

# **A Nuclear-Armed Iran's Impact on Global Security**

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## Summary

In the troubled Middle East, beset by the continuing war in Iraq, stalled Middle East peace, and extremist Islamic terrorists lurking in both the Middle East and adjacent areas, including Europe, it would seem that the last thing the world needs is an Iran equipped with nuclear weapons. It would seem to be a new destabilizing element. On one hand, Iran's proliferation seems inevitable, given the intransigent view of a theocratic government that is ever more entrenched in power. On the other, nuclear weapons are very unusable weapons, especially if a country has just a few and given America's overwhelming nuclear superiority, plus Israel's possession of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, despite piling up billions of dollars as oil prices rise, Iran's economy is precarious, with high unemployment and a restless population, and they can ill-afford to cut themselves off from the world—unless China offers an alternative globalization as it were.

Whatever the case, both the Middle East and Europe, as well as the United States, while busy fending off the terrorists on one hand and attending to their own economic stability and growth in the globalized economy, must now struggle with the nuclear potential of a long-hostile Iran. It need not be so, since Iran is a self-contained nation of a distinct national character, with firm borders, not inclined to attack its neighbors, though it has toyed with terrorism and fomenting Islamic revolutions, albeit at a declining rate. The challenge for the West in the coming years will be to contain a nuclear-armed Iran while slowly inducing it to provide for its people through connections to the global economy. The West can hardly begin, though, until the situation next door in Iraq is settled down and its stability and new character are established.

In the end, though, Iran is not about to destroy the West (Europe and the United States, and Israel), nor is the West going to destroy Iran. Neither side can "win" with nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons do not become any more usable simply because one side or the other has

them. In the interim, though, the world is going to see a lot of politics, a lot of instability, the aggravation of terrorism, and other disturbing events before anyone can say some new order will have been established. Many had hoped that globalization as economics, in a way that provided better lives for most humankind, would resolve many of these issues and instabilities. At the moment, that is not so clear, as disintegrative tendencies seem predominant.

# I. The current setting of the Middle East

The overwhelming event at this juncture in history—at least for Americans—is the war in Iraq. It is a war against insurgency on one hand and a desperate attempt to set up a nation, with infrastructure, governance, a system for rotating leadership, as the three main groups—Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds go their separate ways while still dividing the countries resources among them. On one side, there's Iran, waiting, or even working, to take a new Shia-dominated Iraq under its wing—notwithstanding that the Iraqi Shia, as represented by Ayatollah Sistani, are generally reluctant to set up a theocratic state like the one in Iran, and are Arabs to boot. But politics as the drive for power, i.e., control over decision-making, could bring another result. Iran could use Iraq either as a buffer or a penetration into the mostly Sunni world where Shias are an otherwise despised minority.

Lurking behind the war in Iraq is the threat of the global Islamic terrorists, just about all of whom are Sunnis. They are dispersed across the Islamic world from Morocco to Indonesia and the southern Philippines, and extending down into Africa and up into Europe. The current terrorist movement began after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan when the West over-reacted. The misplaced fear was that the Soviet Union was on a new strategic gambit, especially to threaten the Middle East and all that oil, rather than just trying to bolster a pathetic, factionalized communist regime in Kabul. The United States encouraged the Saudis and Egyptians to send arms and fighters to Afghanistan, passing them through a cooperative Pakistan. Then the two refugees from oppressive rule in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, respectively, Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri, finally made their way to Afghanistan and established their base when the Taliban rule was solidified there in 1996. The “Afghan Arab” fighters, some still there and others dispersed to other countries after training there, had found leadership and an ideology as they drifted back into the world. They were not able to go back to the countries from which they originally came.

The terrorists attacked the U.S. and have attacked in countries from Morocco to Indonesia (e.g., Bali) from west to east, and from London down to Dar es Salaam from north to south. They are dispersed, fanatic, unpredictable. And now many have gone to Iraq to join the insurgency there, under the Jordanian Zarqawi who calls himself “al Qaeda in Iraq.”

The prime irritant among the Arabs, Iranians, and other Islamic people and countries has been the existence of Israel and the continued war between Israel and Arabs, Israel and Palestinians. The Palestinians first roamed the area, as far north as Munich in 1972, as terrorists themselves. Then many leaders found their way back to the West Bank and Gaza when prospects arose for a Palestinian state as the result of American pressure and negotiations by the Norwegians and other Europeans in the early 1990s. Intifada I faded away, but then Intifada II began in the late 1990s, with the addition of suicide bombings. The Palestinian Authority was not really in control under the erratic and indecisive Arafat. It is said that no negotiations could begin without Arafat, but that they could not be concluded either with Arafat. He died. Mahmoud Abbas succeeded him as president. The Israelis have evacuated the Gaza Strip. There is new hope to achieve permanent peace and establish the Palestinian state. But hopes have risen before only to be dashed by renewed conflict. The great irritation of the Islamic world toward Israel and its supporter, the United States, will remain until at least the time peace and the Palestinian state are established and a Palestinian economy takes root.

Afghanistan is still a troubled country, not yet completely pacified, so it remains a source of instability in the region as well—though it is more “South Asian” than “Middle Eastern.” The greater problem at the moment may be the continued sheltering of Osama, Zawahiri, and other terrorists in the Pushtun tribal areas that straddle the (Western-imposed) border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thus, Pakistan also enters the equation for the continued instability in this “middle belt of the Earth.” Iran is right in the middle of that belt.

Altogether, the whole region has had a certain kind of stability, despite the three wars in which Saddam was involved (including this last one), and the situation in Afghanistan. Successful leadership



transitions have taken place in the monarchies of Morocco, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. The insurgency in Algeria has faded away. Qaddafi in Libya has decided to reconnect to the civilized world and has given up his aspirations and pathetic programs for weapons of mass destruction. Egypt almost decided to have free elections, and Lebanon is escaping Syrian hegemony. Saudi Arabia seems to be successful at purging terrorists within its own borders—and as a result Saudis bent on causing trouble are flowing elsewhere, including to Iraq. Aside from the awful situation in Iraq, Syria is emerging as the sick man of the region—with a weak leader in Bashir Assad, poorly governed, but with all those secret services typical of such countries maneuvering around each other.

But despite these fragile elements of stability, the Islamic countries, especially the Arab countries, are falling further behind in globalization. That is, aside from oil, they are generally outside the world economy, unable to generate enough jobs for their growing populations (though Algeria and Tunisian population growth may have leveled off), with stagnant leadership, corruption, cronyism. No wonder many of their people want to emigrate north, including some who are, or then become, terrorists as they become isolated in their new societies and find refuge in the mosques where Saudi-funded preachers preach violence and hate of the West.

Perhaps the only benefit of this stagnation is that it affects their military establishments as well. They no longer get free Soviet equipment. Their remaining equipment is old and, luckily, they haven't been getting any experience in war anymore. They are not entering the age of "netted" forces, with satellite communications, etc. They have a lot of old Scud missiles around: the myth of the Scud persists: "With my missiles I will overwhelm any enemy." Syria and Iran are in particularly bad shape in modernizing their conventional forces. But then, the nature of warfare may be changing to coping with insurgencies, as Algeria has gone through and Iraq is now. Insurgencies in the region also tend to be tribal warfare.

The "rest of the world," that is, especially what may be called "the core" of globalization—North America, Europe, China, India, Japan, the rest of East Asia—stands anxiously by as events in the Middle East

unfold. Most of these areas are reliant on oil coming from the Gulf. With the withdrawal of the British from “East of Suez,” and given its strong connection to Israel, the United States, by default, and practically by inadvertence, became the country outside the region to try to regulate and stabilize it, especially after the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. What other outside country with resources could take its place?

For a long time, Americans thought that the U.S. was protecting the flow of oil to Europe, because it was not so dependent on Middle East oil itself. Now it appears that the U.S. is protecting the flow of oil to China and India as their demand for it grows. One-quarter of U.S. imports of oil also come from the Gulf. France used to have a special relation with Saddam’s Iraq, with long-term contracts, just as Italy had a special relation with Libya. China now works to have a special oil contract relation with Iran (and with Sudan), and India wants to build pipelines from Central Asia across Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. All of these are strange bed fellows. But they have been dependent on the U.S. keeping stability—except that an unstable Iraq, made more so by the U.S., is making everyone nervous. Many thought the U.S. would do better in pacifying and reconstructing Iraq.

Would Europe and the U.S. be so interested in the area were it not for the oil? Probably not—both Europe and the U.S. would treat it like Central Africa, like the Congo.

## II. Where does Iran stand in all this, and why would it concern us?

Iran is perhaps the closest thing to a nation-state in the Middle East, other than Egypt. It is not a product of the setting of colonial boundaries or rule. It has a long—Persian—history. It has its own language, Farsi, which few others may speak (the only related languages are Dari in Afghanistan and Tajik). It is essentially all Shia, with only a few persecuted minority sects (e.g., Bahais). It might be said that Iran is the center of Shiism, except that Najaf and Karbala in Iraq have that honor. Indeed, Khomeini spent some years in Najaf in exile. But otherwise, Saddam suppressed the fullest expression of the religion when he ran Iraq. In many ways, the center of Shia thought flowed instead to Qom in Iran. After Iran's revolution in 1979, it has certainly become the defender and promoter of Shiism.

Otherwise, Iran has a large territory, stable borders, and a large population of around 70 million—roughly equal to that of Egypt. Its people have a strong national identity. For a while, some thought there might be tribal divisions in the country, but these have not materialized.<sup>1</sup> They have even absorbed their Azeris in the north with their Turkic language. They have not truly absorbed the Sunni Kurds. No country—Turkey, Iraq, Iran—can absorb the Kurds. Baluchis in the east may retain their tribal identities, but there are few of them, scattered in a desolate terrain.

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1. Back in the early 1970s, the neighbor of one of the authors was an Iranian physician with an American wife. His name was Yazdi—one of the major tribes of Iran. After the Iranian revolution in 1979, his brother became foreign minister. The brother in America quickly reverted to Islamic dress and habits after the revolution. Twenty years later, the erstwhile foreign minister back in Iran has become something of a political dissident, but we have not heard of any dissidence in the Yazdi tribe overall.

The United States and the rest of the West were quite content with the monarchical rule of the Shah in the post-war period. The U.S. even helped him suppress the rise of democracy with its ousting of prime minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953, leaving the Shah as absolute ruler. The British had long been in Iran, setting up the oil industry that allowed Iran to flirt with the advanced world. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the U.S. encouraged the Shah to be both the bulwark against imagined Soviet moves to the south and as a counterbalance against the Sunni Arab pressure on Israel. With the rise in oil prices after the 1973 war, the U.S. encouraged the Shah to buy all kinds of modern military equipment. What the U.S. did not see was the rising revolution as the Shah crowned himself, rode around on a white horse, and was more interested in military toys. He was the autocrat, the sole ruler, and he kept his military services divided lest they plot against him. So he lost both touch with and control of the country.

The revolution in 1979 was a true revolution, with a wholesale replacement of the old elite by the revolutionary guards and the Shia clergy, led by the charismatic Ayatollah Khomeini. The old elite, especially the military, was simply murdered, if they could not otherwise flee the country. There was no way they could mount a counter-revolution. The shock, too, was that an autocratic and theocratic government was set up with a Supreme Leader, which had been inconsistent with the rather passive role that had characterized Shiism across the centuries. At first, the government was run by a man with a tie, Mehdi Barzagan, and, after he went into exile (and later assassinated), by a man without a tie, Bani Sadr (who later went into exile and has not to date been murdered). Then rule was all by men in long robes and turbans. The new elite took over the luxury living districts of the old elite, in north Tehran, and their foundations (*bonyads*) took over former state businesses, thus to enrich themselves.

Khomeini died in 1979, and Ali Khomeini, not the most esteemed ayatollah, was selected as Supreme Leader. It is interesting that a modicum of democracy was introduced, with a president and parliament being elected—Rafsanjani, a minor cleric and rich man, was the first, later succeeded in the election of 1997 by the more modest minor cleric, Khatami, and now in 1997 by a layman, the major of Tehran, essentially from the Revolutionary Guards group of the elite,

Ahmadinejad, a man without a robe or turban, but also without a tie. But these elections were closely supervised by the Guardians Council, which selected or ruled out candidates with regard to their proper revolutionary orientation. Both the president and the parliament are essentially rubber stamps for the inner elite. The president forms a government, with ministers of the departments, for administrative purposes, to run the routine matters of governing.

More importantly, the inner elite—which determines foreign policy, national security policy, the general direction of the state and government, and any such major projects as the nuclear program—is a tight triumvirate of the Supreme Leader, the leaders of the Revolutionary Guards (the IRGC), and the Howzeh, or loose community of religious clerics in Qom. The members of this triumvirate maneuver cautiously around each other, though it appears any final decisions are made by the Supreme Leader. His position is regarded as even more powerful with the election of Ahmadinejad. He is something of an enigma: not the revolutionary firebrand that Khomeini was, sometimes appearing pragmatic, but clearly aware that it wasn't God that appointed him, especially since he was hardly considered the most eminent of the clerics.

The revolution is now 26 years old. The revolutionaries of 1979 sent their eager recruits off to be slaughtered in the war with Iraq from 1980 through 1988. They may have lost a million men. They conceded in 1988 when the war of the cities—Scuds against Scuds—and the losses of men threatened the loss of support of their whole population. Now 18 years have passed since the end of that war. In a way, they didn't lose anything to Iraq—no territory; just men and apartment buildings. Saddam Hussein went off to his new marvelous adventure, seizing Kuwait, if only to control the oil market in such a way as to make sure the prices rose so he could pay his debts of \$85 billion accumulated during the war with Iran. The United States finally toppled Saddam from power and he is now on trial. A new generation of Iranians is growing up with no particular memories of that war, especially as the population numbers exploded in the interim (though that growth has now leveled off).

