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New Republic

How to Fix the Iran Nuclear Deal

Dennis Ross

November 11, 2013 -- The administration needs to reassure its allies that the West can reach a limited nuclear agreement without damaging its negotiating position or the sanctions architecture.

As Secretary of State John Kerry and other ministers arrived in Geneva this past weekend, expectations rose that a limited agreement might be reached on the Iranian nuclear program. It was not, but the next meeting is already set for November 20, and while debate is likely to become more intense as to whether a limited agreement makes sense at this time, there is value in taking a step back and asking what might be achieved at this point and what could make it acceptable.

To begin with, it is worth recalling that "freeze for freeze" was a proposal that Javier Solana, representing the European Union, sought to produce in talks with his Iranian counterparts in 2007. The idea was the Iranians would freeze the development of their nuclear program -- meaning the enrichment of uranium and production of centrifuges -- in return for the freezing of sanctions on Iran. At the time, Iran's nuclear program had not accumulated even one bomb's worth of material and its centrifuges numbered a tiny fraction of what they have operating and installed today -- and while the Bush Administration supported the proposal, it was not part of the EU three's direct negotiations with the Iranians.

The freeze for freeze idea was never accepted by the Iranians, even though it was envisioned to be an initial step in a process

to reach a wider agreement. Today, a variation of the freeze for freeze idea, also as the first step in a process, may be in the offing. To be sure, the realities are quite different than they were six years ago. Today, the United States is very much involved in the negotiations; Iran has accumulated as much as six bombs worth of enriched uranium, has produced close to 19,000 centrifuges, including more than a thousand of the next generation of IR-2 centrifuges which may be five times as efficient as their IR-1 predecessors; and is building a heavy water plant capable of yielding plutonium. And, of course, unlike six years ago, the Iranians are suffering from the weight of unprecedented economic sanctions.

The deal that was brooded in Geneva and may soon emerge might be described not as a freeze for a freeze but as a "cap for a cap" -- meaning that there would be a cap on the Iranian nuclear program and a cap on the sanctions that are being imposed on the Iranians. The Iranians would essentially suspend their enrichment of uranium at 20 percent, begin the process of converting it to fuel or diluting it to a less purified form, and not add to the number of centrifuges they have operating. While the Iranians operate and spin close to 10,000 centrifuges, a little more than half of what they have actually produced, they would not add to their overall number. But they would, however, be able to replace those centrifuges that break down, meaning that the Iranians would be permitted to continue to enrich uranium at the 3.5 to 5 percent level. So enrichment would be capped only at the level that uranium is purified and not by the amount that could still be accumulated. There is one other important part of the Iranian nuclear program that is still at issue right now in the emerging deal: The heavy water plant the Iranians are building at Arak. The

issue seems to be whether all work on it will be suspended for the six months of the "first step" deal. Heavy water would enable the Iranians to have an additional pathway to producing a nuclear bomb -- either through plutonium or through enriching uranium to weapons grade. Certainly, if the work on the Arak reactor is not suspended, the Iranians could continue down the path that would enable them to finish the plant by the end of 2014; once on-line, the plant could not be attacked without releasing Chernobyl-type radiation into the surrounding area and atmosphere. Indeed, the reason the Israelis attacked the Osirak reactor in Iraq in 1981 and the Syrian reactor at al-Khybar in 2006 before they became operational was to avoid the possibility of radiation releases. In short, the emerging deal is one that would cap but not limit all of the Iranian nuclear program. In return for that, the sanctions regime would not be lifted, but a part of it would be relaxed. While the sanctions that restrict the Iranian ability to sell their oil and conduct normal financial transactions would not be touched, the Iranians would be allowed to access perhaps as much as \$15 billion of its hard currency in foreign banks, trade in gold and precious metals, and apparently be able to import limited materials for some of its domestic industries.

One other point about the emerging deal: it is designed to be the first step in advance of reaching what might be described as an agreed definition of the civil nuclear power that Iran would be permitted to have. For the United States, the key is to ensure that the Iranian nuclear program would not leave Iran in a position in which it would have a break-out capability that would permit it to move quickly or at a time of its choosing to produce nuclear weapons. For the Iranians, they would be able

to enrich, and the restrictions on their program would not single them out or undo their basic achievements. In theory, it ought to be possible to bridge the gaps if the Iranians are actually willing to have only a demonstrably peaceful nuclear capability.

At this point, it appears that the Obama Administration and its partners in the negotiations believe that President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif are willing to curtail the Iranian nuclear program but cannot, at this stage, go as far as we need them to go in extensively rolling back their nuclear infrastructure -- and we cannot lift the crippling sanctions on them unless they do so. On the one hand, we need time to negotiate a more far-reaching agreement -- or at least test whether it is possible; on the other, we don't want them to continue to advance their nuclear program in the intervening period. The so-called first step agreement is, thus, designed to buy us time by capping or limiting the Iranian nuclear infrastructure and development; in return for accepting such a cap, the Iranians would get a limited relaxation of sanctions. The Administration believes that we retain our leverage because the core sanctions regime will remain in place and the Iranian economy cannot recover without ending that regime. And here is the rub with the Israelis and others in the Middle East: They fear that the limited relaxation of sanctions will quickly erode the sanctions regime. Notwithstanding our claims that the sanctions architecture will remain in place, there is a widespread belief in the Israeli security establishment that many governments and their private sectors will see an opening and will be convinced that they can and will be able to start doing business again. As they start approaching the Iranians, the Iranians will see that the sanctions are going to

fray and they simply need to hang tough and concede no more. From the Israeli standpoint, the first step will thus be the last one and the Iranian program, even if capped, will be at such a high threshold that Iran will have a break-out capability. They see no reason to give up our leverage now and let the Iranians off the hook.

For its part, the Administration believes it is not doing so. It sees the Iranian economic needs remaining great, the limited relaxation can buy Rouhani more political space and the authority to negotiate more -- something he must do if Iran is to recover economically at a time when the expectations are again growing among the Iranian public. To dash those expectations won't just weaken Rouhani but ultimately threaten the regime itself -- or so the Administration seems to think. As such, it sees the limited agreement as weakening neither our negotiating position nor the sanctions architecture. Is it possible to bridge this divide in a way that also serves the aim of rolling the Iranian nuclear program back?

