

**The Writing on the Wall:
China-Russia-Iran Axis in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
and Nuclear Tipping Points in Middle East and East Asia**

by Dr. Christina Y. Lin

This paper seeks to link Middle East and East Asian nuclear proliferation by examining the Sino-Russian Axis on the Iran-North Korea nuclear stalemate. The author treats Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as one unit, based on the author's 2008 paper, *The King From the East: DPRK-Syria-Iran Nuclear Nexus and Strategic Implications for Israel and the ROK*, that linked nuclear issues between the Middle East and East Asia region. This analysis posits an alternative paradigm on the current UN Security Council stalemate over the Iran-DPRK nuclear programmes: rather than viewing the issue as caused by the divergent interests of P5+1 (Six Powers) or Six Party angle towards two rogue regimes of Iran and DPRK, the author posits a shift in the grouping of powers which explains the nuclear stalemate is caused by the Sino-Russian axis **and** its Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) partner Iran, with mutual (especially energy) interests that collide with the West.

The inability of the international community to stop a nuclear DPRK and a nuclearising Iran, combined with decreasing credibility of U.S. security umbrella among U.S. allies at a time when rogue regimes are pursuing nuclear weapons, risks a cascade of nuclear proliferation in East Asia and the Middle East and the demise of global non-proliferation regime. It is hoped that by reframing the Iran-DPRK nuclear problem through the case study of SCO and the lens of Sino-Russia-Iran axis and their energy security interests, rather than the lens of UNSC powers against two rogue regimes, scholars and policymakers will gain new insights and understanding to the current impasses over the Iran-DPRK nuclear issues specifically. More broadly, the research findings will enable the transatlantic alliance to better understand changing geopolitical landscape in the post-9/11 world and implement policy that will mitigate these new security risks.

A New SCO Paradigm on the Iran-DPRK Nuclear Issue

There is a growing body of literature on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), most recently on its increasing role in Afghanistan and whether or how NATO should engage SCO in the region. However, to date there has been no attempt to apply this analytical lens to resolve the Iran and DPRK nuclear stalemates. SCO members consist of China, Russia, and the four central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Its

observers are Iran, Pakistan, India and Mongolia. Over the years, there has been increasing cooperation between China, Russia and Iran in the energy realm – since Iran as an OPEC member and its strategic location in the Persian Gulf and Caspian region render it a key piece on China and Russia’ geopolitical chessboard.¹ As such, the Sino-Russian axis in the UNSC has persistently stonewalled or watered down sanctions on DPRK and Iran for their nuclear non-compliance.

Recently, M K Bhadrakumar in an *Asia Times* article entitled “Russia, China, Iran redraw energy map” criticised that the new Turkmen-Iranian Dauletabad-Sarakhs-Khangiran pipeline mocks U.S.’s Iran policy.² Just as the U.S. is calling for “coalition of the willing” to apply new energy sanctions on Iran, Iran has secured energy deals with Turkmenistan (Turkmen-Iran pipeline), with NATO member Turkey (transport Turkmen gas to Turkey via existing 2,577 km pipeline connecting Tabriz in Iran with Ankara), and with Azerbaijan (deliver Azerbaijani gas to Iran via the 1,400 km Kazi-Magomed-Astara pipeline).³ Similarly, China and Russia bandwagoned with Iran to divert Turkmen gas supplies from the U.S.-backed Nabucco pipeline, with a Sino-Turkmen pipeline and resumption of Turkmen gas to Russia in December 2009.⁴ Gazprom agreed to pay \$ 240 - \$ 250 for 1,000 cubic metres of Turkmen gas in 2010, up from \$ 140 in 2008.⁵ Russian commentators observe the driver for Russia finally paying higher prices (Gazprom charges \$ 500 per 1,000 cubic metres in EU) is its resolve not to leave gas that could be used in alternative pipelines such as Nabucco, which if constructed would bypass Russian control and thereby decrease EU energy dependency and increase freedom of action from Russian agenda.⁶ Moreover, at a time when UNSC and Germany (P5+1) are discussing energy sanctions on Iran, China is helping Iran further develop its oil & natural gas fields⁷ while Russia will start Bushehr nuclear plant in 2010 as planned.⁸ In DPRK, China supplies 90 % of its energy imports since the 1990s and has watered down several rounds of UNSC sanctions.⁹ In light of these events, they seem to suggest a growing trend of Sino-Russia-Iran energy interests in the SCO superseding western concerns in the UN framework on Iran-DPRK nuclear issues.

¹ Christina Y. Lin, “China’s Persian Gulf Strategy: Israel and a Nuclearizing Iran 2009”, *China Brief*, Vol. 9, Issue 21, 22 October 2009, The Jamestown Foundation; M K Bhadrakumar, “Russia, China, Iran redraw energy map”, *Asia Times Online*, 8 January 2010.

² M K Bhadrakumar, “Russia, China, Iran redraw energy map”.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Vladimir Socor, “Strategic Implications of the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, Issue 233, The Jamestown Foundation, 18 December 2009; “Turkmen natural gas supplies to Russia resumed”, *RIA Novosti*, 9 January 2010; M K Bhadrakumar, “Russia, China, Iran redraw energy map”.

⁵ “Turkmen natural gas supplies to Russia resumed”, *RIA Novosti*.

⁶ M K Bhadrakumar, “Russia, China, Iran redraw energy map”.

⁷ China finds in Iran a permanent partner for its exports and source of energy. In March 2004, Zhuhai Zhenrong Corporation, a Chinese state-run company, signed a 25-year contract to import 110 million metric tons of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from Iran, followed by another contract between Sinopec and Iran LNG, signed in October of the same year. The \$100 billion deal adds an extra 250 million tons of LNG to China’s energy supply, to be extracted from Iran’s Yadavaran field over a 25-year period. In January 2009, Iran and China signed a \$1.76bn contract for the initial development of the North Azadegan oil field in western Iran. In March the two countries struck a three-year \$3.39 billion deal to produce liquefied natural gas in Iran’s mammoth South Pars natural gas field. <http://iran-daily.com/1388/3378/html/economy.htm>; <http://English.aljazeera.net/business/2009/09/2009923113235664683.html>. China’s exports to Iran have experienced particularly rapid growth in the past five years, with China replacing Japan as the world’s second largest exporter to Iran. According to the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, bilateral trade reached \$27 billion in 2008. “Iran, China to Cement Cooperation,” Fars News Agency, 28 July 2008; “Iran Looks East As Europe Looks The Other Way”, Press TV, 2 July 2008; “Iran-China Trade Exchanges to Exceed \$25Bln”, Fars News Agency, 6 October 2009.

