

SMART POWER: THE UNITED STATES, IRAN, AND A NUCLEAR DEAL

A Monograph

by

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2014-01

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 05/22/2014		2. REPORT TYPE SAMS Monograph		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE SMART POWER: THE UNITED STATES, IRAN, AND A NUCLEAR DEAL				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) LtCol David W. Brynteson, USAF				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School for Advanced Military Studies 320 Gibson Avenue Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT SEE ATTACHED					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Army Leaders, Combatant Commanders					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 47	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			Unlimited		

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

SMART POWER: THE UNITED STATES, IRAN AND A NUCLEAR DEAL, by Lieutenant Colonel David W. Brynteson, U.S. Air Force, 43pages

Historical relations between the U.S. and Iran can be described as ambivalent before World War I as the U.S. had little interest in Persian affairs. Post World War II and through the Cold War, U.S. and Iranian relations were mostly supportive as Iran focused on modernizing its economy while helping the U.S. contain Soviet interests in the Middle East. Iran was once America's staunchest Middle Eastern ally until the overthrow of the Shah during the Iranian Revolution more than thirty years ago. Current relations are confrontational with an atmosphere of animosity, mistrust, and misunderstanding. While opinions may differ as to what actually caused the poor relations, most Americans see the Iranian Hostage crisis, where fifty-two Americans were taken from the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and held for four hundred and forty-four days, as the inception of the battle against radical Islam. However, since 2009 the Obama administration's dual-track policy, which includes engagement and pressure, combining the hard and soft power elements of *smart power*, provide a breakthrough in relations between Iran and the U.S. This application of *smart power*, synchronized effects, and sustainable application of collective strengths of all the instruments of national power (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) is critical to the administration's dual-track policy and is the key factor in achieving a nuclear deal with Iran. Most estimates assess Iran will be able to produce a crude nuclear weapon within a one year, but the current six-month deal, negotiated on 24 November 2013 in Geneva, provides an opportunity that has not existed in thirty years. If negotiations are to succeed, concessions must be made from both sides, but more importantly, Iran must live up to its international obligations. If not, Iran faces increased international isolation or the potential for military strikes against its nuclear program. The application of U.S. *smart power* provides a structure to have a dialogue built on verification, good faith, and even trust. Therefore, it allows the current negotiations the ability to test the possibility and feasibility of the current nuclear deal along with the potential for a comprehensive long-term deal. The alternative is to engage in conflict, which has many unintended consequences. Avoiding such an outcome is precisely why it is so important for the Obama administration to continue to use every available tool through its application of *smart power* towards Iran.

ACRONYMS

AIOC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
BMD	Ballistic missile defense
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DIME	Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Association
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operations Iraqi Freedom
P5+1	United States, Britain, France, Russia, China, plus Germany
SOF	Special Operations Forces
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USG	United States Government
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS	Error! Bookmark not defined.
INTRODUCTION	1
Vignette.....	1
Thesis	2
LITERATURE REVIEW	4
Organization and Methodology	6
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	7
Pre World War II	7
Post World War II and the 1953 Coup.....	8
Cold War Allies	9
1979 Iranian Revolution	12
1981 to Present.....	13
SMART POWER	16
Economic Sanctions: Hard Power	17
Military Instrument of Power: Hard Power	23
Diplomacy: Soft Power.....	30
Informational Soft Power.....	37
CONCLUSION: SMART POWER APPLICATION TOWARDS IRAN	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	45

INTRODUCTION

Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom. States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.

—President Bush, State of the Union address, 29 January 2002

Vignette

In the last two years, the U.S. and Iran have engaged in two aerial encounters over the Arabian Gulf as Iran continues to expand its influence in the region. On November 1, 2012, two Iranian Sukhoi SU-25 fighters forward deployed from the disputed Islands of Abu Musa Island intercepted and fired upon an unprotected United States MQ-1 predator drone flying over international waters. The SU-25 fighters missed and the drone returned to its base at an undisclosed location in the Arabian Gulf. A U.S. spokesperson stated, “The United States has communicated to the Iranians that we will continue to conduct surveillance flights over international waters over the Arabian Gulf consistent with longstanding practice and our commitment to the security of the region.”¹ The second incident occurred on 13 March 2013 when an Iranian F-4 Phantom attempted to intercept a U.S. drone operating over international waters. This time the Iranian fighter only flew within sixteen miles of the U.S. drone due to an encounter with two U.S. Air Force F-22s. The Iranian F-4 returned to base without incident. As a result, the U.S. expanded its military presence in the Gulf by deploying three squadrons of U.S. Air Force fighter aircraft to the Arabian Peninsula.²

¹Aljazeera, “Iranian fighters ‘fired on US drone in Gulf’,” <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121182048162355.html> (accessed 28 September 2013).

²Ibid.

Thesis

The preceding vignette provides examples of one type of encounter with the Iranian military that raises serious concerns about Iranian military aggression in the Middle East and their threat to oil shipping lanes in the Arabian Gulf.³ These two incidents demonstrate the overt and publicized importance of U.S. military power in deterring Iranian aggression and support the Obama administration's dual-track approach to the multiple challenges posed by Iran. These challenges are complex and present consequential choices for America and its allies. First, Iran's nuclear ambitions coupled with its continued pursuit of its nuclear weapons program, is in violation of its international obligations and in direct defiance of the international community. These violations are of great global concern for the U.S. and international community. Second, Iran continues its support for international terrorism and its destabilizing activities in the region by supporting the Assad regime in Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in the Palestinian territory.⁴ Lastly, the regime's ongoing campaign of repression and human rights violations at home are of concern to the U.S. and international community.⁵ While the challenges Iran poses to the U.S. are broad and complex, the U.S. approach is outlined in the National Security Strategy (NSS), which provides clear guidance and direction.⁶

³CNN, "Iranian Jets Fire On U.S. Drone," <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/11/08/first-on-cnn-iranian-jets-fire-on-u-s-drone/> (accessed on 28 September 2013).

⁴U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Policy Toward Iran," <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2013/202684.htm> (accessed 22 January 2013).

⁵Rudy DeLeon, Brian Katulis, and Peter Juul, *Strengthening America's Options on Iran 10 Key Questions to Inform the Debate* (April 2012), http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2012/04/pdf/iran_10questions.pdf (accessed 23 July 2013).

⁶The National Security Strategy (NSS) is a comprehensive report required annually by Title 50, USC, Section 404a. It is prepared by the executive branch of the government for Congress and outlines the major national security concerns of the US and how the administration plans to address them using all instruments of national power. The document is purposely general in content, and its implementation relies on elaborating guidance provided in supporting documents (such as the National Defense Strategy [NDS], the Guidance for Employment of the Force [GEF], and the National Military Strategy [NMS]). Cited from Headquarters, Department

According to the United States National Security Strategy dated May 2010, American interests are enduring, and the central aim of the U.S. national security strategy and policy is:

The security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners; A strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity; Respect for universal values at home and around the world; and An international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.⁷

Furthermore, the NSS outlines the United States' approach towards the Middle East through the advancement peace, security, and opportunity.⁸ Specifically focused on Iran, the U.S. strategy is the “transformation of Iranian policy away from its pursuit of nuclear weapons, support for terrorism, and threats against its neighbors; nonproliferation; and counterterrorism cooperation, access to energy, and integration of the region into global markets.”⁹

Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the United States has engaged Iran using all instruments of national power to encourage peaceful and prosperous negotiations. The use of the military instrument of national power, along with the synchronized effects and sustainable application of collective strengths of the other instruments of national power, have led to an effective use of American *smart power* towards Iran.¹⁰ *Smart power*, as defined by Joseph Nye, is

of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 5, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Washington DC, (11 August 2011), http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf (accessed 28 December 2013), xi.

⁷White House, United States of America, *National Security Strategy*, Washington, DC, (May 2010), http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf (accessed 21 December 2013), 7.

⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Instruments of National Power are defined as: “the ability of the U.S. to advance its national interests is dependent on the effectiveness of the United States Government (USG) in employing the instruments of national power to achieve national strategic objectives. The appropriate governmental officials, often with National Security Council (NSC) direction, normally coordinate the employment of instruments of national power.” According to Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, states that there are four basic elements of national power, which is led by the executive branch. These elements include

a “means to developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to achieve American objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power.”¹¹ The current U.S. application of *smart power* is not only critical to the Obama administration’s dual-track policy on Iran, which includes both engagement and pressure, i.e., “carrot and stick,” but it is the key factor to achieving a nuclear deal with Iran.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last thirty years, many books and academic papers have attempted to analyze U.S. and Iranian relations. Most recently, scholars focused their analysis toward Iranian nuclear ambitions and how the U.S. should approach such a threat. Publications from the Congressional Research Service (CRS), RAND Corporation, the Institute for National Strategic Studies, and the Center for Strategic International Studies were reviewed for this monograph. These publications focus on using the full range of the instruments of national power (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic means).

