

Will Israel Execute a Preemptive Strike on Iranian Nuclear
Facilities In the Next Year?

Tiffany A. Brisbon

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Introduction

June 6, 2008: “If Iran continues its nuclear arms program-we will attack it. Other options are disappearing. The sanctions are not effective. There will be no choice but to attack Iran to halt the Iranian nuclear program”, Shaul Mofaz, former Israeli Chief of Staff and Defense Minister (Pipes 2009, 2).

August 3, 2009: “Iran has perfected the technology to create and detonate a nuclear warhead and is merely awaiting the word from its Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to produce its first bomb, Western intelligence sources have told *The Times*” (Hider, Beeston & Evans 2009).

The volatility of the Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape is no secret. Inextricably entangled in a web of history and alliances, Middle Eastern nations act as characters in a tragedy, doing a delicate dance of diplomacy, even as each seeks to influence the balance of power in the region. Even the smallest development in the area can have global ramifications, making it imperative to consider the political landscape afresh each day. Recently, a rather large development has surfaced, that being Iran’s alleged achievement of nuclear readiness. The recent North Korean launch of an intercontinental Ballistic missile capable of delivering atomic warheads highlighted the plausibility of asymmetrical nuclear threats.

For many years Israeli intelligence has maintained that Iran is fast approaching a nuclear ‘point of no return’ after which time it will become a serious nuclear threat. At the point of no return, diplomacy will no longer deter proliferation. The warnings have recently escalated to near fever-pitch in response to Israeli assessments which estimate that Iran will be fully nuclear-ready within little more than a year’s time, posing an existential threat to Israel, and a menace to Israel’s allies. The Israeli judgment stands in stark contrast to a 2007 *National Intelligence Estimate* released by the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence which included the following key judgments with high to moderate confidence: Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003; The earliest

possible date Iran could produce enough heavily enriched uranium (HEU) would be 2009; Iran would be 'technically capable' of producing enough HEU for a weapon sometime between 2010-2015 (ODNI 2007, 5-7).

While the credibility of Israeli analysts has been questioned in the past following inaccurate 'doom and gloom' predictions, the global community appears to be taking this prediction particularly seriously, so much so in fact that Iranian proliferation will be at the top of the slate at the UN Security Council meeting in September. Meanwhile, in accord with the Begin Doctrine¹, Israel has promised preemptive strikes on Iranian nuclear sites based on its own intelligence concerning Iran's impending proliferation: "Israel cannot afford the introduction of the nuclear weapon. For us it is...a question of survival. We shall therefore have to prevent such a threat at its inception" (Sokolski and Clawson, 138). But a preemptive strike will have dire environmental, economic, diplomatic and social consequences around the world, and therefore merits careful and deliberate scrutiny. This study represents a qualitative predictive study of the likelihood of a preemptive Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities in the next 12 months, one year being Israel's alleged time frame for Iran to achieve full proliferation. The primary hypothesis of this study is that the possible consequences of an Israeli preemptive strike on Iranian nuclear facilities outweigh the benefits, and will serve to moderate Israel's perception of imminent danger in favor of less drastic alternatives to unilateral aggression.

Literature Review

¹ 'The Begin Doctrine' is a "a comprehensive and all encompassing preventive counterproliferation doctrine.."
" (Brom 2005, 137)

There exists an abundance of literature on Israeli-Iranian relations, on their nuclear ambitions and achievements, and on speculative conflict scenarios between the two. What is noticeably missing from the literature are works that consider the *likelihood* or *probability* of conflict occurring in light of Iran's alleged significant nuclear progress. More specifically, there were no documents that considered the probability of a preemptive Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, neither relatively or quantitatively. This study attempts to begin filling that gap by deductively examining the possible consequences of a military strike versus other options. It is the cost-benefit analysis of the consequences which will ultimately guide Israeli policy concerning preemption, as well as the options of national actors Iran, Russia, the United States and Israel.

