

**U.S. Policy Towards an Emerging
Iranian-Shia Hegemon**

**A Monograph
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Abstract

U.S. Policy Towards an Emerging Iranian-Shia Hegemon by MAJ Mark G. Wiens, Army National Guard, 54 pages.

Iran is pursuing a public nuclear policy, which will lead it into regional power status. The Persian Gulf is a vital region for its natural resources that America and its trading powers require to maintain their economies. A disruption of Persian Gulf petroleum production and export will have a global economic impact. The United States has provided security in the Persian Gulf in the past. In order to avoid a conflict with a burgeoning nuclear power in this vital region, the United States must engage Iran immediately and if required, unilaterally.

Iran is a complex nation with aspirations to become a respected power in the region. Its threats directed at Israel draw on the popular Muslim target in order to deflect internal criticism and unify Arab Muslim hatred towards the Jewish state. Iran's leaders employ scare tactics on their own population in order to consolidate power against foreign threats. Iran's penchant for nuclear power and eventually a nuclear weapon can bring this bustling Persian Gulf state a greater stake in the geopolitical game. Iran is a proud state with a desire to regain its ancient glory and become a regional hegemon again, thus gaining international respect.

Iran is also a pragmatic power on the rise. It is pursuing greater economic and diplomatic relations with foreign states and corporations; this follows a long period of extreme isolation and tragic warfare. Iranian leaders, including moderates and conservatives, use policies to increase the investment within and the exportation of natural resources, thus creating the co-dependant relationship of oil producer and user. Iran is a rational actor that uses some uncommon methods of foreign policy and communicating its policy objectives.

There are five recommended actions along the lines of the elements of national power within a United States engagement policy towards an emerging Iranian hegemon. First, the United States should normalize diplomatic relations with Iran in order to dialogue directly. Second, American information operations should accentuate the positive steps made by Iran. American messages directed towards the Iranian people should focus on cooperation in collective security interests of both nations. Third, the United States must remain and stabilize Iraq in order that a fully functioning Iraq can balance Iran's power in the region. Beyond the stabilization of Iraq, America must maintain a military presence in the Persian Gulf in order to demonstrate commitment to security and react to threats in the region. Fourth, America should initiate economic revival with Iran by incrementally decreasing sanctions against American business in Iran and lifting American boycott of Iranian products sold to the United States. This policy element should be gradually implemented with improving relations based on the reactions of Iran; however the initiative lies with the United States. Fifth, the United States must work with coalition partners multilaterally to maintain pressure on Iran to abandon its nuclear program through international organizations and direct dialog.

An American engagement policy must be a synchronized effort employing all the elements of power. America should not lead with its military power; however its military presence in the Persian Gulf does demonstrate American resolve for security and stability. The United States must engage Iran diplomatically in order to reduce tension, and modify sanctions in order to draw Iran into an economic relationship that comes with the prosperity that has accompanied globalization. America's message to the people of Iran must be engaging rather than threatening in order to facilitate a reciprocal response from Iranian leaders. The resolution of a potential crisis, between Iran bent on achieving nuclear power and America bent on keeping Iran isolated, is more about post modern American leadership and values.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PERSIAN GULF HEGEMONS

“Praise be to Allah, the great Persian state will reclaim its rightful place as a leader in the Persian Gulf and the Muslim Caliphate. We have developed the instrument of Allah’s will that will make the world watch in fear and make the American Satan flee,” said President Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad amid calls for the elimination of Israel on 11 February 2008, the nineteenth anniversary of “Revolution Day.” The President of Iran was alluding to the successful testing of a nuclear device in Kerman province several days earlier. The preceding fictional quotation is chilling, yet possible with the current security situation in the Persian Gulf.

This monograph makes the base assumption that Iran has the capability and intent to build, test, and deliver a nuclear weapon of mass destruction (WMD). The Persian Gulf has been, since World War II, a major supplier of petroleum products to the world, and a disruption of oil flow to Europe and Asia by a rogue Iran threatening to use a WMD would have a great impact on the United States’ economy and that of its trading partners. This issue of stability in the Persian Gulf is a vital interest for America. These conditions raise several questions that this monograph will answer: What strategy should U.S. policy adopt in an effort to create the conditions to modify Iran’s behavior prior to its realization of nuclear capability? How can U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf region be maintained despite an emerging Iranian hegemon? How can a looming conflict be avoided without risking vital national interests?

Because of its position as a rising regional hegemon, it is essential that the United States engage Iran and bring it into the fold of responsible nations. The United States is the world hegemon and provides security in the Persian Gulf. America must immediately begin a policy that combines aspects of both a “carrot and stick” approach rather than one that exacts punishment alone. The desired effect is to prevent a clash in the Persian Gulf, thus protecting petroleum distribution, global economics, and providing a wider basis for security and stability in

the Middle-East. David Baldwin explained that inducements combined with more-traditional forms of coercion, are more likely to produce results than either carrots or sticks alone.¹

The hypothesis of this paper is that an American policy of immediate engagement with Iran is the best method to improve bilateral relations which would reduce tensions in the Persian Gulf and dissuade Tehran from pursuing nuclear weapons. A policy of immediate engagement that requires the United States modify its trade, diplomatic, and informational policy directed at Iran from containment to engagement. The effects of this policy modification encourage dialogue and provide opportunities to reduce tension.

Methodology

The background and implications of this problem set has caused significant consternation within the White House and among America's European allies. Their current policies towards Iran have not yielded the desired responses. The United States policy towards Iran is a relevant and significant issue today, as the United States is the sole super power, it desires peace and stability in order to expand trading relations and maintain the free flow of oil. Oil continues to play a significant role in the U.S. economy and power as well as America's trading partners and allies, since the beginning of the Cold War. A threat to this strategic resource in the Persian Gulf will have a worldwide impact. The United States goal for the Persian Gulf is regional stability and the free flow of oil. Several issues arise with regard to recent changes in the region. The possibility of Persian Shia in Iran and Arab Shia in Iraq cooperating to achieve hegemony is a point of concern for America and Iran's regional neighbors. An emerging Shia hegemon will be viewed as a threat to Sunni states in the region. Chapter one will introduce the concept of hegemony, its significance in the Persian Gulf, and the method of analysis used in the monograph.

¹ David Baldwin, "The Power of Positive Sanctions," *World Politics* 24, no. 1 (October 1971), 19-20.

A hegemon is a state with the capability, capacity, and will to project its power and influence over neighboring states and influence them to certain ends. John J. Mearsheimer described a hegemon as the most dominant power in the system (regional or world), in so much as no other state in the system has the power to fight the hegemon alone.² In antiquity the Persian Empire was a global hegemon and threat to a burgeoning European civilization, but eventually conquered by Alexander the Great and his army of Greeks. Over the centuries the Persian Gulf has seen periodic changing of hegemons to include several Persian dynasties. The Sassanid and Safavid Empires ruled present day Iran and dominated much of the Persian Gulf.

The Sassanid Empire (224-651 A.D.) replaced the Parthian dynasty in Pre-Islamic Iran as the regional hegemon. An indigenous Iranian leader and people, Sasan of Fars, overthrew the Parthian masters in 224. The Parthian system was composed of independent rulers, eclectic religions, and a nomadic culture. The Sassanids introduced centralized government by founding new cities, and establishing Zoroastrianism as a state religion. By 651, Arabs ignited by Islam conquered the Sassanid Empire.³

Iran's conversion from Sunni to Shia Islam occurred with the advent of the Safavid Empire (1500-1722 A.D.). The first Safavid Shah Ismail successfully fought to dispel Sunni and Sufi sects from Iran. Ismail's victories in 1510 over Sunni Uzbeks cemented Shiism as the faith of Iran's ruling class. Within several generations, most Iranians converted to Shiism.⁴ Shiism has lasted as the dominate religion in Iran since the time of the Safavids. Modern Iran has harkened back to its ancient Persian glory during the Shah's reign, while the Islamic Revolution has recalled the justice of the Shia Safavid rulers. Both modern regimes have modeled these former great civilizations in their quests for regional hegemony.

² John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 40.

³ John W. Limbert, *At War with History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 59-64.

⁴ Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2002), 117-119.

During much of the 19th Century Iran was caught between Russia and Britain. Both of these great colonial powers were engaged in the “great game.” The competition for the control of Asia during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s thus characterized by espionage, diplomacy, hostile actions and collusion in order to secure their respective borders and interests. Russia’s goal was to secure the Caucasus and control its native Muslims. Britain’s interest was to secure India from invasion and sedition, because it was the most prosperous colony in the Empire. Iran’s geopolitical fate was determined to be a condominium; administered in the North by Russia and South by Britain, with an autonomous central section. Iranians learned to be pragmatic in their dealing with Europeans, playing one Empire off on another, in order garner the most favorable concessions from each power.

In the last century the demise of the Ottoman Empire, “Sick Man of Europe,” and the Russian Empire at the conclusion of World War I, provided the opportunity for Persia to gain a short lived independence.⁵ However the colonial powers of Britain and France acted as regional hegemony until the mandated territories gained independence as nation-states in the 1950’s and 1960’s. With independence and the growth of nationalism in the region, Iran became a hegemon again. Similar to other states during the Cold War, Iran became a U.S. ally and a bulwark against communism. Iran remained the regional hegemon until the Shah’s fall in 1979.

Following the Islamic revolution, Iran lost its regional influence and turned inward to rebuild its spiritual base. Saddam’s Iraq assumed the status of regional land hegemon until his ill conceived invasion of Kuwait and subsequent containment following Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Coalition forces led by the United States have assumed the role of the hegemon in the Persian Gulf. However, as Iraq stabilizes and coalition forces are reduced, the balance of power will shift back to the indigenous states of the region. Iran can be the best-situated state to project power and influence in the Persian Gulf, because of its potential for regional dominance with a

⁵ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, (Owl Books, 1989), 353.

stable and growing economy. Conveniently, Iraq continues to struggle in the wake of Saddam Hussein.

The current state of affairs between Iran and the United States is not moving in a positive direction. The United States and Iran have not had continuous diplomatic relations since 1979. Iranian leaders have referred to the United States as “The Great Satan” and the United States has labeled Iran as “An Axis of Evil,” even though it has a fledgling democratic movement.⁶ Iran has harbored terrorist organizations and is pursuing a nuclear capability. Amidst concerns from the international community, Iran recently announced it has achieved nuclear status by enriching uranium for the first time. This step, if true, puts Iran closer to developing a nuclear weapons capability if it chose to do so.

