

November 3, 2008

Is it time to negotiate with Iran? What should the next US administration do? Is Iran still trying to position itself as a regional power? Which candidate's policy is best?

Friedman's Article

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/29/opinion/29friedman.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Sleepless%20in%20Tehran&st=cse&oref=slogin

- because of Iran's declining economic conditions/oil prices, it is time to negotiate with Iran
- prices have spiked then dropped to normal levels
 - Demand for oil is inelastic
- Iran has been using oil revenue to subsidize industries but now the oil prices are decreases--> now in debt
 - Iran hasn't been managing its oil
 - 30% inflation, 10% unemployment
- Iran imports gas
 - Sends out pure crude
 - Russia sells them refined petroleum
- dependence on non-renewable resources can cause upheaval within the government
- Obama's policy
 - Incentives: membership in WTO, economic investments (to improve economy, investing in refining capabilities)
- McCain's policy
 - Wants Security Council to continue imposing sanctions
 - Restricting Iran's ability to import gasoline
 - Multilateral "League of Democracies"
- US will have more leverage in Iran if its economy is weak--doesn't necessarily mean Iran is willing to negotiate
 - USSR remained a military threat during the Cold War even though its economy was not strong
- Is Iran a national actor?
 - Iran is being rational from its own perspective
- main goal of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons
 - Security? Survival of leaders?
 - Nationalistic issue
- don't want Iran to become another Iraq
 - Wouldn't it make sense for Iran to negotiate with the US?

- advantages to being a nuclear state
 - North Korea--> US aid
 - Pakistan and India
 - acquiring weapons might be the best way for Iran to create favorable relations with the US
- Iran needs to believe that the negotiations will be honored
- balancing vs. bandwagoning
 - Bandwagoning is a poor option because Iran would be in a weaker position than the US
 - So, Iran is trying to balance against the US--> cyclic crisis
 - Iran and Syria
- Iran can still turn to other states (China) when it is experiencing this economic crisis--> other actors in the arena
 - Changing global dynamics
 - Who will be the next hegemon? Will there be multiple?
 - Putin and Iran
- idea of Iranian perseverance

What should the next administration do in order to achieve its best interests?

- US shouldn't have to act by itself
 - team up with the Gulf nations because they will be hurt by Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons
- in US' best interest that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons
 - Economic sanctions are not effective because other states could give Iran economic support
 - Would China and Russia be against sanctions?
 - Brinksmanship
 - Short-term bargaining chip
- National Intelligence estimate
 - Iran stopped its nuclear weapons program in 2003
 - Had been hiding it for 18 years after Iraq War
- Can Iran enrich uranium?
- NPT
 - Calls for nuclear powers to share the technology
- Obama--"tough direct presidential diplomacy without preconditions"

Are Obama and McCain's policies really that different?

- both favor sanctions
- imposing harsher sanctions would involve the assistance of other nations

- China and Russia
 - Need to be convinced that a nuclear weapon is imminent

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Open up full trade, businesses, an embassy
- Flights between New York and Tehran
- Bring elements of American culture
 - Is this naïve if we do not prepare? Especially if we are doing it in exchange for nothing?
 - Defeatist stance--> West appears weaker
- Will sanctions work?
 - Yes
 - Iranian government knows the people
 - Interest=regime survival
 - Regime or bomb?
 - No
 - The sanctions have been imposed for years
 - Sanctions are embittering Iran-->having other nations impose sanctions will exacerbate the situation
 - Will sanctions push them to a regime change?
 - What will come first--a rebellion or the weapon?
- providing Iran with extremely liberal options
- Will Israel go along with any of these concessions/solutions?
 - Israel won't stand for nuclear Iran

Options

1. Diplomatic relations (10 votes)
 - Obama
2. Liberal approach (5 votes)
 - Curbing funding to Syria, Lebanon
 - Open businesses/trades
3. Maintain status quo
4. Intensify sanctions (2 votes)
 - McCain
5. Attack Iran