The sources for this study consist largely of primary print and electronic media—especially journal articles, and declassified government documents. The bulk of supporting texts are drawn from a variety of Iranian, American, Israeli and British sources that span a broad spectrum of disciplines and schools of thought. Included are dissident and pro-nationalist perspectives, government, academic, religious and social texts. Because of the immediacy of the preemption issue, the vast majority of sources are recent academic journal submissions and online articles. It is important to note that sources included in this study share a general consensus of assumptions which are relevant because they represent the bulk of what is generally held to be true concerning Israel and Iran up to the present.

For example, it is generally assumed across the literature that Iran is covertly developing nuclear weapons, despite signing the NPT agreement which calls for

abstention from weaponizing nuclear technology. There is no consensus as to when Iran will go fully nuclear, but there is agreement that operational weapons are not far off in the future. There seems to exist in the recent literature on Iranian nuclear ambition, an underlying assumption that the question is not so much ‘*if* Iran goes nuclear’, but ‘when’? A dichotomy exists between Israeli and U.S. intelligence, but the longer estimates propose that Iran will become a nuclear state sometime within the next six years. It is worth mentioning that there is also a range of estimates as to when the technological ‘point of no return’ might be surpassed, and the very definition of ‘point of no return’ remains ambiguous. Still, Israel’s declared intentions to strike Iran’s nuclear infrastructure are believed to be credible, and there is no disputing that Iran has constructed the three essential structures necessary to produce significant quantities of weapons-grade fissile material (Raas and Long 2007, 13). Moreover, few sources dispute the fact that Israel is capable of successfully destroying Iran’s nuclear facilities, including buried hard targets, although it will require a sustained effort to cause enough destruction to significantly delay proliferation (ibid). The literature also assumes to be true that Iranian nuclear interests are driven primarily by ideological considerations, making a nuclear Iran a credible threat to its neighbors and the world: “...Saudi Arabia, other Gulf States and Iraq-all with which Iran has had longstanding and bitter territorial disputes-are more scared of Iran’s bomb being used against them than are the Israelis” (Johnson 2009, 17). Iran’s credibility as a global threat is further reinforced by its reputation as a state sponsor of terrorism via organizations like Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon, al-Qaida in Iran and Afghanistan, and extremist Palestinian groups in Israel. It is within the

framework of all of these broadly held assumptions across the literature that substantive material on which to build a predictive study is found.

“Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran”, published by the Strategic Studies Institute offers twelve essays regarding how to prepare for a nuclear Iran, the ramifications thereof, and possible strategies for deterrence. Four of the twelve essays proved relevant to this analysis including ‘Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran: Report of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center Working Group’ by Henry Sokolski; ‘The Day After Iran Gets the Bomb’ by Kenneth Timmerman; ‘Is the Begin Doctrine Still a Viable Option for Israel?’ by Shlomo Brom, and ‘Strategy for a Nuclear Iran’ by Thomas Donnelly. Each of the four contributors draws their conclusions from a combination of historical survey, technical reports and intelligence estimates.

Sokolski examines three threats that are likely to increase when Iran acquires nuclear viability—further proliferation, higher oil prices and terrorism. He then presents a list of seven recommendations to manage a nuclear Iran, rather than focusing on the prevention of proliferation. In his essay, Zimmerman postulates on Iran’s motivations for seeking nuclear weapons, its long-standing support of international terrorism, and the regimes internal value system. From his examination he makes five conclusions that support his main assertion that ‘a nuclear Iran is not an option’ (Sokolski and Clawson 2005, 127).

Shlomo Brom considers Israel’s preemptive counter-proliferation doctrine known as the ‘Begin Doctrine’ as it applies to the perceived threat a nuclear Iran represents to Israel and Arab nations. He ultimately concludes that such a long-range strike would

pose a serious logistical and diplomatic problem for Israel, possibly precipitating Iranian nuclear or missile strikes on Israeli cities (like the attacks Saddam Hussein initiated). Finally, Brom concludes that the prospect of an air attack, though feasible, does not have a high probability of success like the attack on Osirak. He names several reasons including Israel's lack of air strike support, a wide-range and distance between targets, and the necessity of refueling on the long haul to targets and back.

