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

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Politics

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

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2015

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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are three people to whom I owe my personal gratitude. I wish to thank Dr. Nigel Parsons for good advice. I would also like to thank Dr. Grant Duncan whose advice has helped me in the early stage of this thesis. My greatest thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Damien Rogers, whose constant support has been instrumental in getting this thesis to where it is now. This thesis would not have been possible without his outstanding contribution. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Rogers for providing helpful comments and directions throughout my work. I am extremely grateful to him for offering his insight and expertise.

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

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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

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INTRODUCTION

Since the invention of nuclear weapons in 1945, policymakers and analysts of world affairs alike have become highly cognizant of the serious consequences stemming from a state's acquisition of these Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Perhaps most obviously, the offensive use of such weapons enabled the United States of America (US) to end its war against Japan as victor. The sheer force exhibited by that first two-pronged nuclear attack discouraged, at least in part, any further attacks. The extent of destruction observed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki shifted the significance of nuclear weaponization from a practical wartime option to a strategy of deterrence based upon the logic of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), which has so far proven sufficient to prevent full-scale nuclear exchange among states. Although nuclear armament drastically altered the way in which policymakers approach international armed conflict and engendered an era of relative peace among the most powerful states known as the Cold War, one of the most serious concerns currently facing the international community is the potential for nuclear exchange and the resulting annihilation of the entire human species.

Nuclear weapons have thus played an important role in great powers' strategic calculations and planning since World War II as the nuclear age, commencing with the Manhattan Project between 1942 and 1946, culminated in the Trinity test on 16 July 1945 (Ross 2009, n.p.). In addition to being viewed as a vital military ingredient for national security, nuclear weapons have been considered by some policymakers as the main symbol of national prestige and global influence. Accordingly, five states attained nuclear weapons capabilities in a

fairly short period of time – the US (1945), the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or Soviet Union (USSR) (1949), the United Kingdom (UK) (1952), France (1960) and the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) (1964) (Bahgat 2006: 124). According to Hans Blix, recent best estimates suggest that about 27,000 nuclear weapons now exist (2006: 36). This nuclear revolution enjoyed greater strategic implications than operational ones. While being an attribute of great power status, nuclear weapons have functioned as an equalizer as well. During the Cold War, the US and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies relied upon nuclear weapons to counter the conventional military advantage of the Warsaw Pact (Ross 2009, n.p.). While nuclear weapons have played an evolving role in international security calculations, these changes manifest themselves in opposing modes for two different groups of states. Nuclear weapons play a lesser role in security planning for affluent, militarily- powerful states because such states perceive advanced conventional military capabilities as more practical than nuclear weapons. In contrast, states that are not capable of safeguarding themselves against sophisticated Western militaries may view nuclear weapons as progressively desirable for their security. That Saddam Hussein and Muammar Kaddafi, two despotic leaders who abandoned their nuclear programmes, have been toppled and executed may encourage Kim Jong Un as he seeks to guarantee the survival of his regime by acquiring nuclear weapons (McDonnell 2012: 1, 2).

Nuclear weapons are a significant tool for political purposes. The possession of nuclear weapons may create an environment where the regional balance of power can be tilted in favour of newly nuclear-armed states that attempt to

boost their bargaining leverage against neighbouring states (Dittmeier 2013: 494). Nuclear deterrence has been a key concept in international security as well as world politics over the past five decades. Since their advent, nuclear weapons have been the subject of scholarly inquiry, especially within the context of deterrence theory. To deter, as Waltz argues, "literally means to stop people from doing something by frightening them" (1995: 3). Deterrence is attained through the ability to punish, rather than through the ability to defend (Waltz 1995: 3). The dominant assertion, which can be drawn from the literature on the deterrent value of nuclear weapons, is that the defender's possession of a reliable second-strike capability is likely to dampen a challenger's view of achieving victory, increasing the likelihood of deterrence success. Moreover, a challenger's likelihood of success on the battlefield may decrease with the use of nuclear weapons, thereby augmenting the prospects for deterrence's success (Huth, Gelpi & Bennet 1993: 613). Because of the risks of nuclear retaliation, there is little to be gained by nuclear-armed states deploying these WMD in military conflicts. Indeed, the prospect of nuclear weapons use gives rise to great caution for all concerned (Waltz 1995: 45). Despite changes in international relations that have had an impact on nuclear proliferation and deterrence, nuclear weapons will retain their significance for the foreseeable future (Arbatov 2007: 4).

As a result of the rapid proliferation of nuclear weapons posing a major challenge to global peace, states from all over the world responded by negotiating and signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 (Bahgat 2006: 124). The NPT is a milestone international treaty whose aim is

to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology. It is designed to promote cooperation in using peaceful nuclear energy. The NPT is also aimed at advancing the goal of attaining nuclear disarmament as well as general and total disarmament. The Treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarming all nuclear-armed states. Whilst having opened for signature in 1968, the NPT entered into force in 1970 and was extended indefinitely in 1995 (Jovini 2013: 2, 3). As an international regime, the NPT is designed to restrain the spread of nuclear weapons by persuading states to comply with certain regulations concerning nuclear energy and research (Tagma & Uzun 2012: 243). Other arms control regimes exist, but none overshadow the reach and significance of the NPT when it comes to controlling these WMD.

The Argument

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 Iranian 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,

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.

Research Questions

The research for this thesis set out to investigate and answer the following question:what motives would Iran have (or have had) to pursue its nuclear programme despite objections from the international community? That primary research question only emerged after a number of ancillary research questions were addressed: why are nuclear weapons so important to policymakers and analysts of world affairs? When did Iran's nuclear programme begin and how did it develop? Did it involve foreign assistance, for example? Where are Iran's nuclear facilities located, when were they developed, and how do they fit into Iran's nuclear programme? Is there any strategic, economic, ideological, or prestige considerations behind Iran's nuclear programme? And what does the scholarly literature have to say about Iran's foreign policy and nuclear ambitions? Is there any evidence to suggest that Iran's nuclear programme has a military dimension? These ancillary questions are addressed by Chapter 1.

Other ancillary research questions remain, however, to be addressed by the ensuing thesis: what have been the international community's main responses to Iran's nuclear programme, particularly since 2002? Are particular members of the international community more exercised than others; if so, why? What is the strongest response so far from the international community and what is its

impact on Iran? In what ways has Iran reacted to the international community's responses? What informs Iran's reactions? What are the implications of Iran's intransigence for the NPT, the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions, and for Iran's quest for its own security amid such a dangerous neighbourhood?

Due to the practical necessities of researching, writing, and submitting a thesis within a term of enrolment, the chronological scope of my research focuses mainly on the decade beginning in 2002 and ending in 2012. This is because the international community's suspicions that Iran's nuclear programme had a military dimension strengthened in 2002 due to revelations of the existence of secret and undeclared nuclear sites indicating possible nuclear weaponization. This period was almost contemporaneous with the tenure of President Ahmadinejad, an ultra-conservative and a rather hawkish figure in Iranian politics, which concluded in 2012.

Sources

Given the secretive nature of Iran's nuclear programme, it is highly improbable that Iranian officials will be keen to participate in frank discussions on such matters or provide first-hand information about their nuclear activities. Inaccessibility to primary sources through conducting interviews with current government officials in Tehran will remain a clear obstacle to a comprehensive and accurate picture of the nature and extent of Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's policy of nuclear opacity will pose a formidable challenge to any outsider trying to appreciate the inner workings of its nuclear programme. Given the emergence of very few outputs from the 'black box' of Iran's nuclear policy,

every effort was made to conduct an extensive investigation of the topic at hand.

Due to the Islamic regime's lack of transparency, it would be an arduous task to undertake almost any research involving Iran. Although Iranian journalism remains an excellent source of open-source information, it has been designed to be anti-Western and is largely subordinate to the ruling regime. Accordingly, intellectual freedom appears to have been at odds with Iran's theocratic structure. Information on Iran's domestic politics, government structure, and nuclear programme is difficult to come by as a result. There have been large gaps in Iranian public knowledge regarding Iran in general and its nuclear programme in particular. Consequently, for the purposes of this thesis information collected on Iran has largely been obtained from scholarly work published in English beyond Iran and, in some cases, from certain figures released by Iran. A significant portion of source documents published in Persian (Farsi) in Iran is subject to the Islamic regime's censorship, the credibility of which is in question.

This thesis used secondary sources, including articles from the following journals: *Journal of International Affairs*; *the Washington Quarterly*; *Center for Strategic Research and Middle East Journal.* Book-length scholarly works also proved useful, especially: Krause (2012), *Iran's nuclear programme: strategic implications; Chubin* (2006), *Iran's nuclear ambitions*; Sokolsky & Clawson (2005), *Getting ready for a nuclear-ready Iran*; Kamrava (2010), *The nuclear question in the Middle East*; Patrikarakos (2012), *Nuclear Iran: the birth of an*

atomic state; Alam (2009), *Iran and post-9/11 world order: reflections on Iranian nuclear programme;* and Delpech (2006), *Iran and the bomb: the abdication of international responsibility*. Notwithstanding my heavy reliance on secondary source material, the thesis also used primary sources where these were available. The primary sources include United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions; International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Reports; UN Sanction Committee Reports; Wiki-leak materials; declassified US Intelligence Reports; the White House; and other similar sources.

Analytical Method

My research aims played an important role in determining which analytical method was chosen for this thesis. My analysis of the international community's response to Iran's nuclear programme and Iran's recalcitrance in the face of that strong objection was based upon a qualitative approach. The term qualitative denotes an emphasis on the qualities of entities as well as on meanings and processes that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of amount, quantity, frequency or intensity (Denzin & Lincoln 2011: 8). Qualitative methods are used by researchers to understand and explain why and how an event, issue, process or a political institution took place. In contrast, quantitative research focuses on observing and measuring repeated occurrence of a political phenomenon that takes place, for example, in voting for political party (Vromen 2010: 249, 268).

Qualitative research refers to a way of thinking about the social reality being studied as well as the method of approaching and conceptualizing it (Punch 2000: 4). Qualitative researchers do not perceive explanation and

understanding of social and political behaviour to be independent of context (Vromen 2010: 257). Qualitative approaches are mostly in line with an interpretive epistemology that emphasizes the constructed nature of social reality (Devine 2002: 201). All qualitative researchers are guided by abstract principles that combine beliefs about ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln 2011: 12). An ontological position reflects the view of the researcher about the nature of the world, and the epistemological position deals with a theory of knowledge — what and how we can know about the world. For example, positivists base their argument on the idea that the world exists independently from our knowledge of it and, therefore, largely tend to choose quantitative analysis for discussing the nexus between ontology, epistemology, and methodology and would like to produce objective results (Devine 2002: 201). Qualitative methods are more concerned with understanding the interpretation of an event without focusing on objective reality (Marsh & Furlong 2002: 18, 19, 21). There are some important core features attributed to a qualitative approach to doing research in Political Science and International Relations. Inductive analysis based upon being explanatory with open questions is of more importance than only concentrating the focus on testing hypotheses. The emphasis is placed on the development of a holistic perspective that tries to comprehend a complex phenomenon in a distinctive context rather than reducing analysis to a number of discreet variables (Liamputtong 2009: 302).

Broadly speaking, there are four methods that are utilized most often for collecting qualitative data in political science research. These are interviewing,

participation, observation, and document analysis (McNabb 2004: 107). This research project focuses on the document analysis method of primary and secondary materials owing to practicality, time-consumption, and cost-effectiveness. Document analysis is referred to as “collection, review, interrogation and analysis of various forms of text as a primary source of research data” (O’Leary 2004: 177). Primary data sources (e.g. interview data and raw data from an experiment) present original and direct evidence and are collected for the specific research problem at hand. Secondary data sources, especially textbooks and journal articles, can utilize the evidence from the primary sources to build an argument (Hox & Boeiji 2005: 593).

While analysing documents, one should also know about any underlying assumptions as well as why, how and where the document is produced (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2010: 230). There are several reasons for utilizing secondary data. The collection of secondary data is regarded as a very cost-effective means of discovering what study has already been conducted on that specific topic. One of good things about the analysis of secondary data is the disclosure of the possible answers to specific research questions, which can, in turn, emphasize areas where new research may need to be carried out (Burham, Gilland, Grant & Layton-Henry 2004: 33, 34). Furthermore, it is difficult, time-consuming and expensive to gather primary data. There is a wealth of secondary data that may compensate for a lack of sufficient information for research projects. Focusing attention on interpretation and analysis would be achieved more efficiently by using secondary data. It would

also be more difficult to conduct a research study in isolation from the already collected data in the field (Blaxter et al. 2010: 192).

Although a combination of qualitative data collection techniques and the use of mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) known as triangulation can be used to verify the validity and credibility of data collected (Blaxter et al. 2010: 205), there are clear limitations to examining the Iranian nuclear programme that makes the application of a combined designs approach problematic. The restrictions are concerned with inadequate primary sources of data that have, in turn, led the use of secondary sources to be of necessity. However, there are two potential sources of bias — the original author's and the researcher's own — when using document analysis method. Since researchers need to work with pre-produced texts, the credibility of their generated data in part depends on recognizing the original author's bias. The second source of bias rest with the researchers and the way in which they read and deduce conclusions from documents might be tainted by their own interpretive judgment (O'Leary 2004: 177). Another limitation is related to the importance of a theme that is usually assessed through the number of times it comes into sight in the material. This certainly confines the scope of analysis (Burnham et al. 2004: 236). Knowing that using the logic of triangulation is likely to decrease the sources of bias, every effort was made to reduce this shortcoming by cross-checking against more sources of reliable information. Nonetheless, this may be a partial solution to the above problem that is unlikely to be entirely purged.

Theoretical Perspectives

This thesis aims to help fill the gaps in, and strengthen the weaknesses of, the existing scholarly literature on Iran's nuclear programme by explaining why the Iranian Government has continued to pursue its nuclear programme despite the strong objections of the international community, an aspect of the topic as yet unexplored by scholars. It is important to appreciate that the value of this thesis lies not only in its consideration of Iran's quest for security through nuclear deterrence despite clear global disapproval, but also in the unique way in which it analyzes its topic in relation to two contending theoretical perspectives.

Liberal Internationalism is the first theoretical perspective used in this thesis. It highlights the role played by states in world affairs, particularly where states cooperate with one another in order to achieve collective ends. As such, this perspective draws attention to the significance of international organizations, such as the UN and the European Union (EU), and gives focus to the significance of the international rule of law such as the UN Charter and the NPT. Organizations and laws are understood here as forces for good in world affairs as they can alter state behaviour in the collective interests of the international community (Burchill 2005: 64). As a theoretical perspective, Liberal Internationalism is based on an assumption that human nature is calculating, rather than pessimistic or optimistic. Liberal Internationalism offers a theoretical perspective which should help explain why the international community did not, and does not, remain silent and passive in the face of Iran's nuclear ambitions. Moreover, it should help explain the logic behind those collective efforts to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions, such as the ongoing attempts

to enforce compliance with the NPT, the punitive measures of diplomatic isolation, military posturing, and the imposition of sanction regimes, each of which are expected to play a crucial role in creating a constructive environment for productive negotiations to end the nuclear stalemate between Iran and the international community.

The second theoretical perspective used in this thesis is Realism, the most commonly used theory of disciplinary International Relations. This perspective also highlights the roles played by states, but does so not in the context of international organizations or the international rule of law. Instead, states are understood here to exist in a system which is characterized as anarchical because there is no international institution with a monopoly on legitimate use of force to impose order on states (Weber 2010: 14). As such, states are the primary arbiter of power in world affairs and all states must pursue material power in order to protect their sovereign interests (Whyte 2011: 149). As a theoretical perspective, Realism is based on an assumption that human nature is pessimistic and self-help is essential to ensure states' survival. Accordingly, Realism offers a theoretical perspective which ought to explain the motivations behind Iran's intransigence in terms of ensuring the survival of the Islamic regime through the acquisition of extraordinary forms of material power. In other words, it should explain Iran's quest for a nuclear deterrent as a means of ensuring its national security in a dog-eat-dog world where other states are not seen as rivals, but as deadly enemies.

Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises four main chapters. Chapter One examines the historical development of Iran's nuclear programme since the late 1950s and then moves into a review of existing research on Iran's foreign policy, which is in some respects tied up with its nuclear programme. This chapter also looks at a range of arguments made by various scholars about the most likely motivations behind Iran's nuclear programme, which then is followed by an examination of Iran's possible nuclear weapons programme. Chapter Two explores the international community's perceptions of, and responses to, Iran's nuclear programme, particularly the prospect of its military dimension. It examines the perceptions of Iran's neighbours as well as other extra-regional actors. This chapter also examines various actions taken by those regional and extra-regional actors. These actions include diplomatic and economic sanctions, military posturing, cyber-attack and targeted assassinations. Chapter Three evaluates the impact of the current sanction regimes targeting Iran as well as the broad effects of these sanction regimes targeting Iran. It does this because sanctions are the most salient action taken by the international community against Iran over its nuclear programme. This chapter also looks at the damaging effects of these sanctions on sanctioning states. Chapter four describes Iran's perceptions of its neighbours and other extra-regional actors in light of its security situation and strategic environment. The chapter discusses Iran's nuclear diplomacy by describing Iran's own diplomatic proposals before explaining that Iran continues to pursue its nuclear programme, in spite of the international community's objections, because it perceives regional and extra-regional actors as threats to its vital national interests. The thesis' conclusion

outlines foreseeable consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran for the international community, explaining why Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could undermine the NPT, trigger an arms race in the Middle East, and increase tensions with US and Israel to boiling point.

CHAPTER 1: IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

The genesis of Iran's nuclear programme dates back to 1957 when the first international agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy was signed between the Iranian Government of Mohammad Reza Shah and the US Administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower (Entessar 2009: 26). Subsequent to that agreement, the Tehran Nuclear Research Centre was established at the behest of Shah in 1959. American Machine and Foundry provided Iran with five nuclear reactors, fuel and other related materials in 1967 (Chansoria 2009: 4-6). It is worth noting that the Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in the quadrupling of oil prices, was one of the factors that persuaded the Shah to seriously consider the construction of nuclear power plants in Iran. The Shah's confidant, Abdolfath Mahvi, was assigned to establish the necessary contacts with foreign companies over nuclear deals. Mahvi had previously contacted West Germany's Kraftwerk Union and Siemens, arranged for these companies to become Iran's chief nuclear power plant contractors, and afterwards established the Iran Nuclear Company to serve as an Iranian channel for the German companies. In so doing Mahvi became the single most important figure in facilitating Iran's nuclear programme. According to Mahvi himself, "it was he who first suggested to the Shah the possibility of Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons" (Entessar 2009: 27), though, significantly it was the US that enabled Iran's first acquisition of nuclear technology.

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the ensuing oil crisis, relations between the US and Iran remained strong, resulting in a US$15 billion agreement to build eight nuclear power reactors. Skyrocketing oil prices,

resulting from the 1973 war, led Iran to earn large sums of dollars for exporting oil and may have generated incentives for the Shah to develop a large-scale nuclear programme. In 1974, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran was established by the Shah in an effort to develop a more extensive nuclear power capacity for years to come (Kibaroglu 2007: 229). In these early years several Western states, namely the US, West Germany and France, supported Iran's nuclear programme by supplying reactors and enhancing a cadre of Iranian professionals, which, in turn, culminated in the expansion of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Regardless of the Shah's possible nuclear weapons intentions, each of these states assisted Iran in developing nuclear energy. Thus, the West assisted Iran under the rule of Shah in establishing its nuclear programme and a substantial proportion of Iran's nuclear technological capabilities is owed to Iran's strategic ties with the West in general and the US in particular (Quillen 2002: 17).

After the demise of the Shah in 1979 and the advent of the Islamic regime, Iran's nuclear programme underwent a temporary halt for five years. In the middle of the war with Iraq in 1985, the Iranian Government began reviving its nuclear programme (Jaspal 2012: 100). The emergence of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the rise of an Islamic state led to unfriendly relations between the theocracy and the West which, in turn, made diplomatic accommodation difficult. The events also culminated in the withdrawal of support and necessary material for nuclear projects from the US, Germany, France, and the UK, which compelled the Islamic regime to intensify its search for alternate nuclear partners. Iran resorted to such states as India, the PRC,

Pakistan, South Africa, and Argentina as a means of assisting with the development and operation of its nuclear programme. However, these efforts did not produce positive outcomes in this respect. While the Iranian Government signed long-term agreements with both Pakistan in 1987 and the PRC in 1990 in order to provide its nuclear personnel with technical training, these agreements were relinquished by both Pakistan and the PRC under US pressure. Nevertheless, the termination of those agreements did not halt Iran's quest for nuclear modernization (Patrikarakos 2012: 115, 116).

Given these obstacles, Iran turned to the trans-national nuclear smuggling network headed by Abdul Qadeer Khan, who is widely perceived to be the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Created by Qadeer Khan in 1970s, the Khan network was the first illicit nuclear procurement network, assisting Pakistan to acquire its nuclear weapons. Khan was motivated by financial gain, pan-Islamism, and a degree of antagonism towards Western control of nuclear technology. The network was suspected of also providing Libya, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea with assistance (e.g. centrifuge designs) in the nuclear field. Iran categorically denied receiving any weapon designs from the network. However, Khan confessed to selling sensitive nuclear technology and equipment to Libya, North Korea, and Iran following his arrest in February 2004 (Albright & Hinderstein 2005: 111, 112, 114, 116). Even though Khan claimed he acted alone, his statement was treated with scepticism by many experts, who argue that Khan merely intended to prevent Pakistan's further embarrassment (Albright & Hinderstein 2005: 119). If one believed Khan's claim that he was a rogue one-man operation, then one could ignore the larger picture that pointed

to the involvement of the Pakistani military establishment. Yet without corrupt Pakistani officials, who denied any involvement by their nuclear scientists in illicit procurement, the Khan network could never have evolved into such a sophisticated supplier. Furthermore, such factors as Pakistan's political instability, bureaucratic politics, and frail state structures influenced by extreme nationalist and religious ideologies could stimulate the network's nuclear-proliferation activities, hence providing an opportunity for the Islamic regime to procure nuclear expertise and equipment.

Moreover, despite ostensibly strict measures taken by Western states, the nuclear bazaar thrived in Europe during the 1990s. Consequently, the Islamic regime easily established contacts within the nuclear black market in order to procure components and technical know-how for its nuclear enrichment activity. Iran achieved its mission largely because the materials and components it needed for its nuclear programme were of 'dual use' nature, meaning any potential military application of such material could be camouflaged. For instance, Iran purchased the Zippe centrifuges from Degussa, which is one of the largest German chemical companies involved in the business of nuclear materials (Bernstein 2008. 266). The Dagussa representatives, as Berstein notes, "made it clear that they did not care if the Iranians were going to use the material to make weapons. That was fine with them, as long as they paid their bills" (2008. 266). This reveals that some Western companies only consider their financial interests and have little or no concern about the serious risks of selling such material to a state suspected of seeking nuclear weapons capabilities (Jaspal 2012: 102). Iran also resorted to the Russian Federation in

pursuit of its nuclear ambitions. After negotiations in 1995, an agreement was signed between the two states over the construction of a nuclear power plant at the coastal city of Bushehr. Despite many hurdles, Iran's first nuclear reactor was successfully launched at Busheher on 21 August 2010. This plant has been under the supervision of the IAEA ever since (Einhorn & Samore 2002: 53).

Iran's Nuclear Facilities

Here, then, Iran's nuclear programme was born over fifty years ago with the full support of Western countries, including the US in particular. As both Republican and Democratic US Administrations initially encouraged Iran to develop nuclear power, the US is partly responsible for Iran's ongoing nuclear aspirations that have, as the figures below illustrate, manifested in a number of nuclear facilities in Iran.

Figure 1: Iran's Key Nuclear Sites

(Source: British Broadcasting Corporation News Middle East, 2013)

Figure 2: Nuclear sites: Arak

(Source: GeoEye – ISIS, 2006)

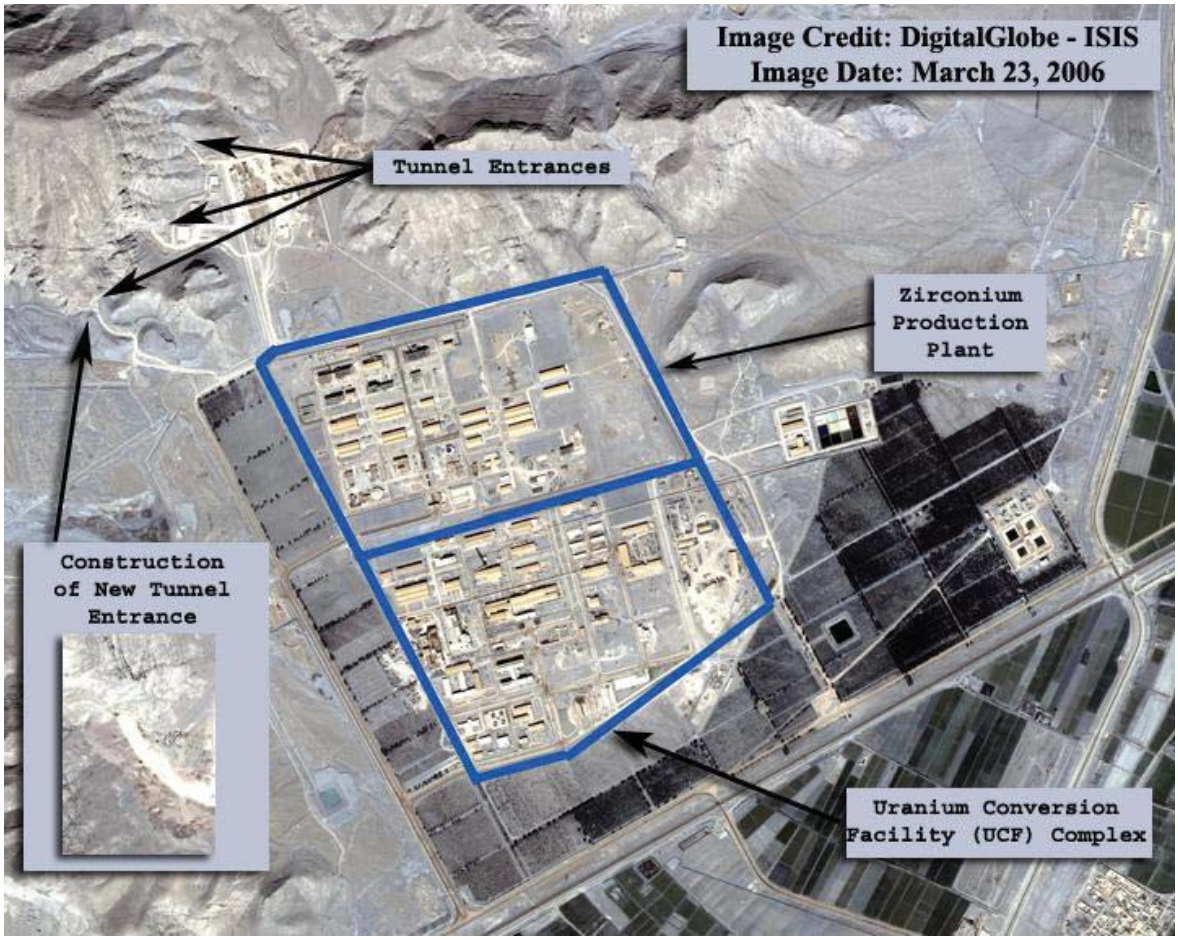
Figure 3: Nuclear sites: Bushehre

(Source: Iran Bulletin, 2010)

Figure 4: Nuclear sites: Fordow

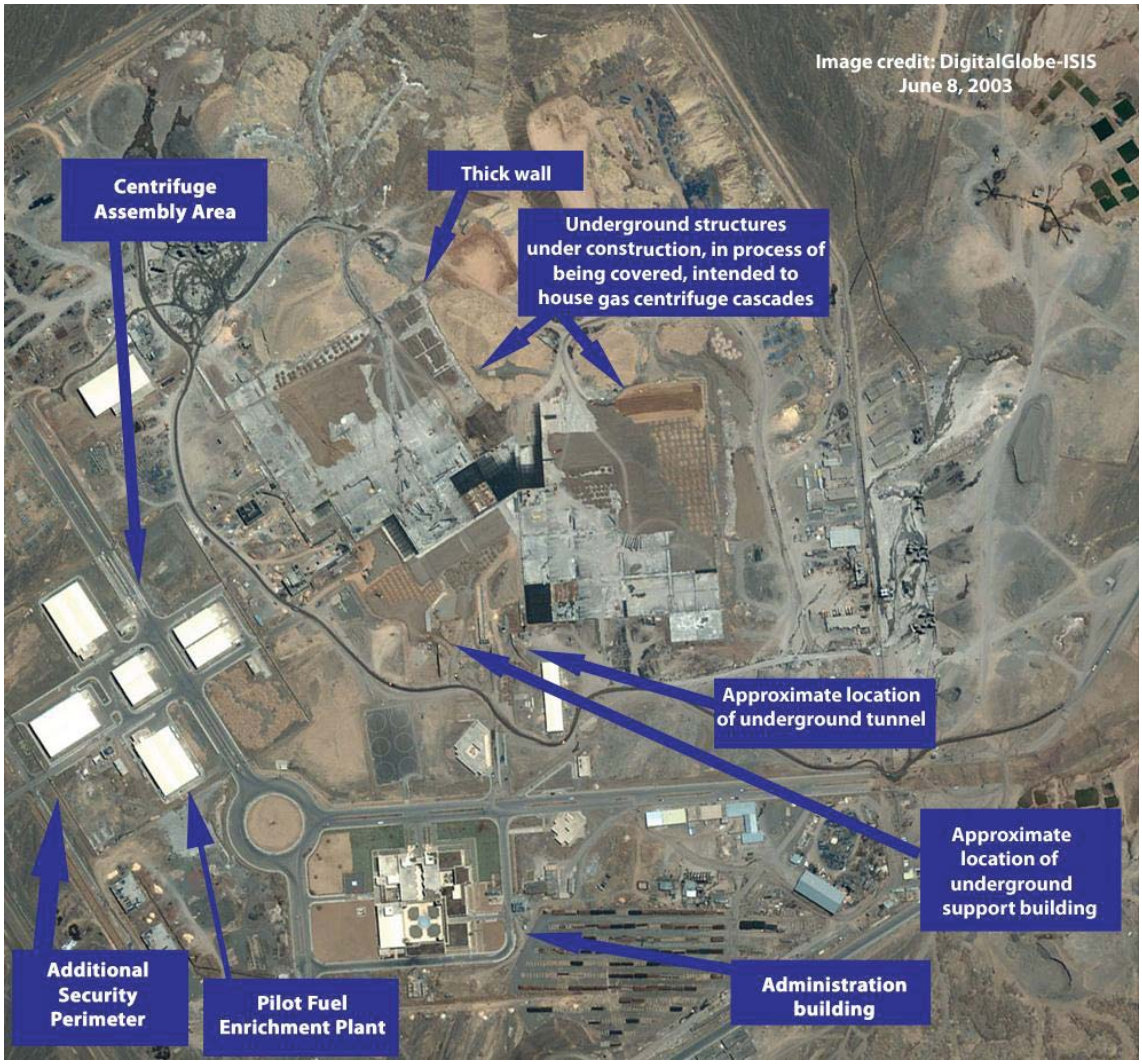
(Source: Astrium – ISIS, 2013)

Figure 5: Nuclear sites: Isfahan



(Source: DigitalGlobe – ISIS, 2006)

Figure 6: Nuclear sites: Natanz



(Source: DigitalGlobe – ISIS, 2003)

Figure 7: Nuclear sites: Parchin

(Source: DigitalGlobe – ISIS, 2012)

The Arak nuclear facility, which comprises Iran's heavy water production plant and heavy water reactor, is located near the city of Arak, 250 kilometres southwest of Tehran. The IR-40 heavy water reactor is designed to generate 40 megawatts of thermal power by using natural uranium oxide fuel being produced at the Esfahan fuel fabrication facilities. It is difficult to determine the exact date of its construction and operation due to the secrecy surrounding Iran's nuclear programme. It was an Iranian opposition group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) that first disclosed the site in 2002, suspecting that Iran intended to construct a plant to separate plutonium from IR-40 reactor spent fuel for building nuclear weapons. According to experts, this reactor type is suitable for manufacturing plutonium and therefore providing an alternate pathway to producing fissile material for the core of a nuclear weapon, though Iran has vehemently denied any weaponization drive attached to this facility (Dahl 2013, n.p.).

