## 1AC

### 1AC—Regional Stability

#### “Maximum pressure” has failed its stated objectives. Sanctions harden Iranian behavior.

**Nasr et al. '24** [(Vali, Professor of International Affairs and Middle East Studies at the Johns Hopkins SAIS. Narges Bajoghli, Anthropologist and Assistant Professor of Middle East Studies at the Johns Hopkins SAIS; Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, Professor of Economics at Virginia Tech. Ali Vaez, Director of the International Crisis Group Iran Project.) "How Sanctions Work: Iran and the Impact of Economic Warfare", Stanford University Press, https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=35571, February 2024] TDI

The impact of sanctions on Iranian society has been detailed in earlier chapters of this book. Maximum pressure showed that US sanctions could decimate an economy. The evidence from Iran is compelling. Between 2018 and 2021 Iran’s economy contracted by 12% and its per capita income by 14%, poverty rose by 11% and average living standards fell by 13%.6 Inflation ravaged the economy. Food prices rose by 186% and healthcare by 125%.7 As disposable income shrank, Iranians spent 30% less on education and 32% less on entertainment.8 In 2017, 45% of Iranians could be considered middle class; that number fell to 30% by 2020.9 The economic downturn affected all aspects of Iranian society.10 The impact was even worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as the United States decided not to provide effective exceptions for importing necessary pharmaceutical and humanitarian goods to deal with the pandemic.11 Iran could technically buy medical and pharmaceutical goods, but, owing to financial sanctions, it could not pay for them. The pauperization of Iran under maximum pressure was one reason why the 2022 protests did not explode into a massive movement that could overwhelm the Islamic Republic. The protests reflected popular anger—especially among youth—toward the cultural strictures and political repression that dominated their daily lives. The discontent toward the country’s dire economic situation was even more widespread. However, the thin margins that Iranians were forced to survive on dissuaded them from joining protests and strikes that could disrupt their livelihoods. Too many Iranians lived day-to-day and depended on government assistance—by one estimate 75% of Iranians in 2022 needed government economic assistance to make ends meet—to mount a revolutionary struggle.12 Sanctions that were designed to encourage regime change were in effect preventing it from happening. Such a foreign policy—which aims to destroy the middle class, crush people, and foster hardship and poverty among civilian populations— simply is not morally superior to the targeting of civilians in warfare. A central element of US policymaking is to question the moral values of adversary governments like Iran, and then to rally the international community to support those policies guided by moral values. However, targeting civilians through sanctions erodes the American moral high ground and increases the cost to its policy.

A further problem lies in the negative impact of sanctions on society. Earlier chapters have detailed how maximum pressure has changed Iranian society in worrying ways.

It has long been an article of faith in Washington that Iran has the most “pro-American” population in a region where anti-Americanism has been rife. Iran is, after all, the only post-Islamist country in the region, one that has tried an Islamic revolution and lived under an Islamic state and is no longer enamored by its promise. The driving force in Iranian society for change, opening the country, and turning toward the West has been the middle class.13 Yet US economic sanctions have shrunk the Iranian middle class, reducing its economic importance and political influence.14 This is counterproductive to American foreign policy. Sanctions have not changed Iran; instead, they have weakened the constituency within it that favored building ties with the West.15 Sanctions, then, have only made dealing with Iran more difficult, as the social base for resistance and distrust of the West has grown larger and more influential. There is also the lesson the United States should have learned in Iraq.16 When punishing sanctions were first adopted as the instrument for containing and changing the Saddam Hussein regime, Iraq boasted the largest middle class in the Arab world, a population with economic means and know-how, and the greatest number of engineers per capita. Iraq then had a literacy rate, infant mortality, and life expectancy that was the envy of the Arab world. It was this impression that led American policymakers to expect building democracy in Iraq to be an easy task. But that middle class disappeared under sanctions.17 When Saddam fell from power, the middle class was nowhere to be found. It was the disenfranchised and the poor that inherited Iraq.18 Instead of democracy, the country was ravaged by extremism and civil war. It has become a threat to the region that continues to tax American foreign policy. Something similar has started to unfold in Iran, as the middle class is sinking under the weight of sanctions, and the country’s social infrastructure is atrophying.19 The result has been a hardening of its politics, which has put the country on the wrong path. Rather than looking to move past the revolution to normalize its foreign relations, it is hunkering down within the citadel of its rejectionist views.

In fact, as we have seen in earlier chapters, Trump’s withdrawal from JCPOA and his maximum pressure strategy undermined the argument for pursuing engagement with the United States. President Rouhani and his moderate faction had argued for trusting the US in negotiating a nuclear deal with the hope that it would anchor Iran’s future in ties with the West, and boost Iran’s middle class and its moderate proclivities.20 By withdrawing from the deal, the US bolstered the argument of Rouhani’s critics and rivals—that Rouhani had been naïve and that it was a mistake to have trusted the US. The supreme leader, who had tacitly supported nuclear talks and JCPOA, now distanced himself from the deal, saying that he had warned Rouhani all along.21 If in 2013 the supreme leader had concluded that moderates would do better negotiating with the US, which had helped the election of Hasan Rouhani to the presidency and Javad Zarif’s appointment as foreign minister, in 2021 he resolved on the reverse. He decided that the moderates would not be able to lift sanctions, and intractable and trenchant hardlines could achieve that goal. Sanctions had hardened Iran, and that would ultimately prove costly to the United States in the longer run. In June 2021 the hardline candidate Ebrahim Raisi was elected president, and the foreign policy team that had negotiated the 2015 nuclear deal was replaced by those who believed that the US would only respond to pressure and threat. Ali Bagheri Kani, the new Iranian chief negotiator, had long criticized JCPOA and Iran’s approach to diplomacy. He believed that only an Iran on the threshold of nuclear breakout could elicit concessions from the United States, and ensure that sanctions would not return. US reliance on sanctions had taught Iran that the way to combat and reverse sanctions was by becoming more threatening. How have these lessons played out since 2015?

#### The risk of proliferation grows as hardliners maintain power and historic barriers erode.

**Ghazvinian '23** [(John, John Ghazvinian is the executive director of the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania) "Why Iran may feel less restrained in nuclear decision-making now," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, https://thebulletin.org/2023/10/why-iran-may-feel-less-restrained-in-nuclear-decision-making-now/, 10-26-2023] TDI

Little has changed in the past few decades. Iran’s leaders have still not made the decision to “race for a bomb”—despite having nearly all the necessary technological capacity to do so. For the most part, this has been a political decision, though there are also important religious restrictions at work. Iran’s continuing calculation is that it has more to gain from cooperating within the legalistic international framework of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) than it does from taking the North Korean path of flouting it by developing a bomb.

Iran’s restraint, however, may now be limited. And it may have more to do with Washington’s policy posture than with the war in Ukraine. In 2003, when North Korea announced it was leaving the NPT and rapidly developed a nuclear weapon, several hardline Iranian lawmakers—indignant at what they felt was an outsized US preoccupation with Iran—could be heard suggesting that perhaps the time had come for Iran to do the same. But these voices were swiftly silenced: Iran’s leadership believed that it had much more to gain from allowing the negotiating process with the P5+1 (as the official party negotiating with Iran has come to be known and that comprises China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) to take its course and find a compromise solution to its nuclear dispute with Washington.

Today, things look very different. Following the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw from the JCPOA in 2018, and the subsequent campaign of “maximum pressure” against Iran—including the killing of the country’s top general and the imposition of hundreds of suffocating economic sanctions—Iran now feels it has little to lose. It has not seen any serious diplomatic efforts on the JCPOA front from Washington in months, and its own domestic political turmoil following the death of Mahsa Amini—which has seen the most serious public protests in a generation, accompanied by a chorus of condemnation from the West—have left Iran’s leaders believing there is little point left in continuing to discuss their nuclear program with Western powers. All this contributes to an atmosphere in which the North Korea option might seem more appealing than ever.

And yet, the option of developing a bomb is still largely taboo in Iran. In recent months, several hardline voices have again suggested that Iran could cease its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, or even withdraw from the NPT completely. But these suggestions have once again been shot down. It appears that as long as Iran’s current Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is in power, Iran will remain in the NPT and not pursue a bomb. But Khamenei is 83 years old and what may come after his rule is anybody’s guess. Khamenei has consistently used his position as the country’s most revered religious authority to insist that nuclear weapons are a sin against God and that the Islamic Republic will never seek to possess them. But if, as many fear, a post-Khamenei Iran drifts toward more autocratic military rule, centered on the power of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, this longstanding religious injunction against nuclear weapons might be called into question.

#### The middle class is key. Sanctions erode the only avenue to reforming the regime.

**Heiran-Nia '22** [(Javad, director of the Persian Gulf Studies Group at the Center for Scientific Research and Middle East Strategic Studies in Iran) "Iran’s middle class has been eroding for some time. Now it’s only getting worse.", Atlantic Council, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/irans-middle-class-has-been-eroding-for-some-time-now-its-only-getting-worse/, 6-30-2022] TDI

The history of social change in Iran, from the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 to the 1979 revolution and beyond, demonstrates the importance of the effective role of a modern middle class in social and political developments.

The formation of the modern middle class in Iran dates to the end of the nineteenth century and the Constitutional Revolution, which led to the establishment of the first elected parliament in the Middle East during the Qajar dynasty. Iran’s middle class continued to grow after the Qajars were replaced by the Pahlavis, a dynasty that ruled from 1925 until 1979. Iranian sociologist Hossein Bashirieh maintains that Iran’s modern middle class wasn’t only the product of modernization during the Pahlavi era, but also played a crucial role in advancing that process.

Modernization not only focused on economic development but social and political progress. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi expected that the middle class would support the monarchy. However, this class became the main opponent of his regime and the instigator of his overthrow.

Following the 1979 revolution, urbanization and higher education trends continued, especially after the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war and during President Hashemi Rafsanjani’s two terms in the early 1990s.

The middle class played a major role in the 1997 presidential election of reformist Mohammad Khatami and the 2013 win of Hassan Rouhani; its boycott of 2005 elections conversely boosted populist Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and, in 2021, conservative Ebrahim Raisi.

Ahmadinejad sought to shift the basis of political support from the middle class to the lower classes. However, the sanctions imposed first by the 2008-2016 Barack Obama administration and, later, by the 2017-2021 Donald Trump administration—after it withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018—delivered the biggest blow to the Iranian middle class.

Since the escalation of sanctions in 2011—which were multilateral at the time —Iran’s middle class has shrunk by at least 10 percent, from 58.4 percent of the population in 2011 to 48.8 percent in 2019. Sanctions also increased corruption that was already present and rent-seeking in Iran’s economic structures. At present, the middle class comprises about 35 percent of the population. It is expected to dwindle further due to rising inflation.

The middle class under the Ebrahim Raisi government

The 2022 budget of the Ebrahim Raisi administration shows a lack of support for the poor and middle class in Iran.

“Raisi’s first budget will put a lot of pressure on the middle class, and a large part of this class will fall into low-income deciles,” Kamran Nadri, director of the Islamic Banking Department at the Central Bank’s Monetary and Banking Research Institute said, recently, in an interview with Iranian Labour News Agency. According to Nadri, the government has failed to compensate for exchange rate changes that are highly inflationary. While salaries are expected to rise by 10 percent, inflation will be 50 percent, he predicts.

The weakening of the middle class has serious implications beyond the economy.

According to a study conducted by social media researcher Mohammad Rahbari, Twitter (one of many social media platforms that Iranians—who are predominantly middle class—have to access via circumvention tools) users paid less attention to domestic policy issues in 2021 than in 2020 and scant attention to foreign affairs. This demonstrates that domestic policies aren’t of great importance to the middle class due to frustration and disillusion with their situation.

A weaker middle class will undermine Iran’s political and social evolution. Fatemeh Maqsoodi, a member of the Iranian parliament, said in a recent speech that the middle class—which is culture-building, travels, and reads—is being squeezed between the upper and lower classes. According to her, the upper classes are becoming more conservative, under the guise of tradition, religion, and revolutionary slogans, while the lower classes are becoming more helpless and poorer.

Dr. Hashem Pesaran, a former professor at the University of Cambridge, believes that democratic values and culture will also dwindle in Iran without the middle class.

The collapse of the middle class is tied to the ebb of the reformist movement that burgeoned after the Khatami election and revived briefly under Rouhani. The reformists in power didn’t meet the needs and expectations of the middle class and didn’t take steps to consolidate political development and economic reform.

Saeed Hajjarian, a prominent Iranian reformist political strategist, has accused some reformists of being opportunists who were only concerned with gaining and staying in power. The economic deterioration following the “maximum pressure” sanctions under President Trump also undermined the reformists.

Iranian conservatives took advantage of the sanctions, blaming the Rouhani administration for the bad economic situation. Raisi and like-minded candidates didn’t mention the role of sanctions in election debates, emphasizing “neutralizing sanctions” instead of “lifting sanctions.” This implied that there was no need to revive the JCPOA to improve the country’s economy. After winning the election, the Raisi government eventually returned to nuclear negotiations; talks stalled since mid-March before indirectly resuming on June 28 between Iran and the United States in Qatar.

Ali Motahari, a former member of parliament, has accused conservatives of sparking protests in December 2017-January 2018 and November 2019 to undermine the reformists. Even Khatami has said recently that he is “disappointed with the future of the country and the political arena. I believe that the political system will not allow the reformists to engage in political activity, and it has passed us by. We must move towards community-based reform and implementation of educational activities with the aim of long-term work.”

‘Middle class poor’

When the middle class is strong, its political and cultural concerns become stronger because the demands of the middle class are mainly social, political, and civil.

The main problem of the modern middle class of Iran is that it has not been able to achieve sufficient wealth and power through its academic credentials. Due to the rentier structure of Iran’s economy, cultural groups don’t benefit that much even when the economic situation improves.

According to Asef Bayat, a professor at the University of Illinois, Iran suffers from a “middle class poor.’’ He believes that the class’s feeling of abandonment, resentment of corruption, and lack of confidence in the future is turning it into a source of potential opposition.

The lifestyle of the middle class is also identifiable and vulnerable to economic shocks. For example, Iranian youth, especially young women, feel deprived of their identity if they are unable to obtain certain consumer items. The middle classes are under pressure because of their inability to continue chosen lifestyles or turn their cultural capital into economic capital.

The emigration of the middle class into the Iranian diaspora due to poor economic conditions and despair about the future has also reached alarming figures, a further threat to the future of Iran’s social capital. According to the Iran Migration Observatory, 71 percent of doctors, 40 percent of nurses, and more than 70 percent of professors and graduate students are seeking to leave Iran.

Meanwhile, lower economic classes are now at the forefront of protests. This group has a greater potential for violence than the middle class.

The erosion of the middle class also undermines proponents of a balanced foreign policy that prioritizes “look to the West.”

This can be seen in the intensification of the “look to the East” policy in the Raisi government, including the emphasis on economic ties with China, and efforts to improve ties with Russia and achieve permanent membership in the Eurasian Economic Union.

The middle class seeks institutional reform to improve the quality of governance. More successful governance requires trust in government and greater citizen participation rather than boosting the interests of a small elite. Economic inequalities cause imbalance in the political system.

In conclusion, with the weakening of the middle class, the safety valve of the political system is eroding while, in foreign policy, the “look to the East” orientation will intensify.

#### Sanctions are exploited by Iran’s ruling elite—they hoard resources to force dependency—the middle class must choose between survival or change.

**Beinart '18** [(Peter, Peter Beinart is a professor of journalism and political science at the City University of New York.) "How Sanctions Feed Authoritarianism", Atlantic, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/06/iran-sanctions-nuclear/562043/, 6-5-2018] TDI

The academic literature is clear: Far from promoting liberal democracy, sanctions tend to make the countries subject to them more authoritarian and repressive. In 2009, University of Memphis political scientist Dursen Peksen found that, between 1981 and 2000, sanctions contributed to a significant erosion of human rights in the countries on which they were imposed. The following year, in a study co-authored with the University of Missouri’s Cooper Drury, he found that sanctioned countries grew less democratic too.

The reason is that sanctions shift the balance of power in a society in the regime’s favor. As sanctions make resources harder to find, authoritarian regimes hoard them. They make the population more dependent on their largesse, and withhold resources from those who might threaten their rule. “Because the regime can intervene in the market to control the flow of goods and services made scarce by foreign economic pressure,” Peksen and Drury write, “the leadership will redirect wealth toward its ruling coalition and away from its opponents to minimize the cost of sanctions on its capacity to rule.”

But sanctions don’t just help despotic regimes tighten their grip. They erode the habits and capacities necessary to sustain liberal democracy over the long term. As sanctions devastate a country’s economy, its professionals often emigrate. Families under economic strain withdraw their daughters from school and marry them off at younger ages. And as sanctions restrict the legal flow of goods, people grow accustomed to the black market. In a 2005 study, Brown University’s Peter Andreas noted that sanctions often breed “a higher level of public tolerance for lawbreaking and an undermined respect for the rule of law. … Reestablishing societal acceptance of legal norms can be one of the most challenging tasks after sanctions are lifted, as old habits can be difficult to break.”

The Trump officials preparing to reimpose sanctions on Iran should know this. They should know it because America created many of these unintended consequences when it sanctioned Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. Those sanctions, which began when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, virtually shut off Iraq’s legal commerce with the outside world. In response to a mounting humanitarian crisis, the United Nations in 1995 allowed Iraq to export a limited amount of oil and use the proceeds to buy imported food. But even as the Clinton administration publicly committed itself to regime change, Saddam used “oil for food” to consolidate his rule. By controlling the distribution of food, he made ordinary Iraqis—who before sanctions had bought and sold food on the open market—more dependent on his regime. Under “oil for food,” reported the journalist David Rieff, “Every Iraqi head of household had to have such a ration book, issued by the Ministry of Trade, which named every immediate family member and listed the precise quantities of foodstuffs to which the bearer was entitled. Every food agent had a computerized list from the Ministry of Trade of the people he was supposed to supply with these staples. What this meant in practice was that the regime could maintain a database on every Iraqi citizen and constantly update it, without recourse to the security services or even a network of paid informants. It was a secret policeman's dream.”

If sanctions made it harder for Iraqis to dislodge Saddam, they also kept Iraqis from rebuilding the infrastructure America had destroyed during the Gulf War. Joy Gordon, author of Invisible War: The United States and the Iraq Sanctions, has detailed the interlocking ways in which international sanctions stymied reconstruction: Iraq’s “water treatment system was compromised first when the U.S. blocked equipment and chemicals for water purification; but if Iraq had somehow been able to produce or smuggle those, the water system would then have been compromised by the lack of electrical power, because electrical generators and related equipment had been bombed by the U.S., and because the replacement equipment was blocked by the United States. If Iraq had been somehow able to generate sufficient electricity, then the clean water could not have been distributed because the bombings had caused so much breakage in the water pipes, and the United States then blocked the importation of water pipes, on the grounds that they could be used for weapons of mass destruction. If Iraq had somehow been able to smuggle or manufacture water pipes, it did not have the bulldozers or cranes necessary to install them because those were blocked by the U.S. as well.”

But sanctions didn’t only devastate Iraq’s physical capital. They devastated its human capital too. According to one estimate, “more than three million professionals and intellectuals” left the country during the 1990s. And as Gordon explained to me, even many of the civil servants who stayed in Iraq stopped showing up to their jobs because their salaries had become worthless as a result of hyperinflation. The result was an “infrastructure running with far fewer people and people who had far fewer credentials and less experience.”

As the sanctions literature predicts, Iraqis turned to the black market. “The unemployment and impoverishment brought about not only malnourishment and disease, but crime and a deterioration of the social fabric,” writes Gordon. Saddam relied on Sunni tribal networks to smuggle oil and other goods across Iraq’s borders, thus increasing their power. And to avoid destitution, many Shia Iraqis turned to the charity provided by local Islamist groups. Queen Mary University political scientist Lee Jones, who studied Iraq in the 1990s for his book, Societies Under Siege, told me, “The result of dictatorship and sanctions was the destruction of secular opposition to Saddam. The only thing that survived were tribes, which became the core of al-Qaeda and ISIS, and Shia clerics that formed basis of Shia political parties.”

After toppling Saddam in 2003, the Bush administration discovered that governing and rebuilding Iraq was far harder than it had predicted. Ironically, that was partly because America’s own sanctions policies had made Iraq a less modern, less secular, less educated  society than it had been 15 years before.

Iran is not Iraq. Because it never endured a bombing campaign like the one to which Iraq was subjected during the Gulf War, its infrastructure is in better shape. But the social and political consequences of years of American and international sanctions have proved strikingly similar.

The United States first imposed sanctions on Iran during the 1979 hostage crisis. But Iran was not substantially cut off from global trade until the Obama administration and its European allies imposed sanctions between 2010 and 2012 that made it almost impossible for Iranian companies to import or export to the West or to transfer money through international banks. The economic and humanitarian costs were immediate and profound. Between 2012 and 2014, the percentage of Iranian families living in poverty almost doubled. By 2016, according to the BBC, Iranians were consuming just over half as much red meat, and just under half as much bread, as they had in 1996. Iran’s inability to import prescription drugs, and the raw materials necessary to make them, contributed, according to one 2016 study, to 6 million patients lacking “access to essential treatment.”

In Washington, it’s widely assumed that these sanctions led Iranians in 2013 to elect reformist President Hassan Rouhani, who pledged to cut a nuclear deal that would lift the burden on Iran’s economy. That’s debatable. Iranians had also voted for reformist candidates—such as Mohammed Khatami in 1997—before the sanctions began to bite.

But even as Rouhani won, Iranians warned that Western sanctions were replicating in Iran some of the toxic dynamics of 1990s-era Iraq. In 2013, hundreds of Iranian dissidents warned in a letter to President Obama that, “We are deeply concerned about the recurrence of the Iraqi experience for Iran, which would eliminate the only opportunity for peaceful and democratic change in our country. We are certain that economic sanctions will continue to weaken Iran’s civil society and strengthen the hands of extremists.”

Indeed, the Iranian government—and in particular the hardline Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps—used the Obama-era sanctions to establish what two Iranian analysts in 2012 called “a near-economic monopoly in Iran as escalating sanctions have crushed Iran’s private sector and driven the middle class out of legitimate businesses.” As in Iraq, the sanctions spawned criminality: what two other Iranian observers have called a “mafia-like class” that has used Iran’s “choked-off economy and its accompanying black markets” to “monopolize the economy.”

As the IRGC exploited sanctions to expand its wealth and power, Iran’s middle class—the prime driver of anti-government activism—grew weaker. Jason Rezaian, the Iranian-American Washington Post reporter jailed by the Tehran regime, argues that the lesson of “the last round of sanctions” against Iran is that “when people are squeezed economically, their needs and aspirations become much more about survival than about working toward change.” The Iranian-American filmmaker and writer Beheshteh Farshneshani noted in 2013 that “sanctions on Iran are only severely weakening the middle class, breaking the collective will and marginalizing democratic voices while solidifying the power of the ruling elite.” Iran’s deteriorating economy, combined with its lack of personal freedom, also provoked what CNN has called a “brain drain to the West.”

As in 1990s-era Iraq, Obama-era sanctions also contributed to making Iranian society more socially conservative. A 2012 report by the International Civil Society Action Network noted that, “Women’s rights experts recognize [a] socio-economic pattern emerging similar to those in Iraq when sanctions were imposed. In Iraq sanctions and the ensuing poverty resulted in the withdrawal of girls from education and increases in child marriage (families were forced to marry off their young daughters to reduce the number of mouths to feed). Iranian girls are at risk of similar developments.” Between 2012 and 2014, according to the Statistics Center of Iran, child marriage rose 20 percent.

Iranian dissidents overwhelmingly supported the 2015 nuclear deal in large measure because it offered the prospect of lifting sanctions and reversing some of these trends. And despite the corruption and incompetence of the Iranian regime, and the continued skittishness of many international corporations, the Iranian economy—which had shrunk in 2014 and 2015—grew in 2016 at a rate of more than 12 percent.

The Trump administration has largely quashed these hopes. Even before withdrawing from the nuclear deal, it lobbied European governments to avoid doing business with Iran and refused to grant permission to American companies wishing to do so. Now, as part of his withdrawal from the agreement, Trump plans not only to reimpose the American sanctions Obama lifted in 2015, but to demand that European companies cease doing business with Iran as well—or else lose access to the American market.

European businesses will not comply entirely, and Iran will go on trading with China and India. But it’s likely that Iran will still grow significantly more economically isolated than it has been over the past two years. In the run-up to Trump’s withdrawal announcement, the value of Iran’s currency, the rial, plunged, sparking fears of hyperinflation. This predictably has played into the hands of pro-regime conservatives, who have responded by vowing to build a “resistance economy” dominated by the state. “For the hardliners,” notes Columbia University’s Richard Nephew, who worked on Iran sanctions and negotiations for Obama, the reinstatement of sanctions “is an opportunity to restrict access to the country and by people in the country to the outside world. This concept of economic resistance is very attractive to them, as they see that openness can damage and undermine their control.”

Iran may still witness uprisings against the regime. But the weaker Iran’s middle class grows, the less organized and coherent those uprisings will become. “If sanctions do indeed trigger a domestic backlash,” Iran experts Mohammad Sadeghi Esfahlani and Jamal Abdi have predicted, “it will not come in the form of a pro-democracy movement, but instead in the form of food riots that will provide an easy target for the Iranian regime’s well-honed apparatus of repression.” It’s also likely that Trump’s withdrawal from the nuclear deal will make Iranians more anti-American. Iranians celebrated the deal because they were desperate for an end to sanctions. Now even the most anti-government Iranians must admit that those sanctions are returning not because their leaders violated the nuclear agreement, but because America’s did.

In 2003, American leaders fantasized about a liberal, democratic, non-expansionist Iraq only to find that America’s own sanctions policies had helped destroy that dream. Now another Republican administration—led by some of the same foreign-policy officials—is spinning similar visions about Iran. The Iranians most invested in that vision warn that America’s policies are making it impossible. And the Trump administration either doesn’t know or doesn’t care.

#### Hardliners are “sanctions merchants” that profit off getting around them. Removal is the only path toward a democratic Iran.

**Sahimi '21** [(Muhammad, Professor at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles) "Ending sanctions may boost Iran's moderates in upcoming elections," Responsible Statecraft, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2021/05/11/ending-sanctions-may-boost-irans-moderates-in-upcoming-elections/, 5-11-2021] TDI

* This is in the context of the 21 elections. Find better card

The Biden administration should lift at least some major sanctions prior to Iran’s elections. This may motivate those who oppose the hardliners to turn out for the elections, and vote for a moderate or reformist candidate, which is precisely the nightmarish scenario that the hardliners imagine occurring.

Lifting of the sanctions will have another important consequence. It was recently revealed that since 2006, when the United Nations began imposing sanctions on Iran, $400 billion has been spent on “getting around the sanctions.” It is the hardliners who benefitted from this fiasco, as they control the black market, import whatever they want through 80 illegal jetties that are outside the control of the government, and make astronomical profit that gives them the financial resources to use in their propaganda against those who oppose them through a vast empire of mass media, including hundreds of websites, tens of “news agencies” acting as propaganda machines, and other means. Rouhani himself has referred to them as the “sanctions’ merchants,” and has accused them of not wanting the sanctions to be lifted. Lifting the sanctions will deny the hardliners such resources, which in turn will not only affect positively the plight of ordinary Iranians, but also, in the long run, will help the cause of democracy and respect for human rights in Iran.

Iranian people deserve to have a secular democratic republic. But, first, the economic plight of the middle and lower classes, the engine for positive change in Iran, should improve drastically. Lifting the U.S. sanctions and electing a reformist will be important steps in that direction.

#### But now is key.

**Mousavian '24** [(Seyed Hossein, Seyed Hossein Mousavian is a Middle East security and nuclear policy specialist at Princeton University ) "The West has a 15-month opportunity for a new nuclear deal with Iran that precludes an Iranian Bomb," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, https://thebulletin.org/2024/06/the-west-has-a-15-month-opportunity-for-a-new-nuclear-deal-with-iran-that-precludes-an-iranian-bomb/, 6-11-2024] TDI

Censure resolutions by the IAEA board are not legally binding but send a strong political and diplomatic message. The representative of Iran’s mission to the United Nations stated, “The decision of the Western countries was hasty and unwise, and it will undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on the process of diplomatic engagement and constructive cooperation.” Today, Iran may be only weeks away from having material for several nuclear weapons.  The new President and cabinet of Iran will be determined within the next two months.

The United States and Europe should try to negotiate a new nuclear deal with Iran’s new administration.

At the IAEA board meeting, China, Iran, and Russia issued a joint statement blaming the US for its “unlawful and unilateral withdrawal” from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (official known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA) and the imposition of “unilateral and illegal sanctions” against Iran. The three countries wrote that “[s]hould the full implementation of the JCPOA be in place today, it would have alleviated the overwhelming majority of existing questions regarding Iran’s peaceful nuclear program on a mutually accepted basis. The IAEA Secretariat too would have had broader verification and monitoring means.”

The three countries confirmed their readiness to restore the agreement based on the text of a draft agreement initially circulated in August 2022 by European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and blamed the United States and the European signatories to the 2015 deal for blocking the draft for “the sake of their own political considerations”.

The nuclear crisis with Iran began in 2003 when the world became aware that Iran was building a uranium enrichment plant. But the divergence between Iran and the West on nuclear issues started after the 1979 revolution in Iran. Now, 45 years later, a last chance is still open for a positive resolution.

During the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran was a regional ally of the United States, which supported the Shah’s interest in acquiring nuclear technology. After the 1979 revolution and that deposed the Shah and an ensuing crisis, in which US diplomats were held hostage for 444 days, however, the United States saw Iran as a threat and led the West in a ban on nuclear technology exports to Iran, a move that resulted in the cancelation of all Western nuclear agreements with Iran.

This strategy led Iran to move towards self-sufficiency in nuclear technology. After Iran acquired enrichment technology, America’s policy shifted from “zero nuclear technology” to “zero uranium enrichment,” accepting Iran’s right to access peaceful nuclear technology excluding enrichment and plutonium separation.

From 2003 to 2013, negotiations between Iran and global powers regarding Iran’s enrichment program ended in failure. Then the Obama Administration shifted U.S. policy from “zero enrichment” to “zero nuclear weapons,” leading to the conclusion of the JCPOA in 2015 between Iran and five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany. The agreement was approved by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

The JCPOA was the most comprehensive nonproliferation agreement in history, with Iran accepting and adhering to the highest level of nuclear transparency and inspections and accepting limitations in its nuclear program that went well beyond the Non-Proliferation Treaty’s requirements

In May 2018, however, even though the IAEA had certified that Iran was in  compliance with all its commitments, President Trump withdrew the United States from the agreement, restored US sanctions on Iran, and added 1,500 new ones. Europe decided to comply with US sanctions. China saw an opportunity, however, and took over the economic relationships with Iran that the West had abandoned.

After President Biden took office in 2021, he and the European Union tried to revive the JCPOA, but ultimately they imposed hundreds of new sanctions. This led Iran to impose its own form of pressure by expanding it enrichment activities to include enriching uranium to 60 percent uranium 235—a level that is near weapon-grade. The result of the standoff are dangerous: Although the JCPOA had kept Iran at least a year away from producing enough weapon-grade for a first nuclear weapon, Tehran is now estimated to be just two weeks away from producing that amount of fissile material, effectively becoming a “nuclear threshold state” like Japan.

Western nuclear sanctions over the past 45 years have caused hundreds of billions, perhaps trillions, of dollars in damage to Iran’s economy. Meanwhile, the West has not achieved its primary goal—preventing Iran from attaining the capability to make a nuclear weapon quickly. The continuing pressure game in regard to Iran’s nuclear program has been a lose-lose strategy for both Iran and the West. The reality: The West is unwilling to compensate for Iran’s economic losses. Iran will not relinquish the leverage its nuclear latency provides for free.

According to Resolution 2231, the UN Security Council will close Iran’s nuclear case by October 2025. Before that time, Europe could utilize the snapback mechanism to reimpose all UN Security Council resolutions against Iran. Iran’s most likely response, however, would be a complete withdrawal from the JCPOA and suspension of its membership in the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon state. If, in such a situation, Israel and/or the United States were to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities, Iran could respond with nuclear weaponization. The standoff between Iran and the global powers would come to resemble the situation with North Korea.

The United States and the EU therefore have a 15-month window to choose between two options: Iran as a nuclear-armed state like North Korea, or Iran as a nuclear threshold state ala Japan.

The JCPOA has two sets of pillars. One is Iran’s permanent commitments to accepting IAEA comprehensive inspection and transparency measures, including the Additional Protocol, which allows the IAEA to inspect any suspect facility. The second set of pillars are “sunset” limitations—including prohibitions against Iran enriching uranium to above five percent uranium 235—that will mostly expire in 2030.

The global powers still have an opportunity to engage Iran in a “New Nuclear Deal”: lifting nuclear sanctions in exchange for Iran’s full and permanent commitment to implementing comprehensive transparency measures in the JCPOA, which would grant the agency full visibility into Iran’s nuclear activities. It is the best option for staving off the Iranian Bomb.

#### Sanctions relief moderates Iran's behavior and brings Iran back to the negotiating table.

**Katzman and Nada '21** [(Kenneth, Dr. Kenneth Katzman is a senior fellow at the Soufran Center and former Senior Analyst for the Congressional Research Service. Garrett is the interviewer none of it is his opinion.) "What Sanctions Iran Wants Lifted," Iran Primer, https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2021/mar/02/sanctions-2-what-iran-wants-lifted, 3-2-2021] TDI

Why is sanctions relief so important to Iran and which sanctions does it want lifted the most?

The United States has imposed layers of sanctions on Iran—reportedly designating approximately 1,600 individuals and entities under the Trump administration alone—for four reasons:

its controversial nuclear program,

development and testing of ballistic missiles,

intervention in the region and support for extremist proxy groups,

human rights abuses and monitoring and censorship of social media use.

Some individuals and institutions have been sanctioned for more than one reason, which might complicate how and under what conditions to lift them.

Iran has insisted that all economic sanctions imposed or reimposed since 2018 by the Trump administration, as part of its “maximum pressure” campaign, must be removed before Tehran will fully comply with the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. But relief from some sanctions—notably on oil exports—is more urgent to Iran than other sanctions. Tehran has specifically demanded sanctions relief for its banking and oil sectors. Key entities include the Central Bank of Iran, the Ministry of Petroleum, the National Iranian Oil Company and the National Iranian Tanker Company. The Trump administration sanctioned those four entities under terrorism designations. All, except the Ministry of Petroleum, were sanctioned by the Obama administration – although as proliferation entities, not terrorism entities - to pressure Iran to comply with international nuclear obligations.

Iran wants most of all to freely sell its oil and get paid in hard currency again. In 2018, President Trump reimposed sanctions on companies or traders buying or transporting Iranian oil. From 2018 to 2020, his administration went further and imposed sanctions on all major Iranian banks as well as foreign banks for doing business with them; Iran was basically cut off from using the international financial system. In early 2021, Iran’s Central Bank reportedly had more than $100 billion in various accounts abroad that it can’t access due to U.S. sanctions. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, Iran has appealed to use those frozen funds, most recently stuck in Japan and South Korea, to buy humanitarian goods.

The Biden administration could lift sanctions en masse with one executive order that revokes all prior orders. In January 2016, when the JCPOA was formally implemented, President Barack Obama issued one executive order that revoked several previous executive orders that had sanctioned various sectors of the Iranian economy. The Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Asset Controls delisted all relevant entities in one grand data dump. But other executive orders — including those that sanction the sale of advanced technology to Iran, on terrorism, and on Iran’s human rights abuses — were left in place. Only sanctions specific to Iran’s civilian economy were lifted.

What effect have the Trump-era sanctions had on Iran’s economy?

I would argue that the sanctions have not seriously impacted the government’s ability to conduct its affairs. But there is a clear consensus that sanctions significantly weakened Iran’s economy. They caused Iran’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to shrink and inflation to rise, as follows:

2017: GDP grew by 3.7 percent. Inflation grew to 9.6 percent from 9.1 percent.

2018 (when sanctions were reimposed): GDP shrank by 5.4 percent. Inflation soared to 31.2 percent.

2019: GDP shrank by 6.5 percent. Inflation grew to 41 percent.

2020: GDP shrank by 5 percent. Inflation declined to 30.5 percent.

\*\*Image Omitted\*\*

The value of the rial against the dollar also dropped dramatically after the U.S. reimposed sanctions in 2018. The dollar traded for 64,500 rials on the free market on May 7, 2018, the day before the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal. By October 2020, the dollar was trading for as much as 315,000 rials, a historic low for Iran’s currency. The rial’s price subsequently stabilized but did not recover its value from the period before sanctions were reimposed.

For all its problems, Iran’s economy was not in danger of collapsing as of early 2021. In the budget for March 2020 to March 2021, Iran had basically assumed that it would export almost no oil. But sanctions forced Iran to further diversify its economy. It has a highly developed auto industry. It exports steel, minerals, wood, construction materials, and more. It is now more of a light manufacturing economy than a purely oil-based economy. In January 2021, the International Monetary Fund forecast that Iran’s GDP would grow by three percent over the next year.

What impact have sanctions had on Iran’s nuclear and missile programs?

U.S. sanctions have not slowed development of Iran’s nuclear or missile programs, which are inimical to U.S. interests.

Nuclear: Between June 2019 and November 2020, Iran’s stockpile of enriched uranium increased to more than 12 times the limit set by the 2015 nuclear deal. Iran has installed advanced centrifuges to enrich uranium faster. In January 2021, it started enriching uranium to 20 percent, well beyond the deal’s limit of 3.67 percent. Iran has reportedly not made the political decision to try to manufacture and test a bomb, but 20 percent-enriched uranium is a technical step closer to weapons-grade purity, which is 90 percent or higher.

\*\*Image Omitted\*\*

Damage at Ayn al Assad base (Sergey Ponomarev/NYT)

Missiles: Sanctions have also not significantly curtailed Tehran’s ability to develop, test or deploy missiles—or its shipments of missiles to proxies across the region, such as the Houthis in Yemen. In September 2019, it attacked two Saudi Arabian oil facilities using cruise missiles and explosive-laden drones and temporarily disrupted about half of Saudi Arab’s total crude oil output. In January 2020, the IRGC fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles at two Iraqi bases housing U.S. soldiers. More than 100 U.S. service members were diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries.

What impact have sanctions had on Iran’s government?

The Trump administration sanctioned several senior Iranian officials, including:

\*\*Image Omitted\*\*

The office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif

Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zanganeh

Atomic Energy Organization of Iran head Ali Akbar Salehi

Head of the Judiciary Ebrahim Raisi

Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi

Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli

Guardian Council Secretary Ahmad Jannati

But these sanctions are mainly symbolic because the sanctioned Iranian officials are not believed to have foreign bank accounts or property and other assets abroad. Sanctions on the supreme leader’s office and foundations (bonyads) connected to him were also mainly symbolic. For example, the Treasury Department sanctioned Bonyad Mostazafan—or the Foundation of the Oppressed—as well as 10 men and 51 companies controlled or owned by the foundation that were involved in the energy, finance or mining sectors. But these kinds of companies operate using Iranian currency and don’t have holdings abroad. The foundation’s factories have not shut down, and the charities have continued to administer aid.

Sanctions, however, may have impacted Iranian domestic politics by inadvertently helping hardliners make a comeback. Hardliners had lost a string of elections between 2013 and 2017. In 2013, Hassan Rouhani, a centrist with reformist supporters, won the presidency. In 2016, Rouhani’s allies won a majority in Parliament. In 2017, Rouhani was reelected to the presidency.

But hardliners capitalized on public anger and frustration after the Trump administration withdrew in 2018 from the JCPOA, which was Rouhani’s chief foreign policy accomplishment and an integral part of his plan to revive the economy. Hardliners did well in the 2020 parliamentary elections.

What has been Iran’s response to U.S. sanctions?

Iran has responded in several ways. First, in mid-2019, after 14 months of Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign, Tehran began breaching its obligations under the nuclear deal. The goal was partly to pressure European countries to do more to offset the negative impact of U.S. sanctions.

\*\*Image Omitted\*\*

Second, Iran sought channels for illicit trade, although with limited success. It shipped gasoline to Venezuela in exchange for payment in gold, a hard currency easy to trade on international markets.

Third, Iran also boosted its oil exports by having its tankers evade detection and tracking by global tanker tracking services. Tankers carrying Iran oil in defiance of U.S. sanctions reportedly turned off their transponders and conducted offshore transfers. Iran still managed to continue exporting at least 300,000 barrels per day of crude oil to China, and sometimes substantially more than that. It also exported an average, during some months, of about 30,000 barrels per day of oil to Syria.

If the United States lifted sanctions on Iran’s nuclear program, what sanctions would remain on Iran – and on what issues?

