

U.S. POLICY TOWARD IRAN - IS A NUCLEAR IRAN ON THE HORIZON?

BY

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The year is 2015 and Iran is armed with nuclear weapons. U.S. policy objectives with respect to Iran continue with no overt changes from early 2000: isolate and contain Iran within the Middle East region and the world, seek regime change, and rely on United Nations sanctions to achieve U.S. and international policy goals. Contrast U.S. policy objectives with a now nuclear armed Iran in 2015. This reality would mean greater Iranian power and influence within the Middle East, and would change the political dynamics with profound, irreversible consequences: The challenges created by a Middle East arms race to obtain nuclear weapons and the potential for Iran to provide a nuclear umbrella protection and capabilities to state and non-state actors. To avert this foreboding prospect, the U.S. must adopt a new strategic deterrence policy toward Iran, and a multi-lateral engagement strategy. The task to achieve tangible U.S. multi-lateral policy results will be daunting, while sufficing Iran's peaceful nuclear energy requirements, but it is a goal that must be attained for the security and stability of the world.

U.S. POLICY TOWARD IRAN – IS A NUCLEAR IRAN ON THE HORIZON?

The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States (U.S.) will not allow these efforts to succeed. History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action.¹

—President George W. Bush
The National Security Strategy of the United States of America
September 17, 2002

The U.S. must accept a grim reality that Iran is a major power in the Middle East. Its regime foments instability with its neighbors and, by many accounts, wields influence that runs counter to democratic U.S. interests in the region. Contrast Tehran's unpredictable behavior with the fact that Tehran has divergent strategic policy interests with the U.S: stability and security in Iraq, eliminating the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in the region, oil and nuclear energy production, halting drug trade in Afghanistan and the attainment of a lasting peace process between Israel and Palestine. Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has served as a catalyst for Iran by proffering acerbic anti-American views. His anti-Israel declarations, most recently at the United Nations and at New York City's Columbia University only reinforce international views that a nuclear-armed Iran is a clear and present danger to U.S. national security, as well as the security and stability of our allies.

For decades, Iran has pursued secretive uranium enrichment and processing programs. Iran has violated the principled tenants of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and is far short of implementing the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR)² that mandates "...states to fulfill its central provisions,

which require enacting domestic legislation and controls to prevent the proliferation of WMDs by non-state actors within their borders.”³ Despite the regime’s carefully orchestrated rhetoric, and assertions that their nuclear programs are for purely peaceful energy requirements, U.S. and international analysts reasonably conclude that the current leadership in Tehran is determined to pursue, obtain, and threaten the U.S. and its allies with a nuclear weapon. With the intent of changing Iran’s behavior regarding the acquisition of nuclear weapons, this paper examines previous multi-lateral diplomatic efforts, and the U.N. resolutions to counter the rising Iranian threat. It will then review U.S. strategic deterrence theory and determine if the U.S. is executing a balanced deterrence approach in deterring and dissuading Iran from achieving its nuclear ends. Part of this analysis includes a futuring diagram, which provides a possible view of the geo-political landscape with a nuclear-armed Iran. Finally, the paper will summarize U.S. policy options for halting Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons, and propose the multi-lateral engagement strategy the U.S. must undertake to halt Iran’s nuclear development, in order to protect vital national security interests home and abroad.

Background – The Current Iranian Regime and Ahmadinejad’s Rise to Power

Iran is considered one of the central Islamic Republic powers in the Middle East, and is ruled by the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamene’i. “He has vast formal powers as the Supreme Leader-Commander in Chief of the armed forces...has a representative on the highest national security body, the Supreme National Security Council, composed of top military and civilian security officials.”⁴ He is broadly viewed as conservative and moderate. He respects U.S. military power, but has made hard line statements in