Iran is not an easy country for the elite to run. The country suffered greatly during the war with Iraq in 1980 to 1988. Unemployment may be as high as 30 percent, and, as in all countries, youthful entrants suffer unemployment most. Iran receives 80 percent of its hard currency earnings from the export of oil. It may have 10 percent of the world's reserves of oil and 20 percent of the reserves of natural gas. But during the 1970s, it was pumping 6 million barrels a day while now it's pumping only 4.1 million, of which 2.5 million is exported. The suspicions that they have damaged their major oil fields are strong. In turn, Iran imports 40 percent of its food (latest figure to be checked), including much wheat from Australia.

It is worth noting that both the outgoing oil and the incoming wheat transit the Strait of Hormuz—Iran has no real port facility outside the Persian Gulf. And yet, at least among some in the United States, there's a fear that Iran might try to blockade that strait.<sup>2</sup> It doesn't make any sense.<sup>2</sup> Iran is already connected to the world, to global trade, and aspires to be more connected if it is to create jobs for its people, but then it takes steps to cut itself off from the world. This may not be surprising for an essentially theocratic government, since theocracies are prepared for sacrifice, especially of their own people.<sup>3</sup> All the reports from the country, however, show that the people, especially the young, are restless and want more freedoms.

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2. China is trying to gain assured access to Iranian oil through a long-term contract. In the past, to gain Iranian favor, they have sold Iran weapons, especially land-based anti-ship cruise missiles, that could be used to attack ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz. One can imagine them continuing that: "To assure their continued oil supplies, they sell weapons that would allow Iran to close the Strait." Strange bedfellows can make strange calculations.
  3. As reported in the New York Times of October 9, 2005, the Iranian stock market has plummeted after President Ahmadinejad's confrontational speech at the UN and the IAEA's referral of the nuclear issue to the UN. Iranian stockholders are selling off and transferring their proceeds to Dubai. Confrontations with the rest of the world can cost the country global connections they may need.

## III. The regional strategic environment

### Overview

The politics and confrontations in the region immediately around Iran are currently dominated by three key issues: (1) the future of Iraq, (2) the continued presence of the United States and its allies, all of whom come from outside the area, and (3) the future course of Iran's foreign policy. These issues provoke the fears of Persian Gulf states about traditional concerns regarding the power of Iran, the chaos in Iraq, and their dependency on the protection provided by the military forces of the United States. The current issues also reveal the dominance of cross-border questions involving religious extremism, the identity of peoples, and terrorism. They also demonstrate the importance of stability to all nations in the region—for their political leadership and for the global economic networks dependent on oil.

Predictions of regional chaos in the wake of Operation Iraqi Freedom (from an aggressive Iran unchecked by a strong Iraq, or from anti-American terrorism throughout the region) have proven to be alarmist. On the other hand, a rapid change in the regional environment toward peaceful, normal relations is proving to be a chimera.

The region is beset by one armed conflict, limited to Iraq (though that conflict involves some elements of international terrorism), but it is also defined by the states and their concerns about external and internal stability. The terrorists may be trying to drive the agenda in Iraq, but outside of Iraq, the question for the other countries is what Iran will do in the future, especially given its dominant size and potential. Will it focus on its considerable domestic issues, or will it seek to assume a more assertive foreign policy role in the region? That question is entangled with the future of the United States in the region. Will the United States (post-Iraq) continue a strong presence and will Iranian and U.S. maneuverings clash to the point of causing

increased regional instability (with consequences for local politics, global economics, proliferation, and terrorism)?

## **Iran's View**

Looking at the region from Tehran, Iranians see Americans on all sides of their country. To the east, Americans are militarily supporting a pro-Western government in Afghanistan and have a base in Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. To the west, the Americans occupy Iraq and are trying to establish a friendly government there (not very successfully so far). The United States' naval and air forces remain entrenched in the Gulf states and they and their allies dominate the air and seas. To the north, the Black Sea states welcome closer ties with the Americans and the U.S. is making arrangements for access to a staging base in Azerbaijan, on the shore of the Caspian Sea.

Their Gulf presence is not new, but the presence of U.S. forces in the lands on either side of Iran—Iraq and Afghanistan—is a consequence of the terrorist attack on the U.S. on 9/11/2001. Coupled with Iranian fears about U.S. government talk of “regime change” across the “Axis of Evil,” the existence of a nuclear armed Pakistan, Russia, India, and America, and the history of the 1980s war with Iraq (complete with chemical weapons, missiles, American hostility, and sanctions), Iran acts like a state faced with a security dilemma of serious consequences. So long as Southwest Asia remains “ground zero” for the American-led global struggle against Islamic extremist terror, Iran will feel it is encircled and threatened by the U.S. and its allies.

## **How Iran's Neighbors (and the U.S.) See the Region**

The Persian Gulf states and the U.S. see quite the opposite from the Iranian view. Iran's geographical position and size, its oil and gas riches, its foreign policy, and its missile and nuclear programs are seen as a great threat to regional stability. An assertive Iran, flush with oil wealth, with some support from Russia, China, and India, without a strong Iraq on its borders, with allies in regional terrorist movements, and armed with missiles and potentially nuclear weapons could throw their weight around in the region.



They point to the history of the Iranian government as a supporter of destabilizing Shia elements in the Sunni-ruled Gulf states in the 1980s. Even though the Iranians have not invaded any of their neighbors for hundreds of years, the revolutionary government has supported subversion and terrorism to destabilize some neighbors (notably Bahrain, where they were beaten back), attack Israel, and weaken U.S. influence in the region. The Iranian model of governance has not proven to be attractive for export to the family-ruled Gulf states, nor have the Shia Persians been able to build an identity as a leader of the Muslims, especially those in their immediate region, most of whom are Arab and Sunni.

More problematic has been the Iranian support for Hezbollah and Hamas in Syria, Lebanon, and the occupied territories. Their unapologetic support for the terrorist groups most identified with attacks on Israel reinforces the image of a rogue state and hard-line revolutionaries bent on changing the regional dynamic with any means possible short of direct military action.

To these views of Iran, must be added concerns about Iranian support for the terrorists who attacked the U.S. Air Force housing at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s, the suspected Iranian support for anti-U.S. insurgents in Iraq, and its continued development of the Shehab-3 missile (with the help of rogue state North Korea) and its uranium enrichment program.

## **Conclusion**

The perceptions of the regional countries about their security environment are in great flux. The stability that prevailed when the U.S. was containing both Iraq and Iran is now in jeopardy as Iraq descends into chaos. At worst, the other countries could see a Shia-dominated government under the Iranian thumb in Iraq, as well a new generation of Sunni terrorists migrating out of Iraq back to their home countries. At best, the region has evolved over the past 20 years from one beset by the intense war between Iraq and Iran, which came close to ruining both countries, followed U.S. containment, no-fly-zones, and strikes on Iraq to a region in which no one is sure of the outcome. Iran's steps to increase its security (interest in the outcome in Iraq,

modest modernization of its military, developing missile capabilities, and support for anti-Israel terrorists) make its neighbors, Israel, and the U.S. insecure. In return, the U.S. war on global Islamic extremist terrorism, NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and the prospect of a democratic Iraq with a clear national identity, all make Iran insecure. So long as these two trends continue and the perceptions of each side's actions remain unchanged, regional stability will be tenuous. How Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would affect that stability will be discussed later in this paper.

## IV. Iran's wider strategic environment

### Introduction

The question of Iran's nuclear ambitions has implications well beyond its immediate region. What is the broader strategic environment, and where does Iran fit into that picture? Iran has not pushed for a strong role outside of its region. It has not sought permanent membership on the UN Security Council like India or Japan or Germany, nor has it sought a role as “spokesman” for the non-aligned nations or as leader of the Islamic countries in international for a—a dubious prospect in any case given their Shia identity.

What has been consistent is their perception of their role as the largest country in the Persian Gulf region, with a significant economic base, a skilled, educated populace, and a cohesive state structure and society. They are a nation that must be accounted for in any deliberations on the future of the region's political, social, and economic construction. To Iran, the continued role of the U.S. in the region stands as an obstacle to their future security and dominance as the region's largest power.

Such a role would be highly disturbing to the United States, its allies, the Saudis, and the small states of the Gulf region, given the revolutionary nature of the Iranian regime (the U.S. was not worried about the Shah having such a role, and encouraged it). Not one of these countries wants the region to have a dominant power, especially one with Iran's identity.

### Economics and the EU

Economically, Iran has sought positive trade relations with Russia, China, India, and the EU, trading on its oil and gas resources. Iran's economic justification for civilian nuclear power is that oil and gas are too valuable to be used domestically and must be used to finance

development through the hard currency receipts gained from exports. Oil and gas receipts can finance foreign investment, technology transfers, and development. But the chief source of those (outside of the U.S.) is the EU. Hence the difficulties with the nuclear negotiations with the EU. Iran wants to establish relations that maximize the benefits listed above while maintaining freedom of action for their nuclear program. The EU wants to leverage its economic tools (the main lever they have in world politics, and an important one in the dominant globalized economy) to place concrete and verifiable limits on the Iranian program.

As of this writing, Iran has resumed nuclear enrichment after failing to reach agreement on the trade of economic benefits for program limits, and the EU has not agreed to resume negotiations about economic ties without a halt to enrichment.

The EU countries have voiced concerns about Iran's potential nuclear weapons program married to the existing Shehab missile program, which could give Iran the ability to strike Europe and thus hold some nations at risk if there were a conflict in the region that led to American and European intervention in Iran. Otherwise, Iran without nuclear weapons could not threaten Europe, except perhaps by threatening not to sell them oil. A long missile shot (with a high probability of inaccuracy) with a conventional warhead would cause minimal damage, but make a lot of people very angry, i.e., it invites retaliation in a violent manner. Missiles from states can be deterred (they have a return address) and will be deterred. Other than regime survival, what stakes are high enough to make Iran attack European homelands and risk a combined U.S.-European response against their highly valued missile programs and other high-value targets?

### **China, Russia, and India: The Other Players**

Iran's positive relations with these countries reflects the Iranian determination to establish a position outside of a U.S.-dominated framework. At the UN level, faced with U.S. insistence that the Iranians be referred to the Security Council for violations of the NPT, the Iranians have been supported by Russia and China (though both countries abstained when the IAEA voted to refer the question to the UN).

Both of these countries have their own economic and political relations with Iran. On the other hand, recent oil and gas pipelines agreements between Iran and India did not prevent the latter from expressing its desire for the Iran nuclear question to be referred to the UN. India's emerging position as a global player and possibly as a permanent member of the Security Council trumps any single issue of its bilateral relation with Iran.

On regional issues, Iran, Russia, and China share concerns about state cohesion and sovereign power and the prerogatives of states in the system as they face questions from the West about human rights, internal suppression, and proliferation of weapons systems (conventional and non-conventional). These issues bring all three states to similar reinforcing positions in opposition to prevailing norms in the U.S. and Europe, even though Russia and China have always declared themselves to be firmly opposed to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. What they all also hope to exploit is to make separate deals with the West on economic and political relations using their unique resources (be that oil/gas in Iran and Russia, or the vast market potential of China) as bargaining chips.

In addition to these issues, Russia, China, and Iran have not come into conflict in the Caspian and Central Asia regions. All watch warily as the U.S. presence in Afghanistan completes its fourth year. NATO and the U.S. look set to maintain a long-term, low-level military role in Afghanistan. The U.S. intends to maintain its airbase in Kyrgyzstan so long as it must maintain a sizeable operation in Afghanistan. To this must be added increased U.S., NATO, and EU outreach to Georgia and other Black Sea/Caspian Sea countries in the name of bringing maritime security to trade routes and energy resources on the edges of the expanding EU and NATO spheres of influence.

Iran, Russia, and China all share a distrust of these developments. Iran views them through the prism of the American military presence, the identification by President Bush of Iran as a rogue regime, part of the Axis of Evil, and the history of Iran's involvement with "the Great Satan." It is not surprising that Iran, Russia, and China may find it easier to reach agreement on regional political and security questions when they share the same goal of reducing U.S. influence in the

region and maintaining their own positions as the largest regional players.

## **Conclusion**

Iran's political goals in its larger strategic environment are shaped by its regional position. By any measure, it is a potential regional power with more capabilities than its neighbors. It is also possessed of a history and a current government that do not reassure the smaller states of the region. It sits at the intersection of the energy resources vital to the West while maintaining policies antithetical to the U.S. and other Western nations.

The role of the U.S. in the region runs counter to possible Iranian ambitions of being the dominant state in the Gulf area. To maintain its freedom of action and ensure the survival of the regime outside of the U.S.-dominated politics of the region, they engage in foreign policies that address both their regional concerns and provide a political counterweight to the U.S. and its allies in wider international relations. These relations may have significant impact on the future course of the implications of a nuclear-armed Iran and its relations with the U.S. and Europe. In short, it is possible to see the splitting of the globalized world back into competing blocs, in part because of the disputes over Iran's nuclear program.

