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**HOW WILL VENEZUELA AND IRAN RESPOND TO U.S. INTERVENTION IN
ARMS TRANSFERS BETWEEN CARACAS AND TEHRAN?**

ANALYTICS I

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VENEZUELAN AND IRANIAN RESPONSES TO US INTERVENTION IN ARMS TRANSFERS BETWEEN CARACAS AND TEHRAN

Overview

Trade relations between Iran and Venezuela have expanded significantly since 2005.¹ Today, both states vie for hegemonic status within their respective regions. Neither Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad nor Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is naïve enough to assume that soft power alone is sufficient for ensuring their respective regimes' survivability beyond the next decade. Both leaders stand to benefit from arms transfers, unconventional warfare training, and the exchange of natural resources and associated infrastructure projects.

Between 2005 and 2006, Venezuela purchased 100,000 AK-103 rifles, dozens of attack and transport helicopters, and has begun receipt of 24 Su-30MK fighter aircraft, all from Russia.² One may question why Caracas would choose to do arms business with Tehran when Venezuela's money spends just as well in Moscow. The reason is accountability. As demonstrated by Russia's recent renege on a contract to supply Iran with S-300 surface to air missile systems, Moscow remains acutely aware of the criticisms that could be leveled its way by the international community should its advanced weapons systems fall into unfavorable hands.³ Iran, not having nearly the face to lose and with its existent avenues of support to proxies like Hezbollah and Hamas, does not perceive itself so accountable to the international community as compared to Russia.

¹ Dodson, Michael and Dorraj, Manochehr. 2008. "Populism and Foreign Policy in Venezuela and Iran," *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* Winter/Spring: 81 www.journalofdiplomacy.org

² "Background Notes on Countries of the World: Venezuela" 2007. *Foreign Relations* Oct:8 <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35766.htm>, Accessed 26 Dec 09

³ Abdullaev, Nabi. "Russia: No S-300 Missile Systems for Iran" 9 Oct 09 <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=3764075>, Accessed 26 Dec 09

Conversely, Caracas could virtually name its price were it to covertly broker deals with Tehran for advanced Russian weaponry, albeit at significant risk to Pres. Chavez's political health.⁴ In fact, this may already be occurring, according to a 23 Sept 09 article from Geo-Strategy Direct:

On Sept. 13, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said Russia has opened a \$2.2 billion line of credit for Caracas. Chavez said Venezuela would purchase air defense systems, main battle tanks and other weapons.

"The Russian government approved financing for \$2.2 billion," Chavez said. "For what? For weapons, and we must thank them. We've decided to install a powerful anti-air defense system."

[Western] intelligence agencies were said to have assessed that Iran began using Venezuela as a front for the procurement of weapons since at least 2006. Intelligence sources have also warned that part of the latest Venezuelan weapons order from Russia would be diverted to Iran. Moscow, under pressure to cancel weapon deals with Tehran, has agreed to sell nearly 100 advanced T-90 [Main Battle Tanks] to Caracas.

"It is likely that many of these tanks or technology would be relayed to Iran and then appear as indigenous weapons produced by Tehran," the intelligence source said.⁵

A May 1st, 2009, news article published by *Arabia 2000* reported that Iran and Venezuela have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on bilateral defense ties.⁶ The MoU outlines expansive defense cooperation in education and exchanging Iranian defense experiences with Venezuela. Defining Iran-Venezuela defense ties as "comprehensive and strategic," the MoU expresses Iran's zeal for future participation in joint projects.⁷

⁴ According to Fabiola Sanchez, author of a *Toronto Star* article, "Venezuela considers selling its F-16 fighter jets to Iran," published on May 17th, 2006 (A16), Chavez has considered selling Venezuela's U.S.-made F-16s to Iran, Cuba and China in light of Washington's lack of cooperation in supplying necessary parts to the Venezuelan Air Force. U.S. officials dispute the assertion, claiming America has lived up to its commitments under the 1982 contract, adding that Venezuela must consult with Washington prior to any F-16 sales. The statements by the Government of Venezuela were possibly in response to a U.S. ban on arms sales to the state.

⁵ Dateline-London. *Iran runs secret arms plants in Venezuela which also buys it weapons; Iran source: Obama offered to sell aircraft, spare parts to Iran; Report: Ahmadinejad plans to use second term to militarize Iran.* "Focus on Iran" Geo-Strategy Direct, 23 Sept 09

⁶ "Iran, Venezuela Ink MoU on Defense." 2009. *Arabia 2000*, by *Qatar News Agency*. Database: International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center

⁷ Ibid

At some point in the process of material transfer and training exchange between Iran and Venezuela, the United States (U.S.) may deem intervention necessary to protect American interests abroad. The nature of possible illicit transfers between Venezuela and Iran, in addition to the possible recourses Caracas and Tehran would most likely action were the U.S. to intervene, are within the logical scope of this paper.⁸ Arms and training exchanges are an attempt by both Tehran and Caracas to undermine U.S. influence in the Americas and Middle East. The nature and extent of Iranian and Venezuelan retribution directed at the U.S., post-intervention, is an indicator, writ large, of both nations' perceptions of the importance in maintaining cross-hemispherical, strategic relationships as they bid for respective regional hegemony.

From a complex realist perspective, examination of Iranian and Venezuelan possible retributive courses of action lends insight into the methods other regionally powerful states might use to balance power against the U.S and her allies. This paper uses the Lockwood Analytical Method of Prediction (LAMP) to determine the most probable responses Iran and Venezuela might make toward U.S. intervention.⁹

1. Determine the predictive issue

How will Iran and Venezuela respond to a U.S. intervention in arms transfers between Tehran and Caracas?

⁸ For the sake of clarity, "illicit" transfers are herein defined as any movement of military or paramilitary materiel or the exchange of military, unconventional, or insurgent training in contraposition to the current body of international law pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolutions and multilateral arms export agreements, of which the United States is a party.

⁹ Lockwood, Jonathan S. and Lockwood, Kathleen O. 1994. *The Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP)*, Washington DC: Joint Military Intelligence College.

2. Specify the actors bearing on the problem

Iran and Venezuela are the national actors in question. The United States, via intervention in the two national actors' transfers of materiel, personnel training, and national resources, is considered the third and final national actor.

3. Conduct an in-depth study of perceptions and intentions of each actor

This study examines the current perspectives of the Iranian, Venezuelan, and U.S. governments by outlining a brief history of interactions, perceptions, and intentions among the three state actors. Future geo-political influences may affect the perceptions presented herein. The election of U.S. President Barak Obama could have significant, as yet undetermined, impact on U.S.-Venezuela relations given the Obama Administration's insistence on securing U.S. energy independence.¹⁰ The deposition of Venezuelan President Chavez would have major implications for U.S.-Venezuela economic and political relations. The removal of Iranian Pres. Ahmadinejad, though ultimately the mouthpiece for Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, from office would also skew the following analysis. For these reasons, it is important to note that this analysis is made from a slice of time and approaches the perceptions and objectives of each state actor pursuant to the others within the current geo-political context.

