

**THE VIEW FROM CONGRESS:
U.S. POLICY ON IRAN**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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THE VIEW FROM CONGRESS: U.S. POLICY ON IRAN

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2017

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:35 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Corker, Risch, Rubio, Gardner, Young, Portman, Paul, Cardin, Menendez, Shaheen, Coons, Udall, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, and Merkley.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. The Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We thank you for being here. We understand we have some pretty unsavory witnesses. They get highly securitized before they come in. We thank you for going through that and being with us.

In today's hearing, we will discuss the next steps in our Iran policy. One of my criticisms of the JCPOA is that it would become our de facto Middle East policy, and Iran would expand their destabilizing activities. I think we are seeing a lot of that today.

Regionally, we have seen an escalation in Iranian intervention. Iran, along with its allies in Russia, have continued to prop up Assad at the cost of countless lives in Syria. Iran's support for Shia militias in Iraq threatens the interests of Sunnis and Kurds alike, not to mention the Shia in Iraq that do not subscribe to the anti-American, zero-sum politics of the militias that are there.

Iran is arming the Houthis in Yemen, who are, in turn, attacking our Saudi allies and targeting our ships. Yemen now faces a humanitarian crisis unprecedented in its history.

Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism. It counts Lebanese Hezbollah, an organization that has killed hundreds of Americans, as among its closest allies. Iran also continues to detain several U.S. nationals.

Last week, many members of this committee joined together in a bipartisan manner and introduced a bill to begin rebalancing our Iran policy. With a new administration in place, we have an opportunity to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with both Iran's regional activities and a longer term threat of an Iranian nuclear weapon.

I know both of our witnesses have spent their careers both in and out of government grappling with this issue, and I look forward to hearing your ideas. We truly thank both of you for being here, and I look forward to your testimony.

With that, I will turn to my friend, Senator Ben Cardin, our ranking member.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for calling this hearing.

I want to thank both of our distinguished witnesses. They may have had difficulty getting through security, but we are glad that they are here and for their expertise in this subject matter.

Iran deserves special attention, and this committee can, I think, play a critical role. We have in the past. I think back about the legislation that authorized the sanctions against Iran for its nuclear activities. I congratulate Senator Menendez for his leadership on that legislation.

It led to sanctions being imposed by the United States, and then with the strong diplomatic efforts of our country and leadership, we got other countries to join us. We were able to isolate Iran to a point where they felt it was in their interests to negotiate with us and our allies for a nuclear agreement.

During that process, Mr. Chairman, under your leadership, we were able to bring together different views on our committee for the proper review of that legislation. I think, as a result, the agreement was stronger and the public understood what was going on. We had much more transparency. So I think we played a very important role.

Well, we are now 15 months past the JCPOA. You and I both opposed that agreement. It has been in force for 15 months, and I strongly believe it would be against U.S. interests to withdraw from the JCPOA or to take any actions that could be interpreted to be in conflict with the JCPOA.

Having said that, Iran's activities today are as bad as they have ever been, and probably worse. They are certainly increasing their terrorist sponsorship in the Middle East, as we see in so many different countries in that region. Their record on violating the ballistic missile obligations are well-known, well-understood. Their human rights violations against their own citizens is horrible, one of the worst countries in the world. They violate the arms embargo. And the list goes on and on and on.

So it is appropriate that this committee take a look at what we can do to make sure that, first, the Iran nuclear agreement is honored so that Iran does not become a nuclear weapons state. But then secondly, look at those activities that were not covered under the JCPOA as to how we can play a stronger role.

Mr. Chairman, I particularly want to thank you and Senator Menendez for the work that we have done in bringing together a bill that we introduced this week that will, I think, appropriately isolate the activities that I previously mentioned for a stronger position for U.S. leadership among our allies to make sure that Iran understands: Yes, we will live up to the JCPOA. Yes, we believe

Iran nuclear ambitions must be avoided. But there are other activities that are of equal concern, and we are going to continue to speak out and take action, if Iran does not change its sponsorship of terrorism, if it continues to violate ballistic missile obligations, if it violates arms embargo and human rights issues.

And that is exactly what our legislation does, and I thank you for the efforts that we have made.

We have to recognize that there are other areas that we need to be prepared in, in dealing with Iran. Under the JCPOA, there are deadlines. After 5 years, the restrictions for conventional weapons sales and technology go away. After 8 years, the restrictions on ballistic missile-related transfers to Iran go away. At 10 years, all provisions of the Security Council Resolution 2231, which brought the JCPOA into force, are terminated.

So we need to start thinking about, as we reach those dates, what are the appropriate policies for the United States without the protections we have, that currently exist?

So it is important that we do that. It is difficult to find someone willing to disagree with the notion that Iran's behavior in the region is not getting worse. Every conversation we have—what is going on in Syria, what is going on in Yemen, what is going on with concerns in the Gulf States—Iran comes into our discussions. So we need to take a very tough position.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I know you will be disappointed if I do not at least mention once the Trump administration in my opening statement.

I am concerned about whether we have a coherent policy from the Trump administration. I know it is early. I understand that. But take a look at the skinny budget that they presented. It would diminish the U.S. role globally rather than strengthening our ability to deal with issues that are a concern of Iran.

So I think it is important that this committee speak. I think it is important that the Trump administration is held accountable, to make sure they understand the seriousness of Iran in that region, and how we can constructively try to modify its destructive behavior.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much. And please know we are all independent and are just trying to make the best of life as we find it. I do think that what we may see is an administration over the next couple years that attempts to move to a place where Iran is involved in zero enrichment. That would be, to me, a place that most people on the committee would welcome, if done appropriately.

So with that, let me introduce our two witnesses. The first witness is Mr. Michael Singh, Lane-Swig senior fellow and managing director of the Washington Institute. Our second witness is the Honorable Martin Indyk, executive vice president of The Brookings Institution.

You both have been here many times in the past. If you could summarize your comments in about 5 minutes or so, without objection, your written testimony will be part of the record. I am sure people look forward to their questions. If you can just begin in the order introduced? And again, we thank you both for being here.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SINGH, LANE-SWIG SENIOR FELLOW, MANAGING DIRECTOR, THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. SINGH. Thank you, Chairman Corker. It is an honor to be here, and Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee.

Let me first say congratulations on the bill. Iran has long been one of these bipartisan issues, and it is great to see a bipartisan bill that I think is a good bill on this issue. It is very encouraging.

Iran is, I think, one of the most pressing challenges that we face in the Middle East. It is the region's leading revisionist state. It is determined to alter the balance of power in the Middle East in its favor at the expense of the United States and our allies. It seeks to accomplish this aim through the destabilizing projection of power utilizing a sort of Middle Eastern version of hybrid warfare.

And I would agree with you, Chairman, and you, Ranking Member Cardin, that Iran's power in the Middle East has grown steadily over the last 8 years and especially since the Iran nuclear deal was signed. And there is a long list, and I will not repeat that list, but it is a list that I think is getting longer and getting worse.

That is not to say that Iran has not faced setbacks in the region. Its relationships, for example, with its Palestinian proxies, like Islamic Jihad and Hamas, I think have suffered in the wake of the Arab uprisings. It has been challenged certainly by the rise of ISIS. Just today we saw, for example, an ISIS threat against Iran.

Russia's intervention in Syria has helped Iran in many ways. It has helped save the Assad regime, which is a critical ally for Iran. But it also has reduced Iran to a junior partner and given Iran a bit of a challenge in that sense.

And U.S. allies, as a result of Iran, are more united in the region than ever, and looking to the United States to join them to press back on Iran.

Nevertheless, though, I agree with the general sentiment that Iran poses a significant challenge to U.S. interests both directly through all these things we mentioned and indirectly by contributing to the environment of sectarian strife and institutional breakdown in the region that has fueled the rise of ISIS and other jihadist groups.

So, in response, I recommended in my written testimony and in previous writings that the new administration adopt a strategy of deterrence toward Iran, focused on ensuring that Iranian leaders understand that any challenge to U.S. interests and U.S. allies is going to come at a steep cost.

Such a strategy would advance three objectives: first, preventing Iran not just from getting a nuclear weapon but from further advancing its nuclear weapon capability and also sharing nuclear weapons technology, not to forget that; second, defeating Iranian ambitions to undermine our allies and reduce our influence in the region; and third, to stop Iran from supporting terrorist attacks and cyberattacks against us and our allies.

I think that any such strategy faces formidable obstacles. In the past, we have enjoyed strategic convergence with our allies despite what other tactical disputes we had with them because we could all agree that the nuclear issue was a threat to us, to the Europeans, to Russia and China even.

That has been replaced, I think, by strategic divergence because our allies outside the Middle East simply do not share our threat perception of Iran. They have a very different take on things. And Russia and China, of course, see Iran as a partner. We saw just today the Iranian President is in Russia, and the Iranian Foreign Minister said that Russia could use Iranian bases on a case-by-case basis, which is remarkable in the historical sweep of things for Iran.

In addition, in the nuclear deal, in the JCPOA, we agreed to concede what I think were our most significant nonmilitary tools—financial sanctions, oil sanctions—which really leave us with weaker tools than we would like to have to confront Iran’s illicit behavior.

And I agree that those obstacles will grow steeper as time goes on, as Iran is allowed to purchase conventional weapons systems, test missiles, and get help with missiles. It needs, for example, international help to develop an ICBM.

So to successfully accomplish our objectives despite these obstacles, I think we need to pursue three lines of action.

First, with respect to the nuclear deal, I think we need to use what is I think a real eagerness in the world for us to remain within the deal as leverage to improve the deal, if I could say that, first, to insist on a strict interpretation of its terms to sort of use what is already on the page but in a stricter way perhaps than we have so far; and, second, to reach side understandings with European allies and others to strengthen the deal sort of outside of the JCPOA framework, so, for example, pressing the IAEA to be more aggressive in using its existing inspection authorities, persuading our allies to agree with us on protocols on punishing Iran for even minor violations of the deal, which so far I think we have let pass in the past year or so.

I think we also need to work with those allies and urge them to work with us to address the big flaws in the deal. I see those as, for example, delays in IAEA access in the framework for inspections of suspect sites, nuclear sites; the omission of Iran’s missile activities—to me, missile activities are part of a nuclear program, inherently; and, of course, the deal’s sunset in 10 to 15 years, which is probably the biggest problem with the JCPOA.

But I do not think we can look at Iran policy as just nuclear policy. I think that would be repeating a mistake that, unfortunately, we have made in the past. We have to look at the nuclear issue through the lens of a broader policy.

So the second line of action, I think, is countering Iranian malign influence in the region. We have to push back on Iran’s actions in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere while strengthening our partners in those areas to deal with Iran themselves. And I think we have to use our full range of policy tools—military, intelligence, sanctions, diplomacy—to do that.

And to gain the support of our allies outside the region due to that strategic divergence I mentioned, I think we need to, whenever possible, do this in frameworks that resonate with those allies, so, for example, ending the Syrian conflict.

And then finally, the third line of action, strengthening our allies’ defenses against Iran, keeping in mind two principles. First, it needs to be key to the actual threats that Iran poses, things like

proxy warfare, political subversion, A2AD efforts embedded by Russia and China, for example. And then second, I think we need to try to forge our allies into a more effective multilateral alliance so this is not just this sort of bouquet of bilateral alliances but no real sort of multilateral structure to it, and I propose a framework to do that.

Just to sum up here, in all of these efforts, I think our policy-making needs to start with objectives, not with tactics. I think we need to put behind us the tendency we have had, I think over the last couple of decades, to sort of rule in or out this or that policy tool as a starting point, and we need to, instead, bring our full capabilities, which are formidable, I think, to bear on this problem.

Second, I think we need to see this challenge in its regional context. So, for example, I do not think we can sustainably defeat ISIS if we do not also address Iran. So these two strategies have to move together, and we need to organize our bureaucracy accordingly.

And then finally, I would agree with Senator Cardin that we need to invest in our own diplomatic capacity, which I think is vital for wielding all those tools, making sanctions effective, force effective and engagement effective. To me, international unity will only amplify the pressure on Iran, and when gaps develop between ourselves and our allies, that gives our adversaries, whether it is Iran or somebody else, room for maneuver. And I worry that those gaps will grow with the elections in Europe this year and other developments that we are seeing, and others will seek to exploit that.

Thanks very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Singh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SINGH

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss United States policy toward Iran.

Speculation regarding the new U.S. administration's policy toward Iran often begins with the question of whether it will keep or scrap the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 countries—the United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China, plus Germany—is formally known. This, however, would be the wrong question with which to begin crafting a new Iran policy. To start from this premise would be to perpetuate a central mistake of the Obama administration: for 8 years, the United States has viewed Iran policy through the lens of the nuclear negotiations; it should now instead see the nuclear issue through the lens of broader Iran policy. Iran's nuclear program is so concerning not simply—or even primarily—because of the general U.S. interest in nuclear nonproliferation but because of the broader threats Iran poses. Iran is the Middle East's leading revisionist state, determined to alter the regional balance of power in its own favor at the expense of the United States and its allies. Although Iran's policies are far from the only problem confronting America in the Middle East, they are arguably the most important, and contribute in material ways to many others: Iran's efforts to project power have destabilized Lebanon, prolonged the Syrian civil war, and fueled resentment among Arab Sunnis and the rise of jihadist groups like the Islamic State.

In response, the United States should pursue a strategy of deterrence—ensuring Iran's leadership understands the costs of challenging American interests and the benefits of accommodating itself to the prevailing international and regional order. Yet Washington must also recognize that Tehran is a difficult foe to deter: while it has proven itself to be a rational actor, weighing costs and benefits and choosing the course of action it deems best for regime interests, its anti-Americanism is not a mere indication of prejudice but rather an ideological pillar with which it will not easily part. This is why better relations with the United States do not entice Iran, although regime officials do appear to debate vigorously how best to manage ties

with Washington in light of Iran's other interests. Nor is Iran's desire for regional dominance a recent flirtation: it has been one of the region's most influential states for millennia, and its clashes with the region's other ancient empires predate the rise of Islam. Any Iranian regime—revolutionary or democratic, pro- or anti-Western—would likely aim to play a leading role in the region. It is this mixture of anti-American revisionism and hegemonic ambition that makes the Iranian challenge so difficult.

A strategy of deterrence toward Iran should seek to advance three broad objectives:

1. Nuclear. Prevent Iran from building or acquiring a nuclear weapon, and from meaningfully advancing its nuclear weapons capabilities (fuel fabrication, weaponization, and delivery). In addition, prevent Iran from sharing nuclear weapons technology with other states or nonstate actors.

2. Regional. Counter and defeat Iranian efforts to challenge American interests in the Middle East and South/Central Asia or to undermine U.S. allies in these regions. In addition, limit Iranian malign influence and power-projection capabilities in these regions.

3. Global. Prevent Iran from mounting terrorist attacks or cyberattacks on the United States or U.S. interests, or from supporting states and nonstate actors that seek to challenge U.S. interests.

The following paragraphs lay out a strategy for achieving these objectives, the obstacles facing it, and concrete actions the new administration can take to advance such a strategy.

BACKGROUND

Former president Barack Obama's legacy on Iran is contentious, to say the least. His admirers consider not just the JCPOA but the establishment of routine U.S.-Iran engagement to be among his foremost foreign policy achievements. Detractors feel quite the opposite. Yet when President Obama took office in 2009, views on Iran were not nearly so polarized. Iran sanctions legislation enjoyed near-unanimous support in Congress, and the American public consistently ranked Iran's nuclear program as a top threat. Obama himself largely continued the approach toward Iran developed by his predecessor, President George W. Bush—unilateral and international sanctions and threats of military force paired with multilateral diplomacy via the P5+1. Obama, however, supplemented this strategy with a strenuous effort to establish direct bilateral talks with Iran (past administrations engaged directly with Iran, but direct U.S. contact on the nuclear issue had been predicated on Iran suspending its uranium-enrichment-and plutonium-reprocessing-related activities) and largely ended official U.S. questioning of the legitimacy of the Iranian regime.

