

Obama's Iran Policy and American Competing Policy Communities

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Abstract

Using Hugh Heclo's issue network theoretical framework and William Domhoff's network analysis methodology, the present article aims to elucidate the roots of Obama's Iran policy in the context of the Iran issue network the year prior to his election to the presidency in 2008. An in-depth study of the issue network associated with the debate over the United States' Iran policy identifies 182 individuals who participated in the debate between January 2008 and January 2009. Based on their policy recommendations, the study uncovers the existence of the following four policy communities: Punitive Nonengagement, Hawkish Engagement, Strategic Engagement and Fundamental Change. While regime change is the ultimate objective of both the Punitive Nonengagement and the Hawkish Engagement policy communities, only the latter believes that negotiation is a useful tactic in gaining compliance from Iran. Both, however, view Iran as a major threat to U.S. and Israeli interests and see no role for Iran in solving regional challenges. The Strategic Engagement policy community does not share this abysmal appraisal of Iran; rather, its members see meaningful cooperation between the United States and Iran on key regional issues as viable if their relationship is based on mutual respect. The Fundamental Change policy community finds the underlying assumptions of U.S. Iran policy vitally flawed and believes that all policy options short of an overhaul of U.S. international behavior lack ethical and legal legitimacy. Both the Strategic Engagement and Fundamental Change policy communities argue U.S. should cease its pursuit of regime change in Iran and abide by its obligations under the Algiers Accord. The Obama administration's Iran policy best fits the recommendations of the Hawkish Engagement policy community.

Keywords: Iran, United States, Iran Issue Network, Policy Recommendations

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Introduction

During the 2008 presidential election campaigns, Barack Obama's insistence on his readiness to meet leaders from so-called "rogue states" such as Iran without pre-conditions raised eyebrows among Washington and European officials. This line of "change" toward "engagement" was perceived as a policy that undermined "the tough stance adopted by the West towards Tehran over recent years," as the Times of London reported on May 24, 2008, upon David Miliband's expressed misgivings about such policy during his visit to Washington. The representation of Obama's Iran policy as change became more wide-spread in the wake of Obama's delivery of a video message congratulating the Iranian people on the occasion of the Persian New Year and calling for "engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect." Such an approach was seen as a departure from former President George W. Bush's "Axis of Evil" attitude.

The present study aims to show the illusiveness of such an understanding of Obama's Iran policy in his first term by examining the issue network that focused on Iran policy during the year prior to the 2008 presidential election. The article finds Obama's Iran policy best explained as hawkish engagement as opposed to strategic engagement, punitive nonengagement, or fundamental change in U.S. foreign policy. It is argued in this paper that to achieve a more comprehensive analysis of U.S. policy toward Iran, it is necessary to go beyond a mere narration of that policy and to include an examination of the "issue network" that participates in the Iran policy



debate (Hecllo, 1979).

Theory: An issue network denotes “a specific type of public-private linkage, involving a great many actors” (McFarland, 1987: 146) who are interested in a particular policy debate and who actively participate in “the communication of criticism of policy and generate ideas for new policy initiatives(McFarland, 1987: 146).” These actors include, but are not limited to, independent public policy institutes (i.e., think tanks), academic research centers, government research units, government officials, public relations consultants, and lobbyists (Birkland, 2001). More generally, issue networks are referred to as policy networks linking “heterogeneous communities of policy actors into intricate webs of common benefit-seeking actions (Knoke, 1996: 6).” Issue networks may then be subdivided into more closed and coherent bodies of individuals participating in policy debates. These groups are denoted here as policy communities.

Marsh and Rhodes propose that policy networks can vary along a continuum between issue networks and policy communities (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). Rhodes distinguishes between the two concepts as follows: A policy community has the following characteristics: a limited number of participants with some groups consciously excluded; frequent and high-quality interaction between all members of the community on all matters related to the policy issues; consistency in values, membership, and policy outcomes which persist over time; consensus, with the ideology, values, and broad policy preferences shared by all participants; and exchange relationships based on all members of the policy community controlling some resources. There is a balance of power, not necessarily one in which all members equally benefit but one in which all members see themselves as in a positive-sum game. The structures of the participating groups are hierarchical so leaders can guarantee compliant members (Rhodes, 2006: 428).

Issue networks, according to Rhodes, stand in contrast to the cohesive and closed policy communities: Issue networks are



characterized by many participants; fluctuating interaction and access for the various members; the absence of consensus and the presence of conflict; interaction based on consultation rather than negotiation and bargaining; an unequal power relationship in which many participants may have few resources, little access, and no alternative (Rhodes, 2006: 428).

In the case of this study, those in the Iran issue network who share “ideology, values, and broad policy preferences” are considered to be a policy community. Abelson believes that studying the dynamics of an issue network in addition to the actual policies of the government renders it possible to better identify key organizations and individuals who are influential in the policy formation process (Abelson, 2002). While such studies “may not enable scholars to make definitive conclusions about which participants in a policy community were the most influential,” they “can offer useful insights into whose views generated the most support (Abelson, 2002: 54).” This approach gives a deeper understanding of the nature of policy making and allows the researcher to compare the recommendations of policy community members to the actual policies the government implements.

Three main questions are advanced. 1. What was the composition of the Iran policy issue network during the 2008 presidential campaigns? 2. Based on Iran policy recommendations, and the relationships among network members, what policy communities can be identified within the Iran issue network? 3. How has the Obama administration's Iran policy in action compared to the articulation of such policy by his advisors as part of the Iran policy issue network?

Methods: In this study, the operational definition of the Iran policy issue network is as follows: all individuals who have published about Iran and provided policy recommendations at least once in the time span from January 2008 to January 2009. Individuals who have endorsed a policy paper about Iran in the above time span are also



included. This time period was primarily chosen for two reasons. It captures the policy debates during a presidential election campaign when change in United States foreign policy toward the Middle East, in general, and toward Iran, in particular, was a major issue. Policy communities generally become most vocal as presidential elections approach and as the spectrum of debate becomes wider. Second, it provides a holistic picture of Obama's Iran policy at its inception.

The following databases were searched to identify the members of Iran issue network: Academic Search Complete, CIAO (Columbia International Affairs Online), Communication & Mass Media Complete, Factiva, Humanities International Complete, Index Islamicus, International Security & Counter-Terrorism Reference Center, LexisNexis Congressional, Middle Eastern & Central Asian Studies Collection, Military & Government Collection, OCLC WorldCat, Peace Research Abstracts, and PolicyFile. The organizational affiliations of the issue network members are then examined.

A network analysis approach similar to William Domhoff's network analysis methodology is applied to identify the issue network that is interested in the Iran policy debate (Domhoff, 1996). Domhoff contends that network analysis should begin by conducting a membership network analysis to identify the individuals and organizations that are part of an issue network. In any network analysis, the critical question is the criterion that links individuals in the network. Whereas in Domhoff's approach, organizational affiliation serves as the link between individuals, in this study policy recommendations denote the linking relationship among the individuals. I use the organizational affiliation information to identify which organizations are more active in each policy community.

Another step in a network analysis, according to Domhoff, is the analysis of "the verbal and written 'output' of the network, that is, the speeches, policy statements, and legislative acts that allow us to study the goals, values, and ideology of the people and institutions in



the network (Domhoff, 1996: 14).” Here, the published output of the issue network members within the study’s time span is examined. Based on the documents retrieved from the above mentioned databases, the policy recommendations of members of the Iran policy issue network are then analyzed. NVivo 8 data management software is used to organize and analyze the data. To address the study's second inquiry, a number of Wikileaks diplomatic cables are used as reference to Obama’s Iran policy in action.

I- The Iran Policy Issue Network

A total of 182 individuals met the criteria to be included in the Iran policy issue network. A number of these 182 individuals were affiliated with the same organization, bringing the total number of organizations that have an affiliate who is a member of the Iran policy issue network to 104. A full listing of the Iran issue network will be presented in the following pages.

Four broad frameworks emerged from the analysis of the individuals’ policy recommendations and their assumptions about the nature of the U.S.-Iran relationship and about political realities in Iran. The analysis revealed the existence of the following four broad categories encompassing the policy recommendations of the Iran issue network: Strategic Engagement, Punitive Nonengagement, Hawkish Engagement, and Fundamental Change in U.S. Foreign Policy. The emergence of these categories denotes the existence of four main policy communities in the Iran issue network during the 2008 presidential campaigns. Given that seven Obama administration officials were part of the Hawkish Engagement policy community, it is proposed here that such an approach has been the official policy of the Obama administration from the start although often veiled under a thin layer of the rhetoric of change.

While none of these categories command the support of the majority of the overall issue network, a large plurality of the experts give recommendations denoting Hawkish Engagement (83 individuals



– or about 46 percent) and Strategic Engagement (56 individuals– or about 31 percent) categories. Another 33 individuals in the Iran issue network (about 18 percent) believe that punitive nonengagement is the best strategy, while only 10 (about 5 percent) think that there is a need for a fundamental change in U.S. foreign policy, in general, and U.S. policy toward Iran, in particular.

