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THE DAYS AFTER A DEAL WITH IRAN

REGIONAL RESPONSES TO A FINAL NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

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This perspective begins by positing that a final nuclear agreement is reached between the P5+1 and Iran.¹ One of a series of RAND perspectives on what the Middle East and U.S. policy might look like in “the days after a deal,”² this paper examines the potential responses of two of the most important regional actors: Israel and Saudi Arabia. Based on the anticipated positions of these two partners, we also explore how the United States might adjust its policies in order to strengthen the implementation of a final agreement and broader regional stability. We undertake this exercise understanding that, as President Obama himself has conceded, the prospects of reaching a final deal are far from certain.³ But we believe the potential for

reaching an agreement is great enough to warrant planning for this outcome.

In planning for the regional response to a final nuclear agreement, Israel and Saudi Arabia come to the forefront, as they are the two actors with the most capacity to affect the success and durability of the deal following its signing. Both also view Iran as a regional rival to a greater extent than other neighbors. And Israel and Saudi Arabia are the two countries in the region most concerned about the interim deal and the prospects, however uncertain, that a final agreement could lead to a broader Western-Iranian détente. As such, we focus primarily on these two countries in our analysis.

Ideally, both regional partners will adapt their policies to accept a final deal (should the United States and its P5+1 partners achieve one in the months ahead) given the common goal of preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. And there is no doubt both countries are regularly consulting with U.S. officials in attempts to shape the final deal in ways that conform to their interests. But based on what we believe are likely to be the contours of a final deal (see box to the right), there is also a strong possibility that both Israel and Saudi Arabia will maintain concerns about Iran's nuclear capabilities and its influence in the region more broadly even following a negotiated final nuclear agreement.

The contours of the agreement we outline here—and on which we base our analysis of what follows—assume that Iran will be able to continue to enrich uranium (albeit at reduced levels and under strict safeguards) and maintain an infrastructure that would leave it with the ability to break out and develop nuclear weapons should it decide to do so in the future. A final nuclear agreement is likely to extend the timeline for Iran's ability to break out, but is unlikely to remove this potential altogether.⁴

As a consequence, the agreement will not entirely remove the nuclear question from the regional agenda because Iran can be expected to maintain some capabilities and infrastructure; in addition, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other neighbors in the region have concerns about Iran that extend far beyond the nuclear issue. For example, the threat that Israel sees from Iran's missile development cannot be reduced just to its nuclear program, while Saudi Arabia views Iran as an ideological and strategic rival. This will pose difficult policy questions for the United States as it seeks both to reassure regional partners already concerned about declining U.S. influence and create an environment conducive to regional stability.

Our Assumptions About the Contours of a Final Deal*

For the purposes of our analysis, we presume that a final deal is reached between the P5+1 and Iran based on these general principles:

- Iran may continue to enrich uranium, but limits are placed on the degree of enrichment and on the number and types of centrifuges, including at Fordo.
- The Arak heavy water reactor will be turned into a light water reactor with no reprocessing and subject to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.
- The deal includes intrusive IAEA inspection of nuclear sites; Iran agrees to sign and ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Additional Protocol, which permits IAEA access to non-declared sites with little notification.
- Iran would share information with IAEA on Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of the program.
- The phasing out of nuclear-related sanctions is linked to implementation of the agreement, including the lifting of unilateral U.S. sanctions through new legislation by Congress, the lifting of sanctions by the EU, and the removal of sanctions under a new UN Security Council resolution.

*These principles are derived from the elements for a comprehensive solution found in the Joint Plan of Action. We are not predicting what the actual agreement will look like, but using these plausible contours as a point of departure for our analysis.

U.S. policy actions will need to include but go beyond traditional security cooperation, and policymakers must remain clear-eyed about where U.S. interests may diverge from these two important partners. Even if a final deal is not reached, many of the partner positions and potential U.S. policy responses we outline here are likely to still be at play, as the challenges presented by Iran will remain with or without a final nuclear deal.

Israel

Reaction to The Interim Deal Was Overwhelmingly Negative, but Alternative Views Have Developed ⁵

Even before the United States and the other P5+1 members reached an interim deal with Iran in Geneva in November 2013, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu forcefully opposed the agreement. Israel's official political establishment has expressed deep mistrust of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and skepticism about a genuine shift in Iranian policies since his election last June. Prime Minister Netanyahu has called him a "wolf in sheep's clothing."⁶ The official Israeli assessment maintains that, like previous Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Rouhani will continue Iran's drive to attain a nuclear weapon and Tehran's hostile positions toward Israel. But some Israelis see Rouhani as even more dangerous than Ahmadinejad because his style and positions could split the international community, while Ahmadinejad's strident hostility to Israel and Holocaust denial united the world in confronting Iran.

And because Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Hosseini Khamenei plays a key role in determining Iran's nuclear policy, the official Israeli stance sees little substantive difference in Iranian policy with

the rise of Rouhani.⁷ Israeli officials worry that while Rouhani will not change course on Iran's nuclear ambitions, his conciliatory rhetoric and "charm offensive" in the West has the potential to split the P5+1 and erode international sanctions against Iran, leading to a deal that would leave Iran as a nuclear threshold state.⁸

It is thus not surprising that once the interim agreement was signed, Israel's political leadership strongly condemned it. As Netanyahu put it, "What was achieved last night in Geneva is not an historic agreement; it is an historic mistake," suggesting the deal endangered Israel while asserting "Israel has the right and the obligation to defend itself."⁹ Other senior Israeli officials offered catastrophic predictions, with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman saying it "brings us to a nuclear arms race" and Minister Naftali Bennett going as far as arguing that the deal could lead to a "nuclear suitcase exploding in New York or Madrid."¹⁰ Lieberman also suggested that Israel might need to seek other allies beyond the United States and "take responsibility regardless of the stance of the Americans."¹¹

Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon summarized the concerns of Israel's government when he characterized the deal as Western "capitulation to a charm offensive and fraud by Iran, whose goal is to win time without substantive damage to its military nuclear program...the Iranian regime has been given the legitimacy to continue its military nuclear project and continue its worldwide terror activities, while it is no longer internationally isolated and its economy has been strengthened."¹²

A number of other Israeli defense and foreign ministry officials also publicly argued this was a "bad deal" because it allowed Iran to continue enriching uranium while sanctions began to ease. Some Israeli officials responded in more measured ways, with President

Shimon Peres reminding Israelis that, “This is a temporary agreement, not a permanent one,” and that the agreement should be judged over time based on outcomes, not words; if a diplomatic agreement does not succeed, he suggested Israel would still maintain the option of pursuing “tougher” alternatives.¹³

Israeli public opinion polling following the interim deal seemed to support Israeli officials’ deep skepticism about Iranian intentions, which is not surprising given that Israeli public opinion tends to be deferential to the views of its leaders on core security issues such as Iran. One poll suggested that 77 percent of Israelis believed that the Geneva agreement will not end Iran’s nuclear weapons program, although a strong majority (71 percent) still thought the United States was Israel’s most loyal and important ally.¹⁴ Indeed, given the importance Israelis place on maintaining a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, Israel’s open defiance of the United States in its public rejection of the deal received significant critique in Israel, although some argued that Netanyahu’s stance simply represented a necessary “bad cop” role to bolster the West’s bargaining position with Iran.¹⁵ Other Israeli experts suggested that Netanyahu’s tough rhetoric might have even strengthened the terms of the interim deal.¹⁶

