

**THE NUCLEARIZATION OF IRAN:
MOTIVATIONS, INTENTIONS AND
AMERICA'S RESPONSES**

John N. Hanna

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Dr. Timothy W. Luke

Dr. Douglas A. Borer

Dr. Gerard Toal

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the strategic intentions behind the Iranian state's programs for acquiring nuclear weapons. Using Graham Allison's Rational Actor Model of national decision-making, this thesis investigates three questions: 1) Iran's motivations for obtaining nuclear weapons; 2) Iran's strategies for actual use of nuclear weapons; and, 3) alternative political frameworks for the U.S. to use with Iran to minimize the negative effects of a nuclearized Iran.

This study asserts that Iran would most likely acquire nuclear weapons for the purposes of self-reliance, a greater international voice, to make up for deficiencies in conventional weapons, and for deterrence. Some scholars argue that since Iran should be designated a "rogue" state, it may become aggressive or hostile once obtaining nuclear weapons. Yet, Iran's political actions actually seem to have become increasingly pragmatic. Hence, it appears that Iran would use this arsenal to induce caution among its rivals to avoid major wars, as well as a tool for deterrence.

While current political differences between Iran and America are considerable, this research recommends pursuing greater political engagement with Tehran, focusing on mutual benefits. American policymakers should implement policies which rely on positive inducements for change as well as sanctions for non-compliance. If no rapprochement takes place prior to Iran's nuclearization, however, the U.S. will need to employ tactics for minimizing the significance of Iran having nuclear weapons. This research suggests that Washington could begin by implementing economic, technical and material sanctions, establishing a Middle East missile defense system, and beefing-up U.S. coastal defenses.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to research and then analyze the motivating factors behind the Islamic Republic of Iran's apparent plans to acquire nuclear weapons. More specifically, this paper investigates Iran's security concerns (internal as well as external) to reveal the strategic intentions motivating the government leadership to pursue the objective of nuclearization. This research also seeks to understand what type of military doctrine Iran possibly would implement for the use of these weapons once it has obtained nuclear arms. Finally, this study examines possible ways in which U.S. policymakers should attempt to approach a nuclearized Iran.

Most importantly this paper will shed light on Iran's security concerns from the strategic perspective of Iran's political/military leaders. Thus, the focus will mostly fall on the global objectives for weapons procurement, and the historical political/military practices of their operations. To reach such an understanding, this research will outline in detail: 1) Iran's strategic motivations for obtaining nuclear weapons; 2) Iran's nuclear Concept of Operations (CONOPS); and, 3) Iran's strategies for actual use of nuclear weapons in order to satisfy its strategic goals. One of the major interests of this study is to also explore alternative approaches to the current system of "isolationism" which the United States has adopted towards dealing with Iran. In other words, this research intends to provide to American policymakers with a revised political framework to use with Iran in order to minimize the possible negative effects that Iranian nuclear weapons would have on the U.S. presence in the Middle East.

In attempting to meet the research goals set here, there are some important questions that will be excluded because they do not assist in answering the fundamental questions which are

raised in this study. Some examples of these questions are: 1) Iran's current quasi-nuclear infrastructure, 2) ways in which the Islamic Republic of Iran has been attempting to acquire nuclear weapons; and, 3) the estimated time it will take Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. Finally, this study does not attempt to outline what the United States can or should do in order to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons to the Islamic Republic of Iran. While these questions are related to the present research topic, they do not greatly help in analyzing Iran's motivations to acquire nuclear weapons, their potential CONOPS and America's response to a nuclearized Iran. In addition, these questions have been discussed in excess within already existing literature dealing with the Islamic Republic's nuclear weapons program.

Theoretical Perspective

Before considering in much depth Iran's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) program, one first needs to examine what the term "Weapons of Mass Destruction" actually means. According to the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, The U.S. Department of Defense defines WMD as follows: "In arms control usage, weapons that are capable of a high order of destruction and/or of being used in such a manner as to destroy large numbers of people, it can be nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons." However, the application of such a term is usually much more fluid and depends greatly on the user and time in which it is used. In World War I, for example, "weapons that are capable of a high order of destruction" would have been machine guns and mustard gas. However, that definition has had to change after the creation of the atomic bomb and biological warfare. What are known as WMD today, will become obsolete as time progresses, and new weapons are eventually manufactured. Thus, the definition of Weapons of Mass Destruction needs to be rooted within a particular time and context. Gert G.

Harigel, from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, has gone so far as to argue that nuclear, biological and chemical weapons should be more accurately designated as “*weapons of terror*” against civilians and “*weapons of intimidation*” for soldiers (Harigel, 2000). He makes this argument mainly because within the last century, more people have died at the hands of assault rifles, handguns, land mines, and to a lesser extent mortars, fragmentation bombs, and hand grenades than from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons (Harigel, 2000). However, for the purpose of this research, the conventional definition as prescribed by the U.S. Department of Defense will be recognized.

In addition, the term “nuclearization” is used throughout this research to categorize a nation-state that has crossed over publicly the nuclear-armed threshold. In other words, a nuclearized country is one that has acquired the technological infrastructure to create, build, and effectively employ a nuclear weapon. (Nuclear power for the purpose of civil uses is not included in this category.) Although the way in which the nuclear weapon is viewed and could be used by a nation is critically important to its deployment, it is not relevant to its categorization as being nuclearized. Currently, the world has seven nuclearized nation-states (United States, Russia, China, France, Great Britain, India and Pakistan). Israel and North Korea are suspected to have these atomic weapons as well; however, neither one of these countries has officially declared it. At this point, according to the American Government, the Middle East does not have any nuclearized nations. For the purpose of regional stability, and for its own self-interests, the United States would like to see this condition maintained.

The issue of Iran’s procurement of nuclear weapons, in order to become a nuclearized state, is not a new one. Several important questions related to this topic have been raised in some form or another in literature dealing with Iran and WMD. Most studies, however, focus on the

estimated timelines it would take Iran to acquire WMD, as well as seek to establish the country's perceived desires to acquire a nuclear weapons program. Even though several predictions have been advanced and multiple answers have been proposed on the subject, nearly all draw from a similar theoretical framework: the Rational Actor Model.

There have been other theories used when studying foreign policy. For example, Graham Allison in his book The Essence of Decision Making, analyzed two other theoretical models when studying the decision-making processes during the Cuban Missile Crisis: "Organizational Behavior" and "Governmental Politics". Unlike the Rational Actor model, which assumes that foreign-policy decisions reflect the priorities of a rational minded state, these other two models recognize the importance of organizational constraints and bureaucratic influences. The first of the two looks at the government as a type of organization, which produces outputs rather than decisions. Information is brought into the organization/government as inputs, and is then processed within it to produce these outputs (i.e. decisions). This particular theory makes the government appear as an organization creating decisions based on the data fed into it, rather than as an individual entity making the most rational choices. Foreign policy is thus a result of a process, not of values or ideology. The other theoretical framework Governmental Politics, analyzes the decisions made by a government as a power struggle between bureaucratic institutes within the government. Rather than choices being made as the optimal solution for a country's strategic dilemma, the government is seen as making its decisions as a form of give-and-take bargaining between different bureaucratic entities within that government. Each organization thus agrees with the final decision only after their concerns have been addressed and taken into consideration.

While it is important to note different theoretical frameworks that foreign policy research is constructed under, it should be mentioned that the great majority of arguments are analyzed under the Rational Actor Model. The reason, justified or not, is because it is the most simplistic to understand and to conceptualize when studying the decision-making processes of a nation-state. In addition, it enables researchers with the perspectives to understand and predict with greater confidence, future outcomes or actions taken by a country's government. It is worth outlining at this stage, the basic assumptions on which this model rests since it has been relied on in addressing most questions related to Iran's nuclear weapons program.

According to Graham Allison, “[t]he attempt to explain international events by recounting the aims and calculations of nations or governments is the trademark of the Rational Actor Model” (Allison, 1971, p. 10). Thus, the theory starts with the premise “that the actor is a national government”, “that the behavior of a nation reflects purpose or intention” and that “the action is chosen as a calculated solution to a strategic problem” (Allison, 1971, p. 10). In other words, when one analyzes an international event, and the national government is seen as an “actor”, and the actions chosen by this “actor” are reasonable choices predicated upon its national objectives, then one is using the Rational Actor Model (Allison, 1971, p. 12).

The concept of the Rational Actor Model can be better understood once it is broken-down into its fundamental components: 1) Goals and Objectives, 2) Options, 3) Consequences, and 4) Choices. National security and interests are the fundamental categories from which strategic goals/objectives are conceived. Once these goals have been articulated, the next step for the rational actor would be to consider the options available to it as a unitary actor. Here, the various possibilities pertinent to a strategic problem provide a broad selection of options to be chosen from by the actor. After the options have been deliberated, the rational actor will then take into

consideration the consequences of each of the possible options that are available. Typically, the rational actor takes into consideration the benefits and costs to a decision. Finally, when all of this information is gathered and evaluated, the rational actor selects a choice. In this final stage of the decision-making process of the rational actor, a choice is made based upon “value-maximizing”. In other words, the rational actor makes his selection after determining which consequence is seen to be the highest ranking in terms of his goals and objectives (Allison, 1971, p. 33); most of the studies dealing with Iran’s nuclear weapons procurement appeal in one way or another to the logic inherent to this theoretical model.

While this theoretical approach is the most simplistic to conceptualize, and thus most often used, it should be noted that there are inherent weaknesses to this model. The Rational Actor Model ignores the significance of culture and religion in determining the “rational” and “irrational” behaviors of a government. This is of critical importance for the purpose of this study, because (as described in Chapter 4) culture and religion have significant impacts on the way in which the Iranian leaders make decisions that govern their country. These two symbols of Persian life: culture and religion, are interwoven into the government’s structure, and thus this research stresses the importance of these institutions while developing its argument under the Rational Actor Model.

Research Questions and Objectives

Middle East regional stability has long been a strategic goal to U.S. foreign policymakers. Their sea-lanes of communication (from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea via the Suez Canal, and the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean via the Strait of Hormuz) are some of the most widely used for both commercial vessels and military naval units. In addition, ever since

the oil embargo of 1973, the United States has realized the strategic importance of the Middle East energy reserves. Therefore, establishing regional stability is of great importance to American foreign policymakers. In keeping with this goal, another critical objective is preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons to countries in this region of the world.

Iran is currently the strongest Middle Eastern military power (other than Israel), and Tehran has a great desire to lessen Western influence in this region. It has been assessed, as well, that Iran may be the first Islamic country in the Middle East to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. With the willing support of several countries to supply Iran with the materials, technologies and scientific know-how to produce its first atomic weapon, America must now reevaluate the prospects of preventing the nuclearization of Iran.

Proliferation of nuclear weapons to the Islamic Republic, or to any nation within the Middle East, could pose a great threat to U.S. national security and international stability. A nuclearized Iran, in particular, would do much to destabilize the already fragile security balance of the Middle East. Even more serious, many American allies neighboring Iran would find themselves in a very tense situation, and they might feel the need to establish their own nuclear weapons program to counter this new threat. The possible end result could be a very hostile and destabilized political/military environment within the Middle East.