It is important to point out that the above categories denote segments of a continuum; where one leaves off, the other starts. Members of the Iran issue network were placed in each of the four groups based on their shared assumptions and the broad strategy they favored. This does not imply complete uniformity in policy recommendations among members of a policy community. The following pages give a detailed description of the four policy communities, addressing the study's first four research questions.

Strategic Engagement: About 31 percent of the Iran issue network members (56 individuals) propose diplomatic engagement with Iran, without preconditions, is the only viable approach that should frame the United States strategy in its relationship with Iran. They also believe that the United States should stay away from regime change measures and adhere to the 1981 Algiers Accord, in which it pledged to avoid political and military interference in Iran's internal affairs. The recommendation for strategic engagement is premised on a pragmatic outlook that acknowledges the failure of all other available options. Sustained engagement is deemed "far more likely to strengthen the United States national security at this stage than either escalation to war or continued efforts to threaten, intimidate, or coerce Iran (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)." Members of the Strategic Engagement policy community argue that Iran is a powerful and influential country in the Middle East, that there is room for common ground, and that the nuclear issue can be managed with international partnership in Iran's nuclear enrichment program. Therefore, they propose that, given the failure of all other options, it is wisest for the United States to become a strategic partner with Iran.



This, however, does not mean a blanket endorsement of Iran's policies and actions.

This group of experts put forth two main recommendations for U.S. public diplomacy. First, they encourage the adoption of policies to facilitate people-to-people exchanges between American and Iranian “scholars, professionals, religious leaders, lawmakers, and ordinary citizens (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008: 2).” The increased unofficial cultural exchanges should be geared toward facilitating the initiation of a direct diplomatic relationship. The recommendation for increased people-to-people public diplomacy does not come with any qualifiers. Proponents of strategic engagement make a second public diplomacy recommendation: The U.S. government needs to cease its “democracy promotion” efforts as they are “harming, not helping, the cause of democracy in Iran (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008: 2).” This recommendation would mean a substantial downgrading in U.S. Farsi broadcasting, but more importantly, the elimination of U.S. funding of groups opposed to Iran's government. Here, I refer to this public diplomacy approach as facilitative public diplomacy: a public diplomacy approach that is aimed at reducing tensions between the United States and Iran, fostering increased understanding between the two countries, and facilitating the movement toward normalized relations between the United States and Iran.

The Strategic Engagement option entails a series of principles as necessary first steps to a successful Iran policy. A joint experts' statement on Iran – endorsed by 20 Iran experts including Thomas Pickering, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations from 1989 to 1992, and James Dobbins, the Bush administration's first special envoy to Afghanistan – well captures the main elements of strategic engagement. According to the statement, first and foremost, U.S. policy makers should acknowledge that three decades of “efforts to manage Iran through isolation, threats, and sanctions” have failed to solve “any major problem in U.S.-Iran relations, and have made most



of them worse(American Foreign Policy Project, 2008: 1).”

Efforts for regime change are deemed as the most destructive element of past U.S. policy toward Iran. Iran is not going to negotiate in good faith, the statement makes clear, while perceiving that the U.S. government is trying to overthrow it. Thus, the most fundamental step to starting a “meaningful dialogue” with Iran is to “replace calls for regime change with a long-term strategy” (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008: 2). According to experts believing in strategic engagement, “Giving Iran a place at the table – alongside other key states” – is the key to resolving Iranian nuclear issue, the instability in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Arab-Israeli peace process. Experts advocating strategic engagement note that, after three decades of hostility, engagement with Iran may prove to be difficult and may not be a “cure all,” but it “certainly will change the equation” (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008: 1). True diplomacy has been the missing element in U.S. policy for the last thirty years, and it is time to see what it can accomplish, they say.

The Iran nuclear issue is believed to be best resolved as part of a wider U.S.-Iran relationship and carried through multilateral talks with the United States taking an active leadership role. Nuclear negotiations with no preconditions do not, however, eliminate the possibility of costs, in the form of sanctions, if negotiations fail. Engaging Iran diplomatically is also said to be beneficial to Israel’s security since Iran has much influence over Israel’s adversaries, Hamas and Hezbollah. According to the joint statement, Washington’s active diplomacy with Iran does not signal approval of Iran, just as earlier U.S. diplomatic interactions with governments of the Soviet Union or China did not mean an endorsement of their policies or actions (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008: 1).

According to this policy community, U.S. policies towards Iran have failed to achieve their objectives, mainly because “they are rooted in fundamental misconceptions that have driven U.S. policy in the wrong direction” (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008: 3).



These misconceptions include the following: 1. President Ahmadinejad calls the shots on nuclear and foreign policy; 2. The political system of the Islamic Republic is frail and ripe for regime change; 3. The Iranian leadership's religious beliefs render them undeterrable; 4. Iran's current leadership is implacably opposed to the United States; 5. Iran has declared its intention to attack Israel in order to "wipe Israel off the map"; 6. U.S.-sponsored democracy promotion can help bring true democracy in Iran; 7. Iran is clearly and firmly committed to developing nuclear weapons; and, 8. Iran and the United States have no basis for dialogue (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008: 3-4).

According to Suzanne Maloney, who is also an advocate of strategic engagement, the failure of the Bush administration's Iran policy was in large measure a consequence of its ingrained faith in these "mistaken assumptions (Maloney, 2008: 26)." Maloney, who is now a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, served on the Department of State policy-planning team from 2005 to 2007. According to Maloney, with the conviction that the Islamic Republic of Iran was on the verge of collapse, the Bush administration included Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil," which resulted in the termination of the unprecedented cooperation between Tehran and Washington on defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan and supporting the government of Hamid Karzai. The Bush administration lost successive opportunities for engaging Iran diplomatically and instead pursued a "Freedom Agenda" to support opponents of the Iranian government. Based on her retrospective analysis of the past mistakes, Maloney concludes that diplomacy is "the only alternative available to U.S. policy makers (Maloney, 2008: 36)."

In a paper, William Luers, president of United Nations Association of the U.S.A. and a former deputy Assistant Secretary of State; Thomas Pickering, the former U.S. ambassador at the United Nations; and Jim Walsh, a professor of international security at the



Massachusetts Institute of Technology, lay out the case for strategic engagement in more detail (Luers, Pickering and Walsh, 2009). The authors urge the Obama administration to recognize that the prime issues of Iran's nuclear capabilities and stability in Iraq and Afghanistan are interconnected and require a unified strategy. Taking military action against Iran's nuclear facilities, for example, would remove the prospects of American-Iranian cooperation on Iraq and Afghanistan. Resolving these issues requires direct talks without preconditions between the United States, Iran, and other interested countries. Specifically, the authors propose the creation of a continuing forum where such talks could take place. Luers, Pickering, and Walsh propose that creating an international consortium to enrich uranium in Iran under international inspections is a viable solution that has a higher possibility of being accepted by Tehran.

Luers, Pickering, and Walsh recommend the following course of action for a successful engagement strategy. Before the initiation of talks, which is recommended to take place after Iran's June 2009 presidential election, the Obama administration should win the support of members of Congress, Europeans, Russians, and Chinese for an engagement strategy. The Obama administration should also assure American allies in the neighboring region – most notably the Arab states, Turkey, Pakistan, and Israel – that direct U.S.-Iran diplomacy serves their interests as well by diplomatically resolving issues that could lead to regional instability or outright war. In the case of Israel, the authors suggest, strategic engagement with Iran will offer the best chance of dealing with Hamas and Hezbollah. The Obama administration should also make confidence-building overtures, including “a reaffirmation of Article I of the 1981 Algiers Accord, in which the United States pledged not to interfere politically or militarily in Iran's internal affairs (Luers, Pickering and Walsh, 2009).”

In short, U.S. should engage with Iran based on mutual respect and not the domineering talk of “carrots and sticks,” a phrase which



Iranians “associate with the treatment of donkeys and which in any case suggests that they can be either bought off or beaten into submission” (Luers, Pickering and Walsh, 2009). The authors express their criticism of the Obama foreign policy team for coupling its stated readiness for negotiations with a continuation of the “tough talk” of the previous administration. “The U.S. can impose costs on Iran, but it cannot impose its will,” the authors conclude. “The same is true for Iran. Progress requires on both sides a greater focus on strategy rather than tactics (Luers, Pickering and Walsh, 2009).” Table 1 presents the list of the members of the Strategic Engagement policy community.