⁸ Rosatom chief Sergei Kiriienko on 21 January 2010 said, “There is absolutely no doubt that it will be built this year. Everything is going according to schedule.” Darya Korunskaya, Guy Gaulconbridge, Conor Humphries, “Russia says to start Iran nuclear plant in 2010”, *Reuters*, 21 January 2010.

⁹ Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, “The China-North Korea Relationship”, 21 July 2009.

A juxtaposition of the existing UNSC paradigm (especially U.S., Russia, China in both Six Powers and Six Party Talks) to resolving the Iran-DPRK nuclear problems, with the proposed new SCO paradigm, is provided below.

Figure 1: Schema of New Paradigm

Conventional Paradigm: Six Powers & Six Party vs. rogue regimes



New SCO Paradigm: NATO members/partners vs. SCO members/observers



* North Korea is also a member of the Six Party Talks. Although it is not an SCO member/observer, it is aligned with China & Russia as a client communist state.

The inability of the UNSC to stop a nuclear DPRK and a nuclearising Iran, coupled with Sino-Russian interests in Iran (SCO partner) and DPRK (Chinese buffer from U.S. troops in South Korea), will have serious implications for global non-proliferation regime. Given President Obama’s current call for nuclear zero/disarmament at a time when rogue nations are aggressively seeking nuclear weapons, this may adversely affect confidence in U.S. nuclear umbrella and security guarantee among U.S. allies in East Asia and the Middle East, with attendant cascades of regional nuclear arms proliferation. By re-examining the Iran-DPRK nuclear impasse through the regrouping of countries in the SCO, hopefully the new paradigm will lend insights for western powers to devise innovative policies in engaging China and Russia to cooperate on this and other global security issues.

Background – DPRK and Iran’s Strategic Partnership

The strategic partnership between DPRK and Iran in missile and nuclear collaboration has lasted more than three decades, yet scholars in international security literature continue to treat them as separate variables with the bifurcation of regional studies between Middle East and East Asian studies. This strategic cooperation has entailed proxy development of missile and nuclear technologies to sidestep sanctions, collaborative efforts to share test data and weapons designs, and implementing a strategy of exploiting the Six Powers Talk (and Six Party Talks) in breaking international commitments to achieve a nuclear *fait accompli* – as evidenced by DPRK exploding its nuclear bombs in 2006 and 2009, and the current IAEA

stalemate over Iran's illicit nuclear program as it nears a nuclear "breakout".¹⁰ In turn, this nuclear axis poses a simultaneous threat to East Asia and Middle East regional stability, as this has eroded international confidence in global non-proliferation regime (NPT) and given rise to debates of perhaps East Asia and the Middle East reaching a nuclear tipping point towards regional arms race. For example, in March 2009, Japan's Defence Ministry's annual *East Asia Strategic Review* report underscored the risk of nuclear proliferation in Asia, citing the sudden interest of Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Thailand in nuclear energy, in addition to the existing four nuclear powers of China, India, Pakistan, and DPRK in the region.¹¹ Similarly in the Middle East, a May 2008 report entitled *Nuclear Programmes in the Middle East: In the Shadow of Iran* published by London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), revealed that 13 countries in the Middle East have announced plans to explore civilian nuclear energy projects. In light of these proliferation risks driven by the threat of a nuclear DPRK in East Asia and a nuclearising Iran in the Middle East, it is vital to understand the drivers for states in the region to choose a nuclear path, and thereby implement ways to mitigate these risks. But before examining historical cases of nuclear choices in East Asia and the Middle East, it is important to also note that Syria is part of the Iran-DPRK nuclear axis, while most attention is currently focused on Iran.

How Syria Fits into the WMD Partnership

The 2007 Israeli air-strike of the DPRK-assisted Syrian nuclear reactor sheds light on the extent of WMD collaboration between DPRK, Iran, Syria, and proxies of Hamas and Hezbollah. There have been several interdictions of DPRK WMD proliferation to Syria, and DPRK assistance of tunnel digging for Hezbollah terror campaigns against Israel has also been documented.¹² For the isolated DPRK, economic rationale drives WMD proliferation to earn hard currency. For Syria, political/strategic rationale drives its WMD proliferation and alliance with Iran. In 2005, *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that Iran and Syria signed a defence accord, where Syria agreed to store Iranian nuclear materials and weapons should Tehran face UN sanctions.¹³ Under the accord, Iran would be prepared to operate "advanced weapon systems in Syria during a military confrontation".¹⁴ In December 2009, Syria and Iran signed a new military agreement in midst of potential Iran nuclear sanctions.¹⁵ According to Tariq Khaitous from the James Martin Centre for Non-proliferation Studies, the Syrian-Iran alliance would help Iran divert international attention away from its nuclear aims – e.g., Syria's suspected continuance of nuclear weapons programmes; sponsor of Hamas, Hezbollah; and shepherding of foreign fighters through Syria into Iraq to attack U.S. and NATO troops¹⁶. In August 2009 IAEA issued a 4th report investigating Syrian attempts to

¹⁰ Christina Y. Lin, "The King from the East: DPRK-Syria-Iran Nuclear Nexus and Strategic Implications for Israel and the ROK" in *Academic Paper Series on Korea*, Vol. 3, No.7 (Washington, D.C.: Korea Economic Institute, October 2008); Erich Follath and Holger Stark, "How Israel Destroyed Syria's Al Kibar Nuclear Reactor", *Spiegel Online*, 2 November 2009.

¹¹ Tim Kelley, "Japan Says U.S. Risks Nuclear Proliferation," *Forbes*, 25 March 2009.

