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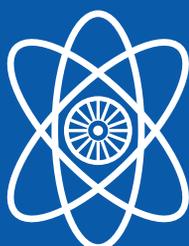
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All the articles are available from the mentioned sources in original format.

[Iran's Nuclear Program: \(Not\) Selling a War](#) Micah Zenko, Council for Foreign Relations, March 19, 2012

The public debate on whether the United States and other countries are able to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon exhausted itself years ago. Yet, discussion about confrontation with Iran will persist until one of two things happens: Tehran provides sufficient transparency over its suspected nuclear weapons activities to meet the demands of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Tel Aviv, and Washington; or Israel and/or the United States attacks Iran's nuclear facilities. Unless the major players are bluffing and ultimately back down—which has happened before—one of these determining actions will likely take place within the next two years.

If President Obama—or any future occupant of the White House—does decide to attack Iran, there is an important prerequisite that has remained largely unexplored: How would the president sell the war to the American people?

The president wouldn't have to start from scratch. Iran has been demonized by the United States since the nascent Islamic Republic seized the U.S. embassy compound in Tehran and held fifty-two hostages from November 1979 to January 1981. Since then, polling has consistently demonstrated two strong beliefs: Americans do not like and are afraid of Iran.

A recent Gallup poll found that 87 percent of Americans held an “unfavorable” opinion of Iran, a number that hasn't changed in decades. In addition, in a September 2011 survey asking, “Which country is the greatest threat to the United

States?” 63 percent of respondents listed Iran first or second. (In June 2009, 79 percent of respondents believed Iran to be a “very serious” or “moderately serious” threat to the United States.)

Despite the polling numbers, Americans are largely split over a U.S. military attack on Iran (support ranges from 41 to 56 percent) and there is broad approval for stronger economic sanctions and diplomatic action. Interestingly, the action favored by most Americans (81 percent), “direct diplomatic talks between the United States and Iran,” is not part of the Obama administration's strategy.

In addition to the lukewarm support among Americans for attacking Iran, President Obama or his successor would also have to tackle two problematic assessments from the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC).

First, as Director of National Intelligence James Clapper has repeatedly reaffirmed since late January, “we don't believe they've actually made the decision to go ahead with a nuclear weapon.” Just yesterday, James Risen reported in the *New York Times* that the IC continues to believe (based on an assessment first made in November 2007) that Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei halted his country's nuclear weapons activities in 2003.

This might be hard for many to grasp, since polling has found the American people disagree with the collective judgment of the 210,000 civilian and military employees and 30,000 private contractors comprising the IC. A recent poll found that 84 percent of Americans think Iran is developing nuclear weapons, while another from February 2010 concluded that 71 percent of Americans believe that Iran currently has nuclear weapons.

Second, Lieutenant General Ronald Burgess, chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) told the Senate Armed Services Committee in February that, despite all of Iran's threats, "it is unlikely to initiate or intentionally provoke a conflict or launch a preemptive attack." This assessment is undoubtedly difficult for some to reconcile with the rhetorical bluster of senior Iranian officials, including repeated threats to close the Strait of Hormuz if U.S. aircraft carriers entered the waterway.

In February, however, the USS Abraham Lincoln steamed through the strait without incident. In fact, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert told reporters that Iran's naval forces have not responded with increased activity, adding: "The Iranian navy has been unto itself professional and courteous." This confirms what U.S. Navy officials have told me in private conversations: for the past two decades, the U.S. and Iranian navies have carefully avoided direct confrontations, and routinely cooperate on a tactical level to rescue distressed ships or lost seafarers.

To build up support for a preemptive attack, the U.S. president could play to the widely-held conviction that Tehran is nearing—or crossed—the nuclear threshold, but he will also need to explain why the intelligence professionals, on the receiving end of over \$75 billion in taxpayer funds, are wrong.

Presidents sell wars by offering a buffet of justifications in the hopes that citizens of varied beliefs and opinions will find something to sink their teeth into. If you are old enough, you may recall the multiple explications provided by senior officials for the use of military force in Iraq from 1991 to 2011, Bosnia from 1992 to 1995, Kosovo in 1999, or even in Libya last year; justifications included to protect civilians, overthrow regimes, send a "message" to other dictators, and repay European allies for support in

Afghanistan.

The media circus surrounding the Iranian nuclear program has distorted the underlying rationale for any use of force. The United States must not attack Iran without clearly defined strategic objectives, a clear understanding of how attacking its suspected nuclear weapons facilities will advance those objectives, and a theory of victory for how those facilities could be destroyed at an acceptable level of cost. So far, both proponents of attacking Iran and the president have avoided addressing these three concerns with any clarity.

<http://blogs.cfr.org/zenko/2012/03/19/irans-nuclear-program-not-selling-a-war/>

U.S. War Game Sees Perils of Israeli Strike Against Iran [Mark Mazzetti and Thom Shanker, New York Times, March 19, 2012](#)

WASHINGTON — A classified war simulation held this month to assess the repercussions of an Israeli attack on Iran forecasts that the strike would lead to a wider regional war, which could draw in the United States and leave hundreds of Americans dead, according to American officials.

The officials said the so-called war game was not designed as a rehearsal for American military action — and they emphasized that the exercise's results were not the only possible outcome of a real-world conflict.

But the game has raised fears among top American planners that it may be impossible to preclude American involvement in any escalating confrontation with Iran, the officials said. In the debate among policy makers over the consequences of any Israeli attack, that reaction may give stronger voice to those in the White House, Pentagon and intelligence community who have warned that a strike could prove perilous for the

United States.

The results of the war game were particularly troubling to Gen. James N. Mattis, who commands all American forces in the Middle East, Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia, according to officials who either participated in the Central Command exercise or who were briefed on the results and spoke on condition of anonymity because of its classified nature. When the exercise had concluded earlier this month, according to the officials, General Mattis told aides that an Israeli first strike would be likely to have dire consequences across the region and for United States forces there.

The two-week war game, called Internal Look, played out a narrative in which the United States found it was pulled into the conflict after Iranian missiles struck a Navy warship in the Persian Gulf, killing about 200 Americans, according to officials with knowledge of the exercise. The United States then retaliated by carrying out its own strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities.

The initial Israeli attack was assessed to have set back the Iranian nuclear program by roughly a year, and the subsequent American strikes did not slow the Iranian nuclear program by more than an additional two years. However, other Pentagon planners have said that America's arsenal of long-range bombers, refueling aircraft and precision missiles could do far more damage to the Iranian nuclear program — if President Obama were to decide on a full-scale retaliation.

The exercise was designed specifically to test internal military communications and coordination among battle staffs in the Pentagon; in Tampa, Fla., where the headquarters of the Central Command is located; and in the Persian Gulf in the aftermath of an Israeli strike. But the exercise was written to assess a pressing, potential, real-world situation.

In the end, the war game reinforced to military officials the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of a strike by Israel, and a counterstrike by Iran, the officials said. American and Israeli intelligence services broadly agree on the progress Iran has made to enrich uranium. But they disagree on how much time there would be to prevent Iran from building a weapon if leaders in Tehran decided to go ahead with one.

With the Israelis saying publicly that the window to prevent Iran from building a nuclear bomb is closing, American officials see an Israeli attack on Iran within the next year as a possibility. They have said privately that they believe that Israel would probably give the United States little or no warning should Israeli officials make the decision to strike Iranian nuclear sites.

Officials said that, under the chain of events in the war game, Iran believed that Israel and the United States were partners in any strike against Iranian nuclear sites and therefore considered American military forces in the Persian Gulf as complicit in the attack. Iranian jets chased Israeli warplanes after the attack, and Iranians launched missiles at an American warship in the Persian Gulf, viewed as an act of war that allowed an American retaliation.

Internal Look has long been one of Central Command's most significant planning exercises, and is carried out about twice a year to assess how the headquarters, its staff and command posts in the region would respond to various real-world situations.

Over the years, it has been used to prepare for various wars in the Middle East. According to the defense Web site GlobalSecurity.org, military planners during the cold war used Internal Look to prepare for a move by the Soviet Union to seize Iranian oil fields. The American war plan at the time called for the Pentagon to march nearly six Army divisions north

from the Persian Gulf to the Zagros Mountains of Iran to blunt a Soviet attack.