VENEZUELA

Venezuela's grand strategy is to support the emergence of a multi-polar world order, with a particular affinity toward balancing power with China, Russian, and Iran against the United

¹⁰ Phillips, Macon. 2009. "Serious About Energy Independence" *The White House Blog*. Posted 5 Feb 09. http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog_post/serious_about_energy_independence/ Accessed 5 Jan 10

States and Western Allies. Pres. Chavez views Venezuela as the main vehicle for repulsing the “imperialist” American economic and political influence in Latin America, while simultaneously promoting Latin American unity through various social expenditure programs.¹¹ Pres. Chavez packages this overarching strategy as the crux of his “Bolivar Revolution.”¹² His ambitions are fueled by the roughly \$90 billion annual income generated by state petroleum exportation.¹³

Because Venezuelan national policy pivots upon Pres Chavez’s politico-economic objectives, a brief history of his rise to current status highlights key historical events and perceptions pervasive to the Venezuelan political milieu. Chavez was first elected president of Venezuela in 1998, following his rise in popularity after a failed attempt to overthrow then-president Carlos Perez in February of 1992.¹⁴ In their report, *Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy*, Mark Sullivan and Nelson Olhero describe Chavez’s expansive efforts at remodeling the Venezuelan political landscape:

Under President Chávez, Venezuela has undergone enormous political changes with a new constitution in place and even a new name for the country, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, named after the 19th century South American liberator Simon Bolivar, whom Chávez often invokes. In 1999, Venezuelans went to the polls on three occasions — to establish a constituent assembly that would draft a new constitution, to elect the membership of the 165-member constituent assembly, and to approve the new constitution — and each time delivered victory to President Chávez. The new document revamped political institutions, eliminating the Senate and establishing a unicameral National Assembly, and expanded the presidential term of office from five to six years, with the possibility of immediate re-election for a second term. Under the new constitution, voters once again went to the polls in July 2000 for a so-called mega-election, in which the President, national legislators, and state and municipal officials were selected. President Chávez easily won election to a new six-year term, capturing about 60% of the vote while his opponent, fellow former coup leader Francisco Arias, received 38%.¹⁵

¹¹ Sullivan, Mark, and Olhero, Nelson. 2007. CRS Report for Congress: Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy. Congressional Research Service. June 8th: 16

¹² Ibid, 3

¹³ Background Note: Venezuela. US State Department Website. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35766.htm> Updated July 2009. Accessed 5 Jan 10

¹⁴ Sullivan, Mark, and Olhero, Nelson. 2007: 3

¹⁵ Ibid, 4

Not until April of 2002 did relations between the U.S. and Venezuela take a turn for the cold, after the temporarily ousted Chavez blamed the U.S. for supporting disparate elements within the Venezuelan government and military. After surviving a 2004 recall referendum and enjoying an advantageous seating of representatives within the unicameral legislature from the 2005 elections, Chavez convincingly won re-election to another six-year term in 2006.¹⁶ Chavez leverages this support base in Venezuela to legitimize his actions upon the world's economic stage, particularly with regard to petroleum pricing.

Venezuela is a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).¹⁷ Indeed, the state spearheaded the founding of OPEC in 1960 to stabilize oil prices.¹⁸ In 2008, Venezuela was the 10th largest oil producer in the world and, in 2007, the 10th largest oil exporter in the world.¹⁹ Venezuela remains highly dependent on the U.S. as a recipient of Venezuelan oil, supplying approximately 64% of Venezuela's total oil exports to the U.S. in 2006 and accounting for 12% of total U.S. crude oil imports (the U.S.'s fourth largest petroleum supplier).²⁰ Though Venezuela would surely suffer in the event of a denial of oil exports to the U.S., Pres. Chavez could be courting other global oil consumers in a bid to marginalize Venezuela's reliance on U.S. oil demand. Sullivan and Nelson make reference to such a course of action:

There are also concerns that Venezuela is looking to develop China as a replacement market, although Venezuelan officials maintain that they are only attempting to diversify Venezuela's oil markets. In June 2006, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report, requested by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar, on the issue of potential Venezuelan oil supply disruption. The GAO report concluded that a sudden loss of all or most Venezuelan oil from the world market could

¹⁶ Ibid, 10

¹⁷ OPEC Secretariat. *World Oil Outlook, 2009*, pg 5. www.opec.org, Accessed 23 Nov 09

¹⁸ Lapper, Richard. 2006. "Living with Hugo." CSR No. 20, Council on Foreign Relations, November: 6

¹⁹ CIA World Factbook: Venezuela. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>; accessed 3 Jan 10

²⁰ Sullivan, Mark, and Olhero, Nelson. 2007. CRS Report for Congress: Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy. Congressional Research Service. June 8th: 28

raise world prices up to \$11 per barrel and decrease U.S. gross domestic product by about \$23 billion. It also concluded that if Venezuela does not maintain or expand its current level of oil production, then the world oil market may become even tighter than it is now, putting pressures on both the level and volatility of energy prices.²¹

Venezuela may also be looking to Iran for greater partnership in petroleum exchanges. On Sept. 6, 2009, Chavez and Ahmadinejad announced an \$800 million a year deal for Venezuela to provide Iran with 20,000 barrels per day of gasoline. Iranian Press TV and a Venezuelan government statement say the gasoline shipments are supposed to begin October [2009]; a Sept. 7, 2009, article published by Stratfor Analysis highlights the strategic implications of such a deal:

Iran is a major energy producer, but because of severe inefficiencies in its refining sector Iran must import about 40 percent of its gasoline supplies. If Iran ignores the Western deadline to come to the negotiating table at the end of September -- and so far it appears that Tehran has little intention of respecting the deadline -- pending U.S. legislation would pressure any energy firm, shipping company or insurer involved in gasoline trade with Iran to drop its contracts with Tehran by forcing it to weigh the political cost of dealing with Iran with the financial benefit of continuing business with the major Western powers. No sanctions regime is ever perfect, and it will take considerable effort to ensure compliance, but this would be the most comprehensive sanctions legislation to date that aims for the Iranian jugular: gasoline imports.

Iran has long searched for ways to escape this sanctions noose and has expectantly looked to allies like Venezuela for a helping hand. Iran is expected to import about 128,000 bpd of gasoline in September [2009] -- around the same amount it imported in August.

Assuming that Iran's gasoline consumption and import levels remain relatively steady (though it should be kept in mind that Iran would take measures, such as lowering subsidies, to reduce domestic demand should these sanctions take effect), the amount of gasoline that Venezuela has offered -- 20,000 bpd -- would take care of more than 15 percent of Iran's gasoline import needs. This is by no means an insignificant amount of trade.²²

²¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Energy Security: Issues Related to Potential Reductions in Venezuelan Oil Production," GAO-06-668, June 2006.

²² *Iran, Venezuela: Testing the Mettle of an Alliance*. 2009. Stratfor Analysis, Sept 7. International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center Database

The mining and industrial sectors of Iran and Venezuela are also areas of combined economic exploration. On Apr. 1st, 2009, Islamic Republic of Iran Mines and Industries Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian and Venezuelan Mother Industries Minister Rodolfo Sanz issued joint statements on the importance of furthering such expansion within their respective states. Mehrabian stated, “The idea of taking advantage of the mines in Venezuela, which is among the new cooperation projects, would turn a new page in our bilateral ties” and reiterated, “the financial crisis in the west necessitates that such independent countries as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Venezuela...assist other independent countries in the world.”²³ Sanz echoed, “With the elongation of the west’s economic crisis, the unipolar economic system of the west would be turned into a multipolar system, in which Iran and Venezuela would be the two major economic poles.”²⁴ Mining cooperation between Iran and Venezuela may entail the production and shipment to Iran of Venezuelan uranium, possibly mined from deposits located in the jungle states of Amazonas and Bolivar.²⁵ According to an article from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Venezuelan officials have estimated Venezuelan uranium reserves to be an unsubstantiated 50,000 tons.²⁶

IRAN

Iran’s grand strategy is to first ensure the survival of the current regime by securing domestic public support and access to resources Iran perceives as vital. The current regime recognizes the survival of the Islamic Revolution as necessary to the regime’s political

²³ Dateline: Tehran. “Roadmap for Future of Iran-Venezuela Industrial Cooperation Prepared” 2009. https://www.intelink.gov/communities/iran/2009/04/roadmap_for_future_of_iranvene.html Accessed 31 Dec 09

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Gurmendi, Alfredo C. 2009. USGS 2008 Minerals Yearbook, Venezulea (Advance Release). Sept 2009. Page 16.3

²⁶ Germani, Nema, and Squassoni, Sharon. 2008. *Venezuela: A Nuclear Profile. Proliferation Analysis, December 18, 2008* Carnegie Endowment for the International Peace. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=22568> accessed 3 Jan 2010

perpetuation. Iran's self-perception is that of a natural religious and political leader among both Muslim and Southwest Asian states. To this end, Iran's second strategic focus is to build relationships with extra-regional powers, like Venezuela, in order to reduce US influence in Southwest Asia and promote the economic development of the world's only Shia-ruled state. Iran-Venezuela relations are founded upon an anti-U.S. context, as both states view themselves the direct recipients of Western injustice & exploitation. With regard to the ideological similarities between socialism and Islamist theocracy, however, that is where both nations begin and end in shared political perspectives. It is necessary to understand Iran's contemporary past in order to place Tehran's potential courses of action in a correct historical context.

