

STIMSON

Appendix II

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Iran and the Arab Spring¹

The effects of the Arab Spring on Iran are significant for several reasons:

- ▶ First, the changing nature of regional governance inspired by the uprisings throughout the Middle East will perhaps fundamentally change how Iran interacts with its neighbors and, in turn, how Iran relates to its own citizenry.
- ▶ Second, the Arab Spring has called into question Iran's relations with two key allies — Turkey and Syria.
- ▶ Third, the growing animosity between Iran and some Arab states because of the Arab uprisings will likely play an important role in the future of Iran's regional policy.

These three factors, along with Iran's rising vulnerability due to both sanctions and internal power struggles, are influencing the US-Iran relationship and will also shape how the relationship develops in the future. These points also illustrate how Iran is becoming more and more isolated from the international community, both globally and regionally.

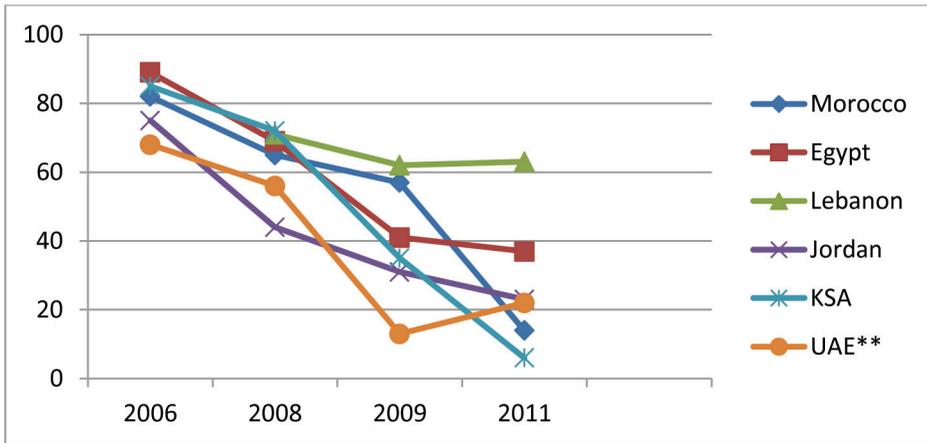
The above assessment represents a positive perspective of the effects of the Arab Spring for US interests *vis-a-vis* Iran, but the Arab Spring also presents an opening for the Iranian regime to recalculate its regional image, policies, and relationships. Iran is already seizing opportunities to strengthen relations with Egypt, which could possibly assist Iran in improving its regional image and role depending on the outcome of the current transition in Cairo.² In addition, the advent of democracy in the Middle East, or governance that is responsive to the views of the people that live in the region, may not ultimately favor US policy preferences given prevailing negative views of the US throughout the region because of the long history of Western interventions and the two major wars (read: occupations) that have taken place recently in Southwestern Asia. Of course, the US is also not favorably viewed in the region because of its long standing and ongoing support of Israel and, particularly, Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and oppression of the Palestinians. Furthermore, the fragility of governing institutions in many nations presents opportunities for extremists to gain power.

In short, to say that the Arab Spring presents only opportunities for the US would be mistaken; it also suggests risks. However, it has presented the US with a unique opportunity to reshape its image in the region and its position relative to Iran. If handled appropriately, the US can seek to maximize the potential benefits of the Arab Spring for its strategic interests in the region and to contain Iranian influence, possibly increasing the chances of a negotiated solution to the nuclear stand-off.

1 This appendix was prepared by R. Taj Moore

2 Reuters, "Egypt Ready to 'Open New Page' in Relations with Iran," *Haaretz* (April 4, 2011), <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/egypt-ready-to-open-new-page-in-relations-with-iran-1.354074>.

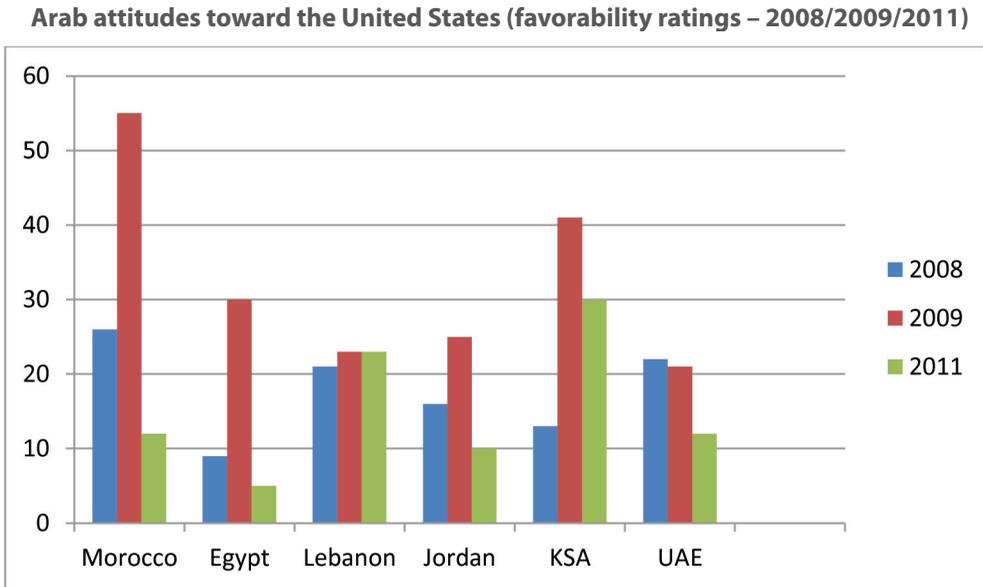
Arab attitudes toward Iran (favorability ratings – 2006/2008/2009/2011)



Source: James Zogby, "Arab Attitudes Toward Iran, 2011," Arab American Institute Foundation (2011)

As the graph above illustrates, Arab views of Iran have plummeted since 2006. In Lebanon, where Hezbollah is influential, Iran's favorability rates have fallen, but remain well above 50 percent. Elsewhere, Iran generally is viewed quite unfavorably and its firm support for President Assad of Syria, its declining relationship with Turkey, along with its historical tensions with Sunni-led Arab nations, make it more likely that Iran will not regain support in the Middle East, barring some dramatic event, such as a new US military involvement in the region.