The objectives of this research, then, are to answer a new set of questions pertinent to today's security environment. Why is the Islamic Republic of Iran attempting to acquire nuclear weapons? Is it simply to eliminate Israeli and American presence in this region, or will it be a mean of defensive deterrence? Or, is it mostly for the Persian "pride," as was claimed under the Shah, to legitimize the accomplishments of the Islamic Revolution? Does the Iranian leadership believe that obtaining this weapon ultimately will establish them as a regional power, and thus it

can provide greater bargaining leverage with their regional neighbors and the United States? Or, could this be an attempt to acquire political/technological status of a "First World" country?

This study focuses on Iran's national defense priorities to explain how nuclear weapons could be employed, if and when they were acquired. It attempts to determine Iran's CONOPS for employment and investigates the possible factors as to why and how Iran would use nuclear weapons. What might be some of the factors in the decisions made by the Iranian leadership in using nuclear weapons against the United States? Will their doctrine maintain this weapon to be used only as a last resort if Tehran or the Islamic regime's existence is put in jeopardy? Or, will the Iranian leadership attempt to use this weapon as a possible terrorist threat?

Finally, this research investigates how American foreign policymakers should reevaluate and reconsider new approaches when dealing with a nuclearized Iran. Is the "isolationism" policy still the most adequate way to work with Iran? With the current drastic changes taking place in the Middle East security environment, this study seeks to determine whether an alternative means of conducting Iranian foreign policy would be prudent, and, if so, what possible changes in U.S. policy should be made in order to minimize American security risks.

The first section of this study, Chapter 3, will provide the reader a brief, chronological history of Iran's attempts to acquire nuclear power. This section investigates from the time dating back to the Shah and his desires to create a civil nuclear infrastructure, to the latest attempts of the Islamic Regime to purchase nuclear reactors from other foreign countries. This chapter provides the reader a better understanding of Iran's long historical desire to become one of the elite nuclearized nations. Chapter 4 discusses and analyzes Iran's motivations to acquire a nuclear weapon. Here, the research investigates Iran's perception of itself and its understanding of the outside world to better grasp its fundamental desire to become nuclearized. In this section,

we go beyond regional security concerns and investigate further into the Islamic Republic's international goals and internal as well as external constraints to these goals. The third section of this paper, Chapter 5, researches the multiple ways in which the Iranian government would most likely employ a nuclear weapon. In doing so, the study investigates Iran's command and control structures to determine who has the ultimate say as to *when*, *where*, and *how* Iran would use a nuclear weapon. Here the paper also analyzes the regional and international goals/objectives of the Islamic Republic and determines the most rational approaches the Iranian government would utilize a nuclear weapon in order to achieve their strategic goals. Finally, Chapter 6 looks at the current U.S. policy of dual containment and its multiple weaknesses in dealing with the Islamic Republic. Here, the study attempts to find new approaches where American policymakers could adopt in dealing with not only a religiously fundamental Iran, but a nuclear-armed one as well. In this section, the research looks to find an improved U.S./Iranian political framework to operate under in order to minimize the negative impact of a nuclear-armed Iran would have on American presence in the Middle East and the regional security environment in general.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

There have been a great deal written about Iran and its international security concerns since the Islamic Revolution. While the majority of articles and books have revolved around conventional armament, missile systems and regional security dynamics, there have been several pieces of scholarly work that have focused on Iran's quest to become a nuclear power.

In the article "Does Iran Want Nuclear Weapons?", (Chubin, 1995) the researcher utilizes the "Rational Actor Model" theoretical approach to frame his main arguments. Chubin reasons that Iran's attitude towards nuclear arms is derived from its view of the world, its concept of its role there, its values and interest, and the lessons derived from recent history. He contends that Iran will acquire nuclear weapons for general political reasons and as a response to specific security threats. In other words, Iran emerges from this research as a rational actor making calculated decisions based upon the optimal options available to it. Although Chubin does a brilliant job of outlining Iran's internal as well as external threat perceptions to explain Iran reasons for acquiring' nuclear weapons, he does not fully explore how the United States should try to enforce the violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) should Iran become nuclearized. (The NPT of 1968 was the first overt attempt by the nuclearized states to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology. Currently, it is the only international legal document through which a nation can commit itself to non-nuclear weapon status. Iran became a signatory of the NPT in 1971 (Perry, 2001, p. 2)).

In relatively similar vein the researcher of "Can the United States influence the WMD policies of Iraq and Iran?" (Eisenstadt, 200) uses the Rational Actor Model to study ways in

which the United States may influence the WMD policies of Iran and Iraq. Eisenstadt meticulously outlines a five-pronged approach to show how the United States' leadership should attempt to prevent these two countries from acquiring WMD. He suggests the following: 1) altering motives, 2) influencing their cost/benefit calculus to obtain WMD, 3) imposing costs and delays, 4) strengthening deterrence; and, 5) mitigating the impact of proliferation through encouraging political change within these countries. Although each of these approaches appears sound, Eisenstadt seems to overlook the value of trade relations with Iran and Iraq. The current political situations within these two countries prevents adequate relations from developing; however, as far as U.S. long term goals are considered, it would be advantageous to help make their economies more dependent on the United States.

In another article on Iran's nuclear weapons program, "Living with a Nuclear Iran?", the researcher (Eisenstadt, 1999) further elaborates on his arguments by trying to research Iran's motivations for acquiring a nuclear arsenal and the dilemmas the country faces as it approaches the nuclear threshold. Eisenstadt notes how Iran is bound by the NPT, and that any significant breach to this contract would lead to a great deal of international pressure being placed on them. He further attempts to predict ways in which nuclear weapons are likely to affect the conduct of the Iranian regime, and the numerous problems related to deterring a nuclearized Iran.

As with his previous article, Eisenstadt relies here again on the Rational Actor Model to analyze the possible actions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. That is, the researcher treats this nation as an actor that must study its options in order to maximize its choices. To do so, Iran needs to analyze the cost/benefit calculus of violating the NPT. While Eisenstadt is quite thorough in most of his analysis, he does not provide any alternative approaches/options as to

how the United States could deal with Iran's nuclear program other than by maintaining the status quo.

Although a great deal of existing scholarly work revolves around the possible ways of preventing the nuclearization of Iran, some researchers believe that America's ability to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons is minimal; cases often used for illustration are Russia, China, India and Pakistan. Thus, instead of debating possible ways in which the United States can combat Iran's proliferation efforts, other scholars-- such as Judith Yaphe and Kori Schake -- discuss ways in which American policymakers can work with a nuclearized Iran. In their book, Strategic Implications of a Nuclear Armed Iran, (Yaphe and Schake, 2000) the researchers examine the potential impact of Iran's proliferation efforts on the United States' national interests, and suggest new courses of action that would minimize their negative impact.

Using the same theoretical approach, the Rational Actor Model, Yaphe and Schake argue that America should have a strategy of minimizing the political/military value of Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. In order to accomplish this, the researchers recommend tightening non-proliferation measures throughout the Middle East. This move would end the United States' policies to isolate Iran, while reaffirming American defense presence in the Persian Gulf. There is little doubt that the researchers do a very good job in outlining how the United States can minimize the importance of nuclear weapons to the leaders of Iran; however, the topic of nuclear doctrine is rarely discussed in their work. To better understand how to minimize the impact of nuclear weapons, one must have a clear understanding of how the country plans on utilizing them.

In Deterring Iranian NBC Use, (DeSutter, 1997) the researcher also investigates American responses to Iranian nuclearization. However, unlike Yaphe and Schake's slightly

more docile/diplomatic approach, DeSutter takes a more aggressive manner in dealing with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Rather than attempting to have any sort of dialogue with this nation, the researcher believes that for the United States to achieve strategic deterrence, it must employ an approach that combines both “denial and jeopardy”. Denial is explained in terms of having both robust active and passive defenses as well as reliable counter-forces in place within the Middle East to confront Iran militarily if necessary. By jeopardy, DeSutter believes that the United States needs to develop the capacity to credibly put at risk the two most important “Centers of Gravity” of Iran: the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Tehran's oil revenues. As with the previous scholars, DeSutter bases the arguments in her book on the same rational theoretical framework. This is most evident in the way she discusses how the United States can best alter the decisions made by the Islamic regime of Iran (actor) through her approach of “denial and jeopardy”.

In most writings on Iran and WMD, virtually every scholar sees the Iranian leadership as becoming increasingly pragmatic. However, in this book, DeSutter appears to ignore this convention and sensationalize as well as demonize the current Iranian regime. Rather than investigate the political/military trends of the post-Khomeini era, she writes in a manner that makes Iran appear as angry and vengeful. Thus, Tehran is seen as wanting to eliminate, at all costs, the United States from the Middle East and the Muslim world.

Although most scholars have varying opinions about the best way for the United States to establish relations with Iran, a great number see an increasingly moderate stance by the Islamic Republic's regime. In “Engaging Iran: A U.S. Strategy”, (Chubin and Green, 1998) the scholars make this argument clear by appealing to the Rational Actor Model. They argue that the United States' goal in Iran should be to draw the country away from the path of belligerent

independence and towards the benefits of cooperation in both economic and security areas. Currently, according to Chubin and Green, American policy has made it only easier for hard-liners in Iran to shrug off economic stagnation as a consequence of “victimization” by the United States. What Washington needs to do is formulate an approach that relies on positive incentives for change as well as stiff penalties for non-compliance. The researchers then outline areas of overlapping interests that the two countries could find in the future for confidence building measures. For example, Chubin and Green note the need to contain the Taleban in Afghanistan and the desire for expanding the number of oil and gas routes from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia.

Here, these researchers discuss Iran and the United States as two actors whose actions can be altered to better both of their security/economic concerns. In addition, Chubin and Green discuss ways in which the United States might ease the tension between the two nations. For example, Washington might stop its automatic opposition to Iranian candidates for posts in international organizations and halt new legislation supporting a tightened trade embargo on Iran. While most of the measures discussed in this study to improve relations appear attainable on paper, some items are rather unrealistic. An example of this condition is when researchers state that the United States needs to remove Iran from its list of countries that sponsor terrorists. Although Iran would undoubtedly like to see its listing changed to improve its image in the world, America would be hard pressed not to change this until Tehran truly does stop supporting terrorists.

Chapter Three

Iran's Nuclear Weapon Programs

While there are conflicting arguments among scholars and experts over Iran's motivations for developing nuclear power, Iranian leadership has continued to reveal an increasing desire to acquire the nuclear scientific know-how. The Iranian leadership has long claimed that since they are signatory in good standing with the NPT, the sole reason for their pursuit of nuclear power is related to civil purposes (Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 130). However, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Iran currently has 93 billion barrels of proven oil reserves (more than 9% of the world's supply). This number does not include the suspected 191 billion barrels of proven and possible oil reserves located in the Caspian Sea, which Iran is currently looking for ways of tapping into. In addition, the Islamic Republic possesses an estimated 812 trillion cubic feet in proven natural gas reserves (15.9% of the world's supply) -- the world's second largest amount behind Russia (Zunes, 1999, p. 1; Cordesman, 1998, pp. 4, 22). Therefore, countries such as the United States are very skeptical about Iran's strategic rationale for pursuing a civil nuclear infrastructure.

It is important to realize, however, that the Iranian nuclear weapons program is not of a recent conception or birth. In fact, the desire to obtain nuclear power in the Islamic Republic started more than 30 years ago under the Shah. This chapter will briefly outline some of the more significant events that have taken place in recent history to illustrate how Iran's nuclear weapons program began and to document how it is still developing to this day.

