

China and the Iran Nuclear Issue: Beyond the Limited Partnership

Joel Wuthnow, Ph.D.
CNA China Studies
wuthnowj@cna.org

Testimony before the U.S.-China Security and Economic Review Commission
Hearing on “China and the Middle East”
June 6, 2013

Co-chairs and members of the commission: thank you for the opportunity to testify today about China’s role and interests in the Middle East, focusing on China-Iran relations. This is a topic of interest to me as a research analyst in the China Studies division at CNA, a federally-funded research and development center in Alexandria, Virginia.

In recent years, China has held a limited partnership with Iran. For Beijing, this partnership has involved an attempt to balance economic opportunities in Iran with the imperative to maintain positive relations with the United States and others. However, a key variable – one that is often overlooked by observers – is Chinese risk assessments concerning Iran’s nuclear program. For the United States, there may be opportunities to inform and broaden China’s consideration of the risks that Iran’s nuclear program pose to China’s own interests in the Middle East.

China’s Limited Partnership with Iran

As several analysts in the United States have argued, China’s contemporary relations with Iran can be characterized as a “limited partnership.”¹ This partnership has two central features: (1) a desire by the PRC to seize economic opportunities, especially in the oil and gas sectors; and (2) an opposing need not to upset relations with the United States. This section briefly discusses both features.

Economic Opportunities

Economic opportunities sought by the PRC in recent years include the following:

- *Oil exports.* Despite fluctuation over the past year, Iran remains a key supplier to China. In 2011, China averaged a purchase of 555,000 barrels/day (bpd), a figure that dropped in early 2012 to 345,000 due to contract disputes between Chinese and Iranian state oil firms. By the first quarter of 2013, the figure had rebounded to 410,000 bpd. Iran remains China’s third-largest supplier of oil, behind Saudi Arabia and Angola.² In addition to economic motives, analysts point to a strategic rationale for China’s continuing energy relationship with Iran. As Harold and Nader argue, Iran may be a “supplier unlikely to be intimidated into cutting oil exports to China in the event of a U.S.-Chinese military conflict.”³

- *Upstream investment.* China has been a key investor in oil exploration and excavation activities in Iran, including major investments in the Yadavaran and Azadegan oil fields by Chinese national oil companies. China has also reportedly considered expanding its involvement in Iran's petrochemical sector, especially in methanol production. Nevertheless, analysts have noted limitations on Chinese investments in upstream activities. As Downs and Maloney point out, this is associated with "tough operating environments and diplomatic sensitivities."⁴ These factors were apparent in China's long-delayed participation in developing the South Pars natural gas field, involvement that was ultimately terminated in April 2013.
- *Manufactured goods.* China's overall trade volume with Iran rose from \$10.1 billion in 2005 to \$29.4 billion in 2010. Aside from the energy sector, much of this growth occurred in Chinese sales of manufactured goods, such as electronics, toys, and clothing. Under pressure from the United States, Chinese firms Huawei and ZTE, which have been condemned for providing surveillance technology to the Iranian regime, have both said they would curtail business activities in Iran. In addition to these products, China has also been a key supplier of gasoline to Iran, whose oil refinery capabilities are limited.
- *Infrastructure development.* Over the past two decades, China has contributed to several key infrastructure projects in Iran, with notable contributions to Tehran's subway system, as well as dams, bridges, and other infrastructure.
- *Arms sales.* Comparatively little is known about the nature of China's arms sales to Iran. There have been reports that China has sold anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran through 2012,⁵ as well as indications that a state-owned Chinese firm has attempted to sell anti-aircraft missiles to Iran in March 2013.⁶ However, the veracity of these reports, as well as the possible economic or strategic motives behind any ongoing arms relationship between the two countries, is uncertain.
- *Nuclear technology.* Although China's formal involvement in Iran's nuclear program ceased in the 1990s, there have been periodic reports that Chinese firms have supplied dual use technologies. John Garver writes that China may have a motive to facilitate a nuclear Iran since this could be a "a valuable check on U.S. influence in the Persian Gulf and move the world in the direction of multi-polarity."⁷ However, the extent of potential Chinese violations of international sanctions is unclear.