On the other hand, the US is also not viewed favorably in the Middle East, with ratings even lower than those of Iran. However, as polls have demonstrated, Arab perceptions are malleable and can change. The chart below illustrates the rise and fall of Arab views of the US from 2008 to the summer of 2011. The rise in favorability in 2009 is likely the result of the election of President Obama and his initial efforts to engage Arab nations and rebalance US policies toward Israel. The subsequent decline reflects disappointment that these new policies lacked staying power. With this in mind, it is possible for the US to capitalize on the opportunity presented by the Arab Spring, not only improve its image, but to gain greater success for its policies.



Source: James Zogby, "Arab Attitudes, 2011," Arab American Institute Foundation (2011)

Popular Governance in the Middle East—Ideological Impact

The popular risings of the Arab Spring have forced the world to reevaluate basic questions about governance. These popular and spontaneous movements have encouraged many to question the core purposes of government and have compelled both outside viewers and participants to not only evaluate domestic governance structures, but also to analyze the international context in which these events have occurred. Said differently, the movement has forced many people to ask fundamental questions regarding the nature of modern states and to evaluate such state characteristics within the framework of the global world order. What it means to be a modern state is not only a product of domestic aspirations and ambitions, but also a result of how that state fits within a global narrative. Although the institutions that emerge from the Arab Spring will not necessarily be democratic in nature, their emergence is due in large part to the democratic movements that have swept the region and will certainly have a lasting impact on generations of Middle Easterners, including Iranians. This is not to say that other factors, such as economic conditions, were irrelevant or that the revolutions arose primarily because of a desire for democratic governance, but the impulses behind the movements are democratic at their core and, inevitably, will strongly influence the future of the region.

The importance of ideas in relation to the Arab Spring cannot be underestimated because they have influenced how many actors have responded to the uprisings and will also shape how participants design the new institutions that emerge from them, and whom they select to lead them.

Ideas matter and Iran seems to know it. It is possible that the Iranian regime interprets the Arab Spring as a challenge to its own security, given the possibility of further destabilization in Syria and an even more united Arab world. As a conceivable strategy, Iran may be

seeking to reshape the dialogue on the Arab Spring as a mechanism for regional rebranding. Instead of speaking to the rise of popular governance and the democratic impulses inherent in the movement, President Ahmadinejad and the Iranian leadership have emphasized the movements' connections to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, even going as far as to claim that the movements were inspired by the Iranian Revolution itself.³ From the very beginning, Iran sought to make the Arab Spring not about issues of governance, but about the resurgence of Islam.⁴ Although hampered by its allegiance to a minority sect of Islam, Iran may be attempting to find some legitimacy by identifying as a Muslim nation with a "Muslim experience." If Iran somehow manages to recast this conversation successfully, the result of the Arab Spring could be problematic for US foreign policy.

As an attempt to reshape this discourse, Iran held a conference in February 2012 for young Arab activists on "the Islamic Awakening." Despite its best effort to recast the debate, the crowd of activists did not totally endorse Iran's message, in part because of its hypocritical decision to not invite Syrian activists to the conference.⁵ It is clear that Iran will continue to face such difficulty and may not have the same level of success it anticipated with respect to reforming the Arab Spring conversation. If they are unsuccessful, it could prove useful for US policies. If not, it could be problematic for US interests.

If influenced by Iran, or by the ideas touted by Iran, the products of the Arab Spring could be the rise of theocratic rule in more Middle Eastern nations and further validation of the actions and goals of the Iranian regime. In Libya, for instance, some are already concerned about the rising influence of Islamic hardliners and how they could affect Libya's future.⁶ Although expression of Muslim extremism in places like Egypt or Libya would probably be shaped by Sunni theological origins, the emergence of this form of governance itself could legitimize the method of rule in Iran, and that alone could further weaken US relationships throughout the region and increase the likelihood of a more hostile Iran. Given historical conflicts between Persia and Arab nations, to say nothing of the religious schism, most Arab states would be unlikely to allow Iran to influence developments in their own nations, but the rise of closed, theocratic societies alone would damage US interests and, perhaps, validate Iran's behavior. As Iran expert Karim Sadjadpour has stated, many in Iran's current leadership have long favored democratic Arab regimes, in hopes that the political systems that eventually emerged would be structurally more similar to Tehran's own.⁷

3 Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran Leader: West Cannot 'Confiscate' Arab Spring," *Associated Press* (August 31, 2011), <http://news.yahoo.com/iran-leader-west-cannot-confiscate-arab-spring-182943006.html>.

4 Mohammad Davari, "Khamenei Backs Revolts, Accuses Obama of Lying," *AFP* (March 21, 2011), <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jG67zzodChPrO2HIoaDCTNzHFVIA?docId=CNG.a807bd69f3debaa7a6b4ca2383f9500b.271>.

5 Robert F. Worth, "Effort to Rebrand the Arab Spring Backfires in Iran," *New York Times* (February 2, 2012), <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/03/world/middleeast/effort-to-rebrand-arab-spring-backfires-in-iran.html?hp=&pagewanted=all>.

6 Rod Nordland and David D. Kirkpatrick, "Islamists' Growing Sway Raises Questions for Libya," *New York Times* (September 14, 2011), http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/15/world/africa/in-libya-islamists-growing-sway-raises-questions.html?_r=1&hp=&pagewanted=all.

7 Question and Answer with Christopher Boucek and Karim Sadjadpour, "Rivals—Iran vs. Saudi Arabia," (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 20, 2011), <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/20/rivals-iran-vs.-saudi-arabia/56t9>.

The danger is present, but may be outweighed by the potential benefits of the Arab Spring, and particularly by Iran's increasingly isolated position. Moreover, the US has opportunities to reduce the risk that such extremist ideologies emerge from the current transitions in countries undergoing democratic change. The US could strive to ensure that the democratic impulse that inspired the uprisings is not forgotten and remains an important value in forming the emerging governments. A possibly effective method to influence the ideological structure of the emerging regimes could be direct diplomacy. A high level of engagement on behalf of the US could cement its alignment with, and its support for, the democratic ideals underlying the movements. In addition, highlighting this theme within the US' own policies could in itself further isolate Iran and decrease the danger posed by extremists attempting to acquire power. Perceptions of the US throughout the Arab are generally unfavorable, so the US would have to prove it is committed to growing and supporting a democratic Middle East and not intervening for the sake of what is often perceived in the region as imperial interests. America would have to rebalance its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, if it wishes to reshape its image. The US' relative silence on uprisings in Bahrain is also a hindrance. In addition, the administration's efforts to sell weapons to the government of Bahrain surely make it more difficult to effectively brand the US as a supporter of human rights in the region.⁸

On the other hand, returning to a more balanced approach could help the US transform the ideas behind the opposition movements into tangible outcomes by underscoring the US commitment to democratic ideals. This would be done not only for short-term benefits, but also for the long-term, ideological sway it could have on generations of Middle Easterners. In addition to extending a diplomatic arm, the US could also offer economic assistance during the fragile democratic transition.