#### Otherwise, proliferation is inevitable and Iranian adventurism triggers conflict in numerous hotspots—runaway proliferation from Saudi, Turkey, and Egypt.

**CGSRS '19** [(CGSRS | Centre For Geopolitics & Security in Realism Studies) "Nuclear Iran and the potential threats to the stability of the Middle East," https://cgsrs.org/publications/38, 2019] TDI

Overall, if Iran’s ideology and its territorial superiority clash with the postulates of nuclear deterrence theory, it also should be recognized that recent statements by Iranian leaders show an apparent decrease in the willingness to resort to a nuclear confrontation. Yet, considering the ideological radicalism and the ambiguity surrounding Iranian intentions, one should be very cautious when gauging and making predictions about the future. ‘Deterrence works; until it doesn’t’ says Lawrence Friedman, a truth that should not be underestimated (The economist, 2015).

Nuclear arms-race: has it already started?

Among the possible consequence of Iran’s nuclearization, proliferation among other Middle Eastern states is by far the most plausible. While some scholars marginalize this risk (Waltz, 2012), the prevailing opinion is that a nuclear arms-race is already underway. This shifts the debate from how to avoid nuclear proliferation to how to cope with its actual development (Vick, 2015; Henderson&Heinonen, 2014). As specified by Amos Yadlin and Avner Golov, analysts who exclude the possibility of an arms race err because they adopt an ‘approach suited to the old Middle East’, offering an ‘inadequate analysis of the countries and their ability to acquire nuclear weapons once Iran has obtained them’ (Yadlin&Golov, 2012). In fact, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UAE appear to have already committed to nuclear plans (Vick, 2015). This development discredits the argument that high costs, lack of infrastructure, and the long time required to ‘build nuclear reactors and acquire fuels’ would somehow keep countries from endeavoring to go nuclear (Lindsay&Takeyh, 2010: 39-40). ‘Strategic stability’ as the acquisition of WMD so as ‘to deter a nuclear attack’, the ‘belief that nuclear deterrence limits conventional wars’ (Mehreen, 2013: 17), and the fear of an ‘Iranian nuclear blackmail’ (Mearsheimer&Zakheim, 2012) are the major triggering factors of the nuclear race. Additionally, one should consider the relevance of a ‘prestige factor’, demanding states to ‘keep up with the neighbors’ in order to maintain their reputation and political stature in the region (Vick, 2015). A look at Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey will show the actuality of this issue. In a 2009 public statement by King Abdullah,  the intention of Saudi Arabia to obtain nuclear weapons if Iran did was announced and later reinforced by a declaration of ‘former intelligence chief al-Faisal’ who, stressing how proliferation would not be just a Saudi manifestation, warned that ‘whatever Tehran gets, the Gulf States will want’ (Henderson&Heinonen, 2014). These intentions have concretized in several accords. Most recently, Saudi Arabia has embarked on negotiations with South Korea concerning the ‘feasibility of building two nuclear reactors in the kingdom’, and with China, France, and Argentina for the construction of 16 nuclear reactors (Plett Usher, 2015). Considering the tense relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, due both to the ideological clash ‘between Shiites and Sunnis’ and to their conflicting aspiration to ‘expand their influence in the region’, the Saudi precautionary behavior is consistent with the threat that a nuclear Iran could represent (Yadlin& Golov, 2012). Similarly, the Republic of Turkey has aligned with Saudi Arabia publicly stating that if Iran acquired nuclear weapons, Turkey will do the same (Idem). Aiming to restore itself as a regional hegemon, Turkey challenges Iran not only from an ideological perspective but also economically, competing for ‘energy markets and trade routes in the Middle East and the Caspian Sea basin’. Considering Turkey’s strong economy, developing a nuclear arsenal would not be particularly difficult (Idem). Accordingly, there have been several signs of a nuclear commitment with the most recent being in 2014, when an accord with Japan was signed allowing Turkey to ‘enrich uranium and extract plutonium’ (NTI, 2014). Egypt instead, because of its poor economic conditions, appears to be the least likely to get a nuclear endowment in the near future (Vick, 2015). Yet, Egypt has advantages that Arabia and Turkey do not possess, viz. a ‘most advanced infrastructure for a civilian and military nuclear program […] with two research nuclear reactors and […] considerable nuclear knowledge and experience’ (Yadlin&Golov, 2012). For this reason, Egypt’s declared intention to carry out a nuclear plan should not be under-estimated. The Egyptian intention could indeed be realized if Egypt manages to get financial support from its allies. This possibility could occur, for example, if China accepted former Egyptian president Muammad Murs s al-Ayy’s recent request to assist Egypt economically in building nuclear reactors (Idem). Overall, all major Middle Eastern countries have manifested, if not actually concretized, their desire to improve their nuclear potential, making it difficult to believe in the absence of a concrete proliferation risk in the region. Rather, the states’ willingness to go nuclear combined with the economic, diplomatic, and political networks they are cultivating, confirm the view that the stability of the Middle East is already being compromised; and that, ‘whether it gets the bomb or not, Iran is causing a regional nuclear arms race’ (Henderson&Heinonen, 2014).

The stability/instability paradox

In war studies, the acquisition of nuclear weapons is often correlated with a phenomenon known as the stability/instability paradox. First conceptualized by Liddle Hart, the stability/instability paradox has been identified from the verification that “to the extent that the Hydrogen bomb reduces the likelihood of full-scale war, it increases the possibility of limited war pursued by widespread local aggression” (Krepon, 2003: 1). Adherents of this view reject the general optimism of deterrence theorists, stressing that deterrence does not result in ‘deterrence in general’, but rather prevents peace by stimulating the growth of other kinds of aggression (Mehreen, 2013: 12). After Liddle Hart, other academics have adopted this stance: among them Scott Sagan, who argues that the feeling of security from retaliation of other nuclear countries generated by the possession of nuclear weapons emboldens emergent nuclear states and prompts them to engage in conventional or sub-conventional conflicts to pursue their goals (Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, 2007). Similarly, Rauchhaus and Horowitz have stressed the tendency of “inexperienced nuclear powers to be more conflict-prone” (Kahl&Waltz, 2012). To clarify, the stability/instability paradox mirrors the situation wherein the fear of nuclear confrontations ‘creates stability at the nuclear war level’ while, being the states ‘complacent in the fact that their aggression will not escalate to a nuclear war’,  induces ‘instability at the lower level through mechanisms of conventional and unconventional warfare’ (Mehreen, 2013: 14). Explained from a cost-benefit perspective, the ‘low likelihood that a conventional war will escalate to the nuclear level’ leads nuclear-states to take advantage of the lowered potential costs of conventional conflicts, adopting more aggressive policies towards their rivals (Powell, 2014: 10). Historical evidence strengthens the belief that the effects of the stability/instability paradox would emerge in case of Iran going nuclear, especially at first. Precedent cases have shown that aggressive and risk-taking attitudes arise in the early stages of nuclear development. Defined ‘adventurism’, this represents the essence of the peril produced by the stability/instability paradox (Krepon, 2003: 9). The evidence that emergent nuclear powers tend to engage in ‘coercive tactics […] such as displays of force, small-scale attacks, and proxy warfare’ can be found in different cases (Meyerle, 2014: 12). For example, during the Cold War both the US and the USSR engaged in sub-conventional conflicts and supported proxies in Latin America and the Middle East to ‘achieve their foreign policy goals’ (Mehreen, 2013: 17). Likewise, in 1969, Zedong’s confidence in strategic stability prompted him to authorize an attack against Soviet forces ‘to warn Moscow against border provocations and to mobilize domestic Chinese support for Mao's revolution’ (Kahl, Dalton, and Irvine, 2012: 20). More recently, the rivalry between Pakistan and India has been exacerbated since both countries obtained nuclear weapons. Pakistan has been ‘engaging in low-intensity conflicts’, backing terrorism, and launching unconventional attacks against India (Idem). Considering the Iranian willingness to ‘advance its revisionist agenda’ (Idem), the euphoria and the feeling of security that a nuclear arsenal would provide Tehran could dangerously lead to a first phase of military aggression. If nuclear weapons provide countries with ‘considerably greater bargaining power in regional confrontations’ (Meyerle, 2014: 11), then there is a high likelihood that Iran, once nuclear-armed, will blackmail or attack non-nuclear powers in the region and then use its ‘nuclear arsenal to intimidate foreign powers from intervening’ (Bell&Miller, 2013). To hypothesize, Iran could attack pro-American regimes in the Middle East with the intent to eliminate the US presence from the region (Nader, 2013: 11). Also, Tehran could develop strategies to support Libyan opposition groups so as to punish Libya for having cooperated with the US and Britain, or exercise its leverage on Syria, strengthen its ties with Assad’s state and use it to ‘arm Hezbollah in Lebanon for stepped up attacks on Israel’ (Timmerman, 2015). The will to strengthen its clout in the region also could manifest in the instigation of ‘Shiite uprisings against the Arab sheikdoms in the Persian Gulf’ or in challenges to the countries of the Gulf to reduce their oil production (Lindsay&Takeyh, 2010: 36). The fact that Iran already is ‘providing substantial support and encouragement to proxies and sponsoring terroristic activities’ in the region makes this eventuality even more likely. Iran could decide to supply both Hezbollah and the Palestinians with “[…] more accurate conventional weaponry for use against Israel’, or possibly ‘increase frequency and scale of terroristic attacks” (Kahl, Dalton, and Irvine, 2012: 21). While a nuclear Iran could adopt many possible strategies to strengthen its dominance in the Middle East, at least initially there are a few hopes it would not take advantage of the blackmailing and intimidating power generated by its nuclear endowment. Taking this reasoning to hypothetical extremes, the worst consequence of the stability/instability paradox could be the risk of unintended escalation. Unintended escalation, defined as the risk that an ongoing crisis ‘ends in a large, counter-value, nuclear exchange without any national authority ordering such an attack’ (Powell, 2014: 8) arises in connection with the belligerent approach Iran could adopt being a nuclear power. In particular, escalation might occur as a result of Iranian attempts to undermine Israeli stability. The progressive ‘erosion of Israeli freedom of action to respond to advanced weapons transfers, provocations, proxy attacks or terrorism abroad’ (Kahl, Dalton, and Irvine, 2012: 22), combined with the general tensions arising from ‘offensive posturing or limited conventional conflict’ could indeed prompt Israel and Iran to adopt a ‘launch on warning doctrine for their nuclear arsenal’ (Warren, 2013). Were this eventuality to occur, the ‘absence of direct lines of communication’ and the high possibility of ‘organizational mistakes’ (Kahl&Waltz, 2012) could fatally turn ‘false warnings of an impending attack’ into strategic miscalculations, possibly degenerating into an unintended nuclear confrontation (Warren, 2013). Even though these are only speculations, the prospect of a nuclear-Iran adopting a more assertive foreign policy, and the related risk of nuclear escalation should lead one to question, if not reject, the confidence in a peaceful nuclear Middle East.

#### Saudi prolif goes nuclear.

Alicia Sanders-Zakre 23. Policy And Research Coordinator, International Campaign To Abolish Nuclear Weapons. "Now Is the Time for Saudi Arabia To Join the Nuclear Ban Treaty". Newsweek. 7-7-2023. https://www.newsweek.com/now-time-saudi-arabia-join-nuclear-ban-treaty-opinion-1811402

Saudi Arabia acquiring nuclear weapons would be dangerous and illegal. Saudi Arabia can and should take technical steps to mitigate this risk, including increasing access for international nuclear inspectors. But to put definitively to rest any doubts about its nuclear intentions, Saudi Arabia should join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) without delay, thereby forswearing all nuclear weapons activities, including development, use, and threat of use.

With the risk that nuclear weapons could be used at an all-time high, following Russia's threats to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine and the escalation of nuclear tensions on the Korean peninsula, all efforts must be made to prevent further proliferation, which only increases the risk of nuclear use.

Nuclear weapons have uniquely horrific effects. They are weapons of mass destruction that kill innocent civilians on a mass scale, burning bodies, leaving eyeballs hanging from their sockets, and scarring descendants of survivors for generations with radiation-caused diseases and psychological trauma. A 300 kiloton nuclear weapon (a common-sized nuclear weapon across arsenals) dropped on Riyadh would kill nearly 500,000 people immediately people immediately, instantly injuring nearly a quarter of a million more men, women and children, including causing third degree burns for everyone within 6.3 kilometers of the blast's hypocenter. There is no adequate health care response for such a tragedy, as medical professionals have warned repeatedly in the advocacy for nuclear abolition.

While Saudi Arabia, like other nuclear-armed states, would try to assure the international community that its nuclear weapons are only intended for "deterrence," and meant to keep the peace, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated all too clearly the problems with deterrence theory. This strategic theory is based on the flawed premise that leaders of nuclear-armed nations will always act rationally and in their states' best interest, clearly communicating their intentions so their adversaries may respond accordingly. It ignores the possibility of human error, of miscalculations, or misunderstandings that have always existed and brought us to the brink of nuclear war in the past, but which are now even more likely with the increased use of artificial intelligence.

#### It’s fast and destabilizing.

Eric S. Edelman 11. Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Finland, and former Principal Deputy Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs, “The Dangers of a Nuclear Iran: The Limits of Containment,” Foreign Affairs, January/February 2011.

There is, however, at least one state that could receive significant outside support: Saudi Arabia. And if it did, proliferation could accelerate throughout the region. Iran and Saudi Arabia have long been geopolitical and ideological rivals. Riyadh would face tremendous pressure to respond in some form to a nuclear-armed Iran, not only to deter Iranian coercion and subversion but also to preserve its sense that Saudi Arabia is the leading nation in the Muslim world. The Saudi government is already pursuing a nuclear power capability, which could be the first step along a slow road to nuclear weapons development. And concerns persist that it might be able to accelerate its progress by exploiting its close ties to Pakistan. During the 1980s, in response to the use of missiles during the Iran-Iraq War and their growing proliferation throughout the region, Saudi Arabia acquired several dozen CSS-2 intermediate-range ballistic missiles from China. The Pakistani government reportedly brokered the deal, and it may have also offered to sell Saudi Arabia nuclear warheads for the CSS-2s, which are not accurate enough to deliver conventional warheads effectively. There are still rumors that Riyadh and Islamabad have had discussions involving nuclear weapons, nuclear technology, or security guarantees. This "Islamabad option" could develop in one of several different ways. Pakistan could sell operational nuclear weapons and delivery systems to Saudi Arabia, or it could provide the Saudis with the infrastructure, material, and technical support they need to produce nuclear weapons themselves within a matter of years, as opposed to a decade or longer. Not only has Pakistan provided such support in the past, but it is currently building two more heavy-water reactors for plutonium production and a second chemical reprocessing facility to extract plutonium from spent nuclear fuel. In other words, it might accumulate more fissile material than it needs to maintain even a substantially expanded arsenal of its own. Alternatively, Pakistan might offer an extended deterrent guarantee to Saudi Arabia and deploy nuclear weapons, delivery systems, and troops on Saudi territory, a practice that the United States has employed for decades with its allies. This arrangement could be particularly appealing to both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. It would allow the Saudis to argue that they are not violating the NPT since they would not be acquiring their own nuclear weapons. And an extended deterrent from Pakistan might be preferable to one from the United States because stationing foreign Muslim forces on Saudi territory would not trigger the kind of popular opposition that would accompany the deployment of U.S. troops. Pakistan, for its part, would gain financial benefits and international clout by deploying nuclear weapons in Saudi Arabia, as well as strategic depth against its chief rival, India. The Islamabad option raises a host of difficult issues, perhaps the most worrisome being how India would respond. Would it target Pakistan's weapons in Saudi Arabia with its own conventional or nuclear weapons? How would this expanded nuclear competition influence stability during a crisis in either the Middle East or South Asia? Regardless of India's reaction, any decision by the Saudi government to seek out nuclear weapons, by whatever means, would be highly destabilizing. It would increase the incentives of other nations in the Middle East to pursue nuclear weapons of their own. And it could increase their ability to do so by eroding the remaining barriers to nuclear proliferation: each additional state that acquires nuclear weapons weakens the nonproliferation regime, even if its particular method of acquisition only circumvents, rather than violates, the NPT.

#### Turkish prolif goes global AND nuclear

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The reasons for wanting to suppress such regional security competitions have been several. First, competitions between and among allies—Turkey and Greece, for example, over Cyprus—were thought to provide opportunities for adversaries to divide alliances and complicate alliance management.1 Second, competitions could breed local arms races, and thus invite ambient insecurity and raise the costs of any crises gotten out of hand. Third, some arms races could lead to weapons-of-mass-destruction proliferation, threatening the global security commons in general and generating a more dangerous world overall for the United States, as webmaster of the system, to manage. From the U.S. point of view, minimizing the number and size of wars and minimizing WMD proliferation constituted an act of doing good and doing well simultaneously: It was valuable for most others even as it was also valuable for the United States at the pinnacle of the postwar pecking order.

The Cold War is over, but the imperative to limit WMD proliferation remains—and so back to the Turkish situation we must go. Consider that Turkey sits in a regional environment in which states armed with nuclear weapons, or prospectively armed with nuclear weapons, are abundant. If a statesman or military planner sits in a swivel chair in Ankara and rotates 360° around, he can barely catch his breath between identifying actors capable of targeting Turkey with nuclear weapons: Russia, Pakistan, India, Israel, France, the United Kingdom, the United States both from its homeland and from other points in Europe, and of course prospectively Iran.2

Now, the logic of the security dilemma is such that in the absence of the credible U.S. provision of extended deterrence, Turkey would feel pressure to develop its own nuclear weapons. That it has not exerted itself in that direction, despite its formidable engineering and scientific capacities, illustrates the stability of Turkish trust in U.S. protection—until recently—and the ability of both sides to bracket the core security relationship away from various disagreements. As with other nuclear-armed states, should Turkey go its own way it would do so with no active intention of actually using such weapons, but rather as a kind of insurance policy against diplomatic extortion at the hands of other nuclear-armed powers.

But of course if Turkey, no longer tethered to U.S. security protection in one way or another, developed nuclear weapons for such a purpose, other regional states would probably feel obliged to develop or otherwise acquire their own weapons, if they could, as an insurance policy against nuclear extortion by Turkey.3 They have already practiced that way of thinking in reaction to the possibility of an Iranian nuclear breakout, of course.

Indeed, that kind of hedging behavior is exactly what analysts have discussed for many years now as the so-called N+ danger inherent in the development of Iranian nuclear weapons. It is not just the danger posed by Iranian nuclear weapons, bad enough as that would be, but the mousetrap effect of proliferation that would likely drive other states to want such an insurance policy: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Algeria, and so on.
Now, some observers have argued that nuclear weapons are really not very important after all. If the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as China, France, and the United Kingdom, survived the Cold War without any nuclear use, it must be because deterrence is easy and hence stable, since all rational people know that the weapons are unusable save for the since-become-impossible exception of a state holding a monopoly over them. One well-known scholar, Kenneth Waltz, argued persistently that the more nuclear the weapons the better—because they would sober everyone up and lead to more stability and fewer wars. Happily, those with actual government responsibility did not agree.

It is unspeakably lazy thinking to glibly superimpose the U.S.-Soviet Cold War deterrence experience onto places like the Middle East. It is, after all, one thing to maintain stable deterrence when there are only two, or a small number of, nuclear powers, and quite another to maintain stable deterrence when the number of nuclear actors gets larger and becomes somewhat open-ended as more states lean that way. Under such conditions it becomes much more difficult to calculate what a sufficient deterrent is, and so efforts to make sure of having “enough” can touch off a multilateral arms competition in which sufficiency becomes an ever-moving target, almost impossible to hit. At the same time it becomes much more difficult to imagine crisis stability if one or more states resort to launch-on-warning deployment postures, which are more likely when young arsenals are small and unprotectable against preemptive attack.

Other important potential differences between U.S.-Soviet Cold War deterrence and potential multiparty deterrence in the Middle East exist, too. Let us note just three.

First, U.S. and Soviet arsenals displayed clear lines of civil-military authority in highly institutionalized state systems, but many Middle Eastern countries lack both such clear lines of authority and highly institutionalized arrangements, being instead looser and more personalized by nature.

Second, it was taken for granted that both U.S. and Soviet leaderships cared about the safety of their populations, a necessary assumption for effective deterrence. But in some heterogeneous and authoritarian Middle Eastern countries this premise may not so surely apply—think both Iraq and Syria under minoritarian (and coincidentally Ba‘athi) leadership, both of which committed mass murder against its own citizens.

And third, U.S.-Soviet deterrence operations became inextricably bound up in the minds of observers with intercontinental ballistic missile delivery systems. The result is that some people today think that if missiles can be limited in one way or another, then the dangers of nuclear weapons, even if they come to exist, would be much mitigated. This is delusional because it is technologically obtuse. You need intercontinental ballistic missiles if you’re trying to shoot a warhead across an ocean. But if your enemy target is not across an ocean, but, as in the Middle East, quite nearby, airplanes are immensely less expensive and more reliable as delivery systems.

The basic point is that in both theory and practice, there is little difference between the proliferation stimulating effects of a Turkish nuclear weapons breakout and an Iranian one. So if the U.S.-Turkish strategic partnership unravels, logic does indeed suggest a Turkish effort to develop its own nuclear capabilities. (Of course, the same kinds of pressures pertain to other key countries were they to lose, one way or another, their U.S. nuclear umbrellas, including Germany, Japan, South Korea, and others.)

If that happens, the Turkish government could probably develop deliverable nuclear warheads at least on its side of the ocean within two to three years. If the Iranian government had thought for its own good reasons to avoid overt testing and breakout postures once the nuclear deal expires by calendar or “is expired” by volition, a Turkish bomb would make that posture far more difficult to justify. One could therefore imagine a situation of twinned or near-simultaneous breakouts of Turkish and Iranian nuclear weapons even a mere three, four, or five years from now. The shock to the region would be profound, and possibly very dangerous.

It almost goes without saying that these larger strategic implications of the current U.S.-Turkish disagreement bear significantly on the security of U.S. allies, friends, and associates in the Arab world.

#### Israel-Hezbollah war within months. Draws in regional powers and escalates.

**Cook '24** [(Steven A., Eni Enrico Mattei senior fellow for Middle East and Africa studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.) "War Between Israel and Hezbollah Is Becoming Inevitable," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/29/israel-hezbollah-war-inevitable/, 1-4-2024] TDI

It is likely that there is going to be a war between Hezbollah and Israel within the next six to eight months.

It is important to be as clear about this as possible because almost every article written on the topic to date declares that Hezbollah and Israel don’t want war. That analysis infers the future based on present conditions, but developments in the Middle East are highly dynamic. It would be wise for analysts and government officials to reexamine their assumptions and update their expectations.

It is true that, to date, Israel and the Lebanon-based militant group have kept their conflict below the threshold of all-out war, preferring tit-for-tat responses to various provocations. Yet this apparent restraint does not mean that Hezbollah and Israel do not want war. Rather, Hezbollah’s leadership and the Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF) high command are currently confronted by a range of constraints that, so far, have put the brakes on a conflict. No one should count on these factors—the strategic calculations of Iran’s leaders; the Biden administration’s determination to avoid a regional conflict; the outcome of the war in Gaza, especially the disposition of Hamas; and U.S. politics—to limit the conflict for much longer. Indeed, these constraints are already breaking down.

The claim that Hezbollah does not want war hinges on a further claim that Iran fears a conflict between its proxy and Israel. The logic that underpins these two arguments is compelling: In recent years, Hezbollah has become an expeditionary force for Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), playing important roles in supporting the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad in its bloody campaign against its own people, working with Iranian-backed Iraqi militias, and training the Houthis in Yemen.

Yet before it was an arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Hezbollah was—and remains—first and foremost a critical component of Iran’s deterrence. The group and its reported 100,000-plus rockets are Iran’s second-strike capability. If Israel or the United States were to attack Iran’s nuclear program, Hezbollah’s arsenal would deliver a devastating blow on Israeli population centers. As much as Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other Iranian leaders are committed to Israel’s destruction, they are more devoted to regime survival and do not want to lose the deterrent capability that they have invested in Hezbollah.

Still, it is not hard to imagine a moment at which the Iranians loosen the reins on their primary proxy. As Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah made clear in an early January speech remembering the life and work of Maj. Gen. Qassem Suleimani—the IRGC Quds Force commander who the United States killed in a drone strike in early 2020—the Iranians have put significant time, energy, and resources into the development of so-called axis of resistance.

Not only is Hezbollah an important part of this axis, but so is Hamas. Despite the possibility of a pause in the fighting in the coming weeks, the Israelis are determined to capture and/or kill the Hamas leadership and render the group incapable of being an organized threat to the state of Israel. If the IDF threatens to turn these goals into reality, the Iranians are likely to lift whatever constraints under which Nasrallah’s forces have been operating rather than accept Hamas’s defeat. That day seems to be approaching.

If Iran has restrained Hezbollah, the United States has done the same regarding Israel. The Biden administration has been consistent about two issues during the Gaza war: First, Hamas must be defeated. Second, a war between Israel and Hezbollah must be avoided. U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin reportedly relayed Team Biden’s concerns to Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant in a blunt conversation last November. U.S. President Joe Biden also told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to widen the war to include Lebanon. U.S. officials clearly believe that war between Hezbollah and Israel will quickly become a regional conflict in which the United States could become a combatant against Iran.

The administration’s concerns are reasonable, but the U.S. president’s ability to influence the Israelis on how they deal with their northern border is waning. That is because the Israeli government decided to evacuate an estimated 80,000 Israelis from towns in the north as a precaution in the case of a major escalation. From the Israeli perspective, this portion of their country is uninhabitable, and Israeli sovereignty there is now uncertain. That is simply not tolerable for the government—or any Israeli government—requiring a forceful response.

But because the Israelis have had their hands full in Gaza, they have been grudgingly amenable to U.S.- and French-led diplomatic efforts. Yet, neither Washington nor Paris have produced a plan that satisfies either the Israelis or Hezbollah. The Israelis require Hezbollah to withdraw to the Litani River, which is 18 miles from the Israeli border, in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006)—a demand that Hezbollah rejects.

For its part, Hezbollah wants Israel to reduce the size of its forces on the border—something the Israelis are not going to do, especially after the events of Oct. 7, 2023. As time goes on, diplomacy has proved to be fruitless, and if the Israelis claim victory in Gaza, they will turn their attention to fixing their security problem in the north. It is an existential issue for the Israelis because, despite the wishes of the White House, war is likely to come to Lebanon this spring or summer.

**Iran conflict locks in escalation and multiple external impacts. Extinction.**

**Ward ’20** — Alex; former associate director in the Atlantic Council’s Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security. July 8, 2019; “‘A nasty, brutal fight’: what a US-Iran war would look like”; *Vox*; https://www.vox.com/world/2019/7/8/18693297/us-iran-war-trump-nuclear-iraq; //RMax

A **deadly opening attack**. Nearly untraceable, ruthless proxies spreading chaos on **multiple continents**. Costly **miscalc**ulations. And thousands — perhaps hundreds of thousands — killed in a conflict that would dwarf the war in Iraq.

Welcome to the **US-Iran war**, which has the potential to be one of the **worst conflicts in history**.

The Thursday night killing of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who led Iranian covert operations and intelligence and was one of the country’s most senior leaders, brought Washington and Tehran closer to fighting that war. Iran has every incentive to retaliate, experts says, using its proxies to target US commercial interests in the Middle East, American allies, or even American troops and diplomats hunkered down in regional bases and embassies.

It’s partly why the Eurasia Group, a prominent international consulting firm, now puts the chance of “a limited or major military confrontation” at 40 percent.

But the seeds of conflict weren’t planted with Thursday’s airstrikes alone. Washington and Tehran have remained locked in a months-long standoff that only continues to escalate. The US imposed crushing sanctions on Iran’s economy over its support for terrorism and its growing missile program, among other things, after withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal last year; Iran has fought back by violating parts of the nuclear agreement, bombing oil tankers, and downing an American military drone.

The crisis has become more acute over the past week. An Iranian-backed militia killed an American contractor while wounding others in rocket attacks, leading the Trump administration to order retaliatory strikes on five targets in Iraq and Syria that killed 25 of the militia’s fighters. In protest, the militia — Ketaib Hezbollah — organized a rally outside the US embassy in Baghdad where some got inside the compound and set parts of it ablaze.

That led Secretary of Defense Mark Esper to tell reporters on Thursday that “if we get word of attacks, we will take pre-emptive action as well to protect American forces, protect American lives,” adding “the game has changed.” The US killed Soleimani hours after that statement, underscoring that change.

Importantly, experts note that neither country wants a full-blown conflict, with President Donald Trump saying he prefers “peace” when it comes to Iran. But the possibility of war breaking out anyway **shouldn’t be discounted**, especially now that Iran’s leadership has **sworn** to **avenge Soleimani**. “The great nation of Iran will take revenge for this heinous crime,” Iranian President Hassan Rouhani tweeted Friday morning.

Which means US-Iran relations **teeter** on a **knife edge**, and it won’t take much more to **knock them off**. So to understand just how bad the situation could get, I asked eight current and former White House, Pentagon, and intelligence officials, as well as Middle East experts, last July about how a war between the US and Iran might play out.

The bottom line: It would be **hell on earth**.

“This would be a violent convulsion similar to chaos of the Arab Spring inflicted on the region for years,” said Ilan Goldenberg, the Defense Department’s Iran team chief from 2009 to 2012, with the potential for it to get “so much worse than Iraq.”

How the US-Iran war starts

US-imposed sanctions have tanked Iran’s economy, and Tehran desperately wants them lifted. But with few options to compel the Trump administration to change course, Iranian leaders may choose a more violent tactic to make their point, especially after Soleimani’s death.

Iranian forces could bomb an American oil tanker traveling through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for the global energy trade aggressively patrolled by Tehran’s forces, causing loss of life or a catastrophic oil spill. The country’s skillful hackers could launch a major cyberattack on regional allies like Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates.

Israel could kill an Iranian nuclear scientist, leading Iran to strike back and drawing the US into the spat, especially if Tehran responds forcefully. Or Iranian-linked proxies could target and murder American troops and diplomats in Iraq.

That last option is particularly likely, experts say. After all, Iran bombed US Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983 and, according to the Pentagon, Iranian-backed fighters killed more than 600 US troops during the Iraq War. Taking this step may seem extreme, but “Iran could convince itself that it could do this,” Goldenberg, now at the Center for a New American Security think tank in Washington, told me.

At that point, it’d be nearly impossible for the Trump administration not to respond in kind. The recommendations given to the president would correspond to whatever action Iran took.

If Tehran destroyed an oil tanker, killing people and causing an oil spill, the US might destroy some of Iran’s ships. If Iran took out another US military drone, the US might take out some of Iran’s air defenses. And if Iranian-backed militants killed Americans in Iraq, then US troops stationed there could retaliate, killing militia fighters and targeting their bases of operation in return. The US could even bomb certain training grounds inside Iran or kill high-level officials.

It’s at this point that both sides would need to communicate their red lines to each other and how not to cross them. The problem is there are **no direct channels** between the two countries and they **don’t** particularly **trust each other**. So the **situation** could **easily spiral out of control**.

Messaging “is often more important than physical action,” Jasmine El-Gamal, formerly a Middle East adviser at the Pentagon, told me. “Action without corresponding messaging, public or private, could most certainly lead to escalation because the other side is free to interpret the action as they wish.”

Which means the **initial tit-for-tat** would serve as the **precursor** to **much more bloodshed**.

“What are we going to be wrong about?”

You may have heard the phrase “the fog of war.” It refers to how hard it is for opposing sides to know what’s going on in the heat of battle. It’s particularly difficult when they don’t talk to one another, as is the case with the **US and Iran**.

Which means that the way the US and Iran interpret each other’s next moves would mainly come down to guesswork.

Eric Brewer, who spent years in the intelligence community before joining Trump’s National Security Council to work on Iran, told me that’s when the Pentagon and other parts of the government rely heavily on their best-laid plans.

The problem, he noted, is that wars rarely play out as even the smartest officials think they will. A guiding question for him, then, is “what are we going to be wrong about?”

Here’s one scenario in which the US might get something wrong — and open up the door to chaos: After America launches its first set of **retaliatory strikes**, Iran decides to **scatter** its **missiles** to **different parts of the country**.

Now the Trump administration has to figure out why Iran did that. Some people in the administration might think it’s because Tehran plans to attack US embassies, troops, or allies in the region and is moving its missiles into position to do so. Others might believe that it was merely for defensive reasons, with Iran essentially trying to protect its missile arsenal from being taken out by future US strikes.

Without a clear answer, which interpretation wins out comes down to which camp in the Trump administration is the most persuasive. And if the camp that believes Iran is about to launch missile strikes wins, they could convince the president to take preemptive action against Iran.

That could be a good thing if they were right; after all, they’d have made sure Iran couldn’t carry out those planned attacks. But what if they were wrong? What if the other camp guessed correctly that Iran was merely moving its missiles around because it was scared the US would strike once more? In that case, the US would have bombed Iran again, this time for essentially no reason — thus looking like the aggressor.

That could cause Iran to retaliate with a **bigger attack**, setting off a **spiral** that could end in **full-scale war**.

Iran could make a grave error too. Imagine Trump sends thousands of troops, say 25,000, along with advanced warplanes to the Middle East in the hope that they’ll deter Iran from escalating the conflict any further.

Tehran could just as easily read that buildup as preparation for a US invasion. If that’s the case, Iranian forces could choose to strike first in an effort to complicate the perceived incursion.

Of course, cooler heads could prevail in those moments. But experts say the **political pressures** on both Washington and Tehran not to be attacked first — and not to be embarrassed or look weak — might be **too strong** for the countries’ leaders to **ignore**.

“Unintended civilian casualties or other collateral damage is always possible, and it is not clear that this administration — or any administration — understands what Iran’s own red lines are,” El-Gamal, now at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington, told me. “As such, the greatest risk of a full-blown war comes from one side miscalculating the other’s tolerance” for conflict.

If that proves true, and the US and Iran officially escalate their fighting to more than a few one-off attacks, it’s war.

What the US-Iran war might look like

At this point, it’s hard to be very precise about a hypothetical full-blown conflict. We know it would feature a series of moves and countermoves, we know it’d be very messy and confusing, and we know it’d be **extremely deadly**.

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But unlike with the path to war, it’s less useful to offer a play-by-play of what could happen. So with that in mind, it’s better to look at what the US and Iranian war plans would likely be — to better understand the devastation each could exact. How the US might try to win the war The US strategy would almost certainly involve using overwhelming air and naval power to beat Iran into submission early on. “You don’t poke the beehive, you take the whole thing down,” Goldenberg said. The US military would bomb Iranian ships, parked warplanes, missile sites, nuclear facilities, and training grounds, as well as launch cyberattacks on much of the country’s military infrastructure. The goal would be to degrade Iran’s conventional forces within the first few days and weeks, making it even harder for Tehran to resist American strength. That plan definitely makes sense as an opening salvo, experts say, but it will come nowhere close to winning the war. “It’s very unlikely that the Iranians would capitulate,” Michael Hanna, a Middle East expert at the Century Foundation in New York, told me. “It’s almost impossible to imagine that a massive air campaign will produce the desired result. It’s only going to produce escalation, not surrender.” It won’t help that a sustained barrage of airstrikes will likely lead to thousands of Iranians dead, among them innocent civilians. That, among other things, could galvanize Iranian society against the US and put it firmly behind the regime, even though it has in many ways treated the population horribly over decades in power. There’s another risk: A 2002 war game showed that Iran could sink an American ship and kill US sailors, even though the US Navy is far more powerful. If the Islamic Republic’s forces succeeded in doing that, it could provide a searing image that could serve as a propaganda coup for the Iranians. Washington won’t garner the same amount of enthusiasm for destroying Iranian warships — that’s what’s supposed to happen. Trump has already signaled he doesn’t want to send ground troops into Iran or even spend a long time fighting the country. That tracks with his own inclinations to keep the US out of foreign wars, particularly in the Middle East. But with hawkish aides at his side, like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, there’s a chance they could convince him not to look weak and to go all-in and grasp victory. But the options facing the president at that point will be extremely problematic, experts say. The riskiest one — by far — would be to invade Iran. The logistics alone boggle the mind, and any attempt to try it would be seen from miles away. “There’s no surprise invasion of Iran,” Brewer, who is now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank in Washington, told me. Iran has nearly three times the amount of people Iraq did in 2003, when the war began, and is about three and a half times as big. In fact, it’s the world’s 17th-largest country, with territory greater than France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal combined. The geography is also treacherous. It has small mountain ranges along some of its borders. Entering from the Afghanistan side in the east would mean traversing two deserts. Trying to get in from the west could also prove difficult even with Turkey — a NATO ally — as a bordering nation. After all, Ankara wouldn’t let the US use Turkey to invade Iraq, and its relations with Washington have only soured since. The US could try to enter Iran the way Saddam Hussein did during the Iran-Iraq war, near a water pass bordering Iran’s southwest. But it’s swampy — the Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet there — and relatively easy to protect. Plus, an invading force would run up against the Zagros Mountains after passing through, just like Saddam’s forces did. It’s for these reasons that the private intelligence firm Stratfor called Iran a “fortress” back in 2011. If Trump chose to launch an incursion, he’d likely need around 1.6 million troops to take control of the capital and country, a force so big it would overwhelm America’s ability to host them in regional bases. By contrast, America never had more than 180,000 service members in Iraq. And there’s the human cost. A US-Iran war would likely lead to thousands or hundreds of thousands of dead. Trying to forcibly remove the country’s leadership, experts say, might drive that total into the millions. That helps explain why nations in the region hope they won’t see a fight. Goldenberg, who traveled recently to meet with officials in the Gulf, said that none of them wanted a US-Iran war. European nations will also worry greatly about millions of refugees streaming into the continent, which would put immense pressure on governments already dealing with the fallout of the Syrian refugee crisis. Israel also would worry about Iranian proxies targeting it (more on that below). Meanwhile, countries like Russia and China — both friendly to Iran — would try to curtail the fighting and exploit it at the same time, the Century Foundation’s Hanna told me. China depends heavily on its goods traveling through the Strait of Hormuz, so it would probably call for calm and for Tehran not to close down the waterway. Russia would likely demand restraint as well, but use the opportunity to solidify its ties with the Islamic Republic. And since both countries have veto power on the UN Security Council, they could ruin any political legitimacy for the war that the US may aim to gain through that body. The hope for the Trump administration would therefore be that the conflict ends soon after the opening salvos begin. If it doesn’t, and Iran resists, all that’d really be left are a slew of bad options to make a horrid situation much, much worse. How Iran might try to win the war Retired Marine Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart left his post as the No. 2 at US Cyber Command in 2019, ending a decorated four-decade career. Toward the end of it, he spent his time at the forefront of the military intelligence and cybersecurity communities. If anyone has the most up-to-date information on how Iran may fight the US, then, it’s Stewart. “The Iranian strategy would be to avoid, where possible, direct conventional force-on-force operations,” he wrote for the Cipher Brief on July 2, 2019. “They would attempt to impose cost on a global scale, striking at US interests through cyber operations and targeted terrorism with the intent of expanding the conflict, while encouraging the international community to restrain America’s actions.” In other words, Tehran can’t match Washington’s firepower. But it can spread chaos in the Middle East and around the world, hoping that a war-weary US public, an intervention-skeptical president, and an angered international community cause America to stand down. That may seem like a huge task — and it is — but experts believe the Islamic Republic has the capability, knowhow, and will to pull off such an ambitious campaign. “The Iranians can escalate the situation in a lot of different ways and in a lot of different places,” Hanna told me. “They have the capacity to do a lot of damage.” Take what it could do in the Middle East. Iran’s vast network of proxies and elite units — like Soleimani’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps — could be activated to kill American troops, diplomats, and citizens throughout the region. US troops in Syria are poorly defended and have little support, making them easy targets, experts say. America also has thousands of civilians, troops, and contractors in Iraq, many of whom work in areas near where Iranian militias operate within the country. US allies would also be prime targets. Hezbollah, an Iran-backed terrorist group in Lebanon, might attack Israel with rockets and start its own brutal fight. We’ve heard this story before: In 2006, they battled in a month-long war where the militant group fired more than 4,000 rockets into Israel, and Israeli forces fired around 7,000 bombs and missiles into Lebanon. About 160 Israelis troops and civilians died, according to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and about 1,100 Lebanese — most of them civilians — perished, per Human Rights Watch, a US-headquartered advocacy organization. It also reports about 4,400 Lebanese were injured, and around 1 million people were displaced. But that’s not all. Iran could encourage terrorist organizations or other proxies to strike inside Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other Gulf nations. Last year, it planned and executed drone strikes on two major Saudi oil facilities deep inside the kingdom, convulsing world markets. Its support for Houthis rebels in Yemen would mostly certainly increase, offering them more weapons and funds to attack Saudi Arabia’s airports, military bases, and energy plants. Experts note that the Islamic Republic likely has sleeper cells in Europe and Latin America, and they could resurface in dramatic and violent ways. In 1994, for example, Iranian-linked terrorists bombed the hub of the Jewish community in Argentina’s capital, Buenos Aires, killing 85 people and injuring roughly 300 more. That remains the largest terrorist attack in Latin America’s history, and the possibility for an even bigger one exists. In 2018, Argentina arrested two men suspected of having ties with Hezbollah. But Chris Musselman, formerly the National Security Council’s counterterrorism director under Trump, told me the US and its allies may have the most trouble containing the proxy swarm in Western Africa. “We could see a conflict that spread quickly to places the US may not be able to protect people, and it’s a fight that we are grossly unprepared for,” he said, adding that there’s a strong Hezbollah presence in the region and American embassy security there isn’t great. Making matters worse, he continued, the US isn’t particularly good at collecting intelligence there, meaning some militants could operate relatively under the radar. “This isn’t really a law enforcement function that US can take on a global scale,” he said. It would require that countries unwittingly hosting proxies to lead on defeating the Iranian-linked fighters, with US support when needed. The chaos would also extend into the cyber realm. Iran is a major threat to the US in cyberspace. Starting in 2011, Iran attacked more than 40 American banks, including JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America. The attack made it so the banks had trouble serving its customers and customers had trouble using the bank’s services. In 2012, Iran released malware into the networks of Saudi Aramco, a major oil company, which erased documents, emails, and other files on around 75 percent of the company’s computers — replacing them with an image of a burning American flag. In the middle of a war, one could imagine Tehran’s hackers wreaking even more havoc. “I would expect them to have begun selected targeting through socially-engineered phishing activities focused on the oil and gas sector, the financial sector and the electric power grid in that order,” Stewart wrote. “There may be instances now where they already have some persistent access. If they do, I expect they would use it, or risk losing the access and employ that capability early in the escalation of the crisis.” Recent reports indicate that Iranian cyberwarriors have stepped up their online operations, with a particular emphasis on preparing to attack US firms. Among other moves, they’re aiming to trick employees at major businesses to hand over passwords and other vital information, giving them greater access to a firm’s networks. “When you combine this increase with past destructive attacks launched by Iranian-linked actors, we’re concerned enough about the potential for new destructive attacks to continue sounding the alarm,” Christopher Krebs, a top cybersecurity official at the Department of Homeland Security, told Foreign Policy last July. All of this — proxies striking around the world, cyberattacks on enterprise — would happen while Iran continued to resist conventional American forces. In the Strait of Hormuz, for instance, Iranian sailors could use speedboats to place bombs on oil tankers or place mines in the water to destroy US warships. The Islamic Republic’s submarines would also play a huge part in trying to sink an American vessel. And the nation’s anti-ship missiles and drones could prove constant and deadly nuisances. Should US troops try to enter Iranian territory on land, Iranian ground forces would also push back on them fiercely using insurgent-like tactics while the US painfully marches toward Tehran.