The deadly combination of a nuclear capable Iran that provides support to terrorist organizations have been key concerns of the stated American policy. The *U.S. National Security Strategy* states, “Our top priority will be to disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations of global reach and attack their leadership; command, control, and communications; material support; and finances.”⁷ Also it contradicts the *National Defense Strategy* which under Strategic Objectives states: “Secure the United States from direct attack. We give top priority to dissuading, deterring, and defeating those who seek to harm the United States directly, especially extremist enemies with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).”⁸

Chapter two gets inside the ‘Persian Puzzle’ and provides a deeper look into the reason Iran is pursuing nuclear power. A modified country study provides a nodal structure model with a focus on Iranian society, politics, military and economy. The other structures such as

⁶ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 87.

⁷ U.S. President. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, September 2002), 5.

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense. *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, March 2005), i.

information and infrastructure are addressed as well. Each structure identifies key Iranian vulnerabilities and strengths, as well as their inter-related nature.

An analysis of the historical relationship, the religious and cultural indicators between Iranian and Iraqi Shia will determine whether a strategic alliance is possible. The greatest threat of a united Shia hegemon in the Persian Gulf is to oil shipping, through the Straits of Hormuz, that the world economy depends. What are the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution In Iraq (SCIRI) and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards activities tending towards: common action, neutrality, or conflict? In the final analysis, the probability of a united Iraqi and Iranian Shia hegemon in the Persian Gulf is unlikely.

An analysis of the purpose for Iran's pursuit of a nuclear capability primarily pursued as a component of its national security. A secondary reason for Iran's development of a nuclear capability is to generate national pride. Then followed by a look into Persian pragmatism, which is defined as the way in which Iranians view themselves, understand their history and set their goals. Chapter two concludes with the reason for Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, and the problems of a Shia hegemon viewed through the lens of Persian Pragmatism.

After a review of Iran's intentions, capabilities and actions, the author will propose a priority for U.S. policy towards Iran. The framework for analysis used in chapter three will be the instruments of power. This will indicate whether Iran is capable of and willing to project power its in the Persian Gulf. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, "The instruments of national power are all means available to the government in its pursuit of national objectives. They are expressed as diplomacy, information, military, and economic."⁹ They are also referred to as DIME. Chapter three analyzes the problem set of the goals of Iranian hegemony versus the goals of the *U.S. National Security Strategy* and *National Defense Strategy*.

⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 31 August 2005), 264.

The U.S. strategy for the region and its impact on Iran requires a comparison of policies, risks, and goals. This examination provides clarity for points of friction and points of consensus. The United States has three general policy options vis-à-vis an Iranian hegemon: engagement, containment, or confrontation. Engagement is a policy marked by a warming of relations between the United States and Iran. This can include a retiring of sanctions and embargos in combination with a reliance on “soft power.” Joseph Nye defined soft power as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”¹⁰ Engagement would require a long-term commitment and constant attention to the region. This policy in conjunction with containment by the U.S. and allies was successful in co-opting Libya to discontinue its nuclear program. This approach has not worked towards Iran, as other nations have instituted policies of containment.

Containment is a policy which contains both positive and negative sub-options within a larger framework of isolating the target state. Stephen Biddle described containment as a policy that settles for modest goals instead of high costs, while lowering mid-term risks.¹¹ In this instance the costs would include rebuilding and stabilizing Iraq, in order to reestablish a balance of power in the Persian Gulf. “(T)he chief risk is near-term chaos resulting from failed political engineering in the Mideast.”¹² Biddle made a slight distinction between containment and rollback however, for simplicity; elements of both policies will be referred to as containment. Containment continues to be the current policy option applied to Iran. The policy requires a relatively high expenditure to maintain forces in the region and diplomatically encouraging other states to apply a policy of containment on Iran in order to be effective. However the effectiveness

¹⁰ Joseph Nye, “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (2004): 256.

¹¹ Stephen Biddle, *American Grand Strategy After 9/11: An Assessment* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), v.

¹² *Ibid.*, 31.

of this policy is doubtful as Iran continues to pursue nuclear status, while our major allies are not applying a similar economic and diplomatic policy.

Confrontation would be the most drastic policy and would shift America away from the diplomatic and economic dimension of national power to the military spectrum. It retains some elements of containment, such as isolation of Iran and substantial military commitment to the Persian Gulf. The current advantage of this policy is its capability of action to resolve the problem in a short time. The United States has forces in the region available to fulfill some of the limited military policies. The confrontation policy risks another military action with a large Muslim nation in the Middle East and deleterious second and third order effects.

Chapter four provides recommendations based on the current situation. It concludes with a recommended U.S. policy towards Iran which creates the conditions most favorable to U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf region. The goal is to provide the solution in the form of the instruments of power, resulting in a hybrid policy option. The conclusion reinforces the risks and opportunities of an Iranian hegemon in the Persian Gulf, and restates the recommendation for U.S. policy and decision makers.

Chapter five reviews Iran's historical, structural and current proclivities provided in chapter two. Next it reviews U.S. policy options through the framework of the instruments of national power as described in chapter three. Then it reviews United States policy recommendations with a hybrid non-kinetic approach to peace and stability with a re-emerging Persian regional power in chapter four. It concludes with tying the history, power and politics of the United States and Iran together and provides the reason why a change in U.S. policy from containment to engagement is necessary and immediate.

The near future is significant for two reasons; first the United States will hold Presidential elections in 2008 and the new executive will make policy changes for the Middle East. Secondly, Iran will likely pursue the capability to create nuclear weapons. Iran achieving a nuclear energy capability is not a sign of the coming apocalypse. However understanding the

conditions and assisting Iran to alleviate them will reduce tension and create opportunities for mutual understanding. The assumption is, Iran is ruled by pragmatists and is a rational actor that does not intend to start a nuclear exchange. Iran reacts to the changing environment and when threatened it pushes back. Kinetic approaches and their consequences are relatively immediate, while non-kinetic effects require months and even years to put into place and begin to understand results. The road to peace and stability in the Persian Gulf requires immediate action in order to have an effect in the intervening years.

Recent Relations: Uncle Sam, the Shah, and the Ayatollah

To understand the issues governing the relationship between modern Iran and the United States, one must begin with the 1950s. In the 20th century, the United States was directly involved in Iranian internal politics and those of the region to include the following incidents: 1953 overthrow of Mossadiq, support of the Reza Shah Palavi Dynasty, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Gulf Wars. Israel, considered a proxy of the United States, engendered a devious and close relationship with the Shah's Iran. Both states intelligence services, the MOSSAD and SAVAK, shared information to the chagrin of pan-Islamists from the 1950s till the Shah's downfall. The CIA noted that, "The main purpose of the Israeli relationship with Iran was the development of a pro-Israel and anti-Arab policy on the part of Iranian officials."¹³ The Iranian hegemon dominated the region with intelligence from Israel, support from America, and vast oil proceeds.

Iranians negative feeling towards America stemmed from the internal meddling of the CIA in 1953. The Dwight D. Eisenhower administration sanctioned a coup to reinstate the Shah over popularly supported Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadiq for fear that the Soviet Union would gain influence in Iran. "[T]he 1953 coup reinstated the power of the monarchy, it did not immediately consolidate the Shah's personal rule and in fact it heightened his unpopularity

¹³ James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 430.

among important social strata.”¹⁴ In order to complete his consolidation of power, the Shah created the SAVAK, his secret police force to enforce his will and eliminate opposition. In addition to this repression, the Reza Shah dynasty enforced progressive modernism. A western style non-religious state backed with autocratic force compelled the Mullahs to submit. A large section of the population felt alienated and several dissidents fled the country to include the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini.

In 1979, the Iranian student revolution in combination with the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini focused its anger on the repressive Shah and his American supporters. The clerics regarded the apostate Shah with disdain as well as his chief supporter. The mullahs rendered the special moniker “The Great Satan” to the United States. By taking the U.S. Embassy and holding the hostages for over a year further aggravated the situation. The corresponding American reaction to rescue the hostages was named OPERATION: EAGLE’S CLAW, popularly known as Desert One. Even though the mission was a dismal failure and no Iranians were affected, it further aggravated the tense situation as it was a foreign military operation conducted within Iran’s territory. The United States continued to isolate Iran by boycotting its products, imposing sanctions on businesses engaged with Iran, and freezing Iranian state assets held in the United States. The strained relationship worsened during the 1980s with the Iran-Iraq War. The United States sided with Iraq against Iran by providing intelligence to Iraq and continuing to sanction Iran for fear Iran would defeat Iraq and dominate the region and spread the Islamic Revolution.

The only perceptible thaw in United States-Iran relations in the past fifty years occurred during the Gulf Wars. Operation Iraqi Freedom brought relief from Iran’s perennial enemy, Saddam’s WMDs, and Iraq’s border-crossing antics. Americans have a short memory regarding Iran and want to move past the Hostage Crisis. Iranians, in contrast, have bitter memories of American interference and remain resentful of the United States. The overall assessment of

¹⁴ Mehran Kamrava, *The Political History of Modern Iran: From Tribalism to Theocracy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), 58.

relations between the United States and Iran has not been positive. Iran, as a rational actor, is justified in a healthy suspicion of United States foreign policy, owing to the past fifty years of internal interference in Iranian affairs. This lingering animus and suspicion is at the forefront of the Iranian leadership's memory when negotiating with the United States.

Iran was on a strong economic growth path and experiencing resurgence in national pride under moderate reformers until June 2005 with the election of Ahmadi-Nejad, a religious conservative. The current Iranian President has used the external threat of Coalition forces surrounding Iran to garner support during the current nuclear crisis. A potential precipitous drop in U.S. military forces in theater can reduce tensions with Iran; however an unstable Iraq will invite interference from a resurgent Iran. The United States and Coalition allies must immediately engage Iran, rather than alienating and isolating the Persian state. Engagement has a potentially higher payoff and more desirable end state for stable and safer region. America's real and lasting power is not in its military. The enduring power is in its people, who transmit its culture, values, and economic prowess. It is easier to influence friends than coerce enemies. The United States has the opportunity to beckon a future ally or ensure an eternal enemy.

CHAPTER 2: IRANIAN INTENTIONS, CAPABILITIES AND ACTIONS

Iran has repeatedly uttered threats to peace in the region. Iranian leaders have stated repeatedly their desire to eliminate Israel. Iran could actualize these threats, if it attains a nuclear weapons capability. Iran has followed these threats with support for terrorist organizations such as Hizbollah. Iran is a major oil exporter and wields considerable economic power among importers, for example China and the European Union. Additionally, Iran's influence over Shia co-religionists (especially SCIRI in southern Iraq) facilitates an interference with internal Iraqi political affairs.

Iran's threats to Israel's existence are echoed in its denial of the holocaust, and support for Palestinian and Lebanese resistance organizations. Iran supports Hizbollah and HAMAS

through training and arming. Iran has unabashedly supported Hizbollah, hence it has received the dreaded moniker a “state sponsor of terrorism.” Since Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Hizbollah has ceased attacking Israel. Iran is not a direct terrorist threat to the United States.¹⁵ In the view of fellow Muslims, Iran is supporting freedom fighters against an oppressor state.