US policy toward Iran may prove to be more about the Middle East as a whole than it is about Iran. With the region changing rapidly, the US could seize early opportunities to engage with emerging governments and prevent Iran from allowing this change to benefit its own regional image and policies. The character and democratic nature of the uprisings could serve as a logical basis for such behavior. Although such a policy would not be directly aimed at Iran, it could fundamentally change how Iran interacts with its neighbors and, perhaps, have some effect on Iran's own governing structure in the long-term if it could somehow inspire the Iranian citizenry to mobilize against their repressive leadership. Or, less drastically, reformers could gain more power and influence within the Iranian government and elite classes. The fact that the nature of state-to-state discourse would have to transform itself fundamentally could influence how Iran behaves, both rhetorically and politically. This in turn would partially shape how the region evolves as a whole due to the uprisings which will affect how generations of Middle Easterners view democracy. What is essential to note here is that ideas have influenced action. Of primary importance is how events unfolding within each country and other states, including Iran and the US, could help shape such developments.

8 Josh Rogin, "Obama Administration Using Loophole to Quietly Sell Arms Package to Bahrain," *Foreign Policy* (January 27, 2012), http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/27/obama_administration_selling_new_arms_package_to_bahrain.

Vulnerable Strategic Partnerships

Iran has sought to undermine US power and influence in the Middle East by creating its own power bloc. Brazil, China, Syria, and Turkey, not to mention Hezbollah, have all been key members of Iran's vision of a robust counterweight to US power and sanctions. Since the Arab Spring, Iran's relations with the two most important of these states—Turkey and Syria—have been damaged, weakening the chances of Iran establishing a formidable alliance capable of undermining US interests and power.

Background: Iran and Syria

Iran and Syria's partnership grew significantly following the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent war between Iran and Iraq. The impetus for this relationship, however, dates before the Revolution and can be traced to Hafiz al-Assad's rise to power in Syria beginning in 1966. Assad's coup divided the Ba'ath Party, which previously had been in power in both Iraq and Syria; the leader of each nation accused the other of deviating from the founding principles of Ba'athism. Thus, a partnership between Syria and Iraq at the time was out of the question and reduced the number of potential allies for a Syria aiming to carve out a more secure and influential role in the region. In addition, Assad's Syria was, and still is, controlled by the minority Alawite sect, which is apparently an off-shoot of Shi'a Islam, rather than Sunni Islam. This also may have led to a natural affinity between Syria and Iran because of their shared, inherently outsider identities. The intense division within Syria between Sunnis and Alawites ultimately peaked with Sunni-led opposition forces attempting to overthrow Assad's regime in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although Assad eventually crushed these revolts with intense brutality, his regime became isolated from many of its citizens, and faced opposition from some Sunni-led Arab nations elsewhere in the region.⁹

Two events in particular undermined Syria's regional legitimacy, resulting in a natural alliance between Iran and Syria. First, during the Lebanese Civil War, Assad supported the Maronite Christians over the Palestine Liberation Organization. This raised doubts throughout the Arab world about the degree to which Assad was committed to the Palestinian cause. Facing increased isolation from Arab governments, Syria perceived no choice but to become partners with its Persian neighbor. Second, and perhaps for this reason, Syria sided with Iran during the Iran-Iraq War that began in 1980, forging a strong relationship with Iran and further separating itself from Iraq and the rest of the Arab world. Saddam Hussein feared Iran following the 1979 Revolution because he thought the Iraqi Shi'a population, more than one-third of Iraq's total and an overwhelming majority in the southern part of the country, might be encouraged by the new Islamic Republic in Tehran to revolt. This concern, combined with Syria's historical animosity toward Iraq due to the Ba'ath split, made Iran and Syria natural allies.¹⁰

9 William Cleveland, "A History of the Modern Middle East (Third Edition)," (Westview Press, 2004), p. 398-407.

10 Ibid., 398-407.

Simply put, Assad isolated Syria from its Arab neighbors early on and left Syria with very few partners in the Middle East. Teaming with Iran presented Syria with an opportunity to gain an ally, weaken Iraq, and possibly find some common ground with another Islamic minority sect. This partnership is founded on mutual isolation; losing it would translate into a significant loss for the Iranians, for the Assad regime, and for both states' strategic interests. Syria, for instance, is an indispensable component of Iran's support network for the Shi'a organization, Hezbollah, which it supports in Lebanon. If it were not for Assad's partnership, Iran's ability to assist Hezbollah militarily and logistically would be significantly reduced and the chances that Iran could maintain influence in Lebanon would surely be diminished.

The positive relationship between Syria and Iran forged in the 1980s survived through the present day and through the succession in Damascus to Hafiz Assad's son, Bashar al-Assad, as the Syrian leader, as well as through the succession in Iran from Ayatollah Khomeini to the current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

Background: Iran and Turkey

"No country other than Turkey can speak to [the Iranians] the way that we can...and I don't think that is very appreciated."

-President of Turkey Abdullah Gül in Washington Post Interview, September 22, 2010

As late as the fall of 2010, the future of Turkey's relationship with Iran appeared bright. President Gül touted the deep relationship his nation had with Iran and expressed his support for its continued growth.¹¹ The Iranian-Turkish alignment spanned many areas—politics, trade, and security/intelligence. For example, Iran and Turkey have a common enemy in the Kurds, located in both their countries, as well as in Iraq, and ardently desirous of their own state. As a result, the two countries share intelligence information in order to suppress Kurdish rebels.¹² As a second example, Hakan Fidan was appointed to lead Turkey's national intelligence organization in June 2010. The appointment was controversial to some because Fidan was known to have worked on improving relations between Tehran and Ankara.¹³ Fidan was described by Israel's Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, as a "friend of Iran," and for that reason untrustworthy with regard to Israeli intelligence and security.¹⁴

In May 2010, Iran, Turkey, and Brazil proposed an enriched uranium swap in order to help ease international worries over Iran's suspicious nuclear program.¹⁵ One month later,

11 Washington Post interview with Turkish President Abdullah Gül, "Turkey's President on its Relations with Iran, Israel and the U.S.," *Washington Post* (September 22, 2010), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/21/AR2010092105114.html>.

