

X-Article: Iran  
Operational Design, Clausewitz,  
and American Diplomacy

by

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## Abstract

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## **X-Article: Iran Operational Design, Clausewitz, and American Diplomacy**

In the late fifth century BC, Athenian negotiators, speaking to their Spartan competitors, with whom they were soon at war, staked out their rationale for their refusal to abandon their position as Greece's other great power: "We have done nothing extraordinary, nothing contrary to human nature in accepting an empire when it was offered to us and then in refusing to give it up. Three very powerful motives prevent us from doing so – security, honor, and self-interest. And we were not the first to act in this way."<sup>1</sup>

—Thucydides

American victory in World War-II was rapidly followed by a global ideological competition with the Soviet Union. George Kennan's "X-Article" in 1947, provided the framework for the policy of containment that would guide U.S. administrations from President Truman through President George H.W. Bush.<sup>2</sup> Since the attacks of 9-11, presidential leadership has strategically negotiated the geopolitical challenges to America's unipolar position in a globalized international system by prosecuting the war on terrorism and rebalancing towards the Asia-Pacific to demonstrate U.S. relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century security environment.<sup>3</sup> The Islamic Republic of Iran's relentless pursuit of an operational nuclear weapons program holds the potential to fundamentally alter the Middle East security environment; changing the status quo from a region influenced by American power to a bi-polar regional framework. As the United States rapidly moves towards crisis escalation with Iran, a whole of government approach incorporating the adversarial analysis of George Kennan, with the time-proven Clausewitzian methods for focusing the national instruments of power, within a comprehensive structure of operational design, establishes the most viable strategic platform in achieving American national interests short of military confrontation.

The parallels between the Soviet Union that Kennan described in 1947 and the 21st Century theocratic Iranian government, promote the use of the original “X-Article” as a framework for current U.S. policy toward Iran. Kennan’s insight facilitated the development of a U.S. strategy that properly weighted the elements of national power; ultimately resulting in the peaceful collapse of Soviet ideology and its regime structure while avoiding a super power military conflict. Operational design must be employed to provide interagency development of an “X-Article Iran” focused on the moderate transformation of the Iranian regime in the June 2013 presidential elections. Incorporating a smart power approach and seeking change within the Iranian political system offers the greatest probability of harnessing the non-violent momentum of the Green Movement.<sup>4</sup> This “once in a generation” opportunity to peacefully secure a nuclear weapons policy change from an elected, reform-centric Iranian government is synchronized with the strategic timeline (6-18 months) and subsequent American offensive operations should the new Iranian President maintain the program.<sup>5</sup>

In his February 12, 2013, State of the Union address, President Obama warned, “the leaders of Iran must recognize that now is the time for a diplomatic solution, because a coalition stands united in demanding that they meet their obligations. And we will do what is necessary to prevent them from getting a nuclear weapon.”<sup>6</sup> Following over a decade of military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States is focused on domestic and economic challenges; yet the Administration has decisively employed military force in the covert drone operations, the Osama Bin Laden Raid into Pakistan, and the air campaign in Libya. Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the nation’s President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, are constantly

assessing their strategic calculus in the pursuit of a nuclear weapon that will provide a substantial degree of regime preservation that denies the tipping point of an American military strike.<sup>7</sup> The United States crossed the tipping point in 1988 as the U.S. Navy asserted supremacy in the Straits of Hormuz by decisively defeating the Iranian Navy.<sup>8</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini considered an asymmetric attack on American interests through a Hezbollah terror campaign, but refrained from this escalation, as he believed President Ronald Reagan's military actions placed the Islamic regime in mortal danger.<sup>9</sup> The current Iranian regime has excelled within diplomatic negotiations at the "calculated delay" while facilitating discreet momentum to achieve an operational nuclear weapon and avoid the tipping point of a catastrophic American military strike.<sup>10</sup>

Israeli intelligence estimates revealed by Prime Minister Netanyahu during his September 27, 2012, address to the United Nations General Assembly, forecast that Iran will achieve an operational nuclear weapons capability by the summer of 2013.<sup>11</sup> It is widely believed the recent classified National Intelligence Estimate provided to President Obama confirms the Israeli analysis, placing operational capacity between 6-18 months.<sup>12</sup> The challenge to American leadership is to develop a comprehensive strategy of engagement to halt Iran's nuclear weapons program. Ideally, the United States will not have to use military force to resolve this crisis; however the unsynchronized use of the elements of national power have failed to persuade the Iranian regime to halt the clandestine program. The nature of this challenge has transitioned to a short-term timeline (6-18 months); nevertheless, the potential conflict resolution framework remains within an enhanced U.S. strategy and not a crisis management approach.<sup>13</sup> American strategy must be shaped with a hybrid interagency

approach of smart and hard power focused on regime transformation and denial of its nuclear weapons program. Kennan's 20th Century strategic framework provides a guiding blueprint for a 21st Century strategy towards Iran that integrates operational design as the catalyst for national interests.

### Long Telegram and the Policy of Containment

In 1946, George Kennan, the Deputy Chief of Mission serving at the American Embassy in Moscow, responding to a U.S. Treasury Department inquiry, wrote an extensive cable to Secretary of State James Byrnes.<sup>14</sup> Kennan's response, termed "The Long Telegram," attempted to answer Treasury's concerns with the lack of Soviet support for the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The telegram far exceeded the Treasury Department inquiry as Kennan provided a detailed, historically based analysis of the Soviet Union and the communist party.<sup>15</sup> Kennan's proposed strategy of containment recommended strengthening Western institutions in an effort to counter Soviet pressure. The cable attracted substantial attention among senior American leaders and would form the foundation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947.

Kennan's Long Telegram formed the baseline for his 1947 article published in *Foreign Affairs* as "The Sources of Soviet Conduct;" known as the X-Article.<sup>16</sup> The framework of vigilant containment of the communist regime within the Soviet Union provided American leaders with a comprehensive strategy for countering the ideological threat.<sup>17</sup> Kennan's understanding of the communist regime and Russian culture provided a focused vision to U.S. policy makers that had been implementing an unsynchronized national strategy in diplomatic, informational, military, and economic confrontations with the Soviet Union since the end of World War-II. The subsequent development of National Security Council Report 68 (NSC-68) in 1950 established a

logical policy template that enabled President Truman and senior leaders across the U.S. government to synchronize their actions within the post-war bipolar international environment.<sup>18</sup> Kennan's X-Article empowered generations of American senior leaders to contain the Soviet government in a macro-global campaign, ultimately prevailing in the Cold War as the communist regime non-violently collapsed in 1991. A 21<sup>st</sup> Century X-Article Iran that leverages a comprehensive operational design framework with Kennan-like understanding of the revolutionary Iranian regime would effectively frame a micro-regional U.S. strategy. Kennan's X-Article analysis of Soviet conduct focused on four regime characteristics that parallel today's Iranian government.

In Part-I of the X-Article, Kennan introduced American policy makers to the political personality of Soviet power as a product of ideology and the Russian Revolution of 1917.<sup>19</sup> The Revolution provided communist leaders with a unique opportunity to present an attractive alternative ideologue to the Russian population; while simultaneously amassing individual power at the detriment of the State.<sup>20</sup> Secret security organizations, referred to as "organs of suppression" were established to enforce state discipline, while consolidating power and protecting the regime from internal opposition.<sup>21</sup> Dissidents that objected to Soviet policy were identified as agents of the capitalist West and were punished or imprisoned accordingly.<sup>22</sup> Moscow placed a strong emphasis on the myth of Western hostility towards the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup> Kennan believed the preponderance of the external stress created by the communist regime served as a government shield in which it could deflect criticism for internal structural failure.<sup>24</sup> The nature of the Soviet regime's self-preservation and ruthless security

apparatus fostered significant internal resistance; triggering the natural dynamic of a tyrannical government - the cycle of expanding authoritarian power.<sup>25</sup>

Kennan attempted to provide situational and cultural understanding of Soviet leadership and a rationalization of the communist world-view in Part-II of the X-Article.<sup>26</sup> His premise stated that the Soviets had two distinct view points of the West: 1) the antagonistic nature of capitalist nations towards the Soviet Union, which shaped the Kremlin's secretive and hostile foreign policy; and 2) the infallibility of the Soviet government, which established a long-term approach that incorporated policy patience and persistence.<sup>27</sup> Kennan described Moscow's view of diplomatic treaties with the West as tactical maneuvers with the enemy.<sup>28</sup> The Soviet government would secure American concessions while temporarily placing communist policy in the background; with the intent of future reimplementation.<sup>29</sup> Diplomats engaging Soviet counterparts were at a disadvantage as only the most senior communist leaders were capable of making policy decisions. Finally, Kennan cautioned that despite the Soviets rigid façade, the communists were still subject to considerations of national prestige.<sup>30</sup> As the Athenian diplomats stated to the Spartan Assembly in 432 BC, "Three very powerful motives prevent us from doing so – security, honor, and self-interest."<sup>31</sup> Kennan's understanding of the Soviet worldview provided American senior leaders with a realist posture for successfully negotiating with Moscow: 1) dialogue in a professional manner; 2) design consensus in a manner that affords Soviet compliance (President Reagan's "trust but verify"); and 3) do not denigrate Russian prestige.<sup>32</sup>

In Part-III of the X-Article, Kennan detailed the stringent conviction that Soviet leaders had in communist ideology and government policies.<sup>33</sup> Kennan warned

American leaders that senior Russian leaders sought an ideological duel with the West and could be dissuaded from pursuing communist policy goals.<sup>34</sup> Despite Soviet pressure on multiple policy fronts, Kennan identified several exploitable conditions within the communist structure: 1) a physically tired and disillusioned Russian populace no longer attracted to the original magnetism of Soviet power; 2) the limitations of the Soviet economy and its failure to generate broad prosperity; 3) an aspect of uncertainty with transitions of power within the government; 4) a growing demographic divide in the age of Communist party members and the general population; and 5) a display of external Soviet brilliance while simultaneously internal structural decay has rapidly advanced.<sup>35</sup> Kennan's situational awareness of the Achilles heels within the Soviet Union paralleled the 19<sup>th</sup> Century analysis of French historian Alexis de Tocqueville in "The Old Regime and the Revolution."<sup>36</sup> In his work, de Tocqueville detailed the revolutionary catalysts as: 1) the population's distaste for the powerful bureaucracy controlled by the monarchy; and 2) the wide social disassociation between the French populace and the ruling class.<sup>37</sup>

