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Charm Offensive Or “Axis Of Evil”?: An Analysis Of Iran’s Nuclear Program And American Responses, 2008-2012

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Abstract

This paper assesses the likelihood that Iran’s nuclear program poses a threat to American foreign-policy interests and the extent to which the American response has succeeded in reducing this threat. The researcher conducted this assessment using publicly available data from governmental or intergovernmental agencies such as the IAEA and the CIA, think tanks such as the Brookings Institute, and contemporary press reports. The findings indicate that Iran’s nuclear program has some military aspects, which might pose a threat to American security interests either by emboldening the Iranian leadership to engage in brinkmanship or by increasing the Israeli perception of Iran as a threat. This threat appears to be exacerbated by the failure of most American responses to reduce the threat from the nuclear program, with the partial exceptions of the sanctions regimes and cyberwarfare tactics applied to Iran.

In 2009, an Iranian nuclear scientist named Shahram Amiri vanished while on a pilgrimage to Mecca, raising suspicions in the Iranian media that he had been kidnapped. They were proved partially right after Amiri turned up in Tucson claiming to be a defector. The resulting cascade of media claims and counterclaims—Amiri later claimed to have been kidnapped, while Iranian media suggested that he was a double agent-- was one of many moves in a key part of American foreign policy: the shadow war over Iran’s nuclear program.¹

The Iranian nuclear program dates back to the reign of Shah Reza Pahlavi, during the alliance between the United States and Iran. However, this program was continued well after Pahlavi’s reign and into the strongly anti-American government of the Ayatollah Khomeini.² In spite of Iranian claims to the contrary, international intelligence agencies therefore have long suspected that Iran’s post-Pahlavi nuclear program may have a military purpose³. Consequently, the questions of greatest concern regarding Iran’s nuclear program are: 1) “Does Iran’s nuclear program pose a threat to American interests?” and 2) “What responses are most likely to have a

¹ Crist, David. The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America’s Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran. 2012. Penguin. Pg.554.

² Berman, Illan. Tehran Rising: Iran’s Challenge To The United States. 2005. Rowan & Littlefield, Oxford. Pg. 32.

³ Amano, Yuki. “IAEA Board Report.” 5 June 2013. IAEA.
<http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2013/gov2013-27.pdf> Pg. 13.

desirable result?”⁴ Given the controversy over the view of Iran as a hostile nation, notably expressed in Kenneth Waltz’s 2012 article “Why Iran Should Get The Bomb,” the first question is considered in two parts: “Is the Iranian nuclear program military?” and, secondly, “Should Iran be allowed to have a military nuclear program?”

Regarding the final question, “What responses are most likely to have a desirable result?”, this study focuses on the individual viability of the four primary solutions to the problem of Iran’s nuclear program actively attempted by the Bush and Obama administrations between 2000 and 2012,: the Bush administration’s effort to foster prodemocracy activism within Iran from 2005-2007, the Obama administration’s outreach attempt in late 2009, the sanctions regimes under both administrations, and the Bush and Obama cyberwarfare programs. The Bush and Obama approaches to the Iranian nuclear program are widely regarded, to some extent, as methodological opposites, with Bush emphasizing sanctions and threats of military strikes and Obama emphasizing firstly diplomacy and then sanctions.⁵ Considering the success of the Bush and Obama approaches offers a useful “comparison” within a widely varying range of American policy on Iran.

The answers to these questions offer many implications for American political and economic security. As noted in Section Two of this paper, the Islamic Republic has—unlike other members of President Bush’s “axis of evil”—shown itself willing to launch proxy attacks on American citizens and allies when this is in its interest, *and* equally willing to cooperate with the United States on matters of common ground. Iran’s intentions toward the United States cannot, therefore, simply be taken on face value. Analyzing Iran’s intentions regarding its nuclear program, the possible results of these intentions, and the track record of previous engagements with Iran could help avoid either unnecessarily opposing a relatively well-intentioned Iran and thereby endangering regional interests or, in the worst case, a lengthy and costly war with a potential nuclear power.

1. Nature of The Iranian Nuclear Program

Today, the general term “Iranian nuclear program” describes a wide variety of nuclear facilities. According to the Congressional Research Service, the facilities which are a primary concern to the United States are Iran’s construction of gas centrifuges and the creation of so-called “heavy water” nuclear reactors.⁶ Centrifuging uranium hexafluoride gas can produce low-enrichment uranium (LEU) or high-enrichment uranium (HEU), while the spent fuel of heavy water reactors can contain plutonium. In turn, plutonium, LEU, and HEU can be used in nuclear weapons. Iran is currently running three declared gas centrifuge facilities: a program at Natanz which tests new centrifuges, a commercial facility also at Natanz, and a centrifuge facility at Fordow. Iran also has a pair of currently known reactors, one of which is a heavy-water reactor under construction at Arak, which will supposedly reach full power in 2013. (Iran’s only fully developed reactor, a “light-water” reactor near the city of Bushehr, is not as easily turned to

⁴ Kemp, Geoffrey. “The High Cost Of War With Iran.” *The National Interest*. 25 March 2013. <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-high-cost-war-iran-8265>

⁵ Mousavian, Seyed. *The Iranian Nuclear Crisis*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington, D.C. 2012. Pg.328.

⁶ Kerr, Paul. “Iran’s Nuclear Program: Tehran’s Compliance With International Obligations.” *Congressional Research Service*. 18 September 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R40094.pdf>.

military use.) Note that a truly definitive account of Iran's nuclear facilities is likely impossible at this point, however, due to the strong possibility of covert Iranian nuclear facilities (see the following paragraph). In any case, by August 2012, the Islamic Republic of Iran had produced enough nuclear fuel, in the form of low-enrichment uranium, to produce enriched uranium for several nuclear missiles.⁷

The Iranian government has consistently claimed that its nuclear program has only civilian aspects, which purportedly gives their program legitimacy under the UN's Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT). For example, as recently as November 19th of the previous year, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, the Iranian ambassador to the UN nuclear watchdog IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), claimed that a recent IAEA report "... confirmed that Iran's nuclear activities, including enrichment, are peaceful."⁸ According to spokespersons for the Iranian government, the gas centrifuges are intended to produce only LEU for civilian energy reactors. Similarly, Ambassador Soltanieh has claimed that Iran's current and projected heavy-water reactors are exclusively for the production of radioactive isotopes to treat cancer patients. In turn, Iranian spokesmen such as Soltanieh argue that international law allows nations to undertake such nominally civilian nuclear projects. Specifically, under the NPT, to which the Islamic Republic was a signatory in 1970, Iran has the right to facilitate and partake in "...the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes,"⁹ albeit "through an appropriate international body with adequate representation of non-nuclear-weapon States." In response to the latter part of the clause, sources of the Iranian government such as Soltanieh and Iran's PressTV hold that the IAEA has never found evidence of a military nuclear program¹⁰ and state that the IAEA is the only "appropriate international body" with the authority to verify the nuclear activities of member states.¹¹ Thus, the government of Iran holds that its nuclear development is approved by international law and therefore unobjectionable.