**<<<PARAGRAPH BREAKS RESUME>>>**

Put together, Brewer notes succinctly, a US-Iran war would be “a nasty, brutal fight.”

Aftermath: “The worst-case scenarios here are quite serious”

Imagine, as we already have, that the earlier stages of strife escalate to a **major war**. That’s already bad enough. But assume for a moment not only that the fighting takes place, but that the US does the unlikely and near impossible: It invades and overthrows the Iranian regime (which Trump’s former National Security Adviser John Bolton, at least, has openly called for in the past).

If that happens, it’s worth keeping two things in mind.

First, experts say **upward** of a **million people** — troops from both sides as well as Iranian men, women, and children, and American diplomats and contractors — likely will have died by that point. Cities will **burn** and **smolder**. Those who survived the conflict will mainly live in a state of **economic devastation** for years and some, perhaps, will pick up arms and form **insurgent groups** to **fight** the invading **US** force.

Second, **power abhors a vacuum**. With **no entrenched regime** in place, **multiple authority figures** from Iran’s clerical and military circles, among others, will **jockey** for control. Those sides could **split** into **violent factions**, initiating a **civil war** that would bring more **carnage** to the country. **Millions more** refugees might flock out of the country, **overwhelming** already taxed nations nearby, and ungoverned pockets will give terrorist groups new **safe havens** from which to operate.

Iran would be on the verge of being a failed state, if it wasn’t already by that point, and the US would be the main reason why. To turn the tide, America may feel compelled to help rebuild the country at the cost of billions of dollars, years of effort, and likely more dead. It could also choose to withdraw, leaving behind a gaping wound in the center of the Middle East.

In some ways, then, what comes **after** the war could be **worse** than the war itself. It should therefore not be lost on anyone: A US-Iran war would be a bloody hell **during** and **after** the fighting. It’s a good thing neither Trump nor Iran’s leadership currently wants a conflict. But if they change their minds, only carnage follows.

“The worst-case scenarios here are quite serious,” Hanna told me.

#### Iran is not a theocratic revisionist state—they are motivated by a desire for economic and cultural autonomy—further sanctions only risk weakening protests, pushing Iran towards the bomb, and war with Israel.

**Nasr '23** [(Vali, Majid Khadduri Professor of International Affairs and Middle East Studies at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. ) "Iran’s Hard-Liners Are Winning," Foreign Affairs, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/iran/irans-hard-liners-are-winning, 2-6-2023] TDI

Iran’s hard anti-Western turn is not driven by a desire to defend the regime’s Islamist ideology. In every speech since the demonstrations began, Khamenei has said little about religion—and a great deal about foreign meddling. Khamenei views the protests as a U.S. conspiracy, hatched in concert with Israel and Saudi Arabia, to weaken Iran and topple the Islamic Republic. In his mind, Iran must mobilize all its resources to respond to this assault. Security officials, taking their cue from Khamenei, have blamed satellite television stations and social media campaigns originating in Europe for stoking unrest in Iran and mobilizing public opinion against the Islamic Republic. They have also blamed turmoil in Iran’s Baluch and Kurdish regions on foreign interference. Last fall, Iran mobilized troops along its border with Azerbaijan and warned Iraq that it might cross the border into that country to close down Kurdish separatist camps.

Khamenei is determined to preserve the regime that he has ruled over for more than three decades. He is 83 years old and rumored to be in ill health. Compromise with dissenters at this stage would sully his legacy, and could even prove counterproductive. He witnessed firsthand how accommodating protesters only hastened the collapse of the monarchy in 1979.

Instead of caving to the demonstrators or heeding the advice of critics, Khamenei has turned to violence and repression. Since September, hundreds of protesters have been killed and many more maimed in crackdowns by security forces. Thousands of protesters and dissidents are now in jail; four have been executed after summary trials, and several more face the death penalty. The regime has used sophisticated surveillance; threats against families, employers, and businesses of protesters; and propaganda and economic pressure to quell the unrest.

Khamenei has also relied more heavily on the counsel of hard-liners within the IRGC, the intelligence agencies, parliament, and the media. To Khamenei, these are the people who understand the problem as he does, share his distrust of the West, and oppose the nuclear deal as a trap designed to cage Iran. In Khamenei’s mind, their distrust has been vindicated, so they should be empowered to shun the West, restrict and censor the internet, and pursue economic and cultural autonomy. These views have long existed within the halls of power, but the protests have added to their prominence.

The protests have also dimmed the prospects for restoring the 2015 nuclear deal. Since the demonstrations erupted in September 2022, Western leaders have winced at the suggestion that sanctions could be lifted as part of a nuclear agreement. The Biden administration is even reluctant to pursue the release of U.S. prisoners held by Iran, fearful of the domestic backlash it would incur if Iranian assets were unfrozen as part of any deal. But hard-liners in Tehran are unfazed by Western opprobrium and have invited still more sanctions by executing young protesters and raising the possibility that the EU could designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

Iran is heading into choppy waters at the United Nations as well. Tehran’s nuclear infractions have alarmed the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose chief recently told the European Parliament that Iran has amassed enough highly enriched uranium for “several nuclear weapons.” The IAEA could soon refer Iran to the UN Security Council for censure, raising the possibility that it will reimpose UN sanctions, especially since France, the United Kingdom, and the United States are all eager to maintain an embargo on the sale of arms and missiles to the Islamic Republic. Iran has threatened that it would respond to such a scenario by leaving the Non-Proliferation Treaty, effectively declaring that it will become a nuclear state. Doing so could lead to confrontation with Israel, which last month attacked a weapons-manufacturing facility in the Iranian city of Isfahan, and potentially with the United States. As U.S. President Joe Biden has repeatedly stated, his administration will not tolerate Iran becoming a nuclear state.

#### Successful regional cooperation solves Israel-Hamas and stabilizes the region post-Gaza war.

**Bar-On ’24** [(Eli, Eli Bar-On serves as the Executive Director of MENA2050 and is a former professor at the Israel National Defense College. Abdulla Al Junaid, Abdulla Aljunaid is a Bahraini writer and political researcher. He is a founding member of the National Unity Assembly and head of the Policy and Analysis Unit. Abdalaziz Alkhamis, Abdalaziz Alkhamis is a Saudi journalist and researcher specializing in Islamic movements and the Middle East conflict. Sarah Awaidah, MENA2050’s Chief Operations Director. Gedaliah Afterman, Dr. Gedaliah Afterman is the Head of the Asia-Israel Policy Program at the Abba Eban Institute. Shlomo Hasson, Shlomo Hasson is a full-time professor at the Department of Geography, School of Public Policy, and the Leon Safdie Chair at the Institute of Urban and Regional Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.) "Only Regional Cooperation Can Resolve the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," National Interest, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/only-regional-cooperation-can-resolve-israeli-palestinian-conflict-208807, 1-24-2024] TDI

The intense fighting in Gaza following the October 7 attack by Hamas is still ongoing. More than 130 Israeli hostages are still being held by Hamas, and the heavy toll on the people of Gaza is growing. Meanwhile, elsewhere in the region, from Yemen to Lebanon to Iraq, tensions are rising and increasing the prospects for the conflict to spill over. In this climate, it might seem premature, but planning for the post-conflict period must begin now.

The ongoing violence shows the urgency of a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Traditionally, resolution efforts focused on direct negotiations between the conflicting parties. However, the Middle East’s evolving strategic reality necessitates a regional solution grounded in regional cooperation and interests, transforming it from a hopeful strategy in the past to a strategic imperative today.

The past three months of conflict have inflicted wounds that will take years to heal, and the challenges ahead are considerable. Yet, we must not succumb to the horrors and despair of war. A proactive, joint approach is essential to forging a better future not only for Palestinians and Israelis but for the entire Middle East.

Decades of unsuccessful negotiations and recent events demonstrate that Israelis and Palestinians alone cannot resolve this conflict. The solution must be regional, combining economic and political measures.

Addressing the immediate humanitarian crisis, the United Arab Emirates has announced plans to establish three desalination plants in Gaza, producing 600,000 gallons of drinking water daily for 300,000 people. Field hospitals and aid from Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and others are reminders that war’s calamities mask enduring challenges like water and food security that need to be resolved. Sustainable energy sources for Gaza are vital for these to become long-term solutions.

Joint economic development plans for Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan, with participation from other regional players, are crucial. Gaza’s development should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a broader international economic plan. Looking ahead, policies that attract local and international businesses by addressing regulatory barriers, streamlining processes, and offering incentives are key to creating a conducive investment environment that will enable a better future for Gaza.

Major cross-regional infrastructure projects, like the U.S.-led India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, can stimulate economic growth and regional connectivity. A roadmap for infrastructure development should balance short-term and long-term goals.

Politically, there is much work to be done. De-escalation and regional integration are crucial. The Abraham Accords, despite recent strains, remain highly relevant for regional development and stability. However, progress between Israel and Arab states must not leave Palestinians behind. Instead, the goal should be integrating both Israel and the Palestinians into the region. The effectiveness of regional cooperation depends not only on the commitment of regional powers to play a role but also on the willingness of Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate and make concessions. A regional framework would make this easier to achieve.

At the center of this framework is a new regional vision that will assist in reconstructing and developing the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River after the war. A natural bridge between the Arab world and Europe, this area has an enormous potential for development and growth. The new vision will aim to stabilize the region in the short term, transform the region into a peaceful and cooperative area in the mid-term, and turn it into a prosperous and economically strategic area in the long term.

Important first steps were taken recently in a workshop in Bonn, Germany, spearheaded by the German Abraham Accords Institute and Bonn University’s Center for Advanced Strategic Security and Integration Studies. This gathering was a melting pot of ideas, bringing together Israelis, Palestinians, Saudis, Emiratis, Bahrainis, and Egyptians—all influential figures and members of MENA2050, an organization striving to create a new regional vision. The workshop’s agenda aimed to architect a new conceptual, regional framework for the Middle East’s post-Gaza war era, a peaceful future where economic revitalization, diplomatic synergy, and innovative progress are keystones.

As tensions escalate, we are reminded that stability and peace require cooperation, even among foes. The future of the Middle East depends not only on the integrity of borders but also on our ability to take a leap of faith and forge a shared regional vision. For lasting peace and security, all parties must prioritize cooperation over conflict, recognizing our collective existence and intertwined future. As people of the region, shaped by its past and invested in its future, we believe that while working with our influential regional networks, we can help shape a new vision to lead our region. This vision will replace instability with cooperation and war with peace.

#### Post-war plans are key to preventing a prolonged humanitarian disaster and ending the war.

**Al Jazeera '24** [(Al Jazeera, News Agency) "Israel cannot win Gaza war without ‘day-after’ plan, Blinken warns," Al Jazeera, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/29/israel-cannot-win-gaza-war-without-day-after-plan-blinken-warns, 5-29-2024] TDI

The United States has once again issued a strong warning to Israel over its lack of a post-war strategy for Gaza, leaving open questions about how the territory will be governed and stablised.

Speaking at a news conference in the Moldovan capital Chisinau on Wednesday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it was “imperative” for Israel to have a plan to ensure the defeat of Hamas and restore security and governance in Gaza.

“In the absence of a plan for the day after, there won’t be a day after,” Blinken told reporters.

He added that the Israeli military has achieved “real success” in its effort to destroy Hamas’s military capacity, but he warned that Israel should not be directly responsible for the future of Gaza.

“If it is, it will simply have an enduring insurgency on its hands for as far as we can see into the future,” Blinken said.

In the absence of a post-war plan, Blinken added, “Hamas will be left in charge, which is unacceptable. Or if not, we’ll have chaos, lawlessness and a vacuum that eventually will be filled again by Hamas or maybe something — if it’s possible to imagine — even worse.”

US officials have been publicly pressing Israel for a so-called “day-after plan”, saying that Gaza should be governed by a “reformed” Palestinian Authority (PA) after the war.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected the notion of handing the enclave to the PA, stressing that Israel will maintain security control over the occupied Palestinian territories, including the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli leaders also say they are pursuing a “total defeat” of Hamas.

While the administration of US President Joe Biden has placed significant emphasis on what will happen to Gaza after the war, it remains unclear when or how the violence will end.

On Wednesday, Israel’s National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said the war will not conclude before the end of the year.

“The fighting in Gaza will continue for at least another seven months,” he told Israel’s public radio, according to the Jerusalem Post newspaper.

The war began on October 7, 2023, and after nearly eight months of fighting, Hamas remains active throughout Gaza. Israel is in the process of invading Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, which it describes as the last Hamas stronghold in the territory.

The international community, however, has warned Israel against a military offensive in Rafah, where an estimated 1.5 million civilians previously fled to avoid bombing elsewhere in the enclave.

This month’s fighting has nevertheless displaced more than one million people from the city, according to United Nations estimates.

Despite portraying Rafah as the final front, Israeli forces have also been engaging in fierce battles with Palestinian fighters in Jabalia and Gaza City in northern Gaza, where the Israeli army said in January that it had dismantled Hamas’s military infrastructure.

On Tuesday, Israeli officials said three of its soldiers were killed in fighting Rafah, and Hamas claimed credit for an attack on an Israeli infantry unit in the city that it said killed and injured 15 troops with explosives.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces have been levelling entire neighbourhoods in northern and southern Gaza in what critics say is a systemic push to make the territory uninhabitable. Israel has also put most hospitals in Gaza out of commission and destroyed dozens of schools and universities in the enclave.

Moreover, the US ally is imposing a strict blockade on Gaza, bringing it to the verge of famine. Rights experts have accused Israel of using hunger as a weapon of war.

On Sunday, an Israeli attack against a camp for displaced people in Rafah killed 45 people, including children. A similar Israeli bombing in southern Gaza claimed the lives of at least 21 Palestinians on Tuesday.

Blinken said on Wednesday that the images of carnage from Sunday’s attack hurt on a “basic human level”.

“We have been very clear with Israel [that] the imperative in this instance, as in other instances, [is] to immediately investigate and determine exactly what happened and why it happened — and if accountability is necessary, to make sure that there is accountability,” the US top diplomat said.

**Continued tensions and escalation draws in great powers. Extinction.**

**CPI ’23** — [Chennai Print India; citing Brandon Weichert, a geopolitical analyst at the Institute of World Politics. October 18, 2023; “The Israel-Hamas Conflict: Is World War 3 on the Horizon”; *CPI*; <https://chennaiprint.in/world/the-israel-hamas-conflict-is-world-war-3-on-the-horizon/>] TDI

As the Israel-Hamas conflict enters its 11th day, experts are warning of the potential for wider **regional implications**, with **consequences** extending **far beyond** the **Middle East**.

The recent attacks on Israel have led to increased concerns about the escalation of the conflict. Retired Colonel Miri Eisin, who now heads a counter-terrorism institute at Reichman University in Israel, notes the critical question: “Whether this will lead to a bigger war is the $64,000 question.”

Adding to the complexity, geopolitical tensions are already **running high** due to **Russia’s invasion** of **Ukraine** and **strained US-China relations**. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has cautioned that the world is entering a dangerous period, with a rise in **operational nuc**lear warhead**s** owned by major military powers.

Israel’s Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has long raised alarms about Iran’s nuclear program. While he has threatened action against Iran in the past, the **recent assault** by **Hamas** may provide an **opportunity** to **act** on **those threats**. If Israel finds evidence of Iranian involvement, it could have global implications.

The **Middle East** remains a **potential hotspot** for a **new world war**, with Iran’s influence on the rise, backed by allies in Beijing and Moscow. Geopolitical analyst Brandon Weichert warns that the Middle East, empowered by its allies, is where the next **global conflict** is **likely** to **emanate**.

Additionally, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has been described as one of the most dangerous developments in Europe since the end of World War II. Dmitry Medvedev, former Russian president, has warned that Nato members’ military aid to Kyiv could lead to World War Three.

China’s growing tensions with the United States have also been a significant concern. The modernization of China’s military has raised alarm in Washington, especially regarding the situation in Taiwan, a potential flashpoint in a regional conflict.

In Northeast Asia, security dynamics have become more volatile due to China’s military threats and the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. North Korea’s relations with the United States are tense, adding to regional instability.

Furthermore, concerns about artificial intelligence triggering global conflicts have arisen. While no state openly seeks to automate its nuclear weapons systems, the integration of AI with command systems is a growing consideration.

The **Israel-Hamas conflict** is one part of a **complex global landscape**, where **tensions** are **running high**, and experts are watching closely for any potential signs of a broader conflict. The situation remains fluid, and the world is on alert for **any developments** that could further **escalate tensions**.

### 1AC—Plan

#### The United States ought to remove nearly all of its economic sanctions on The Islamic Republic of Iran.

### 1AC—Solvency

#### The plan's commitment to sanctions relief facilitates a broader regional cooperation framework. That resolves regional security, normalizes relations, and runaway proliferation.

**Vaez and Nasr '23** [(Ali, ALI VAEZ is an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service and Director of the Iran Project at the International Crisis Group. VALI NASR is Majid Khadduri Professor of Middle East Studies and International Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. From 2009 to 2011, he served as Senior Adviser to the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.) "The Path to a New Iran Deal," Foreign Affairs, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/iran/path-new-iran-nuclear-deal-security-jcpoa-washington, 5-8-2023] TDI

Even if the negotiations resume, it is unlikely that the JCPOA can be saved. Iran’s program is too advanced to be contained by that deal, and the political climate in the West is not conducive to meaningful negotiations. The widespread, antigovernment social protests in Iran and Tehran’s brutal response have killed any appetite in Washington and European capitals for lifting sanctions on Iran—a necessary part of a deal. Iran’s support for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has been similarly repugnant to Western public opinion. And even if Washington were willing to hold its nose and lift many sanctions to restore the JCPOA, it is not clear that Iran’s hard-line leaders are actually interested in finalizing a deal with an administration that could be out of office in less than two years.

As part of the ongoing requiem over the JCPOA’s all-but-certain demise, policymakers are trying to craft a Plan B. But their prescriptions are generally the same policies—sanctions and international isolation, covert action, military exercises, and military threats—that have utterly failed to curb Iran’s nuclear advances for the past two decades. The White House seems interested in a kind of “less for less” deal, in which the United States preserves most of its sanctions but offers partial relief in exchange for Tehran freezing the most troublesome aspects of its nuclear program, such as high-level enrichment. Yet for now, Tehran has made clear it is uninterested in this kind of arrangement.

If the United States and Europe do not want Iran to become a nuclear-weapons state, and if they do not want to attack Iran and hazard war to set back the program, they need a new diplomatic approach. Thankfully, recent events in the Middle East have created an opening for one. A U.S.-Iranian deal may not be feasible, but as Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf forge better ties with Tehran, what was once impossible—a regional agreement that simultaneously tackles Iran’s meddling in the Arabian Peninsula and its nuclear program—is now entirely conceivable. Unlike the JCPOA, this kind of deal would generate buy-in from countries near Iran, making it far more sustainable. It would give Iran more meaningful and lasting economic relief. It could permanently, not temporarily, contain Iran’s nuclear program, and it might reduce Tehran’s support for troublesome militias in the region. In doing so, such a deal could bring more stability to a part of the world that sorely needs it.

GO BIG OR GO HOME

In its nuclear diplomacy with Iran, the West has pursued narrow, transactional deals. Many of the JCPOA’s provisions, for example, would phase out over time, and the agreement deliberately sidestepped regional problems, including Iran’s funding for armed groups, because Western policymakers believed they could not conclude a nuclear deal and address other tensions simultaneously. It was better, they decided, to first focus on freezing Iran’s nuclear program. Future negotiators could then tackle other issues.

But this narrow approach is no longer viable. Iran’s nuclear program is too advanced for temporary restrictions and transparency measures to alleviate Western and Israeli concerns. The United States has also demonstrated that it cannot stick to its word, making it impossible for the West to provide Iran with the kind of effective and sustainable economic benefits it seeks. For their part, the Europeans have proved incapable of delivering on their economic promises to Iran without U.S. approval. And the JCPOA’s failure demonstrated that a successful nuclear agreement may actually require that Iran de-escalate tensions with its neighbors. When the JCPOA was finalized in 2015, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates saw the deal as a blank check that would allow Iran to deepen its involvement in Arab affairs and further expand its ballistic missiles program. As a result, they prodded a sympathetic Trump to abandon the accord. He misguidedly agreed.

Years later, these countries have realized that killing the deal was a grave mistake. The end of the JCPOA made a spiteful Iran even more aggressive and added Tehran’s now unrestrained nuclear activities to its list of concerns. But although the Gulf states cannot resurrect the nuclear deal, their worries about Iran have, paradoxically, made a bigger, regional agreement a real possibility. That is because, in an attempt to curtail Iranian attacks on their territories, Gulf countries have engaged Iran in ways that they have not since the early 2000s. Last August, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates restored full diplomatic ties with Iran, and in March, Iran and Saudi Arabia normalized relations after seven years of estrangement in a deal brokered by China. These agreements mean it is now possible for the Middle East’s most powerful states (with the exception of Israel) to launch a regional dialogue with Iran, one that aims to achieve what all the would-be participants have claimed they desire: enhanced security, expanded trade, and a nuclear weapons–free zone in the Gulf.

The end of the JCPOA made a spiteful Iran even more aggressive.

The sine qua non for achieving this objective is assurances from Iran about its regional power projection, such as a commitment to not support nonstate actors financially or militarily on the Arabian Peninsula. In exchange, these countries would themselves commit to not supporting groups that destabilize Iran. This approach would also entail all the states on the rim of the Gulf agreeing to strict controls on nuclear development, Iran included. These countries could, for example, permanently forgo uranium enrichment above five percent, give up plutonium reprocessing forever, and ratify the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty—which provides UN inspectors with irreversible, enhanced access to all declared and suspected nuclear sites. To meet these requirements, Iran could blend its existing stockpiles of 20 and 60 percent fissile material down to below five percent or ship them out. All signatories could also agree to joint inspections and joint ventures in nuclear fuel, as well as in nuclear safety and security, as Argentina and Brazil did in 1981.

These nuclear provisions will come at a low cost for Iran’s Arab neighbors, since none of them—Saudi Arabia’s nuclear ambitions notwithstanding—currently possess an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle program that they would need to abandon. But it would also come at a tolerable cost for Iran. Unlike the JCPOA, these provisions would allow Iran to agree to long-term restrictions on its nuclear program without dismantling its infrastructure or being treated as an exception to the rule among other Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty member states, whose nuclear programs are not subject to ad hoc restrictions. It would also defuse the risk of a strike by the United States and Israel over Iran’s nuclear program, something Gulf Arab countries want to avoid too—lest they become collateral damage.

In fact, the United States and its European allies could—and should—actively back such a deal. They should exempt an Iranian-Gulf free-trade agreement from sanctions, creating a powerful avenue for economic growth among all the agreement’s parties. The UN Security Council could endorse this accord as the JCPOA’s successor and stipulate punitive repercussions for violations, which could include letting companies sue countries that violate the deal under the UN Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards. If Washington imposes sanctions on the Iranian-Gulf trade deal after agreeing to exempt it, one of those countries could be the United States. Anchoring a nuclear deal in a regional framework will also make it harder for the United States to reimpose sanctions because, unlike in 2018, Washington would face resistance from its Gulf Arab friends if it tried to walk away. For Iran, then, this deal might have the kind of guaranteed longevity the JCPOA never offered, rectifying one of that agreement’s key shortcomings.

LOCAL AND GLOBAL

A broad regional deal would face opposition from Iran hawks in the United States and Europe, who might see it as a lifeline to an Iranian regime that they perceive as being on the ropes after months of protests. Yet it is worth recalling that cordial relations with Iran’s neighbors (and the West) did not prevent the collapse of the shah’s regime in 1979; they would not save a regime that lacks popular legitimacy today. Nor would a deal be a magical solution that resolves all the main tensions in the region. Many European states, after all, integrated their economies with Russia’s, and it did nothing to stop Moscow from invading Ukraine.

Yet even though stronger economic ties cannot guarantee stability, they will make it more costly for Tehran to harm its neighbors. As economic interdependence with Iran grows, wealthy Gulf Arab states will gain more leverage over Tehran, disincentivizing aggressive policies. Iran, in turn, will have the opportunity to rebuild its economy. These advantages explain why, when we proposed such a deal in conversations with policymakers in Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and even Iran, we received positive feedback. Gulf state officials indicated that they would be especially receptive to a deal if it were supported by the United States.

For Washington and its allies, a broad regional deal would have other advantages. It would both serve as crisis management, helping put a lid on further Iranian nuclear development, and establish permanent restrictions and transparency measures on Tehran’s nuclear program—averting a race among Iran’s neighbors to match Tehran’s nuclear fuel cycle technology. This deal would, in other words, be a far more durable and powerful agreement than the JCPOA. And if this deal did de-escalate tensions between Iran and its neighbors, it would allow the United States to focus more on big-ticket political concerns, such as climate change and great-power competition.

Above all else—and unlike a restored JCPOA—this deal could actually happen. It is ambitious, but the world needs an arrangement that merges nuclear and regional issues if it wants to bring lasting stability to the Middle East; ambition is required. Sometimes, the best way to resolve a thorny problem is to make it bigger.

#### Recent elections give the last opportunity to ease sanctions and save relations—that’s the only way to prevent a hardliner takeover and avoid regional war.

**Economist '24** [(Economist, News organization.) "A reformer wanting a nuclear deal with America wins Iran’s election," https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2024/07/06/a-reformer-wanting-a-nuclear-deal-with-america-wins-irans-election, 07-06-2024] TDI

In acrimonious television debates, Mr Pezeshkian had called for negotiations with America that might slough off sanctions and rescue Iran from its “cage”. “Iran ghafas nist” (Farsi for “Iran is not in a cage”), retorted Mr Jalili, insisting the missiles Iran and its proxies have fired at Israel proved it had already broken free. Their opposing visions prompted fierce debates on the streets over whether to boycott an theocratic system or to vote to stem the tide of Talibanisation and escalation of tension with the West expected under Mr Jalili. In the end Iranians did both. They voted in large enough numbers to elect a reformer. (Mr Pezeshkian mobilised 8m more votes in the run-off than in the first round of voting.) But—with just under 50% of the electorate turning out to vote—Iranians still sent the message that they have lost confidence in the system. “Those who voted (for Mr Pezeshktian) or didn’t vote were one team driven by civil disobedience,” says Farhad Meysami, a former political prisoner, in a widely circulated social media post.

In the past, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s increasingly dictatorial supreme leader, would have ploughed on in support of the hardline candidate regardless. He has rigged previous ballots against reformists, turned independent-minded presidents into puppets and arrested naysayers or had them shot. But such is the extent of the public dissatisfaction, exacerbated by the Islamic republic’s deep economic malaise, that he insists he is now listening. “We know what they are saying and it is not like they are hidden and not seen,” he said ahead of the poll. Though he largely shares the hardliners’ worldview, he seems to recognise they are leading the country into a cul-de-sac. He cried no tears when Ebrahim Raisi, the former president and another hardliner, died in a helicopter crash in May. The 85-year-old supreme leader appears to have concluded that avoiding a hardline approach could restore some support to the regime ahead of the selection of his own successor (particularly since one of the candidates for that role is his second son, Mojtaba).

Whether the regime can regain popular legitimacy could largely depend on how much rope it lends Mr Pezeshkian. Anticipating his victory, women and men crowded the streets as if the regime’s strict dress code had already been repealed. The outcome was seen as a victory for the civil-rights movement that had sprung to prominence with its cries of “women, life, freedom” after the death in custody in 2022 of a young woman detained for wearing too loose a veil. Mr Pezeshkian’s supporters expect him to appoint women, including Azar Mansouri, his spokesperson and a former political prisoner, to senior positions in Iran’s male-dominated system.

But he will be unable to protect women if the conservatives put their morality squads back on the streets. And he will struggle to assert himself against the hardliners who control most of Iran’s levers of power, including the armed and security forces, the state media, the clergy, the judiciary and parliament. They have defeated more substantial politicians than Mr Pezeshkian, who cuts a somewhat marginal figure. He is of Azeri and Kurdish stock from the north-western provinces in the Persian-dominated country, last held a cabinet post as health minister two decades ago and has been a backbench MP ever since. Squeezed between Mr Khamenei and his voters, Mr Pezeshkian could be forced to abandon the latter.

The election of Mr Pezeshkian has won Iran’s economy a reprieve stemming the seemingly inexorable decline of its currency, the rial, against the dollar. But turning respite into recovery will require an easing of sanctions, which can only be achieved through improving relations with America. That would require Iran to pull back its network of proxies from fighting America and its allies including Israel in Gaza, Lebanon, Iraq and in the shipping lanes of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Most of all it needs to avert a regional war. But the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (irgc), the regime’s praetorian guard, runs the proxy network, not Mr Pezeshkian. At best, the new president could help Mr Khamenei and the irgc offer a more amenable face to the West should they choose to de-escalate.

Mr Pezeshkian says, too, that he hopes to ease sanctions by reviving the nuclear deal that Iran reached with America and other global powers in 2015, and which the Trump administration then abandoned in favour of “maximum pressure” on Iran three years later. He has recruited prominent advocates of a new deal to his side. In recent weeks, Javad Zarif, Iran’s former foreign minister and chief negotiator, acted as his campaign manager. But Mr Khamenei will probably shy away from negotiating a deal with an outgoing American administration that an incoming Trump presidency might again overturn.

With so few levers to pull, Mr Pezeshkian will struggle to meet popular expectations. The ongoing tussle between regime power and people power will dog his term. He might, though, have one saving strength. Iranians have at best given Mr Pezeshkian the benefit of the doubt. To keep his people at bay, Mr Khamenei needs his president almost as much as his president needs him. “If Pezeshkian can’t open Iran’s cage,” says a farm manager who voted for him on the outskirts of Tehran, “their little window of hope will be closed forever.”

#### Iranians want change—sanctions stop the political agency needed for it.

**Monshipouri and Boggio '22** [(Mahmood, Mahmood Monshipouri is a professor of International Relations. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 1987. He has taught at the University of Georgia, Central Michigan University, Alma College, Quinnipiac University, Redlands University, and California State University at San Marcos. During 2003-2006, he served as a Visiting Fellow at the Yale Center for International and Area Studies. Giorgio Davide, Mr. Boggio is a researcher in the International Relations Department at San Francisco State University.) "Sanctions, Deterrence, Regime Change: A New Look at US‐Iran Relations," Wiley Online Library, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/mepo.12661, 12-7-2022] TDI

The speed and intensity of financial deprivation that gripped Iranian society after the state’s exclusion from the SWIFT system demonstrated that the general Iranian population is more economically vulnerable than the regime. While Iranians were turning to the black market for basic household necessities and desperately trying to move their savings into other currencies as the value of the rial plummeted, the Islamic Republic itself enjoyed greater control than ever over civilian sectors of the economy. Ordinary businesspeople became increasingly reliant on the state to maintain their financial solvency in a period of prolonged crisis.61 Beyond the humanitarian and economic consequences, there is reason to believe that sanctions have significantly diminished the political agency of Iranian civil society. Iran’s primarily middleclass merchants, the bazaari, are an influential social class, but one that is in danger of losing its political agency to economic deprivation. The bazaari, whose strikes and protests during the 1978–79 period were integral in signaling to the shah that Iran’s urban bourgeoisie were turning against him, have become more reliant on the Islamic Republic with each economic crisis since then. Their material security has declined while their relationship to the state has grown closer. The result is that this traditional class of political influencers has been defanged and is more of a state client than a check on state behavior. Perhaps one of the most notable underlying factors that has given rise to these protests, as Javad Heiran-Nia rightly asserts, is the fact that the Islamic Republic has alienated many segments of Iranian society by restricting the public and private spheres, while attempting to impose uniformity of views. The result has been the glaring elimination of healthy competition in various political, cultural, socioeconomic, educational, and even religious domains. “Without a thriving civil society,” Heiran-Nia concludes, the political regime “is contributing to the rising rhythm of protests within Iran.”62 Finally, Iran is a country that is young demographically as well as politically. Its population skews extremely young compared to global averages, with roughly 60 percent under 30. Iran’s youth have major points of contention with the Islamic Republic. They yearn not only for better economic opportunities, but also for greater freedom of expression and general political liberation and social freedoms. They have expressed these desires, at risk to their own lives and liberties, through the 1999 mass student movements and the extensive youth participation in the Green Movement a decade later. The 2022 protests, spearheaded by young women and men, are emblematic of such expressions and demands (more on this below). The goals of Iranian youth intersect in many ways with those of US policy makers, and this demographic is not anti-American by regional standards. But sanctions are harming the youth more than older Iranians. In addition to their special vulnerability to unemployment, young Iranians are restricted by limitations on freedom to travel, study, and work in many desirable international locations, an especially cruel fate given that, before 1980, Iranians used to comprise the largest group of exchange students to the United States.64

#### JCPOA negotiations have been at a standstill due to sanctions—the plan is an act of goodwill that brings Iran back to the table.

**Lederer '23** [(Edith M., American War Journalist ) "Iran's president says US should ease sanctions to demonstrate it wants to return to nuclear deal," AP News, https://apnews.com/article/iran-un-nuclear-sanctions-us-talks-1b5d5f3ab4fc39390a7876dfb09418ac, 9-21-2023] TDI

He told a news conference that the Americans have reached out through several channels “saying they wish to have a dialogue, but we do believe that it must be accompanied by action.” Action on sanctions can be “a solid foundation for continuing” discussions, he said.

The Iranian leader added: “We have not left the table of negotiations.”

Raisi said the American withdrawal from the 2015 agreement, aimed at reining in Iran’s nuclear program, trampled on U.S. commitments including sanctions.

Then-President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the accord in 2018, restoring crippling sanctions. Iran began breaking the terms a year later, including by enriching uranium to higher levels, and formal talks in Vienna to try to restart the deal collapsed in August 2022.

U.N. nuclear chief Rafael Grossi said in an interview Monday with The Associated Press that the Iranian government’s removal of many cameras and electronic monitoring systems installed by the International Atomic Energy Agency make it impossible to give assurances about the country’s nuclear program.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which Grossi leads, reported earlier this month that Iran had slowed the pace of enriching uranium to nearly weapons-grade levels. That was seen as a sign that Tehran was trying to ease tensions after years of strain with the United States. It took place as the rivals were negotiating a prisoner swap and the release of billions in frozen Iranian assets, which all took place Monday.

Grossi has previously warned that Tehran has enough enriched uranium for “several” nuclear bombs if it chose to build them.

#### Lack of a credible commitment undermines collective efforts for regional security – only clarifying the resilience of anti-sanctions policy solves compliance.

Geranmayeh 17 [Ellie, Senior Policy Fellow at the Middle East and North Africa Programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations. She focuses on European foreign policy in relation to Iran, particularly on the nuclear and regional dossiers. Her expertise also covers wider regional dynamics particularly in Iraq and Saudi Arabia and geopolitical trends in the Middle East. "THE COMING CLASH: WHY IRAN WILL DIVIDE EUROPE FROM THE UNITED STATES." European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Brief. Page 4-6]

Over the past year, the E3 (the UK, France, and Germany) and the EU have firmly expressed to the US their continued commitment to the nuclear deal. They have made the case that the Trump administration would be isolated on the Iran issue if it chose to walk away from the JCPOA.24 Some European governments have also said that the JCPOA’s survival is a precondition for their cooperation with the Trump administration on other areas of Iran policy, notably regional issues.25 They have attempted to persuade Trump that multilateral engagement on Iran is a more effective way to change Iranian calculations than a policy of containment.26

Although European capitals share many of the concerns of the US about Iran, Europe is quickly parting ways with the Trump administration over two fundamental issues. First, they disagree on what they are trying to achieve with Iran. Trump’s statements on Iran move US policy aims towards efforts to weaken the Islamic Republic and perhaps to the idea of regime change.27 The US secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, for example, effectively backed a regime change approach when he outlined that the administration would “work towards support of those elements inside of Iran that would lead to a peaceful transition of that government.”28 European governments, on the other hand, are hoping to see behavioural change from Iran in ways that promote European security interests and contribute to regional stability.

The second source of European-US differences over Iran relates to the tools used to achieve these goals. European governments are moving away from isolating Iran using containment and sanctions towards engaging the country using diplomatic and economic tools. The Trump administration has moved in the opposite direction, seeking to isolate Iran through political measures and tougher sanctions. Perhaps the clearest example of this division occurred in May 2017. During Trump’s visit to Riyadh, he called for all nations to isolate Iran. Within hours, the EU high rep resentative together with other European leaders publicly congratulated the re-elected president, Hassan Rouhani, on his victory and expressed hope for further political opening with Iran.29 Similarly, on the same day as Trump made his speech on the new US Iran strategy, the French president discussed with Rouhani a potential trip to Iran, which would be the first by a French head of state since Iran's 1979 revolution.30 In parallel a number of giant European companies have ignored Trump’s calls to refrain from doing business with Iran and instead announced new deals with their Iranian counterparts. 31

Despite these European efforts, there is a broad tendency in Washington among both Democrats and Republicans to assume that European governments can be co-opted or coerced to follow US policy on Iran.32 US observers believe that, when faced with a choice of doing business with Iran or facing economic US secondary sanctions, European governments and businesses will opt to preserve their US ties. They also tend to believe that, by threatening to adopt a confrontational position towards Iran – to include killing the nuclear deal, pushing for regime change, or even conducting limited military strikes against Iran – the US will coerce Europeans to come on board with less extreme policies, such as renegotiating the nuclear deal or demanding that Iran change its behaviour on regional files. In opposing Trump’s policy towards Iran, European governments find themselves in the unusual position of being closer to Russia and China than to their traditional transatlantic partner.33

The US plan: Containment and rollback Politics inside Washington has created a broad consensus in the Trump administration and Congress on the need to get tough on Iran with the ultimate objective of significantly weakening Iran’s leadership.34 In October, Trump outlined the new US Iran strategy that has at its heart an effort to derail the JCPOA, and to contain and confront Iran, leaving little political space for diplomacy.

Implementation of such goals, however, will be difficult. As administration officials admit, Iran’s regional footing is stronger now than at any time since the start of the 2003 Iraq war and its ability to impose costs on the region and the US is also greater.35 Given the new level of the challenge, the administration has had an often fierce debate on how precisely to confront Iran.36 Currently, it appears that two broad factions have emerged: Donald Trump and everyone else.