While the U.S. and Iran have made some progress in their relationship over the past few months, most foreign policy experts view any successful diplomatic negotiations with extreme skepticism. The Arms Control Association Research Staff, as well as, Livia Pontes Fialho and Matthew Wallin authors of, *U.S. Public Diplomacy Towards Iran*, contend that for the last thirty years the United States and Iran have not held any formal direct diplomatic relations. They also assert that there is little hope that a diplomatic strategy alone will lead to successful negotiations

diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME) to achieve a desired end state. More specifically, the United States is effectively applying smart power through the applications of the DIME framework to achieve its strategic foreign policy goals towards Iran.

¹¹Richard L. Armitage, and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *CSIS Commission on Smart Power*, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2007), 7. According to Joseph Nye hard power is defined as military and economic might while soft power is an attractive power. Soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction such as diplomacy and informational instruments of national power.

regarding Iran's nuclear problem and aggression towards the West. Furthermore, any diplomatic attempts by the Iranians should be viewed as a strategic stall tactic while allowing them to develop their nuclear capabilities.¹²

Other authors, like Kenneth Katzman, a specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs for the Congressional Research Service, argue that the increasingly strict economic sanctions that primarily target Iran's energy sector have coerced Iranian aggression, to include development of its nuclear program. Katzman, questions whether the adverse effects of these sanctions are enough to compel the Iranian leadership to negotiate a compromise with the international community and to halt or reverse their nuclear program.¹³ He also stresses the need for a broader, more comprehensive approach focusing on all instruments of national power.

Additional studies, such as those conducted by the Arms Control Association Research Staff, conclude that any military attack against Iran would guarantee that Iran continues building a nuclear weapon and that the Iranian government would stop at nothing to achieve this end.¹⁴ Theorist, Robert A. Pape, supports this position and asserts that using military or hard power, specifically the use of air power as a coercive tool, will not work in deterring a country or "change the behavior of a state by manipulating costs and benefits."¹⁵ Further, Pape questions the theory of strategic bombing, as well as the effectiveness of precision bombing specifically on military or industrial targets.

¹²Livia Pontes Fialho, and Matthew Wallin, "Reaching for an Audience: U.S. Public Diplomacy Towards Iran," *American Security Project*, August 2013, 1.

¹³Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 26 July 2013), 1.

¹⁴Arms Control Association Research Staff, "Solving the Iranian Nuclear Puzzle" *Arms Control Association* (February 2013): 20.

¹⁵Robert A.Pape, *Bombing to Win* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 4.

While conducting research for this monograph, the author discovered many articles focused on the effects of the instruments of national power vis-à-vis U.S. attempts to contain Iranian aggression, and more specifically, Iran's nuclear ambitions. The research failed to find how the synchronized and combined effects of the instruments of national power have actually led to a successful application of *smart power*—which combines the elements of hard and soft power—into a comprehensive U.S. strategy to contain Iranian nuclear ambitions. This monograph analyzes the full spectrum of the applications of national power with a specific focus on their synchronized effects and sustainable application of collective strengths that lead to an effective use of American *smart power* towards Iran. The use of *smart power* is not only critical to Obama administration's dual-track policy on Iran, which includes both engagement and pressure, but it is the key factor to achieving a nuclear deal with Iran.

Organization and Methodology

This monograph is organized in four sections. The first section opens with a vignette that demonstrates the importance of the military instrument of power in the overall application of U.S. smart power towards Iran. This section also contains the monograph's thesis, literature review, organization, and methodology. The second section describes a brief history between the U.S. and Iran, and provides the reader an essential foundation. This section also provides significant insights and contextual understanding into the complex dynamics surrounding these two countries. The third section defines *smart power* as coined by Joseph Nye, and provides an in-depth discussion of the instruments of national power focusing on the DIME (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic) analytical framework. The cyber domain will be briefly discussed in the informational section of this monograph. While cyberspace definitely fits directly into this area of discussion, due to the unclassified realm of this paper, a full analysis is unwarranted and unreasonable to draw any valid conclusions. Finally, this monograph concludes

with an analysis of how U.S. hard power and soft power transition from the theoretical and culminate into an effective U.S. *smart power* strategy towards Iran.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pre World War II

Between 1860 and 1940, the United States and Iran had very little formal contact as Iran pursued a policy of isolationism and non-engagement.¹⁶ Because of Iran's proximity to Europe and its traditional role as a buffer between the Russian and British empires, the U.S. did not desire to get involved in European confrontation between the two states.¹⁷ Amin Saikal, director of the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies suggested, "[t]he strategic location of Iran in a zone between Europe and Asia placed the country within the geographical perimeters of Russian security and aspirations, as well as on the margin of British colonial expansion and on its imperial lines of communication."¹⁸ During this period, Britain and Russia were the dominant players as they worked to expand their influence over the country's oil reserves and looked to consolidate control over Iran.¹⁹ According to James Bill, author of *The Eagle and the Lion*, "[d]uring these years, the United States developed a positive, benevolent image in the eyes of the Iranian people, who increasingly resented the British and Russian intervention."²⁰ Any perceived American interest in Iran was overshadowed by the deep and persistent influence of the British and the Russian empires, as each state sought to bring Iran into its sphere of influence.²¹ Iran's geographical

¹⁶James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 16.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Amin Saikal, *The Rise and Fall of the Shah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 11.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Bill, 16.

²¹*Ibid.*

location would again play a prominent role in the Anglo-Russian rivalry, and as World War I began, the country was strategically located and used primarily as a battlefield for the Central and Allied Powers.²² While official U.S. contact was established in 1851, it was not until 1883 that Iran and the U.S. exchanged formal diplomatic representatives, and only after World War II would the United States and Iran become close allies.²³

Post World War II and the 1953 Coup

In the immediate postwar period, seeing Iran as a bulwark against Soviet expansion and a source of stability in the oil-rich Persian Gulf, the United States made Iran a U.S. policy focus for the first time.²⁴ Moreover, the United States cultivated a friendly relationship with Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. This relationship was critical to U.S. foreign policy as it filled a post-war gap of oil supplies from the Persian Gulf region while ensuring that these reserves did not fall under Soviet domination. Additionally, this effort was aimed at establishing friendly rulers in the region to carry out U.S. foreign policy.²⁵ The partnership with the U.S. was threatened by the May 1951 appointment of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, a secular democrat whose motivation was to nationalize British and U.S. petroleum holdings and returned Iran's oil to its people.²⁶ According to Saikal, "Mosaddeq declared the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) nationalized on May 1, and in return promised compensation. He set up the National Iranian Oil

²²Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 74. Central Powers were composed of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria. They fought against the Allied Powers which were composed of Great Britain, Russia, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States.

²³Bill, 16.

²⁴William O. Beeman, *The "Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs"* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 18.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

Company to take over the AIOC. The nationalization meant Iranian ownership and control of the oil industry.”²⁷

In 1953, the U.S. and Great Britain engineered a CIA-backed coup that ousts Mossadegh because they feared he would allow greater Soviet influence in Iran.²⁸ After fleeing, during the latter days of the operation, the Shah returned from his brief exile in Rome and resumed control of Iran.²⁹ There were three major developments as a result of the coup: Iran’s growing dependence on the United States and alliance with the West in the 1950s; Iran’s assumption of outright opposition to communism; and the transformation of the traditional Anglo-Russian rivalry into the American-Soviet rivalry. From then on, the United States, not Britain, was the major protagonist in Iran and the world against the Soviet Union.³⁰

Cold War Allies

The Shah became one of the United States’ chief political and military clients, purchasing billions of dollars of advanced military equipment from the U.S. and advancing Western investment in the Iranian economy.³¹ During the Eisenhower administration in the mid 1950s, the United States was primarily concerned that Iran remain anti-communist, anti-Soviet, and have a large military force to deter Soviet aggression while maintaining the unconditional support of the Shah.³² According to Ali M. Ansari, author of the book *Confronting Iran*, “the Shah was

²⁷Saikal, 39.

²⁸Peter Edidin, “1979: Iranian Revolution,” *New York Times Upfront* (6 April 2009): 25.

²⁹Ali M. Ansari, *Confronting Iran* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 36.

³⁰Saikal, 45.

³¹Beeman, 18.

³²Ibid.

emphasizing the need for a strong military so that Iran could assume her proper place at the vanguard of the free world's defenses against an encroaching Soviet Union."³³

The U.S. viewed the Shah as a leader who could show the Arab governments of the Middle East how to modernize or established a democratic style of government. Using Iran's vast oil reserves, the Shah brought an ancient nation into the industrialized 20th century, creating one of the region's most advanced and prosperous economies by drawing on its vast oil reserves.³⁴ However, this Iranian economic advancement came at a cost; while the Shah grew wealthy, the people suffered and starved. Additionally, as Iran progressed into a more Westernized industrial state it often ignored traditional Muslim values. This caused unrest within hardline religious Shiite clerics. As a result, the Shah constructed a state, which excluded the vast majority of the population from its polity, and one that enraged its mostly Shiite population.³⁵

As the Cold War tensions eased and war with the Soviet Union became less likely, the United States shifted its strategic and economic interests. Its goal in the Middle East was to have an Iranian government with a broader internal base; greater efficiency and popularity; less corruption; and a government that would support land reform and address human rights.³⁶ As this change in Iranian foreign policy began to take place, it was accompanied by a drastic shift in the perception of the United States alliance with the Shah by the Iranian people. Iran scholar I. Cuyler Young summarizes the state of affairs between Iran and America during the 1950s:

During the last decade, . . . the United States has furnished Iran more than a billion dollars in economic and military aid. Like it or not, justly or unjustly, this has served to identify the United States with the Shah's regime, together with responsibility for what that regime has done, or failed to do. Also, however unjustly, popular opinion

³³Ansari, 42.