Table1. Strategic Engagement policy community

	Name	Current Affiliation	Affiliation Category
1	Norman Neureiter (Schweitzer and Neureiter, 2008)	Amer. Assoc. for the Advancement of Science	NGO official
2	Richard Parker (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	American Foreign Policy Project	Think tank fellow
3	Anthony Newkirk (Newkirk, 2008)	American School of Kuwait	Professor
4	Kaveh L. Afrasiabi (Afrasiabi, 2008)	Author	Columnist
5	Emile A. Nakhleh (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Author	Former U.S.G. official
6	Robert Baer (Baer, 2008)	Author	Former U.S.G. official
7	Ali Banuazizi (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Boston College	Professor
8	Augustus R. Norton (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Boston University	Professor
9	Paul Ingram (Ingram, 2008)	British American Security Information Council	Think tank fellow
10	Suzanne Maloney (Center For a New American Security, 2008)	Brookings Institution	Think tank fellow
11	James G. Blight (Blight, 2008)	Brown University	Professor
12	Philip Girdali (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Cannistraro Associates	Former U.S.G. official
13	Karim Sadjadpour (Sadjadpour, 2008)	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	Think tank fellow
14	Robert Gard (Gard, Tomero and Reif, 2008)	Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation	Retired military officer
15	Kingston Reif (Gard, Tomero and Reif, 2008)	Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation	Think tank fellow



16	Leonor Tomero (Gard, Tomero and Reif, 2008)	Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation	Think tank fellow
17	Zbigniew Brzezinski (Brzezinski and Odom, 2008)	Center for Strategic and International Studies	Former U.S.G. official
18	William Odom (Brzezinski and Odom, 2008)	Center for Strategic and International Studies	Retired military officer
19	Gary G. Sick (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Columbia University	Former U.S.G. official
20	Bradley L. Bowman (Bowman, 2008)	Council on Foreign Relations	Think tank fellow
21	Ray Takeyh (Haass and Indyk, 2008)	Council on Foreign Relations	Think tank fellow
22	Richard N. Haass (Center for a New American Security)	Council on Foreign Relations	Former U.S.G. official
23	Vali Nasr (Center for a New American Security)	Council on Foreign Relations	Think tank fellow
24	Mehran Kamrava (Kamrava, 2008)	Georgetown University	Professor
25	Gawdat Bahgat (Bahgat, 2008)	Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Professor
26	Hadi Ghaemi (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran	NGO official
27	Thomas R. Pickering (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	International Crisis Group	Former U.S.G. official
28	Allan C. Brownfeld (Brownfeld, 2008)	Lincoln Institute for Research and Education	Think tank fellow
29	Geoffrey E. Forden (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Professor
30	Jim Walsh (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Professor
31	John Tirman (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Professor
32	John Thomson (Thomson, 2008)	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Think tank fellow
33	Trita Parsi (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	National Iranian-American Council	NGO official
34	Flynt Leverett (Leverett nad Leverett, 2008)	New America Foundation	Former U.S.G. official
35	Frida Berrigan (Berrigan, 2008)	New America Foundation	Think tank fellow
36	Roger Cohen (Cohen, 2008)	New York Times	Columnist
37	Barnett R. Rubin (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	New York University	Professor
38	Farhad Kazemi (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	New York University	Professor
39	Stephen Kinzer (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Northwestern University	Professor
40	Joe Cirincione (Grad, Tomero and Reif, 2008)	Ploughshares Fund	NGO official
41	James F. Dobbins (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	RAND Corporation	Think tank fellow
42	Hillary Mann Leverett (Leverett nad Leverett, 2008)	Strategic Energy and Global Analysis	Former U.S.G. official

43	Mehrzad Boroujerdi (Abdo and Boroujerdi, 2008)	Syracuse University	Professor
44	Rola el-Husseini (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Texas A&M University	Professor
45	Geneive Abdo (Abdo and Boroujerdi, 2008)	The Century Foundation	Think tank fellow
46	Jim Fine (Fine,2008)	The Friends Committee on National Legislation	Advocacy group member
47	Samuel Gardiner (Gardiner,2008)	U.S. military (retired)	Retired military officer
48	Glenn Schweitzer (Schweitzer and Neureiter , 2008)	U.S. National Academies	NGO official
49	John W. Limbert (Limbert, 2008)	U.S. Naval Academy	Think tank fellow
50	William Luers (Luers, Pickering and Walsh, 2008)	United Nations Association of the U.S.A.	Former U.S.G. official
51	Nikki R. Keddie (Keddie, 2008)	University of California at Los Angeles	Professor
52	Farideh Farhi (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	University of Hawaii	Professor
53	Juan R. I. Cole (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	University of Michigan	Professor
54	William O. Beeman (Beeman, 2008)	University of Minnesota	Professor
55	William G. Miller (American Foreign Policy Project, 2008)	Woodrow Wilson Inter. Center for Scholars	Think tank fellow
56	Babak Yektaraf (Yektaraf,2008)	World Security Institute	Think tank fellow

One of the more prominent members of the Strategic Engagement policy community is Zbigniew Brzezinski, who served as U.S. National Security Advisor to President Carter. As is evident from the above table, the Strategic Engagement policy community includes four experts whose primary affiliation is with the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Among the four is Richard Haass, the president of the CFR, who was the Director of Policy Planning at the State Department in the first George W. Bush administration. Four other affiliates of the CFR are members of the hawkish Strategic Engagement policy community. Three of the Strategic Engagement policy community members are affiliates of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation (CACNP), including CACNP president Robert Gard, a retired army Lt. General. Of the 182 members of the Iran issue network, four are affiliated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and are all in the Strategic Engagement policy community.



Three of the think tanks and advocacy organizations represented in this policy community are quite active in Iran-U.S. relations issues. One is the New America Foundation, in which Flynt Leverett was a senior fellow at the time of the study. Leverett was the Senior Director for Middle East Affairs on the National Security Council in the first George W. Bush administration. In addition, two advocacy organizations have been active in opposing hawkish congressional legislation against Iran. One is the Friends Committee on National Legislation, an anti-war Quaker group, and the other is the National Iranian-American Council (NIAC), a Washington-based Iranian-American organization founded by Trita Parsi who was a former Ph.D. student of Zbigniew Brzezinski at the John Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. A number of NIAC's recent projects have been funded by Ploghshares Fund, whose president Joe Cirincione is also a member of this policy community.

Punitive Nonengagement: About 18 percent of the Iran issue network (33 individuals) advocates a punitive nonengagement strategy with Iran. This approach consists of a concerted and integrated strategy of sanctions, military threats, and support for regime change. The Punitive Nonengagement policy community views what is myth to those advocating strategic engagement as evidence of Iran's clear and present danger to United States' national security. Iran is perceived as an existential threat to both the United States and Israel. Central to this premise is the looming threat of a nuclear Iran that is deemed "almost certainly impossible to stop diplomatically," according to John Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations from 2005 to 2006 (Bolton, 2008). After "the world was hit with a different kind of bomb," as Norman Podhoretz terms the release of the unclassified summary of the November 2007 National Intelligence Estimate, the unquestioned assumption that Iran is developing nuclear weapons was reframed (Podhoretz, 2008). Now, "Iran continues to acquire the capabilities to make nuclear weapons,



while disguising their political intent to build the bomb,” as noted by Kenneth Timmerman, the founder and president of the Foundation for Democracy in Iran (Timmerman, 2008). In an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, Bolton also expressed his frustration over the failure of the European negotiations with Iran. “Every day that goes by allows Iran to increase the threat it poses, and the viability of the military option steadily declines over time,” he said (Bolton, 2008).

While the Punitive Nonengagement policy community frames Iran's danger for U.S. national security in terms of the projected reality of a nuclear Iran, it is the very nature of the Iranian government that produces their perception of an existential threat. “Iran has been at war with this country since it came to power in 1979,” says the president of the Center for Security Policy Frank J. Gaffney, in an article in the *Washington Times* (Gaffney, 2008). The United States should take all measures to destabilize and eventually change the Iranian government, he recommends. These include imposing sanctions, best if targeted at investments in Iran's oil and gas industry to deflate the price of oil, aiding Iranians to overthrow their government through all available covert and overt means, and keeping the military option a viable strategy. “We should be under no illusion: We will not avoid war,” says Gaffney; “it has been thrust upon us by the mullahs for many years now (Gaffney, 2008).” In essence, it is the threat of the Islamic nature of Iran's government that makes the prospects of a nuclear Iran such a catastrophic event. Also, by its very nature, Iran is deemed untrustworthy and unreliable. These are assumptions that make deterrence a projected failure in the view of this policy community: “Deterrence could not be relied upon with a regime ruled by Islamofascist revolutionaries who not only were ready to die for their beliefs but cared less about protecting their people than about the spread of their ideology and their power,” according to Podhoretz, *Commentary* magazine's Editor-at-Large (Podhoretz, 2008). “If the mullahs got the bomb, it was not they who would be deterred, but we,” Podhoretz argues (Podhoretz, 2008).



