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Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses

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Summary

A priority of U.S. policy has been to reduce the perceived threat posed by Iran to a broad range of U.S. interests. Before the issue of Iran's uranium enrichment program emerged in 2002, U.S. officials had consistently identified Iran's support for militant Middle East groups as a significant threat to U.S. interests and allies. The Obama Administration has orchestrated broad international economic pressure on Iran to try to compel it to verifiably demonstrate to the international community that its nuclear program is for purely peaceful purposes. That pressure harmed Iran's economy and might have contributed to the June 2013 election of the relatively moderate Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran, who campaigned as an advocate of ending Iran's international isolation. Subsequent multilateral talks with Iran produced an interim agreement ("Joint Plan of Action," JPA) that halts the expansion of Iran's nuclear program in exchange for modest sanctions relief. It runs from January 20–July 20, 2014, but can be extended for an additional six months. Talks on a "comprehensive solution" on Iran's nuclear program began on February 20, 2014, and the fourth high-level round ended on June 20, 2014, with the parties reportedly still far apart on the core issue of the size and scope of Iran's program to enrich uranium. The talks are to resume on July 2 and run continuously until the expiration of the JPA on July 20.

Rouhani's presidency also has improved prospects for an end to the 34 years of U.S.-Iran estrangement. On September 27, 2013, at the end of Rouhani's visit to the U.N. General Assembly meetings in New York, President Obama and Rouhani spoke by phone—the first leadership level contacts since the 1979 Islamic revolution. The JPA and further nuclear talks have eased tensions somewhat between Iran and its neighbors in the Persian Gulf region, who are all allies of the United States. However, the Gulf states, Israel, and other regional states express concern that Iran's re-integration into the region and the international community will give Iran additional political and economic resources to support pro-Iranian movements and regimes in the region. State Department reports on international terrorism, including the latest one for 2013, assert that Iran continues to provide funds and arms to a wide range of movements, including Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, the embattled government of Bashar Al Assad of Syria, Iraqi Shiite militias, and rebels in Yemen and Bahrain.

President Obama has maintained—both before and after the JPA was signed—that the option of U.S. military action against Iran's nuclear facilities remains open. However, further U.S.—or Israeli—discussion of military options against Iran is unlikely unless the JPA collapses or fails to translate into a comprehensive nuclear settlement. In line with a provision of the JPA that no new sanctions be imposed on Iran during the JPA period, the Administration has threatened to veto bills, including S. 1881, that would add sanctions on Iran—whether or not their provisions would take effect only after the JPA expires.

Rouhani's unexpected election win—a result of a large turnout of reform-minded voters such as those who protested the 2009 election results—appeared to demonstrate that support for domestic reform remains strong. Iran's judiciary remains in the hands of hardliners who continue to restrict social freedoms. However, some political prisoners have been released and some media restrictions have been eased since Rouhani took office. For further information, see CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*, by Kenneth Katzman; and CRS Report R43333, *Interim Agreement on Iran's Nuclear Program*, by Kenneth Katzman and Paul K. Kerr.

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Political History

Iran is a country of about 75 million people, located in the heart of the Persian Gulf region. The United States was an ally of the late Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (“the Shah”), who ruled from 1941 until his ouster in February 1979. The Shah assumed the throne when Britain and Russia forced his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi (Reza Shah), from power because of his perceived alignment with Germany in World War II. Reza Shah had assumed power in 1921 when, as an officer in Iran’s only military force, the Cossack Brigade (reflecting Russian influence in Iran in the early 20th century), he launched a coup against the government of the Qajar Dynasty. Reza Shah was proclaimed Shah in 1925, founding the Pahlavi dynasty. The Qajars had been in decline for many years before Reza Shah’s takeover. That dynasty’s perceived manipulation by Britain and Russia had been one of the causes of the 1906 constitutionalist movement, which forced the Qajars to form Iran’s first Majles (parliament) in August 1906 and promulgate a constitution in December 1906. Prior to the Qajars, what is now Iran was the center of several Persian empires and dynasties whose reach shrunk steadily over time. Since the 16th century, Iranian empires lost control of Bahrain (1521), Baghdad (1638), the Caucasus (1828), western Afghanistan (1857), Baluchistan (1872), and what is now Turkmenistan (1894). Iran adopted Shiite Islam under the Safavid Dynasty (1500-1722), which ended a series of Turkic and Mongol conquests.

The Shah was anti-Communist, and the United States viewed his government as a bulwark against the expansion of Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf and a counterweight to pro-Soviet Arab regimes and movements. Israel maintained a representative office in Iran during the Shah’s time and the Shah supported a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute. In 1951, under pressure from nationalists in the Majles (parliament) who gained strength in the 1949 Majles elections, he appointed a popular nationalist parliamentarian, Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq, as prime minister. Mossadeq was widely considered left-leaning, and the United States was wary of his drive for nationalization of the oil industry, which had since 1913 been controlled by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. His followers began an uprising in August 1953 when the Shah tried to dismiss him, and the Shah fled. The Shah was restored in a CIA-supported uprising that toppled Mossadeq (“Operation Ajax”) on August 19, 1953.

The Shah tried to modernize Iran and orient it toward the West, but in so doing he alienated religious Iranians and the Shiite clergy and he allegedly tolerated severe repression and torture of dissidents by his SAVAK intelligence service. The Shah exiled Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1964 because of Khomeini’s active opposition based on the Shah’s anti-clerical policies and what Khomeini alleged was the Shah’s forfeiture of Iran’s sovereignty to the United States. Khomeini fled to and taught in Najaf, Iraq, a major Shiite theological center that contains the Shrine of Imam Ali, Shiism’s foremost figure. There, he was a peer of senior Iraqi Shiite clerics and, with them, advocated direct clerical rule or *velayat-e-faqih* (rule by a supreme Islamic jurisprudent). In 1978, three years after the March 6, 1975, Algiers Accords between the Shah and Iraq’s Baathist leaders, which settled territorial disputes and required each party to stop assisting each other’s oppositionists, Iraq expelled Khomeini to France, from which he stoked the Islamic revolution. Mass demonstrations and guerrilla activity by pro-Khomeini forces, allied with a broad array of anti-Shah activists, caused the Shah’s government to collapse in February 1979. Khomeini returned from France on February 1, 1979 and, on February 11, 1979, he declared an Islamic Republic of Iran. The concept of *velayat-e-faqih* was enshrined in the constitution that was adopted in a public referendum in December 1979 (and amended in 1989); it provided for the post of Supreme Leader. The regime based itself on strong opposition to foreign, particularly Western, influence, and relations between the United States and the Islamic Republic turned

openly hostile after the November 4, 1979, seizure of the U.S. Embassy by pro-Khomeini radicals. Ayatollah Khomeini died on June 3, 1989, and was succeeded as Supreme Leader by Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i.

The regime faced serious unrest in its first few years, including a June 1981 bombing at the headquarters of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP) and the prime minister's office that killed several senior leaders, including Khomeini confidant Mohammad Hossein Beheshti. These events, along with the hostage crisis with the United States, provided cover for the regime to purge many of the secular, liberal, and left-wing personalities and parties in the anti-Shah coalition. Examples included the Tudeh Party (Communist), the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI, see below), the first elected President Abolhassan Bani Sadr, and the Iran Freedom Movement of the regime's first Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan (a movement later led by Ibrahim Yazdi, who has been in and out of prison for two decades). The regime was under economic and military threat during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, which resulted at times in nearly halting Iran's oil exports. Despite these struggles, there has still been substantial diversity of opinion in ruling circles and, prior to 2009, the regime faced only episodic unrest from minorities, intellectuals, students, labor groups, and women.

Regime Structure, Stability, and Opposition

Iran's Islamic regime, established in a constitution adopted in an October 1979 public referendum, is widely considered authoritarian, although it provides for elected institutions and checks and balances. A Supreme Leader is not directly elected by the population, but he is selected by an elected body. The President and the Majles (unicameral parliament) are directly elected. There are also elections for municipal councils, which select mayors. Even within the unelected institutions, factional disputes between those who insist on ideological purity and those considered more pragmatic have been frequent and highly consequential. See **Figure 1** for a chart of the Iranian regime.

Unelected or Indirectly Elected Institutions: The Supreme Leader, Council of Guardians, and Expediency Council

At the apex of the Islamic Republic's power structure is a "Supreme Leader" who has vast formal powers and no term limits. He is chosen by an elected body—the Assembly of Experts—which also has the constitutional power to remove him. Upon Ayatollah Khomeini's death, the Assembly selected one of his disciples, Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, as Supreme Leader.¹ Although he has never had Khomeini's undisputed political or religious authority, the powers of the office enable Khamene'i to ensure that he is Iran's paramount leader. Under the constitution, the Supreme Leader is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, giving him the power to appoint commanders. He is well-represented on the highest national security body, the *Supreme National Security Council*, composed of top military and civilian security officials. The constitution gives the Supreme Leader the power to approve the removal of an elected president if either the judiciary or the *Majles* (parliament) decide there is cause for that removal. The Supreme Leader

¹ At the time of his selection as Supreme Leader, Khamene'i was generally referred to at the rank of Hojjat ol-Islam, one rank below Ayatollah, suggesting his religious elevation was political rather than through traditional mechanisms.

appoints half of the 12-member *Council of Guardians*; all members of the *Expediency Council*, and the head of Iran's judiciary (currently Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani).

Table I. Supreme Leader: Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i

Born in July 1939 to an Azeri (Turkic) family from Mashhad. Was jailed by the Shah of Iran for supporting Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution. After the regime took power in 1979, helped organize Revolutionary Guard and other security organs. Lost use of right arm in assassination attempt in June 1981. Was elected president during 1981-1989 and was selected Khomeini's successor in June 1989 upon his death. Upon that selection, Khamene'i religious ranking was advanced in official organs to "Grand Ayatollah" from the lower ranking "Hojjat ol-Islam." But, still lacks the undisputed authority to end factional disputes or the public adoration Khomeini had. Has taken more of a day-to-day role since 2009 uprising, including in the nuclear negotiations issue. Sided decisively with hardline opponents of then president Ahmadinejad after mid-2011, but acquiesced to the election of the relatively moderate Rouhani. Khamene'i publicly supported the JPA but has expressed skepticism that a permanent nuclear settlement can be reached. Reputedly issued religious proclamation (2003) against Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon, and has publicly (2012) called doing so a "sin," and is widely believed to fear direct military confrontation with United States on Iranian soil. Generally does not meet with Western officials and is suspicious of relations with the West as potentially making Iran vulnerable to Western cultural influence, spying, and possible regime destabilization efforts.

Throughout career, has consistently taken hard-line stances on regional issues, particularly toward Israel, often calling it a cancerous tumor that needs to be excised from the region. In March 2014, publicly questioned whether the Holocaust occurred—an issue highlighted by former president Ahmadinejad.

Fully backs efforts by Revolutionary Guard and other Iranian organs to support pro-Iranian movements and governments, including that of Syria. On economic issues, he has tended to support the business community (bazaaris), and opposed state control of the economy, but believes Iran's economy is self-sufficient enough to withstand the effects of international sanctions.

His office is run by Mohammad Mohammadi Golpayegani, with significant input from Khamene'i's second and increasingly influential son, Mojtaba. Also advised by *Keyhan* editor Hossein Shariatmadari and former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati.

Potential successors include Expediency Council Chairman Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, hardline Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, Council of Guardians head Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, Judiciary head Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani, and frequent Tehran Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Ahmad Khatemi. None is considered a clear consensus choice if Khamene'i leaves the scene unexpectedly.

Source: CRS.

Council of Guardians and Expediency Council

The 12-member Council of Guardians (COG) consists of six Islamic jurists appointed by the Supreme Leader, and six secular lawyers elected by the judiciary and confirmed by the *Majles*. Currently headed by Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, the conservative-controlled body reviews legislation to ensure it conforms to Islamic law. It also vets election candidates by evaluating their backgrounds according to constitutional requirements that a candidate demonstrate knowledge of Islam, loyalty to the Islamic system of government, and other criteria that are largely subjective. The COG also certifies election results.

The 42-member "Expediency Council" was established in 1988 to resolve legislative disagreements between the *Majles* and the COG. It has since evolved into a policy advisory body for the Supreme Leader and an overseer of the performance of the president and his cabinet. Its members serve five-year terms; its chairman, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, was reappointed in February 2007 and again in March 2012. The latest reappointment was widely interpreted as a Khamene'i effort to keep Rafsanjani loyal to the regime following his March 2011 removal as head of the Assembly of Experts (see below). As noted below, Rafsanjani was not permitted by

the COG to run for president again in 2013. The Expediency Council's executive officer is former Revolutionary Guard commander-in-chief Mohsen Reza'i.

Table 2. Major Factions, Personalities, and Interest Groups

Conservatives	
Supreme Leader Ali Khamene'i	See box above.
President Hassan Rouhani	See box below.
Expediency Council Chair Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani	<p>Born in 1944, a longtime key regime strategist, Khomeini disciple, and advocate of "grand bargain" to resolve all outstanding issues with United States. Was Majles speaker during 1981-1989 and president 1989-1997. Family owns large share of Iran's total pistachio production. Ouster as Assembly of Experts chairman in 2011 widely attributed to his tacit support of popular opposition to Ahmadinejad 2009 reelection. That perception undoubtedly contributed to COG denying his candidacy in 2013 presidential elections, even though Khamene'i had reappointed him Expediency Council chair in March 2012. Victory of close ally Rouhani in the 2013 election has revived Rafsanjani's influence. Rafsanjani remains a widely mentioned candidate to succeed Khamene'i should he leave the scene unexpectedly.</p> <p>The political activities of Rafsanjani's children have contributed to his poor relations with Khamene'i. His daughter Faizah participated in several 2009 protests, was detained briefly in February 2011 for protesting, and was jailed in September 2012 for opposition activities. She was moved to solitary confinement in early 2013. Five Rafsanjani family members arrested in June 2009 (and another briefly detained in March 2010), and his son, Mehdi, was released on bail in December 2012.</p>
Ex- President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	<p>Served as President during 2005-2013. First non-cleric to serve as president of the Islamic republic since the assassination of then-president Mohammad Ali Rajai in August 1981. During his term, he asserted it is his mission is to prepare for the return of the 12th Imam from occultation that would, according to Twelver Shiite doctrine, be accompanied by the establishment of Islam as the global religion. Attracted significant criticism for comments questioning the Holocaust and calling for Israel's destruction. During his second term, he was largely sidelined by Khamene'i. Perhaps to prevent his criticizing the regime after leaving office, he was permitted to start a new university and was appointed to the Expediency Council.</p>
Majles Speaker Ali Larijani/Larijani brothers	<p>Ali Larijani has been Majles Speaker since 2008 but did not run again for president in the 2013 election after losing in 2005. Was state broadcasting head (1994-2004), minister of culture and Islamic guidance (1993), and head of Supreme National Security Council and chief nuclear negotiator (2005—2007). Considered amenable to a nuclear deal with the international community. Politically close to Khamene'i and was a leading antagonist of Ahmadinejad. One brother (Sadeq) is judiciary head; another (Mohammad Javad), was deputy foreign minister (1980s) and now heads a government human rights body. His predecessor as Majles Speaker is Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, whose daughter is married to Khamene'i's son, Mojtaba, and who ran unsuccessfully for president in June 2013.</p>
Senior Shiite Clerics	<p>The most senior clerics, most of whom are in Qom, including several Grand Ayatollahs, are generally "quietist"—they believe that the senior clergy should refrain from direct involvement in politics. These include Grand Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi, Grand Ayatollah Abdol Karim Musavi-Ardabili, and Grand Ayatollah Yusuf Sanei, all of whom have criticized the regime's crackdown against oppositionists. Others believe in political involvement, including Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, the founder of the hardline Haqqani school and spiritual mentor to Ahmadinejad until breaking with him in 2011. Yazdi is an</p>

	<p>assertive defender of the powers of the Supreme Leader and a proponent of an “Islamic state” rather than the current “Islamic republic,” but fared poorly in December 2006 elections for Assembly of Experts. Other hardline clerics include Ayatollah Kazem Haeri, mentor of Iraqi cleric and faction leader Moqtada Al Sadr; and Ahmad Khatemi, frequently Friday prayer leader at Tehran University and a senior Assembly of Experts member. Some of these figures could be candidates for Supreme Leader should Khamene’i leave the scene.</p>
Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani	<p>Judiciary head since August 2009. Like his brother, Majles Speaker Ali Larijani, Sadeq Larijani is close to the Supreme Leader and a hard liner against dissidents.</p>
Society of Militant Clerics	<p>Longtime organization of hardline clerics headed by Ayatollah Mohammad Mahdavi-Kani, who became chair of the Assembly of Experts on March 9, 2011. Did not back Ahmadinejad for reelection in 2009 and led a bloc opposing Ahmadinejad in the March 2, 2012, <i>Majles</i> elections. President Rouhani is a member of this group.</p>
Bazaar Merchants (“Bazaaris”)	<p>The urban bazaar merchants fear jeopardizing the economy by participating in political opposition activity. Have conducted few strikes or other organized action since the 1979 revolution. Each city’s bazaars are organized by industry (e.g., carpets, gold, jewelry, clothing) and bazaari leadership positions are chosen by consensus among elders of each industry represented in the bazaar.</p>

Opposition/“Green Movement” (Rah-e-Sabz)

All of the blocs and personalities below can be considered, to varying degrees, part of the Green Movement or as critics of Iran’s political system.

<p>Titular Green Movement Leaders: Mir Hossein Musavi/ Mohammad Khatemi/Mehdi Karrubi and Other Reformists</p>	<p>The titular leader of the Green movement, Mir Hossein Musavi, a non-cleric, is about 70. An architect by training, and a disciple of Ayatollah Khomeini, he served as foreign minister (1980), then prime minister (1981-1989), at which time he successfully managed the state rationing program during the privations of the Iran-Iraq War but often feuded with Khamene’i, who was then president. At that time, he was an advocate of state control of the economy. His post was abolished in the 1989 revision of the constitution.</p> <p>Musavi supports political and social freedoms and reducing Iran’s international isolation, but supports strong state intervention in the economy to benefit workers and lower classes. Appeared at some 2009 protests, sometimes intercepted or constrained by regime security agents. However, he is not respected by harder line opposition leaders who criticized his statements welcoming reconciliation with the regime. He and his wife (prominent activist Zahra Rahnevard), along with fellow Green Movement leader and defeated 2009 presidential candidate Mehdi Karrubi, were placed in detention in mid-2011. In early 2014, Karrubi was allowed to return to his home, although still under the control of regime guards. Musavi remains in detention. Karrubi was Speaker of the Majles during 1989-1992 and 2000-2004.</p> <p>Mohammad Khatemi was elected president on a reformist platform in May 1997, with 69% of the vote; reelected June 2001 with 77%. Rode wave of sentiment for easing social and political restrictions, but these groups became disillusioned with Khatemi’s failure as president to buck hardliners on reform issues. He declined to run again for president in 2009, instead supporting Musavi, or in 2013. Says he has not been allowed outside Iran since 2009 because of his reformist/Green Movement links.</p>
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Student Groups	Groups composed of well-educated, Westernized urban youth are the backbone of the Green Movement. They have attempted, with mixed success, to gain support of older generation, labor, clerics, village-dwellers, and other segments. The Office of Consolidation of Unity is the student group that led the 1999 riots but which later became controlled by regime loyalists. An offshoot, the Confederation of Iranian Students (CIS), believes in regime replacement and in U.S.-style free markets. CIS founder, Amir Abbas Fakhrafar, is based in Washington, DC. Co-founder, Arzhang Davoodi, remains in prison in Iran serving a lifetime prison sentence.
Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF)	The most prominent and best organized pro-reform grouping, but has lost political ground to Green Movement groups advocating outright overthrow of the regime. Its leaders include Khatemi's brother, Mohammad Reza Khatemi (a deputy speaker in the 2000-2004 Majles) and Mohsen Mirdamadi. Backed Musavi in June 2009 election; several IIPF leaders detained and prosecuted in postelection dispute. The party was outlawed by the regime in September 2010.
Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization (MIR)	Composed mainly of left-leaning Iranian figures who support state control of the economy, but want greater political pluralism and relaxation of rules on social behavior. A major constituency of the reformist camp. Its leader is former Heavy Industries Minister Behzad Nabavi, who supported Musavi in 2009 election and has been incarcerated for most of the time since June 2009. The organization was outlawed by the regime simultaneously with the outlawing of the IIPF, above.
Combatant Clerics Association	Very similar name to organization above, but politically very different. Formed in 1988, it is run by reformist, not hardline, clerics and officials. Leading figures include Mohammad Khatemi, former Interior Minister Ali Akbar Mohtashemi-Pur, and former Prosecutor General Ali Asgar Musavi-Koiniha.
Labor Unions	Organized labor has suffered from official repression for many years. It was not at the core of the 2009 uprising, but many laborers have openly demanded political change. Some laborers want political change but fear income disruption if they openly defy the regime. Some labor protests took place in Tehran on "May Day" 2010, and other small strikes (truckers, some factories) have taken place since. A bus drivers' union leader, Mansur Osanloo, was jail from 2007 until 2011.
Other Prominent Dissidents	Other leading dissidents, some in Iran, others in exile (including in the United States), have been challenging the regime since well before the Green Movement formed and are now significant opposition figures. Journalist Akbar Ganji conducted hunger strikes to protest regime oppression; he was released on schedule on March 18, 2006, after sentencing in 2001 to six years in prison for alleging high-level involvement in 1999 murders of Iranian dissident intellectuals. Abdol Karim Soroush, now exiled, has challenged the doctrine of clerical rule. Former Revolutionary Guard organizer Mohsen Sazegara is based in the United States, but his role in the IRGC likely discredits him in the eyes of dissidents who want regime replacement. Other significant dissidents include former Culture Minister Ataollah Mohajerani, Mohsen Kadivar, and U.S.-based Fatemah Haghighatgoo. Some well-known dissidents incarcerated since 2010 include filmmaker Jafar Panahi; journalist Abdolreza Tajik; famed blogger Hossein Derakshan (serving a 20-year prison sentence); and human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh. Sotoudeh was released in September 2013, as discussed below. 80-year-old Iran Freedom Movement leader Ibrahim Yazdi was released from prison in April 2011 after resigning as the Freedom Movement's leader. One major dissident figure is Nobel Peace Prize laureate (2003) and Iran human rights activist lawyer Shirin Abadi. She has often represented clients persecuted or prosecuted by the regime but she left Iran for Europe, fearing arrest. In December 2009, the regime confiscated her Nobel Prize.
Monarchists	Some Iranians outside Iran, including in the United States, want to replace the regime with a constitutional monarchy led by Reza Pahlavi, the U.S.-based son of the late former Shah and a U.S.-trained combat pilot. The Shah's son, who is

	<p>about 60 years old, has delivered statements condemning the regime for the post-2009 election crackdown and he has called for international governments to withdraw their representation from Tehran. He appears periodically in broadcasts into Iran by Iranian exile-run stations in California,² as well as in other Iran-oriented media.</p>
	<p>Pahlavi has always had some support particularly in the older generation in Iran, but he reportedly is trying to broaden his following by asserting that he supports democracy and not restoration of a monarchy. Since March 2011, he has been increasingly cooperating with—and possibly attempting to co-opt—younger leaders in a “National Council of Iran” (NCI). He and over 30 opposition groups formally established the Council at a conference in Paris in April 2013, and it drafted a set of democratic principles for a post-Islamic republic Iran. However, several groups have left the NCI, asserting that Pahlavi sought inordinate control over its decisions, and formed a rival group called the “National Iran Congress.”</p>
<p>Leftist Groups</p>	<p>Many oppositionists who support left-wing ideologies support the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), which is discussed in a text box at the end of this report.</p>
<p>Sunni Armed Opposition: Jundullah</p>	<p><i>Jundullah</i> is composed of Sunni Muslims primarily from the Baluchistan region bordering Pakistan. The region is inhabited by members of the Baluch minority and is far less developed than other parts of Iran. On the grounds that <i>Jundullah</i> has attacked civilians in the course of violent attacks in Iran, the State Department formally named it an FTO on November 4, 2010. Some saw the designation as an overture toward the Iranian government, while others saw it as a sign that the United States supports only opposition groups that are committed to peaceful methods. <i>Jundullah</i> has conducted several attacks on Iranian security and civilian officials, including a May 2009 bombing of a mosque in Zahedan and the October 2009 killing of five IRGC commanders in Sistan va Baluchistan Province. The regime claimed a major victory against the group in February 2010 with the capture of the group’s top leader, Abdolmalek Rigi. The regime executed him in June 2010, but the group retaliated in July 2010 with a Zahedan bombing that killed 28 persons, including some IRGC personnel. The group is believed responsible for a December 15, 2010, bombing at a mosque in Chahbahar, also in Baluchistan, that killed 38.</p>
<p>Kurdish Armed Groups: Free Life Party (PJAK)</p>	<p>An armed Kurdish group operating out of Iraq is the Free Life Party, known by its acronym PJAK. Its leader is believed to be Abdul Rahman Hajji Ahmadi, born in 1941, who is a citizen of Germany and lives in that country. Many PJAK members are women, supporting the organization’s dedication to women’s rights. PJAK was designated by the Treasury Department in early February 2009 as a terrorism supporting entity under Executive Order 13224, although the designation statement indicated the decision was based mainly on PJAK’s association with the Turkish Kurdish opposition group Kongra Gel, also known as the PKK. Five Kurds executed by Iran’s regime in May 2010 were alleged members of PJAK.</p> <p>In June 2010 and July 2011, Iran conducted some shelling of reputed PJAK bases inside Iraq, reportedly killing some Kurdish civilians. Some reports indicate that that PJAK may have reached a ceasefire agreement with the Iranian regime in early 2012.</p>
<p>Arab Oppositionists/Ahwazi Arabs</p>	<p>Another militant group, the <i>Ahwazi Arabs</i>, operates in the largely Arab-inhabited areas of southwest Iran, bordering Iraq. It has been relatively inactive over the past few years.</p>

² Ron Kampeas, “Iran’s Crown Prince Plots Nonviolent Insurrection from Suburban Washington,” *Associated Press*, August 26, 2002.

U.S.-Based Opposition and Advocacy-Groups

Of the more than 1 million Iranian-Americans of differing ideologies, a vast majority want to see a change of regime in Tehran, although many Iranian-Americans are not active on Iran policy issues. Many still have families living in Iran and appear concerned that high-profile activity in the United States will jeopardize them. As many as half of all Iranian Americans are based in the Los Angeles area, and some of them who are politically active in Iranian issues run at least two dozen small-scale radio or television stations that broadcast into Iran.

National Iranian-American Council (NIAC)

NIAC is an advocacy group that does not seek regime change in Iran. The stated mission of NIAC is to promote discussion of U.S. policy. The group advocates engagement with Iran, supports easing some U.S. sanctions against Iran and has asserted that the Administration is actively planning to take military action against Iran. These positions have led some experts and commentators to allege, although without providing evidence, that it is a front for the Iranian regime. NIAC has criticized the regime's human rights abuses.

Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian-Americans (PAAIA)

PAAIA's mission is to discuss issues affecting Iranian Americans, such as discrimination caused by public perceptions of association with terrorism or radical Islam. Some observers believe it has become less active since 2011 because of desertions by some members who want PAAIA be more active in trying to shape U.S. Iran policy and to take a stronger stand against Tehran.

Elected Institutions: The Presidency, the Majles (Parliament), the Assembly of Experts, and Recent Elections

Several major institutions are directly elected by the population. However, international organizations and governments have often questioned the credibility of Iran's elections because of the COG's role in limiting the number and ideological diversity of candidates. Women can vote and run for most offices, but no woman has ever been approved by the COG to run for President. Presidential candidates must receive more than 50% of the vote to avoid a runoff against the next highest vote-getter.

Another criticism of the political process in Iran is the relative absence of political parties; establishing a party requires the permission of the Interior Ministry under Article 10 of Iran's constitution. The standards to obtain approval are high: to date, numerous parties have filed for permission since the regime was founded, but only those considered loyal to the regime have been granted (or allowed to retain) license to operate. Some have been licensed and then banned, such as the two reformist parties Islamic Iran Participation Front and Organization of Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution, which were formally outlawed in September 2010.

The Presidency

The main directly elected institution is the presidency, which is clearly subordinate to—but often institutionally feuds with—the Supreme Leader. Each president has tried, and failed, to expand his authority relative to the Supreme Leader. Presidential authority, particularly on matters of national security, is often countermanded by key clerics and allies of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and other powerful institutions. Presidential authority on economic and social issues tends to be more substantial. And, the presidency provides vast opportunities for the holder of the post to empower his political base and to affect policy, particularly on economic issues. The president appoints and supervises the work of the cabinet, but the Supreme Leader is believed to have significant input into security-related cabinet appointments.

As the top governing official, the presidency develops the budgets of cabinet departments and imposes and collects taxes on corporations and other bodies. The presidency also runs oversight bodies such as the Anticorruption Headquarters and the General Inspection Organization. All government officials are required to submit annual financial statements to state auditors, but there is no confirmation that such procedures are followed. Religious foundations, called “bonyads,” for example, are loosely regulated. Through profits earned from its affiliate companies, the IRGC is widely known to spend funds additional unbudgeted funds on arms, technology, support to pro-Iranian movements, and other functions.

Prior to 1989, Iran had both an elected president as well as a prime minister selected by the elected Majles (parliament). However, the officials who held these posts during 1981-1989 (Ali Khamene’i, who is now Supreme Leader, and Mir Hossein Musavi) were in constant institutional conflict and a 1989 constitutional revision eliminated the prime ministership. Because Iran’s presidents have sought to assert the powers of their institution, in October 2011, Khamene’i raised the possibility of eliminating the post of president and restoring the post of prime minister, which would be selected by the elected *Majles*. The prime minister would not be directly elected by the population and would presumably not seek to assert powers independent of the Supreme Leader. No further action on the concept has been evident since.

The Majles

Iran’s Majles, or parliament, is unicameral, consisting of 290 seats, all elected. There are “reserved seats” (one each) for members of Iran’s recognized religious minorities, including Jews and Christians. It confirms cabinet selections and drafts and acts on legislation. Among its main duties is to consider and enact a proposed national budget; that review typically takes place each February and March in advance of the Persian New Year (Nowruz) each March 21. It is far from the “rubber stamp” that characterizes many elected assemblies in the region, but it has tended to defer to the presidency. The Majles has always been highly factionalized.

There is no “quota” for the number of women to be elected, but women regularly run and win election, although their representation has always been small relative to the female population. Majles elections occur one year prior to the presidential elections; the elections for the ninth Majles were held on March 2, 2012, as discussed below, and the next *Majles* elections will be held in early 2016.

The Assembly of Experts

A major although little publicized elected institution is the *Assembly of Experts*. Akin to an electoral college, it is empowered to choose a new Supreme Leader upon the death of the incumbent, and it formally “oversees” the work of the Supreme Leader. The Assembly can replace him if necessary, although invoking that impeachment power would, in most circumstances, be highly controversial. It is also the body empowered to amend the constitution. The Assembly has 86 seats, elected to an eight-year term, with elections conducted on a provincial basis. It generally meets two times a year, for a few days each. The fourth election for the Assembly was held on December 15, 2006; after that election, Rafsanjani, still a major figure having served two terms as president (1989-1997), was named deputy leader of the Assembly. After the death of the leader of the Assembly (Ayatollah Meshkini), Rafsanjani was selected its head in September 2007. Rafsanjani’s opposition to the crackdown on the 2009 uprising ran him afoul of the Supreme Leader and he was not reelected as chair of the body in March 2011. He was

replaced by aging and infirm compromise candidate Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-Kani. The next Assembly of Experts election is expected by the end of 2014.

Recent Elections and Their Implications

After suffering presidential election defeats at the hands of President Mohammad Khatemi and the reformists in 1997 and 2001, hardliners regained the sway they held when Khomeini was alive. Conservatives won 155 out of the 290 Majles seats in the February 20, 2004, Majles elections, in large part because the COG disallowed 3,600 reformist candidates. The COG narrowed the field for the June 2005 presidential elections to 8 out of the 1,014 persons who filed. The major candidates were Rafsanjani,³ Ali Larijani, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, and Tehran mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. With 21% and 19.5%, respectively, Rafsanjani and Ahmadinejad, who apparently had the tacit backing of Khamene'i, moved to a runoff on June 24. Reformist candidates fared relatively poorly. Ahmadinejad won with 61.8% to Rafsanjani's 35.7%.

During Ahmadinejad's first term, which began in August 2005, splits widened between Ahmadinejad and other conservatives. In the March 2008 Majles elections, some conservatives ran as an anti-Ahmadinejad bloc. Reformists saw this conservative split as an opportunity to unseat Ahmadinejad in the June 12, 2009, presidential election and rallied behind Mir Hossein Musavi, who had been prime minister during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. The COG also allowed the candidacies of Mehdi Karrubi and Mohsen Reza'i (see above).

Musavi's young, urban supporters used social media such as Facebook and Twitter to organize large rallies in Tehran, but pro-Ahmadinejad rallies were large as well. Turnout was about 85%. The Interior Ministry announced two hours after the polls closed that Ahmadinejad had won, although in the past results have been announced the day after. The vote totals, released June 13, showed Ahmadinejad receiving about 25 million votes (63%); Musavi with about 13 million, and under 1 million each for Reza'i and Karrubi. Almost immediately, Musavi supporters began protesting, citing the infeasibility of counting the votes so quickly. Khamene'i declared the results a "divine assessment," appearing to short-cut a three-day complaint period. Demonstrations against alleged fraud built throughout June 13-19, 2009, largely in Tehran but also in other cities. Security forces used varying amounts of force, causing at least 27 protester deaths (opposition groups reported over 100 killed), including a 19-year-old woman, Neda Soltani. As 2009 progressed, the opposition congealed into the "Green Movement of Hope and Change," which later became a significant challenge to the regime. Some outside analysts said the results tracked pre-election polls, which showed strong support for Ahmadinejad in rural and poor urban areas.⁴

As Green Movement-led unrest faded in 2010, Ahmadinejad sought to promote the interests of his loyalists—particularly chief-of-staff, Esfandiar Rahim Mashai, to whom he is related through their children's marriage—and promote a nationalist version of Islam that limits the authority of Iran's clerics. Hardline critics of Ahmadinejad succeeded in enlisting Khamene'i's support, based on his own apparent suspicions about Ahmadinejad's allies' ambitions and ideology. Infighting escalated in April 2011 when the Supreme Leader overrode Ahmadinejad's dismissal of MOIS

³ Rafsanjani was constitutionally permitted to run because a third term would not have been consecutive with his previous two terms. In the 2001 presidential election, the Council permitted 10 out of the 814 registered candidates.

⁴ A paper published by Chatham House and the University of St. Andrews strongly questions how Ahmadinejad's vote could have been as large as reported by official results, in light of past voting patterns throughout Iran. "Preliminary Analysis of the Voting Figures in Iran's 2009 Presidential Election." <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk>.

head (intelligence minister) Heydar Moslehi and Ahmadinejad protested by refusing to attend cabinet meetings from April 24 to May 4, 2011.

Amid the widening rifts, the March 2, 2012, Majles elections attracted only 5,400 candidacies—33% fewer than the previous Majles elections. Only 10% of them were women. The COG issued a final candidate list of 3,400 for the 290 seats up for election. Two blocs of candidates supported strongly by Khamene'i won about 75% of the seats—weakening Ahmadinejad politically.

June 2013 Presidential Election

In January 2013, the Majles enacted an election law for the June 14, 2013, presidential election. The law set up an 11-member independent election body, reducing the election role of the Interior Ministry, which is part of the executive branch. Municipal elections were held concurrently, perhaps in part to improve turnout among voters mobilized by local issues. Candidate registration took place during May 7-11, 2013, and the COG finalized the presidential candidate field on May 22. A runoff was to be held on June 21 if no candidate received more than 50% of the votes. The major candidates who filed included:

- Four figures close to the Supreme Leader—Tehran mayor Qalibaf, former Majles Speaker Haddad Adel, former foreign minister and top Khamene'i foreign policy advisor Ali Akbar Velayati, and Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Seyed Jalilli. The COG approved them to run; Haddad Adel dropped out before the vote.
- Mohsen Reza'i. He was approved, but his constituency had not broadened since the 2009 contest.
- Former chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rouhani, a moderate and a Rafsanjani loyalist.
- Two significant candidates were denied permission to run. Rafsanjani's entry was hailed by reformists and attacked by conservatives because of his support for the 2009 pro-reform protests. The COG disapproval of his candidacy shocked Iranians because of Rafsanjani's prominent place in the history of the regime. Ahmadinejad promoted the candidacy of his close ally, Mashai, but his candidacy was not approved the COG.

Even before the disqualification of Rafsanjani and Mashai, Green Movement supporters were expected to boycott the vote—either out of fear of a crackdown or out of lack of hope for electoral-driven change. However, the reform vote mobilized behind Rouhani late in the campaign as reformist voters perceived that the regime was committed to preventing fraud and avoiding an election dispute. This vote propelled a 70% election turnout and a first-round victory for Hassan Rouhani, garnering about 50.7% of the 36 million votes cast—and enough to avoid a runoff. Qalibaf was second but trailed far behind with 15%.

After the election, many Iranians celebrated the election of the most moderate candidate in the race. Khamene'i and the rest of the political establishment congratulated Rouhani. The Obama Administration, in statements, “respect[ed] the vote of the Iranian people and congratulat[ed] them for their participation in the political process, and their courage in making their voices heard,” and expressed readiness to engage Iran directly on the nuclear issue. Rouhani was sworn in on August 4, 2013, and nominated a cabinet that same day, well ahead of a two-week deadline to do so. His nominees appeared to reflect an intent to implement his platform, and the Majles,

even though dominated by hardliners, approved all but three of his choices. The most significant confirmed appointees, as well as other personnel moves made by Rouhani, include

- **Foreign Minister:** Mohammad Javad Zarif, the former Ambassador to the United Nations in New York. That position enabled Zarif to forge a wide range of contacts with U.S. policy makers. During his tour, Zarif periodically visited Washington, DC, to meet with Members of Congress and congressional staff. Rouhani later assigned Zarif to serve concurrently as chief nuclear negotiator, a post traditionally held by the chairman of the Supreme National Security Council. In September 2013, Rouhani appointed senior IRGC leader and former Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani as head of that body; Shamkhani has held more moderate positions than his IRGC peers.
- **Oil Minister:** Bijan Zanganeh, who served in the same post during the Khatemi presidency and attracted significant foreign investment to the sector. He replaced Rostam Qasemi, who has been associated with the corporate arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Zanganeh has reappointed and recruited many oil industry technocrats.
- **Defense Minister:** Hosein Dehghan. An IRGC stalwart, he was an early organizer of the IRGC unit in Lebanon that helped form Hezbollah's militia wing; that unit later became the Qods Force. He later was IRGC Air Force commander and deputy Defense Minister.
- **Justice Minister:** Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, perhaps Rouhani's most controversial choice because of Pour-Mohammadi's alleged abuses of political dissidents in previous positions, including as Interior Minister (2005-2008).
- After the formation of the cabinet, the relatively moderate ex-Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi was appointed the head of Iran's atomic energy agency; and Reza Najafi was appointed as envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Hojjat ol-Islam Dr. Hassan Rouhani

Hassan Rouhani is a Hojjat ol-Islam, one rank below Ayatollah. He was born in 1948. He holds a Ph.D. in law from Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland. Rouhani is a long-time regime stalwart who was part of Ayatollah Khomeini's circle prior to the triumph of the Islamic revolution. He is also an associate and protégé of Rafsanjani, and Rouhani's pragmatic policy approach on issues such as the nuclear issue and relations with the United States approximates Rafsanjani's views. Rouhani's closeness to Rafsanjani potentially complicates Rouhani's relations with Khamene'i, but there is no evidence of direct Rouhani-Khamene'i tension to date.

Often nicknamed the "diplomat sheikh," Rouhani was chief nuclear negotiator during 2003-2005, when Iran did agree to suspend uranium enrichment. He is believed amenable to a nuclear deal with the international community that would reduce international sanctions but not necessarily preclude any options for Iran's nuclear program over the longer term. He also campaigned on a platform of easing the Islamic Republic's social restrictions as well as the suppression of free expression that has been particularly focused since the 2009 uprising. On the other hand, some accounts suggest that he supported the crackdown against the July 1999 student uprising.

Even though Rouhani drew support from the Green movement and reform movement to win his election, he is a longtime member of the political establishment. Rafsanjani appointed him a member of the Supreme National Security Council in 1989, and he remains on that body. He has been a member of the Assembly of Experts since 1999, and was a member of the Majles during 1980-2000, serving twice as deputy speaker. He has also been a member of the Expediency Council since 1991. He has headed the Center for Strategic Studies, a foreign policy think tank that advises both Rafsanjani and the Supreme Leader, since 1992.

Rouhani Election Encourages Reformists

The election of Rouhani represented an apparent decision by reform-minded Iranians to try to achieve change through regime-conducted elections and institutions. Some experts say the election of Rouhani began a process of national reconciliation in Iran, although others assert that his election created unrealistic expectations of rapid reform and political and social liberalization.

During 2009-2011, many Iranians who wanted to achieve change were part of the Green Movement, which grew out of the 2009 uprising. The Green Movement consisted primarily of educated, urban youth, intellectuals, and former regime officials. Some of the protests in December 2009 overwhelmed regime security forces in some parts of Tehran, but the movement's outward activity declined after its demonstration planned for the February 11, 2010, anniversary of the founding of the Islamic Republic (in 1979) was suppressed. Minor protests were held on several subsequent occasions in 2010, and the opposition did not experience a resurgence after the start of the Arab uprisings in early 2011. It apparently failed to win over many traditionally conservative groups such as older Iranians and Iranians who live in rural areas. It also experienced divisions between those who sought reform and those who sought outright regime overthrow.

Many of reformist supporters say they will hold Rouhani to his campaign promises to reduce restrictions on freedom of expression. However, the judiciary remains under the control of hardliners, and it is unclear that Rouhani will be able to increase social and political freedoms. A test of his intentions and capabilities has been whether the titular Green Movement leaders Mousavi and Karrubi, who were detained in early 2011, would be set free. In early 2014, the regime moved Karrubi back to his home from a detention facility, but regime guards reportedly are posted in his home. Earlier, in September 2013, the government released nearly 80 political prisoners incarcerated for involvement in the uprising, including prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh. Musavi has not been released from detention, to date.

In 2014, Rouhani has called for easing of official restrictions on use of the Internet and for relaxing enforcement of restrictions on social life. However, a testament to the continuing

strength or hardliners was the arrest in May 2014 of six Iranian youths who made a dance video to the tune of Pharell Williams's song "Happy." The youths (but not the director of the video) were quickly released on bail but forced to apologize on state television for failing to adhere to the dress code for women and for what the regime considers risqué behavior in the video. Rouhani publicly criticized the arrest. Some argue that incidents such as this will eventually reignite significant youth and "Green Movement" unrest as it becomes clear that Rouhani cannot easily ease the grip of hardliners and the Islamic clergy on social life.

Other Human Rights Practices

Iran's human rights record is scrutinized by the United Nations and multilateral groupings. After a four-year review of Iran's human rights record that took place in February 2010, on March 24, 2011, the U.N. Human Rights Council voted, 22 to 7, to reestablish the post of "Special Rapporteur" on Iranian human rights abuses that existed during from 1988-2002. On June 17, 2011, former Maldives Foreign Minister Ahmad Shaheed was appointed to this role. On November 21, 2011, the U.N. General Assembly's Third Committee, by a vote of 86-32, with 59 abstentions, approved a resolution asserting that Iran must cooperate with the efforts of the Special Rapporteur. The full Assembly approved the resolution on December 19, 2011, by a vote of 89-30 with 64 abstentions. On March 28, 2014, the U.N. Human Rights Council voted 21 to 9 with 16 absentions to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for another year.⁵

Despite Rouhani's pledges to increase cooperation and transparency, Iran has not, to date, permitted him to conduct fact-finding visits to Iran. In early April 2014, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on European Union (EU) diplomats to raise Iran's human rights record at official engagements and to include human rights issues in official negotiations with Iran. Earlier, on March 25, 2014, and EU human rights delegation visited Iran and held a meeting there with the released opposition figure Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was discussed above.

International criticism of Iran's human rights practices predates the crackdown against the 2009 uprising. **Table 3**, which discusses the regime's record on a number of human rights issues, is based on the latest State Department human rights report (for 2013: February 27, 2014)⁶ and on reports from the U.N. Special Rapporteur for human rights in Iran (see below)—the latest of which was released on March 13, 2014 (U.N. document A/HRC/25/61). These reports cite Iran for a wide range of serious abuses—aside from its suppression of political opponents—including unjust executions, politically motivated abductions by security forces, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, and arrests of women's rights activists. Some outside groups, including Human Rights Watch, assert that the 2012 revisions to the penal code left in place much of the legal framework that the regime uses to prosecute dissidents,⁷ although it made such reforms as eliminating death sentences for children convicted of drug-related offenses. The Special Rapporteur noted in his latest report that Rouhani has proposed a new "charter for citizen's rights." And, press reports indicate that some restrictions on media and Internet social media have eased, as has enforcement of the public dress code for women, since Rouhani took office. On the other hand, executions of prisoners have increased since Rouhani took office—a trend some experts assert could be part of an effort by hardliners in the judiciary to undermine Rouhani. The U.N. Special Rapporteur

⁵ No votes were: India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia, Venezuela, Vietnam, China, and Cuba.

⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dldid=220352#wrapper>.

⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Codifying Repression," August 29, 2012.

expressed outrage in June 2014 over the high number of executions that have occurred in Iran in 2014.

Many different Iranian institutions play a role in repressing opposition. The most prominent include the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), the IRGC, the Basij organization of the IRGC, and the Law Enforcement Forces (riot police, regular police, and gendarmerie). The Ministry of Islamic Guidance monitors journalists reporting from Iran as well as media and communications operations. Iran has an official body, the High Council for Human Rights, headed by former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Larijani (brother of the Majles speaker and the judiciary head). However, it largely defends the government's actions to outside bodies rather than acts to ensure that the government's human rights practices achieve international standards.

Despite the criticism of its human rights record, on April 29, 2010, Iran acceded to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, after dropping an attempt to sit on the higher-profile U.N. General Assembly Human Rights Council. It also has a seat on the boards of the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) and UNICEF. Iran's U.N. dues are about \$9 million per year.

Table 3. Human Rights Practices: General Categories

Group/Issue	Regime Practice/Recent Developments
Ethnic and Religious Breakdown	Persians are about 51% of the population, and Azeris (a Turkic people) are about 24%. Kurds are about 7%-15% of the population, and about 3% are Arab. Shiite Muslims are about 90% of the Muslim population and Sunnis are about 10%. About 2% of the population is non-Muslim, including Christians, Zoroastrians (an ancient religion in what is now Iran), Jewish, and Baha'i.
Media Freedoms	Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has been active in blocking pro-reform websites and blogs and closing newspapers critical of the government, as well as arresting journalists and bloggers. However, some editors say that the government has become more tolerant of critical media since Rouhani took office. The Majles investigated the November 2012 death in custody of blogger, Sattar Beheshti; seven security officers were arrested and the Tehran "Cyber Police" commander was removed for the incident. Iran is setting up a national network that would have a virtual monopoly on Internet service for Iranians.
Labor Restrictions	Independent unions are legal but not allowed in practice. The sole authorized national labor organization is a state-controlled "Workers' House" umbrella.
Women	Women can vote in all elections and run in parliamentary and municipal elections. They are permitted to drive, and work outside the home, including owning their own businesses, although less than 20% of the workforce is female and women earn nearly 5 times less than men. Nine women are in the Majles, but women cannot serve as judges. There was one woman in the previous cabinet (Minister of Health) but she was fired in December 2012 for criticizing lack of funding for medicines. Masoumeh Ebtekar, a prominent woman who has held the position of a vice president in previous governments, was scheduled to be the first woman to deliver the Friday Prayer at Tehran University in January 2014, but her appearance was cancelled. Women are required to be covered in public, generally with a garment called a <i>chador</i> , but enforcement has relaxed since Rouhani took office. Women do not have inheritance or divorce rights equal to that of men, and their court testimony carries half the weight of a male's. Laws against rape are not enforced effectively.
Religious Freedom Overview	Each year since 1999, the State Department religious freedom report has named Iran as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). No sanctions have been added under IRFA, on the grounds that Iran is already subject to extensive U.S. sanctions. Continued deterioration in religious freedom have been noted in the past few International Religious Freedom reports, stating that government rhetoric and actions creates a threatening atmosphere for nearly all non-Shia religious groups.

Group/Issue	Regime Practice/Recent Developments
Christians	In September 2011, a Protestant pastor who was born a Muslim, Youcef Nadarkhani, was sentenced to death for refusing to recant his Christian faith. The White House, State Department, and many human rights groups called for an overturning of the sentence, which was reaffirmed in late February 2012. He was released on September 8, 2012, but was rearrested on Christmas Day 2012. On February 29, 2012, the House debated but postponed action on H.Res. 556 demanding he be released. The issue of pastor Saeed Abedini, a dual national, is discussed below under “arrest of dual nationals.”
Baha'is	Iran is repeatedly cited for virtually unrelenting repression of the Baha'i community, which Iran's Shiite Muslim clergy views as a heretical sect, which numbers about 300,000-350,000. At least 30 Baha'is remain imprisoned and 60 were arrested in 2012, according to the State Department IRFA report for 2012. U.N. Rapporteur said in February 2013 that 110 Baha'is are in jail, with 133 more to start serving jail time. Seven Baha'i leaders were sentenced to 20 years in August 2010; their sentences were reduced in September 2010 to 10 years but the full sentence was restored on appeal. In the 1990s, several Baha'is were executed for apostasy. Virtually yearly congressional resolutions condemn Iran's treatment of the Baha'is.
Jews	Along with Christians, a “recognized minority,” with one seat in the Majles, the 8,800-member (2012 census) Jewish community enjoys somewhat more freedoms than Jewish communities in several other Muslim states. However, in practice the freedom of Iranian Jews to practice their religion is limited, and Iranian Jews remain fearful of reprisals. In June 1999, Iran arrested 13 Jews that it said were part of an “espionage ring” for Israel. After a 2000 trial, 10 of them were convicted and given sentences ranging from 4 to 13 years. An appeals panel reduced the sentences and all were released by April 2003. On November 17, 2008, Iran hanged Muslim businessman Ali Ashtari for providing Iranian nuclear information to Israel. On September 4, 2013, Rouhani's “Twitter” account issued greetings to Jews on the occasion of Jewish New Year (“Rosh Hashanah”). The Jewish <i>Majles</i> member accompanied Rouhani on his visit to the U.N. General Assembly meetings in September 2013.
Azeris	Azeris are one-quarter of the population and are mostly well integrated into government and society (Khamene'i himself is of Azeri heritage), but many Azeris complain of ethnic and linguistic discrimination. Each year, there are arrests of Azeri students and cultural activists who press for their right to celebrate their culture and history. The government accuses them of promoting revolution or separatism.
Kurds	There are about 5 million-11 million Kurds in Iran. The Kurdish language is not banned, but schools do not teach it and Kurdish political organizations, activists, and media outlets are routinely scrutinized, harassed, and closed down for supporting greater Kurdish autonomy. Several Kurdish oppositionists have been executed since 2010.
Arabs	Ethnic Arabs are prominent in southwestern Iran, particularly Khuzestan Province. The 2 million to 4 million Arabs in Iran encounter systematic oppression and discrimination, including torture and a prohibition on speaking or studying Arabic.
Human Trafficking	The June 19, 2012 (latest), State Department “Trafficking in Persons” report, for the seventh consecutive year, placed Iran in Tier 3 (worst level) for failing to take significant action to prevent trafficking in persons. Iranian women, boys, and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation in Iran as well to Pakistan, the Persian Gulf, and Europe.
Executions Policy	The United Nations asserts that there were 500 executions in 2013 and that pace has, according to some human rights groups, doubled thus far in 2014. Iran is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is obligated to cease the executions of minors.
Stonings	In 2002, the head of Iran's judiciary issued a ban on stoning. However, Iranian officials later called that directive “advisory” and could be ignored by individual judges. A sentence of stoning against a 45-year-old woman (Sakineh Ashtiani) convicted of adultery and assisting in the murder of her husband was set aside for further review in July 2010. In 2011, the stoning sentence was dropped but she is serving 10 years in prison.

Group/Issue	Regime Practice/Recent Developments
Arrests of Dual Nationals and Foreign Nationals/Robert Levinson/ the American Hikers	<p>Iran does not recognize dual nationality. An Iranian American journalist, Roxanna Saberi, was arrested in January 2009 allegedly because her press credentials had expired, and was released in May 12, 2009. Three American hikers (Sara Shourd, Shane Bauer, and Josh Fattal) were arrested in August 2009 after crossing into Iran from a hike in northern Iraq. They were released in 2010 and 2011 on \$500,000 bail each—brokered by Oman. Several cases remain pending, which U.S. officials say the raise during at the margins of the nuclear negotiations.</p> <p>Former FBI agent Robert Levinson, remains missing after a visit in 2005 to Kish Island to meet an Iranian source (Dawud Salahuddin, allegedly responsible for the 1980 killing in the United States of an Iranian diplomat who had served the Shah’s government). Iran denies knowing his status or location. In December 2011, Levinson’s family released a one-year old taped statement by him. In January 2013, his family released recent photos of him, and they acknowledged in late 2013 that his visit to Kish Island was partly related to his contract work for the CIA.</p> <p>A former U.S. Marine, Amir Hekmati, was arrested in 2011 and remains in jail in Iran allegedly for spying for the United States. His family has been permitted to visit him there. On December 20, 2012, a U.S. Christian convert of Iranian origin, Rev. Saeed Abedini, was imprisoned for “undermining national security” for setting up orphanages in Iran in partnership with Iranian Christians. His closed trial was held January 22, 2013, and he was convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison.</p>

Sources: State Department’s country report on human rights practices for 2013 (released February 27, 2014), <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=220352#wrapper>; The *International Religious Freedom Report* for 2012 (May 20, 2013), <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2012&dliid=208398#wrapper>; and the *Trafficking in Persons Report for 2013* (June 19, 2013), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210740.pdf>; and U.N Special Rapporteur report (Marcy 13, 2013).

