

Myths & Facts Regarding the “Framework Agreement” with Iran

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Myths & Facts Regarding the “Framework Agreement” with Iran.

On April 2, 2015, the P5+1 (USA, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, China and Russia) announced they had agreed on “The Framework for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s Nuclear Program” that will serve as the basis for negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement by June 30, 2015, that would prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. A variety of myths have arisen related to the Iranian nuclear program in general, and the terms of the framework agreement in particular. The following facts address the most popular myths.

1. [Iran has signed an agreement with the P5+1 \(USA, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, China and Russia\) that will prevent Iran from building a nuclear bomb.](#)
2. [The United States and Iran have agreed upon a framework for continued negotiation with the intention of reaching a final agreement by the deadline of June 30, 2015.](#)
3. [Critics should accept that the negotiators achieved the best possible deal with Iran.](#)
4. [This is the best deal any leader could negotiate with Iran.](#)
5. [Obama did not back away from his early positions on requirements for a deal.](#)
6. [Obama cannot walk away from the negotiations if Iran doesn’t agree to his demands.](#)
7. [The negotiations have pushed Iran’s breakout time for building a weapon from three months to one year.](#)
8. [The only alternative to the deal being negotiated by the Obama administration is war.](#)
9. [Military force will not stop Iran’s nuclear program.](#)
10. [The consequences of using military force would be catastrophic.](#)
11. [Congress has no role to play with regard to the Iranian issue.](#)
12. [New sanctions on Iran mandated by Congress will sabotage negotiations.](#)
13. [Additional sanctions are not needed because the existing ones have accomplished their objective.](#)
14. [Israel has nothing to fear from a nuclear Iran.](#)
15. [Iran will be prevented from building a bomb by an “unprecedented” verification regime.](#)
16. [We will know when Iran has a nuclear weapon and can take action at that time.](#)
17. [Once Iran signs an agreement, it will have no motivation to engage in secret nuclear research.](#)
18. [If Iran cheats after a deal is signed, sanctions can be easily reimposed.](#)
19. [The framework agreement eliminates the danger of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.](#)
20. [The framework agreement will put an end to Iran’s ballistic missile research.](#)
21. [Issues such as Iran’s sponsorship of terrorism and aggressive militarism should not be part of negotiations regarding Iran’s nuclear program.](#)
22. [Iran would never use nuclear weapons because its highest religious authority issued a ruling that it would not be permissible according to Islam.](#)
23. [Iran’s attitude toward the United States and its other enemies has moderated during the negotiations.](#)
24. [The framework agreement strengthens the United Nations because it shows the organization can compel compliance with the international consensus to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.](#)
25. [Iran is an ally in the fight against ISIS.](#)

Myth

Iran has signed an agreement with the P5+1 (USA, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, China and Russia) that will prevent Iran from building a nuclear bomb.

Fact

U.S. National Security Adviser Susan Rice answered this one succinctly: “Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” (Teresa Walsh, “Susan Rice Defends Nuclear Negotiations with Iran at AIPAC Policy Conference,” [U.S. News and World Report](#), March 2, 2015).

Iran was equally terse. The official Persian text of the framework says that it has absolutely no “legal aspect” and is intended only as “a guideline for drafting future accords.”

“The Framework for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s Nuclear Program” is not a bilateral agreement; it only sets the parameters for negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons by June 30, 2015.

Myth

The United States and Iran have agreed upon a framework for continued negotiation with the intention of reaching a final agreement by the deadline of June 30, 2015.

Fact

In an effort to win quick support for the framework, the Obama administration published a series of talking points it claimed were agreed upon in the negotiations. A joint EU-Iran statement differs, however, in important respects, especially with regard to the lifting of sanctions and permitted research and development. Iran also disputed the White House publication and denied that the issues in the talking points were resolved.

According to one analysis, the official Persian text “carefully avoids words that might give the impression that anything has been agreed by the Iranian side or that the Islamic Republic has offered any concessions.” The language of the Iranian version leaves open the questions regarding Iran’s obligations while specifying what the United States and its allies must do. For example, the American text claims that Iran has agreed on reducing the number of centrifuges from 19,000 to 6,500, but the Iranian text is more ambiguous, saying that Iran “shall be able to” take action regarding the centrifuges. Similarly, the U.S. claims Iran has agreed to stop enrichment at Fordow for 15 years while the Iranian version suggests this is something Iran can do if it decides to do so. The U.S. says Iran has agreed not to use advanced centrifuges; Iran insisted work on advanced centrifuges will continue “on the basis of a 10-year plan.”

One outright contradiction on a key issue is the Iranian declaration that the heavy water plutonium nuclear plant in Arak will remain operational and will be modernized, while, according to the U.S. version of events, Iran agreed to dismantle the core of the reactor. Another significant disagreement is that the United States says that sanctions will be eased gradually while Iran insists they will be removed immediately upon signing an agreement (Amir Taheri, “Iran’s Persian statement on ‘deal’ contradicts Obama’s claims,” [New York Post](#), April 4, 2015).

Even more ominous is a report from Iran’s news agency that Iran will begin using its latest generation centrifuges as soon as its nuclear deal with the world powers goes into effect. This would be a violation of the framework and “dramatically accelerate Iran’s potential progress to the bomb” (“Iran news report: Tehran will start using fastest centrifuges on day deal takes effect,” [Times of Israel](#), April 8, 2015).

Myth

Critics should accept that the negotiators achieved the best possible deal with Iran.

Fact

Is the deal that your interlocutor agrees to necessarily the best deal? Iranians have centuries of experience negotiating in the bazaar and knowing how to get the best deal for themselves. Americans have less experience, which is why most are so easily fleeced when they visit a Middle Eastern bazaar.

Think of a concrete bargaining example that many of us have experienced -- purchasing a new car. The dealer has a sticker price on the car. Is that the best deal? Not likely. So the buyer offers a lower price. The buyer and seller go back and forth. Let's say the dealer drops the price by 15 percent. Sounds like a reasonable concession so the buyer accepts the offer. Was it the best deal? If the buyer negotiated longer and showed more determination, could they have gotten a better price? Most of us have no idea if we could have convinced the dealer to lower the price and, unless you are prepared to walk away from a proposal that doesn't meet your demands, it is even more likely that you were out-negotiated.

Former Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren put it this way in the context of the Iran negotiations:

In reaching the parameters agreement, international negotiators were worn down by the protracted talks. They were persuaded by Iran's displays of warmth and earnestness, and accepted its claim that the nuclear program was a matter of national pride similar to America's moon landing. Most damagingly, when asked by the Iranians "how much do you want to spend?" the P5+1 replied by recognizing the Islamic Republic's right to enrich and to maintain its nuclear facilities. This became the new baseline and the only remaining questions were: How much enrichment and how many facilities? The haggling had scarcely begun and already the merchant profited (Michael Oren, "The Iran Deal and How Not To Buy a Middle Eastern Carpet," [Time](#), April 3, 2015).

How did Iran benefit? Consider some of the most serious holes in the Iranian deal:

1. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been repeatedly rebuffed in its efforts to inspect Iranian facilities and to obtain information about Iran's past military nuclear work. The agreement does not require Iran to comply with IAEA requests until after sanctions have been eased, at which point Iran will have no incentive to cooperate.
2. Not one nuclear facility will be destroyed, including the Fordow center buried under a mountain (which Obama previously insisted be closed) and the Arak heavy-water nuclear facility, which appears to have no other purpose than to produce plutonium for a bomb. At the end of 10 years, a nanosecond in Persian history, Iran can build as many heavy water reactors as it wants.
3. The *Washington Post* noted in an editorial (April 2, 2015) that "not one of the country's 19,000 centrifuges will be dismantled," and that, contrary to Obama's 2012 pledge, "enrichment will continue with 5,000 centrifuges for a decade, and all restraints on it will end in 15 years."
4. Also, at odds with expectations, the *Post* reported that Iran's "existing stockpile of enriched uranium will be 'reduced' but not necessarily shipped out of the country" to Russia for reprocessing.
5. *The Post* also notes "the proposed accord will provide Iran a huge economic boost that will allow it to wage more aggressively the wars it is already fighting or sponsoring across the region" ("Obama's Iran deal falls far short of his own goals," [The Washington Post](#), April 2, 2015).

The only way to assure that the United States can truly get the best possible deal is if it plugs all the loopholes in the framework, commits to walking away from the negotiations if Iran does not agree to tougher terms, and impose stricter sanctions backed by a *credible* military threat if talks fail.

Myth

This is the best deal any leader could negotiate with Iran.

Fact

Maybe Kerry is a lousy negotiator and someone from France or Germany or England could have done a better job. Perhaps, but Obama would be just as unlikely to let any of them walk away from the bargaining table as he was to allow Kerry to give up. The reason, Ed Rogers, noted is two-fold: First, Obama is afraid that a breakdown in talks would allow Iran to move ahead and build a bomb. Second, Obama needs an agreement he can sell as a guaranteed means of cutting off all paths to an Iranian bomb because he is unwilling to use force if negotiations fail, and the Iranians know it (Ed Rogers, “The Insiders: What should Republicans do about the framework agreement with Iran?” [Washington Post](#), April 3, 2015).

You might ask then, why would the Iranians bother negotiating if they know the United States will not use military force? One reason is that they cannot count on a future American president refusing to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities. A second reason is Iran sees little to lose and almost everything to gain from negotiating. As they demonstrated in years of talks with the Europeans, they had no compunction about dragging discussions out for years while using that time to continue to build their nuclear infrastructure. They have not stopped working on ballistic missiles and other elements of their nuclear program during the last 18 months of stringing the U.S. along. Iran is also an ancient civilization that measures time in centuries, and its Shiite rulers are looking years down the road, while American policymakers’ timetable is tied to the two-year electoral cycle.

Even if Iran agrees to some formula now, will that prevent them from cheating on the deal or pursuing their nuclear objectives in 20 or 30 years? The rulers may decide that they can put their program in hibernation while sanctions are lifted and they rebuild their economy and military.

