AN EVALUATION OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM FROM A POWER TRANSITION PERSPECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

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The Iranian nuclear issue erupted in 2002, when anti-governmental Iranians in exile disclosed two formerly unknown nuclear facilities in Natanz and Arak. Iran was a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. While there were other proliferation cases by states not party to the NPT, Iranian issue became the center of international concern. Despite incentives and sanctions by the international community, Iran did not suspend its nuclear program. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to explain why the international community is especially concerned about the Iranian nuclear program and why Iran is so insistent on its nuclear program. This study has adopted the power transition theory perspective to analyze the Iranian nuclear issue with reference to the change in Middle Eastern power balances in the post-9/11 period.

The fall of Iraq in 2003 has created a power vacuum in the Middle East. Given its high GDP levels, big population, and oil-rich territory, Iran regards itself as the potential power to fill this power vacuum. The USA has established a status-quo in the region, which serves its regional interests. The rise of Iran might mean a challenge to US interests in the region. An analysis of domestic systems differences, dissatisfaction with the international norms, membership to international and regional organizations not dominated by the USA and missile build-up has shown that Iran is dissatisfied with the US led status-quo. The nuclear program serves as a tool for Iran to challenge the US-led status-quo and become a leading regional power.

ÖZET

İRAN'IN NÜKLEER PROGRAMININ GÜÇ GEÇİŞİ KURAMINA GÖRE BİR İNCELEMESİ

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Iran'ın Nükleer Programı, Güç Geçişi Kuramı, Orta Doğu, Nükleer Silahsızlanma

İran nükleer krizi, 2002 yılında İran dışında yaşayan hükümet karşıtı bir grup İranlının Natanz ve Arak şehirlerinde daha önce bilinmeyen iki nükleer tesisi ifşasıyla ortaya çıkmıştır. İran, Nükleer Silahların Yayılmasını Önleme Anlaşması'na taraf bir ülkedir. Bu anlaşmaya taraf olmayan ve nükleer silah elde etmiş başka ülkeler olmasına karşın, uluslar arası camia özellikle İran'ın nükleer programına odaklanmıştır. İran kendisine sunulan teşvik paketleri ve getirilen yaptırımlara rağmen, nükleer programından vazgeçmemiştir. Bu araştırma, uluslar arası camianın neden özellikle İran'ın nükleer programına odaklandığını ve İran'ın neden nükleer program konusunda bu kadar ısrarcı olduğunu açıklamayı amaçlamıştır. Bu çalışmada İran nükleer krizi, güç geçişi kuramından yola çıkılarak Orta Doğu'da 11 Eylül sonrası gözlemlenen güç değişimleri çerçevesinde incelenmiştir.

2003 yılında Irak'ın devrilmesi, Orta Doğu'da bir güç boşluğu yaratmıştır. İran'ın yüksek gayrisafi yurtiçi hasılası, büyük nüfusu ve zengin petrol rezervleri, İran'ın bu güç boşluğunu kendisinin doldurabileceğine dair isteğini artırmıştır. ABD bölgede kendi çıkarlarına hizmet eden bölgesel bir statüko kurmuştur. İran'ın muhtemel yükselişi, ABD'nin bölgedeki çıkarlarına hizmet eden bu statükoya karşı bir tehdit oluşturmaktadır. İki ülkenin iç politik ve ekonomik sistemindeki farklılıklar, İran'ın uluslar arası normlardan duyduğu hoşnutsuzluk, ABD'nin etkisinde olmayan uluslar arası ve bölgesel örgütlere üyelik ve İran'ın gelişmiş füze programı, İran'ın ABD

tarafından kurulan statükodan memnun olmadığını göstermektedir. Nükleer program, İran'ın ABD tarafından yönetilen bu statükoyu değiştirmesine ve bölgesel güç olabilmesine hizmet edebilecek bir araç olarak görülmektedir.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS

AEOI	Atomic Energy Agency of Iran
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OPEC	Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries
UNAEC	United Nations Atomic Energy Commission
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Scope and Purpose of the Study

