WHY IRAN WANTS THE BOMB AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR US POLICY

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Understanding why the Iranian regime wants to possess nuclear weapons is essential to formulating the best policy to prevent (or perhaps to simply manage) the emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran. Three general theories—realism, liberalism, and constructivism—provide a framework for looking at Iran's nuclear motivations. However, contrary to many analyses, the regime's desire to possess nuclear arms stems not from neorealist defensive concerns, but rather from offensive goals driven by domestic politics. The use of extremist Islamism by the Iranian regime to justify its autocratic rule is the primary motivating factor. Accordingly, the outlook for diplomatically addressing the Iranian regime's nuclear aspirations appears dim.

KEYWORDS: Iran; nuclear proliferation; diplomacy

In order to formulate the best policy for preventing, or perhaps dealing with, the emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran, it is important to understand why the current Iranian regime would want nuclear weapons. An academic framework for answering this question offers a variety of theoretical explanations. The realist family of models focuses on power and security within the international system; liberal models emphasize domestic political influences, and constructivist models highlight questions of identity and perception.[1]

Neorealism posits the most intuitive reason for pursuing nuclear arms; to wit, a state believes its security is threatened and seeks to reduce the threat through acquisition of a nuclear deterrent. This can involve allying with nuclear-armed partners or developing an indigenous nuclear capability. However, other variants of realism look beyond neorealism's exclusive emphasis on defensive purposes, recognizing that some states may want nuclear weapons to assist with offensive ambitions.[2] For example, a nuclear arsenal could lead a regime to believe its existential security is assured, thereby lowering the regime's risk in adopting aggressive, coercive policies. Liberal theories look to the internal dynamics of a state to discover what entity is spearheading the push for nuclear arms. The bureaucratic politics model suggests that national interests are at times overshadowed by individual or organizational interests; thus, a subset of domestic actors might see a nuclear weapons program as a means to some internal political objective.[3] Likewise, leaders' ideologies impact their proliferation decisions. A "domestic model of political survival" contends that inward-looking leaders who champion self-sufficiency are more likely to pursue nuclear arms than are leaders who prioritize economic gains attendant to globalization and thus value market stability.[4] In these cases, the driving entity behind the pursuit of a nuclear arsenal may hype the idea of a threat in order to achieve its own objectives.

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Finally, constructivism focuses on the meaning attached to possession of nuclear arms as well as policy makers' perceptions of their own states. Some regimes may be motivated by the perceived prestige that nuclear weapons bring. Membership in the nuclear club is understood as an announcement to the international community that the state is powerful and deserving of respect. Certain psychological characteristics may indicate a greater propensity to seek this status, including how the leader sees his state in relation to a "key comparison other."[5]

Because states seeking to manage nuclear proliferation must shape their policies based on the underlying motivations of the proliferating regimes, it is necessary to determine which model, or mix of models, provides the best fit in each particular case. Most analysts suggest the Iranian regime is motivated by security concerns and only wants a defensive deterrent force.[6] Others suggest the Iranian regime might have an offensive rationale behind its pursuit of nuclear arms.[7] Still others focus on domestic politics or norms, although these are often advanced as secondary reasons.[8] This article analyzes the publicly available evidence to try to answer the question of why the current regime in Iran would want nuclear weapons. Although some analysts still question whether Iran is pursuing nuclear arms, evidence to support the notion that Tehran is working toward a nuclear weapon capability has been steadily building, including the September 2009 revelation of the secret Fordow (Qom) uranium enrichment facility, the January 2010 Iranian decision to increase the enrichment level in part of its uranium stockpile from 3 percent to 20 percent, and reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) citing unanswered questions regarding weapons testing.[9] Accordingly, this article proceeds from the assumption that the regime in Iran is pursuing nuclear arms but recognizes this has not yet been proved.

Structure of the Iranian Regime

To properly apply the models, it is first necessary to provide context by outlining the nature of the Iranian regime. The Islamic Republic of Iran is based on an extremist interpretation of Shia Islam that demands clerical governance of the state. Grounded in the belief that Islam provides not just for the spiritual needs of man but for his secular needs as well, Iranian Islamists reject the idea that religion and politics can be separated and have designed their state institutions accordingly.[10] All necessary laws have been provided by Allah and are to be found in the Koran, the *Hadith* (guidance based on the prophet Mohammed's example), and the *sharia* (prior interpretations of Islamic law by Muslim scholars). In the words of the regime's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, "In Islam the legislative power and competence to establish laws belongs exclusively to God Almighty. The sacred Legislator of Islam is the sole legislative power. No one has the right to legislate and no law may be executed except the . . . ruling of the [Divine] Legislator."[11] Democracy is antithetical to this version of Islam, in that democracy gives people the authority to make laws. By so doing, Islamists claim it raises man to the level of God. Using this logic, the Islamist clerical elites have secured power to their insular class while justifying their autocratic rule by attributing it to the will of Allah.

With this ideological underpinning, the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran created parallel lines of authority, one a formal governmental bureaucracy responsible for the administration of government and the other a series of clerical bodies that decide policy. Pursuant to Iran's Islamist constitution, the popularly elected president heads the former; the Supreme Leader, an appointed ayatollah, heads the latter. Though the president serves as the nominal head of government, he takes direction from and reports to the Supreme Leader. An executive structure exists to enforce the laws, but its duties are wholly administrative, as clerical oversight determines state policy. Clerics act as the judicial branch of government by issuing decrees interpreting Islamic law. Moreover, by collapsing the legislative function into the judicial function, the clerics have precluded the primary opportunity to enact governmental change in Iran.

The system is not unlike that employed in the former Soviet Union, with the Islamist clergy playing the role of the Communist Party. As in the Soviet Union, this duality provides the façade of representative government while insulating the powerful elites from the public; just as importantly, it works to prevent new centers of power from forming that could challenge the elites' rule. The upshot of this dual, but unbalanced, system in Iran is that the government consists of extremely weak institutions. True power is wielded in the Supreme Leader's office, which tends to operate through personal connections and informal networks, thereby obscuring decision-making processes and preventing transparency.[12] Because of this, electoral outcomes and appointments to official government positions are less important than seminary or family ties when it comes to influencing political decisions.[13] Without functioning institutions to regulate and even the political playing field between incumbents and challengers, peaceful change is nearly impossible.