Myth

Obama did not back away from his early positions on requirements for a deal.

Fact

The administration has changed its position on at least five issues, capitulating to Iranian demands in the belief that these concessions were necessary to reach an agreement (Kristina Wong, “5 key demands US dropped in Iran talks,” *The Hill*, (April 11, 2015):

1. Since 2009, the Obama administration and the United Nations Security Council demanded that Iran stop all uranium enrichment. Under the framework agreement, however, Iran may continue enriching uranium and producing plutonium for domestic civilian use.
2. Israel originally expected any deal would require Iran to destroy its centrifuges. The administration never made this demand, but envisioned limiting the number to no more than 1,500. Now, however, Iran will be permitted to keep 6,104 centrifuges.
3. The United States originally agreed with the Israeli demand that all of Iran’s nuclear facilities be dismantled. Israel was especially insistent on the destruction of the underground nuclear enrichment facility at Fordow and the heavy water reactor at Arak. Both facilities remain open under the framework agreement.

4. The framework does not put any limitations on the continued development of ballistic missiles, including those capable of carrying nuclear warheads.
 5. Originally, a deal was supposed to last for more than 20 years, but the administration has now reduced that number to 10 to 15. Worse, President Obama admitted that by the end of the 15 years, Iran would have the capability to reduce the breakout time for build a bomb to almost zero (“Transcript: President Obama’s Full NPR Interview On Iran Nuclear Deal”, NPR, April 7, 2015).
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Myth

Obama cannot walk away from the negotiations if Iran doesn’t agree to his demands.

Fact

President Obama certainly could walk out on the talks; however, the Iranians, and many other people, believe Obama is desperate for an agreement at almost any price. Despite all evidence to the contrary (e.g., Iranian shouts of “Death to America” in Tehran during the talks), Obama seems to believe that he can realign Iran with the West and form an alliance to fight ISIS. The only problem with this naïve plan is that it ignores Iran’s hegemonic interests, its promotion of global terror and its ultimate goal of recreating the Persian Empire and turning the entire world into servants of their brand of Islam.

Listen to Ali Younesi, a senior adviser to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who said, “Since its inception, Iran has [always] had a global [dimension]. It was born an empire.” This empire, which Younesi called “Greater Iran” stretches from the borders of China, includes the Indian subcontinent, the north and south Caucasus, the Persian Gulf and Iraq, which he said is the capital of the Iranian Empire (Michael Morell, “Iran’s grand strategy is to become a regional powerhouse,” [Washington Post](#), April 3, 2015).

Iran is happy to fight ISIS, but not to help the United States; their interest is in destroying this and any other Sunni Muslim threats to their regional domination. Iran already has some degree of control over Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. Iran is accomplishing all of this, as well as scaring the Gulf Arab states and Israel, while under sanctions and without a nuclear bomb. Imagine the position the ayatollahs will be in when sanctions are lifted and/or they do get the bomb.

Iran is openly flouting U.S. power and interests by waging war against America’s friends and proxies in the Middle East and “the Obama administration has enabled Iran’s aggression,” according to the [Washington Post](#), “by refusing to respond to it while negotiating the nuclear accord” (“A deal without stability,” [Washington Post](#), April 4, 2015). Given the lack of a credible American military threat, the Iranians feel free to pursue their hegemonic interests and may have no fear of repercussions for cheating on any nuclear deal.

Myth

The negotiations have pushed Iran’s breakout time for building a weapon from three months to one year.

Fact

The framework is based on the idea, which is by no means proven, that the agreement would push back the time required for Iran to produce enough fissile material for a weapon from two months or less, to one year. “It remains to be seen,” editorialized the [Washington Post](#), “whether the limits on enrichment and Iran’s stockpile will be judged by independent experts as sufficient to meet that standard” (“Obama’s Iran deal falls far short of his own goals,” [The Washington Post](#), April 2, 2015).

Obama subsequently set off alarm bells by saying in an interview that “in year 13, 14, 15 [of the proposed deal], they [Iran] have advanced centrifuges that enrich uranium fairly rapidly, and at that point the breakout times would have shrunk *almost down to zero* (emphasis added)” (“Transcript: President Obama’s Full NPR Interview On Iran Nuclear Deal”, [NPR](#), April 7, 2015).

Even if in the shorter run Iran’s ability to build a bomb would be one year, why would this ease the concerns of countries in the region? Obama claims that safeguards would allow the detection of any Iranian effort to “breakout,” however, given the history of failure to detect and stop nuclear programs in North Korea, Pakistan, and India, the record on nonproliferation is not encouraging.

“By making the central measure by which to judge the effectiveness of the deal a one-year breakout time,” Ambassador Dennis Ross explained, “the administration has made verification the most important part of the agreement. It must be in a position to show that it can detect what the Iranians are doing, when they are doing it. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors must have access to declared and undeclared sites — even if it is at a military or Revolutionary Guard facility.” Ross is skeptical the Iranians will agree to the necessary verification regime (“We’ve reached a ‘nuclear framework’ with Iran. So now what?” [Washington Post](#), April 2, 2015). If he is right, no agreement will be possible.

Or will it? Obama appears to be squishy on the issue. Asked by Thomas Friedman whether the deal with Iran would allow international nuclear inspectors access “anywhere” in the country, Obama responded, “That we suspect” (Thomas Friedman, “Iran and the Obama Doctrine,” [The New York Times](#), April 5, 2015).

Huh?

Wait, there’s an explanation. “Obviously, a request will have to be made,” Obama told Friedman, “Iran could object, but what we have done is to try to design a mechanism whereby once those objections are heard, that it is not a final veto that Iran has, but in fact some sort of international mechanism will be in place that makes a fair assessment as to whether there should be an inspection, and if they determine it should be, that’s the tiebreaker, not Iran saying, ‘No, you can’t come here.’”

Does that sound like an ironclad verification regime?

Even if an agreement pushes the breakout time to a year, that may not be enough time “for the intelligence community to identify the development, attempt to persuade Iran to refrain from making it, and take action to stop it” (Ephraim Kam, “Deal makes Iran stronger than ever,” [Israel Hayom](#), April 7, 2015).

Meanwhile, Iran’s enemies may not be willing to take the risk that Iran will obtain a weapon in less time or, later, when the agreement expires. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, which has repeatedly stated it would obtain the bomb if Iran did, may want to act preemptively to acquire one.

Perhaps even more disturbing is the question of how the Obama administration allowed the Iranians to get within two months of breakout? Why should we believe they can push it back to one year? One of the principle arguments against military action is that it would, at best, delay Iran’s program by a few years. The negotiated agreement may not even do that.

Myth

The only alternative to the deal being negotiated by the Obama administration is war.

Fact

This straw man is being cynically used by the Obama administration to suggest that anyone who opposes their policy wants a war with Iran and that is the only alternative to their framework “agreement.” This is rubbish.

The president has repeatedly said that no deal is better than a bad deal, so does that mean he would go to war in the absence of a “good deal”? Not many people, least of all the Iranians, believe Obama would resort to war for a host of reasons: he does not want the United States to engage in a third war with a Muslim state, he does not want to commit troops to fight in Iran, he is afraid of the broader consequences of a military conflict with Iran, and he believes Iran can be delayed from getting a bomb for a longer period through negotiations.

By taking what he sees as the only alternative to talks off the table, he has weakened his bargaining position and virtually guaranteed that he will not achieve the best outcome. Many people believe the framework is a very bad deal, and the direction talks are headed threatens U.S. interests.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to be painted by the administration, and other defenders of the talks, as a warmonger; however, he has repeatedly said the alternative to a bad deal does not have to be war, it can be better deal. To improve the deal, the president should:

- Insist on Iranian compliance with the six UN Security Council resolutions that require a change in Iranian behavior.
- Demand the destruction of all centrifuges and nuclear facilities other than the Bushehr power plant.
- Ban research and development of IR-6 and IR-8 centrifuges.
- Prohibit Iran from building any new enrichment facilities or heavy water reactors.
- Require Iran to reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium from 10,000 to 300 kilograms.
- Demand that Iran ship its stockpile of enriched uranium out of Iran.
- Answer the IAEA’s questions regarding Iran’s previous nuclear weapons programs.
- Insist on non-negotiable “anywhere, anytime” access for inspectors.
- Allow visits to Parchin and related military sites where nuclear activities are alleged to have taken place.
- Restrict research and development of ballistic missiles.
- Cease all military support for Hezbollah and other terrorists.
- Call for the withdrawal of Iranian troops, advisors and arms from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.
- From year 10-15, Iran’s enrichment capacity should be augmented at a rate that would decrease breakout time no faster than one month per year, resulting in a breakout time of 7 months at year 15. During this period, no advanced centrifuges could be deployed.
- “Iran will not import or otherwise use or benefit from nuclear materials, reactors, centrifuges, reprocessing equipment, other nuclear facilities or equipment, or the means to make such equipment or facilities from any state, company, or other entity, unless authorized by the body overseeing licit procurements.”
- “Iran will not export or otherwise transfer nuclear materials, reactors, centrifuges, reprocessing equipment, other nuclear facilities or equipment, or the means to make such equipment or facilities to any state, company, or other entity.”
- At the end of year 15, the members of the P5+1, should determine if Iran’s nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes. If not, the United States alone or with its partners should determine an appropriate course of action.
- Specify that no sanctions will be lifted until Iran has complied with the terms of the agreement.

This list includes recommendations from the Institute for Science and International Security (David Albright, Andrea Stricker, Serena Kelleher-Vergantini, and Houston Wood, “[P5+1/Iran Framework: Needs Strengthening](#),” Institute for Science and International Security, April 11, 2015).

Myth

Military force will not stop Iran’s nuclear program.

Fact

Former Israeli Defense and Prime Minister Ehud Barak noted that in the last generation, six countries have pursued nuclear weapons programs. “Two were persuaded to surrender their ambition voluntarily: Libya and South Africa. Two were stopped by surgical airstrikes: Iraq and Syria. The final two — Pakistan and North Korea — got the bomb, and got it following a path not so different than the one the ayatollahs are treading today” (Ehud Barak, “Iran Has Escaped a Noose,” [Time](#), (April 2, 2015).