12 *Reuters*, "Iraqi Kurds Accuse Turkey and Iran of Attacks," (May 21, 2010), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/05/21/us-turkey-iraq-strikes-idUSTRE64K4W520100521>.

13 Amir Oren, "Israel Worried by New Turkey Intelligence Chief's Defense of Iran," *Haaretz* (July 6, 2010), <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-worried-by-new-turkey-intelligence-chief-s-defense-of-iran-1.294568>.

14 Dan Williams, "Israel Fears Turks Could Pass its Secrets to Iran," *Reuters Canada* (August 2, 2010), <http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCATRE6711F620100802>.

15 *BBC News*, "Iran Signs Nuclear Fuel-Swap Deal with Turkey," (May 17, 2010), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8685846.stm>.

after the proposal had been rejected by the US and EU, Turkey, as well as Brazil, voted in the UN Security Council against placing additional sanctions on Iran, citing diplomacy as the single solution to concerns about the Iranian nuclear program.¹⁶ Turkey's decision to stand by Iran during the sanctions vote, despite considerable US pressure, reflected a resilient relationship which could not be compromised easily. In the same interview cited at the start of this section, President Gül casually acknowledged that Turkey did not vote for the US-sponsored sanctions and later went on to comment that Turkey and Iran would like to enlarge their economic partnership in years to come.¹⁷ The Turkey-Iran economic partnership had already grown significantly to that point, with Turkey representing Iran's third largest export destination and accepting 7.5 percent of all Iranian exports.¹⁸ The above examples demonstrate a deep relationship between Ankara and Tehran that was not only significant for Turkey and Iran, but was a cause of concern for other nations, particularly the US, Israel, and France, who believed the two nations were too close.

The relationship, however, always left space for rivalry. Both nations have relatively large populations, long and proud histories of regional dominance, and perhaps each hopes to gain greater power and influence in the Middle East. In addition, it seems that Turkey may be taking on a new role as the region's most effective leader in opposition to Israeli interests. So although they did have a robust partnership, it was also a relationship with inherent limitations. Since the onset of the Arab Spring and the eventual uprisings in Syria, that began to form in March 2011, political relations between Turkey and Iran have begun to decline and the differences between the two have become increasingly palpable.¹⁹

The Syrian Uprising and its Implications

Likely influenced by the risings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa, Syrians began to demonstrate against the Assad government in March 2011. The uprisings were met with brutality, which eventually compelled international leaders to condemn the attacks and, in the case of the US and other nations, ask that Assad step down from leadership and permit a government transition.²⁰ Iran's response, however, was originally at odds with the international community. Iran initially claimed that the uprisings in Syria were part of a Western, specifically Zionist, plot to undermine the partnership

16 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929, "Security Council Imposes Additional Sanctions on Iran," (United Nations Department of Public Information, June 9, 2010), <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm>.

17 Washington Post interview with Turkish President Abdullah Gül, "Turkey's President on its Relations with Iran, Israel and the U.S.," *Washington Post* (September 22, 2010), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/21/AR2010092105114.html>.

18 Turkey was led by China and Japan and tied with South Korea for third place; D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, Iran, Chart C4: Export by Main Destination Country, <http://www.developing8.org/countries/iran/>.

19 "Syrian Protests Add to Pressure on Assad Regime," *Wall Street Journal* (March 23, 2011), <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704461304576216761028539214.html>.

20 President Barack Obama, "Obama on the Situation in Syria," (The White House – Office of the Press Secretary, August 18, 2011), <http://translations.state.gov/st/english/texttrans/2011/08/20110818094932su0.1070019.html>.

between Iran and Syria.²¹ Syrian desires for a more open system of governance seemed to be overshadowed by what Tehran saw as Western meddling. The skepticism with which the Iranian government portrayed the populist inspired movement in Syria contrasted not only with the opinions of Western observers, but also with the interpretations of Iran's neighbors in the Middle East.

Turkey's first response to the uprisings differed sharply from its Persian counterpart. Turkey did not mention Western conspiracy, but instead immediately called for an end to the fighting in Syria and simultaneously offered assistance to Syria if a need were to arise for democratic transition under Assad's leadership.²² The crackdowns continued through August with more Western states following the US' August denouncement of the Assad regime (the UK, France, and Germany all followed with similar announcements).²³ With this heightened atmosphere of international rejection, Turkey reiterated its desire for Assad to end the violence and reach an agreement with the Syrian population.²⁴ Although Turkish remarks came short of demands for Assad's removal from power, Turkey seemed to harden its stance and seriously demanded reform from Assad.²⁵ Assad faced increasing isolation during August 2011, not only because of Western criticism and Turkish pressure, but also because Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia all withdrew their ambassadors from Damascus, further delegitimizing Assad's rule.²⁶

Iran, on the other hand, proved to be an unwavering supporter of Assad even during this controversial time. It froze funding it previously provided to Hamas, because their leaders refused to demonstrate support for Assad in Syria.²⁷

As the uprisings and repression continued, Turkey soon became a frequent host nation of Syrian opposition leaders for planning and meetings. In November, Turkey increased the pressure on Syria by asking that Assad step down and allow a government transition.²⁸ The Arab League also stepped up its efforts to isolate Syria. In November, it approved sanctions against the Syrian regime because Syria declined to permit Arab observers into

21 Parisa Hafezi, "Iran Says U.S. Exploits Syria Uprising to Save Israel," *Reuters* (June 29, 2011), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/29/us-iran-syria-usa-idUSTRE75S7S520110629>.

22 Jacques Couvas, "Turkey Sees Kurdish Threat in Syria Unrest," *Asia Times Online* (March 31, 2011), http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/MC31Ak01.html.

23 Jay Solomon, Nour Malas, and Laurence Norman, "World Leaders Urge Assad to Resign," *Wall Street Journal* (August 19, 2011), <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111903639404576516144145940136.html>.

24 Anthony Shadid, "Turkey Warns Syria to Stop Crackdown," *New York Times* (August 15, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/16/world/europe/16turkey.html>.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Mike Wooldridge, "Syria's Arab Neighbours Pile Pressure on Assad Regime," *BBC News Middle East* (August 8, 2011), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14453117>.

27 *Reuters*, "Iran Cuts Hamas Funding for Failing to Show Support for Assad," *Haaretz* (August 21, 2011), <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/iran-cuts-hamas-funding-for-failing-to-show-support-for-assad-1.379845>.

