

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

THE DEAL WITH IRAN IS THE BEST-CASE SCENARIO THE INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNITY COULD ACHIEVE IN THE CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.

by

Christos Petalas, Colonel, Greek Air Force

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

Advisor: Dr David D.Palkki

16 February 2016

## **DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government, the Department of Defense, or Air University. In accordance with Air Force Instruction 51-303, it is not copyrighted, but is the property of the United States government.



## **Biography**

Colonel Christos Petalas entered the Greek Air Force Academy in 1984 and graduated in 1988. He is a fighter pilot with more than 4,500 flying hours most of which with the F-4E and T-2E. Col Petalas is a graduate from the Greek Senior Officers School, the Air Tactics and Special Weapons School and the US Air Command and Staff College. He served in several staff positions on the Air Staff, the Joint Staff and the Ministry of Defense. He is currently assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL.



## **Abstract**

Nation-state efforts to develop or acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems, or their underlying technologies constitute a major threat to the security of the US and its allies. The international community seeks the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. Iran must meet the demands for implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), its international obligations and demonstrate its nuclear program is entirely peaceful. The nuclear deal assures Iran's nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes. On the contrast, the alternatives of the nuclear deal do not provide solid and reliable results. Thus, the deal provides the international community the toolset to limit the challenges in Middle East where long-term economic, political, as well as social problems contribute to the terrorist threat worldwide. Moreover the deal aims to increase the flow of oil to the global market, to advance the US interests in the area, and mainly to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime. However, the international community retains all options to achieve the objective of preventing Iran from producing a nuclear weapon.

## **Introduction**

Efforts to promote nuclear non-proliferation initiatives have been ongoing for decades. Different cases have led to a variation in the strategies, tools and mechanisms that the international community could use to achieve the desired outcomes of the non-proliferation of militarized nuclear programs. There are usually questions raised during these debates, over how far nation-states can go with a chosen policy tool, the desired outcomes, the consequences that may occur, the conditions or the circumstances during the effort, the perspective of ethical approach for each strategy, some historical analogies which aspire to provide some degree of predictability regarding the desired outcomes, the potential reactions of key factors and many more. Iran's nuclear program has been a key area of concern over the last decade. Undoubtedly the core topic under consideration could be whether the international community could really in any way coerce, dissuade, prevent or preempt a state from developing nuclear weapons, and if so for how long? The effectiveness of the available instruments, the alternative strategies, the global security challenges, the political climate in the US and the domestic influences in Iran, contributed significantly to finding a long-term solution. This paper argues that the deal with Iran is the best-case scenario the international community could achieve in the current geopolitical environment. More specifically, Iran's nuclear program and the deal that followed after a long and complex period of diplomatic efforts are mentioned here, but the main emphasis of this paper is that significant contributions to the successful negotiations were the geopolitical realities of the effects of escalating economic sanctions in Iran during the last years, the rise of Islamic state, the quagmire in conflicts in the Middle East, and the leadership that was amenable to discussion in Washington and Tehran. A qualitative evaluation shall be utilized for this research project leveraging advantages and disadvantages of the nuclear deal using opinions that

opposed to the deal. Literature and historical research were used to collect substantive and relevant data.

## **Background**

Iran's security dilemma<sup>1</sup> has always been a source of instability in the Middle East and for a country when security is threatened, power maximization is a major concern. The factors that have influenced Iran's security were its geography, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq, the country's alliances with state and non-state actors and its nuclear program.<sup>2</sup> Following a strategic choice Iran aimed to maximize its power through the nuclear power.

### **Iran's nuclear program**

Originally, the Shah's desire to maximize the influence of the country drove Tehran's nuclear program. The US began fulfilling the Shah's nuclear ambitions in the 1950's with an agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy.<sup>3</sup> By the mid-1960s, the Iranians were running a small research reactor in the center of Tehran and in the 1970s Washington agreed to sign a deal to sell the Shah upwards of eight nuclear reactors. However, the Shah made it clear that he wanted more than just the reactors; he yearned to master the secrets of the nuclear fuel cycle so that he would never have to depend on a foreign power for the supply of uranium. The Shah made little progress in realizing his objective before he fled the country in 1979. During the Iranian revolution Khomeini cancelled the nuclear program for religious or policy reasons. Yet in 1985, during the Iran-Iraq war, the country began experimenting with gas-centrifuge technology having the motive of nuclear parity with Saddam Hussein. Iraq's leader was not about to allow the mullahs to obtain nuclear fuel ahead of him and he bombed Iran's reactor in Bushehr. Iranians efforts to master the centrifuge technology continued approaching and cooperating with several countries and in the late 1990s Russians delivered a lot of equipment to Iran including the

