

U.S. Foreign Policy Challenges in the Face of
Iran's Intransigent and Threatening
Nuclear Weapons Development Program

by Carol Hubbard
carol.hubbard@du.edu

Josef Korbel School of International Studies
University of Denver

INTRODUCTION

Of the foreign policy challenges faced by the United States and its allies, probably none is as complicated, multifaceted, and potentially explosive (in every sense of the word) as the Islamic Republic of Iran's professed nuclear ambitions — specifically, its covert nuclear weapons development program. It is not the material nuclear hardware in and of itself that is the primary concern but, rather, the apparent hostile motives behind acquiring it.¹

For almost a decade, Iran has resisted multilateral attempts to get it to comply with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations and inspections, and United Nations resolutions, so it is hard to give much credibility to its official public relations statements that it is merely pursuing nuclear power generation. After all, two-term Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad openly boasts about how Iran will “soon” annihilate Israel with nuclear weapons and subsequently serve as the staging ground for the reappearance of the Mahdi, the Islamic apocalyptic figure who fundamentalist Muslims believe will usher in a worldwide caliphate.

American foreign policy essentially fits into one of three categories (or a mixture thereof): (1) constructive engagement (positive approaches — diplomatic, commercial, financial or cultural), (2) containment (negative approaches — deterrence, coercive

1 “How can 500 nuclear weapons of the United Kingdom be less threatening (or even non-threatening) to the interests of the United States than a small number of North Korean or Iranian nuclear weapons would be? Obviously, North Korean and Iranian words and deeds have led the United States to view [them] as hostile and thus threats to its interests. Here is where a constructivist would argue that American leaders are responding to the *social* dimension of relations between the United States and other countries, rather than merely the material nuclear hardware they possess or seek to acquire.” (Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, p. 288)

diplomacy, economic sanctions, espionage or other covert actions), and (3) the use of force through war or armed intervention.² All have been used with Iran so far except for the latter.

I believe the United States must take a foreign policy stance that not only reflects the reality of rapid globalization and multilateralism but, also, successfully contains and persuades Iran to join the global community as a responsible member. After the destructive neoconservative internationalist policies that dominated the first five years of the two-term George W. Bush presidential administration and left a legacy of questionable war actions and human rights abuses, it remains to be seen whether the liberal internationalist policy stance of President Barack Obama will win the day and forestall not only a nuclear-armed Iran but war as the last workable option left on the table.

Grievances ... and Dreams of Lost Glory

It is estimated that there has been a human presence for some 100,000 years in the area today known as Iran. Persia (its original name) emerged as a significant state soon after cities began to appear. Over thousands of years, Persia became a great empire³ — but one that was eventually eclipsed by Rome. In the 7th century A.D., Muslim Arabs conquered Persia — and the population was forced to convert to Islam.

2 Paul Viotti, *American Foreign Policy*, pp. 2-3.

3 “The ancient nation of Iran, historically known as Persia, has traditionally been a major power in the region. Despite invasions by Arabs, Seljuk Turks, and Mongols, Iran has always reasserted its national identity and taken pride in its unique cultural and political heritage.” (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, “Background Note: Iran” (7/23/10), <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5314.htm>, accessed 8/15/10.)

All but one percent of Iranians today are Muslim, but most Iranians are not Arab, a significant point in Iran's drive for supremacy in the predominantly Arab Middle East.

After World War II, the pro-Nazi Shah, Reza Pahlavi, was forced by the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom to abdicate in favor of his son, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. But in 1953, after the new Shah felt threatened by popular support for democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, he briefly fled the country. The United Kingdom and the United States then engineered a coup (on the basis of *Realpolitik* balance of power concerns⁴ about the spread of communism in the East) and reinstated the Shah. From that time on, his government became increasingly authoritarian.⁵

The Kennedy Administration was instrumental in encouraging the "White Revolution" in Iran in the early 1960s — which brought modernization and rapid economic development (for a time) to the country. However, the Shah's brutal policies continued to create ill will among the population, especially Islamic clerics, due to his authoritarian secular rule and the ruthlessness of his security forces.⁶ And thus the seeds of revolution were born. In 1978, several disparate groups — nationalists, Islamists, Marxists, and students — joined together to revolt against the Shah. He soon fled to Egypt, where he died of cancer one year later.