## V. What happens when nuclear weapons are thrown into the regional and global strategic environments?

### Background

The strategic situation for Iran might be described as three-fold:

1. They are secure and content as a nation-state of unified territory of clear borders, a large, relatively homogenous population, a long history, a unique language, a relatively stable, semi-democratic government, and their distinct Shia identity within Islam (whereas Shias are despised minorities in other Muslim countries).
2. But Iran—or at least its elite—is also a revolutionary state and a theocracy, sometimes wishing to spread its revolution (they haven't been very successful), claiming a unique role in Islam, even perhaps aspiring to take over the Two Holy Places (Mecca and Medina) themselves. They hate Israel and want to destroy it.<sup>4</sup> They blame the West for oppressing them in the past—the anti-colonial syndrome.
3. And yet Iran, attentive to its restless population, wants to prosper and grow, and the elite knows this takes connections to the rest of the world, to globalization. There is no lack of sophistication and awareness in Iran.<sup>5</sup>

Into the complexities of these strategic considerations, Iran is now throwing its rapidly maturing nuclear program. They deny that they intend to build nuclear weapons, but are interested only in nuclear

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4. See Associated Press, “Iran Leader Calls for Israel to be ‘Wiped Off the Map,’” *New York Times* (October 26, 2005).

energy for “peaceful purposes.” Supreme Leader Khomeini and President Ahmadinejad even say that their religion forbids them to have nuclear weapons, but nobody outside Iran believes that. They say they want to enrich uranium themselves, to at least reactor power grade, but everyone knows that, with many more passes through centrifuges, they would be able to enrich to weapons grade. They say they want to prepare their power supplies for a future without oil and gas and thus need nuclear energy, but with the third-largest reserves in the world, this seems implausible to outsiders (unless the Iranians are truly ruining their oil fields, given their lack of access to the more advanced recovery techniques that have been developed and applied elsewhere). Besides, they could always buy reactor-grade uranium on the world market, as they are doing from Russia for the Bushehr reactor. They are building vast factories to supply nuclear fuel, and putting them well-underground to protect against American or Israeli attacks.

They seem to have had this present program for a long time, since at least the late 1980s. Construction of the light-water nuclear reactor at Bushehr by the Germans was well underway when the Shah fell in 1979. That program was part of the worldwide “Atoms for Peace” program begun in the 1950s. The current program may have been stimulated by the Israeli nuclear weapons program, which has been known about since the late 1960s, but it was certainly stimulated by Saddam Hussein’s pursuit of nuclear weapons in Iraq. The Bushehr reactor is finally being completed by the Russians, after ten years of wrangling over the deal and construction. It may go on line in 2006—following long negotiations with the Russians as to whether Iran would return spent rods to Russia for disposal.<sup>6</sup> Iran is discussing with

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5. No country primarily reliant on the export of primary commodities ever employs more than a tiny fraction of their population in that business. The country may be rich, but it is not providing enough employment, which turns much of the population into rentiers, dependent on government hand-outs.
  6. Whether they renege on that agreement in the future remains to be seen. The world would know in five years if spent rods were to be removed for recovery of plutonium for nuclear weapons, but normal energy-producing life would be ten years.



Russia the building of a total of ten reactors around the country—a very expensive proposition for any country and particularly for a country like Iran with a GDP per capita of \$2,400. Iran’s own enrichment program took off when A. Q. Khan, head of Pakistan’s uranium enrichment program, sold them some of his original centrifuges (the “P-1” version), and perhaps even an old weapon design the Chinese had given to Pakistan and Pakistan apparently sold to Libya. Iran has its own uranium mine, which would provide sufficient uranium to make 250-300 nuclear weapons, but would provide only enough fuel to run a single 1,000-megawatt power reactor for six or seven years.<sup>7</sup>

Iran has been caught between what people in America call the “good-cop, bad-cop” (policeman) pressures from the EU and the United States. The Europeans have tried to negotiate economic incentives—that is, greater connectedness to the global economy—if Iran were not to pursue enrichment. The U.S. has threatened to attack Iran, on the basis that it is part of the Axis of Evil and in accordance with the U.S. policy to preempt any attack on the U.S. with weapons of mass destruction. There has also been talk of an attack by Israel on Iran’s nuclear facilities, along the lines of Israel’s attack on Iraq’s reactor at Osirak in 1981. Such a U.S. attack is not considered by many in the U.S. as credible: the U.S. doesn’t know where all the facilities are; some are in urban areas; and they are underground. As for an Israeli attack, the distance is too far, and they would encounter the same problems in finding and destroying targets as the U.S.

Iran claims that it is their right under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to enrich uranium to provide for their own nuclear power. But they have not complied with all the terms of the NPT and have concealed activities from the NPT-required inspections of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency). Recently, it was reported that the IRGC (Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps) has been assigned total control of the program.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in September 2005, the board of

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7. See Paul Kerr, “Iran’s Nuclear Abilities Limited,” *Arms Control Today* (September 2005), p.33. Colonel-General (Retired) Viktor Yesin of Russia has confirmed the limitations in their supplies of indigenous uranium ore.

the IAEA, by a 22-1 vote, with 12 abstentions, referred Iran's NPT violations to the UN Security Council.

A recent report claimed that it would take Iran another ten years before they could have enough fissile material to produce nuclear weapons. Whatever the case, Iran would seem to be following the track that other countries—Pakistan, North Korea, India, Israel—have followed: the best and brightest people in the country get involved, they work in great secrecy, they get ample resources from the government, the program becomes a matter of national pride, and, if it is known, popular to the masses. They believe it is a matter of catching up to the advanced countries. Iran's program would appear to have all of these characteristics—but the world really doesn't know where the program stands.

## Scenarios

Iran has a program, which has existed by all accounts since the late 1980s—triggered maybe by Israel's nukes, but certainly by Iraq's (i.e., Saddam's) pursuit of nuclear weapons. The Iranian program moves forward incrementally. It has become rooted as an elite priority project, with the best people and whatever resources they need, but it is also popular among the masses as a matter of national pride, again by all accounts. Whether that popularity includes nuclear weapons is not clear, but the popularity certainly includes a complete fuel cycle.

We can envisage several scenarios for how the Iranian program unfolds in the future, including in relation to the rest of the world:

1. They declare (a) they have only a “peaceful,” i.e., nuclear power generation, program, and (b) that it is within their right under the NPT.
  - The bargaining going on now (fall 2005) is with the Europeans as to whether Iran gets to continue to enrich ura-

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8. David R. Sands, “Army Takes Control of Iran Nukes,” *The Washington Times* (October 5, 2005), p.1. It is not the regular army, but the Revolutionary Guards, who would manage the program.

nium. This may stretch out for a while to come, but they could inch ahead with their programs in the interim.

2. The rest of the world assumes they have made a firm decision to build nuclear weapons, and to mount them on their Shehab 3 missiles.

For this paper, we assume the second scenario – that they have made a firm decision to build nuclear weapons. We make this assumption so that we can discuss the consequences, without prejudging the outcome of Iran's negotiations with the EU. But there are still several sub-scenarios:

- They still won't declare that they are building or have nuclear weapons (the Israeli approach), and continue to assert that it's only a peaceful energy program.
- They declare they have nuclear weapons, and thus enter the pariah or rogue category as far as other states are concerned.<sup>9</sup>
- They leave the NPT, but won't declare nuclear weapons status. For the rest of the world this is proof-positive that they are proceeding to build weapons, as in the case of North Korea.

If they have declared their intention to build nuclear weapons, they could have two further options:

- They say the capability is only for deterrence, and, following old Soviet and Chinese propaganda, declare that theirs is a policy of “no first use.” The pressure for a “no first use” declaration around the world is enormous, as it is a way to be different from the Americans, who have never adopted such a policy.<sup>10</sup>
- They are silent about how they think about use, at least publicly.

Then there's the question of scale, of the extent of their program to build nuclear weapons and to mount them in delivery vehicles:

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9. Not all Islamic countries would necessarily be proud of another Islamic country (after Pakistan) acquiring nuclear weapons. The Iranians are still Shia and other Muslim countries would not necessarily assume Shias would come to the defense of Sunnis.

- How many weapons are they likely to build, once they are into a production process? At best, Iran can only accomplish a long, slow accumulation once production has started. As noted, they have only enough uranium ore in the country to support a weapons program, not for a long-term energy program. Ultimately, they would have to buy uranium ore on the world market. And they still need uranium to make plutonium from reactors (as opposed to enriching uranium using centrifuges).
- Do they test a nuclear device? Probably not—there's a strong world taboo against it. If they do not test, they can only guess whether the weapons might work, and in any case, they would have to over-design them (which uses excessive fissile material). If North Korea were to test before them, and certainly if the United States or Russia were to resume testing, Iran probably would test too.
- If they were to test and it were not part of a general trend toward resumption of testing, they would become even more of a pariah, a rogue, in the world. If they test, India, Pakistan, North Korea—and then the United States and Russia would test as well (depending on what administration is in power in the U.S.—the nuclear weapons community—what Americans call “the labs”—have incessant pressure on to resume testing. In short, it would touch off a new proliferation race). But the general view now is that Iran is ten years away from having a weapon to test.
- What kind of delivery means would they build? (The question of actual use is addressed below—one must always make the distinction between “having” and “using” (i.e., “employing,” that is, actually exploding nuclear weapons).

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10. The Americans have already made “first use,” on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. As the Cold War emerged and the Soviet conventional forces loomed over Western Europe, backing an aggressive Soviet policy, the United States effectively adopted a policy of first use against such an attack. The U.S. has never ruled out “first use.” But the propaganda against it is very powerful. It is, nonetheless, just a declaratory policy, but it does act as a restraint on “influence,” whatever that is.

The simplest delivery means would be by tactical aircraft. But Iran's air force is very old, has limited range, and has no refueling capabilities.

Iran's preferred delivery means are missiles, in particular the Shehab-3, a variation of the North Korean No Dong missile. There are rumors that they have examined the fitting of nuclear weapons to that missile. Shehab 3 can reach Israel. A Shehab-4 could reach Europe, but, at the moment its development appears to have been abandoned. There is talk of extending the range of the Shehab-3 to 2200 kilometers, which would reach parts of Europe. Some in the U.S. think Iran will build ICBMs to reach "the Great Satan" (see the Rumsfeld-Cambone commission report of 1998), but building an ICBM would be an enormously difficult task. Both the Soviet Union and the U.S. evolved their ICBMs over several models, each tested around 70 times to establish their reliability and their accuracy. The Shehab-3 has been tested only a few times so far, most being failures. Iran already has many shorter-range Scuds, but so far there are no indications they would equip them with nuclear warheads. The Shehab-3 would be a more appropriate vehicle—again, depending what strategy the Iranians adopt.

It is unlikely that Iran would mount nuclear warheads on its shore-to-ship cruise missiles. We are not aware that these cruise missiles could carry a 500 kilogram warhead. But in any case, it must be borne in mind that they would never have a large enough stockpile of nuclear warheads to waste any in a one-weapon-to-kill-one-ship engagement, though an aircraft carrier might be a tempting target—unless the Iranians were to contemplate what kind of retaliation that might bring.

### **What strategy and targets might the Iranians contemplate?**

If Iran were to proceed to build nuclear weapons, and to begin building an inventory 10 years from now on following successful development, it is likely that they would have only a limited number of such weapons, at least for some years to come. The nature of nuclear weapons programs in countries, except perhaps for the United States and Russia at the height of their expansions, is to be limited, certainly in comparison to conventional bombs.<sup>11</sup> That is, each weapon used is

one less in the inventory, not to be replaced for some time. That means leadership must consider carefully what is to be targeted, for the greatest effect. It also means that the weapons are not to be turned over to field commanders for use against targets of opportunity, but their use must be determined by the central authority. Moreover, if there is any rationality and prudence in the thinking of any country's leaders, they must consider that their country would be subject to retaliation with nuclear weapons—if they are firing against another nuclear weapons-equipped state. It also means that nuclear weapons are not very good as battlefield weapons, i.e., against deployed ground forces, especially if the country doesn't have very many.<sup>12</sup> In turn, this means that nuclear weapons are only good for destroying cities. It also means that the forces of the other side would still be intact.

Some people in the United States think another country would undertake a “demonstrative use,” that is, a great fireworks display in the sky in order to warn the other side that more could be fired. However, as those people in the U.S. who worked on nuclear strategy learned a long time ago, you still face the question of what you do next for real effect, that is, what would you do for an encore if there were no response to the demonstration? Others in the U.S. think a country might propel a single weapon into space a couple of hundred kilometers and then detonate it in order to create an electro-magnetic pulse (EMP), thus to fry electronic devices for even hundreds of miles around. With just a few weapons, would a country risk reducing its inventory that way, for an uncertain effect?

The result of all these uncertainties about the utility of actually detonating a nuclear weapon in anger would seem to be that a country would adopt a strategy of deterrence—that is, making strong, vague threats of retaliation themselves, in part because the country would

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11. Though not in comparison to cruise missiles, like Tomahawks. The U.S. feels constrained by the number of Tomahawks it can fire. Of 19,000 weapons launched by the U.S. in Operation Iraqi Freedom, only 803 were Tomahawks—they cost \$1.2 million apiece.
  12. The U.S. calculated that it would take 35-65 nuclear weapons to destroy a Soviet ground division in the event of a Soviet attack in Europe.

not know how it was going to use any of its limited inventory of nuclear weapons until the circumstances dictated. This can be disappointing to military men who like to plan, and like to plan to have the biggest effect. But a strategy of deterrence also implies a reactive strategy rather than a strategy of initiative. It means anticipating that the other side has done something quite devastating in the first place. It also means that it is very hard to predict how the first country may act.

A strategy of deterrence implies something that must be deterred. For most countries who have gotten into this business it means deterring an attack on the country. For Iran in the past, attacked as it was by Saddam Hussein and Iraq, it may have meant deterring another Iraqi attack on them. We have noted that this may have been part of the revolutionary regime's motivation for starting an enrichment program back in the late 1980s. We also noted that they wanted to offset Israel's nuclear weapons. They might have started earlier, since Israel's program was generally recognized by the 1970s, but the Shah was not worried about Israel attacking his Iran, and the new regime took some time to get its act together, especially since they were bogged down in the war with Iraq for most of the 1980s.