In the final portion of Kennan's X-Article, Part-IV, he describes how the United States must view the Soviet Union as a fierce competitor that seeks the disruption of all rival influence.<sup>38</sup> Regarding the development of a comprehensive U.S. strategy towards Iran, Kennan's comments in Part-IV are highly relevant to achieving a non-violent regime transformation by leveraging Iran's internal discontent with the June 2013 Presidential elections. The policy of containment recommended by Kennan would confront the weaker, but extremely flexible Soviet Union at every point in which the communists attempted to destabilize the standing international system.<sup>39</sup> Kennan

believed the U.S. could effectively influence internal developments in the Soviet Union through: 1) information operations; and 2) by demonstrating to the international community that America is a nation to emulate based on broad, constructive policies and democratic principles.<sup>40</sup> The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union validated Kennan's belief that strains placed on the Soviet system by the U.S. could eventually lead to the dissolution of the regime or moderation within communist policies.<sup>41</sup>

The X-Article and Kennan's earlier Soviet analysis in The Long Telegram served as catalysts for senior American leaders such as President Truman, Secretary of State George Marshall, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, Paul Nitze, and John Foster Dulles to shape the containment strategy that would guide the United States through four decades of the Cold War.<sup>42</sup> The situational understanding of the Soviet challenge was evident in Prime Minister Churchill's Iron Curtin Speech, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the National Security Act of 1947, the Berlin Airlift, the founding of NATO, the establishment of Radio Free Europe, and comprehensive strategy within NSC-68.<sup>43</sup> The American architecture of containment was framed with these diplomatic milestones, each exerting pressure on the unbalanced Soviet system. The Glasnost period did reveal a communist counter to Kennan's X-Article.

The "Novikov Telegram" was authored by the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Nikolai Vasilevich Novikov, and sent to Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin and Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov.<sup>44</sup> In retrospect Novikov's analysis was not as culturally refined as Kennan's work; as it inaccurately detailed an American desire for global domination.<sup>45</sup> Indicative of George Kennan's discussion of Soviet diplomats in Part-II of the X-Article: "individuals who are components of this machine are

unamenable to argument or reason...from outside sources.”<sup>46</sup> The American statecraft of the late 1940s / early 1950s that rapidly formed a comprehensive strategy to counter the Soviet threat can be replicated today with an X-Article Iran that offers a reasonable strategic architecture to resolve the current Iranian nuclear challenge. As President Truman stated to Congress in the address that was the cornerstone of the Truman Doctrine: “If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world – and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own Nation.”<sup>47</sup>

### National Interests and Regional Security Situation

The commander’s “understanding the environment” is the essential element of operational design.<sup>48</sup> George Kennan’s Long Telegram and X-Article provided American leaders in the late 1940s a well-defined understanding of the communist regime’s world-view and the strategic environment surrounding the United States and the Soviet Union. A comprehensive analysis of the contemporary strategic environment shaping the conflict between the U.S. and Iran is the cornerstone of operational design.

Stability within the Middle East has been a hallmark of American national interest since the 1950s. The global economic significance of access to Persian Gulf oil within the post WW-II international framework established by the United States requires American vigilance in promoting regional stability. The current conflict with Iran involves aspects of all four of the United States enduring national interests: security, prosperity, values of a free society, and international order.<sup>49</sup> The National Security Strategy addresses the promotion of a responsible Iran through the “transformation of Iranian policy away from its pursuit of nuclear weapons, support of terrorism, and threats against its neighbors.”<sup>50</sup> The State Department’s QDRR promotes elevating economic diplomacy at the intersection of economics, security, and politics.<sup>51</sup> Eight of the top ten

missions listed in the Defense Strategic Guidance are directly applicable to the threats posed by the current Iranian regime.<sup>52</sup> U.S. administrations have sought to restrain aggressive Iranian behavior following the Hostage Crisis in 1979. Engagement with a U.S. strategy towards Iran based primarily on two elements of national power, military and economic; has allowed the regime to episodically achieve operational success against American interests in the Middle East. Leveraging this seam within U.S. strategy, Iranian Supreme Ruler Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad have excelled at crisis escalation in advance of engagement; facilitating discreet momentum to achieve an operational nuclear program. The methods in which the United States has traditionally employed the instruments of national power in relation to Iran (NSS and QDRR) will be radically altered if the fundamentalist regime obtains a nuclear weapon.

A National Intelligence Council report in 1985 identified renewed activity in the dormant Iranian nuclear program and asserted the regime represented a proliferation threat.<sup>53</sup> The United States had begun to recognize the growing Iranian security threat as the Department of State designated Iran as a state sponsor of terror in 1984.<sup>54</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, the renowned 19th Century military theorist, highlighted “accurate recognition...as one of most serious sources of friction in war.”<sup>55</sup> This challenge is evident in the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) declaration “that in the fall of 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program.”<sup>56</sup> The 2007 NIE was immediately contested by multiple intelligence agencies and Middle Eastern nations.<sup>57</sup> Contrary indications from IAEA reporting, enhancement of the Iranian ballistic missile program, construction of hardened nuclear facilities, and aggressive regime rhetoric, indicated a lack of comprehensive analysis of the operational environment. The report illustrates

the importance of senior leader understanding of dynamic complexity while analyzing U.S. policy towards Iran from a systems thinking perspective.<sup>58</sup>

Removed from the global clamor over the report, strategic planners recognized the NIE claim corresponded with the then moderate Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's (1997-2005) October 2003 pledge to suspend all uranium enrichment in return for financial, diplomatic, technology, and trade cooperation with the West.<sup>59</sup> This agreement signified an Iranian commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, of which it is a signatory nation. American military operations in Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003 appeared to have impacted Iranian and Libyan (December 2003 agreement) government positions on their nuclear weapons programs.<sup>60</sup> Despite this non-proliferation progress, the NIE report, coupled with the flawed intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, constrained viable military options available to the Bush administration.<sup>61</sup> Simultaneously, the newly elected hardline President Ahmadinejad was able to break the 2003 pact on uranium enrichment, pursue clandestine hardening / development of nuclear weapons facilities, and conduct missile testing, all of which holistically supported the systems architecture of Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Iran has been a destabilizing element within the fabric of the Middle East since 1979. Overmatched by the United States military, Iran's first revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, established regional state sponsorship of terrorist groups Hezbollah and Hamas as part of his Islamic Revolution. Khomeini's edict to Iranian security and intelligence officials was to "export our revolution to the world."<sup>62</sup> Iran's strategic alliance with Syria has enabled the regime to decisively influence Lebanon and disrupt the Israeli-Arab Peace Process. Shia dominated Iran has regionally challenged the Sunni

monarchy in Saudi Arabia. The fall of Saddam Hussein removed the region's most effective strategic counter to the ideologically driven Persian / Iranian regime; Saudi Arabia unwillingly assumed the role of the Sunni / Arab counterbalance force. Major attacks on American interests within the Middle East have been linked to Iranian support: the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut; the bombing of the Khobar Towers; substantial support to the Jaysh-al-Mahdi insurgent group in Iraq (responsible for killing thousands of American Soldiers); and the brazen assassination attempt on the Saudi Arabian Ambassador in Washington, DC. Iran's strategy not only strives to assert regional dominance within the Middle East, but to create significant areas of security and political turmoil to distract the United States from a direct confrontation with Iran. This Iranian diplomatic, terrorist-sponsoring, highly-charged rhetorical war of attrition against the United States methodically builds regime influence with the disillusioned Arab Street while eroding American influence within the region.

The Iranian regime has leveraged its own oil reserves and its anti-American policies towards the development of critical strategic relationships with Russia and China. In an international effort to halt Iranian enrichment of nuclear fuel, both Russia and China have voted in favor of four United Nations resolutions to prevent arms sales, transfer of missile and nuclear technology, restrict banking and finance, halt IRGC leadership travel internationally, and sanction Iranian businesses involved with clandestine weapons programs.<sup>63</sup> However, both Russia and China have been unsupportive of more strict unilateral U.S. and EU economic sanctions. Russia and China have significant economic ties with Iran in addition to their traditional diplomatic defense of national sovereignty in defiance of American interests. Russian and Chinese

vetoed of UN resolutions regarding Syria have sustained President Bashar al-Assad, Iran's closest regional ally.<sup>64</sup> The Iranian regime and the U.S. administration seek to influence future Russian and Chinese decisions on these two critical issues. The shifting of one of these strategic partners could isolate the other on the world stage and thus possibly force Iran to halt its nuclear weapons program.