Iran’s Defense Capabilities and Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs

The United States has viewed Iran as a key national security challenge in large part because of Iran’s nuclear and missile programs and its attempts to counter U.S. objectives in the region. Some assert Iran seeks to exert regional influence that Iranian leaders see as commensurate with Iran’s size and concept of nationhood. Others interpret Iran’s foreign policy as intended rather to protect itself from any U.S.-led effort to change Iran’s regime.

Conventional Military/Revolutionary Guard/Qods Force

Iran’s armed forces are extensive but they are widely considered relatively combat ineffective in a confrontation against the United States or even a major neighbor such as Turkey. Iran is believed to lack the logistical ability to deploy ground forces much beyond its borders. But, the Iranian armed forces are considered sufficiently effective to deter or fend off any nearby ground threats, should they emerge, from such neighbors as Iraq, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan. A 2012 Defense Department report on Iran’s military capability (required by P.L. 111-84) reported growing lethality and survivability of Iran’s ballistic and cruise missiles⁸—raising the possibility

⁸ Department of Defense. Annual Report on Military Power of Iran, April 2012. For the 2010 report, see http://media.washingtontimes.com/media/docs/2010/Apr/20/Iran_Military_Report.pdf. The reports are required by §1245 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2010 (P.L. 111-84).

that Iran might possess the capability to close the strategic Strait of Hormuz, where about one-third of all seaborne traded oil flows.

Organizationally, Iran's armed forces are divided to perform functions appropriate to their roles in Iran. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC, known in Persian as the *Sepah-e-Pasdaran Enghelab Islami*)⁹ controls the *Basij* (Mobilization of the Oppressed) volunteer militia that has been the main instrument to repress Green Movement protests in Iran. The IRGC and the regular military (*Artesh*) report to a joint headquarters, headed by Dr. Hassan Firuzabadi. The *Artesh* is deployed mainly at bases outside major cities and its leaders have publicly asserted that it does not have a mandate to maintain internal security by suppressing public demonstrations.

The IRGC Navy and regular Navy (Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, IRIN) are distinct forces; the IRIN has responsibility for the Gulf of Oman, whereas the IRGC Navy has responsibility for the closer-in Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. The regular Air Force controls most of Iran's combat aircraft, whereas the IRGC Air Force runs Iran's ballistic missile programs. Iran has a small number of warships on its Caspian Sea coast; it reportedly deployed on that sea in March 2013 to augment its capabilities there. Iran said on January 21, 2014, it has sent some warships into the Atlantic Ocean for the first time ever—presumably a demonstration of strength rather than an actual threat to the United States.

Iran's armed forces have few formal relationships with foreign militaries. Most of Iran's other military-to-military relationships, such as with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and North Korea, generally have focused on Iranian arms purchases or upgrades. Such sales to Iran are now banned by U.N. Resolution 1929 of June 2010 and many of these relationships have lapsed. Iran has a formal defense relationship with Syria, in part explaining IRGC-Qods Force deployments and arms shipments there, as discussed further below. In September 2012, Iran and North Korea signed an agreement to cooperate on science and technology, raising concerns about potential additional North Korean support to Iran's nuclear program.¹⁰ Iranian technicians reportedly attended North Korea's December 2012 launch of a rocket that achieved orbit. Iran and India have a "strategic dialogue" and some Iranian naval officers reportedly underwent some training in India in the 1990s, but this military-to-military relationship has largely ended.

⁹ For a more extensive discussion of the IRGC, see Katzman, Kenneth, "The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard," *Westview Press*, 1993.

¹⁰ Jay Solomon, "Iran-North Korea Pact Draws Concern," *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2013.

Table 4. Iran’s Conventional Military Arsenal

Military Personnel: 460,000+. Regular ground force is about 220,000, Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) ground force is about 130,000. Remainders are regular and IRGC navy (18,000 and 20,000 personnel respectively) and Air Forces (52,000 regular Air Force personnel and 5,000 Guard Air Force personnel.) About 12,000 air defense.

Security Forces: About 40,000-60,000 law enforcement forces on duty, with another 600,000 Basij security/paramilitary forces available for combat or internal security missions.

Tanks: 1,800+ Includes 480 Russian-made T-72

Ships: 100+ (IRGC and regular Navy) Includes 4 Corvette; 18 IRGC-controlled Chinese-made patrol boats, several hundred small boats.) Also has 3 Kilo subs (reg. Navy controlled). 2012 DOD report says Iran may have acquired additional ships and submarines over the past two years, but does not stipulate a supplier, if any.

Midget Subs: Iran has been long said to possess several small subs, possibly purchased assembled or in kit form from North Korea. Iran claimed on November 29, 2007, to have produced a new small sub equipped with sonar-evading technology, and it claimed to deploy four Iranian-made “Ghadir class” subs to the Red Sea in June 2011.

Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs): 150+ I-Hawk plus possibly some Stinger

Combat Aircraft: 330+ Includes 25 MiG-29 and 30 Su-24. Still dependent on U.S. F-4’s, F-5’s and F-14 bought during Shah’s era.

Anti-aircraft Missile Systems: Russia delivered to Iran (January 2007) 30 anti-aircraft missile systems (Tor M1), worth over \$1 billion. In December 2007, Russia agreed to sell the highly capable S-300 air defense system, which would greatly enhance Iran’s air defense capability, at an estimated cost of \$800 million. The system would not, according to most experts, technically violate the provisions of U.N. Resolution 1929, because the system is not covered in the “U.N. Registry on Conventional Arms. However, on September 22, 2010, then Russian President Medvedev signed a decree banning the supply of the system to Iran, asserting that its provision to Iran is banned by Resolution 1929. In August 2011, Iran and Russia took their dispute over the non-delivery of the S-300 to the International Court of Justice. In November 2011, Iran claimed to have deployed its own version (Mersad) of the system, and in January 2014 an Iranian parliamentarian said Iran was pursuing with Russia potential delivery of a substitute system for the S-300.

Defense Budget: About 3% of GDP

Sources: IISS Military Balance—Section on Middle East and North Africa, and various press reports; April 2010 and April 2012 DOD reports on military power of Iran, cited earlier.

Table 5. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

The IRGC is generally loyal to Iran's hardliners politically and is clearly more politically influential than is Iran's regular military, which is numerically larger, but was held over from the Shah's era. The IRGC's political influence has grown sharply as the regime has relied on it to suppress dissent. As described in a 2009 Rand Corporation study, "Founded by a decree from Ayatollah Khomeini shortly after the victory of the 1978-1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has evolved well beyond its original foundations as an ideological guard for the nascent revolutionary regime ... The IRGC's presence is particularly powerful in Iran's highly factionalized political system, in which [many senior figures] hail from the ranks of the IRGC..."

Through its Qods (Jerusalem) Force (QF), the IRGC has a foreign policy role in exerting influence throughout the region by supporting pro-Iranian movements and leaders. The QF numbers approximately 10,000-15,000 personnel who provide advice, support, and arrange weapons deliveries to pro-Iranian factions or leaders in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Persian Gulf states, Gaza/West Bank, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. IRGC leaders have confirmed the QF is in Syria to assist the regime of Bashar al-Assad against an armed uprising, and it reportedly provided advisers to help the Iraqi government counter an offensive by Sunni Islamist extremists in June 2014. The QF commander, Brigadier General Qassem Soleimani reportedly has a direct and independent channel to Khamene'i. The QF commander during 1988-1995 was Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi, who served as Defense minister during 2009-2013. He led the QF when it allegedly assisted two bombings of Israeli and Jewish targets in Buenos Aires and is wanted by Interpol for a role in the 1994 bombing there. He allegedly recruited Saudi Hezbollah activists later accused of the June 1996 Khobar Towers bombing; and assassinated Iranian dissident leaders in Europe in the early 1990s.

IRGC leadership developments are significant because of the political influence of the IRGC. On September 2, 2007, Khamene'i named Mohammad Ali Jafari as commander in chief of the Guard. Jafari is considered a hardliner against political dissent and a close ally of the Supreme Leader. He criticized Rouhani for accepting a phone call from President Obama on September 27, 2013, and has continued to oppose major concessions as part of a permanent nuclear settlement. The *Basij* reports to the IRGC commander in chief; its leader is Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi. It operates from thousands of positions in Iran's institutions. Command reshuffles in July 2008 integrated the *Basij* more closely with provincially based IRGC units and increased the *Basij* role in internal security. In November 2009, the regime gave the IRGC's intelligence units greater authority, perhaps surpassing those of the Ministry of Intelligence, in monitoring dissent. The IRGC Navy has responsibility to patrol the Strait of Hormuz and the regular Navy has responsibility for the broader Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman (deeper waters further off the coast).

As noted, the IRGC is also increasingly involved in Iran's economy, acting through a network of contracting businesses it has set up, most notably *Ghorb* (also called *Khatem ol-Anbiya*, Persian for "Seal of the Prophet"). Active duty IRGC senior commanders reportedly serve on *Ghorb*'s board of directors and its chief executive, Rostam Ghasemi, served as Oil Minister during 2011-2013. In September 2009, the Guard bought a 50% stake in Iran Telecommunication Company at a cost of \$7.8 billion. The Wall Street Journal reported on May 27, 2014 that *Khatam ol-Anbia* has \$50 billion in contracts with the Iranian government, including in the energy sector but also in port and highway construction. It has as many as 40,000 employees.

On October 21, 2007, the Treasury Department designated several IRGC companies as proliferation entities under Executive Order 13382. Also that day, the IRGC as a whole, the Ministry of Defense, several IRGC commanders, and several Iranian banks were sanctioned under that same executive order. Simultaneously, the Qods Force was named as a terrorism supporting entity under Executive Order 13224. These orders freeze the U.S.-based assets and prevent U.S. transactions with the named entities, but these entities are believed to have virtually no U.S.-based assets. On June 9, 2011, the IRGC and *Basij* were named as human rights abusers under Executive Order 13553, with the same penalties as the above Executive Orders.

Sources: Frederic Wehrey et al., "The Rise of the Pasdaran," Rand Corporation, 2009; Katzman, Kenneth, "The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard," Westview Press, 1993; Dept. of the Treasury; http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/09/30/130930fa_fact_filkins?printable=true¤tPage=all.

Nuclear Program and Related International Diplomacy

The United States and its allies have expressed substantial concern about the potential for Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. A nuclear armed Iran, in the view of U.S. and regional officials, would be more assertive than it now is in trying to influence the policies of regional states and in supporting leaders and groups in the Middle East and elsewhere that oppose U.S. interests and

allies. Iran could conclude that the United States would hesitate to use military pressure against it if it possessed nuclear weapons. There is concern that Iran's developing a nuclear weapon would produce a nuclear arms race in one of the world's most volatile regions, and Israel views an Iranian nuclear weapon as a threat to its existence. There are also fears Iran might transfer nuclear technology to extremist groups or countries.

Iran's nuclear program has been a significant U.S. national security issue since late 2002, when Iran confirmed PMOI allegations that Iran was building a uranium enrichment facility at Natanz and a heavy water production plant at Arak.¹¹ The United States and its partners state that they accept Iran's right to use nuclear energy, but that Iran must verifiably demonstrate that its nuclear program is for only peaceful purposes. Since 2010, Iran has been enriching to 20% U-235—relatively easy technically to enrich further to weapons-grade uranium (90%+). Another requirement for a nuclear weapon is a triggering mechanism that Iran is might have researched in the past. The United States and its partners also insist that Iran must not possessing a nuclear-capable missile.

Iran's Nuclear Intentions and Activities

The U.S. intelligence community stated in its “worldwide threat assessment” testimony on January 29, 2014 that the community does not “know if Iran will eventually decide to build nuclear weapons.” Some Iranian leaders appear to perceive a nuclear weapons capability as a means of ending Iran's historic vulnerability to great power invasion or domination. Other Iranian leaders and experts appear to agree with U.S. and international assertions that a nuclear weapon would make Iran less secure. According to this view, moving toward a nuclear weapons capability would bring Iran further international sanctions, possible military action by Israel or the United States, long-term military containment, U.S. attempted interference in Iran, and efforts by neighbors to develop countervailing capabilities.

Iranian leaders denied they are trying to achieve a nuclear weapons capability and asserted that Iran's nuclear program is for medical uses and electricity generation, given finite oil and gas resources. Iran argues that uranium enrichment is its “right” as a party to the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty¹² and that it wants to make its own nuclear fuel to avoid potential nuclear fuel supply disruptions by the United States and its international allies. Iran has claimed that the IAEA information demonstrates little beyond the fact that some of its scientists may have performed nuclear weapons calculations on computers. U.S. officials have said that Iran's gas resources make nuclear energy unnecessary.

Iran further professed that WMD are inconsistent with its ideology. In 2003, the Supreme Leader Khamene'i issued a formal pronouncement (*fatwas*) that nuclear weapons are un-Islamic. On February 22, 2012, he expanded on that concept in a speech saying that the production of and use of a nuclear weapon is prohibited as a “great sin,” and that stockpiling such weapons is “futile, expensive, and harmful.”¹³ On February 17, 2013, he reportedly told visitors that Iran is not

¹¹ In November 2006, the IAEA, at U.S. urging, declined to provide technical assistance to the Arak facility on the grounds that it was likely for proliferation purposes.

¹² For Iran's arguments about its program, see Iranian paid advertisement “An Unnecessary Crisis—Setting the Record Straight About Iran's Nuclear Program,” in *The New York Times*, November 18, 2005, p. A11.

¹³ “Leader Says West Knows Iran Not Seeking ‘Nuclear Weapons,’” Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network, February 22, 2012.

seeking to develop a nuclear weapon but that the international community would not be able to prevent Iran from doing so if that were Iran's goal.¹⁴ In several interviews since taking office in August 2013, Rouhani has insisted that Iran does not seek to develop nuclear weapons.

IAEA Investigations into Past Nuclear Weapons Research

Allegations that Iran might have researched a nuclear explosive device have caused experts and governments to question Iran's assertions that it does not intend to construct a nuclear weapon. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been attempting to investigate information laid out in detail in an IAEA report of November 8, 2011, on Iran's alleged research efforts on designs for a nuclear explosive device ("possible military dimensions," PMD). Even though many questions about PMD persist, no IAEA report—or U.S. intelligence testimony or comments—has asserted that Iran has diverted any nuclear material for a nuclear weapons program.¹⁵

Iran's cooperation in addressing these issues appears to be improving as an interim nuclear agreement between Iran and the international community—the "Joint Plan of Action." (JPA)—is implemented and a comprehensive nuclear agreement is negotiated. And the JPA stipulates that clearing up such questions must be part of a comprehensive nuclear settlement. On November 11, 2013—two weeks before the JPA was agreed—the IAEA and Iran issued a joint statement on a "structured approach" providing for "managed" IAEA access, within three months, to several facilities (the heavy water plant at Arak, among others), Iranian activities (laser enrichment, for example), and planned facilities (additional enrichment facilities) previously excluded from IAEA scrutiny. The IAEA has been given access to some of the facilities it has sought to access, including some uranium mining operations inspected in May 2014. As noted in the IAEA report of May 23, 2014, Iran also provided information on the alleged development of "Explosive Bridge Wire" Detonators used in a nuclear weapons program.¹⁶ However, the IAEA has not to date been allowed requested access to the military facility at Parchin, where Iran allegedly conducted testing on elements of a nuclear explosive device. It had been inspected previously in 2005. In the years prior to the JPA, Iran repeatedly dismissed IAEA information on Iran's experimentation on a nuclear explosive device as based on forged information.

Nuclear Weapons Time Frame Estimates

If Iran were to decide to pursue a nuclear weapon, estimates differ as to how long it would take Iran to achieve that goal. On March 14, 2013, President Obama stated that it was the view of the intelligence community that "it would take Iran over a year or so" to develop a nuclear weapon, after a decision to do so. The Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) issued an assessment in October 2013 that indicated Iran could produce enough weapons-grade uranium for one bomb in as little as a month, were there a decision to do so. A related issue is the ability of the United States and IAEA to detect an all-out effort by Iran to develop an actual nuclear weapon ("breakout capability"). Press reports state that the objective of a comprehensive nuclear

¹⁴ The comments were posted on Khamene'i's website, khamenei.ir.

¹⁵ The February 25, 2011, IAEA report listed Iran's declared nuclear sites as well as a summary of all the NPT obligations Iran is not meeting. IAEA report of February 25, 2011. <http://lewis.armscontrolwonk.com/files/2011/02/gov2011-7.pdf>.

¹⁶ <http://www.isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/iaea-iranreport-230514.pdf>.

settlement would be to extend the “breakout time” to 12 months, from the current estimate among experts of less than six months.

Status of Uranium Enrichment and Ability to Produce Plutonium¹⁷

A key to extending the “breakout time” for an Iranian nuclear weapon is to limit Iran’s ability to produce fissile material. Iran enriches uranium using centrifuges; it has about 19,000 total installed centrifuges, of which a little over half (about 10,000) are in operation. Some were enriching uranium to the 20% level—which requires nearly as much effort as is required to produce weapons grade uranium (90% U-235)—prior to the JPA. According to IAEA reports, prior to the start of JPA implementation, Iran had a stockpile of about 15,000 lbs of low-enriched (3.5%-5%) uranium—enough to produce about five nuclear weapons if it were to enrich that stockpile to weapons grade. And, Iran had a stockpile of about 400 lbs of 20% U-235. That amount of 20% U-235 is still short of the 550 lbs. that would be needed, if enriched to HEU, to produce one nuclear weapon. Some of the enrichment to 20% took place at the heavily fortified Fordow site that Iran acknowledged in September 2009. Iran is assessed by the IAEA as complying with the JPA provision to cease enriching to 20%, to dilute its former stockpile of 20% enriched uranium, and to cease expanding its stockpile of 5% enriched uranium.

Another issue is centrifuge capability. IAEA reports prior to the start of the JPA said that Iran had installed about 1000 of the more advanced IR-2 centrifuges at its Natanz enrichment site, although they were not put into operation. To some experts, the installation of the newer centrifuges cast doubt that an all-out Iranian effort to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon would be discovered in time to take unspecified action.

Plutonium Route? Another means of acquiring fissile material for a nuclear weapon is to produce plutonium, and some experts are increasingly concerned Iran is developing the option to use this route to produce a nuclear weapon, if there were a decision to do so. Iran’s heavy water plant at Arak, which had been slated for completion in 2014, could produce plutonium that can be reprocessed into fissile material for a nuclear weapon. However, Iran does not have a facility to reprocess the material from Arak and there have been no indications of construction of such a reprocessing facility. The JPA requires Iran to halt construction of the reactor, although not necessarily all construction of the site, and there reportedly has been significant progress on this issue during the talks on a comprehensive settlement.

Bushehr Reactor

U.S. officials have generally been less concerned with Russia’s work, under a January 1995 contract, on an \$800 million nuclear power plant at Bushehr. Russia insisted that Iran sign an agreement under which Russia would reprocess the plant’s spent nuclear material; that agreement was signed on February 28, 2005. The plant was expected to become operational in 2007, but Russia appeared to delay opening it to pressure Iran on the nuclear issue. The plant was inaugurated on August 21, 2010, and fueling was completed by October 25, 2010. It began limited operations on May 8, 2011, and was linked to Iran’s power grid in September 2011. It was reported by Iran as operational as of September 3, 2012, and Iran has been assuming full control over plant operations since then. As part of this work, Russia trained 1,500 Iranian nuclear

¹⁷ http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/IAEA_Iran_Safeguards_Report_14Nov2013.pdf.

engineers. Russia and Iran are reportedly negotiating for Russia to build two more reactors at Bushehr as part of a deal for up to eight additional reactors.¹⁸

Early International Diplomatic Efforts to Address Iran's Nuclear Program

The international response to Iran's nuclear program evolved into a global consensus to apply substantial economic pressure on Iran, coupled with diplomacy, to persuade Iran to limit its nuclear program. In 2003, France, Britain, and Germany (the "EU-3") opened a separate diplomatic track to curb Iran's program. On October 21, 2003, Iran pledged, in return for peaceful nuclear technology, to (1) fully disclose its past nuclear activities, (2) sign and ratify the "Additional Protocol" to the NPT (allowing for enhanced inspections), and (3) suspend uranium enrichment activities. Iran signed the Additional Protocol on December 18, 2003, although the *Majles* has not ratified it.

Iran ended the suspension several months after it began, but the EU-3 and Iran reached a more specific November 14, 2004, "Paris Agreement," committing Iran to suspend uranium enrichment (which it did as of November 22, 2004) in exchange for renewed trade talks and other aid.¹⁹ The George W. Bush Administration supported Paris Agreement on March 11, 2005, by announcing it would drop U.S. objections to Iran applying to join the World Trade Organization and to selling civilian aircraft parts to Iran. The Paris Agreement broke down after Ahmadinejad's election, when Iran rejected as insufficient an EU-3 proposal for a permanent nuclear agreement that would provide Iran with peaceful uses of nuclear energy and limited security guarantees. On August 8, 2005, Iran broke the IAEA seals and began uranium "conversion" (one step before enrichment) at its Esfahan facility. On September 24, 2005, the IAEA Board declared Iran in non-compliance with the NPT and, on February 4, 2006, after Iran resumed enrichment, the IAEA board voted 27-3²⁰ to refer the case to the Security Council. On March 29, 2006, the Council presidency set a 30-day time limit (April 28, 2006) for ceasing enrichment.²¹

"P5+1" Formed. With the EU-3 agreements with Iran having broken down, the Bush Administration offered on May 31, 2006, to join the nuclear talks if Iran suspends its uranium enrichment. Such talks would center on a package of incentives and possible sanctions—formally agreed on June 1, 2006—by a newly formed group of nations, the so-called "Permanent Five Plus 1" (P5+1: United States, Russia, China, France, Britain, and Germany). EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana presented the P5+1 offer to Iran on June 6, 2006, focused on easing sanctions and guaranteeing Iran nuclear fuel (Annex I to Resolution 1747). Sanctions threatened,²² such as a ban on technology and arms sales to Iran, were imposed in subsequent years.

¹⁸ Reuters, May 22, 2014.

¹⁹ For text of the agreement, see http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/iaeaIran/eu_iran14112004.shtml. EU-3-Iran negotiations on a permanent nuclear pact began on December 13, 2004, and related talks on a trade and cooperation accord (TCA) began in January 2005.

²⁰ Voting no: Cuba, Syria, Venezuela. Abstaining: Algeria, Belarus, Indonesia, Libya, South Africa.

²¹ See <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/290/88/PDF/N0629088.pdf?OpenElement>.

²² One source purports to have obtained the contents of the package from ABC News: <http://www.basicint.org/pubs/Notes/BN060609.htm>.

First Four U.N. Security Council Resolutions Adopted

The U.N. Security Council subsequently imposed sanctions on Iran in an effort to shift Iran's calculations toward compromise.

- *Resolution 1696.* On July 31, 2006, the Security Council voted 14-1 (Qatar voting no) for U.N. Security Council Resolution 1696, giving Iran until August 31, 2006, to fulfill the long-standing IAEA nuclear demand to suspend enrichment suspension; suspend construction of the heavy-water reactor, and ratify the Additional Protocol to Iran's IAEA Safeguards Agreement. It was passed under Article 40 of the U.N. Charter, which makes compliance mandatory, but not under Article 41, which refers to economic sanctions, or Article 42, which would authorize military action.
- *Resolution 1737.* After Iran refused a proposal to temporarily suspend enrichment, the Security Council adopted U.N. Security Council Resolution 1737 unanimously on December 23, 2006, under Chapter 7, Article 41 of the U.N. Charter. It demanded enrichment suspension by February 21, 2007, and prohibits sale to Iran—or financing of such sale—of technology that could contribute to Iran's nuclear program. It required U.N. member states to freeze the financial assets of several named Iranian nuclear and missile firms and related persons. In deference to Russia, the Resolution exempted the Bushehr reactor.
- *Resolution 1747.* With no Iranian compliance, on March 24, 2007, after only three weeks of P5+1 negotiations, Resolution 1747 was adopted unanimously demanding Iran suspend enrichment by May 24, 2007. The Resolution also added entities to those sanctioned by Resolution 1737; banned arms transfers by Iran, a provision targeted at Iran's alleged arms supplies to Lebanese Hezbollah and to Shiite militias in Iraq; and called for (but did not require) countries to avoid selling arms or dual use items to Iran and for countries and international financial institutions to avoid any new lending or grants to Iran. The Resolution specifically exempted loans for humanitarian purposes, thereby not applying to World Bank loans.
- *Resolution 1803 and Additional Incentives for Iran.* With no Iranian compliance forthcoming, Resolution 1803 was adopted by a vote of 14-0 (Indonesia abstaining) on March 3, 2008. It added 12 more entities to those sanctioned; banned virtually all sales of dual use items to Iran (citing equipment listed as dual use in various proliferation conventions); authorized, but did not require, inspections of shipments by Iran Air Cargo and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line, if such shipments are suspected of containing banned WMD-related goods; and imposed a firm travel ban on five Iranians named in Annex II. Resolution 1803 also stated the willingness of the P5+1 to consider additional incentives; in May 2008, the P5+1 added political and enhanced energy cooperation with Iran to previous incentives. (The text of that enhanced incentive offer to Iran was later revealed as an Annex to Resolution 1929, adopted in June 2010.) In July 2008, Iran indicated it might be ready to accept a temporary "freeze for freeze:" the P5+1 would impose no new sanctions and Iran would stop expanding uranium enrichment. No agreement on that concept was reached, even though the Bush Administration sent then-Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns to a P5+1—Iran negotiation in Geneva on July 19, 2008.

- *Resolution 1835.* The August 2008 crisis between Russia and Georgia contributed to Russia's opposing new U.N. sanctions on Iran. In an effort to demonstrate to Iran continued P5+1 resolve, the Council adopted Resolution 1835 (September 27, 2008), demanding compliance with existing resolutions but not adding sanctions.

