THE IRAN–SYRIA NEXUS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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THE IRAN–SYRIA NEXUS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 2013

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order. After recognizing myself and Ranking Member Deutch for 5 minutes each for our opening statements, I will then recognize other members seeking recognition for 1 minute and I hope that you do give a statement. We will then hear from our witnesses.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. And without objection, your prepared statements will be made a part of the record, and members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record subject to the length limitations and the rules.

The chair now recognizes herself for 5 minutes.

As the conflict in Syria continues, the numbers become even more staggering every day: Over 100,000 killed, 1.85 million refugees have fled the country with over ½ million going to our friend and ally Jordan, placing an extreme burden on our ally as it struggles to cope with the pressure of this mass influx and as the conflict threatens to cross its borders, and an additional 4.5 million Syrians have been internally displaced. Assad remains defiant and in fact his intransigence has become further entrenched thanks to the support from his allies such as Iran and Russia.

Iran along with North Korea has been cooperating with Syria and the Assad families for decades now, aiding Syria with its nuclear and chemicals weapons program, as well as its ballistic missile program. Damascus is Iran's linchpin in the Middle East. Tehran reportedly helped finance Syria's secret nuclear plant, designed and built by North Korea and destroyed, thankfully, by the Israelis in 2007, and has also been linked with helping Assad expand his chemical weapons stockpile. According to assessments by the U.S. intelligence community, it judged with high confidence that chemical weapons were used by Assad on numerous occasions against the opposition, further amplifying the threat to the region and our national security interests.

Tehran has provided Assad billions of dollars in direct funds and recently extended an additional $4 billion line of credit to help fund

his brutal campaign against the opposition. Iran has sent military advisers and personnel to help Assad. Members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard have been sent to advise and fight along side Assad's forces as well as to help recruit external forces to come to the aid of the regime, including a large number of Iraqi Shiite militants and of course its proxy Hezbollah.

The Obama administration continues to take the misguided approach that negotiating with Tehran will bear fruit, but the actions of the regime say otherwise. Due to the lack of urgency on this administration's part to prevent Iran from becoming nuclear capable, I am also concerned that it is not giving the Iranian threat the priority and the immediate attention it requires.

Last Congress I authored and the President signed into law the toughest sanctions yet on record against the regime in Iran. Later this afternoon the House will vote on and we hope to pass today or tomorrow Chairman Royce's and Mr. Engel's Nuclear Iran Prevention Act, which will further strengthen sanctions against Iran and sends the Supreme Leader the message that a nuclear Iran is not an option.

So it is perhaps fitting that we are here today discussing this subject, especially with our distinguished panel of experts. But as we all know, Iran along with Russia has been a key arms supplier for Assad's forces. There are daily flights from Iran to Syria filled with arms and supplies for the regime. These flights continue to fly over Iraq with mere impunity and the United States must do more to urge al-Maliki and the Iraqis to interdict and prevent these arms deliveries from reaching Syria.

The Iran-Syria nexus has very serious consequences for our friend and ally, the Democratic Jewish state of Israel. The conflict is threatening to spread to Israel's borders and the fear of Assad's chemical weapons being moved and falling into the wrong hands is very real. Yet the Obama administration, prodded by some in Congress, has decided to send small arms and ammunition into the war zone.

I have always been and continue to be opposed to arming any rebels in Syria. I remain opposed to doing so. Instead of sending more arms, we should be looking at ways to stop the arms flowing into Syria from Iran, from Russia and we should be looking at breaking the Iran-Syria nexus. We must keep the pressure and increase sanctions on Iran and Syria.

In the wake of last month's election in Iran I must continue to caution the administration on offering more concessions to a State Sponsor of Terrorism that continues to undermine the stability in the region. No concessions and no waivers should be issued by the Obama administration until we see concrete and verifiable proof that Iran has begun to dismantle its nuclear program.

I must reiterate that this new leader is not the moderate that many have been so eager to believe in Iran. It is the Supreme Leader who still calls the shots and his nefarious ambitions have not been altered.

And with that, I am pleased to yield to the ranking member of our subcommittee, my colleague Mr. Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman, for holding this hearing. Thanks to the witnesses for being here. Iran's desta-

bilizing influence in the region, particularly in Syria, threatens to reshape the future of the Middle East by strengthening extremists by undermining moderate states and by fueling a dangerous arms race.

In its current state Syria is slowly on its way to a worst case scenario. With the help of Iran and Hezbollah, Assad appears to have stabilized his grip on western portions of the country, ensuring continued Iranian influence at least for the foreseeable future. Factor in the use of chemical weapons and the spillover of violence in the neighboring states, and we are dealing with a staggering political and humanitarian crisis.

The stats speak for themselves: In a country of 21 million inhabitants, nearly 8 million need humanitarian assistance, at least 100,000 have been killed, 4½ million internally displaced and 1.8 million sought refuge in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. A shocking average of 8,000 people flee Syria every day, a rate of refugee outflow unseen since the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

Amid all the human suffering, it is difficult to remember that the Syrian conflict was once a mass civic movement advocating for greater political freedom. Now it has morphed into a civil war between an externally armed insurgency and a brutal regime backed by Iran. Essentially, Syria has become a proxy war for competing regional forces like Iran. From the beginning Iran has provided arms, military advisers, and enormous financial assistance to bolster Assad. The opposition estimates that Iran is providing Assad with more than $500 million a month, and is flying in about 5 tons of military cargo per day.

Earlier this spring my colleagues and I sent a letter to Prime Minister Maliki asking him to inspect Iranian planes using Iraqi air space. This coupled with Secretary Kerry's efforts have led the Iraqi Government to inspect about a third of the Iranian flights. It is a good step by the Maliki government but we know this isn't good enough as Iran is able to manipulate their flight schedules to ensure that their weapons go to Syria unabated. Therefore, we must therefore continue to press the Iraqis to search all flights, to actively prevent weapons from flowing to Assad's forces.

The removal of Assad would deal a devastating blow to the Iranian regime's ability to get heavy weaponry into Lebanon. From terror attacks in Europe and Latin America, Hezbollah has long done Iran's bidding around the world. In Syria, Hezbollah has openly intervened on Assad's side with more than 5,000 fighters and is largely responsible for Assad's reclaimed territory in the areas around Damascus and the City of Homs. Simply put, Hezbollah's operations in Syria have become a game changer. Iranian Hezbollah intervention has spurred greater sectarian tension with almost daily calls from regional Sunni leaders for a jihad against Iran and Assad. However, we have seen the Gulf Coast countries react constructively with planned sanctions against Hezbollah. It is likely that these sanctions will be more potent than those imposed by the EU.

Europe has taken an important step, but they and we can go further in sanctioning Hezbollah. Unfortunately, the secondary outcomes of this conflict are far more negative than positive. Lebanon and Iraq, two states with tenuous power sharing agreements, are

seriously threatened by a spillover of sectarian violence. The economic burden of hosting refugees is threatening to destabilize Jordan. And Hezbollah's involvement has only furthered a frightening arms race among the region's extremists. For example, last month a group of hardline Islamists in Kuwait auctioned off cars to raise cash to arm 12,000 Syrian rebels with guided missiles, heat seeking missiles, and tandem warheads. My colleagues and I are right to worry about how arms might end up in extremists' hands. We have got to face the facts, the extremists already have them, so what is next? We know that if the Syrian regime survives Hezbollah will be strengthened and Iran's interventionist policy will only result in more aggressive behavior. Yet numerous questions remain. How do we safely support any moderates in Syria? What, if any, change will a new President have on Iranian decision making in Syria? And finally, in an economy that is being struggled by sanctions, how do we put more pressure on the Iranian regime to end their support for Assad? What more can we do to pressure the Iranians?

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses on these and many other questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Deutch, for your opening statement.

The following members have requested 1 minute statements. If you are not on the list, please let us know. Mr. Chabot and then Mr. Schneider and Mr. Kinzinger. We will start with Mr. Chabot of Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a markup in Judiciary so I will be leaving, being back and forth. So I apologize for that in advance.

The terror imposed by the Syrian people by the Assad regime with the help of the Iranian mullahs is horrifying. Since last spring estimates suggest nearly 90,000 people have been killed and the mass exodus of refugees to neighboring nations continues unabated. The humanitarian crisis is getting worse by the day. In previous hearings over the last year or so some of us have expressed skepticism about the steps that the Obama administration was taking or not taking in Syria and concerns that U.S. efforts would not ultimately result in Assad's removal from power.

Here we are today and the Assad regime is still thriving because of the supply of weapons, fighters and cash from Iran creating an even more dangerous environment which is destabilizing the entire region and threatening the security of nations like Israel, Jordan and Lebanon. Iran wants Assad to win this fight because his removal would be a decisive setback for its own nefarious plans in the region. Consequently the mullahs in Iran are doing whatever they can to ensure it preserves its influence no matter what happens in Syria. And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chabot.

Mr. Schneider.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank, you and thank you to the witnesses for joining us today.

The insertion of foreign fighters, weapons and financial support from the Iranian Government into Syria in support of the Assad regime has been well documented. We know definitively that Iran

has also worked through its proxy Hezbollah to further assert its influence over the current conflict in Syria has seen some success in swinging the momentum that once appeared to favor the opposition forces.

I look forward to hearing from the panel on several related topics, including how prolonged Iranian influence could contribute to the breakup of the current Syrian state, and the implications for long-term U.S. interest and interests of our regional allies.

I am increasingly concerned that the fighting between Kurdish, al Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra, opposition forces and other militias in Syria will only provide greater space for Iran to exert its influence over the future state of Syria, to the detriment of our interests and that of our allies.

I look forward to hearing from the panel on these issues, and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have been very vocal about my concern about the lack of policy and the lack of focus of this administration when it comes to the Middle East.

The situation in Syria is one that many of us were discussing 2 years ago, 100,000 lives ago. And I believe that then was the time for action to be taken at a point when you had a moderate opposition and we had the ability to get in there and ensure that Assad didn't survive.

When I was in Iraq as a military guy, one of the worst kept secrets in Iraq was the role that Iran was playing in that war and the lives that Iran has personally cost American soldiers. I have been concerned at the lack of a clear red line for this administration when it comes to Iran's nuclear weapons, when it comes to Iran's support for bad people all around the globe. And I think it is important that this administration be very clear that Iran will not get nuclear weapons. And now that we see the joining of forces between Iran and Syria and Assad, I think this administration needs to be deadly clear that continued relationships like that will have long-term devastating results for the Iranian regime.

With that, I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.

Any other members seek recognition? If not, I am so pleased to welcome our witnesses. First, we welcome back to our subcommittee Ambassador John Bolton, a Foreign Policy Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Ambassador Bolton was appointed as the Permanent Representative to the U.N. in 2005 where he was a leading voice for—I would say the only leading voice, but maybe there are others, for institutional reform at the U.N. and also against international proliferation and terrorism and a strong advocate for human rights. Prior to this the Ambassador served as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security from 2001 to 2005.

Thank you for your service and welcome back, sir.

Next we are so pleased to welcome Mr. Mark Dubowitz, the Executive Director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, where he leads projects on sanctions, nonproliferation and countering electronic repression. Mr. Dubowitz is the coauthor of eight

studies on economic sanctions against Iran and he is also the co-chair of the Project on U.S. Middle East Nonproliferation Strategy.

We welcome you, Mr. Dubowitz.

Third, we welcome Dr. Daniel Brumberg, a Senior Program Officer with the Center for Conflict Management at the U.S. Institute of Peace, where he focuses on issues of democracy and political reform in the Middle East and the wider Islamic world. Dr. Brumberg is also an associate professor at Georgetown University, a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Democracy, and the chairman of the Foundation on Democratization and Political Change in the Middle East.

Welcome gentlemen, and as I said, your statements have been made a part of the record. If you could keep your remarks to 5 minutes, that would be good.

Ambassador Bolton.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN BOLTON, SENIOR FELLOW, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (FORMER UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS)

Ambassador BOLTON. Madam Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I thought perhaps it might be useful to look at the Syria-Iran nexus from the strategic perspective of the entire region in the Middle East because so much is going wrong, almost all of it adverse to American interests, from the disintegration of Libya after the over throw of Khadafi to the turmoil in Egypt, the civil war in Syria, the disintegration of Yemen, the political turmoil in Bahrain and other countries, the effective loss of representative government in Iraq, and obviously the ominous presence of Iran. Events in the region I think are closer to slipping out of control and becoming more adverse to the United States than in any historical period I can think of since the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, that period up until the Six-Day War in 1967.

And yet we have at the moment in Washington and in Europe a return to the notion that if only you could solve or at least make progress in the Israel-Palestinian issue, that somehow everything else would be easier to resolve. And yet if you look at each and every one of the crises gripping the region that I mention, all of them taken together have almost nothing whatever to do with the Israel-Palestinian issue. And if tomorrow we learn that the negotiators had resolved the Israel-Palestinian issue, that would have almost no consequence whatever for the ongoing threats to stability in the region and American interests.

So given that there are only 24 hours a day and given that everybody has to prioritize, I think from the perspective of protecting American national interests we have to ask ourselves what are the key priorities, what are the main threats to our interest in strategic stability in the region? And while they are not responsible for everything that is going wrong, it seems to me that all of the major problems we face stem from Iran, from its pursuit of geographic and political hegemony, the arc of influence it has created from Iran itself through the al-Maliki regime in Iraq, the Assad regime in Syria and terrorist Hezbollah in Lebanon. One element is Iran's

continuing support for terrorism, Hezbollah now, as before Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Iran for decades has been the world central banker of terrorism supplying arms and other assistance as well. And then the third major threat obviously is Iran's nuclear weapons program, 20 years in the search for deliverable nuclear weapons capability.

Virtually all of Iran's objectives are being pursued without an effective response from the United States. The sanctions that we have pursued have in the words of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Yukiya Amano, just a month ago, effectively had no consequence on the Iranian program. Personally I think the sanctions are a good idea because they put pressure on the regime and our ultimate objective should be bringing the regime in Tehran down. But nobody should be under any illusions that Iran is determined enough to have nuclear weapons and the sanctions won't deter it.

It is also no surprise that Iranian Revolutionary Guard officers and others and now Hezbollah have come into the conflict in Syria. Iran was always prepared to shed a lot of Syrian blood to keep the Assad regime in power, and it will continue to do that because the influence it has over Syria fits all three of its objectives, including, I believe, more that we will find out in the area of nuclear, biological and chemical warfare. The Al-Khobar reactor destroyed by the Israeli Air Force in September 2007 didn't get there accidentally and there may well be other aspects of Iranian influence.

And I think it is critical for Iran to maintain the viability of Hezbollah as a threat to Israel. Indeed, if Israel makes the critical decision that it is now facing whether to take preemptive military action against the Iranian nuclear weapons program, the third time in its history that Israel will have done so in its own self defense, I think the most likely Iranian response will be to unleash Hezbollah and Hamas to rocket targets inside Israel, which simply makes this question that much more difficult for Israel.

And yet in response to all this, the American policy is not just ineffective, it is very sadly lacking. I think we are in for much greater danger in the coming years.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Bolton follows:]

Testimony of

John R. Bolton

On

The Iran-Syria Nexus and Its Implications for the Middle East

Before the

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

2:30 P.M Wednesday, July 31, 2013

2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

Thank you, Madam Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify on the Iran-Syria nexus and its implications for the broader Middle East.

Since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein a decade ago, there has been no greater threat to international peace and security in the Middle East, and perhaps worldwide, than the regime in Tehran. Both as the central banker for, and leading state sponsor of, international terrorism, and through its relentless pursuit of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction ("WMD") and their delivery systems, Iran poses a direct threat to key American interests, friends and allies in the region and globally. The ayatollahs are pursuing geographic hegemony over the other oil-producing states of the Middle East, religious and ideological pre-eminence within the Islamic world, and a larger role on the global stage directly contrary to fundamental American interests in virtually every aspect.

In the region, Iran has established an arc of dominance that extends from its own territory through the al-Maliki regime in Iraq, and includes the Assad family/Ba'ath Party regime in Syria and terrorist Hezbollah in Lebanon. Tehran's program of at subversion targets Bahrain and other Arab states across the Gulf, as well as providing money, weapons and other support for terrorist Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In the recent past, Iran has engaged in, among other things, arming, financing, training, and in some cases leading terrorists who attacked U.S. and other coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as making extensive efforts to influence the internal politics of those two countries, among others.

Iran is an equal-opportunity state sponsor of terrorism, aiding Shia terrorists in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as Sunni Hamas in Gaza and Taliban in Afghanistan. The regime's mullahs are fully willing and capable of behaving opportunistically even with sworn enemies in their region and religion to be able to oppose the United States and its allies more effectively. They are ruthless opponents whom we underestimate at our peril. And many are doing just that with their naïve assessments of Iran's new President, Hassan Rouhani.

In the nuclear-weapons field, Tehran has for twenty years been pursuing the objective of securing deliverable nuclear capabilities, and today it is perilously close to achieving that goal. Iran is systematically building a broad and deep nuclear and ballistic-missile infrastructure, not racing simply to fabricate one or two nuclear devices. It has succeeded in making progress across the entire nuclear-fuel cycle despite economic sanctions, and it has successfully launched several earth satellites.

Tehran may well have facilities and capabilities that our intelligence has missed or underestimated. Iran and North Korea, for example, have cooperated extensively for at least fifteen years on their respective ballistic missile programs. There is every reason to believe that they cooperate as well in the nuclear field, which would have, among other things, a very material effect in underestimating how close Iran is in achieving its nuclear ambitions. The Al-Kibar reactor under construction by North Korea, destroyed by Israeli bombing in September, 2007, was very likely an example of just such cooperation.

Accordingly, viewed in light of Iran's regional and ideological objectives, the civil war in Syria is about much more than simply whether the Assad regime remains in power or not. For

Iran, the loss of influence in Syria represented by Assad's fall would be a serious geostrategic setback. Simply as a matter of logistics and operations, replacing Assad with a Sunni regime in Damascus would separate Hezbollah from its major sources of supply and vital transit routes for weapons, personnel and money, and jeopardize Hezbollah's continuing viability in Lebanon.