The ominous nature of Iran’s leadership, exemplified in their constant threats and support of terrorism makes their nuclear achievement seemingly more perilous than Pakistan achieving nuclear capabilities to balance against India. One could easily interpret from Ahmadi-Nejad’s constant propaganda that Iran will use nuclear weapons immediately in an offensive capacity than as a defensive deterrent. This is a tactic to garner internal support by rallying the Iranian people against a foreign nemesis.

Since OIF, the relationship between Iranian and Iraqi Shia groups has grown; this situation has raised concern about a nefarious Persian influence. Iran has provided spiritual, financial, and military support to Iraqi Shiite leaders and militia. However, Iran has not directly attacked the United States in Iraq as a product of state policy. According to Pollack, “one of the things we have going for us in Iraq, if I can use that term, is that the Iranians really have not made a major effort to thwart us. . . . If they wanted to make our lives rough in Iraq, they could make Iraq hell.”¹⁶ In addition the recent offer by Iran to discuss Iraqi stability issues bilaterally with the United States is an opening to direct diplomatic exchange. The combination of a lack of hostility and diplomatic opening is an indication that Iran is not opposed to American efforts to establish a stable non-threatening democratic Iraq, and the possibility for a wider direct dialog on other issues exists.

In comparing the strategic situation leading up to OIF and the current situation facing Iran, there are several distinct differences between them. In the case of Iran there is “universal”

¹⁵ Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America* (New York, NY: Random House, 2004), 379.

¹⁶ James Fallows, “Will Iran Be Next?” *Atlantic Monthly* 294, no. 5 (December 2004): 104.

agreement and IAEA documentation from inspections of Iran's nuclear program. Whereas in the case of Iraq, there was significant international agreement that Iraq's WMD program was still intact to some degree, however there was no contemporary confirmation from an international agency. The American and Coalition impression was that Saddam was successfully hiding his program. This perception, in combination with his boasting a WMD capability, actually increased the perceived threat and the need for action. However Iraq's status was based on intelligence analysis rather than solid facts from an international inspection agency. Hence the situation facing the United States concerning Iran has more certainty and fidelity than that of Iraq prior to OIF.

Iran is mainly Persian and Shia, while its neighbor Iraq is mainly Arab and Shia. The commonality of the same religious sect provides for a conduit of influence and joint action on certain religious and political events. This commonality will not lead to an inclusion of Shia Iraq into a Shia hegemon directed by Iran. There are too many differences to make this possible. The Iran-Iraq War waged throughout the 1980s created a deep divide and latent animosity between Persian and Arab. Iraq, with a parliamentary political system, allows Iraqi-Shias to exercise their own political muscle within their country. This new Iraqi-Shia cohesion and self-awareness provides the power to balance against the former Sunni-Baathists without the need for a mentor Shia state. The presence of Coalition forces and International Community monitors makes a regional Shia hegemony in the short run highly unlikely. However Iranian influence will remain, while coercion and unified action will be limited between leaders and groups cavorting below the visible political process.

Inside the Puzzle: Iran's Complex Power Set

Kenneth Pollack described Iran as the Persian Puzzle in his 2004 book by the same title. He forecasted a conflict between Iran and America, and suggested that how stormy this relationship becomes would determine U.S. policy. Placing the pieces of this complex puzzle

together, one can see the difference in the projected and actual image. Iran projects a hostile image; however after a deeper examination it appears to be a less foreboding nation. Iran is transitioning from a religious revolution a generation ago into a religious state today that is changing, while remaining true to its principles. Iran is making the necessary adaptations to rule and run a nation, thus acting more pragmatic and moderate at times. “Revolutionary movements often are led to deviate from their radical doctrine once they have made the transition from opposition to power. The Islamic revolution is no exception. . . . The pragmatic interests of the state have clearly gained supremacy over the radical philosophy of the revolution.”¹⁷

Iran matured as an international state significantly from 1979 to 1988. The Islamic revolution’s dream of an umma of all Islamic states was shattered after the bitter war with Iraq and a more utilitarian outward view prevailed. This vision, led by moderates, was to bring Iran out of isolation and restore relations between the West and East. “The end of hostilities also enabled Iran to mend fences with the Western powers following the severe setback of 1987: diplomatic relations with France were restored . . . Canada . . . Britain . . . West Germany.”¹⁸ Moreover where does Iran stand now with its neighbors, trading partners and most importantly itself?

Societal Structure

A common assumption made about Iran is that it is characterized by a monolithic Persian culture with crazed religious zealots spewing anti-American venom. Though some radical leaders proffer this about their state, they are a minority and this view is incorrect on several counts. Iran has several fractious cultural demographics along ethnic and generational lines. Iran’s two dominate ethnic groups are Persians and Azeris comprising 51 and 24 percent

¹⁷ Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 55.

¹⁸ Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2002), 86. Severe Setbacks were the failed Karbala 5 offensive against Basra and the initiation of United States escort of Kuwaiti tankers in the Persian Gulf.

respectively, thus constituting 75 percent of the population. The Gilaki and Kurds provide eight and seven percent respectively making up another 15 percent. Languages break along ethnic lines with Persian (Farsi) 58 percent, Turkic 26 percent and Kurdish nine percent. The Iranian population is much more homogeneous in religious practice with 89 percent being Shia and nine percent Sunni.¹⁹ Iran is fractured when considering the generational split. Robin Wright stated, “For most Iranian youth, the unavoidable pull of globalization also relegated religion to just one corner of their lives.”²⁰ The majority of Iran’s population is too young to recall the revolution and the hostage crisis of 1979-1980 that caused the break in relations with the United States. The opportunity exists to reach out to Iranian youth and start making inroads for the future.

Iranian youth express excitement about western culture, sports, music, and dress.²¹ The youth are generally fascinated with American things and are not easily dissuaded. The older leadership has attempted to quash the affinity of its people and youth for things western through laws and rhetoric; this amidst Iranian youth clamoring for more Americana. For example the regime leaders have exploited the Danish “Muhammed Cartoon” and Coalition actions in Afghanistan and Iraq to heighten the appearance of an external threat to the culture and statehood. This manipulation of perceived eternal threats has provided a level which the government could use to consolidate power within Iran. At the same time the religious leaders attempt to limit the foreign cultural influences that are not in unison with the Mullahcratic views. In so far as the social conditions are concerned the crime rate is low in Iran; however there is a burgeoning drug traffic industry and domestic consumption problem. Iran’s societal vulnerabilities are intertwined with its political vulnerabilities. The youth are not buying into the great revolution rhetoric and are looking for more materialistic rewards than the religious state is offering.

¹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook, [document online], Available from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ir.html>, Internet, Accessed on 28 July 2005.

²⁰ Robin Wright, *The Last Great Revolution*, (New, NY: Knopf, 2000), 258.

²¹ Ibid, 252-253.

Political Structure

In order to more clearly understand the impact of politics on society, one must view the inter-relationship of religious and political systems. Iran, although in name a republic, is more of a democratic theocracy, or an emerging republic with a constitution based on the Koran. Politics as well as social matters are regulated by the Shari'a Law. The conservative Mullahs hold the reigns of power, setting foreign and domestic policy agendas. The recent election of Ahmadi-Nejad exemplifies their power and appeal, following a more moderate president open to western dialogue. Reformers like former Presidents Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mohammad Khatami, and former Chief of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Hassan Rouhani think that President Ahmadi-Nejad's extreme religious views, aggressive behavior, and threats against Israel make progress difficult and alienate the neighbors.

The only organized Iranian resistance groups are the Mujahideen-e Khalq (MEK) and the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), both have severe limitations and do not play a significant role within Iran. The MEK is an armed revolutionary organization, originally established with socialist ideology in opposition to the Shah's regime then Khomeini's Islamic Revolution. Saddam's Iraq allowed sanctuary, provided training and arms to MEK in order to destabilize Iran during and after the Iran-Iraq War.²² The MEK's ties to Iraq marginalized its ability to attract a large following and alienated most Iranians as they viewed MEK as a foreign dominated and treasonous group.²³ MEK has little capability within Iran, since its loss of support from Saddam.

The NCRI is an exile organization in opposition to Khomeini's religious regime and advocating a secular and democratic Iran. It politically supports MEK's fight to liberate Iran. NCRI is discredited by the conservatives in Iran claiming NCRI is a puppet organization of Western powers. In 1997, the MEK was added to the terrorist watch list by the United States. In

²² Pollack. 320-321.

²³ O'Sullivan, 93.

2003, the network in Iraq cooperated with coalition forces, were disarmed and placed in Geneva Conventions “protected persons” status.²⁴ Thus working with either organization poses the problem of working with terrorists, which America has sworn not to do.

The chief Iranian political vulnerabilities inherent in the system are the rifts between the reformers, the conservatives, and youth. Though Iran is factionalized, appealing to the reformers alone can marginalize them in the eyes of the Mullahs. Iranian youth are demanding modernity and more consumer goods and a less religious dogmatic existence.

Military Structure

Similar to the political system is the dual nature of the military in which there is state force that is moderate and an elite force that is religiously zealous. The conscripted force is largely light infantry and suitable mainly for defense. The military budget is modest on 3.3 percent of the GDP. The most formidable force is the Revolutionary Guard, which has the majority of the best equipment to include limited mechanized and armored vehicles. Kenneth Katzman in his book *The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard* described the Guard's zealous commitment to the revolution and Islamic ideology and resistance to change, and argued that it is unlike the greater Iranian population and even the state in its rigidity. To some extent the Revolutionary Guard acts as a state within a state. It conducts its own foreign policy and support for terrorist organizations apart from elected state oversight.

The most threatening military capability of the Iranian military is raiding or conducting an insurgency. Iran could mobilize millions of shock troops to conduct an insurgency and could organize human wave attacks if invaded. This was case in 1980, when Saddam's Iraq suddenly attacked. An invasion would be a polarizing nationalist event discrediting western-minded reformers and binding moderates with conservatives to resist the invader. Iran has limited

²⁴ Dudley Knox Library of Naval Postgraduate Studies, [document online], Available from <http://library.nps.navy.mil/home/tgp/mek.htm>, Internet, Accessed on 25 March 2006.

maritime assets to include submarines and anti-ship missiles that would be effective against Persian Gulf shipping and tankers for a limited period. Naval forces have the capability to surge and disrupt shipping in the Persian Gulf. They currently do not have the capability to threaten their neighbors; this is in consideration of the coalition forces operating to their East and West.