Lastly, Thomas Donnelly explores the ramifications of a U.S. precipitated regime change versus bargaining with the leadership over disarmament using the classic 'balance of power' approach.

A second significant policy-focused text, *The Iran Threat*, by Alireza Jafarzadeh, undertakes a broad survey of Iranian nuclear and Islamist aspirations. The central purpose of the Jafarzadeh's exposition seems to be an attempt to convince the global audience that the current regime poses an imminent and increasingly credible threat to world peace. It is worth noting that the author is an 'Iranian dissident and exile with sources inside Iran...famous for exposing clandestine Iranian nuclear activities..' according to James Biedzynski, contributor to *The Journal of Third World Studies* (Biedzynski 2009, 193).

Jafarzadeh builds a case for the initiation not of military force, but of a forced regime change, supporting his argument with information from multiple international academic journals, U.S. government documents, and insider knowledge. About Iranian nuclear ambitions the author had this to say: "Israel knows that it would probably be the Iranian regime's first nuclear target..." (Jafarzadeh 2007, 194). His main conclusion is

that Iran will escalate its rhetoric to actual nuclear aggression against Israel, its regional neighbors, and eventually the United States. The author points to the successful development of long-range missiles (though not covered in the e text, most recently the Shehab-3), along with heavy spending to increase its chemical and biological weapons cache as evidence that Iran seeks ultimately to challenge U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. In his estimate, nuclear capability is a means to that end. Jafarzadeh completes his piece by presenting several alternatives to a full-scale confrontation, preferring to champion deterrence instead.

A third source that contributed substantially to this study is Trita Parsi's book "Traacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the United States". Following a lengthy historical survey, Parsi argues that Iranian foreign policy is driven primarily by 'geopolitical considerations' rather than Islamic ideology, despite the contrary rantings of President Ahmadinejad and other leaders in Tehran (Parsi 2007, 263). His assertion represents a break from the thinking of the majority of his peers. Parsi does an excellent job illuminating the very complicated diplomatic relationship between Israel and the U.S. Using government documents, including declassified intelligence estimates, academic journals and history books, he relates the ways in which the nuances of the Israeli-U.S. alliance have both helped and hindered the peace process in the Middle East. Also worth noting is the thorough job Parsi does of explaining how the cooperative unofficial relationship over the yeas between the Iranian and Israeli governments informs the tenuous relations between them now.

While historical surveys offer a general understanding and broad overview of Iranian-Israeli relations, the technologically-based sources supply this study with the quantitative analysis and consequences of an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Two sources proved most useful to that end- "Osirak Redux" and "Study on a Possible Israeli Strike on Iran's Nuclear Development Facilities".

"Osirak Redux" was written jointly by Whitney Raas, a research analyst for Naval Analyses, and Austin Long, an adjunct researcher for the RAND Corporation. Their study, which appeared in *International Security*, surveys Israel's technological and strategic abilities to strike Iran's nuclear sites. They compare and contrast Israel's 1981 preemptive strike on a nuclear reactor in Osirak, Iraq in attempts to prove the feasibility of a strike on Iranian facilities now. After a historical review of the Osirak mission, the authors relay in detail the technical specification and locations of Iranian facilities, as well as the fortifications of each. Raas and Long methodically reason the most logical targets to strike, timing of strikes, and the likely diplomatic fall-out consequences of striking a nuclear facility. They also examine various methods of ensuring maximum delay in Iran's nuclear program through a detailed discussion of Israeli air, weapon and missile defense capabilities as against technology available to Iranian defense forces. The authors conclude that, although Israel risks high losses on such a difficult tactical strike along with international rebuke, Israel does indeed possess the capability to strike successfully. This conclusion represents a break from the majority of the literature, most of which assert via far less thorough methodology, that Israel's probable degree of success is very low.