regards to Israel's legitimacy.⁵ By contrast, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is an Iranian hardliner... "the first non-cleric to be President of the Islamic republic since the assassination of then president Mohammad Ali Rajai in August 1981."⁶ At 52, he campaigned as a man of the people.⁷ "He was born of a blacksmith and modest circumstances, and promised to promote the interests of the poor and return the government to the principles of the Islamic revolution during the time of Ayatollah Khomeini."⁸ Since rising to power, President Ahmadinejad has energized his followers with anti-Semitic declarations. He has angered the West with inflammatory statements that refute the Holocaust, while expressing a desire to wipe out Israel. Despite earlier perceived rifts with the Supreme Leader, it appears that President Ahmadinejad has gained tacit Iranian approval of his anti-American views and nuclear ambitions. However, there are encouraging signs for the U.S. during this period of uncertainty. Popular Iranian support among some sectors is diminishing for the Iranian President. This is especially evident among the young, the educated class, and wealthy middle and upper class factions. Student protests as recently as 2007 demonstrated that the Iranian President's economic and foreign policy toward the U.S. is not universally shared among the Iranian population. These elements of Iranian national will may portend a movement toward normalized diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Iran. It is also a potential sign that evolving the U.S. policy of containment and regime change to one of multi-lateral engagement, while promoting pro-democracy programs may take root.

The sense of urgency to determine the true nature of Iran's nuclear motives has intensified since 2002. Assessments by international observers and the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are incomplete and ambiguous regarding Iran's nuclear goals. "It was revealed in 2003, that the founder of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, A.Q. Khan, sold Iran nuclear technology and designs."⁹ It is clear to the U.S. government that Iran's intentions to develop nuclear energy are a ruse to mask their true goals.

Despite Iran's professions that WMD are inconsistent with its ideology, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) says it is likely that Iran will eventually try to develop a nuclear weapon. Iran's factions appear to agree on the utility of a nuclear weapons capability as a means of ending its perceived historic vulnerability to U.S. domination and a symbol of Iran as a major nation.¹⁰

Iran's Motivation to Obtain Nuclear Weapons

Iran's nuclear program began in the Shah's era, including a plan to build twenty nuclear power reactors.¹¹ Central to Iran's nuclear facility infrastructure plans are the two power reactors in Bushehr, near Iran's capital of Tehran. Located on the coast of the Persian Gulf, they were started but remained unfinished when they were bombed and damaged by the Iraqis during the Iran-Iraq war.¹² "Research and development efforts also were conducted by the Shah's regime on fissile material production, although these efforts were halted during the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war."¹³ In summarizing Iran's nuclear weapon ambitions, the Federation of American Scientists, a science-based group that closely monitors nuclear proliferation, stated the following conclusions.

Consensus is building among IAEA representatives. It is generally believed that Iran's efforts are focused on uranium enrichment, though there are some indications of work on a parallel plutonium effort. Iran claims it is trying to establish a complete nuclear fuel cycle to support a civilian energy program, but this same fuel cycle would be applicable to a nuclear weapons development program. Iran appears to have spread their nuclear activities around a number of sites to reduce the risk of detection or attack.¹⁴

In a thoughtful article in the most recent Yale Global Online, Arch Roberts Jr. provides his insight on why Iran intends to pursue and achieve nuclear weaponization.

There's no plausible peaceful explanation for Iran's uranium enrichment program: The fuel for its first nuclear reactor at Bushehr will be provided by Russia, with a requirement that spent fuel, full of weapons-usable plutonium, will be returned to Russia. Plans for future reactor construction are well in the distance. So the non-bomb uranium Iran has produced to date has no purpose besides that of a nuclear "breakout" option: kick out the inspectors, run the uranium through the centrifuges several more times, work on missiles and other delivery means, and finish up with a couple of bombs. In the view of Iranian leaders, this posture improves Iran's strategic military perspective.¹⁵