nuclear fuel.<sup>4</sup> Construction of the nuclear infrastructure began in 2001 at Natanz, Iran's main enrichment facility. The plant grew to have a capacity of 50,000 centrifuges, enough to produce large quantities of enriched uranium. Iran also inaugurated a uranium facility in Isfahan and a heavy water plant at Arak, constructed both in 2006. Tehran made incremental but major progress toward mastering the fuel cycle. The country has accumulated a growing stockpile of low-enriched uranium (LEU) produced at its two enrichment facilities.

The Iranian program was hidden until 2003 when Tehran began to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors in the country. Reports of the Agency first started indicating concern of the militarization of the Iranian nuclear program in 2006.<sup>5</sup> However, Tehran faces significant hurdles before it could successfully weaponize highly enriched uranium (HEU) since it has not mastered all of the necessary technologies for building a nuclear weapon.<sup>6</sup> Iran would need few months to produce enough weapons-grade HEU for a nuclear weapon if the government made the decision to do so.<sup>7</sup> However, there is much uncertainty regarding Iran's capabilities and intentions. Iran throughout has maintained that it is doing everything in line with the NPT Treaty. The continuity of the nuclear program assumes a continued political will in Tehran. Moreover, even if the country overcomes the technological hurdles it still faces and if other countries do not intervene militarily, the process would require a period of time for building a crude nuclear device and from there it would require adequate time for Iran to assemble a vehicle that could efficiently deliver the weapon to a target. Sanctions have been a major feature of U.S. Iran policy since 1979 but the imposition of U.N. Security Council and worldwide sanctions escalated after 2006 and increased dramatically since 2010. Three years later started a cycle of intense international negotiations.

## **The Nuclear Deal**

On July 14, 2015, negotiators from Iran and the P5+1 countries (the U.S., U.K. France, Germany, Russia, and China), along with the EU, announced completion of a comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The deal is the result of a long and complicated process. All sides, as with many international negotiations and agreements, brings with it varying expectations. The complexity of the process before the agreement is depicted by the dilemmas of statecraft in the prevention of nuclear proliferation. When implemented, the constraints and verification provisions of this nuclear agreement will effectively prevent Iran from producing fissile material for nuclear weapons at its declared nuclear facilities for at least 10 to 15 years. After this period all constraints of the agreement will be lifted. The long term implications of the agreement are extremely difficult to predict and assess especially after the 15 year-period. On the one hand JCPOA proponents argue that it could ultimately undermine advocates of nuclear weapons inside Iran by reducing the threat of military conflict with the U.S. and increasing the benefits of economic integration.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand JCPOA opponents argue that it will legitimize Iran's nuclear program, the state will keep pursuing dominance in the region, it will not fundamentally change Tehran's hostility toward the U.S., it will enable Iran to get nukes, etc.<sup>9</sup> While the agreement is not ideal, it needs to be weighed seriously against the realistic alternatives.

## **Examining the Alternatives**

### **Maintaining the Sanctions <sup>10</sup>**

Sanctions and inducements are instruments of statecraft specifically geared to change the target state's behavior.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, regarding nuclear proliferation in Iran, sanctions are the tools to dissuade the regime, the leader in the state from achieving their goals in developing



nuclear weapons capabilities. Many people consider sanctions a peaceful and effective means to enforce international law. Under article 41 of the United Nations (UN) Charter, the Security Council may call on member states to apply measures not involving the use of armed force to give effect to its decisions.<sup>12</sup>

Economic sanctions may still often end up being the best alternative in the line to doing nothing or to escalating to military force, but despite their many strengths sanctions are not silver bullets. Sanctions often are referred as negative inducements and in most cases are the main factor for bringing inducements on the table but they rarely deter a rogue state from developing nuclear devices. North Korean willingness to cooperate proved to be an elusive aspiration.<sup>13</sup> So, the question is whether sanctions, as a diplomatic instrument, are able to compel a country to change its policy from developing nuclear weapons towards conventional ones. This question is more significant for the Iran case where security factors and participation in enduring rivalries have played a powerful role in explaining proliferation decisions.

