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Living in a Dangerous Neighbourhood: Iran and its Quest for Security through Nuclear Deterrence

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Hamid Gharekhanian

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing dispute between Iran and certain members of the international community over Iran's nuclear programme has attracted academic debate, significant media attention, and much diplomatic anxiety over the past two decades. While the Iranian Government maintains that its nuclear programme is based upon peaceful purposes and primarily aimed at enhancing energy efficiency to meet the country's increasing domestic demand, this thesis argues that key factors informing Iran's nuclear ambitions include its overarching security concerns which transcend the use of nuclear energy for economic ends. Iran's nuclear policy has largely been shaped by the insecurities caused by its neighbouring countries, some of which are nuclear-armed states. Iran's sense of insecurity has been compounded by the presence of US armed forces in the region, whose military superiority cannot be overcome by Iran's conventional army alone. This thesis contends that Iran's leaders continue to pursue a nuclear programme in the face of the international community's objections because they believe that nuclear weapons represent a credible military deterrent and, as such, form a vital part of its quest for national security.

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I hereby declare that the content of this thesis is my own work, except for sources duly cited and referenced.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

ABBREVIATIONS vii

LIST OF FIGURES ix

INTRODUCTION.....1

The Argument 4

Research Questions 5

Sources 6

Analytical Method 8

Theoretical Perspectives 12

Thesis Structure 14

CHAPTER 1: IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME 16

Iran's Nuclear Facilities 20

Iran's Strategic Position 30

Iran's Foreign Policy 33

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions 40

Iran's Nuclear Weapons Programme? 44

Conclusion 53

CHAPTER 2: INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S OBJECTIONS 55

International Organizations' Perceptions and Responses 56

International Atomic Energy Agency 56

UN Security Council 58

European Union 64

Gulf Corporation Council 67

Governmental Perceptions and Responses 71

United States 71

Israel 84

Conclusion 90

CHAPTER 3: THE IMPACT OF SANCTION REGIMES 95

Impact on the International Community 95

Trade Impacts 97

Sanction Busting 99

Impact on Iran 103

Economic Harm 106

Social Harm 108

Conclusion 111

CHAPTER 4: IRAN'S INTRANSIGENCE 114

Iran's Nuclear Diplomacy 115

Iran's Perceptions of Regional and Extra-Regional Threats 118

Pakistan 123

Israel 127

United States 130

Conclusion 136

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF A NUCLEAR-ARMED IRAN 142

Undermining the NPT Regime 142

Regional Arms Race 144

Direct Military Action 150

Israel 150

United States 155

Iran's Security Dilemma 166

REFERENCE LIST 170

APPENDIX 1 203

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BP ----- British Petroleum

CISADA ----- Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act

ESS ----- European Security Strategy

EU ----- European Union

FEP ----- Fuel Enrichment Plant

FFEP ----- Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant

GCC ----- Gulf Cooperation Council

GDP ----- Gross Domestic Product

HEU ----- highly-enriched uranium

ISIS ----- Institute for Science and International Security

IAEA ----- International Atomic Energy Agency

ISA ----- Iran Sanctions Act

ILSA ----- Iran-Libya Sanctions Act

IRGC ----- Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

IRISL ----- Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines

LNG ----- liquefied natural gas

LEU ----- low enriched uranium

MAD ----- Mutually Assured Destruction

NATO ----- North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCRI ----- National Council of Resistance of Iran

NPT----- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

NSA ----- National Security Agency

PFEP ----- Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant

PRC ----- People’s Republic of China

TRR ----- Tehran Research Reactor

UCF ----- Uranium Conversion Facility

UAE ----- United Arab Emirates

UK ----- United Kingdom

UN ----- United Nations

US ----- United States of America

USSR ----- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WMD ----- Weapons of Mass Destruction

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Iran's Key Nuclear Sites ……..……. 21

Figure 2: Nuclear Sites: Arak..……..…… 22

Figure 3: Nuclear Sites: Busheshre…….……. 23

Figure 4: Nuclear Sites: Fordow…… 24

Figure 5: Nuclear Sites: Isfahan ..……. 25

Figure 6: Nuclear Sites: Natanz …… 26

Figure 7: Nuclear Sites: Parchin …….. 27

Figure 8: Iran and its Neighbours…… ……..... 31

Figure 9: US Military Bases around Iran ……... 132