

WAR WITH IRAN: REACTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS



Analysis and Perspectives by Dr. John Duke Anthony

July 30, 2008

On June 20, 2008, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations President and CEO Dr. John Duke Anthony addressed the Middle East Policy Council's (MEPC) 53rd Capitol Hill Conference on "War with Iran: Regional Reactions and Requirements."

Among the topics covered were:

- *whether and why either the United States and/or Israel might attack Iran at some indeterminate point in the period between now and the inauguration of the next American president and/or the next Israeli prime minister;*
- *how the absence of U.S.-Iran trade and investment ties have contributed to the long standoff between them;*
- *how Israel-centric objectives figure into the overall context of the drumbeat favoring an attack against Iran;*
- *additional largely undeclared reasons why some Americans and Israelis want to attack Iran, including an overarching goal of regime change not entirely dissimilar from the previous regime change objective achieved in neighboring Iraq; and*
- *the pros and cons of an American private diplomatic initiative to Iran in the unlikely but possible event the United States and its Great Power associates were to conclude that diplomacy has failed and the only remaining alternatives would be either (a) to enact and enforce ever more stringent sanctions against Iran, approximating a stranglehold on its economy or (b) acquiescence to the use of whatever other means necessary, including the use of military might, to impose the international community's will upon Iran with a view to forcing it to cease the uranium fuel enrichment and reprocessing activities associated with its nuclear development program.*

MEPC President Ambassador Chas Freeman, formerly Assistant Secretary of Defense, moderated and served as primary discussant of the presentations.

The MEPC Capitol Hill Conference Series on U.S. Middle East Policy is conducted as a public service for Members of Congress, congressional staff, members of the diplomatic corps and broader foreign affairs community, public policy research institute representatives, the media, academe, and the interested public.

Following, courtesy of MEPC, is an unofficial transcription and revised version of Dr. Anthony's presentation together with additional commentary and responses to questions asked during the discussion that followed, edited for written publication. A fuller version of the edited proceedings will be available in a forthcoming issue of MEPC's highly acclaimed scholarly journal, Middle East Policy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

War with Iran: Regional Reactions and Requirements	
ATTACKING IRAN: REGIONAL REACTIONS	4
PREVENTING AN ATTACK: REGIONAL NEEDS	8
AN ATTACK OCCURS: REGIONAL REQUIREMENTS	10
<i>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:</i>	
<i>Is the possibility of Israel attacking Iran likely to be solely a problem for Iran, or might it also prove problematic for Israel?</i>	12
<i>Aside from preventing the development of a nuclear weapon and the additional envisioned possible results, are there any other reasons for U.S. military intervention in Iran?</i>	20
<i>Could trade be leveraged in relation to Iran?</i>	24
<i>What are some possible consequences from the range of continued ambivalence and uncertainties regarding not just Iran's position and role in the Middle East but also America's and Israel's?</i>	27
<i>Would a private diplomatic initiative and opening of the kind that former U.S. President Jimmy Carter conducted in North Korea work with Iran?</i>	30

AMBASSADOR FREEMAN: The panel to discuss the topic of this meeting is extraordinarily well qualified. Dr. John Duke Anthony, the founding president and chief executive officer of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, who has many, many years of teaching and program activity focused mainly on the Arab Gulf, will lead off.

DR. ANTHONY: Thank you, Chas. It's good to be here. I will divide my remarks into four analytical categories of roughly three minutes each. This will allow me to keep to the stipulated time frame of twelve minutes.

The categories focus on regional reactions to the idea of an attack itself and what is required to prevent it, on one hand, and, on the other, likely reactions and requirements in the event an attack occurs.

ATTACKING IRAN: REGIONAL REACTIONS

Following are among the regional reactions to the possibility of a military attack against Iran and what would be required to prevent it.

One, leaders throughout the Gulf with whom I have discussed the matter disagree that an attack against Iran should be viewed by anyone as necessary, inevitable, or unavoidable.

Two, they are dismayed that there are leaders in Israel and the United States who reason to the contrary. The roots of their dismay are fourfold. One is a belief that American and Israeli implied threats of an attack at some time in the foreseeable future have been and continue to be inflammatory and unjustified. Another is abhorrence at that what they perceive to be driving the antagonistic anti-Iran rhetoric in both countries are forces mired in myopia and the irresponsible exigencies of short-term electoral politics.

An additional source of dismay is the view that neither country's leaders seem willing to discuss how attacking Iran could disastrously affect Gulf stability, security, and local as well as regional and global economic growth. A fourth source is a widespread conviction that, in terms of what Jerusalem and Washington have stated for the public record, neither appears to have been fully honest. Each country's leaders, for example, are viewed as having failed to level completely with their citizens regarding a rationale for an attack other than the stated one of forcing Iran to end its nuclear enrichment and reprocessing activities.

Compounding the Gulf-wide dismay in these regards, especially in the GCC countries, is what appears to some to be an eerie echo of what was heard throughout the period prior to the American-led attack on Iraq. Now, as then, none with whom I have spoken contend that diplomacy has been or is about to be exhausted. As in the case of Iraq, none believe either that Israel or the United States can justifiably expect anyone to accept that the lack of success in the international community's reaching out to Tehran thus far means that the only thing left to do is attack Iran.



Image courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Deepening the dismay is that analysts in the Gulf perceive the White House, Congress, Israel, the Knesset, and the mainstream media of both countries as having acted in informal concert to demonize Iran. As was the case throughout the region prior to the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, the perception that senior American and Israeli officials would have others believe they truly feel threatened by nuclear weapons not known to exist is viewed as misleading and reckless.

Regional leaders particularly fail to see why Israeli and Washington officialdom should affect to be so frightened by Iran. Here their analysis is anchored in the realization of how less fearful each appears to have become since learning of North Korea's capabilities to produce nuclear weapons. In contrast to President Roosevelt's "We have nothing to fear but fear itself," the reaction of some to how Israeli and U.S. leaders have indicated how scared they are of Iran,

given the separate and combined power that these two countries have in their respective arsenals, as opposed to what Iran has in its arsenal, has been and continues to be one of disbelief.

Others take exception to Americans and Israelis deploying pre-World War Two Munich-like metaphors implying that any government unwilling to support confronting Iran militarily if necessary is ipso facto guilty of appeasing Iran. Such depictions are viewed as miscast. They are seen as little more than updated and revised variants of Secretary of State Rice's use of "mushroom cloud" imagery in the case of pre-war Iraq.

In essence, many in the region deplore what are regarded as American and Israeli attempts to frighten their respective publics into a willingness to use armed force against Iran. An example used as a variant of the appeasement theme for which both countries' leaders are faulted is their respective hyping of the fear factor. In so doing, leaders in Israel and the United States alike suggest strongly that Iran's refusal to accommodate international concerns regarding its nuclear development program cannot and ought not to be underestimated. To the contrary, these leaders imply that Tehran's refusal to bow to international pressure to date is its own evidence of a looming danger on the horizon. In an analogy to what Winston Churchill wrote in the 1930s about the rise of Nazi Germany, the implication is that analysts who argue differently are guilty of standing by and doing nothing while acquiescing to "a gathering storm."

Analysts throughout the Gulf believe that American and Israeli fear-mongering in this instance is in effect evidence of their having turned upside down and inside out the adage that "Sticks and stones can break one's bones, but words" -- for example, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's words -- "will never hurt you." This is the context for why not a few find lacking in credibility that Israel or the United States would have others believe that the outrageous words of a weak foreign leader should constitute even partial justification for waging a war against the country he represents.

Among regional military strategists, as opposed to foreign policy analysts, reactions to the idea of an attack against Iran differ only slightly. Some find it vexing that many Americans and Israelis believe Iran would ever be likely to drop an atomic bomb on Israel. Their analysis is that such an attack, or even an Iranian attempt to attack Israel with a nuclear weapon, would likely be suicidal. A far more likely scenario, they contend, would be the reverse -- that Israel would bomb Iran. Not only would it do so as it bombed Iraq in 1981, when it dismantled a sole nuclear facility outside Baghdad. In this instance, it is perceived as highly likely that Israel would bomb a far larger number of sites and facilities in Iran, including much of the country's economic, defense, and telecommunications infrastructure, thereby causing much greater damage regardless of whether doing would risk sending an already fragile global economic order into a tailspin.

Stated differently, the reaction of many to the possibility that Iran might bomb Israel is that the case for their having no choice but to do so has yet to be made. Buttressing such views is the belief that surely the national leaders of Israel and the United States, with all their vaunted intelligence capabilities and technological as well as technical wizardry, know that the case they have tried to make thus far is insufficient. Coupled to this reaction is a conviction that the Americans and Israelis who suggest otherwise are engaged in a double game of denial and deceit. The wonder is why these Americans and their Israeli counterparts are not practicing what they so often preach to others: to be able to deter and defend against an adversary's verified *actual* military capabilities versus being concerned about waging war against its unverified *imagined* ones.

Among those in the Gulf who specialize in matters of governance, yet another reaction is manifested in such questions as, “Aren’t American and Israeli leaders aware of how severely restricted the Iranian president’s authority and power is? Do they profess not to know that he has next to zero authority in matters pertaining to Iran’s defense, internal security, intelligence, judicial system, and foreign policy? Do they truly believe that the radical and threatening speechmaking of such an extraordinarily limited leader ought to be a legitimately acceptable reason for commencing a conflict that virtually everyone in the region and most of the rest of the world seeks to avoid?”