Iran's potential for developing nuclear weapons is higher than that for Iraq. "Hammes warned, [Iran could] apply the logic of 'asymmetric,' or 'fourth generation,' warfare, in which a superficially weak adversary avoids a direct challenge to U.S. military power and instead strikes the most vulnerable points in American society as al-Qaeda did on 9/11."²⁵ This approach could include attacks against American individuals, government, and businesses abroad and at home through bombings and proxy actions. Major military vulnerabilities include Iran's lack of agility and poor command and control.

Economic Structure

Iran's greatest strength or potential weapon is its oil. To a large extent Iran's economy is centrally planned with state ownership of petroleum. It is OPEC's second largest (earth's fourth largest) exporter providing five percent of the world's consumed oil. Iran holds 10 percent of known oil reserves, plus it has the world's second largest natural gas fields, however they are undeveloped. Iran receives 90 percent of its export revenue from oil, which is half of its budget. Iran is over reliant on oil and ineffective state sector; it has not regained its former six million barrels a day under the Shah. Modest market reforms were instituted under President Rafsanjani, since 2001 its GDP growth rate has risen from 3.3 percent to 6.3 percent in 2004.²⁶ It has achieved a healthier debt load of only nine percent GDP, while amassing 30 billion dollars in foreign exchange from rising oil prices.

²⁵ Fallows, 110.

²⁶ Country Watch Country Review, [document online], Available from http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.aspx, Internet, Accessed on 5 March 2006.

The infrastructure of Iran is inadequate for its size and population needs. Compared to Iraq, Iran has less key transportation nodes and the condition is dilapidated with a great need of tremendous investment. Transportation: rail 7,200 kilometers, paved highways 94,000 kilometers; Communications: 4.3 million internet users, 28 television stations, 82 radio stations, 14.5 million line telephones (system is being expanded to outlying villages), and 3.3 million cell phones.²⁷ Iran's infrastructure vulnerability works both ways, limiting Iran's ability to transport by rail, road, and port; likewise it is a limiting factor to an invasion force in the event of supporting a ground re-supply operation from Persian Gulf ports to Tehran and other inland sites.

Why is Iran pursuing nuclear energy? Iran argues its need for nuclear power for self consumption in order export the pumped oil. The reason to export the majority of its oil is to gain the hard currency badly needed to pay for infrastructure repairs and expansion. This claim has some validity; however it is more of a rallying cry for national pride and regional respect as a member of the nuclear club.

Iran has several areas of economic concern which are unemployment, poverty and inflation. Iran's unemployment rate runs at 11.2 percent, poverty rate runs at 40 percent of the population below the poverty line, and inflation rate runs at 15.5 percent. The key Iranian vulnerability is its greatest source of strength its oil industry. Iran's economy is heavily dependant on this one resource and aging oil infrastructure which continues to support it. A drop in prices or a self imposed reduction would stifle the modest economic growth and improving employment situation recently witnessed in Iran. Iran has expressed a desire to join the World Trade Organization (WTO); however the United States has blocked the action.²⁸ Admission into the WTO would greatly facilitate Iran's desire to receive international in order to improve its infrastructure and develop its international relationships.

²⁷ Central Intelligence Agency.

²⁸ Country Watch Country Review.

Crazy, Like a Fox or Persian Pragmatism and Brinkmanship

Why would a nation that is a nuclear non-proliferation signatory take such a tactic, as to disregard its commitment and pursue the development of nuclear weapons? Does it feel threatened by its neighbors, have a plan for regional domination using the nuke for internal consumption or a combination of them, or is it more about national pride? “The fact that Iran had been “the sole superpower” of ancient times or the persistent perception that it has been a “unique” cultural and political leader in history might be related to the tendency of Iranian political rulers and leaders to set goals and objectives far beyond the reach of their means.”²⁹ Iran views itself as the guardian of the Persian Gulf. As Iran’s economic power grows domestically, its aura abroad grows with the attention it receives from its nuclear program.

The typical depiction of President Ahmadi-Nejad is of an incendiary bomb-thrower willing to risk obliteration than of bowing to infidel western machinations. The ruling elite of Iran (the Mullahs), like any ruling elite desires to maintain power. When they feel their power waning and cannot control the loss internally or by religion on domestic issues, they may create an external diversion to mobilize the entire country against an outside threat. This mechanism of directed fear against a real or imagined threat has effectively mobilized nations in the name of patriotism. The people’s focus is drawn from domestic problems to foreign crisis. The campaign to acquire nuclear power and weapons enjoys tremendous domestic support, and the majority of Iranians agree that Iran has the right to pursue nuclear weapons and view it as a matter of national pride.

Pragmatism has been developed over the past centuries as a part of Persian mindset, while Iran was not a hegemon. Iran has sought to play competing powers off against one another to Iran’s gain. During the nineteenth century Iran was buttressed by the Russian and British Empires. Both empires sought to gain control of Iran, however through brinkmanship and

²⁹ Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The United States and Iran: The Patterns of Influence* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1982), 168.

bargaining Iranian leaders were able to secure limited autonomy and balance between the two powers. Though this is not unique in the Middle East, Iran continued employing this tactic through the twentieth century. Under the Shah, Iran sided with America in order to receive military and economic aid to oppose the Soviet Union. Persian Pragmatism is merely the ability to see what in Iran's best interests at the expense of other powers in the region.

This "us against them" mentality is rather effective: besides creating a straw-man in which the nation's loathing is directed, the ruling elite may need to eventually increase the tension with a real competitor or threat to keep the game going. This is particularly relevant if the internal dynamic is not favoring the elites. The key for a rational actor playing the game of misdirection is brinkmanship. Brinkmanship, when practiced skillfully against opponents, allows one to gain one's own internal objectives without losing face or power.

Cheryl Benard and Zalmay Khalilzad argued in their book *The Government of God: Iran's Islamic Republic* that an Iranian Islamic Republic in a consolidated state will likely have a decrease in the use of terror, an increased role of professionals in running the state, a greater responsiveness to the aspirations of the social elements, a more regularized decision making, and an increasingly pragmatic approach superseding the previous moral absolutism.³⁰ States will act more pragmatically when their security issues are addressed and their economic situation is stable. Iran is achieving some success economically and pursuing a security policy which is of concern to its neighbors.

Iran, as a sovereign state, has a legitimate concern. In the past four years Iran has seen regime change in two of its bordering states, one of which continues to have a large foreign troop presence. The foreign troops are largely from a nation with which Iran has not had relations with for twenty-seven years. This feeling of being surrounded would create concern in any state.

Anthony Cordesman in his work titled *Iran and Iraq: The Threat from the Northern Gulf* though

³⁰ Cheryl Benard, and Zalmay Khalilzad, *The Government of God: Iran's Islamic Republic* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), 190.

dated 1994, provided insight into the animus that drove distrust between these two nations that could boil over into a conflict in the Persian Gulf. The United States was and still is the de facto policeman of the Gulf, settling disputes and keeping the peace. Cordesman rated Iraq the greater threat under Saddam and Iran as a pragmatic power with a not so moderate religious bent. Cordesman implies that the removal of a megalomaniac tyrant from Iraq will create a possibility for normalized relations in the Persian Gulf.

Another aspect of Iran's hegemonic desires might be better understood by Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism. In relation to this framework, Iran would see itself as a legitimate regional power and needing nuclear status to project its desire. "[T]he structure of the international system . . . causes them [great powers] to think and act offensively and to seek hegemony . . . the principal motive behind great-power behavior is survival. In anarchy, however, the desire to survive encourages states to behave aggressively."³¹ The vacuum created by the loss of a Baathist Iraq would naturally be filled, thus it is not without precedent that a certain amount of expansion and conflict will occur in the region until a balance is found. Rational actors keep this situation from getting out of control by knowing their own limitations and gauging their opponents accurately.

Similar to the Shah's penchant for power, the current President Amadi-Nejad suffers from the same Persian cultural elitism and thirst for recognition. "[T]he Shah's regime, particularly after the fourfold rise in oil prices when he began to dream about quickly transforming Iran into one of the five conventional military powers of the world, and into the equal of France and West Germany in economic power as part of his quest for the 'Great Civilization.'"³² Iran envisions the pursuit of nukes as a national right that will bring internal satisfaction and international respect.

³¹ Mearsheimer, 53-54.

³² Ramazani, 168.

This policy of nuclear development though rational, does pose a risk to Iran. The example of Saddam's Iraq defying the world after repeated appeals to comply with UNSCRs culminated with U.S. led Coalition military action. Iran finds itself, by its own admission, in a similar situation to Iraq in reference to the international community. "The pragmatic minister of defense, Ali Shamkhani, warned that the existence of nuclear weapons will turn us into a threat to others that could be exploited in a dangerous way to harm our relations with the countries of the region."³³ Iranian leaders are rational and aware of the situation they face and the game of brinkmanship their state is now playing, just as it has in the past.

CHAPTER 3: U.S. POLICY OPTIONS-THE DIME

This chapter examines United States policy options to influence, coerce, and force Iran directly and indirectly from pursuing, or achieving, a nuclear capability and becoming a stable member of the brotherhood of nations. The full panoply of options will be presented with focus on non-military slate of options as military options (apart from air strikes which are not currently feasible). However the United States must maintain the allusion to escalation in order to demonstrate its commitment to security and stability in the region. An air power option alone will not ensure an end to Iran's nuclear program, due to its diversification and protection. However it can send a message of serious intent and cause delay by destroying and or damaging critical portions of the program. "Coercion by threat of damage also requires that our interests and our opponent's not be absolutely opposed . . . Coercion requires finding a bargain, arranging for him to be better off doing what we want-worse off not doing what we want-when he takes the threatened penalty into account."³⁴ The common goal of keeping the Persian Gulf free for commercial transit is the desire of all parties (Iran, the United States, Persian Gulf States, and the European Union).

³³ Kenneth Pollack and Ray Takeyh, "Taking on Tehran," *Foreign Affairs* (March-April 2005) [document online], Available from http://weblinks1.epnet.com/DeliveryPrintSave.asp?tb=0&_ug=sid+47D5253F-303E-4743-, Internet, Accessed on 12 January 2006.

³⁴ Thomas Schelling, *Arms & Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 4.

This chapter is constructed to examine the national elements of power (DIME). These elements are largely based on what Nye terms as hard power or the physical assets and promises of a power. “We know that military and economic might often get others to change their position. Hard power can rest on inducements [“carrots”] or threats [“sticks”].”³⁵ These elements are liberally used in the performance of diplomacy, trade, and war. “Both coercion and deterrence focus on influencing the adversary’s calculus for decision making, but deterrence seeks to maintain the status quo by discouraging an opponent from changing its behavior. By contrast, coercion seeks to force the opponent to alter its behavior.”³⁶ Thomas Schelling referred to this coercion as “compellence.”