³⁴Edidin, 24.

³⁵Misagh Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36.

³⁶Keddie, 144.

holds that the sums have been wasted as far as helping the common people of Iran in concerned. For this reason, the United States is distrusted, if not indeed thoroughly disliked, by all those who have come to distrust the Shah and oppose his policies.³⁷

Tension and friction between the United States and the Iranian people grew as the United States helped establish Iran's intelligence agency (SAVAK) in 1957.³⁸ The Shah used the SAVAK to maintain the regime's legitimacy and the SAVAK used fear and torture to enforce peace and silence dissent. As a result, Iranians came to revile the agency for its repression and saw it as an extension of United States involvement in their country to quell the growing unrest.³⁹

In 1962, Ayatollah Khomeini became politically active and came to prominence primarily due to his opposition of the Shah. Khomeini openly opposed the imprisonment and torture of the Iranian people and vehemently opposed the Shah's close relations with the United States. On 3 June 1963, Khomeini delivered an historic speech against the Shah's dependence on foreign powers, attacked the United States for its control over Iran, and denounced America as an enemy of Islam, partly due to its support of Israel. Immediately following the speech, Khomeini was arrested and imprisoned. His brief imprisonment inspired public demonstrations of support before government forces suppressed his supporters.⁴⁰

On 4 November 1964, Khomeini was arrested and sent into exile first to Turkey and then to Iraq, during his fifteen years in exile, Khomeini wrote and lectured against his homeland and the U.S. involvement.⁴¹ From 1965 to 1975, the United States and Iran relationship settled to relative political and economic stability, primarily due to dramatic increases in Iranian oil

³⁷Bill, 128.

³⁸(SAVAK) *Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, was the secret police and domestic security and intelligence service established by Iran's Mohammad Reza Shah with the help of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

³⁹Keddie, 134.

⁴⁰Ibid., 146.

⁴¹Ibid., 148.

revenues and economic growth; however, tensions grew when Iran refused to help the U.S. by lowering the price of petroleum.⁴² Toward the end of the Shah's reign, the U.S. criticized his government's human rights record and crackdown on democracy. After his election in 1976, President Jimmy Carter ended military aid to Iran due to U.S. policy, which prevented the United States from providing arms to countries violating human rights.⁴³ These human rights violations became apparent to President Carter after accusations against the Shah were presented before the United Nations (UN). The UN Commission on Human Rights made allegations of torture of political detainees while Amnesty International declared it had received information indicating that Iran reneged on its own undertakings and violated international law.⁴⁴ Still, the United States stood by the Shah and President Carter publicly reaffirmed his support of Iran during his New Year's Eve visit to Tehran in December 1977. He declared, "Iran, under the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world."⁴⁵

1979 Iranian Revolution

The 1953 coup is viewed as the first defining event in U.S. and Iranian relations, but the 1979 Iranian Revolution can be described as a watershed moment. In 1979, the Iranian people, frustrated by the monarchy's brutality, corruption, and autocracy, and faced with economic slowdown, overthrew the Shah.⁴⁶ Khomeini returned from exile, seized power, and declared the U.S. the "Great Satan." Iran descended into an era of death squads, score settling, and chaos.⁴⁷

⁴²Ansari, 56.

⁴³Keddie, 214.

⁴⁴Lyn Boyd, *A King's Exile: The Shah of Iran and Moral Considerations in U.S. Foreign Policy*, Case Study (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 2000), 3.

⁴⁵Ansari, 76.

⁴⁶Beeman, 19.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 28.

In October 1979, President Carter agreed to provide asylum to the Shah, who was dying of cancer. On 4 November, the Iranian people took the streets outside the U.S. embassy in Tehran, demanding that the Shah return and be tried for his crimes against the Iranian people.⁴⁸ Militants stormed the U.S. Embassy, taking fifty-two Americans hostage and holding them for four hundred and forty-four days. Diplomatic efforts to release the hostages stalled and a failed American rescue operation ended in the death of eight U.S. special operations forces. As a result, the United States was humiliated and forced to pursue a diplomatic solution to end the crisis.⁴⁹

The Algerian government negotiated the release of the hostages via the Algiers Accords, signed on 19 January 1981 nearly six-months after the Shah died in Egypt on 27 July 1980. The terms of the agreement laid out significant concessions for both sides along with the United States agreeing not to intervene in Iran's internal affairs.⁵⁰ Following the Algiers Accords, the United States implemented economic sanctions and froze billions of dollars in Iranian assets stored in the U.S. Next, the United States cut ties and ended all diplomatic relations with Iran.⁵¹ The revolution and hostage crisis helped set the stage for a radical Islamic movement that turned to terrorism in its battle against the United States and the West.⁵²

1981 to Present

Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and more importantly the hostage crisis, United States, and Iranian relations are best described as a downhill spiral of events marked by tension,

⁴⁸Edidin, 26. Frustrated by the monarchy's brutality, corruption, and autocracy, and faced with economic slowdown, Iranians overthrow the shah in 1979.

⁴⁹Ansari, 72.

⁵⁰*Algiers Accords*, 19 January 1981, www.parstimes.com/history/algiers_accords.pdf (accessed 24 October 2013).

⁵¹Edidin, 24.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 24.

agitation, and mistrust. Further challenging relations was the 1986 Iran-Contra Affair, a political scandal during the Reagan administration to free American hostages taken in Lebanon.⁵³ In order to finance the anti-communist Nicaraguan Contra rebels, the United States raised funds from arms and equipment sales to Iran by funneling weapons through Israel to Iran. The scandal was a loss of face for the United States as it defied its own policy not to negotiate with terrorist states. For the Iranians, it was a perceived victory as they received millions of dollars worth of arms and were able to manipulate the United States.⁵⁴

During the Iran-Iraq war, from 1987 to 1988, the United States protected the vital shipping lanes of the Straits of Hormuz, by escorting Kuwaiti tankers in and out of the Persian Gulf. As a result, the U.S. was in direct confrontation with Iran.⁵⁵ The accidental shoot down of an Iranian commercial flight by the USS Vincennes in 1988 killed 290 Iranians and certainly sealed the fate that the United States and Iran would be mortal enemies. This solidified for the Iranian hardliners and convinced many moderates that the United States was the “Great Satan.”⁵⁶

The eight-year, Iran-Iraq war led the country into economic decline and crisis that caused widespread public discontent. The death of Khomeini in June of 1989 left Iran with additional social and international problems.⁵⁷ In May of 1993, the Clinton administration announced a U.S.

⁵³Ansari, 109. A secret deal with the Iranians to secure the release of American hostages in Lebanon held by Iranian terrorists. It was also an American effort to sell arms to Iran as a way of raising funds for anti-Communist fighters (known as Contras) in Nicaragua.

⁵⁴Ibid., 112.

⁵⁵Ibid., 113.

⁵⁶Ibid., 115.

⁵⁷Keddie, 262.

policy of dual containment, which included partial economic sanctions against Iran and Iraq. This was the second time the U.S. imposed economic sanctions on Iran since the hostage crisis.⁵⁸

In 2002, U.S. President George W. Bush delivered his iconic State of the Union address in which he described Iran as part of the “axis of evil,” along with Iraq and North Korea. According to Ali M. Ansari, in the book *Confronting Iran*, “[r]arely has such a rhetorical device had such devastating consequences.”⁵⁹ These statements by President Bush helped foster the current levels of tension and conflict between the United States and Iran. Moreover, United States and Iranian relations were further stained and complicated by Iran’s continued nuclear ambitions, which rose to the forefront of U.S. concerns in 2003.⁶⁰

Today the United States is leading the global effort to isolate Iran diplomatically while also implementing a broad range of strict economic sanctions targeted at undermining its nuclear program through the administrations dual-track policy.⁶¹ The Center for American Progress summarizes the initial results of this policy by noting, “[t]he Obama administration’s initial outreach to the Iranian regime in 2009 did not achieve immediate constructive results, but the demonstration of American good faith forged greater international unity around the problem and served as an important force multiplier for subsequent successful efforts to pressure the regime.”⁶² Now, the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China, plus Germany (P5+1) negotiations enter into a new chapter of relations with Iran. Iran must choose how to respond to global concerns about its nuclear program and live up to its international obligations. If not, Iran

⁵⁸Ibid., 265.

⁵⁹Ansari, 186.

⁶⁰Kenneth Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 4 November 2013) 1.

⁶¹DeLeon, Katulis, and Juul, 3.

⁶²Ibid.

faces increased international isolation or the potential for military strikes against its nuclear program.⁶³ Iran's nuclear program remains a top national security priority for the United States and directly relates to the current United States National Security Strategy towards Iran and the use of all the instruments of national power through the application of U.S. *smart power*.

SMART POWER

The challenges of the twenty-first century are increasingly unconventional and transnational, and therefore demand a response that effectively integrates all aspects of American power.