However, Iran's inconsistent and incomplete degree of cooperation in opening its sites to IAEA inspection, combined with a similar lack of cooperation with IAEA demands and treaties, has made its claims of a "peaceful" civilian program suspect. It is certainly true that several of Iran's nuclear sites are open to UN inspection; furthermore, the IAEA reports that no nuclear material from these declared sites has been diverted for military purposes. Nevertheless, Iran has a history of hiding its nuclear facilities from IAEA inspection. For example, in 2002, a group of Iranian exiles revealed that Iran had been developing undeclared nuclear facilities in the village of Arak. Similarly, the Ahmadinejad administration did not report its nuclear facility at Qom until it became known to the American intelligence community¹². And as recently as August 2012, IAEA Director-General Yuki Amano reported that individuals at a suspected nuclear site,

⁷ Kerr, Paul. "Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance With International Obligations." Congressional Research Service. 18 September 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R40094.pdf>.

⁸ Author unknown. "IAEA report confirms Iran's nuclear program is peaceful." *The Tehran Times*. 2012. <http://tehrantimes.com/politics/103414-iaea-report-confirms-irans-nuclear-program-is-peaceful-soltanieh>

⁹"THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, Article IV." United Nations. May 2005. <http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2005/npttreaty.html>

¹⁰ Author unknown. "Salehi slams US sanctions as irrational." *PressTV*. 9 July 2013. <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/07/09/312978/us-sanctions-irrational-irans-salehi/>

¹¹ Author unknown. "Iran will remain an active IAEA member." *The Tehran Times*. 30 April 2013. <http://tehrantimes.com/politics/107244-iran-will-remain-an-active-iaea-member-state-npt-signatory-soltanieh>

¹² Sanger, David. Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power. 2012. Crown, New York.

Parchin, seemed to be engaged in attempts to disguise the site.¹³ Furthermore, the Iranian government has consistently refused to open certain suspected nuclear sites to IAEA inspection. For example, the May 2013 report by the IAEA concludes that “... *as Iran is not providing the necessary cooperation*, including by not implementing its Additional Protocol, the Agency is unable to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and therefore to conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities”(my italics).¹⁴ In turn, it is hard not to read the Iranian refusal to open its nuclear facilities to inspection as suspect: why would a nation with nothing to hide have to prevent the United Nations from viewing its nuclear facilities? Note too that the Iranian government has not given an official explanation of why they have chosen to hide these facilities. Thus, the Iranian refusal to make their suspected nuclear sites open to inspection is cause for some suspicion.

Secondly, IAEA reports and reports from Western intelligence communities strongly suggest that Iran’s covert uranium enrichment activities may have some military purpose. Specifically, although the strongest evidence for an active Iranian nuclear weapons program dates back to 2003, it is likely that Iran’s nuclear program still has some military aspects, either in the form of a breakout capacity or in plans for full nuclearization. Firstly, according to a 2009 ISIS (Institute of Science and International Security) report, the IAEA is in possession of documents that strongly suggest that Iran prior to 2003 had serious interest in developing nuclear weapons, an assessment that several Western intelligence communities appear to agree with¹⁵. For example, one such document appeared to be a plan to reconfigure Iran’s Shahab-3 missile to accommodate a nuclear warhead. In their official response to a report on the subject by former IAEA Director-General Mohammad ElBaradei, the Khatami administration stated that these documents were forgeries by the United States, suggested that the contents of the documents were internally inconsistent and “lacked classification seals.”¹⁶ This argument, however, is contradicted by the actual report which the “Explanatory Comments” purportedly treated. El-Baradei’s report states that the documents were provided by several member states of the United Nations (which would presumably necessitate a conspiracy broader than the United States) over several periods of time and were internally consistent. Although these documents suggest that such attempts at weaponization were stopped after 2003¹⁷, such information does not do great

¹³ Kerr, Paul. “Iran’s Nuclear Program: Tehran’s Compliance With International Obligations.” Congressional Research Service. 18 September 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R40094.pdf>

¹⁴ El-Baradei, Mohammad. “Implementation Of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic Of Iran.” November 16, 2012. IAEA. <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2012/gov2012-55.pdf>

¹⁵ Kerr, Paul. “Iran’s Nuclear Program: Status.” Congressional Research Service. 17 October 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL34544.pdf>

¹⁶ Author Unknown. “Explanatory Comments By The Islamic Republic Of Iran On The Report Of The IAEA Director General.” Iran Consulate. 1 October 2008. (The website isn’t working, so I accessed it via the following link:

http://www.google.com/#q=Explanatory+Comments+By+The+Islamic+Republic+Of+Iran+On+The+Report+Of+The+IAEA+Director+General&hl=en&tbo=d&ei=w9X1UKaBCaeujAKPxoCwAg&start=10&sa=N&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&fp=53665f6dd9c72138&biw=1517&bih=741)

¹⁷ Kerr, Paul. “Iran’s Nuclear Program: Status.” Congressional Research Service. 17 October 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL34544.pdf>

credit to the truthfulness of later Iranian claims under the administration of Khomeini.¹⁸ Furthermore, current sources also suggest, with varying degrees of certainty, that Iran may currently be aiming at a nuclear weapons program or a breakout capacity. For example, IAEA reports state that Iran is currently carrying out conventional military experiments which may have nuclear applications.¹⁹ Similarly, prior to returning to Iran in 2010, Shahram Amiri reportedly stated to the CIA that the Iranian government was attempting to decide between a breakout capacity and the development of an active nuclear weapons program.²⁰ Although Iranian sources—and, albeit possibly under threat, Amiri himself²¹-- have alleged that Amiri was in fact a double agent or had been kidnapped by the United States, press reports²² allege that Amiri has been placed on trial for treason, and several parts of the Iranian opposition have reportedly alleged that Amiri has been tortured in confinement.²³ And Amiri has been mentioned noticeably little by official Iranian sources.²⁴ It is hard to see why Amiri would disappear from Iranian official media if he were a national hero, but it would make sense if Amiri were in fact a defector—i.e. if the information he had provided the United States was credible. Thus, credible sources suggest that Iran is currently developing a nuclear program with military applications.