In December 2002, Gen. Tommy R. Franks, who was the top officer at Central Command, used *Internal Look* to test the readiness of his units for the coming invasion of Iraq. Many experts have predicted that Iran would try to carefully manage the escalation after an Israeli first strike in order to avoid giving the United States a rationale for attacking with its far superior forces. Thus, it might use proxies to set off car bombs in world capitals or funnel high explosives to insurgents in Afghanistan to attack American and NATO troops.

While using surrogates might, in the end, not be enough to hide Iran's instigation of these attacks, the government in Tehran could at least publicly deny all responsibility. Some military specialists in the United States and in Israel who have assessed the potential ramifications of an Israeli attack believe that the last thing Iran would want is a full-scale war on its territory. Thus, they argue that Iran would not directly strike American military targets, whether warships in the Persian Gulf or bases in the region.

Their analysis, however, also includes the broad caveat that it is impossible to know the internal thinking of the senior Iranian leadership, and is informed by the awareness that even the most detailed war games cannot predict how nations and their leaders will react in the heat of conflict. Yet these specialists continue their work, saying that any insight on how the Iranians will react to an attack will help determine whether the Israelis carry out a strike — and what the American position will be if they do.

Israeli intelligence estimates, backed by academic studies, have cast doubt on the widespread assumption that a military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities would set off a catastrophic set of events like a

regional conflagration, widespread acts of terrorism and sky-high oil prices. "A war is no picnic," Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Israel Radio in November. But if Israel feels itself forced into action, the retaliation would be bearable, he said. "There will not be 100,000 dead or 10,000 dead or 1,000 dead. The state of Israel will not be destroyed."

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/20/world/middleeast/united-states-war-game-sees-dire-results-of-an-israeli-attack-on-iran.html?_r=2

Israelis agree Iran hasn't decided to construct nuclear bomb Associated Press, March 19, 2012

Despite saber-rattling from Jerusalem, Israeli officials now agree with the U.S. assessment that Tehran has not yet decided on the actual construction of a nuclear bomb, according to senior Israeli government and defense figures. Even so, there is great concern in Israel about leaving Iran "on the cusp" of a bomb -- explaining why Israel continues to hint at a military attack on Iran's nuclear installations before it moves enough of them underground to protect them from Israel's bombs.

Israel's leaders have been charging in no uncertain terms for years that Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons. Though officials say they accept the more nuanced American view, they warn that it is just a matter of semantics, because an Iran on the verge of being able to build a bomb would still be a danger. The United States is playing up its assessment that Iran has not made its final decision in a public campaign to persuade Israel to call off any attack plan and allow the increasingly harsh sanctions against Iran time to persuade Tehran to back down.

The concern -- which is widely shared in

Israel as part of a complex calculation -- is of an Iranian retaliation that might spark regional conflict and send oil prices soaring, at a time when the world economy is already struggling and U.S. presidential elections loom. Also in the equation are concerns about the ability of the Israeli home front to withstand a sustained barrage of Iranian missiles fired in retaliation. Iranian surrogates Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip could also bombard Israel with thousands of rockets, and U.S. troops in the Gulf region could also become targets.

Several senior Israeli officials who spoke in recent days to The Associated Press said Israel has come around to the U.S. view that no final decision to build a bomb has been made by Iran. The officials, who are privy to intelligence and to the discussion about the Iranian program, said this is the prevailing view in the intelligence community, but there are also questions about whether Tehran might be hiding specific bomb making operations.

The concern, they said, is about allowing the Iranian program to reach the point where there is enough enriched weapons grade material that a bomb could quickly be assembled, within a year.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday, "Iran, whose leader foments terrorism and violence around the globe and calls for our destruction ... this regime must never be allowed to have nuclear weapons." Israel officials have said that with Iran moving its installations underground, Israel's level of bunker-busting capability leaves it with a window of no more than several months to act effectively. The United States, with more powerful bombs, would have a much longer period -- but leaders here are loathe to be entirely dependent on U.S. determination on the issue.

The suspicion in Israel is that the Iranians have held off on a decision in order to deny Israel -- and other countries -- the pretext

for an attack, officials said, noting that to a certain extent the matter is semantic and therefore secondary. All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the subject is deemed too delicate to be discussed on the record, and the government has ordered silence.

Israel views Iran as a threat to its survival and, like the West, sees Tehran's ramped-up enrichment of uranium, a key element of bomb making, as undercutting its claims that its nuclear program is purely civilian. The U.N. nuclear agency cited its concerns about Iran's ultimate designs in reports, but notes its inspectors have found no direct evidence that Iran is moving toward an atomic weapon.

Netanyahu ratcheted up the tough talk this month, emphasizing during a White House visit and in a high-profile speech at home that Israel was prepared to act alone if necessary, even over U.S. objections. In advance of Netanyahu's White House visit and during a speech to a powerful pro-Israel lobby, President Barack Obama took an increasingly assertive tone about U.S. refusal to tolerate a nuclear Iran and willingness to block that militarily.

Still, he tempered this tone by saying there was "too much loose talk of war" and emphasized his preference for diplomacy and sanctions. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton reiterated shortly before Netanyahu arrived in Washington the prevailing U.S. view that Tehran has not decided to produce weapons.

Iran reported in February that it possesses up to 100 kilograms of uranium enriched to 20 percent, which would be enough for four bombs if further processed. Uranium must be enriched to 90 percent to be military grade. Israeli intelligence officials, like other intelligence agencies worldwide, estimate that once a decision to build a bomb is reached, it would take months to upgrade the enrichment and months more to build a crude bomb -- in all, a year to 18 months. Then, to fit a bomb

to a Shahab-3 missile capable of striking Israel would take Iran two years, Israeli defense officials say.

Israeli officials who favor a strike do not want Iran even to reach the point where work on a bomb could begin. Israeli leaders have invoked the Nazi Holocaust of World War II, when 6 million Jews were killed, in their warnings about Iran, citing its nuclear program, repeated references to Israel's destruction, support for anti-Israel militants on the southern and northern borders and development of missiles capable of being fitted with nuclear warheads.

There is also fear of an Iranian bomb sparking a nuclear arms race across an already volatile region with an active illicit, cross-border weapons trade. Israel itself is widely believed to have an arsenal of nuclear weapons, though it has a policy of neither confirming nor denying that.

Israel has been warning of an Iranian nuclear threat since the 1990s and has been working on a possible military strike for years. Leaders here have welcomed the increased sanctions on Iranian oil exports and banks, but they remain skeptical of an Iranian climbdown, especially because Russia and China refuse to join the effort.

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/03/19/israelis-agree-iran-hasnt-decided-to-construct-nuclear-bomb/print#ixzz1pjziKEwr>

EU Goes Further On Iran Sanctions Wall Street Journal, March 19, 2012

Faced with U.S. pressure to move faster in isolating Iran's financial sector to choke off funds for Tehran's nuclear program, the European Union took an action last week that officials in Brussels admit goes well beyond the carefully-calibrated sanctions they originally intended.

In January, divided between countries that wanted to move quickly to toughen up sanctions and others that were more reluctant, the EU agreed a compromise: They would start a full oil embargo on Iranian crude exports on July 1, they sanctioned a number of Iranian individuals, banks and other firms, and slapped partial restrictions on the central bank.

However to avoid hurting normal Iranian businesses, they allowed the central bank an exemption that permitted it to make and receive payments for legitimate, non-oil trade with European companies.

Last Thursday, the EU took an additional step, ordering European firms to cut off blacklisted Iranian banks from any financial transactions or communications. The measure was aimed mainly at Belgian-based Society for Worldwide International Financial Telecommunication, which is used by the majority of the world's larger banks to send secured messages crucial to making international transfer payments. When the new legislation was published on Friday, it stated clearly that the exemptions allowed the central bank in January also applied to the ban on financial message services.

Only one problem with that: "SWIFT cannot partially disconnect a bank," a SWIFT spokesman said. "EU-sanctioned banks will be disconnected from SWIFT and they will no longer have access to the global secure messaging service of SWIFT." In other words, Iran's central bank was being entirely thrown off the SWIFT system whatever the purpose of the transactions. Several European diplomats confirmed officials were aware of the issue and that it was discussed in the lead-up to last week's measure.

They make two points:

Faced with growing Congressional pressure to penalize SWIFT if it didn't cut ties with Iran's banks, they had little

choice. Payments through the central bank for legitimate purposes can still happen, just not through SWIFT.