Moreover, there are substantial reasons to believe that Syria has long partnered with Iran in numerous highly sensitive efforts, most notably the nuclear reactor destroyed in 2007. Madam Chairman, you will recall that ten years ago, I testified before your committee on Syrian WMD programs, including Syria's palpable interest in nuclear weapons. You also chaired a separate, classified session where I presented a detailed assessment of WMD activities in Syria, a testimony that many in the bureaucracy fought hard to block because they disputed the evidence about Syrian WMD efforts. Ten years later, I stand by that testimony. I understand that this Committee holds the sole remaining copy of this classified hearing.

Some, including then-Senator Joseph Biden, objected to my analysis at that time, on the ground that Syria did not have the financial resources to sustain its own nuclear-weapons program. Obviously, as we now know, someone was funding construction of that nuclear reactor in Syria, and it almost certainly did not involve North Korea providing its designs and workers *pro bono*. The obvious answer to any financial shortfall by Syria, if that was the case, would be for Iran to assume the costs, which Iran would have considerable incentive to do.

In short, the Al-Kibar reactor could well have been the business of a three-way joint venture among Iran, Syria and North Korea, inuring to the benefit of all three in different ways:

-- hard-currency earnings for Pyongyang and possibly access to spent fuel from the reactor for reprocessing to extract plutonium;

-- a clandestine nuclear reactor for Tehran and possibly additional projects on both the front and back ends of the nuclear-fuel cycle, all hidden from international surveillance; and

-- participation in a rapidly progressing nuclear weapons program for Damascus.

Such a relationship would also have clearly enhanced the already large Iranian role in Syrian defense and security matters, thus tightening Iran's hold over the Assad regime.

We have much more to learn on this subject, including what other nuclear-related activities beyond the reactor might have been underway (or still are). Syria's continued, indeed adamant refusal to allow any but the most cursory inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency ("IAEA") support the hypothesis that more was going on, although we remain in the dark as to exactly what might be involved. For example, the intelligence community assessed that the al-Kibar reactor was close to start-up in 2007, which makes it likely that Syria had already constructed or purchased uranium fuel rods. If so, where did those fuel rods come from, and where are they today?

Confronted, therefore, two years ago with a spontaneous, indigenous challenge to the Assad regime in Syria, Iran reacted predictably, making it clear that it was prepared to shed a lot of Syrian blood to keep the regime in power. Aid in material forms, and including participation

by officers of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and others, and now the open, unambiguous presence in Syria of Hezbollah fighters, makes it clear that Iran has not wavered in the slightest in supporting Assad.

Similarly, Russia has been steadfast in providing support for the Ba'ath Party dictatorship, hoping thereby to maintain in power its one sure ally in the Arab world, as well as access to the Tartus naval facility, which could well play a vital role in an expanded, more-aggressive Russian naval posture across the Mediterranean Sea and throughout North Africa and the Middle East. Russia's interests in Syria do not entirely coincide with Iran's, but they converge sufficiently to make them the most important "friends of Assad's Syria."

Those who believed that Russia could be a partner in easing Assad out of power, including the Obama Administration, therefore, never fully understood or appreciated these vital interests of Russia and Iran. Even after Russia and China cast double vetoes against proposed Security Council sanctions resolutions on three separate occasions, the Obama Administration's rhetoric continued to stress its reliance on cooperation with Russia to resolve the Syrian conflict. Accordingly, having seen the United States waste over two years in diplomacy with Russia doomed to failure, we must now unfortunately conclude that the chaos in Syria today may be beyond the point where outside intervention at any realistic level can make a material difference. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Martin Dempsey's recent statements on U.S. military options underline precisely this point.

Had the United States acted decisively to aid the Syrian opposition much earlier, there is at least a theoretical possibility that we could have made a difference. But taking on Assad even at the outset ineluctably meant taking on Iran, and it seems clear that the Obama Administration was unwilling to do anything that would jeopardize its long-sought objective of negotiations with Iran over its nuclear-weapons program. Since I believe that diplomatic efforts with Iran are, at best, a waste of time, the loss of the prospect of negotiations should not have been troubling.

For well or ill, however, all of these potential historical scenarios are now unavailable to us. We see Iran making steady, seemingly inexorable progress toward obtaining deliverable nuclear weapons. And because of the growing size of its nuclear establishment, when the day comes that Iran announces it is a nuclear-weapons state, it will not do so with a handful of nuclear weapons in its arsenal, but with scores or even hundreds. And the chaos in Syria only grows worse, with the United Nations now estimating the death toll of two-plus years of fighting to exceed 100,000. America's range of options is accordingly much diminished, and far less attractive.

So what should United States policy be? I offer the following recommendations:

1. We should overtly and covertly support regime change in Iran, by politically supporting the Iranian opposition and providing it material assistance. Negotiations with Tehran will never dissuade the mullahs from their path toward nuclear weapons, nor will sanctions work in time to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state. Indeed, viewed objectively, continued emphasis on these policy options simply works to Tehran's advantage, by prolonging the time available to it to make progress on its weapons program, and by postponing the inevitable day of reckoning to a time when it will be most advantageous for the theocratic

fascists in Iran. Hassan Rouhani demonstrated his ability to pursue precisely this kind of strategy as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator in 2003-2005, later boasting openly about how he and the regime deceived European Union ("EU") diplomats and the United States.

Theoretically, sanctions massively applied, universally adhered to, and strictly enforced ten years or so ago, might have made a difference. But no longer. Ironically, even the incremental, piecemeal sanctions against Iran have devastated its middle class, one of the primary sources of opposition to the regime. And in any case, as the Treasury Department announced last week, the Obama Administration is actually easing U.S. sanctions under the misguided view that so doing will facilitate Iranian concessions. Both the White House and the EU are apparently signaling behind the scenes to Iran that there is a prospect for still further easing if the longed-for negotiations make "progress." Moreover, recent press reports indicate that European courts are opening large potential loopholes in EU sanctions, in particular weakening the constraints against Iranian financial institutions.

Nonetheless, the mullahs' regime is highly unpopular inside Iran, and had we been at work to overthrow it for the last ten years, we might well be in a very different place today. Supporting the Iranian opposition does not imply military action by the United States of any sort. We are not talking about another war in the Middle East. We are instead simply recognizing that, given material support and time, Iranians themselves can bring this theocracy down.

2. We should support an Israeli decision to attack Iran's nuclear weapons program. While regime change may be the preferred option, the highest U.S. interest is preventing Iran's nuclear weapons program from achieving its objective, and time is not on our side. The Obama Administration says repeatedly that "all options are on the table" regarding the Iranian program, no one seriously believes today that President Obama will ever approve the use of military force. Certainly, neither Iran nor Israel believes it.

That is why the spotlight is on Israel, which must almost certainly make a decision in the very near future whether it will take pre-emptive military action against this hostile nuclear-weapons program, as it has done twice before in its history. Otherwise, the already likely outcome that Iran will indeed get nuclear weapons will become essentially a reality. If Israel does strike, we should provide it political, military, and intelligence support before, during and after the attack, and be prepared to defend Israel at the UN and elsewhere for what will be a thoroughly legitimate exercise of Israel's inherent right to self-defense.

3. In Syria, the United States should provide political and non-lethal material support to opposition leaders and groups only on at least two explicit conditions: (1) that they commit not to engaging in a bloodbath against the Alawite, Druze and Christian populations in Syria if the Assad regime falls, and that they should respect the rights of all of Syria's religious and ethnic communities; and (2) that they commit to turning over to the United States or international organizations acceptable to the United States all of their WMD programs, components and assets, and make available all knowledgeable scientists, technicians, military personnel and others to assist in tracking the connections of these programs internationally.

4. The United States should provide humanitarian assistance to refugees from Syria and displaced persons within the country, but it should not provide military assistance to the Syrian

opposition. Whatever the theoretical arguments for arming the opposition, or providing direct U.S. involvement two years ago, those options have been lost forever. The Syrian opposition today is fragmented and unreliable, and even if we could find leaders whom we trusted, there is no guarantee that they can maintain control over whatever weapons we might provide, and keep them out of terrorist hands.

5. The United States should take all necessary steps to prevent Syria's chemical weapons assets and other WMD from escaping the country and falling into the hands of al Qaeda or other terrorist groups. Keeping Syria's WMD capabilities from falling into the wrong hands for potential use worldwide is the clearest, most-important interest the United States and its allies now have in the Syrian conflict. Dealing with Syria's stockpiles of chemical agents, precursors and weaponized materials is extremely dangerous, but the risk of these materials falling into the hands of terrorists or weapons traffickers is even worse.

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There are many other lessons we should learn about the Iran-Syria nexus, not least of which involve our understanding of the Putin regime in Moscow, the direction of Russian foreign policy, and why the Obama Administration's "reset button" hasn't worked. But these and many other issues can await another hearing.

For now, Madam Chairman, I would be happy to answer any questions you and other Members of the Subcommittee may have.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Dubowitz.

STATEMENT OF MR. MARK DUBOWITZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify and for having this hearing on the Iran-Syria nexus.

The more we talk about Iran's machinations in Syria as a window into the soul of the Iranian regime the better. The Iranian regime does not want the world to talk about its involvement in the massacre of tens of thousands of Syrians. As we are only 4 days away from the inauguration of Iranian President-elect Hassan Rouhani, I will focus on the consequences of his election for Iran's role in Syria and the appropriate U.S. policy response.

Election victory of Mr. Rouhani has revived a myth as old as that of the revolutionary theocracy itself, the myth of moderation. Were Mr. Rouhani a truly different kind of Iranian leader, he would insist that Iran and its terrorist subsidiary Hezbollah stop assisting the Assad regime to murder Syrians, he would end the repression of Iranians and fully comply with Iran's nuclear obligations under international law. This optimism, however, may not be warranted. And indeed if his moderation is only aspirational on our part, Washington could easily allow Iran to solidify its grip on Syria and develop an irreversible nuclear capability. I would argue that it would be naive to expect a significant shift in the foreign and security policies of the Islamic republic.

To summarize the conclusions of my written testimony: Number one, maintaining significant Iranian influence in Syria and expanding its nuclear weapons program are both strategic priorities for Tehran. In both cases Iran is successfully testing the red lines of the United States and the international community.

Number two, Iran's Supreme Leader handles Syria policy with operational control in the hands of Major General Qassem Suleimani, the Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force commander. Most Iranian Presidents, including Rouhani, have little say over Tehran's foreign and national security policies. The exception was former President Rafsanjani during his first term when Ali Khameni was still consolidating his position as the Supreme Leader.

During the duration of the Syrian war, Mr. Rouhani has been the personal representative of the Supreme Leader to the Supreme National Security Council. In this role, if Mr. Rouhani has had any influence on the regime's Syria policy then he has been complicit in the slaughter of tens of thousands of Syrians.

Even if he has influence, Mr. Rouhani's public statements reveal that his conspiratorial anti-American and anti-Israel positions on Syria are closely aligned with Iran's Supreme Leader and the IRGC. His few statements against so-called extremism, terrorism and foreign interference reflect Assad's position, which is to label the entire uprising against his rule as terrorism and not a genuine popular uprising.

Unlike on the issue of Syria, Mr. Rouhani has been publicly critical of how his predecessors have conducted nuclear negotiations.

His record, however, reveals that he has been a practitioner of nuclear deceit and suggests that he cannot be trusted on the Syria file either.

Finally, if Mr. Rouhani wants to prove himself an influential and reliable interlocutor, he must end Iran's nefarious military and financial activities in Syria. But let's be clear, stopping the massacre of Syrian, Muslim and Christian women and children should not be rewarded with concessions, it should be the definition of moderation.

U.S. policy should be designed to treat Iran-Syria nuclear policies in the same way that Tehran views them, as two sides of the same coin, and essential strategic elements of Iran's dry for regional hegemony. Washington must respond to tangible action, not political rhetoric, and be cautious of opportunities for Rouhani to engage in strategic deceit at the proposed Geneva II conference on Syria and at the next round of diplomatic talks of the P5+1.

U.S. policy should be designed to accomplish the following five objectives: Number one, resist diplomatic linkage between Iran's nuclear program in Syria. Linkage will only give Tehran more concessions with which to trade and undercut our negotiating leverage over Iran's nuclear program.

Number two, massively intensify sanctions pressure on Iran. Right now is exactly the wrong time to be offering meaningful sanctions relief.

Number three, enhance the credibility of military force. Targeted U.S. strikes against Iranian backed assets in Syria similar to what Israel has reportedly undertaken or through carefully vetted U.S. proxies will enhance Washington's negotiating leverage on both the Syrian and nuclear tracks.

Number four, avoid a negotiated settlement that allows Iran to retain a critical capability, either in the form of an Iranian backed Alawistan when industrial sized nuclear capacity of undetectable breakout.

And finally, number five, resist the political pressure to sweeten the deal on the assumption that this will strengthen Mr. Rouhani's moderate position in the Iranian political structure.

We should not be negotiating with ourselves. Put the onus on Mr. Rouhani to demonstrate his influence in moderation. Only when Washington has reversed Iranian strategic gains on Syria and its nuclear program can there be any negotiated settlement that protects the security interest of the United States and its Middle Eastern allies.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dubowitz follows:]

Congressional Testimony

The Iran-Syria Nexus and its Implications for the Region

Mark Dubowitz, Esq.
Executive Director
Foundation for Defense of Democracies

Hearing before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

Washington, DC
July 31, 2013

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Mark Dubowitz July 31, 2013

Introduction

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today about Iran's influence in Syria, U.S policy, and regional implications.

Thank you for having this hearing specifically on the topic of the Iran-Syria nexus. The more we talk about Iran's machinations in Syria as a window into the soul of the Iranian regime, as well as its regional intentions, the better. The Iranian regime does not want the world to talk about its involvement in Syria.

As we are only a few days away from the inauguration of Iranian President-elect Hassan Rouhani, I will focus my testimony on the consequences of his election for Iran's role in Syria, what Rouhani's past positions on the Syrian conflict and Iran's nuclear program reveal about possible policy changes, if any, under a new Iranian government, and recommendations for the appropriate U.S. policy response.

Everyone who seeks a free and democratic Iran, a peaceful resolution to the ongoing war in Syria, and an end to the nuclear crisis with Tehran should welcome the end of the Mahmoud Ahmadinejad era. But the election victory of Mr. Rouhani as the new president of the Islamic Republic of Iran has revived a myth as old as that of the revolutionary theocracy, itself: The myth of moderation.

In Iran and abroad, Mr. Rouhani's electoral victory has created an atmosphere of optimism not seen since Mohammad Khatami's presidency (1997-2005), which ended in disappointment for those who believed Mr. Khatami would transform the Islamic Republic into a more moderate regime.

It is understandable to hope that Mr. Rouhani's victory might usher in more freedom for Iran's brutalized people, and that his purportedly moderate policies might even lead him transform Tehran's policies on Syria and on Iran's nuclear program. Indeed, this is the real test of Mr. Rouhani's moderation. Were he a true moderate, he would insist that Iran and its terrorist subsidiary Hezbollah stop assisting the Assad regime to murder Syrians, free all political prisoners in Iran, end the brutality and repression of Iranians, and fully comply with its nuclear obligations under international law.

This optimism, however, may not be warranted. And, if indeed, his moderation is aspirational on our part and not real when it comes to Syria or the nuclear file, crafting misguided policies that allow Iran to consolidate its grip on Syria, or permit Iran to dash to a nuclear weapon, could be irreversible and a grave danger to the U.S. and our allies. While Iran's long suffering people and a weary international community are cheering desperately for Mr. Rouhani to emerge as a champion of moderation, he is likely to meet resistance from other power centers such as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). This was the fate of Mr. Khatami, who was politically emasculated by Khamenei and the IRGC.

But even if he could successfully exert influence over Iran's foreign policies, I regretfully would argue that Mr. Rouhani is not a moderate capable of forging genuine compromises, as an examination of his record will demonstrate. Rather, he is regime loyalist, and a master of nuclear deception, who has played an intimate role in the belligerent foreign policies of the Islamic Republic since its founding. As such, Mr. Rouhani can be expected to maintain course on two of the most troubling Iranian policies: the mass killings in Syria and the illicit nuclear program.

The testimony concludes that:

1. Mr. Rouhani will have little influence on both the Syria and nuclear files, which, as two of the Islamic Republic of Iran's most important strategic priorities, remain in the hands of Iran's Supreme Leader.
2. Mr. Rouhani is not a moderate on Iran's Syria policy; his public statements reveal that his worldview and positions on Syria are closely aligned with Iran's Supreme Leader and the IRGC.
3. While Mr. Rouhani's nuclear track record reveals public disagreement with how his predecessors have conducted nuclear negotiations with the P5+1, he has been a practioner of nuclear deceit and subterfuge, who has misled the international community while relentlessly pursuing a nuclear weapons program. His nuclear track record suggests that he cannot be trusted to deliver on any Iranian commitment to end the bloodshed in Syria.
4. There are concrete steps, however, that Mr. Rouhani can take on Syria if he wants to prove himself as a peaceful, reliable and transparent interlocutor with the international community. By taking seven specific steps to end Iran and Hezbollah's role in Syria, he could prove both his willingness and ability to depart from the policies of Khamenei and the IRGC. But stopping the massacre of Syrian Muslim and Christian women and children should not be rewarded with sanctions relief or any other concession. It should be the definition of moderation.
5. U.S. policy should be designed to treat Iran's Syria and nuclear policies in the same way that Tehran views them: As two-sides of the same coin and essential strategic elements of Iran's drive for regional hegemony. But Washington must resist all efforts by Tehran to combine these two files in diplomatic talks and leverage one against the other in trading concessions.
6. Only massively intensified pressure from Washington and its allies – through crippling sanctions, aggressive diplomacy, and the credible threat (and selective application) of force, either directly or through the support of allied proxies – can help Washington reverse the strategic gains that Tehran has made in both Syria and on its nuclear program. Only then can Washington possibly convert its leverage into any negotiated settlement on both fronts that protects the security interests of the United States and its Middle Eastern allies.

Is President Rouhani Likely to be in Charge of Iran's Foreign and Security Policy?