The current U.S. policy has proven ineffective as it has not produced the desired effect. In fact it has left the United States little options outside escalating to military options. This undesirable position reflects the lack of flexibility to get tougher or requires second parties to implement one’s own strategy. “Escalation dominance: the ability to increase the threatened costs to the adversary while denying the adversary the opportunity to negate those costs or to counterescalate.”³⁷ The United States will not win with escalation dominance, if it fails to gather a coalition of nations to bandwagon against Iran. The use of a surrogate or second order coercion runs a higher risk of failure as it requires intense pressure on the middleman (China or Russia) to achieve the desired effect.

Indirect coercion, of course, requires far more effort than indirect diplomacy. Coercion through a third party requires the coercer to induce or compel the third party to become a coercer itself (or to use brute force) against an adversary. Because third-party coercion requires coercion or suasion to work twice, the problem facing coercers generally multiplies. The coercer must be able to shape the behavior of the third party in such a way that the third party’s response will

³⁵ Nye, 5.

³⁶ Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 4.

³⁷ Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 38.

effectively shape the adversary's will in accord with the coercer's overall objectives.³⁸

Glenn Hastedt defined sanctions as "Penalties imposed on another state in order to coerce it into changing a policy or prevent an action from being taken."³⁹ Sanctions will only work when other trading partners agree to the conditions and duration objectives. "Neither the coercing government nor the target government is a unitary, rational actor. Further, coercers do need to know a great deal about the nature of the target to determine whether it is likely to be coercible, and if so, what kinds of threats will be most effective."⁴⁰ This policy requires the United States to build a "continental system" not unlike Napoleon's attempt to isolate Britain. This system will be oriented to isolate Iran and coerce it to comply. The most difficult task in this construct is building a sustainable and agreeable system among the sanctioners. When all other options are exhausted, there remains force. The military element is the final option.

Diplomatic Options

Diplomacy is the normal method of communications method between nation-states. It ranges from treaties and agreements to demarches. Diplomacy in its positive form it is an inducement or support of relations or actions, while in its negative form it is used to warn, threaten, or coerce. "Coercion is not destruction. Coercive strategies are most successful when threats need not even be carried out."⁴¹ Coercive strategies are threats to raise the threshold of pain until targeted states comply.

The policy of political coercion may include the allusion to the military element of national power, however the military is not employed in a way that is a *causus belli*, merely a threatening presence. This leaves open the possibility of further escalation to military coercion if

³⁸ Ibid., 82-83.

³⁹ Glenn Hastedt, *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, Future*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 328.

⁴⁰ Patrick Bratton, "When Is Coercion Successful? And Why Can't We Agree On It?" *Naval War College Review* (Summer 2005), 114.

⁴¹ Byman and Waxman, 3.

the political options fail. “Political isolation is attractive to policy makers for several reasons. First, it is a low-cost tool. When compared with air strikes or even sanctions, it demands little and carries little risk. Second, political isolation is often a necessary condition for more-forceful types of pressure.”⁴² The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iran currently, thus making diplomatic overtures difficult. The United States may use surrogates to initiate negotiations.

The Reformers, former Presidents Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mohammad Khatami, and former Chief of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Hassan Rouhani, continue to be a potent force in Iran’s political realm. A United States’ appeal to and support for these more moderate forces that are open to western entreaties is the avenue for lasting impact in Iran.

Information Options

The information element of power is similar to diplomacy, however rather than official communications between nation-states, it is the broader use of information to influence, persuade, or send messages to various groups within a target country or other countries. It ranges in nature from positive to negative depending on the target and desired outcome. Denial is an objective, which prevents an adversary’s military and or political victory. “Denial in coercion is not the same as denial in war. Coercive denial hinges on the perception that benefits will not be achieved; denial by war-fighting rests on making that perception a reality.”⁴³ Escalation of Coalition military action is held open as an option in order to communicate that the price for non-compliance will be very high.

Information operations can be directed at key populations within the target country in order to demand change to more democratic and economically viable institutions. An asymmetric approach is to influence a target state through another state’s populace. The information

⁴² Ibid., 115.

⁴³ Ibid., 78.

operation is to target key populations in other nations, which have sway over the target state. The triangulation is complete when the targeted population demands action by their policy makers against the target state. “To resist pressure, adversaries must be able to maintain domestic support, at least among key constituencies, which often requires a demonstration that they are fighting back effectively.”⁴⁴ This option is expected to get return hate mail and triangulation from the target state.

Iran would most likely detect a military build up of forces for a ground attack and could act preemptively by stirring the pot in Shiite Iraq in order to delay or even upset a future assault. “If it thought that the U.S. goal was to install a wholly new regime rather than to change the current regime’s behavior, it would have no incentive for restraint.”⁴⁵ Therefore the United States’ purpose must be to send the right message in word and action to assuage the fears of a paranoid mullahtocracy and induce positive behavioral modification. This is paramount to stave off unintended hostilities and continue an open dialog.

Military Options

Kinetic force can be applied through coercion offensively and defensively within each of the possible policies of confrontation, containment and engagement. Currently the Coalition forces in neighboring Iraq and Afghanistan act as forces of containment directed at Iran, with the capability to become offensive and executing a policy of confrontation. This capability sends the coercive message that can either compel the target to take a different course of action or deter the target from its present course, thus denying it from achieving its goals. “The key success in conventional coercion is not punishment but denial, that is, the ability to thwart the target state’s military strategy for controlling the objectives in dispute. To succeed the coercer must undermine

⁴⁴ Stephen T. Hosmer, *Psychological Effects of U.S. Air Operations in Four Wars, 1941-1991: Lessons for U.S. Commanders* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1995), 70.

⁴⁵ Fallows, 110.

the target state's confidence in its own military strategy."⁴⁶ The offensive options within confrontation include decapitation, air strike, or invasion. Confrontation requires a justifying act of aggression, such as an attack on Israel or under pre-emption Iran achieving nuclear weapons capability.

A policy of confrontation has two faces, which are punishment and subversion. Punishment is an air power operation with limited risk and cost. However it has significant political drawbacks. Punishment generates more public anger against the attacker than against the targeted government. "Punishment does produce emotional stress, but this *reduces rather than increases* collective anger against the government, because heavy punishment induces a 'survival' response and light punishment, a 'Pearl Harbor' effect . . . heavy punishment does not produce disruptive behavior; it induces political apathy."⁴⁷ This option is one used to reduce and demoralize Iran with no attempt at agreement or peaceful negotiations.

Subversion is fomenting regime change by appealing to the civilian populace or supporting discontents and insurgents. If an insurgency is successful, there will be diplomatic and political costs for the coercer. Insurgency effects are unpredictable, and control of insurgents is indirect.⁴⁸ There is no favorable subversion candidate within Iran that has the means to conduct an insurgency. If implemented both of these options would result in an Iranian regime more hostile and less rational in relations with the United States. Both of these options are not likely to yield the desired effect of a munificent and benevolent Iran.

Striking at the Head

Decapitation is threat or actual elimination, of the regime's leadership, which is intended to cause a shift in policy or a change in regime. In John Warden's concept of the Five Concentric Strategic Rings, the "Leadership" ring is the hub or center from which the other rings radiate. A

⁴⁶ Pape, 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁸ Byman and Waxman, 119.

successful direct strike on the leadership can bring the entire nation-state to its knees. “The threat of a leadership attack, however might intimidate enemy leaders into making concessions even if an attack failed or was never carried out. This latter phenomenon is purely coercive. And even the successful execution of a leadership attack can have truly coercive effects as well, because such an attack might spur the replacement leadership to adopt more-conciliatory policies than would otherwise have been chosen.”⁴⁹

The trouble with using force either to cause a morale effect or to destroy a capability is that it is a *casus belli* and will bring on a whole host of reactions from the target. The larger concern for U.S. foreign policy makers is the perspective of the wider audience. The international community’s, including friend and non-aligned, reaction will be to band-wagon against the United States. Band-wagon is a form of power balancing usually by weaker states or organizations uniting against a hegemon or superpower. Though this may appear to be only a media assault, it will create resistance to U.S. leadership in other venues and general loathing of the Mega-Power. Hence spending political capital to punish Iran without significant international indignation and support will back-fire on the United States in its pursuit of regional stability and international leadership.

A state pursuing a policy of compellence will face second and third order effects from the target state and other states in reaction. At best, it causes minimal harm if the target complies or worse it causes great harm if the target is non-compliant and enraged. The follow-on options include continuing with the same motto: “if it doesn’t work at first, then try, try again,” or deescalate, which appears to be admitting failure, leaving only escalation as an option to achieve the objectives.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 72-73.

Striking the Critical Vulnerability

The air strike option highly vaunted by air power advocates is also termed a ‘denial campaign’ after its proposed effect. “The ideal denial campaign would attack military targets and military production centers. Targets could include fielded forces; theater-level command, communications, and logistics; weapons plants; and critical raw materials used in war production. Denial missions generally require pinpoint accuracy, and are likely to be flown in daylight if air superiority allows. Munitions would include fewer incendiaries and more high explosives, and precision-guided munitions (PGMs) might be used if available. The campaign would be prosecuted at the maximum intensity the coercer could sustain and might re-strike certain critical targets many times to prevent their repair.”⁵⁰ Pape argued for the air strike option of precision guided munitions as an alternative against the nuclear research sites. However this is not Osirak (Iraqi nuclear program successfully bombed by Israel in 1982); Iran’s facilities are numerous (three major sites and dozens more ancillary sites) and wide-spread making the prospects of this military option moderate at best merely causing a delay in achieving a nuclear capability. Most likely a “surgical air strike” under these conditions would be more complex and have a deleterious effect on domestic public support and increased internal support for the Iranian regime. “If it [America] launched an attack and removed some unknown proportion of the facilities, the United States might retard Iran’s progress by an unknown number of months or years-at the cost of inviting all-out Iranian retaliation.”⁵¹

The Last Kinetic Resort

The last military option for the United States vis-à-vis Iran is the ground invasion. “[Military] Coercion . . . succeeds when force is used to exploit the opponent’s military vulnerabilities, thereby making it infeasible for the opponent to achieve its political goals by

⁵⁰ Pape, 56.

⁵¹ Fallows, 107.

continued military efforts.”⁵² The United States military can defeat the Iranian military in the field; however the cost in diplomatic goodwill would be high. Even with a concerted recruiting effort, it is unlikely that the United States could build a coalition for this option. A United States unilateral approach faces the reality that there simply are not enough forces available for invasion, occupation, and rotation thus making a unilateral U.S. military option untenable.

The Atlantic Monthly brought together a collection of diplomats, soldiers and spies, plus a smattering of writers and thinkers, in order to conduct a war-game in the fall of 2004, under the direction of Air Force planner Colonel Sam Gardiner (ret.). The central problem facing the panel was the impact of Iran going nuclear and the policy and actions of the United States to prevent the problem set or cope with it.