These departures, though perhaps originally intended to support the preexisting strategy, eventually came to overtake it. Direct U.S.-Iran talks largely supplanted the P5+1 negotiating format, and the agreement that eventually emerged from these contacts fell well short of satisfying longstanding international demands of Iran. Meanwhile, the talks were pitched not only as a way to resolve the nuclear crisis but also as the opening chapter in a hoped-for U.S.-Iran rapprochement. Along the way, the United States largely refrained from challenging Iranian efforts to project power in the Middle East and elsewhere and even enjoined its traditional allies to "share" the region with Tehran.

As a result, the Trump administration faces a vastly different strategic landscape from that faced by the Obama administration in 2009. The most obvious difference is the JCPOA itself. Iran's nuclear program is larger today than it was in 2009, even as its previous rapid expansion has mostly been halted. Still, Iran continues to engage in centrifuge research and development and to advance its missile programs—the former being explicitly permitted by the JCPOA, the latter having been omitted from it entirely. Iran has largely adhered to the agreement, though a substantial reduction in International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reporting on Iranian nuclear activities and various exemptions granted to Iran by the Joint Commission—a body established by the JCPOA to adjudicate problems and disputes under the deal—mean that such judgments must be made with caution. The United States and other P5+1 members have also kept their side of the bargain, despite Iranian complaints likely meant in part to extract additional concessions from Washington, in part to deflect blame for Iran's continuing economic problems, and in part simply reflecting the ambiguous wording of the JCPOA. The reality is that while Iran's reintegration into the global economy has been far from smooth, the country has already reaped tremendous economic benefits from the JCPOA, which stand only to increase as time passes.

Meanwhile, Iran's regional activities have grown inexorably over the past 8 years. The control exerted by Hezbollah, an Iranian proxy, and its allies over Lebanon has solidified. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its proxies—a mix of Hezbollah forces, Syrian paramilitaries, and Shiite militants from Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan—are arguably the strongest force on the ground in Syria. Iran-directed or allied militias in Iraq have assumed a prominent role in the fight against the Islamic State, having gained the official sanction of the Iraqi State and the grudging acceptance of the U.S. military. In both places, Iran has embarked on a distinct strategic shift—from insurgency to counterinsurgency, and from maintaining plausible deniability to touting its role by acknowledging its support for Hezbollah and others, publishing details of funerals held for Shiite militants and IRGC fighters, and, most prominently, sponsoring well-publicized, on-the-spot visits by IRGC Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani. Elsewhere, the Iran-supported Houthis in Yemen overthrew the country's internationally recognized government, have fought Saudi and UAE forces to a stalemate, and appear to be seeking control of the international Bab al-Mandab shipping channel. Iranian support for the Taliban in Afghanistan has reportedly expanded dramatically. And the IRGC has appeared to play a role in fomenting and sustaining anti-government violence in Bahrain.

This is not to say that Iran has been successful everywhere. Ties between Tehran and its Palestinian allies, especially Hamas, appear to have deteriorated in the wake of the 2011 Arab uprisings. The rise of the Islamic State has threatened Iranian interests in Syria and Iraq, despite indications of limited cooperation between IS and the Assad regime. Russia's intervention in Syria has been a mixed blessing, saving the Assad regime—upon which Tehran depends as a channel for projecting power in the Levant—but at the risk of reducing Iran to a junior partner in that conflict. And Iran's stepped-up aggression, combined with American disengagement, has spurred Gulf Cooperation Council unity and joint action, albeit with mixed results.

Internationally, the JCPOA has not provoked the same internal divisions among U.S. allies as it has in Washington. In Europe, the agreement is hailed on the right and left alike as a signal achievement, even by a French government that clashed with the Obama administration over the latter's readiness to offer concessions and keep its friends in the dark during talks. U.S. allies in Europe simply do not share the American threat perception with regard to Iran; there is almost no appetite in Europe for abandoning the JCPOA or taking concerted action in response to Iranian regional activities. This is the case even though Europe is arguably more threatened than the United States by Iran, given the proximity of Iranian missiles and spillover from the conflict in Syria, which is sustained by Iranian power. Russia and China, for their part, see Iran as an ally, both in the Middle East and internationally, as all three share a desire to see the U.S. international role diminished.

This is one of the starkest changes facing the new administration. Upon entering office, Presidents Bush and Obama each benefited from a general strategic convergence with Europe, and even Russia and China, given the priority each placed on nonproliferation as well as on heading off a U.S.-Iran conflict. Because these states largely agreed with U.S. goals, they could eventually overcome disputes over strategy and tactics (e.g., European objections to the use of extraterritorial sanctions). The Trump administration will face the opposite—a strategic divergence between itself and these states, which pay little heed to Iranian nonnuclear misbehavior and are keen to deepen their relations, commercial and otherwise, with Tehran.

In the Middle East, of course, the situation is far different. U.S. allies there—Israel, Turkey, and Sunni Arab countries alike—lacked enthusiasm for the JCPOA. Even so, none currently advocates its abrogation, given worries that the alternative—whether the resumption of Iranian nuclear activities or a U.S.-Iran military conflict—would be worse. However, all want the United States and others to push back against what they see as Iran's increasing boldness in the region, and none believe the JCPOA should be a brake on such a response. Among these allies, only Israel has proven equal to the task of countering Iran's regional activities—Tehran is essentially unchallenged by other regional powers in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, and has managed in Yemen and Bahrain to effectively play a spoiler role without attracting direct retaliation. And just like U.S. allies elsewhere, some of these states will develop strong post-sanctions economic ties with Iran (e.g., transshipment via Dubai and energy links with Turkey) that may mitigate their support for any coercive measures contemplated in Washington.

As a result of such developments, any new U.S. strategy toward Iran will have to overcome the following obstacles:

1. Issues regarding the JCPOA
 - Should the United States choose to walk away from the JCPOA absent a clear Iranian violation, Washington will be diplomatically isolated and experience significant difficulty rallying allies around an alternative approach.
 - Adhering to the JCPOA—which only partially addressed U.S. concerns about Iran’s nuclear program and ignored entirely Iran’s nonnuclear challenges to U.S. interests—means forgoing its most effective sanctions instruments, such as blocking Iranian oil exports or severing Iran from the international financial system.
 - Even if the United States does continue to adhere to the JCPOA, its allies outside the Middle East will be reluctant to cooperate in any effort to counter Iran’s regional and global nonnuclear activities.
 - The JCPOA, if faithfully implemented by all sides, will permit the growth of Iran’s conventional and missile forces—on which U.N. sanctions lapse after 5 and 8 years, respectively—and of its economy and international trading links, which taken together will improve Iran’s strategic position and erode U.S. leverage.
2. Increasing Russian or Chinese military links with Iran, together with Russia’s expanded military footprint in the region generally, will reduce U.S. freedom of action and undermine the credibility of military options against Iran.
3. Deterioration over the past 8 years of U.S. strategic and perhaps operational links with regional allies.

A NEW IRAN POLICY

To advance the three pillars of its nuclear, regional, and global objectives with respect to Iran, the United States should adopt a strategy of deterrence. Such a strategy requires Iran to believe that challenging U.S. interests will be costly and, conversely, that playing by the “rules” of the regional and international order will be beneficial. But before turning to the specific policies that should constitute such a strategy, discussing some general principles will be useful:

- Foster U.S. capability, credibility, and clarity. Harvard’s Graham Allison has observed that deterrence requires capability, credibility, and clarity. Particularly vital to maintaining deterrence are continuing to maintain a robust forward-deployed military presence in the Middle East, exercising diplomatic leadership in the region, and continuing to cultivate expertise on Iran throughout the executive branch. The United States and our allies should also avoid responding reflexively to Iran, instead acting patiently and methodically to address Iranian challenges to American interests.
- Strengthen capabilities of U.S. allies. The United States should aim to deter Iran not only through punitive action after, for instance, a missile test or naval provocation but also by strengthening allies’ offensive and especially defensive capabilities so that Iran will judge potential challenges as having little chance of success.
- Wield policy tools in concert. In this case and others, the United States should wield policy tools in concert rather than sequentially and should take no tools off the table, whether military action or diplomatic engagement; historically, the most effective approach to Iran has been that of diplomacy backed by force or the credible threat of force.
- Preserve international unity. Whatever actions the United States takes, it should aim to preserve to the extent possible international unity, and should in turn count on Iran to try to split America from its allies.
- Understand policy trade-offs. While the United States will need to balance its efforts to deter Iran against other foreign policy goals, U.S. officials should ensure they properly understand those trade-offs. For example, pushing back against Iran does not contradict but rather complements an effort to counter the Islamic State, because Iran’s activities, such as its support for the Assad regime, have fueled the rise of IS.
- Consolidate responsibility. Bureaucratically, the administration should ensure that a single official at the State Department oversees all aspects of Iran policy, with the aim of ensuring that JCPOA implementation, regional policy, and

other matters are integrated into a single coordinated strategy rather than treated separately or competitively.

PILLAR 1: ENFORCING AND ENHANCING THE NUCLEAR DEAL

The JCPOA is a flawed agreement—it permits Iran too much nuclear activity, does not address Iran’s past weaponization activities or missile development, and has insufficient provisions for guarding against clandestine Iranian nuclear work. Moreover, its provisions begin to expire within a decade. Nevertheless, it is part of the reality that confronts the new administration, and Iran and U.S. allies alike would resist its renegotiation. In walking away from the deal, Washington would face the difficult task of devising a new strategy to contain Iran’s nuclear program and rallying allied support for such a strategy in the face of intense international skepticism.

The United States should therefore neither scrap the JCPOA nor make an absolute commitment to it, but rather make plain to Iran and to other diplomatic partners that the deal’s survival will depend on the rigor with which it is enforced. Because those partners are eager to preserve the JCPOA, the prospect of continued U.S. adherence will provide leverage to insist on its enforcement and enhancement—not through reopening the P5+1 process, but through strict interpretation of the deal’s terms and side understandings with European and other allies on related issues. Iran also appears eager to preserve the JCPOA, minimizing any risk that more rigorous enforcement alone would prompt Iran to walk away from the agreement.

In “rigorously enforcing” the JCPOA, the Trump administration should bear in mind that if Iran cheats on the deal, it will likely seek to do so clandestinely, using undeclared facilities rather than those under international monitoring. To guard against such an eventuality, the administration should consider taking steps in the following areas:

Boosting Transparency

- Insist that the IAEA provide greater detail in its public reporting on Iran’s nuclear activities, akin to the reports it published prior to the implementation of the JCPOA. While Iran is likely to protest, such a step would help bolster public confidence that Iran is, in fact, complying with its obligations.
- Provide regular, unclassified reports to Congress on Iran’s compliance with the JCPOA, the progress of its nuclear and dual-use procurement efforts, centrifuge R&D, and missile development, and other states’ compliance with the JCPOA and remaining international sanctions.
- Insist that any decisions of the JCPOA Joint Commission be made public. According to the agreement, this requires consensus of the group, which includes Iran, Russia, and China. However, the United States and the EU3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) can predicate their support for Joint Commission decisions on these states’ agreement to transparency.

Intelligence Sharing

- Continue to prioritize the allocation of intelligence resources for monitoring Iran’s nuclear activities, as well as possible related risks (e.g., nuclear procurement from abroad or the establishment of clandestine Iranian nuclear facilities in third countries).
- Establish a continuous intelligence-sharing mechanism with European, Asian, and Middle East allies, as well as analytical exchanges.
- Fully fund intelligence collection on Iran, despite the rising priority of other efforts such as the campaign to counter IS.

Inspections and Verification

- Insist that Iran provide initial baseline declarations for all materiel and components applicable to its nuclear program, such as uranium stocks and centrifuge components. This will help avert any discrepancy between, for example, centrifuge inventories and centrifuge component manufacturing that could point to an undeclared nuclear effort. Push the IAEA to use its inspection authorities to verify these baselines.
- Likewise, press the IAEA to be aggressive in using its inspection authorities under the Additional Protocol, which complements its Safeguards Agreement, and the JCPOA, especially with regard to possible undeclared nuclear activities and end-use verification for nuclear and dual-use procurement. A norm should be established according to which such inspections are not exceptional but rath-

er part of the ordinary functioning of the JCPOA, and thus need not precipitate crises.

- Fully fund the IAEA to ensure no shortfall in its capacity to implement the JCPOA.

*Procurement and Counterproliferation*¹

- Work to ensure that U.N. member states and the international private sector understand their responsibilities with respect to nuclear and dual-use exports to Iran.
- Work to bolster the export-control capacity of all states, especially those with a history of involvement in illicit Iranian nuclear and missile procurement.
- Restrict use of the procurement channel by Iranian entities with a history of illicit procurement, or—in the case of nuclear procurement—for civilian end users at unmonitored facilities.
- Urge states to maintain a presumption of denial—rather than a presumption of approval—for procurement-channel requests that cannot be adequately vetted within the 30-day period specified in the JCPOA.
- Urge states—including Iran itself—to make nuclear and dual-use exports to Iran outside the procurement channel a crime under domestic laws.
- Given the JCPOA’s reliance on suppliers to verify end use of dual-use items, press the IAEA to employ its inspection authorities to conduct end-use verifications in suspicious cases or when the supplier has shown signs of being remiss or unreliable.
- Reinstate the U.N. Panel of Experts—eliminated with the adoption of the JCPOA—or a similar body to independently assess Iran’s nuclear and dual-use procurement efforts.

Sanctions and Responding to Violations

- The United States should continue to strictly meet its obligations, but should resist any demand to exceed those obligations unless Iran is willing to add to its own obligations; the U.S. (and P5+1) commitment is to take certain actions, not to ensure certain outcomes for Iran.
- Make clear to other P5+1 members that Washington expects them to enforce not only the JCPOA but also the wider-reaching requirements of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231 (e.g., its prohibitions against certain arms- and missile-related exports to Iran) and any other relevant UNSC resolutions.
- Urge states to enact domestic legislation, as the United States has done, that will allow them to quickly reimpose sanctions should Iran violate the JCPOA or should the deal otherwise unravel.
- Together with the EU3 and other allies, develop protocols for responding to violations of the JCPOA or U.N. resolutions, including a menu of penalties short of full snapback for minor infringements. Seek agreement with allies to no longer excuse violations such as exceeding agreed limits on low-enriched uranium stockpiles or skirting restrictions on heavy-water production by storing excess quantities in neighboring Oman.
- Emphasize that the military option remains on the table, and maintain a robust presence and schedule of exercises to lend credibility to that option.

Because the JCPOA does not address certain important aspects of Iran’s nuclear program—e.g., its missile program—simply enforcing the deal rigorously is not enough. Rather, the administration will need also to address critical flaws in the agreement that could permit Iran to advance its nuclear weapons efforts even while fully complying with the deal’s terms.

- Access Delays: The JCPOA essentially permits Iran to delay IAEA inspector access to suspected undeclared nuclear facilities for 24 days. While it would be difficult to fully eradicate evidence of work with radioactive materials in this timeframe, nuclear-weapons-related work does not always require the introduction of such materials; in these cases, 24 days would be sufficient to destroy evidence. Even in instances where radioactive materials had been introduced, Iran could use the time to eradicate other evidence critical to determining the purpose of the site in question. To address this problem, the United States should insist that the relevant timeframe for IAEA access to such sites is the 24-hour limit specified in the Additional Protocol and that delays beyond this limit merit penalties and could be grounds for reimposing sanctions.