Finally, there are several disparities between the requirements of a civilian nuclear program and Iran's nuclear program, further suggesting that Iran's nuclear program is not purely civilian. Firstly, given Iran's sizeable oil reserves, Iran's nuclear program would be redundant, if not downright economically counterproductive, if it were civilian. For example, over 6 million kilowatts of electricity were exported from Iran in 2011—hardly the behavior of a country in need of alternative sources of energy.²⁵ In turn, the development of unnecessary nuclear power is considerably more expensive than the usage of natural gas plants: as Mark Helprin of the Claremont Institute has pointed out, "...why spend \$1,000-\$2,000 per kilowatt to build nuclear plants instead of \$400-\$800 for natural gas plants, when you possess the second largest gas reserves in the world?"²⁶ This is especially telling given the fact that Iran's current reserves of uranium ore are estimated as large enough to support the development of several hundred nuclear weapons—but, as several Iranian officials have admitted²⁷, are not large enough to support the

¹⁸ As Supreme Leader of Iran, Khomeini has the authority to delineate all general policy (regardless of the role of either Khatami or Ahmadinejad) and presumably would have at least known about—if he was not involved in—Iran's bid for nuclear status.

¹⁹ Kerr, Paul. "Iran's Nuclear Program: Status." Congressional Research Service. 17 October 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL34544.pdf>.

²⁰ Sanger, David. Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power. 2012. Crown, New York. Pg. 176.

²¹ Sanger, David. Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power. 2012. Crown, New York.

²² Shuster, Mike. "Covert War With Iran." 2011 May 10. NPR. <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/10/136054851/covert-war-with-iran-a-wilderness-of-mirrors>

²³ Sanger, David. Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power. 2012. Crown, New York.

²⁴ Mousavian, Seyed. The Iranian Nuclear Crisis. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington, D.C. 2012. Pg. 370.

²⁵ Author unknown. "World Factbook: Iran." CIA World Factbook. 2013 July 10.

²⁶ Helprin, Mark. "The Mortal Threat From Iran." The Wall Street Journal. January 2012. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203518404577096851732704524.html>.

²⁷ Kerr, Paul. "Iran's Nuclear Program: Status." Congressional Research Service. 17 October 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL34544.pdf>

development of Iran's projected civilian program. Furthermore, the rate at which Iran has been enriching uranium far outstrips its number of reactors: in 2006, for instance, Iran had a single nuclear reactor but reportedly planned to install "upwards of fifty million centrifuges."²⁸ The work of some analysts, such as that by Mark Fitzpatrick of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, suggests that these discrepancies may simply be due to poor planning, pointing in particular to a 2005 Khomeini fatwa against the indiscriminate effects of nuclear weapons.²⁹ Yet the Khomeini administration has not hesitated to deal out other kinds of indiscriminate violence when necessary. For example, in 2011, the Justice Department alleged that the Quds Force, a special branch of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, had attempted to blow up a Washington restaurant where the Saudi ambassador was eating, with the knowledge that this would seriously endanger the Americans inside.³⁰ And as Fitzpatrick himself notes, "...fatwas can be overturned if circumstances change: for example [sic] if the nation were seen to be facing a mortal threat."³¹ In short, the existence of Khomeini's fatwa against nuclear weapons is in no measure a guarantee of the Khomeini administration's intentions. Thus, then, it is reasonable to provisionally assume that Iran's nuclear program is intended to produce a nuclear weapon or breakout capacity.

2. Threat Posed By The Iranian Nuclear Program

Allowing Iran to gain nuclear weapons would mean allowing a nation which has been actively opposed to American regional interests to become a nuclear power. Specifically, under the administration of Supreme Leader Khomeini, the Islamic Republic has engaged in proxy violence against America and American allies, in an attempt to limit Western power in the Middle East and thereby become a regional power in its own right. For example, in 2001, the Islamic Republic released a captured Afghanistan Taliban commander (who then organized resistance to the American-backed Karzai government) and started a campaign of anti-American propaganda in northern Afghanistan. This was due to the blowback of a speech in which then-President Bush depicted Iran as part of an "axis of evil"; Iranian officials saw this not merely as an insult but as a rejection of talks which the Iranian government felt would allow it to avoid American threats to its power and utilize its regional influence in Afghanistan with American consent³². This attempt to expand Iran's regional power through proxy war has also extended to regional American allies who appear to threaten Iranian power, particularly Israel. Throughout Supreme Leader Khomeini's tenure, Iran has supported acts of terrorism against Israel, offering financial support of over \$100 million (as of 2012) to the anti-Israeli group Hezbollah.³³ This commitment to the cause of the heavily Sunni Palestinians—in spite of the strong differences

²⁸ Sanger, David. *Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power*. 2012. Crown, New York.

²⁹ Kerr, Paul. "Iran's Nuclear Program: Status." *Congressional Research Service*. 2009 December 29. Pg. 22.

³⁰ Crist, David. *The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year War Against Iran*. 2012. Penguin.

³¹ Fitzpatrick, Mark. "Submission for House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee." *IISS*. 2013 Feb 05. <http://www.iiss.org/en/about%20us/press%20room/press/archive/2013-a8a0/february-f12f/the-iran-nuclear-problem-d1a0>

³² Crist David. *The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year War Against Iran*. 2012. Penguin. Pg. 442.

³³ Byman, Daniel. "Iran's Terrorism In The Middle East." Brookings Institute. 25 July 2012. Pg. 2.

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Testimony/2012/7/25%20iran%20terrorism%20byman/25%20iran%20terrorism%20byman.pdf>.

between Sunni and Shia Islamists—derives in part from the Supreme Leader’s attempts to solidify his ideological influence over the Middle East’s Muslims³⁴ and in part from Iran’s view of itself as a regional great power with Israel as its primary Middle Eastern enemy³⁵. Thus, Iran has historically seen itself as opposed to the United States’ interests and has acted accordingly.