I believe so. First, we must be clear that the easing of sanctions will, in fact, be limited and will not affect our enforcement of existing sanctions and those who try to evade them. We will continue to vigorously pursue all loopholes and efforts to work around sanctions. This also means that we must continue to emphasize the reputational costs to any businesses that seek to resume commerce directly or indirectly with Iran.

Second, while the Administration has asked Congress to hold back on adopting new sanctions for now so as not to undercut Rouhani, I think we must also recognize the importance of signaling the Iranians and everyone else that there will be an intensification of sanctions if the diplomacy fails to produce an end-game agreement. Rouhani is president precisely because

of the high cost of sanctions. There should be no illusions about what happens if diplomacy fails to significantly roll back the Iranian nuclear program. We don't do Rouhani any favors if the appearance takes hold that there will be no more sanctions -- even if there are no more agreements. From that standpoint, why not accept an approach in which the Congress adopts the next wave of sanctions but agree that they will not be implemented until the end of the six month period of the first step agreement or a clear break down of diplomacy. Third, at least with our friends who are concerned about what they perceive as our eagerness for any deal with the Iranians -- and this perception is held even more deeply among our Arab friends than the Israelis -- we should be clearer about what we mean by rolling-back the Iranian nuclear program. I understand not wanting to negotiate among ourselves and not giving away bottom lines, but one reason the first step deal seems so alarming to the Israelis and others is they don't know what we mean by a bad deal at the end of the day. They seem to think that we are so eager to avoid the use of force, given public opinion, that we will accept anything. We need to let others know, at least privately, that prevention remains the objective and has always meant that if diplomacy fails, force is the likely result. In addition, we should also make clear that we have a number of absolute requirements for any nuclear end-state agreement: Iran must dramatically reduce the number of centrifuges, ship out essentially all of its enriched uranium and, at a minimum, convert its heavy water plant into a light water reactor. In short, we must convey more clearly that we know where we are going on the nuclear issue with Iran. The benefit of leveling in this fashion is that it not only puts the Iranians on notice but also reassures our friends in the area.

That may be especially important at a time when the Administration needs to send a message other than that it is lessening our interests and stakes in the region and has bigger fish to fry elsewhere in the world.

Dennis Ross is counselor at The Washington Institute.

Article 2.

NYT

What About US?

Thomas L. Friedman

November 13, 2013 -- But there is something else that goes without saying, but still needs to be said loudly: We, America, are not just hired lawyers negotiating a deal for Israel and the Sunni Gulf Arabs, which they alone get the final say on. We, America, have our own interests in not only seeing Iran's nuclear weapons capability curtailed, but in ending the 34-year-old Iran-U.S. cold war, which has harmed our interests and those of our Israeli and Arab friends.

Hence, we must not be reluctant about articulating and asserting our interests in the face of Israeli and Arab efforts to block a deal that we think would be good for us and them.

America's interests today lie in an airtight interim nuclear deal with Iran that also opens the way for addressing a whole set of other issues between Washington and Tehran.

Some of our allies don't share those "other" interests and believe the only acceptable outcome is bombing Iran's nuclear facilities and keeping Iran an isolated, weak, pariah state. They don't trust this Iranian regime — and not without reason. I

don't begrudge their skepticism. Without pressure from Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and the global sanctions on Iran they helped to spur, Iran would not be offering to scale back its nuclear program today.

But that pressure was never meant to be an end itself. It was meant to bring Iran in from the cold, provided it verifiably relinquished the ability to breakout with a nuclear weapon.

"Just because regional actors see diplomacy with Iran as a zero-sum game — vanquish or be vanquished — doesn't mean America should," said Karim Sadjadpour, the expert on Iran at the Carnegie Endowment.

Why? Let's start with the fact that Iran has sizable influence over several of America's most critical national security concerns, including Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, terrorism, energy security, and nuclear proliferation. Whereas tension with Iran has served to exacerbate these issues, détente with Tehran could help ameliorate them. Iran played a vital role in helping us to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001 and can help us get out without the Taliban completely taking over again.

"Iran has at least as much at stake in a stable Iraq, and a stable Afghanistan, as we do — and as an immediate neighbor has a far greater ability to influence them, for good or ill," said Nader Mousavizadeh, the Iranian-American co-founder of Macro Advisory Partners and a former top aide to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

There is a struggle in Tehran today between those who want Iran to behave as a nation, looking out for its interests, and those who want it to continue behaving as a permanent revolution in a permanent struggle with America and its allies. What's at stake in the Geneva nuclear negotiations — in part —

“is which Iranian foreign policy prevails,” argued Mousavizadeh. A mutually beneficial deal there could open the way for cooperation on other fronts. Moreover, there is nothing that threatens the future of the Middle East today more than the sectarian rift between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. This rift is being used by President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Hezbollah and some Arab leaders to distract their people from fundamental questions of economic growth, unemployment, corruption and political legitimacy. It is also being used to keep Iran isolated and unable to fully exploit its rich oil and gas reserves, which could challenge some Arab producers. But our interest is in quelling these sectarian passions, not taking one side.

The Iran-U.S. cold war has prevented us from acting productively on all these interests. It is easy to say we should just walk away from talks if we don’t get what we want, but isolating Iran won’t be as easy as it once was. China, Russia, India and Japan have different interests than us vis-à-vis Iran. The only man who could unite them all behind this tough sanctions regime was Iran’s despicable previous president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The new president, Hassan Rouhani, is much more deft. “Our sanctions leverage may have peaked,” said Sadjadpour. “Countries like China won’t indefinitely forsake their own commercial and strategic interests vis-à-vis Iran simply to please the U.S. Congress.” All this is why the deal the Obama team is trying to forge now that begins to defuse Iran’s nuclear capabilities, and tests whether more is possible, is fundamentally in the U.S. interest. “The prize of détente with Iran is critical to allowing the U.S. a sensibly balanced future foreign policy that aligns interests with commitments, and allows us to rebuild at home at the

same time,” said Mousavizadeh. There are those in the Middle East who prefer “a war without end for the same tribal, sectarian, backward-looking reasons that are stunting their own domestic development as open, integrated, pluralist societies,” he added. “They can have it. But it can’t be our war. It’s not who we are — at home or abroad.”

Article 3.