The American diplomacy has played an important role in achieving the current agreement with Iran despite the fact that for an extended period of time the US refused to establish formal diplomatic relations with the country (1979-present). While traditional methods of diplomacy have more concrete political aims, the foundation for US policy positions on Iran is transformational diplomacy with the primary goal to enact a change in the country aiming to alter, in whole or partially, elements of the foreign government's structure, policies or laws.<sup>14</sup>

Although the US has implemented sanctions against Iran since 1979, it was not after 1990 that these sanctions related with WMD proliferation concerns. The US used many measures during that period to prevent the flow of investment to Iran. The United Kingdom and Australia also imposed their sanctions in the 1990s, mainly targeted the Iranian nuclear sector. Since 2003,

multilateral actions have become the primary complement to US sanctions against Tehran. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) began sanctioning Iran in 2006 targeting mainly financial elements of the country's nuclear program. In 2008, European Union has also applied trade and financial sanctions echoed those of the US and UNSC.<sup>15</sup>

The records of Iran's nuclear program and the ways in which it has responded to the sanctions indicate that negative pressures may produce consequences contrary to their intent and didn't affect the regime.<sup>16</sup> There are several reasons that show the limited impact of sanctions. One of the most important reasons is that sanctions are often employed in a punitive manner, rather than as tools of political bargaining. Looking at their impact on human behavior and its psychology we can notice some key distinctions between sanctions and positive incentives.<sup>17</sup> The latter foster cooperation, whereas the first disconnects relations. Threats tend to generate reactions of fear, anxiety, distrust, exploitation and more importantly resistance, whereas the typical responses to a promise or reward are hope, reassurance, attraction and trust. The great use of negative sanctions threatens the expansion of trade, thereby weakening the incentive for political cooperation that comes with increasing economic interdependence. By contrast, positive measures encourage trade and international cooperation and thereby contribute to the long-term prospects for peace. Incentive policies provide a basis for long-term cooperation and understanding and create the foundations for international stability.

Additionally, quite often the target regimes in an effort to get advantage of the situation allow their already vulnerable population to suffer and may use the sanctions as propaganda to blame the international community or the US for their poverty and poor life quality. In several cases sanctions have become a way for non-democratic regimes to benefit themselves increasing their wealth at the expense of their populations, taking advantage of their control over

permissible trade. During the Iraqi sanctions program through 2003, humanitarian project "Oil for Food Program", gave the ruling regime an opening to profit.<sup>18</sup> Another example is the financial sanctions against North Korea that did not deter the regime which managed to pass the costs onto citizenry.<sup>19</sup>

Since 2005, the US has turned to more sophisticated types of economic sanctions.<sup>20</sup> Officials of the US Treasury engineered new ways of applying economic measures and launched a new campaign against Tehran. Instead of targeting terrorists and dictators directly by freezing accounts and levying sanctions, the Treasury department would aim for their banks in an effort to restrict their sustenance. The Treasury team met more than 100 times with bank officials around the globe to persuade them to end ties with Iran. With each new designation of an Iranian bank or shipping enterprise, Tehran responded by turning to ever more illicit means of moving its money, deepening private-sector suspicions. The lesson learned is that financial measures alone were not able to change Iran's calculus and that economic sanctions can work only when packaged with other forms of pressure. Tehran and other malicious actors have studied Treasury's invention, learned how to evade it and may turn it on a vulnerable United States in the future.<sup>21</sup>

Humanitarian-related effects of sanctions are usually noted in the target countries. In Iran the long imposed sanctions have hurt the population's ability to obtain Western-made medicines, such as expensive chemo-therapy medicines. The scarcity of parts in the aviation sector causes airline fleet to deteriorate to the point of jeopardizing safety. Moreover, pollution in Tehran and other big cities has worsened because Iran is making gasoline itself with methods that cause more impurities than imported gasoline.<sup>22</sup>

Until the actual implementation of the nuclear deal Iran was almost completely isolated from the international financial system, with its most significant private and state-owned banks cut off from international payment messaging systems. Many analysts consider sanctions as the main factor that brought Iran to the negotiations.<sup>23</sup> However there is a constant debate for the effectiveness of economic pressures against a country. Policy instruments can threaten adverse consequences or they can promise benefits. Sanctions as a particular form of financial power is not a silver bullet for each and every national security problem the international community faces and the financial tools should not be overused. Financial measures are an essential element of creating leverage and shaping the environment, but used in concert with other forms of pressure and influence. Combining sanctions and positive inducements appears more effective.<sup>24</sup>

### **Keep Negotiating for a better Deal**

Opponents to the deal argue that the United States should have held out, imposed tougher sanctions, and reached a better deal even if the US has to pursue this unilaterally. The main argument against the deal is that it will achieve the opposite of what it intends and it will increase the likelihood that Iran ultimately acquires the bomb. This could occur if Iran could simply wait until the restrictions under the deal expire and then rush for the bomb; if Tehran uses the increased resources from the deal to start a covert weapons program; or if they abandon the agreement openly.<sup>25</sup>