- **Weaponization Efforts—or Possible Military Dimensions (PMDs):** The JCPOA does not require Iran to account for its past weaponization work or to give the IAEA access to the sites, personnel, and documents involved in this work. Rather, it simply closes the IAEA’s past PMD investigation in the interest of moving forward. While there is no reason at this stage to seek to penalize Iran for its past weaponization work, U.S. (and P5+1) officials must act to fill any knowledge gaps regarding how far that work progressed and to ensure that weaponization-related sites and personnel have not resumed their work. To that end, the IAEA should use its inspection authorities to request access to the relevant sites and personnel, not to reopen past investigations—which would be inconsistent with the JCPOA—but to ascertain their current activities.
- **Missiles:** Arguably the biggest omission in the JCPOA concerns Iran’s missile activities. The JCPOA does not address them at all, and UNSC Resolution 2231 scales back the previous ban on missile testing by Iran and extends the prohibition on other states assisting Iran with its missile development efforts only until 2023. Because Iran will likely require international assistance should it seek to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile, this provision represents a significant achievement for Tehran. The United States should seek allied support for a fourfold response: (1) stricter enforcement of existing sanctions targeting Iran’s missile activities and the adoption of new ones as needed; (2) a commitment to intercept or otherwise respond to any Iranian missile test that endangers the territory or forces of the United States and its allies; (3) stepped-up efforts to interdict missile-related shipments to and from Iran, as well as to gather and share the intelligence required to engage in such interdictions; and (4) strengthened and better-integrated missile defense in the Middle East and Europe to negate any advantages Iran seeks to gain by improving its missile capabilities.
- **Sunset:** Whatever the JCPOA’s strengths and weaknesses, it is a temporary accord. Its restrictions, and those added by UNSC Resolution 2231, begin to phase out as early as 2021 and will expire almost in full by 2026–31. Thus, while the deal arguably buys time for Iran’s adversaries, it also does so for Iran—affording the Islamic Republic a period to develop its centrifuge and missile capabilities while shielded from the harshest international sanctions. As a result, when Iran eventually resumes the expansion of its enrichment- and reprocessing-related activities, its “breakout time” could be dangerously low and its ability to field a usable nuclear missile could be dangerously advanced. To guard against this eventuality, the United States should seek allied support for a threefold response: (1) declaring as a matter of policy that the United States and others will not passively accept the further expansion of Iran’s nuclear activities when the JCPOA lapses; (2) seeking to negotiate the extension and expansion of the JCPOA’s restrictions on Iran’s nuclear activities; and (3) seeking to bolster the global nuclear nonproliferation regime to comprehensively restrict states’ fuel-cycle activities and limit Iran’s options when the JCPOA expires.

PILLAR 2: COUNTERING IRAN’S REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTIVITIES

While the United States has focused its Iran policy on the nuclear issue, American allies in the Middle East have been far more concerned about what they see as Tehran’s mounting efforts to project power in the region. While Iran continues to operate mainly through proxies such as Lebanese Hezbollah and Shiite militias in Iraq and elsewhere, its regional activities are increasingly direct and overt. Iranian officials, especially those affiliated with the IRGC, make no attempt to hide the purpose of these activities—to project Iranian power to the Mediterranean Sea, deter the United States, and weaken and otherwise preoccupy its adversaries. Among Iran’s goals is undercutting the monopoly of force and national loyalty in target states by creating alternate security, political, and religious institutions beholden to Tehran. This pursuit not only amplifies Iran’s power, it also undermines already fragile state institutions and fuels sectarianism. For various reasons, Iran relies on asymmetric and strategic power rather than conventional power, and it will likely continue to do so even if relaxed sanctions create opportunities for Iran to rebuild its conventional capabilities.

Nevertheless, the United States should avoid the temptation to reflexively oppose every Iranian action in the region—instead, the focus should be on deterring Iran where it clearly challenges U.S. interests and strategy. And because most U.S. allies outside the Middle East do not share the U.S. threat perception with respect to Iran (e.g., on its missile program or support for terrorism) and are leery of reopening the nuclear issue, any effort to push back on the Islamic Republic should emphasize the Iranian role in issues such as instability in Syria and Yemen or human rights viola-

tions, which are more likely to garner these allies' interest and support. In addition, successful deterrence requires that the United States and its allies be prepared to ease off these punitive measures if Iran moderates its policies; otherwise, Tehran will have no incentive to do so.

Syria, Iraq, and Yemen

- In Syria, the United States should seek to magnify differences between Russia and Iran by continuing to emphasize the need for President Bashar al-Assad to step down as part of a political transition, a development Moscow may ultimately find more acceptable than would Tehran.
- Washington must insist, as part of any contacts with Russia regarding Syria, on the withdrawal of Iranian forces and Iran-backed foreign militias—including Hezbollah and Shiite militants from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—and assert that the United States and its allies reserve the right to take direct action against these militias if they remain.
- Any discussion of combating terrorist groups in Syria should cover not only Sunni groups but also Iranian proxies such as Hezbollah, which is designated as a terrorist group in the United States and elsewhere.
- Sanctions on the Assad regime and any Iranian or Iran-backed individuals and entities supporting it should be strictly enforced and, if necessary, enhanced; further, Iran should be sanctioned for the provision of arms and other military support to Syria—and to militias elsewhere in the region—in violation of UNSC Resolution 2231 and other measures.
- Extend the international coalition's mission in Iraq by at least 2 years, in order to demonstrate our ongoing (albeit limited) commitment to Baghdad.
- Extend funding to continue building and training the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service and Iraqi security forces.
- Push Baghdad to resist undue Iranian influence (e.g., the institutionalization of Iran-backed militias) and to abide by U.N. resolutions on Iran (e.g., against arms transfers from the Islamic Republic) and assist it in doing so.
- With respect to Arab States, particularly those of the GCC, Washington should press for greater outreach to and coordination with Iraq.
- In Yemen, efforts should be intensified to interdict arms, funding, and other forms of support for the Houthis; Washington should likewise increase regional intelligence sharing toward that end.
- The U.S. leadership must rally international partners to respond forcefully to Iranian-backed threats to shipping through the Bab al-Mandab Strait, using patrols, interdictions, and direct action against any personnel threatening freedom of navigation with missiles, mines, or other weapons.
- Finally, Washington should publicize the role that Iran-backed militias play in human rights violations across the region and seek to impose international and unilateral sanctions on them wherever Washington and the U.N. have not already done so.

Countering Iranian Provocations and Proxy Networks

- Review U.S. Navy procedures for responding to unsafe and provocative conduct by Iranian naval forces to ensure that Iran is deterred and the risk of inadvertent clashes is minimized.
- Maintain and, if needed, broaden freedom-of-navigation operations to challenge excessive Iranian maritime claims in the Gulf.
- Deepen intelligence sharing among U.S. regional allies on Iranian arms shipments and provision of other support for proxies, and interdict such support in concert with allies when intelligence merits doing so.
- Engage in discreet discussions with Israel and Arab allies regarding new ways of countering Iran-backed militias, and where this threat might spread next.
- Press the U.N. to act in response to Iranian violation of the prohibition on arms shipments to groups such as Hezbollah and the Houthis.
- Make clear to Tehran that attacks on U.S. forces or allies by Iranian or Iran-backed forces will merit a firm and direct response against Iranian interests; consider direct action targeting Iranian proxies where U.S. interests are directly threatened (e.g., safety of shipping through the Bab al-Mandab, safety of U.S. vessels in the Gulf).

- Publicly expose Iranian support for regional proxies through declassification of intelligence and diplomatic and media briefings; likewise, debunk exaggerated Iranian military claims when appropriate.

Sanctions

- Bearing in mind that sanctions are an important tool (even if not a silver bullet), recognize that sanctions diplomacy—i.e., gaining the agreement of other countries to act in concert with the United States to both amplify pressure on Iran and ensure its compliance with existing measures—is just as important as Washington’s own adoption and enforcement of sanctions. Strictly enforce existing sanctions on Iran—especially on the IRGC and its proxies and affiliates—and add to them as needed.²
- Publish more extensive “watch lists” of IRGC-owned or affiliated entities and front companies to help the international private sector avoid doing business inadvertently with the IRGC. Significantly expand the number of IRGC-related designations and consider lowering the threshold of IRGC ownership/control required for designation.
- Conduct a review of Iran Air and other Iranian commercial airlines to ensure that any aircraft sales to them satisfy the JCPOA requirement of strictly civilian end-use.
- Increase sanctions focus on less-traditional areas, such as corruption, money laundering, and human rights, in order to widen international support. Seek international condemnation of Iran for its threats against Israel.
- Press regional states to ensure compliance with sanctions on Iran by boosting intelligence gathering, inspection of shipments, and security of maritime and land borders (e.g., the Oman-Yemen border); where needed, bolster their ability to do so.
- Press states outside the region to not only commit to compliance with Iran sanctions but to strengthen their compliance through intelligence collection and steps to ensure that domestic laws support sanctions enforcement.
- Continue actively to educate the international private sector regarding its sanctions compliance obligations with respect to Iran.

Other Arenas

- Step up intelligence gathering and international cooperation aimed at the terrorism- and proliferation-related and criminal activities of Iran and its proxies, especially Hezbollah, outside the Middle East.
- Given Iran’s possession of nuclear materials and knowledge, and the spread of nuclear fuel-cycle activities elsewhere in the world, reinvigorate nuclear security efforts in the United States and strengthen the global nonproliferation regime.
- In accordance with any new U.S. “cyber doctrine,” warn Iran against malign cyber activities directed at the United States and its allies, and impose costs when Iran engages in such activities.

PILLAR 3: STRENGTHENING U.S. REGIONAL ALLIANCES

While the credibility of punitive measures is important for effective deterrence, a strong defense is arguably even more crucial. To that end, bolstering U.S. allies in the Middle East should be a key element of American policy toward Iran. Such an effort should be guided by two principles. First, it should address the actual threats these allies face. These are largely asymmetric in nature; Iran does not challenge U.S. allies conventionally but rather through terrorism, proxy warfare, political warfare, and subversion, similar to the “hybrid” or “gray zone” warfare waged by Russia in Europe. Iran also wields a formidable missile force, putting a premium on theater missile defense in response. Second, to the extent possible, the U.S. goal should be to build a multilateral alliance system in the Middle East, not a series of strong but disconnected bilateral alliances. The Middle East—especially the Gulf—is crowded geographically, making coordination and interoperability among forces an imperative. A multilateral alliance—even if the region is decades removed from a “Middle East NATO”—could also provide a platform for U.S. allies to solve regional problems with minimal external intervention, a balance that would be welcomed both in the region and in the United States.

Regional Coordination

- As suggested earlier, revive the George W. Bush-era Gulf Security Dialogue, expanded to include Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. The GSD had six pillars, all of

which remain relevant: (1) GCC defensive capabilities and interoperability; (2) regional security issues; (3) counterproliferation; (4) counterterrorism and internal security; (5) critical infrastructure protection—to which cyberdefense should now be added; and (6) support for Iraq. Other external powers, such as the European Union, Russia, and China, should be invited to observe and contribute expertise.

- Through the GSD+3: (1) Bolster intelligence sharing and intelligence fusion, with a particular focus on Iran and terrorist groups. (2) Foster a dialogue on the coordination of military procurement and training, and on increasing the effectiveness of internal and external security institutions—as opposed to merely the acquisition of larger and more powerful arsenals. (3) Foster a dialogue on countering the particular threats posed by Iran—to include antiaccess/area denial, terrorism, cyberattack, missiles, and subversion and political warfare—drawing upon lessons learned in the European theater.
- Look for opportunities to use the GSD+3 to engage with Israel, particularly on issues of regional security, counterproliferation, counterterrorism, critical infrastructure protection, and strategic planning, with the aim of discerning and preventing future regional threats.
- Increase investments in regional ballistic missile defense.
- Plan for the contingency of greater Russian and/or Chinese cooperation with Iran and the strengthening of Iranian antiaccess/area-denial capabilities that restrict the freedom of action of U.S. and allied forces, drawing upon lessons from the European and Asia-Pacific theaters.³

Bilateral Efforts

- Initiate bilateral dialogue with each U.S. ally in the region to determine its key vulnerabilities, shortfalls in effectiveness, and equipment needs, drawing upon lessons from recent conflicts such as Yemen.
- Urge allies to make political, security, and economic institutions more effective, responsive, and accountable to guard against popular discontent and ensure resilience in the face of subversion by Iran or extremist groups.
- Initiate a high-level dialogue with Israel on regional threats, including Iran and Syria, that consists largely of military and intelligence officials but led by the White House and Prime Minister's Office. Establish a trusted backchannel between the White House and the PMO.
- Work with Israel to prepare a plan for responding to a Hezbollah missile attack on Israel, emphasizing deterrence not only of Hezbollah but also of Iran.
- Reinvalidate efforts to strengthen the Lebanese government and loosen Hezbollah's grip on Lebanon, focusing especially on reducing Hezbollah's arsenal and freedom of action.

Engagement With Iran

- Maintain existing channels of diplomatic engagement with Iran. However, when engaging Iran, do so multilaterally with regional allies whenever possible.
- Encourage U.S. allies to engage with Iran, but ensure they are doing so from a position of strength, with U.S. support.
- Expand the Iranian people's contact with the United States through increased people-to-people exchanges and visa issuance. Express support for human rights in Iran.
- Avoid transactional engagement with Iran (e.g., on counternarcotics and Afghanistan) that benefits the regime without prompting improvements in Iranian policies on matters of core importance to the United States and its allies.
- Engagement should be seen as just another tool in the policy toolkit, not as absolutely good or bad on its own merits; it should be used as conditions and strategy dictate.

Notes

¹For a full treatment of this topic, see David Albright and Andrea Stricker, "The Iran Nuclear Deal's Procurement Channel: Overcoming Post-Implementation Day Issues," Institute for Science and International Security, April 21, 2016, http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/JCPOA_Procurement_Channel_Post_Implementation_Day_21April2016_Final1_1.pdf.

²For a full treatment of this issue, see Katherine Bauer, Patrick Clawson, and Matthew Levitt, Reinforcing the Role of Sanctions in Restraining Iran (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 2017), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/reinforcing-the-role-of-sanctions-in-restraining-iran>.

³For a full treatment of this issue, see Mark Gunzinger with Chris Dougherty, *Outside-In: Operating from Range to Defeat Iran's Anti-Access and Area-Denial Threats* (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, posted January 17, 2012), <http://csbaonline.org/research/publications/outside-in-operating-from-range-to-defeat-irans-anti-access-and-area-denial>.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good. Thank you so much.
Mr. Indyk?

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARTIN S. INDYK, EXECUTIVE VICE
PRESIDENT, THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ambassador INDYK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be back here in front of you and Senator Cardin and your colleagues. I have to applaud the committee for the excellent work that you are doing on a bipartisan basis, no more importantly than here today in the question of what to do about the challenge from Iran.

And in that context, I applaud the bill, and I also applaud its actual mandating of a development of a strategy for dealing with the Iranian challenge.

I want to associate myself with a lot of what my colleague Michael Singh has said, and rather than repeat some of those things, I would like to focus specifically on what I think the necessary elements are of a pushback strategy.

I think we are all familiar with the kind of dangers that Iran poses and the way over the last 4 decades since the Iranian revolution it has used its proxies, whether it is Hezbollah or Shia militias, its own Iranian Revolutionary Guard force or support of Shia populations or even Shia rebels like the Houthis in Yemen, to exploit the cracks that exist in the Sunni world and advance the hegemonic ambitions for the region.