New York Review of Books

Iran’s Plutonium Game

Jeremy Bernstein

November 11, 2013 -- There have been conflicting reports about why the much-watched negotiations in Geneva failed to produce an interim agreement about Iran’s nuclear program. On Monday, senior US officials said that the Iranian delegation was not ready to sign on to a draft agreement, which called for a six-month freeze in Iran’s uranium enrichment activity to allow time to produce a comprehensive accord. But over the weekend, French officials gave another reason: the French government is concerned about the continuing construction of a heavy-water nuclear reactor at Arak.

In fact, to anyone who has been following the Iranian nuclear program, it was almost a forgone conclusion that negotiations with Iran would hit a road block when it came to the so-called IR-40 reactor located in Arak. The “40” here refers to the projected power output of forty megawatts of thermal power. To convert this into electric power involves a cumbersome process. The thermal power, which is generated in the form of

energetic fission fragments in the reactor, must be converted into steam to run inefficient steam turbines. Thus much of the original reactor generated energy is dissipated; something like only a third of this power could be converted into electricity. And since one large building alone can use several megawatts of power, it is hard to imagine generating much electricity from a forty-megawatt reactor. Whatever the IR-40's intended use, it is not to produce electric power. A reactor designed for that purpose—such as the one at Bushehr—produces billions of watts. Moreover, there is nothing about the reactor's declared purpose that would require it to be a heavy water reactor. According to the Iranian government, the IR-40 reactor is supposed to make medical isotopes. But a light water reactor would have served the stated purpose just as well—and generate the same amount of power.

What makes the Arak reactor suspicious, then, is the design. To understand this we need to understand how a heavy water reactor works. The isotope of uranium that is fissioned in a nuclear reactor is uranium-235. The fission happens when a neutron strikes a uranium-235 nucleus causing it to split and also producing additional neutrons. These neutrons in turn can cause other uranium 235 nuclei to split and it is this chain reaction that produces the power. One of the oddities of quantum mechanics is that the probability of fission increases when the neutrons are slowed down. Unlike breaking a window with a baseball, it is not the case that speeding up the ball makes it more likely to break the window. In quantum mechanics, it is rather as if the baseball gets bigger when it travels at a slower speed, causing a larger collision with the window. Hence in order to cause fission, the neutrons, which are initially moving very rapidly, must be “moderated” in their

speed and this is done by having them collide with the nuclei of some “moderator” such as ordinary water. There is now a balancing act. Moderators can swallow neutrons taking them out of the chain. Ordinary water does that. To compensate one must enhance the percentage of uranium 235 in the fuel. In a so-called light water reactor, which uses ordinary water, the uranium 235 must be enhanced to produce enriched uranium containing about four percent uranium 235. So a supply of enriched uranium is necessary to power a light water reactor. This is not the case with a heavy water reactor. A heavy water nucleus consists of one proton and one neutron plus oxygen as opposed to light water where the neutron is missing; this means there is less of a chance of neutron swallowing. So one can use natural uranium, which has less than one percent of uranium 235. But this method also produces plutonium as a byproduct—something that is useful for making a bomb. To make plutonium you need to maximize the percentage of uranium 238. The reason is the chain of reactions that produce plutonium: uranium 238 absorbs a neutron and becomes uranium 239; this is unstable and decays into neptunium 239; this is also unstable and decays into plutonium 239. For a reactor of the type being built at Arak, a rough rule is that in the course of a day, for each megawatt of thermal power generated one gram of plutonium is produced. Thus the IR-40 could produce forty grams of plutonium per day. If it ran constantly for a year, it could generate $365 \times 40 = 14,600$ grams = 14.6 kilograms of plutonium. Realistically it might operate about 75 or 80 percent of the time, so 11 to 12 kilograms is probably a better estimate. This amount of plutonium is enough for one or two bombs. Once Iran has reprocessed it, the plutonium could replace high-enriched

uranium as the explosive, as it did in the plutonium bomb dropped on Nagasaki. The Iranian government has announced that the Arak reactor will go on line in 2014. What still has to be verified is that there are no facilities at this site for reprocessing any spent fuel elements to extract plutonium. On August 28 of this year, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) produced its latest report on Iran. Of the Arak reactor it said:

Contrary to Iran's obligations under the modified Code 3.1 of the General Part of the Subsidiary Arrangements to its Safeguards Agreement and although the Agency has made repeated requests, Iran has not provided the Agency with an updated DIQ [Design Information Questionnaire] for the IR-40 Reactor since 2006. At that time, the IR-40 Reactor was in a very early stage of construction. As the commencement of the IR-40 Reactor's operation approaches, the lack of up to date design information is having an increasingly adverse impact on the Agency's ability to verify the design of the facility and to implement an effective safeguards approach. The Agency requires this information as early as possible in order, inter alia, to ensure that all possible diversion paths are identified, and appropriate safeguards measures and customized safeguards equipment are put in place. On Monday, the IAEA and Iran issued a joint statement saying that they had reached a new "framework of cooperation" to gain information on Iran's nuclear program. But all the agreement says is that Iran will provide "information on all new research reactors." (The second clause in the annex of the agreement says that Iran will provide to the IAEA "mutually agreed relevant information and managed access to the Heavy Water Production Plant." This is a reference to a plant, also near Arak, where heavy

water is produced, one imagines, for the IR-40 and any successors.) What is left unspecified is the time frame in which this information is going to be supplied. It is hard to imagine any legitimate reason for not converting the Arak reactor into a light water reactor. The Iranians have enough enriched uranium fuel to power such a reactor, and surely it would be worth the while of the countries that are now negotiating with Iran to offer to help in this endeavor. If the IR-40 became a light water reactor, this would end all the suspicions about it. By going ahead with a heavy water reactor, Iran seems to be saying it is determined to have the capacity to produce plutonium—and leave open a path to making a bomb. But it is very difficult to read the real intentions of the Iranians. Perhaps the fact that real negotiations have begun offers some hope that a tragedy can be avoided.

Jeremy Bernstein's books include Plutonium: A History of the World's Most Dangerous Element and Nuclear Weapons: What You Need to Know. His latest book is A Palette of Particles. (November 2013).