On balance, regional leaders remain unconvinced that the focus on Iran’s nuclear program, its president’s extremist rhetoric, and to a lesser extent its support for Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and/or Syria ought to be considered reason enough for launching an attack. In this regard, many suspect they are seeing a replay of the arrogance, ignorance, and disregard for the norms of international law, relations, and legitimacy that preceded the American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. Regional strategic and policy analysts are in widespread agreement that none of the reasons cited, nor all of them together, warrant the commencement of yet another war in the Gulf, vital as it is to the national security and economic interests of humanity as a whole.

Three, a related reaction among some is beyond cynicism and comes close to conspiracy analysis. It is the belief that a fuller and more truthful rationale for what Americans and Israelis imply they are prepared to do to Iran is rooted in reasons that have yet to be revealed. The reason that many suspect the most is the American and Israeli goal of overthrowing the Iranian government. In their view, achieving such a goal would require that amoral tactics, inclusive of but not limited to denial and deception, be brought into play. Intrinsic to this analysis is that the goal of waging war against Iran extends beyond compelling Tehran to cease its nuclear enrichment and reprocessing and muffling the periodic vitriolic content and threatening tone of its president’s public remarks.

Closely aligned to this analysis is a searing indictment of the moral leadership, or the lack thereof, of numerous leaders in Jerusalem and Washington. Those who espouse such views are of two minds on this subject. One contends that the situation would be different were large numbers of Americans and Israelis made aware of regime change in Tehran as the uppermost reason for their acknowledged preparations to use armed force against Iran. The other contends that were the objective of ousting the Iranian government subjected to vigorous and national public debate in their respective countries, most Americans and Israelis would oppose an attack.

Four, a byproduct of these kinds of reactions is region-wide nervousness and uncertainty rooted in the fact that none profess to know what would follow if an attack were actually to occur. The lack of knowledge in and of itself bears directly on an inability to effectively manage risk or adequately imagine or prepare for what the possible consequences might be.

Approximate Maximum Ranges of Iranian Missiles

- Inner Ring—SCUD B
- Second Ring—SCUD C
- Third Ring—MRBM 1
- Outer Ring—MRBM 2

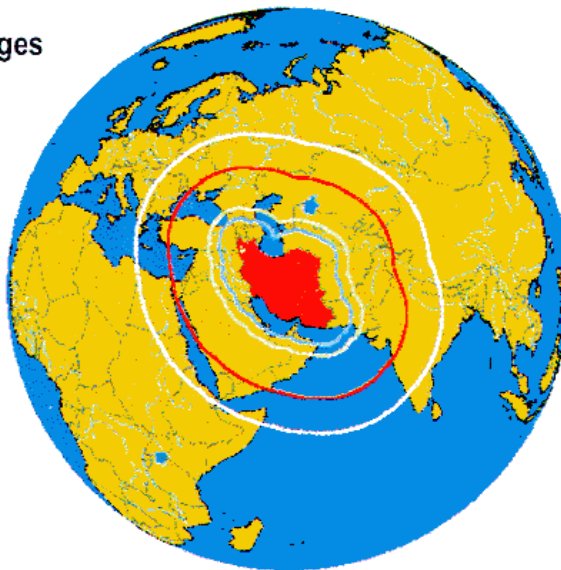


Image courtesy of The Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

An interim manifestation of this somber mood is the fear-induced price of oil, which remains at historically record highs. Another manifestation is in how rapidly discussion about the prospects for an attack on Iran has shifted. It has migrated from riveted attention to the implication of U.S. and Israeli contentions that "all options, including the use of force, remain on the table" to apprehension that between now and January 2009 an attack might indeed take place.

Among foreign military strategists, security analysts, investors, and business representatives living and working inside the Gulf another reaction focuses on a more broadly defined topic. It is, on one hand, the envisioned effect an attack could have on their local or foreign countries' respective strategic, economic, commercial, and defense needs, concerns, and interests. On the other, it is on how an attack might impact the six member-countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in terms of their objectives and relations vis-à-vis each other, Iran, Iraq, and parties further afield.

PREVENTING AN ATTACK: REGIONAL NEEDS

If one assumes for the sake of analysis and argument that an attack may occur, some of the requirements that would have to be addressed beforehand are obvious. Those noted here are ones I have discussed with specialists in the region and analysts elsewhere who follow Gulf developments.

One, the most important and time-sensitive requirement is for the region's leaders to find an appropriate way to motivate their Great Power partners to persuade Iran, Israel, and the United States to do whatever is necessary not to attack Iran. A related requirement is to avoid repeating what happened prior to the American-led attack on Iraq. In this regard, Gulf Arabs and Iranians with whom I have spoken insist that there be no comparable premature and inaccurate conclusions regarding Iran to the effect that diplomatic overtures to Tehran have ended or that further diplomatic efforts would be futile. To the contrary, they argue that greater, more effective, and sustained diplomacy, *not* the opposite, is needed.

Two, Gulf Arab government leaders have no choice but to indicate that every possible precaution is being taken to deter and defend against an attack pursuant to ensuring their citizens' inherent right to self-preservation. To this end, a related need is to ensure that effective national and local emergency contingencies and procedures are already in place. Should the current situation deteriorate to a point where an attack is deemed all but certain, being able to meet these requirements and standards cannot be left to the moment an attack becomes a question not of whether but *when* it will occur.



Three, some believe another as yet untried diplomatic tactic might be worth considering, but a detailed examination of its merits is beyond the scope of these remarks. In essence, it would be for the governments involved to add to their diplomatic efforts public recognition of what has been undeniably positive in various Iranian actions. By implication, this would entail that the almost exclusive emphasis on the negative components, which no one argues should be eliminated, be lessened. The criterion for how to do this would arguably be one of achieving some semblance of balance between the negatives and positives.

A problem with this idea that even its proponents acknowledge is that, its debatable merits aside, it would likely be exceptionally difficult to adopt and implement at this juncture in the diplomatic process. Making the prospects for doing so especially problematic are the American and Israeli elections. These, by their nature, would suggest that such a concept would have next to zero chance of being taken seriously in the corridors of power in either Jerusalem or Washington.

If anything, the exact opposite appears more likely. A reason is not that high-ranking Americans and Israelis are incapable of giving such an idea its due; to the contrary, they are quite capable of doing so. Rather, critics emphasize, what is lacking is a comparable willingness -- the requisite political and moral courage -- to do so publicly. Not only would American and Israeli political advisers to their respective heads of state likely advise against such a proposal as being impractical and counter-productive at this juncture. The advisers of their presumptive nominees to succeed them would not likely be any different.

AN ATTACK OCCURS: REGIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Among some of the more obvious necessities and/or possibilities in the event an attack occurs are the following.

One, all seven Gulf Arab governments will need to be able to withstand the probable immediate or eventual aftermath of any attempt by the armed forces of Israel and/or the United States to impose their respective military might and will upon Iran. What could follow at some point in the event this occurs would be retaliatory actions by Iran and/or Iranian agents. Opportunities to do so would hardly be lacking. Among them, to name but a few, could be the infliction by Iranian special operation forces of damage to offshore drilling platforms on the Arab side of the Gulf; to undersea energy valves, gauges, and pipelines; to shipping in, or in the routes to and from, the Hormuz Strait; to attacks on or sabotage of power generation and desalination plants as well as port facilities along the Arab Gulf coasts; to assassination attempts on leaders in the GCC countries, Iraq, or elsewhere perceived as having facilitated an attack.

Two, also necessary would be to mount and sustain heightened domestic surveillance and security measures. An obvious focus of such measures would be the hundreds of thousands of Iranians living and working in, as well as regularly traveling to and from, the Gulf Arab countries. There are 400,000 Iranians in the UAE Emirate of Dubai alone. Thousands of other Iranians are resident in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar (although far fewer numbers are in Oman or Saudi Arabia).

Additional thousands of Iranians, almost all of them law-abiding, reside in Iraq. Although many live in the Iraqi holy cities of Karbala and Najaf, others are interspersed at different locations throughout the country among an indeterminate number of Iranian agents, supporters, sympathizers, and facilitators in the ongoing insurgency. Any number of these Iranians would be potentially well-situated to harm not only what is upwards of a quarter of a million Americans in Iraq but the tens of thousands of Iraqis that have opted to align themselves with the American presence. Alternatively, and possibly simultaneously, members of Iranian communities elsewhere could attack the interests of the thousands of additional Americans dispersed throughout the GCC region.

Three, additional requirements could entail being able to cope with possible negative *political* consequences in the Arab Gulf countries. For example, one cannot rule out the potential manifestation of radically altered popular attitudes toward individual leaders within the region. The prospects for something like this happening could be determined by the extent to which one or more of the leaders are perceived as having helped facilitate an attack. Lending weight to such perceptions could be an ensuing emotional and/or ideological atmosphere fueled by elements within the Iranian and/or Arab media.

Four, regardless of what local leaders do in the event of an attack, if it is perceived as ineffective, incompetent, or otherwise unacceptable, the consequences for political stability could rapidly become problematic. In this regard, one Arab Gulf leader informed me that, "If an attack is launched solely by the United States, the prospects for our surviving it with our political legitimacy and stability intact would be fifty-fifty." The same official said that were it to be alleged that an attack had anything to do with Israel, either independently or in combination with the United States, the assessment would be different. In that scenario, he said, "Regardless of

whether Israel did or did not attack, even if significant numbers believed it was involved in any way, all bets would be off."