It would be naïve to expect a significant shift in the foreign and security policies of the Islamic Republic because of the outcome of the presidential election.

With the exception of President Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's first term in office, a time when Ali Khamenei still was consolidating his position as the Supreme Leader, Iran's history does not provide any other example of presidents making strategic decisions on their own. Rather, the Supreme Defense Council in the 1980s and the Supreme National Security Council since the end of the Iran/Iraq war (1980-1988) have made all the strategic decisions. In the Supreme National Security Council, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the IRGC, particularly the Quds Force, the extraterritorial operations branch of the Revolutionary Guards, dominate the executive branch.

Iran's decision-making concerning Syria provides a case in point:

The Iranian regime views Syria as a fundamental strategic priority, and, as a result, Syria policy is handled by Iran's Supreme Leader with operational control in the hands of Major General Qassem Suleimani, the Revolutionary Guards Quds Force commander. Suleimani has on numerous occasions made it clear to the United States military that he alone makes the final decisions with regard to Iran's policy in the Middle East and North Africa.[1] By comparison, President-elect Rouhani would have little say concerning Tehran's policy towards Syria.

Hezbollah, a subsidiary of the IRGC, is a tool at Suleimani's disposal for Syria. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, paid a visit to Tehran on April 29, 2013, on the eve of Hezbollah's offensive in Qusayr, which proved to be a key battle in reversing the momentum of the Syrian rebels. His visit underscored Syria's importance to the Supreme Leader. As my FDD colleague and Syria expert Tony Badran observed: "Nasrallah had to travel to Tehran and meet with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Quds Force commander Qassem Suleimani. There, he was reportedly told to go all in, regardless of the cost."[2]

A reporter close to Hezbollah added that during this trip, Nasrallah received the necessary religious ruling from Khamenei for the Hezbollah offensive in Syria.[3] This is in keeping with the doctrine of *vilayat-e faqih* to which Hezbollah adheres, and which establishes Khamenei's primacy as the key decision-maker. No one consulted President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, because, as the head of the executive branch, he has no say in strategic questions (and, by then, had fallen out of the Supreme Leader's favor).

As Iran's president, Rouhani will defer to Khamenei and Suleimani on Syria policy, while busying himself with the diplomatic responsibility of presenting Iran's case to the world.

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[1] "CENTCOM in 2010: Views from General David H. Petraeus," Institute for the Study of War, www.understandingwar.org/press-media/webcast/centcom-2010-views-general-david-h-petraeus-video (accessed January 4, 2011).
[2] Tony Badran, "Hezbollah Slips in Qusayr," *NOW*, May 23, 2013. (https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/hezbollah-slips-in-qusayr)
[3] Ali Mughniyeh, *Al-Ra'i*, June 12, 2013. (http://www.alraimedia.com/Article.aspx?id=442843)

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Is Hassan Rouhani a "Moderate" on Syria?

Even if Mr. Rouhani can exert influence on the Islamic Republic's Syria policy, his record does not suggest that he would take it in a "moderate" direction. Mr. Rouhani is a supreme loyalist, and a true believer, who lived in Paris in exile with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and followed him to Iran in 1979. He was a political commissar in the regular military, where he purged some of Iran's finest officers. He was a member of the Supreme Defense Council responsible for the continuation of the Iran-Iraq War, at great cost in Iranian lives, even after Iran achieved its territorial goals. He rose to become both Iran's chief nuclear negotiator (2003 to 2005), under former Iranian presidents Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and his successor Mohammad Khatami (1997 to 2005), secretary of Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council (1989 to 2005), and the representative of the Supreme Leader to the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (2005-present).

As a trusted advisor to Khamenei, and, since 2005, the representative of the Supreme Leader to the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Mr. Rouhani remained a regime insider during the two-and-a-half years of Syria's bloody war, which began in 2011. During this time, there is no indication from the public record that Mr. Rouhani fundamentally disagreed with the path charted by Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and IRGC Quds Force leader Qassem Suleimani, Iran's operational commander in Syria.

Foreign policy decision-makers in Washington and abroad have asked for patience before judging Mr. Rouhani's record. They point to Mr. Rouhani's election campaign rhetoric, as compared to his competitors, where Mr. Rouhani ran on a "policy of reconciliation and peace," and where, on the nuclear issue, he criticized nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili and Ahmadinejad for reckless diplomacy that united the international community in support of unprecedented global sanctions.

However, in contrast to his public criticisms of the way in which Jalili and Ahmadinejad had conducted nuclear negotiations – and this is a question of style not substance as I'll make clear below – there is little evidence of similar criticisms by Rouhani of the regime's Syria policy. Rouhani's frequent and lengthy statements on Syria, including some issued during the election campaign, are revealing about how he will govern as president; his relative influence in the Iranian power structure, and his strategy in upcoming nuclear negotiations with the P5+1.

These statements reveal a conspiratorial worldview not unlike that espoused by Khamenei and the IRGC; they provide no evidence of any disagreement with the Iranian regime's Syria policy; and they underscore the clear contradiction between Rouhani's sometimes less-belligerent rhetoric and his support for the regime's operational brutality.

As my FDD colleague and Iranian scholar Ali Alfoneh has revealed through translations and analysis, Rouhani's statements on the Syria conflict depict a worldview, which is: (1) based on a core conspiracy theory that all international affairs are controlled by Israel and the United States; (2) Iran-centric with a belief that Iran is the eternal victim of that

conspiracy; and, (3) largely corresponds with the worldview of Supreme Leader Khamenei and IRGC leaders.

However, unlike the crude and offensive language of his predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Rouhani is an effective strategic communicator, deploying soft and sophisticated language, where appropriate, to appeal to a global audience, and using social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook to amplify his message.

Rouhani's statements on Syria reflect an understanding of all international politics as a conspiracy against Iran

On October 28, 2011 in an interview with the daily *E'temad*, Rouhani discussed the anti-government uprising in Syria.[4] In the course of the interview, Rouhani depicted Syria as a regional anomaly rather than as part of the Arab Spring, or "Islamic Awakening," as it is called in the official Islamic Republic parlance. "Developments in Syria are totally different than in other countries," Rouhani said. [5] "In all these countries, the revolt is against authoritarianism and foreign colonialism, but in Syria, the issue is sectarian … This is why we are opposed to certain activities in Syria. We see that the neighboring countries are intervening, and such interventions are not desirable from our point of view."[6]

Rouhani also elaborated on the motivations of external powers to intervene in the conflict in Syria, which he fundamentally depicted as an American and Israeli conspiracy aimed at undermining the "resistance" to Israel.[7] Rouhani explained that the conflict in Syria, in reality, was a conspiracy against Iran. He argued that, as a result of the U.S. "failure" to

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[4] "Tote'ch-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[5] "Tote'ch-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[6] "Tote'ch-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[7] "Tote'ch-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

mobilize a unanimous vote against Iran at the U.N. Security Council, and in light of the Arab Spring, which swept away Western allies in the Middle East and North Africa, Washington had no choice but to bring down the Assad government:

"Their [the West's] main problem is that they are unsuccessful in the Security Council, meaning that they can't advance the sanctions against Iran as they wish," Rouhani said, adding, "As they are losing their allies in the region, we feel that the Zionists and the Americans are attacking the 'front of resistance' and countries which resist the Zionists..."[8]

Elaborating on the role of Israel, Rouhani said: "Behind the scenes, the Zionist pressure in the United States, is because Israel has lost its main friends in the region. [Egypt's Hosni] Mubarak and [Tunisia's Zine al-Abedine] Ben Ali were overthrown and in Jordan too the situation is not suitable...The raid against the Israeli embassy in Egypt [in 2011] is a disaster for the Israelis. The Israelis see that what they have built in the past fifteen or twenty years has all been lost."[9]

As demonstrated below, Mr. Rouhani's views echo those of the Supreme Leader and the IRGC.

Rouhani's worldview largely corresponds with the paranoid worldview of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)

Though often described as moderate, Rouhani's perspective largely corresponds with the paranoid worldview of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the IRGC, and other hardliners. A few examples illustrate these similarities:

Statement by Rouhani: "Developments in Syria are totally different than in other countries [which experience the 'Islamic Awakening]'."[10]

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[8] "Tote'ch-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[9] "Tote'ch-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[10] "Tote'ch-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

Similar statement by Supreme Leader Khamenei: "The essence of the 'Islamic Awakening' in the region is an anti-Zionist and anti-American movement, but in the events of Syria, the hand of the United States and Israel is visible."[11]

Statement by Rouhani: "As they are losing their allies in the region, we feel that the Zionists and the Americans are attacking the 'front of resistance' and countries which resist the Zionists…"[12]

Similar statement by Supreme Leader Khamenei: "The reality of the affairs in Syria is some governments led by the United States and some other powers waging a war per proxy against the government of Syria, aiming at securing the interests of the Zionist regime and dealing blows to the 'resistance' in the region."[13]

Similar statement by Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif, Revolutionary Guards Public Relations commander: "There is no doubt about the fact that the Guards considers Syria the frontline of 'the resistance…' Today, the Global Arrogance is trying to crush the frontline of the struggle against Arrogance, and the Islamic Republic of Iran considers this a threat to all Muslims…Syria is paying the price for defending the Palestinian nation and defending all Muslims in the face of the 'front of Arrogance.' It is natural that we support them and extend assistance to it."[14]

Statement by Rouhani: "Machinations of the West in Syria are conspiracies against Iran."[15]

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[11] "Jowhareh-ye Bidari-ye Eslami Dar Keshvarha-ye Mantaqeh…" [The Essence of the Islamic Awakening in the Region…], *Paygah-e Ettela-e-Resani-ye Daftar-e Maqam-e Moazzam-e Rahbari* (Iran), June 30, 2011. (http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=contentShow&id=8267)

[12] "Totc'eh-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[13] "Dar Didar-e Nokhost-Vazir-e Eraq Matrah Shod," [Discussed at the Meeting With the Iraqi Prime Minister], *Paygah-e Ettela-e-Resani-ye Daftar-e Maqam-e Moazzam-e Rahbari* (Iran), August 31, 2012. (http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=contentShow&id=9731)

[14] "Goftegou ba Sardar Sharif Darbareh-ye Nesbat-e Sepah Ba Souriyeh…" [Conversation with Commander Sharif About the Guards' Relationship with Syria], *Parsine* (Iran), July 1, 2012. (http://www.parsine.com/fa/news/63190/%DA%AF%D9%81%D8%AA%DA%AF%D9%88-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%81-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87%D9%94-%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A8%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%BE%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA)

[15] "Tote'eh-ye Se-Zel'i-ye Jadid-e Gharb Alayh-e Iran Be Revayat-e Doktor Hassan Rouhani," [The West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani], *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-

Similar statement by Major General Rahim Safavi of the IRGC: "External enemies such as the United States and the Zionists – who are the sworn enemies of the revolution – along with some Arab countries and Turkey, are trying to pressure Syria in an attempt to topple its government before the [presidential] election in Iran."[16]

Indeed, only a month after Rouhani issued a statement opposing terrorism and foreign interference inside Syria (more below on the real meaning of that statement), he publicly pledged his support for the Assad regime, and Hezbollah, reaffirming that Iranian-Syrian ties will be able to confront "enemies in the region, especially the Zionist regime."[17]

As these examples demonstrate, Rouhani's worldview and statements do not differ significantly from those of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guards. This does not bode well for the prospects of a more moderate Syria policy with Rouhani at the helm of the executive.

Rouhani, like Khamenei and the IRGC, sees Syria as a strategic priority where Iran's interests must be pursued relentlessly.

Rouhani's rhetoric reveals several important insights into Syria's importance to the Iranian regime: First, the almost identical talking points, repeated across the board by regime officials, suggests a strategic message crafted or approved by Khamenei and disseminated throughout Iran's power structure. Second, this message discipline, in turn, reflects the reality that Syria is a matter of the highest strategic importance for Khamenei and the Iranian regime as a whole. Third, in viewing Syria as the exception to the other Arab revolts – which they viewed as the overturning of the pro-American regional order and the toppling of U.S. regional allies – statements by Rouhani and other regime statements reveal that Iran's power elite regard Syria as a key front that they must defend in order to preserve their interests and continue the push for regional primacy.

While Iran is made up of 34 provinces, Mehdi Taeb, a member of the Supreme Leader's inner circle, labeled Syria "the 35th district of Iran." Taeb went on to say that Syria "has greater strategic importance for Iran than Khuzestan," referring to one of Iran's outlying provinces. "If we lose Syria we will not even be able to keep Tehran." In other words, in the eyes of Iran's leaders, Syria is already a part of Iran.[18]

%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[16] "Mikhahand Dowlat-e Souriych Ra Qabl az Entekhabat-e Iran Sarnegoun Konand" [They Want to Overthrow the Government in Syria Prior to the Election in Iran]. *ISNA* (Iran), April 27, 2013. (http://isna.ir/fa/news/92020704544/%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B5%D9%81%D9%88%DB%8C-%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%86%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%A7%D8%B2)

[17] "New Iran President Backs Syria's Assad, Hezbollah," *Associated Press*, July 16, 2013. (http://bigstory.ap.org/article/new-iran-president-backs-syrias-assad-hezbollah)

[18] Ali Alfoneh, "What Is Iran Doing in Syria?" *Foreign Policy*, September 21, 2012. (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/21/what_is_iran_doing_in_syria)

Iran's Syria policy and its nuclear policy are two sides of the same coin. They both represent essential components of the Iranian regime's drive for regional hegemony. In both cases, the regime is playing to win, while it may perceive, (not without justification) that its adversaries are simply playing not to lose.

Rouhani's statements on Syria reveal a clear contradiction between moderate rhetoric and operational brutality.

Rouhani's more moderate-sounding statements on Syria need to be understood in a broader strategic context to understand their real meaning. This will help explain the striking contradiction between these statements and the regime's policy in Syria.

Stopping the killing and confronting extremism and terrorism

In June 2013, Rouhani said: "[Iran's] first priority is to stop the killings [in Syria] and confront extremism/terrorism..."[19] While this may appear to be a moderate statement, it actually echoes Assad's rhetoric, and is deliberately coded. It reflects Assad's position, which is to label the entire uprising against his rule as "terrorism."

In November 2012, Rouhani said: "The most important problem is the... activities of terrorist groups in this country [Syria]."[20] In reality, Iran is sending in the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah,[21] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias,[22] as well as units of its own IRGC[23] to join the massacre against Syrian opposition forces and civilians. In a show of support for Hezbollah, Rouhani sent a cable just last week to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah praising the terrorist organization's "jihad" against Israel, adding further that Hezbollah is the "hope... for victory against Israel."[24]

Opposition to foreign interference in Syria:

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[19] @HassanRouhani, "#Rouhani: #Syria has been/is at front with Israel..our first priority is to stop killing, confront extremism/terrorism." *Twitter*, June 3, 2013. (https://twitter.com/HassanRouhani/status/341620468849188864)

[20] "Iran Dar Hich Sharaycti Az Hoqouq-e Qanouni-ye Khod Nakhahad Gozasht" [Iran Will Under No Circumstance Forfeit Its Legal Rights], *Markaz-e Tahqiqat-e Estratezhik* (Iran), November 13, 2012.(http://www.csr.ir/Center.aspx?lng=fa&subid=-1&cntid=2610)

[21] Mona Alami, "Hezbollah in the Fight in Syria to Win, Backed By Iran,"*USA Today*, June 6, 2013. (http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/06/06/hezbollah-syria/2394617/)

[22] Michael R. Gordon & Steven Lee Myers, "Iran and Hezbollah Support for Syria Complicates Peace-Talk Strategy," *The New York Times,* May 21, 2013. (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/22/world/middleeast/iran-and-hezbollahs-support-for-syria-complicates-us-strategy-on-peace-talks.html?pagewanted=all)

[23] *Quds Online*. http://www.qudsonline.it/NSite/FullStory/News/?id=50685.

[24] "Iran's Rowhani Praises Hizbullah's 'Jihad' against Israel," *Naharnet Newsdesk* (Insert country), July 24, 2013. (http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/91744)

In June 2013, Rouhani said: "We're opposed to...foreign interference [in Syria]."[25] In reality, Iran's deployment of IRGC Ground Forces into Syria – Iran's internal security forces typically responsible for domestic operations inside Iran and which are rarely deployed abroad - is a notable expansion of Iran's military force beyond its borders.[26]

In October 2011, Rouhani chastised the Saudis who "pursue the overthrow of the Bashar government," because they are "displeased" with "consolidation" of Bashar al-Assad's rule in Syria. Rouhani also accused the Turkish government of miscalculating the balance of power in Syria,[27] and lectured the Turks not to be "the advance guard of NATO, but take a position as a neighboring Muslim country,"[28] when dealing with the crisis in Syria.

What Rouhani is suggesting, consistent with the Khamenei and the IRGC's position, is that Iran's regime is opposed to any interference other than its own (or Russia's), which is designed to ensure Assad's survival. They want to ensure that Syria remains their exclusive sphere of influence.