¹² Internal memo from House Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen to Republican Members, "North Korea's Support for Terrorist Groups and State Sponsors of Terrorism", House Foreign Affairs Committee, 8 May 2008; Larry A. Niksh, "North Korea: Terrorism List Removal", Congressional Research Service Report RL30613, 1 July 2009, p. 18-9; Tariq Khaitous, "Is Syria a Candidate for Nuclear Proliferation?" Nuclear Threat Initiative Issue Brief, March 2008.

¹³ "Syria to hide Iranian nuclear weapons", *Asia News*, 21 December 2005. Robin Hughes, "Iran, Syria sign a further defense co-operation agreement," *Jane's*, 27 June 2007, http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/jdw/jdw060627_1_n.shtml.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Jean-Baptiste Galopin, "As US mulls Iran nuclear sanctions, Syria boosts ties with Teheran", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 15 December 2009.

¹⁶ Tariq Khaitous, "Is Syria a Candidate for Nuclear Proliferation", "Syria's Secret Nuclear Program and Long Term Threat" *Assyrian International News Agency*, 14 August 2006; International Crisis Group, "Reshuffling the

construct covert nuclear programme, and criticised that Syria continued to stonewall IAEA inspections to two suspected sites with uranium traces – Deir el-Zor near al Kibar nuclear reactor that was destroyed in 2007, and the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor at Der Al Hadjar near Damascus.¹⁷

In fact, a recent article by Israeli columnist Alex Fishman in the Hebrew language newspaper, *Yediot Ahronoth*, warned about the “approaching December winds” that will bring revelation, not about Iran’s nuclear ambitions, but about Syria’s nuclear projects.¹⁸ He posits the departure of Mohamed ElBaradei from the chair of IAEA will open doors to new IAEA demands to inspect the suspected nuclear sites in Syria, which may lead to evidence providing direct Iranian nuclear connection and finances for Syria’s alleged nuclear project. If failed negotiations lead to confrontation with Iran, he cautions that the road to military strike on Iran perhaps passes through Damascus, in which case “whomsoever is in the Iranian camp will also get a pounding.”¹⁹ Correspondingly, in December 2009, IDF simulate missile attacks and war against Syria and Hezbollah.²⁰ In January 2010 Israel staged the largest defence exercise named *Orange Flame* to defend against biological warfare attacks, as Syria is known to have an advanced bio-chemical weapons capability.²¹ Due to the small size of Israel, the threat of bio-chemical warfare is also a serious red line in Israeli nuclear doctrine.²²

Syria-Iran Alliance

The strategic alliance between Arab Syria and Persian Iran has perplexed many. In a nutshell, Syria feels threatened by Israel, and is technically still in a state of war, having signed an armistice but no treaty in the 1967 Six Day War. Syria disliked Iran under the Shah for being pro-western and recognising Israel, and was the first country to recognise the Islamic Republic in 1979.²³ Likewise it dislikes Egypt and Jordan for also recognising Israel, and has aligned with Iran to promote its view of Arab interests while Iran promotes Islamic interests in the region.²⁴ For the past three decades, they have joined forces to eject U.S. influence from the region. This was manifested in the 18 April 1983 bombing of the U.S. embassy Beirut, which virtually killed the entire CIA team in Beirut and 241 U.S. military personnel. Despite Islamic Jihad claiming responsibility, the consensus of the diplomatic community was

Cards? (II) Syria's New Hand“, Middle East Report No. 93, 16 December 2009, p. 16; J.J. Green, “Syria suspected of concealing nuclear activity“, *WTOP*, 19 November 2009.

¹⁷ Gregory Schulte, “Damascus Deception“, *Foreign Policy*, 2 Sep 2009; J. J. Green, “Syria suspected of concealing nuclear activity”.

¹⁸ Alastaire Crooke, “Beware the Winds of December“, *Asia Times Online*, 2 December 2009.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Interestingly in a book published in 2008, the author echoed this theme of a possible Israeli military strike against Damascus as fulfilment of Bible prophecy in the Book of Isaiah Chapter 17, verse 1: “Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, And it will be a ruinous heap.“ Bill Salus, *Israelestine: The Ancient Blueprints of the Future Middle East* (Highway, 2008).

²⁰ Anshel Pfeffer, “IDF Simulate Missile Attacks, war against Syria and Hezbollah“, *Ha'aretz*, 13 Dec 2009. The distance between Jerusalem and Damascus is 135 miles.

²¹ Magnus Normark, Anders Linblad, Anders Norqvist, Bjorn Sandstrom, Louise Waldenstrom, „Syria and WMD: Incentives and Capabilities“, FOI Swedish Defence Research Agency, FOR-R-1290-SE, June 2004; Anshel Pfeffer, “Israel to simulate biological warfare attack“, *Ha'aretz*, 5 January 2010; Amos Harel, “IDF to blanket Israel with gas masks“, *Ha'aretz*, 5 January 2010.

²² There are several redlines in Israeli nuclear doctrine: (1) successful Arab penetration into populated area within Israel's post-1949 borders; (2) destruction of Israeli Air Force; (3) Exposure of Israeli cities to massive air attack or biochemical attack; (4) nuclear weapons against Israeli territory. Israel's sea-based Dolphin Class nuclear submarines has 2nd strike capability in the event of a nuclear attack. Avner Cohen, “Israel“ in Muthiah Alagappa ed., *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p.252.

²³ Jubin M. Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran: Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

radical pro-Iranian Shi'ites supported by Syrian and Iranian government.²⁵ As a result, U.S. Sixth Fleet withdrew from Lebanon territorial waters in 1984.