In the context of the nuclear issue, China's economic interests in Iran have posed challenges for international cooperation. This is apparent in two respects. First, China has been reluctant to approve UN sanctions that target Iran's economy, including limiting Iran's access to capital markets, placing embargoes on Iran's shipping and air cargo industries, and toughening measures on foreign insurance of oil imports and exports.⁸ Second, as Downs and Maloney point out, China's incentives to sanction Iran beyond those imposed by the Security Council are limited, especially in terms of reducing investments in Iran's energy sector and reducing sales of gasoline to Iran.⁹

Beyond these two areas, it is also possible that Chinese firms are violating UN sanctions, such as in sales of proscribed weapons and dual-use technology. However, public reporting on these issues is limited, and the role of the Chinese state, as opposed to individual firms, in any reported violations is difficult to determine.

Part of the U.S. approach to the Iran nuclear issue has been targeting PRC firms that do business with Iran, either legally or in violation of international sanctions. In some cases, including pressure against Huawei and ZTE, this approach has been successful. In other cases, the effects have been limited. For instance, Chinese shipping firm Zhuhai Zhenrong is already on the U.S. “blacklist,” yet continues to be heavily involved in transporting oil due to profit motives.

Relations with the United States

On the opposite side of the ledger, China’s partnership with Iran has been limited by Beijing’s need to maintain positive relations with the United States. John Garver concludes that China’s ties with Iran are a “second-order” relationship, surpassed in importance by its primary relations with the United States. As evidence, Garver chronicles how China’s broader goals of economic and political cooperation with the United States led Beijing to eliminate formal cooperation in nuclear and missile programs with Iran in the mid-1990s, even though concerns remained about illicit cooperation between the two in these areas.¹⁰

More recently, the influence of the United States was apparent in China’s decisions to support UN Security Council sanctions against Iran in 2010.¹¹ This episode is worth recounting because it illustrates that sustained high-level diplomacy by the United States can contribute to changes in Beijing’s decision-making with respect to Iran.

After international negotiations on Iran’s nuclear program stalled in 2009, the United States opted to pursue a fourth round of UN Security Council sanctions. This measure was intended to pressure Tehran to comply with International Atomic Energy Agency verification requirements. In late 2009, U.S. officials began a diplomatic push for Chinese support at the UN. The argument of officials such as Kurt Campbell, Jeffrey Bader, and Hillary Clinton, was that China should agree to sanctions due to Iran’s continued violation of IAEA requirements, the threat to regional stability posed by Iran’s ongoing nuclear program, and the desire by many within the region for stronger international pressure against Tehran.

Despite some delays, China began to shift from its earlier opposition to sanctions in early March 2010. At that time, observers argued that China believed it had “overreached” in several aspects of its broader relationship with the United States, including its responses to several controversies: namely, those involving U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, the visit of the Dalai Lama to Washington, and alleged cyber-attacks on Google. These issues were compounded by the sense in the United States and elsewhere that China’s foreign policy was becoming overly “assertive.”

In mid-March 2010, President Obama became personally involved in efforts to gain China’s support for sanctions, intervening on three occasions. First, President Obama held a long exchange with incoming Chinese ambassador Zhang Yesui, following the latter’s credentialing

ceremony at the White House, repeating the United States request for Chinese support. Second, on April 1, the President held an hour-long phone conversation with Chinese President Hu Jintao, underscoring the “importance of working together to ensure that Iran lives up to its international obligations.”¹² Third, Obama met with Hu on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, reportedly indicating that the United States would take steps to mitigate risks to China’s oil supply in the event of a crisis in Iran. The day following Obama’s final encounter with Hu, China’s deputy foreign minister, Cui Tiangkai, promised that China would be open to “new ideas” regarding sanctions, and a day after that substantive negotiations on the text of a fourth resolution had begun at the Security Council.¹³

This sequence of events, coupled with the timing of China’s acquiescence to sanctions, suggests that – along with other factors, such as a “watering down” of the final UN resolution in ways that protected key Chinese economic interests – U.S. diplomacy helped promote a shift in Chinese opposition to sanctions. Hence, in some circumstances, pressure from the United States may be effective in encouraging China to support stronger measures against Iran.