And one would have to say, when you look back at what they have done over the last 4 decades and where they are today, they have had considerable success. They have established an arc of influence that stretches from Lebanon on the Mediterranean Sea across Syria in the Middle East heartland, to Iraq and Bahrain on the gulf, and to Yemen on the Red Sea.

Iran has been assiduously pursuing this effort and has a big stake in it. The Iranians live in a strategic environment. They have practiced the art of strategy since the days of Cyrus the Great 600 years before the birth of Christ, and they have formidable capacities for dealing with and promoting their ambitions in the region.

Therefore, any new American strategy to counter Iran's threats needs to take account of the way, in the Middle East, everything is connected, particularly for the Iranians.

So if we push back on Iran in Yemen, as the Trump administration is now considering doing, that may well stir up the Shia population in Bahrain. If we push back on Iran in Syria, there is a lot of loose talk about that today, they might well use the Shia militias in Iraq to undermine our effort to eliminate the crisis there or encourage Hamas to launch rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza.

In short, countering Iran's regional ambitions is a deadly business, and we should approach it with the seriousness it requires, as I know this committee is doing.

What we need is a comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable pushback strategy. But in pursuing it, we should be careful about making threats unless we are prepared to back them up, and we

should be wary of declaring objectives that we have neither the will nor the capacity to achieve. I hoped that that era was over.

I this morning will just very quickly outline the six elements that I think are necessary in a comprehensive strategy towards pushing back Iran.

The first, as Senator Cardin has mentioned, is the need to rigorously enforce the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal. That is the first element, most importantly because, as long as it is rigorously enforced, it provides us with time to deal with the challenges that Iran is posing to us across the Middle East region. With it, everything becomes easier. Without it, everything becomes more difficult because we have to deal with the challenges of Iran's nuclear capabilities and the potential for a nuclear arms race that they would trigger.

The second element is support for the Iraqi Government of Haider al-Abadi and the Iraqi Armed Forces as they campaign to defeat ISIS and regain control of Mosul and the Sunni regions in Iraq. That is important because, as a result of the last Gulf War, the gates of Babylon were opened to Iran and they moved in very quickly and very effectively to establish their dominance over the previous Maliki government.

Today, al-Abadi seeks to take some distance from Iran, but he needs help to do so. And we, together with our Sunni allies, can counterbalance Iran in Iraq, and we have an opportunity particularly to do so in Mosul and to make sure that the Shia militias are not able to move in there and establish control in the wake of our forcing ISIS out.

That is a critical post-reconstruction challenge that we have to succeed in, not only to prevent ISIS from rebuilding itself in some other form even more malignant, but also to prevent that land bridge that Iran is seeking to establish from Iran across northern Iraq through Syria to Lebanon.

The third element in the pushback strategy is promoting an effective political resolution of the civil war in Yemen. The idea that the Yemen civil war can be resolved by military force alone is an illusion which will only get us more sucked into the quagmire that Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, our Arab allies there, are already engaged in.

To apply military pressure to produce a more reasonable outcome at the negotiating table is not an unreasonable approach. But to only focus on a military solution will be a problem that Iran will exploit. It is a low-cost way of diverting us from the other more important areas.

My time has expired, and I will just quickly mention that Syria is the most complicated problem. Perhaps we can get into it in the discussion. We should not underestimate that Iran has a core interest there, and, with 25,000 forces on the ground, has embedded itself both within the Assad government and institutions and on the ground there.

And we do not, Mr. Chairman, have a vital interest in who controls Syria. Iran does. If we can push them out of Syria eventually, that would be a huge setback to them. But they will fight very hard to preserve their position, and we need to be very smart about the way we go about it, in terms of setting more modest objectives

to restrict their ability to operate there and to insist that any political resolution requires the withdrawal of both armed forces, which would give us the legitimacy to demand that the Iranian-controlled forces withdraw.

The last two elements, one is to concern our activities with our like-minded allies in the region, something, I think, we have a real opportunity to do.

And finally, the controversial point that I make at the end there, but I think it is important, that as we build up our leverage on Iran, including with the sanctions that you are introducing here and the potential sanctions for any misbehavior or failure to fulfill the JCPOA, we should engage in negotiations with Iranians making clear what our requirements are in terms of ending their export of the revolution, ending their destabilization of our allies and the threatening of our allies in the region, and accepting controls on their missile and nuclear activities, particularly in the period after the sunset.

I think that a combination of these elements can achieve, over time, a pushback of Iran, and I applaud the committee for taking it on.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Indyk follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR MARTIN S. INDYK

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to address the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today on a matter of considerable import: the bipartisan legislation to counter Iran's destabilizing activities. As well as imposing sanctions on the IRGC for the organization's involvement in terrorism, and on individuals involved in Iran's ballistic missile program, the CIDA legislation also mandates the administration to: ... develop and submit to the appropriate Congressional committees a strategy for deterring conventional and asymmetric Iranian activities and threats that directly threaten the United States and key allies in the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond.

While the legislation imposes sanctions designed to address the threat posed by Iran's development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, it clearly seeks to embed that effort in a broader approach that contends with Iran's destabilizing activities in the Middle East. Developing that strategy is an urgent priority because Iran's hegemonic ambitions threaten the interests of the United States and its Middle Eastern allies.

Through the sponsorship of terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Palestine Islamic Jihad, the control of Shia militias like the Badr Brigade in Iraq and the Liwa Fatemayoun in Syria (whose troops come from Afghanistan), the deployment of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Al Qods force, and the provision of missiles and other arms to Houthi rebels in Yemen and other proxies across the region, Iran has gone a long way to achieving its regional ambitions. It has established an "arc of influence" that stretches from Lebanon on the Mediterranean Sea, across Syria in the Middle East heartland, to Iraq and Bahrain on the Gulf, and to Yemen on the Red Sea.

Iran has been assiduously pursuing this effort since the overthrow of the Shah almost 4 decades ago when it began its unceasing efforts to export its revolution to the Middle East and beyond. In the 1990s, for example, when I had responsibility for Iran policy in the Clinton administration, we pursued a strategy of containment to deal with the threat that was already manifest. That was part of a two-branch strategy, in which President Clinton sought to advance a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace as the second branch. The calculation in those days was that the more progress we made in peacemaking, the more effective we would be in containing the Iranian revolution, and the more effectively we isolated Iran, the more progress we would be able to make in advancing peace.

The Iranians, who live in a strategic environment and have practiced the art of strategy since the days of Cyrus the Great, 600 years before the birth of Christ, were successful in countering our approach by systematically undermining our efforts to advance Arab-Israeli peace, using their proxies, Hezbollah, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and Hamas. Had we succeeded in achieving a breakthrough to peace between

Israel and Syria in those days, which was actually much closer than the Israeli-Palestinian deal we were also pursuing, the Iranians would have suffered a strategic setback that might well have changed the course of Middle Eastern history.

But that is conjecture. What is not conjecture is the fact that Syria remains the lynchpin of Iran's strategy for dominating the Middle East heartland. Therefore, any new American strategy to counter Iran's threats needs to take account of the way that, in the Middle East, everything is connected. Push back on Iran in Yemen, and they might well stir up the Shia population in Bahrain. Push back on Iran in Syria, and they might well use the Shia militias in Iraq to undermine our effort to eliminate ISIS there, or encourage Hamas to launch rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza.

Back in 1996, when the Iranians thought we were making progress in brokering peace between Israel and Syria, they ordered Hezbollah to launch a terrorist attack on the Khobar Towers in Dahrhan, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 U.S. Air Force personnel. They are quite capable of repeating that exercise today against American troops in Syria or Iraq. As Senator Cotton knows, since he asked the question of General Dunford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in his confirmation hearings in 2015, the Iranians may have been responsible for the deaths of as many as 500 American soldiers in Iraq during the Surge, by supplying explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) to Shia militias.¹

In short, countering Iran's regional ambitions is deadly business and we should approach it with the seriousness it deserves. What we need is a comprehensive, integrated and sustainable "push-back" strategy. But in pursuing it, we should be careful about making threats unless we are prepared to back them up, and we should be wary of declaring objectives that we have neither the will nor capacity to achieve. Above all, we should be mindful of the logical consequences of our strategy and think those through before launching on a course that could well have the opposite effect of what we intended. For all these reasons, I applaud the sponsors of the bill and the members of this committee for seeking to deliberate on these weighty matters.

The rigorous enforcement of the Iran nuclear deal is the first element in a push-back strategy. That will likely be unwelcome to some members of this committee, but in my view, it is essential to its success. Whatever the perceived shortcomings of the JCPOA, it has succeeded in creating a vital 10-year window in which the region is not threatened by Iranian nuclear capabilities and the nuclear arms race that they would inevitably trigger. Nothing is easy about countering Iran in the conflict-ridden Middle East, but everything becomes easier if we do not have an Iranian nuclear threat to contend with at the same time.

As long as the Iranians strictly adhere to the agreement, the United States and its regional allies will have gained vital time to develop and implement the other elements of the push-back strategy. That time is essential because the Iranians have entrenched themselves across the region. They will not easily or quickly be extracted, if at all. We will have to be prepared to play a long game and the JCPOA makes that possible.

The second element in the push-back strategy is support for the Iraqi government of Haider al-Abadi and the Iraqi Armed Forces as they campaign to defeat ISIS and regain control of Mosul and the Sunni regions of Iraq. Since the toppling of Saddam Hussein opened the gates of Babylon to Iran, Iraq's Shia majority has fallen under the heavy influence of Iran.

Eliminating that influence is not an achievable or necessary objective given the historic and religious ties between the neighboring Shias of Iraq and Iran. But providing an effective counter-balance to Iran's influence in Baghdad is eminently achievable since it is welcomed by the current Iraqi government, which was not the case under the previous Maliki government.

For years, that effort has also been hobbled by the unwillingness of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Arab States to engage meaningfully with the Iraqi government, which they branded as "Persian." But the recent visit of the Saudi Foreign Minister to Baghdad, and the Saudi effort to engage with the Sunni tribes of Iraq, presages a new approach which needs to be encouraged and sustained.

This will be particularly important, as the elimination of ISIS in Iraq will generate a huge post-conflict reconstruction challenge in Mosul and the other liberated Sunni regions. If Iranian-directed Shia militias fill the vacuum created by the defeat of ISIS, Iran will have achieved one critically important step in establishing a land bridge from Iran through Iraq to Syria and Lebanon. It will also have created the conditions for the eventual return of Sunni jihadist groups like ISIS and its Al Qaeda precursor, perhaps in an even more extreme form, because the Sunnis of Iraq will not accept Shia dominance of their lives. That is why Sunni State support for a major American-led, post-war reconstruction effort is essential.

The third element in the push-back strategy is effective promotion of a political resolution of the civil war in Yemen. The Trump administration is currently considering stepping up military support for Saudi Arabia and the UAE in their 2-year long military campaign in Yemen.² This makes sense only if it is wedded to a diplomatic strategy for ending the war, which has already caused thousands of civilian casualties and vast human suffering. Otherwise, the United States will be sucked into the Yemen quagmire like so many outside powers before us.

Greater U.S. military engagement also needs to be weighed in the context of the larger regional strategy that this Committee is calling for. Yemen is a low-cost way for Iran to distract the United States and its Gulf Arab allies from the much more strategically consequential challenges in Iraq and Syria. Already, some 50 percent of Saudi Arabia's military capacity, and a large part of the UAE's, is devoted to the Yemen conflict, whereas all that Iran is doing to tie them down is to supply the Houthis with military materiel and financial support.

No doubt, gains on the battlefield can impact the dynamics at the negotiating table. In that regard, a successful effort to take control of the Red Sea port of Hodeida, could impact the Houthi calculus and lead to greater seriousness and reasonableness on their part in the negotiations. But American support needs to be conditioned on the pursuit of a political solution by our Saudi allies as well.

The fourth element in the push-back strategy is to reduce Iran's influence in Syria. This is by far the most difficult and complicated component of the strategy. Developing and implementing it is not helped by loose talk about the unrealistic objective of "pushing Iran out of Syria." That may well be the desirable end-state but we need to recognize that neither we, nor the Russians, have the will or capacity to achieve it in current circumstances.

Iran has developed a formidable presence on the ground in Syria. With encouragement from Asad's Alawite-dominated regime, the Iranians have penetrated the institutions of government that remain in Syria. They have also embedded some 25,000 forces in the government-controlled areas of western Syria. Those forces comprise some 5,000 IRGC, Basij and Iranian Army elements that provide the commanders, advisors and trainers of the larger Shia militias; some 3-5,000 highly trained Hezbollah fighters from Lebanon; and some 20,000 Shia militiamen recruited from Afghanistan and Pakistan. These forces are significantly larger than what is left of the Syrian army or the Russian forces now deployed there. They were responsible for the Asad regime's reconquering of Aleppo and they remain in control of much of the areas in the north-west where they are taking responsibility for the well-being of Syrian citizens there, much as Hezbollah did in southern Lebanon.

The Iranian-controlled presence is bolstered by two factors that must not be ignored in developing the push-back strategy:

- The Iranian-Asad alliance, which was forged by Asad's father in the 1980s, when Syria was the only Arab State to side with Iran in the decade-long Iraq-Iran war. Since then, Asad's son has become ever-more dependent on them for his survival, no more so than in the present. Asad will not demand their departure because it will lead to his demise. And Russia will therefore not demand it either because they fear the consequences of the collapse of the Asad regime more than they value any putative partnership with the United States.
- Iran's "core interest" in retaining a foothold in Syria because it is the lynchpin of its wider hegemonic strategy. If it loses that foothold, it will seriously jeopardize Hezbollah's control of Lebanon, the crown jewel of Iran's regional position. That means Iran will mightily resist any effort to force it out of Syria and has considerable ability to do so. The United States has never viewed Syria as a core or vital interest and we therefore do not have the will or interest in deploying the forces necessary to achieve that objective.

Russia does have a long-standing strategic interest in Syria because of its port facilities for the Russian navy and its role as a platform for the projection of Russian influence across the region. Russian and Iranian interests overlap in Syria in their common objective of maintaining the Asad regime in power. But they are also rivals for influence in Damascus, and Asad relishes the opportunity to play them off against each other. Exploiting that rivalry has advantages for an American strategy of reducing Iranian influence in Syria. However, that game has strict upper limits. Russia will not cooperate in the undermining of its own influence in Syria for the sake of a partnership with the United States. It did that in the 1970s, which led to the loss of its presence in Egypt. It will not repeat that mistake. The idea that Russia will force Iran out of Syria is therefore a dangerous fantasy. And the idea that we should pay for such a fantasy by removing the Ukraine sanctions on Russia would constitute strategic malfeasance, given the impact that would have on our allies in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe.

We should therefore set more modest objectives. We can, for example, press Russia to deny Iran port facilities in Syria. An Iranian-controlled port would enable Iran more easily to ship weapons to Hezbollah. That would severely exacerbate the conflict between Iran and Israel, something Russia has an interest in avoiding. Similarly, we should support Israel's insistence that Russia press Iran and Hezbollah not to send their forces south to the Golan Heights. That would risk creating one front across southern Lebanon into the Syrian Golan, which would constitute a highly destabilizing threat to our Israeli ally.

Finally, as in Yemen, we should do what we can to promote a political resolution of the Syrian civil war, one that leads eventually but inevitably to Asad's departure. In that context, we should insist that one requirement of the political settlement should be the departure of all foreign forces. That principle was incorporated into the Taif Agreement, which ended the Lebanese civil war and eventually resulted in the peaceful departure of Syrian forces from Lebanon. Syrians, who do not want Iranian-controlled militias dominating them in a post-conflict era, will welcome inclusion of that principle. And it will provide us with the legitimacy to demand their eventual departure.