It is likely that in spite of this opposition of interests, the logic of nuclear deterrence would prevent a nuclear Iran from using nuclear weapons against other nations, directly or through its terrorist proxies. Analysts such as Clifford May³⁶ have argued that Iran’s hypothetical use of nuclear weapons would be driven by an unreasoning, potentially self-destructive hatred of the West and of Israel, pointing to public statements that seem to advocate attack on both nations. For example, May claims that Iran intends to “weaken America (‘Satan incarnate’), and wipe Israel off the map” once it has gained nuclear weapons—the latter presumably a reference to ex-President Ahmadinejad’s statement that “Israel must be wiped off the page of time.”³⁷ However, it is more likely that such rhetoric is theatrical rather than prescriptive, intended to appeal to a particular anti-American or anti-Israeli base of support. (For example, as noted by Sanger³⁸, prior to the Green Revolution, Ahmadinejad had considerable support on the basis of his perceived anti-Americanism.) This is especially likely given the fact that the Iranian government has historically acted rationally when opposed by the United States, even when these acts would be in contradiction to its stated ideals. For example, the Ayatollah Khomeini initially opposed the development of chemical weapons on religious grounds, but eventually allowed investment in chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War.³⁹ Similarly, and more germanely to the Khomeini administration, Iranian and American officials actively collaborated against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, if only because the Iranian government viewed Hussein as a threat to its own security—in spite of the avowedly anti-American tenor of the revolutionary government’s ideals.⁴⁰ Thus, the Iranian government has historically been capable of acting rationally, even in contradiction to its stated ideals, to preserve what it believes to be its self-interest. In turn, this makes it likely that the current Iranian government will not attempt to make a direct attack on the United States or its allies should it gain a nuclear weapon. Similarly, Waltz⁴¹ and Byman⁴² have pointed out that Iran is not likely to pass nuclear weapons to Hezbollah and its other proxies, due to the probable Western retaliation that such an act would incur. (American intelligence capabilities are reportedly enough to detect the transfer of a nuclear weapon from Iran to a

³⁴ Nasr, Vali. *The Shiite Revival*. 2007. Norton, New York.

³⁵ Kaye, Dahlia; Nader, Alireza; and Roshan, Parisa. “Israel and Iran: A Dangerous Rivalry.” National Defense Research Institute. Pg. 3.

³⁶ May, Clifford. “Sanctions Alone Won’t Stop Iran.” *The National Review*. 2012 September 13. <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/316676/sanctions-alone-won-t-stop-iran-clifford-d-may>

³⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgGP2I46WfU>.

³⁸ Sanger, David. Pg. 172.

³⁹ Cole, Leonard. *The Eleventh Plague: The Politics Of Biological And Chemical Warfare*. 1996. Henry Holt And Company. Pg. 92.

⁴⁰ Crist, David. *The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America’s Thirty-Year War Against Iran*. 2012. Penguin.

⁴¹ Waltz, Kenneth. “Why Iran Should Get The Bomb.” *Foreign Affairs*. July/August 2012. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137731/kenneth-n-waltz/why-iran-should-get-the-bomb>

⁴² Byman, Daniel. “Iran’s Terrorism In The Middle East.” Brookings Institute. 25 July 2012. <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Testimony/2012/7/25%20iran%20terrorism%20byman/25%20iran%20terrorism%20byman.pdf>.

proxy.) Indeed, Iran already possesses *chemical* weapons of mass destruction but has no history of passing these on to terrorist proxies.⁴³ And given the recent fraying of Iran's relationship with its Sunni quasi-proxy Hamas and the reported political marginalization of Hezbollah,⁴⁴ it is unlikely that Iran would trust one of its proxies with something of as much sensitivity as a nuclear weapon. Thus, a nuclear Iran would not lead to a nuclear war.

However, it is likely that the possession of a nuclear weapon or of breakout capacity will make Iran more bellicose, at least for a short period. In the first possible case of full nuclearization, possession of a nuclear weapon would give Iran a sense of invulnerability via the logic of deterrence, causing it to increase non-military belligerent activities such as support for terrorist proxies. As Daniel Byman of the Brookings Institute puts it: "A nuclear weapon... would give Tehran the ability to threaten a devastating response should it be attacked with conventional forces."⁴⁵ This argument has been controversial, and some, most notably Kenneth Waltz, have opposed it, on the grounds that several other nuclear nations have become less belligerent after gaining nuclear weapons, due to the increase in attention from other great powers. Waltz points particularly to the example of Maoist China, which he claims became considerably more restrained after obtaining a nuclear weapon.⁴⁶ However, a considerable amount of empirical evidence suggests that possession of a nuclear weapon may, in fact, cause nations to become more bold in its increase in proxy warfare. For example, Waltz fails to note that Maoist China's "restrained" behavior after it tested a nuclear weapon in 1964 included an unprovoked attack on Soviet border guards—an attack on a country which had historically been Maoist China's most powerful ally-- five years after the test. (Although China had engaged in proxy war in Korea prior to the nuclear test, the Chinese involvement in Korea was reluctant and had considerable Soviet backing—thus is not comparable to the attack after the test.⁴⁷) Similarly, other nations which have been offered⁴⁸ as examples of nuclearization's restraining effects are known to have increased hostile actions vis-à-vis other nations. For example, Pakistan's support of anti-Indian militants, including in a 2001 attack on the Kashmiri district of Kargil, increased after both nations tested nuclear weapons.⁴⁹ These examples strongly suggest that the perceived protection offered by a nuclear weapon can increase a state's belligerence. A similar conclusion is upheld by quantitative research on the subject, which suggests that although the possession of nuclear weapons does not significantly increase a state's belligerence in the long run, it can

⁴³ Kahl, Colin, Dalton, Melissa and Irving, Matthew. "Risk And Rivalry: Iran, Israel And The Bomb." Center For A New American Security. June 2012. Pg. 18.

⁴⁴ Frankel, Rafael. "Keeping Hamas And Hezbollah Out Of A War With Iran." The Washington Quarterly. Fall 2012. <http://csis.org/files/publication/twq12FallFrankel.pdf>

⁴⁵ Byman, Daniel. "Iran's Terrorism In The Middle East." Brookings Institute. 25 July 2012.

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Testimony/2012/7/25%20iran%20terrorism%20byman/25%20iran%20terrorism%20byman.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Waltz, Kenneth. "Why Iran Should Get The Bomb." Foreign Affairs. July/August 2012.

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137731/kenneth-n-waltz/why-iran-should-get-the-bomb>

⁴⁷ Bragg, Christine. Vietnam, Korea and US Foreign Policy 1945-1972. Heinemann Educational Publishers. 2005. Pg. 62.

⁴⁸ For a list, see Walt, Stephen. "The Mother Of All Worst-Case Assumptions About Iran." Foreign Policy. 30 November 2012.

http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/11/30/the_mother_of_all_worst_case_assumptions_about_iran

⁴⁹ Kahl, Colin, Dalton, Melissa and Irving, Matthew. "Risk And Rivalry: Iran, Israel And The Bomb." Center For A New American Security. June 2012. Pg. 20.

increase a state's belligerence shortly following its development of nuclear weapons.⁵⁰ The second possible case, that of an Iran with a breakout capacity, would likely have the same effect. Having a breakout capacity would provide Iran with security similar to that provided by a nuclear weapons program. That is, given that at least one known Iranian nuclear facility is considered close to impossible to destroy⁵¹, which would allow a breakout-capable Iran to quickly develop a nuclear weapon if attacked, the logic of deterrence would work for a breakout-capable power much as it does for a nuclear power. In short, if the Islamic Republic is allowed to develop either a breakout capacity or nuclear weaponry, its support of terrorist proxies is likely to increase.

