

## *Viewpoint*

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# Can the United States Influence the WMD Policies of Iraq and Iran?

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Iraq and Iran are likely to pose some of the most difficult long-term proliferation challenges for the United States in the coming years. Both countries remain actively committed to developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in spite of obstacles created by export controls and sanctions, and even though they are signatories to various arms control treaties proscribing the possession and/or use of such weapons.<sup>2</sup>

The WMD ambitions and capabilities of Iraq and Iran are of concern to the United States because of the key role these two states play in the politics of the Persian Gulf—a conflict-prone region of strategic importance, where two-thirds of the world's proven oil reserves are located. Iraq and Iran fought a bloody eight-year war in the 1980s, and many of the factors that gave rise to this conflict remain unresolved. As a result, they remain bitter enemies. Moreover, both have tense or hostile relations with several of their neighbors. Iraq still covets Kuwait. It harbors deep resentments against the Arab Gulf states for their role in the 1991 Gulf War and is likely to try to avenge its defeat someday. The leaders of Iraq and Iran also remain opposed to the existence of Israel—the sole nuclear power in the region. The acqui-

sition of nuclear weapons by either would thus increase the potential for a nuclear confrontation in the Middle East. For all of these reasons, preventing Iraq and Iran from enhancing their current WMD capabilities, and deterring the use of these weapons, are high policy priorities for the United States.

Arab Iraq and Persian Iran are very different countries that pose very different types of proliferation challenges to the United States.<sup>3</sup> Iraq is a totalitarian state controlled by a single individual (President Saddam Husayn) who runs the country with an iron fist. Husayn maintains power through the security services, most of which are headed by his relatives. By contrast, Iran's political system is characterized by rampant factionalism, a multiplicity of competing power centers controlled by rival personalities (the most important of which are Supreme Leader 'Ali Akbar Khamene'i, President Mohammed Khatami, and Expediency Council Head 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani), and quasi-democratic processes and institutions.<sup>4</sup> And while Iraq has often resorted to naked aggression to achieve key policy objectives, Iran has often attempted to achieve its policy objectives through indirect means, including subversion

and terrorism by various surrogate groups supported by Tehran. As a result, each requires a policy approach tailored to its unique characteristics and circumstances.

To assess how Washington might influence the WMD policies of Iraq and Iran, this viewpoint will examine five possible policy responses available to the United States: (1) altering motivations; (2) influencing the proliferation cost/benefit calculus of these countries; (3) imposing costs and delays; (4) strengthening deterrence; and (5) mitigating the impact of proliferation through encouraging political change in these countries. Each will be assessed as it applies to Iraq and Iran.

### **ALTERING MOTIVATIONS TO ACQUIRE WMD**

Since their inception, the WMD programs of Iraq and Iran have exerted a powerful reciprocal influence upon one another. Iraq's interest in WMD dates to the early 1970s, and was bound up, first and foremost, with the personal ambitions of Saddam Husayn (then the number two man in Baghdad) and his pursuit of power and influence in the Arab world. Iraq's decision to acquire WMD was probably also influenced by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's efforts to transform Iran into a regional power and to develop nuclear weapons, and Israel's nascent WMD programs.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, the Islamic Republic of Iran initiated its WMD program by pursuing chemical and biological weapons (CBW) and reviving the Shah's nuclear effort. Iran acted in response to Iraq's use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War, and Baghdad's pursuit of biological and nuclear weapons. Eventually, however, Tehran also came to see WMD as a means of achieving broader geo-strategic objectives.

Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq saw WMD as a means to achieve several ends: securing a leadership role in the Arab world, achieving hegemony in the Persian Gulf, deterring its enemies (primarily Iran, Israel, and the United States), enhancing its political and military freedom of action vis-a-vis the United States and Israel by neutralizing their WMD capabilities, and ultimately, transforming Iraq into a great power.<sup>6</sup> Since 1991, with Iraq's armed forces crippled by war and sanctions, Baghdad has probably seen WMD as the only way to recoup some of its former power and influence with the limited financial and material resources currently at its disposal. More importantly, President Saddam Husayn probably sees his personal survival, and the survival of

his regime, bound up with WMD; this is probably the reason he has forgone more than \$130 billion in income from potential oil exports to hold onto his remaining capabilities in this area. Iraqi officials have told United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) representatives that they believe that their chemical weapons (CW) and missiles saved Iraq from defeat during the Iran-Iraq War,<sup>7</sup> and for this reason, Saddam Husayn will not voluntarily divest himself of these capabilities. He also ordered CW used against Iraq's own population in 1987-88 in order to crush a long-running Kurdish insurgency.<sup>8</sup> Thus, he apparently sees WMD as having utility against his domestic enemies as well. Finally, given Washington's current commitment to regime change in Baghdad (as embodied in the Iraq Liberation Act passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton in October 1998),<sup>9</sup> he probably believes that no foreign power will dare invade Iraq and enter Baghdad to unseat him so long as he retains such capabilities.

As for Iran, its approach to WMD was profoundly influenced by its experience during the Iran-Iraq War (though its clandestine nuclear program dates to the days of the Shah). Following the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran was isolated internationally, and during the war it faced Iraq virtually alone. Tehran's sense of isolation was heightened by an international arms embargo organized by the United States and by the apathetic international response to Iraq's use of CW (in violation of its arms control commitments). These experiences left wounds in Iran's national psyche that remain to this day. As a result of this experience, Iran has demonstrated a somewhat schizophrenic attitude towards arms control measures—expressing skepticism about their efficacy (in light of its experience with Iraq), while maintaining a high profile in international arms control-related activities.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Iran has pursued WMD as part of its efforts to enhance self-reliance (a goal the Islamic Republic has pursued in all spheres of national life); to deter potential threats from Iraq, the United States, Israel, and more recently Turkey, Afghanistan, and Azerbaijan; and to close the gap between the self-image that most Iranians hold of Iran as a regional power, and the reality of the country's military weakness. In this context, WMD may provide Iran with the only way to transform itself into a regional power without bankrupting itself.<sup>11</sup>

This assessment has certain policy implications. First, many of the motivations for WMD proliferation by Iraq and Iran are not regime-specific, and would strongly

influence whoever is in power in Baghdad or Tehran. Accordingly, the problem of WMD proliferation by Iraq and Iran is likely to be with us for decades to come. Second, because security threats are not the only reason that Iraq and Iran are pursuing WMD, the provision of security assurances by the great powers, or the creation of a regional security system, will not be sufficient to convince either country to abandon its WMD programs; there are other powerful motives at work here.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, there may not be much that the United States (or its allies) can do to influence the full panoply of motivations that underpin efforts by Iraq and Iran to acquire WMD. Nonetheless, creating a regional security system would be an inherently desirable goal, since it could reduce the likelihood of crises that could result in the use of WMD. However, given the amount of distrust and hostility that continues to characterize relations between Iraq, Iran, and their Arab Gulf neighbors, circumstances are not “ripe” for such arrangements at this time.