The Bushehr nuclear power plant is located on the Persian Gulf coast. It is a 1,000 megawatt electric pressurized water reactor and is probably the only operating civil nuclear power reactor in Iran. Its construction began by West German companies (e.g. Siemens) in 1975 and was finished by the Russian Federation in 2011. This nuclear facility is designed to produce nuclear energy for civil needs (Ghazi 2013, n.p.).

The Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP) is located in the heart of desert, buried deep under a mountain around 20 kilometers northwest of the Shiite holy city of Qom. Shielded beneath hundreds of feet of rock, this facility can be

highly resistant to air strikes. Whilst being Iran's second pilot enrichment facility, the FFEP is probably Iran's most contentious nuclear site. Iran started building this facility as early as 2006 and was publicly disclosed in September 2009 by French, UK, and US leaders. The Plant is designed to hold 16 IR-1 gas centrifuge cascades with a total of approximately 3,000 centrifuges used for producing uranium enriched to 20 percent purity, which could be used for building nuclear weapons if further enriched. The Iranian Government claims the uranium produced in this Plant has been used for the production of medical isotopes (Kirkup & Blair 2013, n.p.).

The construction of Uranium Conversion Facility (UCF) at Isfahan began in 1999. This facility is located east of Isfahan and contains process lines to convert yellowcake into uranium oxide and uranium hexafluoride. UCF largely conducts the process of conversion of yellowcake to UF6, which is then used for the uranium enrichment facility at Natanz and Fordow. The UCF is also capable of converting low enriched uranium (LEU) and depleted uranium into uranium oxide and depleted uranium metal. There are suspicions that the production of 20 percent uranium metal was originally designed to manufacture high enriched uranium (HEU) metal for nuclear weapons (Iran Watch 2008, n.p.).

The Natanz facility is located in Isfahan province. It is a hardened fuel enrichment complex built eight meters underground. This facility is at the heart of Iran's dispute with the UN Security Council and is Iran's primary and largest gas centrifuge uranium enrichment facility. It contains the Pilot Fuel Enrichment

Plant (PFEP) and the Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP) as well as housing a centrifuge assembly area. There is no exact date of when this facility became active, but it was first revealed by the NCRI in 2002 (Public intelligence 2010, n.p.).

Finally, the Parchin site is located some 30 kilometres southeast of Tehran. This military complex is run by Iran's Defense Industries Organization and is dedicated to research, development, and production of rockets and high explosives. This site may be used to conduct high explosive work associated with nuclear weapons development, which can be concealed among the conventional high explosive activities (Tabatabai 2014, n.p.).

Iran's Strategic Position

The significance of Iran's nuclear programme lies in the Islamic regime's status as a key actor in the Middle East region due to Iran's vast territorial and demographic size as well as its proven reserves of gas and oil. Iran will remain a significant player in the region as long as the fossil-fuel age lasts. Iran also has several geostrategic advantages. It enjoys access to the world's two energy-rich regions, the Caspian Basin and the Persian Gulf. Given the benefit of controlling North-South and East-West energy transit lines as well as its capability to exercise control over the Strait of Hormuz, Iran seems to enjoy greater leverage than other regional actors (Ozcan & Ozdamar 2009: 125).

Figure 8: Iran and its Neighbours

(Source: Country Watch n.d.)

Contrary to many countries in the region, Iran is not the product of imperial map-making. Due to its geostrategic location, Iran may be capable of exerting influence beyond its size, potentially to destabilize the Middle East. Endowed with substantial fossil fuel reserves, Iran can play an important part in the regional economy and its sway in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries has considerable importance. In addition to its importance within the Persian Gulf region, Iran enjoys a position of strategic significance for the three major powers in the world today — namely the US, the PRC, and the Russian Federation. Iran can function as a border between interests of the West and

the East, as a conduit for political, economic, and cultural soft power, and as a catalyst for war and application of traditional hard power (Rice 2013, n.p.).

Just as Iran's current geostrategic positioning gives its nuclear programme heightened significance, its nuclear programme has enhanced Iran's significance in contemporary world affairs. In other words, in addition to its substantial hydrocarbon resources and geostrategic positioning, Iran has enjoyed considerable international significance owing to its nuclear programme. The opacity and lack of transparency surrounding Iran's nuclear programme, and its non-compliance with the international community's demands, have led to increasing levels of distrust. However, it is difficult to assess Iran's objectives due to its behaviour, which may be contrary to international norms with respect to its nuclear programme.

Scholars have written much about Iran's nuclear programme since the early 1990s. However, relatively insufficient research has been conducted on the causes of, and motivations behind, Iranian nuclear ambitions. As Iran's nuclear programme constitutes a major portion of the regional and extra-regional dealings with Iran, understanding and explaining the underlying rationale behind Iran's nuclear aspirations (and the international community's subsequent response) is of vital importance. Iran's nuclear programme and its implications on the region and beyond deserves examination as Iran can play a crucial role in Middle Eastern affairs and the Middle East security system has become increasingly connected to the global security system after the terror attacks of 9/11. It is the aim of this thesis to add to the existing scholarly knowledge of Iran's nuclear programme, particularly through an analysis of various factors

motivating the Islamic regime to continue its nuclear programme in the face of the international community's objections.

Iran's Foreign Policy

In some important respects, the development of Iran's nuclear programme is a function of Iran's foreign policy, which has itself been the subject of much scholarly research and analysis. Scholarship on Iranian foreign policy considers various influences of pragmatism, national interests, geostrategic calculations, conservative ideology, and religious fervour.

According to Rieffer-Flanagan, pragmatic considerations have been at the heart of Iranian foreign policy for the last three decades. Bombastic rhetoric and religious statements may be offered up for domestic consumption, but in practice the Iranian Government has pursued pragmatic policies at the international level (2009: 7). A good example of this is when Iran practised pragmatism in dealing with the Nogorno-Karabakh conflict by supporting Christian Armenia vis-a-vis Muslim Azerbaijan (Posch 2013: 19). Another instance is when the Islamic regime did not express any support for fellow Muslims in Chechnya during their war (1994-1996) against the Russian Federation. Indeed, Tehran's pragmatic stance on supporting the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation was appreciated by Moscow (Katz 2012: 55). Iran's forceful action in 1992 to establish its sovereignty over the three islands, also claimed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in the mouth of the Hormuz Strait — Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs — similarly indicates that Iranian foreign policy is strongly motivated by pragmatic

considerations and devoted to advancing Iran's vital national interests. As Menashri concurs, Iran intended to control these islands not as a means of furthering any ideological dogma, but rather, to promote its strategic interests by asserting control over the entrance of the Persian Gulf (2007: 157).

Notwithstanding its obligation to Shiite Islam, the Iranian regime is a rational actor that scrutinizes and pursues its policies in accordance with a cost / benefit analysis (Williams 2010: 35). Shortly before his death Ayatollah Khomeini wrote a series of letters (December 1987 and January 1988) to key high-ranking authorities such as the Council of Guardians and President in which "he reaffirmed the Islamic Government's authority to destroy a mosque or suspend the observance of the five pillars of faith (the fundamental of Moslem observance) if Iranian state interests so required" (Eisenstadt 2005: 228, 229). Despite his fervent Islamic views, Khomeini explicitly endorsed the dominance of state interest over both religion and the principle of the revolution.

Terhalle argues that Iran's domestic power structure, along with its respective factions, has an adverse impact on the pragmatic approach informing Iranian foreign policy, especially when influence comes from the uncompromising beliefs held by radically conservative groups within the Islamic regime (2009: 558). Bearing some degree of political power, these conservatives have been in a position to counteract moderate forces within the domestic structures, undermining foreign policy efforts in ways that do not necessarily advance Iran's national interests. For example, active support for Hezbollah and Hamas emphasizes the ideological approach of conservative factions (Terhalle 2009:

558). Menashri notes that Iran's continued hostile policy vis-a-vis Israel has its roots in ideological dogma rather than the expediency or pragmatic approach (2007: 157). Given the absence of historical animosity, territorial disputes, and genuine conflicting interests between Iran and Israel (while the opposite is true with respect to relations between Persians and Arabs and Turks in the region), Tehran and Tel Aviv do not appear to be natural rivals, and hence they are not destined for everlasting conflict. (Kaye, Nader & Roshan 2011: 79). Indeed, the geostrategic reality in the region could, in my view, underpin an Israeli-Iranian rapprochement. With this geostrategic factor being one of the key driving forces behind every country's foreign policy, the Islamic regime's current pursuit of the revolutionary tradition in its foreign policy vis-a-vis Israel seems unlikely to advance Iran's geostrategic considerations. And understandably so, the Islamic regime's pursuit of some degree of ideology in its foreign policy has made rapprochement with the international community more difficult.

Furthermore, distinct layers of Iran's power structure and the factional politics unfolding within that structure could contradict claims, such as those made by Rieffer-Flanagen, that the Iranian state is a single unitary actor (Terhalle 2009: 560, 561). In contrast to Rieffer-Flanagan, Chubin asserts that Iranian domestic and foreign policies are closely intertwined with ideological considerations. But he too notes that when the national security interests of the country are jeopardized, revolutionary dogma very often, but not always, plays a subordinate role to the preservation of national interests. While the direction of Iranian foreign policy may vary depending on which region is involved, Chubin notes that Iranian foreign policy has suffered from incoherence and multiple

centres of decision making resulting from factional politics within the domestic system (2002: 17, 18).

Barzegar argues that the logic of Iranian foreign policy decision making is most likely to return to a pragmatic approach despite ideological eccentricities on the part of the regime's higher-ranking figures (2010: 174). This is so because he believes that Iranian foreign policy needs to be seen as a more extensive effort to secure Iran's geostrategic interests and national security concerns. Given the US policy of isolating and weakening Iranian influence in the Persian Gulf and the Middle Eastern region, Iran is not in a strong position to pursue its ideological orthodoxy and thus is required to seek a détente of sorts with the US as well as its regional rivals. Although the Islamic regime's interests are distinct from the country's national interests — due, in my view, to the corrupt and despotic nature of the Islamic regime — in practice these interests appear to be interlocked. Given the multi-ethnic nature of Iranian society and the emergence of separatist movements in some parts of the country, any external military threat aimed at bringing about a regime change in Iran risks the partition of the country.

Similar to Chubin, Posch argues that Iran has formulated its foreign policy by balancing pragmatism with ideology. Depending on what is at stake and where, its foreign policy can therefore vary (2013: 18). In the words of Posch, "(w)hile the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has an ideological foundation, its translation into practice is pragmatic" (2013: 30). He suggests that Iranian foreign policy vis-a-vis Central Asia is, for example, motivated by pragmatic considerations whereas its approach towards the Middle East and the Persian

Gulf is often, but not always, guided by ideological factors. Posch also adds that Iranian foreign policy towards its immediate neighbours is shaped by national interests and, therefore, viewed as pragmatic (2013: 18, 19). Nevertheless, this formulation of Iranian foreign policy is perceived by the international community as the significant source of uncertainty (Posch 2013: 6).

The blend of national interest and ideology seen by Chubin and Posch is shared by Menashri, for whom “Iranian policy has developed into a dualistic, complex and intricate set of laws and strategies — generally characterized by pragmatism but streaked with radical guidelines for good measure” (2007: 156). Gasiorowski argues that Iran has pursued an aggressive foreign policy by facilitating the emergence of a Shia crescent in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria (particularly after the 2001 terrorist attack in the US) with a view to increasing its influence. Therefore, Iran’s desire for the spread of Shia across the region is likely to emanate from its strategic motivations (2007: 125). The Islamic regime in Tehran has used ideology as a tool to influence Iranian foreign policy, though the orientation of that policy is unlikely to lurch back toward the radicalism of the1980s.

Hunter argues that Iranian foreign policy is guided by internal determinants such as domestic needs and realities. She sees a combination of constants (geographic situation, historical experience and resource base) and changeable categories (political system features and ideology) working together to influence Iran’s external behaviour (2010: 17). For Hunter, Iran’s geographical features

largely influence its political destiny, which, in turn, makes Iran a focus of interest for great powers. While Iran's possession of hydrocarbon resources is of great importance to major global powers, its deficiency in technological and military resources has affected the independence of its foreign policy (2010: 19, 20). On the other hand, Iran's ideological commitments seem to have adversely impacted on its foreign policy orientation (Hunter 2010: 239, 240). Hunter's argument is credible in the sense that Iran's foreign policy, emanating from its ideological commitments, has undermined its security by encouraging certain powers to destabilize it. She points to the fact that Iran's foreign policy has been unsuccessful in winning over Arab constituencies for whose sake the regime of mullahs has squandered so much of Iranian national interest. Hunter also notes that Iran's anti-Israel policy and rhetoric have never abolished anti-Persian sentiments among Arabs (2010: 241).

Despite the fact that Shiism is an ideological goal and a strategic asset for the Islamic regime, Iran's attempt to pursue its ideological objectives incurs costs. Given the domestic economic difficulties that result in growing public dissatisfaction, the Islamic regime has been harshly criticized by the Iranian people for its policy of supporting outside movements at the expense of Iran's own reconstruction. For example, during the 2006 'July War' between Israel and Hezbollah, a well-known proverb was used by Iranians: "if the lantern is needed at home, donating it to the mosque is haram [forbidden]." In other words the domestic needs of the Iranian people should be given precedence over supporting Hezbollah (Menashri 2007: 162). From this perspective, Iran's profound involvement in the Levant is neither geostrategic nor beneficial to

Iran's national interests. For instance, Iran's current engagement in a protracted and resource-draining civil war in Syria best illustrates the costs incurred by this foreign policy approach. In fact, these policies, which might play a significant role in squandering the country's wealth, lie in stark contrast to the preservation of Iran's national interests. Also, Hamas' decision to opt out of the axis of resistance after popular rebellion in Syria was a considerable ideological blow to the mullahs. Consequently, the extent of Iran's previous support for Hamas signals the failure of Iran's foreign policy vis-a-vis Israel (Barzegar 2010: 182).

Overall, Iran's national interests seem to have received precedence over ideological tenets. In general, there has been a pattern in Iranian foreign policy to guarantee its security and survival. The Islamic regime has utilized all the tools at its disposal, including Islamic worldism, Shiism, nationalism, and geopolitics, in different circumstances in order to realize this goal (Haji-Yousefi 2010: 16). However, critics could reply that Iran would have been in a much better position to protect its vital national interests by avoiding ideological traps and adopting a more pragmatic foreign policy. Being in an unfriendly and already nuclear-armed region that might pose a challenge to Iran's national security interests, Iran's attainment of nuclear hedging capability could somehow guarantee its security against possible external threats. In this sense, the development of Iran's nuclear programme must be understood within the context of Iranian foreign policy.

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

Just as scholars have usefully explained various factors influencing Iranian foreign policy, scholarship also gives focus to other reasons for Iran's nuclear ambitions. Such reasons include developing a capability to: meet Iran's growing energy needs; contribute to Iran's economic growth and foreign exchange revenue; enhance the Islamic regime's international prestige; demonstrate the independence of Iranian foreign policy; and safeguard the core values of the Islamic Revolution. The spectre of nuclear weaponization, and the deterrence capability provided therein, may also have stimulated Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Iran's growing energy needs can be met, at least in part, by the development of its nuclear programme. Iranian leaders have always paid considerable attention to the need to diversify their energy resources, not only to enhance energy efficiency but also to seek new energy sources in order to meet Iran's growing domestic demand (Lotfian 2008: 161). Given Iran's young and fast growing population of over 75 million people, consumption of fossil fuel and electricity per capita has reached a level higher than the global average. For this reason, nuclear energy may emerge as an attractive alternative. At the same time, the availability of nuclear energy is crucial for preventing price fluctuations in fossil energy (oil and gas) and also for attaining development and economic growth (Barzegar 2012: 231). Iran's growing energy needs are inextricably linked to its economic development goals. Here, balancing energy consumption as a means of achieving constant development is a very strong motivator behind the development of Iran's nuclear programme. Maleki notes

the economic rationale behind the Iranian nuclear programme, suggesting that economic considerations are the key motivation behind the programme (2010: 106). Increasing the country's revenues from the sale of hydrocarbon reserves to export markets is also in line with Iran's economic goals of acquiring more foreign currency.

However, counterarguments demonstrate there is little economic logic justifying this approach. Given Iran's possession of abundant hydrocarbon reserves, Iran's pursuit of nuclear power as an alternative to fossil fuel does not make economic sense and, consequently, it seems very costly to maintain a nuclear energy programme (James 2000: 57). The cost of utilizing its current electrical power based on natural gas would, as James describes, "be less than 10 percent of nuclear generated power, yet Iran wants as much as 20 percent of its energy to come from nuclear power plants" (2000: 57). Similar to James, Fitzpatrick argues that there is not any economic reason behind Iran producing enriched uranium fuel for its Busheher power plant, which, when it is operating, will likely only generate three percent of Iran's electricity (2006: 6). The views of James and Fitzpatrick are shared by Rubin, for whom Iran's claim to seek nuclear energy for its needs seems dubious, given that Iran is one of the world's main oil-producing nations and furthermore this mode of power generation appears to have been a costly, risky failure elsewhere (2006, n.p.).

Some scholars also suggest that prestige is a strong motive behind Iran's nuclear ambitions. Patrikarakos argues that nuclear power capability can fill the deficit of prestige Iran feels in connection to its Western contemporaries. He

notes that both the Shah and the Islamic regime have attributed nuclear power to national intellect and progress. For both regimes the nuclear programme has been perceived in many ways as the exegesis of modern Iran (2012: 288-290). Similar to Patrikarakos, Perthes notes that Iran regards itself as regional power and expects the international community to recognize it as such (2010: 96). Arguments raised by Patrikarakos and Perthes are shared by Kibaroglu, who suggests that a large majority of Iranians strongly believe that it is the solemn duty of Iran to promote the country internationally. The possession of full-fledged nuclear technology is one feature of Iranian national pride and prestige (2010: 103, 104).

For a few scholars, there are value-based and ideological motives that could explain Iran's nuclear ambitions. Ideological by nature, the Islamic Revolution calls for change to the global status quo as well as to certain current economic, political, and social trends. In this sense, Iran holds a cynical view of Western policies aimed at depriving Iran from acquiring and using nuclear technology. Iran has, for example, referred to the double-standards of Western governments when they dealt with Argentina's, Brazil's, and Japan's access to nuclear capacity (Barzegar 2012: 233). Moshirzadeh argues that concepts like independence, justice, and resistance have shaped the identity of the conservative leadership, which has given new meaning to Iran's nuclear policy (2007: 537). The discourse of independence emphasizes Iran's past regional power and historical victimization. Such framing highlights Iran's perceived need for independence without capitulating to foreign demands. The discourse of justice articulates the double standards held by the international community

when it comes to non-proliferation expectations. As a signatory to the NPT, Iran is entitled to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes and therefore rejects Western demands for the cessation of enrichment activities. The discourse of resistance points to the preservation of Iran's rightful autonomy underpinned by a unified ideology related to the 1979 Islamic Revolution and focused on resisting Western demands for the cessation of enrichment processes (Moshirzadeh 2007: 537- 539).

Domestic security concerns may have motivated the recommencement of Iran's nuclear programme during the 1980s. According to Khamenei, a nuclear deterrent was the only way to secure the very essence of the Islamic Revolution from the schemes of its enemies, especially the US and Israel, and to prepare it for the emergence of Imam Mehdi. The Shia version of Islam believes in the coming of a global saviour 'known as Mehdi' in the future (Patrikarakos 2012: 120, 121), though the notion of Mahdism / Mahdawiyyah, which is a discourse outside modernity's logic of Westphalian sovereignty, challenges the stability of current configurations of world order (Limba 2010: 92). Khamenei further asserted that an Iranian nuclear arsenal would provide a deterrent in the hands of God's soldiers (Patrikarakos 2012: 121).

For other scholars, the regional security environments, typified by glaring disparities of power, likely generated strong incentives for Iran to seek a nuclear deterrent capability. Bowen and Brewer contend that external interference and intervention led certain members of Islamic regime to feel deeply concerned about its survival (2011: 924, 925). Bahgat is adamant that security

considerations play a crucial role in stoking Iran's aspiration to develop indigenous technical capacity to produce nuclear weapons (2006: 126). Similar to Bahgat, Perthes maintains that Iran has a number of good reasons to feel insecure since instability has been endemic along its borders with neighbouring countries and beyond (2010: 97). The views held by Bahgat and Perthes are also held by Donnelly, for whom Iran's nuclear ambition is fuelled by a desire to deter any possible US attack by developing a nuclear arsenal of its own (2005: 161).

Iran's nuclear weapons programme?

A fundamental complexity underlying all civil nuclear programmes is that the technology and expertise employed to generate nuclear energy can be closely related to what is needed to manufacture nuclear weapons. For some, this complexity leads to uncertainty. The question has arisen as to what proof exists to indicate that the Islamic regime has attempted to pursue a nuclear weapons programme. While there is no smoking gun, circumstantial evidence of a nuclear weapons programme within Iran does exist.

As mentioned, the Shah took the initiative of acquiring nuclear technology with the encouragement of Washington. He attached importance to an independent nuclear research programme and his scientists were granted a great deal of discretion on the nature of the experiments carried out. The Shah's intention to acquire nuclear weapons is somewhat debatable, but according to some sources the Shah was determined to develop a nuclear weapons capacity and certain states were distrustful of his proclaimed peaceful motives (Ashwarya

Cheema 2009: 185). During his trip to the US, the Shah discussed his nuclear ambitions with President Eisenhower, arguing that Iran needed mobile forces with nuclear weapons to counteract threats from the Soviet proxies such as Iraq and Afghanistan. However, despite enjoying a strategic relationship with the Shah's regime, the US did not favour the rise of a nuclear-armed Iran (Entessar 2009: 28). Moreover, according to documents discovered in Tehran following the Revolution in the late 1970s, discussions took place between Iran and Israel about a plan to modify Israel's Jericho Missiles (surface-to-surface) so that Iran could purchase and then load them with nuclear warheads. In the Shah's words, "Iran would have nuclear weapons without doubt and sooner than one would think" (Ashwarya Cheema 2009: 185).

More significant than the Shah's original intent behind the inception of Iran's nuclear programme, however, is the circumstantial evidence indicating possible nuclear weaponization within Iran. There are three key components of a credible nuclear weapons programme: first, there must be a source of weapons-grade enriched plutonium or uranium; second, there must be a reliable delivery system that can include a medium- or long-range missile system which is capable of carrying a nuclear weapon payloads; and third, there must be the appropriate technology to conduct the weaponization of weapons grade-enriched plutonium or uranium into a minuscule (miniaturized) warhead that can be delivered by a missile. Since 2006, the Iranian Government has made advances across each of these components, thereby causing alarm for some members of the international community (Corsi 2009: 29).

There is technical evidence pointing to the military nature of Iran's nuclear programme. There were some misgivings when Iran failed to inform the IAEA of its importation of natural uranium in 1991 and its subsequent transfer for further processing and storage to undeclared locations, both of which were contrary to Iran's obligations under its Safeguards Agreement with respect to the reporting of nuclear material (International Atomic Energy Agency 2003: 7). Furthermore, Iran's involvement in the implementation of a turn-key project for uranium mill processing at the Gchine Plant (around the port city of Bander Abbas) by the Kimia Madan company in the early 2000s raised further suspicion among Western officials that the Islamic regime's military apparatus was attempting to acquire an independent uranium source. Based on satellite imagery, the IAEA assesses that uranium recovery activities have been continuing in the area of the Bandar Abbas Uranium Production Plant (International Atomic Energy Agency 2010: 8). This is a concern because Iran's experiments to extract polonium-210 from irradiated bismuth are highly likely to have weapons use. Polonium-210 is of interest to the IAEA since this chemical element can be used for a neutron source for a nuclear device (e.g. neutron initiators in certain designs of nuclear weapons), hence pointing to military applications (International Atomic Energy Agency 2007: 6). Aside from nuclear weapons applications, these experiments can also be conducted in conjunction with research for long-life batteries for deep-space satellites with civil applications. Given that Iran is not involved in any such satellite programme, the military dimension can be regarded as the more likely purpose (Fitzpatrick 2006: 8).