The fifth element in the push-back strategy is to concert the capabilities of our regional allies in a regional security framework that can sustain a long-term, burden-sharing effort. The United States is fortunate to have capable regional strategic partners in Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Sunni Arab States, that share a common interest in countering Iran's threatening ambitions. Each, however, has its own strategic perspective. Our NATO ally Turkey, for example, has a strong interest in preventing Iran from establishing a land bridge across northern Iraq to Syria and has moved ground forces into Iraq to block that prospect. But it will not cooperate in any effort that strengthens the Syrian Kurds. Similarly, Egypt sees Iran as a regional competitor but does not want to exacerbate the Sunni-Shia sectarian conflict for fear that it will advantage Sunni extremists. An effective strategy will therefore need to be based on a variable geometry that builds on the common interest of countering Iran while allowing for specific differences that may condition the involvement of some of our regional partners.

Nevertheless, there is a new readiness across the region to work together, despite their differences. For example, Turkey has just normalized relations with Israel; the Gulf States are developing their security relations with Israel; and Egypt's security cooperation with Israel is unprecedented. It is time to test the readiness of our allies to come together in a regional security arrangement that will allow us all more effectively to coordinate our efforts against Iran.

The sixth element of the push-back strategy is to lay the foundations for negotiations with Iran about its ambitions and behavior in the region. The Iran nuclear deal, notwithstanding its shortcomings, demonstrates that it is possible to reach enforceable agreements with Iran, using sanctions and concerted diplomacy as leverage to achieve our objectives. This sanctions bill, complemented by the five other elements of the push-back strategy, if successfully developed and implemented, provide a basis for engaging Iran in a negotiation that focuses on:

- Iran's efforts to export its revolution and interfere in the domestic affairs of Arab States across the region
- Iran's destabilizing regional activities and its sponsorship of terrorism
- Iran's ICBM program and its nuclear activities after the expiration of the JCPOA.

Negotiations are not a concession to Iran, nor a sign of weakness, as long as they are backed by sanctions and the other elements of the strategy that I have outlined here, and as long as they are fully coordinated with our regional allies. But they represent a way to signal to Iran that we and our regional allies are willing to have a constructive, normalized relationship with it, even recognize its status as a regional power, if it is willing to change its troubling behavior in fundamental ways. Indeed, if the Iranians prove willing to engage in a serious negotiation about these issues, we should even be prepared to signal to them a willingness to consider lifting our bilateral sanctions, i.e. putting a carrot as well as a stick on the table.

Mr. Chairman, it should be clear from this testimony that developing an effective strategy for dealing with the threats posed by Iran is a complicated and difficult challenge. But the dangers of not doing so are clear and present. I applaud the committee for taking on the task.

Notes

¹“Iran Linked to Deaths of 500 U.S. Troops,” Military Times, July 14, 2015. <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/capitol-hill/2015/07/14/iran-linked-to-deaths-of-500-us-troops-in-iraq-afghanistan/30131097/>.

²Karen de Young and Missy Ryan, “Trump Administration Weighs Deeper Involvement in Yemen War,” The Washington Post, March 27, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-weighs-deeper-involvement-in-yemen-war/2017/03/26/b81eecd8-0e49-11e7-9d5a-a83e627dc120_story.html?hpid=hp_rhp-top-table-main_usyemen-720pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.a313a0a0eb67.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

As is the case, I typically defer and retain some time for interjections. I would like to just make one—Mr. Indyk, your comments made me think about this.

There was a strong divergence of opinion on this committee about the nuclear deal, and each person expressed themselves and voted the way they saw fit, and the deal went into play. What is pretty remarkable is I am not aware of any committee member since the beginning of this year that has called for it to be torn up.

So as we move toward pushing back against Iran, which I hope we will do because I think we all realize that this was about one thing and that was a nuclear agreement, the fact is that the committee has stayed together on not ripping the agreement up but enforcing it, I would say radically, some people would say extremely. And I appreciate the comments that our witnesses have made.

So we have a beginning base here where I think people understand we are collectively together on enforcing. We would like to push back against Iran’s other activities. And we meticulously, in this bill that has been introduced, stayed away from anything relative to the nuclear agreement.

And then I think we all understand that, down the road, we still have work to do, that after year 8, in particular, you start diminishing down to a zero breakout time. So as a committee, we have additional work to do, if we really wish to keep them from getting a nuclear weapon at some point.

But I just say those things to say we have a pretty good point of beginning reference here, and I thank you for highlighting that. Hopefully, we will work together to again push back against the many other activities that are taking place in the region and, as has been mentioned by both witnesses, diplomatically work very closely with our allies and, let’s face it, not so much allies, all of whom are involved in this deal to make sure that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon.

With that, Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. Let me thank both of our witnesses. I found your testimonies to be very helpful.

You both agree that the United States should not unilaterally withdraw from the JCPOA. I see that in your statements and your written comments, and I agree with that. I think that would isolate us diplomatically.

You both agree that the United States must be actively engaged in diplomacy. We see that in Iraq particularly, as Iraq is reaching a critical point with Mosul falling. And if Iraq’s central government is not able to fill the void of confidence of all communities and security of all communities, we know the Shia militia and Iran will try

to develop more influence in Iraq, allowing, enabling Iran greater influence in the region than they have.

It seems to me the immediate issue about Iran's influence in that region is Russia. Russia is facilitating Iran in Syria. Russia is permitting Iran to finance terrorist operations in that region. And when we talk to our Gulf partners, Yemen, for example, Iran is very much involved in creating that instability.

Mr. Indyk, you indicated that it would be fantasy to give Russia relief in regards to Ukraine in exchange for their help in Syria because they will not deliver in Syria. At least that is the implication.

So what should we do in regards to Russia's support for Iran? Is there any way that we can divide that and be able to minimize Iran's support from Russia?

Ambassador INDYK. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Michael Singh referred to the fact that Russia and Iran are not exactly on the same page. I think we need to understand that, from the beginning. They have a common interest in Syria in propping up the Assad regime, but they are rivals for influence in Syria.

The Iranians, as I have described it, have a core interest because of the way that that advantages everything else that they are trying to do in the region to establish their hegemony. The Russians have a long-time strategic interest in Syria, one which, by the way, we never really challenged because we did not see it as much of a threat to our own strategic interests. They have port facilities there. They now have airbases.

And this has proved to be important to them, not only in terms of their objectives in Syria, which is to ensure that the regime survives and there is no chaos that they fear would come from the regime's overthrow that would spread and infect the Muslim populations in their own country.

So they have a very real interest and real concern there. But they have no particular interest beyond the way the Iranians can help keep the Assad regime in power. They have no particular interest in helping Iran in Syria. And certainly, if there were to be an effective ceasefire, which is coming apart at the moment, but were they able to effect that and the political process could be put in place, then I think that the competition between them would accelerate.

Senator CARDIN. Let me just interrupt on that. I agree with you. I understand Russia has limited interest. We heard they have limited interests in protecting the Assad regime. But it has been going on for years, and they are still there.

So they may have limited interests in dealing with the objectives of Iran, but they are partners in this. How do we divide them?

Mr. Singh, do you have a suggestion here?

Mr. SINGH. I do not disagree with Ambassador Indyk. I think it is going to be awfully hard.

I agree with the proposition that, in the long run, they do not have the same interests. And we see that Russia is trying to expand its influence in the region not just in Syria but sort of peppering its influence throughout the region, as we see with these Russian special forces who are in Egypt now, for example, reportedly.

But I think right now, and for the foreseeable future in that conflict in Syria, they need each other operationally. I think for Russia, Iran is the ground force. And as we know ourselves, if you are only putting in an air force, you need also a ground force to go in and sort of direct things there and hold things.

And for Iran, I think that the Assad regime would have fallen were it not for Russia's air intervention and artillery intervention.

So they need each other operationally for now, even if they do not have the same interests, and that poses a real obstacle to any effort to split them.

Senator CARDIN. So we have defined the problem. We do not know a strategy to unlock their cooperation. That is a very good point, that they need each other. And for the foreseeable future, there is very little that is going to change that equation.

Is that what we are all saying?

Mr. SINGH. I would say though that is for now. That is for as long as they are in this phase of the conflict in Syria. Perhaps as this conflict develops, for example, as our plans towards Raqqa develop and so forth, that will change.

And there I agree with what Ambassador Indyk said, that ultimately, the way to drive a wedge between Russia and Iran is by focusing on Iran's desperate need, I think, for the Assad regime to remain in place and Russia's lack of that need, for example. I think we can focus on removing all foreign forces from Syria, which is something Iran cannot accept but Russia perhaps can be more open to.

Senator CARDIN. I will just add one last point. We could also concentrate on what we do about Russia. That is why there is a bipartisan bill here to put more pressure on Russia to make Syria a heavier cost for them in their partnership with Iran.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Gardner?

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, both of you, for your time and testimony today.

Mr. Singh, in the beginning of your testimony, you talked about areas in which Iran has grown in strength because of the JCPOA. You mentioned some of them in your written testimony.

Could you perhaps talk about them openly in the hearing, ways Iran has been strengthened as a result of the JCPOA in a fashion the United States is not comfortable with?

Mr. SINGH. Of course, Senator. I would be happy to do so. And I would say in the wake of the JCPOA, rather than directly because of the JCPOA, perhaps, just to be a little bit more cautious about it. But I think we can see this across the region.

In Lebanon, you have Hezbollah, which is an Iranian proxy. It has a stranglehold now on the government. Our efforts to sort of promote the sovereignty of the Lebanese Government I would say have fallen a bit by the wayside over the past several years.

In Syria, I think it is really the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps which is calling the shots for the Assad regime, bringing in foreign fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and facing, frankly, very few obstacles to doing that.

In Iraq, you have these deeply entrenched Iranian-backed militias who are, I think, a big threat to the sovereignty of Baghdad

and will be a real challenge post-liberation of Mosul, as perhaps these communities start eyeing one another warily.

In Yemen, as has already been mentioned, we have Iranian forces not only providing arms to the Houthis by sea and by land but also, according to our military forces, connected to these anti-ship cruise missile attacks on U.S. forces and commercial shipping in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, which to me is a problem which we cannot pay enough attention to, because that is just an absolutely critical maritime chokepoint.

We have seen missile testing from Iran in absolute defiance of Resolution 2231, which enshrines the JCPOA. And while the United States has responded with some sanctions, we have seen basically silence from the rest of the world. Even though they urge us to keep up our end of the deal, we have not seen them too eager to enforce Resolution 2231 against Iran.

Senator GARDNER. If I could interrupt right there, because you mentioned the strategic convergence and then, of course, the strategic divergence. And both of you, Ambassador Indyk as well as you, Mr. Singh, talked about our allies and the way we see Iran versus perhaps some others, and the divergence that we now see.

Why the divergence when you talk about the activities that you have seen and the bad behavior, whether it is missile testing, further exploration of the missile program? Why the divergence?

Mr. SINGH. Well, I think when it comes to the nuclear threat, again, we could all sort of agree that nuclear proliferation was a bad thing.

When it comes to terrorism, though, I think for many of our allies in, say, Europe or certainly Russia and China, they are less likely to sort of take the terrorism threat coming from Iran seriously. They certainly take seriously the threat of terrorism from, say, ISIS and jihadist groups, but they tend to dismiss it from Iran, in part because they do not see it as much on their soil.

Now, actually, there has been Iranian-sponsored terrorism on European soil. For example, there was a Hezbollah attack in Bulgaria, I believe, just in the past few years. They also I think take the missile threat less seriously for a variety of reasons, frankly.

This is why I say, when we do approach these allies, I think we have to approach them in a way which is not simply focused on let's push back on Iran but it is focused on the broader region and the impact that Iran's activities have on issues like Syria or, say, human rights, where they, frankly, may show more interest.

Senator GARDNER. And if you go back to a week ago, March 21, 2017, the United States sanctioned 30 entities and individuals in relation to the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act. Iran claimed that these sanctions violated the JCPOA.

Could you talk a little bit about that, any step we take, non-nuclear sanctions undermining the JCPOA, at least in their belief?

Mr. SINGH. They will claim this, I think, for every step that we take, that we are violating the JCPOA, because they know that this is an effective negotiating tactic with our partners. It will get others in Europe and elsewhere to put pressure on us not to take these steps even though these are steps which clearly do not violate the JCPOA. I think that needs to be recognized very clearly.

And I think it is also their attempt to use leverage against us, to get us to be cautious, to get us to maybe dilute some of the steps we would have otherwise taken and to sort of take it easy on things.

They are trying to extract as much as they can out of this deal. And, frankly, we should expect them to do that.

Senator GARDNER. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard, do you believe that the United States should designate them as a foreign terrorist organization?

Mr. SINGH. I tend not to think that. I do believe that we should punish them and sanction them for their support for terrorism, but I am wary about sort of picking and choosing good guys and bad guys within the Iranian regime. I think that we need to recognize that Iran—

Senator GARDNER. There are good guys and bad guys within the Iranian regime.

Mr. SINGH. Well, I think, we need to recognize that Iran is a state sponsor of terror, and, from my point of view, Iran will use various organs of its government in pursuit of these goals, supporting terrorism, for example, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, the Basij forces and so forth.

And I am always a bit wary when folks seem to think, well, maybe the Revolutionary Guard is somehow a rogue element that is not carrying out state policy. To me, our real problem here is state policy, and I think we need to remain focused on that.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Coons?

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Corker and Ranking Member Cardin, for convening this important hearing and our two compelling witnesses, and for your leadership in making possible bipartisan legislation in this area.

As has been thoroughly reviewed by our witnesses today, despite the JCPOA, Iran continues its bad behavior, to preach anti-Semitism and call for the destruction of Israel, to build its military arsenal and support terrorism throughout the region, to conduct ballistic missile tests in violation of numerous U.N. Security Council resolutions, and to detain Americans and violate the human rights of its citizens and Iranians.

These are not the actions of a responsible state seeking to rejoin the international community, and it is because of these provocations that we need to take stronger action to disrupt their destabilizing actions and their regional alliances.

So I was glad to join with 13 colleagues, both Republicans and Democrats, to introduce new, tougher sanctions language, as you have reviewed.

Let me ask, if I could, first, Mr. Singh, about freedom of navigation. Iran has increasingly harassed both American and allied vessels in the Persian Gulf.

What is their goal? What is their purpose behind these incidents? And how do we respond in a way that does not risk a miscalculation or inadvertent clashes between American and Iranian ships?

Mr. SINGH. Well, you are absolutely right, Senator. There were 35 of those incidents in 2016. According to our Navy, the Iranians are getting more aggressive and less predictable.

I have had the honor and privilege of actually sitting with our sailors as they try to sort through these threats. I can tell you, if it was not for the professionalism of our Navy, things would be much, much worse.

Why does Iran do it? I think they do it for a number of reasons. Part of it is just chest-thumping. They want to show that they are sort of confronting the United States in ways which they can then go and sort of splash over sort of the Internet and market to show that they are to be taken seriously.

In part, they can do it because they know that we will be professional. They have a long history of interacting with our Navy. They know that we are not rash in our actions, and they are taking advantage of that, to an extent.

What can we do? I think that we need to be creative about the way that we conduct our sort of freedom of navigation operations, challenging not only what Iran is doing in terms of confronting our Navy but challenging some of their illegitimate maritime claims, because they claim territorial seas there which we and others do not recognize.

And you are right. We have to be careful about escalation. But I think we can be more creative than we have been.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Singh.

Let me ask further, if I could, Mr. Indyk, about interdictions and Americans detained in Iran.