The panel assembled assumed roles of the National Command Authority and presidential advisors: Sam Gardiner (directed the exercise and played multiple characters) David Kay (CIA Director), Kenneth Pollak (Democratic Secretary of State), Reuel Marc Gerecht (Republican Secretary of State), Ken Bacon (White House Chief of Staff), and Michael Mazarr (Secretary of Defense), Graham Allison, Thomas X. Hammes, Donald Vandergriff, and Herbert Striner (served as media and observers).⁵³

A major assumption on Iran’s proximity to nuclear realization was made by James Fallows team for the exercise. “The Intelligence Dilemma: Iran is probably three years from a weapon; there is the nuclear program we see, and there are the nuclear programs we don’t see; the intelligence dilemma is that we will most likely not know when they have crossed our red lines [decision points].”⁵⁴

The war-game yielded several results that reduced the likelihood of a successful military solution; however there is a need to keep the military lever available while pursuing a diplomatic solution. The United States military forces in the region serve as a reminder to Iran; “act badly and a similar fate awaits you as Saddam or the Taliban.” “After all this effort, I am left with two

⁵² Pape, 1.

⁵³ Fallows, 101.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 102.

simple sentences for policymakers, Sam Gardiner said. “You have no military solution for the issues of Iran. And you have to make diplomacy work.”⁵⁵

However it is necessary for the United States to keep the military option on the table and talked about occasionally, however the United States should not delude itself on its capabilities. David Kay, former chief nuclear-weapons inspector for the IAEA and the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) following Operation Desert Storm and he returned to Iraq in June 2003 to look again for nuclear weapons, said “If you say there is no acceptable military option, then you end any possibility that there will be a non-nuclear Iran.. . . If the Iranians believe they will not suffer any harm, they will go right ahead.”⁵⁶ Without a credible military threat they will proceed with nuclear power and presumably with full cycle nuclear development ending with nuclear weapons.

The Spectre of OIF

It is impossible to view Iran thru the lens created by the Iraq experience. Kenneth Pollack said, “Compared with Iraq, Iran has three times the population, four times the land area, and five times the problems...”⁵⁷ Moreover Iran’s land mass has much more inhospitable terrain. In the event of an American ground invasion to change the regime or eradicate WMDs, the stabilization force requirements could be as high as 500,000. With all other things being equal, the reduction of host police, the breakdown of civil order, and some insurgency. The troop to task requires the addition of many new Coalition partners to provide a rotational pool. The United States military will apply the same tactics and operational art during major combat operations. However, the requirement for greater troop strength on the ground to prevent a breakdown of civil order is implied throughout the campaign.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 107.

President Bush is feeling the effects of the failed WMD intelligence that led to the invasion of Iraq in domestic polls. Americans will demand from the President absolute proof of Iranian nuclear weapons, an imminent threat, and broad support for military action from U.S. allies, prior to American military action. The distinctively military option will go unquenched without good provocation. Several factors may preclude any tangible military action; a possibility of losing the tenuous stability in Iraq due to Iranian interference or a sovereign Iraq forbidding any U.S. military action against Iran from within Iraq.

Preventive versus Pre-emptive Strikes

The Bush Doctrine of “Pre-emptive Strike” in order to protect the safety of the United States and its allies has come under severe questioning in the rest of the world. America conducting another pre-emptive or preventive strike unilaterally, so soon after Iraq, will cause greater balancing against America. More importantly less support for coalition needs in a future Iran campaign, and may hinder existing relationships in regards to military support in Iraq and Afghanistan. The President’s concept of a “defensive war” was extended to make war across the globe without violating War Powers Resolution and international law on aggressive war.

A military action against Iran at the current time is considered a “Preventive War.” That is a war of self-defense against a foe that currently does not have ability to threaten, but will sometime in the future. This interpretation is suspect to many as it sounds like a war of aggression, which is a violation of international law. Some nations have claimed that OIF was a war of aggression, especially after the fact that no weapons of mass destruction were found. The lack on international support and projected opposition from the UNSC would hamstring an operation and further strain relationships with key allies and trading partners.

Economic Options

The economic element of power is wielded in the form of sanctions. They are a weakening mechanism that debilitates the country as a whole. “Governments have proven skilled at diverting resources from civilian projects and from less-critical military activities to their priorities, making it harder to use general punishment to force them to concede. Governments also can manipulate pressure, using any resulting shortages or problems to punish political opponents while ensuring that loyal followers are relatively unaffected. In such cases, the weakening mechanism is of little value.”⁵⁸ Iran has threatened to suspend oil exports. Iran holds five percent of the crude reserves and is the fourth largest exporter of crude oil, if Iran suspends oil exports; the price of crude oil will rise. China, which is a growing importer of Iranian oil will be a reluctant coalition partner. Iran would severely retard its economic growth by suspending oil shipments; hence Tehran is unlikely to implement such a policy.

The tools of the economic element of nation power useful in foreign policy are boycott, dumping, devaluation, embargo, foreign aid, free trade, grants, loans, non-tariff barriers, quota, revaluation, sanctions, strategic trade, and tariff.⁵⁹ The United States employs the restrictive economic tools and sanctions that are in the form of a boycott of Iranian products to the American market and an embargo of American products to Iran. “The Iran-Libya Sanctions Extension Act of 2001, kept in effect sanctions [boycott] approved by Congress in 1996.”⁶⁰ “In 1995, the Clinton administration instituted a boycott against Iran in response to evidence that it was seeking to acquire nuclear technology and expertise from Russia . . . ban on trade between Iran and U.S. oil companies.”⁶¹ This includes the lack of the positive financial aid to Iran and the continued freezing of the former Shah of Iran’s American investments and assets. Smart sanctions, like

⁵⁸ Byman and Waxman, 77.

⁵⁹ Hastedt, 328.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 334.

⁶¹ Ibid., 329.

weapons are designed to be precision guided, are directed at the bad guys, while sparing the innocents.

“Smart sanctions, in theory, differ from conventional sanctions in two major ways. First, they more effectively target and penalize-via arms embargoes, financial sanctions, and travel restrictions-the political elites espousing policies and committing actions deemed reprehensible by the international community . . . protect vulnerable social groups [for example, children, women, and the elderly] from so-called collateral damage by exempting specified commodities [such as food and medical supplies] from the embargo. This suggested smart sanction was thus designed to hit the real perpetrators harder and to spare potential innocent victims, leading to speedier change of sanctionee behavior.”⁶²

The United States has not been able to coerce Iran into altering its behavior with a policy of targeted sanctions. No one instrument is effective alone no matter how well designed or smart. A combination of instruments with companion nations is required to be most effective. The desired targets, elites and leaders, are rarely affected and often the sanctions are deflected on those less capable of responding. The targeted leaders use the sanctions as a means to coalesce internal support. “Against them [authoritarian regimes], successful coercion often requires an elite-based strategy. Sanctions, infrastructure strikes, and other pressures that affect an entire country might fail or even backfire because they do not affect elites and non elites the same way.”⁶³

The shining example of the success of economic sanctions is Libya. However there are several weighty differences between Libya and Iran. Many nations applied sanctions on Libya as well as a United Nations sanction. Iran has found trading partners in Russia and China as well as the European Union nations, while America stands alone applying sanctions. In fact “the success rate for economic sanctions also showed a marked decrease over time . . . the success rate dropped to approximately 25 percent after that date [1973].”⁶⁴ Cuba is a prime example of a failed U.S. policy of unilateral sanctions. The Cuban economy and people have suffered, but

⁶² Arne Tostensen and Beate Bull, “Are Smart Sanctions Feasible?,” *World Politics* 54, no. 3 (April 2002), 373.

⁶³ Byman and Waxman, 45.

⁶⁴ Hastedt, 337.

Castro remains in power. Many of our allies have subverted American sanctions by initiating business with Cuba.

Their (sanctions) primary function is to create pressure by weakening the entire country and creating broad, popular discontent, but they may also be used to apply pressure more precisely against a regime's power base, for example, by targeting financial assets.⁶⁵

The United States greatest economic weapon is a positive one, thus not sanctions, but the threat of loss of trade. Hence the loss of trade, in a future economic union between Iran and United States, would be too cost prohibitive for a growing Iran to risk. Thus Iranian leaders would pursue more congenial policies, if such a trade relationship existed. Thomas L. Friedman introduced and added to the popular lexicon the concepts of globalization, the "Golden Arches Theory" and interconnectedness. His books *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* and *The World is Flat* make a strong correlation between countries that have experienced economic success and are less likely to do harm to one another for fear of loss and find alternate solutions to their problems.

Michael Dell, founder and chairman of Dell, stipulates in the Dell Theory:

No two countries that are both part of a major global supply chain, like Dell's, will ever fight a war against each other as long as they are both part of the same global supply chain. Because people embedded in major global supply chains don't want to fight old-time wars anymore. They want to make just-in-time deliveries of goods and services-and enjoy the rising standards of living that come with that.⁶⁶

Kenneth Pollack in an Essay titled "Taking on Tehran: The Ticking Clock" suggested such an economic Faustian bargain strengthens the Iranian reformers and puts the onus on the conservatives to take the offer or pursue militarized nukes.⁶⁷ The Friedman's term "flat" refers to this economic and cultural interconnectedness that globalization has wrought. "American economic power exerts its influence by its ability to attract other countries to the U.S. economic

⁶⁵ Byman and Waxman, 106.

⁶⁶ Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 421.

⁶⁷ Pollack and Takeyh.

system and then trap them in it.”⁶⁸ This particular effect is what Walter Russell Mead refers to as “sticky power.”⁶⁹ Once states start doing business with each other it becomes counter intuitive to generate hostilities.

The West should use its economic clout to strengthen the hand of Iranian pragmatists, who could then argue for slowing, limiting, or shelving Tehran’s nuclear program in return for the trade, aid, and investment that Iran badly needs. Only if the mullahs recognize that they have a stark choice—they can have nuclear weapons or a healthy economy, but not both—might they give up their nuclear dreams.⁷⁰

The economic cost of GWOT and the price tag for “Transformation,” is nearing 450 billion dollars with the Defense Department requesting an additional 70 billion dollars in supplemental spending for OEF and OIF. The price the United States will pay is raising the national debt and diverting domestic spending, this risks recession and public disenchantment. Adding another concurrent major military operation with a commitment of several additional years will strain a recovering economy and is politically poisonous. An objective of Osama bin Ladin and the September 11th Jihadists was to strike at America’s heart, its economy. America’s counter actions to that terrorist act have a hefty price tag.