Among the various possibilities that might ensue from such allegations, one could be a recurrence of an earlier era's radical rhetoric directed against the region's leaders. Middle-aged and older citizens in the region can recall the 1960s, when many Gulf Arab state elites' critics often labeled them as "America's Arabs," "Anglo-Arabs," "running dogs," and "lackeys of imperialism." This time around, a more recent and emotionally explosive epithet could be "collaborators," a term many Iraqi insurgents continue to use to describe the country's citizens associated with the American military occupation and who, as a result, have been targeted for attack or worse.

Any of these kinds of reactions would have the potential to damage severely the legitimacy of the Arab Gulf leaders not only domestically but further afield. Some may argue otherwise, but the possibility of something like this occurring should not be taken lightly. Even now, the degree to which the phrase "moderate Arab leaders" has been debased and become demeaning is alarming. It is increasingly affixed to any Arab perceived to be associated with Washington's efforts to strengthen and expand America's position and role of strategic, economic, political, and military dominance in the Gulf and the vicinity of Israel's neighbors. Not surprisingly, policymakers in the Gulf and elsewhere place much of the blame for this state of affairs on the United States. The perception among many is that Washington has done far less than it could to help strengthen the region's moderate leaders in the eyes of their constituents.

Five, a quite different set of requirements stemming from an attack would apply to logistics, operations, economics, and/or finance. Fortunately, from the perspectives of advance planning and preparation, components of all four factors are implicitly or explicitly already in place. In differing degrees depending on the country in question, they are integral to the three separate Defense Cooperation Agreements between the United States, on one hand, and Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, on the other; a modified Defense Cooperation Agreement between the United States and the United Arab Emirates; and an Oman-U.S. Access to Facilities Agreement which, dating from January 1980, is the oldest of the five defense-related agreements in force between these countries and the United States. There are also somewhat similar defense understandings and arrangements between several GCC countries and the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, France. In addition, there is the Qatar-based forward deployed headquarters of the U.S. Central Command, which comprises the most powerful concentration of foreign military might in the Gulf.

Specialists would of course be correct in noting that there is no comparable official American defense cooperation accord, access to facilities agreement, or arrangement for basing rights in Saudi Arabia. Even so, it is important in this instance not to confuse form with function. The record will reveal that Riyadh and Washington have worked incessantly since the days of King 'Abd al-'Aziz bin 'Abd alrahman al-Sa'ud and President Harry S. Truman in the early 1950s to forge and sustain numerous and diverse external defense and internal security-related undertakings and understandings. Indeed, Saudi Arabian-U.S. defense cooperation has spanned a much longer period of time, and involved far more Arabs and Americans working together in pursuit of common military strategic objectives, than any remotely similar involvement between the six other Arab Gulf countries and the United States.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you. Admirably succinct and to the point.

DISCUSSION:

Q: Is the possibility of Israel attacking Iran likely to be solely a problem for Iran, or might it also prove problematic for Israel?

DR. ANTHONY: In the minds of some, the answer is potentially yes. The reasons are numerous.

One, this year marks the 60th anniversary of Israel's founding as a Jewish state. Consider the arithmetic. Exactly half of the six decades have been ones when Israel and Iran were more often than not de facto partners. Each frequently scratched the other's back. Neither country's leaders needed to consult their respective communication codes or coordinates to be in touch with one another. Even without this information they were able to dance, and indeed often did, in each other's strategic and geopolitical shadows.



Image courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

I say this from having lived and worked in Iran in the 1960s and having returned to it in the 1970s. During those years, one would have to have been deaf and blind not to have known how various components of the Iranian-Israeli relationship and their respective and joint interests were intimately and extensively intertwined. Indeed, the close and multifaceted ties between them continued right up to when the shah was overthrown and the Iranian Revolution commenced twenty-nine years ago.

Many of course are aware of the role that Israel played in training the shah's secret police. Also well documented is how Israel and Iran armed Kurdish groups in northern Iraq with Soviet-manufactured weapons Israeli forces seized when Israel attacked and defeated Egypt in the June 1967 war. Acknowledgement of a lesser known vital component of the bilateral relationship between the two countries came from a high-ranking Israeli who addressed a seminar I attended

in Washington, D.C. in the late 1970s. In response to a question about the source of Israel's foreign energy supplies, he said that ninety percent of its oil imports came from Iran.

Overall, the relationship between Tehran and Tel Aviv was seen by large numbers at both ends of the spectrum, and also by many in the United States public and private sectors, as reciprocally rewarding for quite a long time. Hence, many Americans, Israelis, and not a few Iranians, albeit among the latter mainly those in exile, need no reminding of how mutually beneficial the relationship once had been. Among all three groups no small number would like to return to a similar situation.

Two, many Israelis with a longer term world view retain a positive image of how Iranians once played a one-of-a-kind-role at a pivotal point in ancient Jewish history. Evidence of this view has long been admitted by various Israeli leaders. Several years ago, I witnessed such an admission by one nationally prominent former Israeli intelligence official and previous foreign ministry representative. The official did so in response to leading question put to him by an interviewer on a BBC television program that I happened to watch.

"Are there *no* people on earth," the interviewer asked, "that you and your fellow Israelis trust?" The Israeli answered, "Yes, one." The interviewer followed with, "Who?" The Israeli replied matter-of-factly, "The Persians." The allusion was to Esther, a Persian, and her vital role at a strategic juncture in the liberation of the Jewish people from Babylon 2,500 years ago in ancient Iraq during the epoch associated with Persia's Cyrus the Great.

Three, a more recent example of Iranian-Israel strategic military and geo-political cooperation came to light during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. Erupting in the middle of that conflict in November 1986 at a GCC ministerial and heads of state summit I attended was what is referred to in the United States as "Contragate" but better known in the GCC region and Iraq as the "Iran-Israel-Contra Scandal." Behind the differing nomenclature is a story synonymous with then U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz having pressured all six GCC foreign ministers at a private luncheon in New York during a session of the annual meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in early October 1986.

Schultz urged the ministers to persuade their heads of state and everyone else they could think of to do whatever they could to stop the flow of weapons into Iran, which at that point was already two-thirds of the way through the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war that showed no signs of coming to an end. The GCC leaders took the American secretary of state at his word. In response, they pressed their Asian, European, and other international counterparts to comply with the American request. Alas, they soon learned, to their profound astonishment and dismay, that the United States and Israel were themselves providing arms to the Iranian government then headed by Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini – in spite of the fact that, at the time, agents and supporters of Iran in Lebanon held American citizens hostage.

The exposure of the American-Iranian-Israeli collusion was viewed from within the region as constituting a geopolitical gift of enormous magnitude to Israeli strategists. Among Gulf Arab strategic military analysts at the time many were convinced that their Israeli counterparts were, as one put it, "insanely jealous" of America's special military relationship with major Arab countries. Coupled to the perceived jealousy was a fear that, if left unchecked, these particular special Arab-U.S. national security and defense relationships, as well as the economic, commercial, and political ties that accompanied them, might one day rival Israel's extraordinary

links to the United States and vice versa. The same analysts believed then as they do now that their Israeli counterparts have long been and remain determined to do whatever they can to misrepresent the Arab countries that have these extensive and mutually beneficial relationships with the United States.

From this perspective, having Gulf Arabs believe that the United States was leading the charge to keep weapons out of Iranian hands, while Washington and Israel were doing just that, was ideally tailored to serve the Israeli strategy noted. Stated differently, the arms-for-hostages arrangement was perceived throughout the GCC countries and by Iraqis as well-calculated and superbly-timed to keep the United States-Gulf Arab relationship not only off balance and as far apart as possible. It is also seen as practically guaranteed to ensure that the Arab-U.S. relationship would remain laced at both ends with tension, suspicion, doubt, and distrust.

Four, another facet of an Iranian-Israeli dynamic stems from Iran being home to the largest number of Jews in the eastern Islamic world that has yet to immigrate to Israel. Demographers and politicians in Jerusalem are keenly aware of the strategic importance to Israel that these potential future immigrants represent.

An underlying reason why many Israelis consider Iran's Jewish population in such terms is not hard to discern. It is rooted in the view that unless growing numbers of Iranian Jews and their kindred elsewhere can be persuaded to settle in Israel, the Jewish State could eventually find itself demographically in a situation even more precarious than the one it is in now and has faced for quite some time. More specifically, absent the continuing influx of Jews to Israel from other countries, Iran being but one among them, it will become increasingly difficult for Israeli Jews to retain their ethnic and religious majority status vis-à-vis Israel's Palestinian Arab Christian and Muslim citizens. An alternate view is associated with one of the most draconian scenarios imaginable. It would be in the event that large numbers of Israel's Palestinian Arab and Muslim citizens were to launch violent protests in the aftermath of an Israeli attack on Iran. In such a scenario, many analysts believe Israeli security forces would cite such protests as a reason enough to expel significant numbers of Palestinians to other countries.

It is in this and other contexts that an Israeli search for finding a way to end the straight jacket in which Iranian-Israeli relations have long been cast, if only in order to be better able to cope with its demographic challenge, is likely to remain in play. Through these lenses, it is not difficult to see why various Israeli leaders favor regime change in Iran. Changing it for the better, by whatever means, is seen as potentially increasing the possibilities of achieving this objective.