World Diplomatic Efforts against Iran Intensify

Beginning with earnest in 2003, concerted multi-lateral diplomatic efforts were initiated by a number of U.S. coalition partners to halt Iran's movement to a nuclear capability. These diplomatic efforts included a number of significant U.N. resolutions intended to pressure and sanction Iran to give up their nuclear weaponization objectives. U.N. Resolution 1737¹⁶ requires Iran to suspend all uranium enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development. U.N. Resolution 1747¹⁷ freezes the assets of forty named Iranian persons and entities, including the Bank of Sepah, and several Iranian companies. UN Resolution 1803¹⁸ calls on states to embargo all arms exports and new business with Iran. As recently as June 2006 the European three, France, Germany and Great Britain, and Russia, China and the United States (U.N. Security Council Permanent members-5 +1) offered Iran a proposal. The proposal provides for several incentives such as assistance in building a light water reactor to foster peaceful energy independence, fuel supply guarantees, membership within the World Trade Organization (WTO) and an end to certain U.S. sanctions that would allow them to import agricultural appliances and Boeing aircraft

parts.¹⁹ “In return, Iran would have to suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities, resume their implementation of the additional protocols outlined in the United Nations Security Resolution 1540 and fully cooperate with the IAEA.”²⁰ To date, Iran has moved slowly to comply, and it is uncertain whether these key policy incentives will motivate the current regime to change course and achieve enduring UNSCR policy compliance.

Current U.S. Policy to Counter Iran's Nuclear Program

In March 2007, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the State Department, R. Nicholas Burns, outlined the U.S. policy toward Iran to counter their nuclear ambitions. The strategy calls for multi-lateral diplomacy with coalition partners to contain and isolate Iran within the Middle East region. A summary of the U.S. policy toward Iran as outlined by Mr. Burns follows:

- End Iranian nuclear proliferation by enforcing UN mandates and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- Multi-lateral financial pressure on Iranian banks and financial systems that support Iran's nuclear programs.
- Active measures to block Iran's support to terrorism. Military security cooperation with Middle East region states to demonstrate U.S. military and policy resolve.
- Empowering Iranian civil society by funding a variety of civil society programs; committing to peaceful, democratic progress in Iran.
- Engaging the Iranian people. Support to civil society and human rights projects in Iran to foster more accurate understanding of American society, culture and democratic values.²¹

Is the current U.S. foreign policy with respect to Iran adequate to prevent them from obtaining nuclear weapons? Are economic and diplomatic efforts taking root or

are they further isolating Iran from the P-5. The question as to whether the U.S. will sit with and directly engage the Iranian leadership on key nuclear policy issues is yet to be resolved. It is not clear whether containment is dissuading the Iranians or simply encouraging the Iranian leadership to defy the world community. In December 2008, a notable speaker on U.S. intelligence policy addressed the United States Army War College on the Central Intelligence Agency's role in the Global War on Terrorism. He also described the agency's transformation efforts to meet the evolving 21st Century intelligence requirements. During his presentation, the speaker was asked directly on his thoughts about Iran and their nuclear ambitions. In a surprising response, he proffered that he had not given Iran much thought in the preceding year. However, he did offer that direct engagement now probably had more traction than in the past four years on issues of mutual concerns.²² Are his comments a sign of the intellectual ambivalence toward Iran by the recently elected administration or an assessment that a nuclear capable Iran was not a vital U.S. interest? Given the current U.S. policy with respect to Iran in which deterrence is a major policy factor, the next section examines deterrence theory.

Deterrence Theory in the Modern Era

Many attribute Dr. Bernard Brodie as the father of U.S. deterrence theory and strategy. He developed a framework that outlined what he viewed as the qualities of a minimum deterrence capability.

- It may require a large conventional force to guarantee even a modest retaliation.
- Deterrence must always be conceived as a relative thing. It must be adequate to the variable but generally high degree of motivation which the enemy feels for our destruction.

