



A SPECIAL REPORT BY MPAC

SELECTING 'OPTIONS ON THE TABLE' CAREFULLY: The Consequences of a Military Strike on Iran

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FOREWORD

The past year saw significant developments take place in American foreign policy toward Muslim-majority countries. In March, the United States, the international community and global civil society successfully engaged countries in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to agree on a framework to combat religious bigotry and intolerance using freedom of expression, not restricting it.ⁱ In May, Osama bin Laden was eliminated in raid against one of his hideouts. Finally, toward the end of 2011 in late December, our nation withdrew all of its 170,000 combat troops from Iraq, ending an eight-year war and occupation.

Yet, despite these important successes, significant challenges remain. One of these is the highly contentious situation surrounding Iran's nuclear program. Amid the heated conversations frequently characterizing the issue, one important voice has been missing from the table: Muslim Americans. As belonging to a community that spans across many ethnicities and nationalities of origin, Muslim Americans have the potential to be a bridge between East and West. These insights are nowhere more needed than on issues of U.S. national security and foreign policy.

As a part of the Muslim Public Affairs Council's (MPAC) vision for a safe and more secure American and global society, we abhor the thought of nuclear weapon proliferation by any nation,ⁱⁱ including Iran. We also oppose, on religious grounds, to both the theocratic and authoritarian nature of the current Iranian political system.ⁱⁱⁱ

These criticisms notwithstanding, MPAC is also concerned about renewed statements that advocate for a military strike against Iran. It is our belief that toning down the confrontational rhetoric, re-engaging effective international institutions, reinvigorating diplomacy and sanctions that target human rights violators, not the Iranian people, are more promising, yet under-explored approaches. Meanwhile, the arguments in favor of attacking Iran rest on a number of overly optimistic and faulty premises.

Drawing upon many of the world's top regional, military, economic and political subject experts and in the spirit of concern for our nation's best interest, the people of Iran and the welfare of our brothers and sisters in humanity, MPAC offers this paper as our take on this critical situation. While remaining consistent with our moral principles, we seek to serve a voice of pragmatism and level-headed thinking during a time of excessively politicized debates about an issue which carries significant military, economic and political consequences far beyond the immediate region.

-- The Muslim Public Affairs Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY^{iv}

This paper seeks to assess the pros and cons of a military strike option by answering the following questions:

- Will U.S. military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities ensure their complete physical elimination, thus destroying possible nuclear weapons capabilities?
- What are the immediate security, economic and political ramifications of U.S. military strikes against Iran?

We will analyze two types of military strikes:

1. Conventional air-based attacks
2. An air attack using a tactical nuclear device

As an extension of analyzing an actual attack against Iran's nuclear facilities, this report also examines the merits of a military strike.

Arguments favoring an attack on Iran are built upon three faulty premises:

1. *A nuclear-armed Iran is “unacceptable.”* According to this assertion, the regime is irrational and implacable. In its quest to seek nuclear arms to advance its aggressive hegemonic designs in the region, and possibly beyond; deterrence will not work.
2. *The United States has exhausted all of its options.* Its current policy of sanctions and diplomacy has failed or will inevitably fail.
3. *Military strikes are effective and logistically feasible.*

We believe all three premises are unsubstantiated with insufficient evidence, and therefore are fatally flawed. **Echoing other expert analysis, including the intelligence community’s 2007 “National Intelligence Estimate” and its 2011 “Worldwide Threat Assessment,” this paper reaffirms that Iran is a rationally-driven country.** In addition, as other Iran experts have noted, Tehran’s nuclear program is driven by a desire to be treated as an equal by the international community, as well as security concerns to deter the United States or any other nation from seeking “regime change.”

The U. S. and the international community have not exhausted all options for dealing with Iran. For instance, Trita Parsi, a former public policy scholar at the nonpartisan think-tank, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, American policy-makers prematurely gave up on diplomatic engagement with Iranian power brokers, despite its apparent success when utilized by other countries, such as Turkey and Brazil.

Focusing mainly on the last premise, our review of a military strike option shows that its effectiveness is highly questionable. Ensuring there is solid intelligence, both qualitatively and quantitatively, as well as deciding which targets to attack, complicate any mission that seeks to completely destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure. It is uncertain if Iran has covert nuclear sites. Reliable open source information, such as the New York Times, has indicated that U.S. intelligence networks in

Iran may have been partially compromised by counterintelligence actions. Furthermore, many known targets such as sites near Natanz and Qom, Iran, are buried and/or hardened which may mitigate the effects of an aerial assault, even when considering recent developments in armaments technology. An attack may only set back Iran's nuclear program by a few years, but not indefinitely cripple it.

Additionally, there are several unintended military, political and economic consequences of an attack that would undermine America's objectives in the broader Middle East. An attack would invite several reprisals by conventional and asymmetrical Iranian forces in the region, proxy attacks by allied militant countries and calculated instigation of sectarian strife for subversive purposes. This also would potentially have negative side effects of severely driving up the price of oil, strengthening hardline political forces inside Iran and complicating relations with other nations such as Russia and China.

Simply threatening military action against Iran also is problematic because it brings many of the negative aspects of an attack, such as validating hardliners' positions vis-à-vis reformists, without getting any of its material benefits – the elimination, or partial elimination of the regime's nuclear infrastructure.

Moving forward, American policy-makers need to reassess the situation and consider alternative options.

First, there are significant constraints on Iranian behavior. Internally, its economy is under significant strain and its current leaders' credibility is weak due to recent political crackdowns and economic mismanagement. Externally, the United States continues to maintain a significant military presence in the region, and Iran's mostly Sunni Arab neighbors are extremely wary of its intentions. In Iraq, Iran exerts considerable influence, but this is due mostly to a Shi'a-majority constituency finally coming to power. Elsewhere it is limited by the fact that it has to transcend difficult sectarian divisions to gain ground in the Sunni-majority "Arab Street."^v

Moving forward, perhaps the one thing American policy-makers should remain ever cognizant of is to "do no harm." In a move to push Iran toward serious negotiations on its nuclear capabilities, our policies must stop validating and empowering the hardliners and marginalizing more pragmatic forces.

Furthermore, as is in the case in international relations, military force is an unfortunate reality, but its application also has its proper time and place. **Should the U. S. decide to mention the use of military force, it needs to draw new "red lines" about when force can be appropriately used.** One scenario in which military force may be appropriate involves Iran engaging in a clear act of aggression, such as directly threatening to use military force against a U.S. ally such as an Arab state or Israel, or if there is indisputable evidence of its engagement in an act of subversion against another state.

Second, the current U.S. policy, which is focused considerably on sanctions against Iran, has significant drawbacks. While sanctions appear to be limiting the financial and economic maneuverability of the regime, they tend to impact ordinary people rather than those in power. **We believe a targeted approach to sanctions focusing on human rights abusers within the Iranian government and corporations that collaborate in the regime's oppression, while safeguarding the needs and welfare of the Iranian people is a more ethical and effective alternative.** The Stand With the Iranian People Act (SWIPA), H.R. 4303, originally introduced in 2009 by Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN) and former Rep. Bill Delahunt (D-MA), is an excellent step in the right direction, as the bill uses intelligent, targeted sanctions to punish the regime and its collaborators, not average Iranians.^{vi}

Third, American policy-makers should reinvigorate their support for multilateral institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). When given the opportunity to fulfill its mandate, it has been effective. However, nonproliferation experts such as Jon Wolfsthal have noted international funding commitments have not kept pace with the new inspections demands placed upon the agency. This option, if seriously pursued by the United States, would require greater political and financial engagement with multilateral institutions such as the IAEA.