Alternatively, a Plan B would be for something to happen, or be made to happen, inside Iran that might provide a compelling incentive for its Jewish population to want to relocate to Israel. Short of one or the other of these kinds of scenarios materializing, many in the Arab Gulf states and elsewhere find it difficult to envision how Iran would likely facilitate Israel being able to increase the number of its Jewish citizens in the foreseeable future.

Five, many Gulf Arab analysts focus on what they and others are convinced is a perennial Israel component in U.S. domestic politics. Indeed, among the hundreds of thousands of the region's graduates from American universities are many that have observed firsthand the interplay of various Israel-centric components in American electoral dynamics. It should not be surprising that Gulf Arabs are but one among people from many countries that resonate to the phrase often cited during the time of year when American elections are underway as the so-called "silly

season." By this, the implication is hardly flattering. It is that the capacity of many Americans to analyze and vote on national security, economic, and foreign policy issues from a clinical, detached, and objective vantage point tends to recede.

Overtaking such a vantage point are perceptions of the politics of personality, pandering, so-called wedge issues, the interplay of special interests, negative advertisements, and assaults on the candidates' character, including allusions to whether the political party's nominees are sufficiently or insufficiently supportive of Israel. At the end of the day, what many believe matters far more than anything else is the roar of the crowd. To an outsider the process has sometimes been seen as having little to do with making an informed judgment on who is the more prepared to lead the country through the shifting shoals of international affairs. Rather, it has often appeared as more of an assessment of which candidate scored higher in a popularity contest or indicated they would be the one most likely to keep them secure, in this case from radical Arabs, Iranians, and Muslims in general, among others.

How the ongoing discussion and debate about the possible launching of a war against Iran will play out among the pro-Israeli elements in American domestic politics, and among the more hawkish advocates in Israel, the United States, and other countries that want to attack Iran, remains to be seen. In the interim, what is certain is that U.S. and/or Israeli potential or probable actions against Iran will remain issues of immense interest among American and Israeli voters and candidates alike.

As for what to watch for in American and Israeli domestic dynamics in the period immediately ahead *timing* is likely to prove to be an important consideration. The reference is to what many even now believe in the case of the United States could be an "autumnal or winter surprise." In this regard, the thought is that Iran, Israel, and/or the U.S. might in the coming months initiate an action at a specific time designed to influence or take advantage of America's and Israel's preoccupation with their respective elections or, possibly, their electoral outcomes.

Electoral analysts and foreign affairs practitioners who ponder such possibilities cite history in this regard. They are aware that similar unexpected events have occurred in or around election times in Israel and the United States before. For example, many Iranian specialists believe that the timing of Ayatollah Khomeini's decision to release the American hostages in Iran on the day U.S. President Ronald Reagan was inaugurated was not coincidental. They are convinced it was designed specifically to occur at that moment rather than before or later. One of the theories advanced at the time is that the Iranian leadership did not want to release the hostages before then lest it possibly result in the re-election of President Carter on whose watch not only the hostage-taking but also America's effort to free the hostages, known as Operation Desert One, occurred.

One therefore does not have to be a dyed-in-the-wool-cynic or conspiracy theorist to acknowledge that election-related dynamics in either Israel or the United States could have some bearing not only on *whether* but, if so, *when* Iran might be attacked. The Italian political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli was not alone in noting as he did centuries ago that one of the proven means for governments being able to hold onto power has been to take their country to war.

Even Israeli analysts acknowledge that the timing of Israeli attacks against one or another country have not always been coincidental. Rather, they concede there have been times when

such attacks have been linked to electoral dynamics either in the United States or Israel itself. In 1956, for example, Israel, Great Britain, and France, without any of the three informing the United States beforehand, launched a war against Egypt. They did so during the very week of that year's American presidential election. (At around the same time, for what many believed was a similar reason related to timing, the Soviet Union rolled the Red Army's tanks into Budapest to quell a Hungarian nationalist uprising).

In 1981, something similar happened in Israel. The result dramatically influenced the outcome of that year's Israeli elections. In the summer, the reelection prospects of Israel's then prime minister seemed seriously in doubt. However, after he ordered an attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor outside Baghdad, his popularity skyrocketed. As the attack was successful, that one action alone was credited by many with his being able to win re-election.

Six, another possible Iran-Israel factor that could come into play, despite the prospects for it to happen being rather remote, has to do with the dynamics among the adherents of a Middle Eastern originated religion other than Christianity, Islam, or Judaism: namely, Bahaism. Here the reference is to those of the Baha'i faith, both those in the United States and their counterparts in Iran where the religion began, on one hand, and, on the other, the location of the Bahai Temple Mount in Karmel, Israel. However unlikely the prospect might be, this little known dynamic between Iran and Israel constitutes a potential focal point of religious identification and strategic cooperation among Americans, Iranians, and Israelis that bears noting.

Seven, it is not as though powerful Israeli leaders willing to order their country's armed forces to inflict their will upon Iran militarily if necessary are lacking. They exist. One is Shaul Mofaz, an Israeli deputy prime minister, immediate past minister of defense, and an acknowledged aspirant for higher political office. In common with many other Israelis, Mofaz was born in Iran.



Image courtesy of the BBC.

Mofaz is one of the highest-ranking Israeli government officials to have declared publicly, more than a year ago, that the Israeli government might have no choice but to attack Iran. Since then, he has upped the ante. He has repeatedly made it clear that there are no circumstances under which Israel would be prepared to countenance Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. Much more ominous in its implications is that he and other Israelis have indicated they would not accommodate Iran even acquiring or developing the

nuclear fuel enrichment and reprocessing *means* to produce one. More specifically, he has insisted Israel is willing and prepared to do whatever is necessary to ensure that Iran ceases to continue the weapons grade fuel enrichment process part of its nuclear development program.

Eight, among Israelis, Americans, and others are some that have no qualms about giving serious and favorable consideration, as noted earlier, to forcibly removing the Iranian regime from

power. Indeed, some Israelis and Americans view this as the *sine qua non* requirement for altering positively Israel's strategic situation in the eastern Mediterranean. These Israelis, together with their U.S. supporters, believe that logic alone suggests this to be the only viable option that could possibly tilt the regional status quo in Israel's favor.

Stated differently, many believe that only by engineering the ouster of the current government in Tehran is one likely to have a chance of replacing it with one that would be markedly different, and by implication much better, *i.e.*, more acceptable in the eyes of the Israeli and American governments, than the one in power. To be sure, Gulf Arabs are accustomed to being challenged to provide evidence for their viewpoint on this matter. In response, they point to the millions of dollars, beginning with the Clinton administration and continuing to the present, that the U.S. Congress has allocated, authorized, and appropriated annually, and the president has signed into law, directing the United States to beam broadcasts into Iran designed to create tensions and divisions in Iran between the government and the general populace.

As was the case with regard to Iraq, the goal, many Gulf analysts are convinced, is not to change the *behavior* of the regime. Rather, it is to change the regime itself. Those of this view acknowledge that none can guarantee what would follow. However, it is believed that among the possibilities is a new and radically different outlook by the replacement government that would bear little resemblance to the one in power.

What is more, Gulf Arab geostrategic observers with whom I have spoken are not in analytical disagreement with American, Iranian, and Israeli proponents of regime change in Iran. That is, they see clearly how and why Israelis, Israel's American supporters, and an indeterminate number of Iranian exiles would want to topple the government in Tehran. They tend also to agree, but to nowhere near the same extent, with the logic that posits a successor regime in Iran would possibly become more amenable than the existing government to accommodating basic Israeli interests.

The kinds of potential results regional analysts acknowledge as possible as a consequence of a successful regime change in Iran are fairly well known, if only because many Israelis and their American supporters that envision them have not been reticent in indicating what they have in mind. In summary, they see the possibility of the emergence of an Iran that would be inclined to be moderate in its approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, less supportive of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and unlikely to continue aiding Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine. If the listing of such objectives seems reminiscent of some of the largely unstated Israeli geostrategic, geopolitical, and related Israeli objectives vis-à-vis Iraq prior to its invasion, the reason is not hard to find. It is because the listing is reminiscent of some of the largely unstated Israeli geostrategic, geopolitical, and related objectives vis-à-vis Iraq prior to its invasion.

Nine, still other Americans, Iranians, and Israelis are more focused on the economic possibilities they see as potentially inherent in a post-current Iranian leadership environment. In the main, these, they believe, are limited only by the imagination. Many among all three groups view toppling the Iranian government as potentially synonymous with providing opportunities to construct what, in effect, could be a golden gateway to the country's economy.

Through such an opening, reason strategists, the United States, if not also Israel, would likely be better able to obtain guaranteed direct access to Iran's oil and gas reserves. If not that, such an opening could desirably result in, among other things, significantly enhanced American

influence over matters of national policy and decision-making of overarching strategic importance to the United States and its allies. Examples would be the potential for the United States to have significant input and comment into the nature of the terms by which foreign importers would be allowed to purchase the country's energy production; the issuance of the numerous licenses and permits required to explore for oil and gas; the determination of which foreign companies or para-statal enterprises would be awarded which blocs of territory to explore for new sources of energy; and possibly the uses to which the income from Iran's prodigious energy reserves would be put fiscally, developmentally, and/or internationally. A closely aligned objective would be to expand exponentially the opportunities for potentially lucrative American investments in Iran – again, if not by Israel directly then indirectly in association with Israel's many American supporters and the sizeable numbers of expatriate Iranians living in the United States and elsewhere.