The truth is that no one can be sure what impact a military operation will have on Iran’s nuclear program. Will it fail to knock out some or all of the research facilities? If it only knocks out some of them, will that slow down Iran’s progress toward building a bomb? And, the question asked most frequently: At best, won’t a military operation only delay Iran’s ability to build a bomb by a few years?

Let’s take the last question first. Depending on the effectiveness of the military operation it is possible that the Iranian program will only be delayed; however, the negotiated agreement will do the same. Obama has said that Iran will have a breakout time of zero within 15 years. A military attack may deter Iran for a shorter period, but as Barak noted, “A surgical strike on key nuclear facilities in Iran can throw them five years backward, and a repetition would become a major Iranian worry. On the spectrum of military actions, this would be closer to the raid that killed Osama bin Laden than to the invasion of Iraq” (Ehud Barak, “Iran Has Escaped a Noose,” [Time](#), April 2, 2015).

Israeli officials have repeatedly said that Iran poses an existential threat to Israel and that it will not allow Iran to build a bomb. They have hoped that this implied threat would motivate the international community to act. The fear of Israel taking unilateral action no doubt played a role in the imposition of increasingly tough sanctions and more urgent negotiations. The only country, however, that has called for an attack is Saudi Arabia, which believes it has the most at risk if Iran has the bomb.

Israel does not want to go to war with Iran if it can be avoided. Given Iran's threat to the Arab world as well as U.S. and European interests, Israel believes one or more other countries should take action against Iran to protect those vital interests. Israel and the United States disagree, however, on the point at which it will be too late to act. Israel believes that Iran must be stopped before it reaches the "zone of immunity," when it will have the capability to assemble a bomb, whereas the United States has suggested it could still act even after Iran built a bomb.

The United States and Israel also disagree on the implications of taking military action. The U.S. and others believe the cost of any attack is likely to exceed the benefit of what many believe will be only a short-term delay in Iran's ability to build a bomb. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has argued this argument is backward - he believes the cost of not stopping Iran would be higher than the expense of taking action. As he said in 2012, “There's been plenty of talk recently about the costs of stopping Iran. I think it's time we started talking about the costs of not stopping Iran.” A nuclear-armed Iran, he said:

Would dramatically increase terrorism by giving terrorists a nuclear umbrella; that is, Iran's terror proxies such as Hezbollah and Hamas will be emboldened to attack the United States, Israel, and other countries because they will be backed by a power that has atomic weapons.

A nuclear-armed Iran could choke off the world's oil supply and make real its threat to close the Straits of Hormuz.

If Iran gets nuclear weapons, it would set off a mad dash by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. The world's most volatile region would become a nuclear tinderbox waiting to go off.

And here's the worst nightmare of all, with nuclear weapons, Iran could threaten all of us with nuclear terrorism.

Still, Netanyahu said, Israel prefers a peaceful resolution to the issue (“Benjamin Netanyahu Administration: Speech at 2012 AIPAC Policy Conference,” [Jewish Virtual Library](#), March 5, 2012).

Besides the basic desire to avoid war, a number of factors mitigate against a military operation. The Europeans are unlikely to act without the United States because they lack the military capability to sufficiently damage the Iranian facilities and, more important, lack the will to use force. It is possible that one (most likely Britain) or more may be willing to act in concert with the United States.

The United States is the one country that has the military capability to destroy or at least seriously set back Iran's nuclear program. Nevertheless, the United States has its own reasons to hesitate besides the potential consequences of initiating a war. First, before resorting to military force, the president wants to demonstrate to the American people that he has done everything possible to avoid war. Second, the Obama Administration wants to focus on the economy and domestic issues and, to the extent it has any interest in foreign policy, it is to become more engaged in Asia. Third, Obama does not want the United States to fight a third war with a Muslim country after pledging in his first foreign policy address in Cairo in 2009 that one of his goals was to improve ties with the Muslim world. Fourth, after bringing troops home from Iraq and planning to withdraw those in Afghanistan, he is reticent to risk putting troops in a new theater of conflict. Fifth, Obama eschews unilateral moves and may be reluctant to act without a multilateral consensus that there is no other option, and without at least one other major power joining any military operation.

Iranian Capabilities

Iran was reportedly using reinforced materials and tunneling deep underground to store nuclear components in an effort to protect them in the event of an attack (AP, March 4, 2005). Public reports suggest Iranian facilities are now so deep underground only the largest "bunker buster" type bombs could damage them and the United States is the only country that has these weapons. Iran also built a network of tunnels and upgraded its air defenses to protect its nuclear facilities from possible attacks (Thomas Harding, "Iran Races to Defend Nuclear Facilities," [The Telegraph](#), January 25, 2006).

Iran has also upgraded its offshore capabilities. In November 2012, the Iranian Navy unveiled two new submarines and two missile-launching warships. Earlier, Iranian officials had said they planned to design nuclear-powered submarines, which could enable the navy to keep the subs on patrol for longer periods and distances. This new capability is viewed as a potential threat to the strategic balance in the Persian Gulf and, therefore, to the United States and the West (DPA, "Iran Navy unveils new submarines, missile-launching warships," [Haaretz](#), November 28, 2012).

Iran also can order its proxies in Lebanon, Hezbollah, and allies in Gaza, Hamas, to fire rockets at Israel from the north and south to punish Israel. The threat of doing so is also meant to deter Israel. Israel, however, has already made clear that any attacks from Lebanon would be met with a severe response and the Lebanese government is not anxious to be dragged into another war by Hezbollah. Similarly, Hamas may be reluctant to provoke Israel to mount a large-scale operation in Gaza that would further weaken its position after its rocket arsenal was significantly degraded during 2014's Operation Protective Edge.

Iranian Threats

Iran has repeatedly made bellicose threats regarding the consequences of any attack, especially one initiated by Israel. For example, Masud Yazaiari, spokesperson of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, said an Israeli attack would not succeed. "They are aware that Tehran's response would be overwhelming and would wipe Israel off the face of the earth" ("Iran Threatens to Wipe Israel off the Map," [Maariv](#), July 27, 2004). In April 2007, Mohammad Baqer Zolghadr, Iran's deputy interior minister in security affairs, said Iran will strike U.S. interests around the world and Israel if attacked. "Nowhere would be safe for America with [Iran's] long-range missiles ... we can fire tens of thousands of missiles every day," Zolghadr said ("Iranian official says Iran will strike U.S., Israel if attacked," [Haaretz](#), April 26, 2007).

War Options

Most discussions of the military option have focused on worst-case scenarios -- Iran's program can only be delayed, not stopped; a wave of terror will be unleashed by Tehran; Hamas and Hezbollah will rain missiles down on Israel; the Muslim world will be inflamed; the price of oil will skyrocket and the world economy will be damaged.

One other concern is collateral damage. The potential for civilian casualties, property damage or radiation exposure is an important consideration in military planning. One reason why a military option may be pursued sooner than later is that the danger of the release of radiation will be small or non-existent if an attack is launched before nuclear fuel is loaded into any reactors. According to one 2013 study, the most likely targets of any attack are facilities that are built underground or store their hazardous materials in underground bunkers, which would reduce the expected risk to the environment and population (Yossi Melman, "Israeli Analysts: Risks, Consequences of Strike on Iran Overstated," [The Tower](#), August 14, 2013).

Any military planner must take into account such worst-case scenarios, but if all decisions were based on these predictions, no wars would ever be fought. Strategists must also consider best-case scenarios as well as those in between the optimistic and the apocalyptic. Here we examine some of the steps already taken to stop Iran and some of the publicly discussed military options.

An Israeli Attack

A number of analysts have questioned Israel's ability to conduct a military operation; however, Israel's chief of staff, Lieutenant General Benny Gantz, said the country's military was capable of attacking Iran on its own without foreign support. If necessary, he said Israel could fight alone without the help of the United States or other countries. "We have our plans and forecasts ... If the time comes we'll decide" on whether to take military action, he said (AFP, "Sanctions on Iran may not be enough: Netanyahu," [Yahoo News](#), April 16, 2013).

A number of options are available for potentially attacking Iran. Some of those suggested in the media have included assassinating the country's leaders or nuclear scientists; bombing the entrances to prevent scientists and others from reaching them; destroying Iran's main oil terminals and crippling the economy; and bombing the enrichment sites. Press reports have also disclosed covert operations to disrupt the nuclear program. For example, Israel reportedly "used front companies to infiltrate the Iranian purchasing network ... to deliver faulty or defective items that 'poison' the country's atomic activities" (Philip Sherwell, "Israel launches covert war against Iran," [The Telegraph](#), February 16, 2009). The world also learned of joint U.S.-Israeli efforts to sabotage Iranian centrifuges through the use of computer viruses such as Stuxnet.

Many analysts argue that Israel lacks the military capability to stop the Iranian nuclear program for more than a few years. This is the conventional wisdom, but it is just that, conventional, and Israel has repeatedly proved that it has the daring and creativity to disprove the skeptics.

Consider Israel's history. American officials have been consistently wrong about Israel's capabilities. They did not expect Israel to survive the Arab invasion of 1948. In the early 1950s, the Arabs were seen as strategic allies, but, by the end of the decade, Israel was acknowledged as the only pro-Western power in the region. In 1967, no one anticipated that Israel would surprise their neighbors and destroy their air forces on the ground. In 1976, Israel shocked the world when it rescued 102 hostages in Entebbe. In 1981, Israel flew through Arab air space and destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor. In 2007, an Israeli raid destroyed a suspected Syrian nuclear facility.

Now Israel's capabilities are again being doubted. Only a handful of Israelis are privy to plans that could be far more audacious and innovative than critics imagine. As Eitan Ben-Eliyahu, who flew a fighter escort on the raid on Iraq told the *Jerusalem Report*, "you can introduce dozens of improvisations and creative ideas and get much more out of the basic conditions than would seem possible at face value."