The 2005 election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad fostered the development of a strategic partnership with the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.<sup>65</sup> As the most powerful official in the Iranian government, Khamenei's vision of Iran as the vanguard for the Islamic world and the revolutionary symbolism of the nation's nuclear program were united with a dynamic, inflammatory catalyst in Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.<sup>66</sup> Khamenei has consistently attacked the United States for its "global arrogance" in his public comments. His private conversations, however, reveal a more calculated analysis of the regime's power base as Khamenei stated "We need enmity with the United States."<sup>67</sup> The entrenched clerics clearly understand that the survival of their regime is built on a foundation of anti-American rhetoric, as Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, head of the Guardian Council, stated to the Etemad newspaper "If pro-American tendencies come to power in Iran, we have to say goodbye to everything. After all, anti-Americanism is among the main features of our Islamic state."<sup>68</sup>

Ayatollah Khamenei has constitutional authority over each branch of government, the media, and the military; in which he has empowered and shaped Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) into the country's most dominant organization.<sup>69</sup> The aggressive military-political-economic-social expansion of the IRGC and its muscular approach in advancing Khamenei's vision has been recognized by former

Secretary Hillary Clinton as the militarization of the Iranian regime.<sup>70</sup> The three pillars of Iran's nuclear program are all susceptible to a Kennan-inspired X-Article Iran: 1) Ayatollah Khamenei's revolutionary vision and quest for regime preservation; 2) President Ahmadinejad's institutional promotion of the nuclear program and his intense anti-American posture; and 3) the technical framework and rogue state proliferation relationships established by the IRGC.<sup>71</sup>

The United States has been using the economic element of national power to influence the Islamic Republic of Iran since the Revolution and Hostage Crisis of 1979. In an effort to persuade Iran to uphold its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Security Council has passed four major resolutions since 2006 authorizing a series of sanctions, bans, and embargos against the Iranian government, selected companies and financial institutions, as well as senior regime leadership.<sup>72</sup> The Carter, Reagan, Clinton, and George W. Bush Administrations enacted multiple Executive Orders designed to exert significant economic pressure on Iran and gain regime acquiescence on the nuclear weapons program.<sup>73</sup>

Lacking international support for unilateral action, subsequent U.S. administrations found the effect of sanctions on the Iranian economy to be limited, while incurring negative costs within the American domestic market.<sup>74</sup> Denying American energy corporations access to the profitable Iranian petroleum market provided expanded access to foreign competitors. This substitution effect allowed the regime to transition oil exports towards European and Asian consumers; allowing the regime to maintain the single largest revenue stream within the Iranian national budget.<sup>75</sup> As the

Ayatollah Khamenei spurned President Obama's diplomatic overtures, the Administration countered in July 2012 with enhanced the economic sanctions on Iran's energy and financial sectors. More importantly, the European Union (EU) imposed economic sanctions on Iranian energy and financial organizations, based on the January 2012 attack on the British Embassy in Tehran.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, the leading global maritime risk management firm, Lloyd's of London, agreed to comply with U.S. sanctions and no longer issue insurance or reinsurance for ships carrying Iranian petroleum shipments.<sup>77</sup> The coordinated American and European efforts have exponentially increased the effectiveness of the sanctions. Denied the European market, Iran has seen oil exports fall by 50% to 1.3 billion barrels per day.<sup>78</sup> The remaining large importers of Iranian petroleum, China (22%), Japan (14%), India (13%), South Korea (10%), and Turkey (7%), all request U.S trade waivers; providing the Administration with further leverage against the regime.<sup>79</sup>

Despite the poor U.S. track record on the success of economic sanctions against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, the short-term nature of the nuclear timeline supports increased economic pressure on Iran. President Ahmadinejad has been harshly criticized within Iran for the dramatic decline of the Iranian currency. The devaluation of the rial by 80% against the dollar in one year coupled with the reduction of foreign exchange reserves and diminished petroleum revenue is creating domestic tension for the regime.<sup>80</sup> Economists estimate that the annual inflation rate is 70% and that unemployment is over 20% with the loss of between 500,000 and 800,000 jobs in 2011.<sup>81</sup> The rapid decline in economic opportunities has fostered an exodus of Iranian professionals; the International Monetary Fund estimated that 150,000 educated

Iranians departed for neighboring Middle Eastern and European nations in 2009.<sup>82</sup> Historically, tyrannical regimes have demonstrated a remarkable ability to withstand economic turmoil by shifting the suffering to the population and insulating the regime leadership.<sup>83</sup> Ayatollah Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad will attempt to hold out economically until Iran reaches the “zone of immunity” within the clandestine nuclear program, where the facilities are sufficiently protected from military attack and / or the nation successfully develops a nuclear weapon.<sup>84</sup>

President Ahmadinejad and Major General Mohammed Ali Jafar, the IRGC commander, have both dramatically overstated the capacity of the Iranian military to defeat an American or Israeli strike against the nation’s multiple nuclear sites.<sup>85</sup> Iran’s annual military budget is \$10-billion dollars compared to the Pentagon’s \$711-billion budget.<sup>86</sup> A large majority of the weapon systems currently employed by the Iranian military were purchased when the Shah governed the country and have not been modernized. The Iranian Air Force, the critical service in the defense of the nuclear complex, is the weakest of the military branches. The Air Force has 312 aging combat aircraft consisting of (44) F-14s, (20) F-5Bs, (64) F-4Ds /F-4Es, and (over 60) F-5E/Fs, (30) Su-24MK, (35) MiG-29, (13) Su-25K, (10) F-1E Mirages; and (24) Chinese F-7Ms; with a non-mission capable rate of greater than 50%.<sup>87</sup> Iran has moderately effective surface to air defense, however it is not centrally integrated and is highly vulnerable to electronic countermeasures. The Iranian Sejil-2 intermediate range ballistic missile, successfully tested in November 2008, provides the regime with its greatest regional threat.<sup>88</sup> The Sejil-2 has a 2,000km range, providing Iran with precision strike capability throughout the Middle East; bolstering its comparatively weak air force. The Iranian

Navy is the most significant threat to U.S. forces and global commercial traffic in the Persian Gulf. Anti-access, anti-denial capabilities ranging from Iran's three Russian Kilo-class submarines, to its extensive mine warfare capacity, and anti-ship missiles provides both conventional and asymmetric challenges.<sup>89</sup> Despite weaknesses in its defense forces, Iran's greatest military threat is the intellect and leadership of MG Jafar. Prior to assuming command of the IRGC, MG Jafar was the chief of the Center for Strategic Studies; a position that shaped his perspective of the external and internal threats to the regime.<sup>90</sup> Evoking a doctrine of "extra-regional warfare," MG Jafar has stated that "given the enemy's numerical or technological superiority, the IRGC would use asymmetrical warfare capabilities."<sup>91</sup>

The U.S. military presence in the Middle East is significant as DoD has allocated two of its eleven carrier groups to the Gulf since April 2012.<sup>92</sup> American airpower in the region has been substantially advanced with the 2012 deployment of F-22 aircraft from the 302<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Squadron to the United Arab Emirates, along with F-15E aircraft from the 104<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing.<sup>93</sup> In conjunction with naval aviation from the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet, these U.S. Air Force platforms are capable of establishing immediate air dominance in a conflict with Iran.<sup>94</sup> Strategic bomber and aerial tanker assets would enable CENTCOM to establish an air cap, allowing Iranian military targets to be serviced repeatedly. The U.S. drone fleet and ballistic missiles from multiple platforms represent devastating precision strike capabilities. A Center for Strategic and International Studies review estimates "that the United States could destroy all key elements of Iranian military power in virtually any scenario in a matter of weeks."<sup>95</sup>

Contrary to the revolutionary rhetoric, American support of the Islamic regime's regional rivals (Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) balances Iranian military power. Sustained by oil exports, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have larger defense budgets than Iran and both benefit from modern American weapon systems, specifically fighter aircraft.<sup>96</sup> Based on Israeli Air Force qualitative advantages, a viable northern flight / attack route, unsynchronized Iranian air defenses, and effective conventional precision munitions, Israel is capable of a successful military strike against an Iranian nuclear facility target set: the Esfahan nuclear research center / uranium conversion center; the Natanz uranium enrichment facility; and the Arak heavy water plant.<sup>97</sup> As Israeli intelligence organizations focus on Iran's nuclear operational timeline in early 2013, Prime Minister Netanyahu is expected to challenge world leaders to aggressively confront Iran. Israeli perceptions of western reluctance on the Iranian nuclear issue or intelligence indications that Iran has crossed an operational "red line" could initiate an independent Israeli attack.<sup>98</sup> U.S. diplomacy must discretely restrain the wildcard element of an Israeli attack. As former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger warned, "We cannot subcontract the right to go to war...that is an American decision."<sup>99</sup>

#### X-Article Iran

Standing at the brink of a strategic conflict with Iran, American leaders must employ the proven statecraft and policy framework inspired by George Kennan with the sound understanding of the contemporary operational environment. The fusion of these two elements would form a 21<sup>st</sup> Century X-Article Iran; providing the strategic architecture required to achieve U.S. national interests in the Middle East.

Kennan was fluent in Russian, had an integral understanding of Russian culture and history, completed several assignments to diplomatic posts in the Soviet Union, and

gained insight within the communist regime through his meticulous observation of Stalin's Great Purge.<sup>100</sup> The 1980 termination of direct diplomatic dialogue with Iran, driven by the storming of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the subsequent 444-day hostage crisis involving 52 Americans, has dramatically limited the development of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Kennan-like expert on Iran.<sup>101</sup> Identified by President George W. Bush as one of the Axis of Evil nations, the United States has only engaged Iran through multi-national negotiating organizations such as the United Nations or the P5+1 Group.<sup>102</sup> A considerable amount of American resources and diplomatic efforts have been expended in order to obtain Iranian concurrence with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to provide access to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, based on the diplomatic divide, a Kennan protégé that is fluent in Farsi, has an appreciation for the Persian culture, developed an understanding of Islam within modern-day Iran, was stationed in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in the mid-1970s, served at multiple Middle Eastern diplomatic posts over the last three decades, and advised American negotiators in the P5+1 talks has not emerged in the national discourse on the Iranian challenge. George Kennan brilliant understanding of the Soviet government was a product of America's diplomatic engagement with the Soviet Union. Senior leaders set the conditions for the education of the diplomatic corps as the Nation continues to engage its adversaries, despite minimal forward progress. The Department of State must identify the lack of Iranian / Persian diplomatic expertise as an opportunity cost of the current policy towards Iran. The interagency process holds the key to fostering an American shared understanding of Iran and the development of an X-Article Iran.