Certainly, the EU was—and remains—under pressure from Washington. Congress is now crafting legislation which would hit SWIFT's board and directors unless they cut ties with all Iranian banks—sanctioned or not. U.S. lawmakers argue that Tehran is now channeling funds through non-sanctioned banks to finance its nuclear program.

It's also true that international payments can still be made—but they will take longer and be costlier. SWIFT is like a postal service for financial transactions. It pings messages around the international banking system in a common language, under fixed settlement conditions in a secure fashion at the click of a button. The messages it carries ensure financial payments are safely sent and received.

Without SWIFT, Iran's central bank can send financial messages by fax or secured emails for legitimate businesses to European banks. But they'd have to agree legal terms on precisely when a payment should be settled, the messages would need translating into a commonly understood language and secure communication lines would be needed between the central bank and each of their counterparties – banks from Paris to Bucharest.

And there's the rub. The cost of this will almost certainly fall on the end-user—the owner of a mid-sized Tehran-based importer or exporter, for example. In other words, just the type of people Brussels was hoping to avoid hurting.

UPDATE: The SWIFT cut-off has already drawn attention in the region. The economy minister of the United Arab Emirates, Sultan al Mansouri, met his Iranian counterpart last week in Dubai to discuss ways to continue financing legitimate trade, Dow Jones' Leila Hatoum

reported on Monday.

"We discussed the issue of financial transfers, to safeguard the best interest of traders from both countries... Most importantly we discussed the issue of the SWIFT system which has been shut down," Mr. Al Mansouri said in a telephone interview. Dubai is one of Iran's largest trading partners, with two-way trade last year valued at 50 billion U.A.E. dirhams (\$13.6 billion).

Payments system SWIFT to expel Iranian banks Saturday

Reuters, March 15, 2012

The world's biggest electronic payment system on Saturday will cut off Iranian banks blacklisted by the European Union in an attempt to further strangle Tehran's ability to finance a nuclear program. Belgium-based SWIFT, which facilitates the bulk of global cross-border payments, said it would disconnect designated Iranian financial firms from its messaging system on Saturday at 1600 GMT after European regulators ordered the company to do so.

"The EU decision forces SWIFT to take action," SWIFT Chief Executive Lazaro Campos said in a statement on Thursday. "Disconnecting banks is an extraordinary and unprecedented step for SWIFT. It is a direct result of international and multilateral action to intensify financial sanctions against Iran." SWIFT, or Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, has been described as the glue of the global banking system, handling daily payments estimated at more than \$6 trillion.

Expelling the designated Iranian banks from SWIFT will shut down a major avenue through which Tehran does business with the rest of the world. The West hopes that will pressure Iran into curbing its nuclear program. "The joint

action of the U.S. and EU sends a strong message to Iran that we are serious about imposing punishing sanctions," said U.S. Senator Robert Menendez, a Democrat who pushed to make the expulsion of banks from SWIFT part of pending U.S. sanctions legislation.

SWIFT's move will follow a decision by the European Union Council, which represents EU member states, to tighten asset freezes on a number of people and entities associated with Iran's nuclear activities, which Western powers think aim to produce a weapon. Iran maintains its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. "The Council agreed that no specialized financial messaging shall be provided to those persons and entities subject to an asset freeze," the Council said.

The Obama administration applauded the EU decision and said it reflected consensus in the international community that "substantially increased pressure" was needed to convince the Iranian government to address their concerns about its nuclear program. But U.S. lawmakers pushing for tougher sanctions on Iran said SWIFT needed to eradicate all Iranian financial institutions from its network, not just those blacklisted by the West.

"The impact of financial sanctions will not come close to full potential if Iran can simply go across the street to a non-designated bank to conduct the transactions with those still willing to do business with it," said Democratic Representative Brad Sherman, who is working with Republican Senator Mark Kirk on legislation that would extend sanctions to all Iranian banks.

IRANIAN BUSINESSES DEVASTATED

Overseas Iranian businesses said the move might strangle their operations. One said he had been expecting SWIFT

to act in a few months, and was surprised at the news on Thursday. "It will make life even more difficult for us than before, because this is like our lifeline to the outside being cut," Naser Shaker, who owns an oil and gas trading company in Dubai, told Reuters by phone. "All the transactions will be stopped. Through the banks, there are no more options."

Another forecast the collapse of businesses dealing with Iran. "If Iranian banks cannot exchange payments with banks around the world, then this will cause the collapse of many banking relations and many businesses," said Morteza Masoumzadeh, a member of the executive committee of the Iranian Business Council in Dubai and managing director of the Jumbo Line Shipping Agency.

"This is devastating news for our businesses, but what can I do? Do we have any options?" he said. The announcements coincided with news that major money exchange houses in the United Arab Emirates - an important trading hub for Iran - have stopped handling Iranian rials over the past few weeks.

Nineteen banks and 25 affiliated institutions from Iran made a total of 2 million cross-border payments using SWIFT in 2010. They included banks the United States accuses of financing Iran's nuclear program or terrorism - Mellat, Post, Saderat and Sepah. SWIFT, founded in 1973, said its decision reflected the extraordinary circumstances of international support for the

intensification of sanctions against Iran.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/15/us-nuclear-iran-idUSBRE82E15M20120315>

Deterring Iran is the best option

Fareed Zakaria,
Washington Post, March 15, 2011

When I was in college, in the early 1980s, I invited Ronald Reagan's defense secretary, Caspar Weinberger, to give a speech on campus. At the time, U.S. colleges were hotbeds of opposition to the Reagan administration, especially to its defense policies. Sure enough, as Weinberger began to speak, a series of students stood up and began to heckle. One after another, they rose and chanted a single line, "Deterrence is a lie!"

I am reminded of that turbulent meeting as I listen to the debates over Iran's nuclear ambitions because it highlights a strange role reversal in today's foreign policy discourse. It used to be the left that refused to accept the idea of deterrence — searching instead for options such as a nuclear freeze. And it used to be those on the right who would patiently explain the practical virtues of deterrence.

"About once every 25 years, a new generation discovers the horrors of the bomb and the paradoxes of deterrence, and begins looking for a way out. But there are only so many times that one can present the apocalypse .??. so many beguiling alternatives to pursue and discard. Inevitably, the debate grinds to a halt pretty much where it began: affirming, while deploring, the necessity of relying on the balance of terror to preserve the peace." That was Charles Krauthammer, writing in the *New Republic* in 1984. "Deterrence, like old age, is intolerable, until one considers the alternative," he explained.

Yet today it is the right that has decided that

deterrence is a lie. Krauthammer, the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute and others denounce containment and deterrence and would lead us instead to a policy that culminates in a preventive war. It is the right's version of the nuclear freeze — a simple solution that actually doesn't solve anything. Strikes on Iran would probably delay its program a few years while driving up domestic support for the government in Tehran and providing it with a much stronger rationale for pursuing nuclear weapons. Yet sophisticated conservatives insist that this route is preferable to deterrence.

Deterrence is a difficult concept to accept because it is counterintuitive: The prospect of destruction produces peace. And yet its record is remarkable. Great powers went to war with brutal regularity for hundreds of years. Then came nuclear weapons, and there has not been a war between great powers since 1945 — the longest period of peace between great powers in history. The United States and the Soviet Union had a more intense and far-reaching rivalry than almost any two great powers ever. Each thought the other wanted to destroy its way of life. And yet, this rivalry did not result in war. Both sides were deterred.

In 1989, Margaret Thatcher said in a toast to Mikhail Gorbachev, "Both our countries know from bitter experience that conventional weapons do not deter war in Europe, whereas nuclear weapons have done so for over 40 years. As a deterrent there is no substitute for them."

If deterrence doesn't work, then why are we not preparing preventive war against Russia, which still has a fearsome arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles? Or against Pakistan, home to a military-intelligence regime that has been implicated in more major acts of terrorism in the past 10 years than Iran has in the past hundred? The argument that Iran would be deterred does not rest on its reasonableness but on the regime's desire to survive. "Rulers want to have a country that they can continue to rule," says Kenneth Waltz, one of the most

distinguished theorists of international relations.

To gain credibility with his conservative critics and with the current Israeli government, President Obama has gone along with them, ruled out containment, insisted that he does not bluff and spoken of a "window" of opportunity for negotiations. This might prove a serious error: It boxes in the United States, limits Obama's options and forces him on a path that could push him into an unnecessary, preventive war.

