

SE Op-Ed
HD **An ultra-intrusive approach to Iran**

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LP IRAQ HAS descended into hell. The Iraq Study Group has proposed enlisting Iraq's neighbors in a last-ditch effort to restore stability. But while Americans are expecting miracles from the study group, there is an obvious dilemma: How can **Iran** be a partner in Iraq at the same time it is a nuclear pariah? Fortunately, there is a solution that prevents **Iran** from having a nuclear weapons program at the same that it allows **Iran** to claim it has achieved its main demand, enrichment on Iranian soil.

TD We propose that Germany, France, and Britain form a holding company with **Iran** that leases Western centrifuges for a new facility in **Iran**. (Leasing keeps **Iran** from claiming that it might "own" the centrifuges and avoids legal problems that might result from such a claim.) Other important countries, such as Russia, could also join the company, though Russia might only join if it could contribute in kind rather than in hard cash. As in URENCO, the European enrichment consortium, **Iran** would sign a treaty not to enrich uranium anywhere else. By leasing **Iran's** existing centrifuges, the corporation's Western technicians could start monitoring the current Iranian facility immediately. Every day without monitoring lets **Iran** travel another mile down the road to mastering uranium enrichment on its own.

For economic reasons, Iranian centrifuges would be mothballed as soon as Western centrifuges can be sent into the country; Western centrifuges are that much more efficient. Shutting down **Iran's** work on its own centrifuges would immediately halt its quest to master the enrichment process. These Western centrifuges would be "black-boxed" - covered so that **Iran** could not steal sensitive technology. A related option is to let **Iran** lease Russian centrifuges, which use a different enrichment method from the one **Iran** is trying to master. This option would speed up the process of mothballing Iranian centrifuges.

One of the lessons we learned from Iraq is that intrusive inspections are effective in preventing a country from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. We propose the most intrusive inspection process imaginable: Western technicians would provide minute, round-the-clock scrutiny of every aspect of a multinational uranium enrichment facility on Iranian soil. Not only would this prevent **Iran** from diverting either the uranium produced or the sensitive equipment in the facility to a weapons program, but it is the most effective way of detecting covert enrichment facilities elsewhere in **Iran**.

Technical means of detecting secret enrichment facilities - "sniffing" out uranium leaks - are ineffective at detecting even small centrifuge plants. All the other proposals for dealing with **Iran's** nuclear ambitions must make do with such limited capabilities if they want to detect secret enrichment facilities. However, we can use other techniques that might be called "social means." After all, another lesson from the inspection process in Iraq was the importance of knowing who had worked on weapons of mass destruction and where they had moved. This knowledge would be used to keep track of Iranians capable of assisting a clandestine bomb project and deter them from helping any clandestine activity. Such scrutiny would also ensure that **Iran** was not be able to use the knowledge its scientists have already gained in almost a year of running their own enrichment plant.

If **Iran** accepts this proposal, no secret nuclear bomb project could profit from it; indeed, any such project would be seriously impaired by it. Our proposal would undermine Iranian hardliners who reject any collaboration with the West, while at the same time strengthening the moderates' position in Tehran by showing such collaboration is profitable.

But if the West refuses to accommodate that portion of **Iran's** nuclear ambitions that are peaceful, especially when doing so can prevent a nuclear bomb, then Americans cannot expect to have a partnership in Iraq.

Geoffrey Forden is a former UN weapons inspector. Sir **John Thomson**, a former United Kingdom permanent representative to the UN, is the founding chairman of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Both are researchers at MIT's Program on Science, Technology and Society.

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