#### **INFLUENCING THE PROLIFERATION COST/ BENEFIT CALCULUS**

Though both Iraq and Iran see the possession of WMD as a strategic imperative, the policies of each are influenced by a very different proliferation cost/benefit calculus. Baghdad views the acquisition of WMD as a supreme objective, since WMD are perceived as a means of ensuring the survival of the regime. Accordingly, it has seen arms control agreements mainly as a cover for acquiring materials, technology, and know-how, and it will violate the agreements when it can. Moreover, Baghdad under Ba’ath party rule has always viewed the outside world with suspicion and distrust, and it has tightly controlled all contacts between its people and the outside.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the country’s leadership is relatively unconcerned about the impact of its actions on its relations with foreign governments. The costs it has paid for violating its arms control commitments are clearly not of paramount concern for the regime. And were sanctions on Iraq to be lifted, this pattern of behavior would probably not change. As a result of a decade of playing cat-and-mouse with UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Baghdad is familiar with the state-of-the-art in arms control detection technologies, and the capabilities and limitations of the various foreign intelligence services that target Iraq. It therefore probably has a good idea of what it can get away with; and if cheating is possible, it will do so.

The imperative to acquire WMD is an absolute over which Saddam Husayn is not willing (or perhaps, as he sees it, able) to compromise.

With Iran, the situation is much more complex. Tehran faces a dilemma. While Iran’s clerical leadership seems relatively united in its desire to acquire WMD,<sup>14</sup> it is probably divided over the importance of the interests that could be adversely affected by a decision to violate its arms control commitments. The pragmatic reformers likely fear the potential impact of a violation on Iran’s ties with the outside world and the West in particular. These ties are important if Iran is to get its economy on its feet, and avoid popular unrest in the future. Conservative hard-liners care less about Iran’s relationship with the non-Islamic world, and most oppose better ties with the West—or at least the United States.<sup>15</sup> These differences among Iran’s clerical leadership on how they evaluate the potentially harmful effects of WMD development on Iran’s relations with the non-Islamic world might provide an opening that the United States could exploit in order to alter Tehran’s proliferation cost/benefit calculus.

Several other factors will weigh in here as well. The first is the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which could very well be a test case for Iran with regard to the price of violating its arms control obligations. If Tehran is able to circumvent its CWC commitments without paying a heavy price for doing so, it is even more likely to try to violate its NPT commitments as it approaches the nuclear threshold. For this reason, it is crucial that Tehran be held to its CWC commitments.<sup>16</sup> The second has to do with the halt of UN weapons inspections in Iraq, which will not alter Iran’s motivations for acquiring WMD, but could influence the pace and urgency of Iran’s efforts in this area. For this reason, it would be desirable for UN weapons inspections in Iraq to resume as soon as possible. It may not, however, be possible to create an effective inspection regime under current conditions.

Finally, the strength of international nonproliferation norms and the health and well-being of the various arms control treaties (particularly the NPT) are likely to affect Iranian calculations. In particular, the United States-North Korea 1994 Agreed Framework and the response of the international community to the twin nuclear bomb tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 could affect the cost/benefit calculus of Iran’s leadership—though in what direction is difficult to predict. For instance, the even-

tual delivery of pressurized light-water reactors to Korea under the terms of the 1994 Agreed Framework might stiffen Iranian resolve to keep (and not trade away) its civilian nuclear program, and strengthen its demands for access to civilian nuclear technology, as permitted by Article IV of the NPT. Moreover, the lack of any significant adverse long-term consequences for India and Pakistan as a result of their remaining outside the NPT and developing and testing nuclear weapons might encourage some in Iran to advocate withdrawing from the NPT as the best way to avoid an international backlash for going nuclear.

### IMPOSING COSTS AND DELAYS

If it is not possible to alter the WMD policies of Iraq and Iran, it may at least be possible to hinder the ability of these two countries to enhance their existing WMD capabilities and acquire new ones. These efforts could include such traditional tools as export controls, diplomatic demarches, political arm-twisting, sanctions, and preventive action. Together, these measures may halt or at least delay proliferation, and ensure that proliferators end up with fewer and less advanced arms than would have otherwise been the case.

Following the Israeli bombing of Iraq's Osiraq nuclear reactor in 1981, Baghdad redoubled its efforts in the nuclear arena. It investigated six different routes (plutonium separation, and several enrichment technologies: EMIS, gaseous diffusion, gas centrifuge, chemical, and laser) for acquiring fissile material in its pursuit of nuclear weapons before deciding to pursue three of these seriously. This pattern of pursuing multiple proliferation routes runs like a thread through Iraq's WMD programs. Thus, Iraq developed several types of CW agent, several types of BW agent, superguns, and a number of different models of liquid- and solid-fuel missiles (in addition to investigating the potential of radiological weapons). This may have reflected a certain megalomania on the part of Saddam Husayn, who took a deep personal interest in the progress of these programs.<sup>17</sup> It almost certainly also reflected—in the case of the nuclear program—a decision to hedge against the possibility that progress on one route might be halted as a result of export controls in supplier states, or the inability of the Iraqis to master critical technologies. Not knowing which route would bear fruit, Iraq poured billions of dollars into parallel efforts to maximize the likelihood of success.<sup>18</sup>

The need to evade export controls had a far-reaching impact on how Iraq went about procuring materials, components, and equipment overseas. So as not to arouse suspicions, the Iraqis often broke up their orders into small batches; they also made extensive use of middlemen to disguise the ultimate destination and end use of items. They would also seize opportunities to obtain uncontrolled items in enormous quantities, as they became available, whether or not they were ready to use them.<sup>19</sup> The Iraqis paid a price for these practices. Purchasing items in small batches meant that they would not be able to realize savings attainable by purchasing and shipping in bulk. Extensive reliance on middlemen meant additional salaries or bribes had to be paid. Often they also had to pay a risk premium for controlled materials. And the purchase of items in enormous quantities led to overbuying and waste.<sup>20</sup> In a number of cases, the Iraqis were unable to obtain components that they had planned to purchase abroad. As a result, they had to purchase machinery to produce the components domestically.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, as a result of the Osiraq strike, Iraq decided to disperse and hide facilities associated with its nuclear program. It built certain key facilities in duplicate, so that if one facility were hit in another attack, the alternate might survive. Thus, Iraq constructed duplicate calutron enrichment facilities at Tarmiya and al-Sharqat.<sup>22</sup> While sound operational considerations underpinned this decision, it nonetheless resulted in the diversion of resources and delays in the program.

In sum, it is clear that constraints imposed by the export controls of supplier states and the way that Iraq structured its nuclear program—pursuing several routes simultaneously and building key components of the infrastructure in duplicate—slowed the progress of this effort. Had Iraq run a more disciplined and tightly focused effort, it is possible that it might have had “the Bomb” in time for Desert Storm. Recent history could have been very different.

There was another consequence of this duplication of effort in the nuclear arena. This large nuclear program drew off skilled personnel from the CW and other programs, and thereby retarded the progress of these other efforts. Thus, one early assessment of Iraq's CW program found:

Despite the quality of the personnel [overseeing the CW program], there were difficulties in simply maintaining the programme, as be-

low the thin veneer of well-qualified personnel there was nothing. For example, when sophisticated machinery broke down, they were either thrown away or not repaired for a long time.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the indirect effects of export controls were almost as important, and in some ways more important, than their direct effects, and they hindered Iraqi efforts to acquire WMD on several different levels.

There are other examples of successful efforts to delay weapons development. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), the United States spearheaded a multilateral effort starting in late 1983—known as “Operation Staunch”—to halt the supply of arms and spare parts to Iran, in order to prevent an Iranian victory. According to one US official, through the imposition of export control legislation, demarches, and pressure on various governments around the world, Operation Staunch had a significant impact on the Iranian war effort:

Iran obviously continued to get military equipment [but]...it took much longer for Iran to obtain what it needed for its military. The material tended to cost more, so Iran could buy less. A significant portion of what Iran purchased was outdated or of poor quality in comparison to the equivalent that Iraq was buying from the Soviet Union, France, and other suppliers. Supplies for Iran were unreliable because they might be interdicted [and]...this made military planning for Iran more complicated.... Not being able to get the supplies they wanted in the quantities they wanted and not being able to count on a steady flow had a big impact on Iran’s ability to capitalize on its [battlefield] successes.... They could not sustain their offensives...because they often ran out of supplies, unlike the Iraqis.... We were able, through this effort, to inhibit Iran’s war-making ability.<sup>24</sup>

These activities extended to Iran’s efforts during the war to procure precursors and equipment for its CBW programs, though these programs were in their infancy at the time and would have had little impact on the course of the war had they gone forward unhindered.