Nevertheless, there are three limits to this argument. First, the circumstances that facilitated President Obama’s diplomatic success in 2010 (including support for sanctions among several Arab states, in addition to Russia, Israel, and the EU) may be unlikely to repeat themselves in future episodes. Second, despite fluctuations, China retains strong economic interests in Iran and may be unwilling to support more invasive sanctions that threaten those interests. Third, for domestic political reasons, China’s new leadership may be unwilling to acquiesce in the face of perceived demands from Washington.

Beyond the Limited Partnership: China’s Debate about Iran’s Nuclear Program

In addition to economic opportunities and relations with the United States, there is a third factor that may influence China’s decision-making regarding Iran’s nuclear program. This is the perception of Chinese leaders on the risks posed by Iran’s continued nuclear development. Greater alarm in Beijing regarding Iran’s intentions, the potential for a destabilizing arms race in the Middle East, and the chances of a U.S. or Israeli air strike may each affect China’s willingness to accept international sanctions or exert bilateral pressure on Tehran to comply with IAEA requirements.

This section discusses debates within China about how to assess the risks associated with Iran’s nuclear program.¹⁴ Surveying the views of PRC analysts who may be influencing leadership perceptions, it demonstrates that there is a range of views on each of the topics mentioned above. The conclusion is that there may be opportunities for the United States and others to continue to persuade Chinese interlocutors of the risks that Iran’s behavior could pose to regional security, and thus to China’s own interests in Iran and the region.

Risks to the Non-Proliferation Regime

Not all Chinese political and military analysts—including those who may be informing key PRC leaders on how to approach Iran—submit that Iran is taking steps to develop nuclear weapons.

However, very few Chinese analysts contend that Iran's nuclear program is of a purely peaceful character.

In general, Chinese analysts contend that there is a strategic rationale for Iran's nuclear program, but refrain from making predictions about whether Iran will actually acquire a nuclear weapons capability. This theme is evident in three examples:

- Ding Gong, a researcher at the influential Central Party School in Beijing, notes that Iran occupies a “precarious geostrategic situation,” characterized by “few allies and many potential enemies,” and asserts that Iran’s “desire to recover past glories” is motivating its nuclear program. Ding also writes that Iran lacks the plutonium or highly-enriched uranium to produce a warhead, though warns that Iran’s abundant uranium mines would be a valuable source of raw inputs should a sufficient enrichment capacity exist. However, Ding does not predict whether Iran will ultimately seek a nuclear weapons capability.¹⁵
- Jin Liangxiang, a Middle East specialist at the Shanghai Institutes of International Studies, argues that, as a “rational country,” Iran knows that it will “pay a big economic, political and military price for crossing the red line,” but also notes that, with an elevation in uranium enrichment levels to 20%, “the possibility of Iran being able to produce nuclear weapons is increasing.”¹⁶
- Gao Xintao, a lecturer at the PLA’s Nanjing Army Command College, makes a slightly more nuanced argument. His argument is that, by drawing near to, but not actually crossing, the nuclear threshold, Iran can accomplish two goals: enhancing its bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the P5+1 and others, and mitigating the risks of a preemptive military strike. A decision to move from a potential to an actual weapons capability would result from “short-term factors,” though Gao does not specify what those conditions might be.¹⁷ In a separate article, Gao explains how national pride, domestic politics, geostrategic pressures, and historical experiences all inform Tehran’s motives, though concludes only that a nuclear weapons aim is “within the range of the strategic thinking of Iran’s ruling elite.”¹⁸

Despite the skepticism apparent among Chinese security experts regarding Iran’s stated goals of peaceful nuclear development, only a few PRC analysts go so far as to conclude that Iran is developing a nuclear weapons capability. One prominent Middle East expert who I interviewed in Beijing in 2012, for instance, argued that Iran is developing an “Islamic bomb,” which could allow Tehran to claim the mantle of the “#1 power in the Middle East.” However, this appears to be a minority perspective.

Although several Chinese analysts have doubted the sincerity of Iran’s claims that its nuclear program serves peaceful purposes, very few in China have publicly considered the implications this poses for the strength of the international non-proliferation regime. Specifically, a weakening of the regime may encourage other countries to reject the authority of the IAEA and relevant international conventions, which in turn protect China’s own status as a member of the nuclear club. Thus, there may be room to continue to inform China’s debate by elaborating on

the possible consequences of Iranian violations for China's interests in a stable non-proliferation regime.