The scenario of mysterious killing of a CIA team by *Jihadists* is replayed again in December 2009, when an al-Qaida double agent detonated a bomb in Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost, Afghanistan. The base was used to direct and coordinate CIA covert operations to launch missile strikes on al-Qaida and Taliban targets on the Pakistani side of the border.²⁶ This incident underscores once again the destabilising effect of Syria in the region, as it is a hub for al-Qaida network and a “*Jihadi pipeline*” with 80 % of foreign fighters in Iraq coming through Syria.²⁷ According to Barry Rubin, a Middle East scholar, a stable Iraq is not in Syria’s interest. Since 2003, Iraq as a U.S. client state on its border threatens Syria, and victory for U.S. policy in Iraq is an obstacle of Iran-Syria alliance in the region. Moreover, the end of insurgency would free up U.S. assets to use against Syria-Iran designs in the Middle East.²⁸ Indeed, after 9/11 and before U.S. Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, Syrian intelligence regularly cooperated with CIA against al-Qaida cells in Europe and the Middle East.²⁹ However, this was suspended after the fall of Baghdad, and Syrian intelligence agencies’ expertise in penetrating radical Islamist cells in the suburbs of European capitals was retooled as asymmetric campaign against U.S. troops in Iraq.³⁰ Bashar al-Asad calculated that protecting his regime entails sabotaging the U.S. occupation of Iraq and turning the country into another Vietnam.³¹

Sino-Russian Designs in the Middle East

Thus, we see the Iran-DPRK-Syria nexus’ negative ripple effects in the Middle East region. But notwithstanding these consequences, the Sino-Russian axis in the UNSC continues to stonewall western efforts to move forward in resolving these nuclear issues. Russia is stepping up military ties in Syrian port of Tartus as a naval base for its Black Water Fleet that would enable operations in four seas of Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Red Seas.³² It has been asserted that President al-Asad agreed to convert the port into a permanent Middle East base for Russia’s nuclear-armed warships,³³ and Israel is concerned by Russian

²⁵ Subsequent evidence revealed Iran had masterminded the operation with Syrian complicity. Bob Woodward (1987; 245-7, 362-3) states that NSA had been intercepting and deciphering coded electronic messages from the Iranian foreign ministry in Teheran to its embassies in Damascus and Beirut, which revealed operation against US target was being planned and payment of \$25,000 made in Lebanon for that purpose, CIA director William Casey was certain that both Teheran and Damascus had a hand in the operation, and that Syrian intelligence was privy to preparations for the attack. *Le Monde*, 18 May 1983; Bob Woodward, *Veil: the secret wars of the CIA 1981-1987* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1987). According to one account, the Soviets provided intelligence about the scheduled, high-level CIA meeting in the US embassy to the Syrians, who subsequently shared the information with the Iranians to jointly plan the attack. H. Jaber, *Hezbollah: born with a vengeance* (London: Fourth Estate Ltd, 1997), p.81.

²⁶ Matthew Cole, Nick Schiffrin and Rhonda Schwartz, “Mystery Surrounds Contractors’ Role at CIA Base”, *ABC News*, 6 January 2010; Robert Windrem and Richard Engel, “NBC: Al-Qaida double agent killed CIA officers”, *MSNBC*, 4 January 2010.

²⁷ Michael Rubin, “Syria’s path to Islamist Terror”, *Middle East Quarterly*, 23 November 2009.

²⁸ Barry Rubin, “Iran’s nuclear and Syria’s Iraq Adventures”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol II, No. 4 (Dec 2007).

²⁹ Bassel F. Salloukh, “Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad”, in Frede H. Lawson ed., *Demystifying Syria* (London: London Middle East Institute SOAS, 2009), p.165.

³⁰ Saudi journalists describe how the Saudi government reached agreement with Syria to repatriate Saudi nationals trying to slip through Iraq via Syria. To test Syrian intentions, Saudi intelligence officers posed as foreign fighters in Syria, but instead of repatriation, the Syrian authorities helped the Saudis cross over to Iraq. Bassel F Salloukh interview with Saudi journalists in Dubai and Beirut, June 2006. Bassel F. Salloukh, “Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad.”

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² “Russia builds key naval HQ in Syria: Missile presence worries Israel”, *DEBKA file* Special Report, 30 July 2009.

³³ “Big Russian flotilla led by Admiral Kuznetsov carrier heads for Syrian port”, *DEBKA file*, 21 August 2008.

proposal to install S-300PMU-2 air defence system and Iskander-E missile systems as pretext to shield the naval facility against air or missile attacks.³⁴ This serves as Russian rejoinder for the disputed U.S. deployment of missile interceptors in Eastern Europe, and the combined commands of Russian Black Sea fleet and new Mediterranean-based warships are designed as counter-deployments to the post-Georgian war-U.S./NATO naval presence in the Black Sea, as well as its fleets in other parts of the Mediterranean.

Similarly, China is increasing its naval presence in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, with a call in December 2009 by Chinese Rear Admiral Yin Zhou to stand up a permanent naval base in the Gulf of Aden.³⁵ The Chinese have been steadily building a chain of naval installations dubbed a “string of pearls” strategy across the Indian Ocean for some time, to protect its energy maritime supply routes from Middle East and Africa.³⁶ It is “pursuing a two-pronged strategy to secure its energy, using the navy to protect maritime supply and building new pipelines,” according to *Jane’s Intelligence Review*. In addition to China’s major deepwater port on the Arabian Sea at Gwadar in Pakistan that could host China’s expanding submarine fleet and possible future aircraft carriers, China is also building oil and gas pipelines from the Central Asia to western China to reduce its dependence on vulnerable maritime routes. Currently Chinese warships in the Gulf of Aden have been using a French naval base at Djibouti for re-supply. While Rear Admiral Yin Zhou did not specify any country where a permanent Chinese naval base might be set up, some pundits have assessed it could be Iran. In “A China base in Iran?”, Kaveh L Afrasiabi suggested that given Sino-Persian close cooperation in energy security and greater willingness to embrace China’s naval vessels making port calls to Iran, this may be a prelude to more extensive agreements to perhaps provide a small Chinese naval outpost on one of Iran’s Persian Gulf islands.³⁷ If U.S. tries to project military power by utilising some of UAE’s man-made islands, Iran may be inclined to offset U.S. pressure by playing the “China card.” Indeed, in November 2009, NATO entered into the advanced stages of negotiating a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with UAE in face of Iran’s nuclear threat.³⁸

As China and Russia continue to block new UNSC sanctions, with Iran approaching nuclear breakout, the Middle East is teetering near the tipping point of nuclear proliferation. It is thus important to consider contingencies in face of a nuclearising Iran and devise ways to mitigate risks of regional nuclear proliferation.