28 Suzan Fraser and Zeina Karam, "Turkish Premier Urges Syrian Leader to Step Down," *Associated Press* (November 22, 2011), <http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2011-11-22/turkey-syria-crackdown/51345492/1>.

the nation and because it refused to pursue peaceful negotiations with the demonstrators.²⁹ Eventually, in December, Syria signed an agreement with the League to permit an Arab-led observer mission into the country.³⁰ In the end, the Arab League mission was viewed as a failure, with criticisms coming from demonstrators, former observers, and other nations. The Arab League ultimately turned to the UN Security Council, seeking a resolution that would condemn Syria for the systematic use of violence against the Syrian population.³¹

Relations will likely deteriorate even further as Turkey has begun to prepare a list of sanctions against the Syrian government; the sanctions would include the elimination of new transactions with the Commercial Bank of Syria, a stop to all credit to the Syrian government, a travel ban on senior Syrian officials, and would include a blockade on weapon sales to Damascus from third party nations.³² This latter may also serve as a specific signal to Tehran that Ankara has made a decision about its relationship with Iran moving forward, a signal that it will not unconditionally support Iran.³³

The very different initial responses to the Syrian uprisings by Turkey and Iran started a declining relationship between Iran and Turkey. Perhaps to somehow reconcile the relationship, President Ahmadinejad began to change his tone on Syria. In August, Iranian leaders began to call for the Assad regime to meet the “legitimate” demands of the Syrian dissidents.³⁴ This was an immense change in rhetoric and speaks to the fading bond between both Iran and Turkey and between Iran and Syria. It is possible that Iran realized it fell into a double-standard by supporting the revolutions outside of Syria, so it may have tried to remedy that by doctoring its language on the Syrian uprisings. By then, though, it was too late to attempt to change its image and to restore the relationship. Internationally, Iran appeared radical and overprotective of the Assad regime as more Arab nations condemned the Syrian attacks and asked for the end of the violence.³⁵ Although Iran has been suspected of supporting Assad’s crackdown with technical assistance from its security agencies, Iran may have perceived a need to change its public language with respect to the Syrian uprisings because of the increased chances of regional isolation if it

29 Neil MacFarquhar and Nada Bakri, “Isolating Syria, Arab League Imposes Broad Sanctions,” *New York Times* (November 27, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/28/world/middleeast/arab-league-prepares-to-vote-on-syrian-sanctions.html?pagewanted=all>.

30 Kareem Fahim and Hwaida Saad, “Syria Agrees to Allow Outside Observers, but Activists Remain Way,” *New York Times* (December 19, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/20/world/middleeast/syria-agrees-to-allow-arab-league-observers.html>.

31 *Associated Press*, “UN Security Council Likely to Condemn Syria Crackdown,” (January 30, 2012), <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/un-security-council-likely-to-condemn-syria-crackdown-1.410060>.

32 Dan Bilefsky and Anthony Shadid, “Turkey Moves to Intensify Sanctions Against Syria,” *New York Times* (November 30, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/01/world/middleeast/turkey-intensifies-sanctions-against-syrian-regime.html?ref=world&pagewanted=all>.

33 *Today’s Zaman* and *Reuters*, “Turkey Readies Sanctions Against Syria,” *Today’s Zaman* (September 28, 2011), <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-258204-turkey-readies-sanctions-against-syria.html>.

34 Nada Bakri, “Iran calls on Syria to Recognize Citizens’ Demands,” *New York Times* (August 27, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/28/world/middleeast/28syria.html>.

35 Donna Abu-Nasr and Eric Engleman, “Syrian Troops Attack Towns as Arab States Condemn Violence,” *Bloomberg Businessweek* (August 7, 2011), <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-08-07/syrian-troops-attack-towns-as-arab-states-condemn-violence.html>.

continued with its extreme assertions.³⁶ From the Iranian perspective, there would be no obvious benefit to being the odd man out in the Middle East, given the concert of nations in the region recognizing the legitimacy of the protestors. In addition, by changing its rhetoric and embracing the uprisings, Iran began to position itself to reshape its image so as to make gains from the Arab Spring in other nations. Also, it is possible that by changing its language, if not its behavior, Iran could help Assad while not simultaneously further tarnishing its image.

Despite what may have been this attempt to shield the Iranian-Turkish partnership, the relationship has appeared to continue to spiral downwards. Toward the end of March 2011, the Turkish government stopped an Iranian plane headed toward Syria carrying illegal arms. Turkey confiscated the weapons and reported the incident to a UN Security Council panel on the Iran sanctions.³⁷ The recipient of the weapons is unclear, but the fact that Turkey actually made the effort to confiscate the weapons speaks to the waning strength of the Iranian-Turkish alliance. Iran has not responded lightly, though, to Turkey's behavior and reaction toward Assad. In August, Iran froze intelligence updates going to Turkey on Iran's bombing of Kurdish bases in Iraq, perhaps a clear signal that Tehran did not support Ankara's reaction to Assad's crackdown.³⁸ Additionally, at the beginning of September 2011, Turkish officials agreed to NATO's proposal to place a missile defense radar in Turkey, much to the dismay of Iranian leadership.³⁹ Although Tehran was not specifically mentioned as the target of the missile defense system of which the radar is a key component, it was clear that Iran was the principal reason for the system.⁴⁰ Iran responded to Turkey's role in the NATO defense shield with subtle criticisms, claiming that such a deal would not support regional security.⁴¹ Iran later severely criticized Turkey even more, asserting that the defense shield was implemented to protect the Zionist regime from Iran.⁴²

In early December 2011, the Turkish ambassador to the US, Namik Tan, reported that Turkey prevented a shipment of nuclear-related materials from entering Iran via Turkey. He also asserted that Turkey is perhaps more concerned about the dangers of a nuclear

36 Secretary Hillary Clinton, "Repression in Iran and Syria," (US Department of State, June 14, 2011), <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/06/166098.htm>

37 *Reuters*, "Turkey to UN: We Seized Illegal Iran Arms Shipment en route to Syria," (March 31, 2011), <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/turkey-to-un-we-seized-illegal-iran-arms-shipment-en-route-to-syria-1.353371>.

38 Ercan Yavuz, "Syria Reverts to '90s, Iran Abandons Turkey in Terror Struggle," *Today's Zaman* (August 5, 2011), <http://www.todayzaman.com/news-252871-syria-reverts-to-90s-iran-abandons-turkey-in-terror-struggle.html>.

39 Thom Shanker, "U.S. Hails Deal With Turkey on Missile Shield," *New York Times* (September 15, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/16/world/europe/turkey-accepts-missile-radar-for-nato-defense-against-iran.html>.