In the decade following the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the United States continued these efforts to deny Iran access to weapons sources. This successfully cut Iran off from Western arms and technology sources, forcing

it to rely on less advanced suppliers such as North Korea, Russia, and—until recently—China. Moreover, these efforts also hindered the procurement of spare parts for Iran’s armed forces, making it more difficult for Tehran to maintain its existing force structure. These constraints may have made Iran more careful to avoid a confrontation with the United States that could lead to losses of military hardware it could neither absorb nor afford to replace.

US efforts were also instrumental in thwarting a large number of prospective deals concerning technologies useful for the development of WMD. Iran initially obtained chemical agent precursors from the United States, Germany, and Japan, and production technology from Germany and Hungary, but the imposition of stricter export controls by these countries in the late 1980s forced Iran to find alternative sources for precursors and production technology. As a result, China emerged as Iran’s principal source of both.<sup>25</sup> Due however to the difficulties it has encountered obtaining CW precursors, Iran is now working to become self-sufficient in the production of these materials.<sup>26</sup>

Iran has faced even greater obstacles in its efforts to acquire nuclear technology abroad. The following is only a partial list of Iran’s thwarted efforts to acquire civilian nuclear technology over the past two decades:

- Germany repeatedly refused Iranian requests starting in the early 1980s to complete the Bushehr nuclear power plant started by the Shah, or to provide it with reactor fuel;<sup>27</sup>
- Argentina refused to supply Iran with nuclear fuel fabrication and reprocessing technology and a 20 to 30 megawatt thermal (MWt) research reactor in the late 1980s and early 1990s;<sup>28</sup>
- China refused to supply Iran with a 30-MWt research reactor in 1990 and refused to supply a uranium hexafluoride conversion plant in 1998;<sup>29</sup>
- India refused to supply Iran with a 10-MWt research reactor in 1991;<sup>30</sup>
- Russia refused to transfer a gas centrifuge enrichment facility or a 30-MWt research reactor in 1995 that it had previously promised to Iran.<sup>31</sup>

As a result, since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and despite strenuous efforts, Iran has made little progress toward establishing a modern, diversified civilian nuclear infrastructure.<sup>32</sup>

Likewise, in 1993-94, the United States orchestrated an international campaign to pressure North Korea not

to transfer the Nodong-1 missile to Iran, forcing Tehran instead to take the more roundabout route of building a missile using North Korean-supplied production technology. This resulted in a five-year delay in the development of Iran's Shehab-3 missile (which is derived from the Nodong-1). That five-year delay provided the time for Israel to develop its US-funded Arrow anti-missile system, which achieved an initial operational capability in early 2000—at about the same time that the Shehab-3 entered operational service. Further delays in the Iranian missile program might provide the United States and its allies with additional time to improve their theater missile defense capabilities, and for the United States to develop a national missile defense system before Iran develops an intercontinental-range missile.

Sanctions have also been an important policy tool. Iran's economic woes—which have been exacerbated by US sanctions—have forced Tehran to dramatically pare back its military expenditures. Iran's economy is a shambles, due to several years when relatively low oil prices prevailed, rapid population growth, the lingering costs of its war with Iraq, government mismanagement and corruption, and a large short-term debt. And, while sanctions were clearly not at the root of Iran's economic problems, they undoubtedly contributed to these problems by impeding Tehran's search for foreign investment in Iran. These economic problems have forced Tehran to cut conventional military procurement by more than half since 1989.<sup>33</sup> As a result, it has had to prioritize the allocation of scarce financial resources among the various branches of the armed forces. Lacking the funds to sustain a major, across-the-board military build-up, Iran has had to content itself with selectively enhancing its military capabilities, placing emphasis on its missile forces, WMD, and navy, with lesser priority given to its air, air defense, and ground forces.

While the information available in the public domain does not allow definitive judgments, there is reason to believe that financial problems have also forced Iran to prioritize its expenditures on missiles and WMD as well, and have slowed Iran's WMD programs. Iran has apparently given high priority in recent years to its missile forces, and it has made progress in this area recently, thanks in large part to assistance from North Korea and Russia.<sup>34</sup> Emphasizing missiles is a logical decision for Tehran, since it can use displays of its missile capabilities (which are not proscribed by any treaty) as a “symbolic surrogate” for the range of WMD capabilities that

it possesses but cannot brandish, due to its treaty obligations. In contrast, Iran's nuclear program—apparently also a high priority effort—has encountered numerous obstacles. Tehran's efforts to purchase nuclear power plants from Russia and China have repeatedly been delayed, in part, due to financial problems. Russia initially agreed in 1990 to finish the Bushehr power plant; work on the first reactor started after the signing of a contract in 1995, with the Russians promising to finish work by 1999. However, most recent estimates suggest that work on the first reactor will not be completed before 2003. While technical problems are reportedly at the heart of these delays, Iran's inability to pay has also played a role.<sup>35</sup> Iran's financial hardships are also believed to have contributed to its failure to sign a contract with China for the provision of a nuclear power plant.<sup>36</sup>

Some critics of American policy have drawn a connection between US efforts to deny Tehran conventional arms and sanctions on the one hand, and Iran's development of WMD on the other. They say that by denying Tehran both cash and conventional weapons, the United States has forced Iran to go down the WMD proliferation path, since WMD provide the biggest “bang” for Iran's limited “bucks.” This argument seems implausible. The Islamic Republic initiated its CBW programs—and revived the Shah's nuclear program—in response to Iraq's use of CW starting in 1982-83. Iran already had some CBW capabilities before the United States started trying to restrict Iranian access to foreign credits and financing in 1993, and before the most punishing US sanctions were implemented in 1995 and 1996. More likely, US policy has simply ensured that Iran has had fewer resources available to pursue options that it was intent on pursuing anyway.

This criticism, however, does highlight the need to couple efforts to deny so-called rogue states access to WMD with efforts to deny them access to conventional arms. WMD may be seen as a means of neutralizing the WMD capabilities of potential adversaries, in order to create new possibilities for the employment of conventional forces. Iraq seems to have assigned WMD such a role in 1989-1991,<sup>37</sup> and its growing WMD capabilities may account for the increased Iraqi foreign policy activism during this period. Conversely, this may explain in part why Iran—lacking significant conventional capabilities—has been so cautious in the 1990s. WMD alone are not a sufficient basis for an activist foreign policy; their full potential may only be realized when

they are used in combination with capable conventional forces. Thus, efforts to control the spread of WMD must be coupled with conventional arms control.

In sum, then, the US experiences with Iraq and Iran show that export controls and sanctions often have indirect effects (the imposition of costs and delays) that may be nearly as important as their direct effects (the denial of income or of a certain technology or weapons system). The examples of Iraq and Iran likewise demonstrate that delay is important. It buys time to develop countermeasures to an adversary's capabilities and to further obstruct its efforts to acquire WMD, and it also creates opportunities to influence the domestic or regional environment in order to mitigate the impact of proliferation.