The international community already tried reaching a better deal and failed. Between 2003 and 2005 Iran suspended its nuclear program and entered into negotiations with France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (known as the E3). The E3 first in 2005 and then the US, Russia and China in 2006, offered the option to allow Iran a civilian nuclear program, but kept all enrichment capabilities outside of Iran and forced it to ship any spent fuel rods out of the

country. After the Iranian rejection of this offer, the United States and its partners began the effort to increase economic pressure on Iran, imposing four key U.N. Security Council resolutions and developing a robust international economic sanctions regime. Iran despite sanctions pressure responded by increasing the size of its nuclear program. In 2015, Iran's breakout time to a bomb's worth of highly enriched uranium had decreased to only two to three months.<sup>26</sup> If the United States continued to apply pressure in an effort to achieve a "better deal," it is rather possible that Iran would have continued to build out its program even under further financial pressure limiting further the critical period of the process development. In that case, the United States would have the option to choose military action in order to stop Iran from achieving a nuclear capability. The strength of the powerful economic sanctions on Iran over the last several years was based on multilateral participation in, and enforcement of sanctions. Apart from the diplomatic and financial risks associated with trying to continue with a unilateral policy of tough sanctions on Iran, the United States would establish a dangerous precedent in demonstrating a weak sanctions strategy.

The deal gives the international community increased access to the Iranian nuclear program, including monitoring its supply chains. As a result, the likelihood of detecting a covert Iranian program is higher under the deal than without a deal. Additionally, were Iran to race for the bomb in some distant point in the future, they would be violating their international commitments, as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and would become the certain target of sanctions and a potential target of American or Israeli military strikes.

### **Military Intervention**

Some statesman and authors argue that the only guarantee that Iran will not develop nuclear weapons is the threat of military force because a nuclear-capable Iran will mean an even

more crisis-prone Middle East.<sup>27</sup> There is no doubt that the commitment of the US to use all instruments of national power, including the possible use of force, to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons should remain firm.<sup>28</sup> In order for a military action to prove politically effective requires to establish sufficient international support. The United States alone would overwhelmingly dominate such a fight but any attack on Iran's nuclear facilities would only set the country's program back temporary, Tehran would possibly responded militarily and probably the country would become "irreconcilably committed to getting a nuclear weapon."<sup>29</sup> There is no doubt that in a potential military intervention the consequences to Iran would be much more disastrous than to the United States and its allies. However, the risk for all sides associated with the implications in an unstable Middle East region facing so many other problems such as Syria, ISIL, the Arab-Israeli relations, the energy flow, are tremendous and unpredictable.

If successful the use of force might produce only a minimal delay to Iran's existing program. For example, senior U.S. defense officials have stated that Israel only possesses the conventional military capability to set Iran's program back one to three years. The United States with greater capabilities could set the program back further. But it is not clear how much further.<sup>30</sup>

A big scale military presence of the US and its allies in Middle East could create more instability in the area. The recent examples of Iraq and Afghanistan show that the United States finds it difficult to disengage after a military intervention. On the contrary the country aims to move beyond the large ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that defined so much of American foreign policy over the past decade.<sup>31</sup> The main difference between the nuclear deal and a military intervention is that while military options are always available to the United States to

respond, the deal provides an adequate time-period for examining more policy options to try and influence an outcome that will deter Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons.

### **The global security challenges**

The global environment is continuous changing and many threats have appeared preventing the advance of the US and its allies' national interests. ISIL and affiliated groups threaten US citizens, interests, allies, and partners. The challenges to degrade and defeat ISIL, to stop the spread of nuclear weapons materials added to the potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, poses a grave risk for the US and the world.<sup>32</sup>

A comprehensive national security agenda requires limiting the threats. Stability and peace in the Middle East requires reducing the underlying causes of conflict. Under this light the nuclear deal with Iran curves or postpones the nuclear aspirations and developments of the target country and offers the international community ample and valuable time to establish the appropriate priorities and confront some of the rest global security challenges more effectively.

The positive inducements with the respective mutual actions from Iran the deal reflects are probably now much more effective. Moreover the US rebalance to Asia and the Pacific demands a more stable environment in the Middle East and definitely the nuclear deal offers an opportunity for the US to move a step forward preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and keeping nuclear materials from terrorists.