Still, there are many Israeli experts and commentators who argue that Israel’s forceful opposition to the interim deal was a mis-

Within Israel’s official security establishment, assessments of Iran and the interim deal have also emerged that are at odds with Israel’s public position.

take, needlessly marginalizing Israel rather than Iran while risking a rupture in Israeli relations with the United States.¹⁷ Former Israeli peace negotiator Uri Savir argues that Israel’s hostile stance toward President Obama’s Iran policy and its “interference in American domestic politics” erodes Israel’s strategic relationship with Washington, which is “more dangerous than anything that Iran can threaten us with.”¹⁸ Some analysts and pundits in Israel have also argued that the deal was not as bad as Israeli politicians suggested, even providing some important benefits, such as significantly freezing key parts of the Iranian program.¹⁹ As one Israeli commentator noted, “an increasing number of pundits and opposition politicians have begun speaking in considerably more favorable terms, some allowing that it is ... actually a good deal for Israel.”²⁰ A wide array of former top Israeli security officials—former Mossad head Meir Dagan, former Shin Bet director Yuval Diskin, and former Israel Defense Forces chief of staff Gabi Ashkenazi—have similarly argued that while not perfect, the interim deal’s benefits outweigh its risks.²¹

Within Israel’s official security establishment, assessments of Iran and the interim deal have also emerged that are at odds with Israel’s public position. Instead of supporting public rejection of the deal, some Israeli security officials are arguing for shifting the focus toward quiet diplomacy to influence the terms of the final nuclear agreement based on a less alarmist assessment of the interim deal by Israel’s military intelligence staff.²² There are also important voices in Israel suggesting an Israeli bottom line different from Israel’s official position that any deal with Iran would have to completely dismantle all Iranian uranium enrichment capabilities. For example, Amos Yadlin, now head of a prominent Israeli national security think tank and the former head of Israeli military intelligence, has

argued that a “reasonable” deal could allow for some indigenous enrichment, albeit at extremely limited levels and involving a number of other Iranian steps to roll back and dismantle major parts of its program.²³

As the nuclear negotiations move forward and Israel inevitably shifts away from opposing the interim deal to trying to shape a final deal, this less maximalist position suggested by analysts like Yadlin could potentially strengthen. And concerns about the use of unilateral military force within Israel’s security establishment may leave the door open for support for a diplomatic solution if one can be found that really appears to keep Iran at a comfortable distance from being able to break out to a bomb (which analysts like Yadlin suggest would allow for a two-year time frame for Iran’s ability to break out and weaponize its program).²⁴

All of that said, the prevailing view among Israel’s top political echelon opposes a nuclear deal that would leave Iran with any enrichment capability. Israeli perceptions of how close Iran is to having the capability to develop a nuclear bomb are more dire than American assessments (months as opposed to at least a year), suggesting that Israel would be less comfortable with leaving current Iranian enrichment capacity in place.²⁵ Even if there is growing acceptance of some limited Iranian enrichment, any more moderate Israeli position may ultimately not be in sync with what the Americans and the P5+1 may be willing to accept in terms of the extent of Iran’s nuclear rollback. Israeli concerns about a deal the United States might accept are heightened by Israeli perceptions of weakening U.S. resolve in the region.²⁶

As one military official observed, there may be a tolerable deal Israel could accept, but in his view there are many Israeli decision-makers determined “not to leave a question mark.”²⁷ Thus, the

fundamental gap between the U.S. position—the prevention of an Iranian nuclear weapon—and the Israeli position—the prevention of Iran’s *capability* to produce a nuclear weapon—may ultimately not be bridgeable if Israel maintains Netanyahu’s current position of “zero enrichment, zero centrifuges.”²⁸

And finally, there are still a number of senior Israeli officials and security analysts who, weighing the costs and benefits, may prefer the risk of military conflict if they believe the alternative would leave Iran on a path to a nuclear weapon.²⁹ While Israel’s security establishment is not eager for a military confrontation, particularly one that does not have the support of the United States, Israel’s threats of military action are not mere bluff, and Israel has seriously considered the option of military strike in the past.³⁰

So while the Israeli position is moving away from open defiance of the interim deal toward attempts to shape any final deal more to its liking, the overwhelming Israeli position continues to be one of mistrust of Iranian intentions, concerns that the Americans and their negotiating partners will ultimately accept a deal Israel cannot tolerate, and continued support for keeping a military option at play.

Israel Is More Likely to Adapt to a Final Deal Than Immediately Reject It

Based on the dominant views toward Iran among Israel’s security establishment (where Iran is linked to most hostile actions against Israel), as well as the likely contours of a nuclear deal, Israel is not likely to embrace a final agreement. The Israeli responses to and actions after a final deal will thus largely fall into two general categories: rejection or adaptation. Although distinct in that Israeli

rejection of a deal would lead to immediate confrontational actions while Israeli adaptation would allow for the implementation of the final deal to play out, these responses are not necessarily mutually exclusive—at least over time. For example, Israeli adaptation to a nuclear deal could include policies to buy time to prepare for what many in Israel expect to be the eventual collapse of a deal because of Iranian noncompliance. So initial adaptation to a nuclear deal could quickly shift to actions associated with the rejection of the deal (e.g., encouragement of new U.S. sanctions and potential military force) should the deal collapse.

Rejection

Israeli leaders could openly denounce a final deal along the lines that we outlined above because, in their view, such an agreement will not set the Iranian program back far enough to prevent its ultimate attainment of nuclear weapons, and also because Israel is still concerned about an array of other Iranian actions in the region that are threatening to Israel. A number of Israeli steps aimed at derailing a deal could accompany public and acrimonious official rejection of a final nuclear agreement.

Israel may see widespread strikes within Syria, including possibly against Iranian assets, as a useful way to enhance its deterrence against what it may perceive as an emboldened Iran. Israel might also believe such actions would help to ultimately undermine any deal because, in such an escalatory environment, Iran would be less likely to follow through on the concessions required under a nuclear agreement. Israel might seek to accomplish this by, for example, pursuing a more aggressive posture vis-à-vis Hizballah, more forcefully enforcing its redlines on the transfer of Iranian weapon supplies (particularly long-range missiles) to Hizballah

through Syria. While Israel has already launched a number of military strikes inside Syria to prevent such transfers and clearly signal its redlines and its readiness to act on them, it has largely limited these strikes to specific targets.

But if Israel expands its military activity within Syria, a potential escalation of conflict between Hizballah, Iran, and Israel could unfold in ways that could further undermine regional stability, not to mention potentially threaten U.S. forces and interests in the region if Hizballah or Iran decides to retaliate. And Tel Aviv would also likely be concerned that military escalation in Syria could negatively affect the stability of its neighbor Jordan, a critical issue for Israel.