Operational support for the continued massacre of Syrians

While remaining the personal representative to the Supreme Leader on Iran's most powerful foreign policy and national security body, Rouhani has been complicit in the slaughter of tens of thousands of Syrians. Iran has armed[29] and trained[30] thousands of Syrian regime forces and paramilitary auxiliaries. In recent months, Iran has significantly stepped up military support to Assad, a fact acknowledged by Iraq's foreign minister who

[25] @HassanRouhani, "The ones who should decide future of $Syria are Syrian people themselves. We're opposed to terrorism and foreign #interference." *Twitter*, June 17, 2013.(https://twitter.com/HassanRouhani/status/346599807026094081)

[26] Will Fulton, "How Deeply is Iran Enmeshed in Syria?" *USIP Iran Primer*, May 6, 2013. (http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2013/may/06/how-deeply-iran-enmeshed-syria)

[27] "Totc'ch-yc Sc-Zcl'i-yc Jadid-c Gharb Alayh-c Iran Bc Rcvayat-c Doktor Hassan Rouhani." [Thc West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani]. *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[28] "Totc'ch-yc Sc-Zcl'i-yc Jadid-c Gharb Alayh-c Iran Bc Rcvayat-c Doktor Hassan Rouhani." [Thc West's New Triangular Conspiracy Against Iran According to Dr. Rouhani]. *E'temad* (Iran), October 28, 2011. (http://peace-ipsc.org/fa/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A6%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D8%B6%D9%84%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7/)

[29] Louis Charbonneau, "Exclusive: Iran Steps Up Weapons Lifeline to Assad," *Reuters*, March 14, 2013. (http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/14/us-syria-crisis-iran-idUSBRE92D05U20130314)

[30] Erika Solomon, "Insight: Syrian Government Guerrilla Fighters Being Sent to Iran for Training," *Reuters*, April 4, 2013. (http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/04/us-syria-iran-training-insight-idUSBRE9330DW20130404)

noted that Iranian flights are using Iraqi air space to bring military aid to Assad.[31] Without such support, it is unlikely that Assad could sustain the fight.[32]

There is no evidence that Rouhani disagrees with his Supreme Leader and the Revolutionary Guards on the importance of advancing Iranian primacy in the region, especially in Syria. Rouhani appears to be in full agreement that Syria is the key battleground, and a critical element of the regional balance of power.

Maintaining significant Iranian influence in Syria and expanding its nuclear weapons program are both strategic priorities for Tehran.

Much like Iran's determination to expand its role within Syria, the expansion of its illicit nuclear weapons program is also a key Iranian strategic priority. The Iranian regime's strategy is to establish facts on the ground in pursuit of an end game, which it can use to further its goal of regional hegemony. Its nuclear policy is predicated on reaching critical nuclear capability, with an industrial-size nuclear program, and undetectable breakout to multiple nuclear weapons. In pursuit of this goal, in violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions, IAEA demands, and U.S. and international sanctions, it continues to enrich uranium at Natanz and Fordow, install thousands of new, advanced and more efficient centrifuges, engage in suspicious activities with respect to a heavy-water reactor at Arak, and refuses to disclose to the IAEA the military dimensions of its nuclear program.

Iran has publicly identified Syria as vital to its geopolitical interests. Tehran violates U.S. and European sanctions and heads off UN sanctions by relying on the veto power of Russia and China, while relentlessly pursuing its interests through the financing and arming of the Assad regime and an extensive on-the-ground operational support structure and robust proxy network controlled by the IRGC's Quds Force.

In both cases, in Syria and through its nuclear program, Iran is successfully testing the red lines of the United States and the international community.

What we can learn about Rouhani's Syria strategy from examining his nuclear record.

Given the parallels between Iran's Syria and nuclear policies, it is instructive to examine Rouhani's record as Iran's lead negotiator with the EU3 – Britain, France and Germany – from 2003 to 2005. It is a record of deception rather than moderation, and is helpful in assessing whether Rouhani should be trusted to end Tehran's development of its illicit nuclear weapons program, and deliver on an Iranian commitment to end his regime's sizable contribution to the bloodshed in Syria.

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[31] "Iraq Foreign Minister Says Can't Stop Iran Arms flights to Syria," *Haaretz*, July 13, 2013. (http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.535529)

[32] Louis Charbonneau, "Exclusive: Iran Steps Up Weapons Lifeline to Assad," *Reuters*, March 14, 2013. (http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/14/us-syria-crisis-iran-idUSBRE92D05U20130314)

Ahmadinejad, and Iran's most recent nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, were infamous for their bluntness. By contrast, Rouhani has masterfully wielded temperate rhetoric to the same end: the expansion of Iran's nuclear program. In 2004, Rouhani described Iranian nuclear policy as a twin strategy of "confidence-building and...build[ing] up our technical capability," with the goal of "cooperating with Europe" in order to divide Europe from the United States.[33] He further described this approach as key to the development of a key nuclear facility: "While we were talking with the Europeans in Tehran, we were installing equipment in parts of the nuclear conversion facility in Isfahan. By creating a calm environment, we were able to complete the work there."[34]

Rouhani's media savvy deputy at the Supreme National Security Council, Seyed Hossein Mousavian, described this as the "widen the transatlantic gap" strategy.[35] In the third presidential debate of the most recent election, in a discussion on Iran's nuclear program, Rouhani bragged that Iran was able to "import foreign technology from abroad," and stressed that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei guided his nuclear diplomacy.[36]

In 2008, former Khatami administration spokesman Abdollah Ramezanzadeh described Rouhani's nuclear strategy during a panel debate covered by Iran's Fars News Agency: "During the confidence-building era we entered the nuclear club, and despite the suspension [of uranium enrichment], we imported all the materials needed for our nuclear activities of the country...The solution is to prove to the entire world that we want the power plants for electricity. Afterwards we can proceed with other activities..."[37]

Ramezanzadeh further elaborated on Iran's strategy: "As long as we were not subjected to sanctions, and during our negotiations we could import technology, we should have negotiated for so long, and benefited from the atmosphere of negotiations to the extent that we could import all the technology needed. The adversary wanted the negotiations to come to a dead end and initiate a new phase. But we wanted to continue negotiations until the U.S. would be gone from the circle of negotiations."[38]

Ramezanzadeh summed it up this way: "We had one overt policy, which was one of negotiation and confidence building, and a covert policy, which was continuation of the activities...in the field of confidence building, Japan is the most advanced country in the world but Japan can produce a nuclear bomb in less than a week."[39]

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[33] A. Savyon, "Iran's Nuclear Policy Crisis," *The Middle East Media Research Institute*, September 21, 2004. (http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/1222.htm)
[34] Dr. Chen Kane, "Nuclear Decision-Making in Iran: A Rare Glimpse," *Brandeis University*, May 2006. (http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB5.pdf)
[35] Sohrab Ahmari, "Chronic Antagonists," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 20, 2012. (http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304022004577514852558385294.html)
[36] "Third Televised Debate of the Presidential Elections in Iran," *Hamshahroi Online*, June 13, 2013. (http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/details/217658)
[37] "Ramezanzadeh: The Behind the Scenes Policy of the Khatami Administration was the Continuation of Nuclear Activities," *Fars News Agency* (Iran), June 14, 2008. (http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8703250692)
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Indeed, it was during the "moderate" presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami that Iran moved ahead in planning and development of key components of its nuclear program, including clandestine facilities at Natanz and Arak. Rouhani was secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council during the planning or construction of these key facilities. In the case of the Fordow enrichment site, another clandestine enrichment facility only declared when the Iranians were caught red-handed, there is a dispute between Iran and the IAEA on the timing of the construction of the site. The IAEA has not accepted Iran's declaration that it started construction of Fordow in 2007. The IAEA alleges that there was evidence of construction between 2002 and 2004, which then resumed in 2006.[40]

In that case, the decision to build Fordow also occurred when Rouhani was still on the Supreme National Security Council. In none of these cases, notwithstanding Rouhani's claims of transparency with respect to Iran's nuclear program, did he or any of Iran's top officials voluntarily disclose the existence of these clandestine facilities as required under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. On the contrary, they hid them from the IAEA.
In supporting the argument for Rouhani's moderation, much is made of his role in Iran's decision to temporarily suspend uranium enrichment in 2004, and, even, it is, claimed in temporarily terminating Iran's clandestine weaponization activities.[41] But it is worth remembering that this decision was not only a diplomatic feint to head off sanctions while importing nuclear technology, and constructing covert facilities. It likely was also inspired by a genuine fear that President George W. Bush would target Tehran after quickly disposing of Saddam and the Iraqi military in 2003.

This suggests that, perhaps, only the credible threat of U.S. military force in support of the Syrian opposition and/or against Iran's nuclear program could possibly shift the calculus of the Iranian regime.

Testing Rouhani's Intentions

Rouhani can demonstrate that he is willing to depart from the regime's policies through a series of concrete steps.

Rouhani has a long career as a regime loyalist who has been a faithful servant to both of Iran's Supreme Leaders. If Rouhani wants to prove himself as a peaceful, reliable and transparent interlocutor with the international community, Syria presents an opportunity to prove both his willingness and ability to depart from the policies of Khamenei, Suleimani and the IRGC. There are at least seven ways he must do that:

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[40] International Atomic Energy Agency, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council Resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran," Report by the Director General, 16 November 2009. http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2009/gov2009-74.pdf

[41] Francois Nicoulland, "Rouhani and the Iranian Bomb," *New York Times*, July 26, 2013.

1) Cease funding of military assistance and financing to Syria.

Iran continues to supply Assad with military assistance and financing estimated at $500 million a month, according to opposition sources.[42] Iran has also extended a credit line to the Assad regime valued at $4 billion with the possibility of an additional $3 billion.[43]

2) Cease training of Syrian regular and non-regular forces in Iran.

The Syrian government is sending members of its irregular militias for guerrilla combat training at a base in Iran. Iran is helping to train at least 50,000 militiamen and aims to increase the force to 100,000.[44]

3) Remove all IRGC forces from Syria.

Iran's IRGC Ground Forces and IRGC Quds Force services are advising and assisting the Syrian military in order to preserve Assad's hold on power.[45] While the Guards Corps and the Quds Forces typically operate separately – with the Guard Corps focusing on internal Iranian affairs and the Quds Forces exerting Iranian influence beyond its borders – both armed wings of Iran appear to be working together in the case of Syria.

IRGC Quds Force Commander, Major General Qassem Suleimani, plays a prominent role in Iran's Syria policy. After his recent defection, former Syrian Prime Minister Riad Hijab said that, "Syria is occupied by the Iranian regime. The person who runs the country is not Bashar al-Assad but Qassem Suleimani, the head of Iranian regime's Quds Force."[46] The extent of the Quds Force's involvement in Syria became clearer in February 2013 when high-ranking Iranian Brigadier General Hassam Shateri was assassinated in the Damascus countryside while traveling to Beirut, after having traveled to Aleppo.[47]

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[42] "Analysis: By Relying on Iran and Hezbollah, Syria's Assad Risks Irrelevance," *The Jerusalem Post*, July 21, 2013. (http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Analysis-By-relying-on-Iran-and-Hezbollah-Syrias-Assad-risks-irrelevance-320532)

[43] "Iran offers Syria $4 bn credit line," *AFP*, May 27, 2013. (http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gPvIV4RkiZpEZHdCWzk857jj5kkQ?docId=CNG.7b0df1107dcbdc8f82031bbc1504a6f0.851)

[44] Erika Solomon, "Insight: Syrian Government Guerrilla Fighters Being Sent to Iran for Training," *Reuters*, April 4, 2013. (http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/04/us-syria-iran-training-insight-idUSBRE9330DW20130404)

[45] Michael Weiss & Elizabeth O'Bagy, "Why Arming the Rebels Isn't Enough," *The Atlantic*, June 14, 2013. (http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/06/why-arming-the-rebels-isnt-enough/276889/)

[46] *Arna News*, February 16, 2013. (http://arnanews.ir/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1421:%D9%86%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%87-%D9%88%D9%84%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D9%81%D9%82%DB%8C%D9%87-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%87%DB%8C%D8%AF-)

[47] "Martyrdom of the Head of the Lebanon Reconstruction Committee by the Zionist Regime's Mercenaries," *ABNA*, February 13, 2013. (http://abna.co/data.asp?lang=1&id=390561)

The IRGC Ground Forces are also involved in the mission inside Syria to support the Assad regime. Following the January 2013 release of 48 Iranian nationals kidnapped near Damascus, it was revealed that, among those released, were high-ranking current commanders of the IRGC Ground Forces.[48]

4) Prohibit the transfer of technology and material to Syria that is used to repress the Syrian people.

A number of U.S. Department of the Treasury designations in 2012 indicate that Iranian intelligence organizations have been involved in the effort to suppress anti-regime protests throughout Syria. The organizations designated included the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF), the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), and the large defense contractor Iran Electronics Industries (IEI).[49]

5) Instruct Nasrallah to remove Hezbollah forces from Syria.

Hezbollah, with assistance from the IRGC Quds Forces, is training government and pro-Assad forces inside Syria,[50] sending its fighters into Syria to confront the Sunni opposition,[51] and facilitating the passage of Iranian arms shipments to Syria.[52] Hezbollah militants participate in a number of direct support activities in Syria, including sniper and counter-sniper operations, facility and route protection, joint clearing operations, and direct engagement with opposition forces, often in coordination with Syrian forces and pro-government militias.[53]

6) Stop the recruitment of Iraqi Shi'a militias for the Syrian war.

Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'a militias, including Kata'ib Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al Haqq, have established close relations with the IRGC Quds Force and are also fighting in Syria in support of Assad. Iraqi Shi'a leaders told *The New York Times*, in October 2012, that Iran assisted in the recruitment, transportation, armament, and payment of Shi'a fighters travelling to Syria from Iraq. According to the report, some Iraqi Shi'a fighters are

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[48] Mohammed Sergie, "Social Media Buzz: Iranian Prisoner Exchange," *Syria Deeply*, January 14, 2013. (www.beta.syriadeeply.org)

[49] U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Designates Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security for Human Rights Abuses and Support for Terrorism," February 16, 2012. (http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1424.aspx)

[50] U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Sanctions al-Nusrah Front Leaders, Militia Groups in Syria," December 11, 2012.(http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2012/12/20121211139861.html#axzz2M2qKngyq)

[51] Jamie Dettmer, "Hezbollah, Jabhat al-Nusra Set for Showdown in Syria," *The Daily Beast*, March 14, 2013. (http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/03/14/hezbollah-jabhat-al-nusra-set-for-showdown-in-syria.html)

[52] U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Designates Syrian Entity, Others Involved in Arms and Communications Procurement Networks and Identifies Blocked Iranian Aircraft," September 19, 2012. (http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1714.aspx)

[53] Matthew Levitt, "The Hezbollah Connection in Syria and Iran," *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 15, 2013. (http://www.cfr.org/iran/hezbollah-connection-syria-iran/p30005)

traveling to Tehran before being flown into Damascus, while others are being transported from Najaf, Iraq into Syria.[54]

7) Cease Iranian expansionism inside Syria.

Iran is fighting to preserve its interests in Syria. Arab media outlets have reported recently that Iran is seeking to ethnically alter the landscape of the Middle East by granting Syrian nationality to 750,000 Shiites from throughout the Middle East. The reports also state that Tehran is spending billions of dollars to purchase land in Syria.[55]

Iran's offensive in Syria demonstrates that Tehran will use force, diplomacy, economics, and covert action to advance its interest, even if it's at the level of a "Plan B" – to preserve what my FDD colleague Tony Badran has called an Iranian-backed "Alawistan" enclave in Western Syria, from the Alawite heartland to Damascus via Homs, adjoined to Hezbollah in Lebanon.[56]

These are seven steps that Rouhani can take to demonstrate that he is a different kind of Iranian leader. But stopping the massacre of Syrian Muslim and Christian women and children should not be rewarded with sanctions relief or any other concession. It should be the definition of moderation.

U.S. Policy Options

U.S. policy options must be flexible enough with the new Iranian government to take advantage of diplomatic openings but sufficiently hardheaded to avoid falling into the traps set by Iran's Supreme Leader and his new president.

Rouhani's record on Syria reveals a hardliner who is committed to the regime's Syria policy. However, he also is a sophisticated communicator and may end up being a godsend for the Supreme Leader, who can now offer up a more soft-spoken, cosmopolitan, and diplomatic president. Rouhani's task will be to convince the West to ease sanctions, limit its involvement in the Syria conflict, and not resort to military force against Iran's nuclear weapons program, even while Khamenei is unprepared to fundamentally change his Syria policy or relinquish his nuclear program.

The reality is that Rouhani is only the most moderate of the eight hardline candidates who were hand selected by Khamenei to run in Iran's recent election. And even if he

[54] Yasir Ghazi & Tim Arango, "Iraqi Sects Join Battle in Syria on Both Sides," *The New York Times*, October 27, 2012. (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/28/world/middleeast/influx-of-iraqi-shiites-tosyria-widens-wars-scope.html).

[55] Michael Young, "Is Iran Altering Syria's Sectarian Map?" *The Daily Star Lebanon*, July 18, 2013. (http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Columnist/2013/Jul-18/224071-is-iran-altering-syrias-sectarian-map.ashx#axzz2ZUoVl0RK)

[56] Tony Badran, "Alawistan," *Foreign Policy*, July 27, 2012. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/27/alawistanhttp://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/27/alawistan

truly were committed to a change in Iran's Syria policy or to nuclear reconciliation, Rouhani, like Ahmadinejad, lacks the power to alter Iran's trajectory in these two foreign policy areas, which are strategic priorities for the regime. Khamenei remains in charge of both Iran's Syria and nuclear policies.

U.S. policy must be based on tangible action not political rhetoric. While it is reasonable to test the intentions of Rouhani and his ability to influence Khamenei and the IRGC, U.S policymakers must be cautious of two opportunities for Rouhani to engage in strategic deceit while advancing Iran's interests: The proposed "Geneva II" conference on Syria and the next round of diplomatic talks with the P5+1. In both cases, Khamenei will likely allow Rouhani to engage in negotiations. If Rouhani starts sounding too conciliatory, Khamenei will blame his new president for selling out Iran's interests.

But he also could allow Rouhani to rope-a-dope the international community by offering a deal on both Syria and Iran's nuclear program designed to undercut international pressure. Tehran may try again to persuade the P5+1 to tie Syria and Iran's nuclear program together as a combined file in the diplomatic negotiations.[57] This ploy always must be rejected; it is an attempt to expand the scope of the P5+1 negotiations over its nuclear program so that it can trade Syrian concessions in exchange for relief on sanctions tied to its nuclear program. It could also be an Iranian attempt to offer nuclear concessions in exchange for sanctions relief, linked to an agreement by the Western powers to recognize Iranian hegemony in Syria and elsewhere in region.