Developments During the Obama Administration

After President Obama was inaugurated, the P5+1 met in Germany on February 4, 2009, seeking to incorporate into its proposals to Iran the new Administration's commitment to direct U.S. engagement with Iran.²³ On April 8, 2009, then Under Secretary William Burns announced that a U.S. diplomat would henceforth attend all of the group's meetings with Iran. A July 9, 2009, G-8 summit statement said that Iran needed to offer constructive proposals by late September 2009 or face "crippling sanctions." On September 9, 2009, Iran distributed its proposals to settle the nuclear issue to P5+1 representatives in Iran, which the P5+1 considered a sufficient basis to meet with Iran on October 1, 2009.

October 1, 2009, Tentative Agreement

In light of September 25, 2009, revelations about the Fordow uranium enrichment site, little progress was expected at an October 1, 2009 P5+1 – Iran meeting in Geneva. However, the meeting resulted in a tentative agreement for Iran to allow Russia and France to reprocess 2,600 pounds (which at that time was 75% of Iran's low-enriched uranium stockpile) for medical use. Technical talks on the tentative agreement were held October 19-21, 2009 in Vienna and a draft agreement was approved by the P5+1 countries and the IAEA. The Supreme Leader reportedly vetoed finalizing the agreement and it was not implemented.

Tehran Declaration Brokered by Brazil and Turkey. In April 2010, Brazil and Turkey negotiated with Iran to revive the October 1, 2009, arrangement. On May 17, 2010, with the president of Brazil and prime minister of Turkey in Tehran, the three signed an arrangement ("Tehran Declaration") for Iran to send 2,600 pounds of uranium to Turkey, which would be exchanged for medically-useful reprocessed uranium.²⁴ Iran forwarded to the IAEA a formal letter accepting the agreement terms. Even though some assert that the Obama Administration quietly supported the Brazil-Turkey initiative, the Obama Administration publicly rejected it on the grounds that it did not address Iran's enrichment to the 20% level and the Administration opted to finalize agreement on another Security Council resolution that would pressure Iran.

Fifth and Most Sweeping Security Council Resolution Adopted: Resolution 1929

On May 18, 2010, one day after the signing of the Tehran Declaration, Secretary of State Clinton announced that the P5+1 had reached agreement on a new sanctions resolution that would give U.S. allies authority to take substantial new measures against Iran. Adopted on June 9, 2010,²⁵ the key provisions of Resolution 1929 are contained in the summary table below.²⁶ An annex

²³ Dempsey, Judy. "U.S. Urged to Talk With Iran." *International Herald Tribune*, February 5, 2009.

²⁴ Text of the pact is at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/22140/>.

²⁵ It was adopted by a vote of 12-2 (Turkey and Brazil voting no) with one abstention (Lebanon).

²⁶ Text of the resolution is at <http://www.isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/> (continued...)

presented the modified offer of incentives discussed above. (Simultaneous with Russian agreement on the draft, several Russian entities, including the main state arms export agency Rosoboronexport, were removed from U.S. lists of sanctioned entities.)

President Obama and other senior officials noted that the intent of Resolution 1929 was to bring Iran back to negotiations. However, P5+1-Iran talks during December 6-7, 2010, in Geneva and January 21-22, 2011, in Istanbul failed in part because Iran demanded lifting of international sanctions as a precondition to substantive discussions. Following Iran-Russia talks during August 15-16, 2011, Iran praised Russia's proposals for a stepwise exchange of the lifting of international sanctions for Iran's giving up some nuclear activities. State Department official Victoria Nuland confirmed that U.S. diplomats had worked with Russian counterparts to develop the proposal.

P5+1—Iran talks resumed April 13-14, 2012, in Istanbul. At subsequent talks in Baghdad, Iraq on May 23-24, 2012, the P5+1 proposed that Iran halt enrichment to the 20% level (“stop”) and allow removal from Iran of the existing stockpile of 20% enriched uranium (“ship”); that Iran eventually close the Fordow facility (“shut”); that Iran accept a comprehensive verification regime to ensure that Iran fulfills any commitments made; and that Iran clear up reputed past efforts to design a nuclear explosive device (see above). As “reciprocity” for Iran accepting such steps, the P5+1 offered to allow Iran to enrich uranium to the 3.5%-5% level; to guarantee supply of medical isotopes that it says it needs and technical assistance to ensure the safety of its civilian nuclear facilities; and to sell spare parts for Iran's civilian passenger aircraft. The P5+1 did not offer to meet Iran's demand to “recognize” Iran's right to enrich uranium.

A further round of P5+1—Iran talks was held June 18-19, 2012, in Moscow, focusing primarily on the “stop, shut, and ship” concept. No breakthrough was achieved, but the parties subsequently held lower level technical talks on July 3, 2012. In meetings at the end of 2012, the P5+1 countries met to “refresh” their proposals, and agreed to another round of talks.

At talks in Almaty, Kazakhstan during February 26-27, 2013, the P5+1 dropped the insistence that Iran dismantle the Fordow site, but continued to insist Iran cease enrichment to 20% there. A second “Almaty round” convened during April 5-6, 2013, although Iran's looming presidential election intruded on the talks. No date for additional talks was announced.

Rouhani Spurs Optimism

Leaders in the P5+1 countries asserted that the election of Rouhani improved the prospects for a nuclear settlement. Those sentiments increased in the context of his visit to the U.N. General Assembly meetings in New York during September 23-27, 2013. In advance of his visit, Rouhani reiterated in press interviews that Iran has no intention of developing a nuclear weapon. He also stated that the Supreme Leader had given him and his team—with Foreign Minister Zarif as chief nuclear negotiator—authority to negotiate a nuclear deal. The Supreme Leader largely affirmed that authority in a speech to the IRGC on September 17, 2013, in which Khamene'i said he believes in the concept of “heroic flexibility”—adopting “proper and logical diplomatic moves, whether in the realm of diplomacy or in the sphere of domestic policies.”²⁷

(...continued)

Draft_resolution_on_Iran_annexes.pdf.

²⁷ Open Source Center, “Iran: Leader Outlines Guard Corps Role, Talks of ‘Heroic Flexibility,’” published September (continued...)

On September 26, 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry attended a P5+1 meeting with Iran on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly meetings, and Foreign Minister Zarif and Secretary Kerry met separately as well. The meetings resulted in a decision to hold another round of high-level P5+1-Iran talks in Geneva on October 15-16, 2013. At the talks, which included a subsequent round during November 7-9, Iran and the P5+1 discussed an interim agreement during which Iran would suspend 20% enrichment and take other steps to improve international oversight, and a more comprehensive end-stage agreement that would sharply limit Iran's enrichment of uranium. No agreement was reached, but the parties agreed to convene again on November 20.

Joint Plan of Action (JPA)

The meetings that began in Geneva on November 20 ended with an agreement ("Joint Plan of Action," JPA) early in the morning of November 24, 2013. The JPA:

- is to be in place for six months, renewable for another six months, during which time a "comprehensive solution" to Iran's nuclear program is negotiated. The agreement does not explicitly recognize Iran's "right" to enrich uranium but does indicate that a final agreement would likely "involve a mutually defined enrichment program." Technical discussions agreed that implementation would begin on January 20, 2014, and the JPA would extend until July 20, 2014, unless extended for an additional six months by mutual agreement.
- requires Iran to cease enriching uranium to 20% U-235 and to reverse the process of the existing 20% stockpile to lower levels of enrichment. Iran is permitted to continue enriching to the 3.5% level but not to expand its stockpile of uranium at that level of enrichment.
- requires Iran not to make operational its newer-model centrifuges, to limit production of centrifuges to replacing those that break, and to halt development of the heavy-water nuclear reactor at Arak.
- requires that the comprehensive solution address the requirements of U.N. Security Council resolutions, which, among other provisions, ban Iran from developing a ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear weapon.
- provides for temporary sanctions relief totaling about \$7 billion, including access to \$4.2 billion in hard currency abroad that Iran has been unable to repatriate because of financial sanctions, tuition payments for Iranian students abroad, and likely revenues from resuming sales of petrochemicals, trading in precious metals, and easing of sanctions on Iran's auto industry. The agreement stipulates that Iran's current oil exports of about 1 million barrels per day will remain constant, and that the P5+1 countries and EU will impose no new nuclear sanctions on Iran. Iran will also receive help buying humanitarian supplies, including spare parts for civilian aircraft. Iran will receive its \$4.2 billion in eight installments of about \$500 million each, with the first occurring on February 1, 2014. (For detail on the sanctions relief aspects of the deal, including steps

(...continued)
18, 2013.

needed to implement the deal as regards U.S. sanctions laws, please see CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*.)

Some U.S. allies and Members of Congress criticized the JPA as allowing Iran to retain the infrastructure it could use to eventually develop a nuclear weapon. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu opposed the JPA on those grounds as well as on the presumption that an easing of sanctions would cause the entire sanctions regime to unravel. The Administration argued that the JPA would freeze Iran's nuclear program and roll some aspects of it back, while not precluding U.S. options to increase sanctions or take other action if no comprehensive deal is reached. Iranian hardliners criticized the JPA as failing to substantially ease sanctions, and journalists say that Iran's economy has improved only slightly since implementation began.

JPA Implementation. All IAEA reports issued since the JPA began implementation assert that Iran is complying with the JPA requirements, including on uranium enrichment, stockpiles of enriched uranium, and the Arak reactor.²⁸ However, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Non-Proliferation Vann Van Diepen said on March 16, 2014, that Iran is still “very actively” creating front companies and attempting to procure items for their nuclear program and missile program and other programs.²⁹ A report of the U.N.-backed “Panel of Experts” dated June 11, 2014 reports that Iran has continued to try to import items that could be used in programs that would violate applicable U.N. Security Council Resolutions.³⁰

The United States and partner countries have eased sanctions in line with the JPA requirements. The hard currency payments to Iran are being processed in accordance with the stipulated schedule. Some U.S. firms have applied for and received licenses to sell Iran spare aircraft parts.

Talks on a Comprehensive Solution

Talks on a comprehensive solution on Iran's nuclear program—a so-called “final settlement”—began on February 20, 2014, and immediately reached agreement on a framework for the negotiations. Two more sets of talks to build understanding of each side's positions took place in Vienna during March 17-19, and April 7-9, 2014. The April talks were not, by all accounts, affected by U.S. unrest at Iran's apparent appointment of one of those involved in the 1979 seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran—Hamid Aboutalebi—as ambassador to the United Nations. That was the subject of April 2014 congressional passage of S. 2195, which would give the Administration authority to deny him a visa to take up his duties. The United States subsequently announced he would not be admitted to the United States.

The May 13-16, 2014 round intended to begin the process of drafting an actual agreement and narrowing the reported gaps in each other's positions. By all accounts, the talks were “difficult” and did not narrow differences substantially. As the July 20 JPA expiration loomed, the Administration sent Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns and other officials to hold bilateral talks with Iran on June 9-10, 2014, in advance of the subsequent P5+1 – Iran talks on June 16-20. Neither the U.S.-Iran bilateral nor the June 16-20 P5+1 – Iran talks made apparent progress on

²⁸ The latest report can be found at <http://www.isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/iaea-iranreport-230514.pdf>.

²⁹ “Iran Pursuing Banned Items for Nuclear, Missile Work: U.S. Official.” Reuters, March 16, 2014.

³⁰ “U.N. Document S/2014/394. Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Resolution 1929 (2010). June 11, 2014.

the core issue of uranium enrichment. The June 16-20 talks concluded with the outline of a draft agreement but with few issues fully resolved, and agreement to reconvene on July 2 and to hold talks nearly continuously until the July 20 JPA expiration. U.S. and Iranian negotiators also accused each other's delegations of failing to negotiate seriously on that core issue or of making the difficult choices needed to reach agreement by July 20. A six month extension of the JPA is considered undesirable by all sides because failing to meet the July 20 deadline would indicate wide differences and provide opportunities for opponents of an agreement to undermine the talks.

The main outstanding issues include the following:

- The main area of difference reportedly remains the size and scope of Iran's enrichment program. The P5+1 reportedly demand that Iran be limited to about 2,000 – 3,000 operating centrifuges, whereas Iran publicly insists that none of its enrichment infrastructure be dismantled, and that in fact it be allowed to expand in order to produce fuel for the several additional power reactors Iran plans to build. Iran's Foreign Minister has proposed an alternative under which the low-enriched uranium Iran produces would be immediately converted, under monitoring, to a form that could not be easily further enriched. A related difference over the Fordow facility apparently has narrowed with Iran's reported acquiescence to convert it into a research facility that would not enrich uranium.
- The parties are said to be close to agreement on Iran's proposal to reengineer the Arak reactor to produce minor amounts of plutonium. The plan presumably would alleviate P5+1 concerns about Iran using the products of the reactor, after reprocessing, for a nuclear weapon.
- Iran has rejected limitations in its ballistic missile capabilities. P5+1 – Iran differences on the issue appeared to widen the day before the May 13 talks with comments by the Supreme Leader that the P5+1 expectations for Iran to curb its missile program were “stupid and idiotic.”
- There are differences over the duration of the agreement, with Iran reportedly pushing for a duration of only about five years. The P5+1 believe agreed limitations should remain in place for about two decades.
- Iran reportedly has acquiesced to the P5+1 insistence that sanctions be eased in stepwise fashion as Iran complies with the provisions of the agreement—rather than all relief being provided immediately after an agreement.

Some in Congress have expressed concerns about potentially significant U.S. concessions, and have sought to legislate a congressional opportunity to vote to approve or disapprove any deal that might be reached.³¹ The FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4435), passed by the House on May 22, 2014, contains a section (1264) that expresses the sense of Congress that a settlement with Iran result in Iran's ceasing uranium enrichment, ending its nuclear weapons and other WMD programs, and ceasing support for acts of international terrorism. A White House statement said the provision undermines the negotiations by attempting to spell out conditions for the final settlement. The statement also asserts the Administration's intent to consult closely with Congress on the status of the negotiations.

³¹ Josh Rogin. “Key Senator Wants to Force Vote on Iran Deal.” *Daily Beast*, May 16, 2014.

Table 6. Summary of Provisions of U.N. Resolutions on Iran Nuclear Program (1737, 1747, 1803, and 1929)

Requires Iran to suspend uranium enrichment, cease construction of the heavy water reactor at Arak, and sign the Additional Protocol. (1737 and subsequent resolutions)
Prohibits transfer to Iran of nuclear, missile, and dual use items, except for use in light-water reactors. (All combined)
Prohibits Iran from exporting arms or WMD-useful technology. (1747)
Prohibits Iran from investing abroad in uranium mining, related nuclear technologies or nuclear capable ballistic missile technology. Prohibits Iran from launching ballistic missiles even on its own territory. (1929)
Freezes the assets of over 80 named Iranian persons and entities, including Bank Sepah, and several corporate affiliates of the Revolutionary Guard. (1737 and subsequent resolutions)
Requires that countries ban the travel of over 40 named Iranians.
Mandates that countries not export major combat systems to Iran. It did not bar sales of missiles not on the “U.N. Registry of Conventional Arms” (meaning that the delivery of the S-300 system, discussed above, would not be legally banned). (1929)
Calls for “vigilance” (a nonbinding call to cut off business) with respect to all Iranian banks, particularly Bank Melli and Bank Saderat. (1929)
Calls for vigilance (voluntary restraint) with respect to providing international lending to Iran and providing trade credits and other financing and financial interactions. (1929)
Calls on countries to inspect cargoes carried by Iran Air Cargo and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines—or by any ships in national or international waters—if there are indications they carry cargo banned for carriage to Iran. Searches in international waters would require concurrence of the country where the ship is registered. (1929)
A Sanctions Committee, composed of the 15 members of the Security Council, monitors implementation of all Iran sanctions and collects and disseminates information on Iranian violations and other entities involved in banned activities. A seven-member “panel of experts” is empowered (renewable each year) to report on sanctions violations and make recommendations for improved enforcement. The panel’s reports are not officially published by the Sanctions Committee but are usually carried by various websites. Resolution 2105, adopted June 5, 2013, extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts until July 9, 2014. (1929)

Missiles and Chemical/Biological Weapons

Iran has an array of conventional weapons that it could potentially use against the United States and its allies in the Persian Gulf. In particular, Iran’s missiles are considered to pose a threat to U.S. ships, forces, and allies in the Gulf region and beyond.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Official U.S. reports and testimony state that Iran maintains the capability to produce chemical warfare (CW) agents and “probably” has the capability to produce some biological warfare agents for offensive purposes, if it made the decision to do so.³² This raises questions about Iran’s compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which Iran signed on January 13, 1993, and ratified on June 8, 1997.

³² Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analysis, “Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions, Covering 1 January to 31 December 2010,” March 2011.

Ballistic and Cruise Missiles and Warheads³³

The Administration's insistence that missile limitations be part of a comprehensive nuclear settlement is based, at least in part, on the apparent view that Iran's ballistic missiles and its acquisition of indigenous production of anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) provide capabilities for Iran to project power. DNI Clapper testified on March 12, 2013, that the intelligence community assesses that "Iran's ballistic missiles are capable of delivering WMD." There has been a long-standing U.S. estimate that Iran would likely not be able to fully develop a missile of intercontinental range until 2015, although that time frame is not far away and there have not been any recent reports that Iran is approaching that capability.

Tehran views its conventionally armed missiles as an integral part of its strategy to deter—and if necessary retaliate against—forces in the region, including U.S. forces. A particular worry of U.S. commanders remains Iran's inventory of cruise missiles, which can reach U.S. ships in the Gulf quickly after launch. U.S. officials and reports have estimated that Iran is steadily expanding its missile and rocket inventories and has "boosted the lethality and effectiveness of existing systems with accuracy improvements and new sub-munition payloads."

It is unclear the extent to which Iran continues to receive outside assistance for its missile program. Some reports suggest Iranian technicians may have witnessed North Korea's satellite launch in December 2012, which, if true, could support the view that Iran-North Korea missile cooperation is extensive. **Table 7** contains some details on Iran's missile programs.³⁴ It is also not clear to what extent, if any, Iran's missile programs might have been set back by the November 12, 2011, explosion at a ballistic missile base outside Tehran that almost completely destroyed it and killed the base commander.

³³ For more information on Iran's missile arsenal, see CRS Report R42849, *Iran's Ballistic Missile and Space Launch Programs*, by Steven A. Hildreth.

³⁴ Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Dennis C. Blair, Director of National Intelligence, February 2, 2010.

Table 7. Iran's Missile Arsenal

Shahab-3 ("Meteor")	800-mile range. The missile is operational, and Defense Department report of April 2012, indicates Tehran has improved its lethality and effectiveness, tempering previous assessments by experts that the missile is not completely reliable.
Shahab-3 "Variant" /Sijil/Ashoura	1,200-1,500-mile range. The April 2010 Defense Department report had the liquid fueled Shahab-3 "variant" as "possibly deployed," and the April 2102 report indicates the solid fuel version (Sijil or Ashoura) is increasing in range, lethality, and accuracy. These missiles potentially put large portions of the Near East and Southeastern Europe in range, including U.S. bases in Turkey. A U.N. experts panel reported in May 2011 that Iran tested the missile in October 2010 although the launch was "reported by a [U.N.] Member state," and not announced publicly. In concert with the beginning of 10-day "Great Prophet Six" military exercises, on June 28, 2011, Iran unveiled underground missile silos and undertook some missile tests.
BM-25	1,500-mile range. On April 27, 2006, Israel's military intelligence chief said that Iran had received a shipment of North Korean-supplied BM-25 missiles. Missile said to be capable of carrying nuclear warheads. <i>The Washington Times</i> appeared to corroborate this reporting in a July 6, 2006, story, which asserted that the North Korean-supplied missile is based on a Soviet-era "SS-N-6" missile. Press accounts in December 2010 indicate that Iran may have received components but not the entire BM-25 missile from North Korea.
ICBM	U.S. officials believe Iran might be capable of developing an intercontinental ballistic missile (3,000 mile range) by 2015, a time frame reiterated by the April 2012 DOD report.
Short Range Ballistic Missiles and Cruise Missiles	Iran is fielding increasingly capable, short range ballistic missiles, according to DOD 2012 report, such as ability to home in on and target ships while in flight. One version could be a short range ballistic missile named the Qiam, tested in August 2010. Iran has long worked on a 200 mile range "Fateh 110" missile (solid propellant), which it again tested in August 2012. Iran also possesses a few hundred short-range ballistic missiles, including the <i>Shahab-1</i> (Scud-b), the <i>Shahab-2</i> (Scud-C), and the <i>Tondar-69</i> (CSS-8). In January 2009, Iran claimed to have tested a new air-to-air missile. On March 7, 2010, Iran claimed it was producing short-range cruise missiles that it claimed are highly accurate and can destroy heavy targets. Iran also is able to arm its patrol boats with Chinese-made C-802 cruise missiles. Iran also has Chinese-supplied Seerseekers and C-802's emplaced along Iran's coast.
Space Vehicle	In February 2008 Iran claimed to have launched a probe into space, suggesting its missile technology might be improving to the point where an Iranian ICBM is realistic. Following an August 2008 failure, in early February 2009, Iran successfully launched a small, low-earth satellite on a Safir-2 rocket (range about 155 miles). The Pentagon said the launch was "clearly a concern of ours" because "there are dual-use capabilities here which could be applied toward the development of long-range missiles." A larger space vehicle, Simorgh, was displayed in February 2010. Iran claimed a satellite launch into orbit on June 16, 2011. Iran says it plans another space launch in late December 2013.
Warheads	<i>Wall Street Journal</i> report of September 14, 2005, said that U.S. intelligence believes Iran is working to adapt the Shahab-3 to deliver a nuclear warhead. Subsequent press reports say that U.S. intelligence captured an Iranian computer in mid-2004 showing plans to construct a nuclear warhead for the Shahab. ³⁵

³⁵ William Broad and David Sanger, "Relying On Computer, U.S. Seeks to Prove Iran's Nuclear Aims," *New York Times*, November 13, 2005.

Foreign Policy and Support for Terrorist Groups

Iran's foreign policy is a product of the ideology of Iran's Islamic revolution, blended with long-standing national interests. Some U.S. observers interpret Iran's foreign policy objectives as attempting to overturn the power structure in the Middle East that Iran believes favors the United States, Israel, and Sunni Muslim regimes such as Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states. Iran couches that policy as support for an "oppressed" underclass, while denying any intent to empower fellow Shiites. Iran and its supporters interpret Iran's policies as attempting to thwart a U.S. goal of isolating Iran to the point where its Islamic revolution can be overturned.

Some argue that Iran's foreign policy is ineffective. Countries in the region have helped the United States enforce strict sanctions against Iran. Iran's strategic position is threatened by the civil conflict in Syria, in which Iran's closest Arab ally, Bashar Al Assad of Syria, has lost control of a considerable amount of the country. Assad has been key to Iran's efforts to position itself to strategically counter Israel. Another key ally, the Shiite-dominated government of Iraq, is facing a significant Sunni rebellion that has put nearly half that country out of central government control. On the other hand, Rouhani's election and the nuclear deal have made some of Iran's historic adversaries in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere somewhat more willing to engage with Iran on bilateral and regional issues.

Support for International Terrorism

Iran's foreign policy has made use of groups that are named as terrorist organizations by the United States. Iran was placed on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism ("terrorism list") in January 1984. The State Department report on international terrorism for 2013,³⁶ released April 30, 2014, stated that Iran "continued its terrorist-related activity" in 2013 and that Iran "also increased its presence in Africa and attempted to smuggle arms" to oppositionists in Yemen and Bahrain. In 2012, Iran allegedly backed terrorist plots against Israeli diplomats and officials in such countries as India (in which the wife of an Israeli diplomat was wounded in an attack in Delhi in on February 13, 2012), Bulgaria (where a July 19, 2012, bombing killed five Israeli tourists), Thailand, Georgia, and Kenya. Other alleged plots took place in Azerbaijan and Cyprus.

In 2011 and 2012, U.S. officials asserted that Iran might be planning acts of terrorism in the United States itself. The assessment was based largely on an alleged Iranian plot, revealed on October 11, 2011, by the Department of Justice, to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador to the United States.

Some assert that Rouhani seeks to curb Iran's support for militant movements in the region because their activities could injure his goals of broader international engagement. However, many doubt that Rouhani is able to curb Iranian support for terrorism. Rouhani is perceived as having no ability to remove the head of the Qods Force, Qasem Soleimani, who runs Iran's external operations and reports directly to Khamene'i.³⁷

³⁶ The text of the section on Iran can be found at <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224826.htm>.

³⁷ http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/09/30/130930fa_fact_filkins?printable=true¤tPage=all.

In prior decades, Iranian terrorism took the form of assassinating dissidents abroad. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Iran allegedly was responsible for the assassination of several Iranian dissidents based in Europe, including Iranian Kurdish dissident leader Abdol Rahman Qasemlu, several other Kurdish leaders (including those killed at the Mykonos café in Berlin in September 1992), the brother of PMOI leader Masud Rajavi, and several figures close to the late Shah of Iran. In May 2010, France allowed the return to Iran of Vakili Rad, who had been convicted in the 1991 stabbing of the Shah's last prime minister, Shahpour Bakhtiar. Iran has not been accused of dissident assassinations abroad in well over a decade.

Table 8. Major Past Acts of Iran or Iran-Related Terrorism

Date	Incident/Event	Likely/Claimed Perpetrator
April 18, 1983	Truck bombing of U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. 63 dead, including 17 U.S. citizens.	Factions that eventually formed Lebanese Hezbollah claimed responsibility.
October 23, 1983	Truck bombing of U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut. 241 Marines killed.	Same as above
December 12, 1983	Bombings of U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait City. 5 fatalities.	Da'wa Party of Iraq—Iran-supported Iraqi Shiite militant group. 17 Da'wa activists charged and imprisoned in Kuwait
September 20, 1984	Truck bombing of U.S. embassy annex in Beirut. 23 killed.	Factions that eventually formed Lebanese Hezbollah
May 25, 1985	Bombing of Amir of Kuwait's motorcade	Da'wa Party of Iraq
June 14, 1985	Hijacking of TWA Flight 847. One fatality, Navy diver Robert Stetham	Lebanese Hezbollah
April 5, 1988	Hijacking of Kuwait Air passenger plane. Two killed.	Lebanese Hezbollah, seeking release of 17 Da'wa prisoners in Kuwait.
March 17, 1992	Bombing of Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. 29 killed.	Lebanese Hezbollah, assisted by Iranian intelligence/diplomats.
July 18, 1994	Bombing of Argentine-Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires.	Same as above
June 25, 1996	Bombing of Khobar Towers housing complex near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. 19 U.S. Air Force personnel killed.	Saudi Hezbollah, supported by Iran, but some assessments point to involvement of Al Qaeda.
July 19, 2012	Bombing in Bulgaria killed five Israeli tourists.	Lebanese Hezbollah

Source: State Department Country Reports on Terrorism.