Application of Models

In the abstract, nuclear arms should provide a set of advantages; however, practically, pursuit of nuclear weapons engenders a large set of negative consequences. First, "proliferation begets proliferation."[14] If Iran obtains nuclear arms, it is likely that other states in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and perhaps Egypt, would pursue nuclear arms as well. This would create a dramatically increased threat to Iran, as neither Egypt nor Saudi Arabia could successfully mount a significant offensive against Iran using only conventional arms. Moreover, the more nuclear weapons that exist in the region, the greater the chances that accidental detonation, theft, or other unauthorized use could affect Iran. Second, by pursuing nuclear weapons, Iran risks a preemptive strike by other states hoping to deny Iranian aims. Likewise, if Iran is successful in obtaining nuclear arms, in the event of conflict Iran's adversary could decide to launch a preemptive strike to destroy Iranian nuclear arms before they could be used. Without a publicly known, guaranteed second-strike capability, the very presence of a nuclear program is destabilizing. Third, states that might otherwise have a neutral policy toward Iran could fear the increased Iranian military capability represented by nuclear weapons and join a coalition aimed at balancing Iranian power, thereby creating new threats to Iran. Fourth, Iran would face challenges in securing its nuclear arms. With messianic Islamist extremists present in

parts of the regime, including within the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), protection against the theft or other unauthorized use of a nuclear weapon or nuclear materials by insiders would be particularly important. Yet new nuclear powers typically do not have sophisticated security devices such as permissive action links (coded locks) on their weapons or precise material control and accounting procedures. Fifth, the international community, acting through the United Nations, has made nonproliferation a major goal. Various sanctions are emplaced against proliferators, aimed at pressuring them to abandon their nuclear programs. Tough sanctions, appropriately monitored and enforced, could produce devastating economic effects on Iran, threatening the survival of the targeted regime. Thus, in determining whether nuclear arms are beneficial, the Iranian regime, if rational, must take each of these negative factors into account.

One means of acquiring nuclear security benefits while minimizing the above negatives is through allying with a nuclear-armed state. In the case of Iran, the ideology and the conduct of the Islamist regime have severely limited its capacity to ally with a nuclear weapon state. Operating under Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of independence from the international community, the regime has been ideologically constrained from pursuing close cooperation with external powers. Although Iran has recently indicated increased interest in working with Russia and China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the clerics in Tehran are not prepared to trust outside actors with the regime's security.[15] The clerics would not view an extended deterrence guarantee provided by an external power as a viable alternative to Iranian-controlled nuclear weapons.

Realist Models

The realist family of models includes classical realism, neorealism, offensive realism, and neoclassical realism. Classical realism contends that while states differ internally, all states must seek power in order to protect and promote their national interests in the international system. Because man is believed to be hardwired to rule that which he can, there is a never-ending struggle among states to acquire power so as to avoid subjugation. Alternatively, neorealism holds that human nature is not at issue; rather, the anarchic international system impels states to obtain power in order to provide for their own security. This model argues that a state merely needs sufficient power to defend itself, thus permitting a satisfactory level of power to be reached and the infinite struggle to end. Offensive realism accepts neorealism's structural basis but rejects its status quo bias by recognizing that some states have revisionist goals. Finally, neoclassical realism also acknowledges structural influences, but insists that state and individual characteristics impact how a state's government perceives the international balance of power and the manner in which it can utilize its own power.

Analyses of realist models often assume the primacy of neorealism and focus exclusively on how nuclear weapons can help deter attacks and thus ensure the defense of the state.[16] However, a more complete assessment of realist ideas accounts for the possibility that some states have offensive objectives. The potential value of nuclear weapons encompasses both a defensive deterrent component that protects a state from

another state's aggressive acts, and an offensive coercive component that permits a state to carry out its own aggressive designs. This offensive component includes both the threat of first use and the threat of retaliation, wherein the retaliatory threat is used to lower the risks associated with conventional aggressive behavior. Accordingly, this section first assesses the defensive requirements of Iran for nuclear arms at the regional and global levels and then examines the offensive aims that could motivate Iran's nuclear program.

Iran has a primarily non-Arab, Shia population in a region dominated by Arab Sunni Muslims. It sits adjacent to the energy-rich, strategically vital Persian Gulf, dominating the Strait of Hormuz, which controls maritime access to the gulf. The Caspian Sea along Iran's northern border also holds energy resources, inciting conflict among the littoral states as to ownership and control. Beyond its immediate neighbors, Iran has historically faced the threat of Russian territorial encroachment and Western economic domination. The Islamists fear that pro-democracy advocates in the West will attempt to induce a ''velvet revolution'' similar to the movements that overthrew authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe and, more recently, the Middle East. However, the foremost modern global threat from the Islamist regime's point of view is the United States. This threat perception increased markedly when the United States brought significant military forces to Iran's periphery beginning in 2001.

Regional threats. The immediate regional threats that Iran faced before 2003 were Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the Taliban's Afghanistan. Having fought a costly and indecisive war with Iraq from 1980 to 1988, Iran was concerned that a resurgent Saddam might still have designs on the Khuzestan region of Iran, the locus of key Iranian oil fields and home to much of Iran's ethnic Arab population. Having suffered Iraqi chemical weapons attacks in the 1980s, Iran was also concerned about the possible resumption of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. In Afghanistan, Iran was alarmed by violent Salafists who viewed Shiites as heretics. Although they shared similar anti-Western views, the Iranian Islamists determined the Taliban lacked the strategic vision to subordinate the Sunni-Shia split to the greater goal of attacking the West. In 1998, when the Taliban executed Iranian officials in Mazar-i-Sharif, a crisis ensued in which Iran sent 200,000 troops to the Afghan border.[17] While the Taliban were not believed to be as dangerous as Saddam, they were still considered capable of causing serious difficulties.

Other than these two states, the Islamist regime in Iran has faced no significant regional military threats. Saudi Arabia, with less than one-third of Iran's population, seeks to maintain its embattled position as religious leader of the Islamic world but harbors no illusions as to having the military capability to mount an offensive challenge beyond the Arabian Peninsula. With the Saudis dependent on oil exports, instigating a conflict that would threaten the eastern oil fields would be suicidal. Meanwhile, Egypt has long abandoned the Nasserite pretense to speak for the entire Arab world, as evidenced by its conclusion of a wildly unpopular accord with Israel in 1978. With an uncertain political environment in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and a lack of economic resources, Cairo has no strategic interest in attacking Iran. No other Arab state has the size or ability to threaten Iran, regardless of desire. Nor is a coalition of states, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, realistically able to challenge Iran, given the smaller states' distrust of key regional

powers. While Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman all maintain good relations with Saudi Arabia, each is acutely aware of the imbalance in power relative to the Saudis.[18] Thus, they would likely see an offensive coalition aimed at Iran as enhancing the power of the coalition center, and in effect, substituting one security threat for another. Pakistan's population, nuclear capabilities, and Sunni extremist groups could be threatening to Iran; however, Pakistan remains mired in a long-term strategic standoff with India that forecloses the possibility of reorienting its forces toward Iran. Moreover, inhospitable terrain deters Pakistani adventurism to the west. Turkey has both the population and the military capability to mount a threat to Iran; however, it has not manifested any aggressive intent to the Iranian state since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Until recently, modern Turkey has self-consciously emphasized secularism and economic development, focusing more on its European border than its Middle Eastern neighbors. Even if this focus is reversed, Turkish interest would more naturally fall upon Syria or Armenia than Iran. Finally, both geographic obstacles and Kurdish rebels would complicate a Turkish push toward Iran.