We have been successful both directly and with some allies in some interdictions of weapons flows into the Houthis and regionally, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, as well as into Yemen. What can Congress do to support enhanced and more effective interdictions?

And my last question, Mr. Indyk, and I would be interested in Mr. Singh's response as well, do you believe the administration taking a harder line on Iran will imperil American citizens detained in the country? And what more could we be doing to advocate for the release of Bob Levinson and other Americans currently detained?

Ambassador INDYK. In terms of what Congress can do, I do think that you are already doing what is necessary in terms of sending a strong signal for opposition to what Iran is doing in the region.

As far as the interdiction is concerned, that is ongoing, as you pointed out. I think that we should certainly have as part of the pushback strategy an interdiction strategy designed to cut off any kind of arms supplies to any of the different proxies that the Iranians are using.

And the operation now in Hodeidah, which the administration is now considering giving greater support to, that is the port on the Red Sea in Ethiopia, I think has a strategic logic to it. Denying Iran the ability to access that port is very important.

So I think there are a range of things we can do in terms of stepping up the interdiction. And there are other countries in the region with naval capabilities who are also able to do that, and that is in the context of a regional approach in which we concert our activities with our regional allies, which is something I also suggested.

Senator COONS. Any thoughts on Americans detained? Any thoughts about hostages or others?

Mr. SINGH. Let me just say, on interdictions, very quickly, two things which I would suggest are, number one, interdictions are really based on intelligence more than anything else. And I do think we need to be sure that we remain laser-focused on intelligence-gathering on Iran. There are a lot of competing priorities in the region. Maybe that means expanding the overall sort of resources for intelligence in the Middle East. But without the intelligence, you cannot do the interdictions.

I think we also need to press the executive branch to publicize interdictions. We used to do roadshows when we would catch Iranians supporting Iraqi militias, the Taliban, and so forth. I would like to see us do more of that, frankly.

On American citizens, look, I would say I think we had, relatively speaking, an accommodating policy toward the Iranians over the past several years, and there were a lot of American citizens who were taken hostage by the regime. Part of that is due to the fact that a lot of that is driven by domestic Iranian factors. But I do not think, frankly, that we do ourselves any favors by trying to be accommodating and thereby sort of maybe helping American citizens. Actually, I think when Iranians believe there is a price to be paid for taking hostages, then they might think twice about doing it.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Senator Young?

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your appearance here today and testimony to these issues.

Mr. Singh, in your testimony, you speak to the importance of appointing a single official at State to oversee all aspects of Iran policy, from JCPOA implementation to more broadly our policy with respect to Iran and throughout the region, the need for an integrated, coordinated strategy running through one person over at the State Department.

Why is it, our current State Department as organized, is not able to produce a single, integrated strategy with respect to Iran? Speak to the deficiencies, as you see them, in the current org structure over at State that prevents that.

Mr. SINGH. Sure. Well, you know, we do have a tendency to appoint envoys or sort of special officials for this or that aspect of not just Iran policy but policy in general. So we have a coordinator for JCPOA implementation, for example.

But what we often lack is then a sort of official who can oversee all of that, and not only oversee all of Iran policy but then connect the dots with Iran policy, counter-ISIS policy, maybe what we are doing in Syria. You would like that person to be maybe the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. But it turns out that person is often disempowered, and maybe other pieces of the policy are over at the White House or DOD and so forth.

Why can't we do it? It is hard to answer that question. In part, it is just sort of the managerial choices of Secretaries of State or administrations.

Senator YOUNG. And, Mr. Indyk, I will be interested, based on your experiences from 1997 to 2000 as Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern Affairs. I know you can speak to this.

But what managerial choices might be made differently by a Secretary of State, through the President's direction, to help facilitate change in this area?

Mr. SINGH. Well, what I personally would like to see is I would like to see an official at the State Department, say the Assistant Secretary for NEA, have authority over Iran policy. They could have people under them, for example, who coordinate the JCPOA or coordinate sanctions and so forth. And then that person should report to a pretty well-organized interagency process that looks at all of Iran policy that is maybe led by a Deputy National Security Adviser or something like that.

Senator YOUNG. Mr. Indyk, do you agree with that? And surely this has been put forward before as an idea, but nonetheless, Presidents and Secretaries of State continue to do an end-run around the bureaucracy, as it were, and I try not to say that disparagingly. There are very competent people at the State Department. But there are these end-runs that are created around the existing bureaucracy, despite what strikes me as a compelling recommendation put forward probably many, many times.

Ambassador INDYK. Well, I was both an Assistant Secretary for the Near East and a special envoy for the Palestinian negotiations.

Senator YOUNG. You are well-situated to speak today.

Ambassador INDYK. Thank you.

And in this case, as Michael has suggested, I do think that Iran policy should be concentrated in the hands of an effective and empowered Assistant Secretary for the Near East, and that is because that Assistant Secretary has control over all of the embassies in the region and all of the staff within the bureau.

But it is really important that that person be empowered by the Secretary of State to be able to implement the policy.

Senator YOUNG. So why has this not happened? I am going to press you a little bit on this. And perhaps you do not know, but either of you?

Ambassador INDYK. Why has it not happened?

Senator YOUNG. Why have we not empowered our Assistant Secretaries to own the regional policy not just in this area but in other areas of the world?

Ambassador INDYK. Well, I think they are way behind in terms of making those appointments, and they need to get those people in place.

The CHAIRMAN. He means in any administration.

Senator YOUNG. Across administrations.

Ambassador INDYK. Oh, in the time that I was Assistant Secretary, I am describing a situation that I had. I think at the time, different Secretaries of State have different approaches, and the proliferation of special envoys is, I think, a bad thing, because it dissipates the focus and reduces the effectiveness. So I think it is important to empower not just the Middle East Assistant Secretary but all of the Assistant Secretaries. There is too much to do outside in the world for the Secretary of State and the Undersecretaries.

But the other point is the one that Michael made. There has to be a lash up with the White House and the National Security Adviser and his deputy because that is where the policy gets coordinated across the bureaucracy, and that is essential. The strategy needs to be devised in cooperation between those two parties in order for it to be effective.

Senator YOUNG. Very briefly, are there any other organizational reforms that this committee should be aware of that would facilitate the creation of coordinated, integrated strategies in this region and other regions?

Mr. SINGH. I think quite a few. I would have a pretty long answer to that, and I will try to be succinct, I guess.

I know there has been a lot of debate about the State Department budget. I am not personally enthusiastic about draconian cuts to the State Department budget, but it has increased significantly over time. And I think, for the State Department to argue for more, it needs to show that it is spending its current budget wisely.

And I think, frankly, if you ask State Department employees, and I was Foreign Service Officer for 9 years, they are less focused on the budget. Of course, they would love to have a bigger budget, as every bureau or agency would. But what they are focused on is, do individual employees have significant responsibility? Is there room for advancement? Is there room for reward if you are doing well? And is the agency overall working well?

And to me, we have taken away from that over time. So, for example, when we had the second Deputy Secretary of State position, which I understand the new administration will not fill, to me that gave sort of supporting services a seat at the policy table, and that was not appropriate. We have, I think, a lot of bureaus that have been created at the State Department, which maybe are not functioning well, maybe are not necessary and should be folded in elsewhere.

And when you create bureaus, remember, you are not just sort of focusing on an issue but you are creating sort of a stress on shared services, on embassies overseas, because all those folks want to go overseas.

And there is much more to this answer, but I think there is plenty that can be done.

Senator YOUNG. Well, I will look forward to continuing the dialogue. I do want to be respectful of my colleagues. Perhaps this committee should weigh in when bureaus are created in the future.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I will say, as my first interjection, we pulled up the numbers of envoys. It is more than the number of employees I thought we had at the State Department, so it is a long list.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. And I think what you all have suggested is a very good one, and that is empowering the people who have control over these areas and not dissipating their power by working an end-run with an envoy that may be working an end-run around an ineffective Assistant Secretary. I do not know. But if that is the case, changes need to be made, it would seem.

Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good hearing and good testimony thus far.

When I am in the region, one of the things that I often hear is a concern by others in countries all around the region of being kind of trampled in a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and they feel like they are under the foot of it and they hope that they would one day not be under the foot of it.

Recently, there have been two different developments that I have been interested in, and I would just like you to comment on them. One, Iran and Saudi Arabia worked out a deal for pilgrims from Iran to come to Mecca for Hajj after this 1-year sort of interruption of it. And second, the GCC in December decided, and I think Saudi Arabia must have been tacitly approving this, that there would be some potential for discussion about cooperation between GCC nations and Iran. The Iranian President went to Kuwait, I believe, and then the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister paid a visit to Iran.

Talk a little bit about the prospects that you would see for GCC cooperation with Iran and whether if not a warm relationship at least the temperature and the tension could somewhat be abated in that kind of a dialogue?

Ambassador INDYK. Senator, thank you for the question.

I think that lowering the flames of sectarian conflict is an interest of the United States, if it is possible to do. And normalizing relations between our Gulf Arab allies and Iran is also a desirable end-state to aim for. But it depends on Iran changing its objectives and behavior.

So in a tactical area of Hajj pilgrimage, which is important to the people of Iran, and the Saudis have responsibility for the Hajj, they need to find a way to make that work. It is both a Saudi responsibility and an Iranian Government interest to enable their people to go on Hajj. So in a narrow area of common interest, they can figure that one out.

More broadly, as you suggested, there is a willingness on the part of the GCC to actually engage with Iran if Iran is prepared to change its behavior. The three points that I made about the things that we should engage with Iran to talk to them about are the same things that they are talking about. And what their real concern is, is that the Iranians are seeking to encircle them, destabilize them, using Shia populations where they can, Iraq and Bahrain being the most obvious examples.

So I think that there is very much a desire on their part to move out, if they can, from this endless conflict, which has been going on for decades now and causes a huge amount of tension in the region and disruption. But they feel very strongly that unless Iran understands that it is not going to get away with this, they are not going to be able to engage with them.

That is why I also think they will not oppose us engaging with Iranians, as long as it is part of a push-back strategy because that is consistent with them, and as long as we coordinate with them rather than do it behind their backs.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Singh?

Mr. SINGH. Sure. I agree with a lot of what Martin said.

I do want to say, though, that I am skeptical about this sort of premise of an Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry in the region. Certainly,

there is a longstanding rivalry between Iran and the Gulf States that predates the 1979 Islamic Revolution, but it is important to bear in mind that it is not just the Gulf Arabs but also the Turks, the Israelis, most of Iran's neighbors who have a lot of problems with Iran. And I think that is largely because of Iran's strategy for pursuing its objectives, for the objectives themselves and for the strategy of going about its business, because Iran does engage in proxy warfare, political subversion, and really seeks as an aim to weaken the institutions and weaken the sort of security state of its neighbors.

I think a lot of what Iran is doing, for example, in Yemen is duplicating its strategy in Lebanon where it is trying to create a sort of security preoccupation for an adversary that would otherwise maybe be focused on Iran.

So I agree with Martin that they will try to find some stability. They are neighbors. They do not want to live in a state of constant tension and conflict. But until Iran's strategy changes, I do not see any of this going away.

And bear in mind, just one last thought, that Iran does not, I think, see Saudi Arabia as its main rival. It sees the United States as its main rival in the region. That is how I think Iran conceives of itself. So it is really trying to push back first and foremost on our presence and influence in the region.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Portman?

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you holding the hearing.

Mr. Singh, you noted in your testimony something I thought was interesting, which is that you believe that the Iranian nuclear program is dangerous because Iranian foreign policy is dangerous, and as I look back over what happened over the last several years, it seems to me that one of the mistakes the previous administration made was failing to link the negotiations over an Iran deal with other issues that are unrelated, not to the weapons program, but to creating instability in the region. And we have talked a lot about that today.

At the time, I remember the Obama administration arguing that, if we could just get this agreement done, then we would be able to have leverage over Iran on these other issues and hold them accountable. I think just the opposite happened, to be frank with you. I think because we were so afraid they were going to walk away that we pulled back, in terms of holding them accountable on non-nuclear behavior.

I just wonder if you could give us your sense of what we should do now. You talked about several ideas, but I look at what is happening in Yemen, you talked about proxy wars. You look at Hezbollah. Frankly, I think the immediate danger to the region is not nuclear. It is conventional and specifically Hezbollah and Israel.

I also look at what is happening in the sea lanes. You mentioned that today. You talked about some new issues outside the Straits of Hormuz and what is happening with them harassing our naval ships and also commercial vessels, certainly the missile testing, all of which has just continued unabated. And there has not been any leverage that has been applied, based on the agreement.

So we have a new administration. We have a fresh start. Again, you have laid out various ideas. I am going to challenge you both. Give us the two most important ideas that each of you have to deal with the nonnuclear behavior in the region.

Mr. SINGH. Well, Senator Portman, let me say, first, I agree with your analysis. I think one of the most important ideas we could have for pushing back on Iran in the region is to sort of reverse the paradigm through which we have approached this issue for the last 8 years, I would say. I think that Iran was inappropriately seen as primarily a nonproliferation problem.

And in a sense, we, as I said, viewed Iran policy through the lens of the nuclear negotiations. It is that not the nuclear issue is not important. It is absolutely critical, but largely not just because of proliferation but because Iran is such a threat to the region.

And I think we now need to reverse that. We need to see the nuclear issue and the JCPOA through the lens of our efforts to counter the broader threats that Iran poses. So we cannot subordinate our efforts to push back on Iran to any desire to preserve the JCPOA. I think we should want to preserve the JCPOA for a lot of reasons that have already been mentioned, but not if it means having to act against our own interests, not if it means having to refrain from addressing those broader threats that Iran poses.

The second idea is essentially that, again, by doing that, by showing our partners in the region, by showing our allies in the region that we are not just focused on, say, the ISIS threat, we are not just focused on, say, Syria or this or that, but we are focused on pushing back on Iran, I actually think that that will unlock cooperation at a sort of broader strategic level around the region. I think we will get a better hearing when it comes to, say, helping Iraq from our allies or pushing back on the Assad regime in Syria if they believe that we are strategically on the same page as they are.

Senator PORTMAN. I could not agree with you more. You did manage to dodge my question about giving me your top two, so I am going to move to Mr. Indyk.

Ambassador Indyk, you give me what your top two are.

Ambassador INDYK. Look, the first one is a novel idea of having a comprehensive strategy for dealing with Iran's challenges in the region.

Senator PORTMAN. Bringing our partners in, the Gulf State countries and others.

Ambassador INDYK. Yes, but a comprehensive strategy that deals with all of the places where they are pushing and promoting their hegemonic ambitions.

Senator PORTMAN. Number two?

Ambassador INDYK. And number two is to understand where the priorities need to be. The two most important places for a pushback strategy are Iraq and Syria. There is a real opportunity in Iraq because we have something to work with now, and our Sunni Arab allies are, for the first time—they regarded the regime as Persian and they did not want to deal with them. For the first time, they are ready to engage with the al-Abadi government and to help with that effort to deal with the aftermath of the elimination of ISIS.

But Syria is much more complicated. We have much less to deal with.

But those are the two most important places where we can have an impact and where we can start to take apart Iran's—

Senator PORTMAN. Listen, I was encouraged to hear what you said about the Iraqi Prime Minister being interested in actually having some distance from Iran.

He was here, as you know, last week. We had an opportunity to visit with him. I mean, I sensed a little change in the attitude as well.

But on the ground, do you see that? In other words, do you see the Shia forces in Iraq, not the Iranian forces, being willing to also have some distance? You talked about the necessity of Mosul not being a victory for Iran and its surrogate forces, but do you see the other Shia community in Iraq also being willing to encourage that distance?