—President Barack Obama

Before the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, most national security challenges facing the U.S. focused primarily on states wielding conventional military arsenals to achieve political goals.⁶⁴ “During the Cold War era, the United States began to understand that there were limits on the efficiency of military force alone in achieving non-military objectives.”⁶⁵ In the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks, it has become increasingly clear that most national security challenges facing the United States must be addressed through a multi-dimensional and flexible application of *smart power*, a balanced synthesis of hard and soft power.⁶⁶ Joseph Nye, former assistant secretary of defense and former dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, describes *smart power* as, “[t]he ability to combine hard and soft power into a successful strategy.”⁶⁷ The use of hard power is associated with the strategic

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴CACI International, *Dealing With Today's Asymmetric Threat to U.S. and Global Security, Symposium Three: Employing Smart Power* (24 March 2009), http://asymmetricthreat.net/docs/asymmetric_threat_3_paper.pdf (accessed 22 January 2014), 2.

⁶⁵Ibid., 6.

⁶⁶Ibid., 2.

⁶⁷Joseph Nye, “Smart Power,” *Huffington Post*, 29 November 2007, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joseph-nye/smart-power_b_74725.html (accessed 15 December 2013).

reliance on military force and economic sanctions as an instrument of statecraft.⁶⁸ Soft power is a term coined by Joseph Nye to describe foreign policy tools that a nation can use to influence the behavior or interests of states by applying diplomatic negotiations, informational approaches, and cultural or ideological means to achieve a desired outcome.⁶⁹ According to former Secretary of State Clinton, “[w]e must use what has been called ‘smart power’: the full range of tools at our disposal—diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal and cultural—to develop a coherent, integrated national strategy to meet the asymmetric threats the nation faces today.”⁷⁰

“The United States has in its past wielded hard and soft power in concert, with each contributing a necessary component to a larger aim. The U.S. used hard power to deter the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and soft power to rebuild Japan and Europe with the Marshall Plan and to establish institutions and norms that have become the core of the international system.”⁷¹ As previously addressed, Iran presents a number of unique foreign policy challenges for U.S. decision makers, most recently regarding its nuclear ambitions. However, the United States successful application of *smart power*, leveraging the vital elements of hard power to include economic sanctions coupled with the threat of military action, have been essential to brokering a nuclear deal on 24 November 2013.

Economic Sanctions: Hard Power

An extra dollar spent on hard power will not necessarily bring an extra dollar’s worth of security.

—Joseph S. Nye

⁶⁸Francisco Wong-Diaz, *Smart Power and the U.S. National Strategy* (MacDill Air Force Base: JSOU Report 13-3, August 2013), 11.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁰Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, statement of nominee for Secretary of State, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 13 January 2009, <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2009/ClintonTestimony090113a.pdf>, (accessed 20 December 2013).

⁷¹Armitage and Nye, 1.

The United States' implementation of unilateral economic sanctions and its support of United Nations economic sanctions toward Iran are key elements of hard power in the overall application of U.S. *smart power* towards Iran's nuclear ambitions. Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, the Defense Department's capstone doctrine, describes the use of economic instruments to gain and preserve power and influence. In addition, economic sanctions support most force applications to both weaken an opponent and to pave the way toward political solutions to conflict. Economic instruments are also an important means to gain and strengthen allied and friendly support.⁷²

In the mid-1980s, U.S. sanctions intended to compel Iran to cease supporting acts of terrorism and to limit Iran's strategic power in the Middle East. Unlike the U.S. sanctions on Iran, the UN and worldwide bilateral sanctions are a relatively recent (post-2006) development.⁷³ While U.S. sanctions reinforce those by UN, European, and some Asian countries, the objectives of U.S. sanctions have evolved over time. Successive U.S. administrations have sought to ensure that sanctions do not hamper cooperation with key international partners whose support is needed to isolate Iran.⁷⁴ According to Kenneth Katzman, "since the mid-1990s, U.S. sanctions have focused increasingly on persuading or compelling Iran to limit the scope of its nuclear program to ensure purely civilian use."⁷⁵ Since 2006, and more so since 2010, the international community joined U.S. sanctions in pursuit of that goal. Traditionally, these U.S. led sanctions focused on the

⁷²Headquarters, Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC, 25 March 2013) http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf (accessed 28 December 2013), I-12.

⁷³Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 26 July, 2013, 1.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

Iranian energy sector, the most critical part of the Iranian economy. In his testimony to Congress, Katzman also stated:

In response to Iran's stepped up nuclear program and its support to terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestine Islamic Jihad, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12959 (May 6, 1995), banning United States trade and investment with Iran. The rationale was that these sanctions would curb the strategic threat from Iran by hindering its ability to modernize its key petroleum sector, which generates about 20% of Iran's GDP.⁷⁶

The implementations of these U.S. sanctions were expected to increase economic pressure on the Iranian leadership in hopes of brokering a nuclear deal.⁷⁷ The UN Security Council first employed economic sanctions in 2006 when Iran refused to comply with a binding resolution that required that Iran suspended all uranium-enrichment and heavy-water-related activity. Three other resolutions that increased sanctions were implemented with a June 2010 resolution that introduced some of the most sweeping measures against Iran.⁷⁸ Cumulatively, these UN Security Council sanctions have prohibited Iran's access to proliferation-sensitive items, technical assistance, and technology. The resolutions also targeted designated Iranian entities—persons involved in the nuclear and ballistic missile activities that are banned by the resolutions.⁷⁹

In his *Geopolitical Weekly* article, "Iran's View of Obama," George Friedman focuses on Iran's point of view regarding U.S. economic sanctions. Friedman believes that the United States has made two fundamental demands of Iran before it will end economic sanctions. First, Iran must halt its military nuclear program. Second, Iran cease engaging in aggression and terrorism in

⁷⁶Kenneth Katzman, *The Iran Sanctions Act (ISA)* (Washington, DC: The Library of Congress, 2007), 1.

⁷⁷Arms Control Association Research Staff, 13.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

the Middle East. The latter demand ranges from supporting Hezbollah and Hamas to support for Shiite factions in Iraq. Once these aggressions are halted, the United States is prepared to advocate the removal of sanctions against Iran.⁸⁰

Friedman further states that Iran's view is more complicated:

For Tehran, however, the suspension of sanctions is much too small a price to pay for major strategic concessions. First, the sanctions don't work very well. Sanctions only work when most powers are prepared to comply with them. Neither the Russians nor the Chinese are prepared to systematically comply with sanctions, so there is little that Iran can afford that it can't get. Iran's problem is that it cannot afford much. Its economy is in shambles due more to internal problems than to sanctions. Therefore, in the Iranian point of view, the United States is asking for strategic concessions, yet offering very little in return.⁸¹

While current U.S. policy discussions, focus on easing economic sanctions only if Iran ends its nuclear enrichment program there is little support within the Iranian political spectrum to abandon all enrichment activity.⁸² According to RAND publication, *How to Defuse Iran's Nuclear Threat*, "there is little prospect that this larger objective could be attained."⁸³ The Arms Control Association staff supports this point by stating, "[d]espite the mounting costs of economic sanctions on imposed on Iran, they have not led to any discernible shift in Iran's behavior."⁸⁴ Furthermore, "imposed economic sanctions alone will not be enough to induce a change in Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability or reduce their aggression in the Middle East."⁸⁵

⁸⁰George Friedman, "Iran's View of Obama," *Geopolitical Intelligence Report* (23 March 2009).

⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸²James Dobbins et al., eds., "How to Defuse Iran's Nuclear Threat," *RAND Review* (Spring 2012) (accessed 15 November 2013).

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴Arms Control Association Research Staff, 19.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

Economic sanctions are a key element of hard power in the overall application of U.S. *smart power* towards Iran. Current economic sanctions grow increasingly restrictive as long as Iran refuses to suspend its nuclear program. These sanctions specifically target the international financial system and energy sectors. They include a ban on arms sales, Iranian oil, and certain financial institutions, including the country's central bank.⁸⁶ Collectively, this is having a crippling effect on Iran's economy, which shrank from 2012 to 2013. The value of Iran's currency dropped by eighty percent while inflation rose to more than fifty percent. In addition, Iran oil exports, which fund almost half of Iran's government expenditures, have declined to about 1.1 million barrels, or half the total exports in 2012. Relatively high oil prices, however, have helped to reduce the effects of some of these sanctions.⁸⁷ One of the key goals of the sanctions is to "drive up the cost of Iranian intransigence," according U.S. State Department advisor Robert Einhorn.⁸⁸ "The United States and its allies credit the economic pressure created by the multilateral sanctions effort as a primary motivator for inducing Iran to return to diplomatic negotiations."⁸⁹ As a result, in April 2012, the P5+1 talks with Iran resumed after a fifteen-month lull.⁹⁰

According to Katzman, economic sanctions have harmed Iran's economy to the point where Iran's public and some of its leaders appear willing to accept some international proposals to limit Iran's nuclear program to purely peaceful purposes.⁹¹ He states, "the June 14, 2013,

⁸⁶Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 11 October 2013), 1-2.

⁸⁷Katzman, *The Iran Sanctions Act (ISA)*, 1.

⁸⁸Robert J. Einhorn, "Solving the Iranian Nuclear Puzzle," Arms Control Association briefing, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 9 March 2011.