Nor does Israel harbor offensive ambitions toward Iran. Prior to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the shah maintained relatively good relations with Israel, including de facto recognition of the Israeli state as early as 1951.[19] Separated by nearly 1,000 miles, no territorial claims are at issue between Iran and Israel, unlike the frontline Arab states. Even the religious issues are less intense, as the Iranians have traditionally focused more on the shrines associated with the Shiite imams than on Jerusalem, while Jews have historically been allowed freedom to worship under Persian governments. This is not to deny the degree of enmity between Iran and Israel that presently exists, but rather to highlight that Israel has no imperial ambitions toward Iran, a fact Iran's Islamist leaders recognize.[20] No Israeli leader has ever threatened to eliminate the Iranian state.[21] While Israel poses a security threat to Iran today, it is one based on the Iranian Islamists' inflammatory rhetoric and actions toward Israel, causing the Israeli state to consider self-defense measures that could include a preventive or a preemptive strike. Yet any strike would clearly be limited to eradicating Iranian offensive capabilities rather than imposing Israeli control over Iran. Accordingly, this threat stems solely from Iran's offensive pursuits and is not an offensive threat initiated by Israel or the product of a Herzian security dilemma.[22]

Thus, in applying the neorealist model, we must evaluate whether acquisition of nuclear weapons would have been seen by the Islamist regime as enhancing Iranian security against either Baathist Iraq or the Taliban. Because technological and economic constraints on states that are first developing nuclear arms typically restrict the arsenal to moderate-yield weapons with accuracy limited to destroy area targets, these weapons have more political than military utility. That is, they have greater deterrent/coercive potential than war-fighting ability.

With respect to Baathist Iraq, a nuclear deterrent made sense for Iran. Not only had Iraq pursued nuclear arms, but it had used chemical weapons against Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. Iranian elites bitterly condemned the lack of international action at the time, leading them to dismiss the efficacy of treaties, international law, and norms opposing the use of such weapons. In 1988, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Majlis

(parliament), determined that unconventional weapons were ''decisive'' in the Iran-Iraq War and that Iran ''should fully equip [itself] both in the offensive and defensive use of chemical, bacteriological, and radiological weapons.''[23] By developing nuclear arms, Iran could counter the Iraqi threat, hoping for mutual deterrence. Regardless of the negatives surrounding nuclear proliferation, the quest for a nuclear deterrent to Saddam's Iraq was a rational defensive measure.

Conversely, nuclear weapons would not enhance Iranian security regarding Afghanistan. The Taliban were internationally ostracized, economically impoverished, and lacking in scientific and technological expertise, making it unlikely that they could have acquired nuclear arms. Although al Qaeda may have pursued nuclear weapons, there is little public evidence that the Taliban invested effort to this end. Secondly, the Taliban were an ideological rather than a military threat. While they could have spurred terrorist operations against the Iranian regime, such strikes would not likely be deterred by threats of nuclear retaliation. Had a military confrontation arisen, Iran's conventional military capabilities were far superior to those of the Taliban. Lastly, the lack of significant infrastructure and modern military bases to target in Afghanistan limited the war-fighting utility of a nuclear arsenal.

Thus, Baathist Iraq provided the sole regional justification for Iran's pursuit of a deterrent nuclear arsenal. However, with the 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein, this threat evaporated. Since then, Iran has deftly played its hand in Iraq by maintaining strong ties with each of the main Shia organizations in Iraq, including the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, the Islamic Dawa Party, and Moktada al-Sadr's followers. Iran has infiltrated the new Iraqi government at multiple levels, ranging from the national parliament to local town councils in the Shia south; from top-level bureaucrats in the defense and intelligence establishment to guards at the Iranian border.[24] With friendly Shia political organizations setting Iraqi policy, Iraq is no longer a security threat sufficient to warrant the negatives associated with pursuit of nuclear weapons. Even if the new Iraqi government manages to distance itself from Tehran, it is highly unlikely to resume a nuclear weapons program for a host of reasons, including the structure of the new government, the priority of economic reconstruction, the collective memory of the Baathist experience, and the desire for good relations with Western financial backers. Accordingly, if fear of the Baathist regime were the primary motivation for the Iranian nuclear program, there would be little reason for Iran not to accept the carrots offered by the West in negotiations since 2003.[25]

Global threats. From a global perspective, Iran perceives threats from Russian expansionism, Western culture, and American retaliation. Moscow historically desired access to a warm-water port and influence in the Middle East. However, the collapse of the Soviet empire resulted in the Russian threat receding, with a buffer of newly independent states separating Russia and Iran, including Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia in the Caucasus region and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan in Central Asia. Iran has since strengthened ties with Russia, purchasing billions of dollars of Russian military technology as well as obtaining Russian assistance in building the Iranian nuclear power complex at Bushehr. Although current Russian-Iranian relations are based solely on a coincidence of interests that may be transient in nature, there is no foreseeable Russian

threat to Iran in the near to mid-term that justifies Iranian pursuit of nuclear arms. Likewise, the Western cultural invasion that Iran fears lacks a military component, rendering nuclear arms of little value in defending against it.

The United States is thus advanced as the only realistic extra-regional military threat by the Iranian Islamists, who rose to power in large part by demonizing the West, undertaking a series of attacks against the United States that cause the Islamists to fear possible US retaliation. From the seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979, through the bombings, kidnappings, and murder of Americans in Lebanon and Kuwait in the 1980s, to the Khobar Towers attack in 1996, and the arming, training, and funding of insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2003 to today, Iran has maintained a consistent state of belligerence toward the United States.

Some analysts contend that Mohammad Khatami's presidency opened a window of opportunity for US-Iranian cooperation, pointing to Iranian diplomatic assistance in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2003, the May 2003 grand bargain ostensibly proffered by Tehran, and Iranian negotiations with Britain, France, and Germany (the ''EU-3'') in 2003–04.[26] If so, this would weaken the argument herein that the Islamist regime *requires* an American adversary. Thus, it is important to explain why this contention is wrong.

While Khatami attempted to present a more moderate Iranian face during his presidency (1997–2005), hardline clerics and their allies in the IRGC easily defeated his efforts to change policy toward the United States. As noted above, authority in the Iranian system is concentrated in the office of the Supreme Leader, not the presidency. By the start of Khatami's second term in 2001, crackdowns on reformists and student protests left him publicly emasculated.[27] In Afghanistan, Iran assisted in the removal of a hostile regime with whom it had almost gone to war just three years earlier. The ensuing cooperation was to ensure an impotent central government in Kabul, allowing Iran to prevent the rise of a new threat on its border by pursuing a divide-and-conquer strategy with regional Afghan leaders.[28] The US decision to support Hamid Karzai, a weak leader who lacked significant military forces of his own and thus was not perceived as a threat by Afghanistan's various warlords, was a strategic blunder that the Iranians, more familiar with the region's political realities, were only too happy to exploit.[29] Tellingly, Iran permitted fleeing al Qaeda members to enter Iran in 2001 and 2002, refusing to turn them over to coalition forces. Moreover, Iran continued to support terrorism in other areas, as evidenced by the January 2002 Israeli seizure of the *Karine A*, a ship carrying some 50 tons of weapons from Iran to the Palestinian Authority. Tehran's May 2003 offer of a grand bargain was made via a short faxed document from the Swiss ambassador to the US State Department. Reasons to dismiss it were abundant: no Iranian officials were identified as approving the communication, the text was at odds with Iranian actions on the ground, and the substance of the offer was no more than an unenforceable future promise to abide by international law in exchange for the lifting of US sanctions. At the same time that the fax was received, a series of terrorist bombings occurred in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia targeting compounds housing Westerners. Evidence suggesting the bombings were connected to al Qaeda members located in Iran, including explosives expert Saif al-Adel, contradicted the idea that Iran sought to change its policy.[30] Lastly, Iran and the EU-3 engaged in a series of negotiations throughout 2003 and 2004, after the IAEA