(1) Donald Trump The president has taken every opportunity to broadcast his animosity towards Iran. He has called for the country’s international isolation and sought to pressure foreign companies not to do business with the country.37 So far Trump has channeled his stated intention to get tough on Iran into attempts to dismantle or undermine the nuclear agreement.

There is little doubt that Trump seeks to undermine the Iran nuclear deal negotiated by his predecessor and world powers. Despite assessments by US generals and eight reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that verify Iranian compliance, Trump claims that Iran is violating the “spirit” of the deal.38 In his October speech, he outlined that he was willing to end US participation in the nuclear deal unless it was amended to extend the expiration dates of various Iranian obligations (the so called “sunset provisions”) and to include tougher limitations on Iran’s missile programme.39

On regional issues, Trump has already doubled down on US support to Saudi Arabia in its regional feud with Iran.40 This stands in stark contrast to Obama’s attempt to encourage greater accommodation and compromise between the two regional powers.41 The US administration has also stepped up backing for the Saudi military campaign in Yemen, in part to weaken Iranian-allied Houthi forces.42 Trump has sided with Saudi Arabia even where this has put the US at odds with other key regional allies such as Qatar.43 This followed Trump’s agreement to sell Saudi Arabia $110 billion in weapons, an agreement hailed by the White House as the single largest such deal in US history.44 (2) Everyone else

In contrast, some of Trump’s cabinet members, including secretary of defence James Mattis, seem intent on moderating the president’s pronouncements on Iran.45 Moderation in this context means that, although this camp believes in increasing the pressure on Iranian regime, it also believes that retaining the JCPOA is the best way to do so.46 It has reportedly pressed Trump to adhere to the nuclear deal to keep allies on board with pursuing a more active and aggressive pushback on Iran across the region.

The views on Iran of many of these military officers in Trump’s cabinet are coloured by their own and the US military’s experience with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Lebanon and Iraq.47 The deep animosity towards the IRGC was reflected in the White House fact sheet on the US strategy towards Iran, which is heavily focused on countering the IRGC.48 Close advisers to this camp say that they seek to avoid direct military confrontation, but that the US should support covert and overt military pushback against Iranian assets in the region. They tend to favour sup porting Arab allies to engage in greater asymmetric warfare against the IRGC and Iranian-backed forces (in particular Hezbollah), together with placing greater economic sanctions on such entities.49 As a former US official acknowledges, a similar approach was employed in small doses by the Obama administration, but the Trump administration seeks to make it a centrepiece of US policy.50

While supporting a more assertive posture against Iran, this camp wants to avoid losing focus on the Trump administration’s priority of fighting ISIS. Senior US officials have reportedly cautioned against looser rules of engagement, which would allow US military commanders to respond more forcefully to the IRGC and Hezbollah forces in Iraq and Syria, out of concern that this would divert attention from the priority of fighting ISIS in the region.51 There is also a willingness in this camp to engage with Iran where this serves US interests. Tillerson has indicated that he is open to diplomacy with Tehran.52 In the Department of Defence, there is some support for establishing lines of deconfliction with Iran to avoid skirmishes between naval forces in the Persian Gulf.53

Overall, the moderates have swayed Trump to accept a subtler approach to dealing with Iran. Trump seems unwilling to deliver a deathblow to the nuclear deal. He has so far twice used his executive power to renew waivers of sanctions as required under the JCPOA. Instead, the October decision to decertify Iranian compliance with the JCPOA provides a face-saving way for Trump to look tough on Iran but to shift the immediate responsibility over the fate of the nuclear deal onto Congress.54

Yet, even if Trump is isolated, he is the president. It remains unclear if he is interested in renegotiating a better deal or simply aims to shut the door to all diplomacy with Iran. Even if Congress does not follow Trump’s decertification of the JCPOA by ending the deal altogether, the US commitment to the agreement is likely to hang in the balance every three months when Trump must decide to re-waive US sanctions on Iran (with the next waiver deadline looming in January 2018). The unpredictability surrounding his position on the nuclear deal, even with his own cabinet members and closest allies, has essentially put the deal in limbo.55

As the battle over the nuclear deal between Trump and his cabinet rages on, the US and Iran have stepped up their shadow boxing in the Middle East. On several occasions, Iranian and US naval ships have narrowly avoided incidents in the Persian Gulf.56 Their respective forces on the ground have clashed in Iraq and Syria,57 and Iranian drones and US fighter jets have clashed in the air over the Middle East.58 The Trump administration has sanctioned Iranian entities and persons involved with the ballistic missile programme and observers expect tougher Congressional sanctions on this issue in the coming year.59

## 1AR

### 1AR—Regime Change CP

#### Iran-Deal failure causes them to leave the NPT.

**Heiran-Nia '24** [(Javad, Ph.D., director of the Persian Gulf Studies Group at the Center for Scientific Research and Middle East Strategic Studies in Iran.) "After Iran and Israel’s Attacks, Is There Any Chance Left for the Iran Nuclear Deal? • Stimson Center," Stimson Center, https://www.stimson.org/2024/after-iran-and-israels-attacks-is-there-any-chance-left-for-the-iran-nuclear-deal/, 4-23-2024] TDI

If the JCPOA is finally declared dead, the West has three options: deterrence, military action, or new negotiations. The UN Security Council resolution that endorsed the JCPOA in 2015 expires in October 2025. Before then, Britain or France could “snap back” UN sanctions against Iran if Iran were to enrich uranium to weapons grade. Iran has stated that if snap back happens, it will withdraw from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (as North Korea did in 2002 and then proceeded to build bombs).

#### Regime change fails and lacks legitimacy.

**Shannon '24** [(Kelly J, 2023–2024 W. Glenn Campbell and Rita Ricardo-Campbell national fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and associate professor of history at Florida Atlantic University.) "The United States needs a new Iran policy—and it involves regime change, but not the traditional kind", Atlantic Council, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/regime-change-iran-women-life-freedom/, 2-22-2024] TDI

The United States should, therefore, develop a new policy aimed at supporting the Iranian people in changing their government system. This must not be a policy of regime change in the traditional sense. While the United States has historically had success in overtly or covertly overthrowing foreign governments—including ousting Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953—it has been bad at managing the long-term consequences of such actions. The outcomes of the post-9/11 US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are but the most recent examples.

Iranian history also proves that regime change cannot come from the outside. Any government imposed by a foreign power—or that even appears to be—will lack domestic legitimacy. Ever since Iran’s constitutional revolution in 1905–1911, ending foreign influence over Iran’s leaders has been a major reason why Iranians opposed—and toppled—previous governments, including the Pahlavi monarchy in 1979. Thus, any government that replaces the Islamic Republic must be understood by the Iranian people as entirely indigenous in origin. It can have foreign alliances, but cannot be installed by foreign intervention. The traditional US approach of using military intervention or a coup to accomplish regime change would irredeemably taint whichever government replaces the current theocracy.

#### No chance at regime change.

**Jeremy '23** [(Yonah, Yonah Jeremy Bob is The Jerusalem Post's senior military correspondent and intelligence analyst) "Can Iranians overthrow the Islamic Republic regime?", The Jerusalem Post | JPost, https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-754902, 8-15-2023] TDI

Zimmt quoted Iranian sociologist Hamidreza Jalaeipour, who estimated that 70% of Iranians comprise this silent pragmatist traditionalist majority, who might approve of religion and aspects of the regime, while rejecting enforced religion and other aspects of the regime.

Further, Zimmt cited Jalaeipour in diagnosing why the September 2022 protests appear to have eventually fizzled sometime in the spring of this year.

They observed “that the majority of demonstrators in 2022 were middle-class youths aged 15-25. Efforts to shift the protests from a civil movement toward a movement seeking regime change, with the endorsement of foreign media, proved ineffective, because the majority of the populace declined to engage in a violent revolutionary endeavor.”

While numerous citizens are dissatisfied with the government, INSS said, “They concurrently harbor hostility toward the radical opposition situated abroad, including royalist or terrorist organizations.”

Further, Zimmt discussed the view that “Iranian society remains unprepared for a revolution, partly due to its multidimensional – and not bipolar – nature.”

### 1AR—Iran War Good

#### Strikes fail, causes retal, and turns any cred NB.

Kori Schake 20, Contributor, The Atlantic. Director, Foreign & Defense Policy, American Enterprise Institute, "The Disastrous Idea That Won’t Go Away," Atlantic, 11/19/2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/attacking-iran-would-be-disastrous-parting-move/617145/.

First, Iran’s nuclear-weapons program is geographically distributed, its key equipment is buried deep underground, and U.S. intelligence agencies have imperfect information about its location. Which means that fully destroying Iran’s nuclear program would require a sustained military campaign that could take several weeks. It would also require the participation of countries in Europe or the Persian Gulf region that are unlikely to give their consent. Recall that after Iran’s attack on Saudi Arabia in 2019, the Gulf countries opposed U.S. military retaliation. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif recently reminded his country’s neighbors, “Trump is gone in 70 days, but we’ll remain here forever.”

Second, although the U.S. has ways of punishing Iran militarily without destroying its nuclear infrastructure, those alternatives are even less attractive. The U.S. could launch a naval campaign of submarine- or air-launched missiles against Iranian military targets without utilizing allied bases or airspace. But these attacks would be largely symbolic. And the problem with symbolic uses of force is that they invite meaningful retaliation. Attacking Iran while banking on its restraint would be strategic malpractice. If Iran does have a clandestine nuclear-weapons program, the country’s leaders might consider actually using it if attacked. Iran could also resume conventional missile launches or terrorist attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq, use its precision munitions against U.S. Central Command facilities in Bahrain, or launch attacks elsewhere. The government of Iraq could well demand the removal of U.S. troops in protest, as could the governments of Qatar and Bahrain, decimating the future of U.S. power projection in the Middle East and the security relationships underpinning it. Iran retaliated modestly for the killing of Soleimani near an airport in Iraq; the country’s leaders would retaliate more fulsomely for an attack on their territory.

Third, a military strike without the need to preempt an imminent attack and with no attempt to gain approval from the UN or even a coalition of American allies would be incredibly damaging both to the United States and, more specifically, to Trump and his top aides. Trump would become an international pariah, shunned at Davos, unwelcome in and perhaps even prosecuted by foreign capitals, denied the foreign money that would otherwise boost his future prospects and ease his current debts. Even Saudi Arabia might not be willing to associate with him. President-elect Joe Biden surely would not support an unprovoked attack on Iran if he were consulted, so Trump would further sully the tradition of bipartisan foreign policy during a presidential transition. The incoming president would denounce any attack by Trump and repudiate its underlying policy—so Iran could end up in an even more favorable position than the Trump administration’s policies will currently leave it.

#### It decks signalling, breaks the taboo, AND causes nuclear retal.

Dr. Stephen J. Cimbala 20, PhD, Distinguished Professor, Political Science, Penn State Brandywine, "Limiting Nuclear War: Mission Impossible, Inadvisable or Unavoidable?" in The United States, Russia and Nuclear Peace, Chapter 7, 2020, pg. 128.

The first use of a nuclear weapon by one state against another since 1945 will create a tectonic shift in the expectations of policy makers and military planners worldwide. The nuclear taboo that supposedly held back the hands of crisis bound policy makers during the Cold War and for the remainder of the twentieth century would have been shattered. Left in its place will be uncertainty and the plausible expectation that a first use may be followed by retaliation and further escalation. Of course, a nuclear power could choose to attack or coerce a non-nuclear state. Such a one-sided attack could bring condemnation from the international community and responses from allies of the victim: including those with nuclear weapons.

#### It causes miscalculated Russia war.

Geoff Wilson 16, policy associate at Ploughshares Fund, a global security foundation, 9/15/16, “Op-Ed — It’s Time to Ditch the ICBM, America’s Thermonuclear Dinosaur,” https://warisboring.com/op-ed-its-time-to-ditch-the-icbm-americas-thermonuclear-dinosaur/

In the face of an uncertain and ballooning program cost, the real question we should be asking is — why aren’t we just retiring the ICBM part of the arsenal? ICBMs are an anachronism, a thermonuclear dinosaur, and have been for a long time. The strategy for their use is a relic of the Cold War, they do nothing to counter the real threats we face today and they can easily stand to be eliminated from the U.S. nuclear arsenal. To Russia with love With the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the ICBM mission has been relegated to theory. Designed as a deterrent against Russian nuclear forces in the 1970s, the Minuteman III can only really hit targets inside of Russia. While they could technically reach targets outside of Russia, say North Korea, China or Iran, missiles fired at those targets would still have to overfly Russia. In that scenario the Russians would, understandably, think a salvo of nuclear warheads was coming their way and launch a counterattack.

#### The CP ensures Iranian prolif AND conflict escalation.

Dr. Abdolrasool Divsallar 22, PhD, Non-Resident Scholar, Middle East Institute, "A Military Strike on Iran Is the Worst Non-Proliferation Strategy," Middle East Institute, 01/10/2022, https://www.mei.edu/publications/military-strike-iran-worst-non-proliferation-strategy. [language edited]

Unlike the Iraqi case, which received less international public attention, probably because it occurred in the midst of Saddam Hussein’s war with Iran, the Iranian nuclear program is a highly public matter. Syria’s nuclear reactor was also hit in complete silence by a deniable Israeli attack. It raised minimum political costs for Assad. Israeli planners were smart to consider the fact that if the attack avoided embarrassing and humiliating Assad publicly, there was a reasonable chance he would decide to hold back and not respond.

By contrast, Tehran has already invested billions of dollars as well as major political capital in its nuclear projects. In domestic propaganda, Iran’s nuclear capability has been deemed a source of national pride and one of the revolution’s key successes. Above and beyond the humiliation that a strike would cause, an immediate policy shift in its aftermath would have major political costs for the Islamic Republic as well. The leadership’s restraint would not be a face-saving strategy since there would be no plausible deniability for the U.S. or Israel. Thus, the public humiliation caused by attacks on Iranian nuclear sites would inevitably put Supreme Leader Khamenei under huge political pressure to react.

Iran’s response is likely to be two-fold and involve both a military and a nuclear response. But as I have shown in earlier case studies, Iranian behavior follows a core logic of “balancing the threat” and “escalating to deescalate.” As was evident in 2011-12 and the 2019 tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, a growing assessment of existential threats causes Tehran to distance itself from conservative policy pursuits and instead adopt a brink~~man~~ship strategy to reveal the risks of its competitors' policy and convince the aggressor of the mutual costs of insecurity. Tehran’s response to several acts of Israeli nuclear sabotage since 2020 has followed a similar logic.

Iran’s response to the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh on Nov. 27, 2020 was a mix of political, legislative, technical, and restrictive measures that ultimately resulted in the expansion of its nuclear activities. As the International Crisis Group reports, this included a bill in the Iranian parliament mandating “the initiation of 20 per cent uranium enrichment and annual accumulation of 120kg at that level; 500kg of monthly enriched uranium production; installation of additional IR-2 and IR-6 centrifuges; launch within five months of a uranium metal factory, work on which has commenced; preparation for reverting the Arak heavy-water reactor to its pre-JCPOA configuration; and suspending implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’s Additional Protocol should other JCPOA signatories provide no sanctions relief within two months of the law’s enactment.”

The response to sabotage at the Natanz facility in April 2021 was a similar decision to go for 60% uranium enrichment and rebuild a new protected workshop in a tunnel under the mountain. Indeed, the attack provided Tehran a unique opportunity to test its technical capabilities for enrichment closer to weapons-grade level and make its facilities resistant to possible future sabotage attempts. Iran’s response following sabotage at the Karaj centrifuge production plant on June 23, 2021 was guided by a similar logic too. The sabotage damaged the facility and halted its production but also blinded IAEA cameras. But after resuming activities at the site almost two months later, the IAEA was barred from installing new cameras. Again, Tehran attempted to impose a cost on the aggressor for the sabotage by benefiting from several months of unmonitored activities.

In this way, the Islamic Republic’s leaders have shown their ability to forge a domestic consensus and a political willingness to ratchet up tensions and use brink~~man~~ship when threats to the regime are high. Tehran’s indigenous nuclear know-how enables it to rebuild the destroyed facilities and build back a stronger program. That said, it can be argued that Tehran’s response might involve more than just a number of tactical measures, restrictions on the IAEA, or even revisiting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Would a military strike strengthen the rationale for Iran’s nuclear bomb? The answer to this question seems to be positive. A military attack might radically change Iranian elites’ calculus of their security environment. CIA Director Bill Burns made it clear that he does not believe Iran's supreme leader has decided to take steps to weaponize a nuclear device. Yet a strike could dramatically change the regime’s assessment of immediate security threats by proving that it is unable to deter enemy aggression with conventional means amid a growing threat environment. So far, the military escalations since 2019 have gradually spurred public debate about the need for a nuclear bomb among Iranian experts and Persian media outlets.

The Amad project, Iran’s nuclear weapons program in 1990s, was motivated by a similar assessment. Such an assessment would facilitate forging a consensus among political-military elites to opt for a nuclear deterrent and a strategic defense capability. History suggests that Iraqi elites reached a similar conclusion after the Israeli attack on Osirak. It intensified Baghdad's commitment to acquiring nuclear weapons and created independent bureaucratic momentum toward weaponization and vested interest in the development of a nuclear weapons capability.

On the other side, there is no guarantee that the strike would increase the domestic obstacles to Iran’s nuclear program. Ironically, it might actually minimize such obstacles and justify the suppression of those with opposing ideas among the elites. Resolving the existential threats facing the revolution would then be linked to a nuclear device. This could be the moment that Iran’s supreme leader would have enough of a reason to changes his *fatwa* in favor of a nuclear bomb.

#### Russia does not have the means nor motive to launch a second front.

Mitchell ‘1/12 – Ellen, Staff Writer @ The Hill, (“Putin running out of options in global pressure campaign”, 1/12/23, <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/3809871-putin-running-out-of-options-in-global-pressure-campaign/>) – sel \*\* edited for ablelist language

As the Russia-Ukraine war nears the end of its first year, Moscow is struggling to find leverage to wear down Western resolve to aid Kyiv. With its battlefield wins now few and far between, an economy ~~crippled~~ [damaged] by harsh sanctions, and increasing international isolation, Russian President Vladimir Putin is running out of options to expand its provocations beyond Ukraine to chip away at international support for Ukraine’s resistance, experts say. The Kremlin has “basically lost on all fronts in terms of trying to exhaust and create fractures in the coalition between Ukraine and its Western allies,” according to Joseph Dresen, a Russia expert at the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Kennan Institute. “I think Russia is in a bad situation. It’s been bad for a while. It’s only getting worse.” When Moscow rolled its forces into Ukraine on Feb. 24, Russia expected the country to quickly surrender, failing to anticipate a mountain of resistance. Among the roadblocks for Moscow was the resolve of the Ukrainian people, the leadership of the then-untested Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the ill-prepared Kremlin troops. What’s more, the former Soviet nation quickly galvanized Western support, with the U.S. and Europe funneling tens of billions of dollars’ worth of weapons and humanitarian aid to the embattled country. “You’ve heard us say over and over again that we’re going to support Ukraine for as long as it takes. And from everything that I can see from our allies and partners, they feel the same way,” Defense Secretary Llyod Austin told reporters Wednesday. “We remain united in our efforts.” Moscow has tried to weaken global resolve to aid Kyiv, using cyberattacks, shipping blockades to prevent crucial grain exports, freezing gas supplies for Europe and threatening to halt all energy imports, a move Putin said would cause the continent to “freeze.” But a warm winter combined with an international community that has collectively responded to each Russian threat with its own pushback — either through bolstered cyber defenses, energy replacements or economic sanctions — has kept Putin on his back foot. Now, after more than 320 days of a conflict the Russian leader initially claimed would last less than a week, Moscow is all but out of ways to wreak havoc outside of Ukraine. “I just don’t think they have the bandwidth to project power anyplace else right now,” Brian Whitmore, a Russian expert with the Atlantic Council, told The Hill. “I think their play was effectively freezing out Europe and making them suffer through the winter. That’s clearly not going to work right now,” Whitmore said. “They’re counting on the West’s resolve being diminished, and that’s not happened yet. … I don’t think we’re gonna get there, quite frankly.” Further limiting Putin’s options was Russia’s swift loss of economic relations with the West, a forfeiture of decades of painstakingly cultivated ties and an ousting from an information network Moscow can no longer use to its advantage. “Their ability to project nonkinetic power was based on the fact that they were integrated into our financial system,” Whitmore said. “They were deep inside of our information space. Sanctions has really changed that, and their capacity to make trouble has been diminished as a result.” Case in point: The European Union’s (EU) ban on crude oil imports from Russia and its price cap on the country’s oil are costing Moscow about $172 million per day, a figure that is only expected to rise higher when the EU implements further restrictions next month, according to a new report published by the Helsinki-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. “The EU ban on Russian oil was an extraordinary step taken to axe the funds from Europe financing Putin’s war,” the independent research organization said in a statement released Wednesday. Russia has move to replace lost ties by growing closer with other mega-powers including China and India. But those relationships are likely to fray over time as the war continues, Whitmore added. While China and India continue to import Russian oil — with Moscow’s fossil fuel exports earning the country $688 million per day and helping to offset its loses — small cracks are beginning to appear in the relationships. When Putin spoke with Chinese President Xi Jinping over video conference in late December, Beijing’s leader pointed to the “complicated and quite controversial international situation.” Russia has long been seen as a menacing cyber actor. However, even that threat has diminished, as experts say the West now knows what to look for after multiple attempts out of Moscow. “With cyber, once you use it, you sort of tip your hand as to what your tactics are, what your strengths are, and your targets are better prepared to encounter and defend against future attacks,” Dresen said. “I think cyberattacks are less of a weapon for Russia than it otherwise might have been.” For now, Russia appears focused on its brutal military campaign in Ukraine heading into 2023, attempting to take back small patches of land in the east following humiliating losses this past fall. Fighting in particular is raging in and around Bakhmut, a major battleground since the summer. Should the eastern city fall to Russian forces, it would allow for further advances in the Donetsk region but would be unlikely to turn the tide of the wider war. The difficult slog in Ukraine has experts confident that Russia won’t seek to try its military power elsewhere, even as it may continue with nuclear saber-rattling. “I’m really not that worried. I think we have to keep our eyes open and be vigilant, but I think it’s highly unlikely that they will try to make trouble or someplace else, whether it be in the former Soviet space or elsewhere,” Whitmore said. “People think if Ukraine wins, then [Putin is] going to do something horrible. And he certainly would like us to think that to deter us. But history shows there’s this myth out there that Putin never backs down. And he does when faced with superior force over and over and over.” Steven Pifer, an expert with Brookings, told The Hill that the Kremlin is likely being careful to not make sure its saber-rattling doesn’t turn into something they’re not prepared to take on. “In terms of bellicose actions on the conventional level, it’s really hard for me to see what the Russians could do,” Pifer said. “They really can’t poke in the Baltics. The last thing the Russian general staff wants now would be to have to take on NATO in a conventional fight. So I just think that their options are pretty limited.” All three experts The Hill spoke to predicted Putin would play the waiting game rather than take new, potentially disastrous, risks. “I think Putin has now begun to try to prepare the Russian public for a longer war, and he’s prepared to see if he can stick it out and just hope that with time Europeans begin to sort of get tired of this,” Pifer said.

### 1AR—Oil

#### High Oil Prices are unsustainable – demand destruction.

Iordache 23 [(Ruxandra, curated, edited and published UK and foreign breaking news briefs), “Oil prices near $100 per barrel raise questions over demand destruction”, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/09/29/a-potential-oil-price-rally-to-100-per-barrel-raises-questions-over-demand-destruction.html>, CNBC, 9-29-2023] TDI

Supply cuts from heavyweight crude producers have helped drive oil prices near $100 per barrel — fueling some to consider the potential for future demand destruction. Brent crude futures rose 63 cents per barrel from the Thursday settlement to $96.01 per barrel on Friday at 11 a.m. London time and sit well above prices observed in the first half of the year. The gains could prove short lived, some analysts warn. Sushant Gupta, research director of Asia refining at Wood Mackenzie, on Monday said “there are all signs that we could potentially see $100 per barrel in quarter four,” but warned that global economic fragility and incoming seasonal demand drops in the first quarter would make this unsustainable long term. In a Friday report, ING analysts signaled the oil market is “clearly in overbought territory.” At the heart of price support are a series of voluntary cuts that fall outside of the official policy of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, known as OPEC+. First is a 1.66 million-barrel-per-day decline implemented by some OPEC+ members until the end of 2024. Topping this, Saudi Arabia and Russia pledged to respectively remove another 1 million barrel per day of production and 300,000 barrels per day of exports until the end of this year. This adds to a picture of improving Chinese demand — which analysts say could soon peak — and inventory drops. Some say buyers can weather the storm of high prices. Seven European refiners and traders, who spoke under anonymity because of contractual obligations, told CNBC that local buyers can withstand oil prices veering into triple digits without lowering their output runs. All of the sources pointed to firm refining margins, meaning the difference between the value of refined products and the price of the crude feedstock to generate them is favorable. Uncertainty lingers over further China fuel export quotas, while Russia’s indefinite ban of its fuel exports — which Europe cannot purchase because of sanctions that followed Moscow’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine — has tightened availabilities of refined products and could particularly worsen global diesel shortages. Sanctions-disrupted access to Russian crude and OPEC+ cuts have shrunk availabilities of high-density and high-sulfur crude to Western buyers, encumbering their task to produce certain refined products. Refinery margins so far have nevertheless been attractive enough that some refiners have lightened their seasonal maintenance to take advantage, one refiner said. Refined oil product demand could yet stay strong in the West, as Thanksgiving and winter vacations boost travel in the U.S. and Europe, and the hurricane season looms — which can historically disrupt both local refining and crude production. “We estimate a high-impact hurricane event this year could result in a temporary loss of monthly offshore crude oil production of about 1.5 million barrels per day (b/d) and a nearly equivalent temporary loss of refining capacity,” the U.S. Energy Information Administration said in July. “Outages on that scale could increase monthly average U.S. retail gasoline prices by between 25 cents per gallon and 30 cents per gallon.” ‘Self-fulfilling prophecy’ Some European market participants polled by CNBC doubted triple-digit oil prices are sustainable in the long term, with three pointing to possible demand destruction — where customers gradually answer persistently high prices with fewer purchases. A fourth said demand destruction is a potential question, once prices hit $110 per barrel. “Sometimes high oil prices can become a self-fulfilling prophecy,” Indian Energy Minister Hardeep Singh Puri warned in August. “The self-fulfilling prophecy means that at a particular point of time comes a tipping, and then there’s a fall of demand.” One of the market sources also noted that steep backwardation — where current prices exceed future ones and a key metric to assess the viability of storage — discourages stocking refined products, leaving the market vulnerable to any disruptions.

#### High Oil Prices cause petro-aggression – amplifies conflicts.

Bunzel 18 [(Theodore, political section of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and in international economics at the U.S. Treasury), “Do High Oil Prices Mean More International Conflict?”, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/05/30/do-high-oil-prices-mean-more-international-conflict/>, American Interest, 5-30-2018] TDI

As oil prices reach three-year highs, **history** tells us that we should expect **more interstate aggression**. When asked in a recent interview about his famously sympathetic gaze into Russian President Vladimir Putin’s soul in 2001, former President George W. Bush argued that rising oil prices had **fundamentally changed** his interlocutor: “When I looked into his eyes and saw his soul, Russia was broke . . . [t]he **price of oil goes up** and **Putin changed**.” Does the relationship between oil prices and Russian behavior to which Bush alluded hold true? The higher the price of oil, the more aggressive Russia becomes? And what about other petrostates? Might it be true for those as well? We may soon have more evidence for the proposition. Oil prices are brushing off 2016 lows and hitting three-year highs. Brent crude has been hovering above $70 a barrel since April, up from lows of around $30 in early 2016, fueled by OPEC production cuts and rising geopolitical tensions (over issues like the Iran deal). Though nuances, complications, and exceptions abound, the **academic** and **historical evidence** on balance tells us that, as we transition from a lower to a higher oil price regime, we can generally expect a **darker geopolitical outlook**. As rising oil revenues gives Russia, Saudi, Iran, and other oil-exporters an added sense of confidence, it may at least selectively inflameinterstate tensions and lead to **more aggressive behavior**. That possibility, alongside an **increasingly hawkish U.S. national security team** and a President who appears to feel rather **“unchained”** of late, points to a potentially **combustible mix just ahead**. It is generally taken for granted that aspects of geopolitics can function as a key input into oil prices. Trump’s mere threat of a U.S. strike in Syria, for example, caused oil to spike by 2 percent on April 11. In addition to short-term effects, geopolitical competition can influence prices in other ways. To give just one general example, as Soviet power spread into parts of the Third World after the independence era, some states felt safer nationalizing their oil industries to escape Western company control (Iraq in 1961, for example), and prices rose as a consequence. But the relationship may also work the other way around: Oil prices can also be a key input into geopolitics. **Many studies** have demonstrated that oil prices have a **direct effect** on the domestic stability of petrostates. This makes ample intuitive sense: Higher prices **fill public coffers**, allowing governments to palliate needy populations and potential elite opposition groups by dispensing more largesse. Some regime **elites** may reason that a firmer grip on power may **free them to carry out more assertive foreign** **policies without fear of being undermined at home**. There are, however, several complications to this general intuition. Some states already have sufficiently buoyant revenues relative to their small populations to satisfy their publics and feed clientelistic networks. Providing largesse can also backfire if prices drop; taking away something valuable that people have grown used to is a dangerous game, especially when elites aren’t ready to play it. And then of course there is the famed “oil curse”: For all sorts of reasons, from “Dutch disease” economic distortions to the derangement of normal citizen-state relationships, oil riches can in time undermine regimes, weakening and even destroying them. That said, a more recent body of research has empirically demonstrated the intuitive twin of this conclusion: Higher prices cause greater interstate aggression by oil-producing countries. Why would this be the case? Greater oil revenue flushes petrostates with **confidence and** **also** cash that they can put toward military spending or foreign adventures. To take one obvious example, we need only look to Iran’s using its oil revenue to fund proxy groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Furthermore, military spending by one regional oil producer can beget spending by others, fueling regional arms races that can make aggression and conflict by miscalculation more likely. The onset of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980 may be a prime example of that dynamic. Most prominent among the empirical studies is Cullen S. **Hendrix’s** 2014 paper, which shows a statistically significant relationship between higher oil prices and “dispute behavior” (military actions short of actual war) by oil-exporters. (Hendrix also summed it up nicely in this Washington Post piece.) He found that “all things being equal, a one standard deviation ($18.60) increase in the price per barrel of oil from the sample mean ($33.81) is associated with a 13 percent increase in the frequency of [dispute behavior]” in oil-exporting states. He also found that, above $**77 a barrel**, oil-exporters are significantly more dispute prone than non-oil exporters. Hendrix also explores the potential complication of **reverse causality**: Could dispute behavior by oil-exporting countries be driving prices higher, rather than the other way around? A key analytical consideration here is timing. We can all agree that geopolitical activity affects prices in the short-term (such as the Syria example mentioned above), but is this reverse causality true on a sustained basis? Parsing out long-term signal from short-term noise, Hendrix examines whether elevated aggregate dispute behavior affects oil prices at the yearly—rather than daily or weekly—level, and finds that this relationship does not hold. His explanation here is that other players typically step in to redress markets: “While dispute behavior may drive prices changes in the short term . . . the **strategic significance of oil prices** and oil-exporting states encourages **major powers** to act in ways that **stabilize markets**, either through market intervention . . . or direct, armed intervention.” Jeff **Colgan** of Brown University has also touched on this topic, finding through his research that oil has fueled—in some way—one quarter to one half of interstate wars since 1973. He also notes that oil-producers are 50 percent more likely to engage in conflict than non-oil producers. Colgan identifies eight, non-mutually exclusive causal mechanisms for how oil fuels international conflict, most of which are implicitly exacerbated by higher prices. They are: “(1) resource wars, in which states try to acquire oil reserves by force; (2) petro-aggression, whereby oil insulates aggressive leaders such as Saddam Hussein or Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini from domestic opposition and therefore makes them more willing to engage in risky foreign policy adventurism; (3) the externalization of civil wars in oil-producing states (“petrostates”); (4) financing for insurgencies—for instance, Iran funneling oil money to Hezbollah; (5) conflicts triggered by the prospect of oil-market domination, such as the U.S. war with Iraq over Kuwait in 1991; (6) clashes over control of oil transit routes, such as shipping lanes and pipelines; (7) oil-related grievances, whereby the presence of foreign workers in petrostates helps extremist groups such as al-Qaeda recruit locals; and (8) oil-related obstacles to multilateral cooperation, such as when an importer’s attempt to curry favor with a petrostate prevents multilateral cooperation on security issues.” Though he doesn’t substantiate statistically that higher prices lead to more conflict through these channels, he implies it heavily. For example, he writes that, “the low oil prices of the 1990s have given way to higher and more volatile prices, increasing the magnitude of the consequences one can expect from oil-conflict linkages.” While the emerging academic evidence may validate the claim that higher oil prices lead to more aggression, the historical and anecdotal evidence is somewhat mixed, and understandably so. Oil price is clearly only one of many inputs into foreign policy decision-making, and an indirect one at that. No leader thinks, “Now that oil is at $X, I’m going to invade my neighbor.” Context obviously matters, too: No one imagines that Ecuador or Norway is going to invade or try to blackmail a neighbor just because spot prices rise 15 or 30 percent in a given six-month period. Price levels seep into decision-making **more** subtly, affecting interlocking beliefs about strategic behavior generally and specific cases more particularly; they may fuel self-confidence by shoring up budget outlooks and funding the tools of more aggressive behavior in contexts where such behavior could conceivably make sense. Moreover, there are many contravening (and occasionally countervailing) complications. Prominent among these is the fact that low oil prices can incentivize states to “wave the flag” in order to distract from domestic difficulties—so the impact of low oil prices might lead to more aggressive behavior in some cases. That suggests that neither high nor low prices per se may be the trigger affecting behavior, but rather notable changes in price that become politically salient in one way or another. And there’s also the tricky issue of timing: Over what timeframe does increased oil revenue fuel aggression? Is it in anticipation of higher prices, in direct response to the current pricing levels, or is there more of a lag in effect as oil revenue slowly shores up—or is expected to shore up—budgets and military spending over time? The answer might depend on specific cases and leadership cadres. There is also a scaling problem. If a 20 percent rise in oil prices makes a more assertive foreign policy more likely in a given country, does a 40 percent rise make it twice as likely? Or put differently, how much of a difference in price, and presumably in expected revenues, does it take to cross a threshold where it might have an impact on decision-making? Are there multiple thresholds? Russia exemplifies these issues. Taking the same long view as George W. Bush in his interview, it seems self-evident that rising oil prices and higher government revenues over the course of the 2000s gave Putin confidence, funded military expansion and modernization, and helped enable Russia’s most revanchist tendencies. Between 2003 and 2013, Russian military expenditure doubled as the price of Brent crude rose from a low of around $20 a barrel in 2001 to a high of more than $140 a barrel in 2008. Russia, as the saying goes, is a gas station with nuclear weapons**;** a higher pump price thus means more weapons**, nuclear and otherwise**. But when you cross reference this conclusion with specific acts of Russian aggression over the past roughly twenty years, the picture gets much more complicated. When Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008, oil was above $100 a barrel. Same with Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014. But Russia also dramatically intervened in Syria in September 2015, when oil had dropped to around $50 a barrel and the economy was sputtering due to both low energy prices and Western sanctions. Here, many analysts plausibly described these interventions as a way of rallying Russians to the flag and distracting them from domestic hardship. More likely, Putin saw an emergency in Syria that simply had to be dealt with, no matter the cost or risk; the Assad regime was in danger of collapsing, and Syria is Russia’s only ally offering ports and bases in the Mediterranean basin. So Russia is a bit of a mixed bag, but on balance its behavior—especially over a long timeframe—appears to support the thesis. Saudi Arabia’s role in the 1973 Yom Kippur war also illustrates the tricky question of timing. Saudi funding of the effort was enabled by a financial buffer created by a rise in revenues from the late 1960s, and was likely justified by an expected rise in revenues due to an oil price increase that was anticipated, in part, because of the very war it was in the process of financing. Its reserves had already grown so large that, for the first time, Saudi Arabia could ride out a supply (and revenue) disruption and still finance a war. But the Saudis helped finance a war that they themselves did not participate in. So if rising oil prices led to greater interstate aggression, it did so in this case in a particularly indirect way. These are all interesting and important nuances that attenuate any direct causal connection one might be tempted to draw between oil prices and conflict. So it would be nice to know if historical studies have shown any significant statistical relationship between fluctuations in key sources of government revenue (and what memoirs and archives tell us about how those situations were perceived) and interstate behavior. It would be even nicer to drill down into such studies to find cases where specific lucrative commodities—for example, European colonial profits such as from British opium sales in China, or cotton grown in Egypt—made any difference in the behavior of the relevant governments. Alas, such studies do not exist. But regardless of the timeframe and mechanism, academic and historical studies alike do suggest that higher oil prices have generally lead to more aggressive, or at least riskier, behavior in recent decades—whether in anticipation of higher prices, immediately in their wake, or only after sufficient revenue stores are built up. So are we at a point in the energy price cycle where, all else equal, we should expect greater interstate conflict? We’re close to Hendrix’s $77 a barrel threshold, above which oil-exporters are significantly more dispute-prone than non-oil exporters. But given the nuances just described, this specific price threshold is probably too cute. The more realistic argument to make is about the effect of a higher-price vs. lower-price paradigm over a multi-year horizon (particularly in light of the timing issue and potential lag). And if the period of the past two years (when Brent largely hovered between $40 and $60) was a lower-price paradigm, 2018-19 is potentially gearing up to be a higher-price paradigm driven by continued supply cuts by OPEC, tight global inventories, and—in a coincidental way—heightened geopolitical risks. We’ll see how these factors play out, but if oil prices remain elevated we may begin to subtly feel their effects on behavior by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and perhaps others. None of this is to say that oil prices are the most important factor in the geopolitical outlook over the near, medium, or long-term. The reputed hawkishness of Mike Pompeo and John Bolton, the effect of the upcoming mid-term elections on Trump’s decision-making, and reactions to potential exogenous shocks (for example, a major clash in Syria between U.S. or Israeli and Iranian or Russian forces) will play a much more direct and important role in shaping the geopolitical landscape. But a higher oil price regime (if it holds) could well make petrostates like Iran, Saudi, and Russia more aggressive—either in challenging the United States and Europe in the case of Russia, or by exacerbating ongoing proxy conflicts in and around the Middle East in the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Given these and other dynamics, we should expect a bumpy ride ahead.

#### Canada structurally cannot be a leader

Greenwalt, '21 – William C. Greenwalt is a nonresident senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he focuses on the expansion of America's defense (William C. Greenwalt; "O no Canada: Is a three-eyed AUKUS an augury for change?"; American Enterprise Institute; https://www.aei.org/op-eds/o-no-canada-is-a-three-eyed-aukus-an-augury-for-change/; 10-4-2021, Accessed 11-4-2021)//ILake-NoC

Still, as seen by some south of the 49th parallel, Canada’s inability to invest in its defense over the decades has been a sore spot. In retrospect, Canada’s cancellation of the AVRO arrow in 1959 — then one of the most advanced jets in the world — marked the start of a 60-year decline in defense capability. Canadian defense spending as measured by percentage of GDP dropped from 4.2% in 1960 to a nadir of 0.99% in 2014. As a result of paying for its welfare state, the size and quality of Canada’s defense forces and its innovativeness inevitably declined. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan further financially strapped the Canadians, and planned modernization efforts were put on hold. Radars, ships, and planes continue to depreciate and deteriorate while the Arctic increasingly risks becoming a Chinese and Russian lake.

A strong undersea capability able to deploy to its northern reaches should be a priority to defend its sovereignty, but instead the Canadians continue to operate a decrepit force of four 30-year-old UK castoff diesel submarines that the Pakistani Navy didn’t even want. The Royal Canadian Navy’s capabilities are a far cry from the promise when then-President Ronald Reagan in 1988 surprised the Pentagon and approved the transfer of nuclear submarine propulsion technology to Canada to build a new class of submarines. Unfortunately, this once in a generation chance for Canada to acquire a nuclear submarine capability never got off the ground.

#### No China war.

Susan Thornton 22, Senior Fellow at the Paul Tsai China Center at Yale Law School, 2022, “The Barriers to War,” https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-02-11/china-strategy-rival-americas-making

There are a number of formidable restraints in place to keep the peace. The United States has worked hard over the decades to build these barriers-often as part of the very engagement strategy that Mearsheimer criticizes. These bulwarks have helped preserve peace and promote prosperity for the last 70 years, and they are still strong enough to prevent a U.S.-Chinese conflict. Although accidents or incidents connected to military brinkmanship may occur, they would almost certainly not lead to a wider war. That would require something exceedingly unlikely: the simultaneous failure of every restraint.