Thus, delaying the WMD programs of Iraq or Iran might help create a more conducive atmosphere to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, while progress toward resolving this conflict could help reduce the potentially destabilizing impact of a nuclear breakout by Iraq or Iran. Moreover, in the case of Iraq, delay buys additional time to seek the removal of the regime of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn. A nuclear breakout by Iraq could undermine US efforts to rid Iraq of its current rulers, and could bring about the collapse of sanctions.

Delay also has benefits vis-a-vis Iran. It might be easier for Tehran to trade away capabilities under development than to abandon capabilities that already exist, in return for the easing or lifting of sanctions by Washington. Likewise, delay provides a hedge against the possibility that hard-line conservative clerics could gain control over all the major centers of power in Tehran in the future and pursue more aggressive foreign and defense policies. If they do gain such control, the hard-liners will have fewer means at their disposal with which to pursue their objectives. Conversely, should the trend toward greater moderation and openness in Iranian politics continue, it would be desirable to have forestalled Iran's development of long-range missiles and nuclear weapons until the time that more moderate political elements are firmly ensconced in Tehran. In this case, it is possible (though perhaps not likely) that a more moderate leadership might decide, for a variety of reasons, to abandon Iran's long-range missile and nuclear weapons programs.<sup>38</sup> However, if new leaders decide to continue these programs, it is better that the country be in the hands of relatively moderate reformers among the clerical leadership (or better yet, in the hands of a mod-

erate non-clerical leadership) than in the grips of conservative clerical hard-liners, if and when these programs bear fruit. Both moderate reformers and conservative hard-liners are committed to pursuing nationalistic policies in the Persian Gulf and rigid, ideological policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict that could put Iran at odds with some of its Arab neighbors, Israel, and the United States. However, the reformers may be less inclined to adventurism and less likely to rely on terrorism and subversion to achieve their goals than are their rivals. In this way, the potentially destabilizing impact of a nuclear Iran might be mitigated.

Finally, it should be mentioned that delay creates opportunities for chance to come into play, whether in the form of a strategic blunder by a foreign leader, a coup or revolution that might solve some problems (even if it creates new ones), or the sudden death of a foreign leader. Of course, policy should never be based on luck or serendipity, but policymakers should be ready to exploit opportunities when they present themselves. Chance favors those who are prepared.

## STRENGTHENING DETERRENCE

Deterrence lies at the heart of any effort to influence the WMD policies of a country that has already proliferated. Here, both Iraq and Iran pose particularly difficult challenges.

In Iraq, Saddam Husayn holds absolute power and is the key decisionmaker. Bureaucratic or factional politics play little if any role in Iraqi decisionmaking.<sup>39</sup> However, Saddam's personality, character, and decisionmaking style pose significant problems from the point of view of deterrence. Saddam Husayn has a xenophobic view of the world—and particularly the West—which he distrusts and does not know or understand,<sup>40</sup> and he tends to view the actions of foreign governments in conspiratorial terms. Thus, actions by foreign powers are often interpreted by Saddam Husayn as indicative of hostile intent. At the same time, he holds an inflated image of his own historical importance and that of modern Iraq. As a result, Iraqi foreign policy under Saddam Husayn has been characterized by an unusual combination of insecurity and aggressiveness; these qualities contributed to the Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980, crises with the United States, Great Britain, and Israel prior to the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and the invasion of Kuwait itself.<sup>41</sup>

In addition, Saddam Husayn has repeatedly demonstrated a propensity to miscalculate, to exaggerate his own capabilities, and to underestimate those of his enemies. Twice, this tendency led him to plunge his country into wars that cost his country very dearly: with Iran in 1980, and Kuwait in 1990. Moreover, his decisionmaking is often driven by a perceived need to foment crises (to keep the Iraqi people and his military preoccupied with external threats), and an exaggerated sense of self that allows no slight to his dignity or reputation to go unavenged lest his enemies perceive a weakness or vulnerability that can be exploited. Even his closest advisors live in dread, and as a result, few are willing to venture an opinion they believe may be at variance with Saddam Husayn's preferences.<sup>42</sup> As a result, he has made some of the most fateful decisions on his own, without prior consultation with his advisors.<sup>43</sup>

Saddam Husayn may be reckless, but he is not crazy. He has repeatedly demonstrated that he will back down when firmly challenged, or cut his losses when he blunders into disaster. For instance, in June 1982, when he realized that the tide of the Iran-Iraq War had turned against him, he unilaterally ordered Iraqi forces to withdraw from Iranian territory in a vain attempt to placate Tehran. Similarly, on the eve of the Coalition ground offensive during Desert Storm, Saddam belatedly blessed a Soviet attempt to seek a negotiated solution to the fighting once he realized the true scope of the damage being inflicted on his army by the Coalition air campaign. Once his forces were evicted from Kuwait, he agreed to a cease fire rather than fight on for a hopeless cause. And from 1991-98, in repeated standoffs with UNSCOM, Saddam Husayn repeatedly backed down when confronted with the threat or use of force, due to the fragility of his domestic situation. Experience shows that he does not take risks when his survival is at stake. Had Saddam Husayn suffered from a martyrdom complex, he would have been dead long ago.

In sum, because of Saddam Husayn's personal attributes, establishing a stable deterrent relationship with Iraq will remain an uncertain proposition as long as he remains in power.

In Iran, the situation is much more complicated and much less clear. Not a lot is known about national security decisionmaking in Iran. While Supreme Leader Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i sets the broad parameters of policy in the defense and foreign policy arenas, the National Security Council—which has more than a dozen

members—is the key decisionmaking body. Decisions on particularly sensitive and vital national security issues, however, may be made by a much smaller informal grouping, which may include, among others, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, who reportedly retains operational control over Iran's missile and WMD forces.<sup>44</sup>

Because Shi'i religious doctrine exalts the suffering and martyrdom of the faithful, and because religion plays a central role in the official ideology of the Islamic Republic, Iran is sometimes portrayed as an "undeterrable" state driven by the absolute imperatives of religion, rather than the pragmatic concerns of statecraft. This image of Iran as an irrational, undeterrable state with a high pain threshold is wrong. Iranian decisionmakers are generally not inclined to rash action. Within the context of a relatively activist foreign and defense policy, they have generally sought to minimize risk by shunning direct confrontation, which they do by acting through surrogates (such as the Lebanese Hezbollah party) or by means of stealth (for example, Iran used small boat and mine operations against shipping in the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War). They have used these means to preserve deniability and ambiguity about their intentions. Such behavior is evidence of an ability to gauge accurately the balance of power and to identify and circumvent the "red lines" of its adversaries—a strong indicator of an ability to engage in rational calculation.<sup>45</sup>

Tehran's conduct during the latter phases of the Iran-Iraq War likewise demonstrated that Iran is not insensitive to costs. It is possible to argue that in the heady, optimistic, early days of the revolution—from the early- to mid-1980s—Iran had a higher threshold for pain than did most other states. But by the final years of the war, popular support for it had waned: the population was demoralized and wearied by years of inconclusive fighting. This was not, as Ayatollah Khomeini was fond of saying, "a nation of martyrs." In fact, Khomeini was probably the only figure with the charisma and moral authority to inspire the Iranian people to continue the war for eight years. The double blow embodied by the unsuccessful conclusion of the war in August 1988 and the death of Khomeini in June 1989 marked the end of the decade of revolutionary radicalism in Iranian politics. With respect to its ability to tolerate pain and absorb casualties, Iran has since become a much more "normal" state. Its cautious behavior during the 1991 up-



rising by Shi'i co-religionists in southern Iraq and the 1998 crisis with Afghanistan (following the murder of several Iranian diplomats by the Taliban) is perhaps the best proof that Iran's leaders remain wary of stumbling into a costly quagmire. It will thus sooner compromise its Islamic ideological commitments and abandon endangered Shi'i communities to their fate than risk Iranian national interests by entering into foreign adventures.

