



SHEDDEN PAPERS

The Nuclear Program of Iran – Where To From Here?

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The author

Group Captain Stephen Meredith joined the RAAF in 1986. After completing a flying tour as a navigator with 37 Squadron on C-130E, he transferred to F-111 strike aircraft in 1991, followed by postings at Number 1 Squadron, and an instructional position at Number 6 Squadron. Later postings included the Defence Material Organisation, Number 6 Squadron, Air Force Headquarters, Capability Development Group and Executive Officer Number 82 Wing, as well as attendance at the Australian Command and Staff College, where he earned a Masters of Management (Defence Studies).

In January 2006, he assumed command of Number 6 Squadron, overseeing the retirement of the F-111G. In late 2008, he assumed command of Number 42 Wing and assisted in the introduction into operational service of the Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning and Control capability. In 2011, he deployed to the Middle East to work in the US Air Force Central Command's Combined Air and Space Operations Centre. On his return, he was Chief of Staff to the CDF, before attending the Defence and Strategic Studies Course at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies at the Australian Defence College in 2013.

Abstract

This paper analyses Iran's nuclear program. It contends that while the Iranian regime has the ability to develop a nuclear weapons capability, the international community's strategy to contain its nuclear program is not working and is unlikely to produce a stable region.

It argues that the current containment strategy fails to address the fundamental motivations for Iranian development of a nuclear program, including Iranian perceptions of external threats to Iran's sovereignty and regime survival. The paper concludes that the international community's disparate, uncoordinated and punitive approach has not only undermined efforts to contain the Iran nuclear program but has increased regional tensions and arguably hardened Iranian resolve to continue with the program.

The Nuclear Program of Iran – Where To From Here? ¹

The leaders of Iran must recognize that now is the time for a diplomatic solution, because a coalition stands united in demanding that they meet their obligations, and we will do what is necessary to prevent them from getting a nuclear weapon.

President Barack Obama, February 2013²

Introduction

An international problem

Iran occupies a prominent position on one side of the Strait of Hormuz, through which much of the Middle East's energy resources flow. The recently-released Australian Defence White Paper highlighted the Middle East as being of strategic importance to Australia and the global community through the enduring link of the region to energy security and the trade routes that connect a globalised world. Twenty per cent of Australia's petroleum requirements emanate from the region but, more importantly, the Middle East remains the source for more than 30 per cent of the global oil supply. Global economic giants, including Japan and a rapidly rising China, are reliant on this energy flow.³ The region has global strategic importance, and stability of the region is an international concern. However, achieving regional stability has proven much more difficult.

The Iranian regime which emerged from the 1979 revolution has actively sought regional influence and leadership, and has placed itself at the forefront of geopolitics in the Middle East. Iranian use of proxies, such as Hezbollah in the Arab-Israeli conflict and support for terrorism generally, led President George W. Bush to refer to

¹ Editor's note: this paper pre-dates the announcement of late November 2013 that the P5+1 group (US, Russia, UK, China, France and Germany) and Iran had agreed a range of measures in relation to Iran's nuclear program.

² Barack Obama, '2013 State of the Union Address', Address by the President of the United States of America, 12 February 2013, p. 4, available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2013>>, accessed 21 May 2013.

³ Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2013*, Canberra, Australian Government, 2013, pp. 13-9.

Iran as part of the 'axis of evil' in his 2002 State of the Union address.⁴ More recently, the 'Arab Awakening' of 2011, which has resulted in civil war in Syria, has seen staunch Iranian support for its close ally, the Assad regime.⁵ In March 2011, alleged Iranian support for the Shia-based uprising in Bahrain led to tension between Iran and its Gulf neighbours.⁶ When these tangible actions are given context by the bellicose and at times threatening rhetoric of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran has come to be viewed with suspicion and concern.⁷ Consequently, Iranian actions and rhetoric are closely watched by those in the immediate region, those dependent on the energy and trade from the region, and those linked to the region through treaties and military relationships.

Against this backdrop of ongoing tension and suspicion, Iran's pursuit of a nuclear program has raised considerable concern throughout the world, with Australia's Defence White Paper (and National Security Strategy) singling out Iranian nuclear activities as a destabilising factor in the region and a significant proliferation concern.⁸ Within the region, this concern is clearly evident, with former Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Abdullah Bishara asserting that 'Iran's nuclear program totally turns over the balance of power, and makes Iran the master of the region'.⁹ A nuclear-armed Iran would result in a significant strategic shift in the region. Consequently, the proliferation concerns presented by the Iran's nuclear program have driven significant international activity.

Containment?

Since the emergence in 2002 and 2003 of undisclosed uranium enrichment activities in Iran, considerable international action has been directed toward its nuclear program. Despite Iranian claims of a peaceful nuclear program, to date the UN Security Council (UNSC) has passed seven resolutions related to the Iranian nuclear

⁴ George W. Bush, '2002 State of the Union Address', Address by the President of the United States of America, 29 January 2002, p. 2, available at <<http://www.georgwbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002>>, accessed 29 May 2013.

⁵ Michele Dunne and Barry Pavel, 'A Strategy for US engagement in the Middle East: contain threats, embrace dignity', Atlantic Council website, March 2013, p. 2, available at <<http://www.acus.org/files/publicationpdfs/51491/DunnePavelIB.pdf>>, accessed 21 Apr 2013.

⁶ Andrew Terrill, *The Saudi-Iranian Rivalry and the future of the Middle East Security*, Carlisle, Strategic Studies Institute, 2011, pp. 19-26.

⁷ Elihu Richter and Alex Barnea, 'Tehran's Genocidal Incitement against Israel', *The Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2009, p. 45.

⁸ Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2013*, p. 17.

⁹ Matteo Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf: diplomacy, security and economic coordination in a changing Middle East*, New York, I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2011, p. 117.

program, aimed at having Iran comply with its international treaty obligations. This has resulted in increasingly severe economic sanctions and autonomous sanctions from a range of nations including the US, European Union (EU), Australia and others.¹⁰ With sanctions and concerted diplomatic efforts failing to bring an acceptable outcome, threats of military action against Iran's nuclear facilities have been clearly articulated by Israel's leadership.¹¹ Covert actions reportedly undertaken by Israel and the US, such as the release of the Stuxnet computer worm in mid-2009, have attempted to slow the progress of Iranian nuclear activities.¹² The most recent engagement through the P5+1 (US, Russia, UK, China, France and Germany) to address the issues surrounding the Iranian nuclear program have failed to make progress on resolving the impasse.¹³ Meanwhile, GCC states have steadily been building significant conventional military capabilities in response to a perceived Iranian threat.¹⁴ All these disparate actions have formed part of a shifting and uncoordinated policy effort described by Allin and Simon as 'a strategy of containment'.¹⁵

The genesis of containment as a strategy stemmed from the Cold War between the US and Russia following the end of the Second World War. In 1946, the US architect of the policy, George Kennan, put forward containment as a set of policies designed to limit Soviet influence beyond existing boundaries, and mellow Soviet foreign policy behaviour.¹⁶ While containment of the Soviet Union was of a continental scale during the Cold War, Kaye and Lorber have argued that a regional context for containment could be used.¹⁷ Kennan also emphasised the need for a range of tools, including engagement, economic development of allies, and military deterrence.¹⁸

¹⁰ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', February 2013, pp. 1-3, available at <www.nti.org/country-profiles/iran/>, accessed 11 February 2013.

¹¹ Charles Freilich, 'Striking Iran: The debate in Israel', *Survival*, Vol. 54, No. 6, December 2012-January 2013, p. 94.

¹² Christopher Williams, 'Barack Obama ordered Stuxnet cyber-attack on Iran', *The Telegraph*, 1 June 2012.

¹³ Catherine Ashton, 'Statement of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the EU3+3 following talks with Iran', Media Release, European Union, Brussels, 6 April 2013.

¹⁴ Anthony Cordesman and Robert Shelala, *US and Iranian Strategic Competition: The Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula*, Washington, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, January 2013, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵ Dana Allin and Steven Simon, 'Obama's Dilemma: Iran, Israel and the rumours of war', *Survival*, Vol. 52, No. 6, December 2010-January 2011, pp. 35-40.

¹⁶ Martin Griffiths and Terry O'Callaghan, *International Relations: the key concepts*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2002, pp. 53-4.

¹⁷ Dalia Dassa Kaye and Eric Lorber, 'Containing Iran: what does it mean?', *Middle East Policy*, Spring 2012, pp. 53-4.