Official U.S.-Iranian relations were suspended after the 1979 Islamic Revolution that deposed the U.S.-backed Shah of Iran and placed Ayatollah Khomeini in power. On November 4th, 1979, radical student held U.S .diplomats hostage in the U.S. Embassy until shortly before President Reagan's January 20th inauguration in 1981; official American relations with Iran were broken on April 7th, 1980, following a botched U.S. military rescue attempt.²⁷ From there, Michael Dodson and Manochehr Dorraj provide a substantial summary of the events in Iran's historical narrative that have coalesced to today's politically tense environment:

The onset of the hostage crisis of 1980, and the accompanying deterioration of diplomatic and economic relations between Iran and the United States, gave further impetus to adopt a regionalist foreign and development strategy. Iran found that forging regional alliances was necessary to alleviate Washington's economic and political sanctions. Regionalism also complemented the pan-Islamic ideology of the new regime with its populist, anti-imperialist and developing world solidarity proclivities.

However, with the election of Ayatollah Rafsanjani as president in 1989, Iran took some initiatives to shed the policy of "neither East, nor West" and normalize relations with both camps, as manifested by improved relations with Western Europe, Russia and China. Rafsanjani's successor, President Mohammad Khatami...introduced a

²⁷ Katzman, Kenneth. 2008. CRS Report for Congress: Iran: US Concerns and Policy Responses. Congressional Research Service. October 8th: 36

policy of “dialogue of civilizations,” designed to further improve Iran’s global image and end its international isolation [32].

Khatami’s government cooperated closely with the [second] Bush administration to inaugurate a stable government in post-Taliban Afghanistan, providing the largest financial aid of any developing nation for the reconstruction efforts of the Karzai government.

This rapprochement was threatened when, in January of 2002, Israeli officials seized a ship in the Red Sea carrying weapons to the Palestinian Authority. Israel accused Iran of sending the shipment and Iran soon found itself on the “axis of evil” list, along with North Korea and Iraq. Soon after the US invasion of Iraq, Iranian officials sent a letter to the Bush administration offering to negotiate all outstanding issues between the two nations [33]. Additionally, Iran briefly halted its uranium enrichment activities in 2004 after several European nations offered technological, economic, and political incentives. But the Bush administration... rebuffed Iran’s conciliatory initiative, thereby setting the stage for the election of populist presidential candidate Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in August 2005 [34].

President Ahmadinejad took the view that President Khatami’s moderate political course had only brought Iran humiliation and no tangible benefits. By ignoring Iran’s cooperation in Afghanistan and rejecting Tehran’s diplomatic initiatives for rapprochement, the US had rendered the Islamic Republic more insecure and vulnerable to a possible military attack. For Iran’s clerical elite, the need for a nuclear deterrent to a potential US or Israeli attack increased. Iran was heartened by US military and political setbacks in the Iraq war, which led Ahmadinejad to choose a more assertive and confrontational foreign policy. He used the nuclear standoff with the international community to galvanize Iranian nationalism, mobilize his support base, and solidify the regime’s survival. By reinvigorating Iranian nationalism and reasserting Iran’s greater regional ambitions, Ahmadinejad effectively abandoned Khatami’s more conciliatory tone.²⁸

Iran allocates monetary and human resources to Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon in an effort to project its influence beyond geographic neighbors. \$150 million was transferred from Iran to Hamas in 2007; Iran gave financial aid and military training to Hezbollah before and after the Israeli invasion in 2006.²⁹ Dodson and Dorraj further submit:

Iran has also supported the Badr Brigade militia associated with the moderate Ayatollah

²⁸ Dodson, Michael, and Dorraj, Manochehr. 2008. “Populism and Foreign Policy in Venezuela and Iran,” *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*. Winter/Spring ’08: 78-79. www.journalofdiplomacy.org

²⁹ Ibid, 79

Hakim group, known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (recently renamed Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council). The Badr Brigade was originally trained in Iran while Saddam Hussein was in power and has recently been assimilated into the security apparatus in the Shi'a-dominated government of Nuri Al-Maliki. Ahmadinejad's administration has also supported the rival Shi'a faction of radical populist cleric Muqtada-Al Sadr and the Al-Mahdi army, which opposes the US occupation and has repeatedly clashed with American troops.³⁰

Iran uses a branch of its Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a proxy with which Iran can project a political influence from an ocean's distance, according to an article published in Geo-Strategy Direct on Dec. 31st, 2008:

[Western intelligence] sources said Iran has steadily increased military and security cooperation with Venezuela over the last two years. They said Teheran has exported a range of military products as well as trained Venezuela's military and police.

In October 2008, the sources said, 10 IRGC officers arrived in Venezuela to help train the security forces and intelligence agencies of the South American nation. They said Iran has also used Venezuela as a base for military and security projects in the rest of South America.

"Hugo Chavez is helping Teheran evade UN sanctions by exploiting the Venezuelan airlines under an agreement with [Iranian President] Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to strengthen the Iranian penetration in Latin America," the Washington-based Center for Security Policy said on Dec. 22.

Venezuela's state airline Conviasa began flights to Iran, with a stopover in Syria, in October 2007 with the aim of strengthening commercial relations among the three states, according to Fars news agency.³¹

In 2007, Iran was the 3rd largest oil exporter in the world and the 4th largest oil producer in 2008; 2009 estimates place Iran in the #3 spot for largest proven oil reserves in the world.³²

Not surprisingly, Iran is a member of OPEC and has been, much like Venezuela, building "petro-

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Dateline-London. *Iran transporting banned military equipment to Syria via Venezuela; Iran, Russia in talks on more advanced S-300 missile defense system; Basij militia to build up Iran navy under IRGC's direction.* "Focus on Iran" Geo-Strategy Direct. 31 Dec 08

³² CIA World Factbook: Iran. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>; accessed 3 Jan 10

alliances.”³³ China, apart from Venezuela, is one such ally with oil accounting for about 80% of Iranian exports to China and 15% of China’s overall oil imports; as of 2008, Iran had also arranged for the largest sale of natural gas in history: \$100 billion to China.³⁴ Iran’s petro-economy grows in resilience proportionately to its attractiveness to Venezuela as an increasingly capable global trading partner. The logical leap here is small: as Iran gains economic strength through non-western, bilateral petro-deals, Venezuela’s fiscal independence from the U.S. increases.