Anguish over the prospect of an Iranian nuclear weapon is understandable. It would be better for Israel, the Middle East and the world if Tehran does not acquire such weapons. The U.S. effort, in collaboration with almost the entire international community, to prevent this from happening and to put tremendous pressure on Tehran, is the right policy. But were Tehran to persist, were its regime to accept the global isolation and crippling costs that would come from its decision, a robust policy of containment and deterrence would work toward Iran as it did against Stalin's Soviet Union, Mao's China, Kim Jong Il's North Korea and the Pakistani military.

Iran May Not Open a Site to Inspectors Rick Gladstone, *New York Times*, March 13, 2012

Iran signaled on Tuesday that it was unwilling to grant a request by international nuclear inspectors for unfettered access to a restricted military complex that they suspect may house a chamber designed to test explosives used in atomic weapons triggers. In its first public statement on the matter since the leader of the International Atomic Energy Agency expressed irritation last week about Iran's lack of cooperation, Iran also denied suggestions that it had sought to cleanse the military complex, called Parchin, to eliminate any trace of

incriminating activity.

"The site is a military site, and conventional military activities are being carried out in the site," the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Ramin Mehmanparast, said, according to Iranian news agencies. Ridiculing reports that Iran had tried to clean up the site, he said, "If military nuclear activities are carried out, evidence of them can never be cleaned up, and the issue is mostly propaganda."

Iran's unwillingness to grant the inspectors' request could complicate resumed talks announced last week between Iran and the five permanent United Nations Security Council members plus Germany over Iran's nuclear energy program, an increasing source of world tension. Iran says the program is peaceful; Western nations and Israel say it is a cover for developing nuclear weapons capacity.

A sprawling desert complex near Tehran, Parchin figured prominently in the atomic agency's report on Iran's nuclear activities last November. The report said Iran had constructed a containment vessel there in 2000 that may have been designed to conduct tests on explosives required to set off the type of reaction needed to detonate a nuclear bomb.

On an earlier visit to Parchin, inspectors found nothing, but were not allowed free access. Inspectors were recently twice denied permission to visit the site. Mr. Mehmanparast said Iran did not oppose a visit but first wanted an agreement on what the inspectors would be allowed to do.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/world/middleeast/iran-may-not-open-a-site-to-nuclear-inspectors.html>

Iran dismisses claims of military site clean-up The Telegraph, March 13, 2012

Iran on Tuesday dismissed claims it was clearing away traces of suspected nuclear

weapons research activities from a closed military site, saying the allegations were "propaganda". The sprawling Parchin military site, located 20 miles east of Tehran, "is conducting normal military activities," foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told reporters in a regular briefing.

"Declarations about the cleaning up of nuclear traces from this site – and those who are technically savvy know you cannot remove traces of such activity from an area – these declarations are propaganda," he said. The head of the UN nuclear watchdog, Yukiya Amano, said early last week that satellite images suggested there were unspecified "ongoing" activities at the Parchin base. Western diplomats said they suspected Iran was removing evidence from the site.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has focused suspicions on Parchin since receiving intelligence, outlined in a November report, that Iran may have been testing normal explosives in a big metal cylinder there with the aim of researching implosion triggers for an eventual nuclear bomb. Iran has twice this year refused requests by a visiting IAEA team to inspect Parchin.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9140079/Iran-dismisses-claims-of-military-site-clean-up.html>

Exclusive: U.N. Won't Back Down on Iran Nuclear Inspections The Daily Beast, March 11, 2012

The U.N. nuclear agency will not back off its demand to visit the Parchin military site even if this escalates the confrontation with Iran over its alleged nuclear-weapons work, the agency's head Yukiya Amano told Newsweek/The Daily Beast in an exclusive interview.

"We'll pursue this objective until there's a concrete result," Amano said in an

interview Friday in Vienna in his spacious office on the top floor of the 28-story United Nations building, which towers over the Danube River. The 64-year-old veteran Japanese diplomat has proved to be increasingly tough on Iran since taking over the International Atomic Energy Agency in December 2009.

"We don't see the reason why they cannot grant us access to Parchin. It is a military site, but we can work out or manage access," he said. Amano said the stand-off over getting to this test site "has become like a symbol" of Iran's alleged weapons work and its refusal to be transparent with the international community. He said the agency would "continue to focus on Parchin."

The impasse over getting to this site threatens to torpedo a new round of investigations by Amano's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that comes as the Iranian crisis escalates toward a possible war. Iran denies that it wants the bomb and says its nuclear program is an effort to use atomic energy for peaceful ends. But the United States fears Iran is secretly working toward developing nuclear weapons and has spearheaded the passing of four rounds of U.N. sanctions on Iran and a series of bilateral sanctions by the United States, European, and other states to get Iran to rein in its nuclear ambitions.

Iran has refused to let IAEA inspectors into Parchin, 30 kilometers southeast of Tehran, despite intense lobbying for this by the U.N. atomic agency since the beginning of the year. The agency wants to visit one area at this sprawling military testing ground where it thinks there is a 19-meter-long, 4.6-meter-diameter metal-and-concrete cylinder where explosive experiments on how to trigger atomic explosions may have taken place.

"We don't see the reason why they cannot grant us access to Parchin. It is a military site, but we can work out or manage access." The situation is all the more urgent

since there are reports of activity at Parchin that may be related to cleaning up the site for traces, possibly from use of uranium metal, of any tests.

The tests may have used natural uranium to test a nuclear trigger that would compact the core of a bomb with an explosion, or perhaps a neutron initiator that explodes from inside the core to enhance a chain reaction, but any of these would have been a “dry run” without setting off a chain reaction. Without being specific, Amano said when asked about a possible clean-up: “We have information and there are some moves—there’s something moving out there. Going there soon is better” to find out. Iran denies that a clean-up is taking place at Parchin.

Iranian ambassador to the IAEA Ali Asghar Soltanieh told reporters in Vienna this month that Iran was willing to discuss weaponization questions, which were outlined extensively in an IAEA report last November, and was open to granting access to Parchin. But he warned about politicizing the issue and said a plan covering all issues must first be agreed for going forward, something the two sides have so far failed to do.

The IAEA rejects this linkage to a plan and says the visit to Parchin must be the first step, and not be delayed. The IAEA began investigating Iran’s nuclear program in 2003, after an Iranian resistance group revealed that the Islamic Republic was hiding the construction of a plant to enrich uranium, which can be fuel for power reactors or the explosive core of atom bombs, and of a reactor that could make plutonium, also a potential bomb material.

The investigation stalled in 2008 over a wide range of questions about activity possibly related to developing nuclear weapons. These included whether Iran was working on the trigger for setting off a nuclear bomb, on a neutron initiator, and on how to make nuclear weapons small enough to fit on top of a missile. Pressured

by international sanctions, which are now targeting the lifeblood of its economy—its oil sales, Iran let in a senior-level IAEA inspection team for two visits this year, in January and February. It denied access to Parchin on both these visits.

The IAEA had visited Parchin twice in 2005 and found nothing suspicious, but, as Amano said, “that time we didn’t have enough information.” Now the information is better, “so to start with [a new round of inspections], we thought that Parchin was a good selection.” He said the IAEA had wanted to have a “good outcome” to report to a meeting it just held in Vienna in March of the agency’s 35-nation executive arm, its board of governors.

An informed source said Parchin was selected as a first step since it had seemed to be one Iran would be able to accept. It did not require giving Iran new documents, a demand that has hindered progress in the investigation. But the IAEA seems to have stirred up a hornet’s nest, with more activity at the site in Parchin than the agency has seen there in the past seven or eight years.

The IAEA’s drawing a line and sticking to it is new in its dealings with Iran. The fact is that Amano has transformed, since taking office in December 2009, the way the IAEA reports on the Islamic Republic. His predecessor, Egyptian Mohamed ElBaradei, was criticized for being too soft by sticking to a strict, legalistic interpretation of what the agency could do and say. ElBaradei stood up to U.S. pressure to be tougher, as he avoided drawing conclusions about whether Iran was doing weapons work, saying there was no evidence of this, only allegations.