Similarly, the academic paper “Study on a Possible Israeli Strike on Iran’s Nuclear Development Facilities”, by Abdullah Toukan and Anthony H. Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. This study is very similar in many respects to “Osirak Redux”, though the undertaking is far more detailed and up-to-date. This study gives consideration to several topics omitted in the Osirak piece. For example, Toukan and Cordesman include whole sections on Iranian nuclear and defense capabilities, as well as long explanations of Israeli and Iranian defense systems. The most jarring inclusion is the likely health and environmental effects of a nuclear exchange or destruction of nuclear facilities in both countries. Another key difference between the Osirak article and the CSIS study lies in scope. Raas and Long deliberately avoided a discussion of consequences and alternate options. Toukan and Cordesman include, albeit briefly in their findings, political, social, and economic and public health consequences of a preemptive Israeli strike.

Research Design

This study represents a qualitative, holistic attempt to predict the likelihood of a preemptive Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities. To accomplish this end, the Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP) will be employed to consider the alternate futures that might result from a strike versus other options in dealing with Iran’s impending proliferation.

Lamp is a twelve-step process which allows analysts to logically deduce the relative probability of a series of alternate futures. The method is operationalized as follows:

- “1. Determine the issue for which you are trying to predict the most likely future.
2. Specify the national ‘actors’ involved.
3. Perform an in-depth study of how each national actor perceives the issue in question.
4. Specify all possible courses of action for each actor.
5. Determine the major scenarios within which you will compare the alternate futures.
6. Calculate the total number of permutations of possible ‘alternate futures’ for each scenario.
7. Perform a ‘pairwise comparison’ of all alternate futures to determine their relative probability.
8. Rank the alternate futures for each scenario from highest relative probability to the lowest based on the number of ‘votes’ received.
9. Assuming that each future occurs, analyze each alternate future in terms of its consequences for the issue in question.
10. State the potential of a given alternate future to ‘transpose’ into another alternate future.
11. Determine the ‘focal events’ that must occur in our present in order to bring about a given alternate future.
12. Develop indicators for the focal events. “(Lockwood and Lockwood 1993, 27-28).

LAMP method yields a number of alternate futures which can be expressed by the calculation $X^Y=Z$. X represents the number of courses of action open to each actor, while Y represents the number of national actors involved in a scenario. Z equals the number of possible alternate futures for a given scenario. If there is variation between the

numbers of courses of action, then the products are multiplied to reach the total number of possible alternate futures. These futures can be represented graphically in spreadsheet form, easing the pairwise comparison step. The number of pairwise comparisons for a given scenario can be expressed thusly: $X=(n-1)+(n-2)\dots+(n-n)$ (Lockwood and Lockwood 1993, 40).

LAMP serves as a strong, logically-based forecasting tool with much strength. Unlike other evaluative methods, LAMP theoretically takes into account all possible courses of action, taking a much comprehensive spectral look at possible alternate futures. Likewise, though speculative in nature as are all predictive methods, LAMP technique is highly logical and systematic. Furthermore, LAMP method accounts for the free will of the actors involved, and can subsequently be reevaluated as focal points and indicators arise by 'revoting' the alternate futures for a given scenario. That being said, LAMP is not without its weaknesses.

Lockwood points out that during step three, when the analysts considers each national actor's perceptions of the issue in question, analysts can fall victim to 'mirror-imaging' or the tendency to interpret events through a personal lens, rather than from the actor's perspective. Needless to say that such a fallacy would skew the findings. Another obvious weakness inherent in the LAMP technique is the limitations imposed by the number of actors that can be considered for any one scenario. Adding just one or two additional courses of action or national actors can increase the number of alternate futures exponentially, rendering pairwise comparison virtually impossible without support software. On a related note, pairwise comparisons are highly speculative, consisting of

the analyst's best guess as to which alternative is 'more likely'. Perhaps the most obvious difference between LAMP and other methods of prediction is the lack of definitive quantification. Though LAMP yields relative probabilities, it gives no indication in mathematical form of the likelihood of one future versus another. Finally, as with all predictive methodology, the results are only as accurate as the information available. Many of the open sources used in this study, though peer-reviewed and rigorous in nature, have not been fully vetted and may be out-of-date, incomplete, or erroneous.

