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Week 2 Analysis

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# Strategic Intelligence and Foreign Affairs Initiative Weekly Newsletter

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# Iran Protests

## Summary

- Iranian protests will continue to act until government forces begin to crackdown on the political movement.

## Analysis

### Analysis of Competing Hypotheses

Hypotheses: ->	Protests Stop	Government Suppresses Uprising	Protests Continue
<b>Evidence:</b>			
Protests Spread	1	3	5
Lack of International Support	4	5	2
History of Oppression	3	5	1
Protestors Winning	1	2	5
Kurdish Resistance	1	5	4
Iranian Police	4	4	2
Economic Downturn	3	2	4
Wheat Crisis	2	4	5
State organized counter-protests	4	2	3
Totals	23	<b>32</b>	30

### Conclusion

- The current Iranian regime has a history of suppressing the Kurdish people. Counter-protests have begun in support of the government, adding to the adversaries that the pro-freedom protestors face. Protests will continue until the government starts another crackdown like in 2019-2020.

### Sources

1. [The dispatch](#)
  2. [Reuters](#)
  3. [Time](#)
  4. [Reuters](#)
  5. [Reuters](#)
-

# Iran Nuclear Deal Talks

## Summary

- It is assessed that Iran's nuclear deal talks will progress in the direction of reviving a nuclear deal because Iran is showing firm reserves about moving forward. This is due to economic instability from sanctions, re-established relations with North Korea to further missile development, and concerns that a nation will withdraw from a potential future policy agreement like the JCPOA.

## Analysis

### Key Assumptions Check

Assumptions:	Supported	Caveated	Unsupported	Comments:
Iran has the natural resources and technical capabilities to build nuclear weapons.	X			Iran has accumulated more enriched uranium that is sufficient enough to create nuclear weapons and has support from Russia and North Korea for its missile development program.
Iran's main concern is a nation withdrawing from a new nuclear deal.		X		This has been openly expressed by Iranian President Raisi but is more of a political concern rather than a set reason not to move forward.
Iran is already secretly a nuclear state.			X	There has been no evidence for this; however, Iran has the capability to become nuclear if it chooses.
Iran wants to become nuclear to destroy its opposition.		X		While Iran claims to use its abundance in natural resources for "peaceful energy purposes", it maintains high tensions and strong opposition to Israel, the US, and Saudi Arabia.

- Results from the key assumptions check reveal that most of the assumptions being caveated or unsupported show political statements, opinions, and bias, therefore potentially influencing strategic predictions and further analysis if remained unchecked.
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### SWOT: Iran's Perspective

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International Support from North Korea and Russia.</li> <li>- Iran receiving more enriched uranium, sufficient enough to build a nuclear weapon.</li> <li>- Vast amounts of natural resources, including enriched uranium, along with the capability to build a nuclear weapon.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weakening economy due to the daily devaluing of the rial currency.</li> <li>- Significant international opposition.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation with DPNK due to sanctions.</li> <li>- France urging Iran to take the opportunity for reviving nuclear deals.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threat</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sanctions</li> <li>- The E3 and US censoring resolution, resulting in the dismantling of 28 agency cameras from nuclear sites</li> <li>- IAEA condemns Iran's lack of cooperation; backed by 2/3 of the board and 56 other countries.</li> </ul>

- Based on this SWOT analysis, there is no notable progress for reviving JCPOA. Nuclear deal talks remain stale given Iran's continued collection and use of enriched uranium. Iran's primary weakness is its economy, as the rial, is losing its value every day, making Iran "very unstable for foreign investors" (Al Jazeera). As of now, revival for a nuclear deal would have to involve significant economic benefits for Iran. Even then, Iran will most likely continue to bolster its missile developments and accumulate more resources for its nuclear program, due to its current capabilities and support from countries like Russia and North Korea.
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### DIME: Iran's Capabilities

<p><b>Diplomatic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation with North Korea on missile development.</li> <li>- Military and financial support from Russia.</li> <li>- Warns Europe not to follow the policies and actions of the US.</li> <li>- Continued accusations between Israel and Iran regarding nuclear resources and capabilities.</li> <li>- Continued tension with Saudi Arabia despite nuclear deal talks.</li> <li>- UAE reopened its embassy in Tehran and sent an ambassador.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Informational</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nuclear program increasing in size and sophistication.</li> <li>- Accumulating enriched uranium.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Military</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capability to build nuclear weapons if they so choose.</li> <li>- IRGC aggression, protest, de-escalation, and prevention</li> <li>- Domestic Ballistic Missile program</li> <li>- Use of Iranian backed militias and proxies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Iranian currency, the rial, is devaluing every day</li> <li>- Inflation is extremely high and continues to rise</li> <li>- One of the most unstable economies for foreign investors, further hurting its economy.</li> </ul>