Consequently, Israel could seek to bolster its post-deal deterrence posture through less risky means, including continued strengthening of its anti-missile defense capabilities (which would likely continue even if Israel reconciled itself to a final agreement). Israel has had good reasons to limit its military involvement in Syria to the prevention of sophisticated arms transfers to Hizballah, and Israeli officials have clearly signaled they have no desire to become involved in Syria's protracted internal conflict.³¹ This dynamic is unlikely to change with the advent of a nuclear deal with Iran, as escalation with Hizballah could lead to a conflict that erodes, rather than enhances, Israeli deterrence, a lesson the Israelis learned in the aftermath of the 2006 war. It may be that Hizballah, not Israel, is more interested in the expansion of the conflict if its losses in Syria increase and it sees a return to its traditional mission of confronting Israel as a way to enhance its legitimacy and support within Lebanon and the broader region.³²

Another possible Israeli response, which Israeli leaders have repeatedly threatened over the years, is an Israeli military strike

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against Iran's nuclear facilities. While this is not the security establishment's preferred option, the perception of a bad deal with Iran among the Israeli leadership and populace could enhance support for those Israelis favoring this option.³³

However, it is highly unlikely Israel would launch such an attack on its own in the aftermath of a nuclear deal that is broadly accepted by the United States and the international community, particularly given the reservations within Israel's own defense establishment regarding its ability to definitively set back Iran's program via military force, not to mention the damage such an action would inflict on U.S.-Israeli relations. That said, if Israel can expose Iranian cheating on the terms of the final deal, should it occur, or if the narrative following the collapse of a final deal is widely accepted to be the Iranians' fault, Israel may believe it has the legitimacy to launch an attack. In this scenario, Israelis may believe their actions would be implicitly or explicitly supported by the United States.³⁴

But more likely, Israel's actions to express its rejection of a final deal and provoke responses that could lead to its breakdown would

include less overt escalatory measures, such as renewed attempts to sabotage Iranian nuclear facilities in Stuxnet-type operations or the resumption of assassinations of Iranian scientists (as in past practice, Israel would not likely claim responsibility for such actions but would also not deny them). Although it is more likely to pursue this path than overt military strikes, Israel will be hesitant to take such actions within the context of a broadly accepted nuclear agreement, where they would likely be viewed by the international community as attempts to sabotage the deal rather than the Iranian nuclear program.

Israeli rejection of a deal is not likely to affect its positions on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process beyond some possible rhetorical remarks critical of U.S. pressure in an environment where Israel is facing what it perceives as a continued Iranian nuclear threat. Peace process dynamics have a life of their own, and in any case, a final status agreement may well collapse prior to a final nuclear agreement with Iran. Israeli polling also suggests Israelis largely do not see an Iranian nuclear deal affecting the outcome of the peace process.³⁵

Perhaps the Israeli course of action that should most likely be expected in the aftermath of a final deal it rejected would be encouraging the U.S. Congress to delay or prevent a lifting of sanctions against Iran in an attempt to slow or undermine the implementation of a final agreement. Even during the interim deal period, a major congressional effort to threaten new sanctions against Iran gained significant and bipartisan support, threatening to derail the terms of the interim agreement. Ultimately, the Obama administration's lobbying efforts, particularly with Democratic members of Congress, prevented such legislation from moving forward, and President Obama threatened to veto the legislation if it came up for a vote and passed. But this type of

confrontation is likely to surface again in a post-final deal environment, with sanction threats remaining during various implementation stages.

In sum, while Israel has a range of actions it could pursue to undermine a final deal, it would not be likely to pursue the more extreme measures, such as military force, escalation with Hizballah, or sabotage of the Iranian nuclear program, in an environment where there is broad American and international acceptance of a final deal. And Israel would not likely jeopardize peace negotiations (if they were moving forward) as a way to signal rejection of a final deal. Israel will no doubt encourage continued Congressional sanctions pressure to prevent Iranian noncompliance, but such actions could also coincide with Israel reluctantly adapting to the reality of a final deal.

Adaptation

Rather than publicly rejecting a final deal and pursuing actions that could lead to the deal's collapse and open rift with the United States, Israel might instead adapt to, even if it does not welcome, a final nuclear agreement.

Particularly if Israel is able to influence the final deal in ways such that the details of the agreement would meet what some Israeli security analysts assess to be Israel's minimum requirements (e.g., on levels of enrichment, the fate of the Arak reactor, and Iran's missile research), Israel's official position could quietly shift away from the current maximalist positions expressed by Netanyahu. In this case, Israel could refrain from attempts to derail the deal and adapt Israeli security policies to the new reality through measures such as continued missile-defense development, and possibly new debates about Israel's current nuclear opacity posture, as Israel

considers ways to further bolster its regional deterrence. Israel may also attempt to strengthen its de facto cooperation with Saudi Arabia and other regional states wary of Iranian regional influence, although anti-Israel public opinion across the Arab world would limit the extent of such cooperation absent a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Some observers of Israel note that Israel may already be "reconciling itself to the idea of Iran as a nuclear 'threshold state'—and is preparing to make the best of the situation."³⁶ In other words, Israel may be preparing to accept the notion that Iran will maintain some breakout capability in the expected contours of a final deal such as the one we have outlined here.

Upon returning from a security conference in Israel in late 2013, former U.S. national security advisor Stephen Hadley suggested that, "At the end of the day, if we can come up with a limited enrichment capability that really puts the Iranians back so that breakout is a year to 18 months away, if the alternative is a military strike and all the international isolation of Israel that is likely to follow that, my guess is that the Israelis will choke down the agreement."³⁷ If Israeli security assessments begin to shift toward the view that jihadist groups gaining ground on Israel's borders may pose a more serious threat than Iran (Israeli analysts currently view Iran as Israel's top security challenge), Israel's willingness to tolerate a nuclear deal with Iran could increase.

Such a response would not likely end the adversarial Israeli-Iranian relationship, but a significant de-escalation in tensions between the two countries could be possible. Small gestures already developed in the wake of the interim agreement: Israeli Defense Minister Ya'alon stayed to listen to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's panel at the 2014 Munich security con-

ference (in contrast to the Israeli delegation walking out of President Rouhani's speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2013), and Iran's Minister of Energy uncharacteristically stayed to listen to Israel's Water and Energy Minister Silvan Shalom at a conference in Abu Dhabi in January.³⁸ Iran's Zarif has also recognized the Holocaust as a "horrifying tragedy" and has suggested that an Israeli agreement with the Palestinians could allow the possibility of Iranian recognition of Israel.³⁹ A final deal could spur further gestures of this nature, but given there are still groups in Iran holding vehemently anti-Israel positions and Iranian support for Hizballah and other actors hostile to Israel is likely to continue, a radical shift in Israeli-Iranian relations is not likely.

In fact, even if Israel adapts its policies to the reality of a final deal, it is likely to closely monitor the deal's verification and implementation and maintain a leading role in exposing Iranian foot-dragging or possible violations of the agreement. Some voices in Israel already believe that rather than actively trying to sabotage the deal and risk friction with the United States, Israel's interests would be best served by allowing the deal to run its course because they believe that ultimately Iran will not abide by it. As a former close advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu sees the interim deal, "We're going to see Iran do what it's always done in the past: fudge its commitments and attempt to violate the deal. And there will be an understanding that Israel was not crying wolf and had serious concerns that should have been more seriously considered by Western powers."⁴⁰ This may be exactly how Israeli leaders believe the aftermath of a final deal will play out, which would quickly move the Israeli position from one of passive adaptation to active rejection policies if Iranian noncompliance is apparent.

U.S. Policy Options Should Aim to Both Assure and Restrain Israel

Either Israeli response, rejection or adaptation—or a combination of the two over time—will require active American alliance-management efforts. The goal of such efforts should be to encourage Israeli adaptation to a final deal the United States believes is in its interests—and preferably Israeli acceptance of a deal that would also serve *its* interests by preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Policies to this end could include a variety of common "assurance" measures to address Israel's likely increased sense of vulnerability following a final nuclear deal and thereby reduce the potential for unilateral Israeli actions. These could include the continued bolstering of the U.S.-Israeli military relationship, particularly missile defense cooperation.⁴¹ Such measures would send an important political message—that the United States supports Israel—as much as they would allay Israel's security concerns, particularly since Israel already maintains significant military superiority over Iran (and all of its other neighbors, for that matter). They would also help the Obama administration gain congressional support for a final deal and the sanctions relief that would be necessary for it to succeed.