[Article 4.](#)

[Stratfor](#)

The Middle East After a U.S.-Iran Deal

[George Friedman](#)

November 12, 2013 -- The talks between Iran and the Western powers have ended but have not failed. They will reconvene next week. That in itself is a dramatic change from the past,

when such talks invariably began in failure. In my book *The Next Decade*, I argued that the United States and Iran would move toward strategic alignment, and I think that is what we are seeing take shape. Of course, there is no guarantee that the talks will yield a settlement or that they will evolve into anything more meaningful. But the mere possibility requires us to consider three questions: Why is this happening now, what would a settlement look like, and how will it affect the region if it happens?

Precedents

It is important to recognize that despite all of the other actors on the stage, this negotiation is between the United States and Iran. It is also important to understand that while this phase of the discussion is entirely focused on Iran's nuclear development and sanctions, an eventual settlement would address U.S. and Iranian relations and how those relations affect the region. If the nuclear issue were resolved and the sanctions removed, then matters such as controlling Sunni extremists, investment in Iran and maintaining the regional balance of power would all be on the table. In solving these two outstanding problems, the prospect of a new U.S.-Iranian relationship would have to be taken seriously.

But first, there are great obstacles to overcome. One is ideology. Iran regards the United States as the Great Satan. The United States regards Iran as part of the Axis of Evil. For the Iranians, memories of a U.S.-sponsored coup in 1953 and Washington's support for the Shah are vivid. Americans above the age of 35 cannot forget the Iranian hostage crisis, when Iranians seized some 50 U.S. Embassy employees. Iran believes the United States has violated its sovereignty; the United States believes Iran has violated basic norms of

international law. Each views the other as barbaric. Add to this that the ideology of radical Islamism regards the United States as corrupt and evil, and the ideology of the United States sees Iran as brutal and repressive, and it would seem that resolution is impossible.

From the American side, there is precedent for reconciling national differences: China. When the United States reached out to China in the 1970s, Beijing was supplying weapons to the North Vietnamese, who used them against American troops. China's rhetoric about U.S. imperialism, replete with "running dogs," portrayed the United States as monstrous. The United States saw China, a nuclear power, as a greater threat for nuclear war than the Soviet Union, since Mao had openly stated -- and seemed to mean it -- that communists ought to welcome nuclear war rather than fear it. Given the extremism and brutality of the Cultural Revolution, the ideological bar seemed insurmountable.

But the strategic interests of both countries superseded ideology. They did not recognize each other, but they did need each other. The relative power of the Soviet Union had risen. There had been heavy fighting between China and the Soviet Union along the Ussuri River in 1969, and Soviet troops were heavily deployed along China's border. The United States had begun to redeploy troops from Europe to Southeast Asia when it became clear it was losing the Vietnam War.

Each side was concerned that if the Soviet Union chose to attack China or NATO separately, it could defeat them.

However, if China and the United States collaborated, no Soviet attack would be possible, lest Moscow start a two-front war it couldn't win. It was not necessary to sign a treaty of military alliance or even mention this possibility. Simply

meeting, talking and establishing diplomatic relations with China would force the Soviet Union to consider the possibility that Washington and Beijing had a tacit understanding -- or that even without an understanding, an attack on one of them would trigger a response by the other. After all, if NATO or China were defeated, the Soviets would be able to overpower the other at its discretion. Therefore, by moving the relationship from total hostility to minimal accommodation, the strategic balance changed.

In looking at Iran, the most important thing to note is the difference between its rhetoric and its actions. If you listened to Iranian government officials in the past, you would think they were preparing for the global apocalypse. In truth, Iranian foreign policy has been extremely measured. Its one major war, which it fought against Iraq in the 1980s, was not initiated by Iran. It has supported third parties such as Hezbollah and Syria, sending supplies and advisers, but it has been extremely cautious in the use of its own overt power. In the early days of the Islamic republic, whenever Tehran was confronted with American interests, it would pull closer to the Soviet Union, an atheistic country making war in neighboring Afghanistan. It needed a counterweight to the United States and put ideology aside, even in its earliest, most radical days.

New Strategic Interests

Ideology is not trivial, but ultimately it is not the arbiter of foreign relations. Like all countries, the United States and Iran have strategic issues that influence their actions. Iran attempted to create an arc of influence from western Afghanistan to Beirut, the key to which was preserving and dominating the Syrian regime. The Iranians failed in Syria, where the regime exists but no longer governs much of the

country. The blowback from this failure has been an upsurge in Sunni militant activity against the Shiite-dominated regime. But the arc of influence was interrupted elsewhere, particularly Iraq, which has proved to be the major national security challenge facing Iran. Coupled with the failures in Syria, the degradation of Iraq has put Iran on the defensive when, just one year earlier, it was poised to change the balance of power in its favor.

At the same time, Iran found that its nuclear program had prompted a seriously detrimental sanctions regime. Stratfor has long argued that the Iranian nuclear program was primarily a bargaining chip to be traded for guarantees on its security and recognition of its regional power. It was meant to appear threatening, not to be threatening. This is why, for years, Iran was "only months" away from a weapon. The problem was that despite its growing power, Iran could no longer withstand the economic repercussions of the sanctions regime. In light of Syria and Iraq, the nuclear program was a serious miscalculation that produced an economic crisis. The failures in foreign policy and the subsequent economic crisis discredited the policies of former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, changed the thinking of the supreme leader and ultimately led to the electoral victory of President Hassan Rouhani. The ideology may not have changed, but the strategic reality had. Rouhani for years had been worried about the stability of the regime and was thus critical of Ahmadinejad's policies. He knew that Iran had to redefine its foreign policy. The United States has also been changing its strategy. During the 2000s, it tried to deal with Sunni radicals through the direct use of force in Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States could not continue to commit its main force in the Islamic

world when that very commitment gave other nations, such as Russia, the opportunity to maneuver without concern for U.S. military force. The United States did have a problem with al Qaeda, but it needed a new strategy for dealing with it. Syria provided a model. The United States declined to intervene unilaterally against the al Assad regime because it did not want to empower a radical Sunni government. It preferred to allow Syria's factions to counterbalance each other such that neither side was in control.