¹⁸ Cited in Griffiths and O'Callaghan, *International Relations*, pp. 53-4

For the purposes of this paper, containment is defined as the range of policies and actions designed to prevent Iran from developing the components for or testing a nuclear weapons capability.¹⁹

This paper will contend that the Iranian regime has the ability to develop a nuclear weapons capability and that the current strategy of attempting to contain the Iranian nuclear program, through a broad range of actions and policies, is not working and is unlikely to produce a stable region. To support this contention, the paper will briefly outline the history of the Iranian nuclear program and international diplomatic activity associated with it to determine Iranian commitment to and motivation for the attainment of nuclear weapons. It will then analyse the approach of major regional stakeholders, including GCC states, the US and Israel to this security challenge to illustrate the key concerns of these stakeholders and the consequent uncoordinated regional and global approach to the issue. The paper will also consider possible future developments associated with the Iranian nuclear program and will examine the effects a containment strategy may have on those futures.

The paper will argue that the international community's disparate, uncoordinated and punitive approach to date has undermined efforts to contain the Iran nuclear program and, instead, has increased tension and served to harden Iranian resolve to continue with its program. It will argue that the lack of a collaborative regional and international approach to the issue has allowed the Iranian regime to continue to invest in the development of its nuclear program despite considerable economic sanctions.²⁰ Further, it contends that a containment strategy also fails to address the fundamental external and domestic motivations for Iranian development of a nuclear program, while the punitive nature of current sanctions, covert action and threatening rhetoric seems unlikely to address Iranian perceptions of external threats to Iran's sovereignty and regime survival.²¹ Indeed, the current containment strategy seems likely to increase instability in the region and encourage Iranian pursuit of a nuclear capability.

¹⁹ Allin and Simon, 'Obama's Dilemma', p. 38.

²⁰ Kaye and Lorber, 'Containing Iran', pp. 59-60.

²¹ Alasdair Hynd, 'The veiled threats against Iran', Commentary No.16, International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding, University of South Australia, Adelaide, 2012, pp. 5-6.

Does Iran want the bomb?

They (the Iranians) have concealed things from us in the past, but that does not mean that they are building a bomb today.

Former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Mohamed El Baradei²²

Iran's nuclear program

Early history

Iran's nuclear program has been in existence for decades. Under the US-allied Shah of Iran, the Iranian program commenced with the goal of building a nuclear power capability. The program was established with assistance from the US 'Atoms for Peace' program, announced by President Dwight Eisenhower at the UN in December 1953, which aimed to share nuclear knowledge and capabilities for peaceful purposes. The original Iranian plan was to develop a significant number of reactors, uranium enrichment capabilities to generate fuel for the reactors, and a reprocessing capability for spent nuclear fuel.²³

For use in a nuclear-power reactor, uranium must be enriched to a level of around 3 to 5 per cent. However, uranium enriched to this level is not suitable for use in a nuclear weapon, which requires highly-enriched levels of 90 per cent and beyond to produce the necessary fissile material. Reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel allows for extraction of uranium for reuse as fuel but it can also produce plutonium that may be used in a nuclear weapon.²⁴ The ambitious Iranian plan would provide a significant power-generation capability and has provided a complete understanding of the uranium fuel cycle. Significantly, this comprehensive and technically-challenging plan would give Iran an independent nuclear fuel cycle.

Importantly, Iran became a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968, as a non-nuclear weapon state party, which it ratified in 1970. Peaceful use of nuclear capabilities is permitted under the NPT, however, treaty states who are non-weapon states are not permitted to acquire nuclear weapons. The NPT also requires that parties will accept IAEA safeguards on

²² Paul Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program: status', Washington, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 17 October 2012, p. 4.

²³ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', pp. 1-2.

²⁴ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', pp. 11-4.

their nuclear activities.²⁵ In the aftermath of the Iranian revolution in 1979, all activities associated with the program were suspended by the new regime. However, following the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the Iranian regime showed renewed interest in a nuclear program and commenced cooperative agreements with Pakistan, China and Russia in 1987, 1990 and 1995 respectively.²⁶ From the mid-1970s, US intelligence agencies became concerned that the Iranian nuclear program would be used to develop a nuclear weapons capability. These concerns re-emerged in 1985 and were articulated in a US National Intelligence Council report which reaffirmed concerns regarding Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons program.²⁷ In 1995, in response to technology transfer concerns, the US Government actively sought to limit supplier cooperation with Iran and, following an approach by then President Bill Clinton to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Russia agreed to scale back cooperation with the potential to support the development of nuclear weapons.²⁸

Clandestine development

In August 2002, the exiled National Council of Resistance of Iran revealed undeclared Iranian nuclear-related facilities at Natanz and Arak, in direct contravention of Iran's NPT obligations. Iran subsequently admitted to the facilities and agreed to IAEA inspections. Following IAEA inspections to determine the history of these programs, a diplomatic impasse developed over the next few years with further revelations of clandestine activities, including uranium enrichment and conversion experiments, as well as plutonium separation experiments.²⁹ Diplomatic efforts by the EU 3, made up of France, Germany and the UK, which sought to allow Iran to maintain a peaceful nuclear power program under IAEA auspices, were unsuccessful. Iranian intransigence, by continuing to produce components and conduct experiments, served to heighten the international community's concerns about the program. Despite the impasse and clear violations of the NPT, the IAEA did not refer the program to the UNSC.³⁰

In August 2005, under the leadership of President Ahmadinejad, enrichment recommenced and, in January 2006, research and development on Iranian centrifuges—a key component in enrichment activities—was also announced. This

²⁵ IAEA, 'Information Circular: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons', INFCIRC/140, 22 April 1970, pp. 1-5.

²⁶ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', p. 2.

²⁷ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program', pp. 1-2.

²⁸ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', p. 2.

²⁹ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program', pp. 1-2.

³⁰ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', p. 3.

prompted the IAEA to refer the matter to the UNSC, which unanimously passed Resolution 1696 in July 2006 urging Iran to cease uranium enrichment.³¹ Iran ignored this resolution and continued enrichment activities. Following the failure of efforts to have Iran comply with its NPT obligations and its reluctance to engage constructively in dialogue, the P5+1 was formed in June 2006, after Russia, China and the US joined the EU 3.³²

In September 2009, Iran revealed to the IAEA the existence of the previously-undisclosed Fordow fuel enrichment plant at Qom. In October 2009, President Ahmadinejad announced that Iran would enrich uranium to 20 per cent and had the capability to go beyond this level. Following an announcement by President Ahmadinejad of further construction of enrichment facilities and IAEA inspections of the Qom facilities, further proposals were made by the P5+1, however, these diplomatic efforts also failed to make progress.³³

Recent steps to resolve the nuclear issue

On 8 November 2011, the IAEA board of directors released a safeguards report which for the first time attributed 'possible military dimensions' to Iran's nuclear capabilities. The report stated that Iran had undertaken activities 'relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device' and that 'some activities relevant to a nuclear explosive device may still be ongoing'.³⁴ The report led to unilateral sanctions by the US and EU aimed at the Iranian oil industry and Iranian central banks.³⁵

Since this seminal report, the P5+1 and Iran have engaged in several rounds of talks with the aim of breaking the impasse. However, both sides have been unable to agree on the best process by which to make constructive progress. Proposals have included initiatives to supply international nuclear fuel to Iran, and a curtailment of imposing new sanctions.³⁶ The most recent talks between the P5+1 and the Iranian regime, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan in early April 2013, failed to make progress. In a statement on behalf of the P5+1, Catherine Ashton, senior representative of the

³¹ Bart Smedts, 'Iran's Nuclear program: civil and/or military goals?', *Defence and Security Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 3, September 2012, pp. 213-4.

³² Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', p. 3.

³³ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', p. 4.

³⁴ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', pp. 5-6.

³⁵ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', p. 6.

³⁶ Rod Lyon, *Iran's Nuclear Program- and the costs of stopping it*, Canberra, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 14 June 2012, p. 1.

European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, made it clear that the parties 'remain far apart on the substance'.³⁷ The IAEA remains engaged with Iran and has continued to confirm that nuclear material has not been diverted from legitimate programs. However, the IAEA has been unable to clarify outstanding issues associated with the possible nuclear weapon-related activities.³⁸ Continued Iranian manoeuvring with the IAEA to avoid its NPT obligations has served to deepen mistrust and raise significant questions in relation to Iran's nuclear aims.

Could Iran develop a nuclear weapon capability?

Nuclear warhead

Since recommencing its nuclear program in 1984, Iran has made a considerable investment to fully exercise and understand all components of the full fuel cycle.³⁹ Iran currently has a significant nuclear capability that includes mining, conversion and enrichment capabilities, with the IAEA estimating that Iran has accumulated and is holding significant quantities of enriched material.⁴⁰ Iran has consistently claimed that its nuclear program is peaceful. With the assistance of Russia, on 11 February 2012, the Bushehr reactor was connected to the Iranian national electricity grid, making this facility the first operational nuclear power generation capability in the Middle East.