Combining Options with Multilateral Action

Sanctions combined with a diplomatic offensive or military coercion naturally will have a greater impact than any one of them individually. Coercing states tend to combine efforts and synchronize efforts in order to maximize the effect.

Combining coercive instruments offers both additive and synergistic effects. Air strikes and sanctions . . . together can threaten more pain than simple sum of what they threaten individually . . . combined with support for an insurgency...the adversary might find itself with its hands tied by sanctions, unable to defend from both air attacks and internal disorder, and with its resources spread thin, powerless to threaten escalation of its own.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Hastedt, 326.

⁶⁹ Walter Russel Mead, *America’s Sticky Power, Foreign Policy*, 141 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 46-53.

⁷⁰ Pollack and Takeyh.

⁷¹ Byman and Waxman., 120.

The United States has combined the economic levers, with military coercion and constant diplomatic demarches aimed at Iran for the past three years. However, to no avail, Iran has not been deterred from its nuclear objectives and blustery claims.

The United States must lead in establishing a coalition in order to coerce Iran from continuing its nuclear program. A go-it-alone approach is largely ineffectual. A UNSC sanction and EU compliance and influence are necessary to influence Iranian leaders to reconsider the cost of further nuclear development. The first step in group coercion is to isolate the target state. “Political isolation is attractive to policy makers for several reasons. First, it is a low-cost tool. When compared with air strikes or even sanctions, it demands little and carries little risk. Second, political isolation is often a necessary condition for more-forceful types of pressure.”⁷² An American led multilateral coalition is the most effective organization to engage Iran.

Coalitions are a doubled-edged sword; they can cut both ways. In order to maintain a coalition the United States may need to make concessions especially to China and Russia, which have the greatest trade interest in Iran. “Shared control can offset the difficulties caused by divergent interests, but it creates problems of its own. It reduces the coercer’s flexibility, damages credibility, and makes escalation dominance more difficult to attain.”⁷³ Russia and China are key players in any coalition as they are main trading partners and key influencers on Iran’s economy. China imports 13 percent of its oil from Iran and is unlikely to jeopardize this source of oil. In a globalized and connected economy a loss of Iranian oil exports to China will affect the United States and its other trading partners.

The difficulty with coalitions is that they are difficult to build and harder to maintain, while each state has its own reasons for joining and staying. Coalitions like any grouping of states have common and divergent goals, and coalitions are only as strong as the weakest link. For this reason maintaining coalitions for an extended length of time is more difficult than

⁷² Ibid., 115.

⁷³ Ibid., 163.

building one.⁷⁴ Continuing a multilateral sanctions may be more expensive to the lead nation than the targeted state.

When control is shared by countries with different interests, the flexibility and credibility of the coercing coalition is hampered. “The more countries you need to make sanctions work, the less likely they will succeed. More is not better.”⁷⁵ Larger coalitions are more robust and have a wider reach, however maintaining unity is multiplied by the amount of states involved. The inflexibility of a large coalition reduces its ability to escalate and maintain credibility.⁷⁶ Some allies may not provide much to the fight, however for political or legitimacy reasons they are recruited and with them comes their national caveats.

Target states understand the vulnerabilities of assembling a coalition and know the intents of individual coalition members and will seek to divide and conquer by splitting the coalition. Coercion fails when the targeted state doubts the coalition can deliver on the threats or decides to comply with some of the demands in order to exploit the differences and split the coalition.⁷⁷ Coalition action is inherently less credible, less flexible and less responsive. Iran was successful in developing economic relations with Western Europeans in the late 1980s. The American led sanctions were weakened by the backsliding of Britain, Germany, France, and Canada.

Cooperation fails because it is associated with tough bargaining strategies between the sanctioning states and the target . . . successful bargaining between the primary and secondary sanctioners makes it impossible to compromise with the target country . . . the primary sanctioner is unable to enforce the application of sanctions, due to defections by private rent-seeking actors [sanctions busting] or by nation-states [backsliding].⁷⁸

The United States seeks to develop coalitions and international institutional support in order to gain international legitimacy, engender public support and create a greater perception for the requirement of force. The United States needs to build coalitions for political legitimacy.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 158.

⁷⁵ Hastedt, 337.

⁷⁶ Byman and Waxman, 163-174.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 161.

⁷⁸ Daniel W. Drezner, “Bargaining, Enforcement, and Multilateral Sanctions: When is Cooperation Counterproductive?,” *International Organization* 54, no. 1. (Winter, 2000), 74.

“Multilateral sanctions that lack the support of an international organization are significantly less effective than unilateral measures . . . [those] that have the support of an international organization are significantly more effective than unilateral efforts.”⁷⁹ The optimal circumstances were realized by President George Herbert Walker Bush during the preparation for Operation Desert Storm. His administration worked to gain a United Nations Security Council Resolution to authorize force against Iraqi forces in Kuwait. The administration gained Congressional approval for the use of force, while continually building a varied coalition of states that could agree on limited military action.⁸⁰ This is the model solution to large coalition multilateral coercion. The United States rarely acts unilaterally or without a mandate or approval from an international organization. The United States seeks legitimacy in its actions to the point of being less efficient and slower to act.

With few exceptions, all coercive military operations of U.S. forces since the end of World War II have been carried out under the auspices of international organizations or ad hoc collections of interested states...For designing coercive strategies, coalition building numerous material and political advantages... United States also seeks to secure international support from nonstate actors . . . international organizations and NGOs.⁸¹

During the Kosovo crisis, the coalition stood firm as it was built from a smaller pool nations with the same goals and similar determination. “The United States chose to rely on a NATO mandate for the 1999 bombing of Serbia rather than risk failure in the UN Security Council. . . . Belgrade would have acquiesced sooner to the coercive action, but they thought NATO would not stay united through 10 weeks of bombing and the killing of innocent civilians.”⁸² This more dedicated smaller coalition may be more efficient in the short, but not as effective as the larger coalition was in the case of Iraq. An American led coalition to coerce Iran requires a larger coalition.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 97-98.

⁸⁰ Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*, (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 53-54.

⁸¹ Byman and Waxman., 154-157.

⁸² Ibid., 98.

There are implements beyond hard power in a nation's international relations tool-box, these other tools are more subtle, yet just as effective. "Command power-the ability to change what others do-can rest on coercion of inducement. Co-optive power-the ability to shape what others want-can rest on the attractiveness of one's culture and values."⁸³ However there exists a potentially stronger 'co-optive' tool that is a force beyond the sum total of a nation's parts, this is what Nye terms "Soft Power." "Soft power is not merely the same as influence . . . in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction."⁸⁴ The openness of Iranian society and particularly its youth culture to all things American provides an extremely important opportunity to use the soft power tool. Pollack argued that, "There is reason to believe that a different government in Tehran-one more reflective of the will of the Iranian people-would be willing to discontinue or reorient the program [nuclear] to make it much less threatening."⁸⁵

CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

Theodore Roosevelt made famous an ancient West African proverb 'speak softly and carry a big stick.' He popularized the phrase in order to let the world audience know America is on the stage though appearing mute it has the muscle and will be taken seriously. "If a man continually blusters, if he lacks civility, a big stick will not save him from trouble; but neither will speaking softly avail, if back of the softness there does not lie strength, power."⁸⁶ In the resulting drama of his tenure, the United States became a virtual world empire.

In the 21st Century, America does not need to prove how muscular it is in every instance it is challenged or crossed. The greater power or strength that America possesses is its ability to

⁸³ Nye, 7.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁵ Pollack, 423.

⁸⁶ Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex: The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2001), 185.

attract and hold others through cultural and economic ways. Hence the title of chapter four relates directly to Theodore Roosevelt's assessment of the interdependence between the two elements of power and prestige. In the current case, what attracts other states to America is the freedom of thought, personal privacy, and cultural advances, while the power that holds other states is the bond of an economic relationship.

Soft and Sticky Power

“Talk Softly and Carry a Big Carrot” refers to two separate theories of power that nations possess and administer, Nye’s “Soft Power” and Mead’s “Sticky Power.” The combination of American cultural and economic influence on and in Iran has the potential to compel Iran to pursue a less aggressive tact. The essence of this policy is that the United States takes the initiative and lifts sanctions, embargos, boycotts, and reestablishes diplomatic relations with Iran with few initial conditions attached. The power of American private investment and culture infused into Iran will have a positive impact on relations between Iran and the United States as the general populace and more importantly the youth demand more American culture and goods. Their attraction to virtually all things American will influence the leadership to maintain good relations with the United States. Meghan O’Sullivan suggested, “For Iran, better relations with the United States could help the government deal with its own security concerns and facilitate Iran’s entry into the global economy.”⁸⁷ The United States’ private, corporate and governmental investments will create a mutual symbiotic bond that neither nation will desire to disrupt and especially Iran for the sake of its stability.

Hence the “Big Carrot” is more powerful in coercing Iran’s leadership than the threats of air strikes, invasions or other “Big Stick” options. The dual nature of the “Big Carrot” is the threat of economic loss should bad policy be enacted by Iran or the promise of incredible gain

⁸⁷ Meghan O’Sullivan, *Shrewd Sanctions: Statecraft and the State Sponsors of Terrorism* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2003), 47.

through good relations with the United States. “Inducements increase the value of concessions. In addition, inducements can decrease the political costs of capitulation for an adversary, enabling leaders to claim victory even in defeat.”⁸⁸ In this barter, Iran will make a concession by trading off a national aspiration (nuclear power) for increased economic success.

A nuclear armed and ominous Iran is not a foregone conclusion, however time is of the essence to attract and alter an eventually dangerous confrontation between the United States and Iran. A policy of ‘Positive Engagement’ is differentiated from the current policy, which lacks traction and significance as a punishment. It is time to reevaluate the effectiveness of sanctions after a generation of implementation. The United States has just limited itself to the next stick, which is the military option. Assuming that Iran is a rational actor and will respond positively to positive moves by the United States, a policy of ‘Positive Engagement’ can lure and influence Iran from the pursuit of a destructive policy.

The United States should reexamine its policy of containment. It has merely isolated Iran from positive American influence and failed to contain Iran from achieving nuclear energy. According to O’Sullivan sanctions have been a one-sided approach of American policy towards Iran. Though the economic restrictions have had great impact, the goals are largely unachieved at the cost of American business interests.⁸⁹ The expectation of this policy is for an isolated Iran to change its behavior in line with United States policy objectives, which has not happened.

A progressive American policy of an engagement will stimulate the positive actions of Iran. It will reward Iran with economic ties and cultural exchanges, while simultaneously disapproving its penchant for nuclear status through demarches and military presence. A less threatening approach combined with rewards will pay larger dividends than a negative approach without dialogue.

⁸⁸ Byman and Waxman, 9.

⁸⁹ O’Sullivan, 46-48.