Amano has been more forthright. In his first report, in February 2010, Amano clearly spoke about “concerns about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile.” He continued in this vein, issuing

a detailed 12-page annex to a report in November that outlined Iran's alleged weapons work. The alleged secret project was said to be highly organized until 2003, and may since have continued in a more dispersed form in order to avoid detection by Western states.

Amano denies that he has a political, pro-U.S. agenda, as Iran has charged. A US diplomatic cable from shortly before he took office in December 2009 as IAEA director general, released by the whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks, had described him as "DG (director general) of all states but in agreement with us." Another portrayed him as "solidly in the US court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program."

Amano insisted that his reports, even his expression of disappointment in a statement issued in Vienna at the same moment that his inspectors were flying out of Tehran after their February visit, were factual. "We had been asking access to Parchin. I expressed my disappointment because I (had) really wanted to report something positive, concrete to the March board."

Amano said that while his reports could be used by some to justify war, this was not what he was doing. He was merely trying to clarify what Iran is doing. Such statements were not "a justification for war at all. It is a justification for our request for clarification. We should not confuse these two things." He said that in the run-up to the war in Iraq information provided by various inspectors was used to justify the use of force. But, he said, "I am not doing that. What I am doing is that we have information that makes us wary. So we want to clarify. Clarification is not a use of force at all. This is the most peaceful method in order to avoid something worse."

But he said tension could very well increase

if Iran does not cooperate with IAEA efforts by June, when the IAEA board will meet again to review progress. "Yes of course, we could not make a positive report in March [and] tension has increased. If I cannot report something positive in June, that will be the case [again]. But I do not want to see that. So, I am asking for full cooperation from Iran. That is in the interest of Iran too.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/03/11/exclusive-un-won-t-back-down-on-iran-nuclear-inspections.html>

Panetta: U.S. Has Potential Military Plans for Iran Yochi J. Dreazen, *National Journal*, March 8, 2012

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta sits at his desk in the Pentagon on Tuesday. The Pentagon is preparing an array of military options for striking Iran if hard-hitting diplomatic and economic sanctions fail to persuade Tehran to drop its nuclear ambitions, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told *National Journal* in an interview on Thursday.

Panetta said such planning had been under way "for a long time," a reflection of the Obama administration's mounting concern over Iran's continued progress towards a nuclear weapon. In the interview, Panetta said he didn't believe Israeli leaders had made up their minds about whether to order a high-risk raid against Iran's nuclear facilities.

Panetta, President Obama, and an array of other senior U.S. military and civilian officials have counseled Israel to give the sanctions more time to work before resorting to military force. They've also warned that an attack would set Iran's nuclear program back only by a few years, a high price to pay for the inevitably violent Iranian retaliation likely to follow.

"As the president himself has said, I don't believe they've made a final decision here," Panetta told *NJ*. "I feel confident that they

really are seriously weighing all of the ramifications of how best to deal with Iran." Panetta said in the interview that a unilateral Israeli strike against Iran would be less effective than one conducted by the U.S., which has a significantly larger air force and an array of advanced weapons more powerful than any possessed by the Jewish state.

An American strike doesn't appear imminent; Panetta and Obama have said that "all options are on the table" when it comes to ending Iran's nuclear push, but the administration has made clear that it prefers to use diplomatic and economic pressure against Iran instead of resorting to military force.

"If they decided to do it there's no question that it would have an impact, but I think it's also clear that if the United States did it we would have a hell of a bigger impact," Panetta said in the interview. The comments came one day after Panetta told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the U.S. was reviewing "possible military options" for an armed intervention into Syria, underscoring the real possibility that Washington could soon find itself embroiled in a pair of new—and risky—Mideast conflicts.

Asked in Thursday's interview if the Pentagon was conducting similar planning for strikes on Iran, Panetta didn't hesitate. "Absolutely," he said. The Defense chief stressed that the administration didn't simply believe that Iran's nuclear push posed a threat to Israel. Washington, he said, also saw Iran's efforts as a direct threat to the U.S.

"I think they're serious about the threat that they view from Iran and its impact on Israel," Panetta said in the interview. "I think they also understand that we view Iran as a threat to our security as well."

Panetta's remarks echoed his tough talk on Iran earlier this week. Speaking to a powerful pro-Israel lobby on Tuesday,

Panetta said that "if all else fails, we will act" to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. "Let me be clear—we do not have a policy of containment," he told the crowd. "We have a policy of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons."

In his remarks to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Panetta said Obama's new budget requests \$3.1 billion in security assistance to Israel, a sharp increase over the \$2.5 billion provided in 2008. He also noted that the administration had committed more than \$650 million in U.S. funding for Israeli missile defense, double the Bush administration's pledge of \$320 million over the same period. Panetta spoke of Iran repeatedly in his speech, but didn't mention the country by name in that portion of his remarks. Still, his concern about Iran came through loud and clear there as well. In Thursday's interview, it came through even clearer.

http://www.nationaljournal.com/nationalsecurity/panetta-u-s-has-potential-military-plan-for-iran-20120308?mrefid=freehplead_2

The IAEA Outlines the Path for Iran to Come Clean, But is Tehran Ready? Peter Crail, Arms Control Association, Vol. 3, Issue 2, March 7, 2012

After years of denying any need to respond to international concerns about suspected nuclear weaponization work, Iran has finally engaged in a discussion with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to address an alleged weapons program. This is a positive development, but it will only be meaningful in the context of serious efforts by Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA's investigation.

The agency met with Iranian officials in Tehran on two occasions in January and February to discuss a way forward on the issue but Iran did not allow the IAEA to begin with an initial step of visiting a key

site believed to have been involved in warhead-related high explosives testing.

In a February 20 IAEA document, the agency identifies the kinds of actions Iran needs to take to address suspected weapons-related activities and ensure that there is no ongoing warhead development work. The specific topics that the IAEA wants to address were laid out extensively in the agency's November 2011 report, including:

High-explosives experiments with nuclear weapons implications;

Neutron initiation and detonator development;

Work to fit a nuclear warhead on a missile, along with arming, firing and fusing mechanisms;

And Iranian procurement activities related to its alleged warhead work. Iran's Ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, distributed a version of the Feb. 20 document to members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that contains Tehran's suggested revisions to the IAEA's proposed work plan. The two sides are still negotiating the procedures for the agency's investigation.

While any country would have a legitimate need to protect information that is not relevant to the IAEA's investigation, Iran's counter-proposals to the Agency's proposed work plan would place undue limitations on the agency's work that will make it more difficult to determine whether Iran has carried out or still maintains a warhead development program.

Any access that Iran is willing to provide is a step in the right direction and should be encouraged, but the international community should make clear that token measures will only drag out the investigation rather than close the case. Three issues in particular stand out in the document that Soltanieh circulated.

The IAEA Should Avoid a "One and Done" Approach

Iran's responses to the agency show that it would like to prevent the IAEA from adequately following up on any information it obtains during the course of its investigation. Iran has suggested removing a clause stating, "Follow up actions that are required of Iran to facilitate the agency's conclusions regarding the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program will be identified as this process continues." Iran also inserted language specifying that, after steps are taken on each issue the agency wishes to address, that issue "will be considered concluded."

Iran's proposed approach risks that, even if the agency does not receive sufficient information from Iran during its initial investigation, Tehran will try to assert that particular aspects of the case are closed and refuse to answer any follow-up questions. Iran's suggestions would preclude any efforts to go back to topics that the agency previously investigated should new information arise. Such limitations do not match up with what Soltanieh describes in his communication to the NAM states as a "proactive and cooperative approach."

Strictly Sequencing the Issues Investigated Only Delays the Process

The Feb. 20 document says that steps to address the IAEA's questions should be completed in time for the agency's June 2012 meeting, "if possible." Such a quick timeframe would be welcome, particularly as tensions over the issue increase.

But Iran's opposition to potentially addressing some of the IAEA's questions in parallel unnecessarily delays the process. If Iran's nuclear program is purely peaceful, there is little reason to drag out the investigation in such a way and rejecting any parallel investigations does nothing to address legitimate concerns about protecting access to information unrelated to Iran's nuclear program.

More importantly, because many of the activities that the IAEA is investigating appear to be interlinked, it would be natural for the agency to seek to address multiple issues at once if information it obtains is relevant to them.