Such pragmatism is consistent with a basic principle of decisionmaking established by Khomeini shortly before his death. In a series of letters in December 1987 and January 1988, to then President 'Ali Khamene'i and the Council of Guardians (a key body that oversees the activities of the legislative branch), he affirmed the Islamic government's authority to destroy a mosque or suspend the observance of the five pillars of faith (the fundamentals of Muslim observance) if Iranian state interests so required. In so doing, he sanctioned the supremacy of state interest over both religion and the doctrine of the revolution.<sup>46</sup> Since then, this has been the guiding principle of Iranian decisionmaking, whether with regard to social issues (e.g., birth control), the economy (e.g., foreign investment in the oil sector), or foreign and defense policy (e.g., restraint in pursuing efforts to export the revolution in the 1990s).

The main problem in establishing a stable deterrent relationship with Iran is thus not the putative "irrationality" of the regime or its high threshold for pain. Rather, it is regime factionalism, rooted in personalities, ideology, and the very structure of the regime. Persistent factionalism makes it difficult for the regime to implement policy in a consistent, predictable manner, and often leads to policy zig-zags, as different personalities, factions, or branches of the government work at cross purposes, act to subvert their rivals, or press the government to take actions inconsistent with its general policy line. And because this factionalism is rooted in the structure of the Islamic Republic, this problem will exist as long as the clerical regime retains its current structure.

The politics of contemporary Iran, in which its relationship with the United States is a hot-button issue, also pose problems for deterrence. Under current circumstances, it is possible that rivals of President Khatami might attack US personnel or interests in order to embarrass and discredit him and perhaps to prompt US retaliation, in the hope that this might halt efforts toward

greater openness in Iran. Thus far the violent power struggle in Iran has been waged exclusively in the domestic arena, but in the future, this could change. How does one establish a stable deterrent relationship in such a context? Finally, it should be mentioned that Tehran's preference for covert action and its past successes in using terrorism as a policy tool without suffering retribution complicate deterrence, since there may be people in the regime that believe that Iran can engage in terrorism without any major adverse consequences. This also poses an obstacle to creating a stable system of deterrence.

What are the policy implications of this assessment? There are four lessons US policymakers should keep in mind when they seek to deter. The first concerns the need for Washington to avoid, whenever possible, ambiguity in its policies. To this end, it should communicate clearly certain "red lines," the breaching of which would elicit a harsh response from the United States, in order to reduce the potential for miscalculation by Iraqi or Iranian decisionmakers. (This is not to say that there should never be ambiguity—which is often unavoidable and sometimes desirable—just that ambiguity should be minimized whenever possible.)

The second concerns the need to convey a credible threat of punishment. In this regard, Washington is laboring under a handicap. In the past decade or two, American policy has often been inconsistent in responding to provocative actions by both Iraq and Iran. This is due to political constraints (with Iraq, concerns about how "the Arab street" might react; and with Iran, the fear of terrorism and of disrupting the evolution of that country's political system toward greater moderation); the fact that, understandably enough, the attention of US policymakers is often focused elsewhere in the world; and the fact that contemporary American strategic culture—with its emphasis on avoiding friendly and enemy casualties—limits the ability of the United States to use the full range of its military capabilities.

Third, Washington also needs to know where Baghdad and Tehran draw their "red lines" so as to avoid unintended escalation. What actions by Washington could cause Iraq or Iran to use WMD, or could bring about a crisis that leads to the use of WMD? Clearly, threatening the survival of these regimes is one "red line." However, both Iraqi and Iranian leaders have at various times blamed the United States for outbreaks of anti-regime violence or unrest—often seeing the hand of the United

States even when it isn't present. Given the pervasiveness of conspiratorial thinking among the leaders of Iraq and Iran, and the difficulty in refuting conspiracy theories (since the absence of proof is itself proof of a conspiracy), it could be difficult for the United States always to avoid the other states' red lines.<sup>47</sup> Finally, because deterrence vis-a-vis Iraq and Iran is so beset with potential pitfalls, the United States needs to continue to invest heavily in countermeasures to missiles, to non-traditional delivery means (terrorists, unmanned and manned aircraft, boats), and to WMD, should deterrence fail.

### **MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF PROLIFERATION THROUGH POLITICAL CHANGE**

Since it may not be possible to alter the WMD motivations or cost/benefit calculus of Iraq and Iran, or to halt their efforts to enhance their WMD capabilities, and because deterrence remains an uncertain proposition, the United States needs to focus on what it can do to encourage political change in Baghdad and Tehran to mitigate the impact of WMD proliferation. Though the United States has a limited ability to influence domestic politics in either country, it can shape the political environment to influence the outcome of developments there.

In Iraq, the goal should be to get rid of Saddam Husayn and his regime. Because of the relatively narrow social base of the regime (which is essentially a family regime), a coup or revolution in Iraq is not out of the question. This is not to underestimate the difficulty of achieving this objective, but to make the point that this possibility should not be discounted, as there have been several coup attempts and one major uprising in Iraq since the 1991 Gulf War. While a successor regime may be only marginally less brutal than the present one, it is not likely to be driven by the particular combination of attributes embodied in Saddam's personality that makes the present regime so dangerous. Moreover, Washington should have substantial influence over a new regime that it helps to seize power, which it could use to bring that regime closer to compliance with norms of behavior that the United States can live with. Acceptance by a new regime of relevant UN resolutions related (among other things) to disarmament should remain a precondition for an end to sanctions. On the other hand, the United States should publicly underscore its readiness to build a new relationship with a post-Saddam Iraq, to include gener-

ous assistance with debt relief and reconstruction (though such aid should be predicated on a commitment by a new regime to live at peace with its neighbors).

By contrast, in Iran, while dissatisfaction with clerical rule is widespread, another revolution seems unlikely. Accordingly, the goal of US policy should be to encourage the continued evolution of the regime in the direction of greater openness and moderation; in practical terms, this probably means the emergence of a political system in which clerics play a less prominent role. Domestic political change of this kind would hopefully result in a decline in radicalism abroad and more normal relations between Tehran and its neighbors (even if some tensions persist). However, there are major differences among analysts about how to achieve this goal. Also, determining how best to use the limited leverage the United States holds will pose a major challenge to American policy in the future.

The bottom line here is this: measures to change the regime in Baghdad and to achieve evolutionary political change in Tehran are essential components of efforts to manage proliferation in the Persian Gulf region. Recognition of this fact would be an important first step toward dealing with the problem.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The foregoing analysis paints a gloomy picture, portraying WMD proliferation by Iraq and Iran as an unstoppable, even inevitable process. Such a conclusion would overstate the case, but the factors favoring proliferation by these two countries seem very powerful indeed. In human affairs, however, nothing is foreordained, though facing up to the proliferation challenge posed by Iraq and Iran will require a substantial degree of ingenuity, determination, and policy focus by decisionmakers. So what is to be done?

The United States is unlikely to succeed in altering the motivations of Iraq and Iran for acquiring WMD. Washington's ability to alter the complex threat environment of the region and the ambitions of leaders in Baghdad and Tehran is minimal. The creation of a regional security regime is also unlikely to affect proliferation trends in the region—at least initially—but it might help reduce the likelihood of conflict in a proliferated world. Although conditions may not yet be ripe for such a regime, the United States should start laying

the foundation for the eventual emergence of such a regional security framework.