⁸⁹Arms Control Association Research Staff, 17.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 1.

election president of Hassan Rouhani, who ran on a platform that included achieving an easing of sanctions, is an indication of the growing public pressure on the regime.”⁹² These cumulative effects of crippling Iranian sanctions and the apparent new focus by the regime to achieve relief from these sanctions, allowed the opportunity for the current six-month agreement negotiated in Geneva on 24 November 2013. This agreement calls on Iran to limit its nuclear activities in return for lighter sanctions.⁹³

Opponents to the easing of economic sanctions state that now is not the time to ease sanctions. They argue that instead, Congress and the international community should increase sanctions until Iran completely abandons its nuclear enrichment and reprocessing capabilities.⁹⁴ However, imposing new sanctions now would undermine the current international negotiations for a long-term deal.⁹⁵ Furthermore, it can be argued that new sanctions should not be imposed until diplomatic negotiations are exhausted and tested over the next six-months. Only then should the international community consider easing sanctions if a long-term nuclear deal is reached.⁹⁶ As demonstrated over the last thirty-four years, economic sanctions executed in isolation will not produce Iranian capitulation regarding their nuclear issue. When executed as part of the broader U.S. application of *smart power*, however, they have produced a six-month deal with the potential for a long-term nuclear agreement.

⁹²Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 1.

⁹³Faith Karimi, “20 questions about the Iran nuclear deal: What it says, what's at stake, what's next,” *CNN*, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/24/world/meast/iran-nuclear-deal-qa/> (accessed 24 November 2013).

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 11 October 2013), 1.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

Military Instrument of Power: Hard Power

The military instrument of national power is an effective element of hard power in the overall U.S. application of *smart power* that supports the Obama administration's dual-track policy on Iran, specifically helping broker a nuclear deal. In fact, the recent threat of U.S. led strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities allowed the U.S. and the international community to broker a nuclear deal with Iran. Joint Publication 1 states, "[t]he U.S. employs the military instrument of national power at home and abroad in support of its national security goals. Fundamentally, the military instrument is coercive in nature, and includes the integral aspect of military capability that opposes external coercion."⁹⁷ Carl Von Clausewitz supports this theory in his book, *On War*, by stating, "war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means".⁹⁸ In other words, the military instrument of power is the direct application of force, or the threat of force, to coerce others to do a nation's political will. The United States uses the military instrument of national power across the conflict continuum in a wide variety of operations.⁹⁹ Additionally, military power is used in conjunction with the other instruments of national power to advance and defend U.S. values, interests, and objectives. The other instruments cannot be effective without the military instrument of power and the threat of military force makes the other parts creditable.¹⁰⁰ As stated by Joint Publication 1, "[d]eterrence will deter no one if you have no capability to deter or move on to the next stage."¹⁰¹ Similarly, the threat of military power adds the essential hard power dimension to the U.S.'s application of *smart power* towards Iran.

⁹⁷JP 1, I-12.

⁹⁸Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 69.

⁹⁹JP-5 2011.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹Donna Miles, "Military-Diplomatic Relationship as Critical in Pacific as Middle East," *American Forces Press Service*, <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=47593> (accessed 4 October 2013).

Military conflict between the United States and Iran occurred as a by-product of the Iran-Iraq War during the final years of the Reagan administration from 1987 to 1988. The Tanker Wars took place in the shadows of the Iran-Iraq War and was an attempt to break the stalemate between the two countries.¹⁰² Iraq moved first in March 1984 with a limited blockade of the northern gulf. Iraq attempted to enforce this blockade by using French made Dassault jets armed with Exocet missiles. The purpose was to end the war by squeezing Iran economically through its oil exports.¹⁰³ Consequently, the blockade made neutral state tankers targets, and within less than one year, the Iraqis attacked over seventy ships.¹⁰⁴ According to an article in Global Security,

These sustained attacks cut Iranian oil exports in half, reduced shipping in the Gulf by 25 percent, led Lloyd's of London to increase its insurance rates on tankers, and slowed Gulf oil supplies to the rest of the world; moreover, the Saudi decision in 1984 to shoot down an Iranian Phantom jet intruding in Saudi territorial waters played an important role in ending both belligerents' attempts to internationalize the tanker war. Iraq and Iran accepted a 1984 UN-sponsored moratorium on the shelling of civilian targets, and Tehran later proposed an extension of the moratorium to include Gulf shipping, a proposal the Iraqis rejected unless it were to include their own Gulf ports.¹⁰⁵

As a result, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the U.S. responded by escorting and reflagging Kuwaiti and international oil tankers entering and exiting the Persian Gulf.¹⁰⁶ In May 1987, the U.S. guided missile frigate Stark was nearly sunk by an Iraqi Exocet killing thirty-seven crewmembers.¹⁰⁷ Baghdad apologized and claimed that the attack was a mistake.

¹⁰²Lee Allen Zatarain, *Tanker War: America's First Conflict with Iran 1978-1988*, (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2008) 28.

¹⁰³J. R. Dunn, "The Guns of 88: Lessons of the Forgotten Tanker War," *American Thinker* (25 April 2006), www.americanthinker.com/2006/04/the_guns_of_88_lesson_of_the.html (accessed 20 November 2013).

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵Global Security.org, "Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/iran-iraq.htm> (accessed 20 November 2013).

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷Zatarain, 28.

Ironically, Washington used the Stark incident to blame Iran for escalating the war and sent its own ships to the Gulf to escort eleven Kuwaiti tankers that were reflagged with the American flag and crewed by American sailors. Iran refrained from attacking the United States naval force directly, but it used various forms of harassment, including mines, hit-and-run attacks by small patrol boats, and periodic stop-and-search operations.¹⁰⁸

During this military conflict, Iran and the United States fought an undeclared air and naval war in which Iran attempted a direct challenge to American power.¹⁰⁹ This conflict involved the largest naval engagement since World War II and stands as one of the most decisive such campaigns on record. As a result of this conflict, Iran became aware that it cannot win a sustained military conflict with the U.S. and today finds itself surrounded on all sides, not in control of the waters off its own coast, and facing the U.S. as the most powerful and experienced military in the world.¹¹⁰

Since the Tanker Wars, the U.S. and Iran have not engaged in direct military conflict. However, it can be argued that Iran's indirect involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, and most recently Syria, and that support of Hezbollah and Hamas is in fact a proxy war against the United States. In fact, over the past two decades, Iran has witnessed that U.S. military capability remains unmatched.¹¹¹ Operation Desert Storm lasted a total of forty-two days. The air campaign lasted thirty-eight days during which Iraqi air defenses, command and control centers, and air forces were quickly neutralized. The ground war lasted only 100 hours before President Bush ceased

¹⁰⁸Zatarain, 28.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁰Dunn.

¹¹¹Francisco Wong-Diaz, 2.

operations defeating the world's fourth largest army.¹¹² In Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), allied Special Operations Forces (SOF) were successfully inserted into Afghanistan. Enabled by U.S. air power, SOF were eventually able to work with indigenous friendly Afghan fighters in defeating and routing the Taliban.¹¹³ Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the U.S.-led coalition military operation in Iraq, was launched on 20 March 2003. This operation led to the invasion and occupation of Iraq while also removing Saddam Hussein's regime from power.¹¹⁴ According to Benjamin Lambeth's article, "Reflections on the Balkan Air Wars," "Operation Allied Force, ended up being the first successful use of coercive air power on a major scale since Operation Desert Storm against Hussein's Iraq eight years before."¹¹⁵ Finally, Operation Odyssey Dawn, a seven-month, U.S.-led air campaign, initiated in response to United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) to protect Libyan civilians, allowed Libyan rebels to bring about the defeat of a well-armed military and the downfall of a regime that spanned more than forty years.¹¹⁶ This historical narrative reinforces coercive nature of the U.S. military power as a hard power element in the U.S. usage of *smart power* towards Iran's nuclear ambitions by preserving a credible U.S. military deterrence.

The Iranian regime understands the U.S. possesses the means to attack Iran, and elements of the regime acknowledge that a successful attack would dramatically delay or destroy Iran's

¹¹²Carl H. Builder, Steven C. Bankes, and Richard Nordin, *Command Concepts: A Theory Derived from the Practice of Command and Control* (RAND Corporation, 1999), 63.

¹¹³Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom" (Monograph, RAND Corporation, 2006) <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG166-1> (accessed 4 October 2013).

¹¹⁴Catherine Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issue for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 1.

¹¹⁵Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Reflections on the Balkan Air Wars," *Air Power History*, 57, no.1 (Spring 2010): 32.

¹¹⁶Jason R. Greenleaf, "The Air War in Libya," *Air & Space Power Journal* (March-April 2013): 28.

nuclear capability.¹¹⁷ A recent study by the Center for Strategic Studies explains that successful strikes against the Iranian nuclear facilities, “could only be carried out by the United States,” while also stating that “the U.S. would be the only country that has the airpower, support capability, and mix of sea air forces in the Gulf to continue a sustained campaign over a period of time and restrike after initial assessment.”¹¹⁸ The same study identifies that Iran lacks the military capabilities to successfully deter any military attack by the U.S.¹¹⁹ “The longer that the Iranian government persists in its defiance of UNSCR and the closer it gets to a nuclear weapons breakout capability, the higher the political pressure will rise for considering a military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities.”¹²⁰ The importance of preserving credible and effective military capabilities is essential in today’s foreign policy environment. In current conflicts, the prerequisite for strategic success is ensuring the threat of military forces remains in the application smart components of U.S. power.¹²¹ While the successful execution of *smart power* uses the coercive nature of an attack but maintains operational capability to execute an attack if negotiations fail.