This balance-of-power approach was the alternative to direct military commitment. The United States was not the only country concerned about Sunni radicalism. Iran, a Shiite power ultimately hostile to Sunnis, was equally concerned about jihadists. Saudi Arabia, Iran's regional rival, at times opposed Islamist radicals (in Saudi Arabia) and supported them elsewhere (in Syria or Iraq). The American relationship with Saudi Arabia, resting heavily on oil, had changed. The United States had plenty of oil now and the Saudis' complex strategies simply no longer matched American interests. On the broadest level, a stronger Iran, aligned with the United States, would counter Sunni ambitions. It would not address the question of North Africa or other smaller issues, but it would force Saudi Arabia to reshape its policies.

The Arab Spring also was a consideration. A mainstay of Washington's Iran policy was that at some point there would be an uprising that would overthrow the regime. The 2009 uprising, never really a threat to the regime, was seen as a rehearsal. If there was likely to be an uprising, there was no need to deal with Iran. Then the Arab Spring occurred. Many in the Obama administration misread the Arab Spring, expecting it to yield more liberal regimes. That didn't happen.

Egypt has not evolved, Syria has devolved into civil war, Bahrain has seen Saudi Arabia repress its uprising, and Libya has found itself on the brink of chaos. Not a single liberal democratic regime emerged. It became clear that there would be no uprising in Iran, and even if there were, the results would not likely benefit the United States.

A strategy of encouraging uprisings no longer worked. A strategy of large-scale intervention was unsustainable. The idea of attacking Iran was unpalatable. Even if the administration agreed with Israel and thought that the nuclear program was intended to produce a nuclear weapon, it was not clear that the program could be destroyed from the air.

Therefore, in the particular case of Iran's nuclear program, the United States could only employ sanctions. On the broader issue of managing American interests in the Middle East, the United States had to find more options. It could not rely entirely on Saudi Arabia, which has dramatically different regional interests. It could not rely entirely on Israel, which by itself could not solve the Iranian problem militarily. These realities forced the United States to recalibrate its relationship with Iran at a time when Iran had to recalibrate its relationship with the United States.

All Things Possible

The first U.S.-Iranian discussions would obviously be on the immediate issue -- the nuclear program and sanctions. There are many technical issues involved there, the most important of which is that both sides must show that they don't need a settlement. No one negotiating anything will simply accept the first offer, not when they expect the negotiations to move on to more serious issues. Walking away from the table for 10 days gives both sides some credibility.

The real negotiations will come after the nuclear and sanctions issues are addressed. They will pertain to U.S.-Iranian relations more broadly. Each side will use the other to its advantage. The Iranians will use the United States to repair its economy, and the Americans will use the Iranians to create a balance of power with Sunni states. This will create indirect benefits for both sides. Iran's financial woes will be an opportunity for American companies to invest. The Americans' need for a balance of power will give Iran weight against its own enemies, even after the collapse of its strategy.

The region will of course look different but not dramatically so. The balance of power idea does not mean a rupture with Saudi Arabia or Israel. The balance of power only works if the United States maintains strong relationships on all sides. The Saudis and Israelis will not like American rebalancing. Their choices in the matter are limited, but they can take comfort from the fact that a strictly pro-Iranian policy is impossible for the United States. The American strategy with China in the 1970s was to try to become the power that balanced the Soviet Union and China. After meeting with the Chinese, Henry Kissinger went to Moscow. Thus, in terms of bilateral relationships, U.S.-Saudi and U.S.-Israeli relations can stay the same. But it now creates another relationship and option for the United States. In the end, Iran is still a secondary power and the United States is the primary power. Iran will take advantage of the relationship, and the United States will manage it.

It is hard to imagine this evolution, considering what the United States and Iran have said about each other for the past 34 years. But relations among nations are not about sentiment; they are about interest. If Roosevelt could ally with Stalin, and

Nixon with Mao, then it is clear that all things are possible in U.S. foreign policy. For their part, the Persians have endured for millennia, espousing many ideologies but doing what was necessary to survive and prosper. All of this may well fall apart, but there is a compelling logic to believe that it will not, and it will not be as modest a negotiation as it appears now.

George Friedman is chairman of Stratfor.

Article 5.

Foreign Policy

Why the Middle East's identity conflicts go way beyond the Sunni-Shiite divide

Marc Lynch

November 13, 2013 -- A group of Syrian-Americans arrived at an academic conference at Lehigh University last week in Bashar al-Assad T-shirts and draped in Syrian flags adorned with Assad's face. They repeatedly heckled and interrupted speakers, and one told an opposition figure that he deserved a bullet in the head. When a speaker showed a slide picturing dead Syrian children, they burst into loud applause. When another speaker cynically predicted that Bashar would win a 2014 presidential vote, they cheered. In the final session, they aggressively interrupted and denounced a Lebanese journalist, with one ultimately throwing his shoe at the stage. The panel degenerated into a screaming match, until police arrived to clear the room. This spectacle might seem notable in that it

unfolded at an American university, but otherwise it would pass for an alarmingly normal day at the office in today's toxically polarized Middle East. Such intense mutual hostility, irreconcilable narratives, and public denunciations are typical of any number of highly polarized political arenas across the region. A similar scene between supporters and opponents of Egypt's military coup is all too easily imagined -- just add bullets. That's why the disproportionate focus on sectarian conflict as the defining feature of the emerging Middle East seems dangerously misplaced. Sunni-Shiite tensions are only one manifestation of how a number of deeper trends have come together in recent years to give frightening new power to identity politics writ large. The explosion of Sunni-Shiite conflict in recent years has very little to do with intrinsic religious differences or with 1,400 years of Islamic history. It should instead be understood as an entirely typical example of identity politics, one in which sectarian differences happen to be the most easily available to politicians hoping to exploit them for cynical purposes. It looks much the same as the ethnic and religious polarization that ripped apart the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The sectarian polarization in Bahrain or Syria has followed very similar patterns to the Islamist-secularist polarization in Egypt and Tunisia. Responding to these sectarian tensions by embracing authoritarian states, focusing on religious authorities or exegesis, or promoting cross-sectarian reconciliation will miss the point. Today's sectarianism is political to the core -- even if it increasingly seems at risk of racing beyond the control of its cynical enablers. Interpreting Sunni-Shiite conflict as just another manifestation of a millennia-old conflict repeats a broadly essentialist position which tends to be the first resort