determined Iran was in breach of its safeguards agreements. The talks delayed the IAEA from reporting Iran's breach to the UN Security Council in conformity with IAEA rules.[31] In late 2003, Iran promised to suspend its enrichment activities; however, it failed to fully suspend its activities, failed to ratify the IAEA's Additional Protocol as promised, and continued to obstruct IAEA inspections. In 2004 another deal was signed; yet, Iran reneged on this deal as well. In September 2005, the chief Iranian negotiator, Hassan Rowhani, boasted that these negotiations had provided the conditions for Iran to continue its nuclear activities, effectively admitting that Iran was simply using the talks to buy time.[32] This delaying tactic of agreeing to a deal, only to subsequently back away, was further exemplified in 2009 when Iran agreed to swap the majority of its enriched uranium for internationally fabricated fuel rods, then sought to change the deal's terms. Thus, when reviewed *in toto*, the evidence offered to demonstrate a more cooperative Iran is unconvincing.

Having been declared by the United States as the leading state sponsor of terrorism, the Islamist regime initially feared the post-9/11 Global War on Terror might result in military operations aimed at regime change in Tehran. Yet it became clear by late 2004 that neither the US Congress nor the American public would support additional military actions absent major new provocations. Iranian recognition of this was evidenced by the increasing degree of assistance provided by the IRGC to Iraqi insurgents, confident that there would be no US military reprisals against Tehran.[33] Since 2004, there has been almost no discussion of US military action against Iran with respect to its sponsorship of *terrorism*; rather, what discussion exists has been related exclusively to Iran's pursuit of *nuclear arms*. Why would the Iranian regime be willing to accept the risk of US military action in order to pursue nuclear weapons capability? To answer this, we must look beyond the defensive goals of neorealism and consider the Islamist regime's possible offensive aims.

The current Iranian regime, basing its legitimacy wholly on Islamism, is compelled to oppose the existing Western-dominated distribution of power in the international system. To maintain its Islamist bona fides, the regime relies on publicly promoting aggressive, revolutionary, anti-Western policies. This includes support for Islamist terrorist groups, disruption of the Arab-Israeli peace process, and undermining US efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Abandoning these policies would call into question the foundation of the Islamist regime. As George Kennan explained of despotic Soviet ideologues more than sixty years ago, the Iranian Islamists are dependent on the existence of an external adversary to justify their repressive rule.[34] Most recently, this was manifested in the response to the protests following the 2009 presidential election, when the government blamed the West for instigating street riots. Iranian state media televised interviews with detained protestors who alleged they were "provoked" and "influenced" by Voice of America and the British Broadcasting Corporation.[35] After claiming to have a confession from an unnamed CIA spy implicating Iranian opposition leaders in a Western-sponsored plot to destabilize the regime, the deputy prosecutor of Tehran identified the unlikely cabal as consisting of the US government, the Soros Institute, Freedom House, and Stanford University.[36] For the Iranian Islamists, America is treated as an idea rather than a state. Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati of the Guardian Council, speaking in 2007, expressed the

point clearly, ''When all is said and done, we are an anti-American regime. America is our enemy and we are the enemies of America.''[37] Jannati reiterated this in a 2009 sermon, explaining, ''If we are to assure that the Islamic establishment, the revolution and Islam are to stay and the people are to live comfortably, the flag of the struggle against America should always stay hoisted.''[38]

In sum, the primary security concern of the Iranian Islamist regime is not fear of an external attack by imperially motivated powers; rather, it is fear of an external attack in response to Iran's Islamist policies. If Iran were to drop these policies, it would face no security threats for which conventional arms were insufficient; however, doing so would be contrary to fundamental regime principles and would mean the abandonment of the sole claim to legitimacy. Obtaining nuclear arms furthers its ability to maintain aggressive policies by giving it a deterrent to external threats, which then permits a more aggressive, coercive foreign policy. In addition to this realist offensive explanation, the Islamist nature of the regime supports a domestic politics explanation for the decision to acquire nuclear weapons, as addressed in the next section.

It is highly unlikely that the Islamist regime plans to actually detonate a nuclear weapon in an offensive attack. Both of the obvious targets, the United States and Israel, have a second-strike nuclear arsenal capable of threatening the Islamist regime's survival. Setting aside the possibility of unauthorized use by apocalyptic Islamists, nuclear arms are seen as tools for coercion. The regime believes nuclear weapons would deter foreign military strikes targeting the Iranian homeland, making the Iranian use of conventional military force abroad less risky. At a minimum, possession of nuclear arms would allow Iran greater policy flexibility in the Middle East. Regional states that failed to acquire their own counter-arsenal would be forced to think through the logic of extended nuclear deterrence and determine whether they wished to bank upon a US guarantee. In this scenario, given the failure to prevent Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons after US leaders explicitly stated it would not be tolerated, it is difficult to imagine that regional leaders would not adjust their policies to reflect new respect for Iranian power. For example, Iranian demands in the Persian Gulf regarding disputed islands or natural gas fields could be affected; Iranian desires regarding production quotas in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries would carry additional weight, and Iranian interest in Shia minorities in other states might be pursued more aggressively. More problematically, the Islamist regime would likely feel emboldened to increase its support for terrorist organizations, believing itself secured against direct retaliation. Pakistan's behavior after its public entry into the nuclear club in 1998 is instructive: it immediately increased support for Islamist militants, creating 1999's Kargil crisis and the standoff with India in 2000 and 2001. In a classic example of the stability-instability paradox, Pakistani confidence that nuclear arms would prevent escalation made limited conventional and terrorist attacks against India possible.[39] As S. Paul Kapur explains, nuclear arms ''encouraged aggressive Pakistani behavior.''[40] In the same way, Iranian clerics could boost conventional military assistance to Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, reigniting civil war in Lebanon and thrusting the Palestinian peace process into chaos.

Domestic Politics Model

Liberal theories of international politics reject the unitary actor assumption of systemic theories, highlighting instead considerations in domestic politics. Thus, for these models, ideology, competition for power, and bureaucratic struggles are crucial. Specifically, domestic models of proliferation contend that states seek nuclear weapons due to the advocacy of an entity or coalition within the state that sees nuclear arms as a means to accomplish some domestic end. For example, India's decision to conduct a nuclear test in 1998 was viewed by some as an attempt by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to generate domestic public support for his nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.[41] Such efforts are typically couched in the rhetoric of meeting security threats; however, rational analysis of the threat environment can help uncover actual motivations.