Additionally the U.S. should increase its engagement with other pivotal nations such as Russia and China. Both nations have significant economic and political influence that can be brought to bear in seeking a nonmilitary solution with Iran. Moscow and Beijing's behaviors and statements have demonstrated that they are willing to consider and agree to U.S.-led positions when American policy-makers persistently engage in diplomacy with them.

Finally, the U.S. should lay out an alternative set of contingency plans in the event Iran obtains nuclear weapons. Given that Iran is a confrontational, but rational actor, a strategy of deterrence, containment and engagement – similar to how the U.S. dealt with the Soviet Union during the Cold War – can work. This does not mean our officials should acquiesce to Iran obtaining a bomb; today, global security is better off with less nuclear weapons.

However a nuclear-armed Iran can be effectively deterred and contained. **Even prominent Israeli security experts – the current and former heads of Israel's foreign intelligence service and a former military chief of staff – have stated that a nuclear Iran is not an existential threat to Israel.**^{vii} In return for having to exist with Iranian nuclear weapons, the U.S. must reassure its Middle East allies with security guarantees to mollify their concerns and reduce their own incentives to pursue a nuclear weapon and/or move toward greater escalation with Tehran.^{viii}

Yet, regardless of what specific policy alternatives to war American policy-makers make choose to take, **we believe that order for the United States to maintain its effectiveness as a global superpower, it should also couple nuclear non-proliferation of Iran with nuclear disarmament of Iran's surrounding neighbors, including India, Pakistan and Israel.** As pointed out by experts in a National Defense University study, Tehran's strategic calculus is largely shaped by its perception of the regional threat environment.

Pushing for regional nonproliferation and disarmament, particularly when it comes to Israel, is shared by a majority of people in the Middle East, including Jewish Israelis. A November 2011 public opinion poll of Jewish Israelis by the University of Maryland and Dahaf Institute in Israel, found, "64 percent favored the idea of a nuclear-free zone, even when it was explained that this would mean Israel giving up its nuclear weapons" and "60 percent of respondents favor[ing] 'a system of full international inspections' of all nuclear facilities, including Israel's and Iran's, as a step toward regional disarmament."^{ix}

A comprehensive and balanced regional approach to nonproliferation and disarmament led by the U.S. enhances global security while effectively isolating any Iranian intransigence. In other words, the U.S. cannot be accused of double standards in the scenario, and more of the Iranian people will be supportive of our nation. It can also serve to bolster elements within the Iranian political elite that seek to shift away from confrontational posturing, reduce tensions and seek a negotiated settlement that all interest parties in the region and around the world can live with.

INTRODUCTION

With important exceptions, such as Russia and China, a majority of the international community appears to have serious reservations about Iran's nuclear program. This is due to Tehran's history of covert nuclear activities, including construction of secret facilities, which may have military applications. This has caused concern in many global capitals, including Iran's Arab neighbors, Israel and the United States.

Current U.S. policy is a dual-track approach of sticks, such as international trade and financial sanctions, and carrots that includes diplomatic overtures to initiate strategic engagement.^x Nonetheless this has not stopped experts, politicians and government officials from publicly offering a wide range of policy options ranging from acquiescing to Iran's nuclear ambition and engaging in a policy of containment similar to George Kennan's Cold War strategy,^{xi} to outright regime change^{xii} and everything in between.

One of the more hardline policies receiving renewed public attention has been the idea of bombing Iran's nuclear facilities in order to halt or delay its atomic ambitions. For instance, several 2012 Republican presidential nominees have expressed support for a military strike on Iran.^{xiii} Even President Barack Obama^{xiv} and other politicians^{xv} not involved in the presidential race expressed the idea to "keep all options on the table", a euphemism for leaving open the possibility of a military strike.

However, does all of this public support from public figures, including the President, make a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities an option worth pursuing? In addition to "prevent[ing] Iran from developing a nuclear weapon" and ensuring Tehran "meets its international obligations on its nuclear program," the 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy describes American interests in the Middle East to include:^{xvi}

broad cooperation on a wide range of issues with our close friend, Israel, and an unshakable commitment to its security; the achievement of the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations for statehood, opportunity, and the realization of their extraordinary potential; the unity and security of Iraq and the fostering of its democracy and reintegration into the region; 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.

This paper seeks to assess the pros and cons of a military strike option by answering the following questions:

1. Will U.S. military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities ensure their physical complete elimination, thus destroying possible nuclear weapons capabilities?
2. What are the likely immediate security, economic and political ramifications of U.S. military strikes against Iran?

In order to address these questions, this report begins with a summary of the arguments in favor of a military strike, including outlining core assumptions that the U.S. and international allies have exhausted all other options and that a nuclear-armed Iran is absolutely unacceptable. This paper will also provide a brief critique of these core assumptions (and will return to them during the course of our main analysis).

We will then turn to the main focus of this paper, which is analyzing the possible effectiveness of military strikes to eliminate Iran's nuclear development facilities and examining potential costs. We will be analyzing two types of military strikes:

1. Conventional air-based attacks
2. An air attack using a tactical nuclear device

As an extension of analyzing an actual attack against Iranian nuclear facilities, this report also examines the merits of publicly leaving open the option of a military strike. We conclude with alternative policy recommendations.

THREE PREMISES TO THE 'BOMB IRAN' ARGUMENT

Some security analysts, largely American neo-conservatives and American and Israeli ultra-hawks, believe that the only viable policy option that can effectively slow or halt Iran's nuclear program is a military strike.^{xvii} This argument has three premises to it.

The first argument, of course, is that military strikes are effective and logistically feasible. For now we will put that argument aside, because we will be discussing that shortly, and instead focus on the other two premises.

The second premise is that a nuclear-armed Iran is "unacceptable." According to this assertion, the regime is irrational and implacable. It seeks nuclear arms to advance its aggressive hegemonic designs in the region, and possibly beyond; deterrence will not work.