In 2002, a group of anti-governmental Iranians in exile claimed that Iran was constructing a uranium enrichment facility and a heavy water facility in the Persian cities of Natanz and Arak. Iran had been party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), thereby being committed to nuclear energy development for peaceful purposes only. By its membership to the NPT regime, Iran had also recognized the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) authority to inspect the Iranian nuclear activities which were declared to the IAEA. However, Iran had not notified the IAEA of the construction of those two sites. Therefore, the Iranian dissidents' declaration was both confusing and alarming for the international community. The allegation of the Iranian dissidents was soon proved by a US investigation on the satellite photos of Natanz and Arak. This was the beginning of a nuclear crisis which would have serious implications not only for international security but also for the survival of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime was an initiative by the USA to prevent the spread of nuclear material and nuclear technology to countries who do not yet possess that technology. The regime was established by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968. The Treaty sought to limit the possession of nuclear weapons only to five nuclear power holders at the time, which were the USA, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, China and France. Other states that did not possess nuclear weapons

were forbidden to do so and the nuclear power holders were called for a gradual elimination of their capabilities with the Treaty. The Treaty had created an international nuclear order, which legitimized the existence of five nuclear powers, while delegitimizing the aspiration of any other state to have nuclear weapons technology. Except three nations, all others had been integrated to this global nuclear order. With such a high membership level, NPT regime initially seemed highly successful.

However, the NPT regime has not gone unchallenged over time. First of all, three countries which had not integrated themselves to the regime - India, Pakistan and Israel- acquired nuclear weapons. As a result, the number of nuclear weapons states rose from five to eight. A second challenge to the nuclear order came from North Korea. Although party to the NPT, North Korea withdrew from the Treaty in 2003 and declared itself as a nuclear state in 2009. Moreover, the nature of nuclear threats underwent a transformation in the post-9/11 security environment. Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the nuclear threats have come to include non-state actors as well. The transfer of the poorly protected nuclear materials from the ex-Soviet Union states through theft or sale has become a pressing security issue.[1] Moreover, the disclosure of nuclear black market channels run by the A.Q. Khan Network of Pakistan has revealed the engagement of non-state actors such as nuclear scientists in illegal nuclear activities.[2] In a similar vein, upon its strained political relations with the USA, North Korea has threatened the USA

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[1] "Non-proliferation," *The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Web page, a*ccessed May 7, 2010*,* http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/policy/nonproliferation/.

[2] Abdul Qadeer Khan is a Pakistani nuclear scientist. He was the former head of Kahuta Research Laboratories in Pakistan, the primary research facility where the Pakistani nuclear weapons program has been developed. At the early stages of the Pakistani nuclear weapons program, he engaged in the establishment of "black market channels" for the Pakistani nuclear acquisition. However In 2004, Abdul Qadeer Khan admitted that his black market activities was directed to include other countries' nuclear research and development programs as well. He had been involved in the illegal sale of nuclear weapons-related technology to several non-nuclear states, including Iran, North Korea and Libya. Following the revelation of the network, Pakistan introduced new export control legislation with an attempt to control the nuclear black market activities, with the assistance of the USA and Japan. The Pakistani President Musharraf pardoned A. Q. Khan, with an attempt to ensure his assistance in the dissolution of the remainder of this nuclear black market network. Despite his cooperation with the Pakistani government, Khan is still held under house arrest. This information has been taken from Shi-Chin Lin, "The A. Q. Khan Revelations and the Subsequent Changes to Pakistani Export Controls," *Global Security Newswire*, accessed July 20, 2011, http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_54a.html.

to transfer its nuclear technology to other states and non-state actors.[3] Lastly, the disclosure of the violations of IAEA nuclear safeguard standards by Iran became a pressing issue for the survival of the NPT regime.[4]

In the recent years, there has been a specific emphasis on the activities in Iran by the international community. The preoccupation of the international community with the Iranian nuclear program manifested itself first as numerous incentive packages offered by the EU to Iran. These incentive packages included extensive trade opportunities and cooperation on a wide range of issues including nuclear energy technology and regional security. While Iran initially seemed content with these packages and temporarily suspended its nuclear program, the IAEA allegations about Iranian reporting failures and inspections-related issues led to new problems between Iran and the international community. Finally, Iran restarted its nuclear program in late 2005. After this date, the USA referred the issue to the UN Security Council, which passed four rounds of sanctions on Iran to curb its nuclear activities. Apart from these UN sanctions, both the USA and the European Union extended unilateral sanctions on Iran, specifically targeting the oil sector of Iran. Despite such incentives and tough sanctions, Iran has since insisted on its nuclear program.