Also of concern, centrifuge workshops are mainly controlled by Iran's military organizations such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Defence Industries Organization. According to a June 2006 *London Daily Telegraph* Report, IAEA experts were putting pressure on Iran to provide information on a covert military project with a code-name Zirzamin 27, which was designed to carry out uranium enrichment to weapons grade. Such a project was reported to be conducted in secret military research laboratories built under a lake 20 kilometres northeast of Tehran, and it was operated under the direction of the IRGC (Alexander & Hoenig 2008: 152, 153). According to a June 2009 *Times* report, the number of Iran's installed centrifuges had risen to 7,200, which can be more than enough to produce fuel for at least two nuclear weapons within a year (Corsi 2009: 30). In accordance with the IAEA Report, the Physics Research Center at Lavisan, which operates under the direction of the Iranian Ministry of Defence, made an attempt to obtain dual-use materials and equipment with applications in the nuclear military area. Traces of HEU have been found quite recently through analysis of environmental sample swipes of vacuum pumps at the Lavisan military site (Fitzpatrick 2006: 9). Another disturbing development was the revelation of a new pilot enrichment facility at Fordow near the city of Qom, which was, as mentioned, exposed in 2009. According to Iranian officials, the facility houses 3,000 centrifuges designed for producing LEU up to 5 percent. A pilot plant is expected to house one cascade of around 200 centrifuges, whereas an industrial plant would need tens of thousands reactors for fuelling a nuclear power plant. This certainly raises the question of where exactly the new FFEP can fit into Iran's purported civil nuclear programme. According to US experts, such facility with 3,000

centrifuges cannot produce a large amount of LEU for a civil programme whereas an enrichment plant of this size can be used for producing a small quantity of weapons-grade uranium (defined here as uranium enriched to at least 90 percent) sufficient for one or two nuclear bombs a year (Bowen & Brewer 2011: 927).

Furthermore, Iran's decision to construct 54,000 centrifuges, an uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz, a heavy water reactor at Arak as well as to develop a laser technique for enrichment activity at Lashkar Abad is not consistent with the existence of Iran's single reactor. This signals Iran's intention to develop its own fuel cycle, which is one of the major ingredients needed to make nuclear weapons. It also indicates that Iranians do not rely on the Russian Federation for the provision of nuclear fuel cycle because Moscow might annul its fuel supply agreement with Iran, as it abrogated the deal aimed at supplying Iran with S-300 anti-aircraft missile system under US pressure (Delpech 2006: 10). Developments at the Natanz facility are particularly disturbing. In reality, 72 percent of the effort to generate weapons-grade uranium is achieved by the time the uranium is enriched to 3.5 percent. By the time the uranium, as Fitzpatrick suggests, "is enriched to 20 (percent), nine-tenths of the effort to reach weapons grade has been expended" (2010: 78). According to the IAEA's observations, Iran boosted its enrichment capacity by installing first-generation centrifuges with greater output rate at Natanz enrichment facility between November 2012 and February 2013. On 6 February 2013, IAEA inspectors discovered that Tehran had began the installation of 180 IR-2m centrifuges at the above-mentioned plant. While being

much more efficient than first-generation centrifuges, these IR-2m centrifuges have been deployed to significantly reduce the time required for the production of weapons-grade uranium, thereby increasing Iran's ability to manufacture such material (International Atomic Energy Agency 2013: 4). As stated in an IAEA Report, released in November 2012, "Iran has produced a total 232 kg of uranium enriched to 20 (percent), 43 kg of which was produced since the August 2012 report" (International Atomic Energy Agency 2012: 4). According to nuclear experts, the Natanz Plant could generate sufficient uranium for 25 Hiroshima-sized (10 Kiloton) bombs within a year should it operate in full capacity (Slavin 2007: 23). Based on conclusions drawn by Western observers, the Arak heavy-water research reactor is similar in size and type to reactors used by Israel, India, and Pakistan to manufacture enriched plutonium for their weapons. Therefore, the construction of such a reactor by the Islamic regime could be used to acquire enriched plutonium for military purposes (Jaspal 2012: 103).

Chubin argues that Iran's attempt to produce a fuel cycle for its single reactor seems questionable, as it is less expensive to purchase from others. For example, while having ten reactors, Sweden buys its fuel on the open market without having to need enrichment facilities (2006: 26). With respect to Iran's growing domestic energy consumption, as Chubin asserts, it is gasoline that is in great demand, not electricity and, consequently, nuclear power plants that simply generate electricity will not address such demand. For that reason, little economic logic exists that could justify Iran's relentless determination to manufacture enriched uranium fuel for its ostensibly peaceful programme

(2006: 26). In view of the fact that laser enrichment technique consumes more electricity than it generates, Iran's application of laser technology for enrichment purposes for civil nuclear power generation is controversial. There is very little reason for using that technology, except for the production of basic materials for a weapons programme (Delpech 2006:10).

Moreover, the IAEA Board of Governors has pointed out that the Agency has never been in a position to verify that no undeclared nuclear materials or activities take place in Iran and has frequently asked the Iranian Government to suspend all enrichment and reprocessing activities as a voluntary confidence-building measure (International Atomic Energy Agency 2005: 3). As stated in the IAEA's 2007 Report, the Islamic regime has not shelved its enrichment-related activities and continued to work on the PFEP as well as on the construction of the FEP. The Report also pointed to Iran's construction of the IR-40 reactor and its continuation of the Heavy Water Production Plant (International Atomic Energy Agency 2007a: 4). Contrary to the relevant Resolutions of the Board of Governors and the UN Security Council, Iran has continued with these activities and the Agency has not even been allowed to take samples of the heavy water stored at UCF at Isfahan. Nor has Iran provided the Agency with access to the Heavy Water Production Plant (International Atomic Energy Agency 2010: 10).

Media reports from September 2009, which contained information apparently leaked from within the IAEA, highlighted that the Islamic regime possesses sufficient technical information to enable the design and manufacture of a practicable implosion nuclear device on the basis of HEU (Jackson 2009: 1164).

Furthermore, documents on a laptop computer provided by a walk-in defector at an embassy in the Middle East in 2004 revealed certain undeclared Iranian activities, including designs to produce uranium tetra-fluoride or green salt (which points to uranium-conversion links to the military), the testing of conventional high explosives at the Parchin military facility (which can be used in an implosion-type nuclear weapon), and evidence of designs and drawings of a re-entry vehicle and payload for Iran's Shahab-3 medium range ballistic missile that can accommodate a spherical object with the features of a nuclear implosion weapon (Solingen 2012: 36).

An IAEA's Report suggests that Iran was involved in undeclared activities for the production of UF4 (green salt) through the Kimia Maadan company and has refused to discuss the issue with the Agency (International Atomic Energy Agency 2010: 9). Based upon the IAEA's documents, released in February 2008, Iran's involvement in testing high voltage detonator firing equipment, developing and testing a remote firing system (10 km), and a similar system for firing in a well 400 meters deep (taking place at the Parchin military facility) would likely point to a nuclear weapons programme. The elements available to the IAEA are quite inconsistent with any application other than the development of nuclear weapons by Iran (International Atomic Energy Agency 2008: 6, 7). According to an internal IAEA Report, released in early 2002, Iran began working on its warhead development programme under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence, including the design of the inner cone of the Shahab-3 missile re-entry vehicle, production of an explosives operations control set, and production of the contents of the spherical warhead payload. Based upon the

Agency's assessment, designing a suitable chamber inside the re-entry vehicle aimed at accommodating a new warhead payload would likely point to a nuclear weapons programme (Institute for Science and International Security 2009: 3). The IAEA has also expressed its deep concern about Iran's Parchin military site, which seems to have been used for possible nuclear weapon-grade experiments since November 2011. Iran has declined to respond to the Agency's concerns and seems to have continued these activities beyond 2004 (International Atomic Energy Agency 2010: 9).

Iran's policy of secrecy around its nuclear programme has also raised concerns. The Islamic regime's frequent attempts to hinder the IAEA investigation by failing to reveal nuclear activities, making false statements, and destroying evidence would unlikely point to an exclusively civil programme for energy acquisition purposes (Kerr 2009: 14). There is good reason for the IAEA to be suspicious of the civil nature of Iran's nuclear programme because when its inspectors seek to access to particular sites they are either denied access or delayed. This obviously provides the Islamic regime with time to erase incriminating traces and other forms of evidence or to demolish sites prior to inspection, as probably occurred when Iranian nuclear authorities dismantled laser equipment based at Lashkar Abad and relocated it to an unknown destination before permitting IAEA inspectors to access the site in 2003 (Delpech 2006: 10). Iran's systematic record of concealing facilities and sensitive nuclear activities from the IAEA and its policy of deniability have cast substantial doubt on the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme (Bowen &

Brewer 2011: 923). The Iranian Government categorically denies most of the above activities.

Conclusion

Iran's current enduring interest in gaining nuclear technology antedates the Islamic Revolution and may be rooted in Persian nationalism, historical sense of regional leadership, and security-seeking behaviour. History shows that these rationales appear unlikely to change regardless of the nature of ruling regime in Iran. Despite fundamental changes within the Iranian leadership over the past six decades, Iran's nuclear policy remains comparatively consistent and, for the most part, both the Shah's Government and the existing ruling Islamic regime have pursued a civil nuclear programme that might have been a cover-up for a nuclear weapons development programme

Often examined from the twin poles of ideology and national interest or a balance of both factors, the Iranian foreign policy remains relatively complex and non-transparent due to the interests of various political groups (e.g. factional politics) competing for power within the Iranian hierarchy. While primarily guided by ideology and pragmatism, Iran's foreign policy seems to have also been influenced by the dramatic regional developments where ideology is largely subordinated to interest-oriented approach. Considering the existing ideological (Sunni-Shiite) nature of conflicts in Iran's immediate neighbourhood, which makes it difficult for the Islamic regime to pursue a constant pattern in its foreign policy, the question might be addressed whether

there will be grounds for cautious optimism about a perpetual radical shift in Iran's foreign policy towards national-interest (realpolitik) approach.

While it is not possible to fully establish the primary motive to Iran's nuclear ambitions with any degree of certainty, such factors as economic considerations, international prestige, ideology, and security-seeking calculations might have played a crucial role in reinforcing motivations to Iran's nuclear ambitions. Whether for peaceful or weaponization purposes Iran's nuclear programme seems to remain much of a mystery to the outside world. Given that Iran's nuclear programme is shrouded in secrecy, it is not possible to determine, with a high degree of certainty, that Iran's nuclear programme has a military dimension. This is because the circumstantial evidence of Iran's possible nuclear weaponization is not unimpeachable. Yet despite Iran's public protestations to the contrary as well as its treaty obligations, the circumstantial evidence outlined above strongly suggests that Iran's civil nuclear programme is likely to have had a military application.

CHAPTER 2: INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S OBJECTIONS

Iran's nuclear programme has become the most important source of friction between Iran and certain members of the international community, which is defined here as a broad group of governments and international organizations from all parts of the world with the existence of common obligations among them. This friction reflects linkages between Iran's conduct and widely-held regional and global security concerns. Iran's efforts to conceal its nuclear programme was deemed a violation of the NPT and the revelation of clandestine enrichment facilities in 2002 evoked serious security concerns, many of which were intensified by Iran's determination to master the nuclear fuel cycle and its secret production of fissile material. Since 2002, the situation has worsened when a heavy-water plant at Arak and a uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz were disclosed by the NCRI. Satellite photographs taken by the West confirmed the existence of those undeclared sites (Ozcan & Ozdamar 2009: 123). This dispute between Iran and certain members of the international community encompasses three periods, the first of which involved ambiguity and distrust (2002-2006) caused by the disclosure of the status of Iran's nuclear programme. Despite negotiations, the dispute remained unresolved while Iran resumed its enrichment activities. Since 2006, parties to the dispute adopted confrontational approaches due mainly to Iran's insistence on enrichment, thereby resulting in sanction regimes targeting Iran. The third period, which started in October 2009, entails both confrontation and cooperation as Iran's insistence on enrichment and the West's resolve to continue using sanction regimes obliged all parties to interact. Consensus on the precise ways in which this dispute will be resolved has yet to be reached (Barzegar 2012: 225, 226).

This chapter examines the perceptions and responses of the international community — particularly the IAEA, the UN Security Council, the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as well as the US and Israeli Governments — to Iran's nuclear programme and the circumstantial evidence of its military dimension. It argues that the use of negotiations and other tools of statecraft were motivated by the hope of reaching some kind of peaceful settlement to the dispute. To that end, international organizations and governments have used the full range of diplomatic measures available to them, stopping short of the use of armed force. The chapter also argues that efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme have been mostly based upon coercive measures in a bid to force concessions from Iran. Western statesmanship thus appears to have been aimed at subjugating Iran, rather than seeking an agreement mutually acceptable to all concerned parties.

International Organizations' Perceptions and Responses

In dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions, international organizations work in tandem with ad hoc forums of interested parties, such as the P5 +1 grouping on Iran, attempting to enforce compliance with the NPT. (The P5+1 refers to five permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely the US, the Russian Federation, the PRC, the UK and France, plus Germany.)

International Atomic Energy Agency

The IAEA is an autonomous inter-governmental organization that retains structural links to the UN. The IAEA encourages and assists research on

development and application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes across the globe. The IAEA conducts its activities in line with the principles of the UN to promote international peace and security cooperation, and in accordance with the policies of the UN advancing the establishment of safeguarded disarmament worldwide. The IAEA has a duty to submit Annual Reports on non–compliance with its safeguards to the UN Security Council (International Atomic Energy Agency n.d., n.p.). Iran's attempts to impede IAEA investigations into claims of nuclear-weapons related activities and Iran's systematic violations of its NPT obligations have given rise to the belief among the international community in general and Western states in particular that the Islamic regime has been pursuing the capability to build nuclear weapons. Since the revelations of undeclared nuclear sites, the IAEA has attempted to extend the reach and depth of its investigations into Iran's nuclear programme by using disclosures, including any subsequent publicity, and other forms of political pressure. While increasing pressure on Iran, the IAEA has endeavoured to resist Washington's premature calls for raising the Iranian nuclear issue as an item on the agenda of the UN Security Council. For that reason, this organization remains a key buffer against US pressure. However, the IAEA encounters two major constraints in its mission: first, the IAEA is not empowered to enforce compliance with the NPT, given that it is not the secretariat of the NPT; and second, the agency only refers non-complying cases, such as Iran, to the UN Security Council if particular inspections are refused (Chubin 2006: 95, 96, 97, 99, and 101).

UN Security Council

As the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the US, the UK, France, the PRC and the Russian Federation play a leading role in trying to persuade Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment programme. Granted the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, the UN Security Council has attempted to restrain Iran's nuclear activities by establishing sanctions regimes. Sanctions regimes are, of course, coercive measures that are applied in order to bring about a behavioural change in those targeted by the measures. On 31 July 2006, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1696 under Article 40 of the UN Charter, calling for Iran to suspend its enrichment activities. Under Resolution 1696, UN Member-States are requested to prevent the transfer of any technology and materials that can contribute to Iran's ballistic missile programmes and enrichment related-activities (UN Security Council 2006: 1, 2). In response to Iran's failure to meet the terms of Resolution 1696, members of the international community, including some of Iran's neighbours, have worked through the UN Security Council in an attempt to impose sanction regimes on Iran. Additional sanctions aimed at dissuading Iran from pursuing enrichment have also been imposed by Canada, South Korea, the US, and the EU, demonstrating the readiness of both the US and the EU in particular to resort to sanction regimes against Iran outside the UN context (Crane 2012: 111).

The first set of sanctions, mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1737, took effect in December 2006. The Resolution aimed to block the import and export of sensitive nuclear equipment and material (e.g. the sale of dual-use

technologies and equipment) to and from Iran. Under Resolution 1737, Member-States are required to freeze the assets of institutions or individuals involved in Iran's nuclear activities (UN Security Council 2006a: 4). As outlined in this Resolution, Member-States are also required to take the necessary measures to avoid providing Iran with any technical assistance, investment, financial assistance, and other services. In addition, Member-States shall refrain from transferring financial resources or services associated with the supply, sale, use or manufacture of the prohibited items, equipment, materials, and technology (UN Security Council 2006a: 3). Iran's ongoing failures to stop its nuclear weapons programme led to a second sanction regime mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1747, adopted on 24 March 2007 under Article 41 of the UN Charter. Compared to Resolution 1696, Resolution1747 expands the list of exported and imported items to and from Iran, with the introduction of a number of new sanctions. Under Resolution 1747, Member-States are required to exercise restraint in supplying, selling and transferring directly or indirectly from their territories or by their nationals any attack helicopters, combat aircrafts, warships, missiles, armed combat vehicles, battle tanks, and large calibre artillery systems to Iran. As stated in this Resolution, Member-States and international financial institutions are also required to refrain from entering into new commitments for financial assistance and concessional loans to the Islamic regime, except for humanitarian purposes (UN Security Council 2007: 3).

Owing to Iran's refusal to fulfill the terms of the UN Security Council's demand to suspend its fuel cycle activities, the Council adopted Resolution 1803 on 3

March 2008, thereby requiring Member-States to make further efforts to preclude Iran from financing or otherwise obtaining technology for its nuclear and missile programmes. This Resolution was aimed at strengthening rules on financial transactions with Iranian banks, particularly those controlled by the IRGC or the Government (UN Security Council 2008: 4). Resolution 1929 was adopted on 9 June 2010 as a response to Iran's decision not to comply with any of the previous Resolutions and was also passed due to disclosures in September 2009 of secret uranium enrichment at Fardow near the city of Qom. It was aimed specifically at the IRGC and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), a state-owned shipping corporation that has been involved in transporting goods related to Iranian nuclear and missile activities. As outlined in this Resolution, Member-States are required to inspect suspected ships with banned cargo bound to and from Iran. The Resolution also requires states to terminate their banking links with designated Iranian banks that contribute to Iran's nuclear weapons programme (UN Security Council 2010: 3-7).

While establishing sanction regimes is the strongest form of objection demonstrated by the UN Security Council, these regimes were accompanied by significant diplomatic efforts to negotiate an end to the dispute. This cooperative diplomacy commenced before the revelation of undeclared facilities in Natanz and Arak in August 2002. In the early 1990s, the so-called constructive dialogue between Iran and the EU had become a controversial issue between the US and Europeans since the former was already imposing significant sanctions on Tehran (Delpech 2012: 34). In 2004 and 2005, the European troika of France, Germany, and the UK (EU three) put forward

several proposals aiming to resolve the dispute with Iran. In June 2006, the US, the Russian Federation, and the PRC joined the EU three in these diplomatic efforts to present further proposals for comprehensive negotiations with Iran (Davenport 2014, n.p.).

In June 2006, the P5+1 proposed that Iran suspend its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, establish a more transparent review mechanism, and resume its adoption of the NPT's Additional Protocol. In return, Iran would be provided with state-of-the-art light water reactors along with nuclear fuel guarantees and a five-year stock of fuel. Discussion of Iran's nuclear programme at the UN Security Council would cease and the EU and the US would begin cooperating with Iran on civil aviation, telecommunications, high technology, and agriculture, among other areas. Although Iran rejected this proposal due to the requirement to suspend its enrichment-related activities, it acknowledged the proposal contained a useful foundation for more comprehensive cooperation between the parties. In March 2008, the P5+1 revisited their earlier proposal in order to specify some of the benefits that they would offer Iran as part of a long-term agreement on its nuclear programme and to better demonstrate the nature of those benefits to the Iranian public. Key provisions included the establishment of various enrichment and nuclear fuel production consortiums in different parts of the world, including within Iran, improved IAEA supervision, more cooperation on nuclear safety and physical protection as well as on export controls, regional security, and global economic issues (ibid.).

When the P5+1 re-presented their proposal in June 2008, it included consideration of nuclear energy research and development opportunities while treating Iran's nuclear programme like any other NPT non-nuclear-weapons state once confidence is restored. Technological and financial assistance would be made available for Iran's nuclear energy programme. The legal obligation to refrain from the use, and threat of use, of force in a manner inconsistent with the UN Charter would be reaffirmed and important steps would be taken towards normalizing economic and trade relations, including supporting Iran's World Trade Organization membership (ibid.).

In June 2009, the P5+1 also proposed that, in return for a supply of 120 kilograms of fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR), Iran export an equivalent amount of uranium enriched to 4 percent totalling about 1,200 kilograms. The 1,200 kilograms accounted for roughly 80 percent of Iran's LEU stockpile at that time, a percentage that diminished as Iran continued to produce LEU. Iran delayed giving the P5+1 a definitive response to this proposal, with many prominent Iranian politicians voicing their opposition to the arrangement (ibid.).

In July 2011, the Russian Federation proposed a "road map" to implement the P5+1's proposed incentives package. Its key elements entailed: (Step 1) Iran limits its enrichment activities at Natanz, does not install any additional centrifuges, and halts the production of advanced centrifuges while the P5+1 suspends some UN sanction regimes targeting Iran, including financial sanctions and ship inspections; (Step 2) Iran agrees to provide early design information to the IAEA under Code 3.1, caps its enrichment level at 5 percent,

and allows greater IAEA monitoring over its centrifuges while the P5+1 suspends most UN sanction regimes targeting Iran and gradually lifts unilateral sanctions; (Step 3) Iran implements the IAEA Additional Protocol while the P5+1 phases out all UN sanction regimes targeting Iran; (Step 4) Iran suspends all its enrichment-related activities for three months while the P5+1 terminates all sanction regimes. While other members of the P5+1 have not publicly opposed the Russian Federation's proposal, some do not appear to support it in its current form (ibid.).

A further P5+1 proposal, made in 2013, was based on its 2012 proposal, but leaves open the possibility of resuming activities at Fordow, allows Iran to keep part of its stockpile or uranium enriched to 20 percent, and provides some relief from sanction regimes targeting Iran. It calls for Iran to halt all 20 percent enrichment activities, transfer part of its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium to a third country under IAEA supervision, and suspend all operations at the Fordow facility. Iran would also provide the IAEA with information to address the outstanding allegations of possible military activities and commit to the Additional Protocol of the NPT and the modified version of the subsidiary arrangement to Iran's safeguards agreement. In return, the P5+1 will provide fuel assemblies for the TRR, support IAEA technical cooperation to modernize and maintain the safety of the TRR, review the IAEA technical cooperation projects, and recommend to the IAEA Board restarting some of them. The P5+1 also puts together a detailed package to provide medical isotopes for cancer patients in Iran. The US is also prepared to permit safety-related inspection and repair work in Iran for Iranian commercial aircraft and will provide

required spare parts. The P5+1 will cooperate in acquiring a light water research reactor to produce medical isotopes, provide relief from sanction regimes through the sales of precious metals and petrochemicals, and will not impose any new proliferation related sanction regimes targeting Iran (ibid.).

Diplomatic initiatives to resolve the Iranian nuclear issues have initially focused on building confidence between Iran and the international community, with the goal of reaching a negotiated agreement to the dispute. While Iran devised proposals designed to show its willingness to negotiate with the P5+1 and roll back parts of its nuclear programme for relief from some sanctions targeting Iran, the proposals offered by the P5+1 during negotiations with Iran were largely based upon a dual-track strategy to deal with the nuclear issue, demanding Iran to suspend all uranium–related and reprocessing activities that were considered the biggest stumbling block in the negotiations on a comprehensive agreement. Ultimately, two distinct paths emerging in those negotiations point to limited enrichment activities on the part of Iran while precluding it from a nuclear breakout capability. Given that negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran were focused on Iran's declared nuclear facilities, it remains to be seen if Iran would use its covert facilities to produce HEU for manufacturing nuclear weapons.

European Union

Europe and the Middle East are contiguous regions. Any Middle Eastern WMD proliferators with ultra-conservative views pose a threat to European security (Chubin 2006: 102, 103). In June 2003, EU leaders started drafting the

European Security Strategy (ESS) and the EU Strategy against Proliferation of WMD (WMD Strategy). In December 2003, EU leaders approved both documents, providing the basis for EU non-proliferation efforts focusing on Iran. According to the ESS document, the proliferation of WMD is potentially the greatest threat to our security. As stated in the ESS, while the spread of WMD and delivery systems has been slowed down by the international treaty regimes and export control arrangements, the arrival of a new and dangerous period, as the Europeans concur, increases the possibility of a WMD arms race, particularly in the Middle East (European Council 2003: 3). For these Europeans, a nuclear-armed Iran with a relatively radical regime represented a serious security concern and, consequently, the EU has sought to block Iran's nuclear aspirations by pursuing a dual-track (carrot-and-stick) approach (Chubin 2006: 103).

Sanction regimes appear to be a foreign policy tool also favoured by the EU. Sanctions imposed by the EU are primarily economic and diplomatic, given that military action tends to be extremely difficult and costly (Esfandiary 2013: 1). The EU has implemented sanctions beyond those demanded by the UN Security Council. Following UN Security Council Resolution 1747, a travel ban was imposed by the EU on 20 Iranian citizens and 15 companies (United Nations 2007, n.p.). In 2010, the EU endorsed several additional financial and travel restrictions on a number of Iranian financial institutions and companies as well as on Iranian experts involved in Iran's nuclear programme. The UK, for example, closed Meli Bank (Iran's national bank) in London, which was

suspected of being involved in transactions associated with Iran's nuclear programme (Crane 2012: 113).

As Iran's nuclear programme developed further, the EU focused on sanction regimes as their preferred tool, extending the list of targets to include dual-use technologies, financial institutions, and energy sectors (Esfandiary 2013: 7). In 2012, the EU imposed an embargo on oil and gas in addition to imposing further restrictions on several Iranian financial establishments. Notably, the oil and gas embargo took place outside the context of the UN. The production of fossil fuel, namely oil and gas, plays a significant role in Iran's economy as Iran enjoys some of the world's largest proven reserves of gas and oil. While non-oil sectors tend to play a larger role in Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), oil and gas revenues remain the main foreign source of foreign exchange earnings. For instance, Iran earned an estimated 74 percent of its foreign exchange proceeds through oil and gas exports in 2008/09, which represented about 24 percent of Iran's GDP. At the same time, 65 percent of all fiscal revenues were provided by oil earnings (International Monetary Fund 2010: 2). The EU's latest round of sanction regimes was especially heavy for Iran as the EU extended its ban on the importation of natural gas and the list of goods such as raw metal, graphite, and key naval equipment and technology for ship-building. In June 2013, the EU pointed to around 350 targets beyond the UN listing, including the IRGC and the IRISL (Giumelli & Ivan 2013:13, 14).

Like the UN Security Council, the EU has also invoked cooperative diplomacy, though to a lesser extent. In 2004, the EU three, for example, agreed to negotiate with Iran over a number of economic, security, and nuclear issues as

long as Iran suspended its uranium enrichment activities and cooperated fully with an investigation by the IAEA (Davenport 2014, n.p.).

Gulf Cooperation Council

Iran's nuclear ambitions are likely to alarm the GCC Arab states in the Persian Gulf —namely, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Kuwait, and Oman — as almost any situation arising from Iran's nuclear programme could have immediate, direct, and serious impacts on them. Since Iran's Arab neighbours may have to live in the shadow of a nuclear armed-Iran (Bahgat 2006: 423), GCC states have actively discouraged Iran from pursuing its mastery of the nuclear fuel cycle. Yet GCC states remained on the side-lines, a stance revealing complex layers of reasoning and logic that may explain the anxious silence of GCC states when it comes to protesting Iran's nuclear ambitions (El-Hokayem & Legrenzi 2006: 3).

For starters, a nuclear-armed Iran may play a stabilizing impact on the region, functioning as a counterbalance to US and Israeli nuclear capabilities (Russell 2005: 26). Significant levels of sympathy for Iran's nuclear aspirations exist in the Arab world, perhaps emanating from pan-Arab and Islamic norms that continue to shape public and official opinion across the Arab world. According to such norms, GCC Arab states adopt a more anti-Israeli, than anti-Iranian, posture despite the immediacy and potency of an Iranian nuclear threat (El-Hokayem & Legrenzi 2006: 7). A poll on the Al-Jazeera website indicates that 73 percent of Arab respondents believe that the Iranian nuclear program does not pose a threat to the neighbouring countries. A poll conducted in October

2005 indicates that 63 percent of respondents in six Arab countries (including Saudi Arabia and the UAE) believe that the international community should not attempt to coerce Iran into discontinuing its nuclear programme (El-Hokayem & Legrenzi 2006: 6).

From August 2002 until late 2005, the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms remained mostly silent and pessimistically cautious about, as well as puzzled by, Iran's actions. In January 2005, Abdul Rahman Al-Attiya, the GCC Secretary-General, expressed his concern about Iran's possible nuclear weapons programme. GCC states, as he suggests, "can't find any justification for such nuclear activity which poses great dangers for all the peoples in the Gulf region" (El-Hokayem & Legrenzi 2006: 4). As Dawood al-Shirini, a Saudi analyst, argues, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would justify and prolong the presence of foreign forces protecting their fossil fuel interests and any military confrontation between the West and Iran is likely to destabilize GCC Arab states (Jafar 2008: 10). GCC Arab states have remained concerned that a US military attack on Iran would transform the entire Persian Gulf into an inferno with unpredictable consequences (Pasha 2009: 145). According to Aluwaisheg, an accident at the Bushehr reactor, which is, for example, closer to Qatar and Bahrain than to Tehran, would be disastrous for GCC Arab states (2013, n.p.), polluting all six desalination plants on the Arab shore (Jafar 2008: 10). Given the record to date, concern over the reliability of Russian-made reactor appears warranted (Dietl 2009: 167).