Now Iran fears an American attack, especially after the American invasion of Iraq and given the Bush Administration's preemptive counter-proliferation policy. That is why they are putting their manufacturing facilities underground.

We do not know how the Iranians may think through these problems if they were to proceed to build nuclear weapons. They probably do not know either. It is not something those of us outside Iran can deduce about their thinking. All that is known is what the Soviets used to refer to as "objective realities," which in this case means thinking through the retaliation they may provoke. At the initial stage, simply "having," that is, owning, nuclear weapons can become a national obsession, or at least an obsession of the security elite. How actually to use such weapons is something to be deferred until later, or left to lower staff to think about. We assume a level of rationality on their part, especially given the complexity of elite relations at the top, though their internal maneuverings can lead to outcomes not consistent with our view of rationality.

What we suspect is that when a country does have nuclear weapons, its thinking in time of conflict and its military thinking about either defending or attacking can be quite dominated by worrying about whether to use nuclear weapons or not. The Americans found that, while engaging in a nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union, they wanted to build a substantial conventional force hedge against having to use nuclear weapons, at least not early on in a conflict. There were some lower-level discussions in the United States about whether to use nuclear weapons in the Korean War, or in Vietnam, or even (in the 1950s) whether to use them in the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, but the higher levels of the U.S. government never even considered the possibility. Indeed, it appears that the politicians may try to put such questions out of their minds, even as the military echelons below them think anxiously about the possibilities. Iran would probably find that to be the case as well.



## **VI. How, altogether, would Iran possessing nuclear weapons perturb the regional and global system?**

### **Introduction**

We have assumed—for the purpose of speculating on regional and global stability and events—that Iran is on a path to build nuclear weapons and will achieve that goal. We have also said that it can make some difference as to whether they deny or have kept secret their capabilities (the Israeli model) or have defiantly made clear that they are nuclear-capable (the current North Korean model). We are, of course, talking about a capability to be achieved only ten years from now, per one estimate. But, in international politics, the becoming or potential of such a capability, if viewed as inevitable, already affects the perceptions and actions of both the surrounding countries and the rest of the world.

It is worth noting that Israel's model has not done Israel much good. Already, after the 1973 war and the later peace treaty with Egypt concluded at Camp David in 1979, it was clear that Israel could defeat any combination of Arab armies and that the Israeli-Arab situation had become an Israeli-Palestinian situation, for which nuclear weapons have no bearing. As for North Korea, at this time (October 2005), the North Koreans have apparently agreed to forgo nuclear weapons, though it is said “the details remain to be worked out.”

Moreover, it remains to be seen how negotiations between Iran and the EU come out, although at the moment the consolidation of conservative rule in Tehran with the symbolism represented by the election of the hard-liner Ahmadinejad as president augurs badly for such negotiations. This is why we are examining in this paper the case of a nuclear Iran, without necessarily predicting it.

Thus, we speculate on the impact of a nuclear Iran on both the region and the wider world.

## **The effects in the region of a nuclear Iran**

We can ask several questions:

- Does Iran's nuclear weapons capability, declared or not, get the other countries, notably all those Sunni countries (including Pakistan), to side with them, or to cower before them?
- Does their influence grow even stronger over a weakened Syria, the transit point for Iranian supplies and advisers to the Hezbollah in southern Lebanon?
- Does it force the Saudi ruling family to listen to the Iranians and be nicer to their own Shia, or do they decide to buy nuclear weapons themselves, from China (doubtful) or North Korea or Pakistan?
- Or would the Saudis be more open about declaring that the United States can protect them?
- Does it give Iran even more influence in a Shia-dominated Iraq or at least in the nine Shia-dominated provinces of southern Iraq?
- Does the nuclear capability lead the Iranians to give even more support to Hezbollah and does it embolden Hezbollah to be even more aggressive toward Israel?

### **The question of Iraq**

Much in this rather long term, slowly evolving, development depends on how the current war in Iraq turns out. That war would certainly be resolved well before the ten years it is said that Iran would take to achieve a weapons capability.

A stable, democratic, well-governed Iraq maintaining good relations with the United States would also create stability in the region. This assumes that Syria does not collapse into chaos or that the Saudi royal family is not overthrown. A Syrian collapse situation may be imminent

in the next couple of years. The Saudis are more stable than some think, especially as oil prices remain high. A stable Iraq would also be relatively rich again as its oil production is fully restored and its fields are expanded with now-available international help and investment. This means that Iraq could begin to buy new military capabilities and rebuild its military, unless they felt secure enough under an American protective umbrella.

As an aside, and perhaps getting ahead of the story, all the indications are that the U.S. will not set up permanent operating military bases in Iraq. The experience of the chaos and insurgency that followed the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq has turned off the Iraqis to the possibility of bases. They want the Americans out of their country. That means the immediate American presence would be at sea, though with some headquarters (Bahrain, Qatar) on land, and with continuing arrangements with the Gulf states to fly back in if the situation demands and the countries agree.<sup>13</sup>

A less-than-democratic Iraq, with a new strongman in charge—probably Shia, but neither a Khomeini nor a Saddam—might be found by Iran to be threatening. At the same time, Iran would probably have a strong influence, but not dictatorship, as a big brother, over a Shia-dominated Iraq.<sup>14</sup> But the Iraqis seem resistant to a purely theocratic government.

An Iraq divided and decentralized into its Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish entities would be inviting of Iranian intervention, to assist the Shia south.

Yet none of these considerations would seem to vary much if Iran had nuclear weapons (or a program heading in that direction). Iraq

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13. There is persistent old Soviet propaganda around the world that the Americans are always seeking to set up bases. This is a myth. The Americans always want to go home, unless they can set up their families with the troops, in a comfortable way of life. The Gulf area is not that kind of area.

14. Even to the point of the influence that Syria has had over Lebanon until just the last couple of months?

would certainly not be a nuclear target. Iran would not get any more influence over Iraq by swaggering with their nukes.

## **The question of Saudi Arabia**

As for Saudi Arabia, the Saudis have achieved relatively cordial relations with Iran over the last several years, particularly in the relations between now-King Abdullah and now-ex-president Khatami. Whether the new president of Iran, Ahmadinejad, who does not wear long robes and who will be preoccupied in finding his place within the tight, mutually suspicious inner elite in Tehran, creates his own relations with the Saudis remains to be seen. The Iranians know that the Saudi royal family keeps the keys to the Two Holy Places and they cannot force their way in.

Does Iranian possession of nuclear weapons give them more influence over the Saudis?

It is doubtful. What exactly would Iran threaten with its nuclear weapons? Riyadh? The royal family would prefer to be in Taif in any case. Taif? Waste a weapon on a small city? And not kill but a few of the 1,500 to 3,500 princes (no one knows exactly how many princes there are)?

If Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons led somehow to the Saudis obtaining them in their own defense and deterrence, there would be a classic "mutual deterrence" stand-off. We would submit that Tehran represents far more centralization of Iran than Riyadh does of Saudi Arabia, and thus presents a great vulnerability to retaliation. Again, the question about a newly-equipped nuclear Iran is whether they recognize their vulnerabilities to retaliation if they were to actually use nuclear weapons. If anything, the United States and Israel should be constantly reminding them of their vulnerability.

## **The effect on Israel**

Iran would, of course, like to push all Israelis into the sea, to crush and eliminate Israel. They share the general Muslim angst about Israel. They feel threatened by Israel's nuclear weapons. They support Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, but, given the lack of even

rocket attacks by Hezbollah of late and the attempts by Hezbollah to be a legitimate political party in Lebanon (it was interesting that, in their counter-Sunni/Christian demonstration in Beirut after former prime minister Hariri's assassination, they flew the flag of Lebanon, not their own flag), they have not been encouraged by Iran to do foolish things. Iran itself feels that it would be deterring Israel from attacking them once it had nuclear weapons. If they were to give Hezbollah a nuclear weapon and it were used on Israel, however, Israel would immediately retaliate against Iran. Again, the question is whether the Iranians understand these possibilities.<sup>15</sup>

### **Effects on other countries in the region**

It is possible that Turkey would be very alarmed by a nuclear Iran. However, the relations between the two countries have always been correct and neither has expressed a fear of the other. Nobody in the region would mess militarily with the Turks (nor would the Russians). Ten years from now, Turkey might be rich enough to think about building their own nuclear weapons, but across those years they will also be finding their way into the EU, and those negotiations would be a strong restraint on a nuclear initiative by Turkey, especially since Turkey as a NATO member and also a member of EU would have even stronger security guarantees from the West.

The other Gulf states have also had correct relations with Iran, plus a good deal of trade. The most vulnerable country would be Bahrain, with its 70 percent Shia population. Iran took a previous run at destabilizing Bahrain, but its local clients were rounded up and imprisoned. The Bahraini royal family in turn has tried to be more responsive to its population. It is hard to see how a nuclear Iran would change this situation. All the countries of the Gulf have always felt weak and vulnerable. They depend on the international system for their continued existence, as was demonstrated upon Iraq's invasion

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15. We outsiders may never know. We found out after the Cold War that the Soviets had adopted every concept of deterrence first advanced by the Americans, but they did not let on to that during the Cold War, sounding very warlike throughout. The Soviets did declare a no-first-use policy, but the Americans had no reason to believe them.

of Kuwait in 1990. They may well depend on the continued U.S. presence at sea in the Gulf itself. In any case, relations with Iran are not those of hostility, and trade exists (particularly with Shia Dubai).

It is of interest that a nuclear Iran is also not advancing very far in replacing its depleted and obsolete conventional forces. While they have not been as explicit as North Korea in saying that a nuclear capability would compensate for their weakening conventional forces, it may well be the case. At the same time, continued high oil prices may eventually allow them to buy more conventional forces as well. The issue for this paper is whether an Iran feeling more secure against attack because it has nuclear weapons would then feel it can bully the other countries in the region. But none of those countries in the region can attack them in any case, assuming Iraq does not reemerge as a threat (a highly unlikely prospect if the Shias dominate the new Iraq).

Iran has not needed nuclear weapons to balance those of Pakistan. Indeed, the progress they are making in enriching uranium is due to the sales of equipment to them by A. Q. Khan, a Pakistani. Populated Pakistan is rather distant from Iran, across deserts, even though they have a common border in Baluchistan.

### **The question of Iranian support of extremist Islamic terrorists**

Would a nuclear Iran be more likely to support terrorism? Their support these days has boiled down to continued support of the Lebanese Hezbollah with money and equipment. They also apparently provide funds to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who are mainly in the Gaza Strip. They have not reached out with terror attacks themselves for many years. We are told that the extremist Islamic terrorists who fled Afghanistan into Iran after the fall of the Taliban are under house arrest in Iran. The al Qaeda-associated terrorists are all Sunnis. Iran is not really on any crusade to exclude the United States and the rest of the West from the region—only to exclude official Americans from Iran. A nuclear Iran is unlikely to change any of these patterns. Other events, both internal and external, might cause them to renew support for terrorists. If by any remote chance some terrorists were to

set up training camps in Iran, the U.S. certainly would not be deterred by Iran's nuclear weapons from attacking such camps.

## **The effects of a nuclear Iran on the global system**

### **Proliferation Regimes**

The first impact a nuclear-armed Iran would have on the global system would be on existing non-proliferation regimes. The NPT has come under assault from both North Korea and Iran throughout the past 20 years. These non-proliferation regimes, strengthened by the actions of the post-Soviet states, Russia, and the United States for most of the post-Cold War era, have been weakened by the actions of India, Pakistan, North Korea and Iran.

A nuclear-armed Iran will have proven that a country can be a signatory to the treaty, secretly use its civilian nuclear programs to mask the development of a military nuclear weapons capability, evade the IAEA restrictions, UN sanctions, and Western counter-proliferation attempts, and finally achieve nuclear status and use that status to try to negotiate new political relationships with the West.

The proliferation regimes and the IAEA and the UN would face heavy criticism from the U.S. and its allies for their failure to stop Iranian violations. The U.S. government's policies on rogue states and for threatening preemption and other counter-proliferation operations would be reinforced and interpreted as the only insurance against rogue state proliferation. The Europeans and other Western states would also be critical of the proliferation regimes, but they would most likely not follow the U.S. policies on rogue states and preemption. They might increase their support for counter-proliferation measures short of intervention (sanctions, political isolation, and increased power for the IAEA).

The regimes would also come under attack from other states that might be tempted to go nuclear. If Iran could go nuclear without paying a heavy cost, it would reinforce the impotence of the international organizations, as well as the failure of relying on the U.S. and other large powers to check the aspirations of those wanting to be

regional powers. These states might assume that going nuclear is a viable option for regime survival, deterrence of other regional powers, and achieving a seat at the table when important regional or global issues are at stake.

All of these outcomes add up to a significant failure for the existing non-proliferation regimes. While it would not signal a wholesale failure of the system and the emergence of another 25 nuclear-armed states, it would demonstrate the lack of international consensus on countering proliferation.

## **A Nuclear Leak?**

A major concern is the possibility that a nuclear-armed Iran would be tempted to provide nuclear weapons to terrorist groups that may have enjoyed Iranian support in the past. Serious efforts at countering this potential risk have been put in place through national policies, multilateral agreements, and international treaties by the U.S. and other states. These efforts would be highly focused on Iran as a potential source for nuclear terror if Iran were to go nuclear.