Offers on Syria and on its nuclear program, if presented by Rouhani as a step toward "reconciliation and peace," may be enough to tie up the West for sufficient time for Tehran to support a complete, or partial, victory by Assad that, at a minimum, would set up an Iranian-backed enclave in Syria – "Alawistan"[58] – on Iranian terms; maintain territorial contiguity with Hezbollah in Lebanon; protect its interests through a network of reliable proxies even in the case of a de facto partition of Syria; undermine international support for sanctions; get Iranian oil flowing again; stabilize the Iranian economy; and, even help Rouhani deliver on his election promises. But because the stakes are so high at this critical time, U.S. policymakers need to be wary of any offers that do not sufficiently arrest Iran's influence in Syria or its nuclear weapons development.

Iran's new president will negotiate to widen the gap between the members of the U.N. Security Council, and other interested countries, on both Syria and Iran's nuclear program. He will remain focused on objectives that he, Khamenei, Rafsanjani, Khatami, Ahmadinejad, and the Revolutionary Guards have been committed to for years:

[57] Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, "U.S. Officials Say Iran Has Agreed to Nuclear Talks," *New York Times*, October 20, 2012. (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/21/world/iran-said-ready-to-talk-to-us-about-nuclear-program.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

[58] Tony Badran, "Alawistan," *Foreign Policy*, July 27, 2012. (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/27/alawistan)

(1) Maintaining Iran's presence in Syria as a vital strategic area of influence, either through Assad, or through a new pliant Syrian leader, backed by Hezbollah, the Quds Force and other Iranian-backed militias; and,

(2) Playing for time in order to reach an industrial-size nuclear weapons capacity and a nuclear breakout, which will allow Iran, without detection, to produce enough weapons-grade uranium or separated plutonium for one or more bombs.

To strengthen the U.S. policy options on both the positions on Syria and Iran's nuclear program, the Obama administration should:

1. Resist pressure to broaden the P5+1 diplomatic negotiations over Iran's nuclear program to include Syria, or any other disputed issue.

2. Massively intensify sanctions pressure on Iran to enhance its political leverage. It is premature to be offering meaningful sanctions relief or any other concessions, including on Syria, to Iran before Tehran has satisfied all of its nuclear obligations under international law.

3. Massively intensify sanctions pressure on any person assisting the Assad regime, Iran, Hezbollah, or Iranian-backed militias in circumventing U.S. sanctions, while also imposing sanctions on any person providing support to extremist Sunni elements in Syria. Accelerate the designation of extremist elements on both sides of the Syria conflict and sanctions persons in Russia, Qatar, Turkey and elsewhere supporting these designated entities.

4. Enhance the credibility of military force against Iran's nuclear program and against the Iranian Quds Force, Hezbollah, and Iranian-backed militias. Selective and targeted U.S. strikes against Iranian-backed assets in Syria, similar to what Israel has reportedly undertaken, or through carefully vetted U.S. proxies, will send a signal of increased American resolve and enhance Washington's negotiating leverage on both the Syrian and nuclear tracks.

5. Avoid a negotiated settlement, at a Geneva II conference or during the P5+1 nuclear talks, that allows Iran to retain a "critical capability" on either the Syrian and nuclear tracks. It will be tempting to make concessions on Iranian demands that are presented by Tehran as non-negotiable (for example, some type of international recognition of Iranian control, directly or indirectly, of "Alawistan" territories at a peace conference, or Iranian demands for the P5+1 to concede a "right of enrichment" or retain domestic enrichment). Despite the urgency of resolving the Syria crisis and rolling-back Iran's nuclear program, a "bad deal" is worse than no deal. It will only embolden the regime, undercut the reliability of American leadership in the region, and reduce Washington's leverage when it invariably has to address the harmful results of these agreements.

6. Resist the political pressure to "sweeten the deal" on the assumption that this will strengthen Rouhani's "moderate" position in the Iranian political structure. We should

not be negotiating with ourselves. Rouhani must be judged by the results he delivers, not the political rhetoric he espouses. If he is a moderate, with the requisite influence inside the regime, he must demonstrate that he is a different Iranian leader by taking the concrete steps outlined above to decrease Iranian involvement in the Syrian war. If he is a moderate, he must agree to meet all of Iran's nuclear obligations as outlined in multiple UN Security Council and IAEA board of governors' resolutions. The nuclear file must remain the U.S. priority: If Iran already feels emboldened to act with relative freedom in pursuit of its interests in Syria, its ability to act with impunity once it has a nuclear weapons capability will be catastrophic for the region and U.S. national security.

Conclusion

Iran's Syria policy and nuclear policies are two sides of the same coin and essential strategic elements of Iran's drive for regional hegemony. Iran does not view these two policies separately; neither should the United States. But Washington should resist all efforts by Tehran to combine these two files in any diplomatic talks and leverage one against the other in trading concessions.

Washington should remain skeptical of the intentions and influence of Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani. His record is not encouraging on either the Syria or nuclear track. Mr. Rouhani is a loyalist of Iran's Supreme Leader and a master of diplomatic deceit and doesn't appear to be the elusive moderate who will get the United States any closer to rolling back Iranian influence in Syria, or stopping Iran's nuclear drive. Syria and nuclear policy remain in the hands of the Supreme Leader who has shown no willingness to compromise.

Washington should test the new Iranian president by focusing on results not rhetoric. The Obama administration must look for signs of diplomatic opportunity but remain deeply cautious that the Iranian election has changed anything with respect to Tehran's Syria or nuclear policies. Today, Washington's leverage on both files is waning as the trajectories of the Syrian conflict and of Iran's nuclear program continue to beat Western economic and political pressure. The perception is that Iran is playing to win while the United States is playing not to lose. This makes a diplomatic resolution in America's favor increasingly remote on both files.

Only massively intensified pressure – through sanctions, aggressive diplomacy, and the credible threat (and selective application) of force, either directly or through the support of American proxies – can help the U.S. reverse the strategic gains that Tehran has made in both Syria and on its nuclear program. Only then can Washington possibly convert enhanced leverage into a negotiated settlement that protects the security interests of America and its Middle Eastern allies.

On behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Dr. Brumberg.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL BRUMBERG, PH.D., SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, CENTER FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

Mr. BRUMBERG. Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Ranking Member Deutch and other members.

Mr. DEUTCH. Turn on your mic.

Mr. BRUMBERG. So sorry, I am going to start again. Good afternoon, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch and other members of this subcommittee. I am honored to have this opportunity to testify today before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa.

Today I would like to place the question of Iran's relations with Syria and Lebanon's Hezbollah in a wider framework. Indeed, the question I will address is how the June 14th election of Hassan Rouhani to the presidency might shape Iranian foreign policy or aspects of it. I should emphasize that the views expressed in this testimony represent my own assessment and do not reflect the positions of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not take policy positions.

Both before and after his election Rouhani stated that he and his new government would strive to regain the trust of citizens at home and to rebuild Iran's frayed relations abroad. By "reform" Rouhani seems to mean opening space for the return of those political leaders and groups that were previously excluded from politics and ensuring that these groups and the wider populace of some basic civil rights. But he also argues that pursuing these domestic goals requires diminishing international conflicts that former President Ahmadinejad and his hard line allies used to justify repressing the reformists. Rouhani and his allies appear to believe that reducing international tensions will facilitate a reopening of the domestic political arena.

The chances of Rouhani achieving limited success in the domestic front are not bad. If only because a wide spectrum of groups, including some in the so-called principalist camp that had supported the former President, now argue that reviving the economy and regaining the people's trust are vital to reviving the Islamic Republic's battered legitimacy.

But on the international front, moving from confrontation with the West to real cooperation will face significant obstacles. Those obstacles include ultra hard liners who are loath to see the reformists use success on the international stage to strengthen their popularity at home.

Given the influence of these hard liners, Rouhani and his allies are unlikely to depart from the national consensus regarding national security issues. Thus he will not risk provoking retaliation from hard liners and certainly the Supreme Leader by advocating a fundamental change in Iran's approach to Syria or Hezbollah. But even as he pays close attention to these red lines, Rouhani will probably continue looking for opportunities to promote a more flexible foreign policy, one that might ease the political situation at home.

My bottom line is this: While the U.S. should be cautious we should not dismiss such efforts out of hand or take actions that inadvertently reinforce opponents of the political opening. We should instead test Rouhani and his government, pushing I believe for a Palestinian-Israeli deal I still think is important and pursuing negotiations on comprehensive nuclear agreement might offer two tests. How Rouhani and his new government might respond to such tests is unclear. The fact that he has nominated former Iranian U.N. Ambassador Javad Zarif to be Foreign Minister and he has nominated impressive technocrats to take charge of economic policy are both fairly encouraging signs.

Now these developments reflect long-term social and political dynamics. Indeed reformists and moderate leaders from the principalist camp itself have been trying to seek an alliance as far back as 1999. Among other reasons they sought this alliance in a bid to repair the economic damage to Iran that resulted from the previous policies of Ahmadinejad. Rouhani and his allies have stated that advancing these economic reform agendas will require a new engagement with the West and quite possibly with the U.S.

One key objective in pursuing engagement will be to remove international sanctions, but division in an agenda that Rouhani favors is larger than that. To reiterate, Rouhani and his allies see success at the home front as depending partly on success abroad. Rouhani's previous role as chief negotiator on the nuclear issue gives him some credibility, certainly at home. Moreover, the fact that Rouhani and his allies hold that moving or mitigating international sanctions is crucial to advancing their domestic agenda suggests an opening for U.S. diplomacy.

The U.S. wants to make progress on crucial security issues, particularly the nuclear question, but it also is important to encourage realistic changes for a reopening of Iran's political arena. After years of repression Iran's reformist leaders and the wider electorate which elected Rouhani gave praise to such domestic change. But they also know that the struggle for change will take years and will only come through making accommodations at home.

It is in the interest of the U.S. to find ways to make the task of long-term political change possible in Iran while addressing our fundamental security interests.

Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Dr. Brumberg.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Brumberg follows:]

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"The Iran-Syria Nexus and Its Implications for the Region"

Testimony before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa

Daniel Brumberg
United States Institute of Peace

July 31, 2013

Good afternoon, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch and other Members of the Subcommittee. I am honored to have this opportunity to testify today before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa.

My objective here today is to address how the June 14, 2013 election of Hassan Rouhani to the presidency of Iran might reshape that country's foreign policy and, in turn, affect Iran's relations with Syria and Hezbollah. The views expressed in this testimony represent my own analytical assessment, and do not reflect the positions of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), which does not take policy positions, or of Georgetown University, where I am Co-Director of Democracy and Governance Studies.

Rouhani's Election and the Nexus of Domestic and Foreign Policy

Both before and after his election, President Rouhani has stated that his new government will regain the trust of Iran's citizens at home, and rebuild Iran's frayed relations abroad. He has called for domestic "reform," by which he seems to mean the renewed inclusion of political leaders and groups that were previously excluded from politics and the provision of some basic civil rights to these groups. He has also argued that pursuing these domestic goals requires diminishing international conflicts that former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his hard-line allies used to justify the repression of Iran's Reformists. Thus, Rouhani and many of his allies seem to envision a more flexible foreign policy that would reduce international tensions sufficiently to enact these domestic reforms.

The chances that Rouhani will achieve some limited success on the domestic front are good, if only because a wide spectrum of groups -- including some within the "Principlist" camp that had previously supported Ahmadinejad -- now argue that reviving Iran's economy and

regaining the trust of the people are vital to reviving the Islamic Republic's battered legitimacy. However, Rouhani and his allies are unlikely to depart from the overall national consensus regarding security issues. If Rouhani seeks to move away from confrontation with the West to engagement and cooperation, he is likely to face significant domestic obstacles. These obstacles include ultra-hardliners who are loathe to see moderate rivals use success on the international stage to strengthen their popularity at home. Rouhani is unlikely to risk provoking retaliation from hard-liners – and the Supreme Leader – by advocating a fundamental change in Iran's approach to Syria or Hezbollah. But even as he pays close attention to these red lines, Rouhani will probably continue looking for opportunities to promote a more flexible foreign policy – one that in turn might ease the political situation at home.

My bottom line is this: while the United States should be cautious, we should not dismiss, out-of-hand, opportunities to engage Rouhani or take actions that undercut Rouhani or inadvertently reinforce opponents of a political opening. Instead, the United States should test him and his new government and see whether a negotiated settlement is possible. Pushing for a Palestinian-Israeli deal and pursuing negotiations on the nuclear issue could offer two such tests, as I will explain below.

Rouhani's Surprise Victory

In order to identify opportunities for United States policy it is important to understand the social and political struggles that set the stage for Rouhani's surprising June 14, election victory. These dynamics can be summed up as follows:

1. **Rouhani's election owes much to the "boomerang" effect of the repression visited upon the Green Movement following June 2009 elections.** Although Ahmadinejad and

his hard-line allies succeeded in shutting down the Green Movement, their repressive policies produced two unintended consequences. First, these policies reinforced the determination of political leaders who had once been part of the system itself, such as former Presidents Khatami and Hashemi Rafsanjani, to forge common strategies for reviving the push for political form. Second, they generated a widespread legitimacy crisis for the regime itself. This legitimacy crisis induced some leaders in the Principlist Camp who had previously supported Ahmadinejad to break with him, and to start envisioning how the political system might be reopened to forces formerly excluded from it. One of these leaders was Rouhani himself.

2. **The regime's legitimacy crisis was compounded by the negative effects of Ahmadinejad's disastrous economic policies, which were amplified by international sanctions.** The negative effects of the welfare, fiscal and pseudo-privatization policies pursued by Ahmadinejad exacted high costs for important business groups. Indeed, many Principlists who had previously backed Ahmadinejad now assailed him for his "bombastic" language. That language, they claimed, had helped to isolate Iran and justify onerous sanctions, thus undermining their own business interests. This critique linked the domestic struggle against the hard-liners to the international arena. Indeed, many reformists argue that their capacity to push for sound economic policies required getting rid of sanctions.

3. **The 2013 elections opened a chance to widen the anti-Ahmadinejad alliance.** In the lead-up to last month's election, influential Principlists such as Nateq Nour (who had run against Khatami in the 1997 presidential election), prominent reformists such former Presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami, and Hassan Khomeini (grand-son of Ayatollah

Khomeini), joined ranks to support Rouhani's candidacy. Rouhani's bold challenge to his three Principlist opponents in national TV debates cemented a last minute surge of popular support. In what must have been a surprise to Rouhani himself, he slipped past the remaining divided field of Principlists with 50.7 percent of the 36 million votes cast, a turnout of 72.7 percent.

The Wider Social and Political Significance of Rouhani's Election

What can we expect from Rouhani and the new government he is assembling? First, it is important to recognize that Rouhani's election was in some senses a fluke, partly brought on by the hubris of his rivals. Moreover, past official positions, statements or writings are not clear guides to his emerging foreign policy orientations. However, by considering the evolving social, political and economic conditions that helped make his election possible, we can begin to make some educated guesses about what Rouhani's domestic and global agendas might look like, and the steps he might take to advance them.

In the domestic arena:

1. **Rouhani will try to respond to the reenergized electorate that propelled him into the presidency, while trying to reassure hard-liners that his reforms are consonant with the overall interests of the Islamic Republic.** His efforts to walk this fine line will be risky: Rouhani will probably seek to revive the mechanisms and norms of popular representation that the hard-liners had previously tried to strip away. But he will do so knowing that hard-liners might try to shut down another effort at internal reform.
2. **In balancing popular expectations and hard-line pressures, Rouhani will have to accommodate the Supreme Leader Khamenei, or at least gain his tacit acquiescence**

to his policy initiatives. This will not be easy because Rouhani represents social and political interests that are distinct from those of the Khamenei and some of his closest allies. Still, the Khamenei was not only surprised by Rouhani's last minute surge: Khamenei was probably unwilling to intervene lest he preside over a repeat of June 2009 and thus further erode the regime's legitimacy. Thus Khamenei may have an interest in reaching an accommodation with Rouhani.

3. **Given Rouhani's long-standing ties to the clerical establishment, he will have to make his agenda palatable to the clerics**. This represents a significant challenge. Rouhani only garnered 38 percent of the vote in the seminary capital of Qom. Ultimately, the clergy views him as a politician and cautious reformer whose policies may or may not be favorable to the clerics themselves. We should expect a complex dynamic of negotiations between Rouhani and the clerics whose ultimate outcome is hard to predict.

4. **The challenges of reaching internal accommodation among diverse forces will prove especially tricky when it comes to the Revolutionary Guards**. It is true that the Guards have extended their reach and power in recent years. Still, their ranks remain vulnerable to many of the social and political fault lines that have divided the broader Principlist Camp. This fact was amply demonstrated when a section of the Guards voted for Rouhani. Rouhani may try to find ways to reach out to this potential constituency. The fact that the Principlist Camp itself is now in disarray, and that some in their ranks are reaching out to Rouhani himself, may help Rouhani deflect pressures from the Revolutionary Guard.

5. **Rouhani's priority will be to address the negative effects of the previous government's economic, welfare and "privatization" policies.** Focusing on economics

is smart politics because a diverse array of groups are clamoring for economic changes. Rouhani will probably try to reduce rampant spending and expansion of the money supply, while trying to reverse the effects of a corrupted privatization scheme that funneled "welfare shares" to favored cronies of the previous regime.

6. **The success of these economic reforms will partly depend on the future of the international sanctions imposed on Iran.** Rouhani has made it clear that reducing or removing these sanctions is fundamental to any effort to repair the damage of the previous government and to creating a climate that will benefit both private and public sector businesses, whose fates are tied to the international, Western-oriented global economy.

In the foreign policy arena:

Given the balancing act that Rouhani will have to pursue in the domestic area, we should expect -- particularly at the outset -- a cautious foreign policy that pivots around the following:

1. **Rouhani will not break with what Iranian leaders consider Iran's key strategic interests.** Thus it is hardly surprising that he has reiterated his principled support for Iran's alliance with Hezbollah and with Syria's current government as represented by Beshir Assad. Nor it is surprising that Rouhani has defended Iran's Non Proliferation Treaty "rights" to create a "peaceful domestic nuclear program" that includes domestic uranium enrichment. To stray from these positions now would provoke his rivals and undermine his longer-term domestic reform agenda.
2. **Whether in the longer run Rouhani has the capacity to demonstrate greater flexibility on these and other foreign policy issues remains to be seen.** Escalating

conflict between Iran and the international community would complicate this task. In the past, hard-liners tried to justify the repression of reformers by arguing that their desire for an opening to the West would weaken Iran, or by arguing that reformers were a front for Western influence. Because international conflict reinforces the leverage of hard-liners, Rouhani's efforts to open up the political system at home will partly depend on reducing Iran's disputes with its neighbors and the wider international community. His own statements suggest that he is aware of this challenge and he means to address it.