### **Political climate in Washington**

After several decades of hostile relations between Washington and Tehran, few passing moments offered a chance for common ground. Tehran offered support to the US after 9/11 but this reaction, symbolic of opportunities for the US in the Middle East, remained unnoticed.<sup>33</sup> The US foreign policy was driven by the rhetoric of "axis of evil"<sup>34</sup>, describing Iran, Iraq and North

Korea. The possibilities for exploring the depth of that opportunity never tested by the US government. In Nov 2007, the CIA released a report on Iran that concluded that the country had halted work on its covert nuclear weapons program in 2003.<sup>35</sup> The revelation that Iran was not actively pursuing a weapons program was counter to the Bush administration's rhetoric, which had been working to build a coalition of tough sanctions against Iran. Once the information was released, support for sanctions fell apart.

According to the 2015 National Security Strategy, the U.S. interests are the security of the U.S., its citizens, its allies and partners, the maintenance of a balance of power in Europe and Asia promoting peace and stability through alliances, the prevention of the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and the promotion of healthy international economy, energy markets and the environment.<sup>36</sup> A significant part of the US national interests focuses on Asia where a changed and changing China is shaking the world with a huge impact on global affairs. President Obama announced in 2011, a "pivot" or rebalance to Asia as the U.S. presumably drew down resources devoted to the Middle East and Asia.<sup>37</sup> In other words the rebalance meant that U.S. diplomatic, military and economic attention would be gradually shifted to form a preferable environment in Asia increasing engagement with the region's challenges.

However, today's challenges and interconnected world is too large even for the US to be everywhere. As former Secretary of Defense Gates argued in 2009, "The United States cannot expect to eliminate national security risks through higher defense budgets, to do everything and buy everything."<sup>38</sup> Moreover the nature of the threats has changed. While inter-state conflict has declined, state-based threats also remain. States today often worry more about the potential weakness or instability of a neighbor, rather than its strength. For many countries and regions,



their most direct security challenges are rooted in the gaps of governance and authority that allow other actors to evolve. As the lessons from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan reveal, these ungoverned spaces can spawn terrorism, illicit trafficking, rebel groups and flow of refugees exporting instability and impacting entire regions.

The Obama administration inherited several issues including a deepening conflict in Afghanistan and an Iran whose secret facilities and nuclear weapon aspirations pointed toward a rapid drive for the bomb. Given the painful legacy of the Iraq War, it was not surprising that he saw Iraq everywhere. In his eyes, Iraq was a colossal mistake. He had run against it. He had been elected to get the US out of Middle East wars. The nuclear deal with Iran was an opportunity to close successfully one of the major issues in the area. So, Obama's legacy and the forthcoming elections played a significant role in the direction of the successful negotiations on the nuclear deal.

### **Domestic Influences in Iran**

Iran's population is approximately 80 million and it is expected to reach 105 million by 2050. The country's leaders argue that for the fast growing population of the country it makes sense to develop domestic nuclear energy production in order to free oil quantities for exports. Iran has historically aspired to be a regional power perceiving itself as natural hegemon of its neighborhood. It is a Shia country among neighboring countries of Sunnis and this strong sense of distinctiveness together with Iran's security concerns created its nuclear aspirations. "The war with Iraq was the key driver behind the Iranian decision to reconsider their disdain for modern technology"<sup>39</sup>. States can seek to offset the power of an adversary by shifting resources generating more power and developing closer cooperation with allies.<sup>40</sup> Additionally Iranians' long history makes them believe that they deserve to be treated as regional power. It is important

to connect Iranian leader's behavior with the aspirations of the country to take on a new role in the region through which it can achieve its enduring dreams of past glory. These sentiments have created noticeable effect on Arab states understanding of and responses to current Iran-centric issues such as the nuclear deal.<sup>41</sup>

The Iranian government says its nuclear program is designed to produce electricity for civilian uses, and as a signatory to the NPT, it is entirely within its rights under international law to continue doing so. While Iran may have embraced the enrichment to use it as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the U.S., its Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has issued a religious fatwa banning the production of nuclear weapons and called for a nuclear-free Middle East. In an attempt to head this off, Iran's reformist government, at the time headed by Mohammad Khatami, proposed an agreement that would have been even more stringent than the one the U.S. just negotiated. Bush rejected the offer and escalated his threat of regime change. In response, Khatami and his successor, Ahmadinejad, stepped up Iran's enrichment of uranium. As a result, Iran increased the number of its centrifuges between from a few thousand in 2006 to over 19,000 today. It built up its reserves of enriched uranium to over 9,000 kilograms today, and began construction of the heavy water reactor in Arak.