If the rationales undergirding this kind of long term strategic thinking seem similar to those that preceded the attack against Iraq, it is because the rationales are in many ways similar to those that preceded the attack against Iraq. Indeed, viewed in this light, bringing about regime change in Baghdad and the end of Ba'athist Party rule in Iraq were deemed by many analysts as but flip sides of the same strategic coin. The accomplishment of both objectives was deemed as the quintessential linchpin for being able to accomplish numerous other objectives, especially those of an economic, political, commercial, and military nature.

Ten, as many believe could once more soon become a reality, most of the lesser known objectives in attacking Iraq were rarely subjected in advance to intense or extended national debate, certainly by large numbers of Members of Congress or the mainstream media. In the eyes of many, with very few exceptions, enhanced American awareness of such objectives did not become obvious and a source of considerable consternation until after the attack. Similarly, an ability to attain as many publicly unacknowledged American and/or Israeli goals as a result of attacking Iran carries with it the possibility, as viewed by observers in the region, of obtaining other goals of importance to many in Jerusalem and Washington.

Numerous Israel and American strategists foresee in particular a range of potential regional geopolitical benefits that could follow regime change in Iran. Some wager, for example, that a seismic shift in the world's focus on the region's international relations could follow an attack. Among these are many who see the focus possibly, indeed preferably, shifting *away* from the eastern Mediterranean, locus of some of the region's hitherto most intractable issues in dispute involving Israel's concerns that relate to Lebanon, the Palestinians, and Syria.

Any significant shift of attention by the United States and other Great Powers away from Israel and *towards* lands east, *i.e.*, Arabia and the Gulf, could enhance considerably two seldom mentioned but, to many Gulf Arabs and Iranians, transparent Israeli objectives. One is believed to be able to transfer attention as far away as possible from Washington's oft-repeated declaration that it seeks to establish an independent State of Palestine by the end of the year. Another is believed to be to find a way to effectively block any conceivable near-term effort by Washington to pressure Israel into withdrawing from the settlements it has established in the Palestinian and Syrian territories.

Specialists who consider these kinds of perceived Israeli objectives point to a precedent. They regard what happened after, indeed as a direct result of, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 as strategically analogous. Certainly, that particular Israeli attack dramatically and radically

altered the configuration of what up until then had been the agenda of America's regional priorities. It shifted almost immediately Washington's attention away from the goal of forging a just, enduring, and comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza, Jerusalem, and the West Bank. In so doing, it lessened the likelihood of any pressure that many Israelis believed Washington intended to exert on the Israeli government to relinquish its hold on the three Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories noted.

None deny either that the Israeli attack had the effect of altering Israel's strategic situation regarding a second, related objective. This was Ariel Sharon and other Israelis' determination to establish an unending series of facts on the ground in East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank. Doing so, Israeli and other analysts contended, would make it increasingly difficult if not practically impossible for Washington or any other power to force Israel to withdraw from the land, water, and other resources it occupied and controlled in those areas.

Those seeking to accomplish such objectives knew that being able to do so successfully could not be left to chance. What would be required was not only a sufficient amount of time to pursue the objective unhindered by potentially disabling distractions, such as having to deal with America's regional peace objectives and efforts. Also required would be to persuade Washington to reallocate its limited resources *away* from Israel and Palestine and *towards* Lebanon and Syria instead. In accomplishing this goal, Israel was able to proceed relatively unobstructed with its manifold expansion of settlements in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and, to a lesser extent, Gaza. In so doing, it acquired perceived strategic advantages and economic gains that might not have been achievable otherwise and in a manner that was at once timely and, from the perspective of its expansionist objectives, largely effective.

As often happens, however, a consequence of a country achieving one foreign policy objective is the addition of another one. In this instance it was for Israel to be able to do whatever it perceived necessary to hold onto the power and influence that had enabled it to bring and keep the territories noted under its control in the first place. All of which is but to underscore that, from an Israeli perspective, the tactic of attacking Iran, which would almost certainly have the effect of shifting international attention away from the eastern Mediterranean and towards the Gulf, cannot be ruled out as a means to a similar end. Conversely, allowing the incumbent regime in Teheran to remain in power would likely preclude for the foreseeable future a chance such as the one indicated to accomplish the kinds of objectives noted.

Q: Aside from preventing the development of a nuclear weapon and the additional envisioned possible results, are there any other reasons for U.S. military intervention in Iran?

Dr. Anthony: Unmentioned thus far is another strategic gambit, one that was in play in the lead-up to the American military attack against Iraq and that in the present circumstances applies also to Iran, only more so. In the period preceding the American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, I and others attended numerous meetings in which the topic of discussion was America's relations with the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf countries, and the broader Middle Eastern and Islamic worlds. In some of the meetings, various American specialists argued forcefully, and here I paraphrase, that, "We've got our heads upside down, inside out, and backwards – we should be invading Iran first, Iraq second, Syria third, and either Egypt or Saudi Arabia, fourth or fifth."

These and other American strategists in favor of regime change in Tehran are believed by analysts in the Arab Gulf countries and elsewhere to have the following additional objectives in mind with regard to Iran's energy resources. An ongoing frame of reference is an American quest to gain access to Iran and Iraq's energy sectors, a quest synonymous with a strategic economic and related interest frequently expressed by Dick Cheney in the 1990s when he was out of office and serving as the chief executive of one of the world's largest oil services companies.

In those days, Mr. Cheney would refer, in effect, to "America's self-inflicted wound." In so doing, he was understood to have meant that the United States had been made to pay an enormous cost for its adherence to the energy and other economic-related sanctions in place against Baghdad and Tehran. In thereby precluding American access to these two countries' energy resources, it was his view but by no means his alone that Washington had no one to blame but itself.

A second frame of reference is related not only to gaining American access to Iranian and Iraqi energy resources and these countries' potentially lucrative economies as a whole. It is related also to the goal of being able, if at all possible, to limit, influence, or in varying degrees control the terms as well as the extent to which such American global strategic competitors as China and Russia will be able to benefit from such access in the future.

Without stating it in so many words, the advocates of regime change in Baghdad and Tehran alike have usually attached a proviso to these and related views. In the event the replacement regimes in Baghdad and Tehran could in some major way be persuaded to favor Washington for their having ascended to power, it has all along been believed that a possible result could be of enormous strategic benefit to the United States in the form of a major strategic setback to Beijing and Moscow.

Such an objective, many defense analysts contend, is implicit in the U.S. Defense Policy Guidance (DPG) of 1992. When the DPG was being drafted, a U.S. government official elected to provide me an oral summary of it for the purpose of asking me to critique it and offer comments. The official indicated that as the draft did not then have an official title, he and his fellow drafters referred to it informally as "20-20 Vision."

The purpose of the exercise, the official said, was to provide answers to a fundamental, long-term, overriding American strategic challenge. The challenge, reduced to a question, was, "What

would the United States need to still have in place (that was in place then, in 1992) in 2020 A.D. in order to remain the world's sole superpower?" The official indicated that an emerging consensus among the drafters was that the question had three answers, each of which was related to the other two.

One requirement would be that the United States would have to still be supreme in the following five interrelated sectors of global power: economic, financial, technological, military, and industrial. The second, related requirement, one deemed vital to ongoing predominance in all five of these sectors, would be unhindered access to adequate amounts of energy at manageable prices. The third necessity, in turn deemed vital to meeting the first two, would be unrivalled and assured access to the energy resources of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf in particular.



Image courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Using this set of lenses and looking ahead to the period between the present and the next dozen years, Iran comes into focus in a way quite different than many non-specialists have hitherto perceived. For example, Iran is seen as the one remaining Gulf country not yet “locked into place,” not yet restructured and repositioned to play the role envisioned for it by those who drafted the 1992 DPG, many of whom are still in government service.

If one looks elsewhere in the Gulf, especially among the region’s seven Arab countries, it will be revealed that in varying degrees all seven have the following in common. At present, they are effectively under massive and pervasive U.S. influence with regard to their national external

interests and key foreign policy objectives. They are also under American overall domination in matters bearing on regional stability, security, and defense issues. In contrast, Iran is the sole remaining country lying outside this orbit.

Consider the following as but a few of the strategic features driving such analyses and assessments as they pertain to Iran unlike or more than Iraq.

One, Iraq is perceived by many as barely a "card-carrying" Gulf country." A reason is that it has less than 50 miles of coast.

Two, Iraq has only three ports and much of its offshore territory lies in shallow water that tends to accumulate silt. The latter reality limits the extent to which Iraq's ports can presently be used or modernized and developed in the future.

In marked contrast, Iran has 550 miles of territory on the Gulf coast. It also, potentially, has as many as 20 ports, among which several could be strengthened and expanded extensively, while others could be built, enabling the country to process its imports and exports far more effectively and profitably than at present.

Three, although it is a Gulf country Iraq could not be situated further from the globally vital maritime artery of the Hormuz Strait; Iran, however, lies directly across from it.