The September 2012 study by the Arms Control Association asserts,

[t]he objective of such an attack would be to seriously damage Iran’s nuclear weapons potential, but military and intelligence experts widely agree that such a strike would not prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Rather, it would only postpone

¹¹⁷George Friedman, “War and Bluff: Iran, Israel and the United States,” *Geopolitical Weekly* (11 September 2012).

¹¹⁸Anthony H. Cordesman, Arleigh A. Burke, and Adbullah Toukan, *Analyzing the Impact of Preventive Strikes Against Iran’s Nuclear Facilities* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 2012).

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰Arms Control Association Research Staff, 20.

¹²¹CACI International, 21.

Iran's ability to achieve that objective while increasing the likelihood that Iran would pursue the bomb with greater determination.¹²²

This same report also concluded,

A sustained military strike by the United States would only set Iran's nuclear program back up to four years and subsequently increase Iran's motivation to build nuclear weapons to inhibit any future attack. A military attack against Iran's nuclear facilities would likely prompt Iran to leave the IAEA, probably accompanied by an Iranian revocation of its safeguards agreement and withdrawal from the NPT.¹²³

U.S. military strikes may also cause Iranian retaliation by sponsoring Hezbollah and Hamas attacks against Israel or the use of surrogates to launch attacks on U.S. military forces deployed in the region, which has already happened sporadically and in varying degrees.¹²⁴ Moreover, an unprovoked U.S. attack on Iran may enable the regime to change the focus of its repressions and redirect it towards the West, rallying more public support for the regime while denouncing the opposition.¹²⁵

Joseph Nye supports this argument by stating, "U.S. foreign policy has tended to over rely on hard power because it is the most direct and visible source of American strength. The Pentagon is the best trained and best resourced arm of the government, but there are limits to what hard power can achieve on its own."¹²⁶ By delaying military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, the use of U.S. *smart power* acknowledges these potential outcomes while also understanding what motivates Iran leadership. From the Iranian point of view, its nuclear program is extremely valuable, prestigious, and essential to ensuring the survivability of the regime. It has provided Iran political credibility while allowing it to sit as an equal with the five

¹²²Arms Control Association Research Staff, 20.

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 21.

¹²⁵Thomas R. Mattair, "The United States and Iran: Diplomacy, Sanctions and War," *Middle East Policy*, XVII, no.2 (Summer 2010): 60.

¹²⁶Nye, *Smart Power*.

permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.¹²⁷ The current military element of *smart power* preserves the legitimacy of the current diplomatic negotiations and provides a clear demonstration of U.S. and international will to engage directly with Iran. It also protects the Iranians' prestige while placing mounting pressure on their nuclear ambitions and preserving the military option if current negotiations fail.

The U.S. is using the hard power element of *smart power* by supporting its alliances and partnerships in the Arabian Gulf. This application of *smart power* is enhancing legitimacy and unifying Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) support. According to a RAND study, U.S. officials are engaging in defense cooperation with its regional partners that encompass training, equipping, and joint exercises.¹²⁸ The Center for Strategic International Studies also supports this point by stating, "the U.S. is also working with allies in the Arabian Gulf to develop the capability to defeat the threat Iran poses to the Gulf, allied territory, and the flow of trade and energy exports GCC countries worry that during a crisis, Iran could try to prevent their ships from traversing the Strait of Hormuz, cutting off their oil export business."¹²⁹ Ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems have also been provided to Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman, as well as deploying additional U.S. forces to the region, specifically, stationing Aegis-equipped warships in the waters of the Arabian Gulf. Additionally, the U.S. is engaged in developing an integrated early warning radar system across the GCC states that could help the U.S. and the GCC forces to quickly respond to an Iranian missile attack and is part of a multi-layered defense.¹³⁰ The U.S. application of *smart power* underscores the necessity of a strong military, but provides the time to

¹²⁷Friedman.

¹²⁸Lynn E. Davis et al., *Iran's Nuclear Future: Critical U.S. Policy Choices* (RAND Corporation, 2011), 56.

¹²⁹Cordesman, Burke, and Toukan, 3.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*

invest in alliances, partnerships, and institutions of all levels to expand American influence and establish legitimacy of American action.¹³¹

Diplomacy: Soft Power

Soft power is not merely the same as influence ... And soft power is more than just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, though that is an important part of it. It is also the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence. Simply put, in behavioral terms, soft power is attractive power. Soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction.

—Joseph S. Nye

Military force maybe necessary to protect United States National Security interests, but diplomacy will be equally important in creating conditions for a peaceful and stable world.¹³²

Diplomatic tools are used in a wide range of activities, including management of relations with other countries and international organizations; negotiations over economic, social, cultural, and other issues; and persuading allies, partners, and other states to accept proposed initiatives.¹³³

Joint Publication 1, describes “diplomacy as the principal instrument for engaging with other states and foreign groups to advance U.S. values, interests and objectives, and to solicit foreign support for US military operations.”¹³⁴ According to Navy Admiral Timothy J. Keating in the article, “Military-Diplomatic Relationship as Critical in Pacific as the Middle East,” “diplomacy takes the lead in assuring friends and allies of U.S. support, or deterring aggression...it’s the part you want most active, most engaged and most successful, so you don’t face having to implement military force.”¹³⁵

¹³¹Armitage and Nye, 14.

¹³²Francisco Wong-Diaz, 24.

¹³³*Defense Statescraft*, www.defensestatescraft.blogspot.com/2010/04/dime/html (accessed 15 November 2013).

¹³⁴JP 1, I-12.

¹³⁵Miles.

It has been more than thirty years since the United States broke off formal diplomatic ties with Iran following the Iranian Hostage crisis. Since that attack on American diplomats in Tehran, the U.S. has struggled to find ways of reaching and interacting with the Iranian leadership and its people. Previous U.S. administrations were forced to deal with the Iranian nuclear dilemma and each administration tried to improve relations through varied policy approaches. Attempts failed for numerous reasons, but primarily because the U.S. and Iran lacked formal diplomatic relations. In fact, this only forged foreign policies based on mutual distrust and paranoia. These difficulties also have constrained American public diplomacy efforts while hindering the ability of the U.S. to make informed foreign policy decisions.¹³⁶

As previously addressed, the Iranian nuclear program has become a major concern for the U.S. and international community, and attempts resolving those concerns through traditional diplomatic routes alone have yet to achieve the desired results. According to the article “U.S. Public Diplomacy toward Iran,” “such a precarious situation is only worsened by the limited access to information and people in Iran, a fact which impacts the development of a tailored national security strategy for the United States.”¹³⁷ During the last two U.S. administrations, the Iranian nuclear issue has been a top national security priority. These administrations have employed a variety of diplomatic efforts to break the stalemate, including the creation of the State Department’s Office of Iranian Affairs. The office became the central place to devise strategies on all Iran-related issues, including public diplomacy.¹³⁸ Once again, these efforts have not achieved a breakthrough in diplomatic negotiations with Iran, or more importantly, a negotiated nuclear agreement.

¹³⁶Fialho and Wallin, 1.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 2.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

After a historic phone conversation between President Obama and Iranian President Rouhani on 27 September 2013, there is optimism and hope for improved relations. This significant conversation may be the initial indications of thawing relations between the U.S. and Iran after decades of antagonism.¹³⁹ Additionally, leaders in the P5+1 countries asserted, “that the election of Rouhani improved the prospects for a nuclear settlement. Those sentiments increased dramatically in the context of his visit to the UN General Assembly meetings in New York between 23 and 27 September 2013.”¹⁴⁰ During this visit, Rouhani reiterated that Iran’s nuclear program was exclusively for peaceful purposes and that Iran does not intend to develop a nuclear weapon. He further stated that the Supreme Leader Khamenei had given him permission to negotiate a nuclear deal.¹⁴¹ Following these meetings at the U. N. General Assembly, Obama directed Secretary of State John Kerry to pursue direct negotiations with Iran in concert with the five other countries of the P5+1 on the nuclear issue.¹⁴² Most recently, after months of hard work by the U.S., European Union powers and Iran to end a ten-year standoff, negotiations once again broke off without an agreement.¹⁴³

Many Middle East scholars conclude that there is little hope that diplomatic negotiations with Iran will produce any significant results in halting Iran’s nuclear ambitions and aggression in the Middle East. Given Iran’s poor record of living up to its responsibilities and engaging in serious diplomacy, U.S. and European diplomats have also lowered their expectations for future

¹³⁹Don Lee and Ramin Mostaghim, “Thaw Poses Tests For U.S., Iran,” *Early Bird*, <http://ebird.osd.mil/ebird2/ebfiles/e20130929931801.html> (accessed 29 September 2013).

