

Iran's Nuclear Program: Recommendations

| | | ACA Briefing Book: Solving the Iranian Nuclear Puzzle (February 2013) | Atlantic Council: Time to Move from Tactics to Strategy on Iran (April 2013) | Carnegie Endowment: Iran's Nuclear Odyssey – Costs and Risks (April 2013) | The Iran Project: Strategic Options for Iran: Balancing Pressure with Diplomacy (April 2013) | RAND: Iran After the Bomb (April 2013) | CNAS: If All Else Fails (May 2013) |
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| | | PREVENTION | | | | CONTAINMENT | |
| FOCUS OF REPORT: | | Details status of Iran's program, impact and role of sanctions, military strike consequences | Examines probability of "break out" weapon, current impacts on ordinary Iranians, military options | Examines the history and costs of Iran's 50-year program and their reasons for wanting one | Considers effects of strategies designed to pressure Iran; explores potential bilateral negotiations | Analyzes whether a nuclear-armed Iran would behave more aggressively; U.S. impact | Outlines a containment strategy to limit the dangers associated with a nuclear-armed Iran if prevention fails |
| SANCTIONS | P5 + 1 (U.N. Resolutions) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forego new sanctions Phase out international sanctions with cooperation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use sanctions relief as a negotiation tool | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work out a clearly understood plan that involves, the U.S., Iran, U.N. Security Council, EU, and other sanctioning nations | | |
| | BILATERAL (U.S.-Iran) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be cautioned against additional unilateral sanctions as they may be counterproductive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate U.S., private Iranian financial institutions or third country banks for humanitarian, educational, public diplomacy transactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In response to compliance, ease the most punishing sanctions, namely those against Iran's central bank and oil sales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the gradual lifting of sanctions as a bargaining chip with verifiable cooperation on key nuclear issues Explain the challenge of lifting Congressional sanctions | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and tighten sanctions against Iran |
| NEGOTIATIONS | P5 + 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach deal halting Iran's 20% enriched uranium production Consider confidence-building Exchange recognition for the right to enrich for a limit on the extent of enrichment Consider requiring Fordow be shut on a temporary basis Agree to provide fuel plates for the Tehran Research Reactor Agree to provide technical cooperation for development of a light water research reactor Establish more robust verifications to detect, deter violations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce new measures to augment people-to-people ties Facilitate trade in food, medicine, medical supplies by increased support for UN agencies (like the World Health Organization, UNESCO), other multinationals bodies whose outreach to Iranians is less politically sensitive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The goal should be détente Include Iran commitments not to undertake specific imports, experiments vital to nuclear weapons Impose clear IAEA nuclear weaponization benchmarks Broaden diplomatic avenues, cost-benefit discussion angles of Iran's nuclear policy, facilities, safety, security Offer alternative, renewable energy (face-saving) options Identify collaboration areas Pursue nuclear safety, security cooperation more rigorously | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support bilateral (U.S.-Iran) talks about key nuclear issues Manage the coordination of bilateral talks between the U.S. and Iran with the ongoing P5+1 multilateral process and the concerns of other allies <p>Recommendation for all parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage hostile rhetoric | | |
| | BILATERAL (U.S.-Iran) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize getting Iran to indefinitely forgo all uranium enrichment is not feasible, necessary to prevent Iran Support future enrichment under strict IAEA supervision (after international concerns resolved) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obama administration should lay out a step-by-step proportionate plan ending with graduated relief of sanctions on oil, Iranian Central Bank in return for verifiable curbs on enrichment, stocks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts should make clear to Iranians that a prosperous, integrated Iran—as opposed to a weakened isolated Iran—is in America's interests Step back from the edge of the confrontation cliff Reassess positions and principles Adopt a new, innovative approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a presidential welcoming of the Supreme Leader's <i>fatwa</i> against producing, using nuclear weapons as a basis for negotiations Set the tone by inviting an exchange of views on how each side sees the region, world, threats to its security Preview objectives with a long-range agenda, outline bigger objectives, agreements on negotiation terms Broaden collaboration in areas of common interest (Afghanistan, Iraq, drug trafficking, preventing conflict) Establish formal bilateral "hotline" or confidential communication channel to seek clarification on events, statements, actions that are unclear Facilitate expansion of scientific, technical, academic, sports, cultural, citizen-to-citizen exchanges | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit, mitigate consequences of Iranian conventional terrorism sponsorship, support for militant groups, conventional aggression Discourage Iranian use of nuclear threats to coerce other states to provoke crises; dissuade Iranian escalation during crises Discourage Iran from adopting a destabilizing nuclear posture emphasizing early weapons use/pre-delegates launch authority Limit damage to the credibility of the NPT, U.S. nonproliferation leadership Shape posture through a U.S. "no-first-use" pledge |