Nuclear Tipping Point in Middle East? (confidence in NPT)

“If North Korea and Iran cannot be contained, we face the real danger of a cascade of proliferation of nuclear-armed states...indeed, I believe that today we are clearly at the tipping point of nuclear proliferation.” These are concerns of Professor Gao Shangtao at China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, which contrasts with current Chinese efforts to block UNSC sanctions in order to prevent a nuclearising Iran.³⁹ Indeed, the writing is on the wall that states in the region are beginning to pursue nuclear weapons programmes via a civilian programme. A 2008 London-based IISS report entitled *Nuclear Programmes in the*

³⁴ “Russia builds key naval HQ in Syria”, *DEBKA file*.

³⁵ “China’s navy mulls push into Arabian Sea”, *UPI*, 30 December 2009.

³⁶ Christina Y. Lin, “Militarisation of China’s Energy Security Policy: Defence Cooperation and WMD Proliferation Along Its String of Pearls in the Indian Ocean”, *Institut für Strategie- Politik- Sicherheits- und Wirtschaftsberatung (ISPSW)/ETH Zurich*, 18 June 2008.

³⁷ Kaveh L Afrasiabi, “A China base in Iran?”, *Asia Times Online*, 29 January 2008.

³⁸ Mina Al-Oraibi, “An Emirati vision for NATO’s Gulf strategy”, *RUSI Analysis*, 30 November 2009.

³⁹ George Jahn, “Nuclear Tipping Point in 2010”, *News24*, 13 December 2009.

Middle East in the Shadow of Iran reveals that from February 2006 to January 2007, 13 Middle East countries announced plans to obtain civil nuclear energy.⁴⁰ This is remarkable given abundance of energy sources in the region, but fear of Iran is driving many Persian Gulf states to procure nuclear technology.⁴¹ According to Abdul Khaleq Abdullah, a political science professor at United Arab Emirates University, “It’s a whole new ball game. Iran is forcing everyone into an arms race”.⁴² Likewise, a December 2008 report by the congressionally appointed Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States stated that nuclear DPRK and Iran would spur cascades of proliferation.⁴³

It is important to caveat that not all nuclear energy programmes will turn into weapons programme, as this depends on a combination of factors that provide the recipe for a state to choose nuclear proliferation.

Where is the Tipping Point?

In Kurt Campbell *et al*’s 2004 seminal work, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*, he assessed five criteria for a state’s nuclear choices:⁴⁴

1. Change in direction of U.S. foreign/security policy
2. Breakdown of global non-proliferation regime
3. Erosion of regional/global security
4. Domestic imperatives
5. Increasing availability of technology

A combination of these factors could be the perfect storm for a nuclear path. By drawing on historical cases of nuclear choices in East Asia and the Middle East, Campbell observed that the key variables for preventing a nuclear path for most countries (especially U.S. allies) have been confidence in the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime and U.S. security guarantee. However, given a nuclear DPRK and a nuclearising Iran that threatens to dismantle global NPT, coupled with current Obama Administration’s call for disarmament, goal of Nuclear Zero, and cancelling of missile defence in Eastern Europe, there is decreasing confidence in the credibility of U.S. nuclear umbrella/security guarantee. Herbert London of the Hudson Institute, in an article entitled “Is the U.S. Still a Dependable Ally?”, cautioned that concessions in nuclear arsenal to Russia to “reset” U.S.-Russian relations send signals to both friends and foes of U.S. declinism and isolationism.⁴⁵ Jack David (former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence) and Melanie Kirkpatrick echoed this concern and criticised that by scrapping missile defence in Poland and Czech Republic, which acts as a 3rd layer of defence against Iranian missiles for the U.S. eastern seaboard, U.S. has decreased its own security. Moreover, U.S. encouraged 30 countries to forego nuclear weapons and rely on U.S. nuclear umbrella, which it is scrapping.⁴⁶ Thus this change of U.S. foreign policy and erosion of

⁴⁰ IISS Strategic Dossier, *Nuclear Programmes in the Middle East in the Shadow of Iran* (London: IISS, 2008).

⁴¹ Ian Jackson, “Nuclear Energy and Proliferation Risks: Myths and realities in the Persian Gulf”, *International Affairs*; 85: 6 (2009), 1157-1172.

⁴² “It’s time to see Iran’s nuclear plan for what it is” by Richard Whelan, Irish Times, 25 November 2009.

⁴³ William Eldrige, “Report Warns of Global Nuclear Tipping Point”, 19 December 2008, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars. The commission was chartered through National Defence Authorization Act (NDAA) 2008 and led by former Secretary of Defence William Perry, Secretary of Defence James Schlesinger, and former Congressman Lee Hamilton.

⁴⁴ Kurt Campbell, “Reconsidering a Nuclear Future: Why Countries Might Cross Over to the Other Side” in Kurt Campbell, Robert Einhorn, Mitchell Reiss, eds., *Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), p.20.

⁴⁵ Herbert London, “Is the U.S. Still a Dependable Ally?”, *Human Events*, 23 July 2009.

⁴⁶ Jack David and Melanie Kirkpatrick, “A new nuclear-arms race”, *Wall Street Journal*, 17 September 2009.

international security by DPRK-Iran nuclear crisis may provide the tipping point for nuclear proliferation.