Given the above way of thinking about the nature of Iran's government, the members of the Punitive Nonengagement policy community were highly critical of the Bush administration's eventual entrance into diplomatic talks with Iran on its nuclear program, which was seen as a departure from Secretary Rice's earlier call for Iran to first verifiably stop enriching uranium. The criticism referred to the Bush administration's decision to send an envoy, as a "one-time deal," to the international talks with Iran in July of 2008 (Kessler, 2008). "Diplomacy is not wrong," says Michael Rubin, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, "but President Bush's reversal is diplomatic malpractice on a Carter-esque level that is breathing new life into a failing regime" (Rubin, 2008).

Clearly, the punitive nonengagement perspective views public diplomacy as political warfare, with the eventual goal of regime change. Michael Ledeen, a Foundation for Defense of Democracy "freedom scholar," captured the essence of the punitive nonengagement strategy: "It's all about the regime. Change the regime, and the nuclear question becomes manageable. Leave the mullahs in place, and the nuclear weapons directly threaten us and our friends and allies, raising the ante of the terror war they started twenty-seven years ago (Ledeen, 2006)." "In Iran revolution is the dream of at least 70% of the people," Ledeen says, "They are waiting for concrete signs of our support (Ledeen, 2006)."

Ian Berman, the American Foreign Policy Council vice president for policy and a member of the Committee on the Present Danger, is another member of the Punitive Nonengagement policy community who expresses strong discontent with the Bush administration's meager accomplishments in its Iran public diplomacy efforts. The Bush administration, according to Berman, has failed to bring about "the 'empty political space' in which real regime alternatives can flourish" (Berman, 2008). Berman urges that the new U.S. administration must "avoid short-term diplomatic deals" that could diminish the prospect of regime change in Iran (Berman, 2008).



Berman applauds President Bush's January 2007 State of the Union address for broadening the focus of the war on terror. He argued that by extending the list of U.S. adversaries to include "Iranian-supported Shiite extremists in Iraq," the president had rightly assessed that terrorism threats are beyond those posed by al-Qaida and Taliban-led Sunnis. This "wider war on terror," Berman maintained, "requires that Washington resolutely confront the Islamic Republic of Iran (Berman, 2007)."

An aggressive public diplomacy, in Berman's view, is an important mechanism for a resolute confrontation with Iran. In 2007 Berman edited *Taking on Tehran: Strategies for Confronting the Islamic Republic* (Berman, 2007), which includes a comprehensive view of the range of public diplomacy recommendations advocated by the Punitive Nonengagement policy community. Berman coauthored a chapter in the book with Robert A. Schadler and Bijan R. Kian specifically dealing with public diplomacy issues toward Iran. According to Berman and his co-authors, in the "struggle for hearts and minds, there is no more important battlefield than the Islamic Republic of Iran, the ideological and political epicenter of global Sh'ia Islam" (Schadler, Kian and Berman, 2007: 33).

The authors find the two main faults that inhibit the success of U.S. Persian international broadcasting to be the "MTV-ified" nature of such programming and their aim to be "balanced" "at the expense of a robust U.S. democratic message" (Schadler, Kian and Berman, 2007:36). Referring to a 2006 report of the Defense Department's Iran Steering Group, the authors harshly criticize the poor quality of news reporting and analysis on official U.S. broadcasting programs and their failure to provide "proper framing of issues" (Schadler, Kian and Berman, 2007:36). The authors suggest that to bring about a successful political transformation, U.S. broadcasting should highlight the following themes: American support for political opposition forces within Iran; The fallacy of the Iranian government as the sole source of Islamic knowledge; The corruption endemic of the



country's ruling clerical class; and, the dangers that the Iranian government's quest for nuclear weapons poses to its own population (Schadler, Kian and Berman, 2007:36).

In his 2005 book on Iran, *Tehran Rising: Iran's Challenge to the United States*, Berman maintains that buttressing the above messages with face-to-face cultural outreach programs could "loosen the ideological bonds between the Iranian people and Iran's ayatollahs (Berman, 2005)." In this, the main constituency is said to be Iran's youth who form a majority of the country's population. Berman and his co-authors also find the Internet as the best and least vulnerable medium for reaching the Iranian public. They argue for the use of "advanced Internet techniques (podcasts, email blasts, newsgroup postings and secondary distribution)" to provide an uninterrupted flow of information to Iranian activists. The authors consider the current U.S. public diplomacy toward Iran underfunded and ask for an increase in funding "to make it commensurate with the magnitude of the challenge to American interests now posed by the Iranian regime."

Berman and colleagues also call for an increase in funding for the Iranian diaspora broadcasting into Iran. They consider the 2006 State Department \$5 million funding of Iranian expatriate radio and television stations not enough and believe the U.S. government "fails to appreciate the positional contribution expatriate broadcasting can make to public diplomacy toward Iran" (Berman, 2005). American officials, according to the authors, "must make it a priority to supplement existing official programming with the requisite funds to truly empower such private sector efforts (Berman, 2005)." In his 2005 book, Berman takes specific note of the value of the Los Angeles-based National Iranian Television (NITV) and KRSI, Radio Sedaye Iran (Berman, 2005).

Berman and his colleagues contend U.S. public diplomacy toward Iran should go beyond radio and television programming and include "scholarships, fellowships, speeches, artistic performances



and a wide array of face-to-face meetings and exchanges, among numerous other efforts” (Schadler, Kian and Berman, 2007:38). Such programs are significant, according to the authors, because they provide the United States with venues for “properly identifying and engaging emerging pro-democracy leaders in the region” (Schadler, Kian and Berman, 2007:38). In his 2005 book Berman highlights the significance of nurturing Iranian leaders as a vital part of a successful political warfare against Iran. “This promises to be a difficult undertaking,” writes Berman, “unlike the Polish opposition to the Soviet Union in its day, Iranians are still in search of their Lech Walesa – a charismatic, populist leader to serve as the public face of their resistance” (Berman, 2005: 140). Among the exiled Iranian opposition, Berman entertains the possible leadership of Reza Pahlavi, the son of the deposed Shah, or the Mujahideen-e Khalq Organization (MKO), an armed Iranian opposition group designated a terrorist organization by the Clinton administration in 1997. As both choices carry their “political baggage,” Berman is doubtful whether either one will garner Iranian’s support. Nevertheless, he says, “Washington now has some hard choices to make. It must either decide to harness these forces or to seek new ones (Berman, 2005: 141).” Berman believes it is necessary to conduct polls of Iranians to gather more definitive information regarding viable alternatives to the current government. Meanwhile, in Berman’s view, Washington has to deal with “the discrepancy in the group’s [MKO’s] current legal status ... for the MKO to assume a seat at the U.S. policy planning table” (Berman, 2005: 141).

Berman bases the above vision of public diplomacy toward Iran on their assessment of the key role of public diplomacy initiatives in winning the Cold War. Just as the United States, most notably under the Reagan administration, used public diplomacy “to pierce the Iron Curtain and export American ideals to the Soviet bloc,” Berman argues, so too can it achieve victory in its political warfare against the Islamic Republic of Iran (Berman, 2005: 133). In addition to his



vehement belief in the Reagan doctrine as the catalyst for changing the Iranian regime, Berman highlights the importance of the doctrine of preemption. Berman's repeated designation of public diplomacy as political warfare and a mechanism for changing governments hostile to American national and transnational interests gives further indication of his vision of public diplomacy as one tool in the preemption toolbox. In a 2006 testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services Berman concluded with the following remarks: ...the goal of the United States should not simply be to contain and deter a nuclear Iran. It should also be to create the necessary conditions for a fundamental political transformation within its borders, through forceful public diplomacy, economic assistance to opposition elements, international pressure, and covert action (Berman, 2008). Table 2 presents a list of the members of the Punitive Nonengagement policy community.