And beyond the military-to-military relationship, the United States could create a regular high-level political and strategic dialogue with Israel to keep its leaders informed on the implementation of the nuclear agreement and share mutual concerns about broader regional security developments. In this dialogue, the United States should make it clear that it is prepared to reinstitute

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and strengthen sanctions against Iran should Tehran violate or break out of the final deal.

U.S. assurances may be met with some skepticism in Israel given the increasing perception there of declining U.S. power and influence. First emerging after the 2003 Iraq war, such perceptions have increased in recent years as Israeli security elites question the Obama administration's approach to Egypt (with many believing the United States abandoned President Mubarak) and its reluctance to use force in Syria.⁴²

But the Obama administration has proven its resolve in building broad and robust international sanctions against Iran in the past, so clear cooperation with Congress on specific steps that would be put in place in the event of Iranian noncompliance could be made credible to the Israelis. U.S. officials have already indicated that any sanctions relief in a final deal would be incremental, allowing sanctions to remain in place in the event of noncompliance by Tehran.

To prevent potential escalation between Israel and Hizballah in the aftermath of a deal, the United States could also work with the Russians to discourage sophisticated arms transfers to Hizballah in Syria, perhaps in conjunction with efforts to stem the flow of weapons to jihadist groups in Syria of mutual concern to the United States, Russia, Iran, and Israel.

To the extent that a final nuclear deal leads to a broader U.S.-Iranian dialogue on other issues of regional concern, the United States could encourage positive Iranian gestures toward Israel to lower tensions between the two countries and Israeli threat perceptions about Iranian intentions. Such gestures could include explicit statements by high-level Iranian officials denouncing the Holocaust and the avoidance of statements rejecting the Jewish state. The United States should make it clear to the Iranians that continuing anti-Zionist conferences (established during Ahmadinejad's tenure but cancelled after Rouhani's election) or Holocaust-denial statements will damage the potential for U.S.-Iranian cooperation in other areas. While it would be unrealistic to expect Iran, even if more moderate leaders consolidate power after a nuclear deal, to officially recognize Israel, the United States could encourage Iran's leaders to support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as that would entail de facto recognition of Israel in line with other Muslim nations such as Indonesia.

While such confidence-building and security measures for Israel will need to be a fundamental part of any post-deal package, the United States will also need to balance assurance steps with clear messages to the Israelis about how the United States views its interests and a clear delineation of actions that it would view as undermining these interests. Most critically, U.S. officials will need to clearly communicate, both privately and publicly, that the United States will not support military action against Iran in the aftermath of a negotiated final nuclear settlement.

Similarly, as in the case of the interim deal, Israel should understand that as long as the United States is supporting a deal it believes is in its interests (and in the interest of broader regional stability), and Iran has not violated that agreement, the United

States will reject any attempts to encourage sanctions legislation in the U.S. Congress that could undermine the deal. The President could also publicly threaten to veto any such legislation, as President Obama did with respect to the interim deal in his State of the Union address.

At the same time, the United States can assure Israel that Iran will face consequences for noncompliance with the final agreement. The United States can publicly and privately signal that if Iran clearly violates the terms of the agreement, it will seek to again build an international coalition to impose sanctions—and the possibility of military action—against Iran. To strengthen the credibility of U.S. assurances, the United States could push forward a UN Security Council resolution enforcing the nuclear agreement that includes provisions dealing with possible Iranian noncompliance, including renewed sanctions and references to Chapter VII under the UN Charter.

Clearly, if the Israelis pursue a response to a deal more closely resembling resignation than rejection, U.S. assurance policies may prove sufficient. But it would be unwise for U.S. policymakers not to think through the range of tactics that might be necessary to prepare for an Israeli response that may not be aligned with U.S. interests, and they should pursue an approach that prevents unwanted actions while preserving a strong U.S.-Israeli relationship over the longer run.

Saudi Arabia

Reaction to Interim Deal—Outwardly Muted, Inwardly Distrustful

Unlike the more bellicose statements from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and some of his cabinet members, the official Saudi response to the interim nuclear agreement was muted. The Kingdom greeted the announcement of the Geneva deal with a cautious statement that “*if there are good intentions*, this agreement could represent the first step towards reaching a comprehensive solution to the Iranian nuclear program.”⁴³ But typical of Saudi foreign policymaking, the regime’s surrogates offered a more direct and frank accounting of Riyadh’s true stance. The response from these unofficial circles revealed two common themes: First, that the interim deal was evidence of the United States’ declining resolve to play the role of security guarantor in the region. And second, that the Western powers were tacitly accepting an Iranian sphere of influence in return for concessions on its nuclear program.

As the interim deal was being concluded, a prominent member of the Saudi royal family (but one who does not hold an official government post), Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, pointed to American weakness as fueling its “over eagerness” to negotiate the interim agreement.⁴⁴ Also striking a distrustful tone, the former Saudi intelligence chief, Turki al-Faisal, voiced skepticism over the sincerity of the Iranian charm offensive that preceded the talks and criticized the P5+1 for not including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states at the negotiating table.⁴⁵ Regional media commentary was even more pointed in its recriminations: A Saudi newspaper editor assailed the Western powers for “behind the back

For many Gulf Arabs, those policies suggest a shift in the underlying regional balance of power toward Iran and away from a U.S.-led regional order.

dealings,”⁴⁶ while a Kuwaiti commentator noted wryly, “we are not at the table but on it.”⁴⁷ An op-ed in the Emirati press went as far as to accuse the United States “of giving away in the Gulf and Levant that which it does not own to those who do not have a right to it.”⁴⁸

This interpretation of events is not new. At least dating back to the beginning of the 2003 war in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and to varying degrees its GCC allies, have viewed regional developments as part of a worrying trend in which Iranian influence is filling the vacuum created by diminished U.S. resolve.⁴⁹ In this read of events, the West’s potential détente with Iran is just the latest indicator of Shi’a ascent at the expense of Saudi security and regional leadership. The emergence of a Shi’a-led Iraq, Hezbollah’s growing influence in Lebanon, alleged Iranian meddling in Bahrain and Yemen, and Tehran’s support for the Assad regime are juxtaposed against the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, the “rebalance” to Asia, the U.S. administration’s willingness to let Mubarak fall in Egypt, and its hesitancy to support the Syrian opposition. For many Gulf Arabs, those policies suggest a shift in the underlying regional balance of power toward Iran and away from a U.S.-led regional order.

Tension Between U.S. and Saudi Interests

Recent developments suggest that Saudi Arabia is moving toward an increasingly independent and assertive foreign policy that

diverges from the United States’ preferred approach to managing the instability associated with the Arab uprisings. Since the onset of the so-called Arab Spring, the Kingdom has pursued a number of policies openly at odds with the United States. For example, Saudi Arabia led the Peninsula Shield Force that was dispatched to Bahrain to put down a pro-reform movement despite U.S. counsel against it. Riyadh has also been among of the most forward-leaning supporters of the Syrian opposition, declining a rotating seat on the UN Security Council in part as a protest over the international community’s lack of resolve in confronting the Assad regime. It has also funneled arms to the opposition, including Islamist groups the United States would prefer to marginalize. And an analyst close to the Sa’ud family recently suggested the Kingdom may grow the Peninsula Shield Force to a standing army of 100,000, with Saudi Arabia contributing one-half to three-quarters of the troops.⁵⁰ At the same time, the Saudi Ambassador to the United Kingdom suggested his country was prepared “to go it alone” if necessary.⁵¹ Like the Saudis’ goal of building more than a dozen nuclear reactors, military initiatives and pronouncements like these may not be achievable in the near term and are best understood as signals designed to communicate disapproval and motivate U.S. action. But at a minimum, they suggest Saudi unease with U.S. policy and a push for greater self-reliance in the area of national defense.