¹⁴⁰Kenneth Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 4 November 2013), 33.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

¹⁴³Marcus George and Jon Hemming, “Iranian foreign minister blames West of snag in nuclear talks,” <http://www.reuters.com/assets/print?aid=USBRE9A804X20131112> (accessed 12 November 2013).

negotiations.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, Thomas Mattair, an expert on Middle East policy, testified to congress that, “I do not predict that negotiations will be successful. I just argue that we should try.”¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the article by the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center supports skepticism for diplomacy by stating:

Diplomacy is unlikely to yield substantial breakthroughs as long as the current Iranian leadership remains in power. The United States nevertheless needs reliable channels of communication with the Iranian regime to garner information, signal warnings, avoid unintended conflict, and be positioned to move toward accord if and when an opening arises. Should Iran actually build and deploy nuclear weapons, such diplomatic channels will become all the more important.¹⁴⁶

However, on 24 November 2013 after a nuclear deal between the P5+1 and Iran resulting from eight months of secret meetings between U.S. and Iranian officials in the Sultanate of Oman resulted in a six-month nuclear deal.¹⁴⁷ These meetings represent the administrations use of *smart power* towards Iran. “The agreement requires Iran to halt and roll back central elements of its nuclear program while also eliminating its production and stockpiles of higher-enriched uranium, banning the addition of any new centrifuges and barring any work on a heavy-water reactor that potentially could produce plutonium for nuclear bombs.”¹⁴⁸ In exchange, the U.S. and the international community agree to ease economic penalties, estimated at \$7 billion, and promise no new penalties for the duration of the deal.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴DeLeon, Katulis, and Juul, 27.

¹⁴⁵Mattair, 61.

¹⁴⁶James Dobbins et al., “How to Defuse Iran’s Nuclear Threat,” *RAND Review* (Spring 2012) (accessed 15 November 2013).

¹⁴⁷Bradley Klapper, “Congress Raises Questions about Secret Talks,” *Associated Press*, <http://news.yahoo.com/congress-raises-questions-secret-iran-talks-173329201--politics.html> (accessed 17 December 2013).

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

As previously mentioned, most analysts and scholars agree that there is little hope that diplomatic negotiations will lead to comprehensive long-term nuclear deal with Iran. In contrast, they also agree that a diplomacy-centered approach is the only option that can prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon. Pursuing such a course is difficult, but it is the best option on the table.¹⁵⁰ Recent diplomatic negotiations epitomize the strategic and proactive application of soft power and its potential to thwart threats to a country's national security interests over the long run. Soft power, as coined by Nye, is "the ability to shape the preferences of others and get others to want the outcomes you want."¹⁵¹ Since 2013, the administration's renewed efforts to engage in direct bilateral diplomatic negotiations have underscored the importance of soft power. As Secretary of State-designate John F. Kerry said in his January 24 confirmation hearing:

The president has made it clear that he is prepared to engage . . . I think everybody is very hopeful that we can make some progress on the diplomatic front now. I would say this to the Iranians, I hope they listen. They have continually professed the peacefulness of their program. It is not hard to prove a peaceful program. Other nations have done that and do it every day. And it takes intrusive inspections. It takes living up to publicly arrived at standards. Everybody understands what they are.¹⁵²

The administration's use of soft power is capitalizing on the new Iranian regime's optimism regarding diplomatic negotiations with the U.S. Certainly the election of Rouhani was an essential step towards diplomacy. Additionally, in a recent speech, Khamenei stated that, "he believes in the concept of heroic flexibility, which he described as adopting proper and logical diplomatic moves, whether in the realm of diplomacy or in the sphere of domestic policies."¹⁵³ These statements indicate a window of opportunity to negotiate a long-term comprehensive

¹⁵⁰Arms Control Association Research Staff, 32.

¹⁵¹Joseph S. Nye, Jr, "The Benefits of Soft Power," *Harvard Business School Working Knowledge for Business Leaders*, <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4290.html> (accessed 20 December 2013).

¹⁵²Arms Control Association Research Staff, 32.

¹⁵³Kenneth Katzman, "Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 4 November 2013), 33.

nuclear deal and focus on a renewed soft power campaign initiated by Obama and his senior administration officials. They also reinforce through private channels an attempt to normalize interactions between the two states' diplomats. This diplomatic soft power is allowing the U.S. the opportunity to negotiate in good faith—an opportunity that has not existed in over thirty years.

To continue as a leader in global affairs, the U.S. is moving from eliciting fear, anger and mistrust, to inspiring optimism and hope by engaging in diplomatic soft power. U.S. diplomatic negotiations are now fostering an atmosphere of engagement instead of containment or isolation. According a study by Judith S. Yaphe, “Nuclear Politics in Iran,” diplomatically isolating Iran will not work as effective foreign policy as practiced during the Cold War with the Soviet Union. The United States must build an atmosphere of trust and legitimacy before negotiation can succeed.¹⁵⁴ Scholar Hans Moregenthau supports Nye’s assertion that there is a link between legitimacy and state power. Moregenthau states “[p]restige has become particularly important as a political weapon in an age in which the struggle for power is fought not only with the traditional methods of political pressure and military force, but in large measure as a struggle for the minds of men.”¹⁵⁵ This belief is important since, as Yaphe states, “Iran’s focus is on enhancing Iranian national pride and making Western countries recognize the Islamic Republic’s legitimacy as an independent actor and as their equal.”¹⁵⁶ Iranian leaders justify their quest not just as a strategy to correct historical wrongs, but also as a source of hope for the future.¹⁵⁷ U.S. diplomatic soft

¹⁵⁴Judith S. Yaphe, *Nuclear Politics in Iran, Middle East Strategic Perspective* (Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, May 2010), 20.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

power identifies the Iranian desire for legitimacy while recognizing the historical narrative of distrust between the two countries.

Not only does diplomatic soft power establish legitimacy for direct talks between Iran and the U.S., but also unifies the leaders of P5+1. The leaders of these countries assert that the election of Rouhani improves the prospects for a nuclear settlement and support a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear issue.¹⁵⁸ The Center for Strategic and International Studies declared:

Soft power is the ability to attract people to our side without coercion. Legitimacy is central to soft power. If a people or nation believes American objectives to be legitimate, we are more likely to persuade them to follow our lead without using threats and bribes. Legitimacy can also reduce opposition to, and the costs of, using hard power when the situation demands. Appealing to others' values, interests, and preferences can, in certain circumstances, replace the dependence on carrots and sticks.¹⁵⁹

When the U.S. chooses to go it alone, "it raises doubts about the legitimacy of American actions and creates widespread anxieties about how we will use our overwhelming power abroad. Multilateral consultation remains a more effective means of generating soft power and legitimacy than unilateral assertions of value."¹⁶⁰ A report by the Center for American Progress, *Strengthening Americas Options on Iran* states, "[t]he Obama administration's initial outreach to the Iranian regime in 2009 did not achieve immediate constructive results, but the demonstration of American good faith forged greater international unity around the problem and served as an important force multiplier for subsequent successful efforts to pressure the regime."¹⁶¹ Secretary of State John Kerry's recent testimony to Congress further supports this point by stating, "our current approach provides unity and consensus the P5+1 talks."¹⁶² Thus, these partnerships and

¹⁵⁸Arms Control Association Research Staff, 32.

¹⁵⁹Armitage and Nye, 6.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁶¹DeLeon, Katulis, and Juul, 3.

¹⁶²Secretary John Kerry's testimony to Congress, *CSPAN*, 13 December 2013.

institutions serve everyone's interest and develop a unified approach since there is no region of the world in which U.S. standing has fallen further or more precipitously than in the Middle East according to the Commission on Smart Power.¹⁶³ In the past, U.S. diplomacy has come to rest largely on punitive measures, but this type of soft power has the potential to alter the political landscape, while opening up new opportunities that previously seemed hopelessly far-fetched.

Informational Soft Power

Informational soft power currently focuses efforts on the technology revolution by using complementary actions to shape the diplomatic, economic, and military approaches towards Iran. Joint Publication 1 states, "[i]nformation remains an important instrument of national power and a strategic resource critical to national security."¹⁶⁴ Just as the threat of military force, diplomatic negotiations and economic instruments of national power alone have not led to tangible results with regard to Iran's nuclear ambitions, neither has the informational instrument of national power. The U.S. is in a precarious situation due to limited access to information inside Iran. The situation is further challenged by the inability to successfully contact people inside Iran and constrained by government censorship of the Internet.¹⁶⁵ Fialho and Wallin state,

In the 30 years since the Iranian Hostage Crisis, an entire generation of Iranians has grown up unaware or unable to relate to the crisis that led to the fallout of diplomatic relations...If the U.S. wishes to exert strategic influence in Iran, it should cultivate relationships with citizens and battle misperceptions through exchange and dialogue...The Internet and social media tools have given U.S. public diplomacy practitioners a new venue for such communication. Without the valuable on-the-ground presence of a diplomatic mission however, its online presence is currently the chief route of direct access to Iranian citizens.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³Armitage and Nye, 23.

¹⁶⁴JP-1, I-12.

¹⁶⁵Fialho and Wallin, 1.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 3.