- Based on this DIME model, the only diplomatic developments Iran has been with North Korea to re-establish “cooperation on a long-range missile project” (Janes). This would include the transportation of resources and critical parts needed for development. Additionally, Iran’s unstable economic status has affected their status with foreign relations because of the financial risk they pose for foreign investors. Militarily, Iran fights using militias and proxies vice other conventional military methods with the exception of the IRGC. Iran’s most advanced military means of fighting/destruction is their missile development program (potentially their nuclear program). Other than their current support from Russia and North Korea, it is unlikely that they will gain more international support due to their economic status and the international opposition they face. Support to and from terrorist groups like Hamas and religious groups like the Shiite Muslims are likely to continue.

## Analysis of Competing Hypotheses: The Likelihood of Nuclear Deal Talks Moving Forward

<b>Hypotheses: -&gt;</b>	Nuclear Deal Talks Decline/Are Suspended	Nuclear Deal Talks Remain stale/stagnant	Nuclear Deal Talks progress; Iran stops missile/nuclear development
<b>Evidence:</b>			
Iran open to talks for nuclear talks	Inconsistent	Consistent	Consistent
Iran continues to develop their missile program	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent
Accumulating large amounts of enriched uranium	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent
Relations with North Korea	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent
Mistrusts the US with involvement in another nuclear deal	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent
Proxy groups and militia	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Inconsistent
Relations with Russia for financial support and nuclear program development	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent
Total Consistent	5	6	2
Total Inconsistent	2	1	5

- This ACH shows the consistency and inconsistency of the evidence placed against each hypothesis. Results show that most evidence is consistent with the hypothesis of nuclear talks remaining stale or stagnant. The primary incentive for Iran to go forward with a nuclear deal is its economic state. However, it is more likely for nuclear deal talks to be ineffective than effective due to Iran's advancing developments in strategic weapon systems and nuclear capabilities.

### Conclusion

- In conclusion, while nuclear talks have resumed in March, Iran still expresses reserve about a nation pulling out from the agreement again and heavy sanctions destabilize the economy. Because a nuclear deal is currently not in place, Iran has been continuing development in its missile program and nuclear capabilities. It will likely continue to do so until it is given incentive to cease production in exchange for economic relief/financial benefit. Iran also lacks diplomatic alliances and relations. Additionally, reviving a nuclear deal similar to JCPOA would give them more foreign investments and economic stabilization with nations who participated in the agreement. However, it is likely that talks will remain the same until policies and incentives are changes, and sanctions are lifted.

### Sources

1. [AP](#)
2. [Al Jazeera](#)
3. [Janes](#)
4. [CFR](#)
5. [Reuters](#)

# Chances of Destabilization in the Balkans

## Summary

- In recent moves made by Russia and China, both superpowers are working to destabilize the Balkan region and trends show that they are successful in their attempts by exacerbating ethnic tensions and exerting economic, social, and academic influence.

## Analysis

### Key Assumptions

- Russia's recent aggression in Ukraine displays its priority to return to the power and influence it possessed during the days of the USSR.
- Russia contributes to destabilization in the Balkans due to its strategic goals to counter NATO aspirations and activity in the region.
- China contributions to destabilization in the Balkans.
- Ethnic tensions among Balkan states contributes to internal destabilization.

### Analysis of Competing Hypothesis

Hypotheses: ->	Stabilizing	Status Quo	Destabilizing
<b>Evidence:</b>			
Decades long ethnic tensions between nations	Inconsistent	Consistent	Consistent
Recent spike in ethnic tension between Kosovo and Serbia	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Consistent
Iranian cyber-attacks aimed at Kosovo	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Consistent
Serbia signs agreement with Russia to having weekly consultation meetings	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Consistent
Serbia says it is against national interests to sanction Russia	Inconsistent	Consistent	Consistent
Russia intelligence and disinformation campaigns	Inconsistent	Consistent	Consistent
Sanctions on Russian energy	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Consistent
China's economic aid to Bosnia	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Consistent
China's goal of promoting Chinese culture through academic institutions	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Consistent
EU increased peacekeeping troop numbers in Bosnia	Consistent	Inconsistent	Inconsistent
US is committed to keeping troops in Italy in	Consistent	Inconsistent	Inconsistent



case of military flare-ups in the regions			
60% of Serbia's exports go on to EU and only 4.7% go to Russia	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent
Balkan countries have visa-free access to EU promoting travel and trade	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent
Energy and food shortages	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Consistent
Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia to form joint commission to share food and energy surplus	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent
Russian influence on politician in Albania and Montenegro	Inconsistent	Consistent	Consistent
Total Consistent	5	7	11
Total Inconsistent	11	9	5

- This assessment displays that the current activities in the Balkans contribute to continued destabilization.