First, bilateral diplomacy would have to break down. Engagement is the opposite of estrangement, which describes the absence of U.S.-Chinese relations from 1949 to 1972. The purpose of engagement is to forestall misperceptions, provide reassurance, and prevent conflict. It is true that diplomacy and communication between China and the United States have been anemic for the past five years. And it is difficult to discern authoritative policy amid the current cacophony of diplomatic posturing on Twitter and elsewhere, creating an environment ripe for confusion and overreaction. But these deficiencies are not structural; they can be remedied. If top-level leaders in both countries consistently communicate and work to reduce public posturing, as they should, then the diplomatic barriers to war can be reinforced.

For a war to break out, the international system would also have to fail. China and the United States are connected to a global network of countries and institutions that have a stake-in some cases, an existential stake-in preventing conflict between these two countries. Almost every government and institution on the globe would be grievously damaged by a U.S.-Chinese war, and so they all would try to prevent an imminent conflict through diplomatic pressure, mediation, or acts of resistance, such as denying overflight and basing rights. Critics may be quick to deny the influence of others in heading off a major-power clash. But in the current international system, there is no way for either side to emerge victorious, and those outside China and the United States would see this most clearly.

Then there is the restraint created by globalization. Mearsheimer argues that it was a catastrophic mistake for the United States to help China grow wealthy, as its resulting strength will inevitably lead it to challenge the United States. But it is also plausible that the inextricably integrated nature of the global economy, and specifically of the Chinese and U.S. economies, makes any war unwinnable and thus acts as a deterrent to conflict. It is true, as critics will point out, that economic dependencies failed to prevent World War I. But the economic relations of the early twentieth century were nothing like the complex entanglements of today's international economic system. In the case of China and the United States, they create a situation of mutual assured economic destruction.

Another restraint is public opinion, at least on the U.S. side. Politicians in the United States respond to various incentives, but they cannot ignore the sentiments of their voters. And after a 20-year fight against terrorism, the American public is decidedly wary of protracted and costly overseas conflicts. If U.S. policymakers appeared poised for a conflict with China, one would also expect that the press, having learned its lesson from the war in Iraq, would perform its watchdog function, question the official narratives, and activate public concern.

All these barriers should work to prevent a conflict. But if they somehow didn't, there is a final fail-safe that is even harder to imagine not working: military deterrence. Taiwan is the most likely issue over which a U.S.-Chinese war could break out. But the quantity and quality of the weaponry on both sides translates to certain catastrophic losses for all, which should provide a sufficient deterrent to war. And because the devastation of a conflict over Taiwan would spiral out of control quickly, one cannot rule out the use of nuclear weapons. Strange as it may sound, that is good news: just as the nuclear age prevented direct military conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States for more than 40 years, so it should between China and the United States, both of which are nucleararmed powers with survivable second strike capabilities. Although China has many fewer missiles and warheads than the United States-something China is working on remedying-the doctrine of mutually assured destruction still operates. The balance of terror holds.

Looking through this list of potential failures, one might find cause for pessimism, given that each restraint has seen its share of erosion in recent years. But China and the United States are not prisoners of history. The two countries will find that they cannot escape one another, and eventually, they will have to seek accommodation. This may now seem a distant vision, but it is a far more likely outcome, given the countervailing currents, than an apocalyptic war.

### 1AR—Terror

#### It doesn’t stop Iranian terror or proxies.

**Monshipouri and Boggio '22** [(Mahmood, Mahmood Monshipouri is a professor of International Relations. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 1987. He has taught at the University of Georgia, Central Michigan University, Alma College, Quinnipiac University, Redlands University, and California State University at San Marcos. During 2003-2006, he served as a Visiting Fellow at the Yale Center for International and Area Studies. Giorgio Davide, Mr. Boggio is a researcher in the International Relations Department at San Francisco State University.) "Sanctions, Deterrence, Regime Change: A New Look at US‐Iran Relations," Wiley Online Library, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/mepo.12661, 12-7-2022] TDI

The fact that sanctions may have limited Iranian support of Hezbollah, for example, to $700 million rather than $800 million annually is academic. The organizations Iran is supplying are used to operating as insurgencies, with limited financial means against technologically superior state forces. Hamas and the al-Quds Brigade are not planning on purchasing atomic submarines or aircraft carriers, and it is abundantly clear that they are able to operate as intended with their current budgets. The argument that sanctions are preventing these organizations from being better armed and more effective than they already are seems weak, in light of the fact that Hezbollah is already the world’s best-armed nonstate actor, and newer Iranian allies like Ansar Allah (the official name of the Houthi movement) in Yemen have no shortage of small arms and ordnance.58 Iran’s continued support of simultaneous major proxy battles in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon (with other minor proxies still operating across the region) indicates that the sanctions have failed to restrict forward defense from expanding in scale and intensity. Many of Iran’s allies seem to be achieving operational success, as well: Syria remains in Assad’s hands; Hezbollah is practically a military force in its own right; the Houthis succeeded in their initial uprising and only with the intervention of Saudi forces have been fought to a standstill; and Hamas is still the primary political authority in Gaza. If sanctions are not preventing Iran from arming its proxies and not preventing those proxies from achieving their objectives, how exactly are they preventing forward defense or limiting the Iran-Saudi cold war? The basic question of whether sanctions have achieved US policy goals pertaining to Iran and its involvement in the region is answerable with a resounding “no.” Four decades is abundant time to ascertain the insufficiency of sanctions as a tool to alter the behavior of the Iranian regime. But, while the Islamic Republic has weathered sanctions without a loss of strength, legitimacy, or regional operational capacity, Iranians themselves have suffered extensively, as indicated by frequent protests against the regime in recent years.

### 1AR—A/O—Lebanon

#### War causes Lebanese state collapse.

**Jones et al. '24** [(Seth G. Jones, Daniel Byman, Alexander Palmer, and Riley Mccabe, Seth G. Jones is senior vice president, Harold Brown Chair, director of the International Security Program, and director of the Warfare, Irregular Threats, and Terrorism Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He also teaches at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. Daniel Byman is a senior fellow with the Warfare, Irregular Threats, and Terrorism Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He is also a professor at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service and director of the Security Studies Program. He is the foreign policy editor for Lawfare and a part-time senior adviser to the Department of State on the International Security Advisory Board. In addition to serving as the vice dean for the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown, he was a senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution and a professional staff member with both the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks on the United States (9-11 Commission) and the Joint 9/11 Inquiry Staff of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees. Alexander Palmer is an associate fellow in the Warfare, Irregular Threats, and Terrorism Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Riley McCabe is a program manager and research associate for the Warfare, Irregular Threats, and Terrorism Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).  ) "The Coming Conflict with Hezbollah," CSIS, https://www.csis.org/analysis/coming-conflict-hezbollah, 3-21-2024] TDI

A war could dramatically raise tensions with populations across the Middle East and beyond—including in the United States and Europe—and lead to increased attacks by Iranian-backed groups against Israel, the United States, and commercial targets in the region and littoral areas. U.S. forces in the region, already facing limited attacks from Iranian-backed groups, would likely face more frequent and larger strikes. Although the economic implications of the Gaza war have been limited, an all-out war would likely have significant implications on trade, supply chains, energy prices (including oil and gas), investment, and tourism.[78]

A major war would also have significant humanitarian costs. Hezbollah’s rocket and missile systems put all of Israel under threat, and its ground forces are far more formidable than those of Hamas. Israel’s promise to devastate Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon as it has in Gaza is credible, and thousands could die in these attacks. Lebanon’s economy, already under severe strain, could collapse completely as hundreds of thousands of people are displaced and the country’s infrastructure is destroyed.

#### Ending the Israel-Hezbollah conflict prevents Lebanon from falling into complete collapse.

**Halawi '24** [(Ibrahim, Ibrahim Halawi is a Lecturer in International Relations at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is also on the editorial board of British Journal for Middle Eastern Studies.) "Lebanon on the Brink: Failing the State As War Sirens Blare," Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy -, https://timep.org/2024/01/11/lebanon-on-the-brink-failing-the-state-as-war-sirens-blare/, 1-11-2024] TDI

In the absence of any meaningful policymaking and crisis management, Lebanon’s traditional political rivals have been filling airtime by bickering about Hezbollah’s involvement in the war and by continuing to blame each other over the political and economic paralysis. But underneath the noise, there is anticipation by traditional sectarian political elites, who have lost much of their legitimacy as they failed to address the overlapping economic and political crises, that Hezbollah’s defining role in the war might eventually mean political and economic rewards (read spoils) for Lebanon. There is a belief among Lebanon’s political elites that a regional settlement that ends the war and builds the foundations of some degree of long-lasting peace could help end the country’s current stalemate. Usually, a peace settlement comes with financial and political incentives for warring parties. So, both Hezbollah’s allies and rivals in Lebanon are anticipating a prize for calm on the Lebanese front. Whether they publicly agree or disagree with Hezbollah’s activity, the hope among the elite is that this could be the last straw before Lebanon’s financial and political crises are taken care of by external actors whose objective would be a long-term ceasefire on the Lebanese-Israeli borders.

IN REALITY, AND IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY MEANINGFUL POLITICAL LIFE, DECENTRALIZATION HAS BECOME A EUPHEMISM FOR CARTEL-LIKE GOVERNANCE OF THE COUNTRY’S REGIONS

Some anti-Hezbollah actors, particularly some of the traditional Christian parties, want the prize to include redrawing of the Lebanese regime in a manner that mainly separates their regions from Hezbollah’s. In that pursuit, they are advocating different versions of decentralization, and floating ideas of confederalism and federalism. Some are more serious about it than others. In reality, and in the absence of any meaningful political life, decentralization has become a euphemism for cartel-like governance of the country’s regions. With the central state’s inaction, local authority is up for grabs for those with guns and money. A dragging banking crisis meant that economic activity became increasingly in cash, and politically-backed trading companies for strategic imports—fuel, food, medication, and gas—became de facto monopolies in their respective sectarian strongholds, colluding with traditional political elites in these areas.

This, in turn, is an attractive environment for money laundering. Those who want to launder their money seek expensive (and value-stable) assets, such as cars, yachts, luxury brands, and cigars. A report from Statista’s Consumer Insights on spending habits in 2022 found that the Lebanese spent the most on cigars per capita in the world at $36.70, over a dollar more than those living in the United States. A similar trend is emerging for yachts, luxury cars, luxury services, and fashion. It is no surprise that some of Italy’s most notorious mafiosi are showing up in Lebanon.

The distortions resulting from the way these crises have been handled are not just increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. The current war led to a sudden increase in consumption (and economic activity more broadly) in certain parts of the country where the war is not expected to reach, and where tens of thousands of residents in South Lebanon were displaced to. This is inflating regional variations. Consequently, this war’s concentrated impact on South Lebanon is already contributing to a gap in socio-economic realities between the south and the north. South Lebanon, particularly towns and villages within close proximity to the borders, has seen significant displacement, and consequently, economic stagnation. Tens of thousands of people moved out of their villages, either renting in other villages and cities, or staying with family members in other areas.

The diaspora factor

If it were not for the investments, remittances, and seasonal visits of a disproportionately large diaspora, Lebanon’s economy would be in a significantly worse position. Millions of expats are young skilled workers who only found reasonably waged jobs overseas, and end up sending fresh dollars back home to their families to cover their household deficits. Some come back home in holiday seasons, contributing to the survival of segments of the country’s tourism sector.

This dynamic has existed for decades, but after the economy shrank drastically, diaspora’s contribution became more than half of the country’s GDP. As a result, every holiday season is tailored for, and priced for, the visiting diaspora, squeezing the local middle class even further in the process. The private sector keeps coming up with marketing and advertising campaigns to lure more expats, and sell both locals and diaspora the illusion of normalcy to encourage more consumption in what remains a heavily import-reliant economy. In this sense, seasonal tourism has contributed to the country’s readjustment to economic collapse, and its shift toward dollarization (at the expense of its local currency) and cash (at the expense of its banking sector).

Bleak prospects

Those who lived through the Lebanese civil war between 1975 and 1990 reiterate that, despite the difficulties and the tragedies, there was a collective sense that when it all ends, there will be a better time. This is not the case today. The Lebanese people, including the youth, have no hope for a better future. None of their struggles today can be seen as meaningful in the long term, except maybe that of Hezbollah. Hezbollah and its large support base across the country continue to find meaning in their fight against Israel. For them, the losses they have incurred up to this day have materialized in the liberation of South Lebanon from Israel in 2000, and an unprecedented peace since 2006.

WITH THESE MULTIPLE AND OVERLAPPING CRISES, AND THE APPROACHING WAR SIRENS, WHAT IS LEFT OF THE LEBANESE STATE IS ON THE VERGE OF DISINTEGRATION

However, Hezbollah’s base, much like the rest of society, has been suffering from the country’s many crises, and, in various ways, are worried about how this round of fighting will unfold in the midst of all the other crises. Although their party, much like other sectarian parties, provides quasi-state services, it does not make up for the shrinking national economy and ailing state.

With these multiple and overlapping crises, and the approaching war sirens, what is left of the Lebanese state is on the verge of disintegration. The ruling elites are banking on a regional plot twist which would include a solution for Lebanon; yet, they are standing against time, an increasingly desperate population, and unpredictable war outcomes. In the meantime, the country remains afloat thanks to its cash dollar activity, constantly topped up by its large diaspora. However, increasingly organized and consolidated criminal economic activity, some of it legalized under the pretense of mitigating the crises, uses this uncertainty to fortify the political and economic elites’ position. When the dust settles, there will be little left of the state.

## 1NC

### 1NC—Enforcement CP/Deterrence DA

#### Sanctions fail due to lack of enforcement—the CP stops Iranian aggression throughout the region.

**Blas '24** [(Javier, Journalist for Bloomberg covering energy and commodities.) "The US Should Enforce, Not Increase, Iranian Oil Sanctions," Bloomberg, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2024-04-23/the-us-should-enforce-not-increase-iranian-oil-sanctions?embedded-checkout=true, 4-22-2024] TDI

Impossible? Well, of course. The reality is that China simply rebrands every barrel of Iranian crude it imports as Malaysian — the easiest and cheapest way to defy US sanctions, according to oil traders. It isn’t a small matter: “Malaysia” was China’s fourth-biggest foreign oil suppler last year, behind Saudi Arabia, Russia and Iraq1.

Smuggling Oil

Officially, Chinese imports of Malaysian oil have surged to an all-time high over the last few months, but in reality, oil traders say it's re-branded Iranian crude

\*\*Figure Omitted\*\*

Source: Bloomberg calculations based on Chinese custom data; IEA

US lawmakers, frustrated with the White House’s passivity, are trying to force President Joe Biden into action. On Saturday, the US House of Representatives passed the Stop Harboring Iranian Petroleum Act, known as SHIP. The Senate is expected to approve the same legislation shortly, with a first vote on Tuesday. Because it’s tied to long-delayed aid packages for Ukraine and Israel, the White House has said it won’t veto the bill.

The truth is, the US doesn’t need new sanctions on Iranian oil — it needs to enforce the ones it already has. For the last several years, either the White House has turned a blind eye to surging Chinese purchases of Iranian oil, with Biden seeming to be more concerned about rising oil prices than increased Iranian oil output, or the web of Chinese and Iranian obfuscation has outwitted US officials. I’m not sure which would be worse, but the result is the same: Iranian oil production last month surged to a six-year high of 3.3 million barrels a day, up 75% from the low point of 1.9 million barrels during the “maximum pressure” sanctions applied by former US President Donald Trump in late 2020.

At current prices, even after the discounts that Iran is obliged to offer, those additional barrels sell for more than $100 million a day — or about $3 billion a month. The windfall could not have arrived at a better time for Tehran, which desperately needs cash after months of street protests in 2022 and 2023, and to support its proxies in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

What Iranian Oil Sanctions?

Iranian oil production has risen to the highest level in nearly six years despite American sanctions targeting the country's energy sector

\*\*Figure Omitted\*\*

Source: Bloomberg and International Energy Agency

As much as the current system has loopholes, the new legislation has many, too. First, it won’t start applying for 180 days after Biden signs it into law. If it’s rubber-stamped by the the beginning of next month, the earliest the first sanctions can apply is a week before the US presidential election. Second, it calls for sanctions for those ports and refiners who “knowingly” deal in Iranian oil. But it allows anyone to claim innocence if they can produce paperwork that says the barrels originated somewhere else:

“… a foreign person shall not be determined to know that petroleum or petroleum products originated from Iran if such person relied on a certificate of origin or other documentation confirming that the origin of the petroleum or petroleum products was a country other than Iran, unless such person knew or had reason to know that such documentation was falsified …”

As Timm Schneider, an independent oil analyst, points out, Iran has gotten quite good at ship-to-ship transfers, using variously flagged vessels, “which could make it easier for parties to argue they did not ‘knowingly’ buy Iranian crudes.”

#### Existing sanctions have slowed but not stopped proliferation. Shifts in the regime are key.

**Arslanian '23** [(Ferdinand, Ferdinand Arslanian is an economist and research fellow for the Centre for Syrian Studies. He holds an MSc in International Finance and Economic Development from the University of Kent at Canterbury) "The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Nuclear Non-Proliferation: The Case of Iran (2005-15)," Taylor & Francis, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03932729.2023.2228679, 7-24-2023] TDI

The framework was applied to the case of Iran beginning with the faltering of nuclear negotiations in 2005 and ending with Iran singing the JCPOA in 2015. The empirical examination began with a discussion the pre-2005 baseline sub-episode in which US uni-lateral sanctions were undermined by European countries by replacing US economic engagement and pursuing diplomatic engagement, thus nullifying the causal mechan-isms through which sanctions could have aﬀected the target. The faltering of diplomacy in resolving the 2002 nuclear crisis, especially with the ascension of the hardline neo-Principalists, paved the way for the two main sub-episodes. The ﬁrst (2005-10) was insti-gated by Iran’s decision to resume its nuclear programme. This led to a shift from the original US unilateral sanctions to speciﬁc multilateral and extra-territorial sanctions tar-geting the nuclear programme and the ﬁnancial sector. In examining the pathways, the demand-side pathway shows that sanctions evasion networks strengthened the incum-bent neo-Principalists’ control over the economy as their ruling coalition was consoli-dated by the policy of ‘Petro-Populism’ which beneﬁted from high global oil prices and the redirection of oil exports. While the subsequent collapse of oil prices in 2008 undermined the dominance of the ruling coalition and created a rift within the political system, it was insuﬃcient to overthrow the ruling faction and its hard-line stance on nuclear proliferation. In examining the supply-side pathway, the targeted sanctions do not appear to have signiﬁcantly halted the progress of the programme owing to Iran’s evasive measures and Chinese assistance. Both pathways contributed towards the decision to advance the nuclear programme and produce highly enriched uranium. In the second sub-episode (2010-15), the multilateral and extra-territorial sanctions regime shifted from targeted to sectoral. Henceforth, the successful targeting of Iran’s crude oil exports, among other measures, impacted the country’s domestic politics, or its demand-side pathway, as the associated economic deterioration created a broad anti-sanction coalition that challenged the neo-Principalists and negotiated a nuclear deal once it assumed power. On the other hand, with regard to the supply-side pathway, economic sanctions slowed and increased the costs of the nuclear programme, but failed to halt its progress. In examining the relevance of the developed theoretical framework for explaining the case of Iran, the framework clearly explains the repeated interaction between the target and the sanctions regime as each milestone in the nuclear programme is met by a quali-tative change in the regime. As for the causal pathways, the empirical case shows more THE INTERNATIONAL SPECTATOR 31 evidence of the demand-side domestic politics pathway in comparison to the supply-side pathway. Solingen’s distinction between the diﬀerent responses of inward-looking and internationalising coalitions to international pressure plays a role in explaining the diﬀering responses of the Reformists and neo-Principalists. On the other hand, the broad coalition that negotiated the deal does not represent an internationalising coalition as much as it indicates the centrality of the target’s pattern of integration in the inter-national economy, with its reliance on oil exports, to its domestic system of political economy and its overall political survival

#### Biden’s inaction on sanctions allows Iran to successfully evade their effects and pursue nuclear weapons—enforcement and expanded pressure are key.

**Pletka '24** [(Danielle, Danielle Pletka is a distinguished senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. ) "Whatever Happened to Biden’s Iran Policy?," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/03/26/bidens-iran-policy-nuclear-deal-jcpoa/, 03-26-2024] TDI

THE INSTITUTE FOR Science and International Security (ISIS) regularly produces assessments on the state of Iran’s illicit nuclear weapons program. It now assesses the breakout time—the period necessary for Iran to assemble a nuclear weapon—at zero. Effectively, that means Iran has enough weapons-grade uranium to build a bomb within days, and enough to assemble six weapons within 30 days. While not confirming the ISIS figures, at the March 4 Board of Governors meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Director-General Rafael Grossi made clear the international body has very little sense of what’s happening in Iran, explaining that “the agency has lost continuity of knowledge about the production and inventory of centrifuges, rotors and bellows, heavy water and uranium ore concentrate.”

The previous IAEA board meeting, in November 2023, raised a host of concerns that remain unresolved, including Iran’s failure to share information required by international law about the presence of uranium particles at two different sites, Varamin and Turquzabad. In addition, Tehran failed to provide clarifications about IAEA questions raised even earlier—answers Iran had promised to provide in a March 2023 agreement. Rather, the regime chose in September 2023 to expel previously allowed nuclear inspectors in a process called de-designation. While the regime has characterized the decision as retaliation against European countries for sanctions (the inspectors in most reports specified that only German and French inspectors were de-designated), according to a European official, a Russian expert with specialized familiarity with advanced centrifuges was also ousted.

Notwithstanding the advances in Iran’s nuclear weapons work, and its decision to enrich uranium to 60 percent (in violation not only of its obligations under the JCPOA, but also under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, or NPT), there has been no formal statement from the Biden administration that its previous policy is dead. Former Pentagon official Colin Kahl told Congress in testimony in February 2023 that there was “still the view that if you could resolve this issue diplomatically and put constraints back on their nuclear program, it is better than the other options. But right now, the JCPOA is on ice.” Privately, Biden was even more forward, telling a woman who attended a rally in November 2022 that the Iran nuclear deal was “dead.” When Iran special envoy Robert Malley was suspended from his position for still-unclear security violations, it appeared that all hopes for rejuvenating the Iran nuclear deal were dashed.

With the cratering of Biden’s wish for a new or better Iran deal, most expected a resumption of the sanctions regime that had been in place before Biden’s election. But that didn’t happen. Instead, most of the steps taken when Biden took office in 2021—like the lifting of a terrorism designation for Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis (reimposed in early 2024) and relaxed sanctions on violators of U.S. oil sanctions on Iran—remained in place.

A bipartisan letter sent earlier this year by U.S. Sens. Marco Rubio, Maggie Hassan, and over a dozen other senators called for the renewed enforcement of oil sanctions:

Iran is now exporting on average more than 1.4 million barrels of crude oil per day, two-thirds of which ends up in the People’s Republic of China. From February 2021 to October 2023, the regime has taken in at least $88 billion from these illicit oil exports. Iran is deriving significant economic benefits from pervasive sanctions evasion, with Iran’s economy growing by four percent annually and net foreign currency reserves also increasing by 45 percent from 2021 to 2023.

Though the Biden Treasury Department has continued to impose sanctions against Iran for a variety of human rights, missile, and proliferation transgressions, for the most part oil and LNG sanctions, particularly against China and Chinese-linked purchasers, have been thin and ineffective. Few can point to a decisive reason Team Biden is allowing Tehran to rake in the cash, and the National Security Council has denied that the White House is giving Iran a pass. “The United States has maintained strict compliance with all Iran related sanctions and has not lifted any sanctions, any allegations to the contrary are false,” a spokesperson for the National Security Council told the Wall Street Journal.

Nonetheless, robust Iranian oil exports to China continue without sanction. Perhaps the Biden administration still has hope for some sort of agreement to restrain the nuclear program; perhaps fears of an oil price spike in an election year are driving Treasury’s reticence. Or perhaps the Biden administration now worries that its inattention to the problem has given Iran escalation dominance—meaning that it now has to treat Iran as a de facto nuclear power.

#### Sanctions are targeted and effective---pressure forces Iranian compromise.

**Hook 19** --- Special Representative for Iran, Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of State, U.S. Department of State.

Brian H, 12-12-2019, "A Conversation With Brian Hook," Council on Foreign Relations, https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-brian-hook

 This is a speech that has been some time coming. And I want to discuss the economic impacts of our maximum pressure campaign by examining Iran’s economy, the regime’s government budget, its access to foreign exchange reserves, and the role that corruption plays in Iran’s economy. More than one year after the re-imposition of American sanctions, the United States is depriving this regime of historic levels of revenue. Because of our pressure, Iran’s leaders are facing a decision they have not confronted seriously since the 1980s: Either negotiate and compromise or manage economic collapse.

The Islamic Republic’s economy shares many of the same features as a corruption racket. The revenue schemes and shadow financial networks that the supreme leader oversees enrich the regime’s ruling class while undermining opportunity for everyone else. These networks divert resources away from the people and fund a range of illicit and destabilizing activities from terrorist groups in Lebanon, to proxy wars in Yemen, to threatening ballistic missile and nuclear programs.

Unprecedented American sanctions are exposing this regime’s corruption and exploiting structural deficiencies in its financial networks. Our sanctions are meaningfully targeting the revenue streams the clerics rely on to foment sectarian violence, suffering in Iran, suffering in the region, and, because Iran has conducted terrorist operations across five continents, around the world. Iran’s leaders bear responsibility for how they choose to spend the Iranian people’s money, and for the state of their nation’s economy, and the stagnation of the Iranian people’s livelihoods that result.

Iran’s clerics have had four decades to build an economy based on transparency. Yet, they have deliberately chosen to take a different path. They instead use the nation’s economy as a bank to finance their revolution and expansionist foreign policy, thereby exposing it to our financial pressure. Iran’s economy is opaque by design. There is a reason reformers in Iran too often find themselves cast out or incarcerated. The clerical establishment prefers the current system to meaningful changes that would benefit its own people.

Recently the clerics derailed efforts to adopt international anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing standards that would bring transparency to Iran’s banking sector. To almost every country in the world these standards are normal and commonsense. But Iran’s leaders view them as unnecessary and imposing. They continue to resist transparency because they know it will expose the regime to real scrutiny, which would conform—which would confirm what we already know, that the regime uses the Iranian economy to finance and spread its violent revolution and to make the regime elite wealthier.

This is partly why President Trump re-imposed sanctions on Iran, to deprive the clerical rulers of revenue and to disrupt their financial networks. When he did, many experts said that by acting alone the United States could not and would not bring sufficient pressure to bear on this regime’s economic interests. They also said our sanctions would cause protests against the United States as the Iranian people rallied around the flag and the regime. These experts were wrong. The sanctions we have imposed on the regime are the toughest ever and they are making an enormous difference. Sanctions on Iran’s oil sector are at the core of our economic pressure. And for as long as we were in the Iran nuclear deal we were unable to impose oil sanctions.

This regime has relied on oil more than any other export to support its destabilizing activities. Our sanctions on Iran’s oil sector, which were only fully imposed in May, have driven Iran’s oil exports to levels not seen since the onset of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980. Iran’s oil exports have decreased by more than two million barrels per day, driving down Iran’s oil—revenue from oil by more than 80 percent. This amounts to a loss of more than $30 billion per year, with a total loss likely exceeding $50 billion since May of 2018.

Since Iran can no longer find legitimate buyers for its crude oil, it is turning increasingly to evasive practices such as falsifying documents and turning off maritime AIS transponders for its tankers. This strategy will fail to make up for its declining exports. The United States is working closely with nations and industry to educate the maritime and energy sectors about Iran’s evasive practices and potential exposure to U.S. sanctions, if they fail to do their diligence. We are raising awareness of best practices and encouraging entities to adopt appropriate controls to avoid sanctions risks. As we have said, if we see any sanctionable activity, we will take action.

Iran is also running out of options to store the oil it is unable to export. This has forced the regime to shut in its production and increase the amount of crude oil and condensate it sends to refineries and to petrochemical facilities. The regime is hoping to compensate for the fall in crude exports by increasing its output of refined products. But here too our enforcement is adapting, and we are confident that Iran’s refined product and petrochemical sectors—customers will continue to stay away once they are made aware of the risks.

Even as Iran tries to increase its exports of refined products, the regime is facing significant logistical constraints. Iranian tankers are increasingly being used as floating storage, making them unavailable to transport refined products to begin with. Our sanctions are also restricting Iran’s investment in its oil and gas sector, which will have a lasting impact beyond the immediate loss of revenue from the reduction in imports. Both upstream and downstream investments in Iran’s oil and gas sector have stopped. Foreign investments have almost entirely pulled out of Iran due to the risks. Billions of investment has been lost.

While domestic Iranian companies are taking over some of the projects left behind, they are not able to replicate the role of more experienced international oil companies and investors. As time goes on, the impact of our sanctions on Iran’s energy sector will continue to increase. Iran will not be able to make the investments it needs to maintain long-term energy production. The longer the regime chooses to reject diplomacy, the greater the impact will be on its future oil and gas production and revenues.

The decline in energy exports is an important place to start this discussion because it is having a profound impact on the regime’s ability to continue business as usual. The effects have been most pronounced in three key areas: Iran’s economic growth, the regime’s annual budget, and its access to foreign currency. So I’ll first talk about the economy. Last year in 2018 Iran’s economy contracted by about 5 percent. This year Iran’s economy will likely shrink by at least 9.5 percent, according to the IMF. This would be the steepest single year decline in more than thirty years. Some analysts have projected an even steeper contraction, possibly as high as 12-14 percent.

This would put the Iranian economy on the verge of a depression. The IMF and World Bank’s projections place Iran’s economy as the third worst in the world, behind Libya and Venezuela. However, the assumptions underlining even these dismal projections may be optimistic. The IMF has assumed that Iran will average oil exports of six hundred thousand barrels a day. This vastly exceeds Iran’s oil exports since May and is beyond what Iran will export under our sanctions. The IMF and others have repeatedly revised down their growth projections for Iran over the course of the last year. This will almost certainly happen again.

Inflation has also increased and is currently running at 40 percent overall. This is affecting the price of essential household goods significantly. To make matters worse, while Iran manages an official exchange rate the parallel open market exchange rate shows over 50 percent depreciation since May of 2018. The large gap between official and open market exchanges creates corrupt arbitrage opportunities that well-connected importers exploit for private gain. Yet, when ordinary Iranians seek to purchase foreign goods with their weakened currency they are now paying a steep premium.

Iran’s declining growth is having ripple effects throughout the country. Pension funds are coming under increasing strain. Of the eighteen existing retirement funds in Iran, seventeen are in the red. As Iran’s elderly population continues to grow and employment stagnates, these funds will come under greater pressure. Many analysts have compared the current economic decline under this regime’s watch to prior round—to the prior round of sanctions imposed before the nuclear deal was finalized in 2015. However, Iran’s recession today is far worse than it was in 2012. That is when its economy contracted by 6 percent. The more appropriate comparison, as the data suggests, is the opening phase of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980 to 1981, which severely disrupted Iran’s oil production and exports.

Second thing I’d like to discuss is the low—how the low exports are putting unprecedented pressure on the regime’s government budget. Due to the staggering loss of oil revenue, it is nearly impossible for the regime to put forward a credible budget. Oil export revenues typically comprise at least 30 percent of Iran’s revenues. Our sanctions are bringing this figure closer to zero percent. After initially assuming oil exports would average 1.5 million barrels of oil a day in fiscal year 2019, the regime later revised this figure down to only three hundred thousand. It is surprising then that the draft budget released just this month for Iran’s next fiscal year assumes oil exports will average around 1 million barrels per day. This is fantasy. It is an unrealistic forecast. Iran’s budget proposal is so off base that it spooked the Iranian market. The rial hit a six-month low against the dollar shortly after Iran released its government budget.

Iran has attempted over the past year to respond to budget shortfalls by cutting spending and resorting to stopgap measures to raise additional revenue, which it very much needs. These include raiding its sovereign wealth fund, issuing even more domestic debt, attempting to privatize additional state assets, and slashing subsidies. Recently Iran’s financial desperation forced the government to raise gasoline prices in an effort to save money and to increase exports. As the protests last month demonstrated, it will be difficult for the regime to implement further subsidy cuts without sparking even greater frustration among Iranians.

So where will the regime find the money? It would make more sense for the regime to close the revenue gap by plugging holes to tax collection from Iran’s wealthy elite, or by expanding the tax base to include religious and IRGC-linked holding companies that dominate Iran’s economy, and yet pay no taxes. The regime is choosing instead to shift the burden onto the middle class. The regime must also grapple with how to keep its subsidized industries afloat. Iran is one of the most heavily subsidized nations in the world. More than 70 percent of Iran’s budget expenditures are allocated to underperforming state-owned enterprises which make up the bulk of Iran’s economy. And audit by the Supreme Audit Court for 2016 to 2017 that—showed that 162 of 377 state-owned enterprises were, quote, “economically unviable.” The real number is likely much higher.

This suggests that as Iran’s oil sector shrinks the Iranian regime will be unable to continue subsidizing its vast sector of underperforming non-oil industries, just as it is struggling to subsidize gas prices. The government is running out of emergency measures to take or off-budget funds to raid. Moving forward the regime will be less and less able to respond to continued pressure. No creative number-crunching can change the fact that this regime’s coffers are running dry. Short-term fixes will only exacerbate inflation and do nothing to address the structural deficiencies in Iran’s economy. If the regime insists on continuing to divert resources to fund terrorist activity or ballistic missile development ultimately it will be forced to choose between printing money or delaying spending on development, salaries, and benefits.

The Iranian people have been demanding for a long time that the regime stop investing in wars and terrorism abroad and start spending more money at home. Now is an opportunity for the regime to do that, or the regime will face greater pressure from its own people. The recent protests were costly for Iran’s economy. The regime’s unprecedented decision to shut down the internet for a week also created losses for the economy as high as $700 million in e-commerce sales and missed business opportunities.

Last thing I’d like to put—take a look at is the access to foreign exchange reserves. As exports decline the third major impact on the regime has been reduced access to foreign currency. The regime is already struggling to acquire the foreign currency it needs to procure imports such as machinery, industrial imports, and consumer goods—industrial inputs. Prior to the re-imposition of sanctions Iran relied on oil exports for around 50 percent of its foreign currency earnings. Much of the remainder came from petrochemicals, metals, and refined petroleum products. All of these exports are now subject to sanctions.

According to U.S. government analysis, Iran currently has around $100 billion in foreign exchange reserves. Of that, only 10 percent is immediately accessible to Iranian authorities. That is $10 billion. Many exports—many experts have failed to appreciate the difference between reserves and access to reserves. That difference is $90 billion. Given the current sanctions on all of Iran’s top revenue-generating exports, this is simply not sustainable for the regime.

The fact that Iran’s access to foreign currency is declining is all the more dire given last year’s collapse in the rial’s value. The rial has fallen over 50 percent at the market exchange rate since May of 2018. Iranian authorities may be compelled to spend reserves to prevent further depreciation as pressures mount on the rial, even as the regime is increasingly seeking to protect its dwindling accessible foreign currency reserves. By the end of October, Iran’s commerce ministry had banned the import of over 1,500 goods, ostensibly to reduce pressures to spend foreign currency.

Today the Iranian economy has devolved into a kleptocracy which protects the privilege of regime elites while leaving the vast majority of Iranians behind. Although Iran’s clerics promised economic prosperity and social equality after the revolution in 1979, the Iranian people know all too well that neither have been delivered. Massive clerical hedge funds—there aren’t many religious leaders who have a hedge fund—massive clerical hedge funds or so-called charitable foundations worth tens of billions of dollars are just one aspect of Iran’s dark economy. Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has its tentacles in nearly every sector of Iran’s economy.

This is despite a strong declaration from the regime’s first supreme leader, who cautioned that the IRGC should stay out of politics and the economy. Quite the opposite has happened. After forty years, the autocratic rule of the ayatollahs is proving to be an economic catastrophe for the Iranian people. It has robbed Iranians of what should have been decades of progress and prosperity. To summarize, exports are down, the economy is in deep contraction, the budget is facing unprecedented pressures it cannot fix, and access to foreign reserves is minimal.

Most importantly, however, the Iranian people have had enough. Hundreds of thousands of them took recently to the streets in one of the largest protest movements in the Islamic Republic’s history. This followed an unexpected hike in gasoline prices. In cities around the country Iranians joined to demand accountability, reform, and transparency. Many were killed. Many were injured. And many were jailed. The supreme leader dismissed the protesters as “thugs,” which tells you something about how the regime elite think of their own people. But the real thugs are the security officials who fired on unarmed protesters and committed massacres.

The Iranian people understand better than most that their government’s policies are the root cause of Iran’s economic stagnation. When the Iranian people peacefully demand a better life and a more representative government, they are mowed down and brutally silenced. The Iranian people view their government with skepticism and deep frustration. The regime has simply lost all credibility. Again, it has only itself to blame. The Islamic Republic rewards corrupt officials more often than it punishes them.

Our sanctions are exploiting these structural deficiencies to deprive the—to deprive the regime of revenue. We are exposing this regime’s corruption, revealing its gross mismanagement, and we are holding accountable those privileged insiders who have, for decades, profited off the backs of the proud Iranian people. We very much hope that at the end of this economic sanctions—this economic pressure campaign and diplomatic isolation that the regime will start making better choices.

When the president let the Iran deal, Secretary Pompeo gave a speech announcing our new policy. And he made very clear that Iran faces a choice. And this is a year—this is in May of 2018. The regime can either come to the table and negotiate or it can watch its economy collapse. And the supreme leader has chosen collapse. And we very much hope that we can get to the negotiating table with the regime. We have made clear that if we can conclude an agreement that addresses all of Iran’s threats to peace and security, that we will submit it as a treaty to the Senate. We will end all of our sanctions. We will restore diplomatic ties with Iran and exchange ambassadors and welcome them into the international community.

But the agreement has to come first. And in the meantime, we know that this regime is weaker, and its proxies are weaker, today than when this administration came into office three years ago. We recognize that diplomatic isolation and economic pressure is very much—it’s a—it is a necessary response to this regime. We tried sanctions relief and the regime exploited that and, during the period of the Iran nuclear deal, was able to run an expansionist foreign policy with impunity. So we are very pleased with the progress that we are making. We very much hope that we can get to an agreement, and end the sanctions, and welcome Iran into the international community. Thank you.

### 1NC—Regime Change CP

#### CP Text:

The United States should covertly

* Increase financial support for political dissidents from the Islamic Republic of Iran
* Increase funding for Iranian trade unions and striking workers

The United States should

* Significantly increase public campaigns highlighting the human rights abuses and corruption of the Iranian government targeted at people currently living in Iran.
* Expand and enforce sanctions on Iran’s entire financial sector and pressure SWIFT to expel all remaining Iranian banks.
* Require auditors certify financial statements of any company doing business with Iran
* Increase efforts in Syria to obstruct a “Land Bridge”
* Induce Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE to cooperate on developing shared early warning systems and missile defense systems

#### That solves Iranian aggression and successfully changes the regime.

**Edelman and Takeyh '20** [(Eric, ERIC EDELMAN is Counselor at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and Senior Adviser at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He served as U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy from 2005 to 2009. Ray, RAY TAKEYH is Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.) "The Next Iranian Revolution," Foreign Affairs, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2020-04-13/next-iranian-revolution, 4-13-2020] TDI

Although Iran is brimming with dissidence, no coherent resistance movement has emerged. Washington cannot create one, but by overtly weakening the regime and covertly aiding forces inside Iran that can foment popular demands for change, the United States can help the currently disconnected strands of opposition to consolidate. Washington should seek to further drain Iran’s economy, invite defections from the ranks of the regime’s enforcers, and surreptitiously enable those who dare to challenge the regime. But it cannot go any further than that: regime change itself—that is, the removal and replacement of the theocracy—must be undertaken by the Iranians themselves.

Adopting the goal of regime change will not be terribly costly, but it will require a stepped-up program of covert action to aid those elements within Iranian civil society that are contesting the regime’s legitimacy. Chief among those are professional syndicates, such as labor unions and teachers’ unions, which have gone on strike to protest government policies and actions, and student groups, which have organized protests on college campuses. Purged reformers routinely write open letters protesting the regime’s abuses, and they have continued to do so in the aftermath of the crackdown on demonstrations. Last November, from under house arrest, the Green Movement leader Mousavi published a statement on the website Kaleme.com in which he compared the regime’s conduct to an infamous massacre conducted by the shah’s troops in September 1978. Also in November, the reformist former president Mohammad Khatami, whom the regime has tried to silence, denounced the crackdown, writing on Instagram that “no government has the right to resort to force and oppression in confronting protests.” These powerful messages were widely reported by international media outlets and reposted on social media. But it is difficult to assess how many Iranians were aware of them, since the government actively blocks Internet access. That is why it is essential for the United States to supply the regime’s critics and opponents with technology and software that they can use to evade censorship, communicate with one another, and get their messages out.