In February 1979, "... exiled religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned ... [and established] himself as Supreme Leader of a new, theocratic republic guided by Islamic principles."⁷ Iran's ayatollah-controlled government is as radical as it

4 As Thucydides once said, "The strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept." (*History of the Peloponnesian War*, quoted in Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, p. 46).

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

is harsh. It has supported or even orchestrated Islamic terrorist activities in many pro-U.S. (or U.S.-dominated) countries, including Muslim Arab countries such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Afghanistan.⁸

U.S. Foreign Policy toward Iran from the 1970s to the Present

In 1979, during the liberal internationalist⁹ Carter Administration, members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard invaded the U.S. embassy and took American personnel hostage for 444 days. This was the final straw for Carter's foreign policy opponents — who disagreed with his returning the Canal Zone to Panama. "An abortive rescue mission [a covert action by special forces] and the inability of [Carter's] administration to get the hostages released and settle the matter diplomatically undermined Carter's professional reputation and his popular prestige, which contributed substantially to his loss of the presidency to Ronald Reagan in the 1980 election."¹⁰ The Iranians released the hostages on January 20, 1981 — very significantly, the very day of the inauguration of Ronald Reagan, a verbally hawkish yet bridge-building president who swung American foreign policy back (and effectively so) into conservative internationalism.

Conservative internationalism continued to dominate through the George H.W. Bush Administration. But when G.H.W. Bush's son George W. Bush came to office, and the United States was rocked by the terror attacks of September 11, 2001,

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Liberal internationalists "... generally prefer peaceful engagement, coupling such policies to containment of adversaries. Their agendas typically include advancing human rights and human security, socioeconomic welfare, and other liberal values as ends worthy in themselves not just for the United States, but also for the world as a whole." (*Ibid.*, p. 10)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

neoconservative internationalism was implemented for the first time: Accelerated national security concerns partnered with the apocalyptic worldview of Vice President Dick Cheney and unbendingly *Realpolitik* perspective of Donald Rumsfeld and others to give birth to a fear-motivated, aggressive and almost exclusively military approach to dealing with terrorism directed at the U.S. from abroad.

In George W. Bush's second term, however, when the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were becoming increasingly unpopular and reports of abuse and torture perpetrated on foreign detainees began to hit the media, conservative internationalist voices in Bush's administration such as Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell began to have more influence. Now, two years into Barack Obama's presidency, it is clear that liberal internationalism is the dominant perspective in the executive branch as it is in the State Department.¹¹

Iran's 21st-Century Focus: Nuclear Development with Sabers Rattling

Of primary concern is that since 2002, Iran has failed to comply with IAEA and UN attempts to hold it accountable regarding its nuclear weapons development program. Moreover, since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was first elected president in 2005 through questionable means¹², he has gained a reputation as a (seemingly) eccentric and apocalyptically minded demagogue who denies the Holocaust, proclaims Iran's alleged plans of destroying Israel through a nuclear attack, declares that such actions

11 "The president and policy elites in the Obama administration have brought American foreign policy back to a liberal internationalist orientation — putting primary emphasis on constructive or peaceful engagement, albeit still containing adversaries and using force as deemed necessary. ... This approach departs markedly from the first five years of George W. Bush's administration ..." (Viotti, p. 210)

12 Voting fraud was alleged in both elections. (U.S. Department of State, "Background Notes: Iran").

will usher in the return of the Mahdi (the Islamic “messiah”), and taunts and insults Western leaders at international forums.¹³

In the past eight years, the U.S. has used every tool in its foreign policy arsenal to deal with Iran’s nuclear saber-rattling except one: armed intervention or war (which I will discuss later in this essay). While, at times, the U.S. and Israel have seriously considered, and planned for, this option; they have not pursued it yet.¹⁴ Instead, the U.S. has engaged in constructive engagement and containment¹⁵ with a more obvious understanding of how urgent it is that “... the institutions of international society ... manage the tension between ‘the ethic of difference’ and the search for ‘consensus’ on normative issues.”¹⁶

Factors that Facilitate and Empower U.S. Foreign Policy toward Iran

The factors that facilitate and empower current U.S. foreign policy toward Iran (see Appendix A) may be summarized as:

13 Recently, he challenged President Obama to a debate to see “who has the best answers to world problems.” Obama wisely ignored the challenge.