The Perceptions of the National Actors & Courses of Action

When considering the plausibility of a preemptive Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, four national actors can realistically have a direct impact on any alternate futures, though different scenarios include different combinations of nations. Relevant national actors include Iran, Israel, the United States and Russia. Each has a number of options from which to choose. Toukan and Cordesman list eight 'Options to deal with Iran's Nuclear Program within the Time Frame'. These options will be used later in this study and represent step four in the LAMP process (see figure 1). Also, in light of the short time frame under consideration, only the most recent developments for each national actor will inform this study.

IRANIAN PERCEPTION

Before the recent Iranian presidential elections, it seemed that President Obama and much of the global community favored 'engaging' Iran, in efforts to

encourage full compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 (NPT). However, the recent and likely fraudulent reelection of President Ahmadinejad, coupled with the brutal suppression of his protesting populace cooled any burgeoning warmth from the international community. Furthermore, the prospects for regime change in Iran have dimmed, leaving little hope in the near future that moderating voices will prevail on the nuclear armament question. Instead, Iran continues to provoke the world boldly.

Ahmadinejad has grown increasingly bellicose towards Israel and the West, adding to the perception that that he is no more than a bombastic character with limited power under the thumbs of the mullahs, Iran's powerful religious clerics. Or perhaps there is another explanation. Ahmadinejad's boldness, Israel's agitation and President Obama's increasingly stringent olive branch diplomacy could all signal a measure of accuracy in recent intelligence concerning Iranian nuclear capabilities. Furthermore, it is clear that Ahmadinejad has no intentions of shifting his focus from the nuclear question: "Since his election in 2005, Ahmadinejad has depicted western countries as bullies who want to punish Iran by preventing it from developing...nuclear technology. He shouts with his fists in the air that Iran will never back down from pursuing this technology" (Jafarzadeh 2007, 139). It seems reasonable to assume that his interests extend beyond the civil arena.

Surrounded by the U.S. and a bevy of nuclear-ready countries, Iran has long pursued a nuclear weapons program, which it views as a definitive deterrent to its neighbors, and a challenge to the perceived hegemonic power of United States in the region. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent loss of its moderating presence in the Middle East, Iran has partnered with Russia to pursue civil nuclear

technology. But many believe that Iran has long employed a covert ‘talk and build’ nuclear weapons program. Iran buys time by paying lip service to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the guise of civil nuclear applications, while steadily building facilities for and hiding the weaponization of fissile material. So far, such sophistry has been largely successful delaying, for the most part detection and retaliation from the global community.

IRANIAN POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

Iran’s options are necessarily limited in this study by Israel’s proposed course of action. Should Iran sustain a preemptive strike on its nuclear facilities, it has two basic options-cooperate, or retaliate. Retaliation can, of course, take on a myriad of forms, some of which pose serious problems for the international community. Perhaps the largest threat would be to the global economy should Iran decide to close down the Strait of Hormuz ‘through which 20 percent of the world’s oil flows’ (Rodgers 2009, 13). It would not be difficult for Iran to sabotage oil pipelines or the shipping lanes in the Gulf as an alternative retaliatory tactic. Furthermore, the nuclear fallout could easily be viewed as ‘further evidence of a US-Israeli global war on Islam’ (it is probable that the U.S. would assume to have been complicit if not involved whether actually true or not). According to Toukan and Cordesman, the fallout would undoubtedly affect surrounding nations:

- “ • Attacking the Bushehr Nuclear Reactor would release contamination in the form of radionuclides into the air.
- Most definitely Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE will be heavily affected by the radionuclides.

- Any strike on the Bushehr Nuclear Reactor will cause the immediate death of thousands of people living in or adjacent to the site, and thousands of subsequent cancer deaths or even up to hundreds of thousands depending on the population density along the contamination plume” (Toukan and Cordesman 2009, 89).