This premise runs contrary to evidence based on Iranian foreign policy **behavior** since 1979, which shows ruling elites, while espousing a confrontational ideology, are not irrational. For instance, the Iranian regime's decision to accept a 1988 United Nations -brokered cease-fire was based on self-preservation after suffering significant losses of blood and treasure against Saddam Hussein's forces.^{xviii} The decision to support Christian-majority Armenia over Muslim-majority Azerbaijan also appears to be calculated by national self-interest, despite Tehran's espoused support for an ideology based on a radically politicized interpretation of Shi'a Islam.^{xix} Its more recent 2003 decision to temporarily freeze its uranium enrichment and seek a "grand bargain" was also motivated by regime survival,^{xx} something that even proponents of a military attack acknowledge.^{xxi}

More recently the U.S. intelligence community's 2007 "National Intelligence Estimate on Iran," noted that its leadership is, "guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon irrespective of the political, economic and military costs."^{xxii} A 2011 Congressional written testimony by Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, articulating the intelligence community's "Worldwide Threat Assessment" echoed the 2007 "National Intelligence Estimate" by stating, "We continue to judge Iran's

nuclear decision-making is guided by a cost-benefit approach which offers the international community opportunities to influence Iran.”^{xxiii}

Assuming that Iran’s nuclear program does in fact have a military purpose, its potential for nuclear weapons capability is not necessarily evidence of an aggressive posture. Based on hundreds of interviews with government officials, journalists and scholars in the United States and the Middle East, a study by Bradley Bowman, former associate professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, concluded that, “Iran is overwhelmingly motivated by a quest for security and respect.”^{xxiv} A 2005 National Defense University report elaborates upon this further:

Tehran believes it needs advanced nuclear technology that could be used in weapons production for numerous reasons: weapons of mass destruction were used by Iraq against Iran in their 8-year long war...Israel, India, Pakistan and the United States have them; Iran is strategically isolated and needs self-sufficiency to defend itself in the event of an attack; and the possession of such weapons would give the regime a substantial interest in pursuing the nuclear option.

There are also significant domestic incentives to continue a nuclear program. While providing little immediate material benefit, the nuclear issue can distract from economic failures at home.^{xxv} It has also been used by hardliners “to stigmatize reformists, depicting them as defeatists willing to negotiate away Iran’s interests.”^{xxvi}

Although Iran could develop a nuclear weapon, or at least the hedge capability to do so,^{xxvii} alternative options exist to mitigate the risks of such a development. Writing in the U.S. Army War College’s peer-reviewed journal, *Parameters*, national security expert Christopher Hemmer notes, “A nuclear armed Iran will certainly pose a number of challenges for the United States. Those challenges, however, can be met through an active policy of deterrence, containment, engagement and the reassurance of America’s allies in the region.”^{xxviii}

This brings us to the third premise of the military strike option, whether or not the U.S. has exhausted all of its options due to the ongoing or inevitable failure of other policies, such as sanctions and diplomacy. It is far from clear that the U.S. and the international community at large have exhausted all other possible options for dealing with Iran.

For instance, Trita Parsi, a former public policy scholar at the non-partisan think-tank, the Woodrow Wilson International [Center](#) for Scholars, said American policy-makers prematurely gave up on diplomatic engagement with Iranian power brokers, despite its apparent success when utilized by other states. According to Parsi:^{xxix}

Rather than resolving the nuclear issue, Iran and the United States are inching closer to a military confrontation. But war is not inevitable. Diplomacy, which the Obama administration prematurely abandoned, can still succeed.

“Our Iran diplomacy was a gamble on a single roll of the dice,” a senior State Department official told me in 2010. In short, it either had to work right away or not at all. In fact, six months after the U.S. talks collapsed, Turkey and Brazil secured a version of the fuel swap that Obama had sought.

Fearing that the failure of the U.S. talks would eventually lead to war, Turkey and Brazil stepped in to persuade Iran to accept the American benchmarks for the fuel swap. To the surprise of many in the White House, Turkey and Brazil succeeded.

Given that Iran is not necessarily the irrational and implacable adversary some have made it out to be, variants of a deterrence-and-containment strategy (if Iran builds a nuclear weapon), roughly along the lines of a Kennan Cold War model, is another potential option.

Another option may be to negotiate some sort of a formal agreement between Iran and the international community, within the legal scope of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which allows for a limited amount of uranium enrichment and U.S. security assurances in exchange for a formal Iranian acceptance of the NPT's Additional Protocol and other transparency measures.^{xxx}

The purpose of pointing out these potential alternatives is not necessarily to automatically claim they are better options. It is merely to show that these options exist and have not been fully explored. Toward the end of this paper, we will explore these ideas further.

WILL A STRIKE AGAINST IRANIAN NUCLEAR FACILITIES WORK?

Assuming that these three premises are supported by strong evidence, questions still remain regarding the effectiveness and possible drawbacks of a military option. Will U.S. military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities ensure their physical elimination, thus destroying possible nuclear weapons capabilities? What are the likely immediate political and security ramifications of U.S. military strikes against Iran?

Generally there are three types of scenarios discussed. The first and most commonly cited method of attack is an aerial assault, possibly combined with naval support, using conventional explosive ordnance. Before implementing a military strike against a target, two key ingredients are required: picking which targets to hit and having the correct tactical intelligence to ensure accuracy and efficacy.

However assessments vary as to how many targets to hit. Having an accurate and defined number of targets is important because it affects the size of the strike force needed and is directly tied to the objective sought to be achieved.

A limited strike intended to key infrastructure would need to target at least five major targets, in one day, that appears to be most relevant to weapons capability:^{xxxi}

- The Natanz facility, located 130 miles southeast of Tehran, underground
- The Qom enrichment facility (identified in 2009), underground
- The Arak heavy water plant, 150 miles south of Tehran
- The Isfahan nuclear technology research center in central Iran, and
- The Karaj radioactive storage facility, 100 miles northwest of Tehran.