- If deterrence fails we shall want enough forces to fight a total war effectively.
- Our retaliatory force must also be capable of striking first, and if it does so its attack had better be, as nearly as possible, overwhelming to the enemy's retaliatory force.²³

Brodie understood that an effective deterrence policy must have both the physical and psychological components for it to be viewed as credible by an adversary. Simply stated, the litmus test for an effective deterrence strategy is the willingness to use the military instrument of power and the perception by one's opponent that the military instrument will be used. Extrapolating Brodie's framework to the 1980s, a widely accepted view was that the combination of deterrence and a national missile defense program was one of the fundamental reasons the U.S won the cold war. However, there are opposing positions on the viability of a national deterrence strategy that depends on as much offensive delivery as a limited nuclear defensive capability.

In Brodie's book, *The Future of Deterrence in U.S. Strategy*, Brodie offered his unique insight into how he believed a ballistic missile defense program would enhance the U.S. national deterrence capability. Furthermore, he accurately envisioned the potential geo-political discourse created as the U.S. developed a ballistic missile defense capability. His insight is remarkable on the economics of deterrence as a function of future military capability, and a lens to the future on current day debates 40+ years later;

Excessive military costs will also be a drain on both economic power but also the social and political cohesion of the U.S., that make for its present greatness and its superiority over its rivals, and these elements are not to be taken lightly in preparing for the future. In short, plans for the deterrence measures of the future must seek to avoid unnecessary impairment of investment...²⁴

A “Call to Arms” for a New Strategic Deterrence Strategy

Today, the U.S. finds itself in a multi-polar world, with state and non-state actors challenging U.S. national security, including Iran, and the potential threat of adversaries using WMDs against the nation and its allies. Potential antagonists possess ballistic missile capabilities, and threaten to change modern warfare with the ability to deliver ballistic missiles capable of carrying conventional, chemical, biological, and nuclear warheads. Building upon Brodie’s fundamentals of a comprehensive national level deterrence strategy, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) published the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review establishing a “New Triad”²⁵ that commenced an ambitious transformation of the U.S. nuclear strategic posture. The Nuclear Posture Report contains three building blocks:

- Offensive strike systems (both nuclear and non-nuclear).
- Defenses (both active and passive).
- A revitalized defense infrastructure that will provide new capabilities in a timely fashion to meet emerging needs.²⁶

Noteworthy in this historical transformation was the National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 23, published in 2002. This NSPD was the driving force that set in motion the laws and policies that created the first U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) framework. President George W. Bush articulated his vision for this new BMDS capability by stating:

The Defense Department plans to employ an evolutionary approach to the development and deployment of missile defenses to improve our defenses over time. The United States will not have final fixed missile defense architecture. Rather, we will deploy an initial set of capabilities that will evolve to meet the changing threat and to take advantage of technological developments.²⁷

Since publishing NSPD 23, the DoD is achieving extraordinary progress in realizing the President's vision, and building one of the primary cornerstones of the nuclear deterrence triad – active and passive defenses. A combination of ground-based, sea-based, and space-based radars and sensors, ground and sea-based interceptors, and Command and Control Battle Management Systems are deployed worldwide to support the elements of the BMDS architecture. The extant strategic deterrence capability coupled with the limited nuclear defense capability model is coming to fruition. A recent article by Peppi DeBiaso, Office of Missile Defense Policy, DoD, reinforces Brodie's thoughts on the utility of a defensive capability to support the U.S. strategic deterrence policy. "American officials recognize that in order to deter nuclear capable adversaries, we must devalue missiles as tools of extortion and aggression, undermining the confidence of our adversaries that threatening a missile attack would succeed in blackmailing us."²⁸ DeBiaso makes a strong case that a capable BMDS architecture is a fundamental component of a national strategy to deter and dissuade adversaries who are willing to challenge U.S. security through nuclear armed, intercontinental ballistic missile system delivery. The stationing of ground based interceptor missiles in Poland, and ground-based sensor radars in the Czech Republic are further evidence of the U.S. active defensive efforts with respect to Iran. The operational deployment of a BMDS in central Europe is a partial remedy against a nuclear armed Iran when multilateral engagement and pro-democracy programs targeted against Iran fail.