Iranian regime leaders have made no claims to have tested a nuclear weapon, nor is there any evidence that Iran has tested a nuclear device.⁴¹ However, while Iran has not tested a nuclear weapon, intelligence material provided to the IAEA over several years, which is refuted by Iran, indicates current and previous experiments associated with the development of a nuclear warhead for a ballistic missile. While the design of a nuclear weapon is relatively simple, the difficulty of moving from a stockpile of enriched material to a functional design should not be underestimated. For example, the failure of the 2006 and 2009 North Korean nuclear tests to produce the expected detonation results illustrated the technical challenges faced by proliferating states in developing a nuclear warhead.⁴² Despite these challenges, US

³⁷ Catherine Ashton, 'Statement of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the EU3+3 following talks with Iran'.

³⁸ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program', pp. 13-5.

³⁹ Smedts, 'Iran's Nuclear program', pp. 214-6.

⁴⁰ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', p. 7.

⁴¹ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program', pp. 34-6.

⁴² Jacques Hymans and Matthew Gratias, 'Iran and the Nuclear Threshold: where is the line?', *The Non-proliferation Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2013, pp. 19-20.

intelligence community statements suggest that Iran has the technical knowledge and ability to generate a weapons capability from its nuclear program. In January 2012, US Director of National Intelligence Jim Clapper stated that Iran 'has the capacity to eventually produce nuclear weapons'.⁴³ The timelines for the development of a weapon based on current knowledge of the Iranian program are difficult to determine, with predicted timelines regularly passing. However, Clapper indicated in February 2012 that it would take Iran over a year to develop a nuclear weapon once it had decided to do so.⁴⁴ Taking a functional design and placing it on a delivery platform would also take additional time, with some estimates placing this effort at an additional one to two years.⁴⁵

Delivery systems

During the Iran-Iraq war, Iran acquired Russian-origin Scud-B missiles, procured initially from Libya, and used this relatively short-range weapon until the end of the war in 1988. Since the late 1980s, Iran has developed an indigenous ballistic missile capability with significant assistance with missile technology from North Korea.⁴⁶ Iran is not constrained by any proliferation control regime, such as the Missile Technology Control Regime (MCTR), and as a consequence has several programs underway to develop and field ballistic missile capabilities.⁴⁷

Current Iranian missile capabilities provide the ability to deliver a payload at ranges of between 300 to 2200 kilometres. These weapons could be launched from fixed or mobile sites, giving Iran strategic reach with the largest and most diverse missile capabilities in the region. Iran also has an ambitious space program which provides important experience and skills that may assist in the development of its ballistic missile capabilities. Recent Pentagon reporting indicates that with appropriate development support, a very long-range ballistic missile capable of reaching the US could be tested by 2015.⁴⁸ However, Iran has significant technical obstacles to overcome in developing this type of capability.⁴⁹

⁴³ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program', p. 27.

⁴⁴ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program', p. 29.

⁴⁵ Lyon, *Iran's Nuclear Program- and the costs of stopping it*, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Michael Elleman, 'Iran's Ballistic Missile Program', US Institute of Peace Website, p. 1, available at <<http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/iran-ballistic-missile-program>>, accessed 29 May 2013.

⁴⁷ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Missile'.

⁴⁸ Defense Update, 'Pentagon Report: Iran could test an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile by 2015', 25 April 2013, Defense Update website, available at <http://defense-update.com/20130425_iran_nuclear_icbm.html>, accessed 29 May 2013.

⁴⁹ Elleman, 'Iran's Ballistic Missile Program', pp. 1-4.

From a purely conventional approach, the missile capabilities of Iran are a considerable threat to regional states and US military capabilities based in those nations, although accuracy remains an issue for all Iranian ballistic missile capabilities.⁵⁰ Clapper told a US Senate Select Committee that US intelligence agencies agree that 'Iran would likely choose a ballistic missile as its preferred method of delivering a nuclear weapon'.⁵¹

Why would Iran want the bomb?

Domestic drivers

The survival of the Iranian regime has been afforded the highest priority by its ruling elite. Brutal efforts to suppress the opposition Green movement following the 2009 presidential elections, and the subsequent purge of the Green movement's leadership, clearly illustrates the measures the regime is willing to undertake to ensure its survival.⁵² With regime survival as a driver, the development of a nuclear capability is seen by the regime as a way of enhancing domestic popular support. Iran's emergence as a nuclear power is also seen as a way of boosting its standing and enhancing the regime's leadership aspirations within the region.⁵³ A nuclear-armed Iran could become a beacon for Shia Muslims and may embolden Iran to continue to expand its influence in the region through its support for Shia organisations, such as Hezbollah, and Shia populations outside of Iran.⁵⁴ A nuclear-armed Iran would be a significant development changing the strategic balance and allowing Iranian influence to continue to grow throughout the region.

Existential threat

Deterrence is generally a primary objective for a military nuclear capability. Iranian conventional military forces are significant, however, they would be no match for a regional coalition that included US military forces based throughout the region.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Elleman, 'Iran's Ballistic Missile Program', pp. 1-4.

⁵¹ Defense Update, 'Pentagon Report'.

⁵² Michael Eisenstadt and Mehdi Khalaji, 'Nuclear Fatwa: religion and politics in Iran's proliferation strategy', Policy Focus No. 115, Washington, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2011, pp. 1-5.

⁵³ Matthew Moran and Christopher Hobbs, 'The Iranian Nuclear Dilemma: light at the end of the tunnel?', *Defence and Security Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 3, September 2012, pp. 206-8.

⁵⁴ Devin Hagerty, 'Iran: The Nuclear Quandary', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *The Long Shadow: nuclear weapons and security in 21st century Asia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. 297-8.

⁵⁵ Ali Rahigh-Aghsan and Peter Viggo Jakobsen, 'The Rise of Iran: how durable, how dangerous?', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 4, Autumn 2010, pp. 561-3.

The threatening rhetoric from Israel and the US is viewed by Iran as posing a threat to the regime and Iranian sovereignty. The US-led invasion of Iraq, on the pretext of dismantling a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program, served to heighten Iran's sense of threat from the US.⁵⁶ Iran may see the acquisition of a military nuclear capability as providing deterrence against aggression from the US and Israel.⁵⁷

Bomb or no bomb?

Within the Iranian theocratic regime, the supreme leader is the ultimate decision-maker regarding an Iranian nuclear weapons capability.⁵⁸ Iran has continually claimed the right to a peaceful nuclear program and efforts by the P5+1 have included proposals for Iran to continue with a nuclear program under IAEA safeguards in accordance with its NPT obligations.⁵⁹ The assertion of peaceful aims for the nuclear program appears to be supported by an oral *fatwa* issued in October 2003 by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, asserting that the development of nuclear weapons is forbidden by Islam. However, history has shown that Ayatollah Khamenei has taken a pragmatic approach and shifted position when required. Notable examples include changing policies on taxation and military conscription to suit the prevailing circumstances.⁶⁰

Within the US and Israeli intelligence organisations, the view is that while Iran could produce a nuclear weapon, it is yet to decide to proceed with such a program.⁶¹ The suspicions held in the international community that a military outcome is the primary driver for Iran's nuclear program have been reinforced by the significant investment Iran has made in a sustained, non-transparent nuclear program and advanced ballistic missile capabilities.⁶² The June 2013 election of Hassan Rouhani as Iranian President appears to have changed the narrative associated with the nuclear program. This is evident in his promises of increased nuclear transparency and the development of a more constructive relationship with the West. However, it is not clear that the election of the former Iranian nuclear negotiator has changed

⁵⁶ Clifton Sherrill, 'Why Iran Wants the Bomb and What it Means for US Policy', *The Non-proliferation Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, March 2012, pp. 41-3.

⁵⁷ Muthiah Alagappa, 'Nuclear Weapons and National Security: far-reaching influence and deterrence dominance', in Alagappa, *The Long Shadow*, pp. 494-5.

⁵⁸ Eisenstadt and Khalaji, 'Nuclear Fatwa', pp. 20-3.

⁵⁹ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program', p. 10.

⁶⁰ Eisenstadt and Khalaji, 'Nuclear Fatwa', pp. 13-7.

⁶¹ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program', pp. 33-6.

⁶² Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Missile', p. 1.

Iran's nuclear ambitions and, in a recent interview, President-elect Rouhani reiterated the need for indigenous Iranian enrichment.⁶³ While the timeline and end-state are not clear, given the importance of the region, the Iranian nuclear program poses a considerable dilemma for regional and international stakeholders, and requires a coherent and coordinated policy approach.

Broken policies

The calculations of Iran's principal protagonists, Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, are largely unaffected by the mounting financial penalties from the West.

Ray Takeyh⁶⁴

US inconsistencies

US policy in the Middle East seeks to maintain the flow of oil to global markets, provide a secure region, and prevent the spread of terrorism.⁶⁵ To support these aims, the US has had a long and tumultuous relationship with the region and with Iran in particular. In 1953, US covert action led to the overthrow of the democratically-elected Prime Minister and the reinstallation of the Shah of Iran. Considerable amounts of US support then enabled the Shah to hold power until the Iranian revolution of 1979.⁶⁶ The relationship that emerged between the US and Iran following the Iranian revolution and the storming of the US embassy has been filled with tension and hostility.⁶⁷ US foreign policy efforts to have Iran meet its nuclear obligations have included extensive economic sanctions, efforts to effect regime change, and engagement.