Table 2. Punitive Nonengagement policy community

	Name	Current Affiliation	Affiliation Category
1	John R. Bolton (Bolton, 2008)	American Enterprise Institute	Former U.S.G. official
2	Richard Perle (Perle, 2008)	American Enterprise Institute	Former U.S.G. official
3	Danielle Pletka (Kagan, Kagan and Pletka, 2008)	American Enterprise Institute	Think tank fellow
4	Frederick W. Kagan (Kagan, Kagan and Pletka, 2008)	American Enterprise Institute	Think tank fellow
5	Michael Rubin (Rubin, 2008)	American Enterprise Institute	Think tank fellow
6	Ilan I. Berman (Berman, 2008)	American Foreign Policy Council	Think tank fellow
7	Mark Weston (Weston, 2008)	Author	Author
8	Uzi Rubin (Rubin, 2008)	Author	Retired military officer
9	Amir Taheri (Taheri, 2008)	Benador Associates	Author
10	Nir Boms (Boms and Arya, 2008)	Center for Freedom in the Middle East	Think tank fellow
11	Frank J. Gaffney (Gaffney, 2008)	Center for Security Policy	Think tank fellow
12	Norman Podhoretz (Podhoretz, 2008)	Commentary magazine	Columnist
13	Michael A. Ledeen (Ledeen, 2008)	Foundation for Defense of Democracies	Think tank fellow

14	Orde F. Kittrie (Kittrie, 2008)	Foundation for Defense of Democracies	Think tank fellow
15	Reuel Marc Gerech (Gerecht, 2008)	Foundation for Defense of Democracies	Think tank fellow
16	Kenneth R. Timmerman (Timmerman, 2008)	Foundation for Democracy in Iran	Advocacy group member
17	Thomas G. McInerney (McInerney, 2008)	Fox News	Former U.S.G. official
18	David M. Denehy (Denehy, 2008)	Global Strategic Partners	Former U.S.G. official
19	Ariel Cohen (Cohen, 2008)	Heritage Foundation	Think tank fellow
20	James Phillips (Phillips, 2008)	Heritage Foundation	Think tank fellow
21	Nile Gardiner (Gardiner, 2008)	Heritage Foundation	Think tank fellow
22	Shayan Arya (Boms and Arya, 2008)	Inst. for Monitoring Peace & Cultural Tolerance	Think tank fellow
23	Kimberly Kagan (Kagan, Kagan and Pletka, 2008)	Institute for the Study of War	Think tank fellow
24	Raymond Tanter (Tanter, 2008)	Iran Policy Committee	Think tank fellow
25	Ali Safavi (Safavi, 2008)	Near East Policy Research	Advocacy group member
26	Daniel Gallington (Gallington, 2008)	Potomac Institute for Policy Studies	Think tank fellow
27	Louis Rene Beres (Beres and McInerney, 2008)	Purdue University	Professor
28	James A. Lyons (Lyons, 2008)	U.S. military (retired)	Retired military officer
29	Rami Loya (Loya, 2008)	U.S. military (retired)	Retired military officer
30	Gerald F. Seib (Seib, 2008)	Wall Street Journal	Columnist
31	James G. Zumwalt (Zumwalt, 2008)	Washington Times	Retired military officer
32	Jeffrey T. Kuhner (Kuhner, 2008)	Washington Times	Columnist
33	Ronen Bergman (Bergman, 2008)	Yedioth Ahronoth	Columnist

In this policy community, the American Enterprise Institute, Foundation for Defense of Democracy, and the Heritage Foundation are three think tanks that have been actively advocating a punitive nonengagement strategy with Iran. No affiliates of these three think tanks are part of the other three policy communities. David Denehy is also one of the prominent members of this policy community. Denehy was a Senior Advisor in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in the State Department, where he served as the Iran Freedom Agenda Coordinator from 2005 to 2007. Richard Perle, the chairman



of the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee during the first George W. Bush administration, is another influential member of the Punitive Nonengagement policy community.

Hawkish Engagement: A third group of policy experts believe an engagement policy fortified with sharp sticks and appetizing carrots is the only viable method for dealing with Iran. The Hawkish Engagement policy community is the largest policy community in the Iran issue network, consisting of 83 individuals (46 present). The Hawkish Engagement policy community agrees with the Punitive Nonengagement policy community in that Iran's policies and actions have been threatening American interests in the Middle East ever since the Islamic Republic's inception in 1979 and that they pose an existential threat to Israel. Iran is deemed as United States greatest national security threat. Furthermore, Iran's ascendance to a nuclear weapon state should be prevented.

In spite of these similarities, the Hawkish Engagement policy community does not preclude the engagement policy option. But unlike the view of the Strategic Engagement policy community, engagement is not considered to represent an umbrella strategy that could resolve America's problems with Iran. This contrast is partly because the hawkish engagement proponents do not presume that Iran could ever be a trustworthy diplomatic partner and that its interests are always at odds with those of the United States and Israel, unless it is coerced to behave otherwise. To achieve behavior change, these policy experts propose that sharp sticks and appetizing carrots have to be administered strategically, although they may prescribe different measures of sticks or carrots. While regime change is considered a long-term strategy, tactical engagement with Iran is deemed a necessary prerequisite to retard Iran's nuclear capabilities in the interim.

On the public diplomacy front, they believe these efforts must continue but in a less flamboyant manner. Continued engagement with Iran, if Iran is compliant, is not seen as a lifeline for the Islamic



Republic; rather, it is seen as a curse for the current Iranian government disguised as blessing that allows Iranian society to evolve due to the possibility of increased interaction with American society, in essence facilitating the realization of the long-term goal of regime change. Consequently, engagement is viewed as one of the several tactics that Washington is advised to use to achieve its goal of halting Iran's progress in its nuclear capabilities and its overall regional influence.

While the members of the Strategic Engagement policy community view the endurance of Iran through 30 years of war, isolation, and sanctions as testament to the failure of these tactics, the proponents of hawkish engagement view the failure of American policy due to a lack of an integrated approach that would make use of all of the mentioned policy options in a coordinated fashion. Moreover, Iran is seen as much more vulnerable to outside pressure compared to the view of the Strategic Engagement policy community in this regard. Here, the Hawkish Engagement group is closer to the Punitive Nonengagement group in its assessment of Iran's weaknesses and vulnerabilities. As a result, even regime change is contemplated as a viable option, albeit in the long term.

A September 2008 report *Meeting the Challenge: U.S. Policy toward Iranian Nuclear Development*, published by a task force convened by the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) represents an example of a hawkish engagement strategy. BPC is a Washington-based policy group established in 2007 by former U.S. senators Howard Baker, Tom Daschle, Bob Dole and George Mitchell. George Mitchell was appointed as President Obama's Special Envoy to the Middle East in January 2009. Among the task force members were Dennis Ross, the Special Advisor to Secretary of State Clinton for developing Obama administration's Iran strategy; two former senators, Daniel Coats and Charles Robb; three retired generals; and two former assistant secretaries of Defense and State. The task force endorses an Iran policy that combines a diplomatic solution with "a comprehensive strategy involving



economic, military, and informational components undertaken in conjunction with allied and regional states” (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208: xiv). The report finds it unacceptable to trust Iran with a civil uranium enrichment program, even under international inspections. Nothing could provide “meaningful assurance to the international community” that Iran will not go nuclear if it is allowed to enrich uranium on Iranian soil, even under international inspections and even as part of an international consortium (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208: iv).

If Iran rejects the offer to give up its uranium enrichment and support for Hamas and Hezbollah in exchange for “security assurances, lifting of economic sanctions, and the unfreezing of [its] assets,” the United States and her allies should administer a series of successive sticks, including a sanction or embargo of Iran’s energy sector and threats of force (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208: 55). The report advises that the new U.S. president create leverage for possible use of force by bolstering U.S. military presence in the Middle East, which would include “pre-positioning additional U.S. and allied forces, deploying additional aircraft carrier battle groups and minesweepers, emplacing other war material in the region, including additional missile defense batteries, upgrading both regional facilities and allied militaries, and expanding strategic partnerships with countries such as Azerbaijan and Georgia in order to maintain operational pressure from all directions” (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208: xiii). The report assesses the presence of American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan a positive development in this regard. If the United States military presence and threat of force fail to succeed as a deterrent or containment mechanism, the report suggests that the actual military attacks will be a last resort. According to the report, “The objective of any military campaign to end the threat posed by Iran’s nuclear program would be either to destroy key elements of the program or to compel Tehran to dismantle these elements in a verifiable manner” (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208: 74).



It must be noted that not all members of the Hawkish Engagement policy community believe in the advisability of the use of military strikes against Iran's nuclear infrastructure. As such, the Hawkish Engagement policy community could have been further divided into two categories: those that recommend military strikes and those that withhold such a recommendation based on pragmatic calculations. As this article does not focus on the nuclear issue, the Hawkish Engagement policy community was not subdivided.

The signatories to the Bipartisan Policy Center report advise the president to implement "a concerted informational campaign" in conjunction with the above diplomatic and economic measures (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208: xiii). "Investments in Radio Farda and Voice of America should be increased manifold to a level commensurate with the strategic threat which the Islamic Republic now poses," the report recommends (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208: xiv). The U.S. government should make sure its programming and message is "relevant to ordinary Iranians wishing to understand U.S. position and concerns," the report states (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208). In addition, the task force finds it "in the long term interest of the United States" to support Iranian reformists' attempts to gain influence over Iran's government. "The next president should recognize the importance of an independent civil society and trade union movement inside Iran and encourage their growth through any appropriate means," the report asserts (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208).