Unfortunately, the strategic employment of the BMDS is not going unnoticed by the world community. The U.S. relationship with Russia has suffered due in no small

measure to the stationing of these BMDS assets in Eastern Europe. In November 2008, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev publically derided U.S. BMDS employment plans. During his short oratory, he stated that Russia would deploy Iskander short-range ballistic missiles to Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave sandwiched between NATO and EU states Lithuania and Poland. This would enable Russia to directly target U.S. ballistic missile defense installations slated for Poland and the Czech Republic.²⁹

Confronted with this reality, the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, wrote a thought-provoking article in the summer of 2008, soliciting a reexamination of U.S. strategic thinking about deterrence. He highlighted a renewed emphasis on the New Triad, most notably redressing and evolving the national strategic deterrence model. He stated:

A modern model of deterrence needs to address the challenges posed by extremists and ideologues and accounts for the fact that traditional concepts of deterrence do not work against a terrorist whose avowed tactics are wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents – deterring an idea or movement.³⁰

“Part of the vexing dilemma the U.S. faces with Iran is that despite possessing a significant military overmatch with Iran, and the corresponding confidence in the durability of deterrence, the U.S. has achieved little in dissuading Iran from achieving its strategic nuclear objectives.”³¹ In his book, *Deterring America*, Derek D. Smith buttresses the CJCS contention that the U.S. requires an evolved deterrence model. He states that U.S. military superiority is not making the U.S. safer.³² It is spurring an underground network of trade in unconventional technology and weapons that is increasing U.S. vulnerability to the catastrophic effects of WMD terrorism.³³ The environment in Iran has become fertile ground for the proliferation and exchange of nuclear technology and designs. How then does one evolve modern strategic

deterrence theory from its roots? More importantly, how does the U.S. tailor its strategic deterrence model to achieve U.S. policy objectives with respect to Iran and end their nuclear weapons ambitions?

Futuring a Nuclear Iran

Assuming Iran will comply with U.N. sanctions and not acquire a nuclear weapons capability is both short sighted and potentially dangerous. This possibility demands immediate U.S. leadership and attention. The diplomatic relationship with Iran has never recovered from the 1979 U.S. embassy hostage incident. The U.S. policy of indirect engagement with the Iranian regime has not achieved satisfactory results. Iran has taken a covert approach to mask its nuclear ambitions, further expanding its nuclear objectives, reportedly destabilizing the stability and security in Iraq, and pursuing policy results in the region that counter U.S. policy interests. The most significant and debilitating U.S. policy outcome would be for Iran to successfully develop, test and weaponize a nuclear device. At that point, Iran will have little reason to negotiate across mutual Iranian and U.S. points of conflict.

Given the complex and volatile relationship variable between Iran and Israel, a nuclear equipped Iran becomes a grave threat to U.S. and allied interests in the Middle East and at home. At Figure 1 is a diagram that outlines a potential future regarding Iran's and Israel's choices. Current geo-political conditions on the ground in Israel are extremely fragile. Iran continues to use Hamas and Hezbollah as their proxies, and Iran advances its strategic information campaign that Israel is the lone impediment to a lasting peace within the Middle East. Extrapolate to a nuclear armed Iran and the chance for moderation between Israel and the rest of the region will be damaged

beyond repair. Continued overt threats by Iran will undoubtedly force Israel to act militarily. A significant military response by Israel directed against Iran will bolster Iran's credibility in the region, and further legitimize Iran's movement to a nuclear capable state.