3. **As Rouhani creates his cabinet -- assuming he gains the parliament's backing for this cabinet -- he might use domestic leverage to show flexibility on some foreign policy questions.** Rouhani has stated his opposition to international intervention of Syria. But he has adopted the Russian/Chinese formula calling for respecting the "ultimate wishes of the Syrian people" and their right to determine their own destiny. Rouhani's call for a more cooperative relationship in the regional and global arenas comes on the heels of rising concerns -- expressed by Iranian leaders -- regarding escalating Shi'ite-Sunni sectarian conflict in the Gulf and Levant. Iranian leaders face the task of balancing their support for Hezbollah with the need to prevent another civil war from erupting in Lebanon. Such a civil war could destabilize the entire region, and Iraq in particular, where Sunni-Jihadists are escalating their attacks on the government. Similarly, Iran's leaders must balance their support for Shi'ites in the Gulf with their need to maintain trade and financial linkages with the region. Rouhani may try to create a new foreign policy team that has the experience, knowledge and instincts to address these multiple challenges and interests. The apparent appointment of former Iranian UN ambassador Javad Zarif to the position of Foreign Minister is an encouraging signal.

4. **The most likely area for innovation from Rouhani and his allies is on the nuclear issue.** Having previously served as Iran's chief negotiator on nuclear issues, and having assailed the previous government's "mishandling" of these issues, Rouhani will probably push for a more robust process of negotiations with the West. The question is whether this will be merely tactical maneuvering or a reworked *strategic* approach that might create the basis for a mutually acceptable compromise. On this question, it is worth noting that during the 2013 election campaign, Rouhani and former Foreign Minister Velayati (a prominent Principlist) assailed Saeed Jalili, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, for considering concessions without an overall road map of the ultimate shape of a final agreement. The fact that Iran's leaders, and Rouhani in particular, may now press for such a roadmap, and that they might be willing to define their bottom lines, presents both an opportunity and a challenge for Western and American diplomacy in particular.

The United States Response: Testing Rouhani and his Allies

How should the United States respond to possible changes in Iranian policy and behavior? I suggest the following observations:

1) **On the nuclear issue, for many years, the United States and Iran have avoided any serious discussion of the parameters of a final agreement. Because Rouhani and his allies see progress on the nuclear front as crucial to advancing economic and political reforms at home, they might be ready to define Iran's bottom line and on that basis, seek a more comprehensive nuclear deal**. If Rouhani's new government moves in that direction, the United States must also have its ultimate goals clearly in mind and be willing to test Iran's intentions by offering significant incentives to reach an

agreement. These incentives must include a road map for ultimately removing international sanctions against Iran.

2) **Absent the readiness of either or both sides to make the concessions necessary for a comprehensive nuclear deal, the United States should consider modest sanctions relief that it could offer in response to positive moves by the new government to step away from the hard-line positions of past regimes**. We should remember, however, that "positive incentives" (as they are called in the negotiating business) such as incremental sanction relief may not have the intended positive effect unless -- at some point or other -- both sides can start talking about the shape of an ultimate deal.

3) **Beyond the nuclear issue, the most important way the United States can effect change in the foreign policy direction of Rouhan's new government is to change the strategic context in which Iran is operating in the Middle East.** If United States-facilitated Palestinian-Israeli negotiations lead to an agreement, Rouhani's government will be under considerable pressure to accept it. After all, the international community, and Western Europe in particular, will rebuff Rouhani's efforts to engage on the political and especially economic fronts if he rejects a peace deal agreed to by Palestinian and Israeli leaders. Former President Khatami's formula -- according to which Iran will accept any negotiated outcome acceptable to the Palestinians -- may provide Rouhani with the political cover he needs to accept a Palestinian-Israeli deal in order to sustain his other foreign policy initiatives.

In conclusion I would offer the following thought. The United States wants to make progress on crucial security issues, particularly the nuclear question. It is also important to support realistic chances for reopening Iran's political and economic arenas after years of

repression. Iran's reformist leaders – and the wider electorate -- know that the struggle for change will take years, and that it will only come by reaching accommodations and making compromises. Rouhani and his allies are seeking the domestic and international space to tackle these challenges. It is in the interest of the United States to find ways to make the task of long-term change possible, while at the same time addressing our fundamental security interests. It is time to begin a conversation as to how we might pursue both aims.

Thank you and I am happy to take questions.

The views expressed in this testimony are those of the author and not the U.S. Institute of Peace, which does not take policy positions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I will ask questions about seeing Rouhani as a moderate, Russia's role in Syria and what will Iraq do.

Ambassador Bolton, you said that those who had been labeling Rouhani as a moderate are naive in their assessment. And Mr. Dubowitz, you agree that Rouhani isn't the moderate that the world is so eager to say he is, yet the administration has been willing to accept a narrative of him as a moderate and has even begun to offer concessions on sanctions against the regime ahead of its next failed round of P5+1 negotiations. And just this morning the Institute on Science and International Security assessed that Iran is expected to achieve the critical capability needed to produce weapons grade uranium by mid-2014 without being detected.

So as Iran continues to support Assad by reportedly agreeing to supply Assad with $3.6 billion in oil in exchange for the regime to have the right to investments of various kinds in Syria, I think it is wise to be reminded that in the past this so-called moderate has boasted of his ability to deceive, as you pointed out, and mislead the international community on Iran's nuclear program when he served as the chief negotiator, and he continues to support the brutality of Assad.

Given what we know about Rouhani and these latest reports, why would the United States risk our national security and the security of the region by offering concessions to the regime when it is clear that there will be no change in Iran's nuclear position and its role on Syria? And will the administration—do you believe—now allow Iran to use Syria as a bargaining chip for its nuclear program? That is what I see in the horizon.

Now Russia, along with Iran and China, has been flooding Syria with arms for the Assad regime, has had a key strategic interest in selling arms to Assad, having access to all of that region through the Syrian naval base. Moscow has moved to stonewall U.S. efforts in calling for Assad to step down, and continues to obstruct our sanctions against Syria and Iran. It has got this veto power at the Security Council. So it is clear the administration's reset policy with Russia has not resulted in any progress whatsoever; it has actually weakened our position relative to Moscow. So given this, in light of this and Russia's continued cooperation with Assad and with Iran, what steps should the United States take regarding our policy toward Russia?

And on Iraq, we have been saying that we have called on Iraq to act, and stop, and inspect the planes that are routinely flying militants and militia to fight along Assad, but in only a few cases has Iraq actually done this inspection. And in addition, the Iraqi Government continues to ignore our request to honor its commitment to protect the people of Camp Liberty through its Memo of Understanding of 2011 and continues to put their lives in danger. Does the U.S. have any leverage with Iraq to force it to act on any of these issues?

Ambassador Bolton.

Ambassador BOLTON. On the first point, Madam Chairman, on Rouhani as a moderate. I mean, I think his career demonstrates he has been a man of the regime for 30-plus years. He wouldn't have been allowed to run for President unless it was clear he would hue

to the policies, particularly in the nuclear area, of the Supreme Leader and the Revolutionary Guard.

I have watched him in action very closely during the period of 2003–2005 when he was Iran's nuclear negotiator. And he was very smooth, charming, Western European diplomats just loved to deal with him, and he took them to the cleaners day after day after day negotiating a supposed suspension of Iran's enrichment program that was suspended because of the failures of the program itself, difficulties in the uranium enrichment process and even more importantly difficulties in the uranium conversion process that allowed Iran during this period of good will to fix the problems, then break the suspension and return to its nuclear weapons program.

So I think he has shown he knows how to do it once before and have no doubt he would like to do it again. Would he like to see——

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Let me turn to Mr. Dubowitz for Russia's role or Iraq's role.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Let me talk a little bit about this question of his record. Let's remember that he was nuclear negotiator and/or the Secretary of Supreme National Security Council when Iran did not voluntarily or transparently disclose Natanz, Fordo, or Isfahan.

On the issue of sanctions, I support massively intensified sanctions on Iran to bring it to the verge of economic collapse. I think it is the only way to put the Supreme Leader to a fundamental choice. But I think the sanctions relief that I am most concerned about are not the humanitarian sanctions that Treasury clarified last week. It was a statement of clarification, they were not new sanctions, but the fact that there have been sanctions on the books that have not enforced like the gold sanctions that have given Iran up to $7 billion in just under a year of vital foreign exchange reserves. And the unwillingness to entertain new sanctions, it is the non-enforcement of existing sanctions which is sanctions relief. We are already giving Iran sanctions relief and we are getting no nuclear concessions in return.

And finally, on the issue of linkage, I think the issue of linkage is very important, Madam Chairman. And that is that the Iranians will try to expand the negotiations to include Syria and their other interests so that they can trade concessions. And we have to be very careful not to link the Syria issue with Iran's nuclear program.

On Russia and Iraq they are both sanctions busters. We are not enforcing sanctions against either country and they are both in violation of our financial and energy sanctions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much. Thank you, gentlemen. My time is over.

Mr. Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Mark, I just wanted to follow up with Mr. Dubowitz with where you left off. What is it, and I throw this up to all three of you, what is it that needs to happen for sanctions to have the best chance of working? We are going to pass legislation this afternoon that will only strengthen the sanctions. We can give you, all of us sitting here can give you the statistics about the successes that the sanctions have yielded in terms of really tightening the economy in Iran. And yet the

numbers, the statistics about what Iran is doing in Syria, the amount of money, the amount of supplies are staggering. How is that happening, first of all, given where their economy stands? Is there any issue of public pressure that may help with Iran's involvement in Syria? We know the Iranian people are frustrated with the state of their economy. It was an issue for Rouhani in the election. Are they aware of the extent of Iranian involvement in Syria and the cost ultimately to them? So that is the second question. The first question though is sanctions generally, what more can be done?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. So I agree with Ambassador Bolton that sanctions are not going to be a silver bullet. There is no evidence that they have slowed Iran's nuclear program. But I think that we can fundamentally change the calculus of this regime by massively intensifying the sanctions and increasing the credibility of the military threat.

With respect to sanctions the only number that I think matters is the size of Iran's accessible foreign exchange reserves, because that is their principal hedge against a balance of payments crisis and economic meltdown. If we don't know that number then we don't know when they economically drop dead. And we have no way of comparing that number to David Albright's number, which is Iran's obtainment of undetectable nuclear breakout by June 2014. We have to know which comes first. And I think by going after the foreign exchange reserves, denying them access to overseas accounts, going after their oil export revenue, their commercial trade, we have to get Iran closer and closer to the brink of economic collapse but we need to know that number. And if we don't know that number, we don't know where we are at.

Mr. DEUTCH. Dr. Brumberg.

Mr. BRUMBERG. Well, I will have to disagree with my distinguished colleague. I think that the dependence on sanctions is a flight from reality. The notion that by increasing sanctions we are going to compel Iran to do something it doesn't want to do is simply a substitute for a strategic policy. It is not a policy, it is easy to agree on, it is easy to get consensus on, but it is not an effective policy. It hasn't worked so far. I see no evidence that if you put a gun to the heads of the Iranian leadership they are going to say we will do what you want us to do. It hasn't been successful. And when something doesn't work you don't keep repeating it. That is not a policy.

Now sanctions, there are two ways we can think about sanctions. Sanctions are always a means for some sort of end. Sanctions can be a means of a war policy. From the vantage point of Iran and if the Iranian leaders were listening to the presentations today, they would say well, clearly the point of view, and our colleagues have basically said this, the point of view of sanctions is regime change. Now if that is your message, then that is your message. Then of course if you want to make war you make war. But if sanctions is an adjunct for negotiations and is a bargaining chip, then you have to be ready at some point or other to conceive of a deal in which you are going to remove sanctions, because sanctions are there in order to compel your adversary to make peace, and that means a dual track approach.

So I am not saying that one or the other is best. I think we have to decide what we want to do. And ultimately if we want to go to war, we go to war. Because this is what has been advocated here today in effect. But if we don't, we have to recognize that concessions will come down the way. And at some point or another we will deal with this regime because it is not collapsing today or tomorrow.

Mr. DEUTCH. Ambassador Bolton, a lot of us sitting up here believe that sanctions haven't yet caused the Supreme Leader to change his commitment to nuclear weapons because they have not been strong enough, right, isn't that the alternate argument?

Ambassador BOLTON. Well, that is the theory. I actually agree with Dr. Brumberg up until the point when he started talking about going to war. The sanctions are not working and they are not going to work. There is a theoretical case that economic sanctions can work with three conditions, that they are utterly comprehensive, everything is covered, number one. Number two, that they are complied with by every major power in the world, and three, that they are enforced by military force. None of those three things apply to Iran nor will they ever. The nuclear weapons program is not expensive enough for the sanctions to have an effect on and the proof of the pudding is Korea. North Korea, the most heavily economically sanctioned country in the world, has detonated three nuclear devices.

Mr. DEUTCH. Madam Chairman, may I ask for 30 seconds for Mr. Dubowitz to respond to the suggestion that North Korea is an example here. You have spoken to the need for strengthening sanctions. You have spoken to the opportunities that we have to further tighten the economic noose so that the Supreme Leader changes his ways.

Can you speak to ultimately the potential effectiveness of that that your two colleagues on the panel seem to argue against?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, there is no doubt that sanctions will not work on their own. We have all stated that. But I think that it is actually wrong to say that sanctions can't put enormous pressure that we can convert into negotiating leverage at the table. If Iran only has $20 billion of accessible foreign exchange reserves and those reserves are being depleted rapidly, Iran is facing economic collapse. Now if economic collapse cannot break the nuclear will of Mr. Khamenei, nothing will and there will be no nuclear deal with no concessions that Mr. Brumberg would at all entertain. On the other hand, we need to try. And I think that we don't need military force to enforce sanctions. We need to massively ratchet up the current sanctions regime, which is putting enormous economic pressure on the regime and get those FX reserves down to a level where the Supreme Leader does not have the money to support economy.

Mr. Rouhani was elected because the Iranian people are sick of the sanctions, they are sick of the economic pressure and they are sick of the nuclear intransigence that Mr. Khamenei has shown.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Deutch.

Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Madam Chair, and again to the witnesses, thank you for being here. I will take just a very slight issue

with what Dr. Brumberg said. I think actually it is not necessarily that we are advocating for war, I frankly think Iran has been at war with the United States for a very long time. I mentioned in my opening statement I am a veteran of Iraq, I flew planes, and if I could say in this setting, which I can't, I don't think, but I will say that a lot of energy was focused on Iran basically being involved in the war in Iraq and in some cases some have suggested that almost half the U.S. casualties were the direct result of Iranian technology and Iranian action.

And I just want to say too at the outset, I am not critical of this administration because I am a Republican, I am not critical of this administration because there is any partisan politics involved. If this were a Republican administration with the same policy, I would be saying the exact same thing. But I am a believer that when the leadership around the globe retreats something has to follow. And if there is no other leader that is stepping up or able to step up, which in this case there isn't, when the United States retreats from engagement from around the world I think chaos follows. And I think that is what we are seeing in the Middle East as a result of frankly a lack of American engagement.

I will give you some examples on that. We look at Egypt, the day—and I want to ask this question, but I want a second—the day there was this change in Egypt our administration was not really focused on going out and stressing support for the Egyptian people, stressing support for their change into a democracy. I look at the example of Benghazi and what happened there. I look at the status of forces agreement in Iraq and basically the ease to give up there and the quickness at which we walked away from the negotiating table. And today you look at Iraq and it is basically in chaos again, which to me personally is very disturbing.

And you look at the administration floating the idea, even if they don't follow it, floating the idea of a zero troop option in Afghanistan after 2014, that does nothing but embolden our enemy. That does nothing but embolden the forces that would fight against the United States. We have been fighting these proxy wars against Iran, against terrorists for a very, very long time. And this is from somebody, by the way, one of six Republicans that voted to give the President authority to go into Libya because I believed that was the right thing to do.

But a couple of big questions. First off, I want to ask you, Ambassador Bolton, specifically about the—and I know this is an exactly on topic, but the message sent the day that change happened in Egypt. What do you think the Egyptian people saw in the United States' kind of lack of engagement on that transition?

Ambassador BOLTON. Well, I think they see an incoherence in dealing with events in Egypt that has unfortunately characterized the response to the entire Arab Spring. If you go back to Mubarak's fall, I counted in the 31-day period from the time demonstrations began in Egypt to the time Mubarak stepped aside that the administration had four distinct positions. And the net of that, and I think essentially we saw a repetition when the demonstrators went into the streets in late June and early July, and the military finally stepped in on July 3rd. The result is nobody knows where we stand. We don't gain points with any of the various competing fac-

tions or persuasions in the struggle. And overall we are left impotent as the situation deteriorates. And I think the debate we are having now over continued foreign assistance unfortunately helped show that. And I think the signal that it sounds throughout the region combined with an absence now of having done anything effective since September the 11th in Benghazi is that America is uninterested, that we are declining in our ability to shape events in the region. And I think that is something that our adversaries and our friends alike both see and they are calibrating their policies accordingly, unfortunately, for our interest.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you. I will ask each of you if you can answer with basically just one quick answer, what is more important to Iran a healthy economy or nuclear weapons? I'll start with you, Dr. Brumberg.

Mr. BRUMBERG. Well to the forces——

Mr. KINZINGER. Just very quickly.

Mr. BRUMBERG. When you say Iran I am not sure what you mean, but if you are talking about the forces.

Mr. KINZINGER. The regime.

Mr. BRUMBERG. Nuclear weapons. I think that Iran is much more than a regime and I have to say this because this is not the conversation we are having. There was a force that brought Iran to power. This is the force of the electorate. They want economic and political change.