Islamism is the ideological foundation justifying the positions of the elite in Iran. Regime elites compete among themselves for power; yet, they are all dependent on the maintenance of the Islamist system for their positions. Hardliners such as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, pragmatists such as former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and reformists such as the 2009 presidential candidate Mir Hussein Moussavi, all support the Islamist regime. Revolutionaries seeking democracy, accountability, and transparency are persecuted, resulting in the lack of a well-organized revolutionary group or the rise of a popular leader. Among regime supporters there are both true believers in Islamist extremism and what might be termed "public believers"—those who adopt the trappings of Islamism because it is a means to secular power and privilege. Given the evidence of corruption and self-dealing surrounding many top clerics and many IRGC commanders, it is likely that a large number of regime elites, including pragmatists and reformists, come from this second group.[42] Yet, it is largely irrelevant whether the Iranian leaders believe the Islamist rhetoric they trumpet; the key is that they are locked into the use of Islamism. They cannot publicly repudiate that which provides the sole basis of their regime's legitimacy. Even if some of the elites wanted to adopt a less ideological posture, acting in such a manner would leave them vulnerable to charges of apostasy by individuals seeking to elevate their own positions. Thus, the offensive rationale offered under the realist security model also can be attributed to domestic politics, for at least some of the Islamist regime's elites.

Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is useful in building domestic support for the Islamist regime. Although not accountable to the people, the clerics nevertheless seek popular support in order to reduce the costs of ruling. Burdened by growing political, economic, and social problems, the clerical elites look for opportunities to refocus the attention of the Iranian people. The Islamist regime has successfully framed the nuclear issue in terms of nationalism, making it appear that concerns over Iranian nuclear weapons are merely the latest attempt of the West to deny Iran its due respect.[43] International efforts to enforce the requirements of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have likewise been presented as Western discrimination. Thus, observers have noted strong support among the Iranian public for the regime's nuclear program.[44] Although reformists in the 2009 presidential election criticized the Ahmadinejad government on a variety of matters, most stayed away from attacking the nuclear program,

questioning only the tone of the government's negotiation, rather than the program itself.[45] This is consistent with Etel Solingen's theory that inward-looking regimes are more apt to pursue nuclear arms than externally oriented regimes, particularly when located in a neighborhood of other inward-looking states. Iran's unique sectarian position, hypernationalism, and economic statism, make Iran an ideal candidate for proliferation.[46] As Kenneth Pollack notes, "Tehran's hardliners. . .are certain that everyone else will realize that the world needs Iran more than Iran needs the rest of the world."[47]

Developing nuclear weapons could also provide a tangible achievement by which the regime leaders could justify the economic difficulties in Iran. By characterizing economic problems as sacrifices made by the people to permit technological progress, the regime might reduce the level of popular criticism. Conversely, having invested large sums in the nuclear program, the regime would be hard-pressed to explain a lack of results. Along these lines, the bureaucratic momentum of the twenty-year-old program could also prove to be a driving force in the pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Institutionally, the principal advocate of an Iranian nuclear weapons capability is the IRGC. The civilian Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), headed from 1997 to 2009 by a former IRGC officer, serves as the public face of Iran's nuclear program; however, the IRGC is the driving agency. Although the AEOI served as the original point of contact with the Pakistani black marketeer A.Q. Khan, when dealings progressed, the IRGC's Brigadier General Mohammed Eslami became the key liaison.[48] A variety of indicators make clear the degree of IRGC involvement with the nuclear program: the IRGC's Imam Hossein University in Tehran houses one of Iran's largest nuclear physics departments; intelligence provided to the IAEA indicates that civilian nuclear scientists "move freely between military and civilian research venues"; and the Fordow uranium enrichment facility is sited on an IRGC base.[49] IRGC officers are among the individuals specifically listed in UN Security Council resolutions applying sanctions against Iran for its ongoing defiance of the IAEA and UN. The façade of civilian leadership advances regime interests internationally by permitting Iran to deny that its efforts are aimed at the military application of nuclear power, while IRGC control serves domestic interests by preventing transparency, allowing for an undisclosed budget and insulating the nuclear program from possible investigations by the Majlis.[50]

The IRGC has become increasingly important in the Iranian regime, transforming from a palace guard to a multifaceted military force with political and economic interests of its own. Under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, former IRGC officers moved into a variety of key posts throughout government. Despite constitutional prohibition, the IRGC has become overtly involved in politics, supporting the campaigns of Ahmadinejad. This mirrors the IRGC's increased role in Iran's economy, where it has progressed from black marketeering to open, large-scale commercial participation, benefiting from government contracts provided by the Ahmadinejad administration.

With this breadth of interests to protect, the IRGC recognizes that relying solely on an unpopular regime places it in a vulnerable position. Should a more moderate system emerge in Iran, there would be little need for an ideologically based force mirroring the regular military. Capturing the nuclear program allows the IRGC to protect its long-term future. For nuclear arms to have maximum utility, they must be integrated into an

overarching nuclear enterprise of which weapons are but one part. Fail-safe command and control procedures, effective security, operational competence, and development of nuclear doctrine are all parts of this enterprise that demand constant attention. By establishing itself as the organization responsible for the nuclear enterprise, the IRGC ensures its continued relevance. At the same time, nuclear weapons enhance IRGC power in the Islamist regime, guaranteeing that the IRGC will retain influence during the uncertainty that will surround the succession of Supreme Leader Khamenei.

Constructivist Models

Constructivist models emphasize the symbolic importance leaders attach to nuclear arms. By acquiring a nuclear capability, states hope to establish their identity as technologically advanced, independent powers deserving of special recognition. In short, states seek honor and prestige.[51] Constructivist models can be built at either the state level or the individual level of analysis, with the analytical focus emphasizing the particular status sought or the type of leader susceptible to seeking status in this manner. While the international nonproliferation regime has tried to diminish the prestige of nuclear arms, the fact that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council are also the five "legal" nuclear powers under the NPT does not escape notice. Thus, soft-power attempts to construct new nonproliferation norms have, so far, failed to overcome hard-power realities.

Iran has long sought to play a leading role in the Persian Gulf region, regardless of the nature of the regime in power. The Iranian nuclear program was begun by the pro-Western shah, with the assistance of the US government, in an attempt to make Iran the regional hegemon.[52] Although Ayatollah Khomeini sought to dismiss traditional geopolitics as incompatible with Islamism, his attempts failed, leading the Iranian Islamists to incorporate Persian nationalism into their brand of Islamism. Becoming the first nuclear-capable Muslim nation in the Middle East would allow them to enhance their appeal to Muslims across the region, despite sectarian differences. Moreover, a nuclear weapons capability would serve as a public symbol solidifying the independence of Iran from Western dominance—a stark contrast to the public perception of secular governments in the region. Given the resentment of Western power in the region, this is no small measure. In addition, it would help silence those in Iran who claim the nation needs to interact more with the developed world to gain the fruits of modern technology. The Islamist clerics could point to the nuclear weapons program as evidence that globalization is not imperative for scientific progress.

For the mullahs, norms against proliferation are of little practical consequence. Already branded a "rogue state" by the West for its support of terrorist groups, its dismal human rights record, its authoritarian government, and its violent repression of election protestors, the Islamist regime has no reason to abide by Western nonproliferation norms. In terms of Jacques Hymans's psychological model, Iran's primary decision maker, Ayatollah Khamenei, would seem to fit the oppositional-nationalist category most susceptible to proliferation. Khamenei's identity conception of Iran appears to use the United States as a "key comparison other," with a high degree of nationalist pride and

a matching degree of hostility.[53] Thus, the Islamist regime likely views international norms as thinly veiled American efforts to deny Iran its rightful status.