Past Iranian relations with Hezbollah and other anti-Israel groups committed to violence, as well as the regime's own actions against dissidents and other regime opponents outside of Iran, are of concern. But it would be a very risky strategy for any element of the Iranian government or clergy or IRGC to transfer nuclear technology or knowledge to terror groups. Such technology or information could be traced back to Iran, with all of the consequences for the actions visited upon Tehran. Thus, a nuclear-armed Iran would lead the U.S. and its allies to adopt specific, declared policies for deterring the nuclear terror threat. They would likely issue statements holding Iran or any nuclear state responsible for the actions of terrorists. They would threaten nuclear retaliation on Iran for any terror act committed by groups backed by any Iranian faction or office, even if those groups did not receive direct support from official Iranian government sources. Israeli policy would be the most aggressive on this front, followed by the U.S. and then the other allies. A related outcome would be an escalation of counter-terror operations against groups likely to be in close contact with Iranian elements.



## Political Fallout

An overtly nuclear-armed Iran would weaken Russia and China in relevant international fora. They have both claimed that their close contacts with Tehran enable them to exert a moderating influence on Iranian behavior. This would be shown to be a false claim and reduce their political authority on non-proliferation issues if Iran were to proceed with nuclear weapons. If Iran maintains a latent capability and does not declare that it has built nuclear weapons, the Iranians and the Russians and the Chinese could maintain the fiction that they haven't and continue to argue that continued engagement with Tehran was more reasonable and likely to restrain an Iranian breakout than political confrontation and potential preemption.

If Tehran went ahead with its program, it could be an insurance policy for regime survival, and nothing more. That is, they would feel they were deterring an American attack (it is hard to imagine any other country attacking them, now that Saddam has been removed from power). There would be economic costs to pay: foreign investment sources would be likely to dry up, their trade relations might have to shift to less efficient sources based on political compatibility rather than economic need, and they would have difficulty sustaining positive economic relations with the EU or achieve membership in the WTO (World Trade Organization). Thus their access to the world economy would be altogether limited. However, China and India might be wild cards in this equation, given their desperate needs for assured oil contracts to supply their growing economies. Dealing with Russia is an example of turning to less efficient and productive economic sources.

Nuclear weapons focus the mind of state leaders. They would now possess a new and powerful tool, but one that cannot be used (possibly not even in a threatening mode) without assuring their own destruction (or receiving counter-threats). Once entering the nuclear ranks, every step Iran might take to enhance its own security—even if claimed to only enhance its own security—would be seen as more threatening to neighbors in the region and to the West. They would tend to prove the U.S. point that they were a rogue regime. All of this might reinforce U.S. leadership on proliferation issues (again,

depending on the outcome in Iraq and some restoration of the U.S. image around the world as not a rogue itself—this is possible in the next ten years) and might lead U.S. friends and allies to seek greater protection under the U.S. umbrella. This would preserve and strengthen the acceptability of U.S. presence in the region—the exact opposite of the outcome Iran desires. (This assumes the U.S. itself wishes to continue that presence. It is likely, given the continuing need for stability in the oil market, which is a little different from the U.S. seeking oil for itself, as it is sometimes accused of trying to do).

Even the dream of an “Islamic bomb” to counter the Israelis is nothing more than a ticket to the stand-off between states that can be described as classic deterrence. Iranian threats to Israel would be merely threatening mutual suicide (and any Iranian nuclear strike on Israel would probably kill a lot of Palestinians in the process—thus vitiating the very cause that they supposedly hate Israel about). Israel might even openly state that it would hold Tehran responsible for any other weapons-of-mass-destruction-related attack on Israel by terror groups, since such weapons would presumably be provided by some group of Iranians. Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons might also force Israel to finally declare its own nuclear status (Israel has always declared publicly that it would never be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the region). Iran would have removed that concern and taken the onus off the Israelis. This might have a dramatic impact on the other states of the region. That is, it might trigger dormant or latent programs, e.g., in Algeria or Egypt, to develop nuclear weapons—though it is not easy to carry out such programs.

## **Economic fallout**

The biggest choice Iran faces for the future is not whether they should be nuclear-armed or not, but whether they can provide prosperity for their people, who are growing more restless by all accounts. Providing support to the population from the top down from oil and gas revenues has proved to be grossly inefficient and corrupting in most such countries (perhaps only tiny Norway has escaped trouble in this respect). The Iranian government must somehow find ways to create jobs for their people. This would take foreign direct invest-

ment—simply directing oil receipts to local entrepreneurs would not suffice, especially given the level of corruption prevailing in Iran. The chief providers of such investment would tend to be the West and Japan. China is not rich enough to invest yet, though in ten years it could be different. But China would have no need to outsource jobs and production to Iran.

At the moment, there is a strong possibility that the U.S. and EU might impose sanctions on Iran if they proceed with their nuclear program. The U.S. already imposes a broad range of sanctions. They could be joined by the Europeans. This could greatly constrain the growth of the Iranian economy. The U.S. and EU would also bring pressure on the rest of the world not to deal with Iran except for the most basic necessities. The U.S. and EU might also hope for political changes and moderation on the part of the Iranians under these conditions. Sanctions persuaded Libya to give up its program for weapons of mass destruction, though they went about those programs incompetently in any case (they never broke the equipment sold them by A. Q. Khan out of its crates). It would certainly drive the Iranian program into complete secrecy, which of course blunts both the deterrent effects and bullying opportunities that nuclear weapons might otherwise provide the leadership.

On the other hand, India and Pakistan suffered perhaps only brief sanctions after they tested nuclear weapons. Unlike Iraq, they had never joined the NPT. The world got used to their having crossed over the testing threshold. They did make promises not to test again. In a sense, they felt more vulnerable to each other as a result.



## **VII. Consequences for Europe (especially Southern Europe) and the United States**

### **For the Europeans**

The first impact of a nuclear-armed Iran would be on European diplomatic standing in the world. If Iran were to proceed with its enrichment program without suffering significant costs in its relations with the rest of the world, and if it were to go on to develop its own independent nuclear capability with a missile delivery system, this would be interpreted as a serious loss for the “EU 3” (France, Germany, and the UK). If Iran were to keep its capabilities “low key” (no overt tests or deployments), it is quite likely that many EU members would resume normal economic and political interactions after a decent interval.

Some in Europe had trumpeted the attempts to create a diplomatic solution to the security problem posed by a nuclear Iran as the “reasonable alternative” to the American policy of isolation, condemnation, confrontation, and the threat of preemptive attack. The EU 3 also portrayed their actions as being able to prevent a serious regional war if Israel were to attack the Iranian program in a repeat of the Israeli raid on Osirak in Iraq in 1981. The failure of EU diplomacy would further strain relations with Washington if leading EU members were to resume normal interactions with Iran after a time, in spite of Iran's programs, depending on evolution of the Washington posture as well, which also depends on the outcome in Iraq.

Second, Iran proceeding with its nuclear programs would mean that European influence in the rest of the Middle East would suffer. Israel already sees most European states as hostile and would probably use the case to bolster their argument that the Europeans would be equally ineffective in any role in the Middle East peace process as well. In addition, Arab Gulf states might not be so willing to embrace

European cooperation through NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative launched in 2004. If the Europeans were unable to resolve the nuclear issue with Iran, what might be the future of European diplomacy if Iran were more assertive in Gulf political issues? How will EU diplomacy in these areas proceed against the backdrop of a nuclear-armed Iran if most of the EU member states resumed normal ties with that country after the failure of the collective diplomatic initiative?

Third, what would the Americans do? Does a nuclear-armed Iran create further divisions between the two parts of the West? Would the two be able to agree on a joint approach in the IAEA, and failing there, would they remain united in referring the matter to the Security Council? How would each side of the Atlantic interpret this case as a test for the future of the NPT and the power and faith of global governance and multinational institutions?

For the leaders of the EU, those institutions are a sign that norms and values consistent with the development of the Europe community since its institutionalization in 1957 would govern the behavior of all states around the globe. For the current US administration, as it pursues a unilateralist approach to the world those institutions have come at worst to be seen as restraints on US sovereign prerogatives, and at best the ineffective strivings of idealistic diplomats. For Europeans to stick with the Americans in confronting Iran, they would have to face off against Russia and China in the UN Security Council—though a Chinese veto is inevitable in any case given their desperation to pin down sources of oil. The Europeans would have to align themselves more strongly with the Israelis in the peace process rather than the more balanced approach they have taken to Middle East peace so far. On the other hand, the European states would question the economic benefits of dealing with Iran in areas where they might have otherwise been eager to make advances (high technology, oil/gas infrastructure, petrochemicals).

All of these dilemmas must be weighed in the balance against the benefits otherwise accruing from a concerted US-EU effort to reverse the Iranian nuclear programs. It is difficult enough to compel a state to give up its nuclear programs once it has heavily invested in them—as the world has seen with regard to Israel, India, Pakistan, and North

Korea. The only thin reed that is being seized on is Iran's adherence to the NPT and its provisions for inspections by the IAEA. But Iran, like North Korea, threatens to cut that connection.

Lastly, will Europe, especially Southern Europe, adjust its security thinking in the face of a nuclear-armed Iran? As mentioned earlier, an Iran armed with nuclear-tipped Shehab missiles that can reach Europe might be seen in a new light, even if Iran were to declare that their possession of nuclear weapons was meant only to ensure regime survival and to deter attack by the United States or Israel, or even if they were to declare, like North Korea has, that possession of nuclear weapons would compensate for the weakness of their conventional forces.

But the existence of such an Iranian nuclear force, even a small one, might alter Southern European views about participation in theater and global missile defense programs with the Americans (by at least increasing the research and development on such systems as a hedge). Libya giving up its programs for weapons of mass destruction and missiles had removed one Mediterranean threat and a rationale for increased work on missile defense—if in fact Europeans had ever noticed or worried about Libyan programs—but such programs in Iran might change thinking in Italy, Greece, Turkey, and possibly France. It depends, of course, on the range of the emergent Iranian missiles.

Another security change might be increased attention to the strengthening of export controls in Europe on dual use technologies and coordinated counter-proliferation programs with the U.S. In revisiting export control policies, the EU would probably encounter the usual friction between EU officials in Brussels and national capitals and with business interests the countries depend on for their exports. Counter-proliferation efforts involving the militaries, interior ministries, police, and intelligence agencies would have to be pursued more energetically. If Iran is as far ahead in its enrichment program as some suspect, these measures may be like locking the barn door after the horse had already escaped. On the other hand, it is not so easy for a not-very-advanced country like Iran to complete all the steps required for an effective nuclear weapons capability, espe-

cially now that A. Q. Khan's supply service has been curtailed, so a program of continued harassment of supplies to Iran may help to keep the program limited.

For the Europeans then, the costs of a nuclear-armed Iran could be high. European states would face tough diplomatic choices, with the potential loss of economic benefits from relations with Iran, and changes in their security posture on divisive issues like missile defense. As of this writing, Iran's decision to resume uranium enrichment has meant that they have supported the American initiative in the IAEA to refer the issue to the UN Security Council.

## For the Americans

The United States would feel its position and influence with the other Gulf states would be threatened by a nuclear-armed Iran. U.S. forces would not be threatened militarily—they would not be good targets for Iran to waste its few nukes against, unless during an American invasion of Iran, but U.S. political leadership would be questioned by the other Gulf states. Those states of the Gulf have spent at least 30 years with the U.S. as the ultimate guarantor of security for their regimes, their resources, their connections to the West, and their stability against disruptive forces. For Saudi Arabia, U.S. protection dates back to 1945. From the fall of the Shah in 1979, through Saddam's two invasions (1980 and 1990) and his subsequent fall in 2003, the U.S. has put its diplomatic, military, and economic clout to work to prevent any other country or unfriendly force from controlling the Gulf region. The emergence of the war with the global extremist Islamic terrorists and with the U.S. getting bogged down in Iraq has now raised some doubts among the other countries.

Iranian nuclear weapons could further complicate this situation and with it stability in the Gulf and throughout the Middle East. If the U.S. were unable to prevent the Iranians from going nuclear, or to work with local states and the EU to create appropriate regional security to contain Iran, then U.S. leadership in the region would be further questioned. This does not mean that the other Gulf countries could somehow force the U.S. to leave the region,<sup>16</sup> nor would a nuclear Iran overtly challenge U.S. presence, but the Gulf states might well



conclude that the Iranians had increased their status and standing gained from standing up to the U.S. and the EU, especially given support by Russia and China.

Militarily, Iran's new position could have one of two impacts. It could drive the U.S. and the other Gulf countries closer. This could involve increased military cooperation and coordination of surveillance, information gathering, air/naval presence, and even missile defenses in the region. Or it could lead some of the other countries to develop their own security strategies, including accommodation with Iran (which remains a Shia country, with no very good capability to mount conventional attacks on anyone else). This situation would be especially problematic if the new Iraq were Shia-dominated and in alliance with Iran. However, given the small size and military weaknesses of these countries, this course is unlikely if the U.S. continues to deploy forces to the region.

If the Iranians do proceed from enrichment to weaponization, then they will have proven the worst fears of the U.S. (and even the Europeans). This might lead to reinforcement of the U.S. military presence in the region and a continued leadership role (which would be the exact opposite of what Iran might have hoped their possession of nuclear weapons might have caused).

The chief U.S. fear has been that a nuclear-armed Iran would be an even more assertive anti-American force in the region and that they would use the confidence gained from a successful program to bully their neighbors, e.g., in OPEC. Iran might renew its revolutionary urge to destabilize their neighbors, e.g., by insisting on greater control over their pilgrims going to Mecca. Conceivably, they could at least threaten to use nuclear weapons against U.S. forces or a Southern Europe nation, or a regional U.S. ally, if any of their initiatives were to be opposed. To believe that, one would have to assume that

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16. In 1979, upon the conclusion of the Camp David peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, U.S. forces—naval ships—were left with access to one port in the Gulf, in Bahrain, for only 30 days a year, but U.S. military training missions to the countries, notably Saudi Arabia, continued.