Part-I of the X-Article Iran would mirror Kennan's work by describing the political personality of Islamic Republic of Iran's power as a product of theocracy and revolution.<sup>103</sup> A focused national intelligence effort is required to enable interagency operations and provide priority intelligence requirements on critical elements of the complex Iranian geo-political environment. Dr. Philip D. Zelikow, a renowned expert on the Cuban Missile Crisis, stresses the importance of analyzing senior leaders: 1) their background; 2) how they receive information; 3) the design of their office; 4) their personality composition; and finally 5) what options would they perceive as viable.<sup>104</sup>

Ayatollah Khomeini led the 1979 Iranian Revolution.<sup>105</sup> He was as dominant a figure in the goal of advancing the Islamic Revolution, as communist leader Vladimir Lenin was in promoting the Revolution of 1917. Exiled in France, Ayatollah Khomeini inspired a vision of revolution and theocratic rule in a similar manner to Lenin promoting Socialism for Russia while exiled in Zurich.<sup>106</sup> Both revolutionary leaders concentrated on the overthrow of their rivals and did not adequately develop professional plans for the implementation of their theories, leading to significant structural flaws in the turbulent transition period. Khomeini immediately pursued the Iranian workplace strikers and mass demonstrators that had neutralized the Shah's government, with a populist message that portrayed Islam as a religion of the oppressed.<sup>107</sup> The clerics leveraged the ensuing seizure of the American Embassy and the Hostage Crisis to establish a common external enemy that the regime could use to consolidate power and build popular support. The Hostage Crisis was a "tipping point" for Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution "This action has many benefits ... this has united our people. Our

opponents do not dare act against us. We can put the constitution to the people's vote without difficulty, and carry out presidential and parliamentary elections."<sup>108</sup>

Ayatollah Khomeini, *Time* magazine's "Man of the Year" in 1979, had established the Islamic regime, but had created its greatest vulnerability to attain power – the demonization of the United States.<sup>109</sup> Unable to reconcile with American leaders, the Iranian theocratic regime lost its primary trading partner, denied the National Iranian Oil Company of industry leading American drilling technology and petroleum investment, and would become a consistent focal point for the world's strongest military.<sup>110</sup>

Ruthless population control was established by the regime through the new Islamic Constitution and internal security forces responsible for the deaths and imprisonment of tens of thousands of Iranian citizens. The "organs of suppression" represented within Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps reflects the iron discipline of the government as well as the regime's self-preservation that George Kennan reported from Moscow in 1946.<sup>111</sup> Today's Iranian senior leadership - Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, President Ahmadinejad, head of the Guardian Council Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, and IRGC Major General Jafar - have continued Khomeini's use of the U.S. and Israel as external enemies of the state, while authorizing excessive internal suppression of the reformist Green Movement.<sup>112</sup> The cycle of violence necessary to maintain the regime has exponentially accelerated from the initial "organs of suppression" built by Khomeini to the Basiji militia's brutal attacks on the non-violent civil resistance marches disputing the 2009 presidential election.<sup>113</sup> The Soviet police structure that Kennan analyzed held a dominant position; however globalization and the

reach of the world-wide-web enable the Green Movement reformists to mobilize the 32-million Iranians that have access to the internet (user growth of 12,780% since 2000).<sup>114</sup>

X-Article Iran, Part-II, would provide the world-view of Iranian leadership.<sup>115</sup> The Soviet Union that George Kennan had observed was in its initial formation stage; whereas the Islamic Republic of Iran has matured since the 1979 Revolution, allowing for divergent policy perspectives. Ayatollah Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad are focused on their geo-political goal of unseating the United States from its role as the indisputable nation within the Middle East.<sup>116</sup> Neither senior leader was able to diplomatically address President Obama's 2009 video-taped appeal for engagement, with Ahmadinejad demanding a U.S. apology for crimes against Iran and the removal of the global American military presence.<sup>117</sup>

Similar to Kennan's view of Soviet world-views, Iranian regime hardliners believe in: 1) Khomeini's ideology of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist) which would protect Sharia law and Muslim lands from foreign profiting; 2) the antagonistic and regional hegemonic nature of the United States, which shaped Tehran's hostile state rhetoric and regional support of terrorist organizations; 3) the belief based on the 1979 Hostage Crisis, that America is a paper-tiger incapable of attacking Iran; and 4) that a long-term, patient, strategy of asymmetric attrition will defeat American influence, advancing Iran's regional supremacy.<sup>118</sup> The Iranian regime acknowledges the principle of infallibility in the Revolution's ideology and demands a nationalistic adherence to its Islamic principles.<sup>119</sup>

Three decades of international, economic, social, and political turbulence within Iran have created divergent leadership channels; dramatically different than the singular

focus of Stalin's Soviet Union. The reality of internal political power contests has fostered reformist factionalism from: former Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi who challenged Ahmadinejad in the 2009 Presidential elections, former reformist President Mohammed Khatami, pragmatist and chief of the Assembly of Experts that selects the Supreme Leader – former President Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and perhaps the most powerful reform figure the Green Movement martyr Neda Agha-Soltan.<sup>120</sup> The general world-view of these leaders follows the Green Movement's quest for an evolution within the regime through the political process; which could include improved diplomatic relations with the United States and adherence to the NPT. Reform minded leaders are in critical governmental positions where a pivotal decision combined with substantial non-violent civil resistance may successfully achieve regime transformation. Essential to U.S. efforts to assist the reform movement is the development of "trust but verify" conventions that encourage compliance and preserve Iranian national prestige.<sup>121</sup>

Part-III analyzes the regime's conviction to the Islamic Revolution and Iranian governmental strategy.<sup>122</sup> The Iranian regime requires a constant struggle with the United States. This policy of confrontation presents an external enemy to the Iranian people, distracts populace attention from internal structural issues, and enables senior leaders to denounce America for Persian economic, security, and social challenges. President Obama offered engagement early in his first term within his Nowruz message to the Iranian people in which he requested: "engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect."<sup>123</sup> Ayatollah Khamenei responded "He insulted the Islamic Republic of Iran from the first day. If you are right that change has come, where is that

change?"<sup>124</sup> The Iranian regime believes this approach has achieved a competitive advantage in meeting their regional strategic objectives over the past 30-years.

In the late 1940s, the Soviet Union sought scientific innovation within its industrial sector in order to maintain its economic competition with the West. The communist regime leveraged the technological prestige in an effort to build global influence and gain military competitive advantage over the United States. Mirror-imaging the Soviet Union, the Iranian regime desperately seeks Persian technology advances masked as civilian related, but intended for government preservation.<sup>125</sup> Devastated by American-led sanctions, Iran continues its pursuit of a nuclear weapons program despite crippling economic conditions on the Iranian population. Deception rests within the illogical regime claim reference its peaceful civilian nuclear power program, cost of \$1,000-\$2,000 per kilowatt versus \$400-\$800 kilowatt generated by Iran's abundant natural gas.<sup>126</sup> Iran has the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest natural gas reserves and is a regional exporter of electricity, yet it continues to place thousands of centrifuges into operation as highlighted in the 2012 IAEA report on Iran's known nuclear facilities.<sup>127</sup> Keenly observant, Iranian senior leaders have concluded from the examples of regime failures in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Moammar Gadhafi's Libya that a nuclear weapon is a strong deterrent of American military action. The pursuit of the nuclear shield of regime preservation has come at significant expense to the Iranian government and to the detriment of civil programs.

Kennan's insight towards five vulnerabilities in the Soviet structure could logically be used to describe the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Iranian Achilles heels: 1) a tired and disillusioned populace that is no longer attracted to the theocracy of the Islamic Revolution; 2) the

weak, isolated Iranian economy and its inability to generate prosperity despite abundant hydrocarbon reserves; 3) the transition uncertainties of the 2013 Presidential election and the successor to 73-year old Ayatollah Khamenei (male life expectancy is 68.84 years); 4) a demographic and ideological divide between Iran's largest generation, 20-35 year old citizens, and ruling members of the Iranian government (Islamic Revolutionary members are 55-years of age and older); and 5) displays of regional external brilliance while internal decline has rapidly expanded.<sup>128</sup> American strategy must assertively exploit these Iranian vulnerabilities in an effort to achieve regime transition within an ephemeral window of opportunity.

The final segment of X-Article Iran, Part-IV, addresses the United States current challenge with Iran, as the Islamic regime views itself as the regional rival to America and seeks to disrupt U.S. influence in the Middle East.<sup>129</sup> Kennan's conclusion in his 1947 Part-IV, recommended a policy of firm containment towards the Soviet Union, confronting the communists at every attempt to destabilize the U.S. established international system.<sup>130</sup> The X-Article Iran recommends immediate, synchronized pressure from all elements of national power in support of the Green Movement and regime transition through the 2013 Presidential elections. For three decades the diplomatic dialogue between the United States and Iran has been limited to non-existent. President Obama's offer of engagement represents a strategic shock to the Iranian regime that requires confrontation with the United States. Simultaneously, American engagement positively resonates with the social-media savvy Iranian younger generations; challenging the official government position embedded in revolutionary culture. The Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube empowered Green Movement recognizes

the national opportunities offered by President Obama in his inaugural remarks: “to all the other peoples and governments...know that America is a friend of each nation...who seeks a future of peace and dignity...Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us...our security emanates from the justness of our cause.”<sup>131</sup>

For all the applicable parallels between the realpolitik of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Soviet communists and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Iranian mullahs the primary case study difference is the strategic scope of each challenge. The confrontation with the Soviet Union occurred in an international bipolar environment, contrasting democracy versus communism on a global scale. America risked nuclear destruction and its primary leadership role within the post-World War-II international system if it failed during the Cold War. The challenge with Iran, although similar in the confrontation over the micro-regional balance of power, does not comprise the same level of risk to the international prestige or national survival for the United States. This significant difference is a decided advantage for the United States, a hybrid diplomatic approach of principled positional power and a classified best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) must be integrated within the comprehensive strategy towards Iran.<sup>132</sup>

Kennan two significant discussions on challenges with Iran could be described as offensive realism – that the U.S. would control the Middle Eastern security environment to the fullest extent of America’s national elements of power.<sup>133</sup> In 1952 Kennan was disappointed that the United States had “acquiesced in Iran” by not forcefully asserting British property rights within the strategic Abadan oilfields.<sup>134</sup> In a letter to Secretary of

State Acheson, Kennan criticized the theory that U.S. strategy could be “reversed” in Iran; a precedent had been established that provided disproportionate influence to Iran and eroded the substantial position of Western powers.<sup>135</sup> Kennan advocated for the use of the American military: “The only thing that will prevent them (Iranian Premier Mossadegh) from achieving this end is the cold gleam of adequate and determined force.”<sup>136</sup> Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1980, Kennan advocated a strong stance against Ayatollah Khomeini’s regime for the unwarranted seizure of the U.S. Embassy, stating: “I have wondered why...our Government did not simply acknowledge the...state of hostility brought about by the behavior of the Iranian Government, and...regard ourselves as at war with that country.”<sup>137</sup>

The United States has spent billions of dollars to promote a stable international system, achieved an ideological victory of the Soviets in the Cold War, and has promoted democratic ideals within the Middle East in the Arab Spring movement. A 21<sup>st</sup> Century approach to an X-Article Iran advocates a comprehensive strategy that effects regime transition in a non-violent approach, similar to Kennan’s containment. However, U.S. senior leaders must apply all elements of national power from America’s unipolar position of strength and not allow an irrational and failing, regional regime to reverse positive political transitions within the Middle East.