\*\*Image Omitted\*\*

Crowds gather​ to witness Khomeini​’s return to Iran from exile i​n Paris, Tehran, Iran, March 1979

Reza / Camera Press / Redux

Such covert technical assistance is critical, but it is not the only way that Washington can help foster opposition. Direct (but secret) financial support must also play a role. Iranian trade unions should be a particular focus of U.S. efforts. During the Iranian Revolution of 1979, strikes carried out by oil and transportation workers were essential to paralyzing the shah’s regime. In recent years, steelworkers, truckers, bus drivers, railway workers, teachers, and sugarcane workers have called strikes to challenge the current regime. By secretly channeling funds to groups that could carry out similar strikes, the United States can further cripple Iran’s economy.

In addition to taking such covert steps, Washington should make adjustments to its public diplomacy regarding Iran. U.S. officials should take every opportunity to highlight the regime’s human rights abuses and to warn that violators—especially those involved in the use of force to repress popular protests—will be held accountable by the international community when there is a new order in Iran. At the same time, Washington should stress that any member of the Iranian regime who wishes to defect will be guaranteed sanctuary in the United States. The CIA should establish a mechanism for contacting and extracting all who wish to leave. Even a small number of defectors can sow distrust in the system, forcing the security services to constantly look for unreliable elements among its ranks and conduct periodic purges. This would hamper operational efficiency by eliminating some cadres on whom the security services rely and creating distrust and suspicion in the state’s apparatus of repression.

Beyond such policies and official rhetoric, the United States must do more to overcome the regime’s propaganda by making accurate information and honest analysis available to the Iranian people. Currently, Washington spends $30 million a year on Farsi-language media outlets run by the U.S. Agency for Global Media, including Radio Farda and Sedaye America, which offer news and entertainment programming via radio, television, and the Internet. According to the agency, this programming reaches nearly a quarter of all Iranian adults. The U.S. government should augment that effort by openly funding radio and television programming created by Iranian exiles living in the United States. And although traditional forms of media are important, the U.S. government could bring even more attention to the regime’s corruption and economic mismanagement by using Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, and other social media platforms to highlight specific instances of graft and name the regime insiders responsible for them.

UNDER PRESSURE

Aiding dissidents inside Iran is only half the battle, however. To weaken the regime’s grip on the country and create an opening for other forces to take power, the United States must also expand the Trump administration’s highly successful campaign of “maximum pressure” against the Iranian economy. Critics of the Trump administration were quick to dismiss the plan, insisting that unilateral sanctions would not do much to strain Iran’s finances. But they overestimated the willingness of foreign corporations to risk their ability to do business in the United States. Even though the governments of their home countries have not sanctioned Iran, firms such as the French energy company Total, the German manufacturing conglomerate Siemens, and the Danish shipping giant Maersk have stayed out of Iran in order to avoid Washington’s sanctions. Going forward, the United States should blacklist Iran’s entire financial sector, pressure the global financial messaging platform SWIFT to expel all remaining Iranian banks from its network, fully enforce all sanctions on Iran’s non-oil exports (including petrochemicals), and require auditors who certify the financial statements of any company doing business with Iran to adopt stiffer due diligence measures.

The United States must also increase the price that Iran pays for its military adventurism in the region. The strike against Soleimani was an important first step toward directly imposing costs on Iran rather than merely targeting its proxies. Iran’s meddling has already made it vulnerable to blowback in places where its proxies have wreaked havoc. In Iraq in recent months, people have taken to the streets in huge numbers to protest Tehran’s overweening influence. Outrage over Iran’s long reach has also driven recent protests in Lebanon, where many are fed up with Hezbollah, the militia and political group that Iran backs. Washington should capitalize on Tehran’s failing fortunes in the region by aiding the forces that are standing up to Iran—including by providing financial support via covert means, if appropriate—and by using naval and air assets to interdict the flow of Iranian military supplies to the regime’s proxies.

The need to intensify the pressure on Iran should also inform U.S. military strategy and posture in the region. The United States should maintain a small military presence in Syria to observe and obstruct Iranian efforts to convert Syrian territory into a “land bridge” through which to supply its proxies. And Washington should encourage Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates to cooperate on developing shared early warning systems and defenses against the cruise missiles and medium-range ballistic missiles that Iran would likely deploy in any conflict with its neighbors. Steps such as these would further weaken the Iranian regime by thwarting its bid for military dominance in the region, neutralizing the value of some Iranian military investments, and imposing additional costs on the country.

#### Iranian fundamentalism drives inevitable proliferation and war with Israel—only changing the regime solves.

**CGSRS '19** [(CGSRS | Centre For Geopolitics & Security in Realism Studies) "Nuclear Iran and the potential threats to the stability of the Middle East," https://cgsrs.org/publications/38, 2019] TDI

Many academics believe in the viability of nuclear deterrence theory were Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. As per this theory, the effectiveness of deterrence as ‘a way to restrain your opponent’s action by having a credible and adverse consequence’ derives from the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), versus military strategy ‘in which the use of WMD results in the complete devastation of both sides because the aggressor state will experience an inevitable [..] second strike’ (Mehreen, 2013: 10). Born from the experience of nuclear tensions between the US and the USSR, the evidence of ‘the relationship between nuclear proliferation and deterrence’ has instilled the belief that nuclear-balancing is the inevitable outcome of nuclear rivalries (Yoshihara& Holmes, 2012: 17). Accordingly, some academics argue that the same dynamics would apply were Iran to surpass the nuclear threshold. John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz are the main advocates of this argument. In their view, the greatest surprise is not that Iran will acquire nuclear capabilities, but that such balancing behaviour has emerged after forty years of Israel’s uncontested nuclear supremacy in the region (Waltz, 2012). Agreeing that the real cause of instability is the ‘absence, and not the presence’ of a nuclear power able to counterbalance the ‘Israeli nuclear monopoly’ (Idem), Mearsheimer and Waltz conclude that a nuclear Iran would be beneficial for the Middle East. Specifically, Waltz stresses that to date deterrence has worked 100% of the time, and that a nuclear Iran would behave no differently than nuclear states have over the last fifty years (Sagan, Waltz and Betts, 2007). Similarly, Mearsheimer, talking of WMD as ‘weapons of peace’, argues that their acquisition would prompt Iran to act with moderation, reinforcing the possibility of  a ‘more peaceful ’ Middle East (Mearsheimer&Zakheim, 2012). Yet, application of nuclear deterrence theory to the case of a nuclear-armed Iran could be more difficult than is suggested.

Indeed, the neorealist argument is flawed by its anachronism, manifested in the attempt to apply a theory modeled on Cold War dynamics to a totally different geopolitical situation (Bluth, 2004). Moreover, considering the difficulty of finding regular patterns in international relations, the conviction that predictions about the future can be made on the basis of just thirty years of history further weakens the solidity of this interpretation. However, the biggest difficulties emerge when evaluating the applicability of the neorealist assumption that nuclear states behave rationally. Indeed, the western notion of rationality, as the result of the calculations of the risks and benefits involved in an action, does not necessarily correspond to the Iranian case (Mehreen, 2013: 10). In harmony with the Weberian notion of value-rationality whereby ‘leaders make decisions for achieving a specific value such as an ideological, religious or psychological goal’, the Iranian concept of rationality distinguishes itself for its strong ideological connotation (Idem: 11). Observable in the words of former Iranian president Ali Akbar H?shemi Rafsanjani when, referring to the use of nuclear bombs against Israel, he concluded that ‘such an eventuality’ would ‘not have been irrational’ (Rubin, 2008). This is so because Islamic teachings exert an ideological influence on Iranian rational policy-making. Dividing the world between ‘oppressors and oppressed’, Iran’s leaders consider themselves to be invested by God to redeem ‘the Middle East for the forces of right-eousness’, thus justifying as rational all those acts aimed at accomplishing this mission (Takeyh, 2009: 2). The ideological leverage on politics has further manifested in the adoption of Mahdism as the ‘defining strategy of the Islamic Republic’, whereby believers are called ‘to wage war against unbelievers and prepare the way for the advent of the Mahdi’ (Rubin, 2008). Also, the priority of citizens’ security, another fundamental prerequisite of western-intended rationality, is not reflected in the Iranian Islamic doctrine. Instead, ‘the ambitions and values of ordinary people are subordinated to the will of God as interpreted by the supreme leader’ (Idem). As suggested by Amitai Etzioni (2012), when religious extremists die every day in the name of God,  ‘a religiously fanatical Iranian leader […] may calculate whether to use missiles or bombers […] but not whether to heed God’s command to destroy the infidels’. Though maybe too extremist in his considerations, Etzioni is correct in emphasizing the power of ideology when assessing the risks that could follow Iranian nuclearization. From this perspective, the worst case scenario would be a nuclear degeneration of the rivalry between Iran and Israel. The reiteration by Iranian leaders of their desire to eliminate Israel, intended not just as a ‘regime change’ but as its ‘actual physical destruction’. Rafsanjani’s ‘chants of Death to Israel’ and Ahmadinejad’s promise to ‘wipe Israel of the map’ witness the entrenched Iranian hatred, grounding the fears that words could concretize into catastrophic acts (Rubin, 2008). Moreover, in the case of Israel and Iran’s rivalry, nuclear-balancing could prove ineffective for material reasons. Theorists of deterrence argue that ‘peace and stability [are] possible only when the opposing powers have sufficiently large territories and populations’(Lahav, 2012). Comparing Iran’s 591,000 square miles and 79 million of people with Israel’s 8,000 square miles and 7,6 million people, the viability of deterrence theory seems even more unlikely (Idem). However, recent events suggest that in the hypothetical list of threats generated by a nuclear Iran, a direct nuclear confrontation with Israel is the least probable. Optimism in this regard comes from the latest interventions by ?yatoll?h Seyyed ?Al? ?oseyn? Kamenei. In a nine-step plan to destroy Israel published on the internet, Kamenei has stated that “the elimination of Israel does not mean the massacre of the Jewish people in the Israeli region”. Although a nine-step plan to destroy Israel itself hardly can be deemed proof of mildness, at least there has been no specific reference to nuclear bombing intentions (in Winer&Newman, 2014).

Overall, if Iran’s ideology and its territorial superiority clash with the postulates of nuclear deterrence theory, it also should be recognized that recent statements by Iranian leaders show an apparent decrease in the willingness to resort to a nuclear confrontation. Yet, considering the ideological radicalism and the ambiguity surrounding Iranian intentions, one should be very cautious when gauging and making predictions about the future. ‘Deterrence works; until it doesn’t’ says Lawrence Friedman, a truth that should not be underestimated (The economist, 2015).

### 1NC—High Oil Prices Good

#### Sanctions removal cause global prices to decline.

**Katzman '11** [(Kenneth, Dr. Kenneth Katzman is a senior analyst of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Persian Gulf Affairs at the Congressional Research Service, which conducts research and analysis for the US Congress. His responsibilities include analyzing regional developments and US policy to assist members of Congress in their legislative and oversight responsibilities.) "U.S.-Iranian Relations:: An Analytic Compendium of U.S. Policies, Laws, and Regulations on JSTOR," The Atlantic Council, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03553, 02-11-2011] TDI

Iran’s gains from the lifting of the economic restrictions are largest in per capita terms, resulting in an increase in per capita welfare of 3.7 percent or slightly more than $17.7 billion in total (in 2011 US$). The gain stems mainly from the lifting of the EU oil embargo and the liberalization of cross-border trade in financial and transport services, each of which contributes 1.6-1.7 percent to per capita welfare or about $8 billion, while the reduction in trade costs adds less than a half of a percent to per capita welfare or $2 billion. Figure 2. The effect of Iran’s EU oil embargo removal on global oil supply & demand Price Quantity Note: In the model, the supply function has the curvature associated with the underlying CES function. Net oil importers gain while net oil exporters lose as the world price of oil declines by about 13 percent due to the additional amount of oil sold on the global market. The relatively sizable price decline in response to a fairly small change in the oil supplied can mainly be attributed to the inelastic oil demand and supply. The addition of Iranian oil will shift the global oil supply outwards, lowering the global oil price in the absence of a demand shift (Figure 2).

#### Iran sanctions are key – the ability to waive them to save oil prices matters

Mullaney 18 (Tim Mullaney; CNBC Writer; <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/07/13/risks-rising-that-oil-prices-will-cause-next-recession.html>; 7-23-18)

Oil gained more than 20 percent in the first half of 2018, and odds have been rising that higher crude oil prices will spark the next economic downturn. This should not come as a surprise for any investor who is a student of market history: The last five U.S. recessions were also preceded by a rise in oil prices. In July 2008, even when the Federal Reserve was still betting that it had a handle on the economy, Warren Buffett warned that “exploding” inflation — whether in the price of oil or steel — was the biggest risk to the U.S. economy. “Quickly rising oil prices have been a contributing factor to every recession since World War II,” said Moody’s chief economist Mark Zandi. Odds of a 2020 U.S. recession have risen to 34 percent, from 28 percent before this year’s spike in crude oil, Moody’s stated in a report. President Donald Trump’s tax cut, a deal on Capitol Hill to boost government spending, and a flattening of the difference between short- and long-term interest rates also are contributing to the elevated recession risk. “My recession odds for 2020 have significantly increased since late last year,” Zandi said. Oil seesawed in trading on Monday after President Trump’s tweet about Iran added to a geopolitical catalysts for oil. It started trading strong but trailed off by the end of the day. Recent swings in the price of oil — especially early last week, when Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said some buyers of Iranian oil may be given extra time before sanctions hit, and Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed working together to regulate oil prices — show that the oil trade remains vulnerable to a downturn. Sanctions against Iran, reimposed as Trump repudiated his predecessor’s deal to halt Iran’s development of nuclear weapons, is playing a major role in crude oil prices. In late June the Trump administration signaled that oil buyers must stop buying Iranian crude by November, and shortly after, Trump said he had a deal with the Saudis to increase production, though doubts remain about the Saudis’ ability to increase production by as much as 2 million barrels. In June figures reported last week, Saudi production was up by 500,000 barrels as it tries to tame the recent growth in crude oil prices. But the Saudis also have also said they cannot raise oil production above that level this month. Earlier this month, Sanford C. Bernstein made a call that crude could reach $150 a barrel over the next several years. On Monday, as the U.S. and Iranian leaders ratched up their war of words, some analysts contended that oil could reach $200 a barrel if Iran shuts down the Strait of Hormuz or takes military action. The case for a short-term surge in crude prices is that the Trump sanctions would remove much, even all, of Iran’s 2.2 million barrels per day from a global market of just less than 100 million daily barrels, at the same time the global economic expansion has demand growing 1.7 percent annually, according to Bjørnar Tonhaugen, head of oil markets at Oslo-based consulting firm Rystad Energy. The market is already struggling with the loss of as many as 700,000 barrels a day of Libyan crude, and more from Venezuela, as those nations struggle with outdated or malfunctioning production systems and internal political turmoil.

#### Low prices destroy Chinese foreign investment

Tao ’16 (Wang Tao – PhD in Environmental Economics @ the University of York, Nonresident scholar in Carnegie’s Energy and Climate Program base at the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center for Global Policy. “WILL LOW OIL PRICES DESTABILIZE THE WORLD?” 20 January 2016, http://www.newsweek.com/will-low-oil-prices-destabilize-world-417885)

Counterintuitively, China, as the world’s largest oil importer, is not applauding the current low oil price. It is true that low oil prices could mean large savings for China in terms of oil imports, but Beijing’s non-transparent pricing of domestic oil products increased discontent among the public when China’s price adjustment of gasoline failed to follow international trends. Chinese citizens dismissed the government’s excuse of protecting the environment, despite three air pollution red alerts in Beijing in four weeks at the end of 2015. The low oil price has made many of China’s overseas oil investment projects uneconomical, like the oil and gas import contracts that China’s national oil companies signed recently. In the case of Venezuela, where China has invested billions of dollars and still holds dozens of billions of dollars in unpaid loans, the risk to the governing regime and to China’s assets is accumulating at a worrying rate.

#### That causes Chinese lash out and global war

Tweed ’15 (David Tweed – Hong Kong based report for Bloomberg, editor for Bloomberg Europe, “Five Million Reasons Why China Could Go to War.” 15 June 2015, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-06-15/five-million-reasons-china-may-be-drawn-into-foreign-conflicts)

With five million citizens to protect and billions of investment dollars at stake, China is rethinking its policy of keeping out of other countries’ affairs. China has long made loans conditional on contracts for its companies. In recent years it has sent an army of its nationals to work on pipelines, roads and dams in such hot spots as South Sudan, Yemen and Pakistan. Increasingly, it has to go across borders to protect or rescue them. That makes it harder to stick to the policy espoused by then-premier Zhou Enlai in 1955 of not interfering in “internal” matters, something that has seen China decline to back international sanctions against Russia over Ukraine or the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. As President Xi Jinping’s “Silk Road” program of trade routes gets under way, with infrastructure projects planned across Central Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East to Europe, China’s footprint abroad will expand from the $108 billion that firms invested abroad in 2013, up from less than $3 billion a decade earlier. That is forcing China to take a more proactive approach to securing its interests and the safety of its people. With more engagement abroad there’s a risk that China, an emerging power with a military to match, is sucked into conflicts and runs up against the U.S. when tensions are already flaring over China’s disputed claims in the South China Sea.

#### Oil and gas key to Canadian economy – contributes both directly and indirectly to the rest of the economy

* 8 percent of Canadian GDP & tax revenue
* Direct contributor through employment
* Indirect contributor through links to other industries

Globerman and Emes 19, Steven Globerman is a Resident Scholar and Addington Chair in Measurement, Professor Emeritus, Western Washington University and Joel Emes is a Senior Fellow at Fraser Institute, 5-7-2019, "Investment in the Canadian and U.S. Oil and Gas Sectors: A Tale of Diverging Fortunes," Fraser Institute, https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/investment-in-the-canadian-and-us-oil-and-gas-sectors-a-tale-of-diverging-fortunes, HKR-AT

The **oil and gas industry is critically important to Canada’s economy.** **It accounts for almost 8 percent of Canada’s GDP,** as well as for a significant share of the tax revenue collected by governments. The oil and gas sector is particularly important to the provincial economies of Alberta and Saskatchewan. It accounts for almost 30 percent of Alberta’s GDP and slightly over 23 percent of Saskatchewan’s GDP. As such, the economic health of the oil and gas sector is a direct contributor to employment and economic activity in Western Canada and an indirect contributor to the rest of the domestic economy through links to industries that supply inputs to the sector, as well as use the outputs of the sector. The upstream segment of the oil and gas sector encompasses exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas. It is the single largest segment of the oil and gas sector, which also includes midstream gathering and pipeline facilities and downstream refineries. The oil sands account for almost two-thirds of Canada’s oil production. Since activity in the mid and downstream sectors will ultimately reflect the production of crude oil and natural gas in the upstream sector, the willingness of companies to explore for and produce oil and gas in Western Canada dictates the pace of economic activity throughout the industry’s total supply chain. A sharp drop in the world price of crude oil in 2015 and 2016 hurt the profitability of upstream oil and gas companies in both Canada and the US. However, while economic activity in the US upstream segment increased substantially with a modest recovery in crude oil prices in 2017 and 2018, investment in Canada’s upstream segment as a share of total capital expenditures in Canada declined consistently from 2014 through 2018. While total capital expenditures in Canada declined post-2014, the decline in capital expenditures for oil and gas extraction was even more pronounced. Thus, while capital expenditures for oil and gas extraction accounted for approximately 28 percent of total Canadian industrial capital expenditures in 2014, oil and gas extraction accounted for only 14 percent in 2018. Investment analysts and portfolio managers have recently warned that investment in the oil and gas sector is moving increasingly to the US and away from Canada, and that they are reluctant to invest their clients’ savings in Canadian oil and gas companies. An unfavourable business environment for oil and gas exploration and production in Canada is cited as the reason, particularly compared to the business environment in the US. A number of Canadian oil and gas companies have also reallocated their exploration budgets away from Western Canada to the more profitable shale oil producing regions of the United States. In the absence of changes to Canadian government policies affecting the sector, relatively low prices for Western Canada crude oil as well as depressed profitability of Canadian oil and gas companies are likely to continue. As a consequence, the ongoing shift in the location preferences of North American oil and gas companies towards the US might well intensify with drastic consequences for the fiscal health of the Alberta and Saskatchewan governments. While limited pipeline capacity is the major factor depressing the price of Canadian heavy crude oil, more favourable tax and regulatory environments in the US compared to Canada are also contributing to the diversion of upstream oil and gas investments from Canada to the US. By way of illustration, whereas capital expenditures in the upstream segment were around 41 percent higher for the US when comparing 2018 to 2016, they were only about 15 percent higher in Canada. An investment manager in the United Kingdom recently wrote a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau saying that it was hard for her to watch a vibrant Canadian oil and gas industry being strangled by regulation, carbon taxes, and the inability of producers to get their products to world markets. Recent investment patterns in the North American oil and gas sector support this sentiment.

#### Strong economy key to Canada’s global influence

Tilson 14 , MP, Ottawa Journal

(David, “Federal government promotes Canada’s global leadership,” 7-9-14, DOA: 12-29-14, <http://www.newspapers-online.com/caledon/?p=8477>, ava)

Canada is positioned to be a strong and credible voice on key issues in our global community. Our prominence and global influence on the world stage continues to grow under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In a time of global economic uncertainty, our government has prioritized Canada’s economic recovery and resulted in significant measures of economic success. With the creation of more than one million net new jobs since the depth of the global recession, we have the best job growth record among all G7 members. Our government’s investment in jobs, growth and long-term prosperity has enhanced the resilience of the Canadian economy, our economic credibility and in turn demonstrated to the international community that Canada is a great place to invest. Our government has remained focused on pursuing an ambitious and balanced trade agenda that will help Canada’s economic recovery and ensure long-term prosperity. In October, our government reached a free trade agreement with the European Union, a historic accomplishment for Canada’s trade relations. It will boost Canada’s economy by $12 billion annually — the equivalent of 80,000 jobs — and Canadian businesses will have preferential market access to the EU’s half a billion consumers. We also reached an agreement for free trade with South Korea, which is expected to help grow our economy by $1.7 billion per year. In addition to increased jobs and economic activity, expanding Canada’s free trade agreements also provides hard-working families more choice at a lower cost for everyday household goods. We are also working to maintain and build on all of Canada’s bilateral relationships. While in Malaysia, Prime Minister Harper signed a declaration of intent to conclude a new tax agreement between Canada and Malaysia to help promote trade and investment between the two countries. In an increasingly global community with shared concerns, our government is also committed to helping ensure the safety and security of Canadians and our interests abroad. While in Malaysia, Prime Minister Harper renewed our commitment to enhance security cooperation between the two countries for the safety of all our citizens. Prime Minister Harper also announced Canadian support for four projects that will strengthen Malaysia’s ability to counter international crime, human smuggling, and organized crimes. These projects build on what we’ve already done in the global community to help combat money laundering, terrorist financing, corruption, tax evasion and other crimes. Canada’s growing prominence on the world stage has also afforded us the opportunity to take a leadership role within the international community to address issues of human rights and equality, while promoting Canadian values of freedom, democracy, and rule of law. Our government introduced the Office of Religious Freedom to promote Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance in our global community. The Office is working with like-minded partners to raise awareness and develop policies and programs to protect religious minorities under threat, to oppose religious hatred and to promote tolerance. Prime Minister Harper has also demonstrated real leadership in addressing the health challenges and disadvantages faced by women, infants, and children in the poorest of countries, in launching the Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health with G8 countries in 2010. Thanks to the Muskoka Initiative and subsequent global action, maternal and child mortality rates are declining. However, there is still more work to be done. Canada hosted the Summit on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. Through this Summit, we are accelerating our health initiatives and continuing to push this issue into the forefront. Indeed, our government announced that Canada will be providing an additional $3.5 billion in funding for various projects to help children and mothers in the developing world. As we strengthen ties and promote economic prosperity, Canada is positioned to lead on the world stage and promote Canadian values. Our government is delivering on the priorities of Canadians.

#### Solves hotspot escalation and war

Towsend et al 13, Policy Research Initiative @ Canada@150

* Esp w/ US lack of credibility

(Thomas, “Canada’s Place in a Changing Geopolitical Landscape: Leveraging our Comparative Advantage,” Policy Horizons Canada,7-8-13, DOA: 12-28-14, <http://www.horizons.gc.ca/eng/content/canada%E2%80%99s-place-changing-geopolitical-landscape-leveraging-our-comparative-advantage>, ava)

As we look ahead to 2017, factors such as the rebalancing of powers on the international stage and the increasing influence of non-state actors are leading to a world that is, if nothing else, more complex and unpredictable. The confluence of known and unknown drivers of change may lead to unanticipated upheavals in the global order. Drivers such as climate change, resource scarcity, and demographics will challenge conventional geopolitical thinking in the coming decade. Similarly, poverty, pollution, and pockets of disaffected populations will fuel resentment and possibly extremism and violence. As diasporas find themselves increasingly co-localized, cultural, linguistic, religious, and socio-economic differences may stress established commons.1 There is a perception that Canada punches above its weight inter nationally.2 This will not necessarily be the case in the years to follow as the shifting geopolitical landscape may no longer support Canada’s privileged position. Looking ahead to 2017, Canada needs to be cognizant of the changing patterns of engagement, power, and security to assess implications for our country and its place in the world. Fine-tuning Canada’s relationship with the United States will continue to be a priority in 2017 in terms of inter alia trade, security and international engagement. The establishment of an Arctic balance of power will drive Canada’s involvement with circumpolar nations in light of climate change and sovereignty concerns. Canada will need to protect its position as a resource provider amidst competitors such as Russia, Brazil, and African countries, while ensuring the sustainability of its natural capital. Meanwhile, it will also need to deepen its economic and diplomatic ties with nations representing major future consumer demand, like China and India. Canada will need to contend with limited resources and its middle power status when addressing domestic and foreign challenges. These resource constraints affect not only the issues that Canada must address but also how the Public Service organizes itself to do so. This will mean making some difficult choices and acting strategically to leverage our comparative advantages where they exist. Canada should focus on areas where we are most likely to have an impact or in areas that are most important to our safety and prosperity by identifying the opportunities in global trends for Canada to strengthen its position internationally. Analytic Scope Our paper will focus on Canada’s place in a changing geopolitical landscape. We will examine Canada’s comparative advantage and how it can be levered in the years leading up to 2017. The Arctic, domestic security and international trade policy are being addressed by other papers in canada@150 and those issues will not be examined them here. We will target three thematic areas: international security, global governance, and relations between Canada and the United States. The approaches suggested in this paper are not mutually exclusive. Considering that Canada’s public service must evolve and organize itself to ensure that it can effectively represent Canadian interests on the world stage, we present two ideas for changes that will allow Canada to respond quickly and effectively to international events. These approaches will help to create a public service that is ready to address complex multi- stakeholder issues. Trends in violent conflict over the past 20 years warrant cautious optimism that traditional wars will continue to decrease in frequency and intensity as the international community maintains an active engagement in intervention and post-conflict peace-building activities.3 In 2017, however, the underlying causes of political and social instability and, as a result, of violence, will certainly remain. Factors such as climate change, poverty, and resource scarcity could lead to an increase in the prevalence of fragile states and the severity of conflicts. Fragile and conflict-affected situations pose a significant threat to Canada’s security and development interests.4 Canadian engagement in these states has traditionally involved modest interventions in peacekeeping and humanitarian aid.5 This focus has shifted with a more robust combat mission in Afghanistan. The decision to focus resources in Afghanistan has resulted in the mission being one of Canada’s main sources of geopolitical influence, increasing our standing among allies.6 Canada will face sustained pressure to contribute to the global security burden. NATO and the United Nations will look to Canada’s capacities to accept roles within larger strategic missions in conflict zones. Canada will also continue to be called upon by other domestic and international stakeholders to support humanitarian and peacekeeping interventions. Canada will be well placed for future interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states, having developed valuable expertise in Afghanistan, Sudan, Haiti, and a myriad of other countries over the course of the past 15 years, as well as an improved ability to work inter-departmentally towards security, diplomatic, and development efforts. Many lessons have also been learned, including the need for: improved planning capacity towards a long-term vision; interdepartmental agreement and buy-in on a single mandate; and focus to avoid spreading ourselves too thinly. Improved foreign intelligence capacity will also be vital to improve Canada’s planning capacity in this area.

### 1NC—Saudi Prolif

#### Saudi proliferation is good. It restores Middle East stability without runaway arms races.

Mickelson, 23 [Mickelson, D., 2023. Nuclear Peace in the Middle East: The Realist Case for Saudi Nuclearization. Flux: International Relations Review, 14(1).] TDI

Having established Saudi Arabia’s security concerns and goals, it is now crucial to define how the acquisition of nuclear weapons would simultaneously achieve KSA’s strategic objectives and **stabilize** the Middle East. The theoretical crux of this argument relies on Waltz’s Nuclear Peace Theory (NPT), which emerged as a realist argument to explain international peace in the wake of the Cold War. He notes that peace comes from **interdependence**, but while neoliberals attribute this to integrated financial markets and constructivists to the collective shift of combat norms, the possibility of mutually assured destruction was a nuclear war to ensure **de-incentivizes** nations with nuclear capabilities from attacking each other (Waltz 2000, 24). Waltz notes that realism is often **misunderstood** as the endless pursuit of power instead of state behaviour placing primacy on **self-interest** (ibid, 28-32). Possessing WMDs enables nations to exert influence for improved fiscal and diplomatic arrangements, utilizing the threat of their military capabilities to gain these “non-traditional” realist concessions (ibid). This theory is further proven by Rauchhaus, who notes that direct conflict between states is greatly reduced when **both** states have nuclear weapons (Rauchhaus 2009, 271).

The condition of **N**uclear Peace Theory aligns perfectly with Saudi foreign policy. The focus on soft power, achieved through resource superiority, would allow KSA to continue extending its **economic and diplomatic advantages**, while nations, seeing a strategic disadvantage, would be too **afraid** to retaliate. Traditional **N**uclear **P**eace **T**heory dynamics would also parallel those currently existing between **Iran** and **Saudi** Arabia, as each nation opts to pursue conflict through patronized **nonstate actors in anarchic states** instead of direct conflicts (Harrison 2021). However, there are a few counterarguments against the stabilizing effects of this weapon in the Middle East.

The first is derived from Waltz’s philosophy, which argues that regional polarity is a determiner of regional stability. He states that unipolar systems tend to produce the most unstable international systems, as all nations have a clear rival with which to balance power, and the hegemony is forced to overextend its resources to defeat rivals (Wohlforth 1991, 5). A nuclear Saudi Arabia, given its economic power and political presence throughout the region, could easily be construed as becoming a Middle Eastern hegemon, which would be especially contentious given the vast array of constructivist ethnic, religious and political rivalries throughout the region. In fact, a sudden concentration of power could prove extremely destabilizing, as the region has not had a singular, clearly defined military power since Egypt in the 1950s and mid-1960s (IEMed 2014). Due to the multitude of identities present in the region, as well as the large number of strategic/ commercial interests for international actors, any hegemon would be destabilized not only by powerful actors within the region trying to power balance but also through attempts by hegemonic international actors seeking to maintain their space within the global power system.

This counterargument, however, ignores two key principles. First, if Saudi Arabia nuclearized, it would **not** be the only power in the region with nuclear weapons, as Israel has allegedly possessed them since the 1960s. Saudi Arabia attributes the 20th-century instability of the Middle East to this **unilateral** nuclear imbalance, and thus, its acquisition would move the Middle East away from a unipolar nuclear system towards one in which **multiple powers** are able to **balance** each other (Bahgat 2006, 427). Second, KSA’s nuclearization is **conditional** on Iran’s development of nuclear weapons, rendering the Gulf regional ecosystem multipolar, as well as the larger Middle East-North Africa region (Sabga 2020). Saudi nuclearization would create a **multipolar system** wherein both Shi’ites and Sunnis possess the atomic bomb.

The second counterargument is based on Rauchhaus’ findings that while NPT is true in the case of two nuclear powers, possessing WMDs increases the likelihood of conflict in situations of asymmetrical power (2009, 271). He notes this through the stability-instability paradox, wherein the power imbalance between nuclear and non-nuclear states enables the former to default into force more frequently without fear of retaliation and wherein wars have higher levels of fatality due to the devastating weapons used by the non-nuclear side to balance power (ibid, 260). This argument, however, is based on data accumulated mostly through the framework of traditionally **powerful states** exerting power either during the Cold War or in subsequent NATO conflicts and fails to account for how **localized regional asymmetry** affects the use of force (ibid, 264-5). In this case, a good counter-example is France, which, despite having many **non-nuclear** nations in its proximity, has been **less likely** to engage with states forcefully than before the acquisition of nuclear weapons, which can be at least partially attributed to this military development. As such, while the point may hold up given the fractious modern history of the Middle East, there is precedent for asymmetric nuclear imbalances not resulting in increased violence through a **strictly regional context**.

There is a fear that Saudi Arabia’s acquisition of nuclear weapons would **lead others** in the region to do the same. The theoretical basis of this argument originates from the region’s ambiguous polarity, whereby other prominent nations, such as Egypt, the UAE, and Turkey, may **fear** their loss of influence in the region and pursue the acquisition of nuclear weapons to **compete** with Saudi Arabia’s power and influence (Crail 2008, 40). Guzansky notes that Sunni countries threatened by Saudi nuclearization will increase their nuclear activity, encouraging Iran to entrench its program (Guzansky 2022). Each nation has its own legitimate reasons to be threatened by Saudi nuclearization and the capabilities to create its own nuclear programs.

First, Egypt must be considered a regional power due to its undisputed status as the regional hegemon during the mid-20th century and its immense soft power in the Arab world. The trend of power dynamics during the latter half of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries saw Egypt’s power wane whilst Saudi Arabia’s grew. This loss of power can be attributed to two narratives. First is the waning of Arab nationalism, which lent credence to Egyptian power through its association with Nasser and its effectiveness in fighting the “Zionist” threat. As of late, this philosophy has been supplanted by political Islam, most notably through the Muslim Brotherhood, which has centered KSA, the home of Sunni Islam, in political discourse. The second was Egypt’s maiden peace treaty with Israel, which went against Middle Eastern ideals for a united Arab front against Israel (Quandt 1986, 357). Egypt’s close diplomatic relationship with the United States further delegitimized its standing as a regional leader, causing its standing within the Arab community to diminish (ibid). Utilizing the realist framework on which this paper is built, Egypt is unlikely to cede its position to Saudi Arabia as the region’s leader without a fight (Ross 2005, 63), following the Peloponnesian War principle wherein a rising power challenges a hegemon (Bagby 1994, 134). Additionally, Egypt already has the infrastructure to begin a nuclear weapons program due to its experimentation with nuclear energy to desalinate water (Crail 2008, 40).

However, it is unlikely that Egypt will pursue nuclear weapons for three reasons. First, the premise of a **Peloponnesian paradigm**, in the context of Egyptian and Saudi power structures, ignores the case of Saudi Arabia becoming the **predominant** Arab power in the region. It would be doing so by having been the region’s predominant “soft” power for a long period, and it would be entering a multipolar system, not a unipolar system led by Egypt. Second, Egypt’s diplomatic relationships with the US, Saudi Arabia, and Israel would be negatively impacted by its development of a nuclear weapons program. US-Egyptian relations rely heavily on the military aspect of having a **close friend** in the Arab world. The possibility of nuclear conflict or escalated hostility between them and fellow American ally Saudi Arabia would likely lead to a **reduction in foreign aid**, on which the Egyptian economy strongly relies. Meanwhile, KSA is responsible for sending defence materials to Egypt under its Palestinian support strategy, so conflict would place Cairo at a **strategic disadvantage** (Bahgat 2006, 426). Finally, due to its geographical proximity with **Israel**, known for its proclivity towards unilateral strategic action against Arab nuclear programs, Egypt would be putting itself at risk of **Israeli retaliation**. There is also the counterargument that Egypt has constantly advocated for global denuclearization, championing the destruction of all Middle Eastern WMDs in 1990 and co-sponsoring a UN resolution to ban nukes earlier in the century (Glaser 2015). However, Iran was also a champion of this resolution, so the changing norms of the region call this anti-nuclear precedent into question (ibid).

Turkey also has sufficient infrastructure to begin a nuclear weapons program and may choose to pursue one to reaffirm its growing economic presence and regional influence (Crail 2008, 40). This expansion of influence is especially relevant given the increased military presence of Turkey in anarchic states such as Syria, whereby Erdogan has been a massive patron of rebel groups and deployed Turkish forces in Northern Syria, recently launching ground attacks of its own after attacks from Kurdish militias (BBC 2022). However, Turkey is unlikely to acquire nuclear weapons due to its **NATO membership**, which, according to its guiding foreign policy principles, is a key element in **Turkish National Military Strategy** (Yazigioglu 2019). NATO membership allows for a nuclear sharing program, which means that Turkey **cannot develop** its own nuclear weapons but that it will be protected by America’s nuclear umbrella in the event of an invasion (ibid). As such, Turkey is unlikely to develop nuclear weapons.

Finally, of the three nations mentioned earlier, the **UAE** has the most **robust** nuclear program as it possesses the Arab world’s first fully functional nuclear reactor, Barakah (Sabga 2020). It also holds a coveted 123 Agreement with the United States, which allows for the bilateral sharing of civilian nuclear components, materials, and know-how (ibid). Nuclear energy specialists question the use of nuclear fission for decarbonization in a region far more suited to cheaper solar energy, prompting questions of whether this program may serve a dual, militaristic purpose (ibid). However, this statement ignores that these treaties with the US have **strict provisions** concerning the violation of the arrangements which stop **uranium enrichment** and the reprocessing of **spent fuel**, which could have disastrous economic and **diplomatic** consequences. As such, the UAE is unlikely to be caught up in a regional nuclear cascade (ibid).

The most **prominent** nation which must be considered in nuclearization is the **U**nited **S**tates. In the context of Waltz’s world system, the US arguably leads a unipolar system, and as such, any nuclear program that **threatens** that country’s **position** in the international order may be met with **retaliation** (Wohlforth 1999, 6). The US has **three strategies** to **minimize** this threat. These include diplomatic strategies using treaties like **NPT** and the **Budapest Memorandum** to limit proliferation, military intervention as seen in the Second Gulf War, and economical means like the current **sanctions** on Iran and North Korea. However, in the case of Saudi Arabia, there are definite arguments as to why nuclearization **may not lead to intervention** from the US.

First, there is precedent within the **M**iddle East whereby the US begrudgingly **allows** allies to develop nuclear weapons to defend against **existential threats**. Israel is alleged to have **developed nuclear arms** in secret even after norms against nuclear weapons were established, and non-proliferation treaties were added to international law (Wilson 1991, 8). This is also true for **India** and **Pakistan**, which established their nuclear programs after the introduction of NPT (ibid).

All three of these nations are **crucial** American allies and **justified** their development through the existential threat of hostile neighbours (Bahgat 2006, 442). Saudi Arabia could easily argue the same due to the new **Gulf Security paradigm** and the low odds of surviving a direct attack from **Iran**. There is a caveat to this argument: none of these nations ratified NPT, whereas KSA has (ibid, 423). However, due to their role in **OPEC** and active hostility from Iran and Russia, sanctions are **unlikely** to be overly punitive to mitigate the risk of a global **energy crisis.**

This caveat factors into the second point that Saudi Arabia’s economic relationship with the US **prevents** any massive retaliation from taking place. Saudi Arabia holds undue economic influence due to its role as the world’s **largest oil supplier**, shielding itself from financial retaliation from international institutions. With its role in this economy becoming even more important, given the interruption of Russian pipelines during the current war on Ukraine and the need for American industrialization to compete with China during its ongoing trade war, sanctions are unlikely to be overly punitive (BBC 2022; Huang 2021). In many ways, **the US cannot afford to prevent Saudi nuclearization.**

Third, under the Peloponnesian understanding of unipolar systems, America is likely to be **challenged by China’s** rising power and, as such, requires **more forces** to combat Beijing’s emerging threat. Therefore, America needs to **remove** or reduce its **military presence** in the Middle East, where it currently spends an **exorbitant amount of resources** and manpower to remedy conflicts throughout the region (Kessler 2022). A strong military and **nuclear ally** in the region would **reduce the need** for direct involvement in such countries **such as Syria**. The close relationship shared with Saudi Arabia would allow America to do this, especially as the absence of strong allied forces to combat backsliding has led to disasters in disengagement from Iraq and Afghanistan. This point of American regional disengagement is actually threatening to Saudi Arabia, which views US military cooperation in the region as crucial to its foreign policy goals (Bahgat 2006, 430). As such, MBS could use the prospect of taking the lead as an American military proxy in the region to **improve** American economic and diplomatic relations further.