From Spear Point to Bill of Lading

China is a prime example of a policy course correction that diverted a looming confrontation from opposing powers into trading partners. “As was the case with China and extension of its most-favored-nation status in 1991, the tensions and competing approaches of the executive branch and Congress could provide a face-saving opportunity for Iran to enter into a dialogue with the executive branch.”⁹⁰ Interjecting energy in the system might alter the deteriorating conditions and create an opportunity to exploit. “The exchange of goods and business people between the United States and Iran would also widen the exposure to Iranians to the United States, complementing efforts to expand unofficial contacts between the two countries.”⁹¹

The continuous sanctions have hurt the United States ability to influence the “right” people. Largely the policy of hostile sanctions has not achieved U.S. policy goals and only entrenched those American desires to isolate and not reform. “The United States should eliminate restrictions that only retrench the interests of the most conservative elements of the regime and work against those interested in promoting greater transparency and accountability within Iran.”⁹²

Recently President Bush made some remarkable visits and statements about India and Pakistan amidst the controversy of Iran’s nuclear bid. Bush welcomed India into the nuclear family as a member though it is not a signatory to the Non-proliferation Treaty. President Bush reaffirmed Pakistan as a bulwark against terrorism, yet it is an unabashed nuclear power. “[I]f Iran does [get nuclear weapons], America would like Iran to see itself more or less as India does—as a regional power whose nuclear status symbolizes its strength relative to regional rivals, but

⁹⁰ Ibid., 97.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 96.

whose very attainment of this position makes it more committed to defending the status quo.”⁹³

It is possible that Iran’s nuclear quest is a status symbol for a country attempting to gain respect rather than something more nefarious.

Iran has the three legitimate concerns in relation to its pursuit of nuclear power and weapons. These are economic, social, and regional security. An American policy of engagement that provides assistance in development of its natural gas reserves to market, repairing, and improving its dilapidated oil infrastructure, and a Persian Gulf security plan quells the rational concerns. The increasing revenue funds the upgrades in the energy sphere and provides more domestic goods alleviating the first and second concerns in relation to the need for nuclear power. “The United States could help to create a new security architecture in the Persian Gulf in which Iranians, Arabs and Americans would find cooperative ways to address their security concerns.”⁹⁴ Defusing Iran’s security concerns provides it with the assurance that the voluntary elimination of a nuclear weapons program will decrease regional tensions and risk to the state.

Uni-Polar World, Hard Power Realities and Leadership

The United States must be mindful of its use of hard power so not to cancel out the positive effects of its soft power, thus achieving a balanced message that displays strength and restraint in an effort to attract Iran into compliance. An Israeli air strike on the Iranian facilities will not facilitate better relations. The actions of a surrogate Israel can only complicate the issue. An Israeli bombing could not be performed without the compliance or willful ignorance of the United States. Real or imagined the finger pointing leads back to the all powerful United States as the instigator.

Kenneth Pollack described this dilemma of Iranian nuclear ambition as a “Problem from Hell.” There are no easy solutions; the Iranian dilemma is high stakes and fraught with dire

⁹³ Fallows, 110.

⁹⁴ Pollack and Takeyh.

consequences. American policy applied with a deft hand that is engaging and not threatening is America's responsibility. "How we handle the problem of Iran will tell us a great deal about whether we are up to its challenges."⁹⁵ This looming crisis is more about American leadership, values, and worthiness to lead the free world, than Iran seeking regional recognition.

The following five recommendations within a policy of engagement are constructed along the lines of the elements of national power which are directed towards an emerging Iranian hegemon. First, the United States should normalize diplomatic relations with Iran in order to dialogue directly. Second, American information operations should accentuate the positive steps made by Iran. American messages directed towards the Iranian people should focus on cooperation in collective security interests of both nations. Third, the United States must remain and stabilize Iraq in order that a fully functioning Iraq can balance Iran's power in the region. Beyond the stabilization of Iraq, America must maintain a military presence in the Persian Gulf in order to demonstrate commitment to security and react to threats in the region. Fourth, America should initiate economic revival with Iran by incrementally decreasing sanctions against American business in Iran and lifting American boycott of Iranian products sold to the United States. This policy element should be gradually implemented with improving relations based on the reactions of Iran; however the initiative lies with the United States. Fifth, the United States must work with coalition partners multilaterally to maintain pressure on Iran to abandon its nuclear program through international organizations and direct dialog.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The United States and Iran have displayed a dynamic relationship in a short time. This love and hate relationship has been characterized by a U.S. policy of intervention in the internal affairs of Iran as it suited American interests. This stigma has tainted the view of conservative

⁹⁵ Pollack, 424.

Iranian leadership toward America. The religious leadership had been targeted by the Shah, an American Quisling, causing a reaction that led the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Even though the Mullahs are pessimistic about America, they are also pragmatic about Iran's progress. The reformers have a more open and forgiving view of the West and desire to move Iran forward economically and politically. This cooperative view of both conservatives and reformers encapsulates the elevation of Iran from the backwaters of failing states to the rapids of international recognition, while maintaining its Shia-Persian character. America is vehicle to achieve this status, either through cooperation or opposition.

Iran is a complex nation with aspirations to become a respected power in the region. Its threats directed at Israel draw on the popular Muslim target in order to deflect internal criticism and unify Arab Muslim hatred towards the Jewish state. Iran's leaders employ scare tactics on their own population in order to consolidate power against foreign threats. Iran's interest in obtaining nuclear power and eventually a nuclear weapon can bring this bustling Persian Gulf state a greater stake in the geopolitical game. Iran is a proud state with a desire to regain its ancient glory and become a regional hegemon again, thus gaining international respect.

Iran is also a pragmatic power on the rise. It is pursuing greater economic and diplomatic relations with foreign states and corporations, this following a long period of extreme isolation and tragic warfare. Iranian leaders including moderates and conservatives use policies to increase the investment within and the exportation of natural resources, thus creating the co-dependency relationship of oil producer and user. Iran is a rational actor that uses some uncommon methods of foreign policy and communicating its policy objectives.

The United States has a window of opportunity lasting several years to influence Iran to become more moderate in speech, behavior, and abandoning its nuclear program. America inviting Iran to join the members of the global community, in the World Trade Organization, thus increasing Iran's trade value and international image. This invitation will give Iran something

they have desired for a long time, and once achieved Iran will be inclined to maintain it.

Engagement is the optimal U.S. foreign policy directed towards Iran.

The hallmarks of engagement are personal, economic, and cultural ties. A successful engagement policy requires the United States to modify its trade, diplomatic, and informational policies. Economically the United States should initiate lifting boycotts and sanctions in a logical sequence that shows genuine governmental interest in pursuing normalization with Iran. Diplomatically while maintaining a staunch non-proliferation message, the U.S. Government should ratchet down “Axis of Evil” comments publicly, while simultaneously engaging the Iranian Government directly. The focus of the engagement is to offer Iran assistance in developing its natural gas industry and improving its oil infrastructure. The United States must lift its boycott on Iranian products sold in the United States and lift sanctions against U.S. business investments within Iran. These initial actions will further the goals of engagement by laying the ground work for deeper relational growth. This deeper growth is evidenced in the personal relationships of governmental, business and cultural leaders as they pursue peaceful advancements by each of their own nations.

The United States strongest preventative weapons against conflagration are soft and sticky power. These are not unique to America, but are most evident in America’s role in globalization. As America and its trading partners invest and develop in Iran the ties that bind are difficult to break and insure peace. The price of war becomes too high for a nation to contemplate, let alone execute for a rational actor state. The outcast nation will lose its investors and become a pariah among nations for initiating war. Recovery from war will be long and require a regime change for aggressor states. Iran, a pragmatic state, will not risk its improving economy and domestic conditions at the cost of war. The young Iranians are most drawn to American culture in film, music, and goods. This cultural curiosity is a positive force that resists negative propaganda against all things American. America holds the keys to reviving an old relationship that can bring common understanding and common security to the Persian Gulf.

Strong leaders are required to make difficult decisions, and none is more difficult than pursuing war or waging peace, as one may risk one's national security and viability. However controversial it was at the time, it was leaders like Nixon and Sharon that engaged their mortal enemies to secure peace, then economic security. As the saying goes: "It took a Nixon to open China," the backwards logic of this phrase and action makes the anomaly that much more prescient. Nixon, a staunch anti-communist, opened doors to the second most powerful communist nation on the planet. This was an odd occurrence, but not rejected by the American people. However if a hypothetical President McGovern with a left leaning ideology made overtures to communist states during the cold war, then the suspicions of Americans would have been raised and much less accomplished. There was no doubt Nixon's offer was genuine to the Chinese and caused great effect. Coke and McDonalds followed suit, quickly expanding business to the People's Republic of China.

As sticky and soft power grew between the nations and globalization commenced, the goods trade and the cultural exchange expanded. America is made in China. This growth in ties is not by accident it was destined once the dual sticky and soft powers were released on Sino-American relations. If President George W. Bush were to make a similar overture to President Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad, there could be a similar renewal of relations. As both are strong leaders, they could avoid the accusations of being weak on Islamo-fascism or suspicion of being a western puppet which would cripple weaker leaders. The normal pabulum of propaganda aside, they will have a remarkable opportunity for dialog and redirecting the course between America and Iran from conflict to cooperation.

The following are a summation of the five recommended actions within a United States engagement policy towards an emerging Iranian hegemon. The United States should pursue normalized diplomatic relations with Iran in order to dialogue directly rather than through surrogates or international institutions. American information operations should accentuate the positive steps made by Iran directed towards the Iranian leadership and Majlis demonstrating

American good will towards Iran. Also American messages directed towards the Iranian people and the international community focusing on cooperation in collective security interests of both nations in the Persian Gulf.

The United States must remain and stabilize Iraq in order that a fully functioning nation-state can balance Iran in the region. Beyond the stabilization of Iraq, America must maintain a military presence in the Persian Gulf in order to demonstrate commitment to security and react to threats in the region. America should initiate economic revival with Iran by incrementally decreasing sanctions against American business in Iran and lifting American boycott of Iranian products sold to the United States. This policy element should be gradually implemented with improving relations based on the reactions of Iran; however the initiative lies with the United States. The United States must work with coalition partners multilaterally to maintain pressure on Iran to abandon its nuclear program through international organizations and direct dialog.

The engagement policy of “Talk Softly and Carry a Big Carrot,” will bring more security to America and its allies and prosperity to Iran and its neighbors of the Persian Gulf. The losers in this policy are the fanatics that see only evil in the actions of the other. A policy that defuses violence and brings forth peace and prosperity is more difficult to articulate than to achieve. Simply, engagement must be initiated and pursued with the obligation to the greater power to show deference, and then the weaker state can reciprocate.

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