Nuclear Weapons Program Under the Shah

Ever since the time of the Shah, Iran has been developing a civil nuclear infrastructure. The first nuclear reactor acquired by the Islamic Republic dates back to 1967; it was delivered by the United States to the Amirabad Nuclear Research Center in Tehran (now called the Amirabad Technical College) (Cordesman, 1999, p. 365). Although it was (and still is) rather basic, the 5-megawatt reactor was intended to be used for research. It thus became the building block of knowledge from which Iranian scientists could advance their studies in order to create a more elaborate nuclear infrastructure.

Once Iran's scientists became more experienced with the sophisticated principles behind nuclear power research, the Shah established the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran in 1974 to help articulate the workings of a more significant civil nuclear infrastructure. Right away, the Shah began negotiating with other nations to help build nuclear reactors in Iran. Although it was quite ambitious for any country, the Shah's plan was to establish a network of 23 nuclear reactors throughout the country by the mid-1990, to supply most of the electrical power needed by the civilian population. He managed to sign nuclear fuel contracts with the United States, France and Germany. In addition, he also purchased a 10 percent share of a uranium enrichment plant that was being built in France as part of a joint French, Belgian, Spanish and Italian consortium (Cordesman, 2000, p. 5). The Shah's dream of creating this huge nuclear infrastructure obviously was never met. Still, by the time he was sent into exile in January 1979, he had six reactors under contract. Two German plants located in Bushehr were already 60 and 75 percent completed, and he was planning to purchase 12 more from Germany, France and the United States (Cordesman, 2000, p. 5).

Nuclear Weapons Program under Ayatollah Khomeini

Shortly after the Islamic Revolution was launched, from 1978 to 1980, much of Iran's nuclear goals fell out of favor with the new Khomeini leadership. The clerics were much more focused on establishing a new type of government that the rest of the Islamic world could be modeled after, rather than pursuing the business deals that the Shah previously had made with the West. In addition, many countries, like Germany and the United States, whom had once promised to sell nuclear reactors and establish power plants in Iran, cancelled their business contracts after the downfall of the Shah. The new Iranian government refused to recognize the old deals made by the Shah. The result was a severely neglected nuclear power plant program. It was not until the war with Iraq, which broke out in 1980, that the new Iranian leadership wanted to revitalize their now dormant program.

The start of the war convinced the Khomeini government to start providing new funds to the research teams working at the U.S. supplied reactor at the Amirabad Nuclear Research Center. In addition, Iran started soliciting a great deal of help in acquiring equipment and technical know-how from other foreign countries. By 1984, some experts believe that Ayatollah Khomeini eventually did obtain assistance from France and Pakistan to establish a new nuclear research center in Esfahan (Cordesman, 2000, pp. 7, 8). Later that same year, Iranian officials went back on their word and repeatedly requested that the Germans return to complete the Bushehr nuclear power plants that they had started building under the Shah. However, in this case, the Germans refused (Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 141). In 1987, Iran also signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with Pakistan. From that pact, scientists from the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran began conducting research-training trips in Pakistan. Later in the same year, Argentina agreed to train Iranian scientists in their Jose Balaseiro Nuclear Institute as well

as sell Iran \$5.5 million worth of uranium (Cordesman, 2000, pp. 7, 8). However, the Argentineans later refused, after some American pressure, to supply Iran with a 20-30 megawatt research reactor (Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 141).

After a hiatus caused by the Islamic Revolution, the pressures of the Iran-Iraq War, and the eventual threat of occupying forces within its borders, Tehran did start the Iranian nuclear weapons program. As was the case with the Shah, though, the creation of an established nuclear (weapons or civil) program was not realized by the time Ayatollah Khomeini died in 1989. His regime did, however, make significant scientific and technological strides with the assistance of foreign experts toward putting in place the foundations for the first Iranian nuclear bomb.

Post Iran-Iraq War Nuclear Weapons Program

When Iran's then Deputy President Ayatollah Mohajerani stated in October of 1991 that Iran should work with other Islamic countries to create an "Islamic Bomb", two significant things occurred:

- 1) Iran had become more aggressive in acquiring the material and intellectual items needed to create a nuclear weapon; and,
- 2) The United States had placed a great deal of time and effort to slow-down the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology to this country (Cordesman, 1999, p. 239).

Iranian plans to obtain nuclear know-how subsequently have been thwarted on several occasions by American intervention. For example, in 1991, India refused to provide Iran a 10-megawatt research reactor that it originally promised (Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 141). One year later, Iran attempted to purchase enriched fissile material from Kazakhstan. However, to prevent this from occurring, the United States ended up paying between \$20-30 million to buy the 1,300 pounds of highly enriched uranium. At one point, China agreed to provide Iran with a great deal

of nuclear technology as well as two 300-megawatt reactors in the early 1990s; but, after President Jiang Zemin of China met with then President Clinton at a summit in 1997, China promised to halt their nuclear transfers to Iran (Cordesman, 1999, pp. 241-243). In addition, in 1998, the United States convinced Ukraine not to sell the Islamic Republic a \$45 million nuclear power plant, and it also prevented China from providing Iran a uranium hexafluoride conversion plant (Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 141).

These are only a few of the many examples of American interventions, but they reveal that the pressure from the United States significantly has slowed down the proliferation of nuclear weapons to Iran. Although American efforts have hindered the aspirations of Iran's nuclearization, not all of the Islamic Republic's attempts have been thwarted. In 1990, a Spanish newspaper reported that the Associated Enterprises of Spain was negotiating to complete two Iranian nuclear power plants at Bushehr (Cordesman, 1999, p. 244). These negotiations did not go very far, because in 1995 Russia signed an \$800 million agreement with Iran to complete one of the two reactors in Bushehr and to provide technical training and low-enriched uranium fuel for a period of 10 years beginning in 2001 (Yaphe and Schake, 2000, p. 40). It is evident that Iran has obtained a great deal of support from the Russians; the CIA confirmed in 1997 that the Islamic Republic "had obtained new nuclear technology from Russia" (Cordesman, 1999, pp. 241-242). And, on April 9, 1998 the *Jerusalem Post* reported that Iran had purchased four tactical nuclear weapons from Russian smugglers for \$25 million, and that Argentinean scientists were helping to activate these weapons (Cordesman, 1999, p. 244).

What is most alarming, however, is what the Islamic Republic has been trying to hide from the international community. Iran's most important nuclear production facilities are not at Bushehr, which is open to international inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA), but scattered throughout the country. They are thought to be in clandestine locations under military control, where they have not been "declared" and thus not under IAEA inspections. One of the more important hidden sites is said to be at the Sharif University of Technology, located in Tehran. It allegedly serves as a procurement front and research center for their nuclear weapons program (Hersh, 2001).

In the late 1990s, it was also discovered that the director of the Pakistani nuclear program, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, made at least one visit to an Iranian nuclear facility in 2001. Because of his ingenuity when he had his laboratories producing weapons-grade uranium in the mid 1980s, Dr. Khan is known to many in Pakistan as the "father of the Pakistani bomb". Dr. Khan had been under American surveillance because he had made several clandestine visits to North Korea. U.S. intelligence officials believe that he did not bring actual weapon producing materials with him to Iran, but just his years of hands-on experience in bomb making (Hersh, 2001).

Thus, after more than 30 years of research and building, it seems as though Iran has been somewhat successful at creating a quasi-nuclear infrastructure. The unclassified list below obtained from "Rogue or Rational State?" (Perry, 2001) details the known and planned nuclear facilities that have been established within the Islamic Republic:

<u>City</u>	<u>Nuclear Infrastructure</u>	<u>Activity or Percent Completed</u>
1. Bushehr	2 Power Reactors	85% Completed as of 1995
2. Bonab	Low Power Reactors	Constructions Started in 1994
3. Darkhovin	Chinese Built Reactor	Est. Completion Date 2002
4. Esfahan	Chinese Built Underground	Unknown Activity
5. Esteghlal	Chinese Built Reactor	Est. Completion Date 2005
6. Gorgan	Russian Nuclear Technicians	Unknown Activity
7. Karaj	Chinese Calutron	Near Completion
8. Mo'alleh	Possible Uranium Enrichment Site	Unknown Activity
9. Tehran	Uses 20% Argentinean Enriched Uranium	Currently Operational
10. Yazd	High-Grade Uranium Mine	Estimated 5000 Cubic Tons

It therefore becomes evident that Iran's nuclear weapons program has experienced a slow gradual evolution despite American attempts at "sabotaging" it. The estimates of the United States as to when Iran would obtain a nuclear weapon has increased throughout the last decade. In 1992 the CIA estimated that they would be able to produce a nuclear warhead by 2000. In 1995, John Holum testified that Iran could have the bomb by 2003. In 1997, the same analyst altered his assessment to 2005-2007 (Cordesman, 1999, p. 365). Even though Western experts do not know the precise time as to when Iran could produce the bomb, it is now unquestionable that the regime of the Islamic Republic has a strong desire and compelling reasons to produce nuclear weapons of mass destruction. An analysis of the motivations behind Iran's plans for nuclearization is outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Iran's Nuclear Motivations

It is important to note here that much of the internal political workings of Iran are greatly unknown and beyond the knowledge of Western researchers. Thus, to accurately list the Islamic Republic's motivations to become nuclearized may be impossible. Nonetheless, many researchers have debated the reasons behind Iran's plans for becoming a nuclear power. A majority would agree that one main reason is tied to the regional security environment in which the country is positioned. With an unpredictable dictator to the West, Islamic radicals to the North-East, nuclear powers to the East and the world's most powerful navy, America's Persian Gulf Fleet, to the South, Iran believes that it is in a very unfriendly neighborhood. Yet, Iran's desire to acquire nuclear weapons is not solely based on external factors or pressures. There also are many internal political pressures and social realities. In order to better understand Iran's nuclear motivations, then, it is crucial to first review Iran's strategic view of the world, its perception of itself, and its definition of its international objectives.

Iran's View of Itself

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a fascinating country characterized by a great diversity of people, cultures and geography. Still, with the notable exceptions of the ethnic Kurds in the West and Armenians in the North, the vast majority of the Iranian population is Shiite Muslim and ethnically Persian. Although these two facets of Iran's culture are intrinsically interrelated, they are nonetheless in conflict with one another. In other words, even though most Iranians have strong religious beliefs, they are still extremely proud of their Persian history and heritage

(Mackey, 1996, p. 14; Armajani, 1986, p. 14). For this reason, Iran's governmental policies often have been seen as an uneasy combination of diverging Islamic and nationalist ideas (Byman, 2001, p. xi).

In terms of their Persian pride, Iranians view their country as having an exceptionally important position in the Middle East. Due to its geographical size, extensive coastline along the Persian Gulf, and relatively large population, Iranians see themselves as an aspiring world power and a force to be reckoned with in this part of the world. Although its economic hardship has prevented Iran from realizing its dream, Iranians and their leaders want to play an important international role by being taken seriously on the world stage (Chubin, 1995, p. 87).