- 14 “Policymakers face decisions about whether or not to intervene with armed force to respond to aggression, prevent or stop genocide, restore order, or maintain the peace. Both economic and military capabilities as well as domestic political support (or opposition) typically are part of the decision-making calculus. [There are also] ... at least five additional and often competing criteria ... 1. Sovereignty ... 2. National Interest ... Human Rights ... Expected Net Effect on the Human Condition ... Degree of Multilateralism.” (Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, pp. 420-421)
- 15 Coercive diplomacy has been exercised through official State Department, executive branch (presidential), and U.N. statements; U.N. resolutions; and legally binding U.N., U.S., and EU economic sanctions. Containment activities have included air and naval shows of force in the Persian Gulf region, economic sanctions, helping Israel strengthen its defenses, and alternately reassuring and cautioning Israel so it won’t overreact and take preemptive action unnecessarily, and warning Iran that the U.S. will “go to the next step” if Iran violates U.N. and IAEA regulations.
- 16 Andrew Hurrell ‘Society and Anarchy in the 1990s’ in B.A. Roberson (ed.), *The Structure of International Society* (London: Pinter, 1996), in Tim Dunne, “Inventing International Society,” in Viotti and Kauppi, p. 269.

- **Geographic/regional:** Iran is surrounded on almost every side by countries controlled by, or allies of, the U.S. And while Ahmadinejad's pejorative rhetoric focuses exclusively on the U.S. and Israel, in reality it is the relatively defenseless Arab states and the United States — with its great need for Middle Eastern oil — far more than Israel (albeit a convenient and emotionally catalytic distraction) that have the most to lose.¹⁷
- **Military:** The U.S. is the world's military hegemon and already has demonstrated the willingness to use massive firepower and national reconstruction to deal with the threat of (alleged) WMDs from a rogue nation (Iraq). Moreover, a U.N.-approved NATO offensive against Iran could devastate the country.
- **United Nations:** China and Russia, Iran's two key allies, are Security Council members. Russia joined the U.S. and western allies in economic sanctions and a fourth U.N. resolution against Iran's nuclear program in June — which provoked a vehement outburst from Ahmadinejad.¹⁸ And while Russia has helped Iran with its nuclear development program, it also has delayed completion of the Bushehr nuclear plant several times for various reasons.¹⁹ Should Iran fire a nuclear missile for any reason except clear self-defense, it would either be destroyed if NATO responded in kind — or become a pariah country.

17 As Barry Rubin, editor of the *Middle Eastern Review of International Affairs Journal* (MERIA) maintains, "Israel can defend herself, where the Arab countries would have to rely on the United States and/or on Israel to defend them against Iran. Saudi Arabia has the most to lose, and this makes King Abdullah and other Arab leaders very concerned." ("Why Israel Shouldn't Attack Iranian Nuclear Installations—Unless It Has to Do So" (7/14/10), in "Koenig's Eye View from the White House," 7/23/10).

18 "Ahmadinejad warns Medvedev of joining 'U.S. plot' against Iran," (7/23/10), <http://www.haaretz.com>, accessed 8/14/10.

19 *Ibid.*

- **The international regime²⁰ on nuclear nonproliferation:** All the nuclear powers (with the exception of North Korea, whose inadequate missile system makes it ineligible to be considered a true nuclear power yet) are abiding by IAEA regulations and other nuclear nonproliferation agreements.
- **Diplomatic:** The U.S. has shown remarkable restraint in the face of Iran's continual, in-your-face refusal to abide by IAEA regulations or respond to U.N. resolutions or economic sanctions levied by the U.S., U.N., and EU; regular verbal provocations from Ahmadinejad; Iranian-backed terrorist acts against Americans and nationals in Afghanistan and Iraq;²¹ and the taking of American hostages.²² In part, this is due to the executive branch accepting more State Department involvement in "the Iran problem."²³ Moreover, the U.S. has continued to appeal to other countries, particularly China and Russia, whose support is enabling Iran to pursue its nuclear agenda.²⁴ In the case of Russia, these efforts seem to be bearing fruit.²⁵