Furthermore, the increased likelihood of an Iranian nuclear program seems to be increasing the Israeli government's willingness to launch an attack on Iran—which, in turn, would seriously endanger American military interests. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu recently expressed willingness to strike against Iran on its own should the United States not take strong preventative action against the Iranian nuclear program.⁵² Similarly, a recent report by the Congressional Research Service suggests that Israeli decisionmakers are more likely to be seriously considering an attack on Iran: Israeli officials generally view Iran as a serious, if not existential, threat.⁵³ And in 2011, Netanyahu forced out four heads of security who had been strongly opposed to an Israeli attack on Iran.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Israel has recently shown itself increasingly willing to take violent action specifically against Iran's nuclear program: since 2010, Iranian nuclear scientists have been assassinated and Iranian nuclear facilities have been sabotaged in what appear to be Mossad initiatives.⁵⁵ Thus, it seems more likely than not that Israel is seriously considering launching an attack on Iran in the event of Iranian nuclearization. In turn, an attack by Israel on Iran, if carried out, would likely be dangerous to American interests. A series of 2012 White House simulations of an Iranian-Israeli war ended in Iranian defeat only at the cost of heavy American involvement, as did a similar exercise held by the Brookings Institute in 2009.⁵⁶ That is, an Israeli attack on the Islamic Republic would lead to considerable loss of American life. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that the economic impact on the United States of a war with Iran would be significant. Analysts such as Geoffrey Kemp of the Center for the National Interest have argued that a war with Iran would damage relationships

⁵⁰ Kahl, Colin, Dalton, Melissa and Irving, Matthew. "Risk And Rivalry: Iran, Israel And The Bomb." Center For A New American Security. June 2012. Pg. 20.

⁵¹ Sanger, David. Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power. 2012. Crown, New York. pg. 153.

⁵² Solomon, Jay. "Israel Leader Issues Warning." *Wall Street Journal*. 2013 July 14.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323848804578606252472976078.html>

⁵³ Zanolli, Jim; Katzman, Kenneth; Gertler, Jeremiah; and Hildreth, Steven. "Israel: Possible Military Strike Against Iran's Nuclear Facilities." Congressional Research Service. 28 September 2012.
<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R42443.pdf>

⁵⁴ Sanger, David. Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power. 2012. Crown, New York.

⁵⁵ Sanger, David. Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power. 2012. Crown, New York. pg. 141.

⁵⁶ Sanger, David. Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power. 2012. Crown, New York. pg. 233

with major trading partners such as China, while causing oil prices to spike.⁵⁷ And with the United States officially 14 trillion dollars in debt⁵⁸, a hypothetical expenditure on a war with Iran should be avoided as far as possible. Thus, it seems likely that Iran's nuclear program poses a threat to American security, political and economic interests.

3. Current Solutions: Which Is Most Likely To Produce A Desirable Result?

The Bush administration's first attempt to address Iran's nuclear program, a series of pro-democracy propaganda initiatives by Elizabeth Cheney's Iran-Syria Working Group, likely played little role in helping to foster American and Iranian cooperation on the issue of Iran's nuclear program. Beginning in around 2003, the Bush administration launched a series of soft-power attempts to cause the overthrow of the Iranian government, focusing primarily on providing anti-governmental propaganda and creating contact points between reform-minded Iranians and the United States. (Some sanctions were also laid down, but these do not seem to have been the focus of the Working Group.)⁵⁹ For example, the Iran-Syria Working Group expanded the State Department's International Information Program in hopes of providing ordinary Iranians with more information about the United States, while simultaneously pressuring radio stations such as Voice of America and Radio Farda to provide anti-Iranian propaganda. However, it is likely such propaganda efforts served largely to force ordinary Iranians into a more aggressive stance vis-à-vis the United States and their nuclear program. Firstly, the tenor of the Bush administration's publications actively fostered anti-American public opinion in Iran, thus lessening the likelihood of either cooperation with the Iranian government or of (as originally planned) regime change from within. For example, due to pressure from the Bush administration, Voice of America began featuring guests such as the head of the anti-Shia militia Jundallah, which has been responsible for the deaths of numerous Iranian civilians,⁶⁰ and the former Crown Prince of Persia, who has little support inside Iran.^{61,62} Significantly, State Department polls *prior* to the Group's inception reported enthusiastic civilian Iranian support for the United States, while an October 2012 poll after these efforts—the Iran-Syria Working Group, its primary conduit, folded in 2007⁶³--reportedly showed that many

⁵⁷ Kemp, Geoffrey. "The High Cost Of War With Iran." *The National Interest*. 25 March 2013.

<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-high-cost-war-iran-8265>

⁵⁸ Author unknown. "U.S. National Debt." The White House. 2011 July 26.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infographics/us-national-debt>

⁵⁹ Crist, David. *The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran*. 2012. Penguin. 498.

⁶⁰ Author unknown. "Iran official accuses US over mosque bomb." *BBC*. 2009 May 29.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8073336.stm

⁶¹ Crist, David. *The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran*. 2012. Penguin. Pg. 496.

⁶² Crist, David. *The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran*. 2012. Penguin. Pg. 498.

⁶³ Stockman, Farah. "U.S. Disbands Unit Created to Pressure Iran, Syria." *The Boston Globe*.

http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2007/05/26/us_unit_created_to_pressure_iran_syria_disbanded/?page=full 2007 May 26.

Iranians consider the United States an adversary⁶⁴. Thus, the Bush administration's soft-power attempts have largely served to isolate the Iranian populace from the intended message. It is perhaps worth noting that in 2005, shortly after some initiatives had been put in place, the Iranian populace elected the conservative, pro-nuclear Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,⁶⁵ in an election which David Crist has called "flawed but fair."⁶⁶ Furthermore, the propaganda effort's effect upon any of the serious reform groups within Iran, of which the most viable (and therefore representative) is the Green Movement⁶⁷, has been minimal: the members and representatives of the Green Movement have largely rejected rapprochement with the United States. For example, Mir Houssein Mousavi, one of the most prominent Green leaders, has publicly yearned for a return to the years of Ayatollah Khomeini, has heavily hedged his tentative appreciation of President Obama's outreach in Iran—"If his actions are in keeping with his words, why shouldn't we negotiate?"⁶⁸—and has even claimed that Iran's nuclear program is a completely transparent civilian program. In turn, it is likely that Mousavi is representative of much of the Green constituency, or at least has considerable standing within the movement; projected protests in 2010 were organized and then disbanded almost entirely on his orders and on that of a less-influential⁶⁹ opposition leader, Mehdi Karroubi. Furthermore, members of the Green movement have rejected direct American involvement in or support for the movement. For example, a series of Green memos to Washington requested only that President Obama implement stronger sanctions and verbally condemn Iran's human-rights abuses, while asking that Obama refrain from more direct interference (i.e. military action).⁷⁰ It is worth noting, too, that the aforementioned Green activists chose to endure over five months of the Iranian government's violent crackdown on protesters before asking for this limited American aid. Analysts such as Abbas Milani, who call for American support of the Green Movement, have contested this argument, pointing in particular to rank-and-file Green protesters who chant slogans that appeal directly to the United States (for example, "Obama, Obama, you're either with them, or you're with us"). Considering the points raised above, however, it is more likely that these slogans did not represent a desire for rapprochement as much as a desire for the international legitimacy that American recognition would give them. Finally, the opposition movement in and of itself has historically had little significant impact on the Iranian regime's willingness to cooperate with the United States. For example, talks between the United States and Iran in November 2010 and January 2011—in the wake of several minor protests—were left at a standstill.⁷¹ In short, the