However, if prestige were the primary motivation for the Iranian Islamists, then the rational policy would be to develop a nuclear capability without actually building a nuclear weapon. By demonstrating mastery of the nuclear fuel cycle, Iran would place the world on notice that it had the ability to produce nuclear weapons. Physically completing the weapon would be a step backwards, given the negative factors associated with acquiring nuclear arms. Accordingly, some analysts have suggested that Iran is pursuing such a virtual arsenal.[54] Yet Iranian actions, including the evidence of work on weaponization, the development of long-range ballistic missiles, and the placement of the program within the IRGC, indicate that Iran is not satisfied with a virtual arsenal. The Iranian Islamists want the coercive power of possessing nuclear weapons. They want to parade their nuclear arms in front of friends and adversaries. A virtual arsenal not only denies them this opportunity, but is also inherently unstable, as doubt about whether the Islamists have actual weapons increases the chances of a preemptive attack.

Policy Implications

This analysis holds that the Iranian regime is motivated by a desire for coercive power externally and a need to maintain its radical Islamist image internally. Hence, attempting to dissuade the regime from acquiring nuclear weapons by addressing defensive security concerns will not succeed. Provision of a security guarantee, extension of a nuclear deterrent umbrella, or creation of a regional security compact that includes Iran, fail to meet the Islamist regime's needs. Domestically, the regime seeks to buttress eroding support by emphasizing its Islamist character and by equating nuclear technology with nationalist pride. In addition, the IRGC provides institutional support to the nuclear program. To combat this, the United States can offer support for domestic Iranian opponents of nuclear arms; however, the success of the regime's nationalist argument has drastically limited the set of organized opponents. Moreover, with negligible American influence in Iranian policy-making circles, US efforts are effectively limited to public diplomacy. Thus, prospects for countering the domestic drivers of nuclear weapons are dim.

Because the United States has little ability to influence the perceived benefits driving the Iranian regime's pursuit of nuclear arms, the default policy is to try to increase the costs to the Iranian regime of continuing this conduct. Punitive sanctions are the first step. Ideally, this policy minimizes the unilateral US exertion of power, emphasizing instead multilateral cooperation through international institutions. This also permits burden-sharing, while highlighting the US willingness to abide by international law. Yet the chances of success are small. One of the key strengths of this approach, multilateralism, is also one of its key weaknesses. For sanctions to be effective, they must inflict significant costs upon the targeted regime. However, the more significant the costs inflicted, the greater the profits to be made by states that violate the sanctions through black-market transactions. Thus, obtaining compliance is an inherently difficult task.[55] To date, both Russia and China have opposed significant sanctions at the United Nations for

economic and geopolitical reasons. Moreover, Iranian elites have both ideological and pragmatic reasons for preferring self-sufficiency. Ideologically, a key component of the Islamic Revolution was eradicating foreign influence. The West's idea of including Iran in the world order so that Iran has a stake in ensuring system stability is precisely what Khomeini saw as placing Iran at the mercy of the infidel states. From a pragmatic standpoint, the Iranian economy is plagued by corruption, inefficiency, lack of rule of law, and low levels of productivity, making it unprepared for the competitive global market. While Iran would benefit in the long run from greater participation in the Western-led global economy, such participation would undermine the exploitative personal economic interests, including black-market profits, of many regime elites.[56]

As demonstrated by Iran's uranium enrichment efforts, it is too late to prevent Iran from acquiring the materials or knowledge needed to develop nuclear weapons. Per this analysis, it is beyond the reach of the United States to affect the motivations driving the nuclear ambitions of the Iranian Islamist regime. Accordingly, US policy makers are left with the dilemma of either accepting a nuclear-armed Iranian Islamist regime or committing US resources to a policy of regime change in Iran.

NOTES

1. These broad categories are succinctly, albeit incompletely, outlined in Scott D. Sagan, ''Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,'' *International Security* 21 (Winter 1996/1997), pp. 54–86.
2. Classical realism, exemplified in Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, fifth ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); offensive realism, explained in John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); and neoclassical realism, represented in Randall Schweller, ''Neorealism's Status Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?,'' *Security Studies* 5 (Spring 1996), pp. 90–121, all acknowledge the presence of revisionist states having offensive ambitions that exceed simple maintenance of security.
3. Graham T. Allison and Morton J. Halperin, ''Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications,'' *World Politics* 24, Supplement (Spring 1972), pp. 40–79.
4. Etel Solingen, ''Domestic Models of Political Survival: Why Some Do and Others Don't (Proliferate),'' in William C. Potter with Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, eds., *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21st Century: The Role of Theory, Volume 1* (Stanford: Stanford Security Series, 2010), pp. 38–57.
5. Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 12–29.
6. Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force, *Iran: Time for a New Approach* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004), pp. 10, 23; Sanam Vakil, ''The Persian Dilemma: Will Iran Go Nuclear?,'' *Current History* 104 (April 2005), p. 183; Jo-Anne Hart, ''Perceptions and Courses of Action Toward Iran,'' *Military Review* 85 (September/October 2005), p. 10; Paul Rogers, ''Iran: Consequences of a War,'' *Oxford Research Group Briefing Paper* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Research Group, 2006), p. 6; Ray Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (New York: Holt, 2006), p. 140; Colin Dueck and Ray Takeyh, ''Iran's Nuclear Challenge,'' *Political Science Quarterly* 122 (2007), p. 193; and Ted Galen Carpenter, ''Toward a Grand Bargain with Iran,'' *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18 (Winter 2007), pp. 25–26.
7. Kenneth Pollack, testimony before US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, hearing on ''Iran's Political and Nuclear Ambitions and U.S. Policy Options,'' 109th Cong., 2nd sess., May 17, 2006; Anthony Cordesman and Khalid al-Rodhan, *Iran's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Real and Potential Threat* (Washington, DC: CSIS Press, 2006), pp. 12–13; and Richard Russell, ''Iran in Iraq's Shadow: Dealing with Tehran's Nuclear Weapons Bid,'' *Parameters* 34 (Autumn 2004), pp. 42–43.