Iran would need no more reason to unleash its terror proxies against international targets whether they are destabilizing forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, Hezbollah rocket or missile launches into Israeli civilian sites, or attacks of regional allies of the United States. It is also thought that a preemptive attack by the Israelis might cement Iranian resolve to achieve full nuclear capability, inspiring the leadership to withdraw from the NPT to pursue nuclear weapons overtly, or to rebuild the program covertly.

Conversely, Iran could choose to cooperate, if only for a season, agreeing to delay any pursuit of nuclear weapons. This strategy was suggested by former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani: “Rafsanjani has not argued for surrender, his argument is that Iran should conduct a tactical withdrawal until the United States pulls out from Iraq. Then, Iran could resume its nuclear weapons program and threaten the region” (Geo-Strategy Direct 2008, 3).

ISRAELI PERCEPTION

There is not a consensus amongst Israeli intelligence agencies as to how to respond to the threat of Iranian proliferation. While some see Ahmadinejad’s rhetoric as nothing more than an act on the world stage, others view his threat to annihilate Israel very seriously. Israel’s position can be summed up thusly: “...preemptive action does not come at the beginning of long chain of effort. The threat must be very grave. And the risks of waiting must far outweigh the risks of action (Spector and Cohen 2008, 18).

For Israel, the risks of waiting represent a looming existential threat. Though, according to Toukan and Cordesman's report Israel could survive a nuclear strike, Israel is not prepared to leave its security in the hands of other nations, the U.S. included: "I heard, unenthusiastically, the Americans' statement that they will defend their allies in the event that Iran arms itself with an atomic bomb, as if they have already reconciled with this possibility, and this is a mistake" said Dan Meridor, the minister for secret services. '...we don't need to deal with the assumption that Iran will attain nuclear weapons, but to prevent this'" (Hider 2009). In light of historical precedent, it seems unlikely that Israel will allow public opinion to inform its strategic and defensive initiatives. Furthermore, the cooling of relations between Israel and the U.S. following a breakdown in talks over the issue of Jewish settlement building in Gaza and the West Bank may encourage Israel to act unilaterally. However, the diplomatic ramifications of a unilateral strike are weighty, considering that Israel must fly sans permission over neighboring airspace.

ISRAELI POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

Israel has three viable courses of action concerning Iranian proliferation-preemption, diplomacy, and deterrence. Military forms of deterrence are clearly not a favored option according to Mr. Meridor, although Israel can continue covert targeted killings of key Iranian nuclear personnel. Its status as 'nuclearly ambiguous' serves as a stand alone de jure deterrent already. Further, diplomacy has yet to prove effective and may prove even less so as Iran's nuclear ambitions become reality. Israel has little faith in UN sanctions considering it has so far refused to impose binding Chapter 7 sanctions on Iran.

Consequently, Israel has announced publicly that it is prepared for and heavily considering a preemptive strike on Iranian nuclear sites-unilaterally if necessary.

U.S. PERCEPTIONS

Washington walks a fine and tenuous line of diplomacy between Israel, a long-time ally, and Iran. The dual threats of terrorism and asymmetrical warfare have altered the United States' stance on preemptive action. The U.S. has Iran surrounded geographically, and is involved in wars on several fronts in the region. Troops are vulnerable and an Israeli strike would most certainly underscore that fact. Attempts to engage Iran diplomatically have been less than successful thus far, and the government expressed grave concerns about the recent reelection of Ahmadinejad and his violent suppression of political protests. The olive branch that President Obama extended to Iran strained relations with Israel over and above disagreement over settlements.

U.S. POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

The U.S. does not openly favor an Israeli strike, nor has it eliminated military action as an option against a defiant Iran. Should Israel execute a preemptive strike, the U.S. could become a target by proxy, in which case it could choose to employ airstrikes or an invasion. Secretary of State Clinton recently signaled that the U.S. may be leaning towards containment or deterrence: "Secretary of State Clinton...warned that the United States would consider extending a 'defense umbrella' over the Middle East if the country (Iran) continued to defy international demands that it halt work that could lead to nuclear weapons" (Landler and Sanger 2009, 1). Non-military options include diplomacy,

sanctions, which will be the hot topic at the UN Security council in September, and lucrative incentives as alternative courses of action.