Iran is either bluffing or would be willing to risk a nuclear attack for a foreign policy objective of less value than regime survival. This is highly unlikely. The Iranians have not been eager to openly confront the West by taking initiatives beyond their borders. We believe that new nuclear states can be deterred, especially when dealing with other nuclear-armed states.

If Iran gained nuclear weapons, or even while they were developing them, the possibility exists that Israel might take unilateral action against Iran or to prevent Iran from operationalizing a system that could threaten Israel proper. It is hard to believe that the Israelis would know where enough of the targets were in Iran to prevent retaliatory damage to themselves. The special relationship that Israel has with the U.S. could then clash with American relations with Arab states, which would react strongly to any Israeli attack on Iran. Of course, the U.S. has struggled with this problem for at least 30 years, but a nuclear Iran would aggravate it. While some nations in the Gulf might be secretly happy if Iran were to suffer a setback, the diplomatic costs to the U.S. (if it did nothing) could be very high throughout the region. The U.S. would be under pressure to both support and condemn the strike from both domestic and international constituencies. And the Iranian program would go even deeper underground (both physically and metaphorically).

A final concern for the Americans (and Israel) is that a nuclear-armed Iran might be a source for the transfer of whole nuclear weapons to terror groups. Direct transfers, if known about (it is assumed that any terrorist who gets his hands on a nuclear weapon would want to use it against the United States), could probably be traced back to their origins. We hope the government in Iran is risk-averse to engaging in such an act, since it could result in retaliation on them. But they would need to be warned about it. The danger lies in unofficial actions by officials and technicians (much like the A.Q. Khan network) with access that could provide weapons to a terror group that might target Israel (most likely) or the U.S.

This possibility would require the U.S. to increase its information gathering and surveillance of Iran and terror groups, strengthen multilateral counter-proliferation operations to intercept any deliveries,

and issue a declaratory policy that a nuclear attack of any kind by a terror group (no matter how remotely linked to Iran) would be justification for a U.S. nuclear strike on Iran meant to destroy the regime.

The most serious challenges for the U.S. in this case are diplomatic and political, not military. A traditional deterrent approach to Iran is likely to be successful at preventing aggressive Iranian moves in the region. That approach would have the greatest chance of success if coupled with renewed commitments to the friendly regional countries of continued U.S. military presence, missile defense cooperation, and the U.S. working to prevent any Israeli preemptive attacks. Sadly, it might turn out that Iraq is not part of a program to contain Iran.



## VIII. Courses of action upon a nuclear-armed Iran

The West needs to make sure that Iran pays a price for going nuclear. This section lays out the options for the West in dealing with a nuclear-armed Iran. What can the U.S. do *alone* if confronted by this reality? How can the U.S. *and its allies* (together, “the West”) “thread the needle” between the drastic action of preemptive strikes (unlikely to be politically or militarily effective) and a meek acquiescence to a nuclear Iran? Intermediate to these options are the imposition of military containment and economic sanctions.

Western responses to a nuclear Iran should take place across the spectrum of state actions. In particular, it needs to do everything possible to communicate some basic nuclear “truths” to the Iranian government about deterrence and the limits and consequences of war fighting with nuclear weapons, including the inevitable prospect of retaliation if Iran were to use nuclear weapons at all. In a broader approach, the West needs to communicate to Iran that their connections to the global economy, beyond oil on one hand and imports of food on the other, may be severely restricted, with consequences for the quality of life and employment of their population.

### Diplomacy/Politics

Iran must know that if it thinks a nuclear weapons program will give them more leverage to drive Western militaries and other Western government organizations out of the region, they will have made a serious miscalculation. If they think they have gained a *droit de regard* over the other countries in the region, e.g., hegemony that lets them set policies toward Israel, set oil prices, determine who those countries relate to, etc., both the countries and the West are unlikely to acquiesce if a strong position is taken against Iran. In fact, the Iranians will have reinforced the rationale for Western presence as a stabilizing factor in the region. Americans and Europeans have begun a series of engagement initiatives with the smaller Gulf states (most

notably the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative in 2004). These interactions could be expanded in number and complexity.

Crossing the threshold to nuclear possession would damage Iran and its protectors in the international organizations related to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The West should exploit these fora to weaken Russian technical assistance to Iranian missile programs. China must be warned, too. The Chinese have always said they are against proliferation, and the West should remind them of this.

The West must also present a picture of deterrent power across both the conventional and nuclear spectrums to influence other states that might wish to follow the Iranian “road map” to nuclear weapons.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. and Russia need to reach agreement on ways to improve the international safeguards meant to keep civilian nuclear programs from diverting fissile material to military purposes.<sup>18</sup> We have noted earlier that Iran does not have enough uranium ore to mine for a long-term nuclear energy program. They would eventually have to enter the world uranium market. Guaranteeing nations sources of nuclear fuel by treaty rather than spreading the technology of uranium enrichment would be a good place to start.

The U.S. should also attempt to influence Israel to avoid a repeat of its 1981 attack on Iraq’s Osirak reactor. Such an attack does not seem very feasible in any case: the distances are long and the facilities are diverse and well-protected—Iran obviously learned from the Iraqi

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17. The United States has reserved the right to threaten countries that might think of using any of the three kinds of weapons of mass destruction. There has been much debate as to whether a nuclear threat should be used against the possible use of chemical or biological weapons. But there has never been any debate about retaliation against a nuclear attack. The U.S. would “welcome” a nuclear Iran to the nuclear “club” by assuring them that they were now a target for retaliation. As usual, the U.S. would leave the circumstances vague.

18. After long negotiations, Russia and Iran have reached agreement for the return of spent fuel rods from the Bushehr reactor to Russia for disposal. The rods are apparently to be delivered early in 2006. Whether Iran reneges on this agreement 5-10 years from now remains to be seen.

experience. U.S. restraint of Israel would assist in enabling the U.S. to maintain its own relations with the neighboring Arab countries in the face of an Iranian bomb capability. In this connection, the U.S. keeping the pressure on Israel and the Palestinians to make a sustainable peace would both help to strengthen U.S. relations with the Arab states and diminish the Iranian-Islamic distress over the treatment of the Palestinians that has fueled Iranian hatred of the U.S.

### **Political, military, and economic pressure on Iran**

We also recommend that the U.S. make it very clear through declaratory policies that it would regard any terror attack with nuclear weapons as an attack from Iran, however remotely linked to any Iranian involvement, likely to bring a retaliatory response from the United States.<sup>19</sup> An analogy might be, “You have had your one shot, now I get my 100 or 1,000.” Would the Iranian government want to risk suicide on the chance that any individual within its program might be connected to a terror attack of such magnitude?

The U.S. should accelerate involvement with the countries of the region (if they so desire) in the research, design, and deployment of any missile defense system for the smaller countries. Iranian capabilities will likely spark renewed interest in missile defenses, and the U.S. should be ready to increase alliance participation and resolve interoperability problems. While missile defenses are still unproven operationally, cooperative programs could signal U.S. commitment to regional partners.

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19. Some might say that such a weapon could have been provided by Pakistan. Depending on the political evolution of Pakistan, including its disintegration, we believe that the Pakistani government is likely to keep its nuclear weapons under tight control, notwithstanding the bits, pieces, designs, and technologies they allowed A. Q. Khan to sell to others, including Iran. Others might say that North Korea could sell weapons to terrorists, but the price that they would need to bolster their economy would be huge, far larger than terrorists could afford, and we think it unlikely that terrorists, even Osama bin Laden himself, could afford their price.

The U.S. needs to support anti-government groups, inside and outside Iran, in their campaigns for greater democratization and human rights by providing information, making political contacts with opposition figures, diplomatic pressure, and constant presence in the area. Iran is not a monolithic society of revolutionary zealots. It has a tradition of intellectual dissent, a cohesive national identity, and a young population that wants to be a part of the world. These facts argue for a serious effort by the West to encourage an evolution of Iranian society. We believe that the U.S. should not attempt coercive regime change. Not only is a conventional invasion infeasible, even if it were contemplated, but any such action would likely unite the population, given its already strong nationalism and the history of past American and British interference, e.g., in 1953. It is rather by encouraging open communications between the Iranian people and the world—already demonstrated by internet connections and ubiquitous satellite TV disks in Iran—that more moderate politics in Iran may emerge.

The West needs to agree a common position on making Iran pay an economic cost for their proliferation. Realistic limits on the technology exported to Iran, as well as restrictions on direct foreign investment, would damage Iranian connections to the globalization process and make the population aware of the costs to them personally of the pursuit of nuclear arms.

In summary, the West should respond to either an inevitable evolution or the achievement of a nuclear armed-Iran by:

1. Demonstrating to Iran that it will remain in the region and deprive the Iranians of any benefits they might get from a Western withdrawal;
2. Communicating to the Iranian leadership that risky foreign policies (such as support for terror groups, for which Iran will be held responsible) and nuclear weapons are a bad match and can be overwhelmingly met by U.S.-led deterrent and defensive forces with potentially devastating impacts on Iran's government and people;



3. Making the Iranians pay economically for their violations by restricting their access to the benefits of globalization (information technologies, oil/gas infrastructure support, weapons systems procurement, and direct foreign investment); and
4. Increasing support to Iranian moderates and opposition movements in order to weaken the tyrannical nature of Iran's government.

Taken together these measures can deter Iran from either using nuclear weapons or thinking that with nuclear weapons they can bully the other states in the region. But they probably are not sufficient to reverse the course that Iran now seems to be on and remove the Iranian nuclear threat. States are not terror groups and they presumably have enough regard for their survival and position in the world to outweigh their encouragement of suicidal attacks by individuals.

We hope that Iran would be cautious as a new nuclear power, especially if the U.S. adopted a declaratory policy that Iran would be targeted if any terror group carried out a nuclear attack in the United States. But the larger containment and isolation of Iran depends on greater cooperation both among the other countries of the region—which are mostly Arab and Sunni—and the U.S. and its allies. The combination of military presence, active political engagement, economic sanctions, and changes in declaratory nuclear policy are the way to deter Iran, while still preserving the retaliatory option if Iran fails to respond to the first course of action.



## IX. Final Observations

It is estimated by Western sources that it will take Iran another ten years before it has enough fissile material—presumably highly enriched uranium, but plutonium is not ruled out for they may also be building reactors as well as centrifuges—to assemble into nuclear weapons. Some believe the time may be shorter. Whatever the estimate, Iran seems to be on an inevitable course. Their program is already of long duration and has been greatly helped by the illicit transfers of equipment, technology, and designs by A. Q. Khan of Pakistan. Assembling weapons is not so easy, especially without testing, though they might forgo testing, like Israel, or wait for another event, like Pakistan following India. Mating nuclear weapons to missiles is also not easy, but they are developing the Shehab-3 with North Korean help. Rumors also indicate some non-governmental Russian help. One would not be surprised if China were also not helping on the missiles, but there are no reports, at least in public, on that. Neither Russia nor China thinks proliferation is a good thing.

So, while there is much time and diplomacy that must pass, none of the signs are encouraging. Iran seems determined to “go nuclear,” and it does not appear that there is any way to buy them off. Their cover is a nuclear energy program for the time they run out of gas and oil and, in the interim, to maximize their exports of oil and gas and thus their hard currency income. In addition to the Bushehr reactor (which by the way is located right on the Gulf coast, for access to cooling water, and thus vulnerable), they talk of another buying another ten reactors from Russia. They can’t possibly fuel all of those from their own resources (and the rods for Bushehr are being furnished by Russia). It seems that they themselves do not appreciate all the difficulties ahead—indications of a very closed elite and decision-making process.

If they do “go nuclear,” Iran is likely to produce only limited numbers of warheads and missiles. They would be in a position to strike any

country in the region, including Israel. They are unlikely to have ICBMs that can reach the U.S., but the evolution of their missiles may enable them to reach Europe. They can hardly match the nuclear capabilities of the United States.

They might never admit they have a nuclear weapons capability. Once they achieve the capability, they would have to break several taboos: testing, no-first use, declaring that they are not targeting anything in particular. They would be likely to have a deterrence policy. They can break the taboos, of course, but so then could everyone else. It is not clear that they have considered any of these questions, so the outside world would need to warn them of the dangers they face if they proceed, especially that they become a target in retaliation.

Why do people in the West (not Russia or China, apparently) worry so much about a nuclear Iran? Isn't Iran a relatively peaceful and secure state, not likely to attack another state? The first answer is that the region, while much of it is relatively stable, is vulnerable to drastic and violent change in the coming years. Iraq is already in turmoil. Syria is in deep trouble after they assassinated Hariri in Lebanon and has an incompetent government. It is hard to believe the Saudi system can survive the increasing impingement of the outside world. Pakistan could descend into chaos. Iran may well fear even more Western intrusion, like the U.S. in Iraq, in the coming years. Or they may see opportunities for themselves to gain more influence and even impose a new caliphate in the region.

Why they might feel confident about doing these things because they have a few nuclear weapons and yet no real conventional forces is a mystery. In any case, people in the West wouldn't care except that most of the world's oil reserves are in the area. They fear the disruption of oil supplies—and yet over the next ten years the demand for oil is likely to outstrip supply. The match between demand and supply is too neatly balanced at the moment and any disruption, as demonstrated by the impact of the hurricanes in the U.S., has immediate economic consequences that are not so easily rolled back. Another factor is that one could imagine a huge split in the more advanced world, back into competitive blocs. That is, the United States, Europe, Russia, India, and China could all go separate ways. We already see

Russia and China and soon India ready to make deals with the devil if they see economic benefit.