Chavez recognizes Russia’s pivotal position were Caracas and Tehran to attempt a combined oil supply restriction against the West. Javier Corrales makes such a case in his article, “Using Social Power to Balance Soft Power: Venezuela’s Foreign Policy”:

A Venezuela-Iran alliance can promote oil price increases by increasing the number of hawks within OPEC.[30] Iran and Venezuela are the second and fifth largest producers in OPEC, and partnering makes them powerful enough within the oil cartel to counteract Saudi Arabia’s efforts to keep prices stable.[31] This explains the rise of the Venezuela-Iran “special relation.”[32] Chavez has visited Tehran seven times, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran has visited Caracas three times as well. Both have signed agreements covering trade, investments, and diplomatic coordination. Likewise, becoming Russia’s main arms buyer, a distinction Chavez achieved in 2008, allows Chavez to gain leverage in Russia, where he needs to convince the government to cooperate with OPEC’s efforts to restrict supplies. Russia is the second-largest oil exporter in the world, supplying almost 10 percent of the world’s oil. If Russia does not cooperate with OPEC supply restrictions, it can counteract the cartel’s chance of influencing oil prices. Thus, in addition to exchanging and developing weapons, the primary purpose of Venezuela’s ties with Iran and Russia is to influence the world oil market, not just balance the United States.³⁵

³³ OPEC Secretariat. *World Oil Outlook, 2009*.pg 5. www.opec.org, Accessed 23 Nov 09

³⁴ Liangxian, Lin. 2005 “Energy First: China and the Middle East,” *Middle East Quarterly* 11, no. 2; Spring. <http://www.meforum.org/article/694>

³⁵ Corrales, Javier. 2009. “Using Social Power to Balance Soft Power: Venezuela’s Foreign Policy” *The Washington Quarterly*. October: 105

UNITED STATES

Facilitating the spread of democracy while diminishing the capabilities of those states hostile to America, her allies, and her interests, is a main goal of U.S. foreign policy.³⁶ Accordingly, the U.S. has a vested interest in minimizing the influence of both Iran and Venezuela within Southwest Asia and Latin America, respectively. Such an interest will not ebb as long as Tehran and Caracas maintain and act on an anti-American sentiment. Logically, the U.S. also has an interest in disrupting any trade between Iran and Venezuela that may serve to destabilize U.S. interests within those two states' respective regions. Through diplomatic maneuvers, overt advertisement of national strategy, and the placement of both Iran and Venezuela on published lists of American transgressors, the U.S. makes its perceptions and intentions regarding the aforementioned actors unambiguous.^{37 38}

In May 2007, Venezuela was re-certified by the U.S. State Department as “not cooperating fully” with U.S. anti-terrorism efforts, pursuant to Section 40A of the Arms Export and Control Act, as amended.³⁹ The State Department report continues in its assessment:

Chavez's ideological sympathy for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), along with high levels of corruption among Venezuelan officials, limited Venezuelan cooperation with Colombia in combating terrorism. FARC and ELN units regularly crossed into Venezuelan territory to rest and regroup.

It remained unclear to what extent the Venezuelan government provided support to Colombian terrorist organizations. However, limited amounts of weapons and ammunition, some from official Venezuelan stocks and facilities, have turned up in the

³⁶ Adapted from U.S. National Security Strategy, September 2002: pg 1

³⁷ “Guiding Principles” & “Restoring American Leadership in Latin America.” Foreign Policy Section. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy>, Accessed 6 Jan 10

³⁸ According to Renwick McLean's *New York Times* article “U.S. Objections Lead Spain to End an Aircraft Deal With Venezuela,” published on Oct. 19th, 2007 (A5), America denied Madrid's request to sale 12 Spanish transport aircraft to Venezuela on the grounds that the transfer of those planes, to include the sensitive U.S technology within them, would further destabilize the Latin American region by increasing the transport capabilities of an unfriendly state actor. The deal was part of a larger agreement worth about \$2.1 billion.

³⁹ “Country Reports: Western Hemisphere Overview” 2007. Country Reports on Terrorism, US Dept of State: pg 7. Database: International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center. Accessed 25 Dec 09

hands of Colombian terrorist organizations. The Venezuelan government did not systematically police the 1,400-mile Venezuelan-Colombian border to prevent the movement of groups of armed terrorists or to interdict arms or the flow of narcotics.⁴⁰

Though far from appreciatory, such designation falls short of labeling Venezuela a state sponsor of terrorism. Indeed, the U.S. and Venezuela agreed to resume full diplomatic relations in 2009.⁴¹ This is not the case for Iran. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 *Country*

Reports on Terrorism:

Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism. Its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) were directly involved in the planning and support of terrorist acts and continued to exhort a variety of groups, especially Palestinian groups with leadership cadres in Syria and Lebanese Hezbollah, to use terrorism in pursuit of their goals.

Iran maintained a high-profile role in encouraging anti-Israeli terrorist activity, rhetorically, operationally, and financially. Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Ahmadi-Nejad praised Palestinian terrorist operations, and Iran provided Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian terrorist groups - notably HAMAS, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command - with extensive funding, training, and weapons.

Iran continued to play a destabilizing role in Iraq, which appeared to be inconsistent with its stated objectives regarding stability in Iraq. Iran provided guidance and training to select Iraqi Shia political groups, and weapons and training to Shia militant groups to enable anti-Coalition attacks. Iranian government forces have been responsible for at least some of the increasing lethality of anti-Coalition attacks by providing Shia militants with the capability to build improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with explosively formed projectiles similar to those developed by Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard was linked to armor-piercing explosives that resulted in the deaths of Coalition Forces. The Revolutionary Guard, along with Lebanese Hezbollah, implemented training programs for Iraqi militants in the construction and use of sophisticated IED technology. These individuals then passed on this training to additional militants in Iraq.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Kelly, Ian. 2009. "The United States and Venezuela Agree to Resume Full Diplomatic Relations." Department Spokesman, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of the Spokesman, US State Department. June 25th, 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/06a/125409.htm>. Accessed 27 Dec 09

⁴² "State Sponsors of Terrorism Overview" 2006. Country Reports on Terrorism, US Dept of State: pg 10. Database: International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center. Accessed 25 Dec 09

Neither Iran nor Venezuela may be confining support to their proxies within their respective regions of Southwest Asia and Latin America. According to a statement issued by the U.S. Department of the Treasury on June 18th, 2008, Hezbollah, a known Iranian proxy, was given safe haven by Venezuelan government entities:

The U.S. Department of the Treasury today designated two Venezuela-based supporters of Hezbollah, Ghazi Nasr al Din and Fawzi Kan'an, along with two travel agencies owned and controlled by Kan'an.

"It is extremely troubling to see the Government of Venezuela employing and providing safe harbor to Hezbollah facilitators and fundraisers. We will continue to expose the global nature of Hezbollah's terrorist support network, and we call on responsible governments worldwide to disrupt and dismantle this activity," said Adam J. Szubin, Director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

Today's action was taken pursuant to Executive Order 13224, which targets terrorists, those owned or controlled by or acting for or on behalf of terrorists, and those providing financial, technological, or material support to terrorists or acts of terrorism. Assets the designees hold under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen and U.S. persons are prohibited from engaging in transactions in property or interests in property blocked under the order.⁴³

⁴³ Ghazi Nasr al Din is a Venezuela-based Hezbollah supporter who has utilized his position as a Venezuelan diplomat and the president of a Caracas-based Shi'a Islamic Center to provide financial support to Hezbollah. Nasr al Din served until recently as Charge d' Affaires at the Venezuelan Embassy in Damascus, Syria, and was subsequently appointed the Director of Political Aspects at the Venezuelan Embassy in Lebanon.

Ghazi Nasr al Din has met with senior Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss operational issues, as well as facilitated the travel of Hezbollah members to and from Venezuela. In late January 2006, Nasr al Din facilitated the travel of two Hezbollah representatives to the Lebanese Parliament to Caracas to solicit donations for Hezbollah and to announce the opening of a Hezbollah-sponsored community center and office in Venezuela. The previous year, Nasr al Din arranged the travel of Hezbollah members to attend a training course in Iran.

Fawzi Kan'an is a Venezuela-based Hezbollah supporter and a significant provider of financial support to Hezbollah. Kan'an has facilitated travel for Hezbollah members and sent money raised in Venezuela to Hezbollah officials in Lebanon.

Kan'an has met with senior Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss operational issues, including possible kidnappings and terrorist attacks. Further, Kan'an has also traveled with other Hezbollah members to Iran for training.

"Treasury Targets Hezbollah in Venezuela." 2008. The Office of Public Affairs, US Department of the Treasury. June 18th. <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1036.htm>. Accessed 2 Jan 10.