There is little if anything that Washington can do to alter the proliferation cost/benefit calculus of Baghdad. Saddam Husayn has shown that he is willing to pay a very high price to retain his proscribed WMD capabilities, and this is unlikely to change as long as Saddam Husayn remains in power. Nevertheless, there is a slender chance for a deal with Tehran—wherein Iran agrees to fulfill its arms control obligations—should the reformers around President Khatami consolidate the gains they made in parliamentary elections in February and May 2000. This, however, remains an untested proposition, and the near-to-medium-term prospects for the reformers, in the face of counterattacks by hard-liners, remain uncertain. The possibility that Iran might someday withdraw from various arms control regimes it currently belongs to—in order to enhance its freedom of action in this area—should be considered, and steps to prevent such an eventuality developed.

Washington has had much success in imposing costs and delays on the WMD programs of Baghdad and Tehran through using traditional arms control instruments, and these efforts should continue for as long as Iraq and Iran remain committed to acquiring WMD and missiles. Time gained should be used to develop countermeasures to emerging threat capabilities, and to encourage political change in Baghdad and Tehran, in order to help mitigate the implications of proliferation.

In light of the fact that WMD proliferation by Iraq and Iran is a reality, deterrence will remain a pillar of US policy. However, the possibilities of miscalculation, or that decisionmakers in Baghdad or Tehran might—under certain conditions—welcome conflict with the United States, underscore the limitations of deterrence, and the need to be able to fight in a WMD environment. The United States also needs to consider how moral and political constraints on the use of its military power (its aversion to both friendly and enemy casualties, and the often tepid support by allies for the military option) could undermine the utility of America's conventional and nonconventional deterrent.

Finally, encouraging political change in Baghdad and Tehran (regime change in the former, and the evolution of the system in the latter) might help mitigate the problem of WMD proliferation in these countries, but is unlikely to solve it. Iraq is a traumatized nation, and the

world will be dealing for years to come—regardless of who is in power in Baghdad—with the brutalizing consequences of more than three decades of repressive Ba' th party rule, two major wars, and a decade or more of sanctions. This trauma is likely to be expressed through revanchist and ultranationalist attitudes and policies. Conversely, even if Iran's reformers are able to consolidate their rule, they are likely to pursue policies that will result in tensions with some of their Gulf neighbors, Israel, and the United States. Even so, such a future would be better than the even more unhappy present, and hastening its arrival would be a not inconsiderable achievement.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was prepared for a conference, "Influencing the Motivations of WMD States: New Directions in Nonproliferation and Counterproliferation," sponsored by the Naval Post-Graduate School, Monterey, California, August 18-19, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Both Iraq and Iran are signatories to the 1925 Geneva Protocol (prohibiting the use but not the possession of chemical and biological weapons), the 1968 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). In addition, Iran is a signatory to the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

<sup>3</sup> Detractors of America's "dual containment" policy often claim that it erred in lumping Iraq and Iran together. However, a careful reading of the Clinton administration's most detailed policy statement on dual containment indicates that policymakers recognized that Iraq and Iran pose different kinds of policy challenges, and required different types of containment strategies. See Martin Indyk, "The Clinton Administration's Approach to the Middle East," in Yehudah Mirsky, Matt Ahrens, and Jennifer Sultan, eds., *Challenges to U.S. Interests in the Middle East: Obstacles and Opportunities* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1993), pp. 1-8.

<sup>4</sup> For two excellent primers on Iraqi and Iranian politics that highlight such differences, see: Amatzia Baram, *Building Toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn's Strategy for Survival* (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998); Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Iraq's nuclear program dates to 1971, while its chemical and biological weapons programs date to 1974-75. Khidhir Hamza, "Inside Saddam's Secret Nuclear Program," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 54 (September/October 1998), p. 28; Scott Ritter, *Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem—Once and for All* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), p. 83; Annex C, Verification of Iraq's Biological Warfare Program, in the report of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) to the Security Council regarding Iraq's proscribed weapons, S/1999/94, January 29, 1999, <<http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/s99-94.htm>>.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, in a January 1980 interview, Saddam Husayn declared that "we want our country to achieve its proper weight based on our estimation that Iraq is as great as China, as great as the Soviet Union, and as great as the United States." Saddam Husayn in *Alif Ba*, January 2, 1980, cited in Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," *Middle East Contemporary Survey 1979-80* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981), p. 504.

<sup>7</sup> Ambassador Richard Butler, former Executive Chairman of UNSCOM, testimony before the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee,

hearing on "Iran and Iraq: Future of Nonproliferation Policy," March 28, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Pear, "U.S. Says it Monitored Iraqi Messages on Gas," *New York Times*, September 15, 1988, p. A12; Patrick E. Tyler, "Both Iraq and Iran Gassed Kurds in War, U.S. Analysis Finds," *Washington Post*, May 3, 1990, p. A37.

<sup>9</sup> Section 3 of H.R. 4655, "The Iraq Liberation Act of 1998," states that it is the sense of the Congress that "It should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime."

<sup>10</sup> The clearest public expression of this skepticism over the value of arms control agreements was offered by then Majlis speaker and acting armed forces commander-in-chief 'Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani in a 1988 speech to military officers in which he stated that: "Chemical and biological weapons are poor man's atomic bombs and can easily be produced. We should at least consider them for our defense. Although the use of such weapons is inhuman, the [Iran-Iraq] war taught us that international laws are only scraps of paper." Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), October 19, 1988, in FBIS-NES-88-202, October 19, 1988, pp. 55-56.

<sup>11</sup> Conventional arms are very expensive. A single squadron of modern combat aircraft might cost more than \$1 billion, a small flotilla of modern warships might cost several billion dollars, and a major arms build-up could cost tens of billions of dollars. In contrast, a small, well-run nuclear weapons program might only require the investment of a few billion dollars before it produces its first weapon.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Kenneth Katzman, *Searching for Stable Peace in the Persian Gulf* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 1998); Lawrence Potter, "The Need for Confidence-Building Measures in the Persian Gulf," *Middle East Insight* (January-February 1996), pp. 27-30; Mohammad Jafar Mahallati, "The New Persian Gulf Security Arrangement and the Relevant Factors," *Middle East Insight* (July-August 1991), pp. 22-24.

<sup>13</sup> In a recently published book, a former United States Air Force intelligence officer who served in Baghdad in 1987-88 tells how he smuggled a letter out of Iraq for a waitress who was working in the hotel where he was staying. She had a sister in the United States whom she was unable to contact because no one in her family was authorized to send mail overseas. Postage stamps were controlled items, and official permission was needed to purchase them. Rick Francona, *Ally to Adversary: An Eyewitness Account of Iraq's Fall from Grace* (Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, 1999), p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> There is little reason to believe that conservative hard-liners and relatively pragmatic and liberal reformists among Iran's clerical leadership disagree over the importance of WMD for Iran's defense. It is worth noting that it was President Khatami's relatively "liberal" culture minister Ataollah Mohajerani who called on Iran in 1991 to develop nuclear weapons to counter Israel's capabilities in this area. Steve Coll, "Tehran Ambiguous on its A-Arms Plans," *Washington Post*, November 17, 1992, p. A30. For at least some Iranians, there does not appear to be a contradiction between the embrace of "liberalism" and support for the acquisition of WMD.