Foreign Policy: Relations with the Persian Gulf States

Most of the leaders of the Persian Gulf monarchy states (Gulf Cooperation Council, GCC: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates) are concerned about Iran's influence and intentions in the Gulf and broader region. These states, all controlled by Sunni-led governments, are cooperating with U.S. policy toward Iran politically, economically, and militarily. Still, the GCC states often seek to lower tensions with Iran, and Qatar, Oman, UAE, and Kuwait welcomed visits by Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif and his aides subsequent to the November 2013 JPA agreement. The GCC countries reacted positively to the JPA, although

experts say that the GCC states are concerned a comprehensive nuclear deal could lead to a U.S.-Iran rapprochement and possibly weaken the U.S. commitment to Gulf security.

- *Saudi Arabia.* Iran and Saudi Arabia represent opposing poles of influence and interests in the region; Saudi Arabia sees itself as leader of the Sunni Muslim world and views Shiite Muslims, including those in eastern Saudi Arabia, as heretical. In speeches and statements, senior Saudi officials have criticized the Obama Administration's engagement with the Rouhani government. However, apparently seeking to cooperate with the U.S. shift toward intensified diplomacy with Iran, in May 2014 the Saudi government announced it had invited Foreign Minister Zarif to visit. Iran has accepted the invitation, but the visit has not occurred, to date. Saudi alarm over Iranian influence in the Gulf was a major factor in the military intervention by Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Bahrain government in March 2011. The Saudis repeatedly criticize Iran for past actions, including inspiring violent demonstrations at some Hajj pilgrimages in Mecca in the 1980s and 1990s—which caused a break in relations from 1987 to 1991. The Saudis also often accuse Iran of stoking Shiite oppositionists in the Gulf, including within the Kingdom itself.³⁸ Saudi leaders have threatened to try to acquire a nuclear weapon if Iran acquires.
- *United Arab Emirates (UAE)* relations with Iran remain colored by the April 1992 Iranian expulsion of UAE security forces from the Persian Gulf island of Abu Musa, which it and the UAE shared under a 1971 bilateral agreement. (In 1971, Iran, then ruled by the U.S.-backed Shah, seized two other islands, Greater and Lesser Tunb, from the emirate of Ras al-Khaymah, as well as part of Abu Musa from the emirate of Sharjah.) The UAE has sought to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), but Iran has insisted on resolving the issue bilaterally. (ICJ referral requires concurrence from both parties to a dispute.) The issue reignited on April 11, 2012, when then-president Ahmadinejad visited Abu Musa. In May 2012, IRGC Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari, accompanied by several Majles deputies, visited the island and discussed developing a tourism industry there. Yet, in the aftermath of the JPA and a visit to Iran by the UAE's Foreign Minister, press reports say that the two countries have made progress toward resolving the islands dispute. Iran reportedly has removed some military equipment from the disputed islands.

Despite the territorial and political disputes, the UAE and Iran maintain relatively normal trade and diplomatic ties. Earlier, to avoid antagonizing Iran, in May 2007 the UAE received then president Ahmadinejad (the highest-level Iranian visit since the 1979 revolution) and allowed him to lead an anti-U.S. rally of several hundred Iranian-origin residents of Dubai at a stadium there. This large Iranian-origin resident community (about 300,000) in Dubai may explain why Dubai takes a generally softer line on Iran than does the federation capital, Abu Dhabi. Reflecting Abu Dhabi's harder line, the UAE has provided extensive

³⁸ Elsa Walsh, "Annals of Politics: Louis Freeh's Last Case." *The New Yorker*, May 14, 2001. The June 21, 2001, federal grand jury indictments of 14 suspects (13 Saudis and a Lebanese citizen) in the Khobar bombing indicate that Iranian agents may have been involved, but no indictments of any Iranians were announced. In June 2002, Saudi Arabia reportedly sentenced some of the eleven Saudi suspects held there. The 9/11 Commission final report asserts that Al Qaeda might have had some as yet undetermined involvement in the Khobar Towers attacks.

cooperation to U.S. and international efforts to enforce economic sanctions against Iran, as discussed further in CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*.

- *Qatar* is wary that Iran might eventually seek to encroach on its large North Field (natural gas). It shares that field with Iran (called South Pars on Iran's side) and Qatar earns large revenues from natural gas exports from it. Qatar's fears have been heightened by occasional Iranian statements, such as one in April 2004, when Iran's deputy oil minister said that Qatar is probably producing more gas than "her right share" from the field and that Iran "will not allow" its wealth to be used by others. Possibly to try to ease such implied threats, Qatar invited Ahmadinejad to the December 2007 GCC summit there.
- *Bahrain* is about 60% Shiite-inhabited, many of whom are of Persian origin, but its government is dominated by the Sunni Muslim Al Khalifa family. In 1981 and again in 1996, Bahrain publicly accused Iran of supporting Bahraini Shiite dissidents in efforts to overthrow the ruling Al Khalifa family. Bahrain has accused Iran of supporting the post-2011 uprising against the Al Khalifa regime by mostly Shiite demonstrators, although the November 2011 final report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) concluded there is no evidence to indicate Iran instigated the protests. On February 21, 2013, the government said that the IRGC had helped form a Bahraini cell to recruit other agents and store weapons in Bahrain for possible attacks on officials and key locations.³⁹ On December 30, 2013, following a two-day raid, Bahraini authorities seized a ship, originating in Iraq, allegedly carrying Iranian weaponry and bomb-making material for the Bahrain opposition.⁴⁰ The State Department report on international terrorism for 2013 (cited above) asserts that Iran has attempted to provide arms and other aid to Shiite militants in Bahrain. Earlier, tensions flared several times after July 2007 over Iranian attempts to question the legitimacy of a 1970 U.N.-run referendum in which Bahrainis opted for independence from Iran.
- *Oman*. Of the GCC states, the Sultanate of Oman is closest politically to Iran. During the Shah's rule, Iran sent troops to help the Sultan suppress rebellion in the Dhofar region. Sultan Qaboos made a state visit to Iran in August 2009, coinciding with the second inauguration of Ahmadinejad and related unrest inside Iran over his reelection. He visited again in late August 2013, reportedly to explore concepts for improved U.S.-Iran relations and what eventually became the JPA. Rouhani visited Oman in March 2014, the only GCC state he has visited since taking office. Some press reports say Omani officials routinely turn a blind eye to or even cooperate in the smuggling of western goods to Iran. Oman and Iran held some joint naval search and rescue exercises in early April 2014.
- *Kuwait*. Kuwait had pursued ties to Iran as a counterweight to Saddam Hussein, who invaded Kuwait in August 1990. After Saddam's overthrow in 2003, Kuwait has become more distant from and critical of Iran. During 2010-2011, Kuwait and Iran arrested persons they accused of spying for or plotting attacks in the other.⁴¹ However, as the GCC countries increasingly engaged with Rouhani and

³⁹ "Iran's Revolutionary Guard Behind Terror Cell, Says Bahrain." Saudi Gazette, February 22, 2013.

⁴⁰ Sandeep Singh Grewal. Arms Ring is Smashed by Police. Daily News, December 31. 2013.

⁴¹ "Iran Spy Cell Dismantled in Kuwait," *Associated Press*, May 6, 2010; "Iran Cell Planned Attacks in Kuwait, (continued...)"

his government, in early June 2014, Amir Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah became the first leader of a GCC country to visit Iran. About 25% of Kuwaitis are Shiite Muslims, and Iran supported Shiite radical groups in Kuwait in the 1980s as a means to try to pressure Kuwait not to support the Iraqi war effort in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), as listed above.

Yemen

Yemeni leaders have long claimed that Iran was trying to destabilize Yemen, which underwent a leadership transition in January 2012 following an uprising. Yemen's leaders have made such claims against Iran perhaps in order to secure more financial and military aid from the Arab Gulf states. DNI Clapper testified on January 29, 2014, that Iran will likely continue to "provide arms and other aid to ... Houthi rebels" in Yemen. These assertions were reiterated in the State Department terrorism report for 2013, cited earlier. Some accounts say that the Quds Force is using small boats to ship in AK-47s, rocket-propelled grenades, and other arms to replace older weapons used by the Houthis. In January 2013, U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Gerald Feierstein accused Iran of supporting secessionist Yemeni leaders, particularly Ali Salim al-Baidh, who is in exile in Beirut. Perhaps as a response to the alleged Iranian intervention in Yemen, in January 2014 gunmen assassinated an Iranian diplomat in Yemen's capital, Sanaa.

Iranian Policy in Iraq⁴²

The U.S. military ousting of Saddam Hussein in 2003 benefitted Iran strategically by removing a long-time antagonist and producing a government led by Shiite Islamists who have long-standing ties to Iran. Iran has strongly backed the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shiite Islamist who has lived in Iran and is viewed by Tehran as a loyal and somewhat pliable ally. Maliki has support most of Iran's regional goals, including keeping Bashar Al Assad of Syria in power in part by allowing Iran to overfly Iraqi airspace to supply the Syrian military.⁴³

The June 2014 offensive led by the Islamic State of Iraq (ISIS) threatened to destabilize Maliki and Iran responded quickly with Qods Force advisers, intelligence drone surveillance, weapons shipments, and other assistance. Iran is also aiding Maliki by reactivating Shiite militias such as the Promised Day Brigade, As'aib Ahl Al Haq (League of the Righteous) and Kata'ib Hezbollah (Hezbollah Brigades), and the Mahdi Army of Moqtada Al Sadr. Kata'ib Hezbollah has been named a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the United States. Prior to the June 2014 crisis in Iraq, these groups were evolving from militias into political organizations, although several of them had, with Iranian encouragement and assistance, sent fighters to Syria to fight on behalf of the Assad regime. Many Iraqi Shiite militiamen who went to Syria have returned to Iraq.

U.S. officials assert that Iran's influence in Iraq could potentially support U.S. efforts to respond to the Iraq crisis, and the United States and Iran conducted bilateral talks on the Iraq situation on June 16 at the margins of the P5+1-Iran nuclear talks. The United States has largely blamed the

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Minister Says," *Reuters*, April 21, 2011.

⁴² For information on Iran's role in the Iraq crisis, see CRS Report R43612, *Iraq Crisis and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman et al.

⁴³ Michael Gordon, "Iran Supplying Syrian Military Via Iraqi Airspace," *New York Times*, September 5, 2012.

crisis on Maliki's failure to build a government inclusive of Iraq's Sunnis and experts assert that Iran could be helpful in replacing Maliki as Prime Minister. The Iraqi parliament, elected on April 30, 2014, begins meetings on July 1 to determine the composition of the next government. Iran is said to be open to an alternative to Maliki, although Tehran will still likely insist that any Prime Minister be a Shiite and an ally of Iran.

Iraq has continued to conduct a full spectrum of trade with Iran, sometimes running afoul of U.S. sanctions against Iran. On July 31, 2012, the United States sanctioned the Elaf Islamic Bank of Iraq for conducting sanctionable banking transactions with Iran, although the sanctions were removed in May 2013 when Elaf bank ceased the activity. In July 2013, Iraq and Iran signed an agreement for Iran to export natural gas to Iraq through a pipeline under construction; the project is potentially sanctionable under the Iran Sanctions Act. Press reports in late February 2014 said Iraq agreed a deal for nearly \$200 million worth of Iranian arms and ammunition—shipments that would violate Resolution 1747 on Iran—but Iraqi officials have told CRS the deal was cancelled shortly after it was signed. (For more information, see CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*, and CRS Report RS21968, *Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights*.)

Supporting Militant Anti-Israel Groups

Iran has long opposed Israel as a creation of the West and an oppressor of the Palestinian people and other Arabs. Former president Ahmadinejad went well beyond that to statements that Israel should be destroyed. The Supreme Leader has repeatedly called Israel a “cancerous tumor.” Iran has hosted numerous conferences to which anti-peace process terrorist organizations were invited (for example: April 24, 2001, and June 2-3, 2002). President Rouhani has sought to soften Iran's image on this issue, in part by publicly issuing greetings to the Jewish community on the occasion of the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana) in September 2013. Despite that outreach, in March 2014, Khamene'i questioned the Holocaust—an issue that Ahmadinejad had raised during his presidency and for which he had incurred major international criticism.

Iran's support for Palestinian militant groups has long concerned U.S. administrations. The State Department report on terrorism for 2012 repeated previous year's reports assertions that Iran provides funding, weapons, and training to Hamas, a faction of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigades, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC). All are named as foreign terrorist organizations (FTO) by the State Department for their use of violence against Israel. During the second Palestinian intifada (“uprising”) in January 2002, Israel intercepted a ship (the *Karine A*) carrying about 50 tons of Iranian-supplied arms bound for the Gaza Strip. The formal position of the Iranian Foreign Ministry is that Iran would not seek to block an Israeli-Palestinian settlement but that the process is too weighted toward Israel to yield a fair result.

Iran and Hamas

For well over a decade, the State Department annual report on terrorism, including the report for 2013, has said that Hamas (named as an FTO) receives funding, weapons, and training from Iran. However, the State Department report noted that Hamas' position on Syria has caused the Iran-Hamas relationship to deteriorate somewhat. Largely out of sectarian sympathy with the mostly Sunni protesters and rebels in Syria, Hamas opposed the efforts by Assad to defeat the rebellion militarily. Hamas' Syria-based leaders left Syria in late 2011. Iran has tried to rebuild the Hamas relationship since late 2012 by reportedly providing “missile technology” that Hamas has

apparently used to construct its own rockets including during the November 14-22, 2012, conflict between various Palestinian militant groups and Israel. Prior to the conflict, Iran reportedly supplied pre-built missiles, such as the “Fajr-5,” to Hamas via Sudan, from where the gear was trucked into Gaza through Egypt.

Hamas and Iran forged a relationship in the 1990s as part of an apparent attempt to disrupt the Israeli-Palestinian peace process through a campaign of Hamas suicide bombings and other attacks on buses, restaurants, and other civilian targets inside Israel. In recent years, however, Hamas has directly involved itself in Palestinian politics and its terrorist activities appear to have diminished. Iran’s attempts to position its allies to strategically threaten Israel were strengthened by Hamas successes, such as its victory in the January 25, 2006, Palestinian Legislative Council elections, and even more so by Hamas’s June 2007 armed takeover of the Gaza Strip. Iran provided material support to Hamas during the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza (December 27, 2008-January 17, 2009). In March 2011, Israel intercepted a ship, the *Victoria*, off its coast, and seized a large quantity of mortars and C-704 cruise missiles that Israel said were bound for Hamas in Gaza. On March 5, 2014, Israeli intercepted a ship in the Red Sea that Israel said was carrying Iranian “advanced weaponry” bound for militants in Gaza, possibly via Sudan.

Iran and Hezbollah⁴⁴

Lebanese Hezbollah is Iran’s chief protégé movement in the region. The 2014 U.S. intelligence community worldwide threat assessment, referenced earlier, states that Hezbollah “has increased its global terrorist activity in recent years to a level that we have not seen since the 1990s.” The relationship began when Lebanese Shiite clerics of the pro-Iranian Lebanese Da’wa Party began to organize in 1982 into what later was unveiled in 1985 as Hezbollah. Iran’s political, financial, and military aid to Hezbollah has helped it become a major force in Lebanon’s politics and Iran reportedly has been instrumental in persuading Hezbollah leaders to become directly involved in the Syria conflict on behalf of Assad. The State Department terrorism report for 2012 repeated previous years’ assertions that Iran “has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in support of Hezbollah and has trained thousands of Hezbollah fighters at camps in Iran.”

Hezbollah’s attacks on Israeli forces in southern Lebanon contributed to an Israeli withdrawal in May 2000, but Hezbollah maintained military forces along the border. Although Iran likely did not instigate Lebanese Hezbollah to provoke the July-August 2006 war with Israel, Iran has long been its major arms supplier. Hezbollah fired Iranian-supplied rockets on Israel’s northern towns during the fighting, including at the Israeli city of Haifa (30 miles from the border), and, more intensively, at cities within 20 miles of the Lebanese border.⁴⁵ During that conflict, on July 14, 2006, Hezbollah hit an Israeli warship with a C-802 sea-skimming missile probably provided by Iran. Iran’s 50 QF personnel in Lebanon reportedly advised Hezbollah during the conflict, although that number might have increased during the conflict to help Hezbollah operate the Iran-supplied weaponry. Even though Hezbollah reduced its overt military presence in southern Lebanon in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 (July 31, 2006), Hezbollah was perceived as a victor in the war for holding out against Israel. Since that conflict, Iran has resupplied Hezbollah with at least 25,000 new rockets⁴⁶ and several hundred Iranian-made

⁴⁴ For detail on Hezbollah, see CRS Report R41446, *Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Casey L. Addis and Christopher M. Blanchard.

⁴⁵ “Israel’s Peres Says Iran Arming Hizbollah,” *Reuters*, February 4, 2002.

⁴⁶ Sebastian Rotella, “In Lebanon, Hezbollah Arms Stockpile Bigger, Deadlier,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 2008.

“Zelzal” (Earthquake) missiles with a range of 186 miles (capable of reaching Tel Aviv from south Lebanon). In November 2009, Israel intercepted a ship that it asserted was carrying 500 tons of arms purportedly for Hezbollah.

Iran has been a political beneficiary of Hezbollah’s growing influence over decision-making and leadership selections in Lebanon. The movement now plays a major role in all major selections. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is considered unable to defeat Hezbollah’s powerful militia and rarely acts against Hezbollah’s forces or interests.

However, there has been more vocal criticism of Hezbollah within and outside Lebanon because it supports its other key patron, Syrian President Assad, against the Sunni-led rebellion in Syria. On April 30, 2013, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah openly admitted that Hezbollah fighters are helping Assad. Iranian financial and logistical help has facilitated the Hezbollah intervention in Syria. Probably in retaliation for Iran’s role in the Syria conflict, militants detonated bombs outside Iran’s embassy in Beirut on November 19, 2013, killing 25 persons including Iran’s cultural attache to Lebanon.

Syria

Syria’s Bashar Al Assad has been Iran’s closest Arab ally, and Iran would suffer a considerable strategic setback if the Sunni-led rebellion in Syria succeeds in toppling his regime. Syria is the main transit point for Iranian weapons shipments to Hezbollah, and both Iran and Syria have used Hezbollah as leverage against Israel to try to achieve regional and territorial aims. Rouhani has not sought to slow Iranian support to Assad and it is not clear he would be able to change Iran’s overall policy were he to try to do so. However, Iran’s support for the beleaguered Iraqi government as of June 2014 could be draining off Iranian resources that might otherwise go to Assad.

U.S. officials and reports assert that, to try to prevent Assad’s downfall, Iran is providing substantial amounts of material support to the Syrian regime, including funds, weapons, and fighters.⁴⁷ The State Department has said repeatedly that Iran has sent Qods Forces (QF) to Syria to advise the regime and fight alongside the Syrian military. Some experts say the Iranian direct intervention goes beyond QF personnel to include an unknown number of IRGC ground forces as well.⁴⁸ The Iranian advisers also have helped Syria set up militia forces to ease the burden on the Syrian army. In May 2014, there were press reports that Iran was attempting to recruit Afghan refugees in Iran to fight in Syria.

Iran has not denied assisting Syria; on December 11, 2013 and on several occasions since, IRGC leaders including Commander-in-Chief Jafari have said the IRGC has sent military experts to Syria. Iran bases its justification for its intervention in Syria on a long-standing defense relationship with the Assad regime. On December 13, 2009, the Syrian and Iranian defense ministers signed a defense agreement. In June 2010, it was reported that Iran had sent Syria a sophisticated air defense radar system that Syria could potentially use to thwart Israeli air strikes.⁴⁹ In March 2011, Iranian officials commented that they might contribute to improving

⁴⁷ Details and analysis on the full spectrum of Iranian assistance to Assad is provided by the Institute for the Study of War. “Iranian Strategy in Syria,” by Will Fulton, Joseph Holliday, and Sam Wyer. May 2013.

⁴⁸ Will Fulton, Joseph Holliday, and Sam Wyer, “Iranian Strategy in Syria,” Institute for the Study of War, May 2013.

⁴⁹ Charles Levinson, “Iran Arms Syria With Radar,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 2010.

some Syrian port facilities or other installations. On some occasions, including the early 1990s, Iran purportedly has acted as an intermediary with North Korea to supply Syria with various forms of WMD and missile technology, and Iran reportedly has helped Syria expand its chemical weapons arsenal.⁵⁰

In large part to build on the nuclear diplomacy with Iran, the Obama Administration has entertained a possible role for Iran in finding a political solution in Syria, despite Iran's role in helping Assad militarily. U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon invited Iran to the January 22, 2014, "Geneva 2" conference that is attempting to find a political solution to the Syria conflict conference after Iran reportedly privately assured him its supports efforts to form a transition government in Syria. However, Iran refused to state that position publicly and the United Nations rescinded Iran's invitation to the conference. In December 2012, Iran announced a six-point plan for a peaceful transition that would culminate in free, multiparty elections, although the plan was rejected by Syrian rebels because it provided for Assad to be able to compete in 2014 elections.

The Caucasus and Central Asia

Iran's policy in the nearby Caucasus has thus far emphasized Iran's rights to Caspian Sea resources, particularly against Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is, like Iran, mostly Shiite Muslim-inhabited, but Azerbaijan is ethnically Turkic and its leadership is secular. Iran reportedly fears not only Azerbaijan's alignment with the United States, but also that Azerbaijan nationalists might stoke separatism among Iran's large Azeri Turkic population, which has sometimes been restive. These differences could explain why Iran has generally tilted toward Armenia, which is Christian, in Armenia's disputes with Azerbaijan. Iran has often slowed or stopped Azerbaijani truck traffic that must transit Iran in order to reach a non-contiguous part of Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), which is cut off from the rest of Azerbaijan by Armenia's occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh. In May 2012, Azerbaijan refused entry to a senior aide to Khamene'i.

The United States successfully backed construction of the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, intended in part to provide alternatives to Iranian oil. In July 2001, Iranian warships and combat aircraft threatened a British Petroleum (BP) ship on contract to Azerbaijan out of an area of the Caspian that Iran considers its own. The United States called that action provocative. Israel also is apparently looking to Azerbaijan to counter Iran, announcing in February 2012 a major sale of defense equipment. In mid-March 2012, Azerbaijan arrested 22 persons it said were Iranian agents plotting attacks against Israeli and Western targets there.

Iran has generally sought and maintained good relations with the Central Asian states. Along with India and Pakistan, Iran has been given observer status at the Central Asian security grouping called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO—Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan). In April 2008, Iran applied for full membership in the organization, but, not wanting to antagonize the United States, in June 2010 the SCO barred admission to countries under U.N. Security Council sanctions (which is the case for Iran).⁵¹

⁵⁰ James Ball, "Documents: Iran Helped Syria Expand Chemical Weaponry," *Washington Post*, July 28, 2012.

⁵¹ Substantially more detail on Iran's activities in Afghanistan is contained in: CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

South and East Asia

Iran looks to countries in East and South Asia as potential allies to help parry U.S. and European pressure on Iran's economy and its leaders. This section focuses primarily on South Asia, which is in Iran's immediate neighborhood.

East Asia

Many countries in East Asia are aligned with the United States. China is an emerging world power that opposes a nuclear-armed Iran but also opposes unilateral U.S. and U.S.-allied sanctions against Iran. Iran's main ally in East Asia is North Korea which, as noted elsewhere, has weapons-related technology ties to Tehran. In April 2013, press reports indicated Iran might supply oil to North Korea, presumably in exchange for the technological help. For more information on Iran's relations with East Asia, see CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*, by Kenneth Katzman, which focuses on Iran's oil customers such as China.

South Asia: Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, as in Iraq, Iran is viewed by U.S. officials as pursuing a multi-track strategy—attempting to help develop Afghanistan and enhance its influence there, while also building leverage against the United States through ties to pro-Iranian groups and anti-U.S. militants. A key long-term Iranian goal appears to be to restore some of its traditional sway in eastern, central, and northern Afghanistan, where Persian-speaking supporters of the “Northern Alliance” grouping of non-Pashtun Afghan minorities predominate. Many Afghans, even those of Pashtun ethnicity, speak Dari, a dialect of Persian language. Iran might also be using its influence in parts of Afghanistan to try to blunt the effects of international sanctions against Iran.⁵²

Iran has sought some influence by supporting the Afghan government. Outgoing President Hamid Karzai, who is a Sunni Muslim and a Pashtun, has said publicly and repeatedly that he opposes any competition between the United States and Iran in Afghanistan. Karzai regularly meets with Iranian leaders bilaterally as well as in the context of several regional summit series that include Pakistan and Central Asian states. The two countries are said to be cooperating effectively against narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan into Iran; Iranian border forces take consistent heavy losses in operations to try to prevent this trafficking.

Reflecting concern about the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, Iran reportedly tried to derail the U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement that was signed on May 1, 2012, and it is attempting to derail the Bilateral Security Agreement that has been completed but not signed by Karzai to date. The BSA text prohibits the United States from using Afghanistan as a base from which to launch military action against other countries. During a visit by Karzai to Tehran to meet with the new leadership team of Rouhani on December 7, 2013, the two presidents agreed to start negotiating a “pact of friendship.” U.S. officials say the pact, even if signed, would not affect U.S. post-2014 plans in Afghanistan. Iran has not shied away from using financial resources to try to sway the Afghan leadership; in the past, Iran has given about \$2 million per year in direct

⁵² Matthew Rosenberg and Annie Lowry, “Iranian Currency Traders Find a Haven in Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, August 18, 2012.

payments to Karzai's government. Karzai admitted on October 26, 2010, that Iran was providing cash payments to his government, through his chief of staff.

Even though it engages the Afghan government, Tehran has sought leverage against U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The State Department has reported on Iranian materiel support to militants in Afghanistan in its annual reports on terrorism, including citing the Qods Force for supplying various munitions, including 107 mm rockets, to select Taliban and other militants in Afghanistan, and of training Taliban fighters in small unit tactics, small arms use, explosives, and indirect weapons fire. The State Department reports assert that Iran has supplied militants in Qandahar, which is a Pashtun-inhabited province in southern Afghanistan and demonstrates that Iran is not only assisting militants near its borders. In February 2011, British forces captured 48 Iranian-made rockets in Afghanistan's western province of Nimruz, allegedly bound for Taliban militants. On the other hand, U.S. commanders have consistently maintained that the Iranian assistance to Afghan militants is not decisive on the battlefield.