With the following logic, the task force also recommends regime change: "Because nuclear knowledge cannot be reversed, should the Islamic Republic not forfeit its nuclear ambitions, the only permanent resolution may be regime change" (Bipartisan Policy Center, 208: 65). Here the underlying premise of the threat of Iran becomes evident: the knowledge of uranium enrichment. It is not the presence of an Iranian nuclear weapon program that is threatening; rather, it is the very ability to enrich uranium. Consequently, the release of the 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate, which stated with "high



confidence” that Iran does not at present have a nuclear weapon program made little difference in the calculations of the hawkish engagement proponents (National intelligence Council, 2007). As a result, the ultimate solution is seen in transferring the control of such knowledge to a government that is more amicable to the United States and Israel.

Instigating labor unrest is recommended as the least risky of the options available for achieving regime change. Supporting exiled political groups such as the monarchists and the Mujahideen-e Khalq Organization (MKO) are not seen as a viable means for achieving regime change because “few [of these groups] can demonstrate much following inside the country” (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008: 66). The task force doubts the usefulness of MKO, which “has conducted terrorism against both Western and Iranian interests,” because it is widely hated across Iran for actively helping Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008: 66). Iranians look at MKO, the report says, “in the same way that many Americans view John Walker Lindh, the American student who joined the Taliban to fight against his own people” (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008: 66). While the MKO is said to have provided “useful and verified intelligence on the Iranian nuclear program,” they are not found as a reliable substitute for Iran’s current government because their “bizarre philosophy and cultish behavior” (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008:67). Exploiting ethnic diversity as a regime change strategy is also said to be counterproductive because Iranians have a nationalistic sense of identity despite their heterogeneous composition, and ethnic minorities are well integrated in the ruling structure. “Khamenei [the supreme leader] is an ethnic Azeri. Khatami, so often embraced by the West as a reformer, is half-Azeri,” the report notes (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008: 67).

In short, the Hawkish Engagement policy community advocates the use of engagement and negotiations as a necessary tactic to the successful administration of sticks and carrots for achieving the



eventual short-term goal of subverting Iran's nuclear program and regional influence and the long term goal of regime change in Iran. A list of the members of the Hawkish Engagement policy community is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Hawkish Engagement policy community

	Name	Current Affiliation	Affiliation Category
1	Mani Parsi (Parsi and Yetiv, 2008)	Author	Author
2	Mark Parris (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Baker Donelson	Former U.S.G. official
3	Steve Rademaker (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008)	BGR Holding, LLC	Former U.S.G. official
4	Gregory Johnson (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008)	Bipartisan Policy Center	Retired military officer
5	Ronald Keys (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008)	Bipartisan Policy Center	Retired military officer
6	R. James Woolsey (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Booz Allen Hamilton	Former U.S.G. official
7	Bruce Riedel (Riedel and Samore, 2008)	Brookings Institution	Think tank fellow
8	Caitlin Talmadge (Talmadge, 2008)	Brookings Institution	Think tank fellow
9	Daniel L. Byman (Byman, 2008)	Brookings Institution	Think tank fellow
10	Ivo Daalder (Daalder and Gordon, 2008)	Brookings Institution	Think tank fellow
11	Martin S. Indyk (Haass and Indyk, 2008)	Brookings Institution	Former U.S.G. official
12	Michael O'Hanlon (O'Hanlon, 2008)	Brookings Institution	Think tank fellow
13	Philip Gordon (Daalder and Gordon, 2008)	Brookings Institution	Think tank fellow
14	Walter Slocombe (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Caplin & Drysdale	Former U.S.G. official
15	George Perkovich (Perkovich, 2008)	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	Think tank fellow
16	Nima Gerami (Gerami, 2008)	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	Think tank fellow
17	James N. Miller (Center for New American Security, 2008)	Center for a New American Security	Think tank fellow
18	Kurt M. Campbell (Center for New American Security, 2008)	Center for a New American Security	Think tank fellow
19	Anthony H. Cordesman (Cordesman, 2008)	Center for Strategic and International Studies	Think tank fellow
20	James P. Rubin (Rubin, 2008)	Columbia University	Former U.S.G. official
21	James Roche (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Council on Foreign Relations	Former U.S.G. official



22	Gary Samore (Riedel and Samore, 2008)	Council on Foreign Relations	Think tank fellow
23	Michael Gerson (Gerson, 2008)	Council on Foreign Relations	Think tank fellow
24	Robert Blackwill (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Council on Foreign Relations	Think tank fellow
25	Charles Robb (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008)	Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board	Former U.S.G. official
26	Shahram Chubin (Chubin, 2008)	Geneva Centre for Security Policy	Think tank fellow
27	Seth Robinson (Oren and Robinson, 2008)	Georgetown University	Former U.S.G. official
28	Anthony Lake (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Georgetown University	Professor
29	John Hillen (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Global Strategies Group	Former U.S.G. official
30	Richard Clarke (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Good Harbor Consulting	Former U.S.G. official
31	Abbas Milani (McFaul and Milani, 2008)	Hoover Institution	Think tank fellow
32	Kenneth Weinstein (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008)	Hudson Institute	Think tank fellow
33	Emily Landau (Eran and Landau, 2008)	Institute for National Security Studies	Think tank fellow
34	Oden Eran (Eran and Landau, 2008)	Institute for National Security Studies	Think tank fellow
35	Patrick M. Cronin (Cronin, 2008)	Institute for National Strategic Studies	Think tank fellow
36	David Albright (Albright and Shire, 2009)	Institute for Science and International Security	Think tank fellow
37	Jacqueline Shire (Albright and Shire, 2009)	Institute for Science and International Security	Think tank fellow
38	Mark Fitzpatrick (Fitzpatrick, 2008)	International Institute for Strategic Studies	Think tank fellow
39	Samuel Lewis (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Israel Policy Forum	Former U.S.G. official
40	Edward P. Djerejian (Djerejian, 2008)	James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy	Think tank fellow
41	Max Kampelman (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs	Think tank fellow
42	Fouad Ajami (Ajami, 2008)	Johns Hopkins University	Professor
43	Daniel Coats (Coats and Robb, 2008)	King & Spalding	Former U.S.G. official
44	Chuck Wald (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008)	L-3 Communications	Retired military officer
45	Michael D. Hays (Douglass and Hays, 2008)	Michael D. Hays	Military officer
46	Vin Weber (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	National Endowment for Democracy	Former U.S.G. official



47	Thomas L. Friedman (Friedman, 2008)	New York Times	Columnist
48	Geoffrey Kemp (Kemp, 2008)	Nixon Center	Think tank fellow
49	Henry Sokolski (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008)	Nonproliferation Policy Education	Think tank fellow
50	Dennis Ross (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Obama administration	Obama admin. official
51	John O. Brennan (Brennan, 2008)	Obama administration	Obama admin. official
52	Michael McFaul (McFaul and Milani, 2008)	Obama administration	Obama admin. official
53	Richard Holbrooke (Holbrook et al, 2008)	Obama administration	Obama admin. official
54	Samantha Power (Power, 2008)	Obama administration	Obama admin. official
55	Susan Rice (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Obama administration	Obama admin. official
56	Thomas Donilon (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Obama administration	Obama admin. official
57	Steve A. Yetiv (Parsi and Yetiv, 2008)	Old Dominion University	Professor
58	David Kay (Kay, 2008)	Potomac Institute for Policy Studies	Former U.S.G. official
59	Ashton B. Carter (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2008)	Preventive Defense Project	Think tank fellow
60	Charles Wolf (Green, Wehrey and Wolf, 2008)	RAND Corporation	Think tank fellow
61	Frederic Wehrey (Green, Wehrey and Wolf, 2008)	RAND Corporation	Think tank fellow
62	Jerrold D. Green (Green, Wehrey and Wolf, 2008)	RAND Corporation	Think tank fellow
63	Keith Crane (Craen, Lal and Martini, 2008)	RAND Corporation	Think tank fellow
64	Rollie Lal (Craen, Lal and Martini, 2008)	RAND Corporation	Think tank fellow
65	Pat Proctor (Proctor, 2008)	School for Advanced Military Studies	Military officer
66	Michael B. Oren (Oren and Robinson, 2008)	Shalem Center	Think tank fellow
67	Wendy Sherman (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	The Albright Group	Former U.S.G. official
68	Bob Kerrey (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	The New School	Former U.S.G. official
69	W. Andrew Terrill (Terril, 2008)	U.S. Army War College	Professor
70	Mark D. Wallace (Holbrook et al, 2008)	United Against Nuclear Iran	Former U.S.G. official
71	Charles A. Douglass (Douglass and Hays, 2008)	United States Air Force	Military officer
72	Ali Ansari (Ansari, 2008)	University of St. Andrews	Professor
73	Christopher Hitchens (Hitchens, 2008)	Vanity Fair	Columnist
74	David Makovsky (Washington	Washington Institute	Think tank fellow



	Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	for Near East Policy	
75	Matthew Levitt (Levitt and Jacobson, 2008)	Washington Institute for Near East Policy	Think tank fellow
76	Mehdi Khalaji (Khalaji, 2008)	Washington Institute for Near East Policy	Think tank fellow
77	Michael Jacobson (Jacobson, 2008)	Washington Institute for Near East Policy	Think tank fellow
78	Robert Satloff (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008)	Washington Institute for Near East Policy	Think tank fellow
79	Simon Henderson (Henderson, 2008)	Washington Institute for Near East Policy	Think tank fellow
80	David Ignatius (Ignatius, 2008)	Washington Post	Columnist
81	Jim Hoagland (Hoagland, 2008)	Washington Post	Columnist
82	Barbara Slavin (Slavin, 2008)	Washington Times	Columnist
83	Harlan Ullman (Ullman, 2008)	Washington Times	Columnist

Upon President Obama's inauguration, seven members of the Iran issue network took senior level positions in the Obama administration, and all seven belong to the Hawkish Engagement policy community. They are Richard Holbrooke, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan who passed away in December of 2010; John Brennan, and Thomas Donilon, both deputies of the National Security Advisor; Susan Rice, ambassador to the United Nations; Samantha Power, Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs at the National Security Council; Michael McFaul, then National Security Council's Senior Director and the present US ambassador to Russia; and Dennis Ross, first appointed as Special Advisor to Secretary of State Clinton for developing Obama administration's Iran strategy, then became Special Assistant to President Obama in the National Security Council (Kessler, 2009).