### Clausewitz and Systems Thinking

While an X-Article Iran would provide shared awareness of that nation’s political, economic, ideological, regional, cultural, and historic elements, military theorist Carl von Clausewitz and contemporary systems thinker Peter Senge offer structure to the strategy development process. To effectively and rapidly focus American resources Clausewitzian concepts of the trinity and the center of gravity should be integrated with

an operational design framework.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, systems thinking must be applied to allow strategic planners to understand the environmental complexity.<sup>139</sup> This dynamic, non-linear approach provides enhanced awareness of 2nd and 3rd order effects and unintended consequences.

The trinity as described by Clausewitz is an interactive set of forces that set into motion the forces of action within a war: 1) the people and associated emotions; 2) army / commander and uncertainty; and 3) government and rationality.<sup>140</sup> During the French Revolution, Clausewitz witnessed a transition in the trinity as the character of war transformed through the mass mobilization of the people.<sup>141</sup> Clausewitz stated that “every age has its own kind of war.”<sup>142</sup> Therefore, a radical cultural framework shift is required when applying the Clausewitzian trinity to modern-day Iran: the people, the regime (religious and political leaders, IRGC / military, terror organizations, and government institutions), and the element of religion. Theological Iran presents an adversary that is unlike any other major competitor the United States has struggled with since World War-II. Clausewitz’s standard trinity applied to the Soviet Union, North Korea, China, Vietnam, and Iraq.

However, senior American leaders must have an appreciation for the dominant element of religion within Iran. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 reversed the Shah’s policies of westernization as Ayatollah Khomeini stated: “Opposing this government means opposing the sharia of Islam ... revolt against God’s government is a revolt against God.”<sup>143</sup> Persian nationalism, historically an inspirational characteristic of Iranians has been predominantly replaced by religion; Islam dominates all aspects of society, the media, the economy, the military, and government institutions. As a

Western nation that functions with a separation of church and state, American leaders must view Iranian actions from a perspective of intense religious influence.

This fundamental difference between the United States and Iran reflects the clash of civilizations espoused by Samuel Huntington and the non-integrating gap described by Thomas Barnett.<sup>144</sup> The American record in the Middle East on ascertaining rational from irrational perspectives has been insufficient for maximizing strategic effects.<sup>145</sup> The misinterpretation of Saddam Hussein's pre-Iraq War posturing highlights the cultural challenges; exponentially intensified with the Iranian theological based regime.<sup>146</sup> Globalization and the generational demographic shift are the Iranian factors with the highest probability to erode the trinity sphere / influence of religion.<sup>147</sup>

The analytical review of the Iranian environment through the lens of the Clausewitzian trinity enables U.S. interagency planners to think critically on Clausewitz's concept of the center of gravity. Clausewitz stressed the importance of identifying the source of "the hub of all power and movement...and by constantly seeking out the center...will one really defeat the enemy."<sup>148</sup> As a comprehensive strategy is considered, the probability of achieving the strategic endstate of the cessation of the Iranian nuclear weapons program can be enhanced through identification of a strategic and an operational level center of gravity.<sup>149</sup> Thinking in time-streams enables interagency planners to identify centers of gravity with respect to the current diplomatic challenge with the hardline Iranian regime, the proposed U.S strategy, and successfully attaining the national security objective within the conflict timeline.<sup>150</sup> cursory analysis would select the Iranian regime as the center of gravity. However thinking in time analysis applied to this discretely focused U.S. strategy reveals: 1) an empowered, non-

violent Green Movement as the strategic center of gravity; and 2) the Iranian nuclear program / key facilities as the operational center of gravity.<sup>151</sup> Identification of the strategic and operational centers of gravity enhances the effective application of limited resources in the exceptionally short execution window.

The comprehensive strategy will dynamically influence each center of gravity during the first two phases of the Iranian Theater Campaign Plan based on the Joint Operational Planning Process: 1) Phase-0: Shaping; and 2) Phase-1: Deter.<sup>152</sup> Achieving success through influencing the strategic center of gravity, an empowered Green Movement that propels a moderate to victory in the 2013 Presidential election, is primarily conducted through Phase-0 shaping operations.<sup>153</sup> The campaign sequel for militarily influencing the operational center of gravity, the Iranian nuclear weapons program, would occur based on two critical factors. The first critical factor would be the failure to positively influence the strategic center of gravity, in combination with the second factor of Iran crossing the time threshold of uranium enrichment.<sup>154</sup> U.S. efforts to offensively influence the operational center of gravity would span Phases III-V.<sup>155</sup>

Appreciation for the operational environment is essential for the development of a viable U.S. strategy towards Iran. Systems thinking facilitates the application of the national instruments of power across the breadth of comprehensive strategy. Interagency leaders responsible for specific resources must have a shared understanding of the Iranian operational environment, recognizing the interconnectedness of the system. U.S.-driven change within one portion of the Iranian system will generate a shift (or several) in other areas of the environment; seldom proportional and at some level the law of diminishing returns will occur.<sup>156</sup>

Effective interagency synchronization of resources takes place through an understanding of the complex Iranian environment and a collective visualization on how to achieve the endstate.<sup>157</sup> This aspect of strategy development is crucial as the operational timeline is between 6-18 months and the United States maintains a decade's long unsynchronized strategy.<sup>158</sup> Organizational theorist, Peter Senge, believes that a systems-thinking framework can best achieve shared understanding and effects synchronization.<sup>159</sup> Dramatically improving the U.S. approach to interagency strategy development will require: 1) personal professional mastery; 2) recognizing mental models – ingrained assumptions; 3) building a shared vision; 4) interagency team learning through dialogue; and 5) a systems thinking orientation.<sup>160</sup> This innovative approach provides a legitimate comprehensive strategy, monitored by an adaptive interagency team that shares an understanding of the Iranian operational environment and a vision of the strategic endstate.<sup>161</sup>

#### Operational Design – Strategic Campaign Plan

In the development of a comprehensive U.S. strategy towards Iran, why would a military planning process, operational design, be used at the national strategic level? Bottom-line: because it works and is the most effective, focused process at synchronizing capabilities / resources in time, space, and purpose to achieve operational and strategic military objectives.<sup>162</sup> Normally used for operational level challenges, the design framework is ideal for implementing policy initiatives within a short-term time horizon. The convergence of June 2013 Iranian Presidential elections and the 6-18 month nuclear timeline predicted by multiple intelligence organizations; necessitates the use the CENTCOM operational design framework. The National Security Strategy guidance on Iran's nuclear weapons program and nonproliferation of

weapons of mass destruction provides the foundation for determining appropriate ends, ways, and means.<sup>163</sup>

Per Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operational Planning, the major elements included in operational design appropriate for an Iranian Theater Campaign Plan are: End State and Objectives; Center of Gravity; Decisive Points; and Lines of Operations (or more appropriately in this case, Lines of Effort - defined by DIMEFIL (Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economic, Finance, Intelligence, and Legal/Law Enforcement)).<sup>164</sup> A hybrid smart / hard power approach must be applied by all U.S. government organizations involved in the planning effort. National Security Presidential Directive-44 which designates the State Department as the lead for Reconstruction and Stabilization would advance the strategy's whole of government planning methodology.<sup>165</sup> The Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) would represent the core of the collaborative civ-mil effort; with responsibilities for Campaign Plan development and daily adaptive refinement / implementation through the June 2013 Presidential elections.<sup>166</sup>

America has engaged in combat within the Middle East for over a decade; paradoxically the U.S. has a more favorable alignment of regional support than prior to 2001. Regime change in Iraq, NATO operations contributing to fall of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, the pending fall of Bashir al-Assad in Syria, stalwart allies in Israel – Turkey – the United Arab Emirates – Saudi Arabia - Jordan – Lebanon – Bahrain – Qatar – Oman – and Kuwait, continued intelligence / military cooperation with Yemen, and the defeat of dictators through Arab Spring movements in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt has positively fostered geo-political transition within the Middle East. Iran led by hardliners, Ayatollah Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad, is the primary security

challenge for the United States and the Persian nation's regional neighbors. The transition of the Iranian regime to a moderate government would reflect the greatest shift towards regional integration within the international system and Middle Eastern stability since World War-II. While Francis Fukuyama's theory in his book "The End of History and the Last Man," lacked the 9-11 vantage point of religious fundamentalism, culture, geography, ethnicity, and nationalism; the migration to more representative forms of government support his premise that we are witnessing the "appearance of democratic forces in parts of the world where they were never expected."<sup>167</sup>

The strategic endstate is the termination of Iranian nuclear weapons program.<sup>168</sup> Associated objectives are: 1) ensuing stability within the Middle East; 2) integration of Iran and regional nations within the globalization / international system in accordance with their cultural endorsement; 3) structural assistance for moderate Iranian government leaders and non-violent Arab Spring movements; 4) immediate removal of general economic sanctions – Quds Force sanctions remain in place; 5) scaled reduction of DoD facilities in the Middle East; and 6) Iranian support to Bashir al-Assad and terrorist organizations is halted.<sup>169</sup> Decisive points allow strategic planners to apply U.S. capabilities against enemy vulnerabilities; establishing a competitive advantage. The campaign plan would include decisive points of: 1) Green Movement support; 2) global economic sanctions; 3) resumption of IAEA inspections; 4) Chinese support for UNSC measures in regard to Syria; 5) surge of Flexible Deterrent Options (FDOs); and 6) discrete control of Israeli military operations.<sup>170</sup> Application of the national instruments of power will focus on the strategic and operational centers of gravity in an effort to achieve the endstate. Finally, the campaign plan will be aligned on Lines of

Effort defined by DIMEFIL (Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economic, Finance, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement) to generate a whole of government strategy.