4. Specify courses of action for each actor

UNITED STATES:

- 1) “Soft” intervention in Iran-Venezuela arms transfers: use of *non-kinetic options* ranging from the overt levying of additional sanctions (both uni- and multilateral) to the covert/ clandestine allocation and transfer of funds to Western-aligned state and non-state political actors within Southwest Asia and Latin America (SI)
- 2) “Hard” intervention in Iran-Venezuela arms transfers: use of *kinetic options*, ranging from directly attributable/overt to not directly attributable/covert in nature (HI)⁴⁴

IRAN & VENEZUELA:

- 1) Maintain current overt relations; increase support to anti-Western proxies (PROX)
- 2) Maintain current overt relations; attempt to manipulate oil prices within OPEC (OIL)
- 3) Maintain current overt relations; engage in uranium transfer (URTX)
- 4) Overt and sensitive relations recede (RR)
- 5) No change in overt and sensitive relations (NC)⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Both “soft” and “hard” courses of action herein presented may be executed via overt, clandestine, or covert means. University of Georgia Regents Professor Loch K. Johnson, in his book *America's Secret Power: The CIA in a Democratic Society*, provides a comprehensive definition of overt, clandestine, and covert operations:

Overt Operation: An operation conducted openly, without concealment.

Clandestine Operation: An operation sponsored or conducted by governmental departments or agencies in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment. A clandestine operation differs from a covert operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the operation rather than on concealment of identity of sponsor. In special operations, an activity may be both covert and clandestine and may focus equally on operational considerations and intelligence-related activities.

Covert Operation: An operation that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor. A covert operation differs from a clandestine operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of identity of sponsor rather than on concealment of the operation.

⁴⁵ The same spectrum of response defined in footnote 44 is applicable to the relationship between Iran and Venezuela, in addition to the actions both states may perpetrate against the U.S., given the scenarios above.

5. Determine the Major Scenarios

Scenario 1: Venezuela purchases and obtains multiple S-300PMU2 advanced surface-to-air missile (SAM) battalions from Russia. Intelligence indicates final preparations are underway for the transfer of a small number of these SAM battalions from Venezuela to Iran in exchange for an exorbitant amount of Iranian infrastructure investment and the training of Venezuelan police and military forces by IRGC-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) personnel.⁴⁶ The United States deems this transfer unacceptable to its national security interests and decides to intervene.

Scenario 2: Venezuelan government officials arrange for FARC/ELN militants to receive unconventional warfare training from Hezbollah and Hamas cells located within Latin America. In exchange for this training, Venezuela agrees to transport natural gas to Iran as Tehran continues to suffer the effects of effectively enforced multilateral economic sanctions. Such sanctions are in light of Iran's continued refusal to comply with International Atomic Energy Association demands for transparency in Iran's nuclear energy program.⁴⁷ The United States deems this transfer unacceptable to its national security interests and decides to intervene.

6. Calculate the number of alternative futures

$X^Y=Z$, where X is the number of courses of action for each actor and Y is the number of actors:

- 1) Two courses of action for the United States: $2^1 = 2$
- 2) Five courses of action for both Venezuela and Iran: $5^2 = 25$
- 3) Multiplying both products above: $2 \times 25 = 50$

⁴⁶ Executive Order 13224 designates the Qods Force as a state sponsored terrorist organization. The executive order states that the Qods Force has provided material support to the Taliban, Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC). The Qods Force has had a long history of supporting Hezbollah's military, paramilitary, and terrorist activities, providing it with guidance, funding, weapons, intelligence, and logistical support. The Qods Force operates training camps for Hezbollah in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and has reportedly trained more than 3,000 Hezbollah fighters at IRGC training facilities in Iran. The Qods Force provides roughly \$100 to \$200 million in funding a year to Hezbollah and has assisted Hezbollah in rearming in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

"Fact Sheet: Designation of Iranian Entities and Individuals for Proliferation Activities and Support for Terrorism." 2007. Press Room, U.S. Department of the Treasury. <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp644.htm>. Accessed 10 Jan 10.

⁴⁷ "Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran." 2009. Board of Governors, International Atomic Energy Association. 27 Nov. <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaIran/index.shtml>. Accessed 10 Jan 10.

4) Equates to 50 alternative futures per scenario:

Future #	US	Iran	Venezuela
1	SI	PROX	PROX
2	SI	PROX	OIL
3	SI	PROX	URTX
4	SI	PROX	RR
5	SI	PROX	NC
6	SI	OIL	PROX
7	SI	OIL	OIL
8	SI	OIL	URTX
9	SI	OIL	RR
10	SI	OIL	NC
11	SI	URTX	PROX
12	SI	URTX	OIL
13	SI	URTX	URTX
14	SI	URTX	RR
15	SI	URTX	NC
16	SI	RR	PROX
17	SI	RR	OIL
18	SI	RR	URTX
19	SI	RR	RR
20	SI	RR	NC
21	SI	NC	PROX
22	SI	NC	OIL
23	SI	NC	URTX
24	SI	NC	RR
25	SI	NC	NC
26	HI	PROX	PROX
27	HI	PROX	OIL
28	HI	PROX	URTX
29	HI	PROX	RR
30	HI	PROX	NC
31	HI	OIL	PROX
32	HI	OIL	OIL
33	HI	OIL	URTX
34	HI	OIL	RR
35	HI	OIL	NC
36	HI	URTX	PROX
37	HI	URTX	OIL

38	HI	URTX	URTX
39	HI	URTX	RR
40	HI	URTX	NC
41	HI	RR	PROX
42	HI	RR	OIL
43	HI	RR	URTX
44	HI	RR	RR
45	HI	RR	NC
46	HI	NC	PROX
47	HI	NC	OIL
48	HI	NC	URTX
49	HI	NC	RR
50	HI	NC	NC

5) Two scenarios with 50 alternative futures each equates to 100 total alternative futures.

7. Do a pair-wise comparison of alternate futures

SCENARIO 1: If Venezuela exchanges SAMs for Iranian Investment & IRGC-QF Training...

Scenario #1				
Future #	US	Iran	Venezuela	VOTES $50(50-1)/2=1225$
1	SI	PROX	PROX	31
2	SI	PROX	OIL	29
3	SI	PROX	URTX	6
4	SI	PROX	RR	23
5	SI	PROX	NC	37
6	SI	OIL	PROX	34
7	SI	OIL	OIL	35
8	SI	OIL	URTX	13
9	SI	OIL	RR	28
10	SI	OIL	NC	33
11	SI	URTX	PROX	15
12	SI	URTX	OIL	21
13	SI	URTX	URTX	3
14	SI	URTX	RR	5
15	SI	URTX	NC	20
16	SI	RR	PROX	9
17	SI	RR	OIL	14

18	SI	RR	URTX	0
19	SI	RR	RR	8
20	SI	RR	NC	17
21	SI	NC	PROX	26
22	SI	NC	OIL	32
23	SI	NC	URTX	19
24	SI	NC	RR	24
25	SI	NC	NC	27
26	HI	PROX	PROX	48
27	HI	PROX	OIL	49
28	HI	PROX	URTX	42
29	HI	PROX	RR	18
30	HI	PROX	NC	44
31	HI	OIL	PROX	46
32	HI	OIL	OIL	47
33	HI	OIL	URTX	43
34	HI	OIL	RR	12
35	HI	OIL	NC	36
36	HI	URTX	PROX	38
37	HI	URTX	OIL	45
38	HI	URTX	URTX	11
39	HI	URTX	RR	16
40	HI	URTX	NC	30
41	HI	RR	PROX	4
42	HI	RR	OIL	10
43	HI	RR	URTX	2
44	HI	RR	RR	1
45	HI	RR	NC	7
46	HI	NC	PROX	40
47	HI	NC	OIL	41
48	HI	NC	URTX	39
49	HI	NC	RR	22
50	HI	NC	NC	25

SCENARIO 2: If Iranian Proxies Train Local Separatists for Venezuelan Natural Gas...