The most commonly assumed Israeli option would involve an aerial bombardment of Iranian nuclear facilities. The problem analysts frequently mention with regard to Israel bombing Iran is that the Iranian facilities are hidden deep underground. The

Obama Administration has sold Israel bunker buster bombs; however, only a handful of Israeli planes can carry them and the munitions are not believed to be powerful enough to penetrate deep enough to destroy the plants.

In addition to aircraft dropping bombs, Israel could also launch its Jericho missiles or submarine-based cruise missiles. This last possibility, a submarine-based attack, became more realistic following reports that Israel launched an attack with precision guided missiles that destroyed a shipment of Russian anti-ship missiles in the Syrian port of Latakia (Tom Gross, "Was Israel's Latest 'Air' Attack on Syria from a Submarine?" [Weekly Standard](#), July 20, 2013). Gross also raised the possibility that Israel could use another tactic -- an EMP (electromagnetic pulse) that could "be emitted from installations the size of a suitcase smuggled into Iran by land and used to disable specific buildings or target specific offices -- for example, the office of the Iranian defense minister, to make it impossible for him to communicate by phone or computer with the outside world for a period of time."

Unlike the United States, which could carry out sustained strikes, Israel is expected to have only a brief window -- perhaps only a single raid -- to do whatever damage it can. The likely targets would be the heavy-water production plant at Arak, the uranium-conversion facility at Isfahan, and the uranium enrichment centers at Natanz and Fordow. The length of an attack may be constrained, but it could still be potentially devastating if Israel uses its full range of resources, including strikes from the air, land and sea, EMPs and cyberattacks and Special Forces operations.

One other scenario is referred to as the "Entebbe Option." The idea would be for Israeli commandos to storm the enrichment facility housing Iran's centrifuges, remove the enriched uranium and then destroy the facility (Mark Parry, "The Entebbe Option," [Foreign Policy](#), September 27, 2012).

Destroying the Arak facility is a high priority target because it could potentially produce a plutonium-based bomb. The heavy water reactor there is considered more vulnerable to attack than the underground enrichment plants. Israel may be forced to act before nuclear materials are introduced into the facility because of the possibility of nuclear fallout from an attack (Joby Warrick, "U.N. officials say Iran has slowed work on atomic facilities," [Washington Post](#), August 5, 2013). A similar concern prompted Menachem Begin to destroy the Iraqi reactor at Osirak in 1981.

Large Cost for a Short-term Benefit?

Assuming Israel can launch an effective strike, what about the argument that it will only set Iran back a few years?

Maybe the strike will succeed in destroying more of the program than the naysayers believe. But assume that it does not. This does not mean the Iranians can rebuild the program quickly, if at all. Saddam Hussein never rebuilt his after the Osirak reactor was bombed. True, Iran will still have the technical knowledge, but it took their scientists about 20 years to get to where they are today. They will also face much greater international scrutiny. The world kept its head in the sand for years, and the IAEA failed to detect the illicit activities, but that will hopefully not happen in the future. Furthermore, sanctions can remain in place, inspections could become more rigorous and other measures could be taken to ensure the nuclear program is not rebuilt. The Iranians would also have to worry that they would be attacked again, and that would remain an option if Israel believed the nuclear program was revived.

Some argue the Iranians will become more united as a result of their nation being attacked. They may also become more determined to get a bomb, and even more secretive, in hopes of evading detection and avoiding a preemptive strike in the future. This is indeed one scenario, but others are also conceivable. Senior leaders may die in an Israeli attack, which might facilitate regime change. Given the dramatic changes in the Middle East in the last year, isn't it possible that an upheaval will occur in Iran as well and that new leaders will abandon the nuclear option? The Iranian people may conclude that their fanatical leaders brought a catastrophe upon them and that it is time to revolt and restore Iran to the community of nations.

Public discussions of the military option have all assumed that Iran will respond to any attack as their leaders have threatened; however, Israel attacked both Iraqi and Syrian facilities and neither country counterattacked Israel. The Iranians know that if they strike back, Israel can respond in devastating fashion. Israel would overwhelm Lebanon and Gaza if Hezbollah and Hamas

entered the fray. An Iranian attack on American targets or interference with oil supplies would provoke an overwhelming U.S. response and might bring other Western powers into the fight.

America's Reaction

One unanswered question is what the United States would do in the event of an Israeli military operation. Israel's operation against the Iraqi reactor was a tremendous accomplishment, but, at the time, it was denounced by the United States and the rest of the world. A successful raid on Iran might generate similar criticism, though Arab reaction is likely to be muted since most of the Sunni states would privately, at least, be thankful to the Israelis. An unsuccessful operation, on the other hand, would provoke international and domestic condemnation.

U.S. officials hope and expect that Israel will inform them in advance, but Israel may choose not to do so. One reason for keeping the U.S. in the dark is to avoid the President Obama's likely objection to an attack, and limit his ability to take measures to stop it. If Israel ignored U.S. wishes, it would further alienate the president, anger many of its supporters, and risk losing political, military and/or economic support. Given U.S. assets in the area, it may be difficult, if not impossible, for an Israeli operation to evade detection by the United States.

The United States also should not be surprised if Israel acts given the repeated statements by Prime Minister Netanyahu and other officials that Israel will not allow Iran to build a nuclear weapon and will act if others do not. In 1981, Israel sent similar messages to the Carter and Reagan administrations, but, much like today, American assessments of Iraq's nuclear program were different than Israel's, and the Israeli warnings were not heeded.

American officials have said they do not want to appear complicit in an Israeli attack, but the Iranians and the Arab/Muslim world will assume that Israel is acting with U.S. help and/or permission and may have a negative reaction. The United States will therefore have an interest in seeing that Israel's operation is as short as possible and preventing the situation from escalating.

Three years ago, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta suggested that a military attack on Iran would ruin the world economy because of its impact on oil prices (Jennifer Griffin, "Panetta Warns Israel of Consequences of Iran Military Strike," [Fox News](#), November 18, 2011). At a minimum, an Israeli strike is likely to cause a spike in oil prices because of fears of what Iran might do and the tendency of prices to rise whenever there is instability in the region. When oil was more than \$100 per barrel, the disruption in the oil market would have had a much more severe impact than it would at today's prices.

If Iran were to carry out its threats to attack ships in the Persian Gulf, place mines in the water or otherwise interfere with the shipment of petroleum, oil prices would rise even higher since roughly 20 percent of the world's oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz. President Obama has made clear through words and deeds, including the movement of substantial naval assets to the Gulf, that any Iranian threat to oil supplies would cross an American red line that would trigger a military response.

A U.S. Attack

Israel has said that if Iran achieves the capability to build a nuclear weapon, it will have crossed a red line requiring a response. The United States, however, has refused to draw a "red line" and maintained that Iran would have to reach a higher threshold; that is, the actual production of a nuclear device, before it would consider going beyond the steps it has already taken to discourage Iran from pursuing a weapon.

Nevertheless, the Defense Department has prepared for a possible military engagement with Iran. The United States moved troops as well as naval and air assets into the Persian Gulf region, which represent the largest buildup of American forces since the 2003 Gulf War. Equipment has been prepositioned and a special forces operations base established on a converted transport ship. A previously secret drone base in Saudi Arabia was revealed in the media. Obama also ordered the transfer of defensive

systems such as X-band missile-defense radars to Israel, Turkey and Qatar (Massimo Calabresi, “The Path to War,” [Time](#), March 11, 2013).

Should the United States decide to use military force against Iran, it has a range of options. One would be to bomb the nuclear facilities. The U.S. has the capability of carrying on a sustained attack over an extended period. It also has newly developed bunker busting bombs that are much more powerful than those given to Israel.

The United States is also likely to strike far more targets than Israel. The Israelis will be concerned primarily with the nuclear facilities, but an American strike would probably aim to take out missile bases, launchers and production facilities as well. A U.S. operation might also target Kharg Island, the source of most of Iran's oil exports, as well as refineries, natural gas terminals, railways, bridges, roads and power plants. A no-fly zone and/or naval embargo could also be imposed, which would cripple the economy.

Gen. James Mattis, head of U.S. Central Command, said the U.S. military has the ability to bring Iran to its knees. “There are a number of means to do that,” he said, “perhaps even short of open conflict” (Lolita Baldor, “Top US commander: Iran sanctions not working,” [Huffington Post](#), March 5, 2013). According to a senior Israeli security official, the Americans have “prepared a pinpoint military option...that will allow them to mount a focused operation on the Iranian nukes without necessarily sparking a comprehensive regional war” (Amos Harel, “U.S. has pinpoint attack ready on Iran, says Israeli official,” [Haaretz](#), March 20, 2013).

Like an Israeli strike, a U.S. operation would risk angering Arabs and Muslims; however, the reaction to both will also be affected by the success of the operations. Most of the Arab world would cheer, privately, if not publicly, the destruction of the threat. Provoking a regime change would also be viewed positively by most of the people in the region. If an operation results in harming the Iranian people, especially if there are high numbers of civilian casualties, the response could be more negative.

If the United States does take military action against Iran, it will probably act quickly to reassure the Iranian people and others in the region that it acted only as a last resort after Iran failed to heed international calls to give up its nuclear weapons program. If there is a change in the regime, it is likely the U.S. would offer aid to encourage a turn to democracy and to help Iran rebuild the non-military areas that were damaged during the operation. American officials may also want to affirm a willingness to help Iran develop a nuclear energy program with appropriate safeguards to ensure that Iran cannot divert nuclear material for military purposes (Amos Harel, “U.S. has pinpoint attack ready on Iran, says Israeli official,” [Haaretz](#), March 20, 2013).

