THE WHY AND HOW OF DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT WITH POTENTIAL FOES

When does engagement make sense?

BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN ADAMS, U.S. ARMY (RET)
&
LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHRIS COURTNEY, U.S. ARMY (RET)
Why Diplomatic Engagement?

Diplomacy = primary means of conducting foreign policy

Gain information about your negotiating partner

Provides the optimal mechanism for negotiations

“Engagement may or may not lead to agreement but it will always lead to better information, and better information will lead to better policy.” ~ James Dobbins
What Happens When We Don’t Engage Diplomatically?

Rushing to War With One Side of the Story:

Vietnam (1964) Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed Congress based on faulty information

Iraq (2003) Invasion of Iraq based on faulty and politically-motivated read on intelligence

Rely on Assumptions vs. Facts:

Assumptions repeated often enough – they become treated as facts (and can misinform decisions)
Engagement Works

Diplomacy = primary means of conducting foreign policy

US/Western Europe engagement with Eastern Bloc

Cuban Missile Crisis

2001 Macedonian Civil War avoided – Ohrid Agreement
US Emphasis on Diplomacy?

US has more personnel assigned to military bands than it has accredited foreign service officers.

DOD Budget $703 B, State/USAID Budget $47 B

Engagement often seen as “reward” for good behavior – not as primary tool of foreign policy.

Public opinion does not support: Our political discourse confuses being tough with being smart.

Lack of strategic patience.

When your primary tool is a hammer…
CASE STUDY: CUBA

LEGACY (BAGGAGE) OF U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS

- 1898: SPANISH – AMERICAN WAR
- 1901: PLATT AMENDMENT
- 1925 - 33: MACHADO REGIME
- 1933 - 59: BATISTA REGIME
- 1956 – 59: CUBAN REVOLUTION
- 1959 – 61: GROWING TENSIONS
- 1961 – 91: CUBA AS SOVIET CLIENT
- 1991: COLLAPSE OF SOVIET UNION
- 2006 – PRESENT: POST-FIDEL
CONTEMPORARY U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS

• BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

• U.S. & CUBAN DOMESTIC ACTORS

• REGIME CHANGE?

• DEMOCRACY PROMOTION?

• ALAN GROSS CASE: IMPASSE
DOES ENGAGEMENT WITH CUBA MAKE SENSE FOR THE UNITED STATES?

- OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

- CUBAN ECONOMIC “UPDATE”
  - Role of Communist Party
  - Social Justice
  - Anti-colonialism

- BILATERAL ISSUES
US-Iran Relations

1856-1883: Diplomatic relations established
1953: Mossadeq overthrown by CIA organized coup
1981: US Hostages released
1980-1988: Iran-Iraq War
1984-1988: Tanker War
1988: US shoots down Iranian airliner
2001: 9/11 Attacks in US, military action in Afghanistan
2002: President Bush gives “Axis of Evil” speech
2003: US Invasion of Iraq, Iran accelerates nuclear program
2009: Ahmadinijad re-elected, fraud allegations, mass protests
2010: New US Nuclear Policy
2011-2012: New sanctions on Iran targeting banking sector
US and Iran Relations Today

No formal diplomatic relations since 1979

Each side has a narrative of each other which both are reluctant to let go of:

- Iran: US as boogeyman justifies administration policies and actions
- US: Iran as a regional boogeyman justifies large US presence in the Persian Gulf Region

Both have ample reason not to trust each other

2002 Poll results indicated 74% of Iranians favored resuming diplomatic relations with the US
Why Does Iran Want Nukes?

IRAN’S NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS:

Ensure regime survival

Protect the homeland against external threats

Maintain and expand influence and power in the region
US Security Interests Relating To Iran

Maintain US influence in Middle Eastern and world affairs

Successfully resolve ongoing US and NATO military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan

Protect key US allies in the Middle East.

Preserve global access to Middle East oil

Prevent nuclear proliferation in the Middle East
POSSIBLE NUCLEAR POSTURES FOR IRAN

1. Achieve a “virtual capability” by developing the know-how and infrastructure to assemble a nuclear weapon but stopping there.

2. Develop nuclear weapons but leave this capability ambiguous.

3. Acquire nuclear weapons and declare their existence through withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or by conducting a nuclear test.

* Most experts see Iran circa 2 years away from a deliverable nuclear weapons capability
US-Iran Relations: Key Questions

Can the US give Iran what it wants, and still dissuade it from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability?

Can Iran domestically afford to track back from its stance on acquiring nuclear weapons? Can the US?

Is a US-Iran “Grand Bargain” possible?

How much Iranian nuclear technology is the US (Israel, EU, Gulf neighbors) willing to accept?

Can Iran be persuaded to join in a constructive regional security dialogue?

If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, would the US then be willing to establish diplomatic relations? Why wait?
The Immediate Threat

Threat of war breaking out due to unintended escalation of a military incident or a premeditated strike by Israel.

Urgent need to establish bilateral lines of communication (LOC) at all levels: between diplomats, military forces in the region, between senior officials, and emergency LOCs.

We haven’t had a connection with Iran since 1979. We are not talking to Iran, so we don’t understand each other. If something happens...its virtually assured that we won’t get it right - that there will be miscalculation, which would be extremely dangerous in that part of the world.

~ Admiral Mike Mullen, US CJCS
ENGAGEMENT AS A DYNAMIC PROCESS

VARIOUS ACTORS, DIFFERENT LEVELS, COMPETING INTERESTS

3 D’S: DEFENSE, DIPLOMACY, & DEVELOPMENT

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

REMEMBER THE CYCLE OF ACTION & REACTION
THE WAY AHEAD

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM HISTORY?

IMPORTANCE OF REALISTIC APPRAISAL, CLEAR FOCUS

MIX AND PROPORTION OF THE 3D’S VARIES

ALL FORMS OF POWER MUST BE CONSIDERED

NEED TO IDENTIFY REDLINES, INCLUDING OTHER SIDES’...


Background Slides
Bargaining Positions

**US:**
- Economic recovery fragile, effect of oil price spike
- Forces in region (but also danger to forces in region)
- Legitimacy/viability of Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)
- Able to dissuade Israel from first strike...for how long?

**Iran:**
- Increasingly isolated politically and economically
- Iranian Rial in free fall, oil sold in foreign currencies
- Surrounded by western forces, close ally Syria in turmoil
- Strategic ambiguity

**Israel:**
- Strike before Iran acquires weapons – time window closing? Use it or lose it...
- Escalation advantage
Why The Hype on an Immediate Iranian Threat?

- Threat Inflation to support budget requests: DOD, DHS, Congress
- To gain domestic political advantage: GOP Presidential Primary
- Israel and Gulf nations goading US and EU into action
- Israel: Taking Iranian threats at face value, Likud Party desire to maintain control of government
- To drive up oil prices: Who gains?