Sanctions

US sanctions were first implemented in the 1980s in response to the storming of the US embassy, and Iranian support for terrorism. During the 1990s, the Iranian

⁶³ Ashley Hall, 'Iran president-elect promises nuclear transparency', *ABC News*, 26 June 2013.

⁶⁴ Miroslav Nincic, 'Positive incentives, positive results? Rethinking US counter proliferation policy', in Etel Solingen (ed.), *Sanctions, Statecraft and Nuclear Proliferation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 137.

⁶⁵ Christopher Hemmer, 'Responding to a Nuclear Iran', *Parameters*, Autumn 2007, p. 42.

⁶⁶ Donette Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran: American-Iranian relations since the Islamic Revolution*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2010, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁷ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, pp. 144-5.

nuclear program was seen by the US as significant justification for continuing and escalating US sanctions. Examples included the passing of the *Iran Sanctions Act* in 1996.⁶⁸ Since the 2002 revelations of Iran's undeclared nuclear facilities, the US has implemented a range of unilateral and UNSC sanctions targeting Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-related companies associated with the nuclear program. In December 2011, the US Congress passed the *Menendez-Kirk Bill* that sought to sanction the Iranian central bank and any other central bank processing transactions associated with the sale of Iranian oil and petroleum products.⁶⁹ The sanctions regime supported by the US against the Iranian nuclear program is significant and is having a profound effect on the economy of Iran. However, it has arguably failed to contain the development of Iran's nuclear program or the behaviour of the Iranian regime.

Regime change

In 2001, the Bush Administration and the Iranian regime found common ground during the initial stages of the campaign in Afghanistan.⁷⁰ However, within months, President Bush declared Iran part of the 'axis of evil' for pursuing WMD capabilities. The Administration was unable to build a constructive relationship on the positive engagement emerging from Afghanistan. Following the 2005 Iranian election of President Ahmadinejad, the Bush Administration took active measures in the pursuit of regime change. These included the launch of the Iran Democracy Fund, which has been maintained by the current Obama Administration.⁷¹ The Bush Administration also made several veiled threats and, at times, openly discussed the use of military options to achieve regime change.⁷² Coercive policies of this nature had been successful in the case of Libya's nuclear program, however, the coercive narrative and actions of the Bush Administration had little effect on the containment of Iran's nuclear program, with Iran commencing significant enrichment activities in 2005. While the hard-line approach failed to produce results and may have

⁶⁸ Celia Reynolds and Wilfred Wan, 'Empirical trends in sanctions and positive inducements in non-proliferation', in Solingen, *Sanctions, Statecraft and Nuclear Proliferation*, pp. 77-8. The Act was originally titled the *Iran and Libya Sanctions Act* (but reference to Libya was removed in 2006 when sanctions against that country were terminated).

⁶⁹ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', p. 4.

⁷⁰ Nincic, 'Positive incentives, positive results? Rethinking US counter proliferation policy', pp. 137-9.

⁷¹ J. Scott Carpenter, 'After the Crackdown: the Iran Democracy Fund', Policy Watch 1576, Washington, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 8 September 2009, pp. 1-3.

⁷² Sarah Kreps and Zain Pasha, 'Threats for Peace? The domestic distributional effects of military threats', in Solingen, *Sanctions, Statecraft and Nuclear Proliferation*, pp. 199-202.

accelerated the Iranian nuclear program, US administrations have nevertheless attempted to engage the Iranian regime in order to resolve the nuclear issue.

Engagement

The Clinton Administration was unable to reach a meaningful dialogue despite the outreach of reformist President Khatami and his proposal for a 'dialogue of civilisations'.⁷³ In May 2006, the Bush Administration announced its intention to open dialogue on the nuclear issue on the precondition that Iran ceased enrichment activities. However, these efforts were rebuffed by the Iranian regime.⁷⁴ During his 2009 inauguration speech, President Obama spoke to the Muslim world and Iran in particular to 'extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist'.⁷⁵ However, this offer and a focused campaign of letters and messages have not led to any form of constructive dialogue, not least because opportunities for meaningful engagement between the US and Iran on the nuclear program have been missed by both sides.

GCC states

The GCC states, consisting of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain, occupy the opposite side of the Persian Gulf to Iran. The GCC was formed in 1981 as a direct consequence of the Iran-Iraq war and was seen as a mechanism to deal with a post-revolutionary Iran. However, the GCC has failed to reach consensus on a range of issues, calling into question its effectiveness. For example, the goal of economic cooperation and integration under the Uniform Economic Agreement, which was an original goal of the Council, has been much discussed but is yet to see significant progress.⁷⁶ On security issues, the GCC members have collaborated closely on internal security issues, most recently highlighted by the March 2011 intervention in Bahrain.⁷⁷ However, the GCC has not made substantial progress on a regional security framework and the member states remain divided on how best to deal with Iran.⁷⁸

⁷³ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, pp. 107-15.

⁷⁴ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, pp. 135-6.

⁷⁵ Barack Obama, '2009 Inaugural Address', Address by the President of the United States of America, 20 January 2009, p. 3, available at: <<http://www.america.gov/st/usg-english/2009/January>>, accessed 11 June 2013.

⁷⁶ Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf: diplomacy*, pp. 57-72.

⁷⁷ A.K. Pasha, 'The Gulf Cooperation Council: a regional approach to peace security and development', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, Vol. 8, No. 1, June 2012, pp. 96-7.

⁷⁸ Thomas Lippman, Alex Vatanka and Thomas Mattair, 'Symposium: a reawakened rivalry: the GCC versus Iran', *Middle East Policy*, Winter 2011, pp. 7-8.

While the GCC nations have been unable to reach a consensus on Iran, they remain concerned by the development of the Iranian nuclear program. In December 2006, in response to Iranian nuclear program developments, the GCC Supreme Council announced a plan to establish a multilateral civilian nuclear program.⁷⁹ The GCC nations remain nervous as to how an Iranian nuclear program will change the balance of power within the region and, through GCC communiqués, have urged Iran to resolve the crisis.⁸⁰ However, despite their strategic position in the region, GCC members have not been deeply involved in P5+1 negotiations on the issue, appearing content to remain on the sidelines.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the Secretary General of the GCC stated recently that ‘if the talks are about the region, we are the region and we need to know hidden things’, highlighting the need for GCC nations to be engaged in ongoing diplomatic efforts.⁸²

Hedging by GCC nations is evident in their continued reliance on Western nations, including the US, Britain and France, as guarantors of the region’s security and the build-up of their respective conventional military capabilities.⁸³ The US-GCC relationship has seen a significant US military footprint in the region, including the basing of the Combined Air Operations Center in Qatar and the US 5th Fleet in Bahrain.⁸⁴ In addition to these US capabilities, military spending by GCC nations has increased significantly, with combined arms sales—described as a ‘cascade of arms’—totalling \$82 billion in 2008.⁸⁵ Despite these actions, the GCC nations have made it clear they prefer a diplomatic solution to the current crisis.⁸⁶

Despite their concerns about the nuclear program, GCC nations maintain a pragmatic approach to the issue. While Iran and the Sunni monarchies—exemplified by the GCC nations—share a significant rivalry, GCC states have sought to maintain diplomatic relations with Iran.⁸⁷ Economic ties with Iran have seen the UAE maintain a significant trade relationship and, in 2010, it was in the top three

⁷⁹ Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf*, p. 113.

⁸⁰ Anthony Cordesman and Robert Shelala, *US and Iranian Strategic Competition: the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula*, p. 18.

⁸¹ Tariq Khaitous, ‘Arab Reactions to a Nuclear Armed Iran’, Policy Focus No. 94, Washington, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 2009, p. 1.

⁸² Cordesman and Shelala, *US and Iranian Strategic Competition*, p. 13.

⁸³ Cordesman and Shelala, *US and Iranian Strategic Competition*, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁴ Cordesman and Shelala, *US and Iranian Strategic Competition*, p. 5.

⁸⁵ Khaitous, ‘Arab Reactions to a Nuclear Armed Iran’, pp. 2-9.

⁸⁶ Cordesman and Shelala, *US and Iranian Strategic Competition*, p. 17.

⁸⁷ Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf*, p. 121.

export and import trade partners with Iran.⁸⁸ The GCC states are key stakeholders in the Iranian nuclear issue and have publicly stated a preference for a diplomatic solution over a military option. However, their actions to date illustrate that they are hedging against a future in which a nuclear-armed Iran emerges or unilateral action is taken by a fearful Israel.