Scenario #2				
Future #	US	Iran	Venezuela	VOTES $50(50-1)/2=1225$
1	SI	PROX	PROX	39
2	SI	PROX	OIL	42
3	SI	PROX	URTX	38

4	SI	PROX	RR	14
5	SI	PROX	NC	31
6	SI	OIL	PROX	46
7	SI	OIL	OIL	49
8	SI	OIL	URTX	44
9	SI	OIL	RR	27
10	SI	OIL	NC	37
11	SI	URTX	PROX	45
12	SI	URTX	OIL	47
13	SI	URTX	URTX	30
14	SI	URTX	RR	18
15	SI	URTX	NC	28
16	SI	RR	PROX	20
17	SI	RR	OIL	24
18	SI	RR	URTX	12
19	SI	RR	RR	3
20	SI	RR	NC	5
21	SI	NC	PROX	29
22	SI	NC	OIL	34
23	SI	NC	URTX	26
24	SI	NC	RR	8
25	SI	NC	NC	17
26	HI	PROX	PROX	40
27	HI	PROX	OIL	33
28	HI	PROX	URTX	36
29	HI	PROX	RR	11
30	HI	PROX	NC	19
31	HI	OIL	PROX	32
32	HI	OIL	OIL	25
33	HI	OIL	URTX	35
34	HI	OIL	RR	7
35	HI	OIL	NC	16
36	HI	URTX	PROX	48
37	HI	URTX	OIL	43
38	HI	URTX	URTX	41
39	HI	URTX	RR	13
40	HI	URTX	NC	22
41	HI	RR	PROX	10
42	HI	RR	OIL	4
43	HI	RR	URTX	6
44	HI	RR	RR	0

45	HI	RR	NC	1
46	HI	NC	PROX	23
47	HI	NC	OIL	15
48	HI	NC	URTX	21
49	HI	NC	RR	2
50	HI	NC	NC	9

8. Rank order the alternative futures

SCENARIO 1: If Venezuela exchanges SAMs for Iranian Investment & IRGC-QF Training...

Scenario #1				
Future #	US	Iran	Venezuela	VOTES $50(50-1)/2=1225$
27	HI	PROX	OIL	49
26	HI	PROX	PROX	48
32	HI	OIL	OIL	47
31	HI	OIL	PROX	46
37	HI	URTX	OIL	45
30	HI	PROX	NC	44
33	HI	OIL	URTX	43
28	HI	PROX	URTX	42
47	HI	NC	OIL	41
46	HI	NC	PROX	40
48	HI	NC	URTX	39
36	HI	URTX	PROX	38
5	SI	PROX	NC	37
35	HI	OIL	NC	36
7	SI	OIL	OIL	35
6	SI	OIL	PROX	34
10	SI	OIL	NC	33
22	SI	NC	OIL	32
1	SI	PROX	PROX	31
40	HI	URTX	NC	30
2	SI	PROX	OIL	29
9	SI	OIL	RR	28
25	SI	NC	NC	27
21	SI	NC	PROX	26
50	HI	NC	NC	25
24	SI	NC	RR	24

4	SI	PROX	RR	23
49	HI	NC	RR	22
12	SI	URTX	OIL	21
15	SI	URTX	NC	20
23	SI	NC	URTX	19
29	HI	PROX	RR	18
20	SI	RR	NC	17
39	HI	URTX	RR	16
11	SI	URTX	PROX	15
17	SI	RR	OIL	14
8	SI	OIL	URTX	13
34	HI	OIL	RR	12
38	HI	URTX	URTX	11
42	HI	RR	OIL	10
16	SI	RR	PROX	9
19	SI	RR	RR	8
45	HI	RR	NC	7
3	SI	PROX	URTX	6
14	SI	URTX	RR	5
41	HI	RR	PROX	4
13	SI	URTX	URTX	3
43	HI	RR	URTX	2
44	HI	RR	RR	1
18	SI	RR	URTX	0

SCENARIO 2: If Iranian Proxies Train Local Separatists for Venezuelan Natural Gas...

Scenario #2				
Future #	US	Iran	Venezuela	VOTES $50(50-1)/2=1225$
7	SI	OIL	OIL	49
36	HI	URTX	PROX	48
12	SI	URTX	OIL	47
6	SI	OIL	PROX	46
11	SI	URTX	PROX	45
8	SI	OIL	URTX	44
37	HI	URTX	OIL	43
2	SI	PROX	OIL	42
38	HI	URTX	URTX	41
26	HI	PROX	PROX	40
1	SI	PROX	PROX	39
3	SI	PROX	URTX	38

10	SI	OIL	NC	37
28	HI	PROX	URTX	36
33	HI	OIL	URTX	35
22	SI	NC	OIL	34
27	HI	PROX	OIL	33
31	HI	OIL	PROX	32
5	SI	PROX	NC	31
13	SI	URTX	URTX	30
21	SI	NC	PROX	29
15	SI	URTX	NC	28
9	SI	OIL	RR	27
23	SI	NC	URTX	26
32	HI	OIL	OIL	25
17	SI	RR	OIL	24
46	HI	NC	PROX	23
40	HI	URTX	NC	22
48	HI	NC	URTX	21
16	SI	RR	PROX	20
30	HI	PROX	NC	19
14	SI	URTX	RR	18
25	SI	NC	NC	17
35	HI	OIL	NC	16
47	HI	NC	OIL	15
4	SI	PROX	RR	14
39	HI	URTX	RR	13
18	SI	RR	URTX	12
29	HI	PROX	RR	11
41	HI	RR	PROX	10
50	HI	NC	NC	9
24	SI	NC	RR	8
34	HI	OIL	RR	7
43	HI	RR	URTX	6
20	SI	RR	NC	5
42	HI	RR	OIL	4
19	SI	RR	RR	3
49	HI	NC	RR	2
45	HI	RR	NC	1
44	HI	RR	RR	0

9. Analyze consequences of alternate futures

SCENARIO 1: If Venezuela exchanges SAMs for Iranian Investment & IRGC-QF Training...

Future # 27

The United States halts the exchange by covert kinetic action. Iran retaliates by increasing support to sympathetic proxies. Venezuela retaliates by pressuring fellow OPEC members to act to the detriment of the West in general and the U.S. specifically, whom Caracas highly suspects of involvement. (49 votes)

Anti-imperialist sentiment among and between Iranian and Venezuelan heads of state would increase. Neither Iran nor Venezuela want the perception of pacifism that would accompany a lack of retribution in the face of what each state perceives is a hostile act. Because the U.S. acted in a covert manner, the problem facing Iran and Venezuela is one of targeting. Iran would act in accordance with its historical standard of increasing supplies to violent non-state actors within Israel, but would also provide support to Latin American proxies already in place. Iranian support to insurgent elements in Southwest Asia, sans the Levant, would likely remain unchanged. Venezuela would immediately threaten the withdrawal of all direct crude oil transactions with the U.S. Venezuela would quietly resolve not to act on those threats due to both a lack of evidence that directly implicates the U.S. and the disproportionate damage that such an immediate freeze on trade would incur upon the Venezuelan economy. Venezuela's multilateral petroleum exchanges are not sufficient in number of partners or quantity of trade to allow Caracas the financial independence it would need to adequately pressure the U.S. directly. Instead, Venezuela would attempt to pressure fellow OPEC members to increase Western petroleum costs by temporarily limiting the number of barrels exported per day. The asymmetry in Iranian and Venezuelan responses is indicative of at least a temporary regression in each state's willingness to continue building partnerships with the other.

Future # 26

The United States halts the exchange by covert kinetic action. Iran and Venezuela retaliate by increasing support to sympathetic proxies. (48 votes)

Anti-imperialist sentiment among and between Iranian and Venezuelan heads of state would increase. Neither Iran nor Venezuela want the perception of pacifism that would accompany a lack of retribution in the face of what each state perceives is a hostile act. Because the U.S. acted in a covert manner, the problem facing Iran and Venezuela is one of targeting. Tehran and Caracas would both increase support to sympathetic, violent non-state actors within Southwest Asia and Latin America. Because Iran and Venezuela chose parallel courses of action, the attractiveness of cooperation and ensuing synergy within transfer of supplies and effectiveness of operations becomes deeply troubling to the U.S. Not only are capabilities amplified in this future, but cooperative intent between Caracas and Tehran is virtually cemented. That Iran will increase support to proxies in Israel is a given; more troubling to America is the ability of Iran to project its influence in Afghanistan, to the detriment of NATO's strategic aims. The FARC, armed with Venezuela's newly-purchased Kalashnikov rifles and tempered by training from members of the Qod's Force, Hamas, or Hezbollah, seriously threatens the ability of the

Colombian government to act in accordance with U.S. interests. Greater freedom of movement on the part of Iran and Venezuela is afforded in both hemispheres via simultaneous, low intensity engagement with the U.S.