In conclusion, **a nuclearized Saudi Arabia would**, from a theoretical perspective, **restore relative balance to a multipolar regional system in which a nuclearized Iran existed.** It would likely not cause a further cascade throughout the region, nor **would it interfere with Saudi Arabia’s own foreign policy goals** in regard to the United States. However, in practice, there are many reasons to suspect Saudi Arabia will not pursue nuclearization, which are outside the scope of this paper. However, for the purposes of this essay, a nuclearized Saudi Arabia would be not only a possibility but a positive force in regional MENA politics.

#### No Saudi prolif.

Albalawi 23 – Doctoral Researcher in the International Security Department at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, M.A. in Conflict Resolution from the University of Jordan, B.S. in Nuclear Engineering with a focus on Nuclear Safety and Security from the Jordan University of Science and Technology

Almuntaser Albalawi, “Why a WMD-free zone in the Middle East is more needed than ever,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 04-10-2023, https://thebulletin.org/2023/04/why-a-wmd-free-zone-in-the-middle-east-is-more-needed-than-ever/

For the past two decades, Saudi Arabia has shown interest in nuclear energy and sought cooperation with major exporters of nuclear power technology. Recent updates about the Saudi atomic project show progress on human resources development, regulatory frameworks, and preliminary studies for nuclear power projects. However, the country has no substantial nuclear-related infrastructure, not even a research reactor.

Speculation about Saudi Arabia seeking the bomb are built on three observations. First, the Kingdom refuses to follow the UAE’s “gold standard” by signing the 123 agreement and giving up the right to enrich uranium. As part of its nonproliferation policy, the United States demands that partners sign the agreement in exchange for receiving the technology and nuclear materials needed for nuclear energy projects. Saudi Arabia’s hesitance to sign the agreement could be a red flag. Still, enriching uranium is a sovereign right that many countries with clean records of peaceful nuclear activities have.

Second, a 2020 report on secret cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia on uranium mining and extraction brought more attention to the Saudis’ activities. Saudi Arabia’s ambitions to develop its own nuclear fuel for peaceful and commercial purposes have been no secret. While this is a legitimate right granted under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the history of nuclear secrecy makes some states doubtful. Yet it is essential to recognize that the product of uranium mining and extraction, yellow cake, is produced commercially in over 20 countries worldwide, and it is a long way from weapons-grade uranium.

Finally, Saudi Arabia has yet to sign the International Atomic Energy Agency additional protocol, which allows the agency to search for undeclared nuclear activities. In principle, Riyadh does not reject the protocol, as it already has a safeguards agreement in force with the agency since 2009. But Saudi Arabia has little reason to sign the additional protocol, given that its nuclear activities are minimal.

None of these observations prove that Saudi Arabia is seeking the bomb. In the absence of technical expertise and basic nuclear infrastructure, Saudi Arabia is far from acquiring nuclear weapons.

### 1NC—Turkish Prolif

#### No Turkey prolif – security arguments are all hype, A5 solves, and multiple capability hurdles.

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If we put arguments about “intentions” to one side, no material evidence indicates the possibility of Türkiye establishing a nuclear weapons capability. The country simply does not have the technical capacity to support nuclear weapons development, and has long been a party to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, Türkiye has been awarded an IAEA “broader conclusion” since 2012, meaning that the IAEA has completed a holistic examination of the country’s entire nuclear infrastructure and programme and confirmed that the country is adhering to all norms and standards indicating that its nuclear efforts are being designed solely to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.36 Thus, the recent discussions about Türkiye’s alleged possible future development of nuclear weapons seem to be based on political motivations rather than on the facts confirmed by regular IAEA inspections. As Varnum states, “this perspective emanates almost exclusively from US and European policymakers and analysts, whose assessments of Türkiye’s policymaking are often heavily influenced by mirror- imaging” (i.e. projecting their own mindsets onto Turkish policymakers).37 In theory, a propensity for nuclear proliferation is defined by a simple equation that requires not only the intent to acquire nuclear weapons, but also the capability to do so.38 Even though the assessment of intent might vary, the issue of capability is easier to assess, because it is based on material facts, i.e. the capability of a country’s nuclear infrastructure and its possession of delivery systems. In this regard, Türkiye lacks the necessary infrastructure for uranium mining and milling, conversion, enrichment, and fuel fabrication to produce an indigenous supply of nuclear weapons materials.39 In addition, while Türkiye has been investing in missile technology to target possible threats and reinforce its defence against a ballistic missile attack with a robust intelligence-gathering capability dependent on space-based and unmanned systems, the country’s missile capabilities seem to be aimed at providing better defence against regional missile proliferation, and are not designed to provide it with a nuclear- capable delivery system.40 Furthermore, the new Turkish approach to accessing nuclear energy has been based on the BOO approach, in terms of which ownership of nuclear power plants will remain in the hands of the suppliers responsible for their construction and operation. The Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant – the first BOO nuclear project in the world – will be operated and owned by Rosatom. In addition, Türkiye has concluded fuel guarantee and take-back arrangements under which Rosatom supplies the fuel and takes back spent fuel, thus leaving no possibility to divert it for non-peaceful uses. When the BOO model and Türkiye’s relevant infrastructure, including delivery systems, are combined with the country’s international commitments, such as the IAEA Additional Protocol, Türkiye’s nuclear plans are clearly proliferation-resistant.41 In short, Türkiye does not have the material capability to implement a nuclear weapons development programme nor the intent to initiate such a programme. President Erdoğan’s criticism of the global nuclear order has been referred to as a sign of intent. In that speech Erdoğan had simply stated that nuclear weapons should either be forbidden or permissible to all states of the world in terms of Article VI of the NPT. He was therefore calling out Western states’ failure to treat Türkiye equally.42 Additionally, nuclear weapons are very unlikely to bring additional security to Türkiye. On the contrary, any attempt to pursue a nuclear weapons programme will severely damage the country’s interests and its reputation as a reliable international partner, resulting in its isolation in the international arena and even opening it up to the possibility of interventions that might include not only economic sanctions, but also a possible military intervention. Türkiye is currently passing through a domestic and international political juncture in which its relations with the United States and European Union are in decline. Nevertheless, the country’s security policies still align with its historical approach to external security threats, which does not indicate a decision to pursue its own nuclear weapons capability, because it is more practical for it to continue relying on NATO’s extended deterrence and to reinforce its conventional defence capabilities.43

### 1NC—Iran Prolif

#### Iran doesn’t want the bomb and sanctions don’t influence their motivations.

**Monshipouri and Boggio '22** [(Mahmood, Mahmood Monshipouri is a professor of International Relations. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 1987. He has taught at the University of Georgia, Central Michigan University, Alma College, Quinnipiac University, Redlands University, and California State University at San Marcos. During 2003-2006, he served as a Visiting Fellow at the Yale Center for International and Area Studies. Giorgio Davide, Mr. Boggio is a researcher in the International Relations Department at San Francisco State University.) "Sanctions, Deterrence, Regime Change: A New Look at US‐Iran Relations," Wiley Online Library, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/mepo.12661, 12-7-2022] TDI

The only area in which progress is apparent is in the containment of Iran’s development of nuclear armaments. However, powerful motivations beyond the effects of sanctions motivate the regime to curtail its weapons programs voluntarily. Iran’s security is not necessarily guaranteed by progress toward atomic weaponry. Israel and the United States have both established a precedent of preemptive strikes against even suspected possessors of WMDs, and the Iranian regime has surely taken the ultimate fate of Iraq into consideration in tempering its weapons programs. Explicit development of the nuclear program might also trigger escalation of the Saudi-Iranian cold war, with the Saudis falling back on their apparent nuclear agreement with Pakistan to officially (or implicitly) arm themselves if Iran presents itself as a fully nuclear state. Neither scenario is conducive to Iranian security interests, especially as it has mostly kept armed conflict outside its borders since the end of the Iran-Iraq War. Furthermore, Iran has demonstrated the capacity to increase enrichment and centrifuge production in response to severe sanctions escalation, as occurred for a short period in response to its expulsion in 2012 from the Brussels-based Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT).50 As the world’s biggest electronic payment system, which manages most cross-border business, SWIFT’s decision to disconnect Iranian institutions blacklisted by sanctions from its messaging system struck a devastating blow to the republic’s economy. This effectively cut Iran off from the circulation of global capital and constrained the ability of the country’s citizens, corporations, and institutions to transfer assets across borders.51 SWIFT is known to be able to handle more than $6 trillion in payments daily. In 2010, it managed nearly two million Iranian cross-border transactions.52 Sanctions relief did incentivize the Iranian leadership to come to the table and build an internationally satisfactory plan of action. But sanctions relief is plainly not the only incentive for Iranian participation, as demonstrated by Iran’s continuing to follow JCPOA guidelines after the reimplementation of waived sanctions in 2018. The fact that Iran has responded to punitive measures with the implicit threat of nuclear development while responding to diplomatic measures with a commitment to international oversight should be a clear indicator that unilaterally pressuring the Islamic Republic into abandoning a nuclear program is futile. Sanctions cannot be given credit for “forcing” Iran to limit its program; it is clear that progress toward weaponization is a matter of inclination and not strictly capacity. The belief in nuclear deterrence as the ultimate form of state security does not necessarily apply to a state surrounded by forces closely monitoring it and willing to take preemptive military action against it, especially when it has a nuclear-armed ally, Russia.

#### Iran is restrained.

Robert Einhorn 23, Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy, Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, & Technology, Arms Control & Non-Proliferation Initiative, "Will Putin’s Invasion Spur Nuclear Proliferation?" Brookings, 05/24/2023, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/will-putins-invasion-spur-nuclear-proliferation/.

Tehran may decide to settle for a threshold nuclear capability — accumulating substantial stocks of weapons-grade uranium but stopping short of breaking out and using that material to fabricate nuclear weapons. It might settle for a threshold capability if it judged that its current, asymmetric conventional military strategy was succeeding.

It might also do so if it believed that having the option to acquire nuclear weapons relatively quickly would bring strategic benefits without running the risks associated with attempting to build nuclear weapons, including the possibility of a military attack against its nuclear facilities. In 2005, former Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani made the case for a threshold capability: “As long as we can enrich uranium,” he said, “we don’t need anything else. Our neighbors will be able to draw the proper conclusions.”

Alternatively, as many observers believe, Iran may not be content with a threshold capability and may decide instead to run the risks of attempting to build nuclear weapons. It might calculate that Russia and China would shield it from tough economic penalties and that domestic Israeli difficulties or U.S.-Israeli frictions would reduce the probability of coordinated military strikes.

For the time being, however, I think Iran will opt for the more cautious approach: continuing to produce a large inventory of near weapons-grade uranium; stopping short of leaving the NPT and building nuclear weapons; and preserving the option to break out at a future time of its choosing.

#### It won’t cascade.

Robinson ’16 [Todd; July 25; Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the nonprofit, nonpartisan RAND Corporation; National Interest, “The End of Nuclear Proliferation?” http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-end-nuclear-proliferation-17104?page=show]

The Problem of Prediction

The unique ability of nuclear weapons to resolve the underlying causes of insecurity has led academics and practitioners to consistently predict an impending tidal wave of proliferation; President Kennedy predicted in 1963 that there would be 10 to 20 new nuclear states by 1975, when in actuality only two unofficial nuclear powers emerged (Israel and India). Similarly, a 2004-2005 survey of proliferation threats conducted by the office of then Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), predicted that as many as seven new nuclear states would emerge by the year 2016, but there have been none.

Rather than the seven new nuclear states predicted by the experts polled in the Lugar survey, it is difficult to identify any state that, either now or in the foreseeable future, is likely to acquire or even pursue nuclear weapons. These experts might be forgiven for failing to anticipate the successful negotiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, but even assuming that Iran had gone on to acquire nuclear weapons, it is difficult to identify other dominos that would have fallen in the time frame under consideration.

The reality, rather, is that there have been remarkably few cases of proliferation and their frequency has been in steady decline for the better part of three decades, standing in stark contrast to what both academics and policy-makers routinely predicted. The data clearly shows that there have been no reported cases of nuclear proliferation in over a decade, a trend that is likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

#### No Iran prolif.

Einhorn ‘23 [Robert Einhorn; Robert Einhorn is a senior fellow in the Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Initiative and the Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology, both housed within the Foreign Policy program at Brookings. Einhorn holds a bachelor’s in government from Cornell University and a master’s in public affairs and international relations from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University., 5-24-2023, "Will Putin’s invasion spur nuclear proliferation? ," Brookings, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/will-putins-invasion-spur-nuclear-proliferation/]

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### 1NC—Iran War

#### No Iran war.

**Sharifi '24** [(Kian, Kian Sharifi is a writer specializing in Iranian affairs) "Iran Has 'So Much To Lose' In Direct War With Israel And The United States," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-war-israel-united-states-/32811113.html, 2-8-2024] TDI

Iran Has 'So Much To Lose' In Direct War With Israel And The United States

President Ebrahim Raisi (center) stands in front of Iranian missiles with other top officials last August. Since Israel launched its war in the Gaza Strip, Iranian-backed militant groups have attacked Israeli and U.S. targets across the Middle East in a show of support for Palestinians. While Iran has flexed its muscles in the region since the war erupted in October, Tehran has avoided taking direct military action against Israel and its key ally, the United States. Experts say the Islamic republic sees a direct war against its archfoes as a threat to its fragile domestic stability and its own survival. Iran has “so much to lose in a short-term war,” said Alex Vatanka, director of the Iran Program at the Middle East Institute in Washington. “[It] brings in all sorts of questions about the future of the Islamic republic.” A Matter of Survival The possibility of a direct U.S.-Iranian military confrontation increased after a Tehran-backed militia in Iraq killed three American soldiers in a drone strike in Jordan on January 29. But Tehran has struck a conciliatory tone since the attack, wary of U.S. strikes on Iranian territory. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said on February 2 that the country “will not start any war” but will respond strongly if “anyone wants to bully us.” Raz Zimmt, a senior researcher at the Israel-based Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), said that regime survival is the clerical establishment’s “top objective” and any war with Israel and the United States would be an existential threat to the Islamic republic. The Iranian establishment has had to contend with multiple domestic crises in recent years, including rising civil unrest and a faltering economy. The September 2022 death in police custody of Mahsa Amini -- detained for allegedly not properly observing Iran’s strict dress code for women -- sparked months of deadly nationwide protests that posed one of the biggest challenges to the Islamic republic in decades. Iranian Basij paramilitary force members, dressed in the style of Palestinian and Lebanese militants, portray the detention of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a pro-Palestinian rally in Tehran on October 13. The authorities cracked down on the demonstrations, killing hundreds and arresting thousands of protesters. The clerical establishment has long maintained that it derives its legitimacy from the will of the people. But that claim has been increasingly questioned in recent years. The parliamentary elections in 2020 and the presidential vote in 2021 saw record-low turnouts, with less than half of eligible voters casting their ballots in both elections. There are similar concerns about a poor turnout in the upcoming parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections scheduled for next month. The authorities have also grappled with a worsening economy that has been crippled by international sanctions and government mismanagement, leading to soaring inflation, rising unemployment, and growing poverty. “Foreign policy decisions are not directly impacted by public opinion,” Zimmt said. “Nonetheless, the regime's need to prevent needless domestic disturbances in Iran undoubtedly shapes its choices.” Military Prowess For years, Iranian military officials have bragged about the country’s arsenal of drones and missiles. But experts say Iran lacks the military prowess to challenge Israel and the United States. “Iran is well aware that Israel has a clear operational and intelligence advantage over it in a direct military conflict, both defensively and offensively,” Zimmt said. Aside from having a conventionally superior military, Israel also has a nuclear deterrent, said John Krzyzaniak, a research associate at the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control. Israel is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons, with the Washington-based Nuclear Threat Initiative estimating that Israel has around 90 nuclear warheads. Under decades of sanctions, Iran has invested heavily in developing domestic weapons programs, resulting in cheap and effective drones and missiles. Iranian officials have boasted that some of its weapons have been developed specifically to hit Israel. For example, officials have claimed that a Fattah ballistic missile can reach Tel Aviv in 400 seconds. For the time being, Iranian concerns about engaging in direct confrontation with Israel seem to outweigh its desire to exact revenge." -- Raz Zimmt, Israel-based Institute for National Security Studies But Vatanka said this is only “psychological warfare against the Israelis” and meant to “enhance the Islamic republic’s image” as the “sole guardian or promoter of the Palestinian cause.” Krzyzaniak stated that Iran’s missiles can “pose a serious threat” to Israel while its attack drones like the Shahed-136 can “wreak havoc on a civilian population” if fired in large numbers. But he said Israel still maintains military superiority. That is why, Krzyzaniak said, Iran will continue to rely on unconventional warfare and its asymmetric capabilities. “A guerrilla warrior never attacks the enemy head on,” he added. By using the so-called “axis of resistance,” Iran’s loose-knit network of proxies and militant groups who aid it in opposing Israel and the United States, Tehran “reduces the possibility of Iranian casualties and significant assets being damaged” inside the country, according to Zimmt. This allows Iran to “fight Israel through its regional partners on multiple fronts, albeit with a restricted scope,” he said. Experts say that Iran’s reluctance to avenge the deaths of at least 10 members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) in suspected Israeli strikes in Syria and Lebanon since early December further strengthens the argument that Tehran wants to avoid a war. Last month, Iran carried out missile strikes on targets in Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan that were widely seen as a warning to Israel and the United States. But Zimmt said Iran has avoided an escalation that would lead to a war with Israel and the United States. “For the time being, Iranian concerns about engaging in direct confrontation with Israel seem to outweigh its desire to exact revenge,” he added.

#### War is not inevitable

Arash Reisinezhad 23, visiting fellow of the Middle East Center at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 12/4/23, The 7 Reasons Iran Won’t Fight for Hamas, https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/04/iran-hamas-gaza-israel-regional-war/

Since its start, the war in Gaza has been thought of as potentially foreshadowing a direct conflict between Iran and Israel. Hezbollah continues to threaten to open a new front in the war, and Iranian hard-liners have welcomed their country’s direct intervention. Last month, Iran’s former foreign minister, Javad Zarif, mentioned a letter written by hard-line officials to Iran’s supreme leader attempting to persuade him to engage in the conflict with Israel on behalf of Hamas.

The likelihood of an expanded regional war, however, is low. Despite the slogans echoed by Iranian hard-liners, the reality of Iran’s strategic thinking is more circumspect. There are at least seven reasons Tehran is likely to avoid starting a war with Israel on behalf of Hamas.

First, the Islamic Republic of Iran cannot rally society to engage in a new war as it did during the war with Iraq in the 1980s. It was the relentless mobilization of human waves, among other factors, that resisted the Iraqi army and forced Baghdad to withdraw from Iran’s territory. However, several decades later, society’s support for the political system has significantly declined. Following last year’s protests, coupled with the economic crisis caused, in part, by U.S.-led sanctions, discontent among the youth and the urban middle class has surged.

Second, the moderate faction in the Iranian government has been warning against Iran’s direct intervention in the war. Indeed, the war in Gaza has deepened political cleavages in Tehran. In the threat assessment of Iranian hard-liners, the destruction of Hamas is automatically associated with the subsequent collapse of Hezbollah and, ultimately, a military attack on Iran. That is why they support targeting American bases in Iraq and Syria by Iran’s Shiite proxies. This view stands in stark contrast with that of moderate officials, particularly Zarif, who has consistently warned about the destructive consequence of Iran’s potential involvement in a war with the U.S. According to Zarif, if Iran takes a more radical stance on Gaza, it could trigger a deadly conflict with the U.S., which Israel would welcome. And despite being marginalized by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi’s government, Zarif still holds significant influence among the political elites of the Islamic Republic and even its society.

Third, Israel’s apparent failure in deterring Hamas’s attack on Oct. 7 does not alter Tehran’s strategic calculation toward Israel. Despite Israel’s reliance on high-tech defense technology like the Iron Dome missile defense system, Hamas inflicted a significant military and intelligence blow against it, thereby shattering its deterrence policy. But that does not shift Iran’s perspective on Israel or the power dynamics in the region. Though the Hamas operation rattled Israel’s long-standing credible deterrence strategy, it does not provide Iran with the opportunity to challenge Israel using missile power. Conversely, Iran may believe that Israel feels that reestablishing deterrence is an existential priority for which it’s worth taking extraordinary military or political risks.

Fourth, contrary to the conventional wisdom, neither Hamas nor even Hezbollah is Iran’s proxy; it would be more accurate to think of them as Iran’s nonstate allies. There is no top-down relationship between Tehran and Hamas. Even as Hamas aligns its actions with Iran, its approaches could diverge, as they notably did during the Syrian civil war when Hamas supported the Sunni anti-Assad rebels. American and Israeli intelligence has suggested that Iran’s top officials were not aware of the Hamas operation. In mid-November, Reuters claimed that Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, told Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas, that because the Iranian government was given no warning of the attack on Israel, it will not enter the war on the Palestinian group’s behalf.

Fifth, Iran’s strategic partners in Moscow and Beijing have not declared their full support for Hamas. Iran has sought alignment with China and Russia under its Look East policy and would be loath to spoil its relationships with those countries. Tehran is, in fact, following a similar policy in Gaza to the one it adopted after observing the Sino-Russian wait-and-see approach to the capture of Kabul by the Taliban two years ago. The goal for Iran is to avoid being isolated in major international crises.

Sixth, there exists a deep belief among influential decision-makers in Iran that the Arab sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf would welcome a large-scale war between Iran and Israel. Iran may hope that Arab countries would sever their ties with Israel as a result of a wider war, but that is unlikely. Arab public opinion holds little sway over their countries’ foreign policies. And Arab leaders have long perceived Hamas as a disruptive Iranian proxy that they would be happy to see Israel dismantle once for all.

The last and the most significant factor influencing Iran’s apparent reluctance to engage in war is Khamenei’s specific point of view toward regional conflicts. Contrary to the mainstream view in the West, Iran’s supreme leader approaches responses to regional conflicts from a realist standpoint rather than an ideological one. Having served as the president of the Islamic Republic during the devastating war with Iraq, he is acutely aware of the consequences of war, especially with the U.S. This awareness led Iran to choose a relatively measured response following the assassination by the United States of Gen. Qassem Suleimani, the former leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Quds Force. Such behavior aligns with his overall strategy in handling regional crises. More than two decades earlier, when Iranian diplomats in northern Afghanistan were killed by the first Taliban emirate and public sentiment in Iran leaned heavily toward a major intervention, Khamenei and Hassan Rouhani, head of the Supreme National Security Council at the time, helped prevent escalation.

#### They’re deterred.

Dr. John Ghazvinian 23, PhD, Executive Director, Middle East Center, University of Pennsylvania, "Why Iran May Feel Less Restrained In Nuclear Decision-Making Now," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 10/26/2023, https://thebulletin.org/2023/10/why-iran-may-feel-less-restrained-in-nuclear-decision-making-now/.

This concern, however, rests on a faulty set of assumptions and ignores the long-term trends at work, which have far greater impact on Tehran’s nuclear decision-making than the immediate implications of the conflict in Ukraine. For starters, Iran has historically accelerated, slowed, and suspended its nuclear program. These actions were not based on what Iran thought it could “get away with,” but on Iranian decision-makers’ perceptions about the usefulness of its nuclear program to securing the country’s territorial sovereignty and the regime’s survival. This has been true since at least the late 1950s, when Iran’s former monarch, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, ordered the development of an indigenous program of nuclear research and enrichment, despite his close relationship with the United States. The shah calculated then—as the Islamic Republic has calculated since—that some measure of nuclear capability (if not an actual bomb) was an important guarantor of the country’s technological advancement as well as its prestige and influence in the region.

Little has changed in the past few decades. Iran’s leaders have still not made the decision to “race for a bomb”—despite having nearly all the necessary technological capacity to do so. For the most part, this has been a political decision, though there are also important religious restrictions at work. Iran’s continuing calculation is that it has more to gain from cooperating within the legalistic international framework of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) than it does from taking the North Korean path of flouting it by developing a bomb.

### 1NC—Israel-Palestine

#### It won’t get any bigger.

**Ostovar 23** [Afshon Ostovar is an associate professor at the Naval Postgraduate School and a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, IRAN, ISRAEL, AND WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST Oct 17th 2023, https://warontherocks.com/2023/10/iran-israel-and-war-in-the-middle-east/]

There probably won’t be clarity on this question any time soon, and even as Israel attempts to put the pieces together of its intelligence failure in the coming weeks and months, some details might never be known. Further, **even if** Israeli officials were to conclude Iran was involved, rushing to implicate it would present more peril than opportunity. Were Israel to definitively identify Iran as a culprit, a response would be necessary. With Gaza operations and the hostage crisis still unfolding and as **obvious priorities**, Israel is **not in a position to enlarge the conflict**. The United States is in a different but similarly undesired position. With its focus on Ukraine and China, the Joseph Biden administration is even **less interested** in worsening tensions with Iran, much less getting **bogged down** in another war in the Middle East. Iran and its proxies have all threatened to retaliate if Israel expands the conflict or if the United States intervenes. There is also a very real possibility that the war could expand to Lebanon, with intermittent cross-border exchanges between Israel Defense Forces and militants in southern Lebanon already occurring. Israel cannot easily fight a multifront war and is likely to seek to **avoid** **unnecessary** **escalation** **with Iran** and its proxies as long as it can. The United States, likewise, **wants to avoid** **becoming** **overstretched**.

#### Nobody wants a larger war.

Kenneth M. Pollack 23, Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute, "A Big War That Won’t Inevitably Get Bigger," Foreign Affairs, 10/12/2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/big-war-wont-inevitably-get-bigger.

A bloody Israeli offensive could invite the opportunist interventions of Iran and its allied Lebanese militant group, Hezbollah. It could lead Israel to up the ante and proactively go after its foes—on October 12, Israel struck the airports in the Syrian cities of Damascus and Aleppo, in part to send a message to Syria’s ally Iran. But at least for now, the risks of escalation from the Israel-Hamas war are actually quite limited. Israel, Iran, and Hezbollah are all wary of taking such big gambles. Israel needs to focus on Hamas, which will be a hard enough task on its own, and Iran and Hezbollah know that even a wounded Israel could hurt them. A wider war is possible but at this point still appears unlikely.

#### There is zero incentive.

Kenneth M. Pollack 23, Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute, "A Big War That Won’t Inevitably Get Bigger," Foreign Affairs, 10/12/2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/big-war-wont-inevitably-get-bigger.

Of course, escalation is not out of the question. Several developments could trigger a bigger war. For one, if Israel does tremendous damage to Hamas during the counteroffensive in Gaza, either or both Hezbollah and Iran might be tempted to intervene to try to prevent Israel from finishing off their militant ally. Because neither has air or ground forces capable of effectively attacking a mobilized IDF within Israel, such intervention would come largely in the form of drones, rockets, and missiles.

But this, too, is unlikely. Both Iran and Hezbollah know full well that Israel can hammer them while it throttles Hamas. Moreover, both know that even if Hamas gets savaged by the IDF and driven out of Gaza altogether, the group can still reconstitute itself abroad. That is exactly what the Palestine Liberation Organization did after it was crushed and driven from Gaza by Israel in 1967, ousted from Jordan by Jordanian forces in 1970–71, and expelled from Lebanon by Israel in 1982. The PLO now rules the West Bank as the Palestinian Authority. Defeat has not necessarily proven fatal for Palestinian armed groups.

#### War doesn’t change the game---Iran doesn’t want a nuke.

Danny Citrinowicz 23, Nonresident Fellow, Middle East Program, Atlantic Council, "The Gaza War Probably Won’t Change Iran’s Nuclear Strategy. It’ll Make It Difficult to Reach a Long-Term Agreement, Though." Atlantic Council, 11/09/2023, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/gaza-israel-iran-nuclear-strategy/.

Nevertheless, the campaign in Gaza should not change Iran’s nuclear strategy. For now, Iranian deterrence is working, since Tehran is not paying any price for its proxy activity with the Houthis in Yemen, Shia militias in Iraq, and Hezbollah in Lebanon, given the fact that the United States is careful not to attack Iran for fear of escalation (despite being attacked by these proxies in Iraq and Syria). In many ways, Iran may even think that its conventional deterrence—together with a robust nuclear program—is enough, and that there is no point in crossing the nuclear Rubicon.

The fact that the United States is making minor responses against attacks in Syria and Iraq can only strengthen this understanding in Tehran, as does the fact that the United States military no longer surrounds Iran in Afghanistan and Iraq (except for a limited presence that mainly serves the campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and el-Sham and the training of local Iraqi forces).

On the other hand, despite the profound erosion of Israel’s deterrence after the tragic events of October 7, the US’s willingness to stand by Israel’s side—including its willingness to deploy troops and capabilities in the Middle East—is demonstrating to Iran that, in extreme cases, such as an Iranian nuclear breakout, the United States will not hesitate to exercise force against Iran.

### 1NC—Iran-Deal Fails

#### No Iran deal.

**Stratfor '24** [(Stratfor, Worlds leading geopolitical intelligence platform) "A Reformist Presidential Win Is Unlike to Shift Iran's Regional Policy," https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/reformist-presidential-win-unlikely-shift-irans-regional-policy, 7-6-2024] TDI

* Regime change solves

Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian will attempt to improve relations with the West, including the United States, but he is unlikely to impact Iran's regional strategy significantly and is likely to face considerable domestic constraints. The reformist president-elect defeated hard-line conservative challenger Saeed Jalili 53.6% to 44.3% in Iran's July 5 runoff election. The victory caps a surprising path to the presidency for Pezeshkian after Iran's Guardian Council, which oversees the election process, approved his presidency in what was widely believed to be an attempt by the Iranian establishment to approve a reformist candidate in an effort to boost election turnout and boost the Islamic republic's legitimacy. During his campaign, Pezeshkian said he intended to improve Iran's economy through reviving a nuclear deal with the West and securing the lifting of economic sanctions on Iran.

Pezeshkian will become Iran's first reformist president since Mohammad Khatami's 1997-2005 presidency, and is even further from Iran's mainstream political current than was moderate former president Hassan Rouhani, who was president when Iran negotiated the 2015 nuclear deal with the West known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Pezeshkian called for improving relations with the West and securing sanctions relief in talks with the United States and other participants in the JCPOA.

Pezeshkian is critical of the government's recent hard-line social policies, including the restrictive law requiring women to wear headscarves that was a key part of the widespread 2022 Mahsa Amini protests, and has called for equality for women.

Despite Pezeshkian's rhetoric, significant roadblocks remain in both the United States and Iran in the path to a revived or new nuclear deal. In the United States, the Republican presidential candidate — and current leader in polling ahead of the November presidential election — Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, which means that the U.S. under a second Trump administration is unlikely to be interested in resurrecting the deal. In the meantime, President Joe Biden – who may not even be running for the presidency by the time that Pezeshkian is sworn in and has Cabinet members appointed — is not in a strong political position to pursue a new deal with Iran ahead of the election, though if he or a different Democrat candidate were to win, a deal would become more likely. If Trump wins the election, a deal would be unlikely given the lack of trust Iran would have for Trump in talks. Trump's previous strong support for Israel, which opposed the JCPOA, also suggests it is unlikely that Trump would ever offer the concessions necessary to seal a deal. In a June interview, Trump hinted that he only opposed Iran having a nuclear program (a program Iran is unlikely to give up) and thought he could reach a deal with Iran, even going so far as to say he thought Iran could sign an Abraham Accords-style agreement with Israel. While the latter is certainly not going to happen barring a major political shift — e.g., regime change — in Iran anytime soon, Trump's remarks demonstrate that talks could at least occur during his presidency, even if they are highly unlikely to bear fruit. While Pezeshkian is likely to be vocal on the need to offer some concessions to the United States and the West to secure a deal, the decision does not solely reside with him, as Iran's national security strategy is set by the Supreme National Security Council, a body that includes the president and Cabinet members, but also representatives of the supreme leader, the head of Iran's parliament, and the heads of several different branches of the Iranian military, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, all of which are unlikely to support negotiations with the United States that include significant Iranian concessions. Even if Pezeshkian wants to secure a deal, Iran is unlikely to accept the same structure of the JCPOA, and would instead want more guarantees should the United States leave the deal again.

As president, Pezeshkian is likely to bring in many of Iran's moderate and reformist foreign policy figures who were involved in and/or led negotiations with the West during the Rouhani presidency, potentially even including former lead nuclear negotiator and foreign minister Javad Zarif, in an effort to jump-start talks when he takes office.

The 2015 JCPOA was not designed to handle what would happen if the United States left the deal, as its enforcement mechanism was designed with Iran violating the deal in mind, not the United States doing so. The U.S. exit in 2018 gives Iran an incentive to demand weaker constraints on its nuclear program, such as not dismantling and pouring concrete into all of its advanced centrifuges, in case the United States leaves again.

Iran's parliament is also likely to be a major roadblock to a deal. Iran's March 2024 parliamentary election resulted in a legislature dominated by conservatives and hard-liners and led by Mohammed Bagher Qalibaf, who finished third in the presidential election's first round. Under Qalibaf's speakership, Iran's parliament passed a law in 2020 that restricted Rouhani from negotiating a quick resumption of the JCPOA with then-incoming U.S. President Joe Biden. In Iran's political system, the president does not approve laws or veto them, a responsibility that belongs instead to the hardline-led Guardian Council.

#### It can’t solve Iranian proliferation.

**Ross '22** [(Dennis, Dennis Ross is a distinguished fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and teaches at Georgetown University.) "A New Iran Deal Won’t Prevent an Iranian Bomb," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/09/a-new-iran-deal-wont-prevent-an-iranian-bomb/, 9-9-2022] TDI

Iran now has two bombs worth of uranium enriched to 60 percent levels—close to weapons grade—and continues to install and operate advanced centrifuges that can enrich it far more quickly than the first generation IR-1 centrifuges. The baseline of the Iranian nuclear program has advanced dramatically beyond where it would have been if Tehran was still observing the limits of the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). From that standpoint, former U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to withdraw from the JCPOA created the justification for Iran to press ahead, and clearly, the “maximum pressure” campaign of the Trump years failed from that perspective.

Trump’s failing approach on Iran’s nuclear program left U.S. President Joe Biden with a difficult inheritance. But the Biden policy to this point has not succeeded either. For the last 18 months, the Iranian nuclear program has been accelerating, and it includes large amounts of stockpiled enriched material and two items (60 percent enriched uranium and production of uranium metal) that, again in the words of Grossi, have “no justifiable civilian purpose.” That reality means even if the JCPOA is reconstituted, Iran after 2030 would be in a position to move quickly to a bomb unless Iranian leaders come to believe that the cost of doing so is too high.

I understand the Biden administration’s desire to return to the JCPOA. It would stop the advance of Iran’s nuclear program, require it to ship out the excess enriched uranium Tehran has stockpiled (19 times above the JCPOA limits), maintain less than one bomb’s worth of uranium enriched only to 3.67 percent, end the production of uranium metal, and unplug their advanced centrifuges.

But Iran has now developed nuclear know-how, so it is already a threshold nuclear weapons state. And Iran will have zero breakout time when the JCPOA’s qualitative and quantitative limits on its nuclear program lapse at the end of 2030. A resurrected JCPOA essentially buys time until then. It would defer the Iranian nuclear threat, not end it, and as a result, much would depend on how the United States and others use the time bought.

At a minimum, Washington must use the time to take steps that will credibly raise the costs in Iranian eyes of moving toward a nuclear weapon after 2030 and increasing threats in the region. That won’t be a simple task because Iran will also be using that time—and the potentially hundreds of billions of dollars it could gain over the remaining life of the JCPOA—to bolster their regional proxies, build their ballistic missile arsenal further, and harden its nuclear infrastructure to make it less vulnerable to attack.

#### The deal is a cover for Iranian prolif, greenlights aggression, causes Turkey to proliferate and kills American resolve

**Gerecht 18** - Senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies [Reuel, May 4, The Atlantic, The Iran Deal Is Strategically and Morally Absurd, ]

It was surely Barack Obama’s profound aversion to the use of American military power that so enfeebled his nuclear diplomacy and made his atomic accord with Iran the worst arms-control agreement since the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922. I do not know whether a more forceful president and secretary of state—say a Democratic version of Ronald Reagan and George Schultz—could have gotten a “good deal” with Tehran; it just boggles the mind to believe that a better deal wasn’t possible. A stronger president and secretary of state certainly would have been willing to walk away. Neither captured by Iranian demands nor the mirage of “moderate” mullahs and engagement, more astute, less fearful men would have been more patient, and more willing to let sanctions bite deeper into the economy and political culture of the Islamic Republic.

Obama was, to borrow from The New York Times’s Roger Cohen, America’s first “post-Western” president, a man deeply uncomfortable with American hegemony and the essential marriage of diplomacy and force. By 2013, when Hassan Rouhani won Iran’s presidential election, Obama made it increasingly clear that he was unwilling to fight over the clerical regime’s nuclear-weapons ambitions. He was also unwilling to do anything to brake the Islamic Republic’s rising Shiite imperialism, which in Syria led to the massive slaughter and flight of Syrian Sunnis who’d rebelled against Bashar al-Assad’s tyranny. And what happened in 2012-2013 in Syria and Iraq—with the absence of America—triggered the rise of the Islamic State and has now set the stage for a regional conflict that we haven’t seen since Saddam Hussein was running amok.

With Iran, Obama certainly appeared to have a cause, something beyond just avoiding a fight. The Islamic Republic for Obama, and Secretary of State John Kerry, too, appeared to be a left-wing “realist” dream, offering a progressive version of Richard Nixon’s opening to Communist China. The many debilitating weaknesses of the JCPOA—for one thing, the strategic and moral absurdity of paying, via sanctions relief, for Iranian imperialism in the Middle East so we can have a short surcease to the mullahs’ quest for the bomb—stem directly from Obama’s paralyzing fear of war, as well as his aspiration for a Middle Eastern détente.

The suggestion that going to war with the clerical regime is too high a price to pay to stop the mullahs from acquiring nuclear weapons (which is what’s implied by defending the limited, temporary utility of the JCPOA) is downright odd. Obama was, in theory, willing to do just that in the nuclear negotiations. In theory, when he uttered the mantra that “all options are on the table,” Obama was—to borrow from La Rochefoucauld—giving the homage that hypocrisy pays to virtue. The nuclear deal wasn’t just “far from ideal”: It is the hinge of America’s downsizing in the region, the guarantor of a decent interval before nuclear proliferation comes to the Middle East.

Obama’s “wishful thinking” about the region was never more fully on display than when he speculated that his nuclear agreement with Tehran ought to allow the Iranians and the Saudis time to learn “to share” the region; it has, of course, done the opposite. The agreement—and the Iranian perception of that accord as a Western green light for its continuing aggression—has thrown jet fuel on the sectarian strife that Iran’s clerical regime has so malevolently encouraged. The Syrian war went from bad to catastrophic while Obama was engaged in his secret and then open diplomacy with Tehran. Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and most probably Turkey, too—the only Muslim power in the Middle East that has the industrial capacity to check Iran’s clerical regime—will probably soon start down the nuclear path because of Obama’s accord.

Obama provided the agreement that Ali Akbar Salehi was searching for. Salehi, the MIT-educated nuclear guru and negotiator who would be better described as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s bomb maker, sought the time and money to perfect the development of high-velocity centrifuges which, once deployed in small, easily concealed cascades, will guarantee the Islamic Republic an unstoppable means to produce weapons-grade uranium. I was recently listening to John Kerry in a small gathering. To hear him tell it, the JCPOA has “permanently shut down all pathways” to an Iranian bomb. The Obamaians like Phil Gordon, who were willing to admit the deal’s significant flaws, were in a small minority.

Former Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes and so many others were just disingenuous in how they marketed the nuclear diplomacy and the final deal. An honest approach would have been to straightforwardly enumerate the agreements many flaws and then say what we all knew to be true: This administration is unwilling to use military force to stop the mullahs’ quest for the bomb. We are unwilling to contain Iranian aggression in the Middle East. This is the best that we can do under those circumstances.

But if one were serious about non-proliferation, if one fully comprehended the consummate mendacity of the regime (as if we needed to see the nuclear archive that Mossad just snatched), why in the world would anyone agree to an accord that allows the clerical regime to develop advanced centrifuges? Why in the world would anyone agree not to put severe restrictions on ballistic-missile development in the JCPOA? Or allow the Iranians to soften the language in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, so that there is no longer a blanket prohibition against the development of long-range ballistic missiles? In one of my favorite moments in the Washington debate about Obama’s diplomacy, I asked the undersecretary of state for political affairs, Wendy Sherman, why, for Allah’s sake, were we exempting missiles from the JCPOA’s purview. There wasn’t a soul in the Pentagon or the Central Intelligence Agency (with the possible exception of John Brennan) who believed the clerical regime wasn’t developing ever-longer range ballistic missiles to carry nuclear warheads. Her response: We decided to put the emphasis on preventing Tehran from developing warheads.