Israel

Israel has been at the centre of considerable tension and conflict and is the only state in the region which is considered to possess and maintain nuclear weapons, although Israel has never confirmed or denied their existence.⁸⁹ The Iranian nuclear program has been the cause of significant tension between Israel and Iran, and the rhetoric exchanged between the two nations at the UN General Assembly has clearly illustrated this animosity.⁹⁰ With threatening rhetoric emanating from Iran and a nuclear program that continues to make progress, Israel believes that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose an existential threat.⁹¹ This view is reinforced by a recent poll revealing that 27 per cent of Israelis would consider leaving Israel if the nation was faced with a nuclear-armed Iran.⁹² Israeli concerns regarding Iranian nuclear ambitions have existed for a considerable period of time and the Israeli response has included both overt and possible covert actions.

On the floor of the UN General Assembly in September 2012, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu articulated a clear enrichment level 'red line' for the Iranian nuclear program and asserted that time was short to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. He stated that 'the relevant question is at what stage can we no longer stop Iran from getting the bomb'.⁹³ This clear red line should be considered in the context of significant discussion of a military strike by Israel on Iranian nuclear facilities and previous Israeli military action. The Israeli government has previously used military capabilities to strike another country's nuclear facilities in order to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, illustrated by a successful

⁸⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Iran country brief', Canberra, Australian Government, available at <www.dfat.gov.au/geo/iran/iran_country_brief.html> accessed 13 February 2013.

⁸⁹ Avner Cohen, 'Israel: a *sui generis* proliferator', in Alagappa, *The Long Shadow*, p. 241.

⁹⁰ Benjamin Netanyahu, 'Speech to United Nations General Assembly', Address by the Prime Minister of Israel, 27 September 2012, pp. 3-6, available at <<http://www.policymic.com/articles/15409/netanyahu-speech-at-un-general-assembly>>, accessed 12 June 2013.

⁹¹ Cohen, 'Israel', pp. 259-60.

⁹² Yoaz Hendel, 'Iran's Nukes and Israel's Dilemma', *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2012, p. 33.

⁹³ Netanyahu, 'Speech to United Nations General Assembly', p. 6.

strike conducted against the Iraqi nuclear reactor at the Osirak reactor in June 1981. However, this strike came after extensive diplomatic efforts to dissuade France from providing necessary nuclear hardware.⁹⁴ In addition to the Stuxnet computer virus attack, the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists has also been attributed to Israeli covert action. These efforts have been aimed at slowing the nuclear program or to deter those working on and supervising the program.⁹⁵ Israel has also made significant diplomatic efforts related to the Iranian nuclear program.

Israel works closely with the US on the issue, with their close cooperation exemplified by intelligence efforts related to Iranian nuclear capabilities.⁹⁶ Close cooperation has also seen strong US rhetoric supporting the right for the Israeli state to exist and pledging a commitment to Israel's security.⁹⁷ However, the US has also been forced to publicly caution Israel against taking premature unilateral military action against Iranian nuclear facilities.⁹⁸ Israel has also made overtures to the GCC nations in an effort to develop a regionally-based approach to the issue, although these approaches have not led to cooperation or a coordinated actions or outcomes.⁹⁹ Israeli history within the region and difficult relations with Arab neighbours may limit the ability of Arab nations to work with Israel on the issue, despite suggestions of an Arab-Israeli alliance against Iran.¹⁰⁰

Israeli fear of a nuclear-armed Iran has seen considerable effort aimed at containing the program, including diplomatic, possible covert action, and coercive diplomacy threatening unilateral military action. These actions have not always been synchronised with the US and have been unsuccessful at drawing together regional nations. While Israel has made clear its position, including on red lines and options, the international community has continued to pursue a significant sanctions regime and engagement.

⁹⁴ Hendel, 'Iran's Nukes and Israel's Dilemma', p. 31.

⁹⁵ Hendel, 'Iran's Nukes and Israel's Dilemma', pp. 31-2.

⁹⁶ Alon Ben-Meir, 'An Iranian Bombshell: how Israel can and will respond', *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Spring 2010, pp. 15-6.

⁹⁷ Barack Obama, 'Remarks of the President Barack Obama to the People of Israel', Address by the President of the United States of America, 21 March 2013, p. 3, available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/21>>, accessed 14 June 2013.

⁹⁸ Phoebe Greenwood, 'Barack Obama to tell Israel to hold back talk of strike on Iran', *The Telegraph*, 12 February 2013.

⁹⁹ Ben-Meir, 'An Iranian Bombshell', p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ Ben-Meir, 'An Iranian Bombshell', pp. 12-5.

International efforts and coordination

The UNSC has passed a total of seven resolutions that included economic sanctions related to the Iranian nuclear program. These sanctions have carefully targeted institutions and companies associated with or linked to the nuclear program, and have seen the freezing of assets and investments tied to the funding of the nuclear program and banning the transfer of nuclear and missile technologies. Despite the damning nature of the December 2011 IAEA report, Russia and China have opposed any new UNSC sanctions. The Russian Foreign Ministry argued that the report contained no new information, and China argued that new sanctions would not resolve the issue and renewed calls for further dialogue.¹⁰¹ As a consequence, the EU and the US took multilateral and unilateral action against Iranian financial institutions outside of the UNSC framework.

In January 2012, the EU announced measures to freeze all assets of the Iranian Central Bank, a move that was followed by the US in February which also announced the freezing of all assets of the Iranian Government. In the January announcement, the EU also implemented a phase-out of Iranian oil imports.¹⁰² Despite its distance from the region, in January 2013 Australia announced additional autonomous sanctions against Iranian financial institutions and energy imports.¹⁰³ The disparity between the EU and US responses, and the uncoordinated timing of the announcements, illustrates the lack of coordination between these major Western powers. More importantly, the lack of a coordinated international response through the UNSC has undermined the containment strategy by clearly illustrating to Iran that the international community is divided on its approach to resolve the nuclear issue.

Throughout the development of the extensive sanctions regime, talks between Iran and the EU 3 initially, then the P5+1, have continued. Importantly, the most recent P5+1 proposals have been agreed by all partners.¹⁰⁴ There have been no significant breakthroughs despite several plans being presented by the EU 3 in 2004 and 2005

¹⁰¹ 'Analysts: Russia, China ready to block new UN sanctions on Iran', *Voice of America*, 10 November 2011.

¹⁰² Nuclear Threat Initiative, 'Country profile – Iran-Nuclear', pp. 3-7.

¹⁰³ Bob Carr, 'Iran sanctions', Media Release, Australian Government, Canberra, 10 January 2013.

¹⁰⁴ US Department of State, 'Background Briefing on Upcoming P5+1 talks in Almaty, Kazakhstan', Washington, 3 April 2013, p.2, available at <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/04/207049.htm>>, accessed 26 May 2013.

and the P5+1 in 2007 and 2010, and most recently in April 2013.¹⁰⁵ However, the lack of coordination on the form of negotiation proposals with the GCC states, which have supported the economic sanctions and UNSC action, creates distrust and uncertainty on the part of GCC nations and means that regional perspectives are lacking from a potential solution.

Iran's response

Sanctions

There is little doubt that the sanctions applied to the Iranian nuclear program are having a considerable impact on the Iranian economy and increasing the pressure on the Iranian regime. The impact of financial sanctions has increased the cost of Iranian imports by between 10 to 30 per cent.¹⁰⁶ Inflation in Iran now sits at over 20 per cent and the January 2012 EU announcement of further sanctions caused a significant decrease in the value of the Iranian currency.¹⁰⁷ However, the inconsistent application of sanctions by the international community and the ability of Iran to find alternative markets have undermined these activities. The inconsistent approach is exemplified by the failure of Russia and China to support further UNSC sanctions in 2012 and the subsequent uncoordinated international response, led by the US, which imposed unilateral sanctions on the Iranian banking and oil sectors.

In response to these increasingly punitive sanctions, Iran has successfully diversified its trading partners to those less likely to be influenced by the US and the EU for its oil products.¹⁰⁸ Iran has also resorted to illegal means by smuggling Iranian oil and other products through Oman and the UAE. Smuggling has also been evident across the Iran-Iraq border.¹⁰⁹ While GCC nations officially support sanctions, their actions in continuing to maintain trade relations and their inability to control the illegal activity undermine a containment strategy to the advantage of the Iranian

¹⁰⁵ Christopher Hobbs and Matthew Moran, 'Looking Beyond a Nuclear-Armed Iran: is regional proliferation inevitable?', *The International Spectator*, Vol. 47, No. 4, December 2012, p. 210.

¹⁰⁶ Celia Reynolds and Wilfred Wan, 'Empirical trends in sanctions and positive inducements in non-proliferation', in Solingen, *Sanctions, Statecraft and Nuclear Proliferation*, pp. 79-80.

¹⁰⁷ Hobbs and Moran, 'Looking Beyond a Nuclear-Armed Iran', p. 205.