Verifying the Completeness of Iran's Declarations

Section C of the Feb. 20 document details steps the IAEA requests Iran take to ensure that it has a firm grasp of all the nuclear-related activities being carried out in the country. These steps are hardly new. Most of them either stem from provisions of Iran's safeguards agreement that Tehran unilaterally suspended (a requirement to provide early design information of nuclear facilities under so-called Code 3.1), or the agency's Additional Protocol (allowing access to undeclared sites).

Unlike the rest of the document--which is focused on Iran's alleged warhead work--the actions requested in Section C are directly related to ensuring that Iran's known nuclear activities are not being diverted for possible weapons use. Achieving agreement on these steps would provide some of the most vital assurances that Iran's nuclear activities will not be misused. However, the appearance of bracketed text suggests that this section may be subject to extensive negotiation. Iran has refused to provide many of these measures for several years.

Is Iran Ready to Come Clean?

The November 2011 IAEA report makes a convincing case that Iran was indeed involved in a comprehensive nuclear weapons program prior to 2004, some elements of which have likely continued. Iran's full and complete cooperation with the agency would likely bear this out, demonstrating that Iran's claims that it has pursued a peaceful nuclear program all along have been false.

Tehran does not appear to be ready to either make such an admission, or to be confronted with more conclusive evidence of such activities. Iran's leaders should understand that their failure to address the agency's concerns only undermines Tehran's claim that it is simply pursuing a peaceful nuclear program.

The international community should also make clear that, while additional transparency on Iran's part is positive, half measures will not alleviate suspicions. The agency has a job to do, and it should continue to pursue answers to questions raised over the course of its investigation.

At the same time, the leadership in Tehran is unlikely to decide that it can fully address the IAEA's concerns and verifiably end any ongoing warhead work absent a diplomatic process aimed at producing a comprehensive resolution to the nuclear impasse. In the course of that process, Iran must be convinced of two things: 1) that continuing down a path toward nuclear weapons will only result in increasing isolation and diminished security; and 2) that genuine and meaningful cooperation will be met by an easing of pressure, rather than an escalation. Iran should not be at risk of being punished for coming clean.

The talks between the P5+1 and Iran to be scheduled for later this spring provide the best chance to provide Iran with an "off-ramp" from its current course. This process should begin with confidence building steps addressing the most pressing proliferation risks, which would pave the way for additional measures to bring Iran further and further back from a nuclear-weapons breakout capability.

Answering the IAEA's questions will be a critical step en route to a broader, comprehensive arrangement that should also include full transparency over Iranian nuclear activities.

<http://www.armscontrol.org/issuebriefs/The-IAEA-Outlines-the-Path-for-Iran-to-Come-Clean-But-is-Tehran-Ready%20%20%20>

World Powers Agree to Resume Nuclear Talks

With Iran Nicholas Kulish and James Kanter, *New York Times*, March 6, 2012

For the first time in more than a year the global powers dealing with Iran's disputed nuclear program said Tuesday that they would resume face-to-face negotiations. "I have offered to resume talks with Iran on the nuclear issue," said Catherine Ashton, the European Union's foreign affairs chief, who represents the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany in dealings with Iran. "We hope that Iran will now enter into a sustained process of constructive dialogue which will deliver real progress."

The resumption of negotiations could relieve rising pressure from Israel to use military force against Iran. But the decision is not without risks. Direct talks could allow Iranian negotiators to exploit various nations' differences. Failure could offer a rationale for military strikes. Ms. Ashton's positive response to an Iranian offer made last month to resume the talks comes at a delicate moment in the years-long effort to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions. Her response came one day after President Obama urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to give diplomacy and economic sanctions a chance to work before taking military action.

The Israelis are increasingly skeptical that international pressure will lead Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment activities, which Israel and the West suspect are a cover for Iran to achieve the ability to make nuclear weapons. Iran has said the activities are purely peaceful.

At a news conference in Washington on Tuesday, Mr. Obama defended his record on Iran against Republican critics who have called him too lenient. On the contrary, Mr. Obama said, he had deeply isolated the Iranian authorities and had helped to press

them to resume negotiations.

Fears of a pre-emptive Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities have driven up oil prices and represent a threat to the already fragile state of a global economy still reeling from a sovereign debt crisis in Europe. At the same time, the Iranians have acutely felt the squeeze from sanctions aimed at pressing the government to freeze its uranium enrichment program.

The resumed talks represent a significant step forward because all six parties agreed to participate. But that may have been the easy part. One senior French official said that a desire to avoid a military confrontation could lead some parties to take a softer stance on Iran, looking for any small concession that could be interpreted as success.

"Tactically it's much better if you want to divide your enemies to be friendly and cozy with some of them," said Henning Riecke, an expert on European security at the German Council on Foreign Relations.

A senior French official described the Iranian letter proposing the resumption of talks as ambiguous, saying it referred to "various nuclear issues" rather than nuclear enrichment specifically. At the very least, it represents the first time that Iran's nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, explicitly mentioned the nuclear issue.

"We don't want to waste our time talking to the Iranians about the international cost of pistachios," the French official said. Time is of the essence for negotiators because many fear that any stalling by Iran will give the country more time to relocate enrichment centrifuges deep inside mountain bunkers that are difficult to bomb.

There was little optimism in the West that talks would lead to significant breakthroughs, much less to an end to Iran's nuclear ambitions. Guido Westerwelle, Germany's foreign minister, warned Iranian officials against using talks to stall. Iran only damages its own interests

through “tactical maneuvering and playing for time,” Mr. Westerwelle said.

But as fears of an Israeli strike have intensified in recent weeks, any progress was viewed as welcome. “Our approach to sanctions has been proven to be the right one — not targeted against population but meant to change the Iranian approach to the nuclear file,” a senior European Union official who spoke on the condition of anonymity told reporters in Brussels.

“We don’t want to have talks for talks,” the official said. “We want concrete results. They are very, very important talks, and we do not want them to fail.” Another senior French official said that the United States and France “have exactly the same approach.”

The British foreign secretary, William Hague, issued a statement reflecting that vision. “We all agree that the international community should demonstrate its commitment to a diplomatic solution by acknowledging Iran’s agreement to meet, by testing its desire to talk and by offering it the opportunity to respond to our legitimate concerns about its nuclear intentions,” Mr. Hague said.

In a formal response letter sent Monday to Mr. Jalili, Ms. Ashton said that “dialogue will have to focus on this key issue” of the nuclear program. Now that Mr. Jalili has pledged to this, she wrote, talks can resume “as soon as possible.”

But that will first require preliminary discussions between European and Iranian diplomats, possibly including a top aide to Mr. Jalili, that are expected to take place over the next two weeks to decide on details like a site for the talks, according to the European official. No formal negotiations would take place until after the New Year holiday in Iran this month, the official said. Talks could formally get under way in early April.

Hanging over the resumption of talks is deep concern about a rerun of previous negotiations in Istanbul that broke off in January 2011 when the Iranians resisted discussing the nuclear issue. In France, Bernard Valero, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, warned against a repeat of “the experience of the fruitless discussions in Istanbul” and underlined that Iran faced a “united” front from global powers.

Such a failure could increase the risk of military action, said Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council, an advocacy group in Washington. “If you have talks going, it will make it much harder for the Netanyahu government to take military action,” Mr. Parsi said. “It is critical that the talks end up becoming a real negotiation, a real process, and not just another exchange of ultimatums. If the two sides fail to establish a process rather than just another meeting, the risk of war will rise significantly.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/07/world/middleeast/iran-agrees-to-inspection-of-secret-military-site-report-says.html?_r=1&adxn1=1&ref=world&adxnlx=1331125304-+CGRDQqfKh3KDVMnc8MwvA

Iran: The Waiting Option

Anthony H. Cordesman, Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 6, 2012

We may have to use force against Iran. It may provoke clashes or a conflict in the Gulf, or it may refuse any realistic diplomatic solution to its growing capabilities to produce nuclear weapons. If there is anything we should have learned from 10 years of two wars, however, it is that the cautions senior officers like Admiral Mike Mullen and General Martin Dempsey have given about the risks of war are all too accurate. War is the perfect recipe for unpredictable and uncontrollable events, and the primary law of war is the law of unintended consequences.

We do not need another economic crisis triggered by the shock of a massive rise in oil prices or what in the worst case could be several weeks in which the Gulf could not export oil through the Strait of Hormuz. We do not need a slow battle of attrition in the Gulf, and we need to be truly careful about what Iran might do if Israel or the United States launches a preventive attack.