During the US intervention in Iraq, the Iranian government was deeply divided about how to deal with the "Great Satan". To Tehran, the advantages of having the US forces remove Iran's most significant enemy, Saddam Hussein, were very clear but the regime was also trapped in its own anti-American rhetoric. The recent nuclear deal is the result of the causes and consequences of Iran's suboptimal foreign policy especially in the area of nuclear policy. Iran had to choose between political stability at home and hegemony over the region. The nuclear deal has degraded Iran's nuclear threat and hobbled its regional agenda.

However, the threat of the Islamic State was likely a decisive factor in Iran's decision to accept the constraints and verification provisions of the nuclear agreement for its regional strategy. The Islamic State, the extremist Sunni force that has emerged as an anti-Shiite actor and today controls great deal of territory in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, has become Iran's regional worry.<sup>42</sup> The Islamic State has the potential to expand into other Sunni Arab states and thereby present Iran and its Shiite allies with a significant strategic threat. This reality has forced Tehran to rethink its strategic calculus and Iran has been fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; an obligation that might last for long. Iran's involvement in the Syrian, Iraqi, and Yemeni conflicts deepened in 2015 taking more of a frontline role against "terrorists".<sup>43</sup> Confronting the Islamic State requires not a nuclear umbrella but interaction and cooperation with the international community and more sophisticated use of regional economic resources.

### **Recommendations**

There is a difference between the symbolic functions of positive and negative sanctions and their psychological functions in politics. The role of positive inducements is often overlooked in assessment of the effectiveness of economic statecraft. Understanding the source of Iran's national objectives and recognizing the aspiration is important for the US and the international community to help Iran to develop a foreign policy in a more cooperative direction. Without the deal, Iran is condemned to remain isolated. As long as it remains underdeveloped, Iran will not be able to assume a strong regional leadership position and its security concerns will soar over the region creating instability and uncertainty giving the floor to hard-liners in and out of the country.

- **First recommendation:** sanctions work best as instruments of persuasion, when they are combined with incentives as part of a carrots and sticks bargaining process designed to achieve the negotiated resolution of conflict;
- **Second recommendation:** the continuity of heavy sanctions, limited diplomacy and cooperation with Iran would increase the uncertainty in a destabilized region where other strategic threats require also a great deal of attention;
- **Third Recommendation:** initiatives such as the nuclear deal that contributes to the reform and diversification of Tehran's stagnant and oil-dependent economy could help the country to strengthen its economy and integrate into the global economy;

In general some states tend to overestimate their ability to shape Tehran's policy-making; change will largely come from within. Especially in a changing global environment the aforementioned recommendations will facilitate in advancing the US national interests most effectively.

## Conclusion

Iran's regional power aspiration is an historical continuity and as a rising and ambitious power whose desired status is denied opposes the status quo. In general, change in Iran will rather come from within. The alternatives of the nuclear deal don't provide solid and reliable results. Thus, the nuclear deal provides the international community the toolset to limit the Middle East challenges, to increase the flow of oil to an energy dependent Europe, to provide more room for a successful rebalance to Asia for the US and to meet the humanitarian needs of Iran. The agreement designers wanted to extend the time needed for Iran to assemble a weapon to a year in order to provide enough time to react to such a decision. The international

community buys at least 10 to 15 years before Tehran can significantly expand its nuclear capabilities.<sup>44</sup> Examining alternatives imposing heavy sanctions and military action are always on the table in case that Iran deviates from the agreement. For the moment Iran desperately needed relief from the international sanctions that have been crippling its economy, particularly in the falling global oil prices, and the region requires a new strategy that gives room for possibilities to face the emerging and adaptive challenges. The new willingness between the US and Iran to engage with each other diplomatically, and a different approach to Iran's foreign policy, have provided an ideal lining of events permissive to the signing of the deal.



## Notes

1 Martin Griffiths, Terry O' Callaghan and Steven C. Roach, *International Relations: The Key Concepts*, 2nd (US and Canada, Routledge, 2008), 295. "The security dilemma concept rests on the assumption that security is something for which states have to compete for, due to the anarchical international system. Striving to obtain this, they are driven to acquire more power in order to escape the impact of the power of other states which in turn, makes the others more insecure and the result is a rising spiral of insecurity among states".

2 Thomas Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity, Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, (California, Stanford, 2015), 184.