Future # 32

The United States halts the exchange by covert kinetic action. Iran and Venezuela retaliate by pressuring fellow OPEC members to act to the detriment of the West in general and the U.S. specifically, whom Tehran and Caracas highly suspect of involvement. (47 votes)

Anti-imperialist sentiment among and between Iranian and Venezuelan heads of state would increase. Neither Iran nor Venezuela want the perception of pacifism that would accompany a lack of retribution in the face of what each state perceives is a hostile act. Because the U.S. acted in a covert manner, the problem facing Iran and Venezuela is one of targeting. A bilateral effort on the part of Iran and Venezuela to drive up the cost of petroleum products to the West could only be executed on a short-term duration basis (i.e. one or two months), if at all. Neither state has the depth of trade partners nor resilience in export market diversification to permanently exclude Western buyers and not suffer at the hands of domestic popular sentiment. Iran and Venezuela will have to develop more extensive avenues of petroleum trade, primarily with Russia and China, in the next ten years to make this a viable course of action. Exerting pressure within OPEC is only slightly different. Iran and Venezuela would be able to apply temporary upward pressure on petroleum prices only if a third OPEC member participated in a supply constraint to Western consumers. The benefits of trilateral oil supply manipulation would have to outweigh the costs for this third party and, given the global market's recent resuscitation, Iran and Venezuela have little to offer in the way of hard economic incentives. Nevertheless, parallel courses of action by both Tehran and Caracas underscore each actor's intent to maintain mutually beneficial economic relations.

SCENARIO 2: If Iranian Proxies Train Local Separatists for Venezuelan Natural Gas...

Future # 7

The United States halts the exchange by covert, clandestine non-kinetic action. Iran and Venezuela retaliate by pressuring fellow OPEC members to act to the detriment of the West in general and the U.S. specifically, whom Tehran and Caracas highly suspect of involvement. (49 votes)

Anti-imperialist rhetoric will likely increase immediately following American intervention, though allegations of American meddling in the sovereign affairs of other nations would be quickly brushed aside by a discerning international free press in light of both countries' inability to produce evidence implicating the U.S. In addition, neither Iran nor Venezuela decides that the international stage is the proper forum for airing their collective grievances on what they would surely perceive as a sensitive arrangement's interruption. In an effort not to appear completely without recourse, both nations agree that an increase in oil prices is the most expedient and safest means of retaliation against their suspected transgressor. Iran and Venezuela would be able to apply temporary upward pressure on petroleum prices only if a third OPEC member participated in a supply constraint to Western consumers. The benefits of trilateral oil supply manipulation

would have to outweigh the costs for this third party and, given the global market's recent resuscitation, Iran and Venezuela have little to offer in the way of hard economic incentives. Nevertheless, parallel courses of action by both Tehran and Caracas underscore each actor's intent to maintain mutually beneficial economic relations.

Future # 36

The United States halts the exchange by covert kinetic action. Facing a rapidly developing domestic energy crisis due to a lack of processed natural gas imports, Iran begins mining and importing uranium to feed its reactors. Venezuela provides support to Iranian proxies in an attempt to demonstrate solidarity with Iran. (48 votes)

Rather than capitulate to IAEA demands for transparency in its nuclear energy program, Iran pursues a strategy of nuclear energy independence with the option of nuclear weapons' development remaining viable. Venezuela openly supports Iran's pursuit of peaceful nuclear energy, but decides that the political cost of assisting Iran in obtaining uranium, should Caracas be implicated if Iran does indeed build a nuclear weapon, is too high. Instead, Venezuela decides to transport small shipments of rifles, ammunition, and various other small arms to Hamas and Hezbollah in the Levant via Syria. Venezuela thereby balances an appearance of solidarity in anti-imperialist sentiment with its own desire for state preservation.

Future # 12

The United States halts the exchange by covert, clandestine non-kinetic action. Facing a rapidly developing domestic energy crisis due to a lack of processed natural gas imports, Iran begins mining and importing uranium to feed its reactors. Venezuela pressures fellow OPEC members to act to the detriment of the West in general and the U.S. specifically, whom Caracas highly suspects of involvement. (47 votes)

Rather than capitulate to IAEA demands for transparency in its nuclear energy program, Iran pursues a strategy of nuclear energy independence with the option of nuclear weapons' development remaining viable. Venezuela openly supports Iran's pursuit of peaceful nuclear energy, but decides that the political cost of assisting Iran in obtaining uranium, should Caracas be implicated if Iran does indeed build a nuclear weapon, is too high. Instead, Venezuela decides to pressure other OPEC members to constrict petroleum output and thus exert upward pressure on Western consumers' costs. Venezuela thereby balances an appearance of solidarity in anti-imperialist sentiment with its own desire for state preservation.

10. Determine focal events for alternate futures

SCENARIO 1: If Venezuela exchanges SAMs for Iranian Investment & IRGC-QF Training...

Future # 27

The United States halts the exchange by covert kinetic action. Iran retaliates by increasing support to sympathetic proxies. Venezuela retaliates by pressuring fellow OPEC members

to act to the detriment of the West in general and the U.S. specifically, whom Caracas highly suspects of involvement. (49 votes)

FOCAL EVENT- An increased presence of arms and trained militants in Palestine and Lebanon

FOCAL EVENT- Venezuela addresses concerns to OPEC members about supporting governments who trespass the sovereignty of OPEC member states

Future # 26

The United States halts the exchange by covert kinetic action. Iran and Venezuela retaliate by increasing support to sympathetic proxies. (48 votes)

FOCAL EVENT- An increased presence of arms and trained militants in Palestine and Lebanon

FOCAL EVENT- An increased presence of arms and trained militants in Afghanistan

FOCAL EVENT- An increased presence of arms and trained militants along the Venezuela/Colombia border

Future # 32

The United States halts the exchange by covert kinetic action. Iran and Venezuela retaliate by pressuring fellow OPEC members to act to the detriment of the West in general and the U.S. specifically, whom Tehran and Caracas highly suspect of involvement. (47 votes)

FOCAL EVENT- Venezuela addresses concerns to OPEC members about supporting governments who trespass the sovereignty of OPEC member states

FOCAL EVENT- Iran frustrates maritime trade in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, citing the actions of anti-Islamic regimes as precedent

SCENARIO 2: If Iranian Proxies Train Local Separatists for Venezuelan Natural Gas...