8. On domestic politics, see Elliot Hen-Tov, ''Understanding Iran's New Authoritarianism,'' *Washington Quarterly* 30 (Winter 2006/2007), p. 169. On norms, see Patrick Clawson, ''Could Sanctions Work Against Tehran?'' *Middle East Quarterly* 14 (Winter 2007), p. 13; Shmuel Bar, ''Iranian Defense Doctrine and Decision Making,'' Herzliya Interdisciplinary Center, Institute for Policy and Strategy, October 2004, p. 49; Nikola Krastev, ''IAEA Chief: Iran's Nuclear Program About Winning Recognition, Prestige,'' Radio Free Europe, November 5, 2009, <www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1870151.html>; and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, ''Pride and Prejudice: Understanding Iran's Nuclear Program,'' in William C. Potter with Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, eds., *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21st Century: A Comparative Perspective, Volume 2* (Stanford: Stanford Security Series, 2010), pp. 42–75.
9. See, e.g., ''Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Portions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran,'' IAEA, GOV/2011/65, November 8, 2011, pp. 7–8, and Annex, pp. 1–12.
10. The term Islamist, as used here, refers to an extreme interpretation of Islam that rejects secular political authority in favor of clerical rule, espouses intolerance for other religions, and supports the use of violence as a regular instrument of policy. It is distinct from, and should not be considered interchangeable with, the term ''Islamic.''
11. Ruhullah al-Musawi Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 55.
12. Mohsen Sazegara, ''The Point of No Return: Iran's Path to Democracy,'' *Policy Focus*, No. 54, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 2006, pp. 3–4; James A. Bill, ''The Cultural Underpinning of Politics: Iran and the United States,'' *Mediterranean Quarterly* 17 (2006), pp. 23–33.
13. Wilfried Buchta, ''Iran's Security Sector: An Overview,'' Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Working Paper No. 146, August 2004, p. 18; Abbas William Samii, ''The Iranian Nuclear Issues and Informal Networks,'' *Naval War College Review* 59 (Winter 2006), pp. 63–89.
14. Sagan, ''Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?,'' p. 57, citing former secretary of state George Shultz.
15. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established in 2001 as a loose alliance linking Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. In 2005 Iran was formally granted observer status, and in 2008 Iran applied for full membership.
16. See, e.g., Sagan, ''Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?,'' p. 57 (discussing the ''realist-security'' model solely in terms of defense); Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, ''Determinants of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation,'' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51 (February 2007), pp. 173–74 (listing only defensive independent variables under their concept of international security).
17. Barnett Rubin and Sara Batmanglich, ''The U.S. and Iran in Afghanistan: Policy Gone Awry,'' MIT Center for International Studies, October 2008, p. 2.
18. Marina Ottaway, ''Iran, the United States, and the Gulf: The Elusive Regional Policy,'' Carnegie Paper No. 105, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2009.
19. Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 27.
20. Ibid., p. 145, citing an anonymous Iranian regime strategist as acknowledging that ''Iran never really saw Israel as a threat.''
21. Iranian leaders have a history of statements calling for the end of Israel. In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was quoted as saying that Israel should be ''wiped off the map.'' Though the accuracy of this phrase's translation has been questioned (see Glenn Kessler, ''Did Ahmadinejad Really Say that Israel Should be ''Wiped off the Map'?,'' The Fact Checker, *Washington Post*, October 5, 2011, <www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/did-ahmadinejad-really-say-israel-should-be-wiped-off-the-map/2011/10/04/gIQABJIKML_blog.html>; and Uri Friedman, ''Debating Every Last Word of Ahmadinejad's 'Wipe Israel off the Map,''' The Atlantic Wire, *The Atlantic*, October 5, 2011, <www.theatlanticwire.com/global/2011/10/debating-every-last-word-ahmadinejads-wipe-israel-map/43372/>), the sentiment is less debatable. In 1968, Ayatollah Khomeini said: ''It is the duty of all Muslims, and specifically of Islamic states, to take the initiative for the obliteration of this pond of decay [Israel] with all possible means, and not to decline the mujahideen any assistance toward this end.'' Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (London: Saqi, 2005), pp. 168–69 (quoting Ayatollah Khomeini's comments of September 28, 1968 as published in the *Al-Nour* newspaper). In 2000, Khomeini's successor, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, called for the ''annihilation'' of Israel. See Daniel L. Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, and Jerrold D. Green, *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-*

Revolutionary Era (Santa Monica: Rand, 2001), p. 83 (citing Afshin Valinejad, ''Iran Leader Calls for Israel's Annihilation,'' *Boston Globe*, January 1, 2000, p. 4).

22. In a security dilemma, one state's pursuit of increased security through the acquisition of arms may result in another state perceiving an increased threat, causing it to acquire additional arms. This in turn may lead the first state to believe the reacting state has hostile intentions, causing the first state to further enhance its arsenal, developing into a spiraling arms race and lessening security for both sides. John H. Herz, ''Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma,'' *World Politics* 2 (January 1950), p. 157.

23. Cited in Joseph Cirincione, Jon B. Wolfsthal, and Miriam Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Threats*, second ed. (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p. 298.

24. See, e.g., Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), p. 194; Kenneth Katzman, ''Iran's Influence in Iraq,'' CRS Report for Congress, February 2, 2007; Iraq Study Group, *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward—A New Approach* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2006), p. 3; and Government Accountability Office, ''Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq: Serious Challenges Confront U.S. Efforts to Build the Capacity of Iraqi Ministries,'' GAO-08-124T, October 4, 2007, p. 3.

25. Perhaps reflecting this logic, the US intelligence community released a controversial unclassified National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that concluded Iran suspended its nuclear weapons activities in 2003. However, since then, IAEA reports, as well as several foreign intelligence agencies, have noted evidence contrary to the NIE's conclusions. IAEA, ''Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran,'' GOV/2010/10, February 18, 2010, p. 9; William J. Broad, Mark Mazzetti, and David E. Sanger, ''A Nuclear Debate: Is Iran Designing Warheads?'' *New York Times,* September 29, 2009, <www.nytimes.com/2009/09/29/world/middleeast/29nuke.html>; Joby Warrick, ''Evidence of Iran's Nuclear Arms Expertise Mounts,'' *Washington Post,* December 15, 2009, p. A1.

26. See, e.g., David Hastings Dunn, ''Real Men Want to Go to Tehran: Bush, Pre-Emption and the Iranian Nuclear Challenge,'' *International Affairs* 83 (2007), p. 24; Flynt Leverett, *Dealing with Tehran: Assessing U.S. Diplomatic Options toward Iran* (Washington, DC: Century Foundation, 2006), p. 3; Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, pp. 243–50; Suzanne Maloney, ''U.S. Policy Toward Iran: Missed Opportunities and Paths Forward,'' *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 32 (Summer 2008), pp. 30–31.

27. See, e.g., Abbas Milani, ''U.S. Foreign Policy and the Future of Democracy in Iran,'' *Washington Quarterly* 28 (Summer 2005), p. 45, describing Khatami as the ''epitome of political impotence''; and Jahangir Amuzegar, ''Iran's 'Virtual Democracy' at a Turning Point,'' *SAIS Review* (Summer/Fall 2000), pp. 93–109, detailing Khatami's inability to enact meaningful change even within the first years of his administration.

28. Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), pp. 206–07, noting Iranian financial support to the Afghan warlord Mohammed Fahim in 2002 and 2003.

29. See, e.g., David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 50–51.

30. Barbara Slavin, *Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies: Iran, the U.S., and the Twisted Path to Confrontation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007), pp. 203–04.

31. ''Europe: 'Our Discussions with Iran Have Reached an Impasse,'" *Middle East Quarterly* 13 (Spring 2006), p. 65.

32. Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodhan, *Iran's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Real and Potential Threat* (Washington, DC: CSIS Press, 2006), p. 157. See also ''Meeting the Challenge: U.S. Policy Toward Iranian Nuclear Development,'' Report of the Independent Task Force, Bipartisan Policy Center, September 2008, p. iv, noting ''the admission of [President] Khatami's former spokesman, Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, on June 15, 2008, that a strategy of insincere dialogue provided cover for the Islamic Republic to import technology to further the Islamic Republic's covert nuclear program.''