40 *The Telegraph*, "Turkey Backs Nato Missile Defence Shield Against Iran," (September 2, 2011), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/8737158/Turkey-backs-Nato-missile-defence-shield-against-Iran.html>.

41 Ladane Nasser, "Iran Says Turkey's Hosting of NATO Radar System to Boost Tension," *Bloomberg* (September 8, 2011), <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-09-08/iran-says-turkey-s-hosting-of-nato-radar-system-to-boost-tension.html>

42 *Associated Press*, "Iran: NATO Radar in Turkey Serves to Protect Israel," *YNet* (October 15, 2011), <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4131330,00.html>.

Iran than other, more distant states.⁴³ During the same month, Iranian leaders reiterated that the NATO missile defense shield being placed in Turkey would be a target of the Iranian military if it felt threatened.⁴⁴ As the ambassador's remarks illustrate, as well as the aggressive remarks regarding the NATO shield, the Turkish-Iranian political partnership has almost totally disintegrated.

In addition, if and when Assad steps down or is disposed of as Syria's leader, relations between Iran and Syria will likely not be reconciled. The leader of the Syrian National Council (SNC), Burhan Ghalioun, a key opposition group, said that an SNC-led Syria would cut ties with Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran.⁴⁵ Because of the Syrian uprisings, not only has Iran's relationship with Turkey been severely ruptured, likely to a point of no return, but Iran's future in Syria depends closely on Assad's ability to survive the uprising.

With Iran-Turkey relations in steep decline, Iran is more isolated in the region than it was a year ago. Furthermore, with an uncertain future in Syria, Iran's security and its ability to influence the region via Hezbollah will likely be hampered. Two of Iran's prominent strategic partners lack the utility they once had in large part because of the Syrian uprisings. Without Turkey as an ally, one of Iran's political legitimizers and a key member of its imagined US opposition bloc is gone. With Assad almost entirely delegitimized and consumed by internal revolts, Iran will be less able to rely on Syria as a steadfast partner. This seems increasingly so as the Syrian opposition has now launched an armed campaign against the regime and has organized a more cohesive opposition party.⁴⁶ Iran's consciousness of this could be evidenced by its attempts to change the discourse on the Arab Spring in order to align itself more closely with the ideological underpinnings of the uprisings, or simply to more subtly pursue regional goals.

Iran and its Arab Neighbors

As a noteworthy addition to an already complex situation, general tensions between Arab states and Iran have heightened as a result of the Arab Spring. This conflict has most recently manifested itself in a debate over Iran's suspected support of Shi'a dissidents in Bahrain. Specifically, Iran has been accused of encouraging Shi'a protestors in Bahrain

43 Howard LaFranchi, "Turkey: Materials Likely Destined for Iran Nuclear Program Seized," *The Christian Science Monitor* (December 8, 2011), http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/monitor_breakfast/2011/1208/Turkey-Materials-likely-destined-for-Iran-nuclear-program-seized-video.

44 *Today's Zaman*, "Ankara Ignores Another Threat from Iran, Rules it Unofficial," (December 12, 2011), <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-265461-ankara-ignores-another-threat-from-iran-rules-it-unofficial.html>.

45 *Al Arabiya* and *AFP*, "Head of Syria's Main Opposition Says Group Plans to Cut Ties with Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah," *Al Arabiya News* (December 2, 2011), <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/02/180414.html>.

46 Liz Sly, "In Syria, Defectors Form Dissident Army in Sign Uprising May Be Entering New Phase," *Washington Post* (September 25, 2011), http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/in-syria-defectors-form-dissident-army-in-sign-uprising-may-be-entering-new-phase/2011/09/24/gIQAKef8wK_story.html?hpid=z2; Liz Sly, "Syrian Dissidents Form Council, Hope to Win Greater International Support," *Washington Post* (October 2, 2011), http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/syrian-dissidents-form-council-hope-to-win-greater-international-support/2011/10/02/gIQAMsWRGL_story.html.

to overthrow the Sunni dominated leadership there.⁴⁷ Iran has also been accused by Bahrain's foreign minister of utilizing Hezbollah to train Bahraini protestors.⁴⁸ Contrary to these allegations, however, a report by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry found that the government of Bahrain could not provide conclusive evidence of Iran's involvement in Bahrain's domestic affairs. Iran's denouncement of the use of foreign forces against the protestors, though, is well documented by the commission.⁴⁹ Although Iranian involvement in Bahrain could not be confirmed independently, Iran's suspected behavior has still managed to stir sectarian divisions.

In Iraq, the debate has been so tumultuous that it has severely aggravated sectarian divides between Sunnis and Shi'ites, pitting Shi'a Iraqi leader Muqtada al-Sadr against Sunni leader Ayad Allawi, with the Shi'a dominated government of Nouri al-Maliki playing less than an even-handed role. Many Iraqi Shi'a politicians condemned the Saudi intervention in Bahrain, while Sunni parliamentarians have blamed the uprisings solely on Iranian meddling. Disputes in the Iraqi parliament reached such a high level of intensity that the legislative body was closed in order to allow sectarian tempers to cool.⁵⁰ Moreover, the sectarian divisions are also suspected to have led to the issuance of an arrest order for Sunni vice president Tariq al-Hashimi; he fled to the Kurdish region of Iraq in order to avoid prosecution.⁵¹

The confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia has been particularly illustrative of the Arab-Persian rivalry, although the split is more likely a result of regional power politics than religious divisions. Iran's suspected support for and encouragement of Shi'ite protestors in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia has been an immediate cause of tension. In addition, Saudi Arabia is concerned with Iran's nuclear ambitions and does not want to see a nuclear Iran. If Iran does acquire nuclear weapons, Saudi officials have stated they also would perhaps develop a nuclear capability as a protective mechanism.⁵² Perhaps in order to relieve tensions, Iranian intelligence director and Khamenei loyalist, Heydar Moslehi, traveled to Riyadh in December 2011 to meet with Saudi's interior minister, Crown Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz.⁵³ The details of the meeting did not surface immediately, but some speculated that the meeting was used as a way to express Saudi's intense dissatisfaction with Iran's behavior in the region—including stirring up Shi'ite protestors in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia,

47 David Roberts, "Blame Iran: a Dangerous Response to the Bahraini Uprising," *The Guardian* (August 20, 2011), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/20/bahraini-uprising-iran>.

48 Elise Labott, "Bahrain Government Accuses Hezbollah of Aiding Opposition Groups," *CNN World* (April 25, 2011), http://articles.cnn.com/2011-04-25/world/bahrain.hezbollah_1_wefaq-hezbollah-camps-hassan-nasrallah?s=PM:WORLD.