¹⁰⁸ Reynolds and Wan, 'Empirical trends in sanctions and positive inducements in non-proliferation', pp. 79-80.

¹⁰⁹ Nader Habibi, 'The Impact of Sanctions on Iran-GCC Economic Relations', Middle East Brief No. 45, Crown Centre for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, Waltham, November 2010, pp. 9-10.

regime. It is clear that sanctions have bitten hard, however, the Iranian regime has been inventive and innovative in its efforts to circumvent their effect.

The sanctions regime has also provided an opportunity for the Iranian regime to develop a narrative that garners nationalist support by portraying Western opposition to an Iranian nuclear program as a form of 'nuclear imperialism'.¹¹⁰ This nationalism has translated into domestic political support for the current regime.¹¹¹ Importantly, despite the extensive sanctions regime, Iran has continued to invest in the advancement of its nuclear program and significant progress has been made since the first UNSC sanctions in 2006. This progress calls into question the ability of economic sanctions to succeed over the longer term.¹¹²

Threats of military action

The threats of military intervention and regime change have served to increase Iran's sense of an existential threat. Indeed, the coercive rhetoric of the Bush Administration, the more subtle approach of the Obama Administration, and the Israeli red lines may have acted to accelerate the development of Iran's nuclear program. The Iranian regime has also effectively used these coercive measures to build nationalism and domestic regime capital by continuing an ongoing anti-Western narrative.¹¹³ Despite the intended aim of containing the Iranian nuclear program, these actions have seen further enrichment, additional IAEA discoveries, and continued Iranian intransigence at negotiations.¹¹⁴ Consequently, it is possible that these coercive measures have simply strengthened the Iranian drive for a nuclear weapons program.

Engagement

The inconsistent and largely punitive nature of US policy toward the Iranian nuclear program has undermined engagement efforts to contain the Iranian nuclear program. The US policies have not allowed the creation of the environment of the kind required for the US to have a constructive dialogue with Iran.¹¹⁵ Iranian rhetoric and continued nuclear intransigence have also not assisted in building a constructive relationship. The resultant environment of tension, coercive narrative

¹¹⁰ Hobbs and Moran, 'Looking Beyond a Nuclear-Armed Iran', p. 207.

¹¹¹ Hobbs and Moran, 'Looking Beyond a Nuclear-Armed Iran', p. 207.

¹¹² Nincic, 'Positive incentives, positive results?', pp. 130-1.

¹¹³ Hagerty, 'Iran', pp. 303-304.

¹¹⁴ Nincic, 'Positive incentives, positive results?', pp. 130-1.

¹¹⁵ Hooshang Amirahmadi and Shahir Shahidsaless, 'Avoid Repeating Mistakes toward Iran', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 145-6.

and the inconsistent policies of successive US administrations have not curbed or contained the nuclear program and may have served to encourage the development of the Iranian nuclear program in response to the perceived threat.¹¹⁶ This uncoordinated and inconsistent policy approach has also meant that opportunities for rapprochement have been missed by both sides. These missed opportunities were perhaps most prominently evident during the presidency of reformist Iranian President Khatami during the Clinton Administration.¹¹⁷

The Iranian regime has also been successful in exploiting the seam between GCC states and international nations by garnering popular regional support through extensive regional engagement and reassurances of a peaceful nuclear program.¹¹⁸ The uncoordinated international approach to the engagement thread of a containment strategy, coupled with the inability to harness regional stakeholders into a detailed policy, has undermined efforts to practically engage with the Iranian regime on the nuclear issue.¹¹⁹

The Iranian approach to dialogue on the nuclear issue is also instructive. The Iranian approach to the P5+1 negotiations has sought to reduce international pressure to find a solution while continuing with nuclear-related activities. As President Sarkozy of France noted in 2010, dialogue has produced ‘nothing but more enrichment of uranium and more centrifuges’.¹²⁰ The protracted discussions and talks have meant that engagement has not proven decisive and, when Iran came to the negotiation table in April 2013, it came with significantly better nuclear capabilities than when diplomatic efforts first commenced.¹²¹ While the international community remains committed to finding a diplomatic solution and continued engagement, time may be running out and the future of the current impasse remains uncertain.

¹¹⁶ Amirahmadi and Shahidsaless, ‘Avoid Repeating Mistakes toward Iran’, pp. 147-57.

¹¹⁷ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, pp. 150-152.

¹¹⁸ Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf*, p. 119.

¹¹⁹ Andrea Ellner, ‘Iran – Challenge or opportunity for Regional Security?’, *Perceptions*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Summer 2011, pp. 21-3.

¹²⁰ Ben-Meir, ‘An Iranian Bombshell’, p. 14.

¹²¹ Hobbs and Moran, ‘Looking Beyond a Nuclear-Armed Iran’, pp. 208-209.

What happens next?

Iran must know time is not unlimited. And I've made the position of the United States of America clear. Iran must not get a nuclear weapon.

President Barack Obama, March 2013¹²²

Containment of the Iranian nuclear program encompasses a significant array of activities, including covert action, engagement, coercive diplomacy and punitive actions that include an expansive economic sanctions regime. As a consequence of these measures, there are a range of futures that could be considered regarding the Iranian nuclear program. While the US has made its position clear, Israel remains nervous and the GCC nations hedge their position in the event of an unfavourable outcome. The results of containment thus far have seen the unabated continuation of the nuclear program and perhaps increasing Iranian resolve. With President Obama stating that 'all options are on the table', there are a number of broad scenarios that could be considered to provide a better understanding of how the Iranian nuclear issue might progress.¹²³

Military strike by external actor

One of the most destabilising scenarios involves a military strike by unilateral Israeli action or a coalition of nations led by the US against the Iranian nuclear facilities. Instead of containing the Iranian nuclear program, a military strike would likely invoke a significant Iranian reaction and pose significant risks to regional stability. Despite the possible reaction, Israeli concern at the development of the Iranian program has seen open discussion of a military strike in order to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon capability and crossing the red lines articulated by Prime Minister Netanyahu.¹²⁴ The successful strike of single facilities, such as the previously-described air strike against Iraq's Osirak reactor and the 2007 strike against suspected Syrian nuclear facilities, clearly illustrates Israel's intent to prevent hostile neighbours from developing a nuclear capability that would undermine its military advantage as the only nuclear-armed state in the region.¹²⁵ However, a military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities would need to address a number of complicating factors.

¹²² Obama, 'Remarks of the President Barack Obama to the People of Israel', p. 3.

¹²³ Obama, 'Remarks of the President Barack Obama to the People of Israel', p. 3.

¹²⁴ Freilich, 'Striking Iran', pp. 93-4.

¹²⁵ Ben-Meir, 'An Iranian Bombshell', p. 16.

The Iranian facilities are widely dispersed within Iran and not concentrated as the Iraqi facilities were at Osirak. Israeli military estimates consider that a short-term degradation of Iranian nuclear capabilities could be achieved with a single wave of aircraft, however, a more decisive strike would require up to two days and encompass up to 60 different targets.¹²⁶ Additionally, some of these targets are located a significant distance from potential strike assets within the region, complicating military planning. However, air refuelling capabilities would negate this difficulty but bring an additional level of complexity to any strike. The Iranian facilities are also well protected, with the facilities at Qom and Natanz heavily fortified and protected, presenting significant targeting difficulties.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, recent media reporting has highlighted US-Israeli discussions of improved US weapon capabilities linked to Iranian nuclear-hardened targets.¹²⁸ Finally, any strike by air assets may require the overflight of regional nations, such as Jordan or Saudi Arabia in the case of an Israeli effort or the use of US facilities located in GCC nations should the US be involved.¹²⁹

Despite the extensive difficulties a military strike would face, this scenario should still be considered as viable, particularly in light of proven Israeli military capabilities, the threat perceived by the Israeli nation and President Obama's reminder that a military option remains under consideration.¹³⁰ However, the effectiveness of a military strike would remain questionable given the difficulties. A military strike has been assessed as unlikely to stop the Iranian nuclear program but a strike would likely slow progress considerably. The previous US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated that 'any overt attack on Iran would probably prove ineffective'.¹³¹ Indigenous Iranian expertise of the fuel cycle would enable the regime to repair the damage of a strike and rebuild the program given time and resources.¹³² And Iran would perceive any military strike as a direct threat to Iranian sovereignty and seem certain to respond militarily.

¹²⁶ Hendel, 'Iran's Nukes and Israel's Dilemma', p. 36.

¹²⁷ Hendel, 'Iran's Nukes and Israel's Dilemma', pp. 34-5.

¹²⁸ Uzi Mahnaimi, 'US unleashes its nuclear site bunker-buster', *The Australian*, 10 June 2013.

¹²⁹ Peter Brookes, 'Israel vs. Iran: 1st strike strategies', *Armed Forces Journal*, February 2008, p. 28.