We have mentioned above several scenarios for the West—scenarios that would embroil the rest of the world as well depending on how they are applied:

1. Acquiescence.
2. Containment and deterrence.
3. Economic sanctions.
4. Preemptive attack—better described as aggressive prevention.

**Acquiescence** means admitting Iran to the nuclear club, like Israel, India, and Pakistan (none of them signatories of the NPT). For its part, the U.S., as the only real guarantor of continued stability in the region, would feel vulnerable. It would not want to be dictated to on oil, threats to Israel, assistance to terrorists, etc., by a nuclear Iran. Iran would be greatly enabled to expand and make more sophisticated its nuclear weapons capabilities as all the merchants of death surface to legitimacy and flock to Iran to sell their evil goods. Acquiescence doesn't sound like a good option.

**Containment** means surrounding Iran with military force in some way. Around the world, it is known that containment, led by the U.S., isolated the Soviet Union. To threaten China with containment is to send them into agonies of insecurity. Containment means giving Iran no opportunity to dictate regional affairs. It involves close relations between the nations of the West and the other local countries. It also means that the U.S. must ensure a stable and favorable outcome in Iraq, which means a longer stay for the U.S. there. After all, the U.S. contained the Iraq-Iran war of 1980-1988 and Iran has been contained on both sides by the U.S. presence in Iraq and Afghanistan for the last three years. Containment certainly means that any military action by Iran would be swiftly countered. The last time they attacked the U.S. Navy, in 1987-1988, when the U.S. ships were escorting reflagged Kuwaiti tankers, Iran lost its navy.

**Deterrence** is a little narrower than containment in concept (the two concepts got confused in the Cold War). It means, “Welcome to the nuclear club: you are now a target—you are subject to retaliation if you were ever to use a single nuclear weapon, and we can evaporate you.” Iran can threaten more limited retaliation itself if they were faced with other aggressive action in the region. It remains to be seen whether the security they think they gain with a nuclear capability makes them more aggressive, though.

**Sanctions** could really hurt Iran, even if the world still lets their oil flow (which it must, unfortunately). Sanctions forced Libya to give up its aspirations for weapons of mass destruction and missiles on which to deliver them, but it was a weak, small country, and Qaddafi’s people were getting restless under the deprivations sanctions inflicted on them. Sanctions actually worked on Iraq—again to the great detriment of the people, but also leaving Iraq essentially defenseless after its devastating loss to the allied coalition in 1991. But sanctions would have to be under UN authority, and it is not clear that Russia and China and now India would not veto any such resolution or cheat on any agreements. They want to be able to sell to Iran and want in turn some kind of favorable access to their oil and gas, as well as being able to build pipelines across Iranian territory.

**The last alternative** is “disarmament under extreme prejudice” by forceful means, in accordance with the Bush II Administration’s “pre-emption policy” (actually a prevention policy, not “leaping to take a first step under imminent threat” in the classic meaning of preemption). This policy was stated in a rather extreme chapter in an otherwise conventional U.S. national security strategy issued in 2002. It may have been a one-off policy, to be applied only to Iraq, but it has stricken fear around the world.

The trouble with preemption on Iranian nuclear facilities are that (a) air strikes to take out Iranian nuclear facilities appear to be infeasible (and are generally dismissed by U.S. Republicans as something President Clinton did and thus ineffectual), and (b) the U.S. ground forces are exhausted by Iraq and, in any case, Iran is a far larger country with more difficult country for ground forces to traverse than Iraq.

Iran and Europeans may fear an adventure by the Bush Administration of that sort, but it is unlikely in any case.

At this point, altogether, it looks like Iran is on an inevitable course to at least have enriched uranium and it is very likely that they may attempt to build nuclear weapons that could be mounted as warheads on their Shehab-3 missiles. If they proceed in this manner, it also means their relative isolation by most of the rest of the world and thus an inability to join the global economy in any broader way that could provide employment to its people—though China is a wild card in this regard at the moment.

Iran's isolation would in turn mean an unhappy, subdued population, which they are already feeling as the regime conservatives snuff out the political freedoms that had been beginning to appear. It is likely that all the regime can promise them if it continues on the nuclear path is "let them eat nukes and oil."

It also means that the West, particularly the United States, will have to continue to take an active role in the Gulf region and throughout the Middle East—which may or may not aggravate the problem of global extremist Islamic terrorism, depending on whether progress in politics and economics can be achieved in the other countries. This is too bad. However world opinion may cling to the old Soviet propaganda that all the U.S. wants to do is create bases all around the world, Americans really want to go home. They hate the Gulf: it is hot, polluted, there are no good ports, there are terrorists, and there is practically no alcohol. We would prefer that the countries there live in peace with each other, at peace with the whole world, and to connect to the global economy so that their people can prosper. Nuclear weapons do not serve these purposes at all.





# **Appendix I:**

## **Discussion at CEMISS, November 3, 2005**

### **Introduction by Admiral Callini, Director of CeMISS**

The victory of Ahmedinejad is the culmination of the conservative camp in Iran to reassert domination over domestic political affairs. Ahmedinejad said he would clean up the oil industry, help the younger generation to advance, and support the nuclear industry. But so far he has been counter-productive: his pensioning off of civil servants is a threat to government efficiency. He has risked UN sanctions with his statements about proceeding with uranium enrichment and his threats to Israel. The Iranian stock market fell by more than 20 percent after his election.

Now the Supreme Leader is putting restraints on Ahmedinejad. He issued a decree that the Expediency Council under Rafsanjani was to supervise the government and the Majlis (the parliament). The Expediency Council's judgments were to be final. Rafsanjani was to temper the zeal of the new president and the hard-line Majlis. It was to be a place of wisdom.

The Paris Agreement between the EU and Iran from 2004 has all but collapsed. Iran had wanted a full cycle program, but it was excessively broad for merely fuel enrichment. The IAEA has conducted many inspections and found Iran had violated IAEA safeguards. But the EU had wanted it to give up the fuel cycle program. Then Iran resumed its conversion work. Years of secrecy have led to mistrust by the EU and the U.S. of Iranian promises about the civilian nature of their program. That decision forced the EU to press for referral of the issue from the IAEA to the UN Security Council. But any action by the UNSC would be hard to achieve and would be unlikely to succeed.

Russia and China would most likely veto it. Iran could thus not be forced into compliance.

The United States sees Iran as the supreme sponsor of terrorism, a worse threat than Iraq was.

The U.S. has three choices:

1. Military action against the nuclear facilities. That wouldn't succeed. We don't know the full extent of those facilities. Iran could respond against U.S. interests in Iraq and spur Hezbollah in Lebanon to take action against Israel.
2. A concerted diplomatic effort to stop Iran's program. The effort has solely been by the EU to date. The U.S. couldn't take that route before. Ahmedinejad makes it even harder now. There's no trust between the two sides.
3. The U.S. accepts that it is unable to prevent Iran from proceeding to establish the full fuel cycle. It then hopes to overthrow the regime. That is unlikely. There would also be a risk that Israel would strike the facilities.

He had two questions for Dr. Gaffney and Dr. Whiteneck:

1. Why does the U.S. assert that it will take another ten years for Iran to develop nuclear weapons? A couple of years ago, the estimate was that it would take only two to five years.
2. Iran has received support from Pakistan. Would Pakistan be threatened by Iranian nuclear weapons?

**Dr. Gaffney** responded that he didn't know why the U.S. NIE (National Intelligence Estimate) stretched the time out to ten years. He speculated that it might be because of the difficulties of the project, especially now that A. Q. Khan's help had been cut off. After the Iraq situation, the U.S. has struggled with the problem of over-estimating vs. under-estimating. In any case, he didn't think Pakistan would ever be a target for Iran.

**Dr. Lucio Martino** wondered if Pakistan would sell nuclear weapons to Saudi Arabia if Iran developed such weapons. He also wondered about the developing Iran-India relationship.

(Dr. Martino, Dr. Gaffney, and Dr. Whiteneck then presented the briefing—see Appendix II)

## Discussion

**Comment.** You have assumed that Iran wants nuclear weapons only for external purposes, but the literature says that they are doing this only for internal reasons.

**Gaffney.** There's no question that having a program—whether to enrich uranium, for nuclear power, or for nuclear weapons—has become a source of national pride in Iran. Moreover, once such a program gets started, it tends to be self-perpetuating: it gets resources, it attracts the best and brightest minds who get privileges, it unfolds in secrecy, and it would be hard to stop.

**Whiteneck.** But it does raise concerns externally, and other countries react—so then Iran's foreign policy gets complicated by the issue. The Indians and Pakistanis learned this quickly, at least as far as the other country was concerned. They have established a hotline and are pursuing other means of communication with each other.

**Martino.** The Iranians can't discard the program anymore. There are thousands more nuclear weapons in the United States—but does Iran even notice?

**Comment.** The Iranians seemed to be concentrating more on their internal politics. It is, after all, something of a democracy. They have no tradition of an aggressive foreign policy in the region. Thus, the reason for them to pursue a nuclear program, per analysts, would be to use it for negotiation.

**Gaffney.** He agreed that internal politics were important in this case, and that they haven't tended to be aggressive in the region (except for some attempts to foment internal revolutions, especially in Bahrain). But it isn't clear that a nuclear program is a bargaining chip for

something else they want, with the implication that they would give the program up—it only complicates their relations with the rest of the world.

**Comment.** He noted that the Expediency Council has a center for strategic studies. Iran insists on having a nuclear *energy* program, but it is keeping open the question of a nuclear *weapons* program. Israel has reconciled the four elements that were laid out in the briefing, but Israel has the support of the U.S. Iran's program started with the Shah. Iran sees itself as the strongest country in the region. Al Qaeda forced U.S. forces out of Saudi Arabia. Iran has studied the Iraqi experience with a nuclear program. We have to discover what the Iranian political mentality is. Once Saddam lost the first time (in 1991), he disarmed because he was confronting something much more powerful. Iran has the examples of Pakistan and India. Thus, it has only to deter the U.S. on the spot. Israel has a much less serious problem.

Regime change in Iraq is leaving a Shia arc across the region: Shias could be in control in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. The Shias in Syria and Saudi Arabia will be a threat to the Alawis and to the Saudi stronghold of the Najdh. Iran wants the Israelis out of the Occupied Territories—by which Ahmedinejad means the whole of the old Palestine. The real change is that the majority of the people now counts.

What to do with the Pakistani example? The Pakistanis discovered that deterrence is not a Western gadget, but a serious concept. They found they have to dialogue. There is no serious leakage of Pakistani nuclear weapons to al Qaeda. [Some non-serious?]

Would Iran in ten years still want nuclear weapons?

As for the options presented:

- Iran used to be contained. Containment failed upon the death of Khomeini [in 1989—or had it failed with the tanker war of 1987-88?].
- Complacency might be an option.
- Can the U.S. be the full guarantor of Gulf security?

- For economic sanctions, the weakest spot is corruption. Ahmedinejad is not doing much about it, despite his talk. Is it one of the ways in which to engage them? Let them have nuclear energy?
- As for invasion, the U.S. no longer wants to invade Iran.

Even Israel gets no clout from having nuclear weapons.

**Gaffney.** He agreed with most of those points. Al Qaeda may have claimed that they forced U.S. forces out of Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. knew that their departure would remove some of Osama bin Laden's grievances, but the U.S. would have removed those forces anyway. After all, the U.S. did not have forces in the country until 1990, and then both for defense of the country and in preparation for evicting Saddam from Kuwait (and except for the AWACS aircraft the Saudis requested back in 1979), and kept air forces there across the 1990s to support the southern no-fly zone over Iraq, but there was no longer a need to station forces in Saudi Arabia upon the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the U.S. was only too glad to take its force units out.

The U.S. got involved in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf mostly because of the press of events. It has thus taken a strong position there by inadvertence—it didn't plan it and the area is a miserable place to be in. But there's no other outside country beside the U.S. that can maintain stability.

**Whiteneck.** Does Shia identity trump Iraqi identity? The U.S. couldn't imagine Europe being controlled by Hitler or the Soviets—or the Middle East being controlled by radical Islamists. The West as a whole wouldn't be able to stand it. So the U.S. can't give up its control. Lots of other countries have ships in the Gulf as well as the Americans.

Israel keeps nuclear weapons for deterrence—but they are of no help to them in countering the *Intifada*.

Would Iran be in the same position? Would they build just a few weapons in order to put doubt into the minds of any attacker? At the same time, could the West stand losing 2-3 cities if Iran did use nuclear weapons?

**Martino.** The U.S. went to Europe first to throw back the Germans, and then stayed there to counter the Russians. And now it's the much smaller problem of Iran, and with less contact between the two sides.

**Comment.** He's encouraged that Iran sees the world as important. We've got to understand that. Iran wants to establish itself as a regional power. That would not be inconsistent with containment or deterrence as a policy (to maintain the peace). The Iranians have their internal problems. There's a new generation after Khomeini and they are not in favor of many of the government's policies. We need to encourage them from outside. How can we support reformers without making them look like poodles of the West?

**Comment.** From the conversation today, he is less intrigued by Iran than by the United States. What is the U.S. objective? What does it want to deter Iran from? There's a new international order: where does the U.S. want Iran to fit in that order? The U.S. might discover that Iran may be a key ingredient for stability in the Middle East.

**Whiteneck.** The West has a general goal of non-proliferation. It presumes that proliferation is bad. It presumes that rogue states would get more militant if they had nuclear weapons. But states can be deterred. They worry about regime survival. Can we get them to behave? The U.S. doesn't really want to be there in the Gulf. U.S. foreign policy is very reactive.