The support Iran gives to Afghan insurgents gives Iran potential leverage in any Taliban-government political settlement in Afghanistan. In July 2012, Iran reportedly allowed the Taliban to open an office in Zahedan, in eastern Iran—possibly to better coordinate policy with the Taliban or possibly to facilitate and Iranian role in political reconciliation in Afghanistan.⁵³

Iran has, with U.S. acceptance, engaged in some of the international diplomacy on Afghanistan. It attended the October 18, 2010, meeting in Rome of the 44-nation "International Contact Group" on Afghanistan. The United States did not object to the Iranian attendance at the meeting, which included a briefing by General David Petraeus (then top U.S./NATO commander in Afghanistan). Iran also attended the a Contact Group meeting on March 3, 2011, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (at the headquarters of the Organization of Islamic Conference). Iran did not attend the January 28, 2010, international meeting in Britain on Afghanistan, but it did attend a follow-up meeting in Kabul on July 20, 2010. Iran attended the regional meeting on Afghanistan in Istanbul on November 2, 2011, at which all regional countries pledged to support Afghan stability and sovereignty. It also attended the major international Bonn Conference on Afghanistan on December 5, 2011, and subsequent international conferences on that issue, with the exception of the May 20-21, 2012, NATO summit in Chicago.

Pakistan

Iran's relations with Pakistan have been partly a function of events in Afghanistan, although relations have occasionally been tense over the activities of Sunni Muslim militant groups operating on both sides of their border. These Sunni guerrillas from groups such as Jundullah and one called Jaysh al-Adl operate from Pakistan and have conducted a number of attacks on Iranian regime targets. Jaysh al-Adl seized five Iranian border guards in February 2014; one reportedly was killed and the other four were returned to Iran in April 2014.

Iran engaged in substantial military cooperation with Pakistan in the early 1990s, and it was revealed in 2003 that the founder of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, A. Q. Khan, sold Iran nuclear technology and designs.⁵⁴ However, that cooperation waned later in the 1990s as Pakistan

⁵³ Maria Abi-Habib, "Tehran Builds On Outreach to Taliban," *Wall Street Journal*, August 1, 2012.

⁵⁴ John Lancaster and Kamran Khan, "Pakistanis Say Nuclear Scientists Aided Iran," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2004, http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/IAEA_Iran_8Nov2011.pdf.

supported the Taliban in Afghanistan, which committed alleged atrocities against Shiite Afghans (Hazara tribe), and which seized control of Persian-speaking areas of western and northern Afghanistan. Iran remains suspicious that Pakistan might want to again implant Taliban militants in power in Afghanistan, but Iran-Pakistan relations have improved since mid-2011 as Pakistan's relations with the United States have worsened. Iran and Pakistan now have a broad bilateral agenda that includes a potential major gas pipeline project that Pakistan hopes can alleviate its energy shortages. Then president of Iran Ahmadinejad and Pakistan's then President Asif Ali Zardari formally inaugurated the project in early March 2013. Iran has completed the line on its side of the border, and Pakistan is trying to accelerate work on its part of the line, although Pakistan reportedly is having trouble financing the project. U.S. officials say they consider it potentially sanctionable under the Iran Sanctions Act. Iran and Pakistan conducted joint naval exercises in early April 2014.

India

India and Iran have overlapping histories, civilizations, and interests, aligning on numerous issues including Afghanistan. Both countries support the minority factions based in the north and west. As international sanctions increased in 2011-2012, India wrestled with a choice of preserving its ties to Iran—which has provided it with needed oil for its growing economy—or joining U.S. and international attempts to isolate Iran. Since 2012, it has generally sided with the United States and the EU by cutting its purchases of Iranian oil, and has received exemptions from U.S. sanctions. However, India wants to preserve ties to Iran in support of India's own strategic interests; after the November 24, 2013, interim nuclear deal was reached, Indian officials said they want to move forward on the development of Iran's Chabahar port, which would give India direct access to Afghanistan and Central Asia without relying on transit routes through Pakistan. International sanctions have delayed that project to date. India's cooperation with U.S. sanctions is discussed more extensively in CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*.

Of concern to some U.S. officials in the late 1990s were India-Iran military-to-military ties. The relationship included visits to India by some Iranian naval personnel, although India said these exchanges involve junior personnel and focus mainly on promoting interpersonal relations and not on India's provision to Iran of military expertise. The military relationship between the countries has withered over at least the past five years. India and Iran, along with the United States, backed the anti-Taliban "Northern Alliance" in Afghanistan during 1996-2001.

Al Qaeda

Iran is not a natural ally of Al Qaeda, largely because Al Qaeda is an orthodox Sunni Muslim organization. However, some experts believe that hardliners in Iran still might want to use Al Qaeda activists as leverage against the United States and its allies, despite the May 1, 2011, death of Al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden in a U.S. raid in Pakistan. Some allege that Iran is forging links to Al Qaeda affiliates in Africa for the purpose of extending its influence there. However, it is unclear whether any Iranian ties to these groups are approved at the highest levels of the Iranian leadership. On April 22, 2013, Canada asserted it had foiled a plot by Al Qaeda members based in Iran to bomb Amtrak trains running between Canada and the United States. Officials who revealed the alleged plot did not assert that the Iranian government was involved.

Three major Al Qaeda figures who have been in Iran since the September 11, 2001, attacks include spokesman Sulayman Abu Ghaith, top operative Sayf Al Adl, and a bin Laden son,

Saad.⁵⁵ U.S. officials blamed the three for the May 12, 2003, bombings in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, against four expatriate housing complexes, saying they were able to contact associates outside Iran.⁵⁶ As a possible sign of an Iranian shift, Abu Ghaith was expelled to Turkey, and was apprehended by U.S. authorities on March 13, 2013, with the help of Turkey and Jordan while on his way to his native Kuwait. In February 2014, it was reported that another senior Al Qaeda figure, Thirwat Shihata, was expelled by Iran.⁵⁷

Earlier, the Department of Treasury, on January 16, 2009, designated four Al Qaeda operatives in Iran, including Saad bin Laden (and three lesser known figures) as terrorist entities under Executive Order 13224. On July 28, 2011, under that same order, the Treasury Department sanctioned six Al Qaeda members for allegedly moving funds to Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan via their bases in Iran, and under a specific agreement between Al Qaeda and Iran. Another bin Laden ally, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, killed by U.S. forces in Iraq on June 7, 2006, reportedly transited Iran into Iraq after the September 11, 2001, attacks and became an insurgent leader in Iraq.

Iran has, to some extent, confirmed the presence of Al Qaeda militants in Iran. It asserted on July 23, 2003, that it had “in custody” senior Al Qaeda figures. On July 16, 2005, Iran’s intelligence minister said that 200 Al Qaeda members are in Iranian jails.⁵⁸ U.S. officials have said since January 2002 that Iran has not prosecuted or extradited any senior Al Qaeda operatives.

The 9/11 Commission report said several of the September 11 hijackers and other plotters, possibly with official help, might have transited Iran, but the report did not assert that the Iranian government knew about the plot. A U.S. district court filing in May 2011 in New York named Iranian officials and ministries as materially supporting the Al Qaeda in the September 11 attacks. On December 15, 2011, the court in favor of the plaintiffs and later ordered Iran, Al Qaeda, and the Taliban to pay \$6 billion in damages to the relatives of the September 11 attacks. Earlier, on November 28, 2011, a U.S. district court issued a ruling linking Iran (and Sudan) to the August 1998 Al Qaeda bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Latin America

Some U.S. officials and some in Congress have sought to scrutinize Iran’s relations with countries and leaders in Latin America. Iran views some left-leaning and anti-U.S. leaning countries in Latin American countries as sharing its distrust of the United States and as willing to help Iran circumvent some international sanctions. However, Rouhani has not expressed substantial interest in expanding ties in Latin America, in sharp contrast to Ahmadinejad, who visited the region six times as President. Iran has developed exchange programs that bring students from Latin America to study Islam in Iran; it does not appear that these programs are intended to build terrorist or other pro-Iranian operational cells.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Bill Gertz, “Al Qaeda Terrorists Being Held by Iran,” *Washington Times*, July 24, 2003.

⁵⁶ Bill Gertz, “CIA Points to Continuing Iran Tie to Al Qaeda,” *Washington Times*, July 23, 2004.

⁵⁷ Adam Goldman. “Senior al-Qaeda Figure Leaves Iran Amid Series of Departures.” *Washington Post*, February 16, 2014.

⁵⁸ “Tehran Pledges to Crack Down on Militants,” *Associated Press*, July 18, 2005.

⁵⁹ Joby Warrick, “Mexican Depicts Iran’s Wooing of Hispanic Youths,” *Washington Post*, August 11, 2013.

During 2006-2011, when Ahmadinejad was president, Iran opened six embassies in countries in the region (Colombia, Nicaragua, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Bolivia), and expanded embassies in Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela. In Ahmadinejad's visits to the region, some economic agreements were reached but few were implemented, by all accounts. Ahmadinejad attended the U.N. Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil on June 21, 2012, which was bounded by his travel to Bolivia and Venezuela.

In the 112th Congress, H.R. 3783, the "Countering Iran in the Western Hemisphere Act," requiring the Administration to develop within 180 days of enactment a strategy to counter Iran's influence in Latin America, passed both chambers and was signed on December 28, 2012 (P.L. 112-220). The Administration report required by that law was provided to Congress in late June 2013; the unclassified portion asserted that "Iranian influence in Latin America and the Caribbean is waning" in part because of U.S. efforts to cause Latin American countries to assess the costs and benefits of closer relations with Iran.⁶⁰ No Latin American leader attended the NAM summit in Tehran in August 2012.

Venezuela. Iran, then under Ahmadinejad's presidency, had particularly close relations with Venezuela during the presidency of Hugo Chavez, who passed away in March 2013. Chavez's hand-picked successor, Nicolas Maduro, was declared the winner of the April 2013 presidential election, but Maduro has not expressed nearly the enthusiasm for the Iran relationship that Chavez did. Even before Chavez's death on March 5, 2013, there was no U.S. consensus on the degree of threat posed by Iran-Venezuela ties; in July 2012, President Obama stated that Iran-Venezuela ties do not constitute a strategic threat to the United States.

Indications differ over how active is Iran's presence in Venezuela. An April 2010 Defense Department report on Iran was the first U.S. government publication to say that Qods Force personnel were in Venezuela, although the 2012 version of the report did not address that issue. However, a State Department official testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on June 24, 2011, that Iran's embassy in Caracas has only about 14 diplomats and is not particularly active in terms of open diplomatic activity. About 400 Iranian engineers reportedly were sent to Venezuela to work on infrastructure projects there. Many accounts say that most of the economic agreements between Iran and Venezuela were not implemented. The arrangements that were implemented included the establishment of direct air links through an obscure air service, although the route was suspended in 2010. A deal for Petroleos de Venezuela to supply Iran with gasoline was signed in September 2009, apparently in a joint effort to circumvent U.S. sanctions on sales of gasoline to Iran. In part because of this trade, the firm was sanctioned under the Iran Sanctions Act in May 2011. Other Venezuelan firms have also been sanctioned for ties to Iran, as discussed in CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*.

As far as military cooperation, it was reported in May 2011 that the two may have signed an agreement in October 2010 to develop a joint missile base in Venezuela. However, the Obama Administration said there was no evidence to support the missile base assertion. Venezuela reportedly has purchased some Iranian military equipment, such as rifles, as well as \$23 million in military equipment upgrades and an explosives factory.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Department of State, "Annex Z: Unclassified Summary of Policy Recommendations," June 2013.

⁶¹ Martin Arostegui, "Iran Tries to Gain Sway in Latin America," *Wall Street Journal*, December 6, 2011.

Cuba. Iran's relations with Cuba are long-standing and Cuba was routinely included in then president Ahmadinejad's several visits to Latin America. In the past, Cuba reportedly has helped Iran jam the broadcasts of Iranian dissidents based in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the United States. Still, Cuba's economy is widely considered too small to be able to materially reduce the effect of international sanctions against Iran.

Nicaragua. Iran's embassy in Managua, Nicaragua, is said by close observers to be small, and Nicaragua has refused Iranian demands to repay \$164 million in debt it owes Iran for past crude oil deliveries. Nicaragua reportedly was upset that Ahmadinejad's January 2012 visit did not result in an Iranian pledge to forgive that debt. Iran also failed to implement some promises to undertake joint ventures with Nicaragua, including a \$350 million deep water port there. Still, President Daniel Ortega hosted Ahmadinejad during his visit there in January 2012.

Argentina. Iran's relations with Argentina have been strained since the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, which was followed by the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center there. Both events were widely blamed by investigators and others on Iran, working through its close ally Hezbollah. Then-Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi visited Bolivia in May 2011, but President Evo Morales was compelled to apologize to Argentina for inviting him because of Vahidi's alleged involvement in the 1994 Buenos Aires bombing. Vahidi was, at the time of the bombing, the head of the Qods Force. Some in the Jewish community have opposed a January 2013 Iran-Argentina memorandum of understanding to investigate the 1994 bombing by forming a "truth commission," rather than to aggressively prosecute the Iranians involved. In May 2013, the Argentine prosecutor in the AMIA bombing case, Alberto Nisman, issued a 500-page report alleging that Iran has been working for decades in Latin America, setting up intelligence stations in the region by utilizing embassies, cultural organizations, and even mosques as a source of recruitment.

Brazil. Because of its large economy, Brazil, under previous President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, emerged as Iran's most significant supporter, particularly because of Brazil's engagement with Iran to forge the "Tehran Declaration" on nuclear issues in June 2010. However, the government of President Dilma Roussef, whose term began January 1, 2011, has been less supportive of Iran than was her predecessor. Ahmadinejad did not visit Brazil during his January 2012 visit to the region, but he did visit in June 2012 to attend the U.N. conference on sustainable development.

Africa

Former President Ahmadinejad tried to enlist the support of some African leaders to reduce Iran's international isolation. Ahmadinejad's outreach focused on those African countries that might be able to export natural uranium for Iran's nuclear program to compensate for Iran's domestic deficiencies; such uranium producers include Zimbabwe, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. He made five visits to Africa during his presidency, the most recent of which was to Niger, Benin, and Ghana in April 2013. However, the visits produced no major agreements, by most accounts, in part because most African countries do not want to risk their relationships with the United States by undertaking new dealings with Iran. And, some countries in Africa complain that Iran has not implemented some of its pledges: an Iranian promise to build a new oil refinery in Senegal to ease that country's gasoline shortages was not implemented. Rouhani is likely to concentrate on Iran's relationships with the larger and wealthier countries and likely de-emphasize Africa relative to the policies of Ahmadinejad.

The State Department report on terrorism for 2013 states that Iran “has increased its presence in Africa,” but without providing additional detail. In October 2010, according to Senegalese government sources, the IRGC-QF reportedly attempted to ship weapons to Gambia, via Nigeria, but the shipment was intercepted in Nigeria. Several Iranian entities, and a Nigerian shipping agent, were sanctioned by the United States in April 2012 for facilitating this incident. The Nigerian shipping agent allegedly helped Qods Force personnel enter Nigeria. On May 13, 2013, a Nigerian court convicted one alleged QF member and his Nigerian accomplice to five years in prison for the shipment. The U.N. panel of experts report on Iranian arms sales embargo violations, discussed above, have cited Iranian attempts to ship weapons to allies in the Middle East via Nigeria. Iran restored relations with Senegal on February 7, 2013; relations had been severed in February 2011 when Senegal accused Iran of supplying weapons to rebels in its southern Casamance region. (For more information, see CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*, by Kenneth Katzman.)

Some Members of Congress are concerned that Iran is supporting radical Islamist movements or planning acts of terrorism in Africa. Allegations of Iran’s support for Al Qaeda affiliates in Africa are discussed above in the section on Al Qaeda. A Kenyan court found two Iranian men guilty on May 2, 2013, of planning to carry out bombings in Kenya, apparently against Israeli targets there. As noted above, the U.N. panel of experts reportedly concluded in early 2014 that Iranian arms had reached Al Shabab in Somalia. However, such activity appears to be a minor component of Iranian policy and it is not clear that Iran seeks a broad relationship with Al Shabab.

Sudan

Perhaps Iran’s closest relationship in Africa is with the government of Sudan. Sudan is identified by the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism, but relations with Sudan give Iran leverage against Egypt and a channel to supply weapons to Hamas and pro-Iranian movements in north and east Africa.⁶² Independent experts have documented Iranian defense transfers to Sudan, which are not voluntarily reported to the United Nations.⁶³ There is periodic media speculation, and accusations from Israel, that links Iran to alleged weapons shipments through Sudan bound for Gaza.⁶⁴ In October 2012, a weapons factory in Khartoum, purportedly a source of Iranian weapons supplies for Hamas, was bombed, apparently by Israel.

Iran’s relations with Sudan were particularly close in the early 1990s when Islamist leaders in Sudan welcomed international Islamist movements to train and organize there, but outwardly cooled in the mid-1990s when international sanctions on Sudan compelled that country to downplay Islamist links abroad. Iran nonetheless continued to supply the Sudanese government with weapons it has used on its various fronts, such as the one with South Sudan, and the QF

⁶² Michael Lipin. “Sudan’s Iran Alliance Under Scrutiny.” VOAnews October 31, 2012. <http://www.voanews.com/content/article/1536472.html>.

⁶³ Mike Lewis, *Skirting the Law, Sudan’s Post-CPA Arms Flows, Small Arms Survey*, September 2009; Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment, “SAF “Were the Israelis Behind the ‘Mystery’ Air Strike in Sudan?” *Time*, April 6, 2011; “Car Blast in E. Sudan, Khartoum Points to Israel,” Reuters, May 22, 2012; “Rockets and Meetings,” *Africa Confidential*, May 25, 2012. Weapons Documented in South Kordofan,” *Small Arms Survey*, April 2012.

⁶⁴ “Were the Israelis Behind the ‘Mystery’ Air Strike in Sudan?” *Time*, April 6, 2011; “Car Blast in E. Sudan, Khartoum Points to Israel,” Reuters, May 22, 2012; “Rockets and Meetings,” *Africa Confidential*, May 25, 2012. Weapons Documented in South Kordofan,” *Small Arms Survey*, April 2012.

reportedly has armed and trained Sudanese forces including the Popular Defense Force militia.⁶⁵ Some observers say Iranian pilots have assisted Sudan's air force there. Iran's naval forces made three visits to Port Sudan since 2012, and Iran has offered to build missile defense platforms in Sudan that would help stop further Israeli attacks. Sudan's Foreign Minister Ali Ahmed Karti stated in November 2013 that Sudan had rejected the offer, possibly to avoid alarming the Persian Gulf states who view Khartoum's relations with Sudan with suspicion.

U.S. Policy Approaches and Additional Options

The February 11, 1979, fall of the Shah of Iran, a key U.S. ally, opened a deep and ongoing rift in U.S.-Iranian relations. Although U.S. concerns about Iran and its nuclear program are long-standing, Israel's threat to use military action against Iran's nuclear facilities—with or without U.S. backing—has made U.S. policy toward Iran an urgent issue. Many of the policy options being implemented or under consideration are the same options that have faced the United States since 1979.

Iran has an interest section in Washington, DC, under the auspices of the Embassy of Pakistan; it is staffed by Iranian Americans. The former Iranian Embassy closed in April 1980 when the two countries broke diplomatic relations, and remains under the control of the State Department. The U.S. interest section in Tehran—under the auspices of the Embassy of Switzerland there—has no American personnel. There has been occasional U.S. consideration of requesting that Tehran allow U.S. personnel there, but Iran has not supported the idea to date. Still, the State Department is attempting outreach to the Iranian people by establishing in November 2011 an Internet-based “virtual embassy,” that explains the visa application process and other items.

Background on Relations since the 1979 Revolution

The Islamic revolution in Iran occurred at the start of the third year of the Carter Administration. That Administration initially sought a degree of engagement with the Islamic regime, but it agreed to allow the ex-Shah into the United States for medical treatment and engaged some moderate Iranian officials of the new regime who were viewed by Khomeini loyalists as insufficiently revolutionary. As a result, the U.S.-Iran estrangement deepened significantly began on November 4, 1979, when radical pro-Khomeini “students in the line of the Imam (Khomeini)” seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and held its diplomats hostage until minutes after President Reagan's inauguration on January 20, 1981. That anniversary is remembered each year in Iran with large government-orchestrated anti-U.S. demonstrations near the former U.S. embassy in Tehran. That embassy is now used as a museum commemorating the revolution and as a Basij headquarters. The United States broke relations with Iran on April 7, 1980, two weeks prior to the failed U.S. military attempt to rescue the hostages during April 24-25, 1980. Until 2013, the two countries had limited contact after that time.

Reagan Administration. Iran was placed on the U.S. “terrorism list” in 1984, a designation that reinforces the U.S. “tilt” toward Iraq in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. As part of the effort to bolster Iraq in that war, U.S. diplomacy attempted to block conventional arms sales to Iran and

⁶⁵ <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Security-Watch/terrorism-security/2012/1025/Did-Israel-just-blow-up-an-Iranian-weapons-factory-in-Sudan>.

the United States provided battlefield intelligence to Iraq.⁶⁶ During 1987-1988, U.S. naval forces engaged in several skirmishes with Iranian naval elements in the course of U.S. efforts to protect international oil shipments in the Gulf from Iranian mines and other attacks. On April 18, 1988 (“Operation Praying Mantis”), Iran lost one-quarter of its larger naval ships in an engagement with the U.S. Navy, including a frigate sunk. On July 3, 1988, U.S. forces in the Gulf mistakenly shot down Iran Air Flight 655 by the USS *Vincennes* over the Gulf.

George H. W. Bush Administration. After the Iran-Iraq War ended, President George H. W. Bush laid the groundwork for a rapprochement with Iran. In his January 1989 inaugural speech, saying that, in relations with Iran, “goodwill begets goodwill,” implying better relations if Iran helped obtain the release of U.S. hostages held by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran did assist in obtaining their release, completed in December 1991. However, no thaw followed, possibly because Iran continued to back groups opposed to the U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace process.

Clinton Administration. Upon taking office in 1993, the Clinton Administration at first adopted a strategy of “dual containment” of Iran and Iraq. In 1995 and 1996, the Clinton Administration and Congress banned U.S. trade and investment with Iran and imposed penalties on investment in Iran’s energy sector (Iran Sanctions Act) in response to growing concerns about Iran’s weapons of mass destruction and its efforts to subvert the Arab-Israeli peace process. The Clinton Administration expressed skepticism of the EU’s policy of “critical dialogue” with Iran—a dialogue consisting of EU meetings with Iran that included criticisms of Iran’s human rights policies and its support for militant movements in the Middle East.

The election of relative moderate Mohammad Khatemi in May 1997 precipitated a U.S. offer of direct dialogue with Iran without preconditions. In January 1998, Khatemi publicly agreed to “people-to-people” U.S.-Iran exchanges, but ruled out direct talks. In a June 1998 speech, then-Secretary of State Albright called for mutual confidence building measures that could lead to a “road map” for normalization. In a March 17, 2000, speech, she acknowledged past U.S. meddling in Iran, announcing an easing of the U.S. trade ban, and promised to try to resolve outstanding claims disputes. At the September 2000 U.N. “Millennium Summit” in New York, Albright and President Clinton attended Khatemi’s speeches.

George W. Bush Administration. Although Iran’s government apparently had no direct role in the September 11, 2001, attacks, President George W. Bush defined Iran as an adversary of the United States when he included Iran as part of an “axis of evil” (along with Iraq and North Korea) in his January 2002 State of the Union message. Later that year, Iran’s nuclear program emerged as a major issue for U.S. policy toward Iran. President Bush’s January 20, 2005, second inaugural address and his January 31, 2006, State of the Union message stated that the United States would be a close ally of a free and democratic Iran—reflecting sentiment for changing Iran’s regime.⁶⁷

On the other hand, reflecting the views of those in the Administration who favored diplomacy, particularly on Iraq and Afghanistan. The Administration conducted a dialogue in Geneva with Iran on Iraq and Afghanistan from late 2001 until May 2003,⁶⁸ representing the first confirmed

⁶⁶ Elaine Sciolino, *The Outlaw State: Saddam Hussein’s Quest for Power and the Gulf Crisis* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1991), p. 168.

⁶⁷ Helene Cooper and David Sanger, “Strategy on Iran Stirs New Debate at White House,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2007.

⁶⁸ Robin Wright, “U.S. In ‘Useful’ Talks With Iran,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 2003.

direct dialogue between the two countries since the 1979 revolution. The United States aided victims of the December 2003 earthquake in Bam, Iran. An amendment by then Senator Joseph Biden to the FY2007 defense authorization bill (P.L. 109-364) supported the Administration joining the European countries' nuclear talks with Iran.

The Bush Administration did not offer Iran an unconditional, direct U.S.-Iran bilateral dialogue on *all* issues of U.S. concern. Some assert that the Bush Administration missed an opportunity for a “grand bargain” with Iran on its nuclear program and other issues of concern by rebuffing a reported comprehensive overture from Iran just before the May 12, 2003, Riyadh bombing. The *Washington Post* reported on February 14, 2007, (“2003 Memo Says Iranian Leaders Backed Talks”) that the Swiss ambassador to Iran in 2003, Tim Guldemann, had informed U.S. officials of a comprehensive Iranian proposal for talks with the United States.⁶⁹ However, State Department and some European diplomats dispute that the proposal was fully vetted within Iran's leadership.

Obama Administration Policy: Pressure Coupled with Engagement

After taking office in 2009, President Obama asserted that there was an opportunity to diplomatically dissuade Iran from expanding its nuclear program and to build a new framework for relations after the decades of estrangement and enmity. Some Obama Administration officials expressed skepticism that engagement would yield changes in Iran's policies, while other officials believed that the United States needed to present Iran with clear incentives and punishments for continuing uranium enrichment. Obama Administration Iran policy unfolded in President Obama's first message to the Iranian people on the occasion of Nowruz (Persian New Year) on March 21, 2009. He stated that the United States “is now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us, and to pursuing constructive ties among the United States, Iran, and the international community.” He also referred to Iran as “The Islamic Republic of Iran,” a formulation suggesting aversion to regime change. Other steps included the following.

- President Obama's reported two letters in 2009 to Iran's Supreme Leader expressing the Administration's philosophy in favor of engagement with Iran.
- A major speech to the “Muslim World” in Cairo on June 4, 2009, in which President Obama acknowledged that the United States had played a role in the overthrow of Mossadeq, and said that Iran had a right to peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the NPT.
- An announcement on April 8, 2009, that U.S. officials would attend all P5+1 meetings with Iran, and a loosening of restrictions on U.S. diplomats to meet their Iranian counterparts at international meetings.

2009-2013: Emphasis on Pressure

At the end of 2009, Iran's crackdown on the 2009 election-related unrest and its refusal to finalize the October 1, 2009, interim nuclear agreement discussed above caused the Administration to shift to a “two track strategy:” economic pressure coupled with nuclear negotiations and offers of sanctions relief in return for a compromise. The sanctions imposed during the period, and the degree of international cooperation with the sanctions engendered, were substantial—reflecting

⁶⁹ http://www.armscontrol.org/pdf/2003_Spring_Iran_Proposal.pdf.

the emphasis in the U.S. strategy on pressure. The sanctions imposed are discussed in detail in CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*. The Administration also criticized Iran's human rights abuses, altered some sanctions regulations to help Iranians circumvent government restrictions on the Internet, and continued to fund training and exchanges with civil society activists in Iran. The Administration repeatedly stated that a military option "remains on the table" and it continued to work with the Persian Gulf states and other regional allies to contain Iranian missile and other capabilities.