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| | PREVENTION | | | | CONTAINMENT | |
| SUPPORTING REGIONAL SECURITY INITIATIVES | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make U.S. commitments to the Persian Gulf, North Africa, and the Levant to counter support of adversaries Reassert U.S. diplomatic, military, economical leadership Include increased efforts to support a coherent Syrian opposition Revive Arab-Israeli peace talks, expand the Quartet and include Arab League Shore up the U.S. relationship with Egypt, Turkey, and the GCC states Help plan the Afghanistan transition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage Iran as a win-win situation, given Iran's influence on key U.S. foreign policy challenges—namely Afghanistan, Iraq, Arab-Israeli peace, terrorism, energy security, nuclear proliferation Improve U.S. public diplomacy campaign through an improved message, better medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find grounds for collaboration on common adversaries (anti-Shia groups like al-Qaeda, the Taliban, other terrorism organizations) Over the long-term, balance U.S. policy approach that seeks to build relationships on both sides of the Sunni-Shia divide in the region Pursue a broader Gulf security agreement/regional security pact which in the long-term might include Iran Continue adjusting the combination of pressure and enhanced diplomatic engagement that enables the U.S. to challenge and confront Iran's role in the region when necessary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep in mind that the regional environment, the status of the Syrian regime, international pressures, the state of the Israel-Iran rivalry, and U.S./Israeli policy toward Iran could have a bigger role in determining Iran's policy toward Hezbollah than Iran's nuclear capability Examine the capabilities and incentives of regional rivalries, individually—like Saudi Arabia Egypt, Turkey—to determine the likelihood that they would pursue nuclear weapons if Iran does | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with regional partners to convince states not to pursue nuclear weapons capabilities; extend U.S. nuclear umbrella Maintain robust U.S. conventional presence in the Gulf; increase security cooperation, operational integration Resist one-size-fits-all approach; carefully tailor bilateral arrangements, factoring in operational, political considerations Work with partners to ensure base access, adequate supplies, secure communication Advertise deployments of strategic assets close to Iran flight paths that do not cross Russian or Chinese territory Expand membership in the Proliferation Security Initiative (stop spread of WMDs) Expand cooperation with countries controlling well-trafficked ports, canals Build Egyptian, Iraqi counterweights Increase assistance to Syrian opposition, Lebanese Armed Forces (check Hezbollah) Keep assisting Palestinian security forces, institution building; promote peace accord Improve oil infrastructure defense |
| MILITARY OPTION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note consequences include that it would be costly and counterproductive, foreclose diplomatic options, erode international support for sanctions, lessen Iran's isolation, possibly trigger a regional war | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the credibility of the military strike option as it may be the only course that deters Iran's program, but retain the option as a last resort | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that the Iranian nuclear program has deep roots and cannot be "ended" or "bombed away" Note that the nuclear issue will never be fully resolved absent a broader political statement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The more the President threatens to use force, the more difficult it will be for Iran's defiant leadership to consider any offer, and the more the President will be under pressure to use military force | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine Iran's potential foreign policy, military doctrine, and support for terrorism after it has obtained nuclear weapons (since a strike would be unsuccessful in stopping the creation of an Iranian nuclear program) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit U.S. military objectives in crises; avoid intensive air campaigns, large-scale invasion aimed at crippling the regime Develop more effective, U.S. interceptor kill vehicles, sensor integration, midcourse discrimination capabilities Note for U.S.: if diplomacy, sanctions fail, abandoning military option guts credibility |
| CONSEQUENCES OF A MILITARY RESPONSE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could get worse if Islamabad intervened in opposition to U.S. military action Would only yield temporary results as a U.S. strike would only set Iran's program back up to four years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retaliation against Israel Multilateral coalition dissolution Expulsion of IAEA inspectors Withdrawal from the NPT More support for militant groups Global economic crises, costly oil Deterred political reform chances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bombing Iran or allowing Iran to get the bomb would have enormous ramifications on the global economy, regional stability, international law, America's standing in the world, and the well-being of thousands of Iranians | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The closer the regime comes to believing it has reached a point of desperation [that military action will be used against them], the more desirable the option to build a bomb Force would set back Iran's program for several years, but the costs for the U.S. would be high | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Israeli and/or U.S. attack against Iran's nuclear facilities could not prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons (only delay them) Strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities could result in a strong reaction in the Gulf | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strike launched before all other options have been exhausted could shatter international consensus needed to check Iran Ineffective military strikes may produce minimal damage to the nuclear program, strengthen motivation to acquire the bomb Iran's military tendency regarding strategic weapons systems is/will be reactive |
| MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDATIONS & NOTES | <p>Monitoring & Evaluation proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure mass balance of uranium going into and out of Iran's uranium-conversion plant using the destructive analysis technique Have Iran export LEU it produces, preventing further enrichment | <p>Civilian outreach proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Iran's democratic evolution Create a virtual public affairs section for Iran in the State Dept; restore the post of Iran Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Facilitate travel by Iranians; open a U.S. interest section in Tehran Facilitate university-to-university, Fulbright programs | <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The royal heritage (Shah) included the nuclear program, deemed as a costly Western imposition on an oil-rich nation by revolutionaries Iran's current environmental degradation, (est. by World Bank) is three times higher than the region's average | <p>U.S. recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a public statement of America's interest in working with Iran that includes no <i>quid pro quo</i> Make a public effort to ensure Iran receives medicines, medical supplies Cease some covert activities seen as efforts to destabilize Iran Open opportunities for American, Iranian diplomats to have discourse | <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesson for Iran from war with Iraq: need for military self-sufficiency; Revolutionary Guard commander believes the Iraq war could [have been] won through advanced weapons development U.S. ops against Serbia (1995, 1998) may have reinforced Iran's military insecurity | <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multipolar nuclear competitions could complicate deterrence (making attribution for nuclear attacks trickier, creating difficulties for calculating sufficiency, vulnerability of nuclear arsenals) <p>P5 + 1 recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand international legal authorities to interdict arms shipments on the high seas <p>U.S. recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pass meaningful cybersecurity legislation |