Middle East Arms Race

In a Congressional report entitled “Chain reaction: Avoiding a nuclear arms race in the middle east”, the report concludes that if Iran goes nuclear, Egypt, Turkey and especially Saudi Arabia will likely go nuclear.⁴⁷ Next to Israel, Egypt has the most advanced nuclear energy programme in the region. However, Egypt currently has two deterrents from this path: (1) peace treaty with Israel; and (2) security partnership with the U.S.. Egyptian nuclear weapons would destabilise both pillars. In the case of Turkey, currently choosing the nuclear path would hurt its interests in NATO. In the case of Saudi Arabia however, an Iranian bomb will lead to a Saudi bomb. Saudi Arabia is not confident in U.S. nuclear umbrella and in the 1980s, it secretly procured 50 to 60 CSS-2 missiles from China that could fit nuclear warheads, and has financed Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme. Indeed, former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Chas Freeman, disclosed that Saudi officials warned him if Iran gets nuclear weapons, the Saudis would be compelled to acquire its own deterrent stockpile.⁴⁸

This decreasing confidence in U.S. security guarantee is also manifested in conventional arms race. Saudi Arabia and UAE are increasing weapons procurement. Theodore Karasik, director of research at the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, said Iran’s refusal to send enriched uranium abroad would spur further arms sale. “The threat perception is definitely about Iran,” he said. UAE has overtaken Saudi Arabia as arms importer in the region, and is now the 3rd largest arms importer in the world after China and India, according to Stockholm-based SIPRI.⁴⁹

As such NATO has tried to assuage Gulf states’ security concerns and is negotiating a SOFA with UAE, as part of Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s goal to expand NATO ties with GCC. NATO has deepened ties with GCC since the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in 2004, due to shared interests of nuclear proliferation (Iran), piracy, failed states, Somalia and Afghanistan.⁵⁰ Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, and Qatar accepted offers of partnership and have held regular consultative meetings with a focus on military training and exchanges. Saudi Arabia and Oman are reluctant to sign the ICI, as Oman has close ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia prefers bilateral dealings with the U.S.

Whether the extension of NATO’s security umbrella may deter the Middle East region from crossing the nuclear threshold in face of Iran is a moot point. However, in East Asia where three U.S. allies have a prior history of clandestine nuclear weapons programmes (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Taiwan), the inability of the international community to prevent a nuclear DPRK and in face of China’s aggressive military build up, the risk is much higher for a regional crossover of the nuclear tipping point.

⁴⁷ “Chain reaction: Avoiding a nuclear arms race in the middle east”, Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 110 Congress, 2nd session, February 2008.

⁴⁸ Kurt Campbell, *Nuclear Tipping Point*, p.129.

⁴⁹ Richard Spencer, “Gulf arms race triggered by Iranian aggression”, Telegraph 22 November 2009.

⁵⁰ Mina Al Oraibi, “An Emirati vision for NATO’s Gulf Strategy,” RUSI Analysis, 30 November 2009.

Nuclear Tipping Point in East Asia? (confidence in U.S. security guarantee)

Following its 2008 report on Middle East nuclear proliferation in face of Iran, London-based IISS in early 2009 released a subsequent report warning of nuclear proliferation in Asia.⁵¹ Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, and Malaysia are embarking on civil nuclear energy, while only two ASEAN states have ratified IAEA safeguards of the Additional Protocol – Singapore and Indonesia. Granted nuclear technology cannot be readily converted to weapons unless the state possesses technologies for uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing. However, there are risks of procurement from black markets and clandestine programmes if a state decides on the proliferation path.

Natasha E. Bajema in a 2007 CSIS report argued that multi-causality is at the heart of nuclear proliferation problem – stemming from security alliance, non-proliferation norms, and effectiveness of IAEA safeguards.⁵² None are sufficient by themselves as a causal variable, but from their interplay she derived three hypotheses:⁵³

Hypothesis 1: States develop nuclear weapons in response to threat, unless they have security alliance as an alternative.

Hypothesis 2: NPT/non-proliferation norms curbed nuclear proliferation predicted in the 1960s.

Hypothesis 3: IAEA safeguards provide assurance that states are not developing nuclear weapons and therefore restrain proliferation.

These 3 hypotheses have been tested in recent years:

- 1) Why states that forego nuclear options in the past are now revisiting their nuclear decision?
- 2) Are existing security alliances sufficient to restrain proliferation?
- 3) Will the collapse of NPT lead to widespread proliferation?
- 4) Given recent safeguards violations, will IAEA safeguards continue to have a role in restraining nuclear proliferation?

In her study, Bejama concluded that the strength of security alliance is the overriding factor in a state's choice to seek nuclear weapons. In the case of Taiwan and South Korea, perception of decreasing U.S. security commitment led to corresponding pursuit of clandestine nuclear programmes.⁵⁴ Admittedly, security alliance is a necessary but insufficient reason for nuclear restraint, as France became nuclear in 1960 despite an alliance with U.S. and NATO. Presently, other factors are at play as current failures to confront DPRK and Iran non-compliance is eroding NPT credibility, as well as inability of IAEA safeguards to enforce compliance. By examining past case studies of nuclear choices in East Asia, Bejama concluded that at the systemic level, security alliance is the last and critical line of defence against widespread nuclear proliferation.⁵⁵ In face of eroding NPT regime and credibility of U.S. security guarantee, Japan is the country most at risk of reconsidering their nuclear choice.

⁵¹ IISS Strategic Dossier, *Preventing Nuclear Dangers in Southeast Asia and Australasia* (London: IISS, 2009).

⁵² Natasha E Bejema, "The Dynamics of Nuclear Proliferation: How Close is the tipping point?" in "Nuclear Scholar Initiative: Project on Nuclear Issues", Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2007, p.16

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4. Taiwan pursued a clandestine nuclear programme in the 1970s in face of U.S.-China détente and process of U.S. derecognising Taipei by recognising Beijing, while South Korea pursued its programme when Nixon pulled U.S. troops out of South Korea in 1970.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.17.

Japan's Nuclear Option

Currently U.S.-Japan alliance is at an all-time low. A dispute between Washington and the new DPJ government under Hatoyama over the Guam Agreement (which aligns U.S. military forces in Japan) has harmed the bilateral defence relationship. The DPJ is backtracking on an agreement 13 years in the making and advocating moving Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) off Okinawa or out of Japan entirely.⁵⁶ A senior Japanese official commented bilateral ties had entered a “period of winter-like hardship”, while a defence official assessed the alliance worsened to “an alarming level.”⁵⁷ In face of increasing Chinese military build-up and decreasing confidence in U.S. security umbrella, Japan may be at the tipping point of choosing its nuclear option – given its advanced requisite nuclear technology.