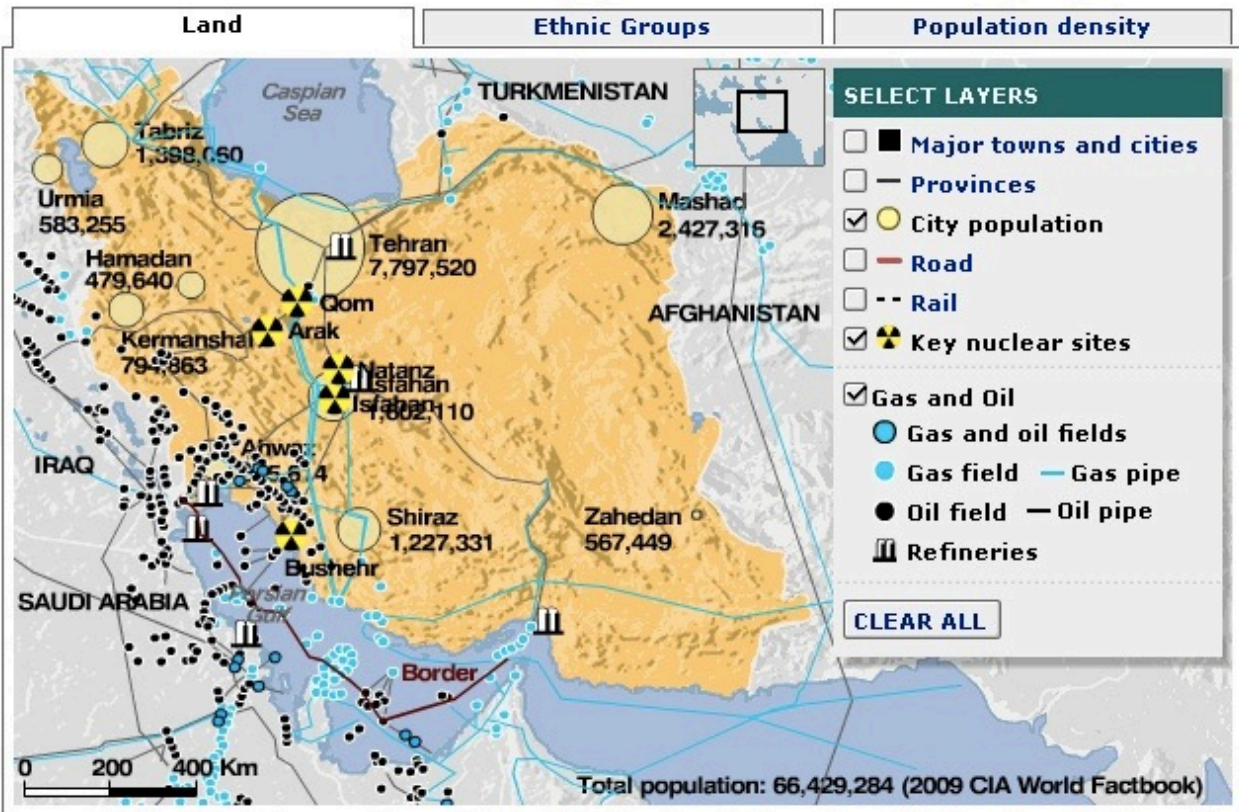


Fig. 1. – BBC Map of Iran's nuclear facilities, oil/gas infrastructure and major population centers ^{xxxii}

However if the objective is to severely damage or achieve the physical elimination of the *entire* Iranian nuclear infrastructure, according to a study by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), a federally-funded think-tank, this, “might require 200-600 sorties, and could take three to 10 days to complete. This would be beyond Israel's capabilities.”^{xxxiii} However if it were to seriously embark upon a military option, then it would need to implement a much larger effort that would include destroying Iran's retaliatory capabilities to mitigate risk. Again, according to the USIP, this likely would include the army, navy, paramilitary and air defenses. This kind of an effort “would require 1,000 to 2,500 cruise missile and aircraft strike sorties, plus a larger number of supporting missions... and would probably take ‘several weeks to two months to fully execute and validate.’”^{xxxiv}

In addition to target selection, a successful aerial assault must be predicated on good intelligence. Simply put, one must know what to attack and where to attack. This is especially important given that there are several practical issues, which may make an airstrike against Iran's facilities more difficult than the 1981 bombing of the Osirak nuclear plant in Iraq, which some have cited as a successful case study.^{xxxv}

In fact, Osirak and Iran are different in several ways. First, unlike the Osirak case, Iran is not limited to one facility; it has several that are geographically dispersed across a country that is approximately four times the size of Iraq. Second, the air defenses around Iranian facilities anticipate an Israeli or American strike, whereas the Iraqis were focused on defending against a possible Iranian raid.^{xxxvi} Some of the facilities, such as the ones in Qom and Natanz are located underground and hardened against possible bombing.^{xxxvii} (Recently, the head of Iran's civil defense organization, Gholamreza Jalali, announced that he would initiate the process moving all enrichment facilities under ground to make them safer from an attack.)^{xxxviii}

A variant of the conventional air strike option would be to attack any targeted nuclear facility with a tactical nuclear device. (While this scenario may seem far-fetched to some, it is not without basis in reality. Former President George W. Bush and other administration officials have previously discussed the possibility of using nuclear weapons against Iran in a preventive strike.)^{xxxix}

The *Union of Concerned Scientists* (UCS), a science-policy non-profit, in 2005 discussed the possibility of a US attack using a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP), tactical nuclear bombs that can burrow into the earth and destroy underground Iranian nuclear sites. Based on a simulation of the RNEP's capabilities, the UCS study found such a

Doubts remain about the ability of air sorties to completely destroy the infrastructure not only because many targets are deeply buried and hardened, but also because there may be a lack of intelligence that fully map out all of the sites that need to be attacked.

device would fail at destroying the deepest and most separated bunkers: "The seismic shock produced by the RNEP would only be able to destroy bunkers to a depth of about a thousand feet. Modern bunkers can be deeper than that, with a widely separated complex of connected rooms and tunnels."^{xl}

Proponents of a military strike option, may also point to the recent development of a new bunker-buster bomb, the Massive Ordnance Penetrator,^{xli} which can destroy deeply buried and hardened targets, such as those in Iran. Assuming that it can destroy hardened targets like the facility near Qom (a big uncertainty because the site is deeply embedded with a mountain),^{xlii} it does not address another important issue: whether or not Iran has other covert facilities that it has not declared to the international community. The latest discovery was the revelation of a secret nuclear facility in 2009 near Qom.^{xliii}

The question over other covert facilities goes back to the broader issue of ensuring there is solid intelligence. Based on publicly available information, this is unclear. Even those analysts who take a more optimistic view of Israeli (and U.S.) aerial assault capabilities "stress the critical nature of target knowledge. In many cases, the means of striking or defending WMD targets may be less important than the ability to locate or hide them."^{xliv}

Over the past several years, news agencies have reported Western, including American, intelligence assets being uncovered in Iran. For instance in 2004 a CIA employee mistakenly sent a digitally encrypted message to the agency's spy network in the country, including one person who happened to be a double agent for Iran. As a result, "The [double] agent quickly turned the data over to Iranian security officials, and it enabled them to 'roll up' the CIA's network in Iran."^{xlv} More recently in November 2011, US officials have confirmed that Iran counterintelligence officials exposed one the CIA's spy networks in the country.^{xlvi}

In sum, the ability of conventional or nuclear air assaults to completely destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure is highly questionable. Doubts remain about the ability of air sorties to completely destroy the infrastructure not only because many targets are deeply buried and hardened, but also because there may be a lack of intelligence that fully map out all of the sites that need to be attacked.

However, attacking Iranian facilities not only runs the risk of being ineffective, but also counterproductive. A number of military, economic, and political negative side effects may occur that arguably outweigh the benefits of a strike.

SECURITY CONSEQUENCES

An attack against Iran is not without significant security costs. According to a 2006 study using Pentagon-designed software, Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), a global health policy advocacy group, conducted a simulation of the effects of what a nuclear attack using a 340-kiloton yield bomb against Natanz and Isfahan. PSR calculated that “within 48 hours, fallout would cover much of Iran, most Afghanistan and spread on into Pakistan and India.” It went on to further note, “our calculations show that within 48 hours, an estimated 2.6 million people would die.”^{xlvi}

Putting aside clear humanitarian ramifications for the moment, an attack also creates negative security side effects. First, the simulation shows that U.S. allies in Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan would all be sickened by radioactive fallout. This would almost certainly include the approximately 98,000 U.S. soldiers serving in Afghanistan.