**Comment (Sacco).** Will al Qaeda still be around in ten years?

**Whiteneck.** We will still be dealing with it across the next ten to twenty years. It is not just a question of globalization. It will be a long-term battle for hearts and minds. The West can win the war of ideas because we have a better idea (economic development and jobs). A country can no longer be autarkic. As for the terrorists, we hope they will get older and end up languishing like the various branches of the Palestinians did in cities like Damascus. (This depends on our cutting off the recruitment of new youngsters.)

**Martino.** Al Qaeda and terrorists may evolve across that time.

**Comment.** Everyone has been referring to the ideological intensity of the current regime in Iran. He would expect Ahmedinejad to declare he has the *Iranian* bomb, as a matter of pride. But if they decide they need nuclear weapons because of the threat, they would keep those weapons secret, like the Israelis do.

On deterrence, two key expressions should be added. In the Cold War, it was mutual deterrence, on a bilateral basis. But it also became extended deterrence—that is, countries seeking protection and asking for deterrence.

**Whiteneck.** We can be deterred by only a few weapons. Minimal deterrence can work. We also talk about deterring a country by threatening to change their regime.

**Martino.** Deterrence and containment should be considered together.

**Comment.** Would deterrence be symmetrical? Would we engage the Iranians?

**Gaffney.** The description of acquiescence we used does not appear to be sufficient. The question is one of engaging them, of seeking a deal. The U.S. itself can't deal with them. Right now, there's zero trust. Maybe the Europeans can.

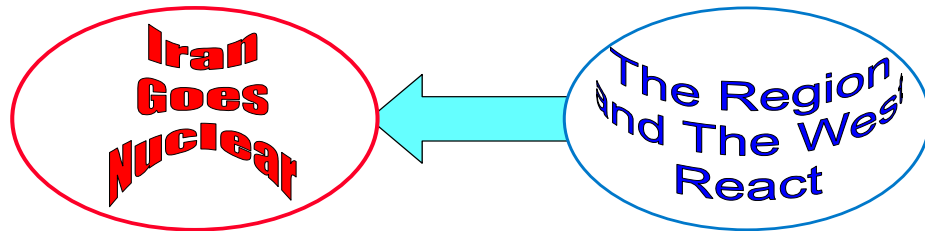
**Final remarks by Admiral Callini.** He thanked the authors for their presentation. We have talked about an important problem. We are watching this situation carefully. There is much commentary on the TV programs about it. STRATFOR says there are 25 al Qaeda people roaming about in Iran. They are under the protection of the Pasdaran. We don't know why they are there. But the young population of Iran is in favor of the U.S. They are willing to embrace the Western way of life, Western civilization. We should look to the younger general. We shouldn't do anything to alienate them. We may like strong measures, but they can create bad reactions. He noted that another meeting of IAEA on the subject of Iran is coming up in a month.





## Appendix II: Briefing

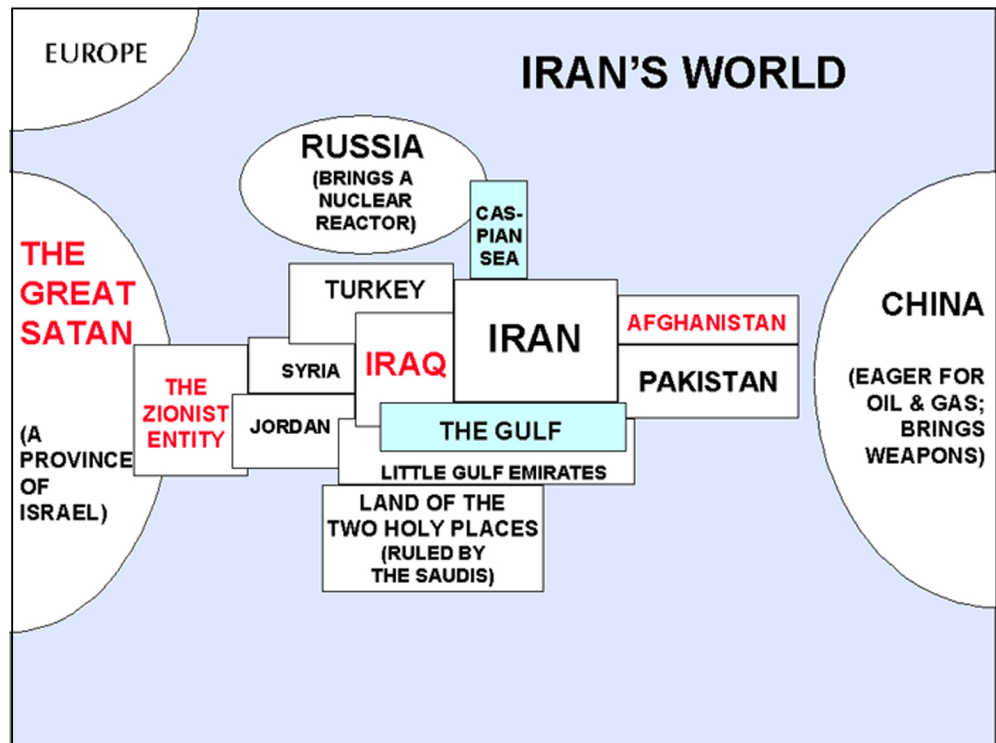
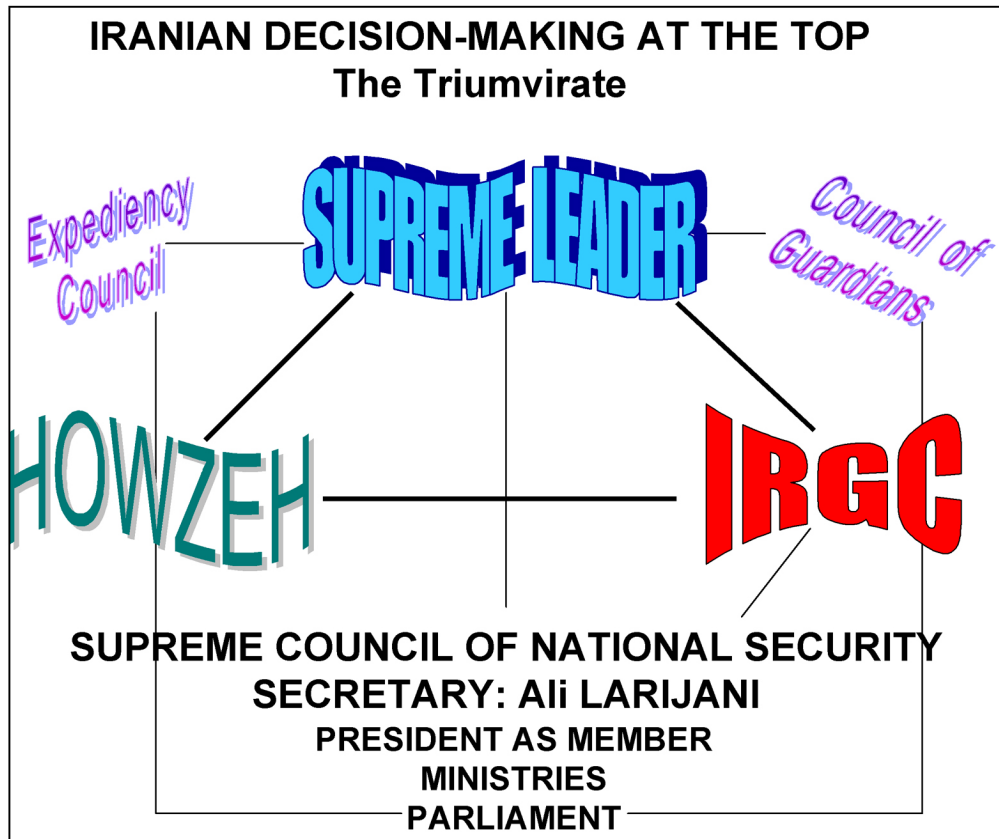
### A Nuclear-Armed Iran's Impact on Global Security



A Report By:  
H. H. Gaffney  
Dan Whiteneck  
for the Military Centre for Strategic Studies  
Roma

# IRAN

PERSIAN-ARYAN  
SHIA  
LONG HISTORY  
CONTINGUOUS TERRITORY  
LARGE (70 MILLION)  
DOESN'T ATTACK OTHER COUNTRIES  
(just Abu Musa and Tunbs)  
THEOCRATIC  
REVOLUTIONARY



## From the world into Iran



### WHAT IRAN SEES AS ITS ROLE IN THE REGION

- Wants stable – manipulable – Iraq as a neighbor. Afghanistan, too.
- Wants to be free to take the Pilgrimage.
- Wants to “wipe Israel off the map,” per Ahmedinejad.
  - Supports Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine.
  - Keeps good relations with Syria as the path to support the above.
- Wants the United States out of the region.
- Problem of stability vs. revolution

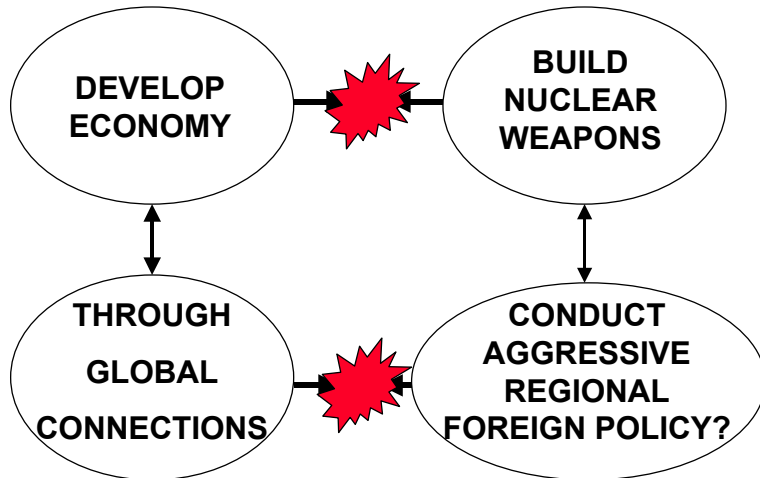
### **WHAT IRAN SEES AS ITS ROLE IN THE WORLD**

- **Strong participant in OPEC. Third largest reserves.**
- **Wants to be free to keep pumping oil, develop gas exports.**
- **Willing to make deals with China and India, including pipelines across Iranian territory.**
- **Wants freedom to deal in world economy, even join WTO. Not so sure about foreign investment.**
- **Wants to do all this to create jobs for their people.**
- **Wants to be seen as a leader of Muslims.**

### **BUT IRAN WANTS TO BE FREE TO DEVELOP A NUCLEAR PROGRAM**

- **Signatory of NPT, which allows development of nuclear power, with inspections by IAEA.**
- **Says program is only for power generation so can (a) have more of its oil for export, and (b) for power once oil supplies dwindle.**
- **Says NPT allows them to enrich uranium.**
- **But secretive program since 1980s, took imports from A. Q. Khan.**
- **Own uranium ore insufficient for long-term power, only for weapons.**
- **Developing Shehab-3 missile based on North Korean No Dong, and rumors that looking at how to mount nuclear warhead.**
- **Hard relations with IAEA, hard negotiations with EU.**
- **Ten years away from weapons, by latest estimates.**

## IRAN'S DILEMMAS AND CHOICES



Assume Iran  
will proceed to  
nuclear weapons

10 years from now...

## **HOW IRAN PROCEEDS TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

- In secret, or openly in defiance of the world?
- If in secret, the Israeli way – let it simply be rumored?
- Highly enriched uranium or plutonium?
- Test or no test? Testing is a high taboo – others would test as well.
- Just for the Shehab-3 ballistic missile, or a new one, or aircraft bombs?
- How many? Could only be a slow accumulation.

## **WHAT POLICY STANCE IRAN TAKES IF IT HAS NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

- First, if they leave NPT (like NK), all assume they have or will have nuclear weapons.
- If secret and rumored, they can only threaten vaguely.
- If they test, it's open; they invite opprobrium.
- If declared and clear, then several alternatives:
  - Obey strong taboo against first use, or not?
  - If only second use (retaliation), then they have embraced deterrence. Deter who and what?
- And then they have the dilemma of what to target... (though the new taboo is “we don't target anybody”).

### IF NUCLEAR, WHAT INFLUENCE DOES IT GIVE IRAN?

- They might well deter Israeli or U.S. attack on them, including a U.S. conventional invasion.
- Do they otherwise threaten weak Saudi Arabia, or force Saudis to buy nukes for themselves?
- Do they embolden Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad?
- Do not forget: they are still Shia, the rest mostly Sunni.
- Would they give nukes to al Qaeda terrorists? And if al Qaeda used them, would Iran REALLY think Iran would be immune from retaliation?

### HOW MAY THE WEST REACT TO A NUCLEAR IRAN?

- **ACQUIESCENCE?** Says they can still join rest of world...
  - Admit them to nuclear club, like India and Pakistan?
  - But negotiate to limit Iran's proliferation?
- **CONTAINMENT?** Meant to limit influence in their region...
  - Solidify relations with all the surrounding states.
  - Announce a policy of containment (i.e., alliance to respond to Iranian aggression)
- **DETERRENCE?** Threaten retaliation...
  - "Welcome to the nuclear club: you are now a target, and we have a lot more than you do!"
  - Missile defenses?
- **ECONOMIC SANCTIONS?** Cut them off from the world?
  - Like those imposed on Libya? Would they work on Iran?
- **PREEMPTIVE ATTACK?** "Disarmament under extreme prejudice."

**CONVEYING RATIONALITY, I.E., DETERRENCE**  
(And the inefficiencies and difficulties of feedback)