Proliferation Risks

Regarding the risk that an Iranian nuclear weapons capability may spark a destabilizing arms race in the Middle East, Chinese analysts have exhibited a range of views. Some are relatively dismissive of the problem, while others are more concerned.

Li Baolin, a researcher at Fudan University, is a representative optimist. Li's argument is that the problem is confined to Saudi Arabia and Egypt, since others, such as Qatar and the UAE, have "fairly good" relations with Iran. Even then, the risks are mitigated by the fact that the technological base of the Gulf States is "too weak to support a [viable] nuclear program."¹⁹ Buttressing this view, a prominent scholar told me in Beijing in 2012 that Iraq was "too weak" to pursue a credible program, Turkey would opt not to because of NATO security guarantees, and Saudi Arabia probably would not due to close ties with the U.S.²⁰

Other writers express greater concern about proliferation:

- Ding Gong, an expert at the Central Party School, argues that Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons would cause a "chain reaction" in the Gulf and as a result, "new conflicts may envelop the whole region."²¹ Despite its professions of peaceful intentions and efforts to develop positive ties, according to Ding, Iran is still treated with distrust. Egypt, in particular, would view an Iranian nuclear weapon as an "assault on the fragile balance of power," a sense likely to be shared by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Still, Ding allows that regional actors are unlikely to nuclearize while international talks are ongoing; this option would only be utilized as a "Plan B" if talks fail.²²
- Yin Gang, a noted Middle East expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, writes that a nuclear Iran would "lead to a new balance of power in the Middle East and a very hard-to-control nuclear competition."²³ Yin also told a journalist in June 2010 that he feared an Iranian bomb would precipitate "a big war in the Middle East."²⁴ In an interview, another scholar feared that Arab states might be tempted to work towards an "Arab bomb" as a means of "balancing nuclear threats [from both Iran and Israel] and ensuring security."²⁵

A slightly different version of this negative assessment is offered by Niu Song, a professor at the Shanghai International Studies University. Niu shares the view that an Iranian bomb would create insecurity in the Arab world. Niu writes that, "Iran is the greatest security threat to the Arab states and Israel, and it is unlikely that this threat will soon disappear."²⁶ However, the consequence of this shared threat perception is not necessarily nuclear proliferation—no specific opinion is offered one way or the other—but rather a tightening of political and military cooperation between the U.S., Israel and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as well as a closer relationship between Iraq and the GCC.²⁷ What this might mean for regional stability is left unstated.

Although some Chinese analysts accept the premise that an Iranian nuclear weapon might spark a regional arms race, few have publicly discussed whether and how such an outcome may damage China's own interests. While this lack of discussion may be due to sensitivity concerns, it may also reflect insufficient attention in China to the risks of a regional arms race, and lack of adequate attention to how such an outcome would negatively impact China's own interests in regional stability. Thus, there may be an opportunity to inform opinion within the PRC about the implications of a regional arms race.

Risks of U.S. or Israeli Military Action

A third risk assessment concerns the chances that United States or Israel may take military action to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. In this respect, Chinese analysts have come to a range of conclusions.

Several Chinese analysts argue that the United States may use force to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons:

- Gao Zugui, a Middle East specialist at the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), writes that Iran's "stridency" raises the chance for "a more hardline military solution" by narrowing President Obama's political and diplomatic options.²⁸
- Tian Wenlin, another scholar at CICIR, argues that the war in Libya has increased the "appetite and confidence" of the United States to continue armed intervention in the Middle East. Tian describes the current similar as analogous to the period of saber-rattling towards Iraq in early 2003.²⁹
- Xu Jin, a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, makes a similar point by observing that the U.S. is preparing for a strike by enhancing missile defense cooperation with GCC states and deploying Blu-110 and -117 "bunker buster" bombs to a naval base in the Indian Ocean, which could be used to execute an attack on Iran's hardened and underground nuclear facilities. However, Xu cautions that "none of this means that the U.S. will definitely start a war."³⁰