Many Arabs possess deeply-held concerns about a nuclear-armed Iran pursuing an aggressive foreign policy towards its Arab neighbours (Russell

2005: 32). In particular, Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf Arab states would be vulnerable to the domination of a nuclear-armed Iran. From their perspective, the Islamic regime, which presently lacks nuclear weapons, is already a cause for serious concern; but armed with nuclear weapons Iran would almost certainly adopt a more aggressive policy against its Arab neighbours. GCC states already see Iran as striving to assert its expansionist and interventionist policies, which are evident in Iran's occupation of the three Islands in the Persian Gulf also claimed by the UAE. Iran's attempt to revive its territorial claim over Bahrain is further evidence of this expansionist policy (Alani 2012, n.p.).

Significant here is a long-standing rivalry between the people of Persia and the people of Arabia. At present Shia Iran poses the most direct challenge to the primacy of Saudi Arabia in terms of faith and the legitimacy of the Al-Saud. This challenge undoubtedly raises the most urgent question regarding the security of Saudi Arabia and other GCC states, particularly if Iran acquires nuclear weapons (Lippman 2012: 118). The Shiite ascendency has been a matter of grave concern to those regional Arab countries with the Sunni majority, most of which are allies of the US. Iran's smaller neighbours have harboured a sense of uneasiness over the Iranian interference in their internal affairs (Mahapatra 2009: 29), as Iran has a history of supporting Shiite uprisings in Saudi Arabia and other neighbouring Arab countries, including Iraq, Kuwait, Yemen, and Bahrain. Shia Islam constitutes approximately 10 percent of the Saudi population and, as the minority in the country, the Shia sect lives in the northern oil-producing region of Saudi Arabia. Much suspicion remains on the part of the

Saudis and other GCC Arab states that Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, might intensify its subversive activities by exploiting Shia elements of their populations. Consequently, for Sunni Arab states on the Arabian Peninsula, the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran remains on the horizon (Sokolski 2005: 9).

In 2005, Riyadh publicly opposed Iran's nuclear programme, expressing support for diplomatic efforts aiming to peacefully resolve the dispute over Iranian nuclear programme (Delpech 2006: 79, 80). While Arab political leaders sought a diplomatic solution to the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme, they also pleaded with the West for military action against Iran. US State Department cables, leaked to Wiki-Leaks, point to the private pleadings of King Abdullah of Saudi and King Hamad ibn Isa of Bahrain for the destruction of Iran's nuclear facilities. According to one cable, the Saudi king had frequently pleaded with the Americans to cut off the head of the snake in Tehran. These cables offered strong evidence that high-ranking authorities in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries are sceptical of reaching a peaceful agreement with Iran, with GCC officials calling for Iran's nuclear programme to be halted by armed force (Colvin 2010, n.p.). Another cable sent from the US Embassy in Bahrain quotes King Hamad, emphasizing that action must be taken in order to terminate Iran's nuclear-related activities by whatever means necessary, as saying, "(t)hat programme must be stopped. The danger of letting it go on is greater than the danger of stopping it" (Colvin 2010, n.p.).

Having said that, however, GCC Arab states have pursued a policy of balancing Iranian power in the Persian Gulf by all possible means, illustrated by their staunch support (excluding Oman) for Iraq during its war against Iran. While

this may signify strategic competition between Iran and those Persian Gulf Arab Sheikdoms, the rivalry has intensified over Iran's nuclear programme, which many Arabs perceive as a significant shift in the balance of power benefitting Iran. Containment policies implemented by GCC states are unlikely to discourage Iran's nuclear ambitions owing to the uncertainty of US policies concerning Tehran.

Governmental Perceptions and Responses

While international organizations have responded in various ways to the prospect of a weaponized nuclear programme within Iran, including diplomatic proposals to negotiate and the establishment of sanction regimes targeting Iran, two governments in particular have taken especially strong positions on the issue, signalling that their perceptions and responses warrant particular attention.

United States

Given its current status as the world's only superpower, the US plays a significant role influencing nuclear-related activities and wields substantial influence over international non-proliferation policy. After the Cold War, and especially since the early 2000s, the US focused its non-proliferation policy more on supply-side controls, seeking to deny so-called "rogue states" such as North Korea and Iran access to nuclear materials. In pursuing this objective the Bush Administration demonstrated its readiness to apply coercive diplomacy and military force as tools of non-proliferation policy. Two official documents outline this strategy; first, the *National Security Strategy of the United States*,

published in September 2002, aims to prevent aspiring nuclear states from gaining access to essential elements of fissile material; second*, the National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, also published in December 2002, explains Washington's planned efforts regarding biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons. Three pillars of this strategy are: (i) proactive counter-proliferation efforts to combat WMD use; (ii) strengthened non-proliferation efforts to stop rogue states from obtaining the materials and technologies necessary for manufacturing WMD; and (iii) effective consequence management to respond to the effects of WMD use (The White House 2002: 14). The driving force behind this new strategy is that the new enemies — rogue states and terrorists — need to be denied access to WMD and eliminated (Bahgat 2006: 127). For Washington, the strategic significance of the Middle East has only increased in recent years, shaped, as Chubin argues, "by the confluence of such concerns as energy security, international terrorism and nuclear proliferation" (2009: 166).

The Iranian nuclear programme is a very tense issue for the US Government. It has been the subject of much debate among hawks, doves and owls within the US Government, though these debates seem to be underpinned by a consensus recognizing Iran's aspirations to acquire a nuclear weapons capability (Mahapatra 2009: 24). Since the beginning of this dispute, US policies have challenged the independence of Iran's nuclear programme because the US maintains that that programme, which involves enriching uranium on Iranian soil, will not only lead to the development of nuclear capability but will also pave the road for weaponization (Barzegar 2012: 254).

The US bases its assessment on the Iranian Government's continual build-up of fissile material, its possession and development of a delivery system, and the discreet activities developing actual warheads (Mahapatra 2009: 26).

The question arises as to why a nuclear-armed Iran would be unacceptable to Washington. Will Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, jeopardize the sense of security across the region and beyond? The US has been clear that a nuclear-armed Iran would cast a shadow over the region, posing a direct threat to its interests in the Middle East. According to President Bush, Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, would most likely destabilize the region and pose a potential threat to all its neighbours (Chubin 2006: 125). As terrorism emerged as a major challenge to US national security, it was somehow associated with nuclear activities in the Middle East and, in the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush Administration described the combination of terrorism and WMD as the most serious threat to US national security (Slavin 2007: 25). As Cliff Kupchan, an Iran expert at Eurasia Group, puts it, "in Bush's view of the world, the ultimate witches' brew is WMD and terrorism" (Slavin 2007: 27). A US State Department Report warns of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons capability while it sponsors terrorism by supporting a number of militant anti-Western groups in the region. In this light, Iran qualifies as the "most terrifying witch" (ibid.), a sentiment echoed by Obama's Administration which views terrorist groups' possible access to nuclear materials or weapons in the Middle East as the greatest threat against the US national security in the short, medium or long term (Barzegar 2012: 249). From the US national security perspective, Iran's nuclear programme and Middle Eastern security issues are directly related to both

global terrorism and nuclear terrorism. The US asserts that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would increase the risk of these WMD reaching the hands of so-called terrorist entities, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, both of which enjoy close ties with Tehran. This can, in turn, pose a serious threat to regional and global security (ibid.). Also of concern to Washington is the potential disturbance of regional balance of power arrangements by a nuclear-armed Iran to the detriment of Washington and its regional allies (Chubin 2006: 125). As John Bolton, then-Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security and a former US Permanent Representative to the United Nations asserted, Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability would likely alter the perceptions of the military balance in the Middle East and may pose serious challenges to Washington in term of deterrence and defence (2004, n.p.).

Washington's concern over Iran's support of terrorism might be exaggerated, however, the Islamic regime is not blind to the risks it would run, which include devastating reprisals from Washington, if Tehran provides nuclear weapons to terrorists and other non-state actors. As Waltz argues:

> The problem with these concerns is that they contradict the record of every other nuclear weapons state going back to 1945. History shows that when countries acquire the bomb, they feel increasingly vulnerable and become acutely aware that their nuclear weapons make them a potential target in the eyes of major powers. This awareness discourages nuclear states from bold and aggressive action (2012, n.p.).

For example, the PRC became far less belligerent after obtaining nuclear weapons in 1964 (Waltz 2012, n.p.). Recent history of the cases of Iraq and Libya suggest that only weak challengers will be subject to military aggression

by Washington; that Pakistan was not on the official list of states harbouring and supporting Mollah Omar's Taliban is a case in point (Lotfian 2008: 161). As Robert Gallucci, a former UN Weapons Inspector and a CIA consultant on proliferation issues describes:

> Bad as it is with Iran, North Korea, and Libya having nuclear-weapons material, the worst part is that they could transfer it to a non-state group. That is the biggest concern, and the scariest thing about all this—that Pakistan could work with the worst terrorist groups on earth to build nuclear weapons (Hersh 2004, n.p.).

He warns that Pakistan is now the most dangerous country for the US, claiming that "(w)e haven't been this vulnerable since the British burned Washington in 1814" (ibid.).

US propaganda plays an active role disseminating information about the threats associated with a nuclear-armed Iran. The US has often inflated threats through a kind of fear mongering as a means of building a case for military action, as the Bush Administration did in 2002 prior to invading Iraq. Notably, US media incessantly portrays Iran as the menacing party attempting to acquire nuclear weapons in order to threaten the entire world. US media coverage very often, as Greenwald argues, depicts Iran as a looming threat without presenting any thoughtful and robust military analysis of Iran's very limited capacities (2012, n.p.). Moreover, the US claims concern over Iran's ability to secure a nuclear stockpile, particularly given that Iran might encounter domestic instability ensuing from turmoil and widespread discontent among its disaffected youth and ethnic minorities. Such fears play into the hands of those who

lament the undemocratic nature of the theocracy in Tehran (Clawson & Eisenstadt 2008: 18).

According to the International Energy Agency, the US presently imports about 20 percent of its total energy requirements. Due to its remarkable technological advances in horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (a process popularly known as “fracking”), the US will continue to be self-sufficient within nearly two decades, with far less dependency on fossil fuel supplies from the Persian Gulf region. Nonetheless, the US enjoys broader geopolitical and strategic interests in the Middle East, including counterterrorism, the security of Israel, and proliferation of WMD. Despite an enhanced energy outlook, it is highly unlikely that Washington will disengage itself from the Middle East any time soon (Bahgat 2013: 69, 70). In fact, the US looks set to pursue its policy of controlling Iran’s nuclear weapons ambitions by adopting measures, including diplomatic demarche (through international organizations), economic sanctions, the threat of use of force, cyber-warfare, and destabilizing the Islamic regime from within. All such measures take aim at the Iranian leaders and seek to coerce them into changing their policy on the nuclear programme (Barzegar 2012: 254).

Since the end of the Cold War and the subsequent rise of US dominance in world affairs, Washington has intensified its use of sanction regimes to advance its foreign policy objectives, particularly when Congress is willing to intrude upon the President's prerogative to led US foreign policy. Suspected proliferators of nuclear weapons, as well as state sponsors of terrorism, appear as the top targets on US sanctions lists (O’Sullivan 2010: 7). Under the Bush

Administration, the US often resorted to the use of unilateral sanction regimes against countries involved in the proliferation of WMD and missiles, imposing, for instance, sanctions on at least 270 occasions and against some 200 foreign individuals and entities (Sitt, Asada, Aust, Eriksson, Ifft, Kyriakopoulos, Mackby, Massinon & Meerburg 2010: 67). Since the fall of the Shah and the occupation of the US Embassy in Tehran, the US has imposed sanctions against the Islamic regime, signalling the roots of such sanction lie in the 1979 Tehran hostage crisis (Crane 2012: 112), though "(t)he imposition of sanctions against Iran by the US Government has assumed a life of its own and has become an annual political ritual in Washington inextricably tied to Middle Eastern politics" (Sitt et al. 2010: 83). US Congressmen and Senators regularly enact resolutions increasing the sanctions on the Iranian Government for its nuclear programme, which they consider threatens Israel, as well as for its support of terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas. The US Government's policy to create a terrorism list has made the imposition of fresh sanctions a routine action (Sitt et al. 2010: 83, 84) and these economic and financial sanctions are designed to damage Iran's international transactions and domestic economy. Extended sanctions targeting the whole Iranian economy have placed the Islamic regime in a difficult position with its citizens as a combination of economic and financial problems might trigger social unrest that may, in turn, undermine the regime's legitimacy. Such scenarios may well fulfil US desires for regime change in Iran (Ozcan & Ozdamar 2009: 127).

US sanctions target Iran's energy sectors. In 2006, US Congress ratified the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), which authorized sanctions on all foreign

companies that continue to invest in the development of oil in Iran (Crane 2012: 112). Since that time, the US has put in place steps to compel foreign firms to select between participating in the US market and conducting various energy-related dealings with Iran. These energy-focused sanctions take aim at Iran's economy and seek to alter Iranian leaders' calculations as well as to deny Iran the financial resources to advance its nuclear programme and provide support for terrorist groups. The ILSA was replaced with the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) after its termination with respect to Libya. Although the ISA has been extended to cover transactions with other Iranian economic sectors, it remains a vital component of US sanctions against Iran's energy sector (Katzman 2014: 9). Given that oil and gas exports constitute a large proportion — around 80 percent — of the country's total income, economic sanctions against exports of fossil fuel from Iran seem to be more effective than political demarches (Perkovich & Manzanero 2005: 182). Consequently, the US sanctions targeting Iran's energy sector have had a slow, but crippling, effect on Iran's economy (Pirouz & Rezvani 2011, n.p.). Salient effects of these energy-related sanctions are evident on Iran's lack of technological and financial capability to export gas from the South Pars field in the Persian Gulf. Iran's plan to build two liquid gas installations in the Persian Gulf with a view to liquefying gas from the Pars gas field has not come to fruition and Iran has no liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminals. The technology required to construct LNG terminals is patented by US firms and, given the monopoly of such technologies by the major Western oil companies (particularly the US) as well as other Western embargoes on gas equipment, the prospect of Iran developing new sources of energy for export

appears dim. Embargoes on gas installations therefore appear to have succeeded in decreasing Iran's revenues from gas exports (Crane 2012: 118).

US sanctions also take aim at Iran's banking system. Washington's early efforts to impose financial sanctions were in line with its targeted measures aimed at shutting Iran out of the international banking system. Since 2006, US Treasury Department has attempted to seize the initiative in persuading foreign banks to end business with Iran by convincing banks that the Iranian Government has been utilizing the international financial system to finance terrorist organizations and obtain weapons-related technology. For instance, stringent sanctions imposed by the US Treasury Department on 16 June 2010 were directed at several Iranian organizations and its financial sectors, including shipping industry and IRGC that are directly linked to the country's missile and nuclear programmes (Pirouz & Rezvani 2011, n.p.). Based upon a Report, released in February 2013 by Government Accountability Office, the Treasury Department approached 145 banks in 60 countries, successfully convincing at least 80 foreign banks to stop conducting financial transactions with Iranian banks (Katzman 2014: 27). (For a useful summary of US and US-led sanctions, please see Appendix 1.)

Washington might pursue a policy of deterring Iran's nuclear programme by military means. Under the Bush Administration, unilateral pre-emptive military strikes were considered as an option to deal with Iran's nuclear programme. For instance, during his State of Union speech President Bush states that Washington's second aim is to preclude those regimes that promote terror from threatening the US or our allies with WMD. The Iranian regime aggressively

seeks these weapons and is vigorously involved in exporting terror (The White House 2002a, n.p.). He added that Iran, armed with WMD, would pose a grave threat to the international peace and the cost of doing nothing in response would be disastrous (ibid.). In September 2002, Washington also released the new *National Security Strategy,* which calls for the pre-emptive use of force against potential hostile states, and promotes regime change through military means (The White House 2002: 16). President Bush branded North Korea, Iran and Iraq as an 'axis of evil.' Of these three, only nuclear-armed North Korea has evaded the full brunt of US antagonism as, in 2003, Iraq was attacked by the US and Iran has been under constant threat of military action by the Bush Administration and, to a lesser extent, by the Obama Administration (Kamrava 2012: 8). Under the Obama Administration, military strikes seem to have so far been replaced by diplomacy and sanctions. This less confrontational tone might reflect the costs incurred by the US through its military adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nonetheless, it is not unimaginable that the US will resort to unilateral air-strikes on Iran's nuclear installations if it deems necessary (Tagma & Uzun 2012: 241) as President Obama labelled a nuclear-armed Iran as unacceptable, adding that he would "never take military action off the table" (Thielmann 2009: 3).

Some US officials maintain that low-yield nuclear weapons, or so-called mini nukes, represent a credible deterrent against Iran. Since 2004, concrete plans to launch a nuclear strike against Iran have been on the Pentagon's drawing board, envisaging a pre-emptive nuclear attack on Iran from US military bases in Turkey, Israel, and Western Europe. In March 2013, Obama pointed out that

the all ‘options’ resolution with respect to Iran has been on agenda during his official visit to Israel. In response to the dangers of a nuclear-armed Iran, an integrated US-NATO-Israel approach was also reaffirmed, with the tone of discussions favouring military action against Iran (Chossudovsky 2013, n.p.). Significant to these actions is Washington’s participation in the armed intervention ousting Libyan leader, Muammar Kaddafi, and deposing a regime that had reached an agreement several years earlier with both the US and the UK not only to forsake its nuclear and chemical weapons programmes, but also to avoid supporting international terrorism. Understood in this context US actions might convince Iran that the US would not abide by any diplomatic agreement but would, rather, seize the first opportunity to overthrow the Iranian regime. In other words, US action on Libya probably exacerbates Iran’s fears and may encourage its pursuit of nuclear weapons for deterrent purposes (Pillar, Reardon, Sebenius & Singh 2013: 179).

Questions remain over whether or not Washington could overcome Iran without the support of the international community, particularly after its military adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq have failed to deliver peace and stability. This means that military options might not be a viable means of resolving the dispute over Iran’s nuclear programme. Since US military force on its own is unlikely to bring about stability within Iran, Washington must devise a comprehensive strategy utilizing all of its instruments of influence within its foreign policy arsenal (Hagel 2008: 15). There are indications that the Obama Administration may decide to expand US engagement with Iran, challenging the US policy of containing Iran, the foundations of which lie in a bipartisan

consensus in Congress. Should expanded engagement with Iran fail, US reliance on containment would intensify (Kaye & Wehrey 2009: 37).

The reiteration of threats of military action may well function as one of the ingredients of the US negotiating strategies vis-à-vis Iran. Notably, for Washington, it would practically be desirable to support diplomacy with a credible military threat. The US leadership (both the current and previous ones) have stated on more than one occasion that all options are on the table (Delpech 2012: 44). For example, in an interview on 1 August 2010, Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued that military actions, as an important option, have been on the table and would certainly remain on the table (Gregory 2010, n.p.).

As part of its strategy to undermine Iran's nuclear programme, the US has also supported the potential balkanization of Iran, though according to a group of former US diplomats and military officials, a military operation against Iran is risky, given that Iran is a large country with a sizable young and educated population of over 77 million people. The idea of exploiting ethnic groups within Iran, with a view to breaking Iran into smaller states, has been one component of the US-Israeli plan to tackle Iran since 2003 (Sahimi 2012, n.p.). 'Divide and Conquer' has been the essential component in enabling colonial powers to conquer nations throughout modern imperial history and, as Petras notes, the key factor in US empire building tracks two doctrines: direct military interventions and provoking secessionist movements, which could, in turn, lead to military confrontation (2008, n.p.). The extended practice of both doctrines

has been seen in twenty-first century in quite a number of states, including Iraq, Lebanon, China, Iran, Sudan, Burma, Somalia, and Venezuela. In each case Washington could not install a client regime, pursuing instead a policy of financing and fomenting separatist entities aimed at creating a regional base of support. Consistent with traditional empire-building philosophies, the US favours only separatism in states that refrain from surrendering to imperial domination (Petras 2008, n.p.). Some US policymakers seem to favour the creation of a greater Balochistan, which would incorporate the Balochi area of Pakistan with that of Iran, thereby undermining the territorial integrity of Iran. Washington has been using Balochi nationalism for initiating an insurgency inside Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province, having established a military base in the area of Chaghi on the north-west corner of Pakistan from where it can better monitor developments in Iran. The US provides support for Jund Ullah (Army of God), an armed group that has been engaged in subversive activities against Iran. US intentions to use Balochistan as a mercenary base aim at destabilizing Iran (Iqbal 2009, n.p.), signalled on 8 February 2012 when some of the Tea Party members in US Congress — specifically Dana Rohrabacher, Louie Gohmert, and Steve King — tabled a bill before Congress proposing the creation of an independent Balochistan out of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. These Congressmen are reportedly backing the Baloch separatist movements and establishing relations with Baloch lobbyists from Iran's Sistan-Balochistan, with strong connections to Jundollah (Shaukat 2014, n.p.). Significant is that US strategies of destabilization in the region are far from new. Washington's course of action involves fuelling ethnic, social, and factional divisions and political fragmentation as well as the territorial disintegration of Pakistan. As

Chossudovsky argues, “(t)his course of action is also dictated by US war plans in relation to both Afghanistan and Iran” (2007, n.p.).

Washington and Tel Aviv have been internationalizing the issue of Balochistan in line with their objective to destabilize Iran. The establishment of an independent Baluchistan would encircle Iran with hostile forces and curtail Iran’s dominance of the Hormuz Strait, posing a serious challenge to Iran’s national security. At the same time, Washington’s dominance and strategic position would be boosted vis-a-vis its rivals, the PRC and the Russian Federation. Washington’s willingness to exert control over Balochistan’s rich mineral resources might also explain the raison-d’être of these US Congressmen.

Israel

Generally speaking, Israel perceives Iran to be an unpredictable, implacable, threatening, and shrewd adversary. As Israel enjoyed relatively warm relations with the Shah’s regime, the transition to theocracy was a shock to the already tenuous geopolitics of the region, especially when Ayatollah Khomeini made various remarks that “Israel is an abomination and that its existence is an affront to both Islam and the political environment of the greater Middle East” (Whyte 2011: 147). More recently, Ahmadinejad assumed an anti-Israeli stance pointing to the deceitful intrigues of the Zionist movement and publicly questioning the occurrence and extent of the Holocaust. Given such posturing by Iran’s leaders, it is not surprising that Israel’s concern for homeland security appears to have been acute (Whyte 2011: 147). Many Israeli leaders view the Islamic regime’s threat as the most serious strategic threat confronting Israel,

and some, as Kam argues, "regard it as liable to endanger Israel's very existence in the future" (2004: 4) before suggesting that Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, which is of major importance to Israel, would trigger a situation whereby a hostile state has the capability of dangerously damaging Israel for the first time since its establishment (Kam 2004: 4). Another major concern for the Israelis is Iran's support of Hezbollah by supplying missiles and funds, which might become more alarming in the event of Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. Tel Aviv has found it somewhat difficult to deal with Iran's nuclear programme unilaterally and has steadfastly referred to Iran's nuclear ambitions as an international problem (Chubin 2006: 131). More specifically, the Israeli Parliament and Military Intelligence community view the Islamic regime as a spiteful ideological enemy that intends to obliterate Israel. For them, political and economic pressures will not coerce Iran into abandoning its nuclear weapons aspirations, meaning that pre-emptive strikes are an option. Beyond the Parliament and military, Iran is perceived as a multifaceted entity motivated by national interests and the protection of the regime, and hence it may be possible that economic and political pressures would persuade the Islamic regime to alter its policy on the nuclear programme. A change of regime may well reduce the risk posed to Israel by a nuclear-armed Iran (Brom 2005: 145, 146).

Israeli perceptions of Iran's nuclear ambitions are shaped in part by US policies since Washington has a de facto security commitment to Israel in which it would defend Israel if its existence were threatened by a nuclear-armed Iran (Bonab 2009: 167). Hence, Israel's calculations about a nuclear-armed Iran largely

depend on its assessment of US capability and readiness to deter Iran through the use of armed force (Lindsay & Takeyh 2010: 39). An attack on Iran by Israel may damage US interests, even if operationally successful, as the US might become entangled in any possible retaliation by Iran, stretching US military forces deployed to theatres in Afghanistan and Iraq to breaking point. Such an attack would almost certainly result in a sharp rise in oil prices and amplify concerns that fossil-fuel supplies throughout the Persian Gulf might be disrupted because of Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz (Allin & Simon 2011: 35).

For some Israeli political elites, the lack of communication between Tehran and Tel Aviv precludes a controlled deterrence relationship (Yaphe & Lutes 2005: 18). From the Israeli perspective, the Islamic regime resembles a circus-like competition for political power more than a unitary, contemplative decision-making body (Russell 2008: 89). The religious nature of the Iranian Government appears to have cast doubt upon its rationality and behaviour — which some Western and Israeli analysts and scholars perceive as irrational — and may not fully conform to the dictates of rational deterrence theory (Williams 2010: 34, 35). Contrary to this belief that states that are radical at home could irresponsibly use nuclear weapons to pursue their revolutionary objectives abroad, states that, as Waltz contends, "are radical at home, however, may not be radical abroad" (Waltz 1995: 11).

Even though the Islamic regime's foreign policies are characterized by their religiosity and their intellectual debt to Shiite Islam, the Islamic regime is understood by Israelis as a rational actor that scrutinizes and pursues its

policies in accordance with a cost / benefit analysis (Williams 2010: 35). In the words of Ehud Barak, "I don't think the Iranians, even if they got the bomb, [would] drop it in the neighborhood. They fully understand what might follow. They are radical but not totally crazy. They have a quite sophisticated decision-making process, and they understand reality" (Solomont 2010, n.p.). Similar to Barak, Halevi, former director of the Mossad, concurred that, "I don't think they are irrational, I think they are very rational. To label them as irrational is escaping from reality and it gives you kind of an escape clause" (Parsi 2007: 270). The view held by Barak and Halevi is shared by Waltz, for whom:

> Iranian policy is made not by "mad mullah" but by perfectly sane ayatollahs who want to survive just like any other leaders. Although Iran's leaders indulge in inflammatory and hateful rhetoric, they show no propensity for self-destruction. It would be a grave error for policymakers in the United States and Israel to assume otherwise (2012, n.p.).

Notwithstanding Israel's oratory to the contrary, many high-level Israeli decision-makers contend that Iran's nuclear ambitions are independent of the religious nature of the ruling regime (Parsi 2007: 263). As Rubin puts it, "(w)hat had been for the Shah an ambition built on nationalism was for his successors a parallel ambition built on an Islamist radicalism that often simply served as a thin disguise for nationalism" (2006, n.p.). Contrary to the portrayal of Iran's leaders as "mad mullahs," the majority of Israeli strategic thinkers acknowledge that the Islamic regime is extremist – but rational (Parsi 2007: 270) and, as Parsi argues, "(a)s much as the Iranian leaders may have wanted to pursue their ideological goals, no force in Iran's foreign policy is as dominant as geopolitical considerations" (2007: 263).

Significantly, there has been no direct military conflict between Iran and Israel during the thirty-five years of clerical rule despite hostile bombastic comments on both sides. Contrary to those who view a nuclear-armed Iran as a threat to Israel, their current rivalry is not yet sufficient to bring them to the brink of a military confrontation. Given the absence of territorial disputes and historical hostility between the two nations, there is no immediate threat from either party that could result in a full-blown war. Despite Iran's links to Hezbollah, which are based more upon strategic calculations designed to further weaken the Arab camp than for ideological purposes, a more pressing threat facing both Israel and Iran emanates from the Arab bloc.

Nevertheless, Israel has taken a number of measures in response to Iran's developing nuclear programme. It has, for instance, adopted a policy of keeping the international spotlight on the Islamic regime. Throughout the1990s, the Israeli Government was in the forefront of those countries that sought to sensitize the Russian Federation to the perils of transferring nuclear technology to the theocracy. Israel's deliberate alarmism sought to preclude Iran from nuclear self-sufficiency before Iran's nuclear programme has reached the point of no return and therefore become less sensitive to external influence (Chubin 2006: 131).