#### Diplomatic Line of Effort

Diplomacy is the primary element within the comprehensive strategy regarding Iran. The importance of the diplomatic foundation is the essence of the strategic communications – a serious, sincere attempt to develop a non-violent resolution to the challenge posed by the Iranian nuclear weapons program. The Obama Administration has engaged in a transparent dialogue with the Iranian regime and directly with the Iranian people.<sup>171</sup> President Obama's tactful approach has inspired confidence within the Iranian populace that America is sincere in attempting to negotiate a diplomatic solution; a strong incentive to the moderate Green Movement leadership. The June 2013 Iranian Presidential elections provide the greatest strategic opportunity for halting the clandestine nuclear program. Interagency diplomatic efforts must focus on: 1) leveraging an enhanced U.S. / China relationship; 2) securing global economic sanctions; 3) providing support to the Green Movement civil resistance; 4) developing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Middle East Marshall Plan; and 5) establishing "decision advantage" over the Iranian regime in a wide range of diplomatic initiatives.<sup>172</sup>

Operational design requires senior leader understanding of the Iranian nuclear challenge and the diplomatic instruments capable of creating positive change.<sup>173</sup> Considerable diplomatic actions have occurred over the course of the last three administrations in an attempt to change Iranian behavior; only minimal policy adjustments have occurred. In consideration of the strategy's short time horizon, Chinese approval of UN Security Council measures against Bashir al-Assad's Syria could have an immediate and penetrating impact on the Iranian hardliners. The new

General Secretary of the Communist Party and President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, is eager to demonstrate his nation's enhanced global posture.<sup>174</sup> Achieving Chinese cooperation on the Syrian civil war would place Iran's principal Middle Eastern ally in an untenable position. In a move not linked to Chinese national interest, Jinping could achieve the "strategic trust" he has called for with the United States and strengthen China's relations with oil-rich Arab states weary of Syria and Iran.<sup>175</sup> To encourage Jinping's diplomatic transition, the U.S. should discretely affirm Chinese primacy within the Syrian oil industry in support of China's significant commercial investment. Through diplomatic channels Ayatollah Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad should be warned that Chinese patience with the regime is limited and a negotiated settlement with the P5+1 Group must be reached or China's veto on UNSC resolutions regarding Iran will be reversed. The loss of Chinese UNSC support for Syria, the pending fall of regional ally Assad, and the resulting isolation of Hezbollah, coupled with the potential forfeiture of China's international defense of the regime, represents a high-risk "diplomatic domino theory" to the Iranian government.

Despite decades of unilateral sanctions against the Iranian regime the United States has finally begun to observe dramatic pressure on Iran through UN resolutions and recent assertive European Union economic sanctions. The combined weight of these sanctions has initiated an economic crisis highlighted by: the rapid depreciation of the Iranian rial currency, rising unemployment, and rampant inflation. Iranian oil exports have dropped by 50% to 1.3 billion barrels per day.<sup>176</sup> In an effort to completely remove Iran's economic security blanket consisting of oil revenues, the United States must coordinate with remaining large importers of Iranian petroleum, China (22%), Japan

(14%), India (13%), South Korea (10%), and Turkey (7%).<sup>177</sup> These nations all receive U.S. trade waivers that would be terminated for 6-months, on the condition that Saudi Arabia increases OPEC production to cover the loss in Iranian petroleum. In theory, sanctions are imposed to discourage objectionable behavior. In practice we have seen the core of the regime and IRGC unaffected by the sanctions, while the Iranian people suffer economic hardships. As a catalyst for the Green Movement, President Obama should propose immediate removal of the sanctions if an Iranian presidential moderate is elected who supports Iran's Non-Proliferation Treaty commitments.

American support for the Green Movement in the upcoming election represents a "tear down this wall" tipping point for President Obama to non-violently defeat the hardline regime and welcome a responsible Iran into the global community of nations.<sup>178</sup> The Defense Intelligence Agency must assist the CENTCOM J-2 with an in-depth psychological analysis of the prominent moderate leaders within the Green Movement and those capable of significant internal support of the civil resistance effort. Momentum behind the Green Movement surged following the disputed Iranian Presidential elections of June 2009; as many citizens believed that Mir Hossein Mousavi had defeated President Ahmadinejad. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators asked "where is my vote?" and demanded the democratic rights sought during the 1979 Revolution. The IRGC and the Basij Milita brutally attacked the demonstrations and arrested key activists in an effort to disband the movement and protect the regime. On June 20, 2009, Neda Agha Soltan, a 26-year old musician was shot by Iranian security forces; projecting her over social media as the martyr of the Green Movement.

The United States provided minimal international support for the Green Movement, despite the repression of the demonstrators. The cautious approach on the behalf of the United States reflected a powerful message that inadvertently supported the regime, contrary to historic examples such as Ronald Reagan's support to the Polish Solidarity movement. Lech Walesa, the former Polish president and Solidarity leader reflected: "I often wondered why Ronald Reagan did this, taking the risks he did, in supporting us at Solidarity...it took a leader with a vision."<sup>179</sup> Mousavi has developed a new platform that stated the regime represented "institutionalized corruption hiding behind a pretense of piety" as well as insisting Iran be afforded its rights under the NPT but the nation must be transparent and not seek a nuclear weapon.<sup>180</sup>

The Arab Spring movement began in Tunisia in late 2010.<sup>181</sup> The non-violent civil resistance effort impacted multiple Arab governments, highlighted by the fall of dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. The region is still being shaped by the Arab Spring democratic initiatives. The immediate, rapidly evolving nature of this movement promotes the use of operational design in the development of a U.S. strategy centered on revitalizing the Green Movement for peaceful regime transformation in 2013. Niccolo Machiavelli, the Renaissance era political realist philosopher, offered cautious insight for future strategists: "It ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."<sup>182</sup> Machiavelli's counsel is sound; however, the Green Movement offers a viable strategic approach short of military action and should be pursued during the upcoming window of opportunity.

The core of the proposed comprehensive strategy rests on persuasive statistical data of non-violent campaigns. Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, authors of “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict,” found that major non-violent movements achieved success in 53% of the efforts.<sup>183</sup> The general reasons cited for success are found in the Green Movement: 1) the non-violent commitment enhances broad based domestic participation and encourages international support; 2) regime violence against non-violent movements may “backfire” and lead to a power shift; 3) key regime members transition loyalty toward the non-violent effort (Arab Spring tipping points in Tunisia and Egypt); and 4) tactical diversity, innovation, and movement resilience.<sup>184</sup> The operational design framing of Green Movement support must integrate creative interagency thinking in the narrative construction and development of the operational approach that fosters success for moderate leaders in the June 2013 election.<sup>185</sup> U.S. strategic communications directed to the Green Movement should encourage a democratic non-violent transformation, promote pride in Persian nationalism, and advance the Iranian responsibility to abide by the nation’s NPT agreement; linked to removal of the punitive economic sanctions.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that Operation Iraqi Freedom cost \$806-billion (2003-2010).<sup>186</sup> At Harvard University, on June 5, 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall detailed the European Recovery Program (The Marshall Plan) “Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy...so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.”<sup>187</sup> The United States dedicated \$13-billion dollars towards this landmark initiative; equivalent to \$113-billion today.<sup>188</sup> A modern-day Marshall Plan, of similar program cost to GDP

would cost \$700-billion.<sup>189</sup> However, in this oil-rich region, the United States could establish an effective 21<sup>st</sup> Century Marshall Plan matching \$100-billion from the U.S. Treasury with an additional \$100-billion from regional petroleum revenues. This plan would provide a democratic framework and integrate the Arab Spring nations within the international system. Recognized as an American investment within the international system, a modern-day Marshall Plan places diplomacy and economics to the forefront in an effort to avoid military confrontation in the future.<sup>190</sup> The United States benefited substantially from the post-World War-II international system that its senior leaders established; expansion within the Middle East represents additional advantages for America. As the world's superpower, shouldering a disproportionate cost for international security, the post-World War-II European peace and the cost of the Iraq War would incentivize this plan in pursuit of U.S national interests.

A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Marshall Plan would attract the social media savvy Generation-Y Iranians that were born after the Islamic Revolution and have witnessed a lack of freedom and economic prosperity.<sup>191</sup> Senator Chuck Hagel, nominee for Secretary of Defense, has stated "the United States must continue to support democratic and economic reform; especially in the greater Middle East...Many Islamic societies are seeking a path that balances modernity, tradition, and the demands of a younger generation for greater political freedoms and economic opportunities."<sup>192</sup> Iranians have observed Shia dominated Iraq host democratic elections and watched the Arab Spring movement remove long-standing dictators. Recognizing that a democratic framework assistance program was available would attract additional Iranian citizens to the Green Movement. One of America's foremost experts on Middle Eastern politics and

globalization, Thomas Friedman believes: “We have the responsibility to make a difference...managing globalization is... our overarching national interest today.”<sup>193</sup>

Fortunately, the State Department has a platform that is currently in operation that could perform this historic task. Two State Department organizations exist that could form the support structure of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Marshall Plan: 1) the Middle East Transitions (MET) office managed by Ambassador William Taylor; and 2) the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) which has been active since 2002.<sup>194</sup> These State Department organizations could transform today’s Middle Eastern shatterbelt into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century prosperity region nested within Thomas Barnett’s functioning core and shrinking the violate non-integrating gap.<sup>195</sup>

The final area of diplomatic shaping falls within the sphere of decision advantage.<sup>196</sup> The U.S. Marine Corps has incorporated this model within the service’s mission command philosophy. In decision advantage, superiority is achieved by controlling tempo and dictating terms of engagement across multiple activities that cumulatively deteriorates the adversary’s position.<sup>197</sup> The operational design framework presents a shared understanding of the environment to U.S. senior leaders, enabling the diplomatic community to identify several critical actions that cumulatively can produced a deterioration effect on the Iranian regime’s hardline policies.