Response to Rouhani

The election of Hassan Rouhani was judged by the Administration as providing an opportunity for a shift in policy from emphasis on economic pressure to emphasis on diplomacy. The Administration reacted to the election by reiterating the offer stated by Vice President Biden in February 2013, to engage in direct talks with Iran on the nuclear issue. A letter signed by 131 House Members to President Obama, dated July 19, 2013, stated that it would be "prudent for the United States to utilize all diplomatic tools to reinvigorate ongoing nuclear talks."

The potential for rapprochement seemed to improve as the U.N. General Assembly meetings in New York approached. On September 20, 2013, the *Washington Post* published an op-ed by Rouhani, entitled "Time to Engage," stating a commitment to "fulfilling my promises to my people, including my pledge to engage in constructive interaction with the world." President Obama, in his September 24, 2013, speech, confirmed that he had exchanged letters with Rouhani stating the U.S. willingness to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully.⁷⁰ President Obama's speech also appeared intended to assuage long-standing Iranian fears, reportedly strongly held by the Supreme Leader, by stating "We are not seeking regime change." He also reiterated that the United States "respect[s] the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy."

September 2013 Phone Conversation. The Administration signaled that the President would be open to meeting Rouhani on September 24, 2013, between their respective speeches to the General Assembly. That meeting did not occur; Rouhani attributed the failure to meet to inadequate time to prepare for a meeting, although experts attributed it to Rouhani's need to avoid angering hardline regime elements in Iran. However, the September 27, 2013, phone call President Obama placed to Rouhani represented the first direct contact between presidents of the two countries since the Islamic revolution of 1979. The two presidents reportedly agreed to direct their teams to focus on a nuclear solution.

After the U.N. meetings, the Administration focused on the nuclear talks in Geneva, which reached agreement on the JPA and have continued with the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear settlement. The Administration has said that there will be no linkage between a comprehensive deal and Iranian cooperation on such other issues as Iraq, Syria, or Iran's human rights record. Still, the negotiations have improved the climate for broadening U.S.-Iran talks, and the United States and Iranian officials have met bilaterally on the Iraq issue at the margins of the nuclear talks in June 2014. The Administration also has sought to reassure U.S. allies in Israel and the Persian Gulf that improved U.S.-Iran relations do not come at the expense of U.S. relations with those countries or represent a U.S. retreat from its historic security responsibilities in the Gulf.

⁷⁰ Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly, September 24, 2013.

U.S. Defense Posture in the Gulf: Containment and Military Options

Some assert that no permanent nuclear agreement with Iran will be reached and that Iran will inevitably become a nuclear armed state. Some who take this view argue that containing a nuclear armed Iran is a feasible and effective option. Experts who support containment argue that the strategy can also limit Iran's political and military influence more broadly, even if there is a nuclear settlement. Critics of containment see any formal adoption of that strategy as an abandonment of U.S. efforts to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear state. All senior Obama Administration officials, including President Obama, have explicitly asserted that U.S. policy is to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear state. S.J.Res. 41, which passed the Senate on September 22, 2012, in the 112th Congress, rejects any U.S. policy that relies on containment but acknowledges that President Obama has ruled out a containment policy.

There is no consensus on the exact parameters of a containment strategy. Many argue that such a policy would consist of isolating Iran to the extent possible through sanctions and diplomacy, as well as through the threat of U.S. military action to prevent Iranian aggression. A key component of a containment policy is for the United States to maintain a significant defense capability in the Gulf and to enhance the capabilities and resolve of U.S. allies there. The Obama Administration has continued to implement both of these policy components, as discussed below.

Military Action: Pros and Cons. A significant U.S. defense posture can be used not only for containment, but to implement any U.S. decision to take military action to stop Iran's nuclear progress. President Obama has repeatedly stated that "all options are on the table" to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. In a March 2, 2012, interview in *The Atlantic*, President Obama clarified that the "military option" as meaning that there is a military component to preventing a nuclear-armed Iran.⁷¹ He has repeated the "all options on the table" formulation even after the JPA was agreed, indicating that such an option is open should the JPA collapse or no permanent nuclear deal be reached. Yet, President Obama and other senior officials continued to maintain that military action is a last resort if sanctions and diplomacy fail.

Some argue that U.S. military action could set back Iran's nuclear program substantially because there are a limited number of key targets and all targets, even the hardened Fordow site, are vulnerable to U.S. air power.⁷² Other experts suggest that U.S. expressions of confidence in its ability to do substantial damage to Iranian nuclear targets could be intended to signal to Israel that the United States can destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure, if needed. A U.S. ground invasion to remove Iran's regime has not, at any time, appeared to be under serious consideration, in part because of the likely resistance an invasion would meet in Iran.

Senior U.S. officials have repeatedly stressed the potential adverse consequences of military action, such as Iranian retaliation that might expand throughout the region or even beyond, a reduction of Iran's regional isolation, a strengthening of Iran's regime domestically, an escalation of world oil prices, and the likelihood that military action would only delay Iran's eventual

⁷¹ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Obama to Iran and Israel: 'As President of the United States, I Don't Bluff'," *The Atlantic*, March 2, 2012.

⁷² Joby Warrick, "Iran: Underground Sites Vulnerable, Experts Say," *Washington Post*, March 1, 2012. For an extended discussion of U.S. air strike options on Iran, see Rogers, Paul. *Iran: Consequences Of a War*. Oxford Research Group, February 2006.

acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability by about one to two years.⁷³ Most U.S. allies oppose military action, and some allied countries and experts warn that U.S.-Iran military conflict could result from events or actions other than a deliberate U.S. strike. For example, Iran threatened repeatedly in 2012 to close the Strait of Hormuz if sanctions are imposed on Iran's exportation of oil. This issue is discussed in detail in CRS Report R42335, *Iran's Threat to the Strait of Hormuz*, coordinated by Kenneth Katzman.

Some argue that there are U.S. military options that would not require hostilities. These options include a naval embargo or a "no-fly zone" over Iran to pressure the regime. These options appear to be under current consideration.

U.S. Deployments in the Persian Gulf

Whether or not U.S. military action against Iran is ordered, the United States maintains a large Persian Gulf presence as a demonstration that a military option can be implemented. During an early December 2013 visit to several Gulf states, Secretary of Defense Hagel stated that the United States maintains about 35,000 forces in the Gulf region. Most of them are stationed at various Gulf state facilities that the United States has access to, in accordance with Defense Cooperation Agreements (DCAs) between the United States and these countries. Some of the forces are aboard the at least one U.S. aircraft carrier task force that is in the Gulf region virtually continuously. In June 2012, the United States, added a ship (USS *Ponce*) in the Gulf that serves as a platform for helicopters and Special Operations Forces, and added minesweeping capabilities including underwater drones that can find and destroy mines. In September 2012, the United States and 30 other nations held minesweeping exercises in the Persian Gulf to reinforce their ability to respond to any Iranian military action there. On November 15, 2012, it was reported that the United States was sending additional advanced anti-mine technology to the Gulf. Another set of anti-mine drills in the Gulf, involving 41 nations led by the United States took place during May 5-25, 2013. The U.S. defense posture in the Gulf is as follows:⁷⁴

- *Saudi Arabia.* The United States does not have a DCA with Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, a few hundred U.S. military personnel are in Saudi Arabia training its military and Saudi Arabia National Guard (SANG) forces. During the 1990s, the United States emplaced forces and combat aircraft at such Saudi facilities as Prince Sultan Air Base, about 60 miles south of Riyadh.
- *Kuwait.* The United States has had a DCA with Kuwait since 1991, and about 13,000 U.S. Army personnel are stationed there, providing ground combat capability in the wake of the full U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The forces operate out of such facilities as Camp Arifjan, south of Kuwait City, where the United States prepositions ground armor including tanks. U.S. forces train at Camp Buehring, about 50 miles west of the capital, and operate in other facilities such as Shaykh Jabir Air Base.
- *Qatar.* The United States has had a DCA with Qatar since 1992; Secretary Hagel signed an updated version during his visit in December 2013. About 5,000 U.S.

⁷³ <http://2scottmontgomery.blogspot.com/2011/12/panetta-brookings-speech.html>.

⁷⁴ The U.S. deployments in the Gulf are discussed in greater detail in CRS reports on the individual GCC states. Information in this section is derived from author visits to the GCC states since 1993 and conversations with U.S. and Gulf state diplomats.

- forces, mostly Air Force, are in Qatar, manning the forward headquarters of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), which has responsibility for the Middle East and Central Asia; a Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) that oversees U.S. combat aircraft missions in the region; the large Al Udeid Air Base, and the *As Saliyah* army prepositioning site where U.S. tanks are prepositioned.
- *UAE*. The United States has had a DCA with UAE since 1994. About 5,000 U.S. forces, mostly Air Force and Navy, are stationed in UAE, operating surveillance and refueling aircraft from Al Dhafra Air Base, and servicing U.S. Navy and contract ships which dock at the large commercial port of Jebel Ali.
 - *Bahrain*. The United States has had a DCA with Bahrain since 1991. About 6,000 U.S. personnel, mostly Navy, operate out of the large Naval Support Activity facility that houses the U.S. command structure for all U.S. naval operations in the Gulf. U.S. Air Force personnel also access Shaykh Isa Air Base.
 - *Oman*. The United States has had a “facilities access agreement”—not a DCA—with Oman since April 1980. Under the agreement, U.S. forces, mostly Air Force, have access to Omani air bases such as those at Seeb, Masirah Island, Thumrait, and Musnanah. A few hundred U.S. forces serve at these facilities in Oman.

U.S. Efforts to Enhance Indigenous Gulf Defense Capabilities

The Obama Administration has continued, and in some ways expanded, prior initiatives to support the indigenous military capabilities of the GCC states. The Administration inaugurated a “U.S.-GCC Strategic Dialogue” in March 30-31, 2012. A cornerstone of the initiative, as it was during forerunner efforts, is to link into one system Gulf state missile defense capabilities. Secretary of Defense Hagel emphasized the joint missile defense vision during his December 2013 and May 2014 visits to the Gulf, including stating that the United States is hoping to sell related equipment to the GCC as a bloc, rather than to individual GCC countries. As part of this effort, there have been several recent missile defense sales include PAC-3 sales to UAE and Kuwait; and the advanced “THAAD” (Theater High Altitude Area Defense) to UAE and Qatar. In September 2012, it was reported that the United States was putting in place an early-warning missile defense radar in Qatar that, when combined with radars in Israel and Turkey, would provide a wide range of coverage against Iran’s missile forces.⁷⁵

Other major U.S. arms sales to the GCC countries have been intended to improve their air and naval capabilities and their interoperability with U.S. forces, as well as to improve border and maritime security. The United States has continued to agree to major sales to virtually all of the GCC states, including such equipment as combat aircraft, precision-guided munitions, Littoral Combat Ships, radar systems, and communications gear. Some arms sales to Bahrain have been withheld because of the government’s use of force to suppress Shiite unrest there.

Some U.S. officials have at times raised the possibility of a more expansive U.S. security commitment to the Gulf states against Iran. In February 2010, then-Secretary of State Clinton raised the issue of a possible U.S. extension of a “security umbrella” or guarantee to regional states against Iran.

⁷⁵ David Sanger and Eric Schmitt, “To Calm Israel, U.S. Offers Ways to Restrain Iran,” *New York Times*, September 3, 2012.

Other Strategic Missile Defense Concepts Against Iran

As part of the effort to demonstrate to Iran that nuclear weapons have no utility, there has also been planning to defend against an eventual long-range Iranian missile system. In August 2008, the George W. Bush Administration reached agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic to establish a missile defense system to counter Iranian ballistic missiles. These agreements were reached over Russia's opposition, which was based on the belief that the missile defense system would be used to neutralize Russian capabilities. However, reportedly based on assessments of Iran's focus on missiles of regional range, on September 17, 2009, the Obama Administration reoriented this missile defense program to focus, at least initially, on ship-based systems, and systems based in other European countries, including Romania, possibly later returning to the idea of Poland- and Czech-based systems. Some saw this as an effort to win Russia's support for additional sanctions on Iran, although Russia continues to disagree with the plan. The FY2013 national defense authorization act (P.L. 112-239) contained provisions urging the Administration to undertake more extensive efforts, in cooperation with U.S. partners and others, to defend against the missile programs of Iran (and North Korea).

Iranian Retaliation Scenarios

Consistent with U.S. assessments, Iran's Supreme Leader and other Iranian political and military figures have repeatedly warned that Iran would retaliate for any U.S. or other military action taken against Iran. In September 2012, IRGC officials warned that even if military action were taken only by Israel, the action would trigger retaliation against U.S. targets. Some U.S. officials believe Iran would try to retaliate through terrorist attacks inside the United States or against U.S. embassies and facilities in Europe or the Persian Gulf. Iran could also try to direct anti-U.S. militias in Afghanistan to attack U.S. personnel there.

Were Iran to take retaliatory action against the United States and the GCC states, it would probably rely most heavily on its ships, submarines, and short range missiles. Iran could potentially use its large fleet of small boats to "swarm" U.S. ships, and its ability to lay numerous mines in the narrow Strait of Hormuz. Iran has added naval bases along its Gulf coast in recent years, enhancing its ability to threaten shipping in the Strait. In February 2013, Iran announced plans to establish a new naval base near Iran's border with Pakistan, on the Sea of Oman.

To reduce the effectiveness of Iranian retaliation, some argue that the United States would need to strike not only nuclear facilities but all of the retaliatory capabilities discussed above. Press reports in February 2012, citing reported Defense Department briefings of President Obama on military options on Iran, said that a U.S. strike could include IRGC and Iranian leadership targets.

Presidential Authorities and Legislation on Military Action

A decision to take military action might raise the question of presidential authorities, but no legislation has been passed by both chambers and signed into law limiting the President's authority to use military force against Iran. In the 109th Congress, H.Con.Res. 391 (introduced on April 26, 2006) called on the President to not initiate military action against Iran without first obtaining authorization from Congress. A similar bill, H.Con.Res. 33, was introduced in the 110th Congress. An amendment to H.R. 1585, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2008, requiring authorization for force against Iran, was defeated 136 to 288. A provision that sought to bar the Administration from taking military action against Iran without congressional

authorization was taken out of an early draft of an FY2007 supplemental appropriation (H.R. 1591). Other provisions, including requiring briefings to Congress about military contingency planning related to Iran's nuclear program, were in the House version (H.R. 5658) of a FY2009 defense authorization bill, but not the final law. The FY2011 Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 111-383, signed January 7, 2011) contained a provision (§1243) requiring the Administration to develop a "National Military Strategy to Counter Iran."

In the 111th Congress, H.Con.Res. 94 called for the United States to negotiate an "Incidents at Sea" agreement with Iran. Section 1240 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2011 (P.L. 111-383) called for a DOD report, within one year of enactment, on the merits of such an agreement with Iran and other Persian Gulf countries. A press report in September 2011 said that some Defense Department officials were contemplating establishing formal communications channels to Iranian naval officers to prevent misunderstandings and unintended conflict.⁷⁶ The idea grew out of a series of incidents with Iranian vessels, some of the incidents involving British warships, that nearly prompted confrontation with Iran. The concept has not been implemented.

Potential for an Israeli Strike?⁷⁷

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel has asserted that a nuclear-armed Iran would constitute an existential threat to Israel, and that Israel would take unilateral action to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. Implicit in these Israeli statements is the view that Israeli leaders do not believe the Obama Administration would take military action to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Prime Minister Netanyahu has openly expressed opposition to the JPA as failing to dismantle Iran's nuclear infrastructure and paving the way for a broad unraveling of Iran sanctions. Israeli leaders have previously expressed concern that Iran's nuclear program might be advancing to the point where Israel would no longer have a military option. Still, the JPA and the talks on a comprehensive nuclear agreement appear to preclude an Israeli military strike on Iran, at least in the short term. The Obama Administration has refused to accept Israeli urgings—such as by Prime Minister Netanyahu in his September 27, 2012, U.N. General Assembly speech—to set clear "red lines"—actions by Iran that would trigger certain U.S. military action. On April 17, 2013, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported out a "sense of Congress" resolution, S.Res. 65, that the United States should support Israel diplomatically, economically, and militarily if it felt compelled to strike Iran's nuclear facilities. The resolution passed the Senate on May 22, 2013, by a vote of 99-0.

Although Israeli strategists say that a strike might be a viable option, several U.S. experts doubt that Israel has the capability to make such action sufficiently effective to justify the risks. The IAF is capable but far smaller than that of the United States, and could require overflight of several countries not likely to support Israeli action, such as Iraq.

Reported Covert Action

There reportedly has also been U.S. covert action to slow Iran's nuclear program, but no apparent U.S. covert action to try to destabilize Iran politically. During 2006-2008, it was reported that the

⁷⁶ Jay Solomon and Julian Barnes, "U.S. Weighs A Direct Line to Tehran," *Wall Street Journal*, September 19, 2011.

⁷⁷ This option is analyzed in substantial depth in CRS Report R42443, *Israel: Possible Military Strike Against Iran's Nuclear Facilities*, coordinated by Jim Zanotti.

United States and Israel conducted operations that resulted in the sale to Iran of nuclear and other technology rigged to have a destructive effect on Iran's programs. Another example includes the Stuxnet computer virus that caused many Iranian centrifuges to be destroyed. The killings of some Iranian scientists over the past few years remain unexplained and could have been the result of covert action. The latest Iranian scientist to be killed was Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, a chemical engineer at the Natanz enrichment facility, who died when a bomb placed under his car exploded on January 10, 2012.

Some believe that Iran is retaliating for the reported covert action through cyberattacks on U.S. or foreign financial institutions, which have been occurring since 2012. U.S. officials have said Iran might also have perpetrated a cyberattack against Persian Gulf state oil and gas firms in mid-2012. U.S. officials say they are working with affected institutions to try to stop the attacks, and some press reports say that other forms of retaliation against Iran might be under consideration.⁷⁸

Regime Change

Even before the election of Rouhani, the Obama Administration has consistently sought to allay Iran's long-standing suspicions that the main U.S. goal is to unseat the Islamic regime in Iran. Since then, in a September 24, 2013, General Assembly speech, President Obama explicitly stated the United States does not seek to change Iran's regime. However, many of Iran's leaders, particularly Khamene'i, continue to articulate a perception that the United States has never accepted the 1979 Islamic revolution. Khamene'i and other Iranian figures note that the United States provided some funding to anti-regime groups, mainly pro-monarchists, during the 1980s,⁷⁹ and the George W. Bush Administration expressed attraction to this option on several occasions.

There was criticism in Iranian opposition and other circles of the Administration decision not to materially support the 2009 domestic uprising in Iran. The Administration asserts that it was appropriately critical of the regime crackdown on protests. On December 28, 2009, President Obama stated that "Along with all free nations, the United States stands with those who seek their universal rights."⁸⁰ On September 19, 2010, then-Secretary of State Clinton asserted that overt and extensive U.S. support for the opposition could undermine the opposition's position in Iran.

In 2011, the Administration reevaluated its stance slightly in the context of the broader Middle East uprisings. Statements by then-Secretary Clinton accused Iran of hypocrisy for supporting demonstrations in Egypt while preventing similar free expression inside Iran.⁸¹ Many observers noted that President Obama's 2011 Nowruz address was far more explicitly supportive of the Iranian opposition than in past years, mentioning specific dissidents who have been jailed and

⁷⁸ Siobhan Gorman and Danny Yadron, "Banks Seek U.S. Help on Iran Cyberattacks," *Wall Street Journal*, January 16, 2013.

⁷⁹ CRS conversations with U.S. officials responsible for Iran policy, 1980-1990. After a period of suspension of such assistance, in 1995, the Clinton Administration accepted a House-Senate conference agreement to include \$18-\$20 million in funding authority for covert operations against Iran in the FY1996 Intelligence Authorization Act (H.R. 1655, P.L. 104-93), according to a *Washington Post* report of December 22, 1995. The Clinton Administration reportedly focused the covert aid on changing the regime's behavior, rather than its overthrow.

⁸⁰ White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Statement by the President on the Attempted Attack on Christmas Day and Recent Violence in Iran," December 28, 2009.

⁸¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/27/statement-national-security-council-spokesman-tommy-vietor-iran>.

saying to the “young people of Iran ... I want you to know that I am with you.”⁸² Since that statement, the Administration has sanctioned Iranian officials for human rights abuses in Iran and for assisting Syria with its crackdown against demonstrations. These statements and steps stop short of constituting a policy of “regime change,” although Iran interprets any public support for the domestic opposition as evidence of U.S. intent to overthrow the clerical government.

Some in Congress have advocated a U.S. policy of overthrow of the regime. In the 111th Congress, one bill said that it should be U.S. policy to promote the overthrow of the regime (The Iran Democratic Transition Act, S. 3008).

Democracy Promotion and Internet Freedom Efforts

In the absence of all-out U.S. pursuit of regime change, successive Administrations and Congress have agreed on steps to promote gradual political evolution in Iran through “democracy promotion” and sanctions on Iranian human rights abuses. The laws and Executive Orders discussed in this section are analyzed in greater detail in CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*. That report also contains tables listing Iranian entities sanctioned under these provisions.

Sanctioning Iranian Human Rights Abusers and Abuses

As part of its efforts to isolate the regime on human rights grounds, on September 29, 2010, President Obama, acting in accordance with Section 105 of P.L. 111-195 (CISADA), issued Executive Order 13553, imposing sanctions on Iranian officials determined to have committed human rights abuses since Iran’s 2009 election. Sanctions include a ban on visas to the United States and freeze on U.S.-based assets or trade with them. In an annex, eight Iranian officials were named as violators and were subjected to the sanctions.

In the 112th Congress, several bills were introduced to increase sanctions on Iranian human rights abusers, including S. 879 and H.R. 1714. Elements of them were incorporated into a broad Iran sanctions bill, H.R. 1905, passed by both chambers on August 1, 2012, and signed on August 10 (P.L. 112-158), and expanded since.

Promoting Internet Freedom in Iran

U.S. actions have focused on preventing the Iranian government’s suppression of electronic communication. Several laws and Executive Orders issued since 2010 are intended to promote Internet freedom, and the Administration has amended U.S.-Iran trade regulations to allow for the sale to Iranians of consumer electronics and software that help them communicate. Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman testified on October 14, 2011, that some of the democracy promotion funding for Iran has been to train Iranians in the use of technologies that undermine regime Internet censorship efforts.

⁸² White House, “Remarks of President Obama Marking Nowruz,” March 20, 2011.

Democracy Promotion Funding

Binding legislation to favor democracy promotion in Iran was enacted in the 109th Congress. The Iran Freedom Support Act (P.L. 109-293), signed September 30, 2006, authorized funds (no specific dollar amount) for Iran democracy promotion.⁸³ Iran asserts that funding democracy promotion represents a violation of the 1981 “Algiers Accords” that settled the Iran hostage crisis and provide for non-interference in each other’s internal affairs.

The George W. Bush Administration asserted that open funding of Iranian pro-democracy activists (see below) as a stated effort to change regime behavior, not to overthrow the regime, although some saw the Bush Administration’s efforts as a cover to achieve a regime change objective. A few accounts, such as “Preparing the Battlefield” by Seymour Hersh in the *New Yorker* (July 7 and 14, 2008), say that President George W. Bush authorized U.S. covert operations to destabilize the regime,⁸⁴ involving assistance to some of the ethnic-based armed groups discussed above. CRS has no way to confirm assertions in the Hersh article that up to \$400 million was appropriated and/or used to aid the groups mentioned.

The State Department, the implementer of U.S. democracy promotion programs for Iran, has used funds in appropriations (see **Table 9**) to support pro-democracy programs run by at organizations based in the United States and in Europe; the department refuses to name grantees for security reasons. The funds shown below have been obligated through DRL and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in partnership with USAID. Some of the funds have been appropriated for cultural exchanges, public diplomacy, and broadcasting to Iran. A further indication of the sensitivity of specifying the use of the funds is that, since FY2010, the Obama Administration has requests funds for Iran democracy promotion as part of a broader “Near East regional democracy programs” rather than delineating a specific request for Iran programs.

Many have consistently questioned the effectiveness of such funding. In the view of many experts, U.S. funds would make the aid recipients less attractive to most Iranians. Even before the post-2009 election crackdown, Iran was arresting civil society activists by alleging they are accepting the U.S. democracy promotion funds, while others have refused to participate in U.S.-funded programs, fearing arrest.⁸⁵ In May 2007—Iranian American scholar Haleh Esfandiari, of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, was imprisoned for several months, on the grounds that the Wilson Center was part of this effort. The center has denied being part of the democracy promotion effort in Iran.

Perhaps in response to some of these criticisms, the Obama Administration altered Iran democracy promotion programs somewhat toward working directly with Iranians inside Iran who

⁸³ This legislation was a modification of H.R. 282, which passed the House on April 26, 2006, by a vote of 397-21, and S. 333, which was introduced in the Senate.

⁸⁴ Brian Ross and Richard Esposito, “Bush Authorizes New Covert Action Against Iran,” http://blogs.abcnews.com/theblotter/2007/05/bush_authorizes.html.

⁸⁵ Three other Iranian Americans were arrested and accused by the Intelligence Ministry of actions contrary to national security in May 2007: U.S. funded broadcast (Radio Farda) journalist Parnaz Azima (who was not in jail but was not allowed to leave Iran); Kian Tajbacksh of the Open Society Institute funded by George Soros; and businessman and peace activist Ali Shakeri. Several congressional resolutions called on Iran to release Esfandiari (S.Res. 214 agreed to by the Senate on May 24; H.Res. 430, passed by the House on June 5; and S.Res. 199). All were released by October 2007. Tajbacksh was rearrested in September 2009 and remains incarcerated.

are organized around such apolitical issues as health care, the environment, and science.⁸⁶ During 2009, less emphasis was placed on funding journalists and human rights activists in Iran, or on sponsoring visits by Iranians to the United States.⁸⁷ One issue arose concerning the State Department decision in late 2009 not to renew a contract to the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), based at Yale University, which was cataloguing human rights abuses in Iran. However, IHRDC has reportedly continued to receive some U.S. funding to continue its work.

Broadcasting/Public Diplomacy Issues

Another part of the democracy promotion effort has been the development of new U.S. broadcasting services to Iran. The broadcasting component of policy has been an extension of a trend that began in the late 1990s. Radio *Farda* (“tomorrow,” in Farsi) began under Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), in partnership with the Voice of America (VOA), in 2002. The service was established as a successor to a smaller Iran broadcasting effort begun with an initial \$4 million from the FY1998 Commerce/State/Justice appropriation (P.L. 105-119). It was to be called Radio Free Iran but was never formally given that name by RFE/RL. Radio *Farda* now broadcasts 24 hours/day. Radio *Farda* has 59 full time employees. No U.S. assistance has been provided to Iranian exile-run stations.⁸⁸

According to information provided to CRS by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), the costs of Radio *Farda* are FY2010: \$9.9 million; FY2011: \$11.84 million; and FY2012: \$11.77 million.