Furthermore, Israeli and US experts orchestrated a damaging cyber-attack against the Iranian nuclear programme (Nakashima & Warwick 2012, n.p.). Both the Israeli Government and the National Security Agency (NSA) developed the Stuxnet virus as a means of damaging Iranian centrifuge equipment, by

delivering commands to the industrial control hardware responsible for their spin rate, in order to disrupt Iran's nuclear weapons programme (Anderson 2013, n.p.). The NSA is a US intelligence agency responsible for coordinating, directing, and conducting highly specialized activities to protect US information systems and generate foreign intelligence. Although developed under President Bush under codename 'Olympic Games,' the virus was deployed under President Obama's orders. The attack was designed to slow down Iran's nuclear programme without launching a military strike (Nakashima & Warwick 2012, n.p.), and according to Snowden, "the Stuxnet malware used to attack Iranian nuclear facilities was created as part of a joint operation between the Israeli and the NSA's Foreign Affairs Directorate" (Thomson 2013, n.p.). Snowden also pointed out that the Foreign Affairs Directorate of the NSA collaborates with Israel on a range of security matters (Thomson 2013, n.p.). The cyber-attack succeeded in disabling 1,000 of the 5,000 centrifuges at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility (Schwartz 2012, n.p.), though its longer-term impact is questionable. One reason for this is that the Israeli cyber-attack may have provided Tehran with more experience to encounter such eventualities and possibly plan for alternatives.

Israel also embarked upon a clandestine war aimed at hindering the development of Iran's nuclear weapons programme, conducting a series of assassinations targeting Iranian nuclear scientists in Iran. The Mossad has a long record of covert operations, including targeted assassinations, outside Israel (Sherwood 2012, n.p.), and according to a report, published by *Spiegel* (German news organization) in August 2011, "the Jewish State was waging a

covert war on Iran" (Sherwood 2012, n.p.). The report also indicated that this policy was being motivated by Tamir Pardo, the Mossad's new chief, who undertook his post on 1 January 2011 (Sherwood 2012, n.p.). As revealed by Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, Mossad operatives from Kidon (a unit responsible for kidnappings and assassinations) were involved in assassinating five of Iran's top nuclear scientists as part of a wider campaign designed to sabotage Iran's nuclear programme. Most of the assassins selected by Mossad were Israelis of Iranian descent who held dual nationality and could speak Persian. These operatives have been able to enter Iran by various routes such as the Iraqi Kurdish region and Azerbaijan (Shaoul 2012, n.p.).

Finally, the Israelis have already contemplated adopting other precautionary security measures, including the development of long-range missiles triggered by particular concerns over Iran's nuclear programme. Israel's Dolphin Class submarines, which can easily navigate the Persian Gulf, provide Israel with a more robust second-strike capability (Chubin 2006: 131, 32). Israel has frequently warned that it would resort to pre-emptive military actions should Iran march toward the development of a nuclear weapon arsenal. In the words of Ehud Olmert, "Israel clearly will not reconcile itself to a nuclear Iran" (Russell 2008: 87).

Conclusion

With the Middle Eastern region being constantly at the centre of international attention due its volatile and complicated political dynamics, Iran's continuing progress towards acquiring a nuclear weapons capability remains a serious concern for the international community. With the exposure of Iran's secret

nuclear facilities in 2002, Iran has been suspected of moving towards becoming a nuclear-armed state. Iran's refusal to declare its sensitive enrichment and reprocessing activities led the IAEA to launch an investigation that concluded in 2003 that the Islamic regime had systematically failed to fulfil its obligations under its NPT safeguards agreement to report those activities to the IAEA. This, in turn, resulted in the IAEA attempting to extend its operations to expose further details concerning Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's continuation of its enrichment activities that induced the failure of negotiations between the P5+1 and Tehran led the international community (through the UN Security Council) to impose a set of sanction regimes targeting Iran in order to persuade the Islamic regime to change its nuclear policies.

While viewing the prospect of Iran's nuclear weapons programme as a potential threat, the EU has increasingly relied on the use of restrictive measures, such as travel ban and economic sanction, in an attempt to dissuade Iran from continuing its suspected nuclear weapons programme. In close collaboration with other like-minded members of the international community opposing Iran's nuclear activities, the EU has also signalled its willingness to resort to its sanctions toolbox outside the UN Security Council in a bid to exert more pressure on the Iranian Government over the nuclear dispute.

While preferring to combine aggressive policies towards Iran's nuclear case with elements of engagement and reconciliation, GCC Arab states have expressed similar concerns about Iran's developing nuclear programme and responded by urging the important members of international community,

particularly the US, to prevent Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability. In the eyes of GCC Arab states, Iran's expansion of its nuclear programme will likely become a far bigger threat to political and military stability in their neighbourhood, thereby prompting GCC Arab states towards greater activism in line with other states opposing Iran's nuclear ambitions. In light of persistent concerns about Iran's nuclear development, GCC states may decide to take actions to preserve their national security in cooperation with other like-minded states.

With Iran's nuclear case being primarily a dispute initiated, developed, and brought before the UN Security Council by the US, the prolonged international debate over Iran's nuclear programme may have been a function of the irreconcilable regional interests of Tehran and Washington. Iran's nuclear programme has become one of the new century's major foreign policy challenges to the US. Not surprisingly, the emergence of a nuclear weapons state of Iran could lead the US to encounter potential transition in the regional balance of power. This is so because the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, as a large majority of American strategic scholars concur, would likely upset the existing military balance of power between an adversarial Iran and Washington and its regional allies, with potential negative consequences for US interests.

Whilst taking a tough position on the Iranian nuclear dispute, the US appears to have exhausted its ability to persuade Iran to reconsider its commitment to pursuing a nuclear weapons programme. Washington's involvement in negotiations with the Islamic regime and its offer of positive inducements in

exchange for nuclear concessions was initially designed to resolve the nuclear dispute in a less confrontational manner. Washington's use of coercive measures signalled that it was quite adamant in stopping or at least delaying Iran's nuclear progress and raises the costs of the programme for the Islamic regime. In dealing with Iran's possible nuclear weapons programme, the US pursued a policy of inflicting onerous restrictions, including diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, sabotage, and the threat of military actions in order to freeze the programme with the hope of constraining it to exclusively civil applications. However, it remains to be seen if those coercive measures taken by the US will be able to force Iran's capitulation on the nuclear dispute in the foreseeable future.

As leading regional powers, Iran and Israel presently view each other as major adversaries. In addition to Iran's pursuit of its extreme ideological stance vis-à-vis Israel, which might be regarded as one of the root causes of animosity between the two countries, Iran's nuclear ambitions appear as a major threat to Israel's security, leading to Israel's international diplomatic efforts against the prospect of a nuclear weapons programme within Iran, as well as the implied Israeli military threats against Iran's nuclear installations. Given the absence of territorial contiguity, which could diminish the potential level of friction between Israel and Iran, the current hostility between the two states may as well stem from the regional political context. While the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran has compounded the nature of the Middle East state system with several foci of violence, Israel finds itself in a position to take precautionary steps such as

conventional and nuclear means of deterrence as part of its approach vis-à-vis Iran's developing nuclear weapons programme.

And, finally, given the findings of this chapter, Liberal Internationalism does help explain why international organizations and states cooperate together for collective security ends and may use armed force as part of that effort. It does not fully explain, however, why powerful states, such as the US and Israel, use, or threaten to use, coercive armed force outside of organizations such as the UN. Nor does it offer a convincing explanation of why Iran does not acquiesce in the face of the international community's strong objections to its nuclear programme.

CHAPTER 3: THE IMPACT OF SANCTION REGIMES

The effectiveness of sanction regimes established by members of the international community is a topic receiving significant treatment in Political Science and International Relations scholarship (Please see: Charron 2013; Cortright and Lopez 2002; Drezner 1999; Farrrall 2009; Giumelli & Ivan 2013; Katzman 2014; Kozhanov 2011; Sitt et al. 2010; Solingen 2012a). Drawing on some of that literature, this chapter signals the varying impacts generated by the sanction regimes currently targeting Iran. Given that these sanction regimes represent the most salient action taken by members of the international community demonstrating the strength of their objections to Iran's nuclear programme, it is necessary to understand the multifarious impacts that these sanctions have not only on Iran but also on the international community itself. This chapter argues that, despite the international pressure directed against Iran's lack of transparency with respect to its nuclear programme, Iran has continued to conduct its nuclear activities. It concludes that the international community's strongest objections have done little to deter Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Impact on the International Community

Featuring as one aspect of an overall foreign policy strategy, sanction regimes are unlikely to occur in isolation of other foreign policy tools (Giumelli & Evan 2013: 9) for, as Maloney maintains, "sanctions are a policy tool, not a policy objective" (2014, n.p.). Sanction regimes are attractive as a policy tool for a number of reasons. Sanctions are invoked by states and intergovernmental organizations as measures to coerce, constrain, and signal international actors

whose conduct is unacceptable. Here, coercion entails actively persuading targeted actors to refrain from certain behaviours or to adopt certain policies desired by sanctioning states and, when these targeted actors are unwilling to change their behaviours or policies; sanctioning states seek to constrain the range of actions available to the targeted actor. Sanctions also convey an important signal when breaches of significant norms are dealt with by way of gestures of disapproval from members of the international community. Furthermore, the various impacts generated by sanction regimes can be direct, indirect, and unintended. Direct impacts are the expected burdens placed on actors targeted by sanctioning states while indirect consequences refer to the collateral damage often accompanying sanctions. Unintentional impacts refer to the harm that is not foreseen and considered by sanctioning states when deciding to resort to sanctions (Giumelli & Evan 2013: 9-11).

Sanction regimes targeting Iran have multifarious impacts on the international community. Firstly, sanction regimes serve as a basis for coalition building, through which states demonstrate the gravity of their concerns about Iranian nuclear ambitions but without having recourse to the use of coercive armed force in international affairs. The EU's efforts to impose sanctions have, for instance, been designed to signal to the Iranian Government and the rest of the international community that it would not remain passive in the face of Iran's attempt to acquire a nuclear weapons capability (Esfandiary 2013: 4). Similarly, the US Government's 2010 sanctions also signalled to the international community that it was determined to impose sanctions against foreign companies investing in Iran's energy sector as well as to impose severe

restrictions on the development of Iran's banking sector and its dealings with the international financial system (Kozhanov 2011: 149). Secondly, sanctions have culminated, to some degree, in shifting the region's balance of military power against Iran. Weapons embargoes have restricted Iran's ability to modernize its conventional forces by preventing it from acquiring or developing hi-tech military equipment while Iran's neighbouring states received military assistance from Washington, enabling them to upgrade their armed forces. In this sense, some Middle Eastern states are reassured by the seriousness of the sanction regimes that the West in general and the US in particular are fully aware of their security concerns. Thirdly, invoking sanction regimes targeting Iran may also help strengthen the NPT regime. This strong response of the international community conveys a powerful signal to all signatories of the NPT, especially those who might be considering acquiring nuclear-weapons capabilities, that such steps will entail consequences (Giumelli & Evan 2013: 15).

Trade Impacts

Sanction regimes targeting Iran also engender new patterns of international trade which are, at least potentially, harmful to European, US, and Middle Eastern economies, though the effects of the most paralyzing sanctions is not yet visible in the available economic data. This is because factors, such as the expansion of black market trading, non-compliance by some parties, and exemptions of various sorts, make it difficult to estimate accurately the impacts of sanctions on EU, US and Middle Eastern economies. In particular, unilateral sanctions tend to divert trade, rather than limit, a targeted actor's ability to trade

as targeted actors search for alternative markets for the goods that are blocked. EU and US sanctions have, for example, compelled Iran to turn East, enhancing its trade with Asian markets. This has adverse impacts on the markets of sanctioning states (Esfandiary 2013: 6) as Iran's effort to re-orientate its trading patterns towards Asian markets does not seem to be in Europe's economic interests. The EU appears to be in a relatively difficult situation as it "can afford to neither provoke Washington's wrath nor antagonize Tehran" (Vaez 2013, n.p). Consequently, the EU incurs the cost of reduced market access to oil as well as facing increasing prices of consumer goods, which has proven detrimental to Europe's already-struggling economies. As a result of these sanctions, Iran's trade with the PRC rose from $3 billion in 2002 to $44 billion in 2011 and Beijing succeeded in negotiating high rebates for Iranian oil that would then be sent to the EU (Bassiri Tabrizi & Santini 2012: 5, 6). At the same time, re-exported European and US goods have frequently found their way into Iran's market via the UAE and Turkey (Vaez 2013, n.p.), though GCC Arab states enjoying a thriving trade with Iran have become increasingly concerned about the loss of export earnings as the implementation of sanction regimes tightens. Meanwhile, the swift expansion of black-market trade between Iran and Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Turkey undermines their economies (The Iran Project 2012: 15, 16).

The exclusion of US companies from lucrative business opportunities in Iran represents an appreciable opportunity cost as goods from India and the PRC have emerged in Iran's market since those two Governments sought to circumvent sanctions on Iranian banks by bartering for Iranian oil. It may prove

difficult to subsequently rearrange trade patterns to include US and European firms, which view Iran as an important export market. Furthermore, US pressure, applied to states around the world, to sever commercial links with Iran has been a most ambitious tactic, though even if the PRC had not reduced its trade deals with Iran it would have been difficult to envisage Washington imposing wide-scale penalties on the PRC's bank and financial institutions. Such measures would lead both Beijing and Washington — the world's two largest economies — to endure unwanted financial damage (Klapper & Olster 2013, n.p.).

Sanctions impacting on Iranian oil exports could be somewhat unproductive from another point of view as such measures entail negative spill-over effects on non-sanctioning states (third parties) engaging in bilateral trade with Iran (Esfandiary 2013: 4). Moreover, as Ghassempour explains:

> Oil is a global industry that can be connected to many countries from its extraction from an oil field to be consumed as varied petrochemical productions. Crude oil may be produced in one country, refined in another and consumed in a third one. Once refined it becomes difficult to determine whether the oil originated from a sanctioned country (2013, n.p.).

It may prove too difficult and too expensive to ban all states from importing oil originating in Iran.

Sanction Busting

Since their establishment, sanction regimes targeting Iran have been destined for failure largely because these regimes are not yet fully implemented. The UN Security Council established a Sanctions Committee to ensure the necessary

and effective implementation of its sanction regimes targeting Iran. In particular, the 1737 Committee has a mandate to monitor the implementation of the restrictive measures enforced in UN Security Council Resolutions 1737, 1747, 1803, and 1929. The Committee is responsible for examining and taking appropriate action on information concerning alleged violations of such measures. A Panel of Experts was also established by UN Security Council Resolution 1929 in order to assist the 1737 Committee in conducting its mandate. Although the responsibility for implementation of Resolutions rests with UN Member-States, the Committee seeks to help Member-States fulfill these obligations (Security Council Committee 2013: 1, 2). For example, Member-States shall provide the Committee with any information on transfers of vessels owned or operated by the IRISL to other companies (e.g. renaming or re-registering of ships) in an attempt to evade sanctions (Security Council Committee 2013a: 9). Effective implementation of all the measures contained in the relevant Resolutions by each Member-State plays a vital and necessary role in contributing to the efficacy of the measures.

There were, however, certain breaches of sanction-related obligations involving the prohibited transfer of arms-related material to and from Iran. According to an Incident Report, released on 15 and 16 October 2009, two Member-States provided the Committee with information concerning a violation involving the banned transfer of arms-related material from Iran to Syria — the shipment was being transferred aboard the *M/V Hansa India*, a Germany-flagged ship chartered by the IRISL (Security Council Committee 2010, n.p.). Another violation was reported by the head of the Committee, Ambassador Néstor

Osorio of Colombia, who monitors the arms embargo imposed on Tehran. As he stated in his Quarterly Report, four Member States presented a report on 28 February concerning a violation of the resolution banning Iran from conducting activities associated with ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads, in the aftermath of Iran's launch of a Navid satellite into space utilizing its own space launch vehicle (UN News Center 2012, n.p.).

Given the level of support for Iran by the Russian Federation and the PRC, it will almost certainly be impossible for UN Security Council to adopt a Resolution authorizing a truly efficient sanction regime. Washington's inability to manipulate Member-States violating existing regimes, including the PRC and South Korea (Kozhanov 2011: 158), indicates that the will behind international cooperation may not be as strong as the US and the EU desire. Rallying international support for imposing a complete oil embargo on Iran, which could push Iran's economy to the verge of collapse, would likely prove an arduous task in the current political situation (Kozhanov 2011: 158).

The US has also not yet fully implemented its unilateral sanctions against Iran as no US Administration has fully implemented any sanctions imposed against Iran since 1996 (Jewish Virtual Library 2014, n.p.). While UN and EU sanction regimes were invoked in response to Iran's refusal to suspend its enrichment activities, the establishment of US unilateral sanctions was informed by fears of the Islamic regime being a sponsor of terrorism while actively pursuing WMD (Sitt et al. 2010: 86). In this broad sense, the US has made every effort to keep the debilitating sanction regimes focusing on banking and oil in place in order to

compel the Iranian Government to make further concessions on its nuclear programme (Kozhanov 2011: 149). Yet perhaps the evolution of sanction regimes over three decades — and throughout the troubled history of relations between Washington and Tehran — is too complex for many US officials and decision makers to grasp as some may not remember the histories associated with these various sanction regimes (The Iran Project 2012: 27). Moreover, the Obama Administration's willingness to decrease sanctions for little in return could underpin a general impression that Washington's resolve is waning. After the recent debacle of US policy on Syria, new sanctions, which might be insufficient to deter Iran's nuclear aspirations, appear as the only viable policy tool left for Washington (Dubowitz & Gerecht 2013, n.p.). It seems that the US must be prepared to fail so as to win which, as Dubowitz and Gerecht maintain, "is the price of admission to power politics in the Middle East" (2013, n.p.). Sanction exponents may well argue that stiffer sanctions would motivate meaningful Iranian concessions yet, in the words of Kahl, "(u)nfortunately, the opposite is more likely the case. New sanctions are dangerous and threaten to derail diplomacy, making a peaceful resolution to the Iranian nuclear challenge more difficult to achieve" (2013, n.p.). In this light, targeted measures taken by Washington seem to be an inadequate means of actively persuading Iran to reassess its commitment to developing its nuclear programme.

Advancements in hydraulic fracturing and other related technologies enabled the US to expand its oil and gas production, thereby damaging Iran's primary revenue without recourse to economic blockade. This change in the global energy market works to US and European advantage, impacting on Iran without

incurring unfavourable costs. However, although hydraulic fracturing technology helps expose new oil resources and, thereby, decreases US dependence on imported oil from the Middle East, a reduction in oil imports resulting from sanction regimes targeting Iran might not insulate the US economy from global oil price spikes. The price of oil is set by the global market (Kroenig & Mcnally 2013, n.p.) and, as Yergin explains:

> There is only one world oil market, so the United States – like other countries – will still be vulnerable to disruptions, and the sheer size of the oil resources in the Persian Gulf will continue to make the region strategically important for the world economy (2011, n.p.).

Even if oil imports in North America fell to zero, US businesses and consumers would be subjected to the adverse effects associated with unstable and soaring oil prices stemming from elsewhere on the globe. As Luft and Korin (2012), cited by Kroenig & Mcnally (2013), note, "(i)n economic terms, it's not the supply itself to any given group of consumers that matters most but the price." This might indicate that the economic impact of sanctions targeting Iran generates significant impacts on the economies belonging to the myriad of sanctioning states.

Impact on Iran

At least five objectives appear to underpin the international community's various decisions to establish sanction regimes targeting Iran. As the section above illustrates, whereas one such objective is to deter other aspirant nuclear proliferators another is, put simply, to be seen to do something rather than standing idle in the face of Iran's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons

capability, and to do so without resorting to the use of armed force as a means of preventing a nuclear-armed Iran from coming into existence (Dobbins 2009: 1). Three other objectives, each of which are explored in this section, are to degrade Iran's military and its capability to project military power across the region, prompt change in Iranian nuclear policy, and promote change in the nature of Iranian Government. But what evidence, if any, exists indicating that sanction regimes have generated impacts sufficient to degrade and disrupt the development of Iran's weapons capabilities by precluding Iran from procuring necessary skills or technology for its nuclear programme (Katzman 2014: 50), to cause Iran to alter any of its nuclear policies, or to foster the Iranian public's resentment against the Islamic regime?

Sanction regimes have played a modest role in limiting the expansion of Iran's nuclear activities, including its production of centrifuges, and in reducing the importation of dual-use materials that would enable Iran to proceed with various aspects of a nuclear weapons programme (The Iran Project 2012: 12). Some US officials go as far as to assert that their sanctions have retarded Iran's nuclear efforts to acquire key materials and equipment for its enrichment programme as a result of the costs associated with accessing much-needed materials and equipment (Katzman 2014: 50). However, according to recent IAEA Reports, Iran has expanded its uranium enrichment programme by constructing more advanced centrifuges, indicating that the Islamic regime continues with its nuclear activities (International Atomic Energy Agency 2013: 3, 4). Iran's ability to enrich uranium (up to 5 percent) continues to increase and Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium continues to rise. According to an

IAEA Director-General Report, enrichment of UF_6 up to percent U-235 has continued at a rate of production similar to that shown in the Director General's previous report. As outlined in that IAEA Report, the amount of nuclear material that exists in the form of UF_6 enriched up to 5 percent U-235 is 7609 kg (International Atomic Energy Agency2014: 1). IAEA Reports also state that, contrary to the relevant Resolutions of the Board of Governors and the UN Security Council, Tehran has not abandoned all of its enrichment related activities in the declared facilities of Natanz, PFEP, and FFEP. Nor has the Iranian Government ceased working on all heavy water-related projects as opposed to the relevant Resolutions of the Board of Governors and the UN Security Council (International Atomic Energy Agency 2014: 5, 9).

It appears that the Iranian Government has accessed the black market in order to meet its military needs. During the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference on 1 October 2013, Aaron Dunne warned that the UK Government is capable of controlling only 5 percent of the items exported every year and London is "among the ones who do a good job in the EU" (EU Conference 2013, n.p.). Dunne questions the nature and capability of the EU's Export Control Regimes due to massive differences in the level of enforcement, though he states for the record that some evidence suggests that while export controls usually have an impact, the impact appears to be less about frontier enforcement and more about companies themselves choosing to remain compliant and feeling concerned about this (EU Conference 2013, n.p.). Yet according to a UN Panel of Experts Report, at least eleven potential sanctions violations are strongly suspected. These include metals swap deals by

commodities companies Glencore Xstrata and Trafigura, satellite equipment sales by Germany, and the export of machine tools by Spain. This signifies that, although sanctions can create obstacles for targeted actors, they cannot prevent specific technologies from being transferred to Iran over the longer term (Charbonneau & Nichols 2013, n.p.).

Economic Harm

Sanction regimes have been more effective in weakening the Iranian economy by reducing Iran's oil and gas revenues as well as disrupting its trade with neighbouring countries (The Iran Project 2012: 12). Despite the Islamic regime's poor economic policies, US sanctions in particular have seriously impacted upon Iran's economy and its capacity to project military power (Dobbins 2009: 2). In addition to the endemic corruption and mismanagement within the Iranian Government, sanctions targeting Iran's key energy sector and its access to the international financial system damaged Iran's economy to the point where Iranian political leaders accepted the Interim Agreement of 24 November 2013 — whereby Iran is required to stop further expansion of its nuclear programme activities in exchange for temporary sanctions relief. Nearly half of Iran's official expenditure and 80 percent of Iran's hard currency earnings come from oil exports. By late 2013, sanctions had decreased Iran's oil exports to about one million barrels per day, which is far below the 2.5 million barrels per day reached during 2011. This drop in oil exports was primarily caused by the EU ban on purchases of Iran's oil (Katzman 2014: 51, 52). This loss of revenue from oil, together with Iran's estrangement from the international banking system during 2012-2013, decreased the value of Iran's currency by

increasing inflation to more than 50 percent while limiting Iran's access to foreign exchange reserves. In 2013, Iran's economy shrank by almost 5 percent, resulting in the closure of many Iranian firms (Katzman 2014: 52).

While unsuccessful in counterbalancing the harmful economic impacts of sanction regimes, Iran has mitigated some of the more serious detrimental effects. Important here are those governments responding negatively to the invocation of sanction regimes, some of which provided Iran with opportunities to circumvent the US and EU sanctions (Kozhanov 2011: 157). In order to avoid the more serious negative impacts of the sanction regimes, Iran's Central Bank used a number of financial institutions in Turkey and the PRC as a means of facilitating the purchase of essential goods to maintain the Iranian economy. While playing a major role in assisting Iran to circumvent sanctions, the PRC also used its Central Bank to purchase goods on behalf of Iran before transporting these goods to Iran. It is, as a senior security officer describes, like an old-fashioned barter mechanism whereby the money the Iranian Government earns from selling oil and other petrochemical products goes into the PRC's banks, enabling Iran to use that money to purchase other goods and materials. It appears a good method of circumventing those sanction regimes targeting Iran (Coughlin 2012, n.p.). Similarly, Turkey's attempt to purchase on Iran's behalf financial institutions in Europe, particularly in Germany, was designed to enable Iran to purchase vital goods required for its troubled economy (ibid.). It is no secret that Washington would find it extremely difficult to compel Moscow and Beijing to change their position.

While denied access to the global financial system, Iranian companies have had recourse to gold as a stable, non-traceable, and a reliable means of exchange. According to Hanke, outside government's creation of an intricate multiple-exchange-rate regime and its clampdown on currency trading, Iranians also appear to have become progressively effective at circumventing Western sanctions targeting Iran (2013, n.p.). The influx of gold into Iran from Turkey in recent months can be viewed as the most conspicuous example of this. Nevertheless, owing to pressure from its Western partners, the Turkish Government suspended gold exports to Iran through Turkey's banking system. As a consequence of Turkey's heavy reliance on natural gas from Iran, transactions between the two countries have been conducted through private couriers, facilitating the Iranian-Turkish gold-for-natural gas deal, mainly via the UAE. In the light of this, it appears unlikely that economic sanctions will, despite a change in the modus operandi of finance and commerce in Iran, succeed in coercing Tehran to reconsider its commitment to developing its nuclear programme prior to Iran reaching a "breakout capability" (ibid.).

Social Harm

The Iranian public, rather than Government, suffer the most from these sanctions, particularly as the economic well-being of many Iranians is directly or indirectly linked to oil production and export. The recent sanction regimes applied during 2012-2013 against Iranian oil exports diminished the Government's earnings and have taken a significant toll on the country's economy, with some unintended consequences such as a plunge in the value of the country's currency and the shortage of medicine (Ghassempour 2013,

n.p.). A sharp decrease in the currency value has resulted in serious inflation directly affecting the Iranian public through industrial damage and layoffs caused by the plunged currency value (ibid.). Due to sanction regimes, the entire Iranian population has suffered from the sharp increase in prices. This has led the Islamic regime to protect the lower classes by providing cash handouts as well as subsidizing certain imported staple goods. In the interim, many small- and medium-sized businesses that were incapable of withstanding the rise in production costs have gone bankrupt (Gordon 2013, n.p.).

The more vulnerable category of Iranian citizens, who have no connections with the ruling regime, has been least able to avoid some of the inauspicious effects of sanctions, finding alternative sources of banned goods or, in some rare cases, exploiting the scarcity to increase their own profits (Vaez 2013, n.p.). More importantly, the implementation of sanction regimes in 2010 triggered a predicament where many Iranian citizens faced great difficulty gaining access to medicines, with an estimated six million Iranians having life-threatening diseases, such AIDS and cancer, being dependent on imported drugs for their treatment (Gordon 2013, n.p.).

Sanction regimes imposed on Iran by the international community are unlikely to foster domestic resistance to the Islamic regime. Most Iranians, despite their political leanings, endorse Iran's efforts to have a complete mastery of the nuclear fuel cycle. Consequently, it is less likely that sanction regimes will contribute to the demise of the theocracy but might even assist it in rallying domestic support. Unilateral US sanctions appear to have reinforced Iran's

domestic political support, thereby moderating and perpetuating the threat the Islamic regime could present (Dobbins 2009: 2). Both the ruling elites and the public have sensed the adverse effects of the economic deterioration caused by sanction regimes though it remains to be seen whether the growing public unhappiness over economic conditions will lead to a shift in Iran's nuclear policy or possibly a regime change.

While the impact of sanction regimes may foster a rising popular discontent with the Islamic regime, the evidence in support of this appears weak if the 2009 Election results are an indicator of the lack of an appetite for a popular uprising. The theocracy's confidence has partially been rooted in its successful repression of the Green Movement (a political movement that arose after the Iranian presidential elections) in 2009 (Middle East Report N°138, 2013: 31). On the other hand, the scarcity of basic necessities resulting from sanction regimes deprives resentful members of the public of the power needed to defy their repressive Government. In this sense, the sanction regimes imposed by the EU and the US have assisted the Islamic regime in marginalizing the voices calling for structural political change by consolidating its dialogue of national reconciliation vis-à-vis any criticism of domestic affairs made by the political activists (Khanlarzadeh 2013, n.p.).