The United States diplomatic relations posture with nations throughout the Middle East is at a 35-year peak. Operation Iraqi Freedom, Arab Spring movements, traditional positive relationships, and regional alignment against Iran have secured America’s historic influence in the Persian Gulf. Enhancement of the security partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) consisting of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain,

Oman, and Qatar is essential in establishing a regional defensive posture against Iranian conventional and asymmetric threats. In December, the GCC officially stated that Iran possess a “looming threat” and demanded that Iran halt their offensive actions in Syria as well as the nuclear weapons program.<sup>198</sup> Although Iraq is a majority Shia nation, the U.S. should discretely lobby for Iraqi GCC admittance. Partnership within the GCC would align Iraq with the Arab nations in the Gulf, reduce the current Shia regime influence being exerted by its Persian neighbor, and potentially alleviate sectarian tension within Iraq.<sup>199</sup>

The traditional rallying cry for the Arab Street has been the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Iranian regime has focused populace attention on: 1) the plight of the Palestinian refugees; 2) American policies that support Israel; 3) alliance with the Palestinian people; and 4) support of a resolution favoring the Palestinians. Iran’s regional strategy for marginalizing the United States and asserting Middle Eastern hegemony is based on the regime’s destabilizing and asymmetric policies against the state of Israel. The use of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and its peripheral tensions is the central focus of American Middle Eastern diplomatic efforts; providing a significant freedom of maneuver for detrimental Iranian actions throughout the region.<sup>200</sup> Major consensus or minor agreements on the Israeli-Palestinian challenge reached by American diplomatic forward engagement would remove the Iranian regime’s primary propaganda instrument.<sup>201</sup> The United States must ensure Israel maintains a restrained military posture in regards to Iran. Strategic patience must be exercised by the Israelis, who have previously seized the initiative and acted unilaterally in conducting strikes against Iraqi (1981) and Syrian (2007) nuclear

facilities.<sup>202</sup> Aggressive official statements from the Israeli Prime Minister may prove helpful in shaping the conflict, but premature and unsynchronized offensive actions against Iran will be detrimental to U.S strategy.

An enhanced diplomatic relationship with the new Chinese leadership is a critical shaping component within the operational environment. In addition to assistance on the UNSC Syrian resolutions, Chinese assistance that North Korea halt nuclear and missile technology transfers to Iran would remove the regime's primary defense sponsor. In a diplomatic gesture to the GCC, the Chinese would prevent any missile technology transfer for anti-access/area denial that could impact commercial petroleum shipping through the Straits of Hormuz. IRGC threats to close the Straits of Hormuz reflect the 1984 Tanker War in which 546 commercial vessels were damaged and the mine / missile operations launched by the Iranian Navy in 1988 prior to its devastating defeat by the U.S. Navy.<sup>203</sup> Chinese technology sanctions will increase global market confidence in regional security and petroleum access.

The United States removed Saddam Hussein and was engaged in combat operations in Iraq for over eight-years while assisting the Iraqi people in the development of a democratic state. An Iraqi government that operates transparently within the parameters of its new constitution, builds economic momentum, and reduces Shia-Sunni-Kurd sectarian tension will serve as an example for the Iranian people. Ambassador James Jeffrey, the American Ambassador to Iraq, must continue to highlight steps the Administration can take towards Iraq that will promote regional independence and deny Iranian influence.<sup>204</sup> An area that must be approached with diplomatic caution, but one that requires a counter to the aggressive Iranian soft power

attempt to manipulate the successor to the 82-year old, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. The Iranian regime is funding the bid by its Judiciary Chief, Ayatollah Mahmoud Shahroudi, to assume the Shia leadership role based in An Najaf.<sup>205</sup> If Shahroudi ascended to the rank of the most prominent marja, the Iranian regime would have direct religious influence over the Iraqi Shia majority and reverse Ayatollah Sistani's neutral stance towards the secular governmental structure.<sup>206</sup> Positive growth for the Iraqi people and the Middle East region should be the outcome of the substantial American effort over the last decade; U.S. diplomacy is the shaping instrument.

#### Information Line of Effort

The demographic changes of the Iranian populace have provided the gateway for the information line of effort. Wide-spread access to social media and satellite television represents an information platform that can compete with Iranian state media in communicating to the members of the Green Movement and the general population. Operational design stresses the need for reframing current information operations conducted by the United States; interagency synchronization of information efforts is essential to effectively reaching the focus audience.<sup>207</sup> Based on the short-term timeline, the Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications (DNSASC) should lead the interagency synchronization effort.<sup>208</sup> The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) has a mature platform for information operations with Voice of America Persian Television and Radio Farda.<sup>209</sup> Iranian governmental actions to block the signals of these programs must be aggressively neutralized to enhance viewer / listener popularity; presently VOA Persian Television has a respectable 21% rating while and Radio Farda is ineffective with only a 5% listenership.<sup>210</sup> The BBG's Middle East Broadcasting Network has the complementary task of positively affecting Arab

populace views of the Green Movement through Al Hurra television and Radio Sawa.<sup>211</sup> CENTCOM's Joint Interagency Coordination Group will brief the DNSASC on the theme of the Combatant Commander's regional messages identifying the Iranian regimes support for terror organizations and internal descent in neighboring Arab countries.<sup>212</sup>

Instrumental to the comprehensive strategy's information efforts is the Green Movement's unchallenged access to the internet. A University of Washington research project has identified significant 21<sup>st</sup> Century information operations conclusions in "Opening Closed Regimes: What Was the Role of Social Media During the Arab Spring?" The information technology group found within the Middle East: 1) a robust, young, tech-savvy population – increasingly welcoming to women within the political dialogue; 2) stories of success tend to go viral, creates a "freedom meme" momentum; 3) dissent on-line was central to the political conversation; 4) social media provides non-violent civil resistance groups with organization, speed, and the ability to grow exponentially.<sup>213</sup> State Department observations of the Arab Spring movement fostered the development of the NetFreedom Task Force; designed to counter internet censorship and facility access to information.<sup>214</sup> Synchronized by the DNSASC, the NetFreedom Task Force and USCYBERCOM must ensure Iranian populace access to the internet at a minimum from April – July 2013; eliminating regime social media firewalls. Through an understanding of the operational environment that has shaped Middle Eastern dissent over the past 12-months, the information line of effort must provide the moderate movement within Iran the ability to organize, rapidly transfer information, and to facilitate a viral expansion of the movement.

## Military Line of Effort

In the X-Article, George Kennan commented that the Soviet Union “was impervious to the logic of reason...it was highly sensitive to the logic of force.”<sup>215</sup> Iran’s sensitivity to American military prowess was distinctively communicated by the regime: 1) as Iran halted anti-shipping operations in the Straits of Hormuz following their defeat by the U.S. Navy in 1988; and 2) seven months after the U.S. removed Saddam Hussein, Iran declared a suspension of all uranium enrichment.<sup>216</sup> Operational design will assist senior leaders in identifying flexible deterrent options (FDO) tailored to communicate strength / the logic of force to the Iranian regime.<sup>217</sup> The military FDOs will complement the diplomatic, information, and economic lines of effort in an operational approach that confronts Ayatollah Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad with unacceptable costs associate with their nuclear policies. If the comprehensive strategy is unable to facilitate moderate Green Movement success in the June 2013 Presidential elections, U.S. and coalition forces are postured to conduct precision offensive operations to neutralize the Iranian nuclear weapons program.<sup>218</sup>

In the development of the comprehensive strategy towards Iran, the military line of effort most easily aligns with the concept of operational design. Strategy planners should focus on the proper integration and influence affects that military power can provide to the campaign planning phases of shaping and deterring. Military power will leverage American joint force advantages, but perhaps more importantly international and specifically a coalition of Middle Eastern states allied against the Iranian threat.

Military shaping activities are highlighted by official statements promoting regional collective defense agreements. The recent engagements by Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, in Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Kuwait, the UAE, and Israel are

essential to building partner confidence and isolating the Iranian regime.<sup>219</sup> Secretary Panetta demonstrated the Administration's resolve during his visit to Israel by stating: "The United States will not allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. Period."<sup>220</sup>

American military sales that compliment regional partners' offensive and defensive capacities should be public and demonstrated in coalition exercises to limit Iranian adventurism. F-16 sales to Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia provide a significant competitive air superiority advantage to these allied nations over aging Iranian aircraft. F-35 Joint Strike Fighter sales and Iron Dome technology transfers have ensured Israel can maintain a technology edge over its Iranian adversary and can defeat the asymmetric rocket threat from the regimes proxy terrorist organizations.<sup>221</sup>

Operational design analysis of the Iranian vulnerabilities within the center of gravity / the nuclear weapons program, align effectively with American missile defense initiatives. NATO efforts on the European Defense Shield with radars located in Turkey and interceptors in Poland should be accelerated.<sup>222</sup> The development of a synchronized regional missile defense system, to include THADD sales such as the recent UAE purchase, and Aegis cruiser deployments to the Persian Gulf would apply greater risk of failure within the Iranian military calculus.<sup>223</sup>

Joint Publication 5-0 states that "activities in phases may overlap."<sup>224</sup> As operational design assists in structuring the comprehensive strategy, the theater campaign plan will transition from Phase-0 Shaping to Phase-1 Deter in mid-March 2013, providing 3-months of deterring activities to influence the regime. Currently, CVN-74, the USS John C. Stennis is in the CENTCOM area of responsibility (U.S. Fifth Fleet). Due initially to maintenance challenges the U.S Fifth Fleet has only once carrier

group in the region; based on theater threat levels CENTCOM had been apportioned two carriers. Despite the pending sequestration cuts of the DoD budget, immediate action must be taken by the U.S. Navy to surge a second carrier group to the region; as this FDO is one of America's most influential military statements.<sup>225</sup> A Department of Defense surge to the region comprised of temporary basing of the advanced F-22, increased UAV operations, B-1 / B-2 bomber exercises and tanker operations, intensive space operations, electronic warfare, Patriot battery deployments, and offensive cyber operations will place decisive pressure on the hardline regime. Joint military exercises from March through June 2013 should focus on the Iranian nuclear facility target set of: the Esfahan nuclear research center / uranium conversion center, the Natanz uranium enrichment facility, and the Arak heavy water plant.<sup>226</sup> The controversial Bushehr nuclear reactor would not be targeted due to the potential for substantial Iranian populace and regional partner exposure to radiation.<sup>227</sup> Rehearsal of the detailed strike routes, defeat of the Iranian air order of battle, establishment of air superiority, reduction of the air defense threat, mission planning loads, and refueling operations must be conducted to ensure rapid dominance of Iranian defense. An effectively shaped, unclassified series of CENTCOM public affairs briefings would place the IRGC on notice that the United States was actively rehearsing for combat operations.