Japan's “non-nuclear policy” in the post-WWII era has rested on its non-nuclear identity and U.S. nuclear umbrella. Satake Tomohiko in a 2009 article argues “as Japan perceives greater threats from its region, it will face a dilemma that inherently exists in its nuclear policy: policymakers in Japan will be required to pursue a more deliberate nuclear strategy than before between demands for preserving a non-nuclear identity on the one hand and maintaining a credible U.S. nuclear deterrence on the other.”⁵⁸ Since DPRK became a *de facto* nuclear power, there has been talk of Japan going ‘nuclear’ and seek greater independence from U.S.⁵⁹ Japan's ‘non-nuclear policy’ (*hikaku-seisaku*) rests on not possessing, developing, or introducing nuclear weapons into Japan, and these principles cannot be sustained without U.S. nuclear umbrella. Since WWII, Japan had considered its nuclear options four times and rejected all four times due to confidence in the U.S. security guarantee.⁶⁰

- 1960s due to 1964 Chinese nuclear test
- mid 1970s due to debate on ratifying NPT
- mid 1990s debate on indefinite extension of NPT
- current DPRK 2006/9 nuclear crisis

In its first study during 1968 - 70 on Japan's nuclear option, Japan conducted two reports – one technical-economic and the other political-strategic. The technical report assessed that Japan had requisite scientific expertise/material to be nuclear, but the political-strategic report assess that the costs outweigh the benefits. Namely, it would harm U.S.-Japan alliance, increase fear of regional states and risk diplomatic isolation. However, some debated whether the U.S. would risk Los Angeles for Tokyo and the prudence of depending on a U.S. nuclear umbrella with “hole over Japan”.⁶¹

In subsequent studies in the 1970s on whether to ratify the NPT in face of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and decreasing confidence in U.S. extended deterrence, and in the 1990s on the

⁵⁶ Bruce Klingner, “U.S. Should Stay Firm on Implementation of Okinawa Force Realignment”, *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, No. 2352, 15 December 2009, p. 3.

⁵⁷ “Japan's Attempt to Rely Less on U.S. Chills Bilateral Ties”, *Mainichi Shimbun*, 10 November 2009.

⁵⁸ Satake Tomohiko, “Japan Nuclear Policy: Between Non-Nuclear Identity and U.S. Extended Deterrence”, *Austral Policy Forum*, 09-12A, 21 May 2009.

⁵⁹ Kurt M. Campbell and Tsuyosi Sunohara, “Japan: Thinking the unthinkable” in Campbell, Robert J. Einhorn, and Mitchell B. Reiss, eds, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), Ch 9, p.232; Hugh White, “Why Japan Might have to go nuclear”, *The Interpreter* (Weblog of the Lowy Institute for International Policy), 16 July 2008.

⁶⁰ Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why states choose nuclear restraint* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.64. Yuri Kase, “The costs and benefits of Japan's nuclearization: An insight into the 1968/70 Internal Report,” *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol 8, No 2 (summer 2001), p.60.

indefinite extension of NPT in face of DPRK nuclear weapons ambitions, Japan assessed that the U.S. security umbrella was robust enough to deter Japan's nuclear option. However, given the current geopolitical environment of a shift in U.S. foreign policy towards disarmament, erosion of global NPT regime due to DPRK-Iran intransigence, and the rapid deterioration of U.S.-Japan alliance in face of an increasingly aggressive Chinese military power, these are strong forces that may push Japan over the nuclear tipping point. As Christopher Hughes observed in his 2009 book *Japan's Remilitarisation*, in April 2002, Ichiro Ozawa, leader of the Liberal Party, reported he told Chinese leaders in Beijing, "If Japan desires, it can possess thousands of nuclear warheads. Japan has enough plutonium in use in its nuclear plants for three to four thousand....If that should happen, we wouldn't lose [to China] in terms of military strength".⁶² Ichiro Ozawa is now the secretary of general of current DPJ government in Japan.

South Korea and Taiwan's Nuclear Option

In a 2006 study on Nuclear U-Turns and why some countries such as South Korea (Republic of Korea, or ROK) and Taiwan roll back their nuclear weapons programmes, credibility of U.S. security umbrella was also the key deterrent.⁶³

The 1954 U.S.-ROK Mutual Defence Treaty extend U.S. nuclear umbrella to ROK. But the 1969 Nixon Doctrine (Guam Doctrine) emphasising increased role of self-defence in Asian allies shook ROK confidence and triggered interest in developing nuclear weapons.⁶⁴ In 1970 U.S. withdrew 24,000 troops from ROK, followed by the 1972 Détente with China. In 1972, U.S. signed the *Shanghai Communique* that marginalised Taiwan, and Seoul's perceived weakening of U.S. commitment to Taiwan spurred ROK to seek self-defence in nuclear weapons.⁶⁵ By summer 1975, statements by various Korean officials hinted ROK could develop nuclear weapons if U.S. removed its nuclear umbrella. Thus the strength of U.S. commitment and security guarantee is a strong deterrent for ROK to pursue the nuclear path.

Similarly in Taiwan, the 1964 Chinese nuclear test shocked them and the government embarked on a secret nuclear programme by 1967. The programme was called "Hsin Chu" after the city of its first nuclear research experiment. Taiwan, like ROK, feared U.S.-China Détente in 1972 that it viewed as undermining U.S. commitment to Taiwan. By 1974 CIA was alerted to Taiwan's clandestine programme and rolled it back.⁶⁶ When the U.S. derecognised Taiwan and switched to Beijing in 1979, and Carter unilaterally terminated the 1955 Sino-American Mutual Defence Treaty by replacing it with the Taiwan Relations Act (which is not a defence treaty), Taiwan felt even more vulnerable. In 2000, the incoming Chen Shui-Bian administration, facing heightened cross-strait tensions, formed a secret exploratory committee on feasibility of building nuclear weapons.⁶⁷ With current cross-strait

⁶² "Japan can be a nuclear power: Ozawa", *Japan Times Online*, 7 April 2002; Christopher Hughes, *Japan's Remilitarisation* IISS Adelphi Papers, (Routledge, 2009), p.106.