In the RAND article, *How to Diffuse Iran's Nuclear Threat*, Nye explains that employing this type of soft power could be supportive in a long-range informational approach toward Iran. "It arises from a country's 'culture, political ideals, and policies.' It is more of a magnet than a mallet. The best way to employ soft power is simply to remove the barriers to exposure."¹⁶⁷ In the case of Iran, the U.S. should make every effort to reduce Internet censorship by the Iranian regime while specifically targeting and exposing the Iranian people to the opportunities and information offered by the outside world.¹⁶⁸

According to the symposium on *Employing Smart Power*, "offensive soft power deals with shaping preferences and outcomes, while defensive soft power deals with diminishing the hard and soft power capabilities of adversaries. Understanding the offensive and defensive projections of soft power is a prerequisite to improving their effectiveness and application to a comprehensive *smart power* strategy."¹⁶⁹ These online tools should not be the centerpiece of a public diplomacy plan, but instead serve as complementary and supporting offensive soft power tools alongside the economic, diplomatic and military instruments of national power. This comprehensive approach prioritizes further dialogue and exchanges between Iranians and Americans.¹⁷⁰ Over time, as a component of a comprehensive strategy, public diplomacy may help contribute to change the general population's views toward the U.S.¹⁷¹

Conversely, a RAND publication, "How to Defuse Iran's Nuclear Threat" states that, "explicit U.S. efforts to bring about regime change, using the internet or other technology, whether overt or covertly will probably have the reverse effect, helping to perpetuate the regime

¹⁶⁷Dobbins, et al.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹Armitage and Nye, 12.

¹⁷⁰Fialho and Wallin, 1.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*,8.

and strengthen its current leaders.¹⁷² Once again, an informational use of soft power alone will not have the desired effect on Iran's population or leadership as a stand-alone approach. However, as a part of broad diplomatic, economic and military effort potentially can help reduce the Iranian threat towards America and its regional interests. The United States State Department established an online presence focused on the Iranian population entitled "21st Century Statecraft."¹⁷³ As part of this public diplomacy initiative, the State Department established the Tehran Virtual Embassy in December 2011 to include Persian Facebook and Twitter pages.¹⁷⁴ Since more than fifty percent of the Iranian population use the Internet, this offensive soft power approach will help raise awareness on certain issues, but awareness does not necessarily equate to influence.¹⁷⁵ However, it is reasonable to assume that an informational approach towards Iran, using online tools, will help break geographic barriers and help circumvent Iranian government restrictions as a broader approach of offensive soft power.¹⁷⁶

The symposium on *Employing Smart Power* also states, "defensive soft power is the least understood aspect of soft power, yet offers great potential in protecting and promoting American security interests."¹⁷⁷ Defensive soft power is intended to thwart dangers and to prevent and defend against attack.¹⁷⁸ Cyberspace is a vital element of defensive soft power. The cyberspace informational domain complements the other instruments of national power while providing the U.S. another deterrent in the application of *smart power* towards Iran. According to Joseph Nye,

¹⁷²Dobbins, et al.

¹⁷³Fialho and Wallin, 3.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 2.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 3.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 8.

¹⁷⁷CACI International, 12.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

“[t]here is no better example of America’s need for a timely shift to *smart power* than the dangerous, yet vital frontier of cyberspace. A domain that has emerged only in the last twenty years or so, cyberspace includes some of the most contested territory in the war of ideas as well as the (arguably) primary battlefields in asymmetric warfare.”¹⁷⁹ Cyber attacks against Iran have proved to be an effective deterrent to Iranian aggression—specifically its pursuit of its nuclear uranium enrichment program. For example, between September and October 2010, a deliberate computer virus (Stuxnet), targeted Iranian nuclear facility computers. This altered their spin rate and caused Iran to take about 1,000 centrifuges out of service; it did not stop their enrichment program.¹⁸⁰ Other covert cyber-attacks have occurred since 2012 on many Iranian foreign financial institutions.¹⁸¹ Conversely, U.S. officials have said Iran might also have perpetrated a cyber attack against Arabian Gulf state oil and gas firms in mid-2012.¹⁸²

In the long run, as a component of a comprehensive U.S. *smart power* application, informational soft power can help reduce the threat Iran poses to American and regional interests.¹⁸³ According to the American Security Project, U.S. efforts, in the immediate term, should focus informational soft power on establishing rapport with average Iranians through the use of online tools. This effort prioritizes dialogue and exchanges between Iranians and Americans, and could help build trust while dispelling negative perceptions of the U.S.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁸⁰ Kenneth Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 4 November 2013), 62.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Fialho and Wallin, 1.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 8.

CONCLUSION: SMART POWER APPLICATION TOWARDS IRAN

Today's challenges require new types of institutions to extend American influence. We need a multilateral pluralism for the twenty-first century.

—Joseph S. Nye

Historical relations between the U.S. and Iran can be described as ambivalent before World War I as the U.S. had little interest in Persian affairs.¹⁸⁵ Post World War II and through the Cold War, U.S. and Iranian relations were mostly supportive as Iran focused on modernizing its economy while helping the U.S. contain Soviet interests in the Middle East. Iran was once America's staunchest Middle East ally until the overthrow of the Shah during the Iranian Revolution more than thirty years ago. Current relations are confrontational with an atmosphere of animosity, mistrust, and misunderstanding. While opinions may differ as to what actually caused the poor relations, most Americans see the Iranian Hostage crisis, where fifty-two Americans were taken from the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and held for four hundred and forty-four days, as the inception of the battle against radical Islam. However, since 2009 the Obama administration's dual-track policy, which includes engagement and pressure, combining the hard and soft power elements of *smart power*, is providing a breakthrough in relations between Iran and the U.S. This application of *smart power*, synchronizing the effects and sustainable application of collective strengths of all the instruments of national power, is critical to the administration's dual-track policy and is the key factor in achieving a nuclear deal with Iran.

The history and documented success of U.S. military power, coupled with current repositioning of U.S. forces to the Arabian Gulf, addressed in the opening vignette, along with the threat of a military strike is vital to hard power. At the same time, economic sanctions are slowing Iran's nuclear program and putting increased pressure on Tehran to respond more favorably to P5+1 overtures. The success of these economic sanctions further support the coercive and

¹⁸⁵Bill, 16.

pressure element of hard power in the U.S. application of *smart power* towards Iran.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, the election of a relative moderate, Rouhani, appears to reflect popular Iranian sentiment to pursue a long-term negotiated nuclear deal that incorporates the easing of international sanctions. This position further supports the effectiveness of the administrations application of hard power towards Iran. While the threat of military force and sanctions are already in place, if the U.S. is serious about negotiations, it has to create an atmosphere where they are possible. This is precisely what *smart power* accomplishes by applying the complimentary tools of soft power. The symposium on *Employing Smart Power* supports this assertion by stating, “[f]ull, active, and flexible integration of the diverse sources of national power is the essence of *smart power*. A combined hard and soft power strategy allows nations to best secure themselves against continuously changing and progressively more dangerous asymmetric threats.”¹⁸⁷ Diplomacy and the informational instrument of national power reinforce the importance of soft power in the U.S. application of *smart power*. Engaging in diplomatic negotiations with Iran fosters an atmosphere of good faith, and builds trust and legitimacy, for both Iran and the international community. It also addresses Iran’s desire for prestige. Informational efforts focus on the technology by using complementary actions to shape the diplomatic, economic, and military approaches towards Iran. These efforts also help engage and build trust with the Iranian people.

However, there are still many uncertainties over the future of Iran’s disputed nuclear program, even with the current negotiated six-month nuclear deal by the P5+1 and Iran. The window to block Iran’s nuclear weapon ambitions is not unlimited. Most estimates assess Iran will be able to produce crude nuclear weapon within a one year, but the current six-month deal

¹⁸⁶Arms Control Association Research Staff, 32.

¹⁸⁷CACI International, 17.

provides an opportunity that has not existed in thirty years.¹⁸⁸ If negotiations are to succeed, concessions must be made from both sides, but more importantly, Iran must live up to its international obligations. If not, Iran faces increased international isolation or the potential for military strikes against its nuclear program. The application of U.S. *smart power* provides a structure to have a dialogue built on verification, good faith, and even trust. Therefore, it allows the current negotiations the ability to test the possibility and feasibility of the current nuclear deal along with the potential for a comprehensive long-term deal. The alternative is to engage in conflict, which has many unintended consequences. Avoiding such an outcome is precisely why it is so important for the Obama administration to continue to use every available tool. The U.S. and international community must give diplomatic engagement a chance to succeed during this six-month period of negotiation. Because of the current success of *smart power*, there is no need for new sanctions right now, and if Iran is not willing to address its nuclear ambitions and potential break out capability, it is not difficult for the U.S. to increase pressure. Affirming his goal of continued “tough, direct diplomacy with Iran,” President Obama acknowledged that diplomacy “may not work, but if it doesn’t work, then we have strengthened our ability to form alliances to impose tough sanctions.”¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, President Obama made it quite clear that his administration “will take no options off the table” when it comes to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.¹⁹⁰ The U.S. application of *smart power* is supporting a new era of engagement and renewed relations with Iran. It is providing the United States and its global coalition, along with the P5+1 powers, the right tools at the right time to rein in Iran’s nuclear ambitions while also preparing for possible contingencies.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸DeLeon, Katulis, and Juul, 1.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 9.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 36.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

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