⁶⁴ "Understanding Iranian Public Opinion: Event Summary.." PILPG. 17 October 2012.

<http://publicinternationalawandpolicygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/PILPG-Event-Review-Understanding-Iranian-Public-Opinion.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Crist, David. The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran. 2012. Penguin.

⁶⁶ Crist, David. The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran. 2012. Penguin.

⁶⁷ Congressional Research Service.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, Mousavi's rhetoric here is almost identical to that of Ahmadinejad's reaction to Obama's "charm offensive." See Crist, David. The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran. 2012. Penguin. pg. 542.

⁶⁹ Author unknown. "Iranian opposition leader Mir Houssein Mousavi out of hospital." *The Guardian*. 24 August 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/24/mir-hossein-mousavi-hospital-iran>

⁷⁰ Wright, Robin. "Iran's Green Movement Reaches Out To U.S." Time. 23 November 2009.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1942091,00.html>

⁷¹ Lynch, Marc. "Upheaval: U.S. Policy Toward Iran in A Changing Middle East." Center For A New American Security. June 2011.

‘Velvet Revolution’ is likely to have little effect in terms of regime change or on Iran’s cooperation with American preferences.

The first attempt of the Obama administration to deal with Iran’s nuclear program, an attempt at diplomatic engagement with the Supreme Leader known colloquially as the “charm offensive,” was not any more effective than the Bush administration’s efforts, due largely to the strongly anti-American political base of the Supreme Leader and the Iranian government’s long-held fear of American interference, which the Green Revolution exacerbated. Shortly after his inauguration, in a sharp departure from President Bush’s more confrontational stance, President Obama repeatedly announced his readiness to negotiate with Iran over its nuclear program, without preconditions. This was followed by several small tokens of good faith aimed specifically at the Supreme Leader, such as an exchange of letters in 2009. Note that these outreach efforts focused particularly on the Supreme Leader, on the grounds that Khomeini was the primary decisionmaker in terms of Iran’s defense policy.⁷² However, the Ayatollah Khomeini’s ideologically and politically deep-rooted anti-Americanism, coupled with the onset of the Green Revolution, have made it unlikely that the “charm offensive” will bear any fruit in future. Firstly, political conditions in Iran have consistently made it in Supreme Leader Khomeini’s interest and in accordance with his temperament—even in times of considerable economic or political turmoil—to evince a strong anti-Americanism, thus leading .As Abbas Milani has noted, Khomeini’s relative lack of religious credentials upon his appointment forced him develop his support base primarily among wings of the government known for conservatism and anti-Americanism, such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Iranian paramilitary security forces, the Basij⁷³. Furthermore, Khomeini was deeply involved in the conservative Islamic aspect of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which was strongly anti-American. Thus, even before the Green Revolution, Khomeini publicly rejected Obama’s offers of engagement.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the domestic political crisis caused by the Green Revolution forced Khomeini’s government to further reject American offers. Note that Khomeini’s anti-Americanism was, to a degree, based on a genuine fear of American attempts at undercutting the Islamic Republic. Historically, the members of Khomeini’s generation have long been concerned about American involvement in Iranian internal affairs⁷⁵, a fear born in part of the impression left by American involvement in pre-Revolution Iranian politics.⁷⁶ Thus, the Supreme Leader was reportedly sure that the West was behind the Green Revolution⁷⁷. Note too that the power base which Khomeini then turned to for support, like the Basij, was—as mentioned before-- strongly anti-American.⁷⁸ Accordingly, throughout the Green Revolution, Khomeini rejected the United States both on the grounds of its perceived interference and out of political necessity. For example, during the Green Revolution, Khomeini attempted to defend himself in the eyes of his

⁷² Crist, David. The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America’s Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran. 2012. Penguin.

⁷³ Milani, Abbas. “Iran Primer: The Green Movement.” United States Institute of Peace. <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/green-movement>. Date of creation unknown.

⁷⁴ Crist, David. The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America’s Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran. 2012. Penguin.

⁷⁵ Crist, David. The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America’s Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran. 2012. Penguin. Pg. 453.

⁷⁶ Ansari, Ali. Confronting Iran. 2006. Perseus Books, New York. Pg. 56.

⁷⁷ Mousavian, Seyed. The Iranian Nuclear Crisis. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington, D.C. 2012. Pg. 342.

⁷⁸ Milani, Abbas. “Iran Primer: The Green Movement.” United States Institute of Peace. <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/green-movement>. Date of creation unknown.

constituents by casting blame for the Revolution on the CIA⁷⁹, even showcasing the hitherto classified letter from Obama as evidence of American duplicity. And the Iranian government angrily broke off talks with the United States: for example, in October 2009, Tehran refused an American offer which would have ensured a supply of enriched uranium for Iran's nuclear reactor in exchange for Iran's cooperation on IAEA safeguards.⁸⁰ Thus, it is unlikely that Obama's charm offensive could have had any useful ramifications. Furthermore, although some parts of Obama's charm offensive, such as an appearance on Persian television, were partially appeals to the Iranian public, the charm offensive does not seem to have had noticeably lasting effect on the Iranian populace. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, there have been no viable democratic movements within Iran that are linked to the United States. Thus, it is unlikely that Obama's pre-2012 outreach effort will in and of itself produce any viable ramifications.