Ambassador INDYK. Well, I think the key is what comes from the top. If we have a government that is prepared to look after the interests of all of its separate communities rather than to favor one over the other, that is a huge advance.

And in terms of the Shia militias, the Shia community, that is an incredibly complicated and delicate issue, because we do not need the Shia militias to create problems for us as we prosecute the war against ISIS in Mosul.

Senator PORTMAN. My time has expired, and I do not want to hold my other colleagues up, but I look forward to following up with you on that particular issue.

Thank you, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Before turning to Senator Merkley, there are 54 envoys, special envoys. Most of them are vacant. I know each person here probably has their special one they would like to see reinstated, but maybe a good starting point would be for all of them to remain vacant for a while.

Senator Merkley?

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The question I would like to have you all elaborate on is it seems to me there is a disconnect between America's position and the U.N. resolutions regarding ballistic missiles. Our position really is that development of medium-range missiles or longer range missiles are directly a threat, a threat to the region. And we are developing legislation for sanctions that speak specifically to ballistic missile programs.

But if we look at the U.N. resolutions, the U.N. resolution is kind of, well, not so clear. It "calls upon," rather than requiring, Iran to refrain from conducting missile tests. And then it has a provision that refers to ballistic missiles that are designed to carry nuclear warheads. And that, by the way, is a step back from the previous U.N. resolution, which said "ballistic missiles capable," which is more of a reference to throw-weight.

So while we are focusing in on the ballistic missiles as inherently a threat, the U.N. has had this design to carry nuclear weapons or warheads language.

And so to what degree did we attempt to pursue the pure opposition to the ballistic missiles program itself? Did we not have that

support at the U.N.? To what degree do our allies share our view versus the U.N. language view? And how will that affect our ability to bring the international community together in our effort to oppose the Iranian ballistic missile program?

Mr. SINGH. Well, Senator, you are absolutely right. Resolution 2231 weakens previous international sanctions against Iran missiles in the two ways you mentioned and then, of course, by making temporary the ban on helping Iran with its missile program. That will expire 8 years from the implementation of the JCPOA, so I think in 2023. That in a way is the most critical piece because if Iran wants an ICBM, it will need international assistance, and under this resolution perhaps could get that international assistance starting in just now 7 years.

We fought, I mean, in the mid-2000s, I can tell you, I cannot really say whether the Obama administration pressed to have this in the negotiations. I think they did at first and then dropped it. We pressed very hard in the initial resolutions, 1696, 1737, and so forth, to get missiles into these resolutions, because we saw, in part as a result of our North Korea experience, that missiles really cannot be divorced from a nuclear program.

There was pushback against that by allies in Europe, Russia, China. Remember, Russia and China are the ones supplying this stuff to the Iranians, as well as the North Koreans who, of course, were not part of that process. And we faced that pushback, and I imagine that, today, you will see the same sort of pushback not only from Russia and China but maybe also from European States.

Why is that? Part of that is they simply want sort of smooth relations. They want this thing to succeed, and so they do not want to sort of add to the existing problems by pointing out the sort of nasty things that Iran is doing. That is why I think it is important that we take quite a firm and unwavering position on it because, you know, down the road, we do not want to be in a position with Iran that we are in now with North Korea, worrying about that sort of ICBM threat.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Ambassador INDYK. I will not take up more of your time, Senator, because I agree completely with what Michael said.

Senator MERKLEY. Okay. Thank you.

I want to turn then to the additional protocol as part of JCPOA and where Iran signed on to the additional protocol but has not yet brought it into force.

What needs to happen there? What should be happening? Are they behind schedule? Is it a problem?

Mr. SINGH. I believe, in the JCPOA, Senator, and I do not have the text in front of me, that what Iran agreed to do is to basically enforce the additional protocol and then, after a number of years, seek parliamentary approval, ratification, of that additional protocol. So it is effectively sort of putting it into practice, but they have not officially ratified it. I assume that is meant to sort of mirror whatever sort of concessions we are making in the JCPOA.

The real issue is how will we interpret its additional protocol obligations, because in the additional protocol is this 24-hour time frame, for example, for IAEA inspectors to gain access to suspected nuclear sites. Now some will tell you that that is sort of a broad

authority. Some will tell you, no, that is actually quite a narrow authority and it does not help us very much.

I think it is important that we push very much for the former interpretation to become sort of routine, to become practice regardless of what the legalities may be.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Ambassador INDYK. If I could, just as a general point, I think it may seem obvious, but it is very important to keep on pressing on all of these issues all along the way so that the Iranians understand very clearly that we are watching, we are enforcing in a very rigorous way, because I believe if they get any sense that there is any leeway, they will take advantage of that.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could, Senator Merkley, first of all, thank you again for being on the committee. The point you brought up about "called upon" was an issue that was of great discussion when we were going through this. I know that Secretary Kerry was in the sales mode, obviously. I mean, I understand that.

But this was something where the committee was very concerned that we had weakened this provision. He declared that, in fact, no way, they cannot develop, and we can go back and look at the record on multiple occasions where it was an absolute declarative statement they cannot develop ballistic missiles of any kind. And I would love to do that, but this is obviously where we have ended up, and I think that is one of the reasons the bill that has been laid out is important, or something similar to it, to push back on this issue.

But I appreciate you bringing that up and just know that it was a point of major contention as people were trying to decide whether they were going to support it or not.

Senator Paul?

Senator PAUL. Mr. Indyk, I think all religions, to a certain extent, are intolerant. Would you say there is a difference there in degree of religious intolerance or description of religious intolerance between the Shia people of Iran and the Wahhabism religion of Saudi Arabia, leaving, I guess, for the moment the government out and sort of the degree of tolerance between the two branches of Islam?

Ambassador INDYK. It is a difficult question to answer, and I am not an expert. I would just make two general points, which is I think that the Wahhabi strain of Sunni Islam is an intolerant strain. Shias are a minority within the Muslim religion and have suffered and feel persecution as a result of that status.

And so it is interesting, when you ask about the people, the Jewish community of Iran is actually, although it suffers from second-class citizenship and is constantly being watched and, on occasion, there are unjustified arrests and so on, but as a community, they are able to function there in a way that Jewish communities in the Arab world have not been able to survive. So that broad statement—

Senator PAUL. The reason I bring it up is that, when we are looking for solutions, if you talk to Iranian Americans in this country, they are very open to engagement with Iran, and I think they are

very open as far as their religious beliefs being more tolerant than, I think, the Wahhabism.

I think also when we look at say, oh, we must push back against Iran, it is sort of like who pushed whom first? Who provoked whom first? And how far back do you go? We can go back tit-for-tat to 800 A.D., to 832 A.D. or something, you know?

But I think there is some truth, when you look at the problems over there, that Iran does see things regionally. They are interested in their region of the world, and they push back against people who push against them. Who pushed first? I do not know.

In Syria, there are 25,000 Iranian troops. Well, there is a whole lot of Sunni folks on the other side that are being funded by the Gulf States as well. The same in Yemen.

Who is right? Who are the better people? Should we be involved in any of these skirmishes back and forth? Is there an answer?

You know, we talk a lot about a summit to try to figure out the Israel-Palestine issue. It seems to me an even more important summit would be a summit between the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia and Iran. Every one of these are proxy wars throughout the region.

But I do say that we get fixated on Iran, and we forget about the danger of Wahhabism throughout the world. When I see the dangers, I see if you want to get involved in a regional war, you will be opposing Iran somewhere in the Middle East. But even if you are not there, Wahhabism is teaching hatred of America throughout the world and funding it.

And most of our terrorism has really come from the radical brand, and most of the monetary support for radical Islam and terrorism throughout the world is coming from Saudi Arabia and their money, not from Iran. Iran kills people, certainly. They are not any angels over there, but they are killing people in their regional wars for their regional interests.

And I think we forget about that because we get so alarmed over Iran that we think Iran is sort of this worldwide menace, and they are coming tomorrow to New York. Well, no, 16 people from Saudi Arabia came to New York and wreaked havoc on us. And I think it is important that we not forget that there is a religious intolerance on one side that I think really is alarming and needs to be discussed.

And I do not necessarily think we have the answer. Islam will have to figure out their own answers to these problems. But I think we should not lose sight of that as we go forward.

Your comments, Mr. Indyk?

Ambassador INDYK. Thank you, Senator Paul. I think I would make two points.

The first is, in terms of who started it, I am not sure that that is particularly useful. But I can tell you, from my own experience, and I am sure Michael has had similar experience, that the Iranians are very aggressive in terms of trying to export their revolution and trying to promote their—

Senator PAUL. They would argue in Yemen that Saudi Arabia and the Qataris are quite aggressive in getting involved in a war there as well.

Ambassador INDYK. Look, I am sure they would argue that, but they would be wrong.

But anyway——

Senator PAUL. You do not think there has been Saudi aggression in Yemen?

Ambassador INDYK. No, I think that the Saudis intervened because they faced a threat from the Houthis with Iranian-supplied weapons.

Senator PAUL. You do not think there is a possible——

Ambassador INDYK. I do not——

Senator PAUL.—effort in bombing a funeral procession? You do not think there are repercussions for a thousand years of the Saudis bombing a funeral possession in Yemen?

This is not all Iran, and I am not a supporter of Iran and their government, but there are problems on both sides of this war. It is messy, and there are sometimes no good people in a war.

Ambassador INDYK. I agree with that. And if you saw my testimony, I argue that we need to be actively engaged to try to find a political solution to that conflict. But we have been actively engaged for a very long time in trying to find a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is one I have been heavily involved in, and I tell you that the Iranians have been purposefully subverting our efforts.

What is it their business to be subverting that? If they are so tolerant, why would they be opposed to that effort to make peace?

Senator PAUL. I am not saying the Iranian Government is. I think there is a difference between the Shia form of Islam in Iran and the others.

And I think the best way to look at this is to ask a Western woman where you would rather live, under Wahhabism or under the Shia regime. And I think the Shia religion is actually more tolerant in Iran than the Wahhabism is of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. SINGH. Can I chime in?

The CHAIRMAN. You can chime in for one second, yes, sir.

Mr. SINGH. I just want to say one thing, just to remind everybody, I am skeptical of the Sunni-Shia sort of framework for looking at regional issues. Do not forget that Iran does support Sunni jihadist groups. They are not strictly acting as sort of a sectarian Shia power but often acting in a quite cynical way to support groups like the Taliban, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and so forth.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Senator Murphy?

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, just for fun, I actually looked back earlier today on the hearings that this committee did in the same month in the first year of President Obama's presidency. And this is apropos of nothing, but just to tell you how as many things change, lots of things stay the same. So our hearings that month were U.S. strategy regarding Iran, prospects for engagement with Russia, more effective strategy for counterterrorism, return and resettlement of displaced Iraqis. Those could be the titles of hearings again, maybe under different circumstances.

But a reminder that as the people inside the administration change, it seems that the problems confronting this country and our friends do not. It is interesting, 8 years later.

Thank you for being here, both of you.

Let me ask Senator Paul's question in just a slightly different way, because he and I, and I think a lot of members of this committee, are very concerned about the lack of questions that are asked, in general, by this Congress about the U.S.-Saudi relationship and the flow of Saudi dollars not directly to the Sunni extremist groups but to the version of Islam that forms the building blocks of Sunni extremism.

So what is the bigger threat to the United States, Sunni extremism or Shia-based extremism?

Ambassador INDYK. I think they are both a threat. They pose different kinds of threats.

The Shia extremism, I think Senator Paul is right. We are talking there about the Iranian Government, which is seeking to export its revolution and seeking to promote its hegemonic ambitions as a regional power. So the combination of those circumstances makes it particularly deadly and quite effective.

The Sunni extremism that we see manifest itself in some state support for but basically Islamist movements, the extreme nature especially in ISIS and Al Qaeda and so on, they certainly grew out of an extremist, intolerant form of Wahhabi Islam. And if you want to trace back the origins of this, we can see it in the two events that happened in the late 1970s, which was the Iranian revolution on the one side and the takeover of the mosque in Mecca on the other side.

And as a result of that, both of them started to export their extremist forms of—

Senator MURPHY. I agree, respectfully, when you think about the world. But, I mean, every attack against the United States thus far has been by Sunni-based extremist groups, at least when we are talking about—

Ambassador INDYK. Attacks against the Continental United States.

Senator MURPHY.—the Continental United States.

Ambassador INDYK. Not against Americans and not against American soldiers.

Senator MURPHY. Right.

Ambassador INDYK. You know, the Iranians and certainly Hezbollah have undertaken terrorist attacks against Americans for some time.

Senator MURPHY. And inside of Iraq during the Iraq war, certainly.

Ambassador INDYK. Saudi Arabia.

Senator MURPHY. Lebanon.

Mr. Indyk, let me ask you another question. You made, I think, a very profound point, which is that while we absolutely have an interest in getting ISIS out of Syria, there is a question as to whether it is a vital U.S. national security interest as to who ultimately controls Syria.

So let me ask you just to drill down on that a little bit more because there is a question now as to whether we have 500, 1,000,

2,000, troops there. Already there are reports that U.S. troops are not just getting ready for retaking Raqqa but are actually sitting in between different factions that may be interested in fighting each other for the ultimate control of the battlespace.

So as we think about our military strategy there, how do we right-size that military strategy to make sure that, ultimately, we are not the arbiter of who controls Syria once ISIS is gone? Because I fear that we are going to sort of quietly make a military commitment that ultimately binds us to sort of hold territory and sort out the balance of power even after ISIS is gone. And I think you agree that that is, ultimately, an important question but not necessarily one that should cost hundreds or thousands of U.S. lives.

Ambassador INDYK. Certainly not the one that would cost large casualties for Americans. I agree with you. I think that our approach needs to be to provide what is necessary on the ground to ensure the defeat of ISIS and then to make sure that what comes in the wake of that defeat is a post-conflict reconstruction effort that is led by the people who live there.

And there needs to be, I think, a very specific focus on building up the capacities for governance of the people who live in those areas. And because it is such a mosaic, we have to be very, very careful about how to do that.

But it is their business; it is not ours. We should support them. There is, I think, an international coalition that would be willing to help out in that process. But it really needs to be one in which we are supporting it, not in there taking control of those areas.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Senator Rubio?

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Thank you both for being here.

We talked about Iran. I want to start with some key assumptions to allow us to kind of analyze the region. I do not think either one of you would disagree with this assessment. In fact, I think, in your written statements you both alluded to this, the three things that kind of drive Iranian decision-making across the spectrum, from so-called moderates all the way to the clerical folks.

Number one is sort of a hegemonic view of the region largely tied to, my understanding is, their view of Persian culture and how ancient it is in comparison to, for example, the Gulf kingdoms and the like, which they view as kind of newer, inferior cultures in their mind. They certainly have great pride in—and by the way, that is not new to this regime. That was also part of the thinking of the shah who was secular, right?

The second is they view themselves as protectors of Shia minorities throughout the region. So in addition to involving themselves in some of these conflicts, they view themselves as the protectors of these minority groups in different parts or in some cases majority groups who are not in majority power in some places.

And the third is this sort of anti-Western, anti-U.S. view that Western interference in the region has imposed all these sorts of Western institutions, and that is how they view Israel, as a Western creation, but also the U.S. military presence.

Number one, do you both agree with that assessment? And number two, would you agree that those are widely held positions throughout the political spectrum in Iran? They may debate how to pursue this engagement with the United States, but what I just described is widely held across the political spectrum in Iran?

Mr. SINGH. Yes, Senator. I would agree.

I think when it comes to the protector of Shia, it is probably more complicated in the sense that, as I said, it is a cynical regime that does not hesitate to support Sunni jihadist groups, which are quite anti-Shia, and also the supreme leader of Iran likes to style himself as leader of all Muslims.