Iran's options are scarcely good for Iran. It would almost certainly end in escalating its way into even more trouble, but it could hurt us, our Arab allies, Israel, and the world economy a great deal in the process. In broad terms, Iran could choose to:

Withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and increase its long-term resolve to develop a nuclear deterrent program. Create an all-out nuclear weapons program with its surviving equipment and technology base, using Israel's strike and aggression as an excuse to openly pursue a nuclear program. Shift to genetically engineered biological weapons if such a program does not already exist.

Immediately retaliate on Israel using its ballistic missile: multiple launches of Shahab-3 missiles, including the possibility of chemical, biological, or radiological (CBR) warheads, against Tel Aviv, Israeli military and civilian centers, and Israeli suspected nuclear weapons sites. Accuse the United States of "green lighting" the Israeli strike and being the real cause of the attacks.

Launch political attacks on Arab regimes friendly to the United States, on the grounds they did nothing to prevent an attack on Israel's greatest enemy. Use allied or "proxy" groups such as Hezbollah or Hamas to attack Israel proper with suicide bombings, covert CBR attacks, and rocket attacks from southern Lebanon. Launch asymmetric attacks against U.S. interests and allies in the Arabian Gulf.

Target U.S. and Western shipping in the Gulf and possibly attempt to interrupt the

flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz. Attack U.S. forces, ships, or facilities in the Gulf or anywhere in the world as a way of showing that Iran could attack Israel's closest ally, the "great Satan."

Strike at Israeli or Jewish targets anywhere in the world using Iranian agents or anti-Israeli proxies. Try to use the United Nations and/or World Court to attack Israel for aggression and war crimes. Transfer high-tech air-to-surface and guided anti-armor weapons to Hamas, Hezbollah, or other extreme anti-Israeli groups, and/or provide them with more lethal rockets, unmanned combat air vehicles, and chemical weapons.

Seek to use its leverage with Iraq, Syria, and Hezbollah to create an actual "Shi'ite crescent" to create a more intense range of threats to Israel. Try to use the transfer of funds and arms, its Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and other covert means to influence the new regimes coming out of unrest in the Arab world to be far more aggressively anti-Israel.

At the same time, the risks and pressures that could lead to the use of force are growing. U.S. and Iranian competition over Iran's nuclear programs has spilled over into the entire Middle East, and the world, and is nearing the crisis point. Given the importance of the Gulf in global energy security, Iran's goals of becoming a regional power, and sociopolitical instability in the Middle East, military competition between the United States and Iran will either force some form of negotiation or continue to intensify to the point where some form of conflict becomes more and more likely.

If the latter occurs, there are no good options. The choice becomes preventive strikes of the kind where consequences are at best unpredictable, or containment and living with what could be a steadily growing regional nuclear arms race. As has just been discussed, a preventive attack could push Iran toward negotiations. But it could also push it into a major new

acceleration of its nuclear programs and the ongoing regional arms race and/or toward asymmetric warfare in the Gulf or against Israel.

Such a nuclear arms race might lead to the creation of some form of military containment that creates a successful mix of deterrence and defense on the part of all the nations involved, but it might equally lead to Iran and Israel targeting their respective populations at a potentially catastrophic level, which would inevitably involve the United States and the Arab states in an ongoing race to find suitable forms of defense, deterrence, and containment.

A failed preventive attack would almost certainly lead Iran to be far more aggressive. A partially successful Israeli attack might do little better. A truly successful preventive attack would have to be carried out by the United States. At least briefly, it would have to be a major air and missile war, and it would probably have to be followed by years of constant patrolling, threats to use force, and occasional re-strikes.

If not, even a relatively successful preventive strike could be a temporary solution at best. The current level of maturity in Iran's program nearly guarantees that Iran could rebuild its program without such a military overwatch and the willingness to use additional force. Moreover, without such follow-up, a strike on Iran's nuclear infrastructure might provide the Iranian regime with a justification to pursue nuclear weapons and drive the program deeper underground.

The best, lasting solution to Iran's nuclear and missile programs is some form of negotiated political solution—one driven by compromise and a “carrot and stick” approach. Such an approach would consist of offering Iran economic and other incentives to shelve its nuclear program, not simply penalizing it for continuing efforts at weaponization and refusing to

comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The risk is all too obvious, however, that the present situation will remain intractable. Over the last decade, negotiations between the United States and its allies, on the one side, and Iran, on the other, have collapsed time and again due to the refusal of both sides to accept the basic demands of the other.

Furthermore, the historical tension between the United States and Iran, as well as an Iranian foreign policy and military doctrine that are centered on neutralizing U.S. conventional power in the region, make it unlikely that Iran will give up the added deterrence, perceived increase in regional influence, and ability to intimidate that only a nuclear breakout capability or deployed nuclear force can provide.

Iran is all too likely to continue to develop its ballistic missile program as both a weapon of intimidation and a means to deliver a nuclear warhead should Iran successfully miniaturize a nuclear device. Given the range of Iran's ballistic missiles, U.S. installations in the Gulf, U.S. allies in the Middle East, and much of southeast Europe will then be in range of an Iranian nuclear missile.

Grim and uncertain as the prospect is, the United States must then consult with its Arab Gulf and European allies and seriously consider preventive attacks. It should seek to keep Israel out of the equation simply because of the tension any Israeli role would create in terms of Arab reaction and its impact on Islamic extremism and terrorism.

The alternative is containment, and this means that key U.S. allies, the flow of world energy exports, and U.S. and global economies would have to live under the growing shadow of an Israeli-Iranian nuclear arms race—moreover, an arms race where the forces involved ensure that the primary targets will be the other country's

population centers.

Accepting the risk of containment requires a belief in Iran's restraint, in mutual deterrence based on a new regional form of mutual assured destruction, and accepting the risk that other nations will join the race. It involves the risk of some miscalculation or accident triggering a disaster with massive humanitarian and economic costs.

Accepting that risk also means the United States must do everything possible to provide its Arab allies, Turkey, and Europe with missile defenses and to improve Israel's missile defenses. It means making good on the U.S. offer of extended deterrence to protect other states—potentially dragging the United States into at least the periphery of a regional nuclear arms race and potential nuclear conflict. It also means living with the near certainty of tying the continuing asymmetric arms race in the Gulf, and the constant risk of clashes or more serious conflicts, to the risk of a linkage between Iran's use of asymmetric warfare and future acquisition of nuclear forces.

This is why the best current option is a “waiting option” that relies on diplomacy, sanctions, and the offer of incentives. It too is filled with risks that will increase on both a short- and long-term basis. It is, however, currently the least bad of a range of bad options, and it does give time for sanctions to work, for dialogue to have an impact, and for the Iranian regime to change its position.

The prospect of such a change really altering Iran's actions and ambitions is all too uncertain—and many of the claims that the regime is fragile and easy to change seem a triumph of hope and ideology over common sense. Yet, successful negotiations, containment, and waiting do seem to be far better than talking about war as if it had predictable and safe results.

http://csis.org/publication/iran-waiting-option?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+CSIS-International-Security-Related-Publication+%28International+Security+-+Related+Publication%29

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North Korea and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

UN nuclear watchdog invited to visit North Korea BBC, March 20, 2012

North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator has confirmed UN nuclear inspectors have been invited to the country for the first time in three years. Ri Yong-ho said the aim of the move was to implement a deal with the US.

The North last month agreed to suspend nuclear and long-range missile tests in return for food aid. It also agreed to allow UN inspectors in, the US said. The invitation comes three months after Kim Jong-un came to power following the death of his father, Kim Jong-il.

But North Korea's pledge to co-operate with the international community was thrown into doubt last week, when Pyongyang announced plans to launch what it called a rocket-mounted satellite. The North said the launch - between 12 and 16 April - would mark the 100th birthday of its late Great Leader Kim Il-sung.

Any launch would be seen as violating UN Security Council resolutions, and the US has described the plans as “highly provocative”.

'Nothing decided'

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - the UN's nuclear watchdog - announced it had received the invitation from North Korea on Monday. It

said it would discuss the possible visit with Pyongyang and "other parties concerned". "Nothing has been decided yet," IAEA spokeswoman Gill Tudor was quoted as saying by Reuters news agency.