49 Mahmoud Cherif Bassiouni (Chair) et al, "Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry," (November 23, 2011), <http://files.bici.org.bh/BICIreportEN.pdf>.

50 *The Economist*, "Iraq, Bahrain and the Region: Sectarian Bad Blood," (March 31, 2011), <http://www.economist.com/node/18491700>.

51 Jack Healy, "Arrest Order for Sunni Leader in Iraq Opens New Rift," *New York Times* (December 19, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/20/world/middleeast/iraqi-government-accuses-top-official-in-assassinations.html?pagewanted=all>.

52 Jason Burke, "Riyadh Will Build Nuclear Weapons if Iran Gets Them, Saudi Prince Warns," *The Guardian* (June 29, 2011), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/29/saudi-build-nuclear-weapons-iran>.

53 *Agence France-Presse*, "Saudi Crown Prince Nayef Meets Iran's Intelligence Minister Amid Strained Relations," *Al Arabiya News* (December 13, 2011), <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/13/182282.html>.

Yemen, Iraq, and its nuclear development.⁵⁴ According to an Iranian announcement, the meeting was used to demonstrate that the alleged plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador in Washington was not planned by Iran and to show that the US and Israel are seeking to break the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran.⁵⁵

As another consequence of these heightened tensions, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has seemed to emerge as a more effective regional body and could become a balancing force against Iran. In October 2011, for instance, Saudi Arabia and the GCC condemned the Saudi assassination plot.⁵⁶ Then, in mid-December 2011, Saudi King Abdullah met with GCC head Abdul Latif Zayani shortly after meeting with Iranian intelligence minister Heydar Moslehi.⁵⁷ The growing interaction and general coordination of the GCC could symbolize a more robust counter to Iranian, or Shi'a, power.

In addition, as the EU has begun to implement an embargo on Iranian oil purchases and US officials have pressured their East Asian counterparts to reduce oil imports from Iran, some Gulf states have stepped up to ensure that oil prices would not rise as a consequence, despite Iranian wishes.⁵⁸ Also, the GCC announced in January 2012 that it would withdraw its observers from the Arab League mission in Syria and called for the UN Security Council to put more pressure on Syria. Again, although this was not directed toward Iran, it demonstrates the growing cohesiveness of the body and its ability to function as a counter to Iranian power aspirations.⁵⁹

Whether or not the protests in Bahrain were provoked or supported by Iran, the often politically isolated Shi'a protestors are expected to have an affinity for Shi'a Iran if they are to somehow gain power and overthrow the Al-Khalifa family. Saudi Arabia, in an attempt to counter what would be a potential power gain by Iran, sent troops to Bahrain in order to quell the uprisings.⁶⁰ In this particular instance, Iran appears to have the upper hand relative to the US as, given the importance of both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia to US strategic interests, America has been nearly silent about the oppression of Shi'a protestors. The US has not made it a point to support the uprisings as it did in places like Egypt and Libya and even has a pending arms sale to Bahrain which has been met with both congressional and

54 Ellen Knickmeyer, "Iran, Saudi Officials Hold Rare Talk," *Wall Street Journal* (December 14, 2011), http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203518404577096031404782816.html?mod=googlenews_wsj.

55 George Jahn, "Iran: Saudis Not Compensating if Tehran Sanctioned," *Associated Press* (December 14, 2011), http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2011/12/14/iran_saudis_not_compensating_if_tehran_sanctioned/?page=full.

56 *AFP*, "Saudi Arabia Condemns Alleged Iran Plot; White House Blames Iran's Quds Force," *Al Arabiya* (October 12, 2011), <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/12/171522.html>.

57 Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, "King Abdullah Receives GCC Secretary General," (December 13, 2011), http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest_news/news12131101.aspx.

58 Brian Murphy, "Gulf States Show Rising Confidence to Rattle Iran," *Associated Press* (January 17, 2012), http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/gulf-states-show-rising-confidence-rattle-iran-15379563?singlePage=true#.TxINvWtA_l4.

59 *BBC News Middle East*, "Gulf Arab States to Pull Observers from Syria," (January 24, 2012), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16698754>.

60 Michael Slackman, "The Proxy Battle in Bahrain," *New York Times* (March 19, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/20/weekinreview/20proxy.html?pagewanted=all>.

public condemnation.⁶¹ In this case, Iran, despite its gross human rights record, appears to be the regional supporter of a populist movement. If Iran is perceived in this way by the protestors, their affinity and support for Iran will only likely grow. However, Iran faces a challenge. It has not yet intervened to protect the protestors, so it is possible that the opposition will not gravitate toward Iranian leadership whole-heartedly. It is possible that many of the protestors will interpret Iran's lack of action as a prioritization of its own state interests over religious bonds. In addition, the Shi'a population in Bahrain is incredibly diverse and includes Shi'ites who do not follow the teachings of Ayatollah Khamenei. That in itself is a likely disadvantage for Iran.⁶²

Diminishing Iranian influence and appeal to the isolated Shi'ites in Bahrain is thus a central task for the US. Human rights and international humanitarian law could be influential here. Greater US emphasis on the need to respect human rights might help to persuade the Bahrainis, and perhaps the Saudis, to better integrate Shi'ites into national political discourse, perhaps decreasing the likelihood that Shi'ites in Bahrain will look to Iran for assistance. If for no other reason, maybe the Saudis would comply in order to weaken Iranian regional influence.

Although Iran has seemingly successfully partnered with Shi'ites beyond its borders, the same is not true in Iraq, where many Shi'ites, while still dedicated to the theological underpinnings of Shi'a Islam, have embraced an Iraqi national identity and appear to reject the growing desire of Iran to influence Iraq. One Iraq-based researcher, for instance, claimed that Iranians are first committed to their national identity, not their religious one. The expert went on to say that even though Iran is a Shi'a nation, it is in the holy city of Najaf, where Iran is least liked. The comments represent the resentment many Iraqis appear to possess towards Iran.⁶³

Iran is isolating itself from the region and worsening regional relations at a time when it needs every partner it can possibly have. The Bahraini uprisings will likely augment regional tensions and further isolate Iran from the regional and global political arena, perhaps an advantage to US policies.

Potential Outcomes

The utility of the Arab Spring for the advancement of American foreign policy interests is far from certain, but still presents opportunities for risks of setbacks and progress.