Mr. KINZINGER. Well, that is great and we have been talking about that for 20 years, the fact the regime is in charge and the regime is the one chasing nuclear weapons. Dr. Brumberg.

Mr. BRUMBERG. Well, we may have some disagreement on that.

Mr. KINZINGER. Would you say healthy economy or nukes?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Regime survival. And if they think that a nuclear weapon can guarantee the survival of the regime they will pursue it. If they think that there is a fundamental choice between a nuclear weapon and the survival of the regime, we may have a chance of breaking their nuclear will. But we need enhanced leverage, we can't be naive, this isn't the Harvard Negotiation Project.

Mr. KINZINGER. Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador BOLTON. They want nuclear weapons and I would say please don't believe the official economic statistics. These are expert smugglers with—the largest Iranian diplomatic facility in the world is in Caracas, Venezuela. Because of their close cultural ties? No, because they are laundering their money through the Venezuelan banks.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you. I have a million more questions but my time is up.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Mr. Schneider.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses. I would like to pick up essentially where we left off. But as you talked about, Mr. Dubowitz, the desire of the Iranian regime is survival and we saw in the recent election what to them appears to have been a surprise outcome with the election of Rouhani. How much impact, and this is everyone, do you believe the economic struggles of the Iranian people having influence on the outcome of the election if at all?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, thank you for the question. I think the Supreme Leader doesn't fear the United States, he doesn't fear Israel. He fears his own people. He knows what he has done to his own people. He has brutalized them, he knows the sense of despair. And I think he was shocked by the election results. I mean he was shocked that his preferred candidate, Said Jalili, lost and that Rouhani won, not because it was a pro-Rouhani vote but it was because it was an anti-Khamenei vote. And the vote was based on a sense of despair and depression and frustration with the nuclear intransigence that has led to the economic demise of a proud nation that otherwise should be powerful and rich and influential. And so for that reason I do think these sanctions are working, not in slowing down Iran's nuclear program, because that is clearly not happening, but in embittering the Iranian people not against the United States but against the Supreme Leader, the Revolutionary Guard and a regime that has held them hostage for 30 years.

Again, these sanctions can give us leverage. That is all they can give us is leverage, and how we use that leverage remains to be seen.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Dr. Brumberg, you are nodding your head.

Mr. BRUMBERG. Well, I agree with that. Sanctions will get Iranian leadership to the table. What you decide to do at the table is the question. Whether you want to negotiate on the kinds of concessions that you ultimately want to provide, including on the sanctions relief, that is the debate we need to have. What kind of relationship do we ultimately want with the Islamic Republic around? Assuming that we are not advocating regime change. If we want to find some way to live with this regime, which in many respects has ben a repugnant regime. That is a conversation I think we often avoid, the strategic conversation we need to have.

I also want to say on this issue of Rouhani and whether he is a moderate and we have these debates that go on forever. Rouhani is not really the story here. The story is the political social forces that brought him into power that have been struggling to be heard and they count in the Islamic Republic system. I have been studying the system for years. It is not simply the Supreme Leader. And the office of the President, which everybody predicted would be abolished is not going to be abolished. There will be parliamentary elections in 2 years. The one thing the reformists desperately want is a peace process between the U.S. and Iran to create the space that they need for the long-term struggle for human rights in that country. Now we have to decide whether we take that struggle seriously. Do we want to help to foster it, because short of regime change the change in Iran will happen through not against us.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. In a sense of time, I only have 2 minutes left. Out of this committee and going to the floor today or tomorrow is a bill that strengthens the sanctions regime, that hopefully gives us that leverage to try to force the hand and change the course away from progress toward a nuclear capability, and it seems what I am hearing is that those sanctions have had an effect on the economy, and the effect on the economy has had an effect on the politics on the Iran. And so it seems to me that we should be pursuing more sanctions or stronger sanctions.

Am I missing something?

Mr. BRUMBERG. I think the sanctions have had an effect on the politics, there is no doubt about it, but alone the sanctions will not compel the Iranians to do what we think they should do. They will not do it by themselves. We have to sit down and negotiate and decide ultimately whether we are going to be living with sanctions forever or real incentives in return for a deal that we and the Iranians can accept. That is the conversation I don't think we are having.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Sanctions are a means to an end. Sanctions aren't the goal——

Mr. BRUMBERG. Yes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Preventing Iran from having a nuclear weapon is the goal.

Mr. Dubowitz.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, there is a lot of talk in Washington about sweetening the offer and that we are not being generous enough to the Iranian regime. There is an offer on the table, it was presented at al-Mahdi. It is a very good offer despite the fact that administration officials go on background as describing the sanctions relief as modest. The offer says gold sanctions and petro sanctions, chemical sanctions relief worth tens of billions of dollars, 20 percent, and the suspension of 20 percent enrichment. That is increasingly an irrelevant nuclear concession if you believe David Albright and nuclear experts who say we are moving to undetectable nuclear breakout. So there is an offer on the table. Let Rouhani respond to it before we talk about sweetening that offer or offering generous sanctions relief. We should be enhancing our negotiating leverage not diminishing it before we show up for the negotiations.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And my time is up as well. I have many more questions. But again, thank you for your time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, sir. Mr. Weber of Texas.

Mr. WEBER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to follow up on that. Winston Churchill, Mr. Dubowitz, said, an appeaser is someone who feeds the crocodiles his friends one at a time, hoping it will eat him last. Is that what is going on here? We are simply trying to appease them in the sanctions process and they are going to get the nuclear weapons? That is your best opinion?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. You know, I don't like to use the word "appeasement" because I think that everybody who has engaged in this has the best of intentions and is trying to figure out how to deal with a very complicated diplomatic issue. I do think that we tend to take a very Western approach to this. You know, we are all trained in sort of negotiating tactics that we want to have a good relationship, we want to expand the community of interests, we want to look for different options, we want to find a deal. The fact of the matter is we are negotiating against hardened negotiators who employ brinksmanship.

Mr. WEBER. One who has already misled the United States and boasted about it.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. They have absolutely done so. So this Rouhaniphoria that has followed the election of Mr. Rouhani I think has to be treated with a high degree of skepticism, not because only of his track record, but the track record of the Supreme

Leader and the fact that these are men who understand the nuclear file and have forgotten tricks we haven't even learned.

Mr. WEBER. All right. Let me move from that to one of my colleagues, Mr. Deutch, down on the other side of the podium here said that they were, I believe, sending Iran $500 million a month into Syria and 500 tons of cargo a day, if I remember him correctly. Were you all aware of that? And you think that is pretty accurate? Based on $500 million a month, now you talked about their surplus I think, how long can they do that?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, I think that is the essential question. I mean, if we know what the size of their accessible foreign exchange reserves are and we know how much money they have got in the bank, then we have a pretty good sense of how long they can do that.

Mr. WEBER. So do the math. How long is it?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, you know, that is the question you need to ask the administration in a classified setting.

Mr. WEBER. Let me move over to Ambassador Bolton.

Ambassador BOLTON. I don't think we know what Iran's foreign exchange reserves are. I don't think they have been honest over the past decade in declaring what their reserves are and where they are. I don't think they are being honest today about their oil exports. I don't think they are recording as official exports the oil they are trucking through Kurdistan into Turkey. I don't think we are calculating the oil they are shipping through Iraq as Iraqi oil.

Mr. WEBER. In other words, you think they would purposefully mislead us.

Ambassador BOLTON. I know it is shocking.

Mr. WEBER. Golly. Let me move on.

Ambassador BOLTON. That is the way it goes.

Mr. WEBER. Let me move on. So you say if the Israelis have that air strike, if they issue that strike, that Iran will most assuredly will retaliate. And I think you said by unleashing Hezbollah into just an unbelievable rocket barrage. Of course we have the Iron Dome in place. Any idea of what kind of sustained barrage and how long that would go on?

Ambassador BOLTON. Well, I think the Iranian calculus, although you can never be sure with a regime of that nature, is that they can intimidate Israel into not acting by threatening Israel's civilian population. And I think the supplies and the personnel that they have put into the Bekaa Valley for Hezbollah since the end of the Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006 is very, very frightening. I think their efforts, which are continuing, to put at least a modest missile capability in Hamas's hands in the Gaza Strip, all make this an extraordinarily difficult decision for Israel, which is what it is calculated to do. And I think that is why we have to look at this from the perspective that there is not much time for Israel to make a decision whether it is going to——

Mr. WEBER. Well, it is just delayed annihilation, if you will. I mean, they can either go ahead and stop the process now or be confronted with it later.

Ambassador BOLTON. Or they can risk the very real possibility that we have all miscalculated, and that Iran has facilities we don't know about, or that they are working with North Korea, or many

other things that put them much closer, not just to one or two nuclear weapons, but to scores of nuclear weapons.

Mr. WEBER. No, I would agree with that. Now let me move back to you Mr., is it Dubowitz or Dubowitz?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Dubowitz.

Mr. WEBER. Dubowitz. You said earlier that not killing Christians, women, and children should not be the framework for concessions in your prepared remarks. Would you reiterate that?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, what I said is that if Mr. Rouhani and this regime would actually demonstrate their moderation, they should stop killing Syrian women and children. But we shouldn't reward them for that.

Mr. WEBER. So you are not saying that we are negotiating with that right now.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. No, we are not negotiating with that right now. What I am suggesting is that we try to view Mr. Rouhani through the prism of the nuclear file all the time. And I think what we try to do in this hearing, given the nexus, is to view him through the prism of Syria, where Mr. Rouhani and this regime are complicit in the slaughter of tens of thousands of Syrians, including women and children. And that should give us pause when we sit down with this man.

Mr. WEBER. Oh, absolutely. And that is a great point. I appreciate you making it. Madam Chair, I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir. My Florida colleague, Ms. Frankel.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you all for your service. To me, this is an example of very smart, committed people with very different opinions on things. And I just wanted to say as an aside that I am personally happy that our Secretary of State is trying for peace in the Middle East. And I hope, and I expect that he will not lose focus on Iran and Syria and the rest of the chaos.

Mr. Bolton, I think I heard you say that you do not believe, as to Iran, that sanctions are working. So I want to just ask you specifically are you suggesting a military intervention to stop a nuclear power? And let me ask my other question. And then, I think, Mr. Dubowitz, I think I heard you say that you think we should have more sanctions. But the sanctions should just be related to Iran trying to obtain nuclear power, but should not be related to its action in Syria. I think you said that. No, you didn't say that. Well, maybe you could explain that. Let's start with those two questions, and then we will go from there.

Ambassador BOLTON. There is simply no evidence that the sanctions have had any impact on Iran's nuclear weapons program. And given that with the amount of uranium they have enriched to reactor grade already, if they were racing to create nuclear weapons, they could do it within about 4 months. So the notion that continuing to ratchet up the sanctions at some point will prevent them from getting nuclear weapons simply misses the reality. I think, and I want to say this very carefully, objectively speaking, focusing on sanctions almost guarantees that Iran will get nuclear weapons because they are that close.

I do believe that the only option is a preemptive military strike against Iran's nuclear program. I have believed that for quite some

number of years. And I know this is a very, very unattractive option. But it is a far worse option to contemplate Iran with nuclear weapons, not only because of what that regime could do with those weapons, but because it doesn't stop with Iran. As Secretary of State Clinton said over a year ago, if Iran gets nuclear weapons, so will Saudi Arabia, so will Egypt, so will Turkey, so will others.

Ms. FRANKEL. Mr. Bolton, can I just ask the other two gentlemen to comment on that? And give me your opinion of a scenario of what would happen if there was a military intervention?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. I think there is another scenario, which is not necessarily to launch a military strike, but actually to enhance the credibility that we were serious about using the military option if all other options were exhausted. I mean, I think one of the fundamental problems of our Iran policy has been that the Supreme Leader does not believe the United States, and I don't think even believes Israel that we are serious about using military force to destroy his nuclear facilities. I think if he thought so and actually believed that, we would have a much better chance of finding a peaceful resolution to this problem at the negotiating table through a combination of economic pressure and a credible military threat. We may not actually have to launch those military strikes in order to get that deal, but we have got to enhance the credibility of the threat.

Ms. FRANKEL. How is that done?

Mr. DUBOWITZ. It is done through the rhetoric of the President, it is done through the positioning of military assets, it is done through selective leaks, it is done through arming our allies, it is done through a variety of ways that signals to the Iranians that this President is serious about using military force to stop a critical nuclear capability, not just a nuclear weapon.

Ms. FRANKEL. Dr. Brumberg?

Mr. BRUMBERG. Well, I have to admit I am not an expert on these strategic matters. I have spent, however, a lot of time sitting with the experts here in Washington, and, I might add, in Israel, talking about this very subject. And I have not run into serious people who do serious work on this question who would argue that using force is an obvious or inevitably successful strategy. In fact, quite the contrary. I hear it over and over again that it will be a boomerang. Why? Because a serious military strike is not something that you have overnight and disappear. It takes weeks. You have to make sure the Iranians cannot retaliate.

So when you talk about a strike, understand what we are talking about. We are talking about going to war. Now, that is what I was saying before. I am not advocating going to war. But I think the discussion just gets around what the real options are. We have to stand up and say if we want war, then make the argument. It is no point in threatening war unless you are ready to go to war. And from what I can tell, again, working with my Israeli friends, the debate in Israel is rich and complex. And the military people there are not convinced that the military strike is the obvious way to go. And moreover, they don't necessarily believe that it is possible for them to do it without the U.S.'s involvement in a major sustained set of strikes lasting weeks, if not longer.

So if this is the solution, and we think at the end of the day we will resolve this, with all the costs to the region, and the costs to the hopes of reform in Iran, then let's make that argument. But if we don't really want that outcome, then let's talk about the real possibilities. And I think that often the conversation doesn't get down to the nitty gritty. And while I obviously disagree with Ambassador Bolton in some respects, I respect his readiness to at least articulate what he thinks the ultimate real option is, which is war.

And if that is the way we want to go, then let's make the argument. But I don't think it is the obvious solution. And I think that threatening war when you know the consequences are going to be very bad isn't an especially good idea.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Remembering that this is an Iran-Syria nexus hearing, remember there are Iranian assets in Syria as well. I mean, the Revolutionary Guard assets could force assets in Syria. The Israelis have reportedly launched four air strikes against assets in Syria, Hezbollah assets in Syria. They have penetrated Syrian air defenses. There has been no blowback, no consequences. They have lost no planes, no pilots. It does suggest that the U.S. has other strike options that may not entail blowing up Iran's nuclear facilities, but, in fact, may entail going after Iranian assets in Syria selectively to once again send a message of resolve. I don't think it is an either/or between, you know, appeasement and a full-scale military intervention with 150,000 soldiers climbing through the mountains of Iran. There are other options as we look at this trajectory.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. And my other Florida colleague, Mr. DeSantis.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. You know, I appreciate the testimony. I was reading in the paper when they had the Iranian election, and Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, I mean, all of them, moderate wins Iranian election. And we even have a letter now that is circulating amongst my colleagues in the House, I think there is over 130 of them, who have said, hey, this guy's a moderate, this is a chance to get some negotiations. And I just find that to be incredibly naive. To describe him as a moderate in a way that we would kind of think of it here is very misleading.

So Ambassador Bolton, what is your sense on Hasan Rouhani and this idea that he is some kind of a moderate? Do you agree with that? And do you think that it is worth negotiating with this regime?

Ambassador BOLTON. No, I don't think it is worth negotiating. We have negotiated for 10 years. And you know, at some point you can say how much longer do we have to wait? The criticism of Ahmadinejad when he was President by the so-called moderates had nothing to do with his objective to get a deliverable nuclear weapons capability. It was that he talked about wiping Israel off the face of the Earth, that he boasted about the nuclear weapons program, that he went on public relations tours of the centrifuge facility at Natanz, that he kept talking about it.

And the argument by leaders like Rafsanjani and others was stop talking about it. You are getting the West agitated. They are paying attention to it. And I think Rouhani is perfectly positioned to play exactly that kind of strategy to allay the fears, to have nego-

tiations, to make meaningless concessions, all the while Iran's nuclear infrastructure grows broader and deeper. And just one piece that we haven't talked about today, the IAEA, in its last quarterly report, estimates that the heavy water production facility and the heavy water reactor at Iraq will be on line next year. And that is an even more efficient way to produce plutonium for the plutonium route to nuclear weapons. There is no power generating capacity in Iraq to use the output of the heavy water reactor. It can only have a weapons purpose. And it is going right along.

Mr. DESANTIS. With respect to Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and Israel's response, you know, you talked about an Israeli strike. I think in your testimony you meant a strike on the actual reactors. One of the gentlemen up here mentioned some of their other assets in the region. So Ambassador Bolton, do you think a strike against some of these other assets in the region, but not necessarily a strike on the Iraqi—or on the Iranian nuclear facilities itself would be effective or sufficient?

Ambassador BOLTON. No, I don't. I think what any strike has to do is break Iran's control over the nuclear fuel cycle at certain key points. You don't have to destroy all their facilities. But at a minimum, I think you need to prevent their capacity to enrich uranium and the even more vulnerable link, their capacity to convert uranium from a solid into a gas. This is the Isfahan conversion facility. We know where it is. It is all above ground. We don't think there is an alternative. The risk of not acting, as every day goes by, is simply that Iran increases the potential to have redundant facilities that we don't know about. And for all this discussion that we have had here today and we have in the general public debate, we ought to be a little bit more humble about our intelligence about what is actually going on in Iran.

We have had problems overestimating our accuracy before. And that is why the notion that we have an essentially unlimited time to negotiate is very, very dangerous.

Mr. DESANTIS. And I know this is about the Syrian-Iran nexus, but with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian issue I think it is relevant because it kind of feeds into this idea that we can get further in negotiations and we may have to. I know Israel has agreed to give up 100 or so Palestinian prisoners, terrorists. And it is frustrating to me because I think that sends the wrong signal to the Palestinians, almost a reward in some ways. I don't think that that is going to lead to any type of lasting settlement. But what are your thoughts on what is going on with that situation?