Multilateral Action

Most of the discussion about the possibility of military action has focused on Israel and the United States; however, it is more likely that an operation will be mounted by an international coalition. One reason to expect this is that President Obama is reluctant to act unilaterally and has made multilateralism a centerpiece of his foreign policy. Furthermore, the countries leading the campaign against Iran have been Europeans, in particular the British, French and Germans. Although none of those countries are likely to act alone, and oppose a unilateral Israeli attack, they would probably join a U.S.-led coalition. As French President Francois Hollande told Israeli President Shimon Peres in March 2013: “We have no doubt that if Iran continues to develop nuclear weapons, the international community, not Israel, will bear the responsibility to stop it! Iran is not just a danger to Israel but a danger to the Gulf Region, to Europe and to the whole world” (“French President to Peres: ‘The International Community, Not Israel, Will Bear the Responsibility to Stop’ Iran from Obtaining Nuclear Weapons,” [Algemeiner](#), March 8, 2013).

Cyber War

Even as negotiations, sanctions and war preparations go on, a covert war is being waged against Iran's nuclear program. This involves efforts to sabotage nuclear-related equipment, both before and after it arrives in Iran. One of its most important

components has been the use of cyber warfare. In 2010, the world learned that a computer worm referred to as Stuxnet wreaked havoc on Iranian computer systems and led to the destruction or damage of hundreds of centrifuges.

In 2012, Iran admitted that another cyber attack, “Flame,” infected their computers, this time allowing the attackers to use them for surveillance. Iran’s oil ministry was hit by the “Wiper” program, which erased its hard drives. News reports attribute the cyber warfare to a U.S. and Israeli intelligence operation called “Operation Olympic Games,” started under President George W. Bush and expanded under Obama (David Sanger, “Obama Order Sped up Wave of Cyberattacks against Iran,” [New York Times](#), June 1, 2012). It is believed these covert activities set the Iranian program back months, if not years. Still, these measures did not stop Iran’s program and its continued advancement has kept the military option “on the table.”

Myth

The consequences of using military force would be catastrophic.

Fact

A variety of military officials in the U.S. and Israel, politicians around the world, pundits and analysts have suggested that any military operation against Iran aimed at destroying or, at least, slowing down Iran's nuclear program will end in catastrophe. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, for example, warned Israel not to take any actions that could harm American interests. He declared that the “results of an American or Israeli military strike on Iran could, in my view, prove catastrophic, haunting us for generations in that part of the world” (“Gates: No blank check from US to Israel,” [Jerusalem Post](#), May 10, 2012).

The motivations of these critics of military action vary and include those who:

- Oppose all war.
- Are virulently anti-Israel and don’t care if Iran threatens Israel.
- Claim the Israelis are trying to drag America into a war.
- Do not believe a military strike can succeed.
- Fear Iran will become more secretive and bury their program even deeper underground.
- Contend that any attack will lead to a spike in oil prices that will damage the world economy.
- Worry Iran will interfere in the shipment of oil through the Straits of Hormuz.
- Believe an attack will trigger widespread anti-Israel and anti-American sentiment and provoke terrorist attacks against Jews and Americans.
- Predict that Iran will respond with missile attacks on Israel and possibly American bases in the region.
- Anticipate that the U.S. will be held responsible if Israel attacks and this would damage U.S.-Arab relations.
- Expect Iranian allies – Hamas and Hezbollah – to launch rockets at Israel.
- Think the Iranian people will rally around the regime as a reaction to seeing their country under attack.
- Insist an Israeli strike will outrage the “Arab street” and protests will force Egypt and Jordan to annul their peace treaties with Israel.
- Argue that Israel can only set back the Iranian program 3-5 years and that is not worth the consequences that Israelis and Americans will have to endure.
- Expect a unilateral Israeli action to bring international condemnation that will isolate Israel and could lead the United States and others to take punitive measures against Israel.

Some believe that U.S. officials who oppose an Israeli strike are deliberately trying to make it more difficult by leaking information that reveals what U.S. and Israeli intelligence communities know about Tehran’s nuclear program; discloses what would trigger a military operation to enable Iran to conceal its operations; and divulges potential strategies that will permit Iran to develop counterstrategies (Ron Ben-Yishai, “Analysis: US thwarting Israeli strike on Iran,” [Ynet News](#), March 29, 2012).

Respected Israeli analysts have also been vocal in opposing an Israeli strike. Most notable has been Meir Dagan, the former Mossad chief, who has said an Israeli attack would be “the stupidest thing I have ever heard” and “patently illegal under international law” because Iran is operating within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Dagan also believes it isn't possible for Israel to launch the type of surgical strike on Iran that it used to destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor because the Iranian facilities are spread around the country. He also fears that an Israeli operation could provoke a regional war and an arms race. Finally, he agrees with those who believe the regime will be strengthened because the Iranian people will rally around it after coming under attack.

Another Israeli, Gabi Ashkenazi, a former military chief of staff, has also spoken out against a military strike by Israel and advocates “a combination of strategies: a clandestine campaign; diplomatic, political and economic sanctions, and maintenance of a credible and realistic military option.”

Ashkenazi's view is supported by another former Israeli chief of staff, Shaul Mofaz, who believes an Israeli operation will harm relations with the United States and result in “loss of life, grave damage to the home front and deep erosion of Israel's political situation.”

Military planners always hope their operations will succeed; however, they must also take into account worst-case scenarios, including many of those suggested by opponents of the use of force. Ultimately, political leaders will have to decide, in consultation with their military advisers, whether the risks of action outweigh the potential benefit. They must also consider the benefits and costs of *inaction*.

Myth

Congress has no role to play with regard to the Iranian issue.

Fact

President Obama told *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman that he hopes to “find something that allows Congress to express itself but does not encroach on traditional presidential prerogatives” (Thomas Friedman, “Iran and the Obama Doctrine,” [The New York Times](#), April 5, 2015). Apparently the president is so fearful that Congress will conclude he has negotiated a bad deal that he is afraid to put any agreement to a vote. This is not an encouraging sign for those concerned about the concessions the United States is making.

The stakes are too high to deny the American people a say on any deal with Iran.

Ironically, while Obama refuses to allow Congress to approve a deal, Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif was reported as saying that the additional protocol must be passed by Iran's Parliament (MNA “No online cameras allowed at nuclear sites: Zarif,” [Mehr News Agency](#), April 7, 2015).

Myth

New sanctions on Iran mandated by Congress will sabotage negotiations.

Fact

Congress has been chomping at the bit to impose tougher sanctions on Iran in light of Iran's foot-dragging during negotiations, failure to offer necessary compromises and ongoing threats to the region. The administration has furiously opposed the

congressional efforts and Obama has threatened to veto any bill that comes to his desk. The president has tried to portray new sanctions as a partisan effort to sabotage talks when the proposed legislations are actually a bipartisan attempt to strengthen his bargaining position.

An increasing number of Democrats have become frustrated with Obama, Iran and what they see as a bad deal emerging, so it is conceivable that the Republicans can rally a veto-proof majority; however, the president has made the potential deal with Iran the centerpiece of his foreign policy, and the achievement to mark his legacy, so he will use the full weight of his office to pressure Democrats not to help Republicans “sabotage the talks.”

This is one of many contradictions in the president’s policy toward Iran. He maintains that it was the tough sanctions that he imposed (reluctantly after congressional action) that brought Iran to the table, but insists the enactment of new sanctions will chase them away.

Congressional action is also needed to clarify what America’s position is regarding sanctions. Iran claims they must be removed immediately upon signing the agreement while the Western formula is ambiguous. According to the *Washington Post*, sanctions will be suspended after international inspectors have “verified that Iran has taken all of its key nuclear related steps.” The *Post* asks, “Exactly what steps would Iran have to complete, and what would the verification consist of?” (“Obama’s Iran deal falls far short of his own goals,” [The Washington Post](#), April 2, 2015).

If it is true that Iran is under such pressure from sanctions now that it felt compelled to negotiate, wouldn’t additional restrictions ratchet up that pressure and force the Mullahs to agree to a better deal than the one on the table?

Myth

Additional sanctions are not needed because the existing ones have accomplished their objective.

Fact

President Obama and others have argued that existing sanctions have been a success because they have brought Iran to the negotiating table. This was not their purpose; however, the sanctions were designed to stop Iran’s nuclear program and they have not done so.

More than six years have passed since Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi’s December 2008 statement that “Iran will never suspend uranium enrichment” (“Iran says will not halt nuclear work despite U.S.,” [Reuters](#), December 8, 2008). Despite sanctions, Iran accelerated its enrichment activities, announcing in January 2013 its intention to install more sophisticated centrifuges in its Natanz plant to speed up the enrichment process (Agence France-Presse, “Iran upgrade of Natanz complicates nuclear standoff: Israel,” [Global Post](#), February 3, 2013).

“We haven’t really moved one inch toward addressing the issues,” Mohamed ElBaradei, then-director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2010. In a 2012 interview with the *Financial Times of Germany*, Yukiya Amano, the current director general of the IAEA, announced that “what we know [about Iran’s nuclear program] suggests the development of nuclear weapons.”

U.S. intelligence officials concurred. Former CIA director Leon Panetta said that while sanctions carry the possibility to create serious economic problems and weaken the Iranian government, they do little to deter Iran’s “ambitions with regards to nuclear capability” (Jay Solomon, “Panetta Warns of Iran Threat,” [Wall Street Journal](#), June 27, 2010). In testimony before a Senate intelligence committee in January 2012, CIA Director James Clapper said, “The sanctions as imposed so far have not caused [Iran] to change their behavior or their policy” (Greg Miller, “Iran, perceiving threat from West, willing to attack on U.S. soil, U.S. intelligence report finds,” [Washington Post](#), January 31, 2012).

History also works against the success of sanctions. As analyst Simon Henderson noted, “Iran is unlikely to give up its nuclear program after seeing what happened to Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein, who were both driven from power, after acceding to international pressure to give up their nuclear ambitions” (Simon Henderson, “Nuclear Iran: Technical Issues Overshadowing Negotiations,” [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), October 23, 2012). Moreover, North Korea has faced crippling sanctions and isolation for years and has not given up its nuclear program.