The emphasis of the international community on the Iranian nuclear program seems paradoxical, given the proliferation instances of Pakistan, Israel and India and of North Korea. Although the USA learned about the Israeli nuclear capabilities two years after their development, it has turned a blind eye to the Israeli nuclear program. Israel has since played "a policy of opacity," neither refusing nor fully acknowledging its nuclear capabilities.[5] There have been no sanctions imposed on Israel for its nuclear

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3 "Non-proliferation," http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/policy/nonproliferation/.

4 Ibid.

5 Israel had developed its first nuclear device during the Six-Day War of 1967. The year 1968 was of significance for Israel, as the USA established the NPT regime and insisted on Israel to engage in this new nuclear order by signing the Treaty. However, Israel refused to sign the Treaty, suggesting that its "unique security needs" necessitated Israel to take any caution for its national security including the bomb. Still, the USA under Johnson presidency was unaware of the Israeli nuclear capabilities at the time. One year later, in 1969, the USA learned about the Israeli nuclear capabilities and the President Nixon of the time started negotiations with Israel on the issue. That year, President Nixon and Israeli

weapons program. Compared to the Israeli case, the USA adopted a tougher stance towards Pakistan. The USA imposed four rounds of unilateral sanctions on Pakistan with an attempt to curb its aspiration for nuclear acquisition. The Pakistani nuclear weapons activities were followed by a similar path taken by India, who regarded nuclear weapons as credible tools for deterrence against Pakistan. When India and Pakistan performed nuclear tests in 1998, the USA imposed another sanction on both countries. However, the 1998 sanctions targeted at both India and Pakistan as well as the three sanctions previously imposed on Pakistan were lifted during George W. Bush government in exchange for the Pakistani cooperation with the USA on fight against international terrorism in the area.[6] Apart from these subsequently lifted sanctions, the UN Security Council has passed the Resolution 1772, which banned transfer of nuclear-related material on Pakistan and India and is still in force. The international community adopted a relatively tougher stance towards the North Korean nuclear program when compared to other three cases. North Korea withdrew from the NPT regime in 2003.[7]

Prime Minister Golda Meir made a secret agreement, according to which the USA would not insist on Israel to sign the NPT, Israel would not disavow its nuclear weapons program but also not declare itself as the first holder of nuclear weapons in the region. Israel has never declared its possession of nuclear weapons since the Nixon-Golda Meir agreement; however it has not fully acknowledged itself as a non-nuclear state, either. Known as the policy of "nuclear opacity," this policy provided Israel with deterrence capabilities without risking its political status in the international community, and freed the friendly US-Israeli relations from the non-proliferation conflict. For a detailed analysis, see Avner Cohen, "Continuity and Change in Israeli Strategic Thinking: Reflections in the Wake of Operation Iraqi Freedom," eds. James A. Russel, *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East: Directions and Policy Options in the New Century* (Gordonsville: Palgrave McMillan, 2006), 36-38; and "Israel Profile: Nuclear Overview," *Nuclear Threat Initiative Website,* accessed July 21, 2011, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Israel/Nuclear/index.html.

[6] India and Pakistan had been subject to sanctions on foreign military and economic assistance by the USA. Symington Amendment (1979), Pressler Amendment (1990), and Glenn Amendment (1998), which denied either military or economic assistance to Islamabad were lifted by the Bush government in 2001. Sanctions still in force on Pakistan are the Military Coup Sanction (1999) and Missile Sanctions (2000). The multilateral 1998 UN sanction on Pakistan and India banning the transfer of nuclear technology to these nations, the Resolution 1772, still remains in force. Alex Wagner, "Bush Waives Nuclear Related Sanctions on India, Pakistan," *Arms Control Association Website,* October, 2001, accessed 21 July, 2011, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2001_10/sanctionsoct01.