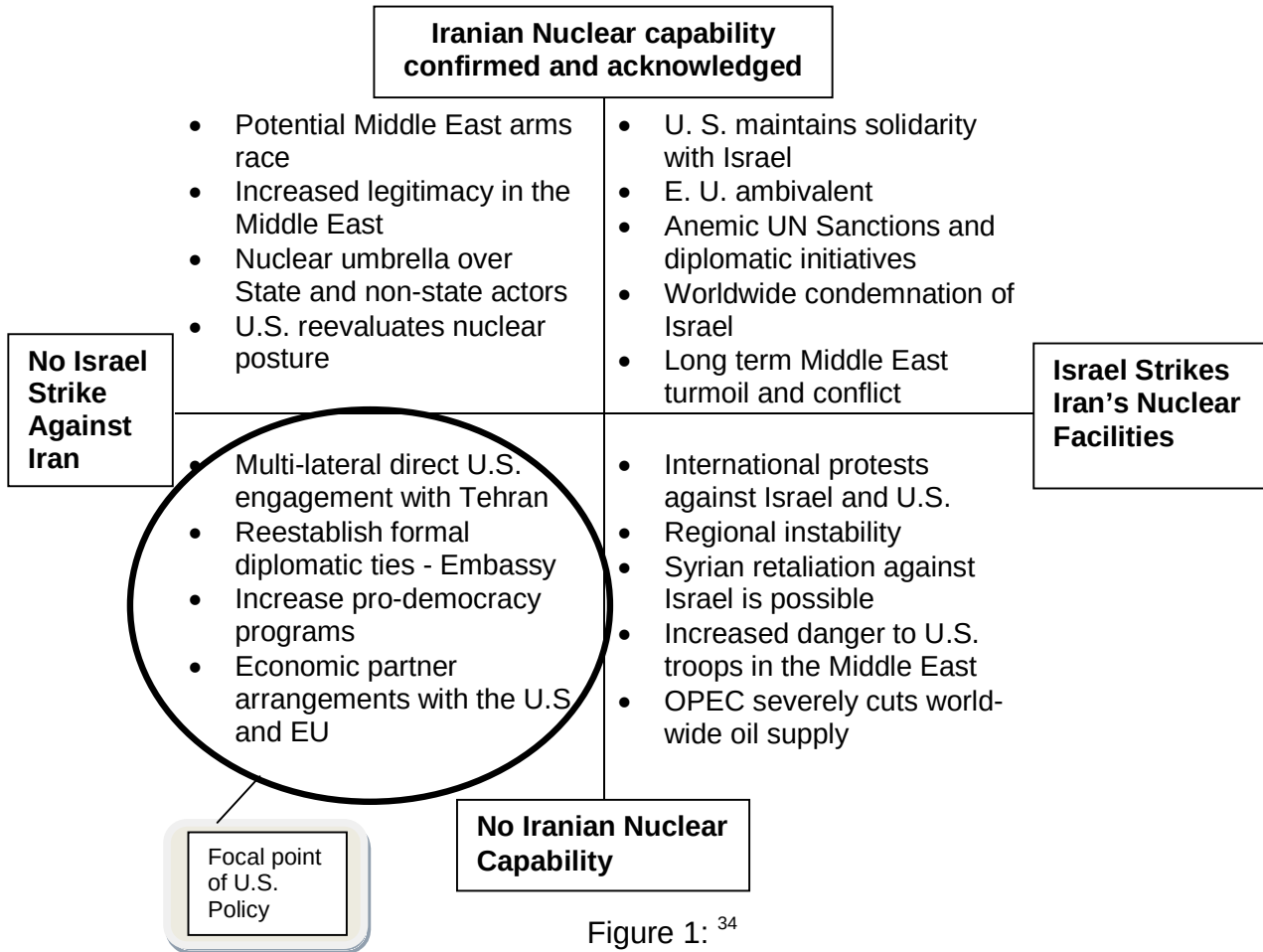


Figure 1: ³⁴

The futuring diagram at Figure 1 outlines four contrasting realities with four distinctly different outcomes. The upper right quadrant represents the most foreboding outcome, a nuclear capable Iran engaged in direct military action with Israel. This is a geo-political risk that must be averted at all costs. It is a harbinger to our survival interests as a nation. The lower left quadrant represents the current U.S. policy of containment, coupled with a multi-lateral engagement strategy with Iran. It is in this

quadrant where U.S. diplomatic and economic instruments of national power must be brought to bear to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. It is also where the U.S. must provide its greatest emphasis and policy efforts in shaping positive outcomes for the U.S. and its allies. The U.S. must expend all the elements of diplomatic and economic power to ensure that Iran never possesses nuclear weapons.