Second, the devastation caused by such a blast would likely create significant numbers of refugees to neighboring countries. A huge and sudden influx of people coming in from outside a nation has the potential to impose significant stress and political instability on host nations.^{xlvi}

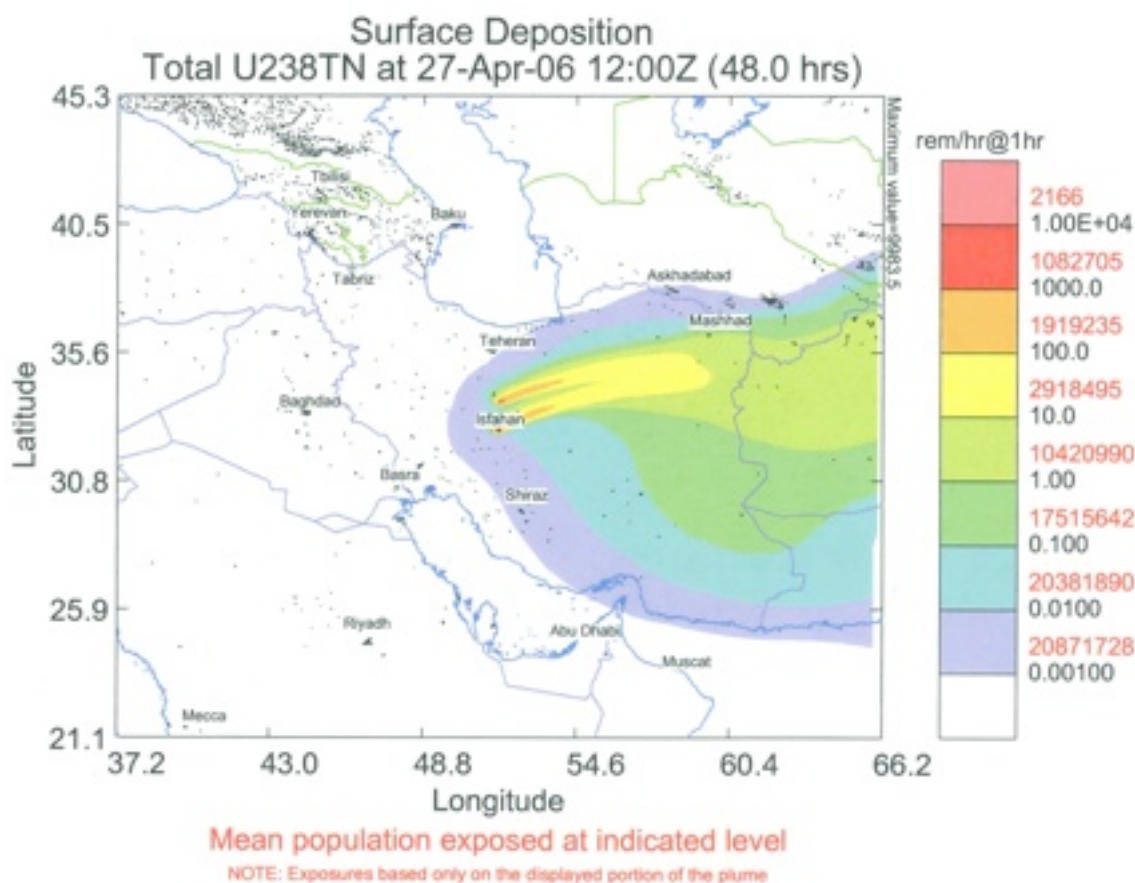


Fig. 2. – PSR Simulation of Radioactive Fallout from Nuclear Attack on Natanz & Isfahan Sites ^{xliv}

Even without the use of tactical nuclear weapons against Iranian nuclear infrastructure, a strike employing conventional ordnance could have devastating effects. According to simulation conducted by Bennett Ramberg, a former Department of State official during the George H.W. Bush administration, “the radiological releases from Bushehr’s destruction could approach the size of Chernobyl.”¹

Iranian reprisals only add to the complications posed by a strike’s radiological side effects. The first challenge of an Iranian reprisal is that the United States (and any participating allies) would have to spend significantly greater amounts of resources in a broader assault effort than if focused solely on destroying Iranian nuclear infrastructure.

Even if the collateral damage from a severe response like a nuclear attack were to occur, as mentioned earlier, military planners would still need to anticipate Iranian reprisals. Tehran’s responses would most likely be based on a combination of conventional and asymmetrical means.

Conventionally, Iran would probably use its arsenal of missiles, including Scuds and Shahab’s to attack both Israeli territory (including Israel’s Dimona nuclear reactor),^{li} as well as U.S. military assets in the region, including 5th fleet in Manama, Bahrain and several U.S. bases located in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.

Yet Iran’s conventional capabilities do not appear to be very significant. The Iranian army suffered severe losses during its war with Iraq, which it still has not fully recovered from. According to Anthony Cordesman, a distinguished American military strategist at the nonpartisan think-tank, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, “Iran’s conventional military readiness, effectiveness and capabilities have declined since the end of the Iraq-Iran war, and Iran has not been able to find a meaningful way to restore its conventional edge in the region.”^{lii}

Iran's asymmetric options are based on both its connections to militant non-state actors and the direct capabilities and strategies of its national assets. Regarding non-state militants, Iran has connections to three main groups.

From 1997-2004, it spent only \$2.3 billion on military arms in comparison to the substantially smaller nations of Oman at \$2.5 billion, and Kuwait at \$3.1 billion, Saudi Arabia at \$10.5 billion, and the UAE at \$12 billion.^{liii} Thus, in order to compensate for its lack of conventional strength, Iran’s priorities have shifted to favoring asymmetric strategies.

Iran's asymmetric options are based on both its connections to militant non-state actors and the direct capabilities and strategies of its national assets. Regarding non-state militants, Iran has connections to three main groups.

First is the Lebanese Shi’a group, Hezbollah. Founded during the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon in 1982 with the assistance of Iran, Hezbollah has become a formidable force in the region. According to the U.S. Congress’ non-partisan think-tank, the Congressional Research Service, Hezbollah serves as both a mainstream political party and armed militia in Lebanon with a transnational network that has branches in Latin America, North America, West and Central Africa and the broader Middle East.^{liv} Its main Lebanese branch has significant military capabilities – much of which were on display in its 2006 war with Israel – including thousands of short and long-range rockets, land-to-sea anti-ship missiles and sophisticated anti-armor weaponry.^{lv}

In the event that Iran is attacked, according to a war game simulation at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute, Iran may partially blame Israel,^{lvi} even if it was not directly

involved in an assault. In this case, however, there would be little reason why Hezbollah would not employ all of its war-fighting capabilities, including its longer range rockets that it chose not to use during its 2006 conflict with Israel.

Additionally Hezbollah may seek to strike at Israeli and Jewish targets elsewhere around the world, similar to its alleged bombings in 1992 and 1994, against Jewish and Israeli targets in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Echoes of a planned response were voiced by Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary, Naim Qassem, when he claimed in a July 2010 interview that his organization holds a "large and precise bank of Israeli targets" in the event of a new war with Israel.^{lvii}

In addition, Iran may leverage its relationship with Palestinian militant groups Hamas to attack Israel. Hamas is believed to have significant mortar and rocket capabilities that can reach out as far as 80km and hit major population centers such as Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem.^{lviii} Recent reporting by *Jane's Intelligence's* Islamic Affairs Analyst notes those recent democratic gains from the "Arab Spring" have stimulated significant debate within Hamas over whether or not to give up armed confrontation with Israel in favor of a non-violent strategy.^{lix} The outcome of the debate, according to the report, appears to largely hinge on how Hamas' leadership perceives how the strategic shift would be received among its constituents.^{lx} A November 2011 opinion survey by Gallup found overwhelming majorities of Palestinians – and Arabs across the region – oppose a military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities.^{lxi} A strike against Iran could have the unintended effect of allowing violence-supporting hardliners gain the upper hand within Hamas' internal debates.