every time ethnic or sectarian violence breaks out. Such approaches tend to focus on intrinsic, deeply rooted, and irreconcilable cultural differences between groups which can always pose a risk of escalation to violence (think Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*, which supposedly convinced Bill Clinton of the inevitability of Yugoslav ethnic slaughters). Evidence of decades of co-existence or intermarriage rarely impresses proponents of an essentialist approach. These differences might be latent for long periods of time, but given the opportunity -- electoral mobilization, state failure, sudden explosions of local violence -- people will tend to fall back on these deep identities. Such arguments tend to lead towards solutions involving the heavy hand of authoritarian states to suppress these supposedly inevitable violent tendencies, or toward partition into ethnic enclaves if state collapse has gone too far. That's just what authoritarian regimes would like us to believe. But much more frequently, ethnic or sectarian violence is driven by either regimes themselves or by elites who cynically exploit identity for their political aims. These leaders might or might not truly believe in these differences, but they are perfectly happy to take advantage of them when it suits their goals. Often, it is the authoritarian regimes themselves that are most responsible for stoking and shaping the identity divisions. The Saudi regime, most obviously, systematically uses sectarianism in order to intimidate and control its own Shiite citizens at home and to combat Iranian influence regionally. Saudi leaders might or might not genuinely hate Shiites, but they know that sectarian conflict is a useful strategy. In Egypt, the Mubarak regime tolerated significant levels of intimidation and attacks on Coptic Christian citizens, while Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government

actively stokes the demonization of Islamists to generate support for the new military regime. In Iraq, a stronger state under the control of Nouri al-Maliki is too easily used to protect Shiite privilege and repress Sunni opponents. Strong states are often the problem, not the solution. The strategic mobilization of identity politics typically involves some common moves. Electoral systems can be designed to maximize sectarian or ethnic competition, force voters into identity-defined voting blocs, and hinder cross-identity coalition formation. Discrimination in state institutions, military recruitment, and patronage can entrench hostility along particular lines and not others. For sectarian entrepreneurs from Slobodan Milosevic to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to triumph, intermarried families must be ripped apart, the possibility of co-existence undermined, and moderate counterparts knocked down in favor of more frightening extremists. Televised slaughter, rumors of sectarian or ethnic targeting, and the wide circulation of hostile rhetoric are a benefit, not an unfortunate side product of their efforts. Often, the real purpose of such strategic identity mobilization is intra-group competition, as ambitious leaders see sectarian or ethnic extremism as a useful way to attack their political rivals as weak, naïve, or duplicitous. Attacking Shiites is often a product of competition among different Sunni factions as much as it is driven by larger religious struggles. More venom is often directed towards moderates within one's own group than towards the putative enemy; as the dwindling cohort of true Egyptian liberals can attest, anyone who might try to seek the middle ground and critique both sides will be viciously shouted down. That, in turn, pushes more and more people to either silently accept or even to vocally repeat the mythologies

supporting this mobilized identity, no matter how absurd. Uncertainty, fear, economic hardship, and violence often create the toxic conditions for identity mobilization to gain traction. It's endlessly useful to demagogues and dictators to have some minority to blame for problems, to deflect outrage from their own failures and to bind an otherwise fractious community together against a common enemy. And that's where the proliferation and entrenchment of sectarian rhetoric over the previous decade have been especially destructive. The sectarian incitement which pollutes official and private media outlets alike, and which floods through politicized mosques and religious networks, provides the master frame which increasingly makes sense to people who a decade ago would have angrily waved such rhetoric away. And after a decade of civil war in Iraq and propaganda about an Iranian-led "Shiite Crescent" threatening the Sunni Muslim world, those narratives are now deeply entrenched and hard to change. Language and terms that once sounded exotic and strange now find wide public circulation and resonance. The Arab uprisings introduced such uncertainty and fear not only within countries such as Syria, but across the entire region. So do recent memories of very real slaughters, displacements, and outrages -- such as those that have scarred Iraq. Syria provided endless opportunity for local entrepreneurs to use sectarian language and imagery to build support and raise money for the insurgency. Increasingly polarized, insular media clusters within which only information supportive of sectarian narratives tends to circulate, reinforces and intensifies identity conflicts with every YouTube video. And those atrocities have been experienced vicariously across the region, with Egyptian or Tunisian Sunnis identifying with the suffering of their

Syrian or Iraqi counterparts even if they did not themselves have much direct contact with Shiites.

Highlighting the role of cynical politicians in the mobilization of identity conflict points to very different policy advice, of course. Fighting sectarianism thus requires changing the incentives and the opportunities for such political mobilization. Were electoral rules changed, official media and state institutions purged of sectarian language, and hate speech and incitement punished rather than encouraged, identity entrepreneurs would suffer political defeat. Elites who want to cynically manipulate sectarianism need to have the raw material with which to work or the right conditions within which to work their evil magic. Taking the oxygen out of the room is not impossible: Kuwait, for instance, turned away from sectarianism in its last elections, in part as the costs of such conflict began to really sink in. But such political responses to identity conflict become far more difficult after they have been successfully mobilized -- especially under conditions of state failure, uncertainty, violence, and fear. It is far easier to generate sectarian animosities than it is to calm them down. This ratcheting effect is the reason for the deepest concern about the trends of the last few years. Identity entrepreneurs might think that they can turn the hatred on and off as it suits their interests, but at some point these identities become self-sustaining and internalized. Blood matters, a lot: There will be no reconciliation in Iraq or Syria for a long time, not with so many people who have watched people they love slaughtered or raped or displaced over their ascribed identities. How could anyone expect an Iraqi Sunni to forgive or happily coexist with Shiite neighbors who only recently killed his children because of their religion? Those memories are only

reinforced by the endlessly circulating videos and images which today provide unavoidable documentation of additional atrocities. Even ending the violence and restoring a modicum of stability in Syria, Iraq, or Bahrain is not likely to erase these inflamed hatreds and memories, leaving well-fertilized terrain for the next identity entrepreneur who comes along. The political approach to sectarianism makes painfully clear that it did not have to be like this. Sectarian conflict is not the natural response to the fall of a strongman. The Bahraini activists who demanded political reform and human rights did not have to be tarred as Iranian assets and smeared as Shiite separatists. Syrian non-violent activists could have developed and enforced a compelling vision of a non-sectarian post-Assad alternative. Gulf Islamists and regimes could have opted not to use sectarianism to generate support for the Syrian insurgency. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its enemies could have opted for cooperation and inclusion rather than spiraling polarization and confrontation. But this approach also offers little optimism about the future. The painful reality is that sectarianism proved too useful to too many powerful actors, and too compelling a narrative in a violent, turbulent, and uncertain time, to be avoided.