However, Chinese experts dismiss the possibility that the United States will use force. For instance, Liu Qiang, a researcher at the PLA Institute of International Relations (which is affiliated with the General Staff Department's military intelligence bureau), provides four reasons why the United States will not militarily intervene: (1) the U.S. public will not support a ground war in Iran, (2) the United States fears Iranian retaliation, such as a decision by Tehran to attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz, (3) the political influence of Iranian-Americans will militate against the use of force, and (4) the United States will be unwilling to face the long-term costs of reconstruction, especially after experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather, Liu states, the United States wishes to "win without fighting" (不战而胜) in Iran.³¹

Similarly, Jin Liangxiang, a Middle East scholar at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, argues that, after the tolls inflicted by the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, combined with the effects of the global recession, the U.S. will not want to get “mired” in another regional conflict.³²

As regards Israel, some Chinese analysts concede that Tel Aviv views Iran as an “existential threat,” and may thus be willing to use force for survival purposes:

- Tang Zhichao, a Middle East researcher at the CICIR, writes that, “Israel, facing a grave threat and leery about the chances of negotiations as well as sanctions, could be tempted to use unilateral force to resolve the issue.”³³
- Hua Liming, a former PRC envoy to Iran, told a reporter that, “Israel is more pressing than the U.S. in preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear arms, and its military strike preparations are more realistic.”³⁴ Hua also mentioned reports that Israeli officials have conducted secret negotiations with Riyadh about permission to use Saudi airspace in any attack.³⁵

However, other Chinese observers point to the difficulties inherent in an Israeli strike. One argument is that, whatever Tel Aviv’s intent, the U.S., seeking to avoid another hot conflict in the region, will be able to prevent Israel from acting. Xu Jin, a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, writes that, “Israel’s behavior depends entirely on the acquiescence and authorization of the U.S.,” which will likely say “no” as long as diplomatic options remain.³⁶ A second argument concerns feasibility. Gao Xintao, a researcher at the PLA Nanjing Army Command Academy, writes that Iran would likely retaliate with ballistic missiles and that, in any event, an attack would only delay, and not halt, Iran’s progress.³⁷

Although some Chinese analysts argue that the United States or Israel may use military force, the potential consequences for Chinese interests are usually unstated. An exception is a report by the Center for National Defense Policy Studies at the Academy of Military Sciences, which notes that an “Iran crisis” is among those with the potential to have an “immense influence on China’s oil supplies and prices.” Moreover, the report notes that the Strait of Hormuz and other sea lines of communication are “lifelines for China’s energy resources,” exacerbating the vulnerability of China’s economy to a potential military clash in the Middle East.³⁸

Nevertheless, there may be an opportunity to inform Chinese views regarding the risks that unchecked Iranian nuclear development may lead to military conflict. Specifically, it may be possible to present detailed evidence about the risks that such a conflict would bring to the global economy, and to China’s economic interests energy security throughout the region. If the PRC is alarmed that Washington or Israel may act militarily, Beijing may take more proactive steps to increase pressure on Tehran to comply with IAEA requirements.

Implications for the United States

The preceding analysis demonstrates that there is an ongoing discussion within China about the risks associated with Iran's nuclear program. For the United States, there may be an opportunity to inform this debate in order to emphasize the risks that Iran's nuclear program poses to regional security – and to China's own interests.

Indeed, this approach may have advantages over other policy tools, such as sanctioning PRC firms that invest in Iran (which may be ineffective) and leveraging the broader U.S. relationship (which may come at a high political cost). Conversely, encouraging more accurate risk assessments in China, including emphasizing the potential implications for China's own interests, may be a useful way to elicit broader Chinese cooperation in dealing with Tehran.

Specific steps that the United States Congress should take include the following:

1. **Investigate whether the administration has been identifying and utilizing opportunities to inform Chinese risk assessments regarding Iran.** As stated above, the Obama administration has emphasized the risks posed by Iran's nuclear program in prior diplomatic interactions with the PRC. However, the Congress should investigate whether the administration has continued to identify and seize the full range of opportunities to inform Chinese risks assessments in the following areas:
 - a. Evidence that Iran's intentions are not peaceful and the argument that Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons would endanger PRC interests in a credible non-proliferation regime;
 - b. Evidence that Iranian development of nuclear weapons may incite an arms race in the Middle East, which may endanger China's interests in regional stability; and
 - c. Evidence that the United States and Israel may be able and willing to use force to respond to Iranian nuclear development, which would may result in a serious threat to China's energy security.
2. **Emphasize the risks of Iran's nuclear program in Congressional delegations to China and other countries.** Congressional delegations should seize opportunities to present evidence to Chinese interlocutors that strengthen and broaden perspectives in the PRC that the Iranian nuclear program may have negative consequences for regional security, and for China's own interests. In addition, Congressional delegations to other countries (such as Israel) should encourage those states to make similar arguments to Chinese officials and influential experts.