3 Ibid, 169.

4 David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance*, (US: Three Rivers Press, 2009), 38.

5 IAEA Board Report: Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 31 August 2006 and 14 November 2006, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iran/iaea-and-iran-iaea-reports>

6 Kenneth Katzman and Paul Kerr, Congressional Research Service, *Iran Nuclear Agreement*, 2015, 2.

7 The White House. "Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program." April 2, 2015. 1, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/parametersforajointcomprehenisveplanofaction.pdf>.

8 Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, *The Iran Nuclear Deal, A Definitive Guide*, (US, Harvard Kennedy School, August 2015), 8.

9 Ibid, 8.

10 Charles Krauthammer, "The worst agreement in U.S. diplomatic history", 2 July 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-worst-agreement-in-us-diplomatic-history/2015/07/02/960e8cf2-20e8-11e5-aeb9-a411a84c9d55\\_story.html?tid=a\\_inl](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-worst-agreement-in-us-diplomatic-history/2015/07/02/960e8cf2-20e8-11e5-aeb9-a411a84c9d55_story.html?tid=a_inl) (accessed 12 November 2015).

11 Etel Solingen, *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5.

12 Martin Griffiths, Terry O' Callaghan and Steven C. Roach, *International Relations: The Key Concepts*, 288.

13 Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, "Engaging North Korea: the efficacy of sanctions and inducements", in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, ed. Etel Solingen, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 259.

14 Karin A. Esposito and S. Alaeddin Vahid Gharavi, *Transformational Diplomacy: US Tactics for Change in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2004-2006*, (Hague Journal of Diplomacy 2011), 333.

15 Celia L/ Reynolds and Wilfred T. Wan, "Empirical trends in sanctions and positive inducements in nonproliferation", in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, 77.

16 Miroslav Nincic, "Positive incentives, positive results? rethinking US counterproliferation policy", in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, 136.

17 David A. Baldwin, *The Power of Positive Sanctions*, (Princeton University, World Politics/ Volume 24 / Issue 01 / October 1971) 34.

18 Juan C. Zarate, *Treasury's War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare*, (US: PublicAffairs, 2013), 6.

19 Haggard and Noland, "Engaging North Korea", 258.

20 Zarate, *Treasury's War*, 6.

21 Ibid, 18.

22 Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions*, (Congressional Research Service, August 4, 2015), 58.

23 Zachary Laub, "International Sanctions on Iran", Council on Foreign Relations, 15 July 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/international-sanctions-iran/p20258>.

24 David D. Palkki and Shane Smith, "Contrasting causal mechanisms: Iraq and Libya", in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, 293.

25 Dennis Ross, "Iran deal leaves U.S. with tough questions", 14 July 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/iran-deal-leaves-us-with-tough-questions/2015/07/14/7f76e3b0-2807-11e5-b77f-eb13a215f593\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/iran-deal-leaves-us-with-tough-questions/2015/07/14/7f76e3b0-2807-11e5-b77f-eb13a215f593_story.html) (accessed 29 October 2015).

26 Oli Heinonen, "Iran's Nuclear Breakout Time: A Fact Sheet", *The Washington Institute*, 28 March 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-nuclear-breakout-time-a-fact-sheet>.

27 James F. Jeffrey, "Iran Nuclear Deal Offers Shaky Compromise", *Global Times*, 16 July 2015, available at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-nuclear-deal-offers-shaky-compromise> (accessed 4 November 2015).

28 National Security Strategy, February 2015.

29 Joe Gould, "DOD to Congress: Iran Deal or No Military Options Open," Defense News, July 29, 2015, [www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/congress/2015/07/29/dod--congress-iran-deal--no-military-options-open/3084357](http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/congress/2015/07/29/dod--congress-iran-deal--no-military-options-open/3084357).

30 Colin Kahl, Raj Pattani and Jacob Stokes, "If All Else Fails, The Challenges of Containing a Nuclear-Armed Iran", 2013, CNAS 15.

31 National Security Strategy, February 2015.

32 Ibid

33 Sanger, *The Inheritance*, 40 "Iran offered to allow U.S. pilots to land in country's airports in case of emergencies during the operations over Afghanistan. Moreover Iranian officials contributed in creating a framework and holding meetings for the new Afghan government. That was the first time in the last years that the US and Iran introduced the subject of dealing with terrorism".

34 George W. Bush, President of the US, (speech in January 29, 2002).

35 National Intelligence Estimate , "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities", November 2007. (The estimate defined "nuclear weapons program" as "nuclear weapon design and weaponization work and covert uranium conversion-related and uranium enrichment related work").

36 National Security Strategy, February 2015,

37 David Lampton, *Following the Leader*, (University of California Press 2014), 182

38 Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1, January/February 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63717/robert-m-gates/a-balanced-strategy>.

