

# International relations



WHAT TO DO WITH IRAN? Few can deny that one of the most serious threats to world peace is the nuclear program being designed by Iran. Iran has consistently ignored international disapproval and sanctions and continued to mislead the international community about its actions. There are a number of different approaches that the United States could pursue in dealing with the menace presented by Iran. There are a number of approaches based on different international relations theories. In the first case, Washington could act in a realist manner. This would involve the Americans thinking the worst about Iran and to act out of self-interest. This probably would mean that Iran would be bombed. The second approach could be a liberal one which would involve the U. S. acting within the bounds of the international system. Both of these approaches will be explored in this brief essay. Realism involves looking at the political system in a way that takes self-interest as the paramount motivator for actors. There is not really any such thing as altruism in this theory, only power and efforts to accumulate power. In order to have power, a country must have security (Bell, 2008, p. 25). For the United States, Iran represents a serious security threat to the world order it has established. Iran threatens Israel and to a less extent Saudi Arabia. A lot of the rhetoric from Iran is poisonous and also suggests Iran is a threat. Washington can only take Iran at its word when it says that it wants to destroy Israel, America's ally. The way that Iran treats its own people lends all of this credence too. Because of these factors, the United States should act decisively. Clearly, negotiation has not been successful. For many American realists, the only thing that Iran will understand is force. Following this theory through to its conclusion, it seems necessary for America to bomb Iran. Politicians like Dick Cheney might be described as realists.

Fortunately for Iran, Barack Obama is less like this. The other that may provide advice on how to act is liberalism. Liberalism looks more to an international order of actors working together, rather than alone. Obama, for example, is more of a liberal when it comes to Iran. He wants to see European and other countries working together to bring sanctions and pressure against Iran. He doesn't want the United States to act alone or forcefully against Iran. He thinks that there is a place where the interests of all the actors involved can meet in order to compromise. This is not a bad place to start when dealing with a problem in the international system.

However, after many years with little results, there may be a better approach to take. President Obama might do well to return to his IR textbook for guidance. Generally, of these two positions, realism makes more sense. Liberalism has been tried for years now with regards to Iran, and yielded nothing. It is time to take stronger action and actually do something to change this equation. It is time for the United States to act forcefully in its own interests. Work consulted Bell, D., ed. 2008. Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Gold, D., 2009. The Rise of Nuclear Iran: How Tehran Defies the West. New York: Regnery Publishing. The Economist, 2010, Aug. 16. “Why Israel is obsessed with Iran.” [http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2010/08/bombing\\_iran](http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2010/08/bombing_iran)