¹ See, for example: Marybeth Davis, et al., “China-Iran: A Limited Partnership,” a report prepared by CENTRA Technologies, Inc., for the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (October 2012); Scott Harold and Alireza Nader, “China and Iran: Economic, Political, and Military Relations,” RAND *Occasional Paper*, 2012; and John W. Garver, *China & Iran: Ancient Partners in a Post-Imperial World* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

² Data courtesy of the U.S. Energy Information Administration, online at: <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=CH>.

³ Harold and Nader (2012), p. 18.

⁴ Downs and Maloney (2011), p. 3.

⁵ SIPRI arms transfer database. Available online at: <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>

⁶ Robert F. Worth and C.J. Chivers, “Seized Chinese Weapons Raise Concerns on Iran,” *New York Times*, March 2, 2013.

⁷ John Garver, “Is China Playing a Dual Game in Iran?” *The Washington Quarterly* 34:1 (Winter 2011), pp. 76-7.

⁸ For more details, see: Joel Wuthnow, *Chinese Diplomacy and the UN Security Council* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 85-7.

⁹ Downs and Maloney (2011).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 216-236.

¹¹ This section draws heavily from Joel Wuthnow, *Chinese Diplomacy and the UN Security Council* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 87-92.

¹² “Readout of President Obama’s Call with President Hu of China,” *US Fed News*, April 3, 2010.

¹³ “Six Major Powers to Resume Bargaining on UN Iran Sanctions,” *AFP*, April 14, 2010.

¹⁴ This section draws heavily from Joel Wuthnow, “Pessimism without Alarm: Chinese Perceptions of Iran’s Nuclear Program since mid-2010,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association, September 2011. It also includes more recent sources.

¹⁵ Ding Gong, “Cong Yilang he wenti kan Yilang de diqu daguo yishi,” (Viewing Iran’s Regional Great Power Ideology Through The Iranian Nuclear Problem), *Alabo Shijie Yanjiu* (Arab World Studies), 4 (2010): 48-49.

¹⁶ Jin Liangxiang, “Yi he wenti jiqi dui diqu he daguo guanxi de yingxiang,” (The influence of the Iran Nuclear Program on Regional and Great Power Relations), *Guoji Zhanwang* (World Outlook) 2 (2011): 64.

¹⁷ Gao Xintao, “YaFei fazhanzhong daguo he xuanze de tedian: zhanlue cengmian de kaocha,” (Aspects of Nuclear Choices by Developing Great Powers in Asia and Africa: A Strategic-level Investigation) in *Guoji Luntan* (International Forum) 13 (2011): 1-7. Similarly, a prominent Middle East expert told me in February 2012 that Iran was aiming for “strategic ambiguity” about its ultimate aims, primarily as a way to extract bargaining concessions without paying the costs associated with a nuclear test.

¹⁸ Gao Xintao, “Guojia anquan, guoji shengwang, heneng liyong yu guonei zhengzhi: yilang qiangli tuijin he kaifa de dongyin,” (National Security, International Reputation, Nuclear Energy Use and Domestic Politics: The Motives Behind Iran’s Aggressive Nuclear Development), in *Sichuan Shifan Daxue Xuebao* (Journal of Sichuan Normal University) 38 (2011): 19-25. Among the historical factors Gao cites is Iran’s experience as the subject of Iraqi chemical weapons use during the Iran-Iraq War which, Gao argues, could motivate Tehran to develop a nuclear deterrent.

¹⁹ Li Baolin, “Alabo guojia yu yilang he wenti,” (Arab States and the Iran Nuclear Issue), in *Guoji Ziliao Xinxi* (International Data Information), 1 (2011): 3.

²⁰ Interview with scholar, February 2012.

²¹ Ding, “Cong yilang he wenti kan Yilang de diqu daguo yishi,” 48-5.