<sup>15</sup> Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?*, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> For an Israeli expression of concern over what some might call insufficient skepticism by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) toward Iran, see Ze'ev Schiff, "Iran Earns a Rare Seal of Approval," *Ha'aretz Internet Edition*, April 27, 1999, <<http://www3.haaretz.co.il/eng/old-scripts/open.asp?date=04/27/99>>. See also the statement of John Gee, Deputy Director-General of the OPCW at the opening ceremony for the First Course on Medical Defense against Chemical Weapons, held in Tehran, in May 1999, congratulating Iran for having "co-operated fully with the [OPCW] Secretariat, in a spirit of openness and transparency." <<http://www.opcw.org/geespe2.htm>>. By contrast, the US government believes that while "Iran ratified the CWC, under which it will be obligated to eliminate its chemical program...it continues to upgrade and expand its chemical warfare production infrastructure and munitions arsenal." Department of Defense, *Proliferation: Threat and Response* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, November 1997), p. 27. Though

this assessment was published in 1997, it remains the assessment of the United States, as well as several European governments.

<sup>17</sup> There are intriguing parallels between Germany's numerous secret weapons programs during World War II and Iraq's numerous WMD programs during the 1980s. The large number of German weapons programs resulted from the lack of a central authority for determining military research and development (R&D) priorities, the lack of a clear line of jurisdiction between design bureaus and competition among them, and political patronage and empire building, leading to a great deal of duplication of effort and waste. See I.V. Hogg, *German Secret Weapons of World War II* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1970), pp. 7-10; Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), pp. 227-243, 251, 273-274, 434-436, 488-489. While the reasons for the large number of Iraqi programs are still unclear, this proliferation of projects may have been due to some of the same pathologies and the same misplaced faith in the utility of "secret weapons" that afflicted the German effort during World War II.

<sup>18</sup> David Albright and Mark Hibbs, "Iraq's Shop-Till-You-Drop Nuclear Program," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 48 (April 1992), p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, according to one IAEA report, "Faced with tighter and tighter export controls, (the Iraqis) proceeded with the large procurements as opportunities presented themselves, even though they had no immediate plans for the materials in the quantities ordered. Their strategy was to buy whenever there was an opportunity and simply run the risk that some material might not be used." IAEA, "Report of the Ninth IAEA On-Site Inspection in Iraq," S/23505, January 30, 1992, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Albright and Hibbs, "Shop-Till-You Drop," pp. 27-28, 36; David Albright and Mark Hibbs, "Iraq's Bomb: Blueprints and Artifacts," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 48 (January/February 1992), p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> Albright and Hibbs, "Iraq's Bomb: Blueprints and Artifacts," p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Steven Matajja and J. Marshall Beier, eds., *Multilateral Verification and the Post-Gulf Environment: Learning from the UNSCOM Experience* (Toronto: York University Centre for International and Strategic Studies, 1992), p. 119. A biography of weapons designer Gerald Bull makes a similar observation, in describing a visit by Bull to Iraq's Saad 16 missile R&D facility near Mosul: "Saad 16 was an extraordinary development, full of the most advanced Western technology, but the Iraqis didn't even know how to use some of the laboratory machines. (Bull) quickly concluded that many of the Iraqi scientists were poorly trained and the technicians didn't know their jobs. 'It's a disgrace,' Bull told his colleagues in Belgium. 'Those poor bastards don't even know how to make a screw.'" William Lowther, *Arms and the Man: A True Story of Weapons and Murder* (New York: Ivy Books, 1991), p. 207. While this may have been true of some of the Iraqi scientists, it is clear that there were also some very talented people in many of their programs—but particularly in the nuclear program, which received priority access to manpower and material.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Burleigh, "Lessons of 'Operation Staunch' for Future Conflicts," in Eric Arnett, ed., *Lessons of the Gulf War: Mediation and Conflict Resolution*, (Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1990), pp. 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> R. Jeffrey Smith, "Chinese Firms Supply Iran with Gas Factories, U.S. Says," *Washington Post*, March 8, 1996, p. A26; Herbert Krosney, *Deadly Business: Legal Deals and Outlaw Weapons, The Arming of Iran and Iraq, 1975 to the Present* (New York: Four Walls and Eight Windows, 1993), pp. 187-195; Gary Thatcher, "Poison on the Wind: The New Threat of Chemical and Biological Weapons," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 13, 1988, p. B14.

<sup>26</sup> DOD, *Proliferation: Threat and Response*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Hibbs, "Iran Sought Bushehr Fuel Throughout War with Iraq," *Nucleonics Week*, May 27, 1999, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Hibbs, "Iran Sought Sensitive Nuclear Supplies from Argentina, China," *Nucleonics Week*, September 24, 1992, pp. 2-3; Steve Coll, "U.S. Halted Nuclear Bid by Iran: China, Argentina Agreed to Cancel Technology Transfers," *Washington Post*, November 17, 1992, pp. A1, A30.

<sup>29</sup> Coll, "U.S. Halted Nuclear Bid by Iran," pp. A1, A30; Barton Gellman and John Pomfret, "U.S. Action Stymied China Sale to Iran," *Washington Post*, March 13, 1998, p. A1.

<sup>30</sup> Steve Coll, "Iran Reported Trying to Buy Indian Reactor," *Washington Post*, November 15, 1991, pp. A33, A39; William Drozdiak, "U.S. Move to Halt Nuclear Technology Sales Angers Iranians," *Washington Post*, November 22, 1991, p. A35.

<sup>31</sup> Margaret Shapiro and R. Jeffrey Smith, "Russia Firm on Reactor Sale to Iran, But Sale of Gas Plant is Apparently Rejected," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1995, p. A17. However, rumors that Russia and Iran were still conducting negotiations concerning the research reactor and gas centrifuge facility continued to appear through 1998. David Makovsky, "Iran Negotiating with Russia for a Reactor," *Ha'aretz Internet Edition*, 18 February 1998, <<http://www3.haaretz3.co.il/eng/old-scripts/open.asp?date=02/18/98>>; Bill Gertz, "Russian Arms Deal with Iran Worries U.S.," *Washington Times*, May 7, 1998, p. A1.

<sup>32</sup> A number of the issues discussed in this section are discussed in greater detail in other works by the author, including "Living with a Nuclear Iran?" *Survival* 41 (Autumn 1999), pp. 141-143; (with Patrick Clawson), "Opportunities and Challenges for U.S. Policy," in Patrick Clawson, ed., *Iran Under Khatami: A Political, Economic, and Military Assessment* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), pp. 99-114; and *Iranian Military Power: Capabilities and Intentions* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1996), pp. 1-2, 93-94, 108-111.

<sup>33</sup> According to Iranian Central Bank figures, actual spending on conventional arms imports reached \$1.625 billion in 1989-90; \$1.6 billion in 1990-91; \$1.678 billion in 1991-92; \$808 million in 1992-93; and \$850 million in 1993-94 — the last year that Tehran published such figures. International Monetary Fund, *Islamic Republic of Iran—Recent Economic Developments*, September 19, 1995, p. 74, and October 5, 1993, p. 38. These figures are roughly consistent with US government estimates that Iranian foreign-exchange expenditures on conventional arms dropped from a high of \$2 billion in 1991 to less than \$1 billion in 1997. Bruce Riedel, "U.S. Policy in the Gulf: Five Years of Dual Containment," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, PolicyWatch* no. 315, May 8, 1998, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> In October 1999, the Clinton administration apparently convinced Russia to shut down a program for Iranian students at Baltic State that was transferring expertise useful to Iran's missile program. Patrick E. Tyler, "Russian Scientist's Links to Iran Offer Case Study in Arms leaks," *New York Times*, May 10, 2000, pp. A1, A6. However, cooperation in other areas apparently continues.