In Senate testimony in March 2013, Gen. James Mattis, head of U.S. Central Command, said the Obama administration's strategy of sanctions and negotiations are not working. He said Iran has a history of denial and deceit and is “enriching uranium beyond any plausible peaceful purpose.” Though he suggested it may still be possible to pressure Iran to drop its nuclear program, Mattis said he believed Iran is using negotiations to buy time (Lolita Baldor, “Top US commander: Iran sanctions not working,” [Huffington Post](#), March 5, 2013).

Even before agreeing to negotiations, Iran continued to profit from lucrative business deals, including many with countries that agreed to sanctions. For example:

- South Korea made a \$500 million payment to Iran for crude oil imports. According to official documents, Iran sold over \$1.3 billion in oil to South Korea during 2014 ([International Business Times](#), November 26, 2014).
- In 2013, the State Department exempted China, India, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Taiwan from financial sanctions targeting Iranian oil sales because they reduced (but did not cease) their purchases of Iranian crude oil. Earlier, the U.S. gave exceptions to Japan and 10 European countries ([Wall Street Journal](#), June 5, 2013).
- From 2000-2010, the U.S. Treasury Department granted nearly 10,000 special licenses to American companies so they could sell products in Iran and other countries the U.S. considers sponsors of terrorism. Most of the licenses were granted under a law allowing trade in humanitarian goods, though they included products as diverse as cigarettes and chewing gum (AP, “U.S. Allowed American Companies to Do Business with Blacklisted Nations,” [Huffington Post](#), December 23, 2010).
- In April 2012, Switzerland decided against sanctioning Iran's central bank or imposing an embargo on Iranian oil “due to its importance for the Iranian economy.” A year earlier, Swiss energy giant EGL signed a 25-year deal with the National Iranian Gas Export Company to buy 5.5 billion cubic meters of Iranian natural gas per year, starting in 2011, for approximately \$20 billion (Benjamin Weinthal, “US: Swiss-Iran Gas Deal sends ‘wrong message,’” [Jerusalem Post](#), August 19, 2010).

It is true that sanctions have hurt Iran’s economy and that contributed to the decision to enter negotiations, but it also appears that Iran took the measure of its interlocutors and determined that it could gain sanctions relief without giving up its nuclear ambition. That calculation now appears correct. The West, including the United States, granted Iran \$6-7 billion in sanctions relief for scaling back its nuclear program and agreeing to negotiate a resolution of the dispute over that program (“Frequently Asked Questions Relating to the Extension of Temporary Sanctions Relief through June 30, 2015, to Implement the Joint Plan of Action between the P5 + 1 and the Islamic Republic of Iran,” [US Treasury Department](#), November 25, 2014). The United States was not alone in paying Iran off for doing nothing to give up its pursuit of nuclear weapons. For example:

- German exports to Iran rose 33% during the first 8 months of 2014 thanks to the loosening of international sanctions (“German exports to Iran surge after easing of sanctions,” [Reuters](#), November 4, 2014).
- In September 2014, Japan released \$1 billion in frozen Iranian oil assets to Iran. This payment represented the first two payments of the \$2.8 billion that Iran was promised during the negotiations (“Japan transfers \$1 billion in frozen oil money to Iran,” [Times of Israel](#), September 4, 2014).

Those funds can be used to fund further nuclear research, missile development, terrorism and intervention in the affairs of its neighbors.

Obama claims that one of the virtues of the agreement is that it is backed by the world's major powers; however, this also makes it far more difficult for the United States to enforce it. The Europeans, Chinese, Indians, Japanese and others are anxious to resume economic relations with Iran and will be extremely reluctant to reimpose sanctions in the event of an Iranian breach of contract. Russia has already built one nuclear reactor in Iran and is talking about building more, as well as selling the Iranians advanced weapons systems. The Russians stonewalled sanctions for years and now will use its threat to Ukraine as leverage against any demands for new measures against Iran.

Assessing the interactions between the West and Iran, former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz concluded:

Mixing shrewd diplomacy with open defiance of U.N. resolutions, Iran has gradually turned the negotiation on its head. Iran's centrifuges have multiplied from about 100 at the beginning of the negotiation to almost 20,000 today. The threat of war now constrains the West more than Iran. While Iran treated the mere fact of its willingness to negotiate as a concession, the West has felt compelled to break every deadlock with a new proposal. In the process, the Iranian program has reached a point officially described as being within two to three months of building a nuclear weapon. Under the proposed agreement, for 10 years Iran will never be further than one year from a nuclear weapon and, after a decade, will be significantly closer (Henry Kissinger and George P. Shultz, "The Iran Deal and Its Consequences: Mixing shrewd diplomacy with defiance of U.N. resolutions, Iran has turned the negotiation on its head," [Wall Street Journal](#), April 7, 2015).

Worse, according to Iran's interpretation of the framework agreement, all sanctions will be lifted once a final agreement is signed. The Obama administration disputes this interpretation, but if this is what Iran expects, they are unlikely to agree to anything different.

Myth

Israel has nothing to fear from a nuclear Iran.

FACT

Jews have learned from painful history that when someone threatens to kill them, they should take it seriously. Therefore, no one should be surprised at the alarm expressed by Israel after hearing Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad proclaim, "This origin of corruption [Israel] will soon be wiped off the Earth's face!" and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, declaring, "Israel is a cancerous tumor. So what do you do with a cancerous tumor? What can be done to treat a tumor other than removing it?"

Some argue Iran would never launch a nuclear attack against Israel because no Muslim leader would risk an Israeli counterstrike that might destroy them. This theory doesn't hold up, however, if the Iranian leaders believe there will be destruction anyway at the end of time. What matters, Middle East expert Bernard Lewis observed, is that infidels go to hell and believers go to heaven. Lewis quotes a passage from Ayatollah Khomeini, cited in an 11th grade Iranian schoolbook, "I am decisively announcing to the whole world that if the world-devourers [the infidel powers] wish to stand against our religion, we will stand against the whole world and will not cease until the annihilation of all of them. Either we all become free, or we will go to the greater freedom, which is martyrdom. Either we shake one another's hands in joy at the victory of Islam in the world, or all of us will turn to eternal life and martyrdom. In both cases, victory and success are ours." (Bernard Lewis, "August 22," [Wall Street Journal](#), August 8, 2006).

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad believes the most important task of the Iranian Revolution was to prepare the way for the return of the Twelfth Imam, who disappeared in 874, thus bringing an end to Muhammad's lineage. Shiites believe this imam, the Mahdi or "divinely guided one," will return in an apocalyptic battle in which the forces of righteousness will defeat

the forces of evil and bring about a new era in which Shi'a Islam ultimately becomes the dominant religion throughout the world. The Shiites have been waiting patiently for the Twelfth Imam for more than a thousand years, but Ahmadinejad may believe he can now hasten the return through a nuclear war. It is this apocalyptic world view, Lewis notes, that distinguishes Iran from other governments with nuclear weapons.

There are those who think that Iran would never use such weapons against Israel because innocent Muslims would be killed as well; however, Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Ahmadinejad's predecessor, explicitly said he wasn't concerned about fallout from an attack on Israel. "If a day comes when the world of Islam is duly equipped with the arms Israel has in its possession," he said, "the strategy of colonialism would face a stalemate because application of an atomic bomb would not leave anything in Israel but the same thing would just produce damages in the Muslim world." As one Iranian commentator noted, Rafsanjani apparently wasn't concerned that the destruction of the Jewish State would also result in the mass murder of Palestinians as well ("Rafsanjani Says Muslims Should Use Nuclear Device against Israel," *Iran Press Service*, December 14, 2001).

Iran will not have to use nuclear weapons to influence events in the region. By possessing a nuclear capability, the Iranians can deter Israel or any other nation from attacking Iran or its allies. When Hezbollah attacked Israel in 2006, for example, a nuclear Iran could have threatened retaliation against Tel Aviv if Israeli forces bombed Beirut. The mere threat of using nuclear weapons would be sufficient to drive Israelis into shelters and could cripple the economy. Will immigrants want to come to a country that lives in the shadow of annihilation? Will companies want to do business under those conditions? Will Israelis be willing to live under a nuclear cloud?

If you were the prime minister of Israel, would you take seriously threats to destroy Israel by someone who might soon have the capability to carry them out? Could you afford to take the risk of allowing Iran to acquire nuclear weapons? How long would you wait for sanctions or other international measures to work before acting unilaterally to defend your country?

Myth

Iran will be prevented from building a bomb by an "unprecedented" verification regime.

Fact

Does anyone else recognize the paradox of claiming that an agreement will cut off all avenues for Iran to achieve a bomb, while also saying that we have measures we can take if they do begin to build one?

Any agreement will depend on Iran's willingness to permit intrusive inspections, but there is ample reason to be skeptical. Iran has consistently obstructed IAEA investigations, concealed research sites and materials, and offered no reason to trust it to cooperate in the future. Just as the framework was being finalized, for example, the IAEA reported that Iran continues to refuse to disclose information about Iran's past military nuclear work (David Sanger, "Inspectors Say Iran Is Evading Questions as Nuclear Talks Enter a Crucial Stage," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2015). Before the ink was dry on the framework agreement, Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif stressed that Iran would allow no online cameras to be installed in nuclear facilities (MNA "No online cameras allowed at nuclear sites: Zarif," *Mehr News Agency*, April 7, 2015).

The IAEA has also been prevented from visiting the Parchin site where it is suspected that Iran carried out nuclear weapons tests. The Iranians have tried to conceal the area and the framework agreement does not require them to allow IAEA to inspect the site. In fact, inspectors would have to rely on Iran's consent to examine any facilities, including military ones.

Iran has a history of deception that is likely to continue. Former IAEA inspector Olli Heinonen, recalled, for example, that it took six months between the time the Natanz plant was discovered and the IAEA was allowed inside. The delay was designed to conceal another research and development site. The same deceptive policy, he said, was used to develop the secret

underground facility at Fordo (Rebecca Shimoni Stoil, “Ex-IAEA deputy: Deal puts Iran on nuke threshold for 10 years, then gets worse,” [Times of Israel](#), April 7, 2015).