In addition, this Persian pride with its deep historic roots, religion plays a tremendous unifying role in the country. Islam serves as both the center of this pride and the basis for an affirmation of a non-Western identity. The conservative Iranian leadership is proud to have ousted their Shah, who was seen by many Iranians as a ruling puppet manipulated by the United States and the West. This was a significant act, due to the fact that the West was perceived to be imposing ideas on Iran that ran contrary to the spirit of traditional Islam. To the clerics of Iran, whose power rests on the principles of Islam, Westernization meant secularization. Rejecting Islam's central role in defining Iran's culture and identity was unacceptable (Mackey, 1996, p. 135). By ousting the Shah from Iran and confining him, along with his ideas, in exile, the Iranian Revolution successfully reaffirmed the importance of Islam and its teachings to the people of Iran. Further, Iran believed that it removed itself from the clutches of many intrinsic evils of Westernization. Beyond ethnic and cultural diversity within the country, then, Iran draws its political strength from this strong Islamic heritage. Moreover, it seeks to propagate this identity beyond its frontiers.

As a revolutionary Islamic country, Iran sees its experience as having resonance and applicability throughout the Islamic world. It seeks to affirm the model of its revolution by seeing its adoption elsewhere, both as a means of achieving greater power abroad and by applying its policies of hostility against what it sees as arrogant Western Powers. Hence, acquiring a nuclear arsenal cannot only strengthen Iran's self-confidence, but it also can provide it with the tools to make its national power more competitive at the international level.

Iran's Strategic View of the World

“Chemical and biological weapons are a poor man's atomic bombs and can be easily produced. We should at least consider them for our defense. Although the use of such weapons is inhumane, the (Iran-Iraq) War taught us that international laws are only scraps of paper...It was also made clear that the moral teachings of the world are not very effective when war reaches a serious stage and the world does not respect its own resolutions...”

Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani, October 1988

(Cordesman, 1999, p. 234)

One of the most, if not *the* most important catalyst to Iran's reevaluation of the current world order was the eight-year war with Iraq (Cordesman, 1999, p. 269; Chubin, 1994, p. 70). The Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s played a major role in affecting the Islamic government's view of strategic weapons and WMD. During this conflict, which Saddam Hussein instigated, Iraq used chemical weapons on the Iranian military and civilian population. According to an official Iranian report made in March 1998, the chemical weapons had affected approximately 60,000 people. The horrific implications of this number are more clearly understood when one realizes that in a two-month period in 1986, Iraq launched 308 missiles against Iran causing over 2,226 deaths and over 10,705 casualties (Chubin and Green, 1998, p. 158). Iranian pleas to the United

Nations to condemn these attacks were never taken into any serious consideration. In fact, Iran found themselves friendless and the subject to a one-sided arms embargo.

Iran carries many deep, long lasting scars and changed its view of the world from this eight-year war. Some of the more important lessons it learned, as noted in the article "Does Iran Want Nuclear Weapons?" (Chubin,1995) were:

- 1) The world is very dangerous, and for that reason, Iran must be prepared for any technological surprises. In addition, the Iranian people should always anticipate the worse from its enemies.
- 2) Iran should never rely or hope for the self-restraint of its adversary, nor should it expect its enemies to adhere to international commitments.
- 3) It would be unwise for Iran to count on the assistance or support from international organizations.

Given these lessons, Iran learned the strategic importance of deterrence. The Iranian military forces did not possess the strategic weaponry to deter the Iraqi leaders from invading their homeland, bombing their cities, or using chemical weapons against their people. The Iranian government soon understood the significance of possessing weapons of mass destruction when conducting modern warfare.

Another important factor in Iran's strategic understanding of the world was the high-tech Gulf War involving Iraq and the American led coalition forces. Within several weeks of starting Operation Desert Storm, the alliance along with United States and its modern war machine was able to do what eight years of Iranian fighting could not do: bring about the unconditional surrender of Iraq. Once the Iranian leaders witnessed how the United States military was able to

meticulously dismantle the Iraqi forces, they soon realized that they required the means of preparing for such a war (Cordesman, 1999, p. 269; Chubin, 1994, p. 70).

This overwhelming use of precision-guided weapons made the Iranian leadership understand that conventional warfare against the United States would be foolish. Although the Iranian soldiers are, for the most part, dedicated and professional, their conventional military hardware is no match to America's. In addition, there are two main factors inhibiting the Iranian military if they attempt to fight against the United States' armed forces in a conventional battle. First, given the poor economic situation of Iran, the government cannot allocate a large pool of money to modernize the military by procuring and maintaining new, sophisticated weapons (Amirahmadi, No Date, p. 12). Second, the Iranian armed forces cannot allocate a large number of man-hours to properly train their soldiers on these new weapon systems. If they were able to do so, the American military would most likely already be developing the next generation of weapon systems. The former Iranian Defense Minister Akbar Torkan understood these inhibiting factors when he stated in 1993:

“Can our Air Force...take on the Americans, or our Navy take on the American Navy? If we put all our country's budget into such a war we would have just burned our money. The way to go about dealing with such a threat requires a different solution entirely.”

(Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 128)

Due to the difficulty of catching up militarily to the West, Iran realizes that they must find alternative means to combat or deter those forces. A nuclear arsenal may very well be the most cost-effective solution that the Islamic Republic could find.

Iran's National Security Priorities

To better grasp Iran's motivations for the acquisition of nuclear weapons, it is important to also understand what the security priorities of the Iranian government are. In terms of national security, Iran's leadership believes that their immediate concerns are not against international aggression, but rather against local and internal opposition elements. Iran's main priority is to ensure that the Islamic regime stays in power; and, thus, the more immediate security concerns of the Islamic Revolution is against opposition groups such as the mujahedin in Iraq who are attempting to topple the regime, than against possible future U.S. attacks. Another major local concern is the maintenance of its territorial integrity against potential secessionists from ethnic Azerbaijanis and Kurds who are discontent with their political representation and have strong, centralized populations in the north/northwest. In addition, the Iranian government has continuously been concerned over the economically destabilizing factor of possible incursions from bordering states, specifically those who are currently in the process of decomposition like Iraq and Afghanistan (Clawson, 1994, p. 69). In fact, some would argue that external threats are not even a main issue with the Islamic Republic. According to Ahmed Hashim, "Iran's recent economic problems are the greatest threat to its national security, and the first priority for the Tehran leadership." (Amirahmadi, 11, p. 11).

Along with local security issues, the Iranian leadership has international security concerns with Iraq and the West, which are predicated mostly upon policies of the United States (Chubin, 1994, p. 69). Due to the decade long United Nations sanctions placed on Iraq, this military threat has been somewhat neutralized. However, there are no guarantees once sanctions are lifted, that Iraq would not resume its previous WMD programs. In addition, the American presence in the Persian Gulf is still seen as a potential, future threat that Iran would like to see eliminated.

Although this is not an urgent danger, the Iranian government realizes that the United States' presence in the region is a security concern that has strategic relevance to the realizations of their international goals and objectives.

Iran's Nuclear Motivations

Iran's specific security motivations to become nuclearized are not particularly urgent, nor are they overwhelming. As one can see from the previous section, nuclear weapons would not be very helpful with the more time critical, local security threat posed by the mujahedin in Iraq. Nor would a nuclear arsenal be of much help in the problems related to Iran's territorial integrity, which may be challenged by possible secessionists. In addition, nuclear weapons would be of no use against military incursions from less powerful bordering states. It would only be of some importance to its bigger security concerns, like Iraq and the United States.

Thus, the quest for nuclear weapons is mostly motivated by "political" rather than "security" reasons; its drive for world status being greater than any particular national security threat (Chubin, 1995, p. 89). The need to acquire a nuclear arsenal, then, mostly stems from ambitions rather than necessity. Therefore, if we look into the minds of the Iranian leadership to discover Iran's nuclear motivations, they could be narrowed down to these four main reasons:

- 1) For self-reliance
- 2) To provide Iran with a greater voice in the international scene
- 3) To make up for deficiencies in conventional weapons
- 4) To strengthen deterrence

Self-Reliance. The Islamic Republic hopes to achieve self-reliance in all areas of national life, especially with its military. As was stated earlier, Iran faced isolation from the rest of world during its war with Iraq, while at the same time Iraq received more than \$80 billion in loans from Arab Gulf countries (Yaphe and Schake, 2000, p. 13). Due to the American-led arms embargo

and the fact that the great majority of weapons purchased by the Shah were from the United States, Iran had significant problems maintaining as well as resupplying its weaponry stockpiles. During this war, Iran quickly learned the importance of self-reliance. Acquiring WMD from an indigenous nuclear weapons program would only express this resolution.

Greater International Voice. In this current world order, which the Iranian government is presently opposed to accepting, the countries that possess nuclear weapons have the largest voice in the international arena. A simple example of this power dynamic is the United Nations Security Council. All five permanent seat holders (The United State, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China) have veto power along with nuclear weapons. The Iranian government, which prides itself as being the leader of the Muslim world as well as the leading example for all Islamic countries to follow, would love to produce an “Islamic Bomb”, even though Pakistan aspired to play the same role.

The Islamic Republic’s leaders may believe that this capability would not only add volume to its voice at the negotiation table during international disputes, but also serve to demonstrate Iran’s advancement in technology (i.e. expression of modernity) after the Revolution to the rest of the world. In addition, Iranian leaders may hope that this new technological advancement would divert the attention of the Iranian people from the nation's domestic and economic inadequacies.

Deficiencies in Conventional Weapons. As was noted earlier in this chapter, the gap between Iran’s conventional military arsenal and the United States’ is rather large. Iran had planned on attaining greater modernization in its armed forces; however, economic hardship and low oil prices in the 1990s prevented most of these plans from being implemented. In November 1997, the U.S. Department of Defense estimated that substantial Iranian debt had limited

Tehran's arms purchases to only about \$1 billion per year, far less than what they needed to rebuild their armament industry (Amirahmadi, No Date, p. 12). The acquisition of nuclear weapons would be seen as the most cost efficient “bang-for-your-buck” solution that the Islamic Republic could choose. Thus, this solution would greatly reduce the strategic military gap between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States.

Deterrence. Because Washington went into the war with Iraq knowing that Baghdad had used chemical weapons in a previous war, this could lead the Iranian leadership to believe that chemical weapons do not deter the United States at all from entering into conflict. Knowing this, the question must be asked: what if Iraq possessed nuclear weapons? Would Washington have been so willing to commit their troops to a war where there was a legitimate threat of a nuclear attack?

The Iranian government has learned from watching how American policymakers deal with potential nuclear threats, that the United States is much more likely to be cautious and less aggressive in its actions. Two examples of American apprehension are the light water nuclear reactor deal made between the Clinton Administration with North Korea, in order to halt a nuclear energy program there, and the benign, diplomatic negotiations over the recovery of the downed spy plane crew in China. Knowing that Iranian conventional forces do not stand a chance of defeating the United States, in the event that they would need to confront American forces, the Iranian government may believe that only a nuclear capability would enable it to avert defeat or even confrontation (Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 128). Rather than having to deal with the United States militarily, Iran would much rather use a nuclear bomb to deter America from intervening in its security affairs within the Persian Gulf region.

As one can see, Iran's motivations to acquire nuclear weapons are not very time critical in terms of their immediate security concerns, and they are only of some significant use in terms of its more external security issues. Therefore, Iran's need for a nuclear arsenal is mostly motivated by "political" rather than "security" factors. When one analyzes the historical lessons learned by the Islamic regime from the Gulf and Iraq Wars, as well as its enduring international ambitions, it becomes clearer that Iran's desire to become nuclearized is much more a matter of status-driven choice than of necessity.

It should be mentioned here, however, that there are some who would argue that it would be beneficial for Iran to merely have the appearance of becoming nuclearized. In other words, the Islamic Republic may be able to achieve some of its strategic deterrent goals by simply giving the impression to the international community that it possesses the ability to produce as well as deliver a nuclear strike. This type of nuclear strategy is similar to that of Israel.