Marc Lynch is professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University and an editor of Foreign Policy's Middle East Channel.

Article 6.

Foreign Policy

Jordan's U.N. Security Council

Debate

Curtis R. Ryan

November 12, 2013 -- In October, Saudi Arabia secured its first-ever election to a seat on the U.N. Security Council (UNSC). The same day, even as gift bags were sent to thank countries that had voted for Saudi Arabia, the kingdom then created another "first" as it became the first country to reject its own election to the UNSC. The objection appeared, at least at face value, to be a matter of principle. The Saudi government declined the seat, citing the Security Council's failures in ending conflicts from Syria to Israel and Palestine. Just as importantly, however, Saudi Arabia may have wanted to avoid going on record in two years' worth of repeated votes on controversial issues in international relations and international security. That pressure may now fall to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as Jordan appeared poised to take the UNSC seat originally offered to Saudi Arabia.

For this to occur, Saudi Arabia would have to confirm its rejection of the seat, and Jordan would need to win an election in the U.N. General Assembly. If Jordan does join the U.N. Security Council, it would be another "first," since the kingdom has never before secured a UNSC seat. It also represents both an opportunity and a new set of difficulties and constraints for a country that has struggled with internal and external pressures during the years of the regional "Arab Spring." Jordanian officials were actively engaged in diplomacy, consultation, and negotiation, to see if they should, in fact, really want this opportunity or burden, and further, to see if Jordan would truly have the backing of Arab and other

states (including Saudi Arabia). In a related move, Jordan dropped its own bid for a seat in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) -- a body of 47 countries, some of which have stellar human rights records, and others which seem to be a Who's Who of rampant human rights violators. In dropping its own bid to join the UNHRC, Jordan paved the way for Saudi Arabia, certainly an unlikely participant in any human rights body, but one that will be joined by equally out of place states such as the People's Republic of China. With Saudi Arabia moving into the Human Rights Council, Jordan could then take the Saudi seat in the UNSC. The Security Council would still manage to have Arab representation, even after the Saudi shift, which will be reassuring to some members of the Arab League.

But does Jordan represent any significant change from Saudi Arabia in terms of likely stances in international relations? At first blush, the two might seem similar on the world stage: both are majority Arab and Sunni Muslim states, both are hereditary monarchies, and both have been closely aligned with Western powers -- with the United States in particular. But while Saudi Arabia is a tremendously wealthy oil giant, Jordan is a resource-poor and deeply indebted country, in the midst of a long-term economic crisis. Both states have complained of Israeli policies, the continuing lack of an independent Palestinian state, and have warned of rising Iranian power (to the point of referring to the perceived dangers of an emergent "Shiite Crescent"), and both have felt the internal as well as regional pressures of the Arab Spring. Yet unlike Saudi Arabia, Jordan has for almost 20 years maintained a peace treaty with Israel. While U.S.-Saudi relations have encountered recurring rifts, U.S.-Jordanian relations have never been

closer.

Saudi Arabia has championed revolutionary causes from Libya to Syria, but led a reactionary and decidedly counter-revolutionary camp among the conservative monarchies of the region. Jordan, in contrast, has (as is typical of Jordanian foreign policy) attempted a middle path wherever it appears available, styling itself as a moderate in regional relations. As Saudi Arabia has played an ever-increasing role arming elements of the Syrian opposition to the Assad regime, Jordan has played a more ambiguous and at times seemingly contradictory role regarding the Syrian civil war. Jordan has called consistently for a diplomatic solution, and has declared itself neutral in the conflict. But it has also accepted U.S. Patriot missile batteries and F16 jet fighters to bolster its border with Syria, while giving sanctuary to Syrian opposition figures, and even being accused frequently in international media of arming and training select rebel forces. (The Jordanian government strongly denies the latter accusations). At least until the Arab uprisings, Saudi policy had seemed rather insular and locally focused, while Jordan has been an active internationalist, including as an enthusiastic supporter of the United Nations. The U.N.'s World Interfaith Harmony Day, for example, is now a global event, but it was a Jordanian suggestion, urged by King Abdullah II. Jordanian soldiers have also served in U.N. peacekeeping operations from Haiti to Sierra Leone to Darfur, Sudan. Setting up field hospitals, in fact, has become something of a national specialty for the Jordanian armed forces in either conflict zones or in global disaster relief efforts. In terms of the UNSC, in addition to its close relations with the United States, Jordan has maintained solid and even strong relations with the permanent members of

the council, including Russia, China, France, and especially Britain.

It is with these points in mind that the Jordanian government, diplomatic corps, and monarchy all see Jordan as an especially worthy and responsible country for candidacy to the UNSC. Membership on the council, however, will bring with it both opportunities and constraints. Jordan could, for example, expect a greater voice in international affairs, as well as more favorable terms for foreign aid and perhaps greater trade and investment opportunities, as these do seem to be perks of the two-year UNSC term. But Jordan would also be forced to go on record in particularly controversial areas of international politics, whereas in the past it has tended to prefer a middle path -- a centered, moderate, and at times even ambiguous path. Jordanian foreign policy has always been marked by caution and careful deliberation. To be blunt, Jordan simply cannot afford to alienate either regional or global powers. If it becomes a UNSC member, however, Jordan's influence might increase, but it can also expect to receive strong and at times contradictory pressure even (and perhaps especially) from its allies, including the United States and Saudi Arabia or other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, regarding Israel, Palestine, Syria, Iran, and other areas of international security. Since the kingdom depends on U.S. foreign aid even as it attempts to join the GCC, these contradictory pressures will only become more difficult to navigate over time.