In parallel to this more assertive military posture, Saudi Arabia has doubled down on its traditional checkbook diplomacy. To counter Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria, Saudi Arabia recently pledged US \$3 billion to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Wasting no opportunity to communicate their pique at the United States’ tepid support for the Syrian opposition, Riyadh stipulated that the LAF use the funds to buy French, not American, weap-

ons.⁵² And in July 2013, when the Egyptian military deposed the country's first president elected from outside of the officer corps, leading the United States to withdraw much of the \$1.3 billion it traditionally provides Egypt through the Foreign Military Financing program, Saudi Arabia increased its own aid to Egypt and announced it would offset any shortfall resulting from cutoffs in Western assistance.⁵³

Taken together, these developments are indicators that Saudi Arabia should not be expected to simply toe the U.S. policy line should the P5+1 reach a final nuclear agreement with Iran. It is true that U.S. forward presence in the Gulf serves as a security guarantee for the Kingdom, one for which there is no credible alternative in the near or medium term. But Saudi Arabia has shown a willingness to compartmentalize that aspect of the relationship to chart independent foreign policies on other issues.

Saudi Arabia Might Adapt to a Deal but Increase Competition Against Iran Elsewhere in the Region

Like Israel, Saudi Arabia may grudgingly accept a final nuclear deal along the lines of that described at the outset of this report, even if it has reservations about the fact that Iran will retain some residual nuclear program. Indeed, given that Riyadh does not have the same military capabilities as Tel Aviv—namely, to launch a strike on Iranian nuclear infrastructure—it may be that Saudi acquiescence is more likely than the Israelis'. Despite Saudi skepticism that genuine change is afoot in Tehran, the Kingdom does have a recent history of seeking better relations with Iran when opportunities present themselves. For example, there was some warming of relations between the two Gulf rivals during the Rafsanjani and Khatami presidencies, and the combination of Rouhani and a final

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nuclear agreement could be the impetus for another thaw. Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif's visit to the GCC states in December 2013 raised the possibility of some warming in Iranian-GCC relations, although it is important to note that Zarif was not welcomed in either Riyadh or Manama.

Should Riyadh conclude that the final agreement is not in its best interests, it possesses several counters that could complicate implementation and diminish the chances that an agreement could translate into a broader Western-Iranian détente. Whether Saudi leadership chooses this path is likely a function of the broader regional context. The terms of the final nuclear accord will inform Saudi decisionmaking; however, the Kingdom's strategic competition with its rival across the Gulf runs much deeper than the nuclear issue. Unless implementation of a final accord leads to corresponding shifts in Iran's positions on other issues of concern—including a ratcheting back of material support to Hizballah, greater flexibility on Syria, and restraint in the fanning of Shi'a opposition within the Arab Gulf states—the Saudis could pursue several counters that are concerning from the U.S. policy perspective.

The most concerning, but also the least likely, is that Saudi Arabia will lay the groundwork for the acquisition of its own nuclear weapon to balance against an Iran it sees as a threshold nuclear power given the advanced stage of the Iranian program. Indeed, the head of the foreign affairs committee in the Saudi

Shura council, Abdallah al-‘Asker, greeted the interim deal by underscoring that this option remains open.⁵⁴ But while Saudi acquisition is a risk, logic suggests that the negotiation of a final accord between the P5+1 and Iran would reduce, not increase, that risk. This is because even if the agreement leaves Iran with the infrastructure and knowledge to achieve a nuclear weapons capability in the future, the deal would lengthen the time horizon for Iran to reach that threshold. Since Saudi Arabia has not pursued a nuclear weapons program to date,⁵⁵ it would be illogical that a development that places controls on the Iranian nuclear program and extends the time frame for Tehran to achieve breakout would serve as the impetus for Saudi Arabia pursuing the development of its own nuclear deterrent.

This is in addition to the fact that even if Saudi Arabia had the intention to develop nuclear weapons, it lacks the infrastructure or technical know-how to do so.⁵⁶ It is true that Saudi Arabia has the financial wherewithal, has pursued nuclear cooperation agreements with a variety of more technology advanced countries, and has announced—somewhat fantastically—its plans to build more than a dozen nuclear reactors including the first by 2020, but the Saudi nuclear program is civilian in nature and remains largely aspirational. This leaves the acquisition of a turnkey program from Pakistan as the only near- or medium-term path for the Kingdom to emerge as a nuclear weapons state. While this scenario should not be dismissed out of hand given the long history of Saudi-Pakistani cooperation and persistent rumors of Islamabad providing Riyadh with nuclear weapons capability as a quid pro quo for the latter’s financial support,⁵⁷ it has always been a remote possibility, and one that would be made even more doubtful by the conclusion of a final agreement.

The second Saudi counter, and one that is more likely, is that Saudi Arabia will further roil the regional waters in an effort to complicate the emergence of a broader détente between the United States and Iran, which many Saudis fear would come at the price of the United States recognizing an Iranian sphere of influence. The Kingdom is already engaged in strategic competition with Iran in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and within the Arabian Peninsula when it comes to countering Iranian influence among the GCC states’ Shi‘a populations. Saudi Arabia has shown a strong commitment to advancing its interests in these battlegrounds, and any escalation with Iran within these arenas could spoil the chance—however uncertain it may be—that a nuclear agreement would translate to a broader thaw in Western-Iranian relations.

This approach could take the form of Riyadh more aggressively funding Sunni Islamists pitted against Iranian surrogates in arenas such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. Riyadh is already supporting an array of militant groups in these neighboring countries, so the question is whether the Kingdom uses its influence to press them to take the fight to Iranian-sponsored groups like Lebanese Hizballah and ‘Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq. If Riyadh’s objective was to spoil a détente, escalating these conflicts would be one means of advancing that goal. But complicating the Saudi calculus, the Kingdom would only pursue this approach if the expected benefits—in this case, spoiling a potential Western-Iranian détente—outweighed an important unintended effect: the risk that returning jihadists could once again threaten Saudi security.

U.S. Policy Options Should Seek Saudi Support for Improving Gulf Security Dynamics

The ideal outcome from the perspective of U.S. strategic interests is a final nuclear deal with Iran that can be sustained through the implementation phase and that leads to Iran moderating its positions on other issues of U.S. concern. To increase the chances of realizing this outcome, the United States would benefit greatly from Saudi Arabia doing its part to foster a regional environment conducive to détente. Nudging Riyadh in that direction will require supplementing traditional assurance tools with a strategic dialogue that is aimed at socializing regional partners to the notion that Gulf security is not a zero-sum proposition, and also that increasing Iran's sense of security can actually contribute to the security of the Arab Gulf states. Should this idea take root, the next step would be to gradually introduce confidence-building measures between the United States, the GCC states, and Iran that routinize interactions and mitigate the chances of unintended escalation.