Former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz pointed out a number of other loopholes in the verification regime that Obama claims blocks all avenues to an Iranian bomb. “Iran permanently gives up none of its equipment, facilities or fissile product to achieve the proposed constraints,” they note. “It only places them under temporary restriction and safeguard—amounting in many cases to a seal at the door of a depot or periodic visits by inspectors to declared sites. The physical magnitude of the effort is daunting. Is the International Atomic Energy Agency technically, and in terms of human resources, up to so complex and vast an assignment?” (Henry Kissinger and George P. Shultz, “The Iran Deal and Its Consequences: Mixing shrewd diplomacy with defiance of U.N. resolutions, Iran has turned the negotiation on its head,” [Wall Street Journal](#), April 7, 2015).

Furthermore, the secretaries note that because Iran is “a large country with multiple facilities and ample experience in nuclear concealment, violations will be inherently difficult to detect.” Maintaining constant vigilance will be difficult and any reported violations will likely be subject to debate that may allow Iran to delay or circumvent any penalties.

Another option for Iran to cheat is to transfer the weapons outside the country. For example, Iran has worked closely with North Korea on ballistic missile development, and co-financed the Koreans’ nuclear tests, and could hide its nuclear weapons in that country, according to William R. Harris, an international lawyer who formerly took part in drafting and verifying U.S. arms control agreements (Bill Gertz, “Verifying Iran Nuclear Deal Not Possible, Experts Say,” [Washington Free Beacon](#), (April 6, 2015).

The Obama administration claims that any Iranian breakout will be detectable, but other than the possible renewal of sanctions, which would be difficult to implement quickly, if at all, the president leaves open how the West would respond. Kissinger and Shultz point out, moreover, that it is unlikely “that breakout will be a clear-cut event,” so Iran could build a weapon through “the gradual accumulation of ambiguous evasions” that might not attract attention until it is too late.

The North Korean precedent is hardly reassuring. In that case IAEA inspectors were given limited access to known nuclear facilities and none whatsoever to suspected sites where nuclear materials were hidden. “The result was that when the so-called Hermit Kingdom decided to sprint for a bomb and violate its negotiated agreements regarding its nuclear program, it could reach breakout more quickly” (Rebecca Shimoni Stoil, “Ex-IAEA deputy: Deal puts Iran on nuke threshold for 10 years, then gets worse,” [Times of Israel](#), April 7, 2015).

Myth

We will know when Iran has a nuclear weapon and can take action at that time.

FACT

If there is one thing we have learned over the years it is the need for a healthy dose of skepticism about what intelligence agencies know and when they know it. We have myriad examples from the failure to predict the fall of the Soviet Union to the misinformation about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction to the inability to anticipate the current Arab turmoil. In the case of Iran, the failure of the intelligence community to detect Iran’s secret nuclear program, and continued doubts about whether all of Iran’s activities are known, should give pause to anyone who wants to trust the future of the Middle East to the analysts in Langley or anywhere else.

The question for the international community is whether it can afford to risk the possibility of Iran achieving a nuclear capability without being detected. And what will be the implications if the information is wrong or too late? Once Iran has even one nuclear bomb, will any country risk military action against it?

Myth

Once Iran signs an agreement, it will have no motivation to engage in secret nuclear research.

Fact

Iran has been largely impervious to sanctions from the outset with regard to its nuclear research. The only time that Iran allegedly stopped working on militarizing its nuclear program was in 1983 when U.S. troops were still in Iraq and the Iranians had a genuine fear that a U.S. military strike was imminent (Dafna Linzer and Joby Warrick, “U.S. Finds That Iran Halted Nuclear Arms Bid in 2003,” [Washington Post](#), December 4, 2007). When the U.S. failed to attack, and then withdrew its troops, Iran’s leaders seemed to conclude that the West did not have the will to use military force to stop their project and that Obama would prevent an Israeli strike. Iran has subsequently been emboldened and is now spreading its tentacles throughout the region.

Without a credible military option, the Iranians will have an incentive to engage in the type of secret research that went undetected for years and, today, may still be concealed.

Myth

If Iran cheats after a deal is signed, sanctions can be easily reimposed.

Fact:

Sanctions are not like a water spigot; they cannot be easily turned on and off. It took years and multiple UN resolutions to impose the current sanctions. Even with the existing sanctions, many countries, including the United States, have been cheating on them for years, allowing Iran to continue to maintain its economy at a high enough level to stave off any popular revolt and allow it to continue to pursue its hegemonic designs on the region.

Many countries have been standing at the starting line just waiting for the sanctions gun to go off so they can race to Iran with business proposals. Most countries will not want to reverse their policy, and it is likely the current consensus would break down, unless the Iran breach was so egregious – e.g., building a bomb (which, remember is supposed to be impossible according to the administration) – that the international community could be rallied again to act. By that time, however, it may be too late, and the only alternative may then be military action.

Myth

The framework agreement eliminates the danger of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

Fact

One of the most serious but understated threats posed by Iran’s nuclear program is the prospect of widespread proliferation. President Obama acknowledged the danger when he stated, “It will not be tolerable to a number of states in that region for Iran to have a nuclear weapon and them not to have a nuclear weapon,” said President Obama. “Iran is known to sponsor terrorist organizations, so the threat of proliferation becomes that much more severe.” Obama added: “The dangers of an Iran getting nuclear weapons that then leads to a free-for-all in the Middle East is something that I think would be very dangerous for the world” (Jeffrey Goldberg, “Obama to Iran and Israel: ‘As President of the United States, I Don’t Bluff,’” [The Atlantic](#), March 2, 2012).

In theory the framework agreement reduces the danger of proliferation, but in practice it will not. Iran’s neighbors are unlikely to risk the possibility of Iran cheating on any deal now, or in the future, and will therefore provoke an arms race as Turkey and

several Arab states seek weapons to deter the Iranians. The Saudis have been unambiguous about their intentions. For example, former U.S. diplomat Dennis Ross said he was told by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah in 2012, "If they get nuclear weapons, we will get nuclear weapons" (Chemi Shalev, "Dennis Ross: Saudi king vowed to obtain nuclear bomb after Iran," [Haaretz](#), May 30, 2012).

Most Arab countries say publicly they are only interested in peaceful uses of nuclear technology, but the fear is that some or all will follow the Iranian example and work toward building a bomb. Since 2006, at least 13 countries in the region have either announced new plans to explore atomic energy or revived pre-existing nuclear programs (including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, and Syria) in response to Iran's nuclear program (James Acton, "Extended Deterrence and Communicating Resolve," [Carnegie Endowment for Peace: Strategic Insights](#), Volume VIII, Issue 5, December 2009). Several countries have strengthened their nuclear cooperation with other nations, such as the United States, Russia and France. Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE signed nuclear cooperation accords with the United States, and Russia and Egypt have laid the groundwork for Russia to join a tender for Egypt's first civilian nuclear power station. Kuwait, Bahrain, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and Jordan announced plans to build nuclear plants as well. Even Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the Arab world announced plans to purchase a nuclear reactor before it disintegrated in civil war.

If Iran has nuclear weapons it can also pose an indirect threat by sharing the technology, or an actual weapon, with other Muslim countries or terrorists. President Ahmadinejad raised worldwide concern about nuclear proliferation when he told the UN General Assembly in September 2005, "Iran is ready to transfer nuclear know-how to the Islamic countries due to their need" (Joel Brinkley, "Iranian Leader Refuses to End Nuclear Effort," [The New York Times](#), September 17, 2005). Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, repeated the proliferation threat several months later when he told the president of Sudan, "Iran's nuclear capability is one example of various scientific capabilities in the country...The Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to transfer the experience, knowledge and technology of its scientists" (Nazila Fathi, "Iran Says It Will Share Nuclear Skills," [The New York Times](#), April 25, 2006).

One major fear is that Iran could provide terrorists access to nuclear material. Former President Bill Clinton noted, "the more of these weapons you have hanging around, the more fissile material you've got, the more they're vulnerable to being stolen or sold or just simply transferred to terrorists." He added, "even if the [Iranian] government didn't directly sanction it, it wouldn't be that much trouble to get a Girl Scout cookie's worth of fissile material, which, if put in the same fertilizer bomb Timothy McVeigh used in Oklahoma City, is enough to take out 20 to 25 percent of Washington, D.C. ("Transcripts: One-on-One with Bill Clinton," [Piers Morgan Tonight](#), September 25, 2012).

A particular concern would be if Iran decided to transfer any of these materials to Hezbollah. This is a group that is engaged in terror worldwide, is committed to Israel's destruction and has killed more Americans than any terrorist group other than al-Qaeda on 9/11.

The United States has reportedly proposed extending an American "umbrella" to the Gulf States to reassure them of American support and discourage their pursuit of a nuclear option. This raises a series of questions according to Henry Kissinger and George Shultz: "How will these guarantees be defined? What factors will govern their implementation? Are the guarantees extended against the use of nuclear weapons—or against any military attack, conventional or nuclear? Is it the domination by Iran that we oppose or the method for achieving it? What if nuclear weapons are employed as psychological blackmail? And how will such guarantees be expressed, or reconciled with public opinion and constitutional practices?" (Henry Kissinger and George P. Shultz, "The Iran Deal and Its Consequences: Mixing shrewd diplomacy with defiance of U.N. resolutions, Iran has turned the negotiation on its head," [Wall Street Journal](#), April 7, 2015).

The region will become far more dangerous as the number of countries engaged in nuclear activities grows. More ominously, the expansion of the Middle East nuclear club will pose a threat to global peace and stability.

Myth

The framework agreement will put an end to Iran's ballistic missile research.