33. Department of Defense, ''Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,'' December 2007, pp. 17, 19; Arshad Mohammed, ''U.S. Sees Attacks by Iranian-Backed Groups Up in Iraq,'' Reuters, February 7, 2008, <www.reuters.com/article/2008/02/07/us-iraq-usa-satterfield-idUSN0762850020080207>; Katzman, ''Iran's Influence in Iraq''; Paul Tait, ''Military Finding More Iranian Arms in Iraq,'' Reuters, November

11, 2007, <www.reuters.com/article/2007/11/11/us-iraq-iran-general idUSL1124367020071111>; Clay Wilson, ''Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Iraq and Afghanistan: Effects and Countermeasures,'' Congressional Research Service Report, CRS22330, August 28, 2007, p. 3; Shannon W. Caudill, ''Hizballah Rising: Iran's Proxy Warriors,'' Joint Forces Quarterly 49 (2008), p. 130.

34. X [George F. Kennan], ''The Sources of Soviet Conduct,'' *Foreign Affairs* 25 (July 1947), pp. 566–82.

35. Zahra Hosseinian and Fredrik Dahl, ''Iran Says Courts Will Teach Protestors a Lesson,'' Reuters, June 23, 2009, <in.reuters.com/article/2009/06/23/idINIndia-40496320090623>.

36. Thomas Erdbrink, ''100 Iranians Tried for Disputing Election,'' *Washington Post*, August 2, 2009, p. A12.

37. Amir Taheri, *The Persian Night: Iran under the Khomeinist Revolution* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009), p. 189.

38. ''Iran's Struggle with America Should Continue,'' Reuters, November 13, 2009, <www.reuters.com/article/2009/11/13/us-iran-usa-cleric-idUSTRE5AC21I20091113>.

39. P.R. Chari, ''Nuclear Restraint, Nuclear Risk Reduction, and the Security-Insecurity Paradox in South Asia,'' in Michael Krepon and Chris Gagne, eds. *The Stability-Instability Paradox: Nuclear Weapons and Brinksmanship in South Asia* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2001), p. 20.

40. S. Paul Kapur, ''Ten Years of Instability in a Nuclear South Asia,'' *International Security* 33 (Fall 2008), p. 72.

41. Peter Beckman et al., *The Nuclear Predicament: Nuclear Weapons in the Twenty-First Century*, third ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), pp. 214–15.

42. No less than President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has overseen unprecedented public allegations of corruption on the part of many senior clerics in Iran. See Ali Alfoneh, ''Ahmadinejad versus the Clergy,'' *Middle Eastern Outlook*, No. 5, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, August 2008, pp. 7–8, Table 3, containing a list of numerous senior clerics, including six ayatollahs, and the specific allegations of economic corruption made against them.

43. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, pp. 154–155. Because of this, pursuing nuclear arms simply as a potential bargaining chip is unlikely.

44. Mohamed A. El-Khawas, ''Iran's Nuclear Controversy: Prospects for a Diplomatic Solution,'' *Mediterranean Quarterly* 16 (2005), p. 32 (noting the nuclear program as a source of national pride in Iran); Michael Donovan, ''Iran's Bomb: A Crisis Deferred?'' *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 29 (Summer 2005), pp. 27, 34 (noting widespread popular support for the nuclear program); Ted Galen Carpenter and Jessica Shoosh, ''A View to a Coup?'' *The National Interest* (March/April 2007), pp. 62–67 (pointing to a January 2006 Iranian poll claiming 85 percent of Iranians supported the nuclear program); and ''Public Opinion in Iran,'' WorldPublicOpinion.org, April 7, 2008, pp. 14–16 (finding 81 percent of Iranians though it was ''very important'' for Iran to develop its own nuclear fuel cycle); and Alan Fram, ''Poll: Iranians Support Nuclear Weapons,'' Associated Press, July 10, 2007, <www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-07-10-3857364054_x.htm>.

45. For example, Mir Hussein Moussavi, a reformist candidate in Iran's 2009 presidential election, praised Iran's nuclear work on nationalist grounds, asserting, ''The nuclear technology is one of the examples of the achievements of our youth.'' Thomas Erdbrink, ''Another Key Politician to Run Against Ahmadinejad,'' *Washington Post*, March 11, 2009, p. A8.

46. Article 44 of the Iranian Constitution states ''All large-scale and mother industries, foreign trade, major minerals, banking, insurance, power generation, dams and large-scale irrigation networks, radio and television, post, telegraph and telephone services, aviation, shipping, roads, railroads and the like; all these will be publicly owned and administered by the state.'' Nikki Keddie identifies the state as controlling 60 percent of the economy, while the *bonyads* (which are charitable trusts exempt from taxes that are part of Iran's underground economy—and consequently hard to reach with sanctions) control another 10–20 percent. Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, revised and updated ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 273. According to the 2003 World Values Survey, over 90 percent of Iranians reported they were ''very proud'' of their nationality, an extraordinarily high number compared to the 58 percent mean of respondents across all countries, or even the 71 percent reported by US respondents in 2000. Clifford Grammich and C. Christine Fair, ''American and Iranian Public Opinion: The Quest for Common Grounds,'' *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 30 (Spring 2007), p. 12.

47. Kenneth Pollack, ''Pariahs in Tehran,'' *The National Interest* 110 (November/December 2010), p. 44.

48. Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat: President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 134.

49. On the nuclear physics department, see ibid., p. 147; on the intelligence see Joby Warrick, ''U.N. Alleges Nuclear Work by Iran's Civilian Scientists,'' *Washington Post*, March 11, 2008, p. A1; and Karen DeYoung and Michael D. Shear, ''U.S., Allies Say Iran Has Secret Nuclear Facility,'' *Washington Post*, September 26, 2009, p. A1.

50. Yossi Melman and Meir Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. 144.

51. See, e.g., Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), p. 8.

52. This does not suggest that Iran would necessarily seek nuclear arms under any type of regime. The negatives associated with nuclear proliferation are greater today than in the shah's era. The international community has adopted a stronger nonproliferation norm, the economic effects of globalization mean abiding by international norms is more important than ever, and the rise of Islamism has generated unprecedented concern in the West regarding the dangers of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

53. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*, pp. 12–36.

54. Judith S. Yaphe and Charles D. Lutes, ''Reassessing the Implications of a Nuclear-Armed Iran,'' Institute for National Strategic Studies, August 2005, p. 10; Scott Sagan, ''How to Keep the Bomb From Iran,'' *Foreign Affairs* 85 (September/October 2006), p. 47.

55. Neither the US experience with the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act and various executive orders sanctioning Iran, nor academic study of the efficacy of sanctions in general, provide optimism that sanctions will result in Iranian policy adjustments. One study of 115 cases of economic sanctions between 1914 and 1990 showed only a 35 percent success rate, with a declining trend since 1970. Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Jeffrey J. Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliot, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, third ed. (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2007). See also Jeannine Aversa, ''Analysis: Sanctions Haven't Slowed Iran,'' Associated Press, October 25, 2007, <www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-10-25-3730164290_x.htm>.

56. Alfoneh, ''Ahmadinejad versus the Clergy,'' pp. 7–9, Table 3, detailing specific corruption charges against numerous regime elites.