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 time that it allows Iran to claim it has achieved its main demand, enrichment on Iranian soil.

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 secret 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.
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