A Multi-Lateral Engagement Strategy with Iran

Strategic engagement with Iran is an old problem that demands a fresh look. In a recent New York Times Magazine article by Robin Wright, the author believes that broad consensus is growing among Bush administration officials to initiate direct and candid dialogue with Iran. The author goes on to state, “the next President must reach to Iran in direct dialogue...the so called ‘grand bargain,’ negotiating over all diplomatic, economic and security issues and eventually re-establishing U.S. and Iranian ties.”³⁵ Engagement with Iran must be extensive, and represent all of the elements of the U.S. interagency influence. Characteristics of a new engagement strategy would be heavily weighted with diplomatic and economic instruments of U.S. power.

Diplomatic. An evolved engagement strategy calls for direct, multi-lateral engagement with Tehran on issues ranging from cross border terrorism, proliferation of WMDs within the Middle East, stability in Iraq and Afghanistan, and mutual accommodation regarding Iran’s desire for peaceful nuclear energy production. The newly elected U.S. President, Barack Obama, must place Iran and the issue of a nuclear Iran as an early centerpiece for his foreign policy initiatives. He should direct the Secretary of State to nominate and select a special envoy to Iran, with duties aimed at finding a middle ground on mutual U.S. and Iranian strategic issues but primarily

focused on halting their nuclear ambitions. U.S. direct interaction with Iran would be part of a greater international coalition much in the same way the U.S. developed and executed the six-party talks with Kim Jong-Il, and the leadership in North Korea. Cooperation and economic collaboration with U.S. nuclear energy organizations may be one potential avenue to bridge existing U.S. and international policy rifts. Bringing in the P-5 nations to lend credibility to the deliberations may further buttress U.S. policy objectives. Central to the U.S. diplomatic efforts are mutual interests, including limiting drug exports from Afghanistan and energy cooperation between Russia and Iran. Furthermore, U.S. interagency partnering (Treasury, Commerce and Justice) cooperating with Iranian security officials may be a small step in assisting the Iranian government in achieving compliance with the standards outlined in UN Resolution 1540, reducing and eliminating the spread of WMD within their borders. In return, the U.S. would seek policy tradeoffs in terms of their goals to obtain nuclear capabilities. Multi-lateral agreements on the nuclear issue, coupled with U.S. credibility with the Iranian leadership may be the springboard to a negotiated Israeli-Palestinian settlement. One of the key elements of negotiation with Iran is the timing of direct discussions. One proposal may be to publically plan for direct high-level negotiations at the conclusion of Iranian general elections that take place in the summer of 2009. The U.S. should also consider lower level engagement outside of the public domain in advance. The short-term U.S. policy goal must be reestablishment of formal ties with Iran by resourcing and manning a U.S. consulate in Iran to affirm its commitment to this enduring engagement strategy.

Information. Continue to fund Voice of America. Adopt a message of strategic cooperation with Iran and Arab states in the region. It must find common ground on areas of domestic policy, drugs, and the global war on terrorism.

Military. Adopt a passive military approach to Iran by working through regional neighbors such as Egypt and Iraq, to reduce and eliminate the proliferation of arms and technology from and to Iran. Work multilaterally with the P-5 to co-opt Syria, India and Pakistan, as they are main actors exporting nuclear technology and designs to Iran. Seek areas of military cooperation and assistance. An achievable long-term goal would be a return of military assistance between the two countries. Relook U.S. Navy presence, and potentially reduce their overt role in the region.