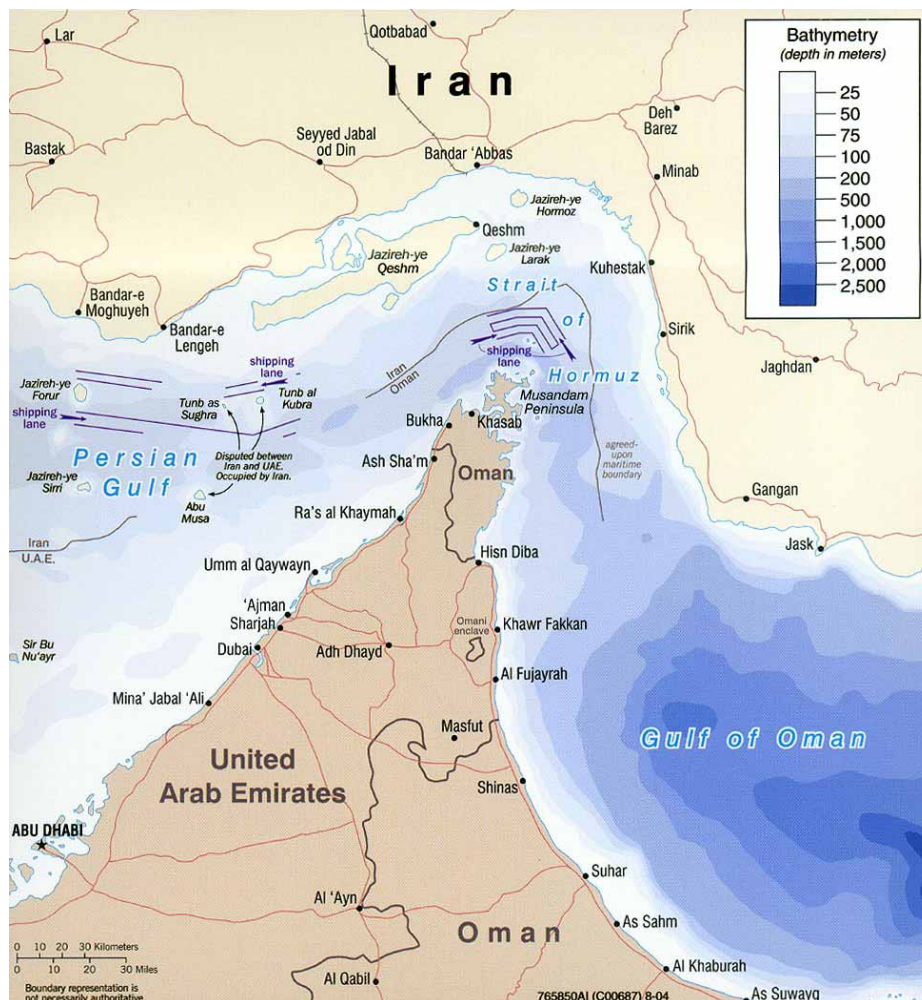


Image courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Four, Iran, unlike Iraq, is unique among energy producers in the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world. In these three contiguous geographic regions, it is a one-of-a-kind country. For example, in addition to its own prodigious reserves of oil and gas, which place it among the world's top three producers and deposit holders in both categories, it is situated adjacent to *two* of the world's remaining vast energy reservoirs: the Caspian Sea and the Gulf. From this actual and potential energy perspective alone, Iraq pales in comparison.

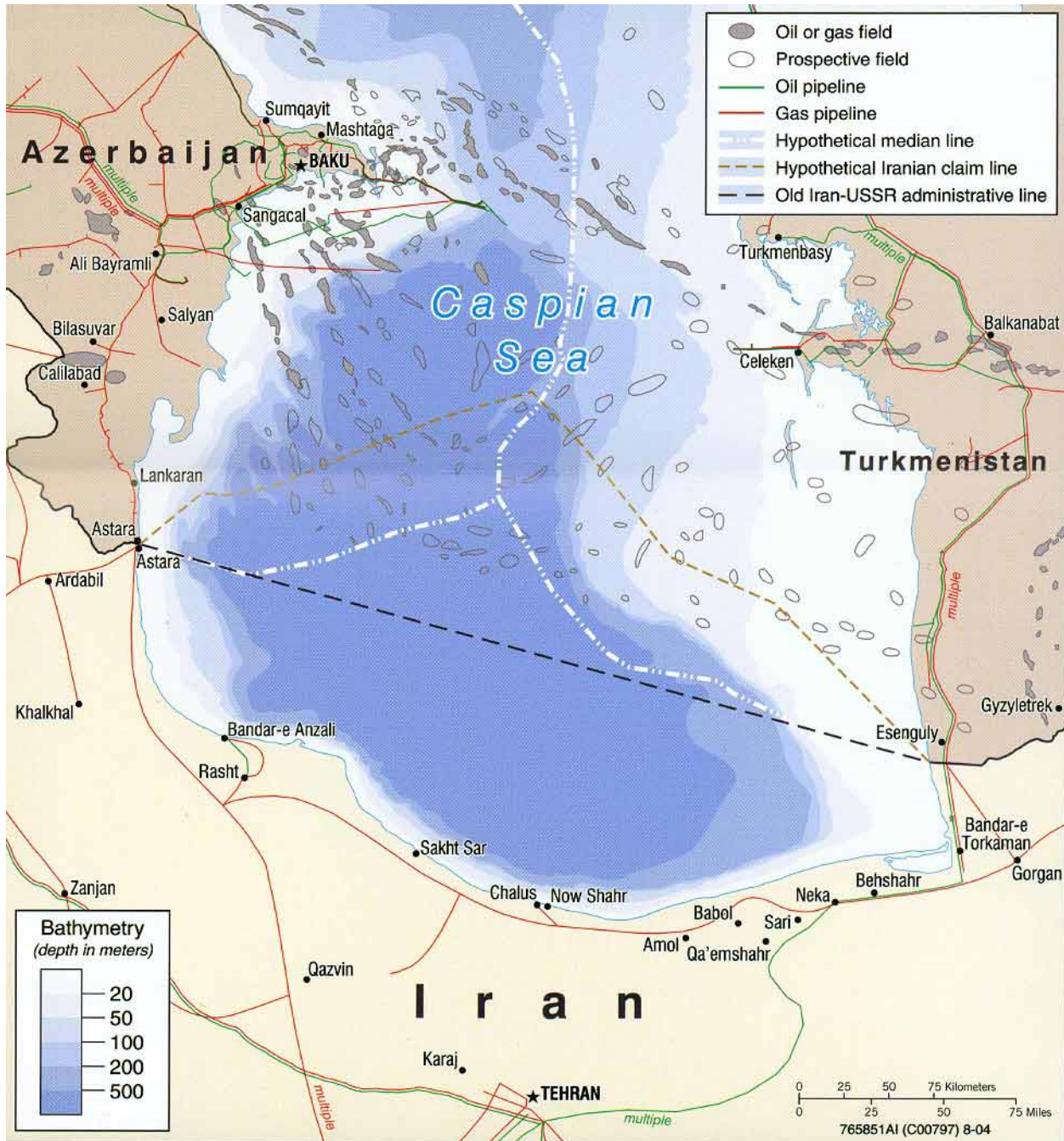


Image courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Q: Could trade be leveraged in relation to Iran?

DR. ANTHONY: It is difficult to see how it could be leveraged at this point, given that it hardly exists, but when the atmosphere improves many will be eager to forge mutually beneficial commercial ties.

The last time Iran and the United States were close to doing so was 1995. That's when a major business deal valued at 2.3 billion dollars was concluded between Iran and a major American energy firm. Tehran granted Conoco a concession to develop oil and gas in the South Pars field offshore Iran.

The Israeli lobby was adamantly opposed. It pressured the White House to prevent the arrangement from going forward, and President Clinton buckled. Using executive privilege, Clinton announced in March 1995 that he had vetoed the concession. Two months later, he issued a second executive order, one that, in effect, tightened the screws. He inserted an "extra-territoriality clause" (ETC) into the already existing unilaterally imposed American economic sanctions against Iran. The ETC was aimed not only at American businesses but also foreign firms. It specified a 40 million dollar cap for *any* foreign investment in Iran's energy sectors.

A company or government of a country that invested more than the specified amount in Iran's oil or gas industries would be put on notice by Washington officialdom. A result would be that, as far as the United States was concerned, it could not proceed without potential consequences. Any attempt to do so, for example, could trigger a mechanism whereby the foreign investor could be labeled a "reputational risk." This in turn could prompt a reevaluation or even denial of any special privileges or regulatory benefits the investing company or government had or might hope to obtain in the United States.

(Since 2006, the UN Security Council has associated itself with the United States in three additional sets of economic sanctions against Iran. Meanwhile, Washington and other countries' capitals have introduced further measures aimed at tightening Iran's international financial isolation.)

Not surprisingly, many American and other corporate leaders have reacted negatively to these measures. In their view, the enactment, enforcement, and expansion of such restrictive actions have harmed the United States more than other countries. Worse, they have done little if anything to diminish Iran's regional influence or the nature and orientation of its government policies.

In addition, the sanctions have failed to advance what U.S. Vice President Cheney and many others years ago argued, as noted, is an American national interest in becoming directly involved in the development of Iran and Iraq's energy resources. In Iraq, as analysts from one end of the Gulf to the other are quick to emphasize, one of the consequences of the U.S.-led attack is that the exact same interest and strategic policy objective is well on its way to being achieved.

In Iran, which has been under mainly American-led sanctions for a far longer period than Baghdad was prior to the attack on Iraq, this specific interest has remained dead in the water until now. This is but one example of how the absence of robust and reciprocally rewarding trade relations between Iran and the United States has been costly to both sides. The case can be made that had these relations not been ruptured, or had they been restored long before now, the world

would not be where it is at the present: facing the potential of an American and/or Israel attack on Iran.