RUSSIAN PERCEPTIONS

Russia has remained fairly consistent in its relationship to Iran, largely supporting and aiding Iran in the development of civil nuclear technology. There exists a strong Russian precedent of support for Iran, it being Russia's last foothold in the region. Consequently, this study assumes that, barring Israeli military action, Russia and China will not stray from their normal policies towards Tehran, and will only be considered in a strike scenario. However, it should be noted that Russia has made efforts to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions in the past, albeit half-heartedly.

RUSSIAN POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

Russia benefits economically from its relationship to Iran and prefers diplomacy or 'engagement' with Iran's current regime: "President Obama wants 'engagement' This is precisely the view of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov" (Bolton 2009, 18).

Russia has two viable courses of action from which to choose-abandon Iran in support of Western ideology, or continue supporting Iranian nuclear endeavors.

SCENARIO ONE

In the first scenario, Israel executes a preemptive air (or missile) strike on Iranian nuclear facilities sometime in 2010. This scenario assumes that the United States will likely be drawn into some form of military conflict with Iran. It is also assumed that Russia will

be forced to choose between supporting the West for the greater good of the global community, or supporting Iran as it always has in one form or another. Iran will have but two options. It can cooperate, agreeing to halt its nuclear weapons development (at least temporarily). Conversely, Iran can retaliate whether militarily, economically, by proxy or some combination of the three. The total number of possible alternate futures, is twelve or 66 pair-wise comparisons.

SCENARIO TWO

In the second scenario, Israel foregoes its promise of a strike, in favor of more moderate tactics in tandem with the international community. This scenario is far more complicated than scenario one, though it assumes that Russia will continue its historical precedent in support of Iran. According to Toukan and Cordesman, the U.S. has five available options, Israel has three, and Iran two. Total number of possible alternate futures equals thirty or 435 pairwise comparisons. To reduce the number of comparisons, this study assumes that Iran will eventually go nuclear, as forecast by both U.S. and Israeli intelligence sources. As a result, only U.S. and Israeli options are considered.

Options to deal with Iran's Nuclear Program within the Time Frame (figure 1)

Diplomacy and Dialog:

Efforts to persuade Iran to not proliferate, and by convincing Iran that it **does not face a sufficient threat to proliferate and** cannot make major gains in power or security by doing so.

Incentives:

Options that give Iran security guarantees, economic and trade advantages.

• Containment:

Creation of a mix of defensive and offensive measures that would both deny Iran the ability to exploit its WMD capabilities and show that any effort to use such weapons to intimidate or gain military advantage would

be offset by the response.

- Sanctions:

Controls and measures designed to put economic pressure on Iran, limit its access to technology, and/or limit its access to arms.

- Regime change:

Efforts to change the regime and create one that will not proliferate.

- Defense:

A mix of measures like missile defense, air defense, counterterrorism, counter smuggling/covert operations capability, civil defense, and passive defense that would both deter Iran and protect against any use it can make of its WMD capabilities.

- Deterrence:

Creation of military threats to Iran so great that no rational Iranian leader could see an advantage from using weapons of mass destruction.

- Preventive or Preemptive Strikes Before Iran has a Significant Nuclear Force:

Military options that would destroy Iran's ability to proliferate and/or deploy significant nuclear forces. To build an international consensus to allow the use military force as a last resort when all other options absolutely fail.