[7] North Korea signed the IAEA safeguards agreement in 1992. Following several inspection problems with the IAEA, it declared its intention to withdraw from the NPT in 1993. This led to a crisis between the USA and North Korea, in which the former threatened the latter to impose economic sanctions if it does not review its decision to withdraw from the NPT regime. The crisis was resolved in 1994 with the "Agreed Framework," according to which North Korea accepted to suspend some of its nuclear activities and remain loyal to the NPT regime in exchange for nuclear technology transfers by the USA. However, the Agreed Framework proved insufficient in meeting the expectations of both parties. This was coupled by subsequent intelligence reports about nuclear activities on some of the North Korean nuclear sites. When the USA included North Korea in the list of "axis of evil" states, North Korea

The first US response towards North Korean withdrawal was to open trilateral diplomatic talks involving North Korea, the USA, and China for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis. The negotiations were then extended to include Japan, South Korea and Russia, which came to be known as "the Six Party Talks." However, the talks did not yield the intended results on the part of the USA, who imposed unilateral sanctions on certain North Korean banks. Immediately after North Korea performed its first nuclear test in 2006, the USA could convince the UN Security Council to impose multilateral UN sanctions on North Korea. In 2009, North Korea declared itself a nuclear state. Apart from a strengthening of 2006 sanctions in 2009, there have been no other UN sanctions imposed on North Korea since 2006.[8]

When compared to other proliferation instances, the international community's concern with the Iranian nuclear program does not seem proportional. Although Iran is party to the NPT, it has been subjected to more UN sanctions than India, Pakistan and North Korea, who are not NPT members. Moreover, the UN imposed multilateral sanctions on other three countries only after they performed open nuclear tests. On the other hand, Iran has been subjected to multilateral UN sanctions in the absence of any nuclear tests and conclusive evidence about the military nature of its nuclear program. Despite its membership to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran sits at the very center of strong international pressures to halt its nuclear program and it is presented with both "carrots" and "sticks" to do so. Why is the international community headed by the USA seems more concerned about the Iranian nuclear program? And why does Iran seem so insistent on its nuclear program despite such strong "carrots" and "sticks" extended by the international community? This thesis proposes that the international community seems to be concerned more about the implications of nuclear weapons on

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disavowed the Agreed Framework and withdrew from the NPT in 2003. See "North Korea Nuclear Profile," *Global Security Newswire*, accessed July 23, 2011, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/NK/Nuclear/index.html.

[8] The UN Security Council passed the Resolution 1718 in 2006 and Resolution 1874 in 2009. The 2006 sanctions included assets freeze; ban on the sale of certain conventional weapons; and on the transfer of ballistic-missile related materials. The 2009 sanctions included a ban on "all arms transfers to and from North Korea;" a demand from other states "not to provide financial or trade assistance to North Korea" if that would assist the North Korean nuclear program; and a freezing of the assets. For a comparison of both sanctions, see "North Korea Sanctions: Resolution 1718 Versus 1874," *US Department of State Website,* accessed July 19, 2011, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/06a/124709.htm.

the rise of Iran as a leading regional power and its potential challenge to international and the regional status quo, rather than the program's implications on the survival of the NPT regime. This is because if the concerns about the compliance to the NPT as an international regime were the main motivation for the international community to stop Iran, similar measures should have been applied to other dissenters. The singling out of Iran implies that there are other concerns at play. This thesis aims to uncover those by emphasizing the possible challenges Iran poses to the status quo powers by grounding its analysis in the power transition theory.

1.2 The Importance of the Study

During the Cold War, the possible eruption of a nuclear holocaust between two superpowers was the number one security issue bothering policy makers and the academic community alike. The end of the nuclear superpower rivalry following the collapse of the Soviet Union seemed to bring an end to such fears. However, this prospect proved to be only temporary. First of all, the nuclear club was joined by Pakistan and India in late 90s. This was followed by the nuclearization of North Korea in year 2009. This increase in the number of nuclear states has not only created a more insecure international environment but also sparked fears that many more states may go nuclear.

