

# ENGAGEMENT, COERCION, AND IRAN'S NUCLEAR CHALLENGE

REPORT OF A JOINT STUDY GROUP ON US-IRAN POLICY

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## Preface

We are pleased to present *Engagement, Coercion, and Iran's Nuclear Challenge*, the product of a year-long collaboration between the US Institute of Peace's Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention and the Stimson Center.

The report offers insights into the enduring challenge that faces the United States and the international community: How to persuade the Islamic Republic of Iran that its long term interests would be best served by resolving issues related to its nuclear activities. This report offers a clear path forward, a manner of recalibrating US policy that can steer away from the rocky shoals of either a defiant, nuclear-capable Iran, or the inevitability of conflict to prevent that outcome. It is premised on some basic assumptions: Iran's complex internal politics, fundamental international relationships, and fervent belief in its legitimate right to peaceful nuclear activities are not likely to change soon; that Iran's leaders may not yet have determined how far to proceed towards a nuclear weapons capability and may be divided on the issue, and thus there is still time to shape Iran's calculations; and the policies the US has pursued over many years have so far failed to diminish Iran's commitment to its nuclear program.

On this basis, the study group analyzed the most important factors that could lead to better outcomes from the perspective of US interests, and offers its best advice about how to conduct a more effective policy. The report is not intended to be a tactical blueprint for talks between Iran and the international community, but to focus attention on the larger purposes of US policy and to offer our judgments about how to achieve better outcomes. The study group members are well aware that success in preventing a nuclear armed Iran is by no means assured. It is their hope that this report offers some insights and ideas that might move the odds in a more favorable direction.

The study group was led by Stimson co-founder and distinguished fellow Barry Blechman, and Daniel Brumberg, senior advisor to USIP's Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention. They were joined as a contributing author by USIP vice president for grants and programs Steven Heydemann. The three leaders organized a distinguished group of nearly 50 experts into three working groups: Internal Politics and Iranian Foreign Policy (Brumberg), Iran's Regional and Global Relations (Heydemann), and US Policy Options (Blechman). Each working group attempted to shed light on the most important factors that shape or constrain US policy. They brought deep knowledge about how these issues are viewed in the complex and sometimes contradictory world of Iranian politics and interests. We hope their insight will provide some new and unique perspectives into this daunting problem set.

To ensure a coherent and compelling report, we did not strive for formal consensus on the text by all the participants. We present the findings of the principal authors with the understanding that their judgments are broadly supported by the other members of the study group, although individuals may disagree with specific recommendations. The study

group members are listed along with the report of the group in which they participated later in this volume. We are deeply grateful for the commitment of time, effort and goodwill provided by all the members, for their lively debates and deliberations, and for their important contributions to the drafting process and vetting of policy recommendations.

In addition, the study benefited from the technical advice of a small group of experts on the energy situation in the Middle East, organized by Amy Jaffe, the Wallace A. Wilson Fellow in Energy Studies at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University. Their report appears in the appendix to this volume. We are grateful for their help. We also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the able research staff at USIP, Abi Williams, Semira Nekou, Leslie Thompson, and Steven Riskin, and at Stimson, Andrew Houk and Carrielyn O'Connell.

The US Institute of Peace and the Stimson Center have worked together for many years on a wide range of peace and security issues. We share a commitment to nonpartisan research and analysis, and the search for pragmatic and actionable policy ideas that can make meaningful contributions to those entrusted with the responsibility for ensuring international peace and preventing conflict. Finding a constructive outcome to the longstanding dispute between Iran and the international community over its nuclear activities in a way that addresses the vital interests of our friends and partners in the Middle East is no simple matter. This report will not be the last on the subject, but we believe its policy recommendations provide an achievable set of course corrections that could enhance prospects for success in engaging Iran.



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