⁶³ Rebecca K. C. Hersman and Robert Peters, "Nuclear U-Turns: Learning from South Korean and Taiwanese Rollback", *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 13, No 3, November 2006.

⁶⁴ Statement of President Nixon, July 25, 1969 in Guam. For further discussion on ROK rollback, see Joseph A Yager, "Nuclear Supplies and the Policies of South Korea and Taiwan toward nuclear weapons", in Rodney W Jones, Cesare Merlini, Joseph F Pilat, William C Potter eds, *The Nuclear Suppliers and Nonproliferation: International Policy Choices* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1985).

⁶⁵ Peter Hayes, "The Republic of Korea and the Nuclear Issue," in Andrew Mack, ed, *Asian Flashpoint: Security and the Korean Peninsula* (Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1993); Jonathan D. Pollack & Mitchell B. Reiss, "South Korea: The Tyranny of Geography and the Vexation of History" in Kurt Campbell *et al* eds., *Nuclear Tipping Point*, p.261.

⁶⁶ Derek Mitchell, "Taiwan's Hsin Chu Program: Deterrence, Abandonment, and Honor," in Kurt Campbell *et al* eds., *Nuclear Tipping Point*, p.295.

⁶⁷ PR Newswire, "Catalytic Diplomacy Revealed—Russia, China, North Korea and Iran", 5 October 2009.

rapprochement under the new Ma administration and reduced U.S.-Taiwan tension as a result, it remains to be seen whether a nuclear weapons programme remains in the “feasibility mode” and not cross over the tipping point.

Conclusion – Strengthen U.S. Security Guarantee and NPT Regime

China-Russia-Iran energy axis in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is blocking international efforts to resolve Iran-DPRK nuclear issues. The erosion of the NPT regime combined with decreased confidence in U.S. security guarantee is brewing a storm for cascades of nuclear proliferation in Middle East and East Asia. As such, U.S. nuclear security guarantee and NPT regime need to be strengthened, as they are gatekeepers at the nuclear tipping point. Despite Obama administrations’ call for Nuclear Zero, so long as Iran and DPRK exist in its current form, roll back to a nuclear free world is very slim. According to Bruno Tertrais in the November 2009 issue of *The World Today*, the call for nuclear disarmament is decreasing credibility of U.S. security umbrella that will trigger cascades of nuclear proliferation.⁶⁸ The call for disarmament will not affect countries like DPRK and Iran, which are international pariahs. Additionally, he argues that countries seeking nuclear weapons perceive both conventional as well as nuclear threats (e.g., Japan fear China’s military build up). Moreover, U.S., France, and UK would have a hard time maintaining a credible NATO nuclear umbrella if they take irreversible steps towards Zero, especially when NATO’s new strategic doctrine is stepping up ties with GCC in its Gulf Strategy to ally regional fears of Iran.

In East Asia, U.S. needs to project its security commitments and reaffirm its regional alliances with Japan, ROK, Australia, Thailand, Philippines, and cooperation with Taiwan and Singapore. The U.S.-Japan Alliance needs special attention during this critical time, as it is the pillar of Asian regional security. The geo-strategic location of Okinawa allows for rapid deployment to contingencies in Japan, Taiwan Straits, and the Korean Peninsula, which would be more difficult logistically were U.S. troops moved further away to Guam.

In the Middle East, NATO needs to continue strengthening ties with GCC, and U.S. needs to strengthen relations with moderate Arab states. Additionally, U.S. needs to reassure Israel. If it feels abandoned by the U.S. in face of an existential threat, this may force the hand of their Samson Option of unleashing nuclear weapons. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel assembled 13 nuclear weapons when Golda Meir thought the country was completely overrun.

On disarmament and ‘reset’ button with Russia, U.S. and NATO need to exercise caution, as Russia’s pattern of behaviour does not match its proclamations of peaceful intentions. Over the past years, the world has witnessed increasing Russian aggression:

- Russia target Czech Republic and Poland with nuclear missiles in 2007
- Resume bomber flights along NATO’s northern borders
- August 2008 invasion of Georgia August 2009 resume ‘Zapad’ (West) exercises which it used to simulate attack on NATO during the Cold War⁶⁹
- Soft wars of gas cut-offs and cyber attack

⁶⁸ Bruno Tertrais, “In their Hands”, *The World Today*, Vol 65, No 11, November 2009.

⁶⁹ Bruce Jones, “Russia to launch largest military manoeuvres since Cold War”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 24 August 2009; Thomas Valasek, “NATO, Russia and European Security”, Centre for European Reform Working Paper, November 2009.

Given its increasing footprint in the Middle East, some scholars argue that Russia would benefit from an Israeli/U.S. strike on Iran. Iran is a lucrative export market for Russian arms and nuclear technologies, as well as a foothold in the Middle East. An Israeli-Iranian military crisis would spike oil prices and Russia would gain from the oil windfall as a major energy exporter.⁷⁰

However, Israel is less sanguine than the Sino-Russian axis on a nuclear Iran, as it views it as an existential threat. A January 2010 article from *The Economist* encapsulates this view, describing how Netanyahu sees his role as similar to Winston Churchill during the Battle of Britain. He recalled Churchill's efforts to awaken the world to the danger of Nazi Germany, and in 2006 he said, "It's 1938 and Iran is Germany".⁷¹ Whether Bibi sees himself as Churchill in the Battle of Britain fighting alone against Hitler, and desperately trying to rally America into the war, the article argues that it is imperative the international community come together to apply a crushing embargo on the current regime. As the article concludes, it may be a harsh view, but for Israel the alternatives are worse.

Remarks:

Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.



Dr. Christina Y. Lin

Dr. Christina Y. Lin is a Washington, D.C.-based energy security consultant and former director for China affairs in policy planning at the U.S. Department of Defense.

⁷⁰ James Phillips, "An Israeli Preventive Attack on Iran's Nuclear Sites: Implications for the U.S.," *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, No. 2361, 15 January 2010, p.5.

⁷¹ "The gathering storm", *The Economist*, 7 January 2010.