Presently, virtually the entire international community recognizes Israel as a state with nuclear weapons. While it does not have an overt nuclear doctrine, and it insists that it will not introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East, Israel continues to follow a policy of what Avner Cohen called in 1998 "nuclear opacity" - visibly possessing nuclear weapons while denying their existence. This unique strategy has allowed Israel to enjoy the benefits of being a nuclear weapons state in terms of deterrence without having to suffer the international repercussions of acknowledging their arsenal (Cohen, 2001).

For this reason, there may come a time where Iran may consider pursuing a similar strategy and attempt to enjoy these same benefits. However, there are a few inherent dangers that accompany this form of nuclear ambiguity. For example, Israel also has a strong

commitment to preventing its potential adversaries in the region from becoming nuclearized states, as evidenced by Israel's 1981 raid on Iraq's Osirak Nuclear Installation. Iran may face a similar danger of a preemptive strike on its nuclear infrastructure to prevent it from producing a significant nuclear arsenal. In addition, there are a couple of intrinsic differences in this situation between Iran and Israel, which would make the Islamic Republic's choice of "nuclear opacity" a poor one.

First of which, contrary to what the Iranians would like to portray, the Islamic Republic is viewed by many nations in the world, especially the United States, as a pariah or renegade country. Acquiring a nuclear arsenal "ambiguously" would only add to the international community's mistrust of Iran and further reduce its efforts to be seen as a moderating and modernizing nation. A second and a more significant difference between these two nations, is that in this situation Iran unlike Israel is a signatory of the NPT. Therefore, Iran is legally obliged to remain un-nuclearized. While there are many nations who may not have liked seeing Israel acquire a nuclear arsenal, there was very little they could do about it in the international legal arena. However, Iran does not possess this similar luxury. By signing the NPT, the Islamic Republic made a legal obligation not to become a nuclear power (unless they were under immediate threat); thus, if Iran were able to ambiguously acquire a nuclear arsenal, they would be subject, at best, to sever economic sanctions and international isolation.

India & Pakistan: Two Reasons not to become Nuclearized:

Although Iran's motivations to become nuclearized may seem rather appealing to some political/religious leaders in that country, there are numerous reasons why the Islamic Republic should not attempt to "go nuclear". If one investigates the security environment in south Asia

between India and Pakistan, two nuclearized nations, it becomes evident that there would be two serious security/economic problems Iran would most likely face.

The first of which is that even if a nation possesses nuclear weapons, it leaves them easily prone to Low Intensity Conflicts (LIC) between themselves and their neighbors, as one can see with the current situation in Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Although both countries possess this weapon, there has been cross border skirmishes and increasing tension since the two nations decided to conduct nuclear tests in 1998. George Perkovich from the Henry L. Stimson Center stated that the overtness of nuclear weapon capabilities actually has weakened deterrence and heightened the risk of conflict between India and Pakistan. He believes that since their nuclear tests, Pakistan's current military leadership has become emboldened in its nuclear capabilities to prosecute an aggressive low-intensity conflict against India. "This (Pakistani) military leadership believes that India will be deterred from major counter-attack, so that deterrence is a license for aggression" (Perkovich, 2001). Iran may very well be subject to the same LIC between state-sponsored terrorist (the mujahedin) and/or separatist movements (from the ethnic Kurds or Azerbaijanis) within its borders. The result of which cannot be settled by the use of a nuclear weapons, but does cause greater tension, regional destabilization and possible escalation of attacks.

The second significant reason why the Islamic Republic should reconsider becoming a nuclearized power is the great possibility of a costly, small Cold War occurring in the Middle East. As was the case with Pakistan and India, once the Indians conducted their first "peaceful nuclear explosion" in 1974, a minor (yet financially costly) Cold War began with these two countries. This war almost reached its climax in 1998 when both India and Pakistan detonated underground nuclear weapons for "testing" purposes. Leonard Spector states in his book, Going

Nuclear, that some nuclear threshold nations have avoided overt nuclear arming partly for fear that this might stimulate rival powers to do the same or enlarge preexisting nuclear capabilities. He adds that military considerations dictate that along with the weapons themselves, costly delivery systems must be acquired, customized and maintained all of which can impose a heavy burden on a developing economy (Porro, 1989, p. 294). The Islamic Republic will, thus, need to put into serious consideration the possibility of starting a financially stressful, small Cold War with their Middle Eastern rivals (i.e. Israel, Iraq and the Gulf Countries Council (GCC)) when determining whether or not it would be prudent to cross the nuclear threshold.

What is significant to understand from the Islamic Republic's motivations to acquire nuclear weapons is that even if there was a significant change within the security environment in the Middle East the Islamic government might still want to obtain a nuclear arsenal. Therefore, it is perhaps inevitable that Iran will someday soon become nuclearized. It is thus imperative for American military and political leaders to better understand how Iran would attempt to use this weapon, in order to find the best approaches to defend against its use.

Chapter Five

Iran's Nuclear Intentions

It is clear today that Iran is pursuing a strategy focused on producing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles in order to enhance its military and political strength. Due to Iran's continuous denial about acquiring such weapons, it is rather challenging to obtain unclassified information regarding its clandestine nuclear weapons program. For this reason, and due to the nature of the Islamic Republic's reclusive nature, it is almost impossible to predict with any degree of certainty or accuracy Iran's possible uses of nuclear weapons without relying on educated guesses based upon, first, Iran's international ambitions and, second, the regime's strategic motivations.

Most of the existing literature on Iran's WMD program assumes that the country has not developed a coherent doctrine for its nuclear weapons program (Cordesman, 1999, p. 388). However, that assumption is difficult to accept. Otherwise, how could Iran, which has been planning to develop a nuclear arsenal for the past 20 years, not have produced a plan or at least an initial concept on how to use this weapon? The sheer fact that the Islamic Republic has been spending millions of dollars acquiring the infrastructure to produce a nuclear weapon, along with sophisticated medium to long-range ballistic missiles, would lead one to believe that the Iranian leadership possesses a basic idea about how to use these weapons to achieve its political as well as military goals. Therefore, it is critical for scholars of the Iranian military to develop an analysis of the basic principles behind the Islamic Republic's possible uses for a nuclear weapon, should the opportunity arise.

Other than the previously stated motivations, there are other factors that could help us better determine Iran's intentions about how they could use an atomic arsenal. One of the most important factors to consider here are Iran's systems of command and control. By briefly looking at this issue, we can more clearly see who makes the decisions about how Iran would use a nuclear weapon, and how that nation's technological limitations must prevent it from developing a too sophisticated nuclear doctrine.

Command and Control

Iran's military command and control structures are both complex and centralized. It is somewhat confusing to Western analysts mainly due to the fact that there are two separate militaries, both of which are under the direct orders of the Supreme Religious Leader, currently Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. One is the regular, traditional Iranian military called the Artesh, which has the constitutional role of planning for Iran's national security. However, this is rarely the case, since most security policy decisions are a result reached by the security community itself and the political elites (Byman, 2001, p. 21). The other, more politically powerful, ideologically focused military is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which was first established by Ayatollah Khomeini. Their main mission is to preserve the existence of the Islamic Republic's revolutionary ideals. Because of its ideological strengths, the IRGC has been charged with exporting the revolution to other Muslim countries. In addition, it has been entrusted to advance both Iran's missile and WMD programs.

Both branches of the military along with Iran's secret services report to the Supreme Council for National Security (SCNS), members of which include the President (currently a reform minded moderate Mohammed Khatami, who was reelected for a second term in June

2001 with an overwhelming majority of the vote), the Supreme Religious Leader, and the Minister of Intelligence. Although this committee makes up the formal security policymaking structure, the Supreme Religious Leader is the overall Commander and Chief of both the Artesh and the IRGC. With this power, he has the dominant voice in the Islamic Republic's security policies, has the ability to mobilize forces and declare war (Byman, 2001, pp. 23-24). It would be reasonable to believe in this highly centralized structure that the Supreme Leader has the ultimate say as *to when, where, and how* Iran would use a nuclear weapon.

It is important to note here the unique and albeit perplexing power dynamic of the political world of the Islamic Republic. Due to the secrecy involved with Iran's higher-level decision making process, not a great deal is known about how they are made. While there is a formal decision making structure, it is often ignored or bypassed. The reason for this confusion is largely due to numerous institutional and non-institutional actors, family ties, personal relationships, overlapping institutional authority and mixture of religion and politics all come together make it terribly difficult to identify who has a say on what issue (Byman, 2001, pp. 21-23).

Underling their decision making dynamic is Iran's own left and right wing political struggle. President Khatami and other reform minded moderates have had a strategic agenda of moving the Islamic Republic from the often-perceived context of a "rogue" nation. Rather than the traditional anti-West and anti-American rhetoric that had been heard out of Iran since the Revolution, Khatami and his followers have been trying to steer the Islamic Republic towards a path of normalcy with the international community. This, however, has been causing a much stress and confrontation with the more traditional/conservative religious figures within the country, (which control the intelligence, defense, justice and media sectors of the government).

Many of which have been quite comfortable with the status quo and the legacy that was left by the Ayatollah Khomeini and have been attempting to undermine President Khatami's moderating agenda.

Also, within Iran foreign and domestic security policies cannot be clearly separated. Therefore, the Islamic Republic's potential use of a nuclear weapon must be understood within this policy context. All of Iran's security policy decisions, which include WMD uses, involve a) a calculation of its overall vulnerability, b) the Islamic regime's need to stay in power; and, c) the country's commitment to its revolutionary ideals (Byman, 2001, p. xiv).

Thus, one of the main foci of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, is to defend the revolutionary order against its hostile neighbors and against the United States. The question then becomes, how would Khamenei, along with his political and military elites, utilize nuclear weapons to remain in power, defend against attacks and secure Iran's national borders? The answers to these questions lie in the Islamic Republic's possible nuclear doctrine.

Iran's Potential Nuclear Doctrine

Given the Iranian state's centralized command structures, it becomes imperative to examine how Iran possibly would utilize a nuclear weapon to serve its international goals and security needs. Iran most likely would seek to acquire nuclear weapons for primarily status-based global reasons. Knowing that Iran and its Supreme Leader are mostly concerned with the Islamic regime's survivability and the integrity of its territory, it would seem rational to deduce that Iran would use its nuclear arsenal as a deterrent, which would induce caution from foreign countries to avoid major all-out wars. In addition, by possessing a nuclear weapon, Iran would deter against other possible nuclear threats to its territory from such regional powers as Israel and

Iraq. In order for nuclear deterrence to work effectively, however, three conditions must be met: 1) the opponent must be susceptible to deterrence, 2) the opponent must have vital interests within striking distance of the nuclear weapon; and, 3) the declared nuclear threat must be credible (Sauer, 1998, p. 3).

Currently, the first two of the above conditions have been met. Iran only needs to become a credible nuclear threat. The Islamic Republic possesses a credible regional delivery system with its Shahab-3 missile. This delivery vehicle, with a maximum range of 1,300 kilometers, has advanced Iran's striking power to include Israel, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iraq and all the nations in the GCC (Einhorn, 2000). Along with the capitals of each of these countries, the Shahab-3 can strike all of the American military installations located in the Persian Gulf region. Thus, the Islamic Republic could, if it can build a warhead that can be transported by this missile, be able to use a nuclear weapon to deter regional and global threats from threatening its people, retaliating against one of their attacks, or interfering with Iranian national/regional goals.