The Iranians have mastered the art of deceptive diplomacy, but as Kennan observed with the Soviets, the regime is "highly sensitive to the logic of force."<sup>228</sup> The previous deployment of the F-22 Raptor to the UAE registered an emotional response from Iran's defense minister, Gen. Ahmad Vahidi: "harmful action that damages regional security...psychological warfare."<sup>229</sup> A 90-day surge along the military line of effort

postures the United States and its regional partners in a strategic position of competitive advantage if a moderate regime does not come to power and the Iran advances to its “break out capacity” phase.<sup>230</sup> Use of operational art in arranging operations within the military line of effort provides primacy to the diplomatic element of national power during the shaping and deter phases and postures the American military for primacy during Phase-2 / seize the initiative, if required.<sup>231</sup>

### Economic Line of Effort

After decades of experimentation, the United States is effectively implementing the economic element of power against the Iranian hardline regime. On January 16, 2013, President Ahmadinejad acknowledged the tremendous pressure the American led sanctions have placed on the Iranian economy, as he called for a “shift from reliance on oil income” and “an austerity budget.”<sup>232</sup> Based on the severe U.S. / EU sanctions, Ahmadinejad is threatening to reduce the government subsidies on fuel. Parliament is resisting President Ahmadinejad’s directive due to the intense economic hardship impacting average Iranians as well as the potential to accelerate inflation.<sup>233</sup>

President Obama and Congress have increased the economic stress on Iran with a new series of U.S. sanctions targeting critical industries in shipping, port-management construction, and government-controlled media.<sup>234</sup> In an effort to synchronize this latest economic action with the comprehensive strategy, the Administration must implement the sanctions immediately and not wait for the 180-days that Congress allowed for enactment.<sup>235</sup> Essentially experiencing an economic depression, the Iranian population is shouldering the bulk of the fiscal downturn, while the regime is generally insulated from the impact of the sanctions. Although highly ineffective in past uses by the United States, the sanctions against the Iranian regime are ideally sequenced to leverage the

populations mounting discontent. Additional clout in the manner of the American removal of economic sanctions based on a favorable outcome in the presidential election could accelerate electoral support for the moderate Green Movement.

Operational design provides shared understanding across the interagency planning effort to not harm the economic infrastructure of Iran. Branch economic plans linked to the base theater campaign plan are positioned for implementation: 1) in the event of moderate candidate victory in the June 2013 Presidential elections; or if required 2) following Phase-3 “Seize the Initiative” operations in which the nuclear weapons program has been neutralized and the regime has capitulated to international demands.<sup>236</sup> Both branch plans are founded on reducing the economic pressure on the Iranian population and conserving the petroleum / industrial infrastructure required for a rapid recovery and introduction within the international system.

The ability of the economic element of national power to promote a resurgence within the Green Movement reflects the most influential instrument available to senior American planners. Following the strategic shock of the Arab Spring, the U.S. intelligence community reviewed current assessment models.<sup>237</sup> In estimating state instability, J. Eli Margolis developed a qualitative analysis of the three types of failure that are common in the collapse of a regime: 1) crisis of resilience; 2) crisis of legitimacy; and 3) crisis of authority.<sup>238</sup> Iran is currently experiencing a crisis of resilience in its inability to meet basic economic responsibilities to the population. The regime has a crisis of legitimacy evidenced by the rising disapproval of President Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Khamenei. Sanctions and the ensuing economic pressure are the catalysts for a vibrant Green Movement and the corresponding crisis of

authority. The dynamics of the interrelation of these elements of instability provide the indirect approach to the strategic center of gravity, an empowered Green Movement.

### Counterargument

As the United States and the international community debate the appropriate measures required to halt the Iranian nuclear weapons program, a common theme 50-year after the Cuban Missile Crisis is the development of a Kennedyesque course of action.<sup>239</sup> This solution set is modeled on the successful crisis management approach employed by President Kennedy which averted the two general accepted positions of: 1) attack Cuba; or 2) accept Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba. Graham Allison in an article within *Foreign Affairs* maintains a grand bargain can be reached by the regime agreeing upon nuclear program constraints that would incorporate transparency in exchange an American pledge to not attack Iran.<sup>240</sup> Dr. Allison states a Kennedy-like third option would deny the Iranian regime a nuclear weapon for as possible.<sup>241</sup>

The Cuban Missile Crisis is a hallmark of American Presidential leadership in a crisis management situation. The Soviet Union led by Premier Nikita Khrushchev was an adversary that had multiple options before it; missiles in Cuba were only one aspect of countering American foreign policy. Khrushchev believed in the destiny of the Soviet ideological struggle with America; he had famously told Western diplomats: “We will bury you.”<sup>242</sup> A decision to discretely negotiate on Cuba and remove the medium range ballistic SS-4 / SS-5 missiles would not threaten the survival of the Soviet politburo.<sup>243</sup> This is the primary difference between the 1962 challenge and the current Iranian issue, the theological founded regime has acute situational awareness – fearing the dynamics of the Arab Spring and desperately seeking a nuclear weapon for survival. The lesson of Moammar Gadhafi resonates with President Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Khamenei.

A nuclear weapon secures their positions of power, asserts the nation's regional hegemon status, shields the regime from an American offensive operation, and allows the IRGC to forcefully suppress the Green Movement.

This argument advocates for Iranian containment versus the cost associated with U.S. military action against Iran. The Iran Project recently released "Weighing Benefits and Costs of Military Action Against Iran" that provides structural challenges to the use of military force and a description of the benefits and costs.<sup>244</sup> However, the Iran Project study fails to address the worst-case scenario / cost, an Iranian inspired 9-11 type loss of an American city or Tel Aviv. The Osama bin Laden inspired Al Qaeda attack on September 11, 2001 has cost the United States an estimated \$3-trillion, second only to World War-II at a cost of \$4.4-trillion.<sup>245</sup> Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger advises that "an effective counterproliferation policy requires the willingness to accept sacrifices for the sake of a greater long-term goal."<sup>246</sup> An Iranian regime that successfully produces a nuclear weapon, at a bare minimum changes the geo-political status quo in the Middle East at the expense of America's dominant position. A radical, theologically driven regime may not be containable from the western perspective. Ayatollah Khamenei has acknowledged this unique aspect of the Islamic regime as he was discounting America's comparison of Iran to the Soviet Union: "The enemy has made certain mistakes in their calculation...their next mistake is they have underrated the pivotal role of religious and spiritual leadership in Iran."<sup>247</sup> Troubling comments such as former President Rafsanjani statement that "even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything...it is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality."<sup>248</sup> Kennan provided the containment strategy that ultimately defeated the Soviet Union. However,

the second greatest attack on U.S. soil demonstrates the challenges of containment, as Dean Acheson stated in 1941: “No rational Japanese could believe an attack on us could result anything but disaster.”<sup>249</sup> History cautions senior American leaders that the costs to containing the radical Iranian regime may far outweigh the benefits.

### Conclusion

George Kennan’s understanding of the operational environment was the cornerstone of one of America’s most significant strategic documents – The Long Telegram / X-Article. Kennan assisted senior leaders in forming a vision and describing the strategic approach that America would pursue in the ideological conflict with the Soviet Union. The X-Article provided the framework for Clark Clifford’s “American Relations with the Soviet Union” report that offered policy recommendations; followed by NSC-68 and the whole of government strategy of containment. Although clearly on a different strategic level, which Kennan would be the first to acknowledge, the X-Article provides constructive parallels for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenge with Iran. The framework of an X-Article Iran provides a shared understanding of the theologically driven regime to interagency planners. Implementing smart power as former Secretary of State Clinton describes in the QDDR synchronizes a whole of government comprehensive strategy through the unique prism of operational design.<sup>250</sup>

The premise of the strategy put forward by this paper is to achieve the objectives as described in the NSS, but to lead with diplomacy in an effort to assist the Iranian people in achieving a peaceful transformation within the regime and meet the obligations of the NPT.<sup>251</sup> A transformation of this magnitude is possible; George Kennan was the architect of the greatest strategic transformation of an adversary. Incorporating Clauswitzian theories of the trinity and centers of gravity within the

comprehensive strategy facilitates an intense interagency focus required to achieve success within the short-term time horizon.<sup>252</sup> The 13 elements of operational design frame the strategic lines of effort defined by the instruments of national power; essentially merging Clifford's report and NCS-68 into a theater campaign plan that truly attains the dynamic synchronization of unified action.<sup>253</sup>

As the United States rebalances to the Asia-Pacific region and is challenged to maintain its global commitments in an era of decreasing Defense Department budgets, successfully resolving the Iranian nuclear issue would dramatically alleviate strategic stress.<sup>254</sup> Intelligence estimates of the Iranian regime developing an operational nuclear weapon within the next 6-18 months, reduces the course of action available to American senior leaders. However, the 2009 Green Movement initiative and the Arab Spring successes demonstrate that transformation can occur within the dictator-entrenched Middle East. The comprehensive strategy core is based on the NSS tenet of "recognizing the legitimacy of all peaceful democratic movements."<sup>255</sup> Modern theorist from Thomas Barnett and the disconnected gap, Samuel Huntington and the clash of civilizations, and Thomas Friedman and globalization; discuss the divide between the United States highlighted by the international system and the Middle East highlighted by the 1979 Islamic Revolution.<sup>256</sup> Recognition of the divide is a vital component of the interagency shared understanding of the operational environment; comprehension that an informed, balanced strategy can close the divide must be an objective for American leadership. Leveraging the vision of George Kennan and operational design, the United States can once again non-violently influence an adversary's structural deficiencies and fundamentally alter the geo-political landscape of the Middle East.

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