Fact

Iran has been engaged in an intense research and development effort, aided by North Korea, to build long-range ballistic missiles. According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), “Iran’s ballistic missiles challenge U.S. military capabilities and U.S. influence in the Middle East.” U.S. intelligence indicates that “Iran already has the largest inventory of ballistic missiles in the Middle East, and is expanding the scale, reach, and sophistication of its ballistic missile forces, many of which are inherently capable of carrying a nuclear payload.” The Pentagon also believes that Iran’s missiles threaten “U.S. forces, allies, and partners in regions where the United States deploys forces and maintains security relationships” (Steven Hildreth, “Iran’s Ballistic Missile and Space Launch Programs,” [Congressional Research Service](#), December 6, 2012). Iran has also made it difficult for any attacker to eliminate the missile threat by spreading launch complexes around the country.

As early as 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell stated that U.S. intelligence indicated Iran was trying to fit missiles to carry nuclear weapons. “There is no doubt in my mind—and it’s fairly straightforward from what we’ve been saying for years—that they have been interested in a nuclear weapon that has utility, meaning that it is something they would be able to deliver, not just something that sits there” (Robin Wright and Keith Richburg, “Powell Says Iran Is Pursuing Bomb,” [Washington Post](#), November 18, 2004).

In 2011, British Foreign Minister William Hague told Parliament that Iran had conducted three secret tests of ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1929 (AP, “Britain: Iran conducting secret missile tests,” [USA Today](#), June 29, 2011).

Independent of the nuclear negotiations, the Iranian missile program continues to advance. In May 2013, Iranian officials unveiled a domestically developed transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) system for their Shahab-3 missiles, making their missile arsenal more mobile and easily disguised. The development of a multiple reentry vehicle (MRV) attachment for the Shahab-3 missiles and newer longer range Qiam missiles was unveiled in February 2014. The MRV attachments allow the missiles to carry multiple warheads and strike many different targets at once, in contrast to a single warhead carried on a single missile hitting a single target. Also unveiled in 2014 was the Iranian Kadr F missile, capable of striking targets up to 1950 kilometers away.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guard announced that they had test fired a new missile named the “Great Prophet 9” in the Strait of Hormuz on February 26, 2015, as part of a naval and air defense drill, which included a simulated attack on American aircraft carrier. The Naval Chief of the Revolutionary Guard, Admiral Ali Fadavi, stated after the drill that “the new weapon will have a very decisive role in adding our naval power in confronting threats, particular by the Great Satan, the United States” (Kambiz Foroohar, “Iran Heralds New Weapon as War Games Aimed at ‘Great Satan’ End,” [Washington Post](#), February 27, 2015).

Iran also reportedly has an arsenal of cruise missiles. In March 2005, Ukraine admitted that it had exported to Iran cruise missiles that are capable of reaching Israel and carrying nuclear weapons. Israel is also concerned that Teheran is developing its own cruise missile to evade interception by the Arrow, the IDF’s anti-ballistic missile defense system (Yaakov Katz and Herb Keinon, “Israel: Iran could have nukes by ’09,” [Jerusalem Post](#), May 6, 2008).

Unlike Israel, Iran’s neighbors do not have missile defenses or the ability to deter an Iranian attack. This could allow Iran to “blackmail such states into meeting demands, for example, to raise oil prices, cut oil production or even withhold cooperation with the U.S. on which their very survival depends.” Any Iranian interference with Gulf oil exports would adversely affect oil prices and be difficult for the United States to prevent (Steven Hildreth, “Iran’s Ballistic Missile and Space Launch Programs,” [Congressional Research Service](#), December 6, 2012).

Yet another concern is Iran’s development of a space launch capability. Iran became just the ninth country to demonstrate this capability when it launched the Omid satellite from a Safir-2 rocket. Though the satellite ultimately crashed into the ocean, the

launch was an indication that Iran was making progress toward developing long-range ballistic missiles. Additional satellites have been launched and more are planned with capabilities for communication, reconnaissance, remote sensing and imaging. The Congressional Research Service also warned that Iran “will use space for a range of military purposes, such as for reconnaissance and communications.”

The CRS study concluded that “Iran has not shown that it is deterred or dissuaded by U.S. conventional military superiority, or by U.S. and international sanctions, or by the deployment of U.S. BMD [ballistic missile defense] capabilities.”

Given the growing threat of Iran’s missile program, it is irresponsible for negotiators to contemplate an agreement that does not place restrictions on Iran’s missile development.

Myth

Issues such as Iran’s sponsorship of terrorism and aggressive militarism should not be part of negotiations regarding Iran’s nuclear program.

Fact

The top priority of negotiations is to ensure that Iran cannot build a nuclear weapon; however, that should not be the only objective. If sanctions are really as effective as Obama claims, why aren’t we using the leverage we now have to curb Iran’s involvement in terrorism and interference in their neighbors’ affairs? Iran is the leading sponsor of international terror, and its proxies in Lebanon, Hezbollah, killed more Americans than any terrorist group with the exception of the 9/11 hijackers. Why shouldn’t Iran be required to stop engaging in terror and to turn over the perpetrators of the Beirut massacres committed by Hezbollah, as well as the Iranian criminals who invaded our embassy in Tehran in 1979 and held our citizens hostage for 444 days?

Why shouldn’t we also demand that Iran withdraw its troops, advisers and weapons from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen? “Absent the linkage between nuclear and political restraint,” Former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz argue, “America’s traditional allies will conclude that the U.S. has traded temporary nuclear cooperation for acquiescence to Iranian hegemony” (Henry Kissinger and George P. Shultz, “The Iran Deal and Its Consequences: Mixing shrewd diplomacy with defiance of U.N. resolutions, Iran has turned the negotiation on its head,” [Wall Street Journal](#), April 7, 2015).

Myth

Iran would never use nuclear weapons because its highest religious authority issued a ruling that it would not be permissible according to Islam.

Fact

In President Obama’s announcement of the joint statement following the conclusion of the negotiations in Lausanne, he repeated the falsehood that Iran’s Supreme Leader has issued a *fatwa* [religious edict] against the development of nuclear weapons (“Statement by the President on the Framework to Prevent Iran from Obtaining a Nuclear Weapon,” [The White House](#), April 2, 2015). Besides minimizing the Iranian threat, the claim raises the question, Why is it necessary to sanction or negotiate with Iran if Obama believes they will not develop nuclear weapons because of this *fatwa*?

The truth is the president has been misinformed. After an exhaustive investigation into the question of whether or not a *fatwa* regarding nuclear weapons was ever issued, the Middle East Media Research Institute concluded:

The Iranian regime has persisted in its attempts to deceive the West in the matter of a *fatwa* that it claims was issued by Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei banning nuclear weapons. The deception focuses on both the

fatwa's alleged date of issue and on its alleged content. This fatwa has never been presented by Iran and in fact does not exist (“Iranian Regime Continues Its Lies and Fabrications about Supreme Leader Khamenei's Nonexistent Fatwa Banning Nuclear Weapons,” [The Middle East Media Research Institute](#), April 6, 2015).

Myth

Iran's attitude toward the United States and its other enemies has moderated during the negotiations.

Fact

Listening to the reaction of the Obama administration to Iranian words and deeds makes you wonder if officials are oblivious, naïve or just so desperate for an agreement they are prepared to ignore that they are dealing with an implacable enemy.

Doesn't it raise some alarm bells to hear Iranians chant “Death to America” while President Obama is talking about U.S.-Iranian relations turning the page, “But I say that hoping that we can conclude this diplomatic arrangement -- and that it ushers a new era in U.S.-Iranian relations -- and, just as importantly, over time, a new era in Iranian relations with its neighbors” (Thomas Friedman, “Iran and the Obama Doctrine,” [The New York Times](#), April 5, 2015).

The Gulf and North African Arab states certainly see no moderation in Iran's behavior as it threatens its neighbors, fights proxy wars from Syria to Yemen, and interferes in the internal affairs of countries from Bahrain to Libya.

Myth

The framework agreement strengthens the United Nations because it shows the organization can compel compliance with the international consensus to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Fact

If anything, the framework agreement has destroyed the credibility of the UN and the members of the Security Council. Between 2006 and 2012, the United Nations adopted eight separate resolutions aimed at forcing Iran to comply with demands to cease its nuclear activities. Iran flouted each one. Shockingly, the same countries that voted for those tough measures at the UN have now agreed that Iran does not have to comply with any of those resolutions and, worse, they are rewarding the Iranians with concessions for their defiance.

The surrender was led by Obama who, in 2012, insisted that Iran abide by the UN resolutions calling for Iran to suspend the enrichment of uranium. In the framework agreement, however, he agreed to allow Iran to retain 5,000 centrifuges for enrichment over the next decade and then remove all restrictions in 15 years (“Obama's Iran deal falls far short of his own goals,” [The Washington Post](#), April 2, 2015).

The message to international scofflaws is that UN resolutions can be ignored and, if you hold out long enough, you might force your opponents to capitulate.

Myth

Iran is an ally in the fight against ISIS.

FACT

The recognition that ISIS is a threat to the Middle East and beyond has led the United States to see Iran as an ally in the battle to destroy the radical Sunni group. Iran, however, is far more dangerous than ISIS.

The regional fight with ISIS is not only about territory and power; it is also a continuation of the centuries old conflict between Sunnis and Shiites. As a Sunni group, ISIS has naturally drawn the wrath of Shiites, particularly in Iraq and Iran (and by extension their Lebanese proxies, Hezbollah). Even Sunni nations are afraid of ISIS, however, because of its declared goal of establishing a caliphate (which they've already declared in the area they control) with its leaders as rulers.

Iran does have an interest in defeating ISIS because it is threatening Shiite domination of Iraq and Iranian patronage of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that Iran's leaders are just as brutal and fanatical as ISIS, and have for decades sought to spread their revolution across the region as a prelude to what they hope will ultimately result in the global domination of Islam. Unlike ISIS, Iran already controls a large nation with a formidable army, and has spread its influence to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Yemen. Iran's reach extends even further as one of the leading sponsors (along with Saudi Arabia and Qatar) of international terror. While ISIS is collecting conventional weapons as it overruns Iraqi military positions, Iran continues to seek a nuclear weapon.

Defeating ISIS is vital to preventing the spread of one radical Islamic party, but it will not eliminate the broader Islamist threat posed by Iran and its allies.