Meanwhile, democracy advocates in the kingdom seem increasingly disillusioned by Jordan's domestic reform trajectory. In my visits to Jordan, democracy activists have argued that reform efforts appear to have frozen in place. International security concerns, especially over the Syrian civil

war, do indeed seem to have affected Jordan's reform process, and recent shifts in leadership in the lower house of parliament and the royally-appointed senate seem to have signaled a decidedly conservative and traditionalist turn. Reform advocates feel that they have been sidelined as traditional conservatives make their return, with economic Neoliberals taking perhaps a secondary position, while political and social reformers are blocked out even further. This was in some ways symbolized by the recent replacement of former senate president and moderate reformer Taher Masri with the conservative traditionalist 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Rawabdeh. Yet these moves were greeted generally by apathy. Perhaps more dangerous to democratic aspirations, however, is the emergence of a narrative among conservatives within domestic politics that seems to equate reform activism with instability, insecurity, and worse.

The rearranging of elites in key Jordanian institutions seems to signal a state bracing for worst-case scenarios regarding the fallout from Syria. In my conversations with King Abdullah, he was proud of a series of domestic reform achievements, but also especially concerned with the dangers to Jordan of spillover from the Syrian disaster. Jordan's economy and resources have been strained by the presence of more than 500,000 Syrian refugees and indeed Zaatari refugee camp is now Jordan's fourth largest "city."

A broader question, however, is whether a seat on the U.N. Security Council will also affect Jordan's domestic politics as well as its international position. Will it insulate the state from pressures for further domestic reform, or act as a spotlight on both the successes and limitations of the kingdom's reform program, which, at present, remains an incomplete process? Is

the conservative retrenchment within Jordanian domestic politics a temporary offshoot of the security dilemmas associated with the Syrian war, or will it turn out to be a long-term feature of the political landscape?

In either case, Jordan has no shortage of pressures: from domestic politics to economic crisis to regional instability. If Jordan adds a U.N. Security Council seat to the country's resume, it will then be travelling into uncharted international territory, requiring deft diplomacy, as both great opportunities and great dangers abound.

Curtis R. Ryan is a professor of political science at Appalachian State University and author of Jordan in Transition: From Hussein to Abdullah and Inter-Arab Alliances: Regime Security and Jordanian Foreign Policy.

Article 7.

The Guardian

How British and American aid subsidises Palestinian terrorism

Edwin Black

11 November 2013 -- On both sides of the pond, in London and Washington, policymakers are struggling to weather their budget crises. Therefore, it may astound American and British taxpayers that the precious dollars and pounds they deploy in Israel and the Occupied Territories fungibly funds terrorism. The instrument of this funding is US and UK programs of aid paid to the Palestinian Authority. This astonishing financial dynamic is known to most Israeli leaders and western

journalists in Israel. But it is still a shock to most in Congress and many in Britain's Parliament, who are unaware that money going to the Palestinian Authority is regularly diverted to a program that systematically rewards convicted prisoners with generous salaries. These transactions in fact violate American and British laws that prohibit US funding from benefiting terrorists. More than that, they could be seen as incentivizing murder and terror against innocent civilians.

Here's how the system works. When a Palestinian is convicted of an act of terror against the Israeli government or innocent civilians, such as a bombing or a murder, that convicted terrorist automatically receives a generous salary from the Palestinian Authority. The salary is specified by the Palestinian "law of the prisoner" and administered by the PA's Ministry of Prisoner Affairs. A Palestinian watchdog group, the Prisoners Club, ensures the PA's compliance with the law and pushes for payments as a prioritized expenditure. This means that even during frequent budget shortfalls and financial crisis, the PA PA pays the prisoners' salaries first and foremost – before other fiscal obligations.

The law of the prisoner narrowly delineates just who is entitled to receive an official salary. In a recent interview, Ministry of Prisoners spokesman Amr Nasser read aloud that definition: A detainee is each and every person who is in an Occupation prison based on his or her participation in the resistance to Occupation.

This means crimes against Israel or Israelis. Nasser was careful to explain:

It does not include common-law thieves and burglars. They are not included and are not part of the mandate of the ministry. Under a sliding scale, carefully articulated in the law of the

prisoner, the more serious the act of terrorism, the longer the prison sentence, and consequently, the higher the salary. Incarceration for up to three years fetches a salary of almost \$400 per month. Prisoners behind bars for between three and five years will be paid about \$560 monthly – a compensation level already higher than that for many ordinary West Bank jobs. Sentences of ten to 15 years fetch salaries of about \$1,690 per month. Still worse acts of terrorism against civilians, punished with sentences between 15 and 20 years, earn almost \$2,000 per month.

These are the best salaries in the Palestinian territories. The Arabic word *ratib*, meaning "salary", is the official term for this compensation. The law ensures the greatest financial reward for the most egregious acts of terrorism.

In the Palestinian community, the salaries are no secret; they are publicly hailed in public speeches and special TV reports. The New York Times and the Times of Israel have both mentioned the mechanism in passing. Only British and American legislators seem to be uninformed about the payments.

From time to time, the salaries are augmented with special additional financial incentives. For example, in 2009, a \$150-per-prisoner bonus was approved to mark the religious holiday of Eid al-Adha. President Mahmoud Abbas also directed that an extra \$190 "be added to the stipends given to Palestinians affiliated with PLO factions in Israeli prisons this month".

Reporting on the additional emolument, the Palestinian news service Ma'an explained:

Each PLO-affiliated prisoner [already] receives [a special allocation of] \$238 per month, plus an extra \$71 if they are married, and an extra \$12 for each child. The stipend is paid

by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) each month. About 6% of the Palestinian budget is diverted to prisoner salaries. All this money comes from so-called "donor countries" such as the United States, Great Britain, Norway, and Denmark. Palestinian officials have reacted with defiance to any foreign governmental effort to end the salaries. Deputy Minister of Prisoners Affairs Ziyad Abu Ein declared to satellite TV network Hona Al-Quds:

If the financial assistance and support to the PA are stopped, the [payment of] salaries (Rawatib) and allowances (Mukhassasat) to Palestinian prisoners will not be stopped, whatever the cost may be. The prisoners are our joy. We will sacrifice everything for them and continue to provide for their families.

Many believe foreign aid is an investment in peace between the warring parties in Israel and disputed lands. That investment might have a greater chance for success if terrorism did not pay as well as it does – with taxpayers footing the bill.

Edwin Black is the award-winning, New York Times and international investigative author of 120 bestselling editions in 14 languages in 61 countries, as well as scores of newspaper and magazine articles in the leading publications of the United States, Europe and Israel.