The move was confirmed later by Mr Ri. Speaking in Beijing, he said: "In order to implement the agreement, we've sent a letter of invitation to the IAEA to send inspectors to our country." It is unclear how much scope for inspections the IAEA would be given, the BBC's Bethany Bell in Vienna reports.

She adds that in the past North Korea has limited access to key sites. Pyongyang expelled IAEA inspectors 10 years ago after a deal with the US unravelled. In 2003, the secretive Communist state withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The inspectors were allowed back several years later - but were thrown out again in 2009.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17439840>

ROK: DPRK nuclear issues can be discussed bilaterally *Xinhua, March 13, 2012*

Nuclear issues of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) can be discussed on the sidelines of the upcoming Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, South Korean foreign minister said Monday. "North Korea (DPRK)'s nuclear issues are not on the agenda for the summit, but it can be discussed bilaterally because all member countries of the six-party talks except for the North will be attending the event," Kim Sung-hwan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, told a group of ethnic Korean journalists working overseas.

He was referring to the stalled talks on Pyongyang's nuclear program. The talks, last held in 2008, involve the two Koreas, China, Japan, the United States and Russia. The summit seeks to minimize the use of nuclear materials, so it can deliver a message to the North that it should give up

on materials such as highly enriched uranium and plutonium," the foreign minister added.

His remarks came two weeks ahead of the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit that will open here on March 26. The two-day Summit, which will bring together 58 heads of state and international organizations, is aimed at reducing and protecting radioactive materials and keeping terrorists at bay from nuclear materials and facilities.

South Korea has extended an invitation to the DPRK to attend the global forum on the condition that the country demonstrates its commitment to denuclearization, but no official response has been made.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-03/12/content_14816011.htm

UN to resume nuclear monitoring soon: N Korea Envoy *AFP, Mar 12, 2012*

North Korea's chief nuclear envoy says UN atomic inspectors will return soon to his country as part of a food aid deal with the United States, according to a news report Tuesday. "It (the return) will come at an early date," Vice Foreign Minister Ri Yong-Ho told journalists in New York, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported.

"Concrete measures are being constantly taken to fulfill the February agreement," Ri said in comments made Monday US time. He was wrapping up a rare visit to the United States to attend an academic forum. The North last month agreed to suspend nuclear and long-range missile tests and to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor a moratorium on uranium enrichment.

The enrichment programme, first disclosed in November 2010, could give the communist state a second way to make atomic weapons in addition to its longstanding plutonium programme.

North Korea, which has conducted two nuclear tests, kicked out IAEA inspectors in 2009 and is suspected of supplying equipment, materials and know-how in the past to Syria and Libya.

In return, the United States promised to ship 240,000 tonnes of food. US State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Monday there are plans to start the shipments "as soon as possible". The surprise February 29 deal raised hopes of eased tensions under the North's new ruler Kim Jong-Un, who succeeded his late father Kim Jong-Il.

Ri said Pyongyang was willing to move along if Washington wants to improve ties, stressing an end to "hostile" relations between the two countries would lead to resolving all pending issues. But he painted a gloomy picture for inter-Korean relations, accusing South Korea of backtracking on summit agreements reached in 2000 and 2007.

"We are willing to go hand in hand should the South respect the declarations and implement them. But the South does not seem to be willing to do so yet," he was quoted as saying. The North has taken a consistently hostile tone with the South during the leadership transition period, reviling its President Lee Myung-Bak as a "rat" and a "traitor" and vowing to "wipe out" his administration.

http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h_qdxfn_clQpAdr8y_NNONTFis3w?docId=CNG.f119d41299fffc8a8f86252540de18bb.1d1

Nuclear Envoys of North, South Korea in U.S. *Associated Press, March 8, 2012*

Nuclear envoys of the rival Koreas have a chance for informal talks at an academic conference that began in New York on Thursday as diplomacy on Pyongyang's atomic program gathers pace. North

Korea's representative to stalled six-nation disarmament talks, Ri Yong Ho, and his South Korean counterpart, Lim Sung-nam, are attending the two-day conference on Northeast Asian security, taking place behind closed doors at a hotel near the United Nations headquarters.

Former senior U.S. officials and Korea experts are also participating. It wasn't immediately clear if the Korean envoys would meet face-to-face. Washington wants to see improved inter-Korean relations before resuming the disarmament negotiations that the North withdrew from in 2009. The North has since conducted its second nuclear test and unveiled a uranium enrichment program, that could give it an alternative means for producing fissile material for a bomb.

North Korea announced last week it would freeze its uranium enrichment and nuclear and long-range missile tests, and allow in U.N. nuclear inspectors—key U.S. conditions for restarting the six-nation talks that would determine what assistance the impoverished North would get for abandoning its nuclear-weapons program. In Beijing on Thursday, the U.S. and North Korea concluded their latest talks, aimed at finalizing the 240,000 tons of food aid that the North will receive for its nuclear freeze.

U.S. envoy on North Korean human-rights issues, Robert King, said administrative issues on deliveries of the aid have been resolved, though details still remain to be settled. Despite the recent U.S.-North Korean accord—the most substantive sign of warming U.S.-North Korean ties in three years—the situation on the divided Korean peninsula remains tense.

The U.S. and South Korea staged war games in recent days, and in apparent response, North Korea held its own drills and called for a "sacred war" against the South. Two military attacks on South Korea in 2010 that killed 50 people nearly triggered a war. The State Department says none of its officials are planning to attend the New York conference. However, John

Kerry, the Democratic chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, is expected to speak at the conference Friday.

Among former U.S. officials due to attend are ex-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Jim Steinberg, who served as deputy secretary of state under the Obama administration. He is now dean of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, the conference organizer. North Korean officials periodically attend such informal "track 2" talks in the U.S. and elsewhere. It is a chance for policy makers and experts to exchange views. But this forum is being watched less for clues on North Korean policy under its new young leader Kim Jong Un than for any North-South meeting on the sidelines.

North Korea's positive outreach to Washington has surprised U.S. diplomats. Though the uptick in relations began in the middle of last year, many North Korea watchers expected the momentum to stall after longtime North Korean ruler Kim Jong Il's death in December left power in the hands of his untested son and a coterie of advisers. Instead, U.S. forensic teams are also expected to resume searches in North Korea next month for the remains of American military personnel missing from the 1950-53 Korean War.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204781804577269680109819436.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

North Korea nuclear reactor satellite picture show progress Associated Press, March 7, 2012

A newly released satellite image shows that North Korea has made progress in building a light-water reactor to expand its nuclear programme, a private non-proliferation group has said. The 3 February image of the nuclear complex at Yongbyon was taken nearly a month before

North Korea agreed to freeze major nuclear activities in return for US food aid.

The image, from a commercial satellite, was released by the Washington-based Institute of Science and International Security (Isis). Senior analyst Paul Brannan said a turbine building at the reactor that had still been under construction in a 20 September image now appeared to be externally complete.

Brannan said the reactor's dome remained on the ground next to the building, showing work was still needed. The reactor may need work inside that was not visible from the air, he said. North Korea says the reactor is for electricity generation and two US academics who visited the site in November 2010 and have studied subsequent satellite imagery say the reactor appears designed for that purpose. Other experts, citing the clandestine nature of the North's nuclear programme, fear the reactor could be designed to produce plutonium for bombs.

Isis says the 3 February image also shows a uranium enrichment plant that the North unveiled to the US academics Siegfried Hecker and Robert Carlin. The North says the plant would produce low-enriched uranium to fuel the reactor for power generation but there are worries that it could produce highly enriched uranium for weapons.

North Korea already has reprocessed spent fuel from an older reactor at Yongbyon to extract plutonium and conducted nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009. Last week's US-North Korea agreement is seen as a preliminary step towards negotiations on getting the North to abandon its nuclear weapons programme in return for more substantial aid.

Under the agreement, North Korea said it would freeze uranium enrichment at Yongbyon, allow in UN nuclear inspectors and suspend nuclear and long-range missile tests. Its statement did not explicitly

mention construction of the light-water reactor.

North Korea has said it wants to complete the reactor in 2012 but Hecker and Carlin wrote in January that despite the rapid construction of the reactor buildings, constructing and assembling the internal components was very difficult and would require at least two more years. Hecker said by email on Tuesday that he believed that

analysis still applied to the latest picture.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/07/north-korea-reactor-satellite-pictures>

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