(Source: Anthony Cordesman. CSIS Report.Iranian WMD: Strategic and War fighting Implications of a Nuclear Armed Iran)

**Pairwise Results for Scenario 1: Options Following
An Israeli Preemptive Strike On Iran**

US	Russia	Iran	Votes	Rank
I	SI	R	9	3
I	SI	C	6	6
I	SW	R	3	9
I	SW	C	0	12
D	SI	R	11	1
D	SI	C	8	4
D	SW	R	5	7
D	SW	C	2	10
ST	SI	R	10	2
ST	SI	C	7	5
ST	SW	R	4	8
ST	SW	C	1	11

D=Diplomacy
I=Invade
ST=Strike (air or missile)
SI=Support Iran
SW=Support the West
R=Retaliate (military,economic,proxy)
C=Cooperate

**Pairwise Comparison for Scenario 2: No Israeli
Strike-Options for Dealing With Iran's NUclear
Program**

US	Israel	Votes	Rank
DT	D	0	15
DT	DT	1	14
DT	DF	2	13
D	D	3	12
D	DT	13	2
D	DF	7	8
I	D	5	10
I	DT	11	4
I	DF	9	6
C	D	4	11
C	DT	10	5
C	DF	8	7
S	D	6	9
S	DT	14	1
S	DF	12	3

DT=Deterrence

D=Diplomacy

DF=Defense

I=Incentives

C=Containment

S=Sanctions

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF MOST LIKELY FUTURES

In this study, the consequences of a preemptive strike are presumed to inform the actual decision whether or not to operationalize the plan. Therefore, the likely courses of action of the nations involved likewise influence the plausibility of the maneuver.

In scenario one, the two most likely scenarios are numbers five and nine respectively. In alternate future number five, following a preemptive Israeli strike, The United States walks a very fine diplomatic line between its ally and Iran. In an effort to moderate Iran's assured response, the U.S. attempts to engage Iran through diplomatic means. Russia, not surprisingly, aids Iran, perhaps by supplying arms, emergency health services, food and money. Iran would surely be reeling from the cascading negative side effects of even an only partially successful Israeli strike. Though recovery would be very slow considering the poor state of the world economy, and Iran's heavily subsidized civil infrastructure, it would most certainly mount almost immediate retaliatory action against Israel. Assuming that the U.S. was complicit, if not directly involved in the operation, Iran would attempt to destabilize the region further by targeting US troops and bases in the region, perhaps provoking a military response from the United States. As a result, Alternate future five could very easily transpose into alternate future nine. Alternate future nine is nearly identical to number five, with the notable exception that the U.S. pursues either air or missile strikes against Iranian targets, presumably in response to some Iranian aggression.

Focal points that must occur to precipitate either alternate future post-strike include indication of imminent Iranian proliferation capability, and further cooling of

relations between the U.S. and Israel. Attacks on American targets by Iranian proxies might also encourage the U.S. to move from diplomacy to military options. The obvious indicator for scenario one would be an actual preemptive operation undertaken by the Israelis.

In scenario two, the two most likely alternate futures were numbers five and fourteen. Scenario five posits that in the absence of an Israeli strike, the most likely options would be for the United States to encourage sanctions against Iran as it has in the past, and for Israel to employ various methods of deterrence. Since there are no official diplomatic relations between Israel and Iran, the diplomatic option is limited to what Israel can affect via its ally the U.S. Israel has already taken measures to defend itself against Iranian aggression, and need not take further action in that sense.

Alternate future fourteen in which the U.S. chooses diplomacy over sanctions while Israel employs various methods of deterrence could well transpose into future five quite soon. In light of the upcoming UN General Assembly meeting in just a few weeks time, it would seem that President Obama is leaning towards sanctions, and has been very clear that Iran has a limited window to deal specify that any negotiations with Iran should be “short in time and well-defined in objectives” (Dreazen 2009, A8). The results of negotiations with Iran at the UN General Assembly will certainly be a focal point that could precipitate this future fourteen. Should Iran signal that it rejects sanctions or other attempts to halt its nuclear weapons development, that could be an indicator of what is to come.

CONCLUSION

Following an abbreviated LAMP analysis of the likelihood of a preemptive Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, it appears that Israel will most likely not execute the operation, as hypothesized earlier in this study. The consequences severely limit the probability of such a risky operation for an ambiguous threat. It is far more likely according to the findings here that non-military options will be employed to encourage Iran to abandon or delay its nuclear ambitions. Israel, however, has exercised its military muscle despite assurances from the global community, and will likely employ covert methods to deter Iranian nuclear ambitions.

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