While having done a great deal of damage to Iran's populace, sanction regimes have done little to slacken the control of the repressive regime. The IRGC and the regime have a chokehold on the Iranian people more than before as sanction regimes have pushed Iran's economy to a far more profound level of

corruption. The role played by the IRGC in Iran's economy has significantly augmented as the sanctions have intensified (Gordon 2013, n.p.) and, as Henderson maintains, the IRGC, which, coincidentally, also proves to be the internal group most advocating the development of a nuclear weapons capability, appears to have benefitted most from sanction regimes targeting the country. (2012, n.p.). As Vaez explains:

> As often is the case with sanctions, members of the elite with greatest access to the regime and state privileges are best positioned to survive and even thrive in the new environment. The multiple exchange rates and the distribution of subsidy stipends provide segments of the ruling apparatus with potent patronage tools to purchase loyalty and protect core constituencies (2013, n.p.).

As an already powerful entity, the IRGC has always been a direct target of sanctions (Gordon 2013, n.p.), but, due to its privileged access to a favourable currency rate, its and other state-affiliated enterprises have become primary beneficiaries of the sanction regimes currently targeting Iran.

Conclusion

As an important instrument of international diplomacy, sanction regimes imposed by the international community – ranging from states to intergovernmental organizations – were designed to signal Iran that its non-compliance with its NPT obligations would entail direct consequences for Tehran. While sanction regimes against Iran gained momentum, the debate over the effectiveness of those sanctions in the hope of halting or at a least retarding Iran's nuclear programme gathered strength. Sanction regimes inflicted by the international community aimed to warn Iranian leaders of the

economic cost of continuing to ignore its demands. While being the most ardent advocates of sanction regimes to influence Iran's nuclear policies, the US and the EU employed those punitive measures to send a clear message to the Islamic regime and other would-be proliferators that they would not remain inactive in the face of nuclear proliferation.

Having some success in punishing Tehran for its failure to comply with its NPT obligations, sanction regimes seem to have gone hand in hand with development in Iran's nuclear programme. While designed to exert pressure on Iran in order to induce a comprehensive shift in its nuclear policies, sanction regimes have some unintended negative outcomes that have adversely impacted on lives of many Iranian citizens. With the Iranian Government resorting to every possible means, such as black market and other channels, to evade Western sanctions or at least to mitigate some of their harmful effects, the evidence of success of sanction regimes as an effective tool of inducing specific policy changes appears to be inadequate if that was one of the objectives of the imposition of sanctions. In the words of Maloney, "(a)s a result, sanctions, while nominally successful in raising the costs to Tehran of its provocative policies, could fail in their ultimate goal of gaining Tehran's adherence to international non-proliferation norms and agreements" (2010: 145, 146).

While the gravity of recent sanctions may well play a major role in bringing the Islamic regime to the negotiating table, it is not entirely clear that sanction regimes alone would culminate in Iran conceding to the international

community's demands. When measured against the fairly successful factor of retarding Iran's nuclear programme, sanction regimes have so far failed to fulfill their proclaimed main objective that was to sway Iran's behaviour on the nuclear dispute, which progresses unhindered despite regular protests from the international community. Given the failure of sanction regimes to drive Iran's economy to the verge of collapse, as well as Iran's ability to adjust to mitigate the impacts of unremitting economic sanctions, it remains to be seen whether those sanction regimes as stand-alone policies will yield dramatic results and halt Iran's possible journey towards a nuclear arsenal in the long run. While the sanctions regimes, which are the most salient forms of objection from the international community, has not prompted a change in Iran's pursuit of its nuclear programme, it has prompted a change in Iran's nuclear diplomacy, the topic of the first section of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: IRAN'S INTRANSIGENCE

Far from being apologetic for their nuclear programme, Iranian diplomats declare Iran's right to generate nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, categorically denying any attempt to acquire nuclear weapons. Their basic argument is that the Iranian nuclear programme is in line with their state's obligations under the NPT, especially Article IV that emphasizes the inalienable right of all the parties to the Treaty to the peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination (International Atomic Energy Agency Information Circular 1970: 3). More specifically, Iranian leaders assert Iran's sovereign right to enrich uranium, arguing that it would be an empty proposition to have a nuclear programme without a fuel cycle. Based upon their argument, Iran cannot depend on other nations to provide its nuclear fuel as they may halt it anytime due to political pressure (Bahgat 2006: 133, 134).

Yet members of the international community remain fearful that, notwithstanding such protestations, Iran may acquire nuclear weapons in the shadow of Articles IV and X. While Article IV stipulates "the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty" (International Atomic Energy Agency Information Circular 1970: 3), it does not distinguish between technologies that can produce nuclear materials for weapons, such as nuclear fuel cycle technologies, and those technologies that cannot, such as nuclear light-water reactors for energy production. In this sense, Article IV lawfully permits states to develop the full complement of technologies needed to manufacture nuclear weapons while still

complying with their obligations under the NPT (Blackstock & Milkoreit 2007: 10). Moreover, Article X allows any country to exit the NPT with only three months' notice (International Atomic Energy Agency Information Circular 1970: 5). Under these conditions, states are capable of getting very close to the development of a nuclear weapons capability while still fully complying with international law, and then withdraw from the NPT and manufacture nuclear weapons, again technically complying with international law (Blackstock & Milkoreit 2007: 10). North Korea's nuclear test, conducted in October 2006, is a salient example of a state reaching, and then passing, this precipice, colloquially referred to as "having the bomb option." It is entirely possible that Iran will resort to its Article IV rights in order to accomplish its nuclear weapon ambitions, if indeed they harbour any such ambitions, all the while proclaiming its nuclear activities as peaceful (Blackstock & Milkoreit 2007: 10).

This chapter explores Iran's major reactions to the international community's objections to the development of its nuclear programme. In particular, the chapter describes Iran's own diplomatic proposals before explaining that Iran continues to pursue its nuclear programme, in spite of the international community's strong objections, because it perceives regional and extra-regional actors as threats to its national security.

Iran's Nuclear Diplomacy

Iran reacted to the international community's diplomatic efforts opposing the development of its nuclear programme, as outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, by proposing five of its own diplomatic initiatives. Firstly, on 17 January 2005, Iran proposed to France, Germany and the UK that, in return for the EU's

removal of restrictions on transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods to Iran as well as their rejection of any attacks, threats of attack, or sabotage of Iran's nuclear facilities, Iran would commit to not seeking WMD and would cooperate on combating terrorism and regional security, particularly on Iraq and Afghanistan (Davenport 2014, n.p.).

Secondly, on 23 March 2005, Iran proposed to France, Germany and the UK that it would adopt the IAEA Additional Protocol and allow continuous on-site inspections at key facilities, limit the expansion of its enrichment programme, and declare a policy of non-reprocessing, immediately converting all enriched uranium to fuel rods. In return, the EU would declare its recognition of Iran as a major source of energy for Europe, guarantee Iran's access to advanced nuclear technology along with contracts for the construction of nuclear plants in Iran, and normalize Iran's status under G8 export controls (ibid.).

Thirdly, in 2012, Iran proposed the following 5-step initiative to the P5+1. Under Step 1 (Guidelines), Iran will emphasize its commitments under the NPT and its opposition to nuclear weapons based on the Supreme Leader's fatwa while the P5+1 will recognize Iran's nuclear rights, particularly its enrichment activities, under Article IV of the NPT. Under Step 2 (Transparency Measures), Iran will continue its broad cooperation with the IAEA on the "possible military dimensions" of its nuclear programme while the P5+1 will terminate its sanction regimes targeting Iran other than those authorized by the UN Security Council. In accordance with Step 3 (Confidence Building Measures), Iran will allow continuous IAEA monitoring of enrichment activities at TRR and will cooperate

with the P5+1 in order to obtain enriched fuel needed for the TRR. The P5+1 will terminate all UN sanction regimes targeting Iran and remove the issue of Iran's nuclear programme from the UN Security Council's agenda. Under Step 4 (Strengthening Cooperation on Mutual Interests), all parties will start cooperating on designing and building nuclear power plants, research reactors, light water research reactors, and nuclear safety and security. Under the final step (Strengthening Joint Cooperation), parties will start cooperating on regional issues, especially Syria and Bahrain as well as combating piracy and countering narcotics-related activities (ibid.).

A fourth initiative emerged on 1 April 2013 when Iran proposed further talks similar to the five-step proposal Tehran brought to the negotiations in 2012. However, after the P5+1 expressed dissatisfaction with this proposal, which it viewed as a step backward, Iran revised its proposal for the second day of talks along these lines: Iran will freeze its centrifuge installation at Fordow, continue its talks with the IAEA, and continue converting 20 percent enriched uranium hexafluoride to uranium oxide, but suspend its enrichment of uranium to 20 percent. In return, the P5+1 will terminate all sanction regimes targeting Iran and will recognize Iran's nuclear rights (ibid.).

Fifthly, the resumption of negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 took place in Geneva on 15 and 16 October 2013. Iran and the P5+1 continued negotiating the particulars of the proposal during two subsequent rounds of talks taking place in Geneva on 7-10 November and 20-24 November. On 24 November, the head of Iran's negotiating team, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, and

the head of the P5+1 negotiating team, Catherine Ashton, signed the Joint Plan of Action. As stated in that Joint Plan, the actions specified under the first phase of the Joint Plan of Action would be time bound, with a duration of six months. The agreement can be extended should both sides agree to renew it by mutual consent (European Leadership Network 2013: 1). The second round of talks, which started on 20 January 2014 and are expected to continue until 20 July, were designed to arrive at a lasting agreement between Iran and the P5+1 (Rubin 2014, n.p.), though as Delpech argues:

> The diplomatic experiment is therefore long, diverse and rich. A number of lessons can be drawn from it. The (previous) agreements were not honored by Iran, and the offers have been ignored, rejected, or met with counterpoise ignoring the core issue (2012: 35).

Iran's Perception of Regional and Extra-Regional Threats

The people of Iran are, to a certain extent, distrustful of the outside world as they have in the past fought colonization and external intervention (Parsi 2007: 6). A substantial part of the general population holds the strong belief that Iran has always been subjected to outside incursions and subsequent mistreatments over the centuries. Undoubtedly, this conviction is supported by some historical justification. Iran has been targeted by foreign powers such as the Mongols, the Arabs, the Russians, and the British (Perthes 2010: 97). In 1953, a US-orchestrated coup led to the overthrow of the democratically-elected Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, who led the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) and fervently advocated the nationalization of Iran's oil that was then controlled by British Petroleum (BP). Mossadegh's proposal to nationalize BP's assets and operations in Iran infuriated the UK which, in turn, imposed economic sanctions

targeting Iran. Following that event, the UK adopted a hard-line position and supported a covert operation to remove Mossadegh. The UK's attempts to convince the US that Iran's progressive slide into the Soviet orbit was the real issue behind the Iranian crisis proved successful. The US decision to launch a coup was endorsed by US President Eisenhower in 1953 under the codename 'Operation Ajax' — an operation that eventually resulted in the removal of Mossadegh from office (Maugeri 2006: 65-68).

Moreover, Iraq's unprovoked invasion of Iran, leading to a protracted bloody war that lasted from 1980-1988, and resulted in an estimated 500,000 Iranian deaths, has left an indelible mark on the Iranian psyche (Dorraj 2006: 326). Despite having been party to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Iraqi regime used chemical weapons against Iran in the course of the war (Sitt et al: 77). The military and financial support of the West, the USSR, and a large majority of the Arab states for the Iraqi Government was sufficient to remind Iran that it was alone in confronting flagrant acts of aggression. In other words, it seemed to the Iranians that the entire world (including the US) sided with Iraq in its war against Iran. The UN Security Council did not perceive the Iraqi invasion as a threat to international peace and security and took over two years to demand the withdrawal of the invading Iraqi forces (Parsi 2007: 6). It also took the UN Security Council another five years to address Iraq's frequent use of chemical weapons against Iranian troops as well as civilians — perhaps because European countries and the US sold the vital ingredients required for manufacturing these chemical weapons to Iraq — whereas Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was condemned in UN Security Council Resolution 660 within

12 hours of the attack (ibid.). Iran's protest of the lack of action by the UN Security Council on these matters proved futile. The inability or reluctance of the UN Security Council to denounce and investigate Iraq's use of chemical weapons may have provided a basis for Iran's mistrust of subsequent UN Security Council actions. This may also have led to the belief that Iranians cannot depend on external help and are required to provide for their own security (Sitt et al: 77). For the Iranians, the lesson, as Parsi argues, "was clear: when in danger, Iran can rely on neither the Geneva Conventions nor the UN Charter for protection. Just like Israel, Iran has concluded that it can rely only on itself" (2007: 6).

In addition to its historical experiences, Iran's current geostrategic position does little to alleviate the deeply-embedded fear among Iranian political elites that the country's territorial integrity and political sovereignty may be impinged at any time by external military forces. Despite being located at a natural crossroads between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea as well as the Arab world and the subcontinent, Iran has not been able to translate its geostrategic assets into political advantage. Iran does not have a natural constituency both regionally and in the wider Muslim world due to the fact that it is a non-Arab Shia state. Iran is short of strategic partners or reliable friends, nor is it an official member of any multilateral regional institution. As Iran is a Persian Shiite country in the largely Sunni Middle East, it finds itself entangled in an extremely serious security environment and thus the structural conditions in Iran's immediate region play a key role in inducing any defensive aspect of Iran's nuclear ambitions (Chubin 2006: 114).

Iran's nuclear programme is unanimously regarded by Iranian society as the starting point for national, regional and international prestige, technological advance, and military deterrence. At the domestic level, Iran's nuclear programme has in fact led to a homogenization across the political spectrum and consensus forged among political elites over Iran's engagement in direct negotiations with the West in general and the US in particular (Barzegar 2012: 239). Notwithstanding the debilitating effects of sanction regimes targeting Iran (or perhaps because of them), the majority of Iranians support the country's nuclear programme. According to Gallup surveys, conducted during the period 16 December 2012–10 January 2013, around 63 percent of Iranians endorsed the continuation of Iran's nuclear power programme (Younis 2013, n.p.). Taken as a whole, the support of Iranians for the country's nuclear programme could emanate from the perceived status and deterrence benefits obtained from such programme.

In the 1980s, the theocracy conceded that only a viable nuclear deterrent could guarantee Iran's national security as well as its very survival (Dorraj 2006: 326). After the ceasefire with Iraq, the Iranian leadership had a firm conviction that Iran should fully arm itself with chemical, radiological, and bacteriological weapons for both defensive and offensive purposes (Bowen & Kidd 2004: 264). Within this context, Iran's ultimate intention to deter Iraq became the primary rationale for the Islamic regime's revival of the country's nuclear weapons programme in the mid-1980s (ibid.). Although the removal of the Iraqi regime has significantly decreased the perceived threat from Iraq on one level, Iran has still encountered threats from other states both in the region and beyond. Such

circumstances may tend to further justify the Iranian nuclear motivation than its current hostility towards the West (Chubin 2006: 114). As Mokhtari explains, "(w)ithout allies or surrounding protective oceans, Iran's security must therefore be based on deterrence....Iran's deterrence must of necessity be self-generated and self-reliant" (2005: 211). Such security challenges could not be overcome by conventional forces based on domestic capacity and current technology. It would be possible to develop a credible nuclear deterrence with a reliable missile capability that, at the same time, could be less costly in financial terms, as compared to the need of regular systemic upgrading of conventional weapons (ibid.).

More recently, the Islamic regime may have considered its survival to be linked with possession of a credible nuclear weapons deterrent. Owing to the potent deterrent capabilities of nuclear weapons, certain states, depending upon their geostrategic considerations, might perceive such weapons as strong sources of security. Similar to other states, such as the PRC, India, and Pakistan, which sought nuclear deterrent capabilities for security-based reasons, Iran's motives for acquiring such capabilities may therefore emanate from the idea of being the prisoner of insecurity in the volatile Middle East (Dorraj 2006: 325). Given the inherently unstable area surrounding Iran — the troubled states of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as challenges to the unipolar status of the US— Iran's pursuit for security through a nuclear weapons deterrence remains attractive for Iranian policymakers (Williams 2010: 35). As Mattair emphasizes:

> Elementary international relations theory tells us that this would be a common reaction to what Iran sees in its environment.

> Russia to the north, China to the east, Pakistan and India to the southeast, the United States to the south, and Israel to the west, all have nuclear weapons. Iran is encircled by nuclear powers (2010: 54).

Although factors such as national pride and regional hegemony might partially explain Iran's quest for nuclear weapons, there are more immediate and pressing issues and circumstances that prompt its pursuit for the ultimate deterrent (Dorraj 2006: 326). While one threat may dissipate over time and be replaced by others, the sense of insecurity on the part of Iranians always remains in place in that dangerous neighbourhood (Solingen 2012: 165). Indeed, Iran's perception of its neighbours — particularly Pakistan and Israel — as threats to its vital interests informs Iran's intransigence in the face of the international community's objections to its nuclear programme.

Pakistan

Whilst sharing a 500-mile border through the heart of the volatile Balochi region, Iran and Pakistan enjoy a relationship entailing numerous complexities, including the potential for conflict between the two states (Delpech 2006: 53). As a predominately Sunni Muslim country, Pakistan has had a complicated and dysfunctional relationship with a predominantly Shiite Iran since the ascent of clerical regime to power in Iran in 1979 and religious denominations have played a role in shaping Iranian-Pakistani relations ever since (Ghosh 2012, n.p.). Pakistan's central role in the ascendancy of Taliban — the declared enemy of Iran both ideologically and strategically — led the Islamic regime and Pakistan to move apart gradually (Delpech 2006: 53). Relations between Iran and Pakistan deteriorated with the establishment of the radical Sunni Taliban

Government in Afghanistan, resulting in a climate of mistrust (Alam 2008: 532) in which Iran finds itself as an ideological adversary to Pakistan's geostrategic ambitions in the region. The two states remain at odds with each other (Ghosh 2012, n.p.) as each supports rival constituencies within Afghanistan (Delpech 2006: 53). The two states have been funding proxy wars between Sunnis and Shia and providing surreptitious support to their co-religionists in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran (Ghosh 2012, n.p.).

Sectarian violence is a further 'rub' point between Pakistan and Iran as violence against Pakistan's Shiite minority is currently a concern for Iran (Alam 2008: 532). Relations between the two states have become further strained due to Pakistan's alleged support for Jaish al-Adal (Army of Justice) – an anti-Iranian Sunni militant group based in the Pakistani Balochistan – that has been involved in an armed struggle against the Iranian Government. The Iranian authorities have accused the Pakistani establishment of supporting Jaish al-Adal by allowing it to operate from the Pakistani Balochistan against Iran. This Sunni militant group, waging an insurgency against Iran, has been engaged in the kidnapping and killing of Iranian border guards (Mire 2014, n.p.). There were, for example, clashes on 26 October 2013 between Iranian armed forces and this separatist group at Saravan in the southeast Sistan–Baluchistan province, resulting in the killing of seventeen Iranian border guards. In retaliation for these killings, sixteen members of this rebel group were executed by the Islamic regime. Jaish al-Adal is a new Sunni group that is fervently anti-Shia with separatist ambitions (Aljazeera 2013, n.p.).

Despite the fact that Iran received some nuclear equipment (e.g. centrifuges) and certain technical assistance from the Pakistani Government and Abdul Qadeer Khan's clandestine network during the 1980s and 1990s, the two states have been suspicious of each other's geostrategic motives, particularly over Afghanistan (Delpech 2006: 53). The Iranian establishment conceded that Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998 shifted the balance of power in favour of Pakistan (Alam 2008: 434). According to Farooq Sulehria, Pakistani journalist and researcher, the Talibanization of the Pakistani military and a possible internal takeover of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal by such militant Sunni extremists cannot be condoned. This would cause great alarm to Shia Iran should such scenario take place (Shams 2013, n.p). As Dorraj argues, "it is not clear what the future holds for Pakistan. The future specter of Iran facing the possibility of a hostile nuclear Pakistan with no deterrent is unsettling" (2006: 327).

Here, then, Pakistan's nuclear status is a significant factor influencing Iran's nuclear calculus. While the symbolism of nuclear weapons may have provided Pakistan with an instrument to enhance its international prestige, it may well foster fears of Pakistan's dominance of the region. Although periods of tactical alliance existed between the Shah and Pakistan in the 1970s, there has always been a great deal of ambiguity surrounding relations between Iran and Pakistan, particularly since 1979 (Delpech 2006: 53). While having been staunch allies during the Cold War, the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, Afghanistan's civil conflict, and Pakistan's nuclear weapons development are three factors transforming the relationship between Iran and Pakistan into a tense rivalry (Pant 2009, n.p.).

The major shift in Iran's foreign policy stance and its hostile relations with Washington after the 1979 Revolution was an extra source of tension, given that Pakistan became even more important to the US. Pakistan has used Iran's isolation in an attempt to increase its value to Western allies. Iran's antagonistic ties with the US undermined its ability to respond to Pakistan's provocative policies (Hunter 2014, n.p.). Moreover, Iran's attitude towards the Persian Gulf Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, has a direct impact on the state of Iranian-Pakistani relations. Pakistan has a much better relationship with Iran's rival, Saudi Arabia, which has been a strong supporter of Pakistan and its quest for nuclear status (Ghosh 2012, n.p.). Iran's concerns have been exacerbated by a possible nuclear pact between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia as Pakistan is viewed as the only reliable source for a predominantly Sunni Saudi Arabia and other regional Sunni Arab states to acquire nuclear weapons under a nuke-for-oil deal (Pant 2009, n.p.). Pakistan's warm relations with Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab states stemming from Islamabad's religious shift and financial lure might create an environment where Tehran and Islamabad would be unable to look forward to a return to the cordial relations of previous days. Pakistan's opportunistic submission to US policies (at Iran's cost) and its firm support of the Taliban and other Sunni extremist groups have compounded the already mistrustful and complex relations with Iran (ibid.). Mainly out of sight have been indications of mutual sectarian suspicion, distrust and rivalry that have proven to be a challenging obstacle to a genuine Iranian-Pakistani relationship. Concerns such as these may underpin any desire for Iran to develop a nuclear weapons capacity. While having been uncomfortable about

taking a backseat to a nuclear-armed Pakistan, Iran might make every effort to rectify a nuclear imbalance in a bid to alleviate its security concerns. In this sense, Iran's possible acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability may well be considered as a potential counterbalance to the Pakistani nuclear arsenal. Given that Pakistan enjoys a unique position as the sole Muslim (predominantly Sunni) state with the nuclear weapons, Iran's fear of a nuclear-armed Pakistan may be, or become one of, the motivations behind its nuclear weapons ambitions.

Israel

During the Pahlavi era, Iran and Israel enjoyed close relations. However, this period of cordiality came to an end following the ascendancy of the theocracy, culminating in Iran adopting an hostile attitude toward Israel. Iran's hostility to Israel appears to have remained uncompromising since 1979. In the view of the Islamic regime, Israel is an enemy of Iran and Islam, an attitude which is rooted in revolutionary doctrine (Menashri 2006: 108, 109) and resulted in the Islamic regime's refusal to recognize the State of Israel, the theocracy's opposition to the peace process between Israel and Palestine, and Iran's support for anti-Israel organizations, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon, all of which has deepened the current tension between the two countries (Bowen and Kidd 2004: 265).

Iran perceives a nuclear-armed Israel as a potential source of insecurity and a direct threat to Iran since Israel, the only country in the Middle East with an advanced nuclear arsenal, has adopted a tougher foreign policy towards its

regional neighbours and seeks to exploit the psychological pre-eminence of its nuclear weapons capability to impose its views on neighbouring states (Cohen 2012: 189). Being in possession of a potent nuclear arsenal with long-range delivery systems, Israel has displayed its preparedness to take firm preventive action against emerging nuclear threats (Bowen and Kidd 2004: 265). In particular, Israel's threat to use force as a means of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons began in 1992 when Israeli strategists spoke of military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities (Chubin 2006: 130). Israel continues to periodically and convincingly threaten a counter-proliferation attack against Iran's nuclear facilities (Quillen 2002: 21). Israel's attempt to beat the drums of war and urge the international community to toughen its sanction regimes targeting Iran has probably confirmed Iran's worst fears and such worries have been compounded by Israeli covert operations ranging from cyber warfare to the suspected assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists (Melamud & Tabatabai 2014, n.p.). Furthermore, Iran's concern about the Israeli pre-emptive military action has been intensified following Israel's attacks on suspected Iraqi and Syrian nuclear installations (Brom 2005: 153). The Israeli leadership has long perceived the military option as a legitimate one to Iran's nuclear activities (Melamud & Tabatabai 2014, n.p.). On 1 October 2013, Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister, warned that Israel remains ready to use military forces against Iran should necessity arise. In the words of Netanyahu, "I want there to be no confusion on this point. Israel will not allow Iran to get nuclear weapons. If Israel is forced to stand alone, Israel will stand alone" (Aljazeera 2013a, n.p.).

This rhetoric accompanying Israel's unmatched conventional military and nuclear superiority causes a great deal of consternation among the Iranian political elite. Developing an arsenal of nuclear weapons may provide Iran with greater parity, thereby alleviating its sense of anxiety over Israel's military advantage (Dorraj 2006: 328, 329). At the same time, the new Iranian Government has demonstrated its interest in improving relations with the outside world and has sought to shift away from Ahmadinejad's antagonistic approach in foreign policy. The Geneva Agreement of the interim nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is evidence of this change and, notwithstanding that agreement, Tel Aviv has not changed its uncompromising tone towards Tehran, with the Israeli Prime Minister denouncing it as a historical mistake (Melamud & Tababatai 2014, n.p.).

Iran's willingness to redefine its international image after periods of provocative anti-Israeli rhetoric from the Ahmadinejad era may have assuaged security concerns between the two states. It may be possible for the geostrategic setting in the Middle East to once again favour some degree of rapprochement between Tehran and Tel Aviv, whether it be overt or sub rosa. By reaching a possible detente with Israel, Iran might be able to refocus its attention on its immediate neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf without being apprehensive about imminent Israeli military action. It is likely that Israel will considerably benefit from a rapprochement with Iran, especially as Sunni extremists have waged jihad against Jews and Shiites in the greater Middle East (Hassibi 2014, n.p.). Separated by 1,000 miles with no territorial disputes between them, Iran and Israel are in a position to allow their geostrategic interests to guide them so that

they may tackle their common regional concerns. Nevertheless, Israel's belligerent rhetoric of pre-emptive strikes against Iran can only intensify Iran's perception of regional threats. Although the incendiary Israeli-Iranian political rhetoric may add an ideological dimension to the current strife between the two sides, any quest by Tehran for a nuclear weapons capability would most likely be motivated by its power disparity with Tel Aviv, which possesses the military advantage in the Middle East region.

United States

Relations between Iran and the US have been characterized by mutual distrust and hostility since 1979 (Bahgat 2013: 67), though the roots of Iran's opposition to US policies can be traced to the 1953 coup against the Iranian Prime Minister Mossadeq, which was orchestrated by the CIA and MI6 (Milani 2009, n.p.). The Arab-Israeli peace process, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation in particular have constituted key areas of contention (Bahgat 2013: 67).

For many Iranians, the US represents the greatest source of insecurity for the region. This is particularly so since the US emerged as the sole global power, or superpower, after the demise of the USSR (Sherrill 2012: 35). With no real challengers to its hegemonic position, the US has largely pursued a belligerent policy of unilateralism in the Middle East. Washington's military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq are cases in point (Dorraj 2006: 328). A lesson learned, then, from the fate of Saddam Hussein is that a state cannot directly challenge the US in an aggressive manner without having a credible nuclear weapons deterrent (Sagan, Waltz & Betts 2007: 137, 138). The systemic changes both at the regional and international levels primarily elicited by Washington's military

and economic supremacy after the demise of the USSR led to the exacerbation of Iran's geopolitical position and the limitation of its foreign policy options (Hunter 2003: 136, 137).