Ross reiterates the policy positions of the Hawkish Engagement policy community in writings of his own, which are indicative of Obama administration's approach to Iran. Ross believes the United States must "Talk tough with Tehran" (Ross, 2008), something the Bush administration failed to do appropriately in his belief. He states, "Iran has continued to pursue nuclear weapons because the Bush administration hasn't applied enough pressure – or offered Iran



enough rewards for reversing course” (Ross, 2008). The best way to achieve the needed pressure on Iran is “to focus less on the United Nations and more on getting the Europeans, Japanese, Chinese, and Saudis to cooperate” (Ross, 2008). The main value of U.S. willingness to talk directly to Iran, in Ross’s view, is that U.S. partners will “feel more comfortable ratcheting up the pressure” (Ross, 2008). The ultimate aim goes beyond Iran’s readiness to forgo its uranium enrichment program and includes a change in Iran’s support for Hamas and Hezbollah. Ross proposes that the United States enter the nuclear negotiations with Iran without Iran having to suspend its uranium enrichment activities, on the condition that the European Union agrees to “adopt more stringent sanctions on investments, credits, and technology transfer vis-à-vis Iran in general or at least on the Iranian energy sector” (Ross, 2008). This move is necessary, “to avoid misleading the Iranians into thinking they had won,” Ross writes. “The price for our doing this [i.e., talking directly with Iran] would not be with Iran but with Europe” (Ross, 2008).

Before joining the Obama administration, Ross was the chairman of the Jerusalem-based Jewish People Policy Planning Institute (Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, 2008). Ross and Richard Holbrooke also co-founded the American Coalition against Nuclear Iran (ACANI) in September 2008. According to its web site, ACANI aims to “prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to become a regional super-power possessing nuclear weapons” (American Coalition Against Nuclear Iran, 2008). In February 2009 ACANI announced the start of “Iran Business Registry” (IBR) as part of its web site, in which ACANI compiles a list of those countries and corporations that have dealings with the Iranian economy. IBR is an effort to “educate” investors and policymakers because Iran is said to be “uniquely susceptible to financial pressure” (United Against Nuclear Iran, 2008). In a full page advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* on February 19, 2009, ACANI asked the readers to join the cause against a nuclear Iran by stopping to do business with



companies that have economic dealings with Iran (Are You Supporting a Nuclear Iran?, 2009).

Among other prominent members of the Hawkish Engagement policy community are Anthony Lake, the National Security Advisor under President Clinton; R. James Woolsey, the former head of the Central Intelligence Agency in the first Clinton administration; and Martin Indyk, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel. Indyk is currently the director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. Seven out of eight Brookings Institution affiliates who are members of the Iran issue network promote a hawkish engagement strategy, with the last one (Suzanne Maloney) advocating strategic engagement. The same is true with the RAND Corporation, with five members in the Hawkish Engagement policy community and one member (James Dobbins) in the Strategic Engagement policy community. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) is another think tank that is a strong advocate of a hawkish engagement approach, with all of its six affiliates being part of this policy community. Dennis Ross was also a WINEP counselor and distinguished fellow before joining the Obama administration.

II. Fundamental Change in U.S. Foreign Policy

Members of the Iran issue network that advocate fundamental change in U.S. foreign policy find the underlying assumptions of U.S. Iran policy vitally flawed. These experts argue that Iran has never militarily threatened the United States or Israel and that it is not in violation of any international law. They further argue that U.S. allegations that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons, supporting terrorism, and helping the insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan have not been substantiated with evidence. The United States and Israel, on the other hand, repeatedly threaten to use military force against Iran. Proponents of fundamental change maintain that the underlying aim of existing U.S. Iran policy has been and continues to be the prevention of Iran's



ascendance to a regional power and the preservation of U.S. hegemony in the region. This group believes that a legitimate United States Iran policy requires a fundamental change in the overall objectives of U.S. foreign policy and United States behavior. Unlike the Strategic Engagement policy community, the members of the Fundamental Change policy community do not propose a change in the course of U.S. Iran policy due to pragmatic reasons; rather, they make the case for such redirection based on legal and moral grounds.

This policy community's specific policy positions and recommendations could be gleaned from a 2008 report published by the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies entitled *Iran in the Crosshairs: How to Prevent Washington's Next War* (Bennis, 2008). Contrary to the position of the Punitive Nonengagement and the Hawkish Engagement policy communities, Phyllis Bennis, the author of the report, lays out her arguments as to why Iran is not a threat to international peace. Bennis assertively states that "Iran does not and has never had a nuclear weapon – and no one, not even the Bush administration, claims they have" (Bennis, 2008: 7). She further asserts, the United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agrees that there is no evidence Iran has ever had a military program to build an atomic bomb. Moreover, she maintains, as a signatory to the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), "Iran has a legal right to produce and use nuclear power for peaceful purposes" (Bennis, 2008: 8). Thus, asking Iran to forgo uranium enrichment for fueling its civil nuclear program is to prohibit it from "exercising that internationally-guaranteed right" (Bennis, 2008: 8). With these premises, Bennis maintains, "The U.S.-orchestrated decision of the U.N. Security Council to strip Iran of that right and impose sanctions if Iran continued to exercise its NPT rights, has no grounding in international law; it is based solely on the U.S. claim that it doesn't trust Iran" (Bennis, 2008: 44).

The author further asserts that it is not Iran that is "fomenting a nuclear arm race in the Middle East;" rather, it is Israel that is doing



so (Bennis, 2008: 14). Also, contrary to the U.S. position, it is Washington that is in violation of its international obligations under the NPT, not Iran. Bennis notes that under Article VI of the NPT, the United States and the other nuclear weapons powers are obligated to move in good faith towards complete nuclear disarmament. The United States is also in violation of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice that, as quoted in the report, “the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law” (Bennis, 2008: 16).

“What about Iran’s support for terrorism?” Bennis asks. While criticizing the U.S. government for failing to support this perpetuated argument with substantiated evidence, the author of the IPS report notes that Hamas and Hezbollah are “both important political parties that have been elected to majority and near-majority positions in the Palestinian and Lebanese parliaments” (Bennis, 2008: 11). Furthermore, they emphasize, the activities of these political parties are not merely militaristic; rather, they “provide important networks of social services, from clinics and hospitals to schools, daycare centers, food assistance, and financial aid, to the most impoverished, disempowered, and (in the case of the Hamas in Gaza) imprisoned populations of Lebanese and Palestinians” (Bennis, 2008: 11). Bennis also finds the allegation that Iran is instigating unrest in Iraq and Afghanistan as unsubstantiated. These allegations, the author argues, do not justify an attack on Iran.

“Is Iran a threat to Israel?” The author of the report thinks otherwise. It is Israel that has repeatedly threatened to attack Iran if the United States fails to do so. These threats have come directly from Israeli officials who have control of Israel’s military and whose track record shows that these threats are real. Bennis stresses that Iran’s president does not control the country’s military and that his comments regarding “wiping Israel off the map” have been taken out of context. Juan Cole, a professor of Middle East history at the



University of Michigan with near native Farsi speaking ability – who is in the Strategic Engagement policy community – agrees. He told the *New York Times*, as quoted by Bennis, “Ahmadinejad did not say he was going to wipe Israel off the map because no such idiom exists in Persian. He did say he hoped its regime, i.e., a Jewish-Zionist state occupying Jerusalem would collapse.” Like the Strategic Engagement policy community position, Bennis asserts Iran has not declared its intention to attack Israel.