### **Conclusion**

- There is a history of internal and external factors that result in destabilizing the Balkans. Both China and Russia have taken actions to seek political, economic, or informational influence in the region. This is an effort to counter the Western influence, NATO, and the EU. Continued ethnic tensions are also a source of internal conflict in this region. Russia's aggression in Ukraine points to its hope to gain influence and power that is reminiscent of the days under the USSR.

### **Sources**

1. [Reuters](#)
  2. [CEPA](#)
  3. [Carnegie Endowment](#)
  4. [CEPA](#)
  5. [CBC](#)
  6. [Reuters](#)
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# Puerto Rico Hurricane

## Summary

- Puerto Rico suffers emergency conditions from recent Hurricane Fiona and struggles with post-disaster conditions. Current Puerto Rican crisis is hoping to be resolved with the Status Act determining the territory's status as either a state or independent country.

## Analysis

### Key Assumptions

- Puerto Rico and US relations are close but could stand to be improved in the infrastructure sector.
- Parts of the country are experiencing better living conditions within shelters, while many are still stranded.
- The Puerto Rican healthcare service is struggling under the recent hurricane.
- The Status Act has the potential to aid Puerto Rico in better recovering from crisis caused by natural disasters.

### SWOT: Puerto Rico's Status Act in Congress

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allows Puerto Ricans better living conditions as a state</li> <li>- Enhanced Puerto Rico's commonwealth – Puerto Rico is currently unable to borrow in global markets due to its economic status</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taking on Puerto Rico's current debt of over \$70 billion</li> <li>- Puerto Rico is facing many critical infrastructure issues</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many are hopeful that a status change would ease Puerto Rico's current crisis</li> <li>- Provides Puerto Rico with a better form of representation</li> <li>- Determines if Puerto Rico becomes a state or independent from the US</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threat</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Puerto Ricans may lose their sense of independence if Puerto Rico becomes a state, creating uproar among the citizens</li> </ul>

### Conclusion

- Puerto Rican relief continues to draw on and so does the potential for a closer relationship and better conditions provided with the US. As well as possible Status Act being passed by Congress, determining Puerto Rico's permanent status as a state or independent nation.

## Sources

1. [CBS](#)
  2. [Yahoo](#)
  3. [Energy](#)
  4. [PBS](#)
  5. [KOMU](#)
  6. [CBS](#)
  7. [Politico](#)
  8. [CFR](#)
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# Southern Border Updates

## Summary

- The United States is experiencing an increase in discoveries of highly potent fentanyl at border checkpoints. The increase in fentanyl smuggling is likely the cause of a simultaneous uptick in fentanyl overdoses within the US. The importation of illicit fentanyl across the southern border will likely continue to increase in scope as long as cartels continue to view the enterprise as profitable.

## Analysis

### Key Assumptions

- There is a direct correlation between the increase in fentanyl smuggling across the southern border and the increase in American fentanyl overdoses.
- Fentanyl smuggling is driven by profit.

### SWOT: Cartel' Perspective: Smuggling Fentanyl into US

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mexican cartels are wealthy and extremely powerful</li> <li>- The cartels have access to the supplies needed to make fentanyl</li> <li>- It is a profitable enterprise for the cartels</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Drug smuggling is inherently dangerous for cartels as an illegal activity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mexican authorities are often easily bribed</li> <li>- The US border is porous in places, enabling unmonitored border crossings</li> <li>- Fentanyl can be made more attractive by adding color or disguising it as another drug</li> <li>- Fentanyl is potent and cheap to produce</li> <li>- The drug can be concealed on migrants entering the US</li> <li>- There is a high demand for drugs within the US</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threat</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- US border patrol agents have been discovering fentanyl both at and between border checkpoints</li> <li>- Fentanyl is gaining negative attention from American authorities and the media</li> <li>- The US is pursuing international negotiations to make fentanyl harder to produce</li> </ul>

### Conclusion

- The benefits of smuggling fentanyl into the US currently outweigh the costs. Thus, this activity is likely to continue to increase and become more deadly with the recent invention of “rainbow fentanyl”.

## Sources

1. [NIDA](#)
  2. [Justice](#)
  3. [Texas Gov](#)
  4. [DEA](#)
  5. [CFR](#)
  6. [CDC](#)
  7. [Whitehouse](#)
  8. [Ashville Recovery Center](#)
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