Future # 7

The United States halts the exchange by covert, clandestine non-kinetic action. Iran and Venezuela retaliate by pressuring fellow OPEC members to act to the detriment of the West in general and the U.S. specifically, whom Tehran and Caracas highly suspect of involvement. (49 votes)

FOCAL EVENT- Venezuela addresses concerns to OPEC members about supporting governments who trespass the sovereignty of OPEC member states

FOCAL EVENT- Iran attempts to “buy off” other OPEC members’ cooperation

Future # 36

The United States halts the exchange by covert kinetic action. Facing a rapidly developing domestic energy crisis due to a lack of processed natural gas imports, Iran begins mining and importing uranium to feed its reactors. Venezuela provides support to Iranian proxies in an attempt to demonstrate solidarity with Iran. (48 votes)

FOCAL EVENT- increased activity noted at Iranian nuclear sites and surrounding urban areas

FOCAL EVENT- positive trend in militants' weapons availability noted by Israeli intelligence

Future # 12

The United States halts the exchange by covert, clandestine non-kinetic action. Facing a rapidly developing domestic energy crisis due to a lack of processed natural gas imports, Iran begins mining and importing uranium to feed its reactors. Venezuela pressures fellow OPEC members to act to the detriment of the West in general and the U.S. specifically, whom Caracas highly suspects of involvement. (47 votes)

FOCAL EVENT- Venezuela addresses concerns to OPEC members about supporting governments who trespass the sovereignty of OPEC member states

FOCAL EVENT- increased activity noted at Iranian nuclear sites and surrounding urban areas

11. Develop indicators for each focal event

FOCAL EVENT- An increased presence of arms and trained militants in Palestine and Lebanon

KEY INDICATOR- overland smuggling of rocket materials and personnel from Iran through Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon

KEY INDICATOR- increase in overseas smuggling of small arms, cargo vessels with multiple ports of call that do not match manifests

KEY INDICATOR- increased number of training camps within Iran accompanied by a greater number of personnel and necessary supporting infrastructure

FOCAL EVENT- Venezuela addresses concerns to OPEC members about supporting governments who trespass the sovereignty of OPEC member states

KEY INDICATOR- intercepted communiqués from Venezuelan government officials to the government officials of other OPEC members addressing the need for a united stance against exportation to exploitative capitalist regimes

KEY INDICATOR- OPEC meeting minutes containing remarks made by Venezuelan representatives that are disparaging to continued trade with the U.S.

KEY INDICATOR- Chavez alludes to Venezuela's emerging role as a champion of anti-imperialism within OPEC

FOCAL EVENT- An increased presence of arms and trained militants in Afghanistan

KEY INDICATOR- overland smuggling of small arms and personnel between Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan

KEY INDICATOR- increased number of training camps within Iran accompanied by a greater number of personnel and necessary supporting infrastructure

FOCAL EVENT- An increased presence of arms and trained militants along the Venezuela/Colombia border

KEY INDICATOR- Conviasa commercial flights between Iran, Syria, and Caracas increase in frequency and quantity of passengers per flight, passenger manifests not published

KEY INDICATOR- small arms are indigenously manufactured in numbers far exceeding the requirements necessary for Venezuela's military and police forces

KEY INDICATOR- increased number of training camps along the Venezuela/Colombia border accompanied by a greater number of personnel and necessary supporting infrastructure

FOCAL EVENT- Iran frustrates maritime trade in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, citing the actions of anti-Islamic regimes as precedent

KEY INDICATOR- Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN) vessels interfere with merchant ships traversing regular shipping channels by demanding to board and inspect cargo

KEY INDICATOR- increased militarization of the Strait of Hormuz (SOH), with Iran citing the need for greater trade security in the face of Western aggression

FOCAL EVENT- Iran attempts to "buy off" other OPEC members' cooperation

KEY INDICATOR- the laundering of funds out of state-run banks prior to placement, layering, and eventual reinvestment of like amounts within another state's avenues of financial disbursement

FOCAL EVENT- increased activity noted at Iranian nuclear sites and surrounding urban areas

KEY INDICATOR- newly constructed infrastructure around enrichment and reactor sites

KEY INDICATOR- influx of dual-use technologies (i.e gas centrifuges) into Iran

FOCAL EVENT- positive trend in militants' weapons availability noted by Israeli intelligence

KEY INDICATOR- caches of weapons without any previous history of identification are uncovered

KEY INDICATOR- changes in Hamas and Hezbollah tactics are observed that incorporate differing capabilities of newer weaponry

12. Assess the potential for transposition between alternate futures

SCENARIO 1: If Venezuela exchanges SAMs for Iranian Investment & IRGC-QF Training...

Future 27 has the potential to transpose to future 26 if Venezuela perceives the actions it has taken to increase the cost of petroleum to the U.S. are ineffective. The benefits of supporting Colombian separatist elements, combined with Iran's support for Shia-friendly insurgent elements against NATO, could easily prove a greater utility in upsetting Western economic interests by fomenting global market uncertainty. Such uncertainty could play into both Iran's and Venezuela's interest by stimulating a rise in petroleum prices.

Future 31 could also transpose to future 26, given an Iranian decision to react in a more kinetic manner to perceived Western meddling. The transposition of futures 27 and 31 to 26 indicates a positive trend of mutual, violently hostile intentions toward the U.S. They could be labeled as "warming" transpositions. Either of these transpositions would likely take place following a second U.S. intervention. The nature of Iran-Venezuela retributive courses of action arising from a third or fourth U.S. intervention becomes difficult to conceptualize given the confluence of incentives and disincentives that would be undoubtedly leveraged upon both actors by the U.S.

"Cooling" transpositions are also possible: futures 31 and 27 could transpose to future 32 should Venezuela or Iran, respectively, perceive supporting violent non-state actors a dangerous non-necessity. The pay-off with this transposition is the parallelism of intent within OPEC: a necessary, if not sufficient, factor in both actors' campaigns for a third willing party to exert upward pressure on petroleum prices.

Futures 26 and 32 may transpose with each other if Tehran and Caracas see equal value in both altering initial responses and in maintaining a synergy of effort.

Future 27 could transpose to future 37 should Iran's senior leadership decide that Western kinetic intervention merits an accelerated pace in the state's bid for nuclear energy independence; a nuclear weapons capability would remain ambiguous so long as the uncertainty bought the

Islamic Republic more time for nuclear development and greater bargaining power at the next round of negotiations.

SCENARIO 2: If Iranian Proxies Train Local Separatists for Venezuelan Natural Gas...

Future 36 has the potential to transpose to future 37 if Venezuela decides to abandon support to the FARC/ELN in favor of the less provocative oil price manipulation option. Such a transposition on Venezuela's part would be a gamble. In light of a kinetic interdiction, Caracas may decide that a more amicable response to perceived imperialist intervention is warranted, lest some imperialist powers decide to flex their collective muscles to Venezuela's greater detriment. Of course, this constitutes a great disparity in anti-Western sentiment between Tehran and Caracas and would certainly signal at least a temporary decline in relations between both actors.

Future 36 could also transpose to future 31 if Iran perceives continued pursuit of nuclear energy, sans cooperation with the IAEA, as detrimental to regime survivability. In this transposition, Iran would attempt oil price manipulation vice uranium transfer and enrichment as its main avenue of international defiance. The transposition of future 36 to futures 37 and 31 is indicative of a repression of defiant activity toward the West, though probably not an indicator of violent intent's regression among and between Caracas and Tehran. Neither state would be likely to act out of goodwill vice simple preservation toward the U.S. given that a kinetic event had just transpired, causing an interruption in extensive training and materiel transfer.

Future 7 could transpose to future 12 if Iran and Venezuela are not able to secure a third OPEC member in a trilateral attempt to push petroleum prices higher. Iran may then resort to importing additional uranium as a step toward accelerating its own nuclear energy independence. A nuclear weapons capability would remain ambiguous so long as the uncertainty bought the Islamic Republic more time for nuclear development and greater bargaining power at the next round of negotiations.

Conclusion

Through political, economic, and military partnership, Iran and Venezuela enjoy greater latitude in shaping unilateral and bilateral responses to U.S. actions. Iran and Venezuela will attempt to balance against the U.S. in nearly all circumstances, given that the survivability of each state's regime is not at an immediate risk from American military action. America will almost certainly choose a covert or covert-clandestine means of either kinetic or non-kinetic action when the U.S. perceives an immediate, plausibly deniable response is merited.

A predictive analysis using the LAMP's highly structured approach provides the reader with a transparent methodology by which to gauge his or her own perceptions of U.S., Iranian, and Venezuelan courses of action. Aside from providing a systematic, research based approach to each alternative future's comparison, the LAMP actively controls against the mirror-imaging bias by requiring the researcher to observe each state actor from the perspective of the other state actors. Admittedly, this process is arduous and time consuming. The resultant product, however, is of much greater fidelity than if such perceptual study was not undertaken. The researcher hopes such objectivity in perceptual study and alternative future comparisons was evident.

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