However, the Islamic Republic would have few illusions about being able to extend this deterrent capability very far beyond self-defense. While it could seek deterrence by being able to hit American troops and/or allies in the region, attacking for reasons other than self-defense would be provocative and leave Iran exposed to the superior nuclear arsenal of the United States. This nuclear force cannot be extended indefinitely without credibility being lost. One of the main lessons from the Cold War is that the ultimate value of having nuclear weapons rests in their capacity to be used as a credible deterrent threat against other nuclear weapons (Snyder, 1999, p. 124; Chubin, 1995, p. 98).

Therefore, the Iranian government would probably not use its nuclear weapons to bully or coerce Gulf States in order to weaken or sever ties with the United States. Nor would Iran use it to increase its own quota in the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC), or to enforce its views on territorial disputes. There are obviously better means to accomplish these goals, like diplomacy, bargaining, conventional forces, etc. (Chubin, 1995, p. 99). Therefore, there is no reason to expect that Iran would use its nuclear weapons as all-purpose military instruments, especially when its nuclear forces would be open to a devastating first strike attack, and it could not match the United States in the total number of nuclear weapons.

Some scholars have argued that due to Iran's radical views, or "rogue" state tendencies, a nuclearized Islamic Republic would become an aggressive, confrontational state that could use this weapon for terrorist purposes. Paula DeSutter from the National Defense University, for instance, contends that Iran's Shiite form of Islam is so unpredictable and irrational, that their country is a very risky case. In fact, it is full of "true believers" who are more than willing to die for their cause. She argues that this willingness to die for a greater purpose directly raises the risk tolerance of that state. For this reason, contemporary deterrence strategies are less likely to be effective against such a country (DeSutter, 1997, p. 10).

This is the main fear of most Western policymakers: a radical Islamic Republic possessing a nuclear weapon with the irrational desire to attack its enemies. Although there truly is no way of proving that this will never be the case, we can say from looking at the recent history of Iran's behavior, that this will most likely not occur.

Michael Eisenstadt has noticed that American, Soviet and Chinese experiences during the Cold War suggest that due to the potential destructive power of nuclear weapons, the logic of deterrence almost always moderates the actual behavior of nuclearized nations. This induces

their leaders to act more with pragmatic caution, and thereby enhance stability among those countries.

Also, there is no evidence from the past 12 years that suggests that Iran is confrontational or unaware of its comparatively small power against the realities of the superpower order. Since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iranian decision-makers have not been generally inclined to make rash decisions. More times than not, they tried to avoid confrontation (Eisenstadt, 1999, pp. 132-133). Few examples of this behavior can be seen in:

- 1) Iran's cautious behavior during the 1998 diplomatic crisis with Afghanistan, the Taliban killed Iranian diplomats. While fevers ran high in Tehran, the Iranian leadership chose not to fall into a costly guerilla war against Afghan rebels. Rather, they sought a diplomatic solution to the crisis.
- 2) The way in which Iran has been using surrogates such as the Lebanese Hizbullah to conduct attacks for them, thus, minimizing their risks by shunning direct confrontation and to preserve Iran's deniability. This type of behavior is evidence of their ability to accurately gauge their power limitations, and to identify the "red lines" of their enemies.
- 3) Finally, Iran has demonstrated caution and pragmatism with their acquisition of chemical weapons, biological weapons and missile technology, none of which have they used irrationally or to instigate dangerous confrontation.

Iran's pragmatism has been consistent with its decision-making on critical policy issues. Such decisions that have been generally based more on reasons related to the stability of the state and better economic conditions, than on religious doctrine or blind fanaticism. In fact, shortly

before his death, Khomeini wrote in a series of letters to then President Ali Khamene'i that the Islamic government has the authority to destroy a mosque or suspend the observance of the 5-pillars of faith, if the interests of the Iranian state so require. In doing so, he sanctioned the supremacy of state interests over both religion and the fundamental doctrine of the Islamic Revolution (Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 136).

The most significant impact of Iran acquiring a limited nuclear capability would not be the alleged willingness to engage in "irrational" uses of the weapon, as some researchers would have us believe; rather, it would most likely be Iran's increasing sense of its own confidence. Also, this weapon could be taken by the people in Iran as a way to challenge the nuclear monopoly of supposedly arrogant powers in the West, and an instrument of self-assurance about the strength of the Muslim world. Although a nuclear weapon would not make Iran more willing to initiate the use of force, it may increase its ability and confidence to confront smaller, weaker nations in the Persian Gulf or Middle East when they disagree with Iran's international policies.

Finally, since the preservation of the Islamic regime in Iran is the ultimate goal for the Spiritual Leader and religious elites within Iran, it would be very likely that they would use their nuclear weapons as a last resort to prevent their overthrow by a foreign nation. It is impossible to accurately determine the actual "red line" at which the Iranian leaders would perceive the future of the Islamic Republic in serious danger. Nonetheless, it is still important for American policymakers to understand this: a simple attack to Iran's borders, coast lines, or a naval blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, while being very provocative in nature, would most likely not bring about an attack with nuclear weapons.

Of course, certain variables are unknown in this situation, like the actual political/military environment in which this attack would take place, or the attitude styles of those who are in

power in Iran at the time. However, it is important realize that in this situation, the continued existence of Iran's regime would not be in immediate danger. If such attacks were to occur, the Islamic Republic would most likely look to other means to minimize the negative effects on Iran such as conventional counter-attacks or diplomatic offensives. This would especially be the case if these attacks were launched by another nuclearized country, which would possess far larger, and more sophisticated nuclear arsenal that could be used as a retaliatory strike.

Consequently, Iran's "irrational" use of nuclear weapons is the least likely scenario to take place. Recent political and military behavior by this country indicates that Iran is gearing its policies more towards a rational and pragmatic resolution of conflict than confrontational extremism. Therefore, it seems clear that Iran would utilize its weapon more as a deterrent against hostile nations than an instrument of terrorism. In addition, the regime's elites would most likely only use this weapon as a last resort if they saw their existence in jeopardy from external forces.

While this analysis does not see the virtues of Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons, and does not support the proliferation of this type of arsenal in the Middle East and the rest of the world, it remains very skeptical about Iran's irresponsible or irrational use of this weapon. Also, merely possessing this weapon is not an ideal solution for all of Iran's internal and external security needs.

Being a developing country, Iran currently does not possess the adequate technological infrastructure or the sufficient know-how that would enable it to use this weapon for whatever it wishes. Nonetheless, the consequences of a nuclearized Iran should not be exaggerated. It is for this reason that American political actors should reconsider their current policies in dealing with a possible nuclearized Iran.

Chapter Six

The United States' Response to a Nuclearized Iran

"Our vision for the future of the Middle East is a simple one. We want to see the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous region in which all nations and peoples can live in freedom and security. There is much work still before us, but we are making real progress towards our goal."

Former President Clinton

Middle East regional stability, thus far an illusive ideal, has been an enduring strategic goal to American foreign policymakers. Ever since the creation of the Jewish State in 1948, and the widespread commercial exploitation of oil during the 1950s in the Middle East, creating regional stability has been an important objective for the United States government. Sea-lanes of communication (i.e. from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea via the Suez Canal, and the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean via the Strait of Hormuz) are now among the most critical and widely used lanes for both commercial vessels and military naval units. In addition, the oil embargo of 1973 revealed to the American public and policymakers the vital importance of the Middle East energy reserves. Therefore, establishing regional stability in the area is of significant importance to United States' foreign policy. Another critical objective is preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons to countries in this region of the world.

As one of the politically least understood countries in the Middle East, the Islamic Republic of Iran continually has voiced anti-American positions in conflicts throughout the region. Iran is currently the strongest Middle Eastern military power (other than Israel), and Tehran has a great desire to lessen Western influence in this region.

Furthermore, Iran is projected to be the first Islamic country in the Middle East to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. With the willing support of such countries as China, Russia and North Korea to sell it advanced weapon technologies in order to destabilize the current unipolar world order; America must now reevaluate the prospects for preventing the nuclearization of Iran. In doing so, United States' policymakers should search for new, alternative means of working with the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to maintain regional stability and unrestricted access to this region's fuel resources.

Present U.S. Policy towards Iran

Currently, the United States has adopted a strategic policy aimed at economically isolating Iran as well as its neighbor and historical enemy Iraq. This has been done to militarily stabilize the region as well as to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East. The Clinton Administration first established this directive and labeled it the dual containment policy. Its main objectives when first introduced in May 1993, were five-fold:

- 1) Attempt to end Iran's support of international terrorism.
- 2) To stop Iran from supporting Hamas and its efforts toward sabotaging the Arab-Israeli peace process.
- 3) To eliminate Iran's international subversion through support of Islamic movements in Sudan and elsewhere.
- 4) To have the Iranian leadership recognize civil human rights.

- 5) And, to prevent the Islamic Republic from acquiring weapons of mass- destruction (Sick, 1998, p. 8).

More than eight years later, these principal objectives have not changed.

America's dual containment policy was, and still is, aimed at preserving the balance of power in this region by containing the destabilizing effect of local aggressors. At the same time, Washington is protecting its own interests with assistance from other Gulf States and Israel. In actual practice, however, what dual containment really has meant, is the isolation of states such as Iran and Iraq with the ultimate goal of causing their economic destabilization, the eventual internal collapse, or democratic changes in their current regimes (Perry, 2001, p. 25).

To help accomplish the five strategic objectives of the dual containment policy, the United States has tried several approaches. On the economic front, Washington continues to aggressively oppose Iran's requests for loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Sick, 1998, p. 6; Yaphe and Schake, 2000, p. 108). On the political front, the United States has maintained automatic opposition to Iranian candidates for posts in international organizations (Chubin and Green, 1998, p. 160). In addition, America incessantly has solicited help from the European Union, Japan, Russia along with China for political, economic and technological support (see Chapter Four) at more effectively tightening the noose around the Islamic Regime of Iran. However, the results of these actions have, at times, been less than promising.

There are several reasons for this comparative ineffective U.S. policy. For one, America's strategy runs contrary to international legal norms, and it contradicts specific international agreements that recognize sovereign rights and principles of non-intervention. For

example, this policy runs directly counter to the Algiers Declaration of 1981, under which the United States pledged not to intervene politically or militarily in the internal affairs of Iran (Sick, 1998, p. 8; Zunes, 1999, p. 3). It is evident that America recognizes this legal dilemma, because it has never requested that the United Nations support these sanctions.

Another reason, and probably the most important one, as to why the dual containment policy has had little success is that Iran is much too large (60 million inhabitants), and geopolitically important to be isolated by unilateral measures alone. Iran's oil and gas deposits, which make up greater than 9 percent of the world's oil reserves, are too significant in the world's international energy supplies (Zunes, 1999, p. 1). In addition, Iran is physically sandwiched between both the oil rich areas of the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf, while at the same time being located at the international crossroads of Central Asia and the Middle East. It soon becomes apparent to any nation's foreign policymaker that Iran's geographic location is too strategic to be ignored.

The European Union has long recognized the importance of Iran on the world stage and has made attempts to restore its ties with the Islamic regime. Even after the 1998 Mykonos Trial where it had accused Iran of supporting international terrorism, President Khatami visited France and Italy in 1999 and then Germany in July of 2000. In addition, foreign ministers from the European Union and the United Kingdom have since returned to Tehran. Currently, Belgium is the only Western European state not to have diplomatic relations with Iran (Yaphe and Schake, 2000, p. 109).