<sup>35</sup> Sergey Rybak, "Minister Says Minatom Projects Proceed, May Expand in China," *Nucleonics Week*, April 29, 1999, p. 5; Mark Hibbs, "Iran Still Angling for Europeans to Finish Bushehr PWR Station," *Nucleonics Week*, October 1, 1998, p. 8; Mark Hibbs, "Amrollahi Ouster Challenges Stalled Bushehr PWR Project," *Nucleonics Week*, October 9, 1997, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher S. Wren, "Mixed Signals Over Status of Iran Deal," *New York Times*, September 30, 1995, p. A4; Elaine Sciolino, "China Cancels Sale to Iran, Pleasing U.S.," *New York Times*, September 28, 1995, p. A1; Steve Mufson, "Chinese Nuclear Officials See No Reason to Change Plans to Sell Reactor to Iran," *Washington Post*, May 18, 1995, p. A22; Elaine Sciolino, "Iran Says it Plans 10 Nuclear Plants but no Atom Arms," *New York Times*, May 14, 1995, p. A1; Elaine Sciolino, "Beijing Rebuffs U.S. on Halting Iran Atom Deal," *New York Times*, April 18, 1995, p. A1; R. Jeffrey Smith, "China, in Rebuff to U.S., Defends its Nuclear Dealings with Iran," *Washington Post*, April 18, 1995, p. A13; R. Jeffrey Smith, "China Nuclear Deal with Iran is Feared," *Washington Post*, April 17, 1995, pp. A1, A12.

<sup>37</sup> Thus, in a June 1990 interview, Saddam Husayn stated that "If Israel were to conduct an aggression, then the confrontation must be long...[and if the confrontation is long] the outcome will not be the one Israel desires." When asked how a long war will be possible in light of Israel's nuclear capabilities, he responded that "Iraq is in possession of binary chemical weapons. Our scientists and military men calculate this is sufficient enough to deter an Israeli nuclear attack." Thus, from Saddam Hussein's point of view, Iraq's chemical weapons offset Israel's nuclear weapons and made a long conventional war with Israel possible. Karen Elliot House, "Iraqi President Hussein Sees New Mideast War Unless America Acts," *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 1990, p. A1.

<sup>38</sup> Just as delays imposed on the Argentinian and Brazilian programs bought time to allow for the emergence of democratic systems in both countries,

and the cancellation of nuclear programs that had been initiated by previous military governments. Jose Goldemberg and Harold A. Feiveson, "Denuclearization in Argentina and Brazil," *Arms Control Today* 24 (March 1994), pp. 10-14.

<sup>39</sup> This is not to say that there aren't policy debates in Iraq among key actors in the regime, representing various personal and institutional interests. At the end of the day, however, the only opinion that matters is that of Saddam Husayn. The best-known example of such bureaucratic infighting concerns the debate between Defense Minister 'Adnan Khayrallah and Special Security Organization chief Husayn Kamil in the mid-1980s over whether to commence industrial-scale production of chemical and biological weapons. According to the account provided by former armed forces chief of staff Lt. Gen. Nizar 'Abd al-Karim al-Khazraji after his defection, the Muthanna State Establishment (which was in charge of CBW research and development) had been lobbying in the mid-1980s for increased funding for CW-related research and moneys for BW research. Khayrallah reportedly opposed this, believing that such weapons would be useless against Iran, suicidal if used against Israel, and would put Iraq on a collision course with the United States. Kamil, however, seeing the possibility for empire-building (and perhaps knowing about Saddam's interest in such weapons) eventually won the debate, and convinced Saddam Husayn to place the CBW and ballistic missile programs under his control (in 1986 and 1987, respectively) and to intensify efforts in the realm of CBW (in 1987). Ritter, *Endgame*, pp. 83-87.

<sup>40</sup> According to Sa'd al-Bazaz, a former Ba'th party member and editor-in-chief of the official daily paper *al-Jumhuriyya*, "Saddam does not know international politics. His knowledge of the world is meager. That's not because he hasn't visited the West (though he has been to France and Cuba, twice to Belgrade, and many times to Moscow); you can understand the world without traveling, merely by studying and being broadminded. Saddam's problem is different. He feels insecure dealing with others and has no desire to be connected to the outside world. He does not trust even his close and loyal people who run foreign policy, including Tariq 'Aziz himself. Saddam will use him so long as Tariq 'Aziz is someone acceptable in a place like France, but that does not mean that Saddam trusts Tariq 'Aziz. He needs Tariq, but he does not trust him." Sa'd al-Bazaz, "An Insider's View of Iraq," *Middle East Quarterly* 2 (December 1995), p. 71.

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," in Ami Ayalon, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey, 1990* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 379-423, and Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf War, 1990-1991: Failed or Impossible Task?" *International Security* 17 (Fall 1992), pp. 147-179.

<sup>42</sup> See, for instance, the description of the somewhat tentative and indirect efforts Foreign Minister Tariq 'Aziz allegedly made to dissuade Saddam Husayn from seizing all of Kuwait in 1990, in Andrew and Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), pp. 6-8.

<sup>43</sup> According to Bazaz, Husayn took the decision to invade Kuwait on his own, out of pique at the behavior of the Emir of Kuwait who exhibited insufficient deference during talks held with Iraq's deputy prime minister in June 1990. Bazaz, "An Insider's View," p. 67. This, however, was probably only a pretext, since Saddam Husayn was apparently pursuing a strategic design by invading Kuwait. For more on Saddam's personality and the decisionmaking process in Baghdad, see: Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes*, pp. 6-8; General Wafiq al-Sammara'i, interview on *Frontline: The Gulf War*, a Public Broadcasting Service Television Special, broadcast on January 9-10, 1996; Bazaz, "An Insider's View," pp. 67-75; and an interview with Major Karim 'Abdallah al-Juburi, a former bodyguard of Saddam Husayn who defected to the West in 1990, in *Al-Majallah*, January 9, 1991, pp. 14-15, 18, and January 22, 1991, pp. 27-31, translated in JPRS-NEA-91-012, February 12, 1991, pp. 10-19.

<sup>44</sup> Thus, during the 1997 trial in Germany of an Iranian intelligence agent accused of organizing the assassination of four Kurdish dissidents in Berlin in 1992, another intelligence agent who had defected to Germany testified for the prosecution that a secret Committee for Special Operations (consisting of the Supreme Leader, the President, the Foreign Minister, and the Minister of Intelligence) was responsible for ordering assassinations. Alan

Cowell, "Berlin Court Says Top Iran Leaders Ordered Killings," *New York Times*, April 11, 1999, p. A1; William Drozdiak, "German Court: Tehran Ordered Exile Killings," *Washington Post*, April 11, 1999, p. A1; William Drozdiak, "Former Official Disclosed Iran's Complicity in Murders," *Washington Post*, April 12, 1997, p. A1. It is likely that a similar, informal decisionmaking body, including the head of the Revolutionary Guard, would be responsible for decisionmaking concerning WMD.

<sup>45</sup> This discussion is based in part on Eisenstadt, "Living With A Nuclear Iran?," pp. 134-137.

<sup>46</sup> David Menashri, *Revolution at a Crossroads: Iran's Domestic Politics and Regional Ambitions* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1997), p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> For an imaginative attempt to grapple with the policy implications of conspiracy theories, see Daniel Pipes, "Dealing with Middle Eastern Conspiracy Theories," *Orbis* 36 (Winter 1992), pp. 41-56.