¹³⁰ Obama, 'Remarks of the President Barack Obama to the People of Israel', p. 3.

¹³¹ Ido Oren, 'Why has the US not bombed Iran? The Domestic Politics of America's response to Iran's nuclear program', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 4, December 2011, pp. 677-8.

¹³² Hendel, 'Iran's Nukes and Israel's Dilemma', p. 34.

Iranian response

The Iranian response to a military strike would likely be unpredictable and could include a wide array of actions. These actions might include conventional attacks on US facilities in GCC nations, missile attacks on Israeli cities, greater support for proxies such as Hezbollah or the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. An Iranian foreign ministry official has previously stated that in response to an attack, 'ballistic missiles would be fired in masses against targets in Arab Gulf states and Israel'.¹³³ Iranian strikes on Israeli or regional targets could see the escalation of ongoing tension into a regional conflict.¹³⁴ A regional conflict would require the accelerated development of a missile defence capability by the US to defend its facilities located in GCC states, as well as GCC nations that may have assisted in strikes or subjected to retaliatory Iranian attack.¹³⁵

Containment collapse

While a military strike could be considered as part of the broad range of actions that make up a containment strategy, in the Iranian case this action would simply buy time and brings the risk of a belligerent response that might engulf the region in a wider conflict. Importantly, following the materialisation of a direct threat, Iran would likely feel compelled to withdraw from the NPT and develop nuclear weapons as a deterrence against these threats. Withdrawal from the NPT has the potential to undermine the NPT as a whole by forcing nations to reconsider their position in light of the Iranian experience, which could have implications well beyond the Middle East.¹³⁶ A military strike would also serve to strengthen domestic support for the regime. Instead of containing Iran from acquiring this type of capability, military action against Iranian nuclear facilities would likely have the opposite effect and simply create regional instability and collapse a containment strategy.

For but not with

In this scenario, Iran would develop the components and technology for a nuclear weapon but would not breakout by conducting a nuclear test. A nuclear capability

¹³³ Patrick Knapp, 'Iranian Ambitions: the Gulf States in the shadow of Iran', *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Winter 2010, p. 51.

¹³⁴ Brookes, 'Israel vs. Iran', p. 29.

¹³⁵ Richard Russell, 'Iran's Nuclear Program: security implications for the UAE and the Gulf region', Emirates Lecture Series No. 70, The Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi, 2007, pp. 24-6.

¹³⁶ Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf*, p. 126.

that includes all required technologies, infrastructure and knowledge could be considered an opaque nuclear capability and would be possible with the current *fatwa* remaining in place. Regardless of any red line the *fatwa* might impose, this development would see GCC nations and other regional stakeholders consider Iran a nuclear-armed state.¹³⁷ A nuclear-armed Iran would see a significant reaction within the region, regardless of whether Iranian nuclear weapons emerge in a transparent manner or remain opaque in nature.

Iranian action

If Iran had acquired a nuclear weapon capability, the region would likely see an emboldened Iran believing that once perceived existential threats had been deterred, it was free to prosecute its regional leadership aims by any means. A nuclear capability would afford Iran the opportunity to grow the regional influence it seeks by unconventional means under the shield of a nuclear weapon.¹³⁸ These circumstances might also see greater Iranian efforts to intimidate smaller GCC nations, such as Bahrain, while support for proxies such as Hezbollah would likely extend Iranian influence within the region.¹³⁹ Given the Iranian propensity to provide arms to third parties, there is some concern that Iran would transfer nuclear capabilities or material. While there is no evidence of this occurring to date, retribution for an act of this nature could see a significant international response. However, the need for regime security would likely ensure that Iranian nuclear capabilities were not provided to third parties.¹⁴⁰ This scenario would see continued uncertainty and see a significant shift in the strategic balance in the region.

Regional reaction

In response to a nuclear-armed Iran, GCC nations would likely accelerate their already significant build-up of conventional military forces. To combat Iranian missile capabilities, significant conventional military acquisitions would see the development of a regional ballistic missile defence capability as a priority. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated following a March 2012 GCC meeting that 'we can do more to defend the Gulf through cooperation on ballistic missile defence'.¹⁴¹ There is also likely to be a further build-up of alliances between GCC

¹³⁷ Bruce Riedel, 'The Mideast after Iran gets the bomb', *Current History*, December 2010, p. 370.

¹³⁸ Hagerty, 'Iran', pp. 314-6.

¹³⁹ Riedel, 'The Mideast after Iran gets the bomb', pp. 370-1.

¹⁴⁰ Hobbs and Moran, 'Looking Beyond a Nuclear-Armed Iran', p. 143.

¹⁴¹ Thom Shanker, 'US and Gulf Allies Pursue a Missile Shield Against Iranian Attack', *The New York Times*, 8 August 2012.

states and Western powers. While the US is seen as the major security partner, France signed an agreement with the UAE in 2008 and several Gulf nations signed an agreement with NATO to further security cooperation.¹⁴²

In response to a nuclear-armed Iran, there is significant academic argument regarding the likelihood of nuclear proliferation by regional states. While GCC nations professed a desire to progress a multilateral peaceful nuclear capability in 2006, little progress has been made. The GCC nations do not possess advanced nuclear capabilities nor the infrastructure and knowledge necessary to develop a nuclear weapon capability. With significant wealth, GCC nations could short circuit the development process by acquiring nuclear weapons from a third party such as Pakistan.¹⁴³ While a development of this nature is unlikely, any proliferation efforts by GCC nations would again place significant pressure on the continued relevance of the NPT as a worthwhile and significant instrument.¹⁴⁴ However, proliferation by GCC nations could place the US relationship with the region in jeopardy. To avoid further proliferation, regional nations seem more likely to fall back on extended nuclear deterrence from the US.¹⁴⁵

Deterrence now the focus

The range of actions that would result from a nuclear-armed Iran is significant, with the potential of setting off a scramble of alliance making and arms procurement. Deterrence would have primacy over containment as regional stakeholders sought to understand Iranian nuclear doctrine and Iranian plans for a second-strike capability.¹⁴⁶ Major stakeholders would be forced to rethink policy settings and military postures. Increased Iranian influence in the region would likely generate an increase in regional instability and suspicion. A regional conflict could emerge from this environment with its attendant effects for the region and the international community.¹⁴⁷ Significantly, an Iranian nuclear weapon capability could undermine non-proliferation measures such as the NPT.¹⁴⁸ The inability of containment to

¹⁴² Khaitous, 'Arab Reactions to a Nuclear Armed Iran', pp. 6-9.

¹⁴³ Khaitous, 'Arab Reactions to a Nuclear Armed Iran', pp. 10-1.

¹⁴⁴ Brookes, 'Israel vs. Iran', p. 29.

¹⁴⁵ Riedel, 'The Mideast after Iran gets the bomb', pp. 374-5.

¹⁴⁶ Ofer Israeli, 'An Israeli Plan B for a Nuclear Iran', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 2, June 2012, pp. 57-9.

¹⁴⁷ Shams-uz Zaman, 'Implications of a nuclear-armed Iran on the Middle East and Pakistan', *Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2012, pp. 178-9.

¹⁴⁸ Hobbs and Moran, 'Looking Beyond a Nuclear-Armed Iran', p. 144.

prevent or influence the outcome of the Iranian nuclear program has far-reaching strategic impacts.

Negotiated settlement

In this scenario, the P5+1 and Iran have been able to reach a negotiated settlement that sees Iran retain a peaceful nuclear capability under strict IAEA safeguards. The negotiated solution would be limited to the functional aspects of the nuclear program, such as permitted enrichment levels, handling of enrichment material, and management of Iranian nuclear facilities.¹⁴⁹ Iran has shown little interest in a settlement of this nature to date and the latest round of negotiations at Almaty has not yielded the much sought after breakthrough. However, economic sanctions are biting in Iran and the Iranian regime will need to act to avoid these sanctions becoming a catalyst for regime change from within. Iranian investment in the nuclear program in terms of resources and regime political capital is too great for a civilian nuclear program not to remain. While such an outcome represents the most palatable solution from a Western perspective, Iranian motivations and threat perceptions that could drive the development of a military nuclear capability would remain.¹⁵⁰ These concerns would need to be addressed to avoid continued regional instability and tension.

For a negotiated settlement to be successful, a broader-ranging engagement plan between key regional stakeholders would need to be considered to resolve the fundamental drivers of tension in the region. This framework would need to address key issues such as Iranian security in light of US rhetoric regarding military options and covert action by Israel. Iranian leadership aspirations would also need to be considered within any broader engagement plan. Finally, Iran would require assurances that resolution of the nuclear issue has provided a secure environment in which regime change is no longer sought or desired.¹⁵¹

Iranian action

Without a normalisation of relations through ongoing engagement beyond the nuclear issue, it is possible that stakeholder suspicions regarding Iranian actions

¹⁴⁹ Hossein Mousavian, 'The Iranian Nuclear Dispute: origins and the current options', *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 42, No. 6, July/August 2012, p. 13.