Unlike their European counterparts, however, the United State's current policy is inherently distrustful and hostile toward the Islamic Republic. Although, the Clinton

Administration showed some signs of becoming more flexible by allowing the import of luxury goods such as carpets, pistachios and caviar, there still is a ban against investing in Iran's energy development. Iran, unfortunately, has not really given many good reasons for Washington to treat them otherwise; ever since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, events supported by Iran have shaped this response. The destruction of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, the subsequent taking of hostages, attacks on the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, the bombing of the American Embassy in Kuwait, and several major airline hijackings form a basis for U.S. mistrust of Iran (Perry, 2001, p. 25).

America's current policies, which encourage the collapse of the Islamic regime may be unrealistic, and may prove dangerous to moderate forces within Iran. While the former Assistant Secretary of Near East Affairs Djerijan denies that the United States "seeks to overthrow the Iranian Government...our policy does not exclude dialogue with Iran", current American policy still does not attempt to foster dialogue (Perry, 2001, p. 26). Rather, Washington's diplomacy toward Tehran creates mistrust and increases the level of divisiveness.

After more than eight years of pursuing dual containment, it appears that only one of the original five objectives has been met: Iran still has yet to declare acquisition of nuclear weapons. However, CIA Director George Tenet had told the Clinton Administration in January 2000, that he could no longer verify that Iran did not have nuclear weapons (Yaphe and Schake, 2000, p. 111). It becomes apparent, then, that the current policy towards Iran may only "contain" a problem state for the very short-term. Due to the policy's inherent static nature, absence of a clear endgame and its apparent lack of flexibility to deal with altered circumstances in a hostile region such as the Middle East, it is not the preferable long-term strategy. This is the case

because dual containment is not likely to reduce future conventional or nuclear threats that an alienated and aggravated Iran poses to regional security.

Washington needs to begin to find different strategies to engage Iran. American policy objectives should be to integrate Iran into regional security and the global economic environment before it becomes a nuclear power. Then, once Iran becomes nuclearized, the United States will have made inroads to communicate with the Islamic regime that better articulate America's military and political "red lines".

Possible Future Policy *before* Nuclearization

The aim of future U.S. political engagement should be to achieve realignment or integration of Iran into the international community. In engaging Iran, the United States should use "carrot-and-stick" approaches to support both sensible and realistic demands for change. Unlike current policy, which only looks to punish Iran, American foreign policymakers will need to formulate a different approach that relies on positive inducements for change as well as sanctions for non-compliance. In this process, these policymakers must explicitly inform the Iranians about which actions will result in rewards or punishments. The United States was able to use this form of engagement with the Egyptians during the Camp David Peace Accords. Previous to Camp David, the Egyptians under former President Nasar and then Sadat were anti-West and distrustful towards America. However, at this meeting, then U.S. President Carter was able to broker a peace treaty with Egypt and Israel. In unspecific terms, the United States was able to use "carrot-and-stick" approaches by offering billions of dollars for defense equipment and the promise to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in order to ensure peace between those

two nations. A similar situation using the same approach may also work with the Islamic Republic.

The U.S. aim should be to draw Iran away from continued confrontation with the West and towards the benefits of economic and regional security. In doing this, the Islamic Republic still can maintain its revolutionary goals while playing a more important role within the Middle East. Although the current diplomatic differences between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran do appear to be rather immense, there are several areas where these two worlds can meet.

First, the United States will need to recognize the cultural significance of the Islamic clergy within Iran as well as their moderate allies in the government. Washington must attempt to work with both entities. American leaders should not refuse to negotiate with these Iranian “hard-liners”. The clerical isolationists must be given good reason to not discredit negotiations, and the best way to do this is by including them in the negotiations. Back in 1979, 1986, and 1989, Iranian-U.S. negotiations had to be abandoned when Iranian isolationists, who were not included in these talks, engineered scandals (Kurzman, 1998, p. 70). Therefore, the new leaders of the United States and Iran must learn from these previous episodes to prevent them from reoccurring.

U.S. policymakers then will need to walk a thin-line between appeasement and antagonism in trying to frame negotiations in terms of mutual benefits rather than developing the means for altering the foreign policies of the Islamic regime, or even overthrowing it. At the same time, the Washington will need to reassure the Iranian leadership that it seeks political dialogue rather than political change. As Shahram Chubin and Jerrold Green put it: “engagement depends on small steps, some reciprocal, which could be phased and sequenced to

enhance the atmosphere of progress to the more substantive bilateral issues” (Chubin and Green, 1998, p. 160). Some of the incentives that these two scholars identify can help the normalization process. These moves would include:

- 1) Dropping automatic opposition to Iranian candidates for posts in international organizations.
- 2) Creating a forum (like the Gulf Cooperation Council) for regional dialogues on arms control.
- 3) Increasing cultural representations and visits.
- 4) Repaying transfers of money for U.S. arms paid for by Iran but not delivered.

Currently, Iranian domestic priorities revolve around the more fundamental issue of the economy. For this reason, then, economic aid could be the most obvious and beneficial way of making some reengagement. Iran's population has been reported as growing at 2 percent per annum. In order to maintain its current standard of living, the country requires an economic growth rate of 6 percent. In other words, the Iranian government needs to generate at least 700,000 jobs per annum if its rapidly growing population of youths are to be kept employed and off the streets (Chubin and Green, 1998, p. 155). Without a doubt, this situation has been weighing heavily on the minds of the Islamic leadership over the past few years.

The present American sanctions have been doing a great deal to inhibit the economic growth of Iran. One of the most frustrating situations is the stagnating Iranian oil and natural gas industry. In 1995, for example, the U.S. oil company Conoco announced that it had signed a \$1 billion contract with the government of Iran to develop the Sirri Gas Field in the Persian Gulf. However, U.S. political pressures and subsequent legislation made it illegal for any American

oil/gas company to do business with the Islamic Republic, and this law eventually caused the nullification of that contract (Sick, 1998, p. 9; Yaphe and Schake, 2000, p. 107). Tehran would very much like to see more American capital and investment within the nation's borders to help maintain and then improve Iran's current economic situation. This would allow for greater integration between the American and Iranian economies, and it undoubtedly would more widely open up this oil rich country's economy to the rest of the world. However, the government leaders of Iran do not want to see any unnecessary political strings attached to such business deals.

In addition, The Islamic Republic wants to be the primary route for the oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. Once again, Iran's strategic geographical position is of immense critical interest. This route would be the shortest, most economic path for energy resources to be transmitted. However, the Clinton Administration advocated creating a pipeline from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey, which would completely bypass Iran (Yaphe and Schake, 2000, p. 108; Chubin and Green, 1998, p. 160). The United States, then, could assist the Iranian government by supporting their pipeline plans.

These are two significant areas that America could use to bridge the widening gap between this country and Iran. However, all of these economic incentives would come at a price. U.S. policymakers need to explain explicitly to the Islamic regime which actions it expects them not to take. Providing clear, consistent policy expectations towards terrorism, the Middle East peace process, nuclear weapons development, and human rights for Iran can do this. The United States may also want to consider setting the same standards to all other Middle Eastern countries

so as to eliminate the perception of a double standard, which would jeopardize American credibility.

Here, it would become more difficult. Washington would expect the Islamic Republic to stop any efforts to produce nuclear weapons, and to continue allowing international observers to examine, periodically, its civil nuclear power program to ensure the international community that it is meeting this demand. America, in the process, must be sensitive to Iran's desire to produce a light water, civil nuclear infrastructure, which does not use the fissionable form of the uranium isotope, so it cannot be transformed into weapons grade material. In addition, the United States can do a great deal toward helping ease the security tensions in the region by helping establish a Middle East nuclear weapons "free zone". This would be similar to the United Nations resolution passed in the 1995 NPT calling for the development of an internationally recognized nuclear weapons "free zone" in the Middle East. To do this, the United States would need to remove all of its nuclear warships from the region as well as persuade Israel to become a member of the NPT (Perry, 2001, p. 28; Zunes, 1999, p. 6).

Iran must also assure the United States that it has stopped supporting groups opposed to the Middle East peace process, whether it is with arms, training, shelter, passports, finance, etc. This is not to say Iran needs to support the peace process per se; however, it should not attempt to take part in any activity that would undermine or jeopardize these talks. In fact, there has been some evidence that the Iranian government would allow this to take place. President Khatami has reportedly already assured the Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat that Iran would support any agreement accepted by the Palestinians (Chubin and Green, 1998, p. 157).

The United States will need to reassure the Iranian leadership that it seeks a meaningful political dialogue with Iran rather than an abrupt political change in that country. At the same

time, it must explain that any Iranian attempts to engage in political or military actions which run counter to American “red lines” would then require the reinstatement of economic pressures and sanctions. If Washington is able to negotiate effectively over these issues as well as create a more prosperous economic future for the Islamic Republic, then the Iranian government may be more likely to consider Western concerns. In addition, this new economic marriage between the U.S. and Iran would allow for greater flexibility with an “arm twisting” ability for U.S. policymakers, if (or when) they deal with a nuclear-armed Iran.

Possible Future Policy *after* Nuclearization

Although America has done a great deal with sanctions to prevent the nuclearization of Iran, there is always the possibility that the Islamic regime will find the motivations to acquire nuclear weapons (see Chapter Four) too powerful to ignore. If that is the case, and Iran overtly becomes a nuclear power, than the United States should have a secondary plan to implement for this new challenge.

Needless to say, an openly nuclear Iran would destabilize the security environment of the Middle East, as was the case in southern Asia with Pakistan and India (see Chapter Four). Many American allies who neighbor Iran, including the Gulf Cooperation Council states and Israel, will find themselves in a precarious situation. There will be the possible threat of a LIC, some of those countries may need to establish their own nuclear weapons program or verbally confirm the current existence of such a program just to counter this new threat. The end result would be an even more hostile and destabilized political/military environment within the Middle East.

Therefore, it will be up to the United States to find as well as implement new ways to minimize the significance of an Iran with nuclear weapons.

By reducing the strategic importance of possessing nuclear WMD, the U.S. may be able to create the necessary environment for the Iranian government to reconsider having a nuclear weapons program, as was the case for South Africa. In that situation, South Africa initially never confirmed it was developing, or possessed nuclear weapons. It did, however, have the necessary natural and technological infrastructure to become a nuclearized nation (Federation of American Scientists, 2001). In 1987 President Both announced that South Africa was considering signing the 1968 NPT and would begin discussions with other Sub-Saharan countries towards that end. In September 1990, Pretoria agreed to sign the NPT, but only "in the context of an equal commitment by other states in the Southern African region" (Federation of American Scientists, 2001). After intensive diplomatic efforts, especially by the United States and the Soviet Union, Tanzania and Zambia agreed to sign the treaty. It should also be mentioned that in addition to external concerns, Pretoria had severe internal security problems. South African leaders faced the possible risk in the 1980s and early 1990s of a radical faction within the country gaining control over their nuclear weapons and blackmailing elements within the nation (Porro, 1989, p. 296). After having some of their external security concerns alleviated and recognizing the significant strategic limitations of becoming nuclearized, South Africa eventually signed the NPT on July 10, 1991.