Here is a case where reality brooks no illusion. An underlying reality in this instance is that, on one hand, the United States remains the world's single largest consumer and importer of energy. On the other, Iran remains one of the world's largest producers and exporters of energy. From the perspective of economists and business analysts irrespective of their nationality, a more natural mix and match of commercial needs and potentially mutual benefits would be hard to imagine.

Viewed from the same vantage point, the United States is seen by many as having been self-defeating and lacking in wisdom in deliberately excluding itself from two of the largest pools of remaining hydrocarbon deposits on the planet. In doing so, in the eyes of numerous energy specialists, the United States not only shot itself in the foot but demonstrated a remarkable capacity to reload faster than anybody else.

The commercial cost to the United States of denying its economy and citizens the benefits of securing this interest can be measured in numerous ways but especially commercially. None deny, for example, that the United States and its allies, for decades and counting, have derived massive and pervasive commercial and related advantages from Arabia, the Gulf, and the Middle East's prodigious, easily accessible, and relatively low cost fuel.

Oil and gas have fueled the engine of American and global economic growth for nearly half a century. The same sources of energy have been vital to the American peoples' high standard of living practically nonstop since the end of the Second World War. The same energy sources have also been vital to the material well-being of America's allies over an even longer course of time.

Truths often have consequences. Those noted illustrate a glaring disconnect between U.S. policy in support of sanctions, on one hand, and the ongoing economic, commercial, and related needs of the American economy, on the other. Yet U.S. energy companies are not alone in opposing the sanctions on Iran. They comprise but one component of a much larger American commercial sector that views Iran as a potentially vast marketplace.

Little wonder why. For starters, Iran has more than three times the population of Iraq and therefore three times as many potential consumers. Iran also possesses the world's third largest petroleum reserves and second largest gas reserves. As has long been widely recognized, these reserves, in order to produce maximum economic benefits, require substantial injections of precisely the kinds of state-of-the-art technology that American companies own and could provide Iran but are prohibited from doing so because of the sanctions.

Being able to meet such trade, investment, and energy technology needs is beyond question essential to Iran. Dick Cheney, large numbers in America's energy industries, and influential American strategists, as indicated, recognize that the same three factors are essential to the United States. On Iran's side, only by meeting such needs will it be able to increase the level of its energy production as well as exports and expand the number, productivity, and efficiency of its refineries. Likewise, only by meeting such needs will Iran be able to more effectively utilize its energy resources as the lowest cost fuel possible for driving the country's future economic growth. On the U.S. side, being involved in Iran's energy industries would enable Americans to

better meet their economic and commercial needs. That America's competitors view Iran similarly is telling.

But U.S. energy and commercial interests are not the only components within the American private sector that long to see the lifting of sanctions against Iran. Many in America's financial sectors look forward to the post-sanctions era when they might once again be able to help underwrite various facets of the reconstruction, modernization, and development of Iran's economy. Aligned with them are U.S. companies keen to reintroduce American expertise to the Iranian economy in the areas of design, engineering, procurement, and construction. Such expertise could go a long way towards improving Iran's infrastructure together with bolstering its industrial and manufacturing potential.

The fact that U.S. policies preclude such obvious commercial and related benefits to the private sectors of Iran and the United States is a matter of concern not only to Americans and Iranians. It is also a concern to the friends of both peoples elsewhere, including the rest of the Gulf in particular. Such concerns are a major part of the uncertainties that cloud the prospects for regional stability and security in the period ahead.

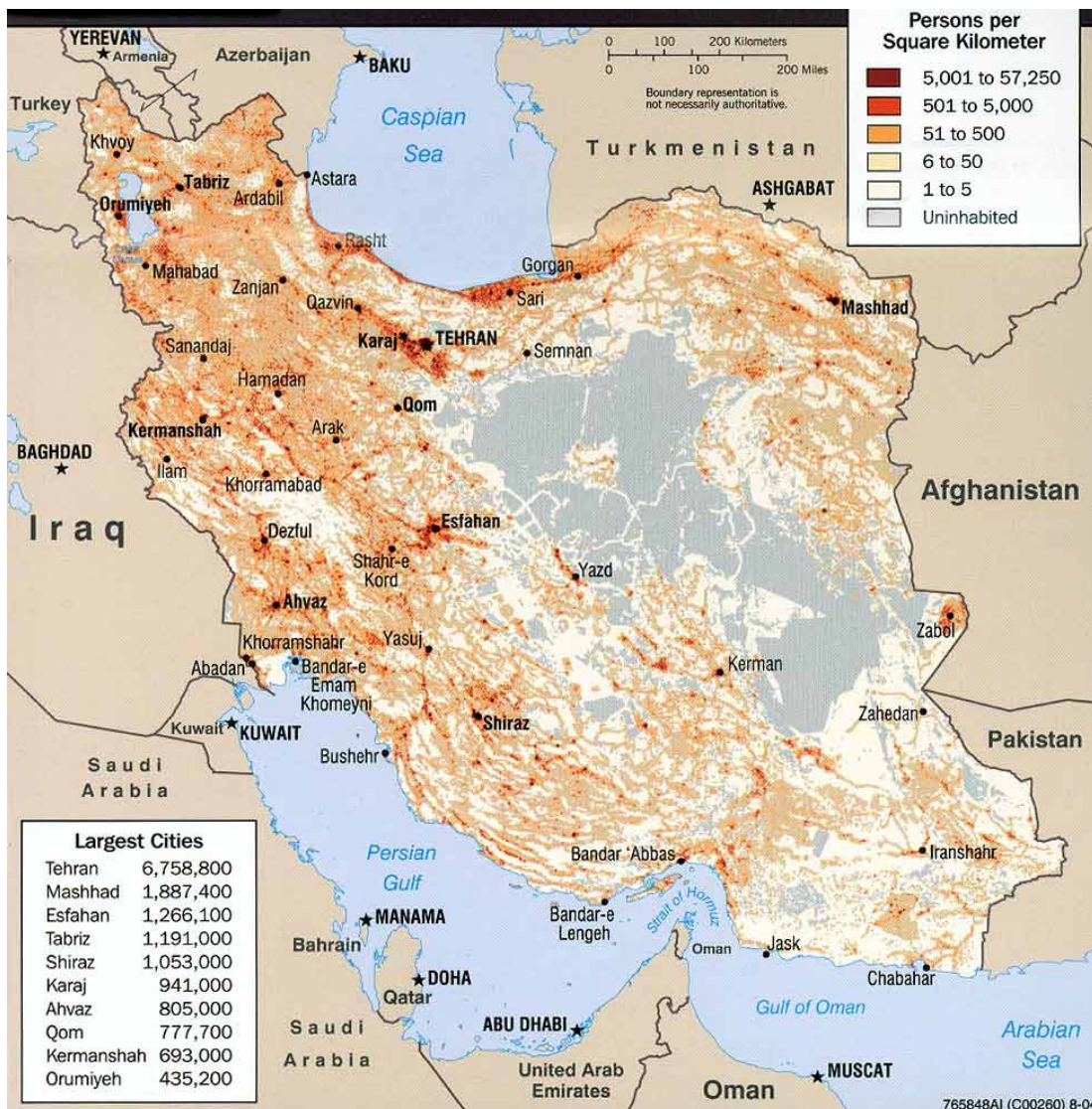


Image courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Elevating the concerns among some international investors and business strategists are anxieties about the coming changes of government in Israel and the United States after their respective forthcoming elections. In large measure because of the nature of the domestic political dynamics in both countries, regional analysts throughout the region do not expect Jerusalem and/or Washington to cease implying what they are prepared to do to Iran, by force if necessary.

If the sinews of commerce had been in place between Iran and the United States all along, the prospects for an attack would undoubtedly be less alarming or likely than in some respects they remain. However, none within the region with whom I have spoken has been able to make a case as to when the trade and investment sanctions might end or even begin to recede.

Q: What are some possible consequences from the range of continued ambivalence and uncertainties regarding not just Iran's position and role in the Middle East but also America's and Israel's?

Dr. Anthony: Regarding the implications for American and regional interests stemming from the lack of serious and sustained U.S. engagement with Iran, one consequence has to do with business interests. In this regard, few people outside the Arab Gulf states are aware of how much larger and more robust the American commercial community in the GCC region has become in the past few years. For example, three years ago there were 500 U.S. firms in these countries; the number now exceeds 1,000 in the UAE alone and another 200 in Saudi Arabia.

What practically all longtime American corporate representatives in these countries agree on is the following. It is the perceived linkage between the Gulf and the Arab-Israeli conflict. More specifically, it is the connection between the nature, seriousness, and extent of U.S. efforts to move the Arab-Israeli conflict, on one hand, to a peaceful and satisfactory resolution, on the other. The linkage between the two is directly tied to the overall degree of trust and confidence the American business community in the Gulf is able to experience and enjoy. This is not new; despite many claiming that no linkages exist, the ones noted have been evident for decades.

Three powerful examples are frequently cited. One is the September 1991 Madrid Conference, brokered by the United States six months after the reversal of Iraq's aggression against Kuwait, followed later in the 1990s by the Oslo Accords. Each of these pioneering breakthroughs raised the spirits of many Arabs and Israelis that a meaningful peace might finally be near to hand.