²² *Ibid*, 50. In addition, Ding argues that the “power vacuum” left in the Gulf as a result of a drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq will precipitate even greater insecurity among regional actors. Similarly, one of my interlocutors argued that there are not likely to be any “proliferation consequences” if Iran stays within the “red lines,” meaning maintaining contacts with the IAEA and refraining from testing a nuclear device. Interview with scholar, February 2012.

²³ Yin Gang, “Yilang he wenti de shizhi shi yilang de guojia diwei wenti,” (The Essence of the Iran Nuclear Problem is the Problem of Iran’s National Status), *Dangdai Shiejie* (Contemporary World), 5 (2010): 51.

²⁴ Peter Ford, “At Shanghai Expo, Ahmadinejad Polite Despite China’s Support for Iran Sanctions,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 10, 2010. See also, Swaine, “Beijing’s Tightrope Walk on Iran,” n48.

²⁵ Interview with scholar, February 2012.

-
- ²⁶ Niu, “Yilang yinsu dui Yiselie-Haihehui guojia guanxi de yingxiang,” 115.
- ²⁷ The current members of the GCC are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Iraq’s ties to the organization as an “associate member” were discontinued after the first Gulf War.
- ²⁸ Gao Zugui, “Aobama zhengfu Zhongdong zhengce,” (Comments on the Obama Administration’s Middle East Policy) in *Heping yu Fazhan* (Peace and Development), 6 (2010): 17. Similarly, Wang Liping and Xia Shi, professors at Jiujiang University in Jiangxi province, contend that, “the U.S. is clearly unwilling to tolerate a nuclear Iran,” and that “a military attack is certainly an option.” This, they argue, would have deleterious results for China, which would see its access to energy resources threatened. Wang Liping and Xia Shi, “He anquan beijing xia de Yilang he wenti yu Zhongguo waijiao zhanlüe xuanze,” (The Iran Nuclear Problem in the Context of Nuclear Security and China’s Strategic Options) in *Guoji Zhengzhi* (International Politics), 6 (2010): 60.
- ²⁹ Liu Qiang, et al., “Yilang ‘he weiji’ de shizhi yu qianjing” (The Substance and Prospects of the Iran ‘Nuclear Crisis’) in *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi Luntan* (Forum of World Economics and Politics), 2 (2012), pp. 171-2.
- ³⁰ Xu, “Yilang he wenti ‘he’ qu ‘he’ cong,” 2. Xu was referring to reports in the spring of 2010 that the U.S. had deployed these munitions to its naval facility at Diego Garcia in preparation for potential airstrikes on Iran. For details, see: “Report: U.S. Positioning ‘Bunker-Busters’ for Possible Iran Strike,” *Haaretz*, March 17, 2010.
- ³¹ *Ibid*, p. 172.
- ³² Jin, “Yi he wenti jiqi dui diqu he daguo guanxi de yingxiang,” 71-2.
- ³³ Tang Zhichao, “Yilang he tanpan chongqi duihua jieju xianxinji,” (A New Vehicle to Restart the Iran Nuclear Negotiations) in *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Bao* (Chinese Social Sciences Today), 14 (2010): 1.
- ³⁴ Chen Xiaru, “Former PRC Envoy Views Possible Iran Retaliation Against U.S. -Israel Strike,” *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (China Youth Daily), August 3, 2010. Accessed through World News Connection.
- ³⁵ Hua was likely referring to a 2009 report, which indicated that Israeli officials believed they had been granted tacit approval from Riyadh for raids on Iranian nuclear facilities. See: Uzi Mahnaimi and Sarah Baxter, “Saudis Give Nod to Israeli Raid on Iran,” *The Sunday Times* (London), July 5, 2009.
- ³⁶ Xu, “Yilang he wenti ‘he’ qu ‘he’ cong,” 2.
- ³⁷ Gao Xintao, “Yilang dui hebukuosan jizhi de renzhi jiqi genyuan,” (Israel’s Understanding of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Mechanisms And Its Roots) in *Alabo Shijie Yanjiu* (Arab World Studies), 5 (2010): 31-3.
- ³⁸ Major General Chen Zhou (ed.), *Strategic Review 2011* (Beijing: Academy of Military Sciences, 2012), pp. 71-2.