But I think that it is roughly true, what you said.

Senator RUBIO. And by the way, working with the Sunni groups in the region for geopolitical purposes or as leverage on the United States, or what have you, is true, but if there is a Shia group somewhere in some country, Iran is always viewed, at least the supreme leader, as the protector of that group or at least has an obligation to move in.

Here is why I asked you that. Embedded in all of this is this conversation about what Iran is going to look like 20 years from now, so we have had successive Presidents now reach out with the hope of somehow strengthening the hands of what we term moderates at the expense of the clerics who, by and large, my understanding of the power of the supreme leader is basically the same as a monarchy that has almost entire power that delegates down to some of the elected branches some day-to-day control. But in the end, the supreme leader is the ultimate authority on how much space they have, and that includes any upcoming elections.

So I guess my point is, as you look now to the future, knowing what you both know about Iran, what hope is there, whether it is a change in a new supreme leader, which I think many people anticipate will happen here fairly soon for one reason or another and/or through elections, what hope is there of a leadership in Iran, based on what we know about these assumptions, that moves them a little bit more in the direction that will, indeed, allow them to perhaps reconsider some of the decisions they are making in the region? Or are we really looking at an intractable situation in the foreseeable future that, no matter who comes to power, both as the next supreme leader and/or President, we may call them moderates because of their approach on some of these issues, maybe a little bit less conflicted, but, by and large, you are dealing with people that believe Iran has a right to be the predominant power in the region because of their history and Persian culture, who views it their obligation to have to engage in the protection of Shia, and who continue to hold this view that this sort of Western presence in the region has undermined the region and, in many ways, redefined it?

In essence, what hope is there of a transition to something a little different for the foreseeable future?

Ambassador INDYK. We have been hoping for that transition for the last 40 years, and what we have seen is that, on occasion, a more moderate leader will be elected as President. We had it in the case of President Khatami. We had it in the case of President Rouhani, compared to his predecessor.

But what we do not see is change in the fundamental attitudes of the supreme leader, who, I agree with you, has real overriding control, and the institutions which he commands and is able to use, whether it is Basij or the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps or the MOAS, to advance these various ambitions that are both hegemonic and revolutionary.

And so, therefore, the big question is, what will the next week supreme leader be like, and whether, after perhaps 5 decades, we will see some thawing of the inspirations that are fueling these problematic behaviors. But that is an unknowable situation.

I think that we need to continue to test the proposition by holding out the potential for Iran to take up its place as a regional power but one that does not threaten its neighbors and seek to destabilize them, and does not seek to export its revolution to Shia minorities that creates an instability in these neighboring countries.

And if they are willing to engage in a constructive way, we should be willing to respond. We need to hold that out for them. We also need to avoid hoping that somehow it is going to happen. We will know it when we see it.

Mr. SINGH. I would agree with that. I would say that those we consider hardliners and those we consider moderates in Iran, like President Rouhani, they are all committed to the survival of the regime. And anti-Americanism is a pillar, an ideological pillar, of the regime.

So you may have moderates like Rouhani and Zarif who are more pragmatic when it comes to engagement with the West, especially economic engagement, but I think there is only so far they are willing to go. Of course, even when they go that far, they are accused of being antirevolutionary, as we have seen in the last few weeks, by the more hardline forces.

I do not think that reflects the people of Iran. I think the people of Iran are not necessarily wedded to those ideas, and I would like to see us engage more with them. And I think that even in, say, a post-regime situation, it is easy to envision that you could have, say, military elements and so forth who still see the United States as an obstacle to, say, hegemony for Iran in the region and are not eager to work with us or really to have any dealings with us, or see us as an enemy.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Very good.

Senator Menendez?

Senator MENENDEZ. I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, thanks for holding an important hearing, and both of you for your insights for the committee.

Let me say, this weekend marks 2 years since the JCPOA was announced in terms of its outline. And in those 2 years, outside of the nuclear activity, I think little has changed in Iran's historical strategic objectives and objectives throughout the region, and we can trace that from since the early 2000s where Iran has been testing the resolve of the international community's arms control protocols by testing ballistic missiles, tests that went on in October and November 2015, tests that were followed in March 2016, January

of this year, all in violation of various U.N. Security Council resolutions.

In January of this year, the U.N. itself declared that Iran had participated in arms transactions that likely violated the arms embargo that is still in place.

More broadly, Iran has ramped up its support for terrorist networks throughout the Middle East. It is building on a multi-decade strategy to exert more influence around the Middle East. In addition to its high-profile stalwart allies like Hezbollah and Hamas, it has increased its support for irregular Shia militias in Bahrain, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and elsewhere.

So I understand the aspirational desires of hoping that Iran can come into an understanding with its leadership of the international order, but so far, I have not seen it. And if anything, I have seen it demonstrably go the other way.

And I am sure we all do not need to be reminded that Assad would be much weaker were it not for the support of his friends both in Moscow and in Tehran.

So that is why I appreciate Senator Corker, Senator Cardin, and my efforts, along with others, in having legislation that, regardless of whether you voted for or against the JCPOA, there should be efforts to try to get Iran to recognize that there are consequences for violating the international order and to try to bring it back into the international order.

But if you can do all of these things and not have any real consequence, then you will continue to do them, especially if you believe that it ultimately pursues your interests.

I always want to, in a hearing on Iran, just mention American citizens detained in Iran, a number that regrettably has increased in the past. I particularly would like to point out Robert Levinson, some of whose children and a grandchild he has never met are my constituents. He has been missing now for more than 10 years. And I want to urge the administration and the Government of Iran to take all steps necessary to bring him home. We are going to continue to cast a spotlight on him.

But I want to go to the questions, while we seek to be aspirational, how do we—I believe that aspiration is a good thing, but you also sometimes have to put some hard work behind it to make it happen. So I notice with interest—and sometimes I feel like I listen to some testimony, I am not saying any of yours, but elsewhere, about this equivalency or some type of moral equivalency.

Why does Iran need to be so engaged with Hezbollah? I noticed in your written remarks that you had said that Iran has embarked on a distinct strategic shift from insurgency to counterinsurgency, from maintaining plausible deniability to touting its role by acknowledging its support for Hezbollah, publishing details of funerals held for Shiite militants, IRGC fighters, and it goes on and on.

Why is that? And why is it that we should not look at that with some degree of real concern?

Mr. SINGH. Thank you, Senator. I think we should look at it with a degree of—not just a degree of concern but great concern.

You know, as I said, initially, Iran sought to maintain its plausible deniability. Hezbollah would deny that it got its funding from Iran or its weapons from Iran, and we have seen that shift. I think,

frankly, it is because they could no longer maintain—it was no longer plausible, let's say, that deniability. They could no longer maintain that because you had so many Hezbollah fighters in Syria, Hezbollah fighters also in Iraq. You had Iranian officers dying in Syria and Iraq. And, of course, they would have funerals, which were not secret.

So I think they tried to shift the narrative. You know, it is undeniable that it is hard to connect fighting against Sunni Arabs in Syria to Hezbollah's purported mission of "resistance" to Israel. But that is exactly what Iran and Hezbollah do, they try to connect what they are doing in Syria and Iraq to this sort of anti-American, anti-Israeli mission, and they tout it relentlessly.

I do not think that many people buy this, frankly, but it has been a real marked shift in the Iranian narrative.

Senator MENENDEZ. What is our best strategy to at least try to curtail their engagement and their support for Hezbollah and other entities that are destabilizing the region?

Ambassador INDYK. I would say, Senator, that the first thing we have to be very aware of and make sure that it does not happen is that Hezbollah moves to the south in Syria and into the Golan Heights and sets up a front across southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights, which is adjacent to it.

They are trying to do that now with Iranian support. They have been probing in that direction. The Israelis have made it clear it is a redline for them and will do what they can to prevent it.

But, in other words, we need to put a break on what they are doing first before we can somehow start to dismantle it. Hezbollah has taken heavy casualties, the heaviest of all in terms of troops on the ground in Syria. But in the meantime, they still have been building their capacity in Lebanon. I think the latest Israeli estimate is they have 140,000 rockets that can be rained on Israeli cities.

So what we are talking about is very well trained now, battle-hardened, highly capable, and very well-armed, and in control of the Lebanese Government, and nobody makes any illusions about that anymore. The Lebanese Government says that Hezbollah is their army now. They did not used to say that either.

So, progressively, they have grown a lot stronger, and the challenge is, therefore, a lot greater. We cannot easily disarm them. We can prevent them, I think—we would have to work with the Russians as well—from moving south into the Golan.

But in terms of what you do with the broader challenge that Hezbollah confronts us with, in Lebanon, in particular, we have very little to work with there anymore. And I do not have a good idea of how we can take them apart in Lebanon. What we can do is, over time, try to limit their and Iran's position in Syria. And if we can do that, then, over time, we may be able to impact their position in Lebanon.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I know Senator Rubio has another question. I have to run and do something else. I am going to say a few things and then turn it to him and Senator Cardin.

But thank you for being here. People will have additional questions, I know, so we will close the record at the close of business on Thursday, if you could respond fairly quickly to those questions.

The CHAIRMAN. We appreciate very much you being here.

I will probably write one relative to supporting democracy movements within Iran itself, and how we should look at those things. I know there was a tremendously missed opportunity back in 2009. I understand there were negotiations underway, but it seems there is more that we could be doing there also.

But again, thank you both for being here.

With that, Chairman Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. [Presiding.] Just two quick points. I would encourage you both, as you work on your scholarship and as you talk to others, I think two immediate flashpoints we are going to see, and I think you would both agree, are upon ISIS's defeat in Iraq is what the Shia militias do vis-a-vis the United States, and whether they begin to immediately turn to attack us, because I think Iran should be held responsible if they do.

You talked about Hezbollah. I just returned from the region. There is widespread expectation that war between Israel and Hezbollah is inevitable. And I would say there are elements in the Lebanese Government that are not pro-Hezbollah. The Prime Minister is an example. His father was assassinated by Hezbollah.

And the argument that they make, and I am just reporting back what they say, is anything we can do to strengthen the Lebanese army and the Lebanese armed forces undermines Hezbollah's ability in the country. That is a broader topic.

Here is the one I wanted to ask you both about, and it is related to Iran but it is a little broader.

In Bahrain, we have, I think, a 70 percent Shia population but a Sunni governing class. I really felt, and perhaps I was wrong, but I really felt a few years ago there was an opportunity, because at the time, many of the Shia groups in Bahrain were not asking for the overthrow of the King or the elimination of the monarchy. They were just asking for more political representation. And I really believe that had a space been created at that moment, that that provided a unique opportunity. And perhaps I was wrong about that.

That did not happen, and I think that actually opened the door for more Iranian influence because, since all the other doors were closed, that was the only avenue that was there.

As far as U.S. policy in the region, when things like that emerge in the future, my argument to Bahrain was they are an important ally, but the situation they face is unsustainable in the long-term and the better thing to do is to create an internal accommodation over time that allows the Shia to be more represented in government and, therefore, less susceptible to Iranian argument.

I think that is a part of our strategy toward Iran and the region as well. It is not to allow these aggrieved parties to have no other option but Iran.

I do not know if either one of you have done any extensive amount of work on the Bahraini question in terms of the broader policy with regards to Iran.

Mr. SINGH. Senator, I would agree with that. I think that it is good, friendly advice to our allies that they look to sort of embrace

their own populations, that they look to be accountable to their populations as a way to defend against Iranian inroads.

This is the same advice—I know you are interested in Russia and Eastern Europe, Senator—the same advice we give Eastern European governments, is make sure you are including those Russian minorities in your country, embracing them, treating them as full citizens, so that they do not become a potential vector for Russian influence in the country, make sure you are addressing issues like corruption and so forth, which are often, again, an open door for Russian influence and Russian leverage over the political process.

And I think this is something that all of our allies, especially in the Gulf, need to pay attention to, that part of defending against Iran is ensuring that your own political and economic institutions are inclusive and resilient and accountable.

On the question of Hezbollah and proxies, I could not agree with you more. I think we need to look not just at the existing proxies but where new ones may emerge because it is clearly part of Iran's broader strategy.

Look at the Houthis. Maybe they are not exactly a proxy now, but will they be in the future? Might there be new proxies in Syria?

And I do think we have tools to push back at them. In Lebanon, we do have a government to work with and allies that we can work with who I think, frankly, we have ignored for the past 8 years.

We do have a U.N. Security Council resolution, 1701, that I worked on that I think also has been largely ignored.

We have a Shia community in Lebanon which is not, I think, well-represented by Hezbollah but is often terrorized by Hezbollah because, you know, they like Shia as long as you listen to them, but if you do not, you are in trouble.

And then, of course, we have the ability to publicize the fact that Hezbollah and these other Shia proxies, they are not resisting Israel. They are not resisting the United States. They are killing Muslims. They are killing Arabs. That is what they are actually doing on the ground. And I think we can be absolutely clear about that.

Ambassador INDYK. I think you are absolutely right about Bahrain, but I imagine that, after they listen to you, they turn around and say that is just another naive American advancing democratic ideas, but we know better.

I think there is kind of an attitude in the region that has become quite scornful of the notion of what is referred to as democracy or the freedom agenda or so on. I think there has been a real setback in that regard, and it is difficult to make the case, and it is especially difficult to make the case when you have the Iranians out there looking to exploit these Shia populations, because then you have a bad guy that you can always point to, to excuse Iran's actions or lack of actions.

So I think in the current circumstances, it is a very hard argument to make. I think Bahrain would have been far better off if they followed your advice, but they have consistently gone the other way.

And then, of course, there is the influence of big brother next door, Saudi Arabia, because it too sees the Iranians as an encir-

cling threat. To give them their credit, I think the deputy crown prince deserves a lot of credit for this Vision 2030 effort to transform Saudi society even while all this is going on. It is something we need to get behind.

But I think we just need to recognize that, in the current environment, our ability to actually change their minds on these things is going to be very difficult to do. It does not mean we should not do it.

Senator RUBIO. Sure. Just to be clear, I am not naive enough to believe that Bahrain is going to look like New Zealand any time in the near future in terms of their politics internally. I am saying that, for example, if you look at the Jordanians who have slowly but surely begun to make steps in the right direction—and it is a balance. If you move too quickly, it could unravel. If you move too slowly, it could unravel.

But I do think, if you do not give 70 percent of your population the belief that they have a role to play in your politics—and the reforms that were being asked for 3 or 4 years ago were not outrageous. If you do not accommodate for that, that pressure builds and it provides the opportunity for Iran to take advantage of it. And that was my argument at the time.

So, Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. I just really want to thank our two witnesses. I found this very, very beneficial. I am not surprised. We have a great deal of respect for your knowledge in this area, and we will be calling upon you.

So the hearing was on Iran, and we talked about Lebanon, we have talked about Iraq, we talked about Saudis, we talked about UAE, we talked about Israel, we talked about Russia. There is no question that Iran is engaged in a lot of the geopolitics of the entire region and, of course, has an impact directly on our national security.

So this is a continuing battle. There is no simple solution here. There is no easy path forward. And we have to be mindful as we move in one direction. As I think, Ambassador Indyk, you pointed out, there is an opportunity in a different direction for problems to arise, and I think we have to evaluate that very carefully.

One thing is certain to me. We do need a clear U.S. policy, and it must be one of engagement in that region and it has to be done in a way that puts U.S. security interests—but does not drag us into conflicts where a military solution is not an answer.

So I appreciate very much both of your testimonies, and we intend to rely upon you as we move forward.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

And I want to thank both of you for being here.

And with that, the meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]