So why is Iran perceived to be such a fundamental threat to the United States and Israel? Bennis believes it is because “Iran is one of only two countries [the other being Iraq] in the Middle East with all the prerequisites to become an indigenous regional power: water, oil, and size” (Bennis, 2008: 23). To ensure that Iran does not become a regional power, successive U.S. administrations have attempted to either “buy its allegiance, insure its weakness, or destroy its capacity” (Bennis, 2008: 23). What Iran has done, according to Bennis, is “to threaten its [U.S.] control of Iran’s oil and its strategic neighborhood,” first through its 1951 oil nationalization and then through its 1979 revolution that ousted the Shah who was the de-facto United States gendarme in the region (Bennis, 2008: 23).

Despite Iran’s many grievances against the United States (i.e., the 1953 CIA coup against Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq, American support for the Shah’s dictatorship, its backing of Saddam Hussein in Iraq’s war against Iran, American aid for the Iranian terrorist militant group known as the MKO, funding Iranian opposition groups for regime change, and years of sanctions and threats of military attack), Bennis believes diplomacy is possible between the United States and Iran. She makes this assessment based on Iran’s constructive role in assisting the United States and other western countries in stabilizing Afghanistan. As James Dobbins, President George W. Bush’s first envoy to Afghanistan, as quoted by Bennis, said, “perhaps the most constructive period of U.S.-Iranian diplomacy since the fall of the Shah of Iran took place in the months



after the 2001 terrorist attacks” (Bennis, 2008: 33). Notably, James Dobbins is among the Strategic Engagement policy community who has a positive view of the prospects of U.S.-Iran relations.

According to Bennis, the potential of normalized relations between the United States and Iran could only be realized if America recognizes that “negotiations and diplomacy, not crippling sanctions, military threats, or military attacks, must be the basis of the U.S. posture towards Iran” (Bennis, 2008: 34). She also believes that, as a first step to ease the nuclear dispute, the United States must recognize and implement its obligations under the NPT. The U.S. must also recognize that it does not have the jurisdiction to dictate to Iran about its nuclear program. Rather such jurisdiction lies exclusively with the United Nation and the IAEA. Successful negotiations require a recognition of Iran’s demands for “a security guarantee (guaranteeing no invasion, no attack on nuclear facilities, and no efforts at ‘regime change’), recognition of Iran’s role as an indigenous regional power, and reaffirmation of Iran’s rights under the Non-Proliferation Treaty” (Bennis, 2008: 34). Once again, Bennis’ assessment of what Iran wants is similar to the assessment of the Strategic Engagement policy community. While the Fundamental Change policy community makes this recommendation because it finds it the only legal and moral alternative, the same recommendation is advanced by the Strategic Engagement policy community for its pragmatic value. This assessment is, of course, a complete departure from the demeaning stick and/or carrot approach of the other two policy communities.

Bennis makes a final recommendation that underscores one of the fundamental differences between this policy community and the previous three policy communities: Washington should stop using the Israeli-Palestinian “peace process” as an instrument to gain regional support for its position in the U.S.-Iran crisis, as it did at the Annapolis conference in December 2007. Instead, it should change its Middle East policy from its current uncritical political, military, economic, and diplomatic support for Israeli occupation and

discriminatory policies, to a policy aimed at establishing a just and comprehensive peace based on human rights, international law, equality, and UN resolutions (Bennis, 2008: 34).

From the above positions, it is evident that the Fundamental Change policy community opposes public diplomacy efforts that are aimed at regime change or the destabilization of the Iranian government. In addition to this general public diplomacy stance, Bennis proposes the need for “broadened participation in people-to-people delegations to Iran,” which denotes a genuine interaction between the Iranian and United States societies (Bennis, 2008: 36). This recommendation hints at the need for moving beyond the people-to-people exchanges that are strictly controlled by the U.S. government. Table 4 gives a list of the members of Fundamental Change policy community.

Table 4. Fundamental Change policy community

	Name	Current Affiliation	Affiliation Category
1	Hannes Artens (Artens, 2008)	Author	Author
2	Jonathan Cook (Cook, 2008)	Author	Author
3	Sasan Fayazmanesh (Fayazmanesh, 2008)	California State University, Fresno	Professor
4	Eryand Abrahamian (Abrahamian, 2008)	City University of New York - Baruch College	Professor
5	Akan Malici (Malici and Allison, 2008)	Furman University	Professor
6	Dedrick Muhammad (Muhammad and Hassen, 2008)	Institute for Policy Studies	Think tank fellow
7	Farrah Hassen (Bennis and Hassen, 2008)	Institute for Policy Studies	Think tank fellow



8	Phyllis Bennis (Bennis, 2008)	Institute for Policy Studies	Think tank fellow
9	Tom O'Donnell (O'Donnell, 2008)	The New School	Professor
10	Stephen Zunes (Zunes, 2008)	University of San Francisco	Professor

Institute for Policy Studies is the only major think tank that advocates an Iran policy incorporating fundamental changes in U.S. foreign policy. IPS was founded in 1963 by two resigning Kennedy administration officials (White House staffer Marcus Raskin and State Department lawyer Richard Barnett) and began as an organization for the anti-Vietnam War movement. IPS has continued to oppose America's successive military interventions, including the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars.

Conclusion

The foreign policy approaches of the Punitive Nonengagement and the Hawkish Engagement policy communities stand in sharp contrast to those of the Strategic Engagement and Fundamental Change policy communities and exemplify an asymmetrical relationship between the United States and Iran. Here, Iran is deemed an arch enemy of the United States who poses an existential threat to the United States and Israel. Thus, harmonizing of interests between the United States and Iran and U.S. openness to change to achieve such harmony are interrelated.

As was evident from the views expressed by the group of advisors guiding the Obama foreign policy before his election in 2008, the Obama administration policy toward Iran remained asymmetrical in his first term. In an op-ed piece on January 12, 2009, *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen sarcastically points to the lack of diversity of viewpoints in the first Obama administration team of advisors. "The Obama team is tight with information, but I've got the



scoop on the senior advisors he's gathered to push a new Middle East policy as Gaza war rages: Shibley Telhami, Vali Nasr, Fawaz Gerges, Fouad Moughrabi, and James Zogby," Cohen writes (Cohen, 2009). "This group of distinguished Arab-American and Iranian-American scholars, with wide regional experience, is intended to signal a U.S. willingness to think anew about the Middle East, with greater cultural sensitivity to both sides, and a keen eye on whether uncritical support for Israel has been helpful," Cohen fantasizes.

In reality, as Cohen writes, the Obama Middle East policy team was anything but a departure from the U.S. foreign policy establishment. "They include Dennis Ross (the veteran Clinton administration Mideast peace envoy who may now extend his brief to Iran); James Steinberg (as deputy secretary of state); Dan Kurtzer (the former U.S. ambassador to Israel); Dan Shapiro (a longtime aide to Obama); and Martin Indyk (another former ambassador to Israel who is close to the incoming secretary of state, Hillary Clinton)" (Cohen, 2009). There is nothing wrong with a foreign policy guided by a group of "smart, driven, liberal, Jewish (or half-Jewish) males; I've looked in the mirror," Cohen writes (Cohen, 2009). What is wrong with this setup is its failure "on the diversity front" and "on the change-you-can-believe-in front" (Cohen, 2009). It is ironic to hope for success using the failed approach of previous administrations.

According to a confidential diplomatic cable revealed by the Wikileaks dated January 29, 2009, from the then-secretary-of-state Clinton to several US embassies, US diplomats were directed to make the following points regarding US policy toward Iran. The expressed aim is to persuade the target countries to exert more pressure on Iran.

The two elements of the P5+1 strategy – engagement/incentives and pressure – were *always* intended to run *in parallel*, because without a credible threat of consequences, it is unlikely that Iran will make a strategic or even tactical change in direction. (Emphasis added) (Wikileaks Web site, 2010)

What is evident from this cable is the fact that the Obama



administration's Iran policy was based on a carrot-and-stick mentality from the start and lacked genuine political will for real negotiations with Iran. In fact, a strategy of "diplomatic coercion," to use James Petras' terms, is a good way to denote what Obama's hawkish engagement approach toward Iran really means (Petras, 2012).

The above examination of the Iran issue network provides a unique contribution to a more nuanced understanding of the range of policy options being debated regarding the future of U.S.-Iran relations. The proposed typology presented here is the first of its kind and could serve as a foundation for future research. Using the policy communities furnished here, other studies could do a concentrated analysis of the views of the more prominent members of each policy community paying closer attention to the networks that bind them together. Such network analysis could focus on the members' shared organizational affiliations beyond their primary affiliation noted here, their prior government service, members' co-authorship of articles, and citation analysis. Future examination of the funding sources of those think tanks that are most active in the Iran issue network may also prove beneficial. The role of lobbying groups, especially the Israel lobby, in the promotion of certain think tanks and policy positions must also be investigated. A review of the Foreign Agents Registration data could be useful in this regard.

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