear enrichment is completely stopped. Since the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate and with recent IAEA reports on progress, Iran has gained confidence and is now in no hurry to respond. With U.S. inflexibility and Iranian stubbornness on the nuclear issue, there is little room to

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[43] *Report of an Independent Task Force: Iran – Time for a New Approach*, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Robert M. Gates, Co-Chairs (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 2004), 9.

[44] *Report of an Independent Task Force: Iran – Time for a New Approach*, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Robert M. Gates, Co-Chairs (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 2004), 3.

move forward. As a result, instead of focusing on the big issues where interests diverge, it would be better to address issues where interests converge. Broader range, big issues can be addressed in the future once diplomatic relations start to somewhat normalize.

The next issue was to stop punishing Iran as a means of forcing policy change. Punitive measures have been largely unsuccessful and offer little glimmer of success. The global marketplace is feeling pressure, including Iran and the U.S. Offering to expand economic and diplomatic relations would be a powerful tool from which to influence Iran policies. The carrot is typically a better incentive than the stick.

The last recommendation was that the leadership needs to stop the rhetoric of regime change. It has the potential to raise national sentiment in defence of the current regime and in many ways provides justification for an Iranian nuclear capability. The Iranian people will determine the correct time for a change of government, but in the interim, constantly calling for changing the theocratic regime creates an atmosphere of distrust and fear that perpetuates itself into an atmosphere of distrust.

The bottom line is that isolation is not working and engagement offers more opportunities for success. The geopolitical environment has significantly changed over the past five years with the U.S. now firmly entrenched on both Iranian borders. The focus should not be on reducing Iranian security anxieties and take advantage of areas of mutual interest. Iran can have a positive influence in both Iraq and Afghanistan and is an opportunity from which increased dialogue can begin. Investigating and opening doors is a much preferable solution than to continue the current policy of ignoring each other and continuing to talk of the military option.

CONCLUSION

While it appears that the resolution of this issue is nowhere in the near future, there are opportunities to move the yard-sticks closer towards normalizing relations and further away from the military option. It seems clear that conducting an attack to stop Iran's developing nuclear capability would be very difficult to accomplish and only complicate the situation. First, it's questionable whether an attack would stop Iran's nuclear program; the extent of the program is unknown and facilities currently identified are adequately defended. Secondly, there's limited international support for more

conflict and vital support in the Gulf region is waning, making mounting and conducting operations problematic. Thirdly, while any attack may affect the short term timeline, history has shown that over the long term it is difficult to stop a determined nation from acquiring a nuclear capability. Lastly, an attack would seriously impede other strategic aims within the region. Rising oil prices are affecting global economies today and even a perceived threat to major oil producing nations would send volatile oil prices even higher. Implications are significantly higher if Iran decided to close off the Strait of Hormuz or support terror attacks against the Saudi oil infrastructure. A military attack could also run counter to the strategy of regime change as Iranians rally around the current government in response to an armed attack. It could also provide fuel to jihadist fires, substantiating their assertion the U.S. is conducting a war against Islam and providing justification for increased terror attacks. As a result, the military option does not appear to be in the best interest of the U.S. and would have implications far beyond the borders of Iran or the U.S. Continuing rhetoric that insinuates a 'military option remains' is not useful for improving relations, particularly since the current policy is about sanctions. All this does is create additional tension and mistrust that precludes an atmosphere conducive to progress.

The other issue is that the current strategy of diplomatic and economic isolation is not congruent with making progress nor allow for any ability to influence Iran. This policy indiscriminately affects and isolates the Iranian population instead of focusing on the government. It negates any opportunity to negotiate leverage on Iran and without a formal face to discuss issues, can allow situations of simple misunderstandings or miscalculations to rapidly develop into dangerous situations. After almost 30 years, it is time to relook the strategy and investigate other options. With a world leaning more toward engagement, it is time for the U.S. to try a similar policy. It will be much better placed to influence Iran and develop mutually cooperative and beneficial programs with a policy of engagement.

> "The strategic imperatives of the U.S. and Iran are by no means identical, nor are they often congruent, but they do intersect in significant way, particularly with respect to the stabilization of Iraq and Afghanistan…[where] the short term needs and long term visions of Washington and Tehran are surprisingly similar.

> The hostility that characterizes U.S.-Iranian relations undermines these shared interests and squanders the potential benefits of even limited cooperation."[45]

It does not have to be difficult or start with the full resumption of relations. What it must be is pragmatic that at least allows for the opportunity to approach and address issues where there is common ground and of mutual benefit. Without this approach, the potential for the region seems dismal. Iran's position within the region is growing, politically, economically and militarily and they will be a major player on the scene for quite some time. It is time for Iran and the U.S. to either coexist or confront each other; I submit that coexistence is a much better way to go.

[45] *Report of an Independent Task Force: Iran – Time for a New Approach*, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Robert M. Gates, Co-Chairs (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 2004), 9.

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