Thirdly, while both the Bush and Obama administrations engaged in sanctions against Iran, these sanctions showed no utility in provoking Iranian engagement but limited usefulness in sparking potentially useful internal tension. Throughout their tenures, both Presidents Bush and Obama attempted to limit Iran's economic contact with the United States and other nations. For example, the Bush and Obama administrations confirmed the Clinton administration's bans on most trade between Iran and the United States.⁸¹ Both administrations also drew upon their contacts with other nations to limit Iran's other international trade as far as possible. For example, in July 2012, America waived sanctions on India, South Korea, Japan, Turkey, and three other economies in exchange for a pledge of a one-fifth drop in their purchases of Iranian oil.⁸² And Iran has been largely shut out of the international banking system: foreign banks that transact with Iranian banks, such as Credit Suisse in a well-publicized case, have had to pay heavy fines.⁸³ In turn, while these sanctions were not successful in forcing Iranian cooperation, these sanctions may prove effective in triggering regime change, which would potentially be useful to the United States. Firstly, it is unlikely that these sanctions, in their highly stringent form as of 2012, have altered the Iranian unwillingness to negotiate. Both ex-President Ahmadinejad and, more importantly, Supreme Leader Khomeini, showed unwillingness to come to terms with the United States even during the stiff sanctions of 2012 and its accompanying social unrest: Tehran has still not responded to a proposal that came out of talks in February. (Under this proposal, sanctions would have been eased in response to Iran's ending the production of highly enriched fuel.⁸⁴) And as of early 2013, the Congressional Research Service reported that Iran's stockpiling of low-enrichment uranium, as well as its belligerent foreign

⁷⁹ Jaseb, Hossein and Hosseinian, Zahra. "Khomeini vows no retreat on election results." Reuters. 24 June 2012. <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE55F54520090624?i=1>

⁸⁰ Author Unknown. "The Candidates On U.S.-Iran Policy." Council On Foreign Relations. 2012 October 31. <http://www.cfr.org/iran/candidates-us-iran-policy/p26798>

⁸¹ Katzman, Kenneth. "Iran: Sanctions." Congressional Research Service. 2013 June 13. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf>

⁸² Iran Loses \$133 million a day on embargo, buoying Obama." Bloomberg. August 2012. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-08-01/iran-loses-133-million-a-day-from-sanctions-as-oil-buoys-obama.html>

⁸³ Katzmann, Kenneth. "Iran Sanctions." Congressional Research Service. 7 December 2012. Pgs. 41-42. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf>

⁸⁴ Author unknown. "India seeks direct talks with Iran." India Today. 2013 July 14. <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/obama-united-states-us-president-barack-obama-hassan-rouhani-iran-iran-nuclear-programme/1/291257.html>

policy, had not ceased. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the election of the moderate Hassan Rouhani to Iran's presidency will significantly alter Iran's nuclear policy. It is possible that Rouhani himself may not wish to do so: senior Iranian officials such as Foreign Policy Subcommittee Chairman Vahid Ahmadi have suggested that Rouhani will not seek to change Iranian nuclear policy. (Note too that Ahmadi chose to make this claim through Iran's Fars News Agency, which has generally served as a mouthpiece of the Iranian government.) Even if Rouhani did wish to negotiate, his power would be severely curtailed by the historically uncooperative Supreme Leader Khomeini, who exercises constitutional and practical power over Iranian foreign policy.⁸⁵ And while Rouhani has purportedly sent out signals implying his willingness to bargain⁸⁶, it is worth pointing out that the noncooperative Ahmadinejad administration, implying through its semi-official Fars News Agency that it will open Parchin to inspection⁸⁷. However, sanctions do hold some potential in that they have produced enough domestic tension to seriously threaten the stability of the Iranian government, thus offering some future possibility of a government more amenable to American suggestions on the nuclear program. The sanctions regime has severely affected the state of the Iranian economy itself, with the prices of goods reportedly increasing daily.⁸⁸ In turn, these sanctions have caused former bastions of support of the Iranian government to express considerable dissatisfaction with the Khomeini administration. Many in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps now worry that sanctions may cut into the business perks they receive as Guard members.⁸⁹ Press reports reveal that Iranian workers, a key interest group, have begun striking in increasing numbers earlier this year, and sources in the lower ranks of the Iranian army have expressed resentment over unprecedented slashes in basic benefits.⁹⁰ And Nasser Shabani, a brigadier general in the Revolutionary Guard, earlier this year reportedly described this year as "critical" for the regime due to increasing protests against "poor living conditions."⁹¹ Such widespread discontent might conceivably coincide with the Green Movement, which a 2012 CRS report claimed would soon be resurgent.⁹² Thus, sanctions offer the possibility of a wholesale governmental change within Iran, thus offering new opportunities for resolving the issue of Iran's nuclear program.

Note that while these sanctions have caused the United States few economic difficulties, it is possible that they may endanger American regional interests as Iran advertises the

⁸⁵ Author unknown. "Frontline: The Structure Of Power In Iran." *PBS*. Date of creation unknown. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tehran/inside/govt.html>

⁸⁶ Author unknown. "Israeli FM: Tehran ready to resume nuclear talks." *Haaretz*. 17 July 2013. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.536297>

⁸⁷ Author unknown. "Parchin Not Used For Nuclear Activities." *Fars News Agency*. 15 January 2013. <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107135975>

⁸⁸ May, Clifford. "Sanctions Alone Won't Stop Iran." *The National Review*. 13 September 2012. <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/316676/sanctions-alone-won-t-stop-iran-clifford-d-may>

⁸⁹ Sanger, David. *Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power*. 2012. Crown, New York. page (to be found).

⁹⁰ Tomlinson, Hugo. "Iran army unrest over postponed payday as global boycott bites." *The Times Of London*. 11 January 2013. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article3655128.ece>

⁹¹ "Iran: Senior IRGC Commander warns unrest will begin from other cities, not Tehran." National Resistance Council of Iran. *NCRI*. <http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/society/12684-iran-senior-irgc-commander-warns-unrest-will-begin-from-other-cities-not-tehran> (The Council historically has been a reliable source of information on Iran -- for example, it was the NCRI who revealed the existence of Arak).