Ambassador BOLTON. No, I think the release of the prisoners was clearly as a result of the pressure of the United States. I don't think that will fundamentally change the negotiating dynamic. And I think the ultimate outcome is that we are going to be left pretty much in the place that we were before. I do think to the extent that it reflects an investment of American prestige in an effort that is almost certainly doomed to failure, it will leave the United States, when that occurs, in yet even weaker a position in the region as a whole than we are already.

Mr. DESANTIS. I appreciate that. And thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir. Mr. Connolly of Virginia.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. And you may not remember that I was once a Senate staffer on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. But in 1981, I staffed the nomination hearing for a young person named John Bolton.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. He was young once?

Mr. CONNOLLY. He was young, he had no gray hair. He still had the moustache, though.

Ambassador BOLTON. Much like you.

Mr. CONNOLLY. That is right. He aged. I don't know what happened to me. Well, starting with you, Mr. Ambassador, you sound pretty gloomy. You have no faith in the restart of peace negotiations undertaken by Secretary Kerry, and you think that there is really no alternative but to a preemptive strike to take out the nuclear capability that is being developed in Iran. Is that correct?

Ambassador BOLTON. Yeah. It is a very, very unattractive alternative. But I think you have to look at it this way. If the choice were between the world as it is today compared to the world after an Israeli strike, we would all prefer the world as it is today, of course. But that is not the choice that Israel faces or that the United States faces. The choice is between the world after an Israeli strike compared to a world where Iran has nuclear weapons. And it is in that circumstance where that is the decision that the resort to preemptive military force, as Israel has twice before done against this program, I think is the only other option.

Mr. CONNOLLY. So the Israelis should, in your view, and we should encourage them by extension, I assume, undertake this preemptive action. Any kind of timeline?

Ambassador BOLTON. The sooner the better. I mean, look, the Israelis unambiguously would prefer that the United States do this because they know our capacity is much greater, our ability to sustain the operation over a long period of time is much greater. And it is true that the United States has said, in both the last administration and this one, that all options are on the table, but nobody believes that. Nobody believes it in Israel and nobody believes it in Iran. That is why the spotlight is on Israel. They don't want it on Israel, but that is the choice. And I think if they don't act in the very near future, then the almost certain outcome is that Iran gets nuclear weapons and very, very soon. And if that happens, as I said a moment ago, I think at least three other countries in the region move quickly to get nuclear weapons themselves.

Mr. CONNOLLY. What about trying, before you sort of undertake a preemptive strike, presumably you have got to do some calculus about the consequences. Now, some have posited that this is very different from taking out a capacity in Syria or the previous taking out of a reactor in Iraq. This is very different, and that you are talking about potentially region-wide, you know, reactions that could be deeply and profoundly injurious to the interests of Israel, and by extension, us. So how would you address that, Mr. Ambassador, since you have called for the preemptive strike?

Ambassador BOLTON. Yeah. Well, I have written, and I will try and summarize what I think the Iranian reaction would be. But let me say, first, in terms of the reaction in the region, the Arab states of the peninsula on the other side of the Gulf would welcome the elimination of the Iranian nuclear weapons program. They may not

say that publicly, but in private, they fear Iran with nuclear weapons almost as much as Israel does. I think that Iran itself, then, would have some hard decisions about how to respond. I do not think that they would close the Strait of Hormuz. I do not think they would attack deployed American forces in the region or the Arab states on the other side of the Gulf because that would bring us in.

And as I said before, you can never be certain with this regime. But I think by process of elimination you conclude the most likely Iranian retaliation is to have Hezbollah and Hamas attack Israel, which is why prompt American support, if Israel does decide to attack, is so important to resupply the planes they will undoubtedly lose in large numbers over Iran so that they can gain air supremacy over the Bekaa Valley and the Gaza Strip to suppress that rocket fire.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Madam Chairwoman, if you would allow Mr. Dubowitz and Dr. Brumberg to simply have the opportunity to respond.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Congressman, I actually think that there is another risk, that the Iranians may not dash to a nuclear weapon quickly, prompting a—or at least before that, prompting Israel and the United States to have to move quickly. The Iranian end game actually may have a middle point. And the middle point is to establish critical nuclear capability where they are at the point of undetectable nuclear breakout, where they can break out without the IAEA and Western intelligence knowing about it. And then in doing so, establish an industrial size nuclear capacity so they can produce not one weapon, but multiple weapons, and then stop. And at that critical point where they have the ability to turn a screw and build a nuclear weapon, they stop and they say to the international community we now have an industrial-sized program with undetectable breakout, and here are our demands: Massive sanctions relief, recognize our interests in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bahrain and elsewhere, and don't force us to build a bomb. You know, the Supreme Leader has this supposed fatwa against a nuclear weapon. Well, we don't want a nuclear weapon, so don't force our hand. And in doing so have all of the leverage and turn the tables on the international community, get massive sanctions relief, get the oil flowing, get the economy stabilized, and then at some point, because I think it is absolutely in the Supreme Leader's DNA, then dash to a weapon with a strong economy and without sanctions in place. That may be a potential end game that I think we should be very conscious and very wary of.

Mr. BRUMBERG. Well, if this discussion illustrates anything, it is the lack of good alternatives. I mean, I think we all recognize, listening to this discussion as we are trying to work out a very difficult situation, that many of the alternatives are worse than the other. The Israelis themselves, from what I know, speaking to the experts, don't believe that they have the ordnance to undertake an effective strike by themselves. And therefore, there is no such thing as successful or effort to be successful on the military front without

a concerted, extended, protracted bombing campaign supported by the U.S.

And again, there is no guarantee that it will be successful. And it may have regional effects that we can't imagine and maybe disaster. And that is disastrous. That is why the Israelis are so worried, and are not necessarily adamant for making the kinds of moves that some are advocating. I might also just add one more remark here, and that is when you talk about the Iranians looking for capacity, having the capacity, what that means. It is a very complex issue. Can we negotiate under those circumstances an agreement that we can accept? Perhaps not. Perhaps so. We don't really know. This is a matter to be addressed through negotiations, unless we simply don't want to have negotiations. Then the war option is really the only one, and it is not a good one either.

So I think that all the alternatives are bad. I myself have made the argument that we should, at the very least, test the opportunity before us. The situation cannot be reduced to one man or one position, but is a complex one in which we have a serious process of change going on in Iran, and let's not blow that up as well.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Connolly. I hope your cold gets better. And Mr. Deutch and I have packed this subcommittee with Floridians. So very pleased to yield to Dr. Yoho of Florida.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity, and I enjoy you guys and your testimony. What I see as our foreign policy is a circle. It is like a tiger chasing its tail for the last 25 to 30 years. You know, stop Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, sanctions, the threat of war, the IAEA inspectors in the hopes that Iran will not develop a nuclear war.

Mr. Bolton, or Ambassador Bolton, in your book, Surrender is Not an Option, for over 20 years we and other nations of the world have attempted to dissuade Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, but yet they get closer, decade by decade, year by year, day by day. And we send the IAEA in there, and they get hoodwinked, and Iran says we are not doing it, but we know they are and they have been. I mean, the proof is in the pudding right now.

What other strategies, other than the sanctions we have talked about and the threat of war, would you recommend? And this is for all three of you. And what, in your opinion—and I know this is crazy, but play along with me here, because the last 30 years have been kind of crazy. And this has happened before with Pakistan developing a nuclear weapon and then India. Said it couldn't be done. And then North Korea and China. What would happen if, as Mr. Dubowitz said, the end game, if they were allowed—not allowed, but if they developed that and then we had a different strategy, thinking outside of the box, and say you know what, if you have that, you just better be careful how you use it because the rest of the world is going to respond. I mean, I know that is—I have not heard anybody talk about that. But yet you said your end game is getting Iran that close to developing a nuclear weapon. And if they get that close, they have the negotiation power. And it sounds to me like they are going to get that anyways. So what happens if we change the policy and said you know what, if you get that, you

need to be very, very careful? I would like to hear your comments on that.

Ambassador BOLTON. Well, I think the idea that if they get nuclear weapons they can be contained and deterred is a strategy that is doomed to leave Israel and our Arab friends in the region in grave peril forever. And in fact, given Iran's support for international terrorism over the years, would lead to the potential of them assisting terrorists in exploding a nuclear device anywhere on Earth, whether they ever get the ballistic missile capability to deliver it that way or not.

And as I said a moment ago, once that happens, even if I am wrong that you cannot contain and deter a nuclear Iran, it doesn't stop there. You have got the proliferation to the Saudis, to Egypt, to Turkey, and others that takes an already very dangerous environment in the Middle East and ratchets it up to half a dozen nuclear weapon states in a relatively short period of time. And that too is a prescription for disaster.

So that is why I think it has been so important to focus on stopping Iran in the first place. And the idea that there is some level that people would allow them to be comfortable with but not actually, for example, testing nuclear weapons, I think is a mistake because I think the proliferation will occur anyway. If you have trouble sleeping some night just read books about India's recessed deterrent policy——

Mr. YOHO. I have.

Ambassador BOLTON [continuing]. In the decades before they detonated weapons in 1998. They did have everything but turning the last screw, and everybody knew it, and that is why Pakistan got nuclear weapons. And that is proliferation at work. That is why, as I say, the ultimate conclusion has to be to stop Iran in the first instance. And we are very nearly out of time do that.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, I absolutely agree. I mean, I think Iran as a threshold nuclear power would be as dangerous as Iran with nuclear weapons, which is why we must ensure that they don't get there. And these notions of giving Iran the right to enrichment, or having it have domestic enrichment I think are fanciful, because ultimately, this is a regime that has shown itself willing to rapaciously cheat and deceive. And if it has domestic enrichment, it will do so.

Just to add to your question, sir, I think that there is more we can do to show the Supreme Leader that we are serious. I mean, if you look at it from his perspective, Iranian provocation in Iraq and Afghanistan, around the world, including trying to blow up a restaurant in Georgetown, Washington, has been met with nothing. No response. Court hearings. Prosecutions. Angry words. And even on the sanctions front, targeted sanctions, graduated sanctions, focused sanctions. We haven't responded in a massive way. On the sanctions side, it needs to be massive sanctions leading to economic collapse. We should be responding in places like Syria not with U.N. Council recommendations or Geneva two peace conferences, but with actually killing Iranian IRGC Quds Force commanders in Syria. I mean they are there, they are on the ground. We should be taking them out. That will send a message that we are serious.

Mr. YOHO. Madam Chair, can the next witness answer that?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Absolutely, Dr. Yoho.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, ma'am.

Mr. BRUMBERG. Well, I think you put your finger on the question, and that is, is there any level of enrichment that we can live with in a negotiated settlement? Now, from the perspective of the United States and our European allies, if there is no level of enrichment on Iranian soil acceptable, there is no basis for an agreement and we should simply stop negotiating and consider the options which we have already talked about. I am not convinced that this is the basis for a negotiation. And I don't think whatever administration was sitting in the White House would necessarily agree to that premise. Because it only narrows your options and precludes negotiations.

So once again, this is really about ultimately what is the end game of a negotiation. What are you prepared to live with? And that is a discussion that neither the Iranians nor the Americans are very likely or happy to have. We keep dancing around it. In some sense, we are making progress here because at least we are having that discussion. But that is really the ultimate question. And we can have a useful debate about that.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much. Mr. Messer, you are our cleanup batter hitter. Come on, out of the ballpark.

Mr. MESSER. Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly appreciate the testimony today, and have learned a lot listening. I think in the last couple of questioners, you know, often when we go through these conversations, we assume that it is a given that Iran cannot, we cannot have a nuclear Iran, and yet then don't talk about the consequences of what that really means. I think in the last couple of questioners we managed to get there. So I will skip through that, the questions I was going to ask there, and just say, in my view, I think shared by at least two of the three on the panel, there is no world in which it is acceptable to have a nuclear Iran. The world would be forever changed. And we have to do whatever we can, even the most unsavory of options, to make sure that that doesn't happen.

This hearing is about the nexus between Syria and Iran. And obviously in the world we live in today, there is an awful lot of events happening in Syria. So I would just ask the panelists to assess where they see events in Syria today, the stability of the Assad regime, and how does this nexus change in a world if Assad falls.

Ambassador BOLTON. Well, let me just address one aspect we haven't talked a lot about in connection with Syria. And that is the effective confluence of interests between Iran and Russia in keeping Assad in power. I think that is very important for a lot of reasons. And I think that is why you see the momentum, the dynamic in the conflict having shifted these past several months. Certainly not over yet. We have been up and down and all around in Syria over the past 2 years. I don't think you can predict at this point even yet what the outcome will be. But Russia and Iran have worked effectively to keep the Assad regime propped up when it looked like it was about to go down. And that is significant I think because of the larger regional implications. Russia and China cast three double vetoes in the Security Council of U.S. and European

proposed sanctions. They are going to do whatever they can to keep Assad in power, as Iran will.

And that is one reason why I worry, in the midst of all this chaos in the other countries in the region, that the Russians see an opportunity, maybe not to get back to where they were in Soviet days before the—before Sadat took office in Egypt, but they see the potential to expand Russian influence in the region that they haven't had in a long time.

And so that is why this conflict in Syria is so important to them. And I think we have missed this in the last 2 years. We believed for a long time we could negotiate with Russia to ease Assad out of power. It was never going to happen. And I think the Obama administration was reluctant to take Iran on in the early days of Syria because that would tank whatever prospects there were of negotiating with Iran about the nuclear weapons program. That is the linkage point right there.

So I think it is a very, very troubling time from that perspective, and that Russia and Iranian cooperation isn't ending in Syria. You are going to continue to see it as the Russians for reasons of their own, and very mistakenly in my view, but as they continue to fly political cover for Iran on this issue.

Mr. MESSER. Thanks. The other panelists.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, with respect to Syria, I mean again, I think the Iranian game there is to establish a different kind of critical capability, in that case, to establish what my FDD colleague Tony Badran has called Alawistan. So Assad is winning. Assad will probably not have control over all of Syria. But if he can control a land mass that stretches from Latakia in the north to Tartus on the border of Lebanon in the south, includes Homs and Damascus, with territorial contiguity with Lebanon, which provides a land bridge to Hezbollah, then he has Alawistan, he has a land mass, a launching pad for Iranian influence in that region. And that is a different kind of critical capability than we talked about on the nuclear side, which is threshold critical capability.

I think on the issue of how we deal with this, and this is a response to my friend over here, I think we make a big mistake when we negotiate with the Iranians in responding to an Iranian declaration that something is nonnegotiable by saying, okay, it is nonnegotiable, then we will take it off the table. So the right to enrichment, domestic enrichment, nonnegotiable, we won't have a deal unless we——

Mr. MESSER. Particularly when the result is nonnegotiable.

Mr. DUBOWITZ. Well, that is right. And I think that that is just a big mistake in negotiating with men who employ brinksmanship. Everything is negotiable. And in fact, what we need to be doing is what the Iranians are doing, creating facts on the ground in the way that they create centrifuges on the ground, enrichment stockpiling, and critical territory in Syria. We need to be creating our own facts on the ground to use as leverage in a negotiation process where we can actually come to some peaceful determination.

Mr. MESSER. Okay. Madam Chair, with your permission Dr. Brumberg.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Absolutely. Without objection.

Mr. BRUMBERG. I think we all can agree the situation in Syria is disastrous on many levels, one of which we have already mentioned briefly, and that is it has been the basis for an escalation of a sectarian war between the Sunnis and the Shiites throughout the region. And that is feeding the jihadist movements everywhere, including, of course, now in the Sinai, which has become a huge problem. And what is interesting is that in Iran, there is a considerable debate about this. Because they know the blowback of their so-called success in Syria will come to haunt them. This has implications for Iran's own security. If Lebanon falls apart, and Hezbollah is completely dragged into a sectarian war, Iran's own interests will not be defended, and in fact, will be undermined.

So the Iranians are having an interesting debate about this. The incoming President and the people around him are surely aware of it. They have talked about it. And they are going to have to deal with the unintended consequences of their so-called victory in Syria.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much. I thank the witnesses for excellent testimony. And I do agree with Ambassador Bolton, in an ideal world, peace between Israel and the Palestinians, is always a wonderful thing. But meanwhile, we can only have so many hours in the day. You have to focus on what is happening. We have got Egypt in crisis. We have got Iran close to nuclear weapons. We have got bloodshed in Syria. And look what this administration is doing. Anyway, with that, the subcommittee is adjourned. Thank you gentlemen. Thank you to the audience as well.

[Whereupon, at 4:05 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman

July 29, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at www.foreignaffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Wednesday, July 31, 2013

TIME: 2:30 p.m.

SUBJECT: The Iran-Syria Nexus and its Implications for the Region

WITNESSES: The Honorable John Bolton
Senior Fellow
American Enterprise Institute
(Former United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations)

Mr. Mark Dubowitz
Executive Director
Foundation for Defense of Democracies

Daniel Brumberg, Ph. D.
Senior Program Officer
Center for Conflict Management
United States Institute of Peace

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa* HEARING

Day *Wednesday* **Date** *07/31/2013* **Room** *2172*

Starting Time *2:30 p.m.* **Ending Time** *4:04 p.m.*

Recesses [ ] (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

The Iran-Syria Nexus and its Implications for the Region

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

(See attached attendance list)

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

N/A

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

None submitted

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *4:04 p.m.*

Subcommittee Staff Director

Hearing Attendance

Hearing Title: The Iran-Syria Nexus and its Implications for the Region
Date: 07/31/13

Member	Present
Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana (FL)	X
Chabot, Steve (OH)	X
Wilson, Joe (SC)	
Kinzinger, Adam (IL)	X
Cotton, Tom (AR)	
Weber, Randy (TX)	X
Desantis, Ron (FL)	X
Radel, Trey (FL)	
Collins, Doug (GA)	
Meadows, Mark (NC)	
Yoho, Ted (FL)	X
Messer, Luke (IN)	X

Member	Present
Deutch, Ted (FL)	X
Connolly, Gerald (VA)	X
Higgins, Brian (NY)	
Cicilline, David (RI)	
Grayson, Alan (FL)	
Vargas, Juan (CA)	
Schneider, Bradley (IL)	X
Kennedy, Joseph (MA)	X
Meng, Grace (NY)	
Frankel, Lois (FL)	X