61 "Bahrain - M1152A1B2 HMMWVs and TOW-2A and TOW-2B Missiles," (Department of Defense - Security Cooperation Agency, September 14, 2011), http://www.dsca.mil/PressReleases/36-b/2011/Bahrain_10-71.pdf.

62 Bassiouni, *Op. cit.*, 22.

63 Liz Sly, "Iraq's Shiites in No Mood to Embrace Iran," *Washington Post* (December 14, 2011), http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraqs-shiites-in-no-mood-to-embrace-iran/2011/12/14/gIQANYRUuO_story.html.

Potential Risks

Some argue that the Arab Spring has presented several advantages for Iran. First, Arab states are now more focused on their own internal issues than on Iran. Second, the US is too busy trying to figure out how to deal with the Arab uprisings to give enough attention to pressuring Iran. Third, the region's volatility permits Iran a chance to create "mischief" in the area. Fourth, the turmoil in the region has kept oil prices at high levels, strengthening Iran economically, and reducing the influence of the sanctions regime.⁶⁴ These points are all legitimate to some extent and could become troublesome for US policy toward Iran. The latter two points in particular could be especially problematic.

As described above, Iran is attempting to shape the global discourse on the Arab Spring in order to shift from what appears to be a largely democratic dialogue to a conversation centered on Islamic revival. This, coupled with Iran's suspected support for Bahraini protestors, illustrates how Iran hopes to manipulate the rise in regional unpredictability to its advantage. Islamic extremists aiming to influence and lead new Arab governments have an opportunity to change the order of the Middle East, and this presents a threat to US policy in the region. This will make building regional alliances far more difficult. The rise of religious rule in the Middle East could further validate the Iranian government and reduce its regional isolation. Given that some of America's "allies" in the Middle East are no longer in power, US leverage may have contracted, presenting Iran with an opportunity to establish new ties. In addition, if regional instability causes a continuing rise in oil prices, Iran may be better able to diminish the effect of the newly toughened sanctions regime. This will further limit the options available to the US and make dealing with Iran even more difficult than it is currently. These assessments, however, are accompanied by opportunities to reduce the significance of these risks, as well as to create new benefits for the US.

Potential Benefits

Although some of the US' strategic partners, such as Egypt's Mubarak, are no longer in power, this is not necessarily a complete loss. Although the same power structure no longer exists in the Middle East due to the uprisings, it does not mean American policy options are now reduced to zero. Instead, an opportunity exists for the US to represent itself to the region and perhaps to begin to reverse its low ratings in the eyes of Arab publics. As mentioned above, reinforcing itself as a partner of rising democratic governments could serve as an effective diplomatic tool and could help reduce the chances of Islamic extremist regimes from emerging. In short, there are opportunities for both parties, Iran and the US, because of the Arab uprisings.

In addition, although it is true that both Arab regimes and the US are busy dealing with the Arab uprising, they clearly are not ignoring Iran and the challenges it presents. As congressional and public reactions to the Saudi assassination plot demonstrate, no one has

64 Kenneth Pollack and Ray Takeyk, "Doubling Down on Iran," *The Washington Quarterly* (Fall 2011), http://www.twq.com/11autumn/docs/11autumn_pollack_takeyh.pdf.

forgotten about the Iranian threat.⁶⁵ In addition, in November, the Obama administration designated Iran's Central Bank (ICB) as a primary "money-laundering concern," meaning that states and entities engaged in significant transactions with ICB risk access to US financial organizations.⁶⁶ Congress later cemented this point by passing legislation in the National Defense Authorization Bill for 2012 which requires the administration to sanction such entities.⁶⁷ Moreover, in December, the US and Saudi Arabia reached an agreement on a \$29 billion defense package which would offer Saudi Arabia helicopters, fighter planes, as well as miscellaneous military services, including training.⁶⁸ Additional arms deals were concluded with the UAE, Kuwait, and Oman.⁶⁹ This illustrates that despite what some interpret as a preoccupation with the Arab Spring, the US government still considers Iran to be one of, if not the primary, foreign policy concern.

Saudi Arabia and many other Arab states have also made their position toward Iran clear by condemning Assad and by supporting Bahrain's leaders, a clear sign of further Iranian isolation. Similarly, one of Iran's few regional political legitimizers, its strongly anti-Israel stance, seems to have been taken over by a more reasonable Middle Eastern country, Turkey. This is significant because one of the very few issues that connected Iran with its Arab neighbors was its outspoken support for the Palestinians and unrelenting hostility towards Israel. With Iran's role changing and this validating element disappearing, Iran may become less relevant than it was previously. And this seems to be the most likely scenario. Iran may thrive under conditions of regional volatility, but the US also has chances to advance its own agenda in the region because of the instability.

Conclusions

The Arab Spring surely presents challenges to the US that could negatively affect its regional interests. Fortunately, the US has within its power the opportunity to avoid or, at least, to mitigate these dangers. To do so, it is indispensable to remember what inspired these movements—a general absence of opportunity, be it economic, political, or social. Ultimately, it is up to each nation to determine its future path, but by the US highlighting its support for equal opportunity, and by proving that it is in fact committed to that idea, it could be an advantage for the US by reversing perceptions of its policies throughout the Middle East and, as a result, enhancing the prospects for favorable outcomes. How the US does this is not singular, but will have to include a return to a more even-handed approach

65 Foreign Staff, "Iran Threatens Retaliation After Drone Shot Down," *The Telegraph* (December 4, 2011), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8934086/Iran-threatens-retaliation-after-drone-shot-down.html>.

66 US Treasury Department Announcement, "Fact Sheet: New Sanctions on Iran," (US Department of Treasury Press Center, November 21, 2011), <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1367.aspx>.

67 National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (S.1867), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112s1867es/pdf/BILLS-112s1867es.pdf>.

68 Assistant Secretary Andrew J. Shapiro, "Special Joint Press Briefing on U.S. Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia," (US Department of State, December 29, 2011), <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/12/179777.htm>.

69 Jim Wolf, "U.S. in \$3.5 Billion Arms Sale to UAE Amid Iran Tensions," *Reuters* (December 31, 2011), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/31/us-usa-uae-iran-idUSTRE7BU0BF20111231>.

to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as some demonstrated support for legitimate opposition movements.

The bottom line is that Iran has become increasingly isolated and this presents an opportunity to either narrow that isolation further or permit Iran a chance to reverse the trend. If the US does not succeed in such an endeavor, it seems unlikely that Middle Eastern nations would look to Iran, but they may begin to look elsewhere, perhaps to places where American interests, and ideals, are not considered.