20 An international regime is a set of "... rules agreed to by states ... concerning their conduct in specific issue areas ... and often associated with international and nongovernmental organizations linked to these regimes." (Viotti and Kauppi, p. 131)

21 "The Islamic Republic of Iran still has not recognized Israel's right to exist and has hindered the Middle East peace process by arming militants, including Hamas, Hizballah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has contributed to positive reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, Tehran has also pursued policies to undermine stability in both countries. Additionally the U.S. Government is concerned with the Islamic Republic of Iran's recent crackdown on human rights and detainment of civil society actors." (U.S. Department of State, "Background Notes: Iran")

22 Three young American hikers who strayed into Iranian territory have been in an Iranian prison for a year on espionage charges. (However, one of them, Sarah Sourd, was released on bail in late September 2010.)

23 "Deeply embedded in the State Department culture ... are diplomatic concepts and norms that legitimate consultations, negotiations, and other forms of communication that can be pursued for constructive purposes as conflict resolution or conflict management." (Viotti, pp. 215-216.)

24 "Both Iran and Russia believe they have important national interests at stake in developments in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, particularly regarding energy resources in the Caspian Sea. The U.S. has expressed concern about Russia's sales of military equipment and technology to Iran and Russian assistance in building a nuclear facility at Bushehr." (U.S. Department of State, "Background Notes: Iran")

25 "Ahmadinejad warns Mevedev of joining 'U.S. plot' against Iran" (7/23/10), <http://www.haaretz.com>, accessed 8/14/10.

- **Economic:** While, until this summer, Iran seemed unfazed by the economic sanctions imposed on it by the U.S., U.N. and EU (and, indeed, great care was taken to craft sanctions that would not punish the Iranian people for the sins of their government²⁶), the latest round seems to be biting deep enough to cause Iran to rethink its intransigent position.²⁷ As U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently said, “[T]he sanctions are meant to be one tool among several intended to impact Iranian behavior regarding its nuclear program.”²⁸

Iran has a very young and generally well-educated, but underemployed, population. Its underemployment stems from problems inherent in its nationalized industries, government inefficiencies, and an over-dependence on oil revenues (which provide 85 percent of Iran’s income).²⁹ This strengthens the idea that at least part of Iran’s dogged saber-rattling is fueled by pragmatic self-interests — and calls to mind the Lockean idea of human culture being more one of “rivalry, not [innate] enmity as Hobbists would have it.”³⁰

26 “The U.S. Government, by executive orders issued by the President as well as by congressional legislation, prohibits nearly all trade with Iran. Sanctions have been imposed on Iran because of its sponsorship of terrorism, its refusal to comply with IAEA regulations regarding its nuclear program, and its human rights violations. However, these sanctions are meant to target the Iranian Government, not the people of Iran. As a result, there are a number of exemptions allowed by the U.S. Government intended to benefit the Iranian people.” (U.S. Department of State, “Background Notes: Iran”)

27 Iran has long desired to become a major liquified natural gas (LNG) exporter. Yet just a few days ago, shortly after foreign energy companies began retreating from plans to work with Iran (as a result of recent international sanctions levied against Iran), Iranian officials announced that they are suspending two liquified natural gas (LNG) projects. One Iranian gas official admitted that “sanctions are one of the reasons.” (“Tehran Curbs Liquified-Gas Ambitions,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 8/12/10)

28 Hillary Clinton Interview with Sanger/Landler of *The New York Times* (8/6/10) in “U.S. Department of State Weekly Digest Bulletin” (8/15/10).