⁹² Katzman, Kenneth. "Iran: U.S. Concerns And Policy Responses." *Congressional Research Service*. 5 September 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32048.pdf>

humanitarian costs of these sanctions. On the one hand, oil prices have not significantly increased due to global sanctions on Iranian oil. In July 2012, India, South Korea, Japan, Turkey, and three other economies pledged to cut their consumption of Iranian oil by one-fifth. However, thanks in part to increased output from Saudi Arabia, oil prices were still low in August 2012.⁹³ Furthermore, increased American production of oil—the International Energy Agency projects that the United States may export more oil than Saudi Arabia as early as 2017—may further lessen the economic shock of sanctions. This is in spite of the fact that as the fourth largest producer of oil in the world (as of 2011), Iran has had close economic ties with both the United States and several of America’s larger trading partners, such as India and China.⁹⁴ However, current sanctions may, in future, worsen relations with regional interests among the Arab states. While the United States has placed sanctions on parts of the Iranian government which have been involved in human rights violations, the Iranian government has used the increased public suffering caused by sanctions to cast itself as an Islamist nation being oppressed by a Western power. For example, earlier this year, Iran’s semi-official Fars News Agency recently ran a pair of front-page articles in which the Supreme Leader and Mr. Ahmadinejad claimed that the “Western embargos” were “designed to hurt ordinary people.”⁹⁵ In turn, it is propaganda may endanger American regional interests in the Middle East. Many Arab nations whose pro-American rulers were either overthrown in the Arab Spring (for example, Egypt) or who are dealing with significant internal strife occasioned by the Arab Spring (for example, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain) were regional allies in anti-Iranian policies. Furthermore, many of these newly vocal publics have a strong interest in America’s treatment of human rights in the Middle East⁹⁶. This is especially as several of the nations affected by the Arab Spring are important regional interests for the United States in themselves: for example, America has long sought cooperation with Egyptian governments against terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula, which is important in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict⁹⁷. Allowing the United States to be seen as an enemy to human rights might complicate relations with these key nations. Thus, while the Bush and Obama sanctions avoided endangering the American economy, they carry ramifications that may endanger future regional interests in the Middle East.

Finally, the Bush and Obama administrations have made several covert computer-based attempts to physically destroy Iranian nuclear infrastructure, which are limited by their considerable cost and—to a much greater extent—by the fact that cyberwarfare has never been more than a stopgap measure to buy time for more effective measures. Beginning in the second term of the Bush Administration, the White House has been working on Operation Olympic Games, in which American and Israeli programmers insert computer viruses into the computer

⁹³ DiPaola, Anthony and Arnsdorf, Isaac. “Iran loses \$133 million a day on embargo, buoying Obama.” Bloomberg. August 2012. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-08-01/iran-loses-133-million-a-day-from-sanctions-as-oil-buoys-obama.html>

⁹⁴ Katzmann, Kenneth. “Iran Sanctions.” Congressional Research Service. 7 December 2012. Pgs. 41-42. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf>

⁹⁵ “Ahmadinejad: Western Sanctions Designed to Harm Iranian People” 16 January 2013. <http://english.farsnews.com/> and “Supreme Leader: Iranian Nation Not To Succumb To Western Pressures, Sanctions.” 16 January 2013. <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107136409>

⁹⁶ Lynch, Marc. “Upheaval: U.S. Policy Toward Iran in A Changing Middle East.” Center For A New American Security. June 2011.

⁹⁷ Sharp, Jeremy. “Egypt: Background And U.S. Relations.” Congressional Research Service. 6 December 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>. Pg. 5.

infrastructure of Iran's nuclear plants. Unlike the other measures described in this paper, the covert methods of Olympic Games were explicitly intended by both Presidents as a supplemental measure to buy time—"perhaps eighteen months to two years"—while other attempts were made to deal with the Iranian nuclear program.⁹⁸ From about 2006 to 2010, the virus Stuxnet reportedly destroyed so many centrifuges that Iranian engineers, unsure of their own designs, began to throw away intact centrifuges and fire members of its staff, causing a significant slowdown in the program: after a decade, Natanz now holds approximately a thousand centrifuges, a fifth of the centrifuges it was intended to hold. Furthermore, given the technological crudity of Iranian nuclear facilities⁹⁹ and the fact that Olympic Games is still in progress, it is likely that Olympic Games will continue to be effective at setting back the Iranian nuclear program. Firstly, Olympic Games, at an estimated cost of \$300 million¹⁰⁰, is a considerable drain on the American treasury, which is itself already—as previously mentioned deeply in debt. However, while the value of Olympic Games cannot be determined without full knowledge of the nature and intended use of Iran's nuclear program, it is clear that the United States has been able to make considerable headway during the period in which Olympic Games was slowing down the Iranian nuclear program. For example, the sanctions on Iran's banking system were mobilized between 2006 and 2010. In turn, these sanctions, along with the sanctions on Iran's oil industry, were reportedly critical in slashing the value of the Iranian rial and thus triggering the potentially destabilizing domestic unrest in Iran.¹⁰¹ Thus, the cost of Olympic Games may be mitigated by its (currently unknown) effects. More dangerously, however, Olympic Games is limited by its acknowledged lack of permanence: the Iranian government has shown itself capable of reversing the effects of cyberwarfare. For example, external experts have pointed out that Iranian enrichment efforts are now at the same or increased levels compared to Olympic Games' inception, possibly because the Iranians have simply attempted to increase the speed of their remaining centrifuges.¹⁰² In short, America's physical attacks on the Iranian nuclear program have had mixed success: they may be effective in bringing about some kind of rapprochement—or a complete halt to the program—in combination with sanctions or diplomatic rapprochement, as an attempt to buy time. Cyberwarfare is not a solution in and of itself.

Conclusion

While Iranian spokespersons and state media have frequently asserted that their nuclear program is civilian, their poor record of cooperation with the IAEA, a significant amount of corroborating evidence, and the decidedly non-civilian appearance of their program all suggest otherwise. In turn, allowing Iran to have a nuclear weapon could increase Iranian brinkmanship and (possibly) draw the United States into an Iranian-Israeli war. Furthermore, out of the four

⁹⁸ Crist, David. *The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran*. 2012. Penguin.

⁹⁹ Sanger, David. pgs. 193-194.

¹⁰⁰ Sanger, David. *Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power*. 2012. Crown, New York.

¹⁰¹ Katzman, Kenneth. "Iran: Sanctions." 2013 June 13. *Congressional Research Service*. Pg. 2. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf>

¹⁰² Sanger, David. "Obama Order Sped Up Wave Of Cyberattacks Against Iran." *New York Times*. 1 June 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/world/middleeast/obama-ordered-wave-of-cyberattacks-against-iran.html?pagewanted=all>

responses to the program attempted so far, democracy promotion and rapprochement are likely ineffective. And while sanctions and cyberwarfare are effective, the humanitarian effects of sanctions are likely to endanger our regional interests in the Middle East, while cyberwarfare is not a permanent solution in itself. Thus, none of the current or previously used solutions are likely to be completely desirable.

However, this analysis of how current and previous policies have fallen short may provide a platform for possible solutions in future. For example, the potential fallout from sanctions' humanitarian effects suggests that the United States should concentrate on increasing more targeted sanctions, specifically ensuring that certain humanitarian necessities—such as medicines or parts for passenger planes—be allowed to pass into Iran. It is also possible that solutions not previously attempted by the Bush and Obama administrations and thus not considered in this paper, such as military action, may be effective.

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8073336.stm
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