Even if Saudi Arabia opposes the type of final agreement laid out in the beginning of this report, Riyadh does not have the capability to scuttle its implementation. The Saudi regime is unlikely to adopt its most destructive counter—pursuing a nuclear weapons capability—and its more likely counter—pressing Iran in other arenas—may not be sufficient to dissuade Iran from implementing the agreement. What the United States should guard against however, is Riyadh complicating the chance a nuclear deal will translate into positive spillover on other regional issues. For a détente to emerge, Saudi Arabia would have to be open to the type of engagement it pursued with Iran during the Rafsanjani and Khatami presidencies of the 1990s and early 2000s.⁵⁸ But at that time, the roles were

reversed. Saudi Arabia and Iran were flirting with one another, while the United States worried about the defection of Arab states to its adversary. Today, Washington and Tehran are trying to bridge divides while regional partners worry about whether détente would come at the expense of their interests.

The traditional assurance toolkit will need to be part of the prescription for assuaging Saudi concerns; it can help Riyadh feel comfortable enough to engage in limited forms of cooperation with Iran should the opportunity arise in a post-deal environment. The United States has already done much on this front, including upgrades to the GCC states' ballistic missile defense, joint exercises, an enduring U.S. carrier presence in the Gulf, and the more than 35,000 American forces operating at bases within the GCC states.⁵⁹ But there are ways to increase this cooperation further; for example, the United States could make explicit security guarantees that formally bring the GCC states under the U.S. nuclear umbrella—as is the case with Japan and South Korea—although some of the Arab Gulf states may not want to be singled out in U.S. declaratory policy due to the sensitivity of tying themselves too close to Washington (and it is also not clear whether Washington can or would want to credibly make such a commitment). Another approach could be for Washington to lend diplomatic support to Saudi initiatives on other priority issues, such as the Middle East peace process. In addition, the United States will have to clearly communicate the objectives that motivate shifts in its military posture—like the “rebalance” to Asia—so as to avoid any misperception that the United States is less committed to Gulf security.

Crafting a U.S. policy approach will also need to take into account the effects of interactions between partners. Although Israel and Saudi Arabia have a general alignment of interests when

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it comes to preventing the emergence of a nuclear weapons-capable Iran, reassurance strategies must be grounded in each partner's views of the other. The interaction effects between these partners was traditionally made manifest in two issues: the need to assuage Israeli threat perceptions by maintaining its qualitative military edge (QME) vis-à-vis the Arab states and the existence of the Israeli nuclear program as a perceived double standard that worked against Arab states focusing on the threat of Iranian acquisition. These issues have not disappeared from Tel Aviv's and Riyadh's radar screens, but they did recede as Iran inched closer to the nuclear threshold. In recent years, Tel Aviv has been less apt to oppose U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and the Saudis have shown a willingness to set aside the issue of Israel's nuclear program by focusing on the proliferation threat in the Gulf rather than the Middle East writ large. In a post-deal world, tacit cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia may expand further as both work against the potential that a nuclear agreement translates into a broader Western-Iranian détente.

In addition to equipping, training, and diplomatic pronouncements, there is a need for strategic dialogue and the gradual introduction of confidence-building measures between the United

States, GCC states, and Iran. A logical first step would be to increase the number of fora—such as the Manama Dialogue—that could enable the United States, its Arab Gulf partners, and Iranians to engage in candid discussion of issues of mutual concern.⁶⁰ Of course, absent changes in strategic outlook, particularly from Iran regarding how it defines its interests in the Levant, no amount of talking will lead to a Saudi-Iranian thaw. And the difficulty of finding a way to include Iran in the Geneva II talks on Syria is evidence of the practical obstacles to integrating Iran into regional fora. Notwithstanding the challenges involved, these dialogues are critical for fomenting an exchange of ideas that might lead Iran and Saudi Arabia to reprioritize interests or, at the very least, make them aware of flexibility in each other's positions that allow them to achieve their own interests at lower costs.

Should these dialogues show promise, the United States could then work with regional partners to begin embedding them in routinized interactions with Iran that, at a minimum, can assist the parties in managing hostilities. Although it has been tried before and ultimately rejected by Iran,⁶¹ the post-deal environment would be ripe for once again trying to establish a hotline between the United States and Iran on issues of Gulf maritime security, and it could also include regional partners such as Saudi Arabia. A hotline would have the dual benefit of heading off unintended escalation while also building a foundation of trust that could be used to pursue a broader détente. Including Saudi Arabia and other GCC states in these efforts would increase local ownership of the initiative and hedge against the reaction that this was another example of the United States going behind its partners' backs.⁶² And as with Israel, the United States should consider increased sharing of information on the status of Iran's nuclear program with Saudi

Arabia and its Arab Gulf partners during and beyond the implementation phase of the final agreement.

Conclusion

While a final nuclear deal with Iran is not likely to be enthusiastically embraced by key U.S. partners such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, our analysis suggests that both countries are likely to adapt to the new reality of a deal rather than actively attempt to derail it. Both Tel Aviv and Riyadh may work against the emergence of a broader Western-Iranian détente, but neither is likely to take the more aggressive counters (a military strike from Israel or Saudi nuclear-weapons acquisition) that would scuttle implementation. But because a final nuclear agreement will not entirely remove concerns about Iran's program and broader regional ambitions, Israel and Saudi Arabia should not be expected to pursue post-deal policies that neatly align with U.S. regional interests.

The United States will thus need to actively manage its relationship with these key regional partners and should be prepared to seize potential opportunities as well as to face challenges following a final nuclear agreement. This requires regular and high-level strategic dialogue with both countries, as well as the encouragement of broader regional dialogues inclusive of Iran that address issues beyond the nuclear file.

And in conjunction with a range of traditional assurance policies (particularly in the military cooperation and missile defense arena), the United States will need to be very clear with its partners about how it views its regional interests and actions by partners that would not be welcomed. The United States will also have to assure its allies that Iranian noncompliance would be met with a strong response, committing the United States to build a broad interna-

While a final nuclear deal with Iran is not likely to be enthusiastically embraced by key U.S. partners such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, our analysis suggests that both countries are likely to adapt to the new reality of a deal rather than actively attempt to derail it.

tional coalition to again pressure and isolate Iran should it violate any aspect of the final agreement.

Getting to a final nuclear agreement in the months ahead will not be easy, but it is critical for U.S. policymakers to begin preparing now for the days after a deal. Understanding and addressing the likely concerns and reactions of key U.S. partners is essential for the successful implementation of a nuclear agreement, as well as for the promotion of broader regional stability in the years ahead.

Notes

¹ The United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council), plus Germany.

² The others address Iranian foreign policy and U.S. approaches to the region in a post-deal environment.

³ In assessing the chances of reaching a final deal, President Obama has said, “I wouldn’t say that it’s more than 50-50, but we have to try.” “Obama Defends Iran Nuclear Deal,” *USA Today*, December 7, 2013.

⁴ It is not possible to say precisely what that timeline would be; experts in the nonproliferation community have suggested that Iran would need anywhere from a few short months to eighteen months to break out should it jettison the agreement and pursue nuclear weapons. See, for example, David Albright’s testimony that if the final nuclear agreement caps Iran at 4,000 IR-1 centrifuges, this would be consistent with a six-month breakout timeline. *Testimony of David Albright, Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), before the [Senate] Committee on Foreign Relations on the Negotiations on Iran’s Nuclear Program*, February 4, 2014 (as of March 31, 2014: http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Albright_Testimony1.pdf).