29 *Ibid.*

30 Viotti and Kauppi, p. 279.

- **History:** The Cuban missile crisis brought the U.S. and the Soviet Union to the edge of nuclear war. Nonetheless, a U.S. naval “quarantine”³¹ (blockade) “... coupled with diplomatic measures at the UN, the Organization of American States, among NATO allies, and bilaterally with the Soviet Union ...”³² turned back Soviet ships and led to the Soviets removing their nuclear missiles from Cuba. This type of show of force, also known as “gunboat diplomacy,” is one of the containment tactics the U.S. is currently using in the Persian Gulf (albeit without a blockade).
- **Iranian internal considerations:** There is a significant anti-government movement in Iran; in fact, it is believed that Ahmadinejad would have lost the presidential election to the popular progressive candidate a year ago had the elections not been rigged and subsequent protests brutally suppressed. Iranian popular culture reportedly is far more Western than Eastern. And while Iranians favor nuclear energy development, a large majority oppose Iran becoming a nuclear weapons state.³³

Of course, as realists would quickly point out, “... all states have an interest in survival, wealth, security, and enough power to secure those interests.”³⁴ But national pride on the part of Iran’s citizens and leaders alike can be used, also, as a hook to pull Iran into more constructive behavior. As Robert

31 Viotti, p. 62.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Ches Thurber, “Reassessing Diplomatic Strategy Toward Iran,” Leonard Marks Essay Contest (1st place, 2009), <http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/programs/marks.html>

34 Viotti and Kauppi, p. 288.

Keohane put it: "Self-interest is not simply material; on the contrary, it encompasses one's interest in being thought well of, and in thinking well of oneself."³⁵

Factors that Impede U.S. Foreign Policy toward Iran

While there are many factors empowering the United States' current foreign policy of constructive engagement and containment³⁶ toward Iran, there are a few others that, admittedly, are impediments (see Appendix B) — to one degree or another:

- **Historically, the American track record for becoming conversant (culturally and linguistically) with the countries it seeks to engage** has often been lacking, even nonexistent. In the case of Iran, with its shame-based and collectivist culture very different from that of the U.S. (which is guilt-based and individualistic)³⁷, not to mention having a language (Farsi) that only a few U.S. diplomats speak, it is vital that the U.S. improve its Iranian "fluency" culturally and linguistically.
- **The United States' intervention in Iran's internal affairs and governance from the 1950 through the 1970s** not only contributed to the revolution that erupted in the late 1970s but left a legacy of resentment, wounded pride and fear. And with the U.S. continuing to directly impact Iran's

35 Viotti and Kauppi, p. 161.

36 Viotti, Paul. *American Foreign Policy*, pp. 2-3.

37 Class notes, "Cross-Cultural Communication," the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, the University of Denver, Winter Quarter 2010.

neighbors with its wars in Iraq (questionable) and Afghanistan (necessary to a greater degree), we cannot discount how this is perceived by those in that area.

- **The balance of power in the Middle East has shifted dramatically in the past 60 years.** As previously mentioned, Iran is now primarily surrounded by countries friendly, or at last beholden, to the U.S. Moreover, Israel — the only democracy in the Middle East — is a primarily Jewish (albeit officially secular) state with tremendous military and technological power. It also is a key ally of the United States. In all likelihood, Iran’s threats may stem significantly from its perception that it is being backed into a corner by the powerful NATO countries.³⁸
- **Iran has seemed impervious to all the foreign policy tactics tried by the UN and NATO nations** — until this summer, at least (when Russia, Iran’s biggest ally, signed on to the latest rounds of economic sanctions).
- **The “last resort” option of armed intervention, especially if merely preemptive, is not a good one from any angle.** As Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently said on NBC’s “Meet the Press”: “The United States has a viable military plan to attack Iran and its nuclear facilities, though such a strike [is] probably a bad idea.” Mullen maintained that while it is unacceptable to allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon, a strike against Iran would have serious and unpredictable ripple effects

38 As Thucydides once wrote, “What made war inevitable [between Athens and Sparta] was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.” (*History of the Peloponnesian War*, quoted in Viotti and Kauppi, p. 46).

throughout the Middle East.³⁹ Moreover, the foundation for such an intervention is currently lacking.⁴⁰

As Machiavelli cautioned, *si guarda al fine* — in other words, a ruler should anticipate consequences.⁴¹ Rushing to war, or even just an armed intervention in response to inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions would be no wiser than falling prey to the myth of the “ticking time bomb” scenario used to justify torture. As the ancient Greek statesman Demosthenes said: “... [W]ar is directed against those who cannot be held in check by judicial processes.”⁴² We have not yet arrived at that point with Iran.