Beyond support for militant non-state leaders antagonistic with Israel, Iran appears to have developed options that allow it to directly strike against U.S. forces. Iran is alleged to have ties with the Taliban, a group it was once "implacably hostile"^{lxii} toward. Some U.S. officials claim Tehran is supporting the Taliban through arms, training and possibly allowing the transit of foreign militants through its territory into Afghanistan.^{lxiii}

However Iranian asymmetric options go also beyond training and outsourcing its fighting to sympathetic non-state actors. The Iranian regime itself has significant capabilities it can bring to bear on American forces in the region.

Substantial numbers of Shi'a, a minority sect of Islam shared by a majority of Iranians, live in strategic parts of the Gulf region, including Kuwait, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the oil-rich Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.^{lxiv} One potential option Iran has is to engage in disruptive activity by instigating Shi'a populations in the region to rise up and create instability,^{lxv} something feared by many regional Arab leaders.^{lxvi} This can range from encouraging protests, as Bahrain has recently alleged,^{lxvii} to the possibility of attacking oil-rich areas of Saudi Arabia where many Shi'as live (particularly if Iran believes Saudi Arabia colluded with the United States and/or Israel).^{lxviii}

Although allegations about Iran instigating protests in Bahrain appear to be unproven, some analysts did see the situation as a proxy battle between Iranian and Saudi Arabian spheres of influence.^{lxix} The clerical regime did appear to politically position itself to stoke sectarian aspects of the uprising in order to make inroads with the local Shi'a population and gain leverage over the Saudi and American-supported ruling Sunni family.^{lxx} Sectarian uprisings in these strategic locations could play a highly disruptive role by compromising the staging grounds used by U.S. military forces to strike Iran.

Iran also has a significant naval asymmetrical option at its disposal. According to an analysis by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a neo-conservative leaning think-tank, the Iranian fleet can do two major actions. First, it may use the paramilitary Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to

employ its familiarity with the local aquatic environment, available weapons and flexible tactics to defeat its enemies. More specifically it deploy an “asymmetric naval war fighter [that] exploits enemy vulnerabilities through the use of 'swarming' tactics by well-armed small boats and fast attack craft, to mount surprise attacks at unexpected times and places.”^{lxxi}

Iran's naval fighters have the added advantage of their areas of operation being located close to their staging areas, enhancing their reactionary capability. They also have a deep and dense coastal road network, which enhances their tactical options and flexibility.^{lxxii} The Strait of Hormuz itself acts as a restricting corridor, which decreases both the effectiveness and maneuverability of large enemy fleets while allowing Iran to hit targets on the far side with long-range coastal missiles.

Iranian naval forces are likely to employ a “hide, hit, run, repeat” strategy—that is, utilizing camouflage and deception combined with repeated fast, powerful blows to the enemy, and subsequent escapes. These ambushes can originate from small coastal coves, inlets, harbors, islands, artificial objects, coastal/offshore staging areas, and/or busy sea lanes.^{lxxiii} The IRGC's guerilla-style naval tactics are potentially troublesome when combined with offensive choke-point mining that leverages geographic advantages to both box in its enemies for attack and preemptively keep them out of its waters.

Iran's strategic location between the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz also enhances its stealth capabilities. Any naval conflict in these two bodies between foreign conventional and Iranian unconventional naval forces will likely prove favorable for Iran, given the fact that the IRGC naval fleet uses civilian-looking boats and vessels to approach enemy vessels. Considering the fact that more than 3,000 local vessels a day pass through both of these bodies, overcoming IRGC naval forces may prove to be difficult for its adversaries.^{lxxiv}

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

Another consequence of an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities would be a spike in the price of oil. Historically sharp rises in the price of oil, which were often the result of geo-political conflicts, have led to economic recessions since World War II.^{lxxv} In the context of a military strike against Iran, rising oil prices will likely occur in a number of ways. First, even before any military backlash occurs, in a nuclear strike scenario the expected trajectory of the radiation would directly contaminate the Strait of Hormuz and southwestern Turkmenistan. Both are extremely important because they involve the transit and/or exploitation of oil/gas resources. Radiation fallout in these two parts of the world would contaminate gas fields and shipping routes for an indefinite period of time.

Assuming a 21-day closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a December 2011 assessment by the Rapidan Group, an energy market analysis firm, estimated the global price of oil could increase up to \$175 a barrel.

Putting aside a worst-case scenario such as a nuclear strike, a more realistic strike scenario involving conventional ordnance against a target such as the Bushehr nuclear power plant would spread significant amounts

radioactive fallout into the Persian Gulf.^{lxxvi} Radiation fallout with or without the use of nuclear ordnance would contaminate gas fields and shipping routes for an indefinite period of time.

Radiological effects would only further complicate the high likelihood of Iranian forces attempting to shut down the Strait of Hormuz. How much would global oil prices rise in the event of an Iranian naval action? According to an analysis by Caitlin Talmadge, a former Fellow at Harvard University's John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, if Iranian forces mine the Strait of Hormuz it would close shipping lanes for up to one month,^{lxxvii} thus temporarily shutting off 17 percent of all oil sold worldwide and 33 percent of all seaborne traded oil.^{lxxviii}

In terms of price increases, Hadi Esfahani, a Middle East economics expert at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Center for Global Studies, conservatively estimates that, "an oil price increase as a result of a military attack, even if it does not turn into a broader war, could exceed 50 percent".^{lxxix} Assuming a 21-day closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a December 2011 assessment by the Rapidan Group, an energy market analysis firm, estimated the global price of oil could increase up to \$175 a barrel.^{lxxx}

Esfahani's analysis was published in September 2008, just before the global recession hit. Since then the United States, EU, and other nations have been undergoing a period of intense economic turmoil. Nations such as Italy, Spain and Greece have been hit especially hard by the EU's debt crisis. These three nations are also heavily reliant upon Iranian oil imports to keep their economies going.^{lxxxi} Unsurprisingly, they have been lobbying against oil sanctions toward Iran. Rising oil prices from an attack on Iran would damage their already weak economies, further spread their financial contagion and possibly American economic interests.^{lxxxii}