¹⁵⁰ Hynd, 'The veiled threats against Iran', pp. 5-6.

¹⁵¹ John Shenna, 'The Case against the Case against Iran: regionalism as the West's last frontier', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 3, Summer 2010, pp. 356-63.

would continue.¹⁵² Iran would need to reassure GCC nations and Israel of the peaceful nature of the remaining nuclear program to avoid future suspicions and a repeat of the current crisis. Iran would also need to allay fears over its regional leadership aspirations and support for organisations such as Hezbollah.¹⁵³ The election of Hassan Rouhani as President of Iran on 14 June 2013 will usher out the regime of President Ahmadinejad in August 2013 and may see a more reformist approach adopted by Iran. As the election of President Obama in the US saw an ‘extended hand’, with his moderate credentials and initial encouraging rhetoric, President-elect Rouhani may present a significant opportunity for US-Iranian rapprochement and perhaps a significant regional shift.¹⁵⁴

Regional reaction

GCC nations will closely watch the actions and rhetoric of Iran. Unless GCC nations are involved in the ultimate solution and any ongoing engagement plan, their suspicions seem likely to remain. Among the Sunni-dominated monarchies, hedging could still be evident and a continued build-up of conventional military capabilities could continue. However, Iranian reassurances and ending of support for Hezbollah would have a significant impact on the ability for a normalisation of the relations of GCC nations with Iran.¹⁵⁵ Ongoing engagement may enable the establishment of a regional-based security dialogue, such as the existing Gulf Security Dialogue, to further regional understanding and progress a range of issues including the Abu Musa island dispute between UAE and Iran.¹⁵⁶ With the Iranian nuclear issue resolved, expanded engagement might also build on previous proposals to build a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East or focus on those common elements of security, such as Afghanistan, which was the basis of previous successful cooperation between the US and Iran.¹⁵⁷ This approach would avoid the uncoordinated nature of the current containment strategy.

¹⁵² Marina Ottaway, ‘Iran, the United States, and the Gulf: the elusive regional policy’, Carnegie Papers, Middle East Program No. 105, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, November 2009, pp. 19-21.

¹⁵³ Andrea Ellner, ‘Iran – Challenge or opportunity for Regional Security?’, *Perceptions*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Summer 2011, pp. 17-8.

¹⁵⁴ Hall, ‘Iran president-elect promises nuclear transparency’.

¹⁵⁵ Ellner, ‘Iran – Challenge or opportunity for Regional Security?’, pp. 17-8.

¹⁵⁶ Knapp, ‘Iranian Ambitions’, pp. 53-8.

¹⁵⁷ Mir Sadat and James Hughes, ‘US-Iran Engagement through Afghanistan’, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring 2010, pp. 39-42.

Extended engagement

While it might be argued that without a containment policy that included tough economic sanctions a negotiated settlement would not have been possible, the ongoing Iranian motivations that drove the nuclear program would need to be considered. While the punitive measures may have achieved the short-term objectives, a significant follow-up effort will be required to address the fundamental Iranian motivations for a nuclear program to ensure long-term stability. For example, this may require the US to provide security reassurance to Iran, given previous regime change rhetoric. Iranian nuclear motivations and regional concerns will need to be addressed to provide longer-term regional security and stability.¹⁵⁸ A shift from a strategy of punitive containment to a pragmatic regionally-based approach of continued and transparent engagement that addresses key Iranian concerns seems more likely to succeed in the longer term.

Conclusion

With the energy that flows from the Middle East driving global powerhouses like China, the region continues to be strategically important. However, the area is also the seat of considerable tension with an 'Arab Awakening' sweeping across the region in 2011 and no resolution in sight to Arab-Israeli tensions. Iranian rhetoric under President Ahmadinejad, and continued Iranian support for groups such as Hezbollah and the Assad regime, have caught regional and global attention. As a consequence, the nuclear program of Iran is closely watched, discussed and subject to a diverse range of actions and policies with the clear aim of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Sanctions, diplomatic engagement, coercive diplomacy, threats of military action and a regional conventional military build-up have all formed part of a containment strategy designed to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. However, the current containment strategy has not stopped Iranian enrichment and the uncoordinated international efforts and failure to address the fundamental Iranian motivations for a nuclear capability have simply maintained tension and potentially hardened Iranian resolve.

Since the nuclear program of Iran commenced under the Shah in the early 1950s, Iran has developed significant nuclear fuel cycle infrastructure, knowledge and

¹⁵⁸ Hossein Mousavian, 'An Opportunity for a US-Iran Paradigm Shift', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Winter 2013, pp. 138-42.

material. Despite initial peaceful intentions and as a signatory to the NPT, revelations in 2002 of clandestine nuclear development activity brought diplomatic efforts led by European nations in an attempt to resolve the significant international concerns that resulted. A 2005 announcement of renewed Iranian enrichment activities fuelled the crisis and, in 2006, saw the referral of the program to the UNSC. Since that time, Iranian nuclear development has continued, despite the imposition of additional UNSC sanctions aimed at containing Iranian nuclear-related activity. In concert with its nuclear efforts, Iran has also made a substantial investment in the development of a range of missile systems. These capabilities could be used as the delivery mechanism for a nuclear weapon over significant distances and have caused great concern regionally.

The Iranian nuclear program is driven by a range of internal and external motivations. The most prominent of these is the perception of an existential threat from the US. US actions through the invasion of Iraq on the pretext of Iraqi WMD capabilities and open discussion of regime change have served to reinforce this threat perception. Domestically, the program is used to garner domestic support for the incumbent regime and as a tool to boost the regional leadership aspirations of Iran within the region. The consensus of numerous intelligence agencies is that Iran has the capability to develop a military nuclear capability but is yet to decide to proceed down this path. While the *fatwa* issued by Ayatollah Khamenei may serve as a 'red line' preventing the development of a nuclear weapons capability, continued development and concealment of Iranian nuclear capabilities continues to raise suspicions regarding Iran's ultimate goal.

The Iranian program has drawn a range of policies and actions as part of a containment strategy. Each US administration has taken a different approach, with the hawkish Bush Administration making overt threats being replaced by the Obama Administration that sought to engage the Iranian regime. GCC nations have hedged on the outcome and some states have remained engaged with Iran both diplomatically and economically. There is no consistent regional or international approach towards the Iranian nuclear program and, as a consequence, actions are uncoordinated and limit the ability of any strategy to succeed.

Aggressive Israeli rhetoric and actions including covert action have potentially driven Iranian perceptions that Israel poses an ongoing threat. Israel has also made attempts to coordinate a regionally-based approach to the issue with little success. Ongoing tensions between Israel and the Arab nations seem likely to continue to impede constructive dialogue. While the P5+1 has agreed on detailed plans to deal

with the nuclear program, Russia and China have refused to support additional UNSC resolutions for further sanctions. This inability to achieve an international consensus resulted in uncoordinated unilateral EU and US actions, which have been followed in a piecemeal nature by other nations including Australia.

From an Iranian perspective, the series of policies and actions implemented against it have clearly sought to limit Iranian plans to establish a peaceful nuclear program. While sanctions are having a significant effect on the Iranian economy, Iran has been agile in seeking out both legal and illegal trade avenues and has continued to invest in an expansive nuclear program. Iran has also successfully built a narrative to garner domestic and regional support built on the perception of the major powers' nuclear imperialism. With no coordinated or consistent approach within the region and among international stakeholders, Iranian uranium enrichment has continued unabated and Iran has made significant progress in the intervening period, questioning the ability of economic sanctions to succeed over the longer term.

There are a number of different outcomes that could eventuate when considering the future of the Iranian nuclear program. A military strike by Israel or a US-led coalition as part of a containment strategy could potentially trigger a wider regional conflict and reinforce Iranian threat perceptions. If Iran was successful in achieving a nuclear capability, whether transparently or opaquely—and despite a containment strategy being in place—significant regional tension, alliance making and conventional military build-up seem a likely outcome. There also remains the possibility of nuclear proliferation in the region with a possible attendant risk to the NPT and the rules-based international order this treaty supports. Finally, while a negotiated settlement may be possible, suspicions will linger if an ongoing regional engagement framework does not address underlying Iranian motivations for a nuclear program.

The current policies toward Iran have not been adequate to prevent the Iranian nuclear program from making continued progress and driving regional instability. The uncoordinated and inconsistent international and regional approach has limited the ability of a containment strategy to prevent Iran from continuing to develop a possible nuclear weapons program. While progress may have been delayed, containment is not an effective strategy for the Iranian nuclear issue. A new policy is required that would coordinate regional and international actions, as well as actively addressing Iranian motivations behind the nuclear program. Until these steps are taken, regional instability seems set to continue placing global interests at risk.

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