In my opinion, a preemptive armed intervention is *exactly* what Iran’s radical Islamic leaders want as it would (1) only delay, not stop, Iran’s nuclear program while creating the desire for revenge, (2) rekindle Iranian nationalism and unify a currently divided population, (3) make a nuclear attack on Israel a “legitimate” response rather than an unprovoked assault, (4) create dissension among the more powerful nations, (5) give Islamic militants worldwide a new grievance and reason for jihad, and (6) encourage Middle Eastern countries who are on the fence about whether to align with Iran or the West to choose the former out of self-preservation, if nothing else.

Three Options for Iran’s Middle Eastern Neighbors

39 “Meet the Press” (8/2/10), quoted in “Koenig’s Eye View from the White House” (8/6/10).

40 Viotti lists seven factors that influence whether to intervene militarily: (1) financial constraints, (2) military resources, (3) level of support (or lack thereof) for the current president and his administration, (4) the understanding policy elites have of external restraints, (5) calculation of national interests, (6) the constraining influence of international law, sovereignty, and the related non-intervention principle, and (7) commitment to humanitarian law or human rights. (pp. 90-93)

41 Viotti and Kauppi, p. 47.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

Iran's neighbors are caught between the proverbial rock [the U.S. and its allies] and a hard place [Iran and its allies]. They have three primary choices at this point: balancing power shifts through pursuing their own nuclear weapons programs along with conventional military build-up — a development that would probably further destabilize the region and be enormously expensive financially; “bandwagoning” by aligning with Iran out of self-interest and self-preservation; or continuing to side with the West, no matter what. (They also may choose to create a unique mixture of some or all of these options.)

Whether or not they do so will be greatly influenced by whether the U.S. and its allies can build enough of a reassuring and stabilizing global (not just regional or Western) consensus at the United Nations and through other international regimes about how to deal wisely with Iran, continue to demonstrate the willingness to defend Middle Eastern countries caught in the middle, and do what's necessary to keep Iran from triggering a war.

In light of these realities, U.S. policymakers must promote and collaborate with the voice of reason that reassures and warns at the same time — which would be most effective if we could bring ourselves to acknowledge some of our recent shortcomings in the arena of “just wars” (Iraq) and the Geneva Conventions (violations of rules against torture, “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment,” and unlawful detention). As Viotti and Kauppi say: “... [I]n a time of increasing global insecurity, the effort in just-war theory to put practical limits on the use of force and thus to reduce, if not

completely eliminate, the barbarity of warfare remains salient in what is at best a still emergent, global civil society."⁴³

CONCLUSION

One has to wonder whether the United States is reaping what it sowed from the 1950s onward with its *Realpolitik* approach to certain of the countries it perceived as vulnerable to communism. Would the world be facing threats of nuclear terrorism from Iran had Russia, the UK and the U.S. not interfered in its internal politics after World War II? After all, even if the democratically elected Iranian prime minister, Mossadegh, *had* taken Iran toward communism in the 1950s, it still might well have reverted to democracy with the end of the Cold War.

As Viotti points out in his book *American Foreign Policy*: "Although policy elites in countries like Iran and North Korea may seek nuclear weapons for reasons of national pride or in an effort to be taken seriously as regional powers, they also may do so to counter what they see as threats posed by the United States."⁴⁴ We Americans too often consider ourselves the benevolent "shining city on the hill" without considering how differently we may be perceived by those on the receiving end of our interventions and assistance (no matter how well meant).

In any case, Iran is playing a dangerous and highly strategic game of chess with the world, especially the United States. Even many skilled negotiators admit that discerning Iran's ultimate strategic goal is difficult. A country like Israel, even if Iran

43 *Ibid.*, p. 411.

44 p. 166.

would eventually like to sweep it off the global board, is most likely being threatened either to distract the U.S., provoke the U.S. or Israel into a self-defeating preemptive strike, or gain allies for Iran among Arab populations. In other words, I believe that Israel may well be a means to an end, not the end itself. Iran's current leadership has much bigger prey in sight.