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

In the event of a possible U.S. military confrontation with Iran, some countries, such as Russia and China, may react very negative toward such an occurrence. For instance, Russia would likely have a negative reaction. Since the mid-1990s Russia has been developing closer ties with Iran, including for nuclear development, because Tehran 1) has become an important market for Russian arms exports, 2) the Iranian regime helps achieve a broader Russian foreign policy goal of offsetting U.S. unilateralism, particularly as advocated by certain former KGB-elements within Putin's inner circle, and 3) it is positioning itself to coordinate with the Iranian energy sector in the event Tehran manages to become a major gas-exporter in the future.^{lxxxiii} Nevertheless, despite certain mutual interests, particularly in terms of shared suspicions about U.S. power, according to Mark N. Katz, a 2010 Visiting Scholar at the Washington, D.C.-based Middle East Policy Council, "Russia and Iran have long had a contentious relationship and do not cooperate well with each other."^{lxxxiv}

Specifically on the issue of nuclear development, Russian cooperation with Iran has been close on the Bushehr-based nuclear reactor, including sending over hundreds of its own scientists and technicians. Killing many of its scientists and technicians as collateral damage in an attack would be likely to create tensions with the United States. If Israel launched the attack, Russia may push for sanctions against it at the U.N. Security Council.^{lxxxv}

Furthermore, according to the American Enterprise Institute, a neo-conservative think-tank, "... despite voting in favor of the UN Security Council resolutions in 2006, 2007 and 2008, Russia blocked further punitive action against Iran in September 2008 — even after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) condemned Iran's lack of cooperation."^{lxxxvi}

Russian Deputy foreign minister Sergei Rybakov's past statements on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Political shifts would not be limited to political elites; an attack on Iranian soil by American forces would constitute a very large setback to the country's reformist movement.

Treaty have indicated support for Iranian possession of nuclear technology.^{lxxxvii} Given these positions, and a certain level of enduring post-Cold War mistrust, attacking Iran would negatively complicate US-Russian relations, raise tensions between Washington and Moscow, and harm progress made in areas of cooperative international security, such as nuclear arms limitation talks and treaties.

Another country impacted by a U.S. attack on Iran is China. According to Jeffrey Reeves, Director for Chinese Studies at the Center for Advanced Studies, Beijing's support for Iran and its nuclear program appear to be motivated by three factors:

1. Energy geo-politics,
2. The ability to provide China with extra political leverage to secure its perceived "existential" security needs against internal and external antagonists, and
3. Offset perceived American unilateralism.^{lxxxviii}

Nevertheless, Reeves notes that "While China does support Iran's right to a nuclear program, it also places more importance on its relations with the United States. Iran remains a third-tier foreign policy priority for Beijing, with the United States its only first-tier concern."^{lxxxix} Perhaps this is why China, like Russia, has also supported prior US-led decisions to sanction Iran.^{xc} While these patterns demonstrate

that China's attitudes and behaviors toward Iran can be malleable at times to U.S. actions, a strike against Iran would probably make them more antagonistic toward future U.S. policy actions dealing with Iran and broader global issues, particularly in light of Beijing's shared skepticism (albeit to a lesser degree) of U.S. global power.

Political costs are not limited to the international scene; extend to the domestic political dynamics within Iran. Many commentators and politicians, including some Iranian leaders, have sought to portray an Iranian political landscape as consistently uncompromising and confrontational on the nuclear issue. While there is a domestic political consensus on Iran's right to a peaceful program,^{xcv} there is robust debate between reformists and conservative pragmatists on one hand, and hardliners on the other, about a weapons capability and how it affects its relationship with Western states.^{xcvi}

Yet, as noted earlier, Iran's quest to build a nuclear infrastructure that provide a hedge capability to build weapons, if needed, is motivated by security fears and international prestige.

Political shifts would not be limited to political elites; an attack on Iranian soil by American forces would constitute a very large setback to the country's reformist movement. At a minimum it will politically discredit reformers and validate the hardliners' confrontational stance. Furthermore, given recent regime behavior, it would provide the necessary pretext for hardliners to engage in another wave of brutal crackdowns against any opposition.^{xcvii} Finally it may further motivate the regime to explicitly engage in an overt weapons program^{xcviii} and possibly leave the NPT.^{xcix}

Muhammad Sahimi, head of the independent news agency *Tehran Bureau* and a veteran Iranian political analyst, adequately sums up the effect of an American attack^{xcvi} in his assertion that Iranian society would rally behind its government. Large segments, if not an outright majority, of Iranians are skeptical of foreign pronouncements about their nation's domestic affairs. A pair of polls conducted by World Public Opinion (WPO) between January and September 2009 found 60 percent Iranians supported "full, unconditional negotiations" with the U. S.^{xcvii} However WPO's research also found "almost two-thirds of Iranians said they believe that Americans hate Muslims and go out of their way to humiliate the Islamic countries and their people."^{xcviii}

Sahimi's warning and the WPO polls are perhaps best illustrated by the case of Iranian student activist Ahmad Batebi. Batebi, after being immortalized by his appearance on the cover of *The Economist* magazine in July 1999, defiantly holding up a blood-stained tee-shirt, endured a lengthy prison sentence in Iran's notorious Evin prison, where he was routinely beaten and tortured, and where his physical and mental health rapidly deteriorated.

While temporarily on medical release from prison, Batebi fled Iran, eventually seeking asylum in the United States. Nonetheless, despite his palpable animosity toward the Iranian regime, Batebi made clear that US military action in Iran would be wholly unwelcome by the Iranian people. Recoiling at the mere prospect of American military intervention, he flatly stated that "I might go back and fight for my country myself," should the US attack Iran.^{xcix}

SHOULD THE UNITED STATES 'KEEP ALL OPTIONS ON THE TABLE'?

Thus far the focus of this paper has been discussing the effectiveness and ramifications of an actual attack. However a question remains as to whether or not simply threatening to attack is effective. One may argue that the threat of an invasion against Iran in 2003 led the regime's leaders to open Iran up to IAEA inspections. Flexing some of America's military muscles would bring Iran back to the negotiation table and agree to transparency measures.

This argument is faulty for two reasons. First, the threat took place in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq invasion, before the "intelligence" used to justify it was discredited and the weapons of mass destruction were never found. Second, when the U. S. rejected an Iranian offer for re-engagement through a "grand bargain," "it confirmed the arguments of the hardliners and undercut those of the moderates, convincing many Iranians that the U. S. had a greater interest in regime change than in policy change."^c

At this point with the hardliners still in charge, Iranian perceptions of feeling threatened by a possible American or Israeli attack remains one of the primary reasons it may be seeking a nuclear hedge capability. Threatening to attack Iran at some point in the future by "keeping all options on the table" only reinforces that perception and continues to validate the views of the hardliners vis-à-vis reformists. In addition, continuing military threats poisons the well of diplomacy without positively changing Iranian behavior.^{ci}

It also reduces the credibility of an American deterrent. With the revelation that the U.S. went to war with Iraq based on false intelligence, American accusations and concerns are now treated with a greater amount of skepticism, despite problematic behaviors by the Iranian regime. In this context, by unsubtly pointing toward military action, without not actually undertaking it, further serves validate hardliner positions made in public – whether sincere or not – that America is merely a paper tiger.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion this review of a military strike option shows that its effectiveness is highly questionable. Additionally, there are several unintended military, political and economic consequences of an attack that would undermine America's objectives in the broader Middle East and with other important international actors such as Russia and China. Simply threatening military action against Iran is also problematic because it brings many of the negative aspects of an attack, such as validating hardliners' positions vis-à-vis reformists, without getting any of its material benefits – the elimination, or partial elimination of the regime's nuclear infrastructure.