⁵ The interim nuclear agreement halts or rolls back key aspects of Iran’s nuclear program (particularly near-20% enriched uranium) and increases inspection of Iranian nuclear facilities in exchange for the temporary lifting of some limited sanctions. The idea of the agreement is to largely freeze Iran’s nuclear progress while Iran and the P5+1 negotiate a final nuclear agreement within a six-month time frame. Further details are outlined in the agreement’s Joint Plan of Action. See The White House, “Summary of Technical Understandings Related to the Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action on the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Nuclear Program,” press release, January 18, 2014 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/16/summary-technical-understandings-related-implementation-joint-plan-actio>).

⁶ Prime Minister Netanyahu’s address to the UN General Assembly, October 1, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.550012>).

⁷ Author interview with Israeli official in the Prime Minister’s office, August 1, 2013, Jerusalem, and author interview with Israeli military official, July 31, 2013, Tel Aviv.

⁸ Author interview with Israeli official in the Prime Minister’s office, August 1, 2013, Jerusalem, and author interview with Israeli military official, July 31, 2013, Tel Aviv.

⁹ Barbara Opall-Rome, “Netanyahu: Iran-P5+1 Deal ‘Historic Mistake,’” *Defense News*, November 24, 2013.

¹⁰ Neri Zilber, “The Bad Cop Syndrome,” *Foreign Policy*, November 25, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/11/25/israel_america_iran_trust_broken).

¹¹ Barak Ravid, “Netanyahu: Iran Nuclear Deal Endangers Israel, We Will Defend Ourselves,” *Haaretz*, November 24, 2013.

¹² Ravid, 2013.

¹³ Ravid, 2013.

¹⁴ Tel Aviv University-Israel Democracy Institute Peace Index, November 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://en.idi.org.il/about-idi/news-and-updates/november-2013-peace-index>). The question posed in the poll was, “Do you believe or not believe that the agreement between Iran and the Western countries, headed by the United States, will indeed lead to the cessation of Iran’s nuclear weapons program?”

- ¹⁵ Neri Zilber, “The Bad Cop Syndrome,” *Foreign Policy*, November 25, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/11/25/israel_america_iran_trust_broken). Also see Jeffrey Martini, “Playing Good Cop, Bad Cop with Iran,” blog post, U.S. News and World Report online, November 22, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2013/11/22/dont-let-congress-israel-or-saudi-arabia-derail-iran-negotiations>).
- ¹⁶ Yaakov Lappin, “Yadlin: Geneva Agreement Isn’t Final, Iran Is Being Tested,” *Jerusalem Post*, November 24, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Yadlin-Geneva-agreement-isnt-final-Iran-is-being-tested-332843>).
- ¹⁷ For a review of different Israeli positions on the nuclear negotiations even before the interim deal, see Dalia Dassa Kaye, “A Different Israeli Take on Iran,” *The Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 2013.
- ¹⁸ Uri Savir, “For the Iran Deal,” *The Jerusalem Post*, November 26, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/For-the-Iran-deal-333124>).
- ¹⁹ For such contrary views, see Jordan Gerstler-Holton, “Not All Israelis Are Furious About the Iran Nuclear Deal,” *The Atlantic*, November 25, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/11/not-all-israelis-are-furious-about-the-iran-deal/281827/>); “Iran Unlikely to Breach Interim Deal, Says Top Israeli Analyst,” *Times of Israel*, November 24, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-unlikely-to-breach-interim-deal-says-top-israeli-analyst/>); Barak Ravid, “A Good Deal: Geneva Pact Distances Iran from Nuclear Bomb,” *Haaretz.com*, November 24, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/premium-1.559860>); and Barbara Opall-Rome, “Israeli Experts Dispute Netanyahu Snub of Iranian Nuke Deal,” *Defense News*, November 25, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131125/DEFREG04/311250015/Israeli-Experts-Dispute-Netanyahu-Snub-Iranian-Nuke-Deal>).
- ²⁰ Chuck Freilich, “An Interim Deal: The View from Israel,” *Iran Matters*, Belfer Center blog, Harvard University, November 26, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://iranmatters.belfercenter.org/blog/interim-nuclear-deal-view-israel>).
- ²¹ Ben Caspit, “Netanyahu’s Alarm About Iran Balanced by Military Chiefs,” *Al-Monitor*, November 26, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/iran-agreement-israel-defense-apparatus-not-alarmist.html>).
- ²² Caspit, 2013. Reports also suggest that Israel’s military intelligence Iran experts offered a very different reading of Rouhani than their Prime Minister’s public statements, suggesting a real struggle for power within Iran and a group of moderates around Rouhani that could create an independent power center. See Amos Harel, “As 2014 Dawns, Israel Keeps a Nervous Eye on Regional Jihadist Groups,” *Haaretz.com*, December 27, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/premium-1.565709>).
- ²³ See Amos Yadlin and Avner Golov, “Four Possible Deals with Iran,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 17, 2013. A former Israeli official knowledgeable about arms control issues also suggested a deal was possible that Israel could live with if carefully formulated. Author interview with former Israeli official, July 28, 2013, Tel Aviv.
- ²⁴ See interview by Ben Birnbaum with Amos Yadlin in *The New Republic*, October 23, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/115313/amos-yadlin-iran-strike-why-israel-needs-act-soon>).
- ²⁵ Oren Dorell, “Israel Issues Warning on Report on Nomb,” *USA Today*, October 25, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/10/25/iran-bomb-uranium-israel/3186567/>). Israeli Minister Naftali Bennett has suggested Iran is six weeks from a bomb; see Robert Lenzer, “Iran Can Have a Nuclear Bomb In Six Weeks if Negotiations

Fail, Israel Claims,” Forbes.com, November 18, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertlenzner/2013/11/18/israeli-economics-minister-bennett-warns-that-saudi-arabia-other-gulf-states-will-build-nuclear-bombs-if-iran-gets-one/>)

²⁶ For an example of Israeli assessments of declining U.S. power in the region following the Arab uprisings, see Shmuel Bar, “America’s Fading Middle East Influence,” *Policy Review* (Hoover Institution), No. 166, April 1, 2011. As of March 31, 2014: <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policy-review/article/73161>.

²⁷ Author interview with Israeli military official, August 2, 2013, Tel Aviv.

²⁸ Netanyahu reiterated this position in a speech to Jewish American leaders visiting Israel in February (Israel Prime Minister’s Office, “Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Remarks at the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations,” transcription of speech, February 17, 2014 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechpre170214.aspx>) and in a speech to AIPAC during a March 2014 visit to Washington (“Netanyahu’s AIPAC Speech: The Full Transcript,” Haaretz, March 4, 2014; as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.577920>).

²⁹ As one Israeli official noted, while Israel prefers a diplomatic resolution, Israel cannot accept an Iranian nuclear capability, and its assessment is that a military strike “could do a lot” to set back the Iranian program, as it would take Iran many years to reconstitute its nuclear program if a military attack targeted the most critical nuclear facilities (author interview with Israeli official in the Prime Minister’s office, August 1, 2013, Jerusalem). Some security experts at prominent Israeli think tanks also expressed the view that military options “wouldn’t be the worst” alternative and could delay Iran’s progress and deal a blow to the regime’s legitimacy if “done right” (author discussions with think tank analysts in Tel Aviv and Herzilya, July 2013).