To translate for those unfamiliar with such intelligence details: The United States was going to ignore that which is easy to detect—the design and testing of missiles—and focus on what is impossible to detect unless you get really lucky with human-intelligence penetrations or walk-ins—the development of warheads. And where have the mullahs probably put warhead design? On Revolutionary Guard Corps bases like Parchin. When we get a chance to review the Iranian archive snatched by Mossad (and I certainly hope the Israelis release all of the material), I suspect we will see in detail what we have long known: Nuclear-weapons research and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps are inseparable.

In other words, the organization that is responsible for internal oppression, foreign wars, overseas terrorism, and an expeditionary army of non-Iranian Shiites is the overlord of the nuclear-weapons program. Which brings up the most comedic moment in Obama’s nuclear adventure: the remote-controlled soil sampling of earth at Parchin, where International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors were not permitted to enter. According to Obama, Kerry, Sherman, and so many others, the JCPOA granted the International Atomic Energy Agency access to Iranian military bases for inspections. But “access” here doesn’t meet the standard, say, of the Oxford English Dictionary, where it means: “Admittance (to the presence or use of a thing or person); the action or process of obtaining stored documents, data, etc.” Not only did Obama debase American diplomacy, but his mania for a deal debased the International Atomic Energy Agency, too.

It is striking that Kerry throughout the talks was so cavalier about the clerical regime’s past “possible-military-dimension” nuclear research. If America had insisted on standard IAEA procedures (they turn over all of their paperwork and have their nuclear scientists and engineers sit down for thorough discussions with IAEA inspectors), we would have, of course, discovered the vast range of their mendacity, as well as the intimate details of the global dual-use import network that the regime has used to build clandestinely their nuclear-weapons program. Such routine discussions and verification would have exposed Salehi, Khamenei, Rouhani, Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif, and so many others, as just stellar liars. I really don’t recall Rhodes and Kerry before the JCPOA was concluded harping on the consummate dishonesty of these people.

As my colleague, the former No. 2 at the IAEA, Olli Heinonen has pointed out, the clerical regime could have a lot of components for the clandestine production of high-velocity centrifuges, but we can’t verify their stockpiles and compliance because we can’t answer the big questions about Iran’s development of nuclear weapons. At this moment, the clerical regime could have a clandestine centrifuge site in Mashhad in northeastern Iran. And we would not know it. I worked on Iranian operations for nearly a decade in the Central Intelligence Agency. I have a decent idea of what the National Security Agency can and cannot intercept. There is nothing in the JCPOA that would aid us in discovering this or any other possible secret facility.

The JCPOA, then, isn’t really an arms-control agreement; it’s just cover for American inaction, and for President Obama’s acute desire to leave the Middle East. So, let us go post-JCPOA. The deal’s defenders have understandably and quite correctly expressed dismay that the Trump administration doesn’t appear to have done much preparation for the day after. That is undoubtedly true: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster, and Secretary of Defense James Mattis obviously didn’t want to withdraw from the nuclear agreement. When you don’t want to do something, it’s human nature not to prepare. The easier route is always to maintain the status quo. The democratic way is to punt problems down the road, to hope that the unpleasantness goes away. Then add on the Trump factor, which is discombobulating. But also let us be historically fair: Even the best of planning isn’t necessarily worth much when things get messy, as they often do in foreign affairs, which is defined by the unexpected. And withdrawing from the JCPOA is going to be messy.

### 1NC—Iran War Good

#### US steamrolls Iran now and stops prolif but waiting risks escalation.

**Bryen '20** [Stephen; Bryen has served as a senior staff director of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as the deputy undersecretary of defense for trade security policy, as the founder and first director of the Defense Technology Security Administration, as the president of Delta Tech Inc, as the president of Finmeccanica North America, and as a commissioner of the US-China Security Review Commission; 1-5-2020, "There’s a silver lining in a potential US-Iran war," Asia Times, https://asiatimes.com/2020/01/theres-a-silver-lining-in-a-potential-us-iran-war/]

The US is in a very strong position versus Iran. It has a vastly superior air force including stealth bombers and fighter planes, modern and effective naval forces including aircraft carriers, missile defense Aegis cruisers and nuclear submarines. The US also has superb intelligence and situational awareness, something the Iranians lack.

Iran has short, medium and some long-range rockets, and the ability to use terrorism to its advantage. Beyond that, Iran has little else. The Iranian navy is worthless as a fighting force. Its air force is made up mostly of old planes that are hardly flightworthy. It does not have precision weapons.

Iran does have drones and aging Russian cruise missiles. It also has proxy forces that can cause trouble for Israel in the form of Hezbollah and, to a degree, Hamas. But not much more. (In fact, Hamas was celebrating the demise of Soleimani, handing out candies in the Gaza strip. After all, Soleimani killed countless Palestinians in Syria.)

The US has formidable allies in the region. Israel has a first-rate air force, missile defenses, submarines and strike naval assets. It has a well-disciplined and trained army along with civil defense to protect its citizens. Like the US, Israel has excellent situational awareness and intelligence assets, formidable command and control capabilities, and deep fighting experience.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other allies in the region also have frontline fighter aircraft and competent naval assets. Like Israel, they also have some missile defenses. They are supported by the US, have precision weapons, and in a setting of general war can be useful and effective assets.

Iran has none of these things. Its questionable allies – China and Russia – are not going to get into a war with the United States over Iran. The argument that China needs Iran’s oil doesn’t stand up: there is so much oil available from the Gulf states, Russia, even the United States that the argument makes little sense.

The Russians, for their part, have not prevented Israeli strikes on Iranian operations in Syria (Hezbollah plus Iran’s Revolutionary Guards). In fact, it can be argued that they have aided and abetted Israel to some degree. Why would they risk war with the United States? If Russia did so it would lose its growing support in Europe, trash any chance of a political settlement in Ukraine and probably end up going broke. Speculation about a combined Russian and Chinese intervention is unrealistic. Russians still understand what correlation of forces means.

Legally speaking, neither Russia nor China has a security agreement or defense treaty with Iran. Russia does have a military cooperation agreement, but the agreement says nothing about Russia coming to Iran’s aid. The cooperation agreement is not a defense treaty. Similarly, China has a military cooperation agreement with Iran, but it imposes no obligations on China and is not a defense treaty.

With President Trump’s clear threat to forcefully answer any Iranian action against the US, the critical issue is whether Iran would talk itself into a fight with the US.

Given the nature of the Iranian regime, its tendency toward extreme posturing and its ambition to dominate the Middle East and Persian Gulf, nothing can be ruled out.

But if Iran does go to war, there is a silver lining: heightened conflict could provide the opportunity to end the country’s budding nuclear ambitions.

If conflict breaks out, the US could use its bunker busters and precision weapons to annihilate as much of Iran’s missile and nuclear weapons centers as possible.

That would definitely end the Mullahs’ rule and the Middle East would be spared the growing threat of nuclear war.

#### Deterrence has failed inviting Chinese and Russian aggression globally—strikes now solve and avoid escalation with Iran.

**Kroenig and Cimmino '24** [Matthew and Jeffrey; Kroenig is vice president and senior director of the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security and a professor of government at Georgetown University. He previously worked on Iran policy in the U.S. Department of Defense; Cimmino is a fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security and the center’s deputy director; 1-3-2024, "To Restore Deterrence, Biden Should Hit Iran Hard," Dispatch, <https://thedispatch.com/article/to-restore-deterrence-biden-should-hit-iran-hard/>] TDI

If America’s foremost priority is to avoid escalation, then it essentially hands the initiative to its more ruthless adversaries—those who are willing to escalate militarily in order to achieve their goals.

American strategy documents for many years have vowed to deter Iranian aggression. But deterrence has now failed. So the operative question now becomes: How can the United States restore deterrence?

Deterrence works by convincing an adversary that the costs to attacking the United States and its allies and interests greatly outweighs any conceivable benefits.

When deterrence fails, therefore, the United States needs to execute its deterrent threat. It needs to follow through and impose a significant cost on Iran that outweighs the perceived benefits of aggression—as Tehran calculates it. It needs to convince Tehran that it badly miscalculated and that attacking the United States and its interests is too costly. In other words, it is escalation, not de-escalation, that is necessary to restore deterrence with Iran.

This means the United States should hit Iran hard. It could retaliate directly against the Houthis’ military infrastructure. It could roll up Iranian proxy networks in the region. It could sink the Iranian navy. It could strike Iranian naval bases, or even seize this opportunity to degrade Iran’s nuclear and missile program. These are all steps the president can take on his own initiative consistent with the 1973 War Powers Act. U.S. actions of this magnitude would convey to Iran that it miscalculated and that attacking the United States was a foolish decision that should not be repeated.

Limited U.S. uses of force against Iran have proven effective in the past. In 1988, Ronald Reagan authorized Operation Praying Mantis in response to Iran’s mining of the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War. The United States destroyed about half of Iran’s navy, and the prospect of a larger conflict with the United States helped to persuade Tehran to accept a ceasefire.

Similarly, exactly four years ago to the day, January 3, 2020, President Donald J. Trump authorized a drone strike that killed Iranian general Qassem Suleimani, prompting only token Iranian retaliation and demonstrating that Iran would suffer significant consequences for attacking U.S. interests in the region.

Decisive military action against Iran now will also strike fear into the hearts of Putin and Xi. Biden is currently showing Putin and Xi that the United States does not have the stomach for a conflict, potentially tempting China and Russia to engage in aggression. A strong stand against Iran will not distract from other American geostrategic priorities, but rather will strengthen deterrence in Europe and the Indo-Pacific.

The Biden administration is correct that there is a risk of escalation in this course of action. But if Iran retaliates, then America can simply hit Iran harder. The United States enjoys “escalation dominance,” meaning that at every rung of the military escalation ladder Iran stands to lose more. Only when this is made clear to Tehran, will it restrain its desire to retaliate.

The United States is still a military superpower. It should act like it. Iran—not the United States—should be cowering in fear of escalation.

#### Otherwise, war is inevitable. Iran will get nukes fast, which causes global nuclear war and poses an existential threat to Israel.

Erfan Fard 10-5. Counter-terrorism analyst and Middle East Studies researcher based in Washington, DC. He graduated in International Security Studies (London M. University, UK), and in International Relations (CSU-LA). "Iran requires a delicate dance on the edge of peril". israelhayom. 10-5-2023. https://www.israelhayom.com/opinions/the-iranian-nuclear-challenge-a-delicate-dance-on-the-edge-of-peril/

In today's world, few issues are as pressing and concerning as the imminent weaponization of Iran's nuclear program. In this op-ed, we delve into the technical intricacies of Iran's nuclear program, specifically focusing on fissile material production and weaponization timelines. It is crucial to understand these aspects for a comprehensive view of the situation and its implications for international security and regional stability. Because the Iranian rough regime is a bad actor in the political theatre.

Fissile material production forms the bedrock of nuclear weapon development. Unfortunately, Iran's enrichment capacity, uranium stockpile, and enrichment facilities have surpassed the limits set by the dead Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). This surplus raises fears that Iran possesses enough enriched uranium to produce multiple nuclear weapons. The urgency of the situation cannot be overstated; estimations suggest that Iran could produce weapons-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU) in just one week. The trajectory of Iran's nuclear program underlines the need for immediate international attention and decisive action.

Another critical facet of nuclear weapons development is weaponization. While Iran has not resumed weaponization research, experts estimate it would take approximately a couple of weeks to complete the necessary weaponization steps. This timeline assumes parallel progress in fissile material production and weaponization. Hence, it is vital to monitor and address weaponization capabilities. Alas, erroneously, IAEA reports indicate a lack of a viable nuclear weapon design and suitable explosive detonation systems, providing valuable insights and alarm into imagined Shia mullah's nuclear capabilities. The potential threat lies in the likelihood that imagined Shia mullahs in Tehran with nuclear capabilities could develop a variety of nuclear bombs, posing a grave danger to regional and global stability. It will be a nightmare for the modern world. "Like a sword that has fallen into the hand of a brigand."(Rumi)

The imminent weaponization of Iran's nuclear program poses a grave threat to regional and global security. The Middle East is already a tumultuous region, and the addition of nuclear weapons to the mix would escalate tensions to unprecedented levels. Iran's adversarial relationships with neighboring countries, notably Israel, exacerbate concerns. Israel, with its historic rivalry with Iran after 1979, perceives a nuclear-armed Iran as an existential threat, potentially triggering a nuclear arms race in the region. The delicate balance of power and peace that the world strives to maintain could be shattered, with dire consequences for all.

Significantly, Iran has cultivated a transnational terrorist network involving a variety of extremist groups aimed at encircling Israel. Despite improvements in the Saudi-Iran cold war dynamics, Iran remains committed to asserting its influence as a dominant power in the region. On a daily basis, Iranian propaganda consistently underscores their objective of eliminating and destabilizing Israel.

Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would disrupt the fragile regional stability in the Middle East. Neighboring countries would be compelled to reevaluate their defense strategies and alliances, potentially leading to a dangerous arms buildup. The region would likely witness increased militarization and a higher risk of conflicts, pushing the already volatile region closer to the brink. The Israel-Iran rivalry, in particular, could escalate to a perilous level, threatening not only the two nations but also regional stability and peace.

The persistence of the mullahs' regime in Iran poses a fundamental obstacle to achieving stability and peace in the region. The essence of the Shia mullahs' regime is rooted in the destructive ideology of Khomeinism.

From Israel's standpoint, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons is an immediate and existential threat. Iran's regime has, on numerous occasions, expressed hostile intentions toward Israel, and its leadership has denied Israel's right to exist. Given the Iranian regime's history of supporting terrorist groups in the region, a nuclear-armed Iran would dramatically tip the balance of power, endangering Israel's security and altering the dynamics of the entire region. Israel would be forced to reevaluate its defense strategies, potentially leading to an escalation of military activities.

The evolving situation regarding Iran's nuclear program demands meticulous scrutiny and proactive measures from the international community. Understanding fissile material production and weaponization timelines is paramount in formulating an effective response. Enhanced monitoring, a thorough reassessment of nuclear agreements, and a united global approach are imperative to mitigate the nuclear threat posed by Iran, ensuring international security and stability. It's a delicate dance on the edge of peril, but with collective and purposeful action, we can pave the way for a peaceful tomorrow while preventing a potential catastrophe in the Middle East.

The reality is indisputable: individuals with a long history of endorsing terrorism and engaging in criminal acts over the 44-year Islamic caliphate of Khomeinism cannot be trusted to exercise restraint in the event they acquire nuclear capabilities. Envision a scenario where a region is grappling with the unsettling reality of nuclear weapons in the possession of Tehran's Shia mullahs, known for their affinity towards terrorism.

#### Strikes solve, prevent regional instability, and preserve global energy access in the strait—Iran only escalates when they feel the U.S. won’t have a strong response.

**Buccino '23** [Joe; Former communications director at U.S. Central Command, and a retired U.S. Army colonel with five deployments to the Middle East during his military career; 12-6-2023, "American Forces Must Strike Iran to Protect US Troops," <https://www.military.com/daily-news/opinions/2023/12/06/american-forces-must-strike-iran-protect-us-troops.html>] TDI

One month ago, the Houthis shot down an American drone operating in international airspace without an American response. Seeing no consequences, the group has now graduated to attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, an escalation that could detonate bubbling tensions in the region. The Houthis could introduce regional or even global instability if merchants, fearing attacks, discontinue the flow of energy and commerce through the Bab-el-Mandeb or the Strait of Hormuz. More than 10% of international commercial transport flows through these chokepoints. More than a quarter of global oil transits the Strait of Hormuz. These waterways are critical energy and commerce arteries, crucial to American interests and global energy and trade.

In dialing the attacks on land and at sea up and down, Iran seeks to stay on the near side of a threshold that would trigger an American response. That threshold is unknown to Tehran and probably to Washington, D.C. The rocket attacks against American bases are meant, in part, to test how far Iran can go without triggering a significant reaction. The danger: In testing the Biden administration, should Iran trip over a red line, both countries could stumble into war.

To prevent a catastrophic miscalculation and defend American troops and interests in the region, the U.S. must go beyond strikes on inconsequential targets in Syria. Deterrence of Iran, or any other state for that matter, is based on perception. For deterrence to work, leaders inside Tehran must perceive that the U.S. has not only the means but also the will to inflict such significant pain that the imposed costs of any further attacks outweigh the benefits. Right now, Tehran does not believe the Biden administration has the will.

Beyond the quartet of American air strikes, the administration has mobilized a pair of aircraft carrier strike groups to the theater. The militia groups' attacks, meanwhile, continue apace, now paired with the attacks at sea.

The messaging from the Pentagon has not helped. According to official statements, the two carrier strike groups were moved to the region to "address risks" and "respond to contingencies." Left unclear is whether these two dozen ships, more than 100 aircraft and thousands of troops are on hand to defend American forces in the region, protect the maritime straits, provide humanitarian relief to Gazans or strike at Iranian targets. In response to the Dec. 3 Houthi attacks on three separate commercial vessels, U.S. Central Command explained, "The United States will consider all appropriate responses." Given the tepid reactions to the 76 strikes on American forces in Iraq and Syria, it's unclear what the administration would consider an appropriate response.

The United States cannot influence Iran's behavior by targeting its surrogate militants. However, the instances where America has imposed direct, consequential losses upon the Islamic Republic have seen success in curbing hostile actions. A notable instance was during the Tanker War in 1988 when, under President Reagan's orders, American ships destroyed more than half of Iran's naval fleet, prompting an end to its belligerence and persuading Khomeini to conclude the protracted conflict with Iraq. A more recent example was the targeted elimination of Quds Force leader Qassem Soleimani in January 2020, which precipitated a marked decline in Iranian hostilities toward American forces and interests in the Middle East.

To restore deterrence and put a cap on escalation, U.S. forces must strike assets of value to Tehran. For example, a limited, precision strike against IRGC training bases inside Iran would send a message that the administration has moved beyond the back-and-forth exchanges inside Syria. Such a strike against empty IRGC facilities would avoid a broader war and allow room to scale up. An unmistakable public message should follow, clarifying that the carrier strike groups are in the region to climb the escalatory ladder should Iran choose to do so and inflict crushing damage against more significant Iranian targets. Similarly, a strike on IRGC naval assets in the Persian Gulf, followed by a clear public message, would restore deterrence.

Supreme Leader Khamenei is a rational actor. As president and supreme leader, he has held power in the world's most volatile region for four decades. He understands violence and its cost. He must be made to understand precisely how far he can go in provocations without prompting a war between two states looking to avoid one. Washington must be willing to impose significant costs on Iran for its actions.

#### Energy wars go global---extinction.

Klare ‘11 [Michael; June 28; professor at Hampshire College; “Prepare for a world energy war,” https://grist.org/climate-energy/2011-06-28-prepare-for-a-world-energy-war/]

Think of us today as embarking on a new Thirty Years’ War. It may not result in as much bloodshed as that of the 1600s, though bloodshed there will be, but it will prove no less momentous for the future of the planet. Over the coming decades, we will be embroiled at a global level in a succeed-or-perish contest among the major forms of energy, the corporations which supply them, and the countries that run on them. The question will be: Which will dominate the world’s energy supply in the second half of the 21st century? The winners will determine how — and how badly — we live, work, and play in those not-so-distant decades, and will profit enormously as a result. The losers will be cast aside and dismembered.

Why 30 years? Because that’s how long it will take for experimental energy systems like hydrogen power, cellulosic ethanol, wave power, algae fuel, and advanced nuclear reactors to make it from the laboratory to full-scale industrial development. Some of these systems (as well, undoubtedly, as others not yet on our radar screens) will survive the winnowing process. Some will not. And there is little way to predict how it will go at this stage in the game. At the same time, the use of existing fuels like oil and coal, which spew carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, is likely to plummet, thanks both to diminished supplies and rising concerns over the growing dangers of carbon emissions.

This will be a war because the future profitability, or even survival, of many of the world’s most powerful and wealthy corporations will be at risk, and because every nation has a potentially life-or-death stake in the contest. For giant oil companies like BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Royal Dutch Shell, an eventual shift away from petroleum will have massive economic consequences. They will be forced to adopt new economic models and attempt to corner new markets, based on the production of alternative energy products, or risk collapse or absorption by more powerful competitors. In these same decades, new companies will arise, some undoubtedly coming to rival the oil giants in wealth and importance.

The fate of nations, too, will be at stake as they place their bets on competing technologies, cling to their existing energy patterns, or compete for global energy sources, markets, and reserves. Because the acquisition of adequate supplies of energy is as basic a matter of national security as can be imagined, struggles over vital resources — oil and natural gas now, perhaps lithium or nickel (for electric-powered vehicles) in the future — will trigger armed violence.

#### Crushing Iran restores global deterrence—Adversaries don’t believe the U.S. has the resolve to fight because of Biden’s cowardice—solves Baltics & Taiwan invasions.

Block 22 [Josh Block, Adjunct Fellow @ the Hudson Institute. “Bomb Iran To Stop a Wider War in Europe and Protect Taiwan”, <https://www.hudson.org/foreign-policy/bomb-iran-to-stop-a-wider-war-in-europe-and-protect-taiwan>, 4/13/22. IMP]

Putin’s war against Ukraine is far from Tehran. But if the Biden administration hopes to deter Russia in Ukraine, and its growing alliance with **China** and Iran, it needs to move **decisively** against Iran’s nuclear assets now. The war in Europe and the coming threat of a nuclear-armed Iran is confronting the United States with a stark reality—an emerging alliance of nuclear-armed states, including Russia, China, Iran and North Korea, whose atomic umbrella will stretch from NATO’s borders in Eastern Europe to the Asian Far East. The Biden administration does not yet realize that the ground has shifted under its feet or it would be making corollary shifts, not more concessions to Iran. Instead, supporting a deal negotiated by Russia—one better than even Iran imagined, or so Russia brags—proves that the current administration is behind the times and dangerously wedded to ideas from a now-antiquated paradigm. The original 2015 Iran nuclear deal—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA—was conceived and negotiated against a global alignment that no longer exists. We are in a new era with new alignments and new divisions. This is why America cannot agree to such a deal. It would empower Russia and China to leverage Iran’s nuclear status against us while guaranteeing to Russia in writing that it can build 40 or more nuclear reactors in Iran. Such a deal is simply incompatible with the world we now inhabit. Startling and rapid, these shifts mean the cooperative period of East-West relationship has reverted to one of Cold War-style threats and alliances, including dramatic realignment among four and potentially many as five anti-Western states armed with nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. This growing nuclear threat simply isn’t tenable for the United States. In response, the Biden administration should show the grit and determination necessary to finally launch military strikes against Iran’s nuclear infrastructure. America and its allies have dithered on this issue for far too long. But strikes against Iran won’t just end a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. They will send a **strong** **message** of **resolve** from the United States to our adversaries that will **restore desperately lacking** American military **deterrent power**. This is vital for U.S. national security. Is there any indication that Putin is deterred by NATO or American warnings? To the contrary, Putin seems to be the one doing the deterring. Why else did the White House block the transfer of 28 MiG-29 fighters from Poland to Ukraine, which is pleading for them? Given the Biden administration’s badly engineered withdrawal from **Afghanistan**, its insincere and porous application of sanctions on Russia, its failure to arm Ukraine adequately and its serial weakness in the face of Iran’s ballistic-missile attacks on Americans and the capital cities of our Gulf allies, is it surprising that America and NATO’s **willingness** to go to war over formerSovietsatellite states is **deeply suspect** in Moscow? That is why the United States should act immediately and decisively to destroy Iran’s nuclear and military-industrial complex. This will restore America’s credible military deterrent, and prevent adventurism and a wider war in Europe. In the process, it will discourage reckless aggression in **Asia**, rhetorical or otherwise. What currently deters Putin from calling President Joe Biden’s and NATO’s bluff over “one inch” of territory? During any two-week NATO debate over invoking Article 5, Putin can take a 100-mile slice of Polish countryside or invade a Baltic state. Far from being deterred, Iran’s Supreme Leader has already called the White House’s bluff. On March 13, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps launched a substantial ballistic-missile attack targeting Erbil, near America’s new consulate in Kirkuk. This latest direct attack by Iran on American soldiers and civilians follows dozens of attacks by Iran and its proxies, which targeted U.S. military bases, plus population centers in Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Tehran has de facto declared war on the United States and our Gulf allies. Twenty years of talks with Iran regarding its illegal nuclear-weapons programs have amounted to two decades of calculated deception—deception almost always shielded diplomatically by Russia and economically by China. Since Biden took office, Russia and China have increasingly overcome historic differences, forging deeper scientific, military, trade, financial and imperial leader-to-leader ties. Chinese state media has amplified false Russian bioweapon accusations against the United States and spread Russia’s fallacious narrative of liberating Ukraine from Western aggression and phantom Nazis. Concern about Putin’s state of mind is widespread among White House advisers and European military officials. The frustrated commander-in-Kremlin has put his nukes on alert. He told the West to stay the hell out. He has issued increasingly brazen threats against European and NATO states considering military aid, which are deterring these states from providing the help Ukraine needs. All this must be reversed. Biden has apparently grown fearful of providing Putin a “pretext” to involve a NATO state in Putin’s war. So suddenly, Poland was out of line for offering planes to Ukraine—in a swap U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken suggested on a weekend was underway until the White House was “shocked” by the very idea on Monday. If the president wants to avoid **wider war** in **Europe** and deter the naked aggression that threatens global systems—those ensuring free and fair trade, borders, open seas and respect for human dignity—we must act to destroy Iran’s nuclear and military-industrial capability, restoring our deterrent credibility and taking away from Russia and China the ability to align with a nuclear **Iran** against the West. In the United States, as of early April, the national average price for gas remains more than $4 and spikes over $5 in places. Saudi Arabia and the UAE were incensed with the White House’s wildly nonchalant reaction to Iranian proxies firing ballistic missiles into their cities over the past few months. Understandably, Gulf leaders were unavailable for a call with Biden about increased oil output amid the Ukraine crisis. Acting now to eliminate the Iranian nuclear military-industrial complex would **remind** the world’s other leading **powers** that the **U**nited **S**tates still **maintains red lines** that cannot be crossed. It would also restore some confidence in the Gulf and go a long way towards reducing the price of gas at the pump.

#### Extinction AND Ukraine makes it more likely.

McKinney 22 [Maj. Melissa McKinney, U.S. Naval War College, “Deterrence By Denial to Prevent a Russian Invasion of The Baltic States”, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1174670.pdf>, 5/13/22. IMP]

The United States’ (U.S.) commitment to defend its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies under Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty has obligated its military assistance in regaining territory lost to a **Russian** invasion of the **Baltic** State**s**.1 This puts the U.S. into a complicated position where it would first seek to obtain air superiority, as historically has been necessary in previous conflicts. Establishing air superiority to defend the Baltic States would require destroying Russia’s Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, primarily located in the Kaliningrad enclave.2 The enclave contains the most lethal Russian Integrated Air Defense Systems (IADS), as well as nuclear capabilities, presenting a significant challenge for the U.S. and NATO.3 To target A2/AD, U.S. airpower would need to strike Russian (IADS) strategically positioned within sovereign Russian territory. 4 In this kind of scenario, the U.S. would face classic Type I deterrence problems itself, which Herman Kahn describes as “deterrence against a direct attack.”5 The enclave is considered an extension of the **Russian homeland**, and therefore, an attack on Kaliningrad is an attack on Russia. 6 The current U.S. and NATO deterrence by punishment strategy would be unfeasible given the likelihood of Russian escalation to drastic measures. The **probability** of a Russian **nuclear response** would **increase** **substantially**. The decision would come from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who invaded Ukraine “to protect the civilian population and to ‘demilitarize’ and ‘de-Nazify’ Ukraine.”7 To prevent the escalation of conflict and Russia’s most dangerous course of action – seizure of the Baltics – the U.S. and NATO must implement a deterrence by denial strategy. Shifting the deterrence strategy, and resourcing it appropriately, would send a strong message—the U.S. and NATO are a united, credible force with which to be reckoned. Russia must see the cost of invading the Baltic States as not worth the blood and treasure or the risk of a humiliating.

 It is essential to understand the relevance of an effective deterrence strategy consisting of intimidating force composition and defensive posture to prevent an adversary from taking action. 8 In the Texas National Security Review, Tami Biddle makes the point that a deterrence by punishment strategy seeks to persuade an adversary by threatening painful repercussions for violating demands, while a deterrence by denial strategy aims to convince an adversary that military action would fail due to the defender’s ability to prevent a successful attack.9 At the height of the Cold War, the U.S. and NATO forces operating in Western Europe implemented a deterrence by denial strategy against a potential invasion by the Soviet Union. The Alliance assessed that a robust force posture of upwards to 300,000 troops in Germany would convince Soviet forces that an offensive would be outmatched, unsuccessful, and detrimental.10 Years later, the U.S. significantly downsized its presence in Europe, leading to a shift in strategy to deterrence by punishment, with rotational tripwire forces, to create time and space for the arrival of reinforcements for the region’s defense. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 confirmed that the current strategy has been ineffective, as the U.S. and NATO’s painful financial sanctions have failed to end Russia’s military action so far. As the West fears that **the Baltic States could be next**, this paper suggests implementing an effective deterrence by denial strategy in three key areas: an increase in forward forces, bolstering a defensive posture, and a focus on non-kinetic effects that seek to degrade Russian Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities. THEATER GEOMETRY AND INADEQUATE FORCE POSTURE Theater geometry and disparities in force posture create an ideal operational environment for Russia to completely isolate the Baltic region, preventing access to U.S. and NATO reinforcements. The entirety of the Baltic States’ eastern border of roughly 450 miles is shared with Russia and Belarus.11 The western border of the Baltic States is the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland, creating a natural gap with Sweden and Finland. Throughout the Baltic States, the terrain consists of a robust network of roads and highways, increasing Russian forces’ potential for operational movement and maneuver from east to west and north to south.12 The ability for Russian forces to utilize the highly developed infrastructure would create an advantage in the factors of time and space and a corresponding disadvantage for Baltic forces. The Russian troops would have the ability to traverse the region rapidly, gain territory, establish defensive positions, and facilitate multiple lines of operations to secure the operational objectives of the capital cities. The Baltic States’ limited conventional force posture of roughly a combined 3 light infantry brigades would be a mismatch against a robust Russian attack.13 Situated on the southern border of the Baltic States, the northeastern edge of Poland, and along the Baltic Sea coastline is the sovereign Russian territory known as the Kaliningrad enclave. It is home to the Russian Baltic Fleet, which provides the force potential for obtaining sea denial or sea control within the Baltic Sea. Kaliningrad has an additional territorial advantage in the Suwalki Corridor, a 110-150 km-wide Polish and Lithuanian land border between the Russian enclave and Belarus.14 Due to its operational importance, Russia prioritizes the protection of the corridor by emplacing long-range artillery aimed against any NATO forces that might be sent to secure the region.15 Russia’s control of the corridor would establish its line of communication between the enclave and the homeland, setting conditions for an invasion of the Baltic States. The Russian Armed Forces are composed mainly of ground forces divided into 5 districts. The Western Military District operates along the Baltic States’ eastern border.16 Russia significantly increased funding for modernization campaigns such as the Strategic Armament Program (SAP) to increase combat readiness, update equipment, and re-arm forces in the Western Military District and Kaliningrad enclave. 17 According to a Brookings Institute estimate, before the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Russian force posture in these areas provided substantial mobility and firepower with approximately 800,000 combat personnel, roughly 947 tanks, 666 pieces of artillery, and 1,776 infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs). 18 Some may now see such a force as nothing but a paper tiger following Russia’s debacle in Ukraine. However, history also provides profound examples of the error in **underestimating** Russia’s ability to capitalize on favorable military opportunities, as in the Battle of Stalingrad during World War II.

#### Taiwan goes nuclear.

Auslin 22 [Michael Auslin, Defense Correspondent. “America must consider the risk a war over Taiwan could go nuclear”, <https://www.ft.com/content/e919274c-f743-462f-83fe-80ac352036fd>, 7/22/22. IMP]

War games are one thing but in the real world, as soon as one US missile hits Chinese territory, the question of escalation becomes critical. Retaliatory strikes by People’s Liberation Army rocket forces against US territory almost **inevitably** would **follow**, sparking an escalatory spiral. It is possible the Chinese would not wait to find out if incoming US missiles were indeed conventional but would strike at America’s land-based nuclear missile silos to prevent a full attack.

Any major clash would, in fact, be the first ballistic missile war between great powers. Americans long ago ceased any civil defence preparation and the public is entirely unprepared to come under missile attack. Such an escalation would put **enormous pressure** on US leaders to strike back even **harder** at Chinese targets, thus **risk**ing an **all-out confrontation**, with the urge to go **nuclear growing** with each new setback.

#### No Chinese Draw-In.

**Beebe and Lieven '23** [George and Anatol; Beebe spent more than two decades in government as an intelligence analyst, diplomat, and policy advisor, including as director of the CIA's Russia analysis and as a staff advisor on Russia matters to Vice President Cheney; Lieven is Director of the Eurasia Program at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. He was formerly a professor at Georgetown University in Qatar and in the War Studies Department of King’s College London; 10-19-2023, "How China and Russia can help us avoid escalation in the Middle East," Responsible Statecraft, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/us-russia-china-israel/>] TDI

Between China and Russia, Beijing’s help will be easier to enlist. China has the most to lose from a wider conflict in the region, which could threaten access to the region’s oil supplies, drive up energy prices, and undermine the global commerce on which China’s economy depends. It also has much to gain from working with the United States to contain the crisis and stabilize the region, which would bolster Beijing’s prestige on the world stage and potentially mitigate America’s reflexive fears that China intends to destabilize the international order.

For these reasons, Washington will be reluctant to bless a prominent role for China in the region; but China is already playing such a role regardless of U.S. wishes, as its facilitation of Saudi-Iranian rapprochement has demonstrated. Successful cooperation with China in the Middle East would mark a return to previous U.S. statements that Washington hopes that Beijing will become a “responsible stakeholder” and not an enemy on the world stage.

#### Neither would Russia.

**Radchenko '23** [Sergey; Wilson E Schmidt distinguished professor at the Henry A Kissinger Center, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies; 11-3-2023, "As war engulfs Gaza, Putin sees a chance to regain some of Russia’s faded global stature," Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/nov/03/war-gaza-putin-russia-middle-east-soviet-union>] TDI

The protracted quagmire of the war in Ukraine has weakened Russia’s ability to meddle in the Middle East (though it retains its naval base at Tartus and an airbase in Latakia, both in Syria). Understanding Russia’s role in Syria as a check on Iran’s influence, Benjamin Netanyahu has tried to maintain a balancing act between supporting Ukraine and maintaining a working relationship with the Kremlin. And Putin, vitally interested in keeping Israel neutral in the Ukraine war, has been careful not to upset Netanyahu. The [Hamas](https://www.theguardian.com/world/hamas) attack has blown up this uneasy equilibrium.

Yet today, unlike in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Russia is not a superpower that can project force across the region and sustain a wide-ranging clientele through military and economic aid.

What Putin can do is leverage his relationship with Iran and Syria, and Russia’s contacts with Hamas, to insert Russia into the peace process in the Middle East. Asked whether Russia could mediate in the conflict, Putin claimed recently [that it can](https://news.sky.com/video/israel-hamas-war-russian-president-vladimir-putin-offers-to-mediate-in-conflict-12982885), relying on its traditional relations with the Palestinians, and good relations with Israel. By finding a place for itself at the high table of Middle Eastern politics, Putin hopes to regain some of the international stature he had lost by invading Ukraine.

At the very least, he can win the sympathy of regional powerbrokers by championing the Palestinian cause. He has tried to do this by refusing to blame Hamas, and by sponsoring a [(failed) ceasefire resolution](https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15464.doc.htm) at the UN security council. Given the scope of Israel’s military operations in Gaza, it won’t be hard for the Russians to deflect any further criticism of their war in Ukraine by pointing to the smoking ruins of the Palestinian enclave.

Precisely because Russia is no longer a superpower, it has little credibility to lose. Its assets in Syria notwithstanding, it does not have to become embroiled in a widening war. Rather, Putin can do what the Soviets did in the 1956 Suez crisis: cheer from the sidelines and score moral victories.

This does not mean that Putin wants an escalation. A broader war that embroils Russia’s key partner, Iran, carries significant risks for Russia too. But, unlike the heyday of Moscow’s involvement in the Middle East, Putin’s decisions have limited bearing on how the current crisis unfolds.

### 2NR—Iran War Good

#### Strikes permanently stop a nuclear Iran without further escalation.

Mark Dubowitz & Matthew Kroenig 22. Dubowitz is the Chief executive of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. Kroenig is a professor of government at Georgetown, director of the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Strategy Initiative and a former senior policy adviser at the Pentagon. "Biden’s Moment Of Truth In Iran". Wall Street Journal. 1-6-2022. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/bidens-moment-of-truth-in-iran-negotiations-deal-nuclear-warheads-proliferation-centrifuges-fissile> 11641504610?reflink=share\_mobilewebshare

Negotiations in Vienna over Iran’s nuclear program started this week and quickly stalled—and little wonder. Tehran is striding toward nuclear weapons and has little interest in a diplomatic breakthrough.

That makes it almost certain that President Biden will soon face the fateful choice between allowing the clerical regime to become a nuclear-weapons power and using military force to stop it. The red line for military action will come when Iran’s timeline to sprint to a nuclear weapon shrinks to less than the Pentagon’s response time. On the current trajectory, that could happen early this year. If and when it does, the president should order military strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities to prevent Tehran from building the bomb.

The best possible resolution of this crisis would be a negotiated settlement that verifiably and permanently closes off all Iranian pathways to the bomb. But the 2015 nuclear deal failed to do that, and Tehran isn’t interested in any agreement that does.

Meanwhile, time is running out. Iran already could produce one bomb’s worth of weapons-grade uranium in as little as three weeks and test a crude nuclear device in six months. It might take a year or two to fashion a functioning nuclear warhead that is deliverable on a missile, but once the clerical regime has enough weapons-grade material, the game is over. The world could no longer physically prevent Iranian weaponization. Like North Korea, Tehran could move its bomb-grade material to secret facilities and fashion warheads undisturbed. To stop Iranian nuclearization, Washington must stop Tehran from acquiring sufficient quantities of fissile material.

A nuclear-armed Iran would cause further proliferation as regional powers like Saudi Arabia build their own bombs. Backed by the threat of nuclear weapons, Iran would step up its regional aggression and support to terror and proxy groups. With Washington deterred by fear of escalation—including the risk of a nuclear strike against Israel—the clerical regime would have a freer hand. Eventually, as Tehran’s intercontinental ballistic missile program advances, the U.S. itself would be vulnerable to Iranian nuclear attacks and coercion.

Fortunately, Washington has effective military options. There is little doubt the Pentagon can destroy Iran’s nuclear facilities (even those that are deeply buried and hardened), as several defense secretaries have stated.

American strikes would delay Iran’s efforts by years at minimum and forever at best. Tehran can’t enrich uranium without the necessary facilities. It would take time to rebuild, install and operate centrifuges, and reconstitute stockpiles of fissile material. The U.S. government has estimated that an Israeli strike would buy only one or two years, but an American strike would be more effective. And Iran might think twice before spending billions to rebuild facilities the U.S. could destroy again.

Iran would likely retaliate, but the lesson from President Trump’s strike on Gen. Qasem Soleimani two years ago is that Tehran’s response would likely be muted. The attack would stun the Iranian political system since it will be unexpected; Islamic Revolutionary Guard publications now regularly mock American determination. The ruling clerics still fear a major war, which could lead to the destruction of their military and the end of their regime. Washington can further deter retaliation by issuing an explicit threat that if Tehran escalates, the Pentagon will destroy more than the nuclear facilities.

Mr. Biden should publicly ask the Pentagon to update military plans and, alongside allies and partners, conduct exercises targeting mockup Iranian nuclear facilities. He should also ensure that U.S. allies and bases in the region are protected against Iranian counterstrikes. Israel would benefit from help addressing the threat of Iranian precision-guided missiles. Mr. Biden could also broker a deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia on missile and drone technology, which Riyadh needs to defend against Iranian attacks. It could have the added benefit of encouraging the kingdom’s entry into the Abraham Accords.

Military options are most effective when they don’t have to be used. If Tehran understands that diplomatic intransigence will have serious consequences, it will be more likely to negotiate. For those who hold out hope that coercive diplomacy still can solve the Iranian nuclear challenge, putting the military option back on the table, along with a renewed sanctions offensive, is the best bet.

If all else fails, Mr. Biden should be prepared to destroy Iran’s nuclear program. The risks of this approach pale in comparison to the threat of living with a nuclear-armed Iran for decades to come.