Persian News Network (PNN). The VOA established a Persian language service to Iran (VOA Persian Service) in July 2003. In July 2007, it was renamed Persian News Network (PNN), encompassing radio (1 hour a day or original programming); television (6 hours a day of primetime programming, rebroadcast throughout a 24-hour period); and Internet.

Even though PNN has expanded its offerings significantly, it has come under substantial criticism from observers. Some say that PNN has lost much of its audience among young, educated, anti-regime Iranians who are looking for signs of U.S. official support. The Inspector General report cited above, as well as many observers, maintains that decisions on who to put on PNN panel discussion shows have been made by a small group of Iranian exiles who deliberately deny appearances to certain Iranians with whom they disagree. Still others say that PNN frequently airs the views of Iranian groups that are advocates of U.S. engagement of the regime or who downplay regime transgressions. Some have criticized PNN for covering long-standing exiled opposition groups, such as supporters of the son of the former Shah of Iran.⁸⁹ Other critics say PNN offers little coverage of the Green Movement, even though a mission of the network is, or should be, to highlight the purported unpopularity of the regime. Others say it has run pieces pointing out such U.S. social problems as homelessness and drug use, while refusing to air pieces showcasing U.S. democracy and rule of law. Other observers say there is wide-ranging nepotism

⁸⁶ CRS conversation with U.S. officials of the “Iran Office” of the U.S. Consulate in Dubai, October 2009.

⁸⁷ Jay Solomon, “U.S. Shifts Its Strategy Toward Iran’s Dissidents,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 11, 2010.

⁸⁸ The conference report on the FY2006 regular foreign aid appropriations, P.L. 109-102, stated the sense of Congress that such support should be considered.

⁸⁹ CRS conversations with Iranian members of the Green Movement, December 2009-August 2010.

at PNN, in which employees hire their relatives and deny opportunities to employment applicants based on merit. VOA officials said in September 2012 they are attempting address some of these issues through the human resources office of the VOA.

Several observers point to one particular PNN show as having particular effect on audiences inside Iran. That show is called “Parazit” (Persian for static); it is a weekly comedy show modeled on a U.S. program on Comedy Central network called “The Daily Show.” On Parazit, the writers of the show, Kambiz Hosseini and Saman Arbabi, mocked then president Ahmadinejad and other Iranian figures, using political satire. Observers say that the show deteriorated in quality in 2012 after Mr. Hosseini left the show or was ousted from it, and it was taken off PNN in February 2012. A different show that satirizes Iranian leaders and news from Iran—called On Ten—began in April 2012.

Other issues relate to the PNN’s leadership and governance. In February 2011, Ramin Asgard, a former State Department officer, was hired as PNN director,⁹⁰ tasked with redressing the PNN deficiencies. However, he left in January 2012, reportedly out of frustration at his inability to restructure PNN. PNN is temporarily run by VOA official Steve Redisch. The VOA is attempting to recruit a permanent replacement for Asgard.

According to a VOA briefing on September 21, 2012, PNN has 79 full-time employees and 114 contractors. Past costs for PNN are: FY2010, \$23.78 million; FY2011, \$22.5 million; and FY2012 (estimate), \$23.32 million. In FY2013 its costs are expected to be about \$18 million.

⁹⁰ <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=54504>. Confirmed to CRS on February 25, 2011, by a member of the BBG.

Table 9. Iran Democracy Promotion Funding

FY2004	Foreign operations appropriation (P.L. 108-199) earmarked \$1.5 million for “educational, humanitarian and non-governmental organizations and individuals inside Iran to support the advancement of democracy and human rights in Iran.” The State Department Bureau of Democracy and Labor (DRL) gave \$1 million to a unit of Yale University, and \$500,000 to National Endowment for Democracy.
FY2005	\$3 million from FY2005 foreign aid appropriation (P.L. 108-447) for democracy promotion. Priority areas: political party development, media, labor rights, civil society promotion, and human rights.
FY2006	\$11.15 for democracy promotion from regular FY2006 foreign aid appropriation (P.L. 109-102). \$4.15 million administered by DRL and \$7 million for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.
FY2006 supp.	Total of \$66.1 million (of \$75 million requested) from FY2006 supplemental (P.L. 109-234): \$20 million for democracy promotion; \$5 million for public diplomacy directed at the Iranian population; \$5 million for cultural exchanges; and \$36.1 million for Voice of America-TV and “Radio Farda” broadcasting. Broadcasting funds are provided through the Broadcasting Board of Governors.
FY2007	FY2007 continuing resolution provided \$6.55 million for Iran (and Syria) to be administered through DRL. \$3.04 million was used for Iran. No funds were requested.
FY2008	\$60 million (of \$75 million requested) is contained in Consolidated Appropriation (H.R. 2764, P.L. 110-161), of which, according to the conference report \$21.6 million is ESF for pro-democracy programs, including non-violent efforts to oppose Iran’s meddling in other countries. \$7.9 million is from a “Democracy Fund” for use by DRL. The Appropriation also fully funded additional \$33.6 million requested for Iran broadcasting: \$20 million for VOA Persian service; and \$8.1 million for Radio Farda; and \$5.5 million for exchanges with Iran.
FY2009	Request was for \$65 million in ESF “to support the aspirations of the Iranian people for a democratic and open society by promoting civil society, civic participation, media freedom, and freedom of information.” H.R. 1105 (P.L. 111-8) provides \$25 million for democracy promotion programs in the region, including in Iran.
FY2010	\$40 million requested and used for Near East Regional Democracy programming. Programs to promote human rights, civil society, and public diplomacy in Iran constitute a significant use of these region-wide funds.
FY2011	\$40 million requested and will be used for Near East Regional Democracy programs. Programming for Iran with these funds to be similar to FY2010.
FY2012	\$35 million for Near East Regional Democracy, and Iran-related use is to be similar to FY2010 and FY2011.
FY2013	\$30 million for Near East Regional Democracy, with Iran use similar to prior two fiscal years.
FY2014	\$30 million for Near East Regional Democracy, with Iran use similar to prior three fiscal years.
FY2015	\$30 million requested for Near East Regional Democracy, with Iran use likely similar to previous years. Request mentions funding to be used to help circumvent Internet censorship in countries where the funds are to be used.

Sources: Information provided by State Department and reviewed by Department’s Iran Office, February 1, 2010; State Department Congressional Budget Justifications; author conversation with Department of State Iran Office, April 21, 2011.

State Department Diplomatic and Public Diplomacy Efforts

Since 2006, the State Department has been increasing the presence of Persian-speaking U.S. diplomats in U.S. diplomatic missions around Iran, in part to help identify and facilitate Iranian participate in U.S. democracy-promotion programs. The Iran unit at the U.S. consulate in Dubai has been enlarged significantly into a “regional presence” office, and “Iran-watcher” positions have been added to U.S. diplomatic facilities in Baku, Azerbaijan; Istanbul, Turkey; Frankfurt,

Germany; London; and Ashkabad, Turkmenistan, all of which have large expatriate Iranian populations and/or proximity to Iran.⁹¹ An Iran watch position is being added in Herat, Afghanistan, in early 2013. An enlarged (eight-person) “Office of Iran Affairs” has been formed at the State Department, and it is reportedly engaged in contacts with U.S.-based exile groups such as those discussed earlier.

The State Department also is trying to enhance its public diplomacy to reach out to the Iranian population.

- In May 2003, the State Department added a Persian-language website to its list of foreign language websites, under the authority of the Bureau of International Information Programs. The website, according to a statement issued by then-Secretary of State Colin Powell, is intended to be a source of information about the United States and its policy toward Iran.
- On February 14, 2011, the State Department announced that it had begun Persian-language Twitter feeds in an effort to connect better with Internet users in Iran.
- In part to augment U.S. public diplomacy, the State Department announced in April 2011 that a Persian-speaking U.S. diplomat based at the U.S. Consulate in Dubai, would make regular appearances on Iranian official media to explain U.S. positions.

Adding or Easing International Sanctions

Many assert that it is the significant effect of sanctions on Iran’s economy that caused Rouhani’s election and Iranian agreement to the JPA. U.S. sanctions laws and multilateral sanctions and their effects on Iran are discussed in detail in CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*, by Kenneth Katzman.

The JPA requires some easing of U.S. sanctions on foreign firms and countries that deal with Iran. The easing was implemented on January 20, 2014—the first day of implementation of the JPA. The JPA also requires the international community not to impose any new sanctions against Iran during the JPA period. The Administration argues that Congress should not enact—and has threatened to veto—additional sanctions legislation while the JPA is in effect. This veto threat applies to S. 1881, even though the sanctions provisions would not take effect until after the JPA expires.

Should the JPA collapse or fail to translate into a comprehensive deal, there are numerous remaining ideas and suggestions for additional economic and diplomatic sanctions against Iran. Some are U.S. sanctions, some are U.S. sanctions against foreign entities intended to compel them to exit the Iranian market, and others are multilateral or international. Other options include

- *Mandating Reductions in Diplomatic Exchanges with Iran or Prohibiting Travel by Iranian Officials.*
- *Banning Passenger Flights to and from Iran.*

⁹¹ Farah Stockman, “‘Long Struggle’ With Iran Seen Ahead,” *Boston Globe*, March 9, 2006.

- *Limiting Lending to Iran by International Financial Institutions.* Resolution 1747 calls for restraint on but does not outright ban international lending to Iran.
- *Banning Trade Financing or Official Insurance for Trade Financing.* This was not made mandatory by Resolution 1929, but several countries imposed this sanction (as far as most trade financing) subsequently.
- *Banning All Investment in Iran's Energy Sector.* Such a step is authorized, not mandated, by Resolution 1929, and the Iran Sanctions Act allows for U.S. sanctions against foreign investment in that sector. A growing number of countries have used that authority to impose these sanctions on Iran.
- *Restricting Operations of and Insurance for Iranian Shipping.* A call for restraint is in Resolution 1929, but is not mandatory. The EU and other national measures announced subsequently did include this sanction (IRISL) to take effect as of July 1.
- *Imposing a Worldwide Ban on Sales of Arms to Iran.* Resolution 1929 imposes a ban on sales of major weapons systems to Iran, but another option is to extend that ban to all lethal equipment.
- *Imposing an International Ban on Trade With Iran, Particularly Purchases of Iranian Oil or Gas.* As noted, the EU has agreed to stop all purchases of Iranian oil as of July 1, 2012, and it later banned purchases of Iranian natural gas. Other countries have cut their oil buys. An option is to impose a worldwide ban on all purchases of oil or gas, or to further pressure or incent nations to end such buys from Iran. A related idea could be the enactment of a global ban on trade with Iran or of U.S. sanctions that seek to compel a partial or comprehensive global ban on trade with Iran. As noted, H.R. 850, introduced in the 113th Congress on February 27, 2013, comes close to this later concept.

Table 10. Digest of Existing U.S. Sanctions Against Iran

Ban on U.S. Trade With and Investment in Iran. Executive Order 12959 (May 6, 1995) bans almost all U.S. trade with and investment in Iran. Modifications in 1999 and 2000 allowed for exportation of U.S. food and medical equipment, and importation from Iran of luxury goods (carpets, caviar, dried fruits, nuts), but P.L. 111-195 (Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act, CISADA) restored the complete ban on imports. The trade ban does not generally apply to foreign subsidiaries of U.S. firms. P.L. 112-239 sanctions most foreign dealings with Iran's energy, shipping, and shipbuilding sector, as well as the sale of certain items for Iranian industrial processes and the transfer to Iran of precious metals (often a form of payment for oil or gas).

U.S. Sanctions Against Foreign Firms that Deal With Iran's Energy Sector. The Iran Sanctions Act (P.L. 104-172, August 5, 1996, as amended, most recently by H.R. 1905/P.L. 112-158) authorizes the President to select five out of a menu of twelve sanctions to impose against firms that the Administration has determined: have invested more than \$20 million to develop Iran's petroleum (oil and gas) sector; that buy Iranian oil (unless such country has a sanctions exemption under the FY2012 National Defense Act, see below); have sold Iran more than \$1 million worth of gasoline or equipment to import gasoline or refine oil into gasoline; have sold energy \$1 million or more worth of energy equipment to Iran; that provided shipping services to transport oil from Iran; that have engaged in an energy joint venture with Iran outside Iran; or that buy Iran's sovereign debt.

Sanctions On Iran's Central Bank. CISADA bans accounts with banks that do business with the Revolutionary Guard and sanctioned entities and the Treasury Dept. in November 2011 declared Iran's financial system an entity of primary money laundering concern. Section 1245 of the FY2012 National Defense Act, signed December 31, 2011, prevents foreign banks that do business with Iran's Central Bank from opening U.S. accounts.

Terrorism List Designation Sanctions. Iran's designation by the Secretary of State as a "state sponsor of terrorism" (January 19, 1984—commonly referred to as the "terrorism list") triggers several sanctions, including the following: (1) a ban on the provision of U.S. foreign assistance to Iran under Section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act; (2) a ban on arms exports to Iran under Section 40 of the Arms Export Control Act (P.L. 95-92, as amended); (3) under Section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act (P.L. 96-72, as amended), a significant restriction—amended by other laws to a "presumption of denial"—on U.S. exports to Iran of items that could have military applications; (4) under Section 327 of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (P.L. 104-132, April 24, 1996), a requirement that U.S. representatives to international financial institutions vote against international loans to terrorism list states.

Sanctions Against Foreign Firms that Aid Iran's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs. The Iran-Syria-North Korea Nonproliferation Act (P.L. 106-178, March 14, 2000, as amended) authorizes the Administration to impose sanctions on foreign persons or firms determined to have provided assistance to Iran's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. Sanctions include restrictions on U.S. trade with the sanctioned entity.

Sanctions Against Foreign Firms that Sell Advanced Arms to Iran. The Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act (P.L. 102-484, October 23, 1992, as amended) provides for U.S. sanctions against foreign firms that sell Iran "destabilizing numbers and types of conventional weapons" or WMD technology.

Ban on Transactions With Foreign Entities Determined to Be Supporting International Terrorism. Executive Order 13324 (September 23, 2001) authorizes a ban on U.S. transactions with entities determined to be supporting international terrorism. The Order was not specific to Iran, coming 12 days after the September 11, 2001, attacks, but several Iranian entities have been designated.

Ban on Transactions With Foreign Entities that Support Proliferation. Executive Order 13382 (June 28, 2005) amended previous executive orders to provide for a ban on U.S. transactions with entities determined to be supporting international proliferation. As is the case for Executive Order 13324, mentioned above, Executive Order 13382 was not specific to Iran. However, numerous Iranian entities, including the IRGC itself, have been designated.

Divestment. A Title in P.L. 111-195 authorizes and protects from lawsuits various investment managers who divest from shares of firms that conduct sanctionable business with Iran.

Counter-Narcotics. In February 1987, Iran was first designated as a state that failed to cooperate with U.S. anti-drug efforts or take adequate steps to control narcotics production or trafficking. The Clinton Administration, on December 7, 1998, removed Iran from the U.S. list of major drug producing countries. This exempted Iran from the annual certification process that kept drug-related U.S. sanctions in place on Iran.

Sanctions Against Human Rights Abuses and Internet Monitoring. Various laws discussed above, and Executive Orders, impose sanctions on named Iranian human rights abusers, and on firms that sell equipment Iran can use to monitor the Internet usage of citizens or employ against demonstrators.

Source: CRS. For analysis and extended discussion of U.S. and international sanctions against Iran, see CRS Report RS20871, *Iran Sanctions*, by Kenneth Katzman.

Table 11. Selected Economic Indicators

Economic Growth	Negative 5% growth in 2013
Per Capita Income	\$12,800/yr (purchasing power parity) (2013)
GDP	\$988 billion (purchasing power parity) (2013)
Proven Oil Reserves	135 billion barrels (highest after Russia and Canada)
Oil Production/Exports	About 1 mbd exports since the end of 2013.
Major Oil/Gas Customers	Remaining customers: primarily China, India, South Korea, Japan, and Turkey. Turkey also buys 8.6 billion cubic meters/yr of gas from Iran.
Major Export Markets	Mirrors major oil customers.
Major Imports	Mirrors major oil customers.
Development Assistance Received	2003 (latest available): \$136 million grant aid. Biggest donors: Germany (\$38 million); Japan (\$17 million); France (\$9 million).
Inflation	30%+, according to Iran Central Bank, but believed to be about 42% by outside experts.
Unemployment Rate	Official rate is 15.3%, but outside experts believe the rate is higher

Sources: CIA, *The World Factbook*; various press; IMF; Iran Trade Planning Division; CRS conversations with experts and foreign diplomats.

Opposition Group: People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI)

The best-known exiled opposition group is the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), also known as the Mohahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO). Secular and left-leaning, it was formed in the 1960s to try to overthrow the Shah of Iran and has been characterized by U.S. reports as attempting to blend several ideologies, including Marxism, feminism, and Islamism, although the organization denies that it ever advocated Marxism. It allied with pro-Khomeini forces during the Islamic revolution and, according to State Department reports, supported the November 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The group was driven into exile after it unsuccessfully rose up against the Khomeini regime in September 1981. It is led by spouses Maryam and Massoud Rajavi; Maryam, based in France, is the "President-elect" of the PMOI-led opposition. The whereabouts of historical PMOI leader Massoud are unknown.

Even though the PMOI opposes the regime in Tehran, the State Department generally shied away from contact with the group during the 1980s and 1990s. The State Department designated the PMOI as an FTO in October 1997—during the presidency of the relatively moderate Mohammad Khatemi. The NCR was named as an alias of the PMOI in October 1999, and in August 2003, the State Department designated the NCR offices in the United States an alias of the PMOI and NCR and the Treasury Department ordered the groups' offices in the United States closed. The State Department's reports on international terrorism for the years until 2011 asserted that the members of the organization were responsible for: the alleged killing of seven American military personnel and contract advisers to the former Shah during 1973-1976—including the deputy chief of the U.S. Military Mission in Tehran; bombings at U.S. government facilities in Tehran in 1972 as a protest of the visit to Iran of then-President Richard Nixon; and bombings of U.S. corporate offices in Iran to protest the visit of Secretary of State Kissinger. The reports also listed as terrorism several attacks by the group against regime targets (including 1981 bombings that killed high ranking officials), attacks on Iranian government facilities, and attacks on Iranian security officials. However, the reports did not assert that any of these attacks purposely targeted civilians. The group's alliance with Saddam Hussein's regime in contributed to the designation, even though Saddam was a tacit U.S. ally when the group moved to Iraq in 1986.

In challenging its FTO decision, the PMOI asserted that, by retaining the group on the FTO list, the United States was preventing the PMOI from participating in opposition activities and was giving the Iranian regime justification for executing its members. In July 2008, the PMOI petitioned to the State Department that its designation be revoked, but the Department reaffirmed the listing in January 2009 and after a January 2010 review. The reaffirmations came despite the fact that in January 2009, the European Union (EU) had removed the group from its terrorist group list (2002 designation) and in May 2008, a British appeals court determined that the group should no longer be considered a terrorist organization. In June 2012, the Appeals Court gave the State Department until October 1, 2012, to decide on the FTO designation, although without prescribing how the Department should decide. On September 28, 2012, maintaining there had not been confirmed acts of PMOI terrorism for more than a decade and

that it had cooperated on the Camp Ashraf issue (below), the group was removed from the FTO list as well as from the designation as a terrorism supporter under Executive Order 13224. However, State Department officials, in a background briefing that day, said “We do not see the [PMOI] as a viable or democratic opposition movement.... They are not part of our picture in terms of the future of Iran.” On December 20, 2012, Canada removed the group from its list of terrorist organizations. The NCR-I reopened its offices in Washington, DC, in April 2013.

Camp Ashraf Issue

The de-listing of the group has not resolved the situation of PMOI members in Iraq. U.S. forces attacked PMOI military installations in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom (March 2003) and negotiated a ceasefire with PMOI elements in Iraq, according to which the approximately 3,400 PMOI members consolidated at Camp Ashraf, near the border with Iran. Its weaponry was placed in storage, guarded first by U.S. and now by Iraqi personnel.

In July 2004, the United States granted the Ashraf detainees “protected persons” status under the 4th Geneva Convention, although that designation lapsed when Iraq resumed full sovereignty in June 2004. A subsequent bilateral U.S.-Iraq agreement limited U.S. flexibility in Iraq, and the Iraqi government pledged to adhere to all international obligations. That pledge came into question on July 28, 2009, when Iraq used force to overcome resident resistance to setting up a police post in the camp. Thirteen residents of the camp were killed. On April 8, 2011, after the Iraqi government changed the Iraq Security Forces (ISF) brigade that guards Ashraf, clashes between the Iraqi force and camp residents resulted in the death of 35 Ashraf residents. The State Department issued a statement attributing the deaths to the actions of Iraq and its military.⁹²

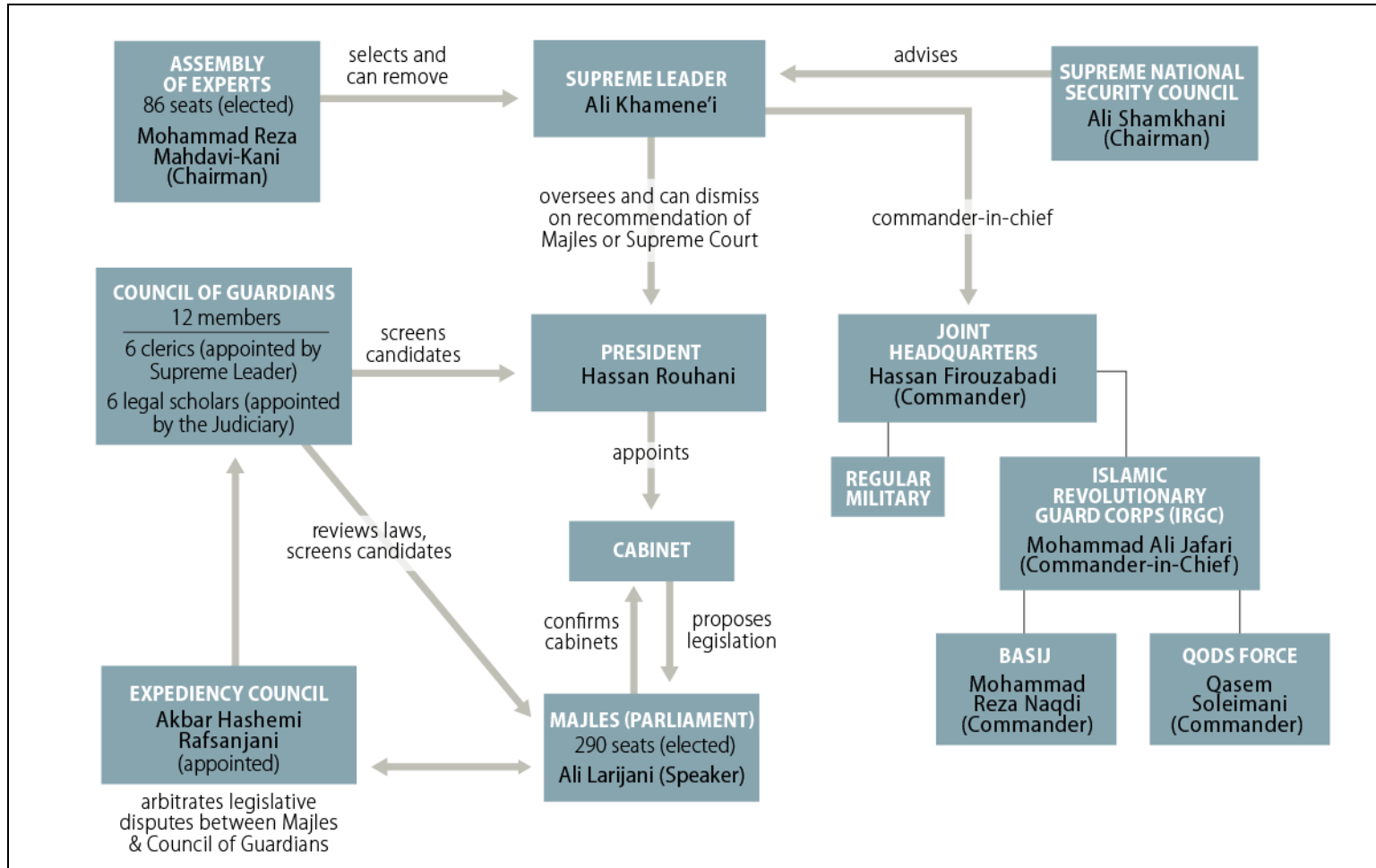
After the clash, Iraqi officials reiterated their commitment to close Ashraf at the end of 2011 (following a full U.S. withdrawal from Iraq) in co-operation with the United Nations and other international organizations. The U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) declared the residents “asylum seekers” and offered to assess each resident in an effort to resettle them elsewhere. The then top U.N. envoy in Iraq, Martin Kobler, offered to mediate between the issue and he called on the Iraqi government to postpone its deadline to close the camp.

In December 2011, the Iraqi government and the United Nations announced agreement to relocate the residents to former U.S. military base Camp Liberty, near Baghdad’s main airport. The PMOI, which had demanded safeguards for their transfer, subsequently announced acceptance of the deal and the move to Camp Liberty (renamed Camp Hurriya). The relocation was completed by September 17, 2012, leaving a residual group of 101 PMOI persons at Ashraf. Still, the group alleges that conditions at Liberty are poor. On February 9, 2013, the camp was attacked by rockets, killing six PMOI members; the Shiite militia group Kata’ib Hezbollah (KAH) claimed responsibility. Another rocket attack on the camp took place on June 15, 2013. On September 1, 2013, 52 of the Ashraf residents were killed by organized gunmen that appeared to have, at the very least, assistance from Iraqi forces guarding Ashraf’s perimeter. Seven others are missing and allegedly being held by Iraqi security forces. The survivors were moved to Camp Liberty.

The U.N. High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) is conducting refugee status determinations for all the residents who relocated to Camp Hurriya. About 352 have been resettled through the UNHCR process: 237 went to Albania; 95 to Germany; 95 to Italy; 15 to Norway; and 2 to Finland. The United States reportedly might resettle 100 or more. Earlier, 200 Ashraf residents took advantage of an arrangement between Iran and the International Committee of the Red Cross for them to return to Iran if they disavow further PMOI activities; a few reportedly were subsequently imprisoned and mistreated.

⁹² <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/04/160404.htm>.

Figure I. Structure of the Iranian Government



Source: CRS.

Figure 2. Map of Iran



Source: Map boundaries from Map Resources, 2005. GRAPHIC: CRS.

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