Economic. Reinforce U.S. economic support to Iranian civil society projects. Demonstrate a commitment to stability and security within Iran and within the region. Reevaluate the intensity of sanctions with respect to food and medical aid. Work to synchronize compliance with UN resolutions and relief from punitive sanctions. The European Union (EU) is the primary trading partner with Iran. Their political and economic relationship depends heavily on Iran's compliance with U.N. sanctions and halting their nuclear weapons program. Leverage these facts as bargaining chips.

Way Ahead

When is the use of nuclear weapons viable or absolutely necessary in the advancement of a nation's national interests? Furthermore, how does the U.S. dissuade, deter, and defeat an enemy inspired by an ideology potentially divergent from American culture and values? This is truly a 21st century problem. The U.S. relationship with Iran is at a crossroads. U.S. policies of containment and regime

change under the Bush administration did not produce tangible policy results or dissuade the Iranian government from exploring their options and striving to attain a nuclear capability. In many ways U.S. policies to halt Iran's nuclear research and developmental activities were heavy handed, and did more to create a rift between the U.S. leadership and the leadership in Tehran. To that end, evolving the U.S. new triad must go beyond the physical attributes of upgrading the U.S. offensive nuclear arsenal and development of a BMDS capability. Each of the cornerstone components must be inextricably linked to the political, socio-economic, and geo-political variables the country faces today, and the U.S. must extend that goal to its friends and allies. The timing of direct, multi-lateral engagement between the newly elected U.S. President and the socio-economic environment within Iran open real opportunities for U.S. and Iranian direct engagement to take root. Divestment and continued isolation of Iran with the greater world community is exactly the wrong option for U.S. diplomats. Formal diplomatic communications by President Obama with the Iranian leadership would be a first step in establishing U.S. credibility within the Middle East region and demonstrate U.S. commitment to a peaceful, non-nuclear Middle East. With the backdrop of a recent satellite test by Iran, Iran not only demonstrated the will but the capability to develop intercontinental ballistic delivery systems. This event comes directly on the heels of recent comments by the President Obama signaling U.S. willingness to dialogue openly with the leadership in Tehran. In the most recent addition of the magazine *The Economist*, the author proposes that the most difficult decision that President Obama will make during his first administration is "...whether the U.S. is willing in the final resort to attack Iran's nuclear facilities to stop it from getting a bomb. Everything flows from

that call.”³⁶ While this view is alarmist, the article accurately places the relationship between the U.S. and Iran at a critical juncture in time. The time is now for the U.S. State Department to select a special envoy to Iran and deal directly with the Iranian leadership. A special U.S. envoy with duties in the larger Middle East region is far too broad. A U.S. future with a nuclear-armed Iran demands our greatest national priority.

Dr. Bernard Brodie once offered his opinion; the best reason for the U.S. avoiding the use of nuclear weapons as much as possible in the future is in order to continue, for the purpose chiefly of avoiding incentives to proliferation, the so-called “tradition of non-use.”³⁷ If Dr. Brodie were alive today what new strategic model would he develop to meet the national goals of developing a new strategic deterrence theory? Maybe the prerequisites are before the nation and the U.S. leaders need to look a little deeper.

Endnotes

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⁶ Ibid, CRS-8.

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¹⁰ Kenneth Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Updated September 2008), CRS-19.

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²⁵ Donald H. Rumsfeld, "Nuclear Posture Review [Foreword]," January 8, 2002, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed December, 2008).

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²⁹ Geopolitical Diary, *Medvedev's Carefully Timed Address*, November 6, 2008, 2.

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³⁴ Figure 1, Iran and Israel Futuring Diagram, Author developed Figure through USAWC, Seminar 2 Group Collaboration, September 2008.

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³⁶ The Economist, *Subject: Iran*, December 18, 2008, 1.

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