A desire to regain some of its ancient glory, apocalyptic goals fueled by religious fanaticism, unresolved grievances about America's overbearing pursuit of its own interests from the 1950s through the 1970s, hostility toward and jealousy of "the Jewish state" of Israel, security concerns, and the commonly shared desire to become more modern and provide more for its people — some or all of these motivations are contributing to the rather inscrutable mindset and long-term goals of Iran's government.

A successful foreign policy toward Iran, therefore, will require that the U.S. continue to utilize a skillful *mélange* of "soft power" moves⁴⁵, engagement⁴⁶, coercive diplomacy and containment.⁴⁷ It will need to continue to work with and through established international regimes and multilateral organizations — including, but not limited to, the United Nations, the IAEA, START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), and the Nuclear Security Summit.⁴⁸ A wise strategy going forward would be for the United

45 As Joseph Nye Jr. put it, soft power is "... getting others to want what you want ... it co-opts people rather than coerces them." (Viotti and Kauppi, p. 91)

46 On August 10, 2010, Mr. Crowley of the U.S. State Department said, "We know that if you go back 30 years, we have a fairly long list of concerns about Iran. We recognize that Iran has its own list of concerns about the United States. We are prepared to have a broad-based dialogue with Iran going forward, but obviously, right now, the nuclear issue remains at the top of our list." (U.S. State Dept. "Daily Press Briefing")

47 This may include any or all of the following: diplomatic communications, military moves, covert actions, and economic sanctions such as boycotts or embargoes. (Viotti, p. 67)

48 Mr. Crowley also said: "From the very first day that the Obama Administration took office, we have implemented a diplomatic strategy that has clarified the choice that is facing Iran and built international support for our efforts. And I think it's important to put what we did with Iran and these sanctions into a broader context,

States to make multilateralism an intrinsic part of our foreign policy and forsake the idea of having to be “top dog” in the world.⁴⁹

As Viotti and Kauppi point out, “With rising levels of interdependence and interconnectedness in world politics ... states likely will rely more heavily on regimes for their own selfish reasons. Hence, while realists tend to view regimes as constraints on state behavior, neoliberals view regimes more positively as actually enabling states to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.”⁵⁰ Certainly, the history of how the Cold War with the former Soviet Union came to an end can be instructive in dealing with Iran.⁵¹

The days are past when any country, whether the U.S. or any other emerging hegemon, can expect to act unilaterally and still stay within the framework of international law and increasingly normative global expectations of international dialogue and consensus.⁵² Joseph Nye Jr. presciently said in the late 1990s: “Power in the twenty-first century will rest on a mix of hard and soft resources. No country is better endowed than the United States in all three dimensions — military, economic, and soft power. Our greatest mistake in such a world would be to fall into one-

because I personally believe that many different strands of activity contributed to obtaining the sanctions and creating the international support for sending a very strong message to Iran. When we decided to work to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime ... we were sending a message about what we did expect in a very comprehensive way.” (*Ibid.*)

49 Class notes, “U.S. Foreign Policy,” the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, the University of Denver, Summer Quarter 2010.

50 Viotti and Kauppi, p. 135.

51 “As tentative steps toward reassurance were made by the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s [after Ronald Reagan took a Teddy Roosevelt-like “talk softly, but carry a big stick” approach with it] and were reciprocated by the United States ... they stopped acting on the basis of a structure of shared knowledge that emphasized egoistic identities and self-help, shifting for a time from zero-sum ... to more positive-sum understandings.” (*Ibid.*, p. 283)

52 For example, Turkey and China have both said that they will “... abide by U.N. sanctions but aren’t beholden to unilateral U.S. or EU measures” — which emphasizes (1) the importance of the nuclear nonproliferation international regime and (2) the United States continuing to deal with Iran in a multilateral context. (“Teheran Curbs ...”)

dimensional analysis and to believe that investing in military power alone will ensure our strength.”⁵³

But perhaps the most important component of the long-term solution to any conflicts lies in pondering *and* practicing the following — which points to the reality of collective consciousness among human beings:

“How, then, do decision makers ground in interests the ideas or objectives they wish to advance, using the capabilities they have in efforts to achieve these ends? The answer ... lies not ‘out there,’ but rather ‘in here’ — within and between the decision makers themselves. ... In the ideas they form — usually in relationships with others — and the exchanges they have with one another are forged ... consensus ... not just on the issues of the day, but also on the underlying shared meanings, understandings, and interests that connect them with others as fellow human travelers.”⁵⁴

Whether or not this echoes a Kantian⁵⁵ (or what realists would call purely utopian) hope for the future remains to be seen, but it is well worth striving for.