More fundamentally, however, a military option is based on two other flawed premises and insufficiently supported with evidence:

1. A nuclear-armed Iran is absolutely “unacceptable” and
2. The U.S. has exhausted all of its policy options.

The challenges facing American policymakers and the international community are not as dire as many may think.

First, there are significant constraints on Iranian behavior. Internally, its economic is weak and its current leaders' credibility is shot due to recent political crackdowns and economic mismanagement. Externally, the United States continues to maintain a significant military presence in the region and Iran's mostly Sunni Arab neighbors are extremely wary of its intentions. In Iraq it exerts considerable influence, but is mostly due to a Shi'a-majority constituency finally coming to power. Elsewhere it is limited by the fact that it has to transcend difficult sectarian divisions to gain ground in the Sunni-majority “Arab Street.”^{cii}

Like other expert analysis, including the U.S. intelligence community's 2007 National Intelligence Estimate and its 2011 Worldwide Threat Assessment, this paper reaffirms that Iran is a rational actor. As other Iran experts have noted, Tehran's nuclear program is driven by a desire to be treated as an equal by the international community, as well as security concerns to deter the United States or any other nation from seeking “regime change.”

Moving forward, perhaps the one thing American policy-makers should remain ever cognizant of is to “do no harm.” To move Iran back toward serious negotiations on its nuclear capabilities, our policies must stop doing things that validate and empower the hardliners and marginalize more pragmatic forces.

“Keeping all options on the table,” and engaging excessively confrontational public rhetoric, are counterproductive. As mentioned earlier, publicly talking about a military option brings some of the drawbacks and none of the benefits of an actual attack.

Furthermore, as is in the case in international relations, military force is an unfortunate reality, but its application also has its proper time and place. Should the United States decide to mention the use of military force, it needs to draw new “red lines” about when force can be appropriately used. One scenario in which military force may be appropriate involves Iran engaging in a clear act of aggression, such as directly threatening to use military force against a U.S. ally like an Arab state or Israel, or if there is indisputable evidence of its engagement in an act of subversion against another state.

Second, the current U.S. policy, which is focused considerably on sanctions against Iran, has significant drawbacks. While on one hand sanctions appear to be limiting the financial and economic maneuverability of the regime, they also tend to impact ordinary people rather than those in power. Iran experts, such as Fariborz Ghadar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, have noted that sanctions harm political opposition by reducing the financial power of small and medium enterprises and allowing the paramilitary establishment's *bonyad* enterprises^{ciii} to gain more influence in the Iranian economy.^{civ} Furthermore, EU countries Greece, Spain, and Italy are heavily reliant on Iranian oil imports. All three nations have fought to stave off oil sanctions that will further harm their weak economies and run the risk of further intensifying European economic crisis.

Sanctions have also largely denied Iranian opposition movements the ability to fully leverage the impact of social media and Internet communications.^{cv} Thankfully, the U.S. *Department of the Treasury* partially corrected this policy by issuing an exemption from sanctions for free Internet communication software.^{cvi} Nonetheless, as things stand, it remains largely illegal to send most software technologies to Iranians without a special U.S. government license.^{cvi}

Instead, we believe should pursue a targeted approach to sanctions that will target human rights abusers within the Iranian government – and corporations that collaborate in the regime's oppression – while safeguarding the needs and welfare of the Iranian people. The Stand With the Iranian People Act, H.R. 4303, originally introduced by Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN) and former Rep. Bill Delahunt (D-MA), is an excellent step in the right direction, as the bill uses intelligent, targeted sanctions to punish the regime and its collaborators, not average Iranians.^{cvi}

Third, American policymakers should reinvigorate its support for multilateral institutions such as the IAEA. When given the opportunity to fulfill its mandate, it has been effective. However, according to Jon Wolfsthal, a nuclear nonproliferation expert and former Department of Energy official under the George W. Bush Administration, the United States was willing to support small increases in IAEA funding, “but neither these increases nor support from other countries has kept pace with the rigorous new demands [such as the NPT's Additional Protocol] placed on the agency.”^{cix} This option, if seriously pursued by the United States, would require greater political and financial engagement with multilateral institutions such as the IAEA.

Additionally they should increase their engagement with other pivotal nations such as Russia and China. Both nations have significant economic and political influence that can be brought to bear in seeking a non-military solution with Iran. While both nations have publicly supported China's right to peaceful nuclear technology and remain at least moderately skeptical of U.S. projection of power in the region and elsewhere, both nations have also clearly indicated they put a higher premium on their relations with Washington than Tehran. Moscow and Beijing's behaviors and statements have demonstrated that they are willing to consider and agree to U.S.-led positions when American policy-makers persistently engage in diplomacy with them.

Finally, the U.S. should lay out an alternative set of contingency plans in the event Iran obtains nuclear weapons. Given that Iran is a confrontational, but rational actor, a strategy of deterrence, containment, and engagement – similar to how the U. S. dealt with the Soviet Union during the Cold War – can work. This does not mean our officials should acquiesce to Iran obtaining a bomb; today global security is better off with less nuclear weapons.

However a nuclear-armed Iran can be effectively deterred and contained. Even prominent Israeli security experts – the current and former heads of Israel's foreign intelligence service and a former military chief of staff – have stated that a nuclear Iran is not an existential threat to Israel.^{cx} In return for having to

exist with Iranian nuclear weapons, the U.S. must reassure its Middle East allies with security guarantees to mollify their concerns and reduce their own incentives to pursue a nuclear weapon and/or move toward greater escalation with Tehran.^{cxix}

Yet, regardless of what specific policy alternatives to war American policy-makers make choose to take, we believe that in order for the U.S. to maintain its effectiveness as a global superpower, it should also couple nuclear non-proliferation of Iran with nuclear disarmament of Iran's surrounding neighbors, including India, Pakistan and Israel. As pointed out by experts in a National Defense University study, 'Tehran's strategic calculus is largely shaped by its perception of the regional threat environment.

Pushing for regional nonproliferation and disarmament, particularly when it comes to Israel, is appears to be shared by a solid majority of people in the Middle East, including Jewish Israelis. A November 2011 public opinion poll of Jewish Israelis by the University of Maryland and Dahaf Institute in Israel found, "64 percent favored the idea of a nuclear-free zone, even when it was explained that this would mean Israel giving up its nuclear weapons" and "60 percent of respondents favor[ing] 'a system of full international inspections' of all nuclear facilities, including Israel's and Iran's, as a step toward regional disarmament."^{cxii}

A comprehensive and balanced regional approach to nonproliferation and disarmament led by the United States enhances global security while effectively isolating any Iranian intransigence. In other words, the U.S. cannot be accused of double standards in the scenario and more of the Iranian people will be supportive of our nation. It can also serve to bolster elements within the Iranian political elite that seek to shift away from confrontational posturing, reduce tensions; and seek a negotiated settlement that all interest parties in the region and around the world can live with.

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