The second example took place in tandem with those events: the four consecutive Middle East and North Africa economic summits facilitated by the United States during the first half of the 1990s. At and in between these summits, numerous Arab and Israeli corporate representatives explored the prospects for how they might do business together in the event a meaningful peace accord was reached.

The third example was the United States' brokering of a peace accord between Israel and Jordan in 1994 and the establishment of joint economic investment zones between the two countries.

Viewed by the participants in these developments from the perspective of the rear view mirror, those were halcyon days. What remained to be achieved in terms of a series of Israeli-Arab peace agreements seemed at the time, if not exactly imminent, then eventually reachable. Indeed, that which the first Bush administration and the Clinton administration were able to help

Arabs and Israelis achieve was hardly minor or irrelevant. It gave hope not only to many Israelis, Palestinians, and Syrians, but also to the thousands of Americans, their counterparts, and others who lived elsewhere in the region, including in Arabia and the Gulf.

Within the eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf almost equally, the nature and extent of American leadership in evidence in those days made the overall regional atmosphere receptive and the political moment, for the most part, unusually propitious. Like nothing before, it helped facilitate meetings between Israelis and Arabs in which both sides proceeded seriously to examine how to lay to rest the region's oldest, largest, and most pervasive impediment to Arab-Israeli regional cooperation and development.

Among the six GCC countries, three of them -- Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar, each enjoying the endorsement and support of the GCC's three other member-states -- went out of their way to extend to Israeli officials the hand of recognition, peace, and the prospect of mutually beneficial cooperation. The fact that these countries' leaders felt confident doing so was not the result of accident, coincidence, or intra-regional and inter-regional dynamics alone. Rather, it was inspired and made possible to a great extent by the participants' belief that the Bush and Clinton administrations were serious.

While much of what transpired was hardly devoid of defect for having sown the seeds for further discord and violence, neither was the effort itself without meaning. Indeed, whenever the United States has been perceived by the Gulf Arab countries' leaders and ordinary citizens as doing the right thing in the right way at the right time for the right reasons with regard to the right people and the right issues -- and with regard to the latter, the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular -- the lesson has been clear. It has made it far easier for the resident American communities to live, work, be trusted, and succeed in this region.

But a corollary to the lesson has also been clear. It is, conversely, that whenever the United States has seemed unable or unwilling to give the Arab-Israeli conflict and related issues their due from the perspective of the region's Arab Christians and Muslims, as well as peace-minded Israelis, the situation on the ground within the GCC region, Iraq, Iran, and Israel has been much more dangerous than would otherwise be the case. Indeed, it has at times been near ruinous. More often than not, it has been fraught with innumerable uncertainties together with ominous indications and trends related to longer term implications for American interests, investments, overall involvement, and key foreign policy objectives in the region.

There is a second consequence of America's failure to address seriously and meaningfully the imperative of solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is linked to the implications for the same range of American national security, economic, and related interests, plus those of Israel, stemming from Israel's unwillingness to accept the March 31, 2002 pan-Arab peace proposal that was



Image courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

renewed during the past year. The proposal includes, among other things, the offer of all 22 Arab countries to establish normal diplomatic and other mutually beneficial relations with Israel.

The offer was not, and to this day is not, meant to be viewed as a unilateral act of preemptive capitulation. Rather, in straightforward fashion, the offer contains three important provisos. One is that, pursuant to the establishment of an Independent State of Palestine living alongside a secure, independent, and recognized State of Israel, the Israeli government, to derive the benefits from the proposal as offered, must agree to withdraw from the Palestinian and Syrian territories it has forcibly occupied since June 1967. Only by doing so can Israel claim to be in compliance with the United Nations Charter principle regarding “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.”

A second proviso is related. It is that Israel must accept the establishment of the capital of an independent State of Palestine in what, for centuries prior to the Israeli annexation of it after the 1967 war, was the predominantly Arab Christian and Muslim sector of East Jerusalem. Such an act, the proposal’s proponents explain, would not entail the “division” of Jerusalem as many falsely claim but, rather, a politically symbolic *sharing* of the city. Such an act, too, would go a long ways towards reflecting the November 1947 United Nations partition of Palestine resolution in which the governance of Jerusalem, given its sacrosanct religious affiliation with the adherents of all three of the Abrahamic/Ibrahmic monotheistic faiths, namely Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, be administered in accordance with the concept and principle of a *corpus separatum*.

A third proviso has to do with the necessity of finding a “reasonable” solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees. Here the key concept is the one in quotation marks. The meaning of the phrase has been explained repeatedly as indicating exactly what it says. That is, it is *not* the same as that which has been claimed by the proposal's Israeli detractors and their American supporters, namely, that *all* the refugees, *e.g.* those dating from the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948-1949, and their progeny as well, must be repatriated. (Indeed, “reasonable” could be interpreted by the parties to include the repatriation of some, *i.e.*, an indeterminate number, of refugees; it could include, but not necessarily have to be limited to, the eventual repatriation of still other refugees and/or the provision of material compensation for the loss of their home, land, and/or other possessions; it could include mutually agreed land or other resource swaps, *etc.*)

With regard to the overall offer of peaceful and normalized Arab relations with Israel, and all three provisos, the 22 Arab heads of state have remained in unanimous agreement since the proposal was first put to Israel more than half a decade ago. Among the ongoing consequences of the prolonged American and Israel procrastinations regarding their respective inability to launch and sustain meaningful movement with regard to the proposal and the interrelated issues it addresses, as noted, are the following. Without a serious, effective, and measurable engagement by the United States with Iran, on one hand, and, on the other hand, meaningful progress relating to Israel with regard to settling the Arab-Israeli conflict, achievement of a situation where the Arab Gulf region, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere are rendered stable and secure is likely to remain elusive.

At a minimum, the prospects for optimism regarding long term Gulf stability and security in particular will remain less than favorable. The regional financial, business, and investment fronts are cases in point. For example, Arab Gulf actors and their American and other associates’ ability to plan, prepare, and anticipate effectively will likely continue to remain daunted by the adage that, wherever commercial circumstances tend to be characterized by grave and

unpredictable uncertainties and risks, capital tends to be a coward. The truism of this maxim would appear to be as obvious as it is also ominous with regard to this region as anywhere else.

Indeed, in this instance, the maxim would appear to be especially relevant in terms of Arabia and the Gulf, given their perceived and actual linkages to two kinds of oil: namely, turmoil and the other kind. This is but one context that underscores why many in the GCC region, Iran, and Iraq believe that what is most required of the United States to avoid yet another war in the Gulf is as obvious as it is imperative. It is to engage Iran, Israel, the Lebanese, Palestinians, and Syrians diplomatically in ways that are not pro forma but substantively serious, sustained, and comprehensive.

Q: Would a private diplomatic initiative and opening of the kind that former U.S. President Jimmy Carter conducted in North Korea work with Iran?

DR. ANTHONY: Whether it could succeed would depend in part on whether the Iranian government would agree to receive such a delegation, what its mission would be, and the caliber of the delegation's leaders and its members. Provided these criteria are met satisfactorily by the parties most directly concerned, and provided that other relevant parties are unable to indicate why such an initiative would likely do more good than harm, I would support the idea in principle. In saying so I am of course aware of how strongly a significant number of U.S. government representatives would oppose it.

Many would undoubtedly contend that the conduct of American diplomacy, by right and also by necessity, has traditionally been the exclusive prerogative of the executive branch and should remain there. As such, many would argue that nongovernmental diplomatic efforts in situations as dicey as this one ought not to come into play unless all else has failed and a case can be made that an initiative of this nature is absolutely necessary.

I am also appreciative of two other considerations. One is a matter of timing and begs the question not only of *whether* but also, if so, *when* it might be advisable to launch an initiative of this nature. At what point might the atmosphere be deemed especially receptive and/or the moment most politically propitious to do so? Is it now? If not, is it later? If so, would it be best to launch such an effort before or after the American elections? If the latter, would it be better to do so following the elections but prior to the inauguration of the next U.S. President? Or might it be at whatever point the United States and the other Great Power representatives involved agree and declare that diplomacy has been exhausted but, for whatever reason, many contend there is reason to believe the truth is the opposite?

This said, it is undeniable that some rather remarkable if unorthodox successes have occurred when the exercise of traditional diplomacy seemed to have been exhausted or deemed unlikely to bear fruit. Indeed, there are numerous historical examples of instances where the need for other kinds of diplomatic overtures not only became painfully obvious and compelling to all, but ended up being authorized, pursued, and succeeding. There have been cases where private citizens succeeded in liberating hostages and in conducting search and rescue missions in which people's lives were saved, where individuals wrongly imprisoned were freed, and where the terms of persons rightly convicted of a crime were commuted or ended earlier than would likely otherwise have been the case.

All of which is but to underscore the importance not only of context with regard to the circumstances in which such an initiative might be launched but also a question of which tactics might have the greatest chance of success. Regarding the latter, must it always and forever be that only government diplomats be viewed as the sole possessors of patents on the process, trademarks on the technique, monopolies on the method, or copyrights on the concept?

The author would like to extend thanks to four individuals for special assistance: MEPC President Ambassador Chas Freeman for extending the invitation to address MEPC's Capitol Hill Conference; MEPC Acting Director Jon Roth and Middle East Policy Editor Anne Joyce for granting permission to peruse the briefing's unedited transcripts for use in preparing this essay; and Mark Morozink for assistance with the maps used to illustrate the text.