53 Viotti and Kauppi, p. 93.

54 Viotti, *American Foreign Policy*, pp. 7-8.

55 “Kant addressed war and peace in international society, looking toward an improvement in state behaviors among liberal republics that would make them decidedly less prone to use force against other states ... The Kantian ideal was ... a future, cosmopolitan international society of individuals, states, or other actors following ethical principles and aiming toward perfection. In other words, ‘right reason’ is to be used to discern obligations stemming from universal law that transcends the laws made by individual states. This was to be the path toward ‘perpetual peace’ — a world free from war.” (Viotti and Kauppi, p. 407)

APPENDIX A

Factors That Facilitate/Empower US Foreign Policy

Factors	Domestic	External	Both
International regime (now joined by Iranian ally, Russia) re: nuclear nonproliferation		X	
Iran is surrounded by countries invaded by, or allies, of the U.S.		X	
US embassy hostage situation in 1979—and current hostages			X
US has stable relationships with Iranian allies Russia and China although both relationships are strained (financial, espionage, Google issue, North Korea); Russia joined the US and western countries in a 4th UN resolution and economic sanctions -- and Russia is Iran's only nuclear partner ("Ahmadinejad," Haaretz)		X	
US has military hegemony and demonstrated willingness to use massive military force to deal with WMDs in a rogue nation (Iraq)		X	
US response has been diplomatic, measured, and multilateral (dialogue at UN, containment, air and naval shows of force in the region, economic sanctions, helping Israel strengthen defenses, reassuring Israel so there won't be a preemptive action)			X
"Underground" popular Iranian culture is far more Western than might be expected in a country run by ayatollahs		X	
When Ronald Reagan (a classical realist hawk) became president, the US embassy hostages in Iran were released			X
A UN-approved NATO offensive against Iran could devastate the country		X	
Lessons from Cuban missile crisis -- a naval blockade worked even though the Soviets-Cubans could have used nuclear weapons		X	
If Iran nuked any country, it would it would become a pariah country and/or be devastated if Western countries retaliated in kind		X	
Iranians favor nuclear energy development, but a large majority oppose Iran becoming a nuclear weapons state (Thurber)		X	

APPENDIX B

Factors That Impede US Foreign Policy

Factors	Domestic	External	Both
US interventionism in Iran's government from 1950s-1970s		X	
The balance of power has changed greatly in the Middle East in the past 60 years: Iran is surrounded by countries that are either allies of the US or have been invaded by it. Could this be one of the reasons why Iran has continued its nuclear program?		X	
<p>THE PROBLEMS OF PURSUING ARMED INTERVENTION (with or without Israel):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * There's the question of how/when/whether Obama would engage in armed intervention. * The U.S. is spread too thin with wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. * Americans are war-weary and fairly uninterested in Iran's threats except as they pertain to Israel. * Iran is a very large country (slightly larger than Alaska) with a healthy and largely well-educated population of 67 million. * Taking out Iran's nuclear facilities and/or nuclear weapons capabilities would be extraordinarily difficult. They are not only deep underground but scattered around a very large country (slightly larger than Alaska). If Iran were attacked before having nuclear weapons, world opinion (not to mention Iranian nationalism) might turn against the U.S., Israel, and NATO. If attacked after developing a deployable nuclear weapon (or weapons), Iran's radical Islamic clerics might well choose nuclear retaliation in the conviction that it would instigate the return of the Mahdi — the Islamic "messiah." * Justifying an armed intervention would not yet be possible according to international law. * The struggling U.S. economy and resultant depressed morale makes another war front unthinkable. 			X
Economic sanctions have been ineffective so far.		X	
Human rights violations occurred under the G.W. Bush Administration.			X
Israel is Iran's primary target in this nuclear chess game.			

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