39 Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity*, 170.

40 Ibid, 224.

41 Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, *Iran and the Arab World after the Nuclear Deal*, Harvard Kennedy School, August 2015, 85.

42 Director of National Intelligence, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community*, 9 February 2016, 24.

43 Ibid.

44 Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, Harvard Kennedy School, August 2015, 8.



## Bibliography

Baldwin, David A. *The Power of Positive Sanctions*, Princeton University, World Politics/ Volume 24 / Issue 01/ October 1971.

Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, *Iran and the Arab World after the Nuclear Deal*, Harvard Kennedy School, August 2015

Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, *The Iran Nuclear Deal, A Definitive Guide, US*, Harvard Kennedy School, August 2015.

Bush, George W. President of the US, speech in January 29, 2002.

Esposito, Karin A. and S. Alaeddin Vahid Gharavi. *Transformational Diplomacy: US Tactics for Change in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2004-2006*, (Hague Journal of Diplomacy 2011).

Gates, Robert M. *A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age*, Foreign Affairs 88, no. 1, January/February 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63717/robert-m-gates/a-balanced-strategy>.

Gould, Joe. *DOD to Congress: Iran Deal or No Military Options Open*, Defense News, July 29, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/congress/2015/07/29/dod--congress-iran-deal--no-military-options-open/3084357>.

Griffiths, Martin, Terry O' Callaghan and Steven C. Roach. *International Relations: The Key Concepts*, US and Canada, Routledge, 2008.

Haggard, Stephan and Marcus Noland. *Engaging North Korea: the efficacy of sanctions and inducements*, in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, edited by Etel Solingen, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Heinonen, Oli. *Iran's Nuclear Breakout Time: A Fact Sheet*, The Washington Institute, 28 March 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-nuclear-breakout-time-a-fact-sheet>.

IAEA Board Report: Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 31 August 2006 and 14 November 2006, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iran/iaea-and-iran-iaea-reports>

Jeffrey, James F. *Iran Nuclear Deal Offers Shaky Compromise*, Global Times, 16 July 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-nuclear-deal-offers-shaky-compromise> (accessed 4 November 2015).

Juneau, Thomas. *Squandered Opportunity, Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, California, Stanford, 2015.

Kahl, Colin, Raj Pattani and Jacob Stokes. *If All Else Fails, The Challenges of Containing a Nuclear-Armed Iran*, CNAS, 2013.

Katzman, Kenneth and Paul Kerr, *Iran Nuclear Agreement*, Congressional Research Service 2015.

Krauthammer, Charles. *The worst agreement in U.S. diplomatic history*, 2 July 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-worst-agreement-in-us-diplomatic-history/2015/07/02/960e8cf2-20e8-11e5-aeb9-a411a84c9d55\\_story.html?tid=a\\_inl](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-worst-agreement-in-us-diplomatic-history/2015/07/02/960e8cf2-20e8-11e5-aeb9-a411a84c9d55_story.html?tid=a_inl) (accessed 12 November 2015).

Lampton, David. *Following the Leader*, University of California Press 2014.

Laub, Zachary. *International Sanctions on Iran*, Council on Foreign Relations, 15 July 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/international-sanctions-iran/p20258>.

National Intelligence Estimate. *Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities*, November 2007.

National Security Strategy, February 2015.

Nincic, Miroslav. *Positive incentives, positive results? rethinking US counterproliferation policy*, in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, edited by Etel Solingen, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Palkki David D and Shane Smith. *Contrasting causal mechanisms: Iraq and Libya*, in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, edited by Etel Solingen, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Reynolds, Celia L. and Wilfred T. Wan. *Empirical trends in sanctions and positive inducements in nonproliferation*, in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation* edited by Etel Solingen, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Ross, Dennis. *Iran deal leaves U.S. with tough questions*, 14 July 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/iran-deal-leaves-us-with-tough-questions/2015/07/14/7f76e3b0-2807-11e5-b77f-eb13a215f593\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/iran-deal-leaves-us-with-tough-questions/2015/07/14/7f76e3b0-2807-11e5-b77f-eb13a215f593_story.html) (accessed 29 October 2015).

Sanger, David E. *The Inheritance*, US, Three Rivers Press, 2009.

Solingen, Etel. *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

US House. *Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program*, April 2, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/parametersforajointcomprehenisveplanofaction.pdf>.

US House. *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community*, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 9 February 2016.

Zarate, Juan C. *Treasury's War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare*, US: PublicAffairs, 2013.