The US also represents the most serious threat to the Islamic regime. The threat posed to Iran by the US intensified when the US deployed large military forces to Iran's periphery in 2001 (Sherrill 2012: 35). According to Tarock, nowhere is the US projecting its overbearing power as forcefully, arrogantly, and aggressively as in the Middle East region, and nowhere more so than in Iran and Iraq, both enjoying vast proven reserves of oil and natural gas (2006: 645). Since 2003, the Islamic regime may have had a good reason to be strategically uncomfortable as Iran is almost surrounded by US military forces stationed in Iran's neighbouring countries – namely Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Turkey, and some Central Asian countries. The presence of the US Navy in the Persian Gulf appears to complete the encirclement (Perthes 2010: 97). As Walt explains:

> Iran has good reason to worry: It has nuclear-armed states on two sides, a very bad relationship with the world's only superpower, and more than three dozen U.S. military facilities in its neighborhood. Prominent U.S. politicians repeatedly call for "regime change" there, and a covert action campaign against Iran has been underway for some time, including the assassination of Iranian civilian scientists (2012, n.p.).

The map below illustrates the distribution of US military bases surrounding Iran.

Figure 9: US Military Bases around Iran

(Source: Proteck Machinary, n.d. Each star represents a US military base.)

The dispute over Iran's nuclear programme remains the most serious problem affecting the relationship between Tehran and Washington. Iran is aware that its nuclear programme is the only area where the US insists that it would use military force against Iran in the event of diplomatic failure (Cordesman 2008: 20), signalling the threat of military action against Iran looms on the horizon. Yet Iran also knows that the feasibility of a possible military operation would depend on international acquiescence, favourable US domestic public opinion,

and the ability of US military to sustain another war, each of which would be subject to close examination (Tagma & Uzun 2012: 241).

Although the Khatami Government adopted a more moderate foreign policy based upon detente and peaceful coexistence, this did not improve its relationship with Washington, which described Tehran as part of the so-called axis of evil along with North Korea and Iraq. Moreover, the Khatami Government adopted a more moderate position on its nuclear programme by suspending uranium enrichment, though the West failed to reciprocate by providing Iran with some kind of security assurance (Haji-Yousefi 2010: 18). Given the serious threat posed by the US military, proponents of Iran's nuclear programme demand the development of a nuclear insurance policy with a view to deterring an all-out US-led assault (Lotfian 2008: 171).

Despite a great deal of discussion by the Western media about US foreign policy on Iran, far less is generated on Iran's foreign policy on the US. Visible, however, is the sensationalist coverage of the so-called "mad mullah" with aggressive nuclear ambitions that are irrational, and therefore not subject to deterrence, which means they can only be dealt with by way of coercive armed force. Yet Iran's foreign policy is devised by calculating mullahs, not mad ones. In fact, Iran's perception of the seriousness of the threat posed by the US military largely defines its policy ambitions as Iran perceives the US to present an existential threat. In this sense, the US encirclement of Iran has become a matter of great alarm to the Islamic regime, which, accordingly, has been enhancing its retaliatory capacities in order to prevent a possible US attack by developing an indigenous missile and anti-missile system as well as a nuclear

programme casting doubts on its precise capabilities (Milani 2009, n.p.). Understandably, Iran's logic for sustaining its nuclear programme has been straightforward in the sense that Iran's nuclear policy runs contrary to US vital interests. This may, in turn, require Iran to deter a US attack through the development of a nuclear arsenal (Donnelly 2005: 161).

This is because, since 1979, Iranian-US relations have been shaped by misperception and mistrust over each other's strategic objectives. The ongoing dispute over Iran's nuclear programme between Tehran and Washington forms part of the broader tensions over hegemony in the Persian Gulf, which may explain the underlying logic of a US containment strategy at the regional level. In 2009, Washington's decision to engage with Tehran under Obama's Administration did not appear to be the sea change in US foreign policy that has often been depicted (Kaussler & Newkirk 2012: 349). According to Kaussler and Newkirk, whilst the Obama Administration does not seek to rely single-mindedly on unilateralism occurring commonly under his predecessor, George W. Bush, the use of coercion short of outright military confrontation still appears to guide Washington's policy with Iran. The US objective today is designed to undermine and isolate Iran internationally (2012: 349). This US strategy could further fortify Iran's jaundiced perception of the US as the greatest threat currently facing the country. Consequently, Iran's acquisition of indigenous nuclear weapons capabilities could offer a counterbalance to the US conventional military superiority.

At present, the US seems to have been the main driver of Iranian nuclear ambition. As Takeyh maintains, "(t)he remarkable success of Operation Iraqi

Freedom in overthrowing Saddam cannot but have made a formidable impression on Iran's leadership" (2004: 54). The Islamic regime realize that Saddam's chemical-weapons depositories did not deter the US from military intervention (ibid.). No country on earth can deter the US by conventional means alone. It can easily overpower other countries. The Iranian Government has realized that it cannot deter a US attack by conventional means and Iran's possible possession of chemical weapons would not be a potent deterrent against any US attack. The considerable gap in conventional military capability between Iran and the US could be reached by acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, which would provide Iran with the only means to protect itself from US attack. Iran's calculus here is based upon the notion that only the possession of an arsenal of nuclear weapons would likely guarantee its security interests (Sagan, Waltz & Betts 2007: 137). Given that Iran's military capability would unquestionably be no match for US military power, a military confrontation with Washington would be undesirable for the theocracy. Accordingly, Iran's acquisition of a nuclear deterrent would serve as an insurance policy against US conventional attack (Delpech 2006: 36). As Amuzegar argues:

> Living in a dangerous neighbourhood, surrounded by nuclear powers on all sides and hearing repeated threats from high American and Israeli politicians, a nuclear capability is a credible deterrent and a valuable insurance policy against external threats (2006: 97).

Furthermore, the most recent history of the case of Ukraine, whose territorial integrity was flagrantly violated by the Russian Federation, may well aggravate Iran's sense of insecurity, thereby encouraging it to expedite its possible

nuclear weapons programme. Iran could view Russia's blatant violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity as alarmist, given that security guarantees extended by important members of international community – namely the US, the UK and the Russian Federation (endorsed by Budapest Memorandum of 1994) – have proven to be little more than worthless, and that international organizations, such as the UN, the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe**,** and even NATO, have so far failed to fully preseve Ukraine's territorial integrity (Adebahr 2014, n.p.). Seen from this perspective, finding a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear programme would, as Adebahr argues "be a much-needed counterpoint to the disregard of international norms and the decline of global governance mechanisms" (2014, n.p.).

Conclusion

Iran's attempt to conduct its diplomacy by proposing the above-mentioned five initiatives was a response to the international community's own diplomatic efforts opposing the development of Iran's nuclear programme. The resulting negotiations signal that Iran has pursued power politics in its negotiations with the P5+1 over the nuclear dispute. Iran appears to have so far handled the nuclear negotiations over the dispute shrewdly. In diplomatic exchanges, Iran has very often demanded concessions, suggesting that it will comply once those concessions are made. However, at the same time, Iran does not seem to have fulfilled the promises it has made. While seeking a policy of making more demands in a bid to evade any punishment, Iran has attempted to consume a great deal of time, which appears in line with its aim of making

progress on its nuclear weapons programme. These prolonged negotiations may allow the Iranian Government more time to cross the nuclear weapons threshold.

Compounded by a long history of colonial and semi-colonial rule and dominance, which Iran has endured over the centuries, regional structural conditions appear to have played a central role in encouraging Iran to pursue a possible nuclear weapons programme. When looking at Iran's history, the deterrence and security reasoning behind its attempt to acquire nuclear weapons may even appear more valid for Iran. Iran's more recent history further demonstrates how it has felt threatened by the West, thereby leading to an understanding of the reason why Iran distrusts the West and some of its neighbours. While further complicated by the web of strategic ties between the US and some regional actors, which may well work to Iran's detriment, regional security environments, characterized by disparities in power, seem to have created potential incentives for Tehran to acquire nuclear weapons in an attempt to enhance its deterrent capacity. Surrounded by nuclear-armed powers from every direction as well as the precarious nature of Middle Eastern politics, which would likely remain that way for the unforeseeable future, Iran finds itself vulnerable to external threats facing the country.

Iran's view of a nuclear-armed Pakistan as a source of increasing concern does not seem to serve as a welcome geopolitical development for Tehran. Pakistan's expanding nuclear arsenal is an alarming development for the geopolitical balance in Iran's proximity, thereby prompting Iran into correcting

the nuclear imbalance by developing its own nuclear arsenal in a bid to counter a future Pakistani threat. Flanked by a fragile nuclear-armed state with strong Sunni fundamentalist currents, Iran has found itself encountering Pakistan, armed with nuclear weapons, which has placed Iran in a position of protracted strategic discomfort. Having greater anxieties stemming from Pakistan's special relations with Iran's rival, Saudi Arabia, Iran's fear of living in the shadow of a nuclear-armed Pakistan appears to have been one of the motivations behind its nuclear weapons ambitions.

While perceiving a nuclear-armed Israel as a geopolitical and military rival, Iran's attempt to pursue a nuclear weapons capability may well justify its perception of threat. Compounded by threats of pre-emptive attacks against Iran's nuclear facilities, Israel's potent nuclear arsenal is seen by Iran as a source of insecurity and a direct threat to Iran's national security interests. As Iran's nuclear efforts progress, this rivalry largely fueled by ideology seems to have intensified. While being largely a distant affair conducted by proxies such as Hezbollah, Iran's hostility towards Israel and vice versa may well stem from geopolitical shifts underpinning Iran's regional status. However, regardless of the politics and belligerent rhetoric, it may make geostrategic sense for Iran and Israel to disregard their persisting animosities with a view to considering the prospect of detente and addressing their common concerns in the region. Their cooperation could be particularly beneficial when the region is under threat from Sunni jihadists who loathe Jews and Shiites alike. Iran's desire to develop a nuclear weapons capability may well be aimed at seeking greater parity with Israel, which enjoys conventional and nuclear superiority in the region.

Viewing regional enmity towards Iran solely through the lens of a Shia-Sunni divide may not have presented sufficient evidence to explain Iran's ambitions to continue its nuclear programme. The security architecture of the Persian Gulf and Tehran's evolving relationship with Washington appear to have played a pivotal role in Iran's nuclear calculations. While being aware of US vital interests in the Middle East, Iran may perceive security in this rapidly changing regional strategic environment, which has long been influenced by the world's sole superpower, as a positive-sum game (a win-win scenario) in which Iran may need to secure its national interests by advancing a win-win game, thereby seeking a balance of security between Tehran and Washington. Hostile bilateral relations between Iran and the US, which have become crucial factors in defining Tehran's security stance, Washington's antagonistic and belligerent position (e.g. unilateral use of military force) and its extensive military presence in Iran's neighbourhood could conjure up the memories of the 1953 American-orchestrated coup in the minds of Iranian political leaders. Despite Washington's reluctance to reconcile itself to the futility of restraining Iran's nuclear ambitions, Iran's view of the US as an existential threat seems to compel Tehran to devise a strategy that could rest on crafting a viable nuclear deterrent capability. While Iran's nuclear ambitions derive, in large part, from viewing the US as potential threat, President Bush's denunciation of Iran as a member of 'axis of evil' has aggravated Iran's strategic concerns and further stoked its drive to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Perceiving itself as being encircled by US military forces and as having few regional allies, which could contribute to further exposure of its vulnerability, Iran has found itself so

defenceless in the face of such security challenges that may well be ameliorated by Iran's incorporation of nuclear weapons as strategic components of national defence policies. Despite the fact that the emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran does not appear a foregone conclusion for Washington, Iran's efforts to push ahead with the development of a defensive nuclear weapons deterrent could highlight its sense of insecurity against the growing presence of US forces in the Persian Gulf.

Furthermore, while being established and proclaimed by the West, the concept of world order underpinning the modern era appears to have been altered by the emergence of such existing regional crises as a self-declared caliphate across Iraq and Syria, Ukraine's current scenario and likely paralysis of Afghanistan's young democracy. Due primarily to the absence of an effective mechanism in place, such order seems to be in crisis. While the creation of an international order within the various regions appears to be a remote possibility, Iran might find itself in a serious position that may well require it to encounter the shifting geopolitical calculus of the region by developing its nuclear deterrent for its own security, which Iran might not achieve otherwise.

Finally, from a theoretical perspective, while Liberal Internationalism can help explain why members of the international community cooperate through organizations and law for disarmament purposes, Realism provides a more powerful means of explaining Iran's desire to continue its nuclear programme despite the strong opposition of important members of the international community. This might be so because security policies in the Middle East may

be explained better by Realism than Liberal Internationalism since this particular region has no strong security organizations in place (e.g. NATO) and does not manifest compatible values and complex economic interdependence. Rather, these policies better reflect a mainly anarchical self-help system. Here, then, Realism not only helps to explain why Iran continues to develop its nuclear programme in the face of the international community's strong objections, but also helps to explain why Israel and the US remain hostile to Iran and its role in the region. Realism does not fully explain, however, how powerful states, such as the US, Israel, and Iran, can evade the security dilemma resulting from a regional arms race.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF A NUCLEAR-ARMED IRAN

While the advent of Iran's nuclear weapons programme remains hypothetical for the present moment, Iran's crossing of the nuclear arms Rubicon would have serious implications for the NPT regime and the balance of power in the region. It could also trigger direct military action from Israel and the US. This situation places Iran on the horns of a security dilemma, from which it is unlikely to escape in the near and medium terms.

Undermining the NPT Regime

A nuclear-armed Iran would represent a serious challenge to the credibility of the NPT regime which, comprising a set of cohesive agreements, norms, institutions and patterns of behaviour, seeks to maintain international peace and security through preventing further proliferation of nuclear weapons (Ford 2012: 177). As a long-standing member of the NPT, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would generate deep misgivings about the regime while setting a precedent for other nuclear aspirants. Any breach of the NPT, or a withdrawal from it, by Iran could function as a model for other states in the region and as a catalyst for the demise of the NPT regime itself (Chubin 2006: 124).

Before that situation occurred, signatories to the NPT, particularly non-nuclear-armed states, such as Japan, South Africa, Argentina, Mexico, Canada, Australia, and Egypt, would attempt to strengthen aspects of the NPT regime. Signatories would likely agree on certain rules limiting the provision of nuclear assistance for those states that are not in full compliance with NPT requirements. It may also be possible that NPT signatories will call for rules

resulting in states no longer being entitled to develop indigenous nuclear capabilities, including those in uranium enrichment and plutonium separation fields currently under national control. Yet any efforts to strengthen NPT rules would involve intense negotiations between the nuclear and non-nuclear states, particularly over crucial trade-offs. Such negotiation would also offer non-nuclear states an opportunity to hold to account the US and other nuclear-armed states for their failure to disarm and, thereby, their failure to diminish the perceived value of nuclear weapons. Beyond the tensions between nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-armed states, deep divisions among NPT signatories over the future of nuclear industries will become apparent, particularly as Washington and other like-minded states seek to prevent further nuclear proliferation (Perkovich & Manzanero 2005: 196, 197, 198). Significant here is that fundamental tenet of Washington's policy towards Iran, which is based upon the resolute effort to prevent Iran from weaponizing its nuclear programme as a means of precluding nuclear proliferation throughout the Middle East region and the attendant collapse of the NPT regime (Dunn 2007: 32).

A nuclear-armed Iran would thus provide a salient lesson to those policymakers and analysts of world affairs who disregard or minimize the difficulties associated with enforcing compliance with the NPT's key provisions. In this sense, a nuclear-armed Iran would, as Ford argues, "represent the collapse of the non-proliferation regime into a merely hortatory system — a scheme of unenforceable virtue ethics in an environment that still seems to present participants with powerful incentives for misbehaviour" (2012: 179). Moreover, the emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran could produce something of a chain-

reaction effect spurring further nuclear proliferation in the immediate region. States within the region — namely Turkey and Saudi Arabia — that hitherto took shelter under the US nuclear umbrella may no longer feel adequately secure from an Iranian attack and may be tempted into responding to a nuclear-armed Iran by following suit (Inbar 2006: 89).

Regional Arms Race

In addition to undermining the NPT regime, a nuclear-armed Iran would lead to greater tension between the Islamic regime and its neighbours, particularly conservative Sunni regimes, generate greater instability in the wider Middle East, and raise the security stakes for regional states. A nuclear-armed Iran could spark a regional arms race, igniting what NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer described in January 2009 as a "nuclear domino effect" in the Middle East as "the nuclear proliferation regime is eroding before us" (Brunnstrom 2009, n.p.). States vulnerable to the domino effect include Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt. Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would likely compel Riyadh, Ankara, and Cairo to acquire their own nuclear weapons (Shavit 2012, n.p.). Consequently, a multipolar nuclear arena will, as Shavit argues, "be established in the most volatile region on earth" (2012, n.p.).

Given its proximity to, and acrimonious rivalry with, Iran, Saudi Arabia may be the most likely potential proliferator, though Turkey and Egypt have been involved in balancing against Persian ambitions. Even today, both Turkey and Egypt exhibit pretensions to regional leadership and their political leaders seem to be under no illusions that Iran's rise would present regional challenges. Iran's success in acquiring a nuclear weapons capability and asserting regional

leadership for itself may well encourage these states to pursue Iran's nuclear path (Ford 2012: 175). As Barack Obama noted in a March 2012 interview, a number of regional states that do not enjoy their own nuclear weapons capabilities would not tolerate Iran's possession of nuclear weapons. The risks of an Iran acquiring nuclear weapons that then, as Obama asserts, "leads to a free-for-all in the Middle East is something that I think would be very dangerous for the world" (Goldberg 2012, n.p.). And understandably so, the threat of proliferation would only intensify the already unstable Middle Eastern region.

Although no concrete evidence exists indicating Saudi Arabia has undertaken a quest for nuclear weapons, some analysts argue that Riyadh possesses both the strategic incentive and the financial capacity to pursue a nuclear-weapons capability. Whilst being a dominant actor in the global energy market, Saudi Arabia could be threatened by powerful neighbours (Bahgat 2011: 33). A nuclear-armed Iran may pose the greatest threat to Saudi Arabia due to current rivalry between them and, as such, the Saudis appear to have had the strongest security motive to seek a nuclear weapons deterrent capability. Despite its demand for the creation of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the region, Saudi Arabia has frequently warned that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons might force it into following suit (Miklos 2013, n.p.). In June 2011, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal declared that Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would coerce Saudi Arabia into pursuing policies that might lead to indescribable and dramatic consequences. He added that it would not possible for Saudi Arabia to live in a situation where Tehran enjoys an arsenal of nuclear weapons, whereas Riyadh lacks a nuclear weapons deterrent capability. Any

attempt by Iran to build nuclear weapons would be unacceptable to Saudi Arabia and therefore compel it to follow suit (Burke 2011, n.p.). Saudi Arabia's major concern is that Iran would likely feel encouraged to target the Kingdom's regional interests as well as domestic politics by using proxies without being fearful of conventional retaliation, against which Iran's nuclear capabilities could provide protection (Joshi & Stephens 2013: 11). Consequently, Saudi Arabia's acquisition of nuclear weapons may well work strategically to alleviate Saudi insecurities vis-a-vis Iran's nuclear weapons (Russell 2005: 32). The most likely scenario could point to the use of Pakistani nuclear weapons stationed on Saudi soil. According to Bruce Riedel, a former senior CIA Analyst, the two states today "have an unacknowledged nuclear partnership to provide the kingdom with nuclear deterrent on short notice if ever needed" (2008, n.p.).

Egypt might embark upon developing a nuclear weapons capability owing to immense internal pressure to respond to a nuclear-armed Iran. Egypt's bureaucratic structures might view Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons as an instrument to enhance their own domestic power at the expense of opposition forces and, hence, a nuclear-armed Iran would provide Cairo with a plausible security rationale to proceed with a nuclear weapons programme (Ladha 2012: 4). Egypt has displayed a strong interest in developing nuclear technologies in the past. For example, in 2005, Egypt was found to be in violation of its agreement with the Agency for doing so (International Atomic Energy Agency 2005a: 1, 2). On the other hand, in the event of Iran's crossing the nuclear weapons Rubicon, any Egyptian restraint could be short-lived. Egypt might begin its own nuclear programme or fully support Saudi Arabia's efforts to seek

parity with Tehran. The effect of a nuclear-armed Iran on Egypt may well not be restricted to domestic reputational costs, given that the balance of power would most likely then tilt significantly in Iran's favour (Joshi & Stephens 2013: 52, 53).

With a long history of rivalry with Iran, Turkey might also feel threatened by a nuclear-armed Iran. Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, may pose some direct and indirect risks to Turkish security interests. Turkish strategists have recently contemplated developing a nuclear weapons deterrent capacity that might go beyond its alliance arrangements with the West. This could largely stem from the Turkish concern about the reliability of commitments made by both the US and NATO to Turkey's defence. However, Turkey's choice to become a nuclear armed-state will greatly depend on a scenario where there would be an acute deterioration in the quality of its defence collaboration with its key allies, leaving it alone to the face of a nuclear-armed Iran in a perilous geostrategic setting (Lesser 2005: 89, 90).

However, the credibility of this widely-accepted, but seldom tested, assumption — namely that a nuclear-armed Iran would most likely further destabilize the entire Middle East — deserves closer scrutiny. The question is whether key states in the region have the motivation, resources and capabilities to pursue a nuclear-weapons capability. Some might argue that it is less likely that such a development will trigger a nuclear arms race in the region. Given the experience of the past six decades, the rise of a new security threat does not seem to have been an adequate condition for states to embark on developing a nuclear weapons programme (Bahgat 2011: 28). The historical record suggests that states may hold back even when their rivals acquired nuclear weapons.

For example, the PRC's pursuit of nuclear weapons in the 1960s triggered fears that Japan would most likely follow suit, but approximately half a century later Japan remains a non-nuclear state. Another instance is Israel, believed to possess over 200 nuclear weapons, and its large neighbour, Egypt, which has lost four wars against Israel but has not yet followed its lead (Lindsay & Takeyh 2010: 39).

Given the absence of domestic nuclear infrastructure and knowledge base, Saudi Arabia may not be able to carry out a crash programme. Moreover, while being an NPT state and having many foreign investors and US military on its territory, the Kingdom could face great difficulty supporting such a programme (Miklos 2013, n.p.). The work of Kahl et al. emphasizes that "the prospects of Saudi reactive proliferation are lower than the conventional wisdom suggests" (2013: 5). The only option may be left for the Saudis is to buy nuclear weapons from Pakistan. Such a development seems less likely, given that Pakistan needs its entire nuclear arsenal to deter its hostile nuclear-armed neighbour, India. Further to that, any Pakistani attempt to sell nuclear weapons to the Saudis would most likely generate global condemnation of Islamabad, leaving it a pariah state surrounded by nuclear foes. Saudi Arabia would probably lose a large degree of US support should it attempt to acquire nuclear weapons. It might also expose itself to an Israeli airstrike (Miklos 2013, n.p.). Moreover, in the event of a clandestine nuclear deal between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, there would be significant security and economic disincentives to the Saudis. These include the prospect of deteriorating Saudi security environment, severing strategic ties with Washington, harming the country's reputation and

subjecting the Kingdom to possible sanctions. Such developments would likely dissuade the Saudis from acquiring nuclear weapons (Kahl, Dalton & Irvine 2013: 5).

There would also be significant strategic reasons for Islamabad to refrain from an illicit transfer of nuclear weapons. Pakistan cannot afford to direct its energies away from India by offering a nuclear guarantee to the Saudis (Kahl et al. 2013: 6). The most likely scenario for the Saudis is to seek protection under the US nuclear umbrella, given that the Arab states of the Persian Gulf are long accustomed to relying on foreign powers for their security needs (Schake & Yaphe 2001: 28), though such assurances from the US warrant scrutiny. Saudi Arabia's disappointment with the inability or reluctance of its main security partner to resolve critical issues, such as the Syrian civil war, could lead the Kingdom to perceive this as part of a broader trend of US retrenchment from the Middle East after recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this context, a nuclear-armed Iran might erode, to a greater extent, the Kingdom's trust in Washington's reliability (Schake & Yaphe 2001: 30).

In technological terms, Egypt appears to lack a covert nuclear weapons capability. Since the departure of Hosni Mubarak in early 2011, it remains uncertain that Egypt would make investments in nuclear energy in the future (Ladha 2012: 4). Egypt does not seem to enjoy the financial resources, nuclear infrastructure, or motive to develop a secret nuclear weapons programme, given that its nuclear facilities have been under IAEA safeguards (Reiss 2010: 3). As a signatory of the NPT, Egypt appears to have remained compliant with non-

proliferation since the Treaty's establishment and it seems unlikely that Cairo will exit (Reiss 2010: 3). Any Egyptian attempt to develop a secret nuclear weapons programme would most likely entail great political consequences for Egypt, given that such a venture could lead Washington to sever its annual financial support to Cairo. It is also likely that Egypt would lose its credibility in the eyes of its fellow African states (Khaitous 2007, n.p.). Furthermore, Egypt's possible attempt to seek a 'breakout' capability could be target of an Israeli pre-emptive airstrike, which have proven effective in the past by destroying Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981 and Syria's reactor in 2007. There is no reason to anticipate that Israel would, as Reiss argues, "be willing to give Egypt a pass, and no reason that Egypt would not already know that" (2010: 3).

Direct Military Action

After the failures of many diplomatic initiatives and various forms of restrictive measures to derail Iran from its nuclear path, Israel and the US might contemplate devising a coherent strategy to deter Iran in a future setting where Tehran could decide to use its nuclear weapons capabilities to its geopolitical advantage. However, it is not entirely clear as to how Tel Aviv and Washington will react to the emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran.

Israel

Israel possesses a fully-integrated arsenal of nuclear weapons based upon the traditional triad of airborne, land-based, and sea-based delivery systems, including a submarine-based second strike nuclear capability. Israel has pursued a policy of nuclear ambiguity even prior to its acquisition of an

operational nuclear weapons capability in the 1960s (Aronson 2006: 104, 105). Since the establishment of the State of Israel, pre-emptive and preventive measures have become a central part of security discourse in Israel (Brom 2005: 133). Israel's strategy has been shaped by a belief that any foe developing a nuclear weapons capability is considered an existential threat that needs to be eliminated. After Prime Minister Menachem Begin ordered air strikes against Iraq's Osirak nuclear facility in 1981, leading to the complete destruction of the site, this belief in preventive counter-proliferation came to be known as the Begin Doctrine (Adamsky 2012, n.p.). A nuclear-armed Iran would represent a major defeat for the Begin Doctrine.

Israel's fear of a nuclear-armed Iran develops at least in four discrete forms, with a various set of sources. These four distinct forms are: (i) fear of annihilation; (ii) fear of a more serious security environment; (iii) fear of socioeconomic challenges; and (iv) fear of a challenge to founding principles of Israel (Eiran & Malin 2013: 78). Tel Aviv generally considers these fears as cumulative, rather than as separate. In fact, the willingness of most Israelis to support their leaders' position towards Iran stems from these four fears (ibid.). According to a poll, conducted in March 2012 by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 77 percent of Israelis perceive Iran as an existential threat. This is so because many Israelis are cognizant of the annihilationist declarations of the Islamic regime (ibid). Equally important, the majority of Israeli leaders conceive of the Iranian threat by linking it with the Holocaust. In the words of Netanyahu, "(t)he murderous hatred against the Jews has not passed from the world, but it simply was replaced by murderous hatred against the Jewish state"

(Yagna, Lis, Nesher & Aderet 2013, n.p.). He added that the Islamic regime has made no secret of its glaring intention to obliterate the State of Israel by using all possible means to accomplish this goal. According to Netanyahu, what appears to have changed is Israel's ability to defend itself by itself (ibid.). Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, would also pose a challenge to Israel's founding myth. Some Israeli analysts have noted that secular Zionism's doctrine of providing a sanctuary for Jews might be undermined by the potential of an Iranian nuclear attack. As Sneh, a former Deputy Defence Minister, described, the Islamic regime's success in developing nuclear weapons capacities would most likely halt Jewish immigration into Israel and prompt many Israelis (particularly technological elite) to leave Israel. This would, as Sneh noted, "be the end of the Zionist dream" (Machover 2008, n.p.). In his view, the prospect of a hostile nuclear-armed Iran could trigger an exodus of Jews from Israel (ibid.). Such various fears, however, might hold contradictions that reflect Israel's internal divisions over the necessary response to Iran's possible acquisition of nuclear weapons.

The Israeli leadership has framed Iran's strategic threats by demonstrating the various ways that a nuclear-armed Iran would trigger adverse changes in Israel's immediate strategic environment. Many Israeli analysts maintain that a nuclear-armed Iran would be emboldened by the cover offered by this nuclear deterrent to attempt to project its power and expand its influence in the Persian Gulf and the Levant. In such a situation, Iran would probably persuade smaller neighbours to climb aboard the Iranian bandwagon in order to confront Israel with a more aggressive regional alliance (Eiran & Malin 2013: 80).

Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would likely induce an adverse socio-economic effect on Israel. According to Ariav, former Finance Ministry director general, the alternative, which also carries a price, needs to be taken into consideration prior to debating the implications of a military confrontation with Iran. A nuclear-armed Iran, as Ariav argues, "involves considerable economic cost to Israel, from its effect on our economic rating to large security outlays" (Bassok & Amit 2012, n.p). There is a deep concern on the part of the Israelis that Iran's possession of nuclear weapons may hamper the ability of the State of Israel to attract foreign direct investment (Eiran & Malin 2013: 81).

The key question here is whether or not a nuclear-armed Iran would use its nuclear weapons against Israel. A large majority of Israelis believe that this is not an issue that needs to be put to the test. However, Israel asserts that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would dramatically change Israel's strategic landscape by prompting a regional nuclear arms race, boosting Iran's position as a nuclear power, and allowing the Islamic regime to escalate its destabilizing power projection under the shield of nuclear deterrence (Joshi & Stephens 2013: 77). Understandably, Israel remains apprehensive of a domino effect in the region should Iran acquire nuclear weapons.

The question arises as to how Israel might deal with a nuclear-armed Iran. Conceptually, such measures as military pre-emption, deterrence, and seeking formal security guarantees from the US or NATO may be taken into consideration (Yaphe & Lutes 2005: 17). The prospect of Israel's acquisition of NATO membership may well serve as an additional layer of security for Tel Aviv

(Tertrais 2011: 51). Israel perceives pre-emptive military actions to be its most certain and realistic option, though some Israeli pro-Likud scholars argue that it would be too late to take a *casus belli* pre-emptive and preventive measures once Iran has crossed the nuclear weapons threshold (Yaphe & Lutes 2005: 17). Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would probably have major ramifications on Israel's doctrine and would influence the evolution of its nuclear arsenal. Israel's regional nuclear monopoly would also be ended with Iran's entry to the nuclear club, thereby putting Israel's policy of nuclear ambiguity under pressure. According to Jervis's model of offence-defence-based calculations:

> Any declaration of nuclear capabilities on the part of Iran should be answered by the Israeli acknowledgement of its own nuclear deterrent forces and second strike delivery systems. In this way, Israel raises the uncertainty involved in engaging in conflict so high that Iran is unlikely to take the risk of attacking the Jewish state since even a complete strike against all known Israeli military and civilian targets could not guarantee non-retaliation (Whyte 2011: 152).

Therefore, it seems likely that Israel will shift from its opaque policy on nuclear weapons to a more explicit stance. A move to quasi-public acknowledgment might be designed to function as a deterrent vis-a-vis Iran (Chubin 2006: 132).

The prospect of a regional arms race caused by Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would, however, probably be regarded as a nuclear nightmare for Israel (Bonab 2009: 161). Iran might maintain ambiguity about its nuclear weapons capabilities without declaring itself a nuclear-armed state, though its withdrawal from the NPT would present Israel with some very difficult decisions. A declaration on the part of Israel might direct regional condemnation toward

Tel Aviv and away from Tehran. Nevertheless, a situation where both Israel and Iran would maintain ambiguity about their nuclear weapons capabilities might turn out to be unstable over the longer term (Reardon 2012: 96, 97).

This description of Israeli strategic thinking warrants closer scrutiny, however. Israel's development of a nuclear weapons capability is based upon logic of deterrence and the use of nuclear weapons as a last resort when facing an existential threat. This capability was referred to as the Samson Option, which was named after the Jewish biblical hero. According to this Samson Option, a nuclear-armed adversary could be deterred. In contrast, the Begin Doctrine rejects the idea of stability based upon MAD and appears to have diverged markedly from a deterrence–oriented nuclear policy of the Samson Option (Adamsky 2012, n.p.). Furthermore, the secrecy surrounding Israel's nuclear policy may twist the idea of the Sampson option as Israel's policy of ambiguity has apparently been aimed at disguising not only the quantity and types of weapons, but also the doctrine of nuclear use and deployment, leading Israel's nuclear policy to be full of paradoxes (Maoz 2003: 71).

United States

Given the volatile and complex political dynamics of the region, this spread of nuclear weapons would represent a significant threat to US interests in the region. The memories of the 1973 oil crisis appear to have resulted in Washington's quest to maintain hegemony and the physical control of fossil fuel in the Middle East. In this respect, it is important to recall the 1980 Carter Doctrine and the 2006 *US National Security Strategy* in relation with the Middle East. The Carter Doctrine was designed specifically to secure oil resources in

the greater Persian Gulf region, which contains more than two-thirds of the world's exportable oil. As outlined in the Doctrine, Washington's access to oilfields in the Persian Gulf was of vital importance to the strength of its economy and therefore any attempt to obstruct such access would be regarded as an attack on Washington's vital interests and hence would be dealt with by every means at its disposal, including military force. To execute this policy, Washington established a permanent US naval presence in the Persian Gulf, particularly around the Arabian Peninsula. All those Presidents succeeding Carter have endorsed the basic principles of the Doctrine, ensuring that oil resources must not fall under the control of hostile forces (ibid.). The 2006 *US National Security Strategy* also points to the following four US interests in the region: (i) securing the supply of oil and gas; (ii) eliminating any threat from terrorist organizations; (iii) preventing the spread of WMD; and (iv) preserving Israel's existence and military superiority in the region (The White House 2006: 8,18, 19, 26).

Given this Doctrine and strategy, any attempt by Iran to acquire nuclear weapons would be incompatible with US interests in the region. Notably, there are far more fossil fuel deposits on the Arabian Peninsula than those in Iran and, consequently, the US would probably need to be more apprehensive about any undesirable change within the Arab world that might be detrimental to the West. For example, should the Saudis acquire nuclear weapons, it would no longer need the US military presence on its soil for security purposes. Therefore, it may be possible for the Saudis to limit or even stop its energy relations with the West and forge closer ties with other countries such as the

PRC and the Russian Federation, whose strategic interests in the Middle East appear to have been at odds with those of Washington. On the other hand, Washington's ambition to maintain Israel's existence and military pre-eminence, to which predominantly Sunni Arabs have harboured a deep-seated animosity, could raise apprehensions within Western countries of Arabs' possible attempts to acquire nuclear weapons. The acquisition of nuclear weapons by any Arab state would likely undermine Israel's military superiority that the US has been determined to maintain. It remains to be seen how the US would manage the arduous task of averting an arms race in the region.

Washington's reaction to Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons will prove crucial to Iran's future. The challenge presented by a nuclear-armed Iran has become one of the most important issues in US foreign policy. Equally important, a nuclear weapons state of Iran would likely be the most significant security challenge facing Washington in this millennium. Besides being one of the most pressing foreign policy issues for Washington, a nuclear-armed Iran might further destabilize an already unsettled region, thereby putting at risk US interests. If Iran crosses the nuclear weapons Rubicon, the US will probably alter its Middle East policy, refocusing on preventing Iran's possible use of nuclear weapons (Kamp 2012: 167, 168). The US appears to have the ability to contain and deter a nuclear-armed Iran. According to Berman, in addition to shaping the geopolitical balance of power in the Middle East, the choices made by the US will also determine the long-term success of Washington's strategy in that region (2005:148). Success in this regard would likely entail a degree of constant attention to sustaining and enhancing US military capabilities. The

question of whether or not Washington has the financial resources and political determination to achieve this objective remains an open question, however (Ford 2012: 176).

As stated in the March 2006 *National Security Strategy*, the proliferation of nuclear weapons presents the greatest threat to US national security (The White House 2006: 19). Iran's emergence as a nuclear weapons state would likely pose a number of challenges for Washington. Given Washington's strenuous efforts to prevent its status in the Middle East from regressing, the US might, however, commit itself to obviating those challenges by pursuing an active policy of deterrence, containment and engagement along with the possible reassurance of its regional allies. Considering Washington's three strategic interests in the Persian Gulf – namely, securing the flow of fossil fuel onto global markets, eliminating any terrorist threat, and precluding any hostile state from dominating the region – the US may need to adopt a policy that aims to reduce the threat to key oil supply and counteract any Iranian attempt for regional hegemony (Hemmer 2007: 42).

Given that deterrence appears to have been the main element of the adopted strategy between nuclear-armed states, the strategy of nuclear deterrence could be effective in resolving the problem of a nuclear-armed Iran. The threat of annihilation stemming from a US retaliatory nuclear strike would undoubtedly be a powerful deterrent. As history shows both the USSR and the US understood the threat of nuclear reprisal made the use of such weapons problematic (Hemmer 2007: 46). The Islamic regime seems to have been rational and thereby subject to deterrence. As far as it can be judged from

outside, the Islamic regime has not displayed any sign of irrationality or unpredictability as yet. The Iranian leadership has indeed acted to its own advantage, prudently assessing the benefits and risks of its policies (Kamp 2012: 161). By virtue of being exceptionally corrupt, the Islamic regime is certainly inclined to act to its own material benefit and is keen to maintain its benefits and privileges. As Kamp notes, “such a regime is hardly suicidal” (2012: 161).

After the Second World War, the US forward-deployed nuclear weapons to assure allies of its permanent commitment to their security, thereby establishing a stable international order. However, since 1954, Washington has removed almost all of its tactical nuclear weapons from allied countries. Hence, there could be little chance that the US Senate would deem it prudent to endorse a mutual-defence treaty with its regional allies, such as Saudi Arabia, or that the US would likely consider deploying nuclear weapons to the region. This could well stem from the recent softening of its stress on the role of nuclear weapons in defence policy as well as the instability in the region. Moreover, due to the current financial climate, any extended deterrence toolbox may be confronted with congressional hurdles. On the other hand, those Arab Sheikdoms themselves might not agree to a formal defence treaty with Washington, or a highly noticeable US military footprint (Joshi & Stephens 2013: 98). With all that said, the US Secretary of State suggested in 2009 the creation of a security umbrella for regional allies in the event of Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons (Kugler 2009: 2).

Washington's extension of such an umbrella would likely be aimed at both deterring Iran and reassuring US partners in the region, though the extent of how much confidence these states would have in Washington after it has decided to consent to the previously "unacceptable," namely a nuclear weapons state of Iran, remains questionable. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked that the possibility of protecting Arab states in the Persian Gulf region under a defence umbrella might be perceived by some analysts as a tacit acceptance of the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran. To be precise, would these countries entrust their future security to the US? (Reiss 2010: 5). On the other hand, the crucial question is whether the traditional deterrence tools would be the right implements to assure Persian Gulf Arab allies of its commitment to containing threats from a nuclear-armed Iran. Given the complex politics among these Sheikdoms, Washington's commitment to the security of partners might need to extend far beyond the mutual-defence pacts and nuclear umbrellas. A crucial challenge for Washington in seeking to assure its Arab allies in the Persian Gulf region may highlight the ruling regimes' internal stability and legitimacy. Symbols of US commitment indicate that Washington could demonstrate its readiness to dedicate military forces to deter external threats. Nevertheless, these measures at best prevent such threats facing its Arab allies, while failing to deal with the internal sources of their insecurity (Joshi & Stephens 2013: 98).

The US deterrence policy might deserve closer scrutiny, however. Washington's measures designed to deter a potentially nuclear-armed Iran may possibly generate greater incentives for Iran to weaponize its programme if it

has not done so already. US efforts to boost its own defensive capabilities and those of its regional allies with a view to deterring Iran may specifically increase Iran's perception of regional threats, triggering a security dilemma (Reardon 2012: 148). The security dilemma emerges when one state's gain in security often unintentionally culminates in threatening that of others. The security dilemma plays a vital role in comprehending how in an anarchical international system states with primarily compatible objectives still wind up in competition and military confrontation (Jervis 1978: 169, 170). Even defensive measures, such as the deployment of missile defence system, might augment Tehran's threat perception. Iran may perhaps view US efforts to enhance its regional defence forces as preparations for Iran's reprisal after an impending assault. Any negative shift in the regional balance of power could provide Iran with a potential incentive to weaponize its programme (Reardon 2012: 148).

One option for Washington to evade the security dilemma might include increased cooperation between the US and Iran, aimed at implementing the highest possible security standards for Iran's nuclear devices. Such collaboration may sound contradictory but may not be unusual. For example, while having been apprehensive of the security standards of the vast USSR nuclear arsenal at the height of the Cold War, the US secretly proposed technical support to Moscow for greater safety of its nuclear weapons (Kamp 2012: 167). Similarly, being faced with a nuclear-armed Iran, the US would likely subordinate its political uncertainties and collaborate, at least in the field of warhead security, with the Iranian Government that it significantly disdains (Kamp 2012: 168).

Washington's perception of a nuclear-armed Iran as a potential threat might be subject to closer scrutiny too. Given the disparities between the massive US nuclear arsenal and Iran's probable small nuclear inventory, the utility of nuclear weapons by Iran could be open to question. The US often tended to overestimate the USSR's military capabilities by depicting that state as a greater threat that it really was (Williams 2010: 34). Such thoughts did fuel a greater degree of hostility than the reality of situation on the ground. Although Iran and the US have a history of cooperation and animosity similar to that of the USSR and the US, Iran is a poor comparison to the USSR in terms of military capabilities, and Washington would most likely be capable of containing Iran by applying deterrent philosophies as it did vis-a-vis the USSR (Sagan & Waltz 2003: 6). As Eisenstadt described, for the near term, the US would, however, remain the primary state when it comes to devising a response to the likely rise of a nuclear-armed Iran as well as to attaining security in a proliferated region (2005: 250). Taking everything into account, it appears highly unlikely that a nuclear-armed Iran will pose a danger analogous to that demonstrated by the USSR. Washington may well reflect on fundamentally shifting from its nuclear policy by pursuing a line of thinking suggested by Kenneth Waltz that essentially permits Iran to attain nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons, as Waltz argues, augment international stability by excessively raising the cost of war (Sagan & Waltz 2003: 7, 8). Notwithstanding its quest for security and perhaps regional leadership or international prestige, Iran would likely find itself incapable of effectively using nuclear weapons against the US or its allies (e.g. Israel) and, further to this, the threat of nuclear reprisal would

dissuade Iran from transferring such WMD to terrorist organizations (Williams 2010: 34).

Significantly, one aspect of Washington's stance vis-a-vis a nuclear-weapons state of Iran could be associated with the physical control of the fossil fuel supplies. The security of oil flow through the Strait of Hormuz has been the bedrock of US foreign policy for over 50 years. While producing much of the world oil, the Middle East is regarded as the decisive node in the global economy. Today, geopolitics, as Lodgaard notes, "is first and foremost about energy supply and security" (2006: 115, 116). The US has a number military bases in the Middle East region in order to hold the area in a tight military grip. Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, could, however, question the credibility of American military supremacy in that part of the world (Lodgaard 2006: 116). According to Hemmer, Washington should be fully aware of the challenges that Iran, in possession of nuclear weapons, would pose. Such challenges facing US interests in the region could be immense and long-lasting (2007: 52). Furthermore, a nuclear-armed Iran could significantly disturb the international order more than Pakistan, North Korea, India, and Israel. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would likely strain NATO and could lead the US and other NATO partners to have differences in responses to a nuclear-armed Iran (Perkovich & Manzanero 2005: 177). Given the contiguous border between Iran and NATO-member Turkey, a nuclear-armed Iran would have profound, long-term and broad consequences for the key roles and missions of NATO. Although Article V may be brought into play to deter and defend against a possible Iranian threat or nuclear blackmail, any NATO's attempt to launch

operations in Iran's neighbourhood (Middle East and Central Asia) might face challenges due to Iran's nuclear weapons ability to project power (Tertrais 2011: 45, 46).

In the end, the US might need to reassert its interests in the region by explicitly declaring a number of red lines beyond which a nuclear-weapons state of Iran could not encroach. These include no use or transfer of nuclear weapons to third parties as well as no initiation of conventional war and subversive activities against other regional states. In the event of crossing any of these red lines, Washington would respond with military force, including the possible use of nuclear weapons. Undoubtedly, the articulation of such red lines could, as Reiss suggests, "provide a synthetic sense of security and the feeling of some control over a situation that has clearly gone badly" (2010: 7). The use of red lines appears to have been effective in certain circumstances. However, opponents of this view might argue that Iran without nuclear weapons has already involved in some subversive activities and Washington has not responded very forcefully or even militarily. It might raise the question why a nuclear-armed Iran would worry excessively about the possible US reaction. In contrast, proponents of this view may argue that this kind of rhetorical muscle-flexing would probably immunize them from criticism for being exceedingly fatalistic or defeatist on the subject of precluding Iran's nuclear ambitions (Reiss 2010: 7).

As expected, a forward-looking containment strategy on the part of US could anticipate the possibility of a nuclear-armed Iran, thereby putting down the

foundation for containing Iran. Such a strategy would particularly focus on deterring Iran's possible use of nuclear weapons and denying it any political or military gains from its nuclear weapons capabilities. Washington's strategy of deterrence and containment might deserve a serious critique. The US appears to have pursued this strategy under the pretext of the containment of threat to its interests in an attempt to prevent any nation from posing a challenge to Washington's hegemony in the region. With no external checks on its power since the collapse of the USSR, Washington would most likely exert far more pressure on Iran that has been somewhat capable of operating outside its sphere of influence. Perhaps, the rationale behind these pressures could be the preclusion of monopolization of the hydrocarbon resources by any unfriendly regional power. Moreover, in order to preserve its hegemonic status, Washington has to dominate the geo-strategically important Persian Gulf and Middle East. It seems less likely that such task will be materialized without containing Iran's possible quest for regional pre-eminence through the acquisition of nuclear weapons. By the same token, testing the maxim of the policy of 'divide and rule,' it might make sense to witness a powerful Shia country in the heart of Middle East acting as a counterbalance to the predominantly Sunni states in the greater Middle East. With Islam being the fastest growing religion in the world, it may well be in the best interest of the Christian world to maintain its supremacy by exploiting the chasms within Islam. Shia Iran, in possession of nuclear weapons, may well be a win-win situation and balance out the asymmetries in demography between the Shias and the Sunnis, thereby working to the benefits of the predominantly Christian West.

Iran's Security Dilemma

Iran's tendency to preserve its own security by maximizing its power relative to other regional states could inevitably lead to the security dilemma. The essence of the dilemma, as Mearsheimer argues, "is that the measures a state takes to increase its own security usually decrease the security of other states" (2001: 36). Consequently, states find it difficult to boost their own chances of survival without jeopardizing the survival of other states (Mearsheimer 2001: 36). However, one might be questioning whether the effects of security dilemma could be prevailed without fundamentally altering the structure of international politics so that a nuclear-armed Iran may evade this dilemma. While Realism is useful for explaining Iran's current intransigence, International Relations theory cannot offer much in the way of assistance to concerned policymakers wishing to avoid the security dilemma. Theory helps us to understand and explain, but it cannot tell us how to act.

In the event of crossing the nuclear weapons Rubicon, Iran might encounter a dilemma as to whether to declare its nuclear weapons capability or to adopt a policy of ambiguity. In the event of publicizing its nuclear capacities in violation of the NPT, Iran may well be subject to harsher sanctions and renewed isolation from the international community. There would be significant economic, political, and strategic disincentives for Iran to consider should it decide to become a nuclear weapons-armed state. Iran's direct breach of its commitment to the NPT would likely harm the country's international standing and relations with the EU and the US, the mending of which seems to be of vital importance to the current Iranian Government.

Moreover, in the event of Iran's nuclear weaponization, it seems unlikely that the strategic outcomes will be all positive. Iran might encounter an uncertain and complex strategic calculus over the issue of weaponization. This calculus may be approached differently across Iran's domestic political actors. For example, many elites could be more prepared to accept the risks and costs of Iran's nuclear weaponization than others (Reardon 2012: 74). Iran's development of nuclear weapons might provoke a pre-emptive attack, and could elicit efforts on the part of other regional states to balance against a nuclear-weapons state of Iran through possibly the pursuit of nuclear weapons capabilities of their own (ibid.). It seems unlikely that Iran will expect a benign response from Israel, thereby finding itself in a confrontation with Israel that enjoys in military terms much greater conventional and nuclear capabilities. Furthermore, Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, would likely lead to a larger and long-term US military presence in the region. Contrary to some Iranian elites' belief that Iran could accomplish a level of international approval as a nuclear state, Iran's nuclear weaponization might well augment its diplomatic and economic isolation, especially with the Western world, at least in the short term (Reardon 2012: 74, 75). Given the extent to which the Islamic regime is unpopular with more than 80 percent of its population, acquiring a nuclear weapons capability may well encourage the regime to be more repressive of civil dissent (Noyes 2008: 90, 91).

Looking ahead, although the possession of nuclear weapons would likely underpin Iran's deterrent capabilities vis-à-vis any potential threat to its national security interests in the region, it seems unlikely that Iran's acquisition of

nuclear weapons will alter its central strategies and interests or enable Iran to reshape the geopolitical order of the Middle East. Furthermore, it appears unlikely that Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, will further destabilize the Middle East, given the substantial historical evidence suggesting that Iran has not harboured territorial ambitions or invaded other nations over the past two centuries. However, with Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability, a change of regime from within, or at least the fundamental reformation of the current Iranian Government, might offer the best guarantee for maintaining Iran's national interests without undermining the regional stability as well as the interests of other extra-regional actors, specifically the US. Deterrence planning on the part of Washington in the twenty-first century might, however, seem much more complex and situation specific in the event of Iran's success in becoming the world's tenth nuclear power. It may be possible that a more promising and inclusive approach could work towards the creation of some kind of a regionally-accepted security structure that would be more effective at mitigating the risks from both a nuclear-weapons state of Iran and the reactions of neighbouring states. In the case of the initiation of a regional framework for dialogue, Iran may well prefer being a part of new regional understanding. Members of the international community might even decide to learn to live with a nuclear-armed Iran rather choose a confrontational path with one, given that the current Iranian Government has adopted a far less uncompromising stance and begun to move forward towards a more conciliatory course in its foreign policy. In the final analysis, it seems that Iran's leaders continue to pursue a nuclear programme in the face of the international community's objections

because they believe a nuclear deterrent is an important part of Iran's quest for national security in a dangerous neighbourhood.

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Appendix 1

US and US-led United Nations sanctions against Iran, 2003 – 2012

Note: This chart is designed as a quick reference tool for major sanctions and is not comprehensive by any means.

Sanctioning agents	Date	Action	Objective
US Bush	7/3 /2003	Imposes sanctions under the Iran Non- proliferation Act of 2000 against six foreign companies for selling forbidden technology to Iran.	Prevent Iran from using the technology for its suspected nuclear weapons programme.
US Bush	4/7/2004	Invokes sanctions against 13 foreign companies under the Iran Non- proliferation Act of 2000.	Pressure those companies for assisting Iran in its nuclear and missile programmes.
US Bush	12/1/2004	Invokes sanctions against five more foreign companies under the Iran Non- proliferation Act of 2000.	Pressure those companies for assisting Iran in its nuclear and missile programmes.
US Bush	6/28/2005	Obstructs property of weapons of mass destruction proliferators and their supporters, including restrictions on Iran shipping.	Halt Iranian nuclear proliferation and development of missile delivery system.
US Bush	6/14/2006	Freezes assets of four Chinese companies for purportedly helping Iran's ballistic missile programme.	Pressure those companies for assisting Iran in its ballistic missile programme.
US Bush	9/8/2006	Bans Iranian Bank Saderat's access to US financial system.	Prevent Iran from transferring millions of dollars to terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah and Hamas.
US Bush	9/30/2006	Codifies sanctions against Iran, bans investment in Iran (amends ISA), provides financial and political assistant for democracy promotion, sanctions against	Force Iran to change domestic policies, punish Iran for support of terrorism, and support domestic and foreign pro-democracy groups.

		countries assisting Iran in nuclear proliferation and advanced weapons development, prevention of money laundering for weapons of mass destruction.	
UN	7/31/2006	Demands (under Security Council Resolution1696) Iran suspend uranium enrichment, or face possible economic, diplomatic sanctions.	Persuade Iran to cease nuclear proliferation.
UN	12/27/2006	Imposes (under Security Council Resolution 1737) sanctions on Iran for failure to halt uranium enrichment.	Persuade Iran to cease uranium enrichment, permit expanded inspection of nuclear facilities by the IAEA and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
UN	3/24/2007	Toughens (under Security Council Resolution1747) sanctions against Iran, adds arms embargo.	Persuade Iran to cease uranium enrichment, permit expanded inspection of nuclear facilities by the IAEA and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
US Bush	1/9/2007	Blocks US banks from handling transactions on behalf of the Iranian state-owned Bank Sepah	Prevent Iran from using US banks for the transactions, thereby compelling Iran to comply with UN Resolutions demanding that Iran ceases enriching uranium.
UN	3/3/2008	Tightens (under Security Council Resolution1803) restrictions on Iran's proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities, increases vigilance over	Persuade Iran to cease uranium enrichment, permit expanded inspection of nuclear facilities by the IAEA and to reach a

		Iranian banks, has states inspect cargo.	negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
UN	9/27/2008	Reaffirms (under Security Council Resolution 1835) earlier resolutions on Iranian uranium enrichment.	Persuade Iran to cease uranium enrichment, permit expanded inspection of nuclear facilities by the IAEA and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
UN	6/9/2010	Expands (under Security Council Resolution1929) an arms embargo and tightening restrictions on financial and shipping enterprises related to “proliferation sensitive activities.”	Pressure Iran’s civilian economy to persuade leaders to permanently to cease uranium enrichment, permit expanded inspection of nuclear facilities by the IAEA and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
US Obama	7/1/2010	Sanctions Act of 1996, mandatory sanctions with respect to financial institutions, imposition of sanctions on certain persons who are responsible for or complicit in human rights abuses, prohibition on procurement contracts with persons that export sensitive technology to Iran, harmonisation of criminal penalties for violations of sanctions, increased capacity for efforts to combat unlawful or terrorist financing, sanctions on firms that conduct any type of transaction with/in Iran’s energy sector.	Pressure Iran to change Iranian domestic policies, build a foundation for future multilateral sanctions, pressure Iran to permanently cease development of nuclear weapons and support of terrorism, pro-democracy groups.
US Obama	9/28/2010	Blocking property of certain persons with respect to serious	Highlight and punish Iranian Government’s human rights

		human rights abuses by the Government of Iran and taking certain other actions.	abuses, support opposition groups and civil liberties, pressure Iran to change domestic policies or encourage regime change, permanently to cease uranium enrichment and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
US Obama	12/31/2011	Blocking property of certain persons with respect to serious human rights abuses by the Government of Iran, provisions to sanction foreign banks that deal with Iran's Central Bank, etc.	Compel Iran to compromise on its nuclear programme.
US Obama	4/29/2011	Blocking property of certain persons with respect to human rights abuses in Syria.	Punish Iran's attempts to exert influence regionally and for supporting Assad Government in Syria.
US Obama	5/23/2011	Authorising the implementation of certain sanctions set forth in the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996, as amended.	Strengthen Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act (CISADA), compel Iran to permanently cease nuclear proliferation and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
US Obama	11/20/2011	Authorising the imposition of certain sanctions with respect to the provision of goods, services, technology, or support for Iran's energy and petrochemical sectors.	Strengthen CISADA, compel Iran to permanently cease nuclear proliferation and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
US Obama	7/30/2012	Authorising additional sanctions with respect to Iran.	Target Iran's oil revenues, compel to permanently cease

			nuclear proliferation and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
US Obama	8/1/2012	Expansion of multilateral sanctions regime with respect to Iran, expansion of sanctions relating to the energy sector of Iran and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by Iran, sanctions with respect to Iran's revolutionary guard corps, measures relating to human rights abuses in Iran, sanctions with respect to human rights abuses in Syria.	Highlight and punish Iranian government's human rights abuses, support opposition groups and civil liberties, pressure Iran to change domestic policies or encourage regime change, punish Iran for supporting Assad Government in Syria.
US Obama	2/5/2012	Blocking property of the Government of Iran and Iranian financial institutions.	Target Iran's overall economy, compel to permanently cease nuclear proliferation and to reach a negotiated agreement on its nuclear programme.
US Obama	4/23/2012	Blocking the property and suspending entry into the US of certain persons with respect to grave human rights abuses by the Governments of Iran and Syria via information technology.	Punish Iranian government's human rights abuses in regard to information technology, support pro-democracy groups.
US Obama	10/9/2012	Authorising the implementation of certain sanctions set forth in the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 and additional sanctions with respect to Iran.	Implements provisions contained in the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012. Highlight and punish Iranian Government's human rights abuses, support pro-democracy groups and civil liberties, pressure Iran to

			change domestic policies, punish Iran for supporting Assad Government in Syria.

(Sources: The Iran Project 2012; & Ataev 2013)