American leaders need to look at South Africa as an example and should consider implementing four possible strategic policy changes to help reduce the significance of a nuclearized Iran. These would include:

- 1) Economic Sanctions
- 2) Regional Missile Defense System
- 3) Technical and Material Sanction
- 4) Coastal Defense

Economic Sanctions. As was the case with India and Pakistan when they became nuclearized, the initial political action that takes place will be international economic sanctions headed by the United States. As a signatory member of the NPT, Iran (unlike Israel, Pakistan or India) is obliged not to produce any nuclear weapons, so long as it is not under any immediate, extreme threat. For this reason the United States, as well as the rest of the international community, would be within the U.N. legal bounds to implement sanctions on Iran if they were not in, or on the verge of, war (Eisenstadt, 1999, p. 129). It is critical here, however, not to only focus on the punitive aspects of these economic sanctions. Washington will also need to continue to remind the Iranian leadership that a return to normal relations could be possible, and additional economic aid would be provided, so long as they dismantled their nuclear arsenal and weapons program.

In addition, American policymakers also may go about trying to isolate Iran diplomatically from the rest of the world. Yet, given what has been seen with the dual containment policy, this plan may not have much support. Therefore, the most likely course of action that the United States could take in this particular situation might be on the military front rather than on the political one.

Regional Missile Defense Systems. Since the most credible and realistic threat of a nuclearized Iran would be to its close neighbors in the Middle East, the United States will need to find ways to provide security to those interests. In helping to minimize any nuclear threat to the Middle East, America will need to improve the strategic defenses of its allies and American military bases within striking distance of Iran. Due to their rather extensive long-range missile systems, the Islamic Republic currently has the ability to hit every capital city in the Middle East along with all fixed U.S. military installations (see Chapter Five).

American military planners will need to start developing an advanced, defensive surface-to-air missile system, similar to the Patriot Missile used extensively in the Gulf War or the Israeli built (but American funded) Arrow-2 anti-tactical ballistic missile (ATBM). The purpose of this system would be to destroy any possible incoming nuclear missile, preferably during the delivery vehicle's boost stage over the Persian Gulf. Other anti-missile ideas could range from sea-based interceptors to airborne lasers.

The United States currently has been working to develop those systems, and it needs only to deploy such defensive measures to the Middle East when the security environment calls for it, and once testing and development of those systems has been completed. Either way, those programs can be pursued on multiple fronts or in a joint effort with the assistance of the GCC and/or Israel.

Technical and Material Sanctions. Although the United States possesses a very powerful and credible, second-strike nuclear capability, there has been some fear among American policymakers that this deterrent factor, which was successfully upheld throughout the Cold War, may not be enough to prevent an irrational “rogue” nation from sending a nuclear missile across

the ocean into the U.S. heartland. For this reason, as well as to limit Iran's strategic targeting options in general, the United States should continue its aggressive campaign (from the dual containment policy) to control and prevent intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) technologies and materials from entering Iran. If this can be maintained, the Islamic Republic will be limited to striking against only U.S. interests outside of America's borders (see Chapter Five). This would allow U.S. strategic war planners greater flexibility in defending against, as well as reacting towards, a hostile, nuclear-armed Iran without having fear of an attack on American territory.

Coastal Defenses. If the Islamic Republic of Iran is unable to advance past its current sophistication with ballistic missile technology, the Iranian leadership may seek alternative, less technologically advanced, means to strike against the U.S. with a nuclear weapon. The second, and one of the most unexpected ways to attack the United States, as was proven with the USS Cole bombing off the Yemeni port of Aden, is the suicidal detonation of a merchant or passenger ship with a nuclear bomb. While the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole did not include the use of a nuclear weapon, it did show how susceptible large ports could be. Although the likelihood of an overt attack such as this by the Islamic government may be minimal, political leaders within the Iranian regime very well could utilize international terrorists as their surrogates, eliminating any Iranian fingerprint that possibly could be used to identify the Islamic Republic as the culprit. To help prevent this sort of attack from occurring, the United States will need to beef-up coastal security and surveillance to help prevent the infiltration of any unregistered or unidentified ships from coming into one of its ports.

While these are not all of the possible ways in which the United States could react to a nuclearized Iran, they constitute a good start towards helping to minimize the significance of Iran

having nuclear weapons. By implementing these four strategic measures, American policymakers would be able to provide greater security for its national interests in the Middle East as well as allow the Iranian regime to reconsider the necessity of continuing with their nuclear weapons program.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Existing research on the Middle East, and the Islamic Republic in particular, suggest that one of the main strategic objectives of Iran is the elimination of Western and Israeli influence from this region. While the Islamic Republic is economically and militarily incapable of accomplishing this goal at this stage, the acquisition of nuclear weapons would greatly affect the current geo-political status quo of this region and could significantly alter future American foreign policy in the Middle East.

Although the Islamic Republic is currently a member of the NPT, it has been aggressively pursuing a nuclear program for more than 30 years. Motivations behind such a persistent objective have been for both civil and military usage. The war with Iraq and the inability of the Iranian leadership to prevent the ruthless chemical attacks on its civilian population did a great deal to convince the Khomeini government to revitalize this program, which remained dormant for several years after the overthrow of the Shah. To carry out such a program, Iran has continuously requested the assistance of numerous countries such as China, Russia, Argentina and North Korea.

Despite such attempts, it is currently assessed that the Islamic Republic has yet to acquire the necessary materials and/or technical know-how to produce its first atomic bomb. Nonetheless, the Iranian leadership has been and still is patient, mainly because their international security motives to acquire nuclear weapons are not urgent or critical.

A great deal of the political workings of Iran are greatly unknown and beyond the knowledge of Western scholars. Thus, to accurately list the Islamic Republic's motivations to

become nuclearized may be impossible. However, a close analysis of Iran's security environment reveals that the main concerns of Islamic Republic seem to be more local and internal in scope than external and international. In other words, the security of the Islamic Revolution against opposition groups, such as the mujahedin in Iraq, and the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the country against potential secessionists from the ethnic Azerbaijanis and Kurds are far greater concerns to the Iranian leadership than the fear of a potential American attack (Clawson, 1994, p. 69).

Therefore, one can argue that Iran's desire for nuclear weapons is motivated by "political" rather than "security" reasons; whereas its driving force centers around the maintenance of the current status rather than protection. It becomes evident, then, that the need to acquire a nuclear arsenal stems less from a sense of urgency or necessity, than from ambition, choice and historical lessons learned from the Gulf War and the eight-year war against Iraq. Thus, if we were to summarize the motives of the Iranian leadership to acquire a nuclear arsenal, we would most likely narrow them down to these four main reasons: 1) self-reliance, 2) a greater voice in the international scene, 3) the need to make up for deficiencies in conventional weapons; and, 4) the desire to strengthen their deterrence against future hostile aggression.

Although we are unsure as to *when* Iran will be able to produce its first nuclear weapon, it becomes important, nonetheless, to investigate *how* the Islamic Republic is likely to use such a destructive weapon. Because of Iran's continuous denial about wanting to acquire such weapons, it is rather challenging to obtain accurate information regarding its nuclear weapons program. For this reason, and due to the nature of the Islamic Republic's reclusive nature, it is almost impossible to predict with any degree of certainty Iran's possible uses of nuclear weapons

without relying on educated guesses based upon Iran's international ambitions and the regime's strategic motivations.

Nonetheless, some scholars would argue that since Iran has been designated a "rogue" state, it is not rational in its foreign policy and thus may become aggressive, hostile and irresponsible with the acquisition of a nuclear arsenal. However, as the post-Ayatollah Khomeini events have demonstrated, Iran's political agenda and actions have become increasingly pragmatic and rational. Iran seems to be less likely use nuclear weapons to "bully" its neighbors, for instance, or impose their political agenda on other nation-states. It would use such an arsenal to induce restraint from foreign countries in order to avoid major all out wars, the result of which could be too costly for the Iranian government to handle. As such, the arsenal would be used more as a tool for deterrence.

Whatever motives Iran has for the acquisition of nuclear weapons and whatever the possible usage of such an arsenal, a nuclearized Iran is not what the United States wants in an already restless Middle East. The acquisition of nuclear weapons within this region could only make the security environment more hostile and volatile. However, the willingness and support of multiple countries to sell advanced weapon technologies to the Islamic Republic, forces America to reevaluate the plausibility of preventing the nuclearization of Iran. The current U.S. strategy of dual containment has proven ineffective at altering Iran's push to become a nuclear power, and inadequate at preventing them from interfering in the Middle East peace process. American policymakers should, therefore, investigate alternative means to work with this country in order to help maintain regional stability.

The current political and cultural gaps between Iran and the U.S. are rather considerable. Nonetheless, this research recommends pursuing pragmatic political engagement, focused

mainly on mutual benefits in order to achieve the realignment and integration of Iran into the international community. To this end, America will need to recognize the importance of the Islamic clergy within the Iranian government and attempt to work them. Unlike the U.S. policy currently pursued with Iran, which only seeks to isolate and punish Iran, American policymakers should use “carrot-and-stick” approaches to rely on inducement for change as well as sanctions for non-compliance. For example, the Iranian leadership would greatly like to see an ease in economic sanctions and allow for American oil companies to invest in their country. The U.S. may find it in their interest to consider these options as long as Iran agrees not to interfere in the Middle East peace process. If at anytime the Islamic Republic is suspected of reneging on their deal, then the United States could rekindle their previously imposed sanctions.

Recent developments in the U.S.-Iran relations give some indications that both nations may move soon to some form of open dialogue. In June 1998, Iran’s President Khatami called for a "dialogue of civilizations", then Secretary of State Albright called on Iran to work with the United States to help develop a "roadmap leading to normal relations". Former President Clinton also stated "What we want is a genuine reconciliation with Iran" (Yaphe and Schake, 2000, p. 110). American policymakers need to take advantage of this current mindset and use it to start bridging gaps before Iran becomes nuclearized.

However, in case no such rapprochement takes place between the two nations prior to Iran's overt acquisition of a nuclear weapon, it then becomes imperative for the United State to have a back-up plan ready to implement. This research recommends that America focus on finding ways to minimize the strategic significance of having a nuclear arsenal. Some of the more effective ways to accomplish this is by implementing sever economic, technical and material sanctions on Iran, as well as establishing a regional missile defense system and beefing-

up U.S. coastal defenses. At the same time, Washington will also need to remind Tehran that a return to normal relations could be possible if they dismantle their nuclear arsenal and weapons program.

A move towards normalized relations will obviously not be easy for the leaders of either the United States or Iran. Current political and cultural differences challenge these two governments from working with one another. However, after the tragic terrorist events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent wave of biological attacks, there appears to be a growing need to more closely monitor those states that are pursuing weapons of mass destruction. The mounting tension in the Middle East and the increasingly restlessness and hostility of religious fundamentalists are all adding a further sense of urgency to the issue of security and nuclear weapons proliferation in this region. It appears now, more than ever, that the problem of international security has become much more relevant in this area of the world where terrorism has become an aspect of every day life.

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VITA

Lt. John N. Hanna, son of Dr. Nabil and Kamilia Hanna, was born on August 19, 1976 in Southampton, Long Island, New York. Before obtaining his Masters Degree with Virginia Tech, he studied at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Australia and at The Pennsylvania State University receiving a Bachelors of Science Degree in Industrial Engineering in 1998. Currently, he is an Intelligence Officer in the United States Air Force, stationed with the 426 Information Operations Squadron, Vogelweh Cantonment, Germany.