³⁰ According to one former Israeli official, Israel seriously considered military action against Iran twice, and only heavy U.S. pressure prevented it from coming to pass (author interview with former Israeli official, July 28, 2013, Tel Aviv).

³¹ For an overview of Israeli positions and interests in the Syrian conflict, see Dalia Dassa Kaye, “Learning the Wrong Lessons from Israel’s Intervention in Syria,” blog post, Reuters.com, May 14, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2013/05/14/learning-the-wrong-lessons-from-israels-intervention-in-syria/>).

³² For an overview of various scenarios for how Israel might get drawn into the Syrian conflict, see The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, “No Good Outcome: How Israel Could be Drawn into the Syrian Conflict,” Policy Focus No. 131, November 2013.

³³ For a detailed discussion of debates within Israel on the question of a military attack against Iran, see Dalia Dassa Kaye, Alireza Nader, and Parisa Roshan, *Israel and Iran: A Dangerous Rivalry*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1143-OSD, 2011 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1143.html>)

³⁴ Yoel Guzansky, a former head of Iran policy on Israel’s National Security Council, argues that if Iran is caught cheating even during the interim agreement period, “you have a legitimacy to do other things that you didn’t have before.” See Charles Levinson, “Israel Debates a New Diplomatic Approach,” Wall Street Journal.com, November 24, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304791704579217110836724136>).

³⁵ See Tel Aviv University-Israel Democracy Institute Peace Index, November 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://en.idi.org.il/about-idi/news-and-updates/november-2013-peace-index>). When asked, “In your opinion, how will the agreement recently signed with Iran by the Western countries, led by the United States, affect the Israeli government’s position on conducting the negotiations with the Palestinians?”, 38

percent responded that the agreement would have no effect, while nearly equal but lesser numbers predicted opposition effects (26 percent believed Israel would take a tougher position; 23 percent said Israel would take a more conciliatory position).

³⁶ See Gideon Rachman, “Israel’s Public Paranoia Masks Private Complacency,” *Financial Times*, December 16, 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d4208ae0-641f-11e3-98e2-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2xajANWdV>).

³⁷ Barbara Slavin, “Ex-Bush Adviser: Israel Could ‘Choke Down’ Iran Deal,” *Al-Monitor.com*, February 10, 2014 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/originals/2014/02/israel-iran-deal-breakout-year-nuclear-hadley.html>).

³⁸ Meir Javedenfar, “Iran, Israel and the Politics of Gesture,” *Al-Monitor.com*, February 5, 2014 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/02/iran-israel-politics-gesture.html>).

³⁹ Javedenfar, 2014.

⁴⁰ Levninson, 2013.

⁴¹ For a more detailed menu of U.S. “assurance” options for regional partners, see Lynn Davis, Jeffrey Martini, Alireza Nader, Dalia Dassa Kaye, James T. Quinnlivan, and Paul S. Steinberg, *Iran’s Nuclear Future: Critical U.S. Policy Choices*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1087-AF, 2011 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1087.html>).

⁴² Such sentiments were expressed in dozens of interviews with Israeli officials and security experts with the author on multiple visits to Israel following the Arab uprisings.

⁴³ “Majlis al-Wuzarā’: Ittifāq Iyrān wa Majmū’a (1+5) Khatwa Awliya” [The Prime Minister’s Office: The Iran-P5+1 Deal Is a First Step], *Al-Riyadh* newspaper, in Arabic, November 25, 2013.

⁴⁴ Mathew Kaminski, “Prince Alwaleed bin Talal: An Ally Frets About American Retreat,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 22, 2013.

⁴⁵ Statement from Prince Turki al-Faisal at the 5th Plenary Session of the Manama Dialogue, December 8, 2013.

⁴⁶ “Khubrā’: Min Haqq al-Sa’udiya al-Husul ‘ala al-Nawawī li Tawāzun” [Experts: It Is the Right of Saudi Arabia to Obtain a Nuclear [Weapon] to Balance], *Al-Arabiya*, in Arabic, November 24, 2013.

⁴⁷ David Pollock, “We Are Not at the Table, but on It’: Arabs React to the Iran Deal,” Washington Institute, November 26, 2013.

⁴⁸ Radwan al-Sayyid, “Al-Ittifāq al-Amirikī al-Iyrāī...Ikhtilāf fī al-Ru’iya,” [The American-Iranian Agreement...A Difference in Vision], *Al-Ittihad* newspaper, in Arabic, December 1, 2013.

⁴⁹ Fred Wehrey, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jeffrey Martini, and Robert A. Guffey, *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-892-AF, 2010 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG892.html>).

⁵⁰ Nawaf Obaid, “Saudi Arabia’s Gulf Union Project Includes a Military Dimension,” *Al-Monitor*, December 30, 2013.

⁵¹ Mohammed Bin Nawaf Bin Abdulaziz al Saud, “Saudi Arabia Will Go It Alone,” *New York Times*, December 17, 2013.

⁵² Anne Barnard, “Saudis’ Grant to Lebanon Is Seen as Message to U.S.,” *New York Times*, January 6, 2014.

⁵³“Sa‘ud al-Faisel: al-Duwal al-‘Arabīya Qādira ‘ala Ta‘wīd al-Musā‘dāt al-Gharbīya li Misr,” [Sa‘ud al-Faisel: The Arab Countries are Capable of Compensating for the Western Assistance to Egypt], Al Ahram, in Arabic, August 20, 2013.

⁵⁴“Khubrā’: Min Haqq al-Sa‘udīya al-Husūl ‘ala al-Nawawī li Tawāzun” [Experts: It is the Right of Saudi Arabia to Obtain a Nuclear [Weapon] to Balance], Al-Arabiya, in Arabic, November 24, 2013.

⁵⁵ Saudi Arabia has twice purchased Chinese missiles that are concerning as potential delivery mechanisms for future nuclear weapons. The U.S. reaction to the first missile purchase led to pressure for Saudi Arabia to join the NPT, which the Kingdom did in 1988. Saudi Arabia’s official position is that it seeks a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Gulf.

⁵⁶ Colin H. Kahl, Melissa G. Dalton, and Matthew Irvine, “Atomic Kingdom: If Iran Builds the Bomb, Will Saudi Arabia Be Next?” Center for a New American Security, February 2013; Davis et al., 2011; and Thomas Lippman, “Saudi Arabia’s Nuclear Policy,” SUSRIS, August 5, 2011.

⁵⁷ Nuclear Threat Initiative, Saudi Arabia country profile, web page, February 2013 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/saudi-arabia/nuclear/>).

⁵⁸ Frederic Wehrey, Theodore W. Karasik, Alireza Nader, Jeremy J. Ghez, Lydia Hansell, and Robert A. Guffey, *Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implications for U.S. Policy*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-840-SRF, 2009 (as of March 31, 2014: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG840.html>).

⁵⁹ Remarks by William J. Burns, Deputy Secretary of State, CSIS, Washington D.C., February 19, 2014

⁶⁰ The 2013 Manama Dialogue did not have any high-level participation from Iran. The most significant Iranian participant was Dr. Seyyed Kazem Sajjadpour, who serves as an advisor to Foreign Minister Zarif.

⁶¹ Jay Solomon, “Iran Rejects Proposed U.S. Military Hot Line,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 2011.

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About This Perspective

One of a series of RAND perspectives on what the Middle East and U.S. policy might look like in “the days after a deal” (a final nuclear agreement) with Iran, this paper examines the potential responses of two of the most important regional actors: Israel and Saudi Arabia.

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