The nuclearization of additional three nations was only a part of the story in the post-Cold War period. As a matter of fact, one novel challenge to nuclear status-quo came with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The security environment created in the post-9/11 period introduced the primacy of non-state actors such as terrorist groups and individuals in international relations. In such a security environment, the primary security concern came to be the acquisition of nuclear weapons technology by the terrorist groups. The decentralized and non-territorial organization of terrorist groups challenges the traditional military strategies for retaliation that can only be employed against states. Therefore, the acquisition of nuclear weapons-related technology by

terrorist groups would create an even more unstable and unpredictable security environment. Such a fear has been exacerbated by two empirical instances. First, the head of International Atomic Energy Agency has stated that every two days "an incident involving theft or smuggling of nuclear material" is reported to the Agency, which emphasizes the need for member states "to better protect these materials against theft or smuggling."[9] Secondly, the Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan admitted in 2004 that he has been involved in "the illicit transfer of nuclear weapons technology to Iran, North Korea, Libya and other countries."[10]

Nuclear weapons continue to be a pressing security issue for the international community. Only the nature of this security threat has changed. The USA has been primarily concerned with the acquisition of nuclear-related technology by the Al-Qaeda. Especially after 9/11, "the American perception is that the danger of terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda acquiring a nuclear bomb or rogue nations joining the nuclear weapons club is greater than the nuclear risk between USA exchanging nuclear missiles with the former Soviet Union."[11] The nuclear issue is not only among the top items of the US Security agenda, but it is regarded as a very important security issue in the European Union as well. According to the EU public opinion, nuclear proliferation ranks as the number two security threat for the EU citizens after economic crisis.[12]

Given the relevance of nuclear weapons for the world community, the Iranian nuclear issue is a major security concern, to the resolution of which major powers as well as international institutions have been actively engaged. A power transition approach to the Iranian nuclear issue could shed light on new conflict resolution

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9 "Nuclear Security Summit Hears of Terror Risk," *BBC Online*, April 13, 2010, accessed May 12, 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8616855.stm.

10 "The A. Q. Khan Revelations and the Subsequent Changes to Pakistani Export Controls," *Global Security Newswire Website*, accessed June 12, 2011, http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_54a.html.

11 "The Dallas Morning News Editorial," cited in "Nuclear Summit Marks Progress," *USA Today,* April 16, 2010, accessed May 12, 2010, http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-04-16-column16_ST3_N.htm.

12 Ivan Krastev, et. al., "The Spectre of a Multipolar Europe," *European Council on Foreign Relations Website,* October 2010, http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/the_spectre_of_a_multipolar_europe_publication, p. 25.

opportunities for the conflicting parties. It can create a new avenue for policy makers, NGO's and non-proliferation activists to create new agendas for further nuclear disarmament. This research will also contribute to the existing International Relations literature on Iranian nuclear program by placing the scholarly argument that the Iranian nuclear rationale can be explained with reference to its aspiration to become a regional dominant power into a theoretical framework. Therefore, the research has implications for actual policy making and for academic literature alike.

1.3 Literature on Nuclear Proliferation

Since its eruption, the Iranian nuclear crisis has received the attention of scholarly community. The literature on Iranian nuclear program can be categorized under four rubrics. The first set of arguments follow the neorealist logic that the external security environments in the post-9/11 period in the Middle East is both the driver of the Iranian nuclear program and of the specific US concerns about the Iranian case.[13] The neorealist logic provides us with an understanding of the role of external security concerns and threat perceptions in increasing the stakes for nuclear acquisition. In the Iranian case, the perceived threat from a nuclear Israel as well as from the US military presence in the region after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq are given as the primary rationales of the Iranian nuclear program. Although neorealism makes an important contribution to the existing literature, security concerns play an important role in other nuclearization cases as well. As such, it does not explain why there is a specific concern on Iran.

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[13] See Chris Quillen, "Iranian Nuclear Weapons Policy: Past, Present and Future," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 6:2 (June 2002); Ray Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Calculations," *World Policy Journal* 20:2 (June 22, 2003); Scott D. Sagan, "How to Keep the Bomb from Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2006); Efraim Inbar, "The Need to Block a Nuclear Iran," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10:1 (March 2006); Nader Entessar, "Iran's Nuclear Decision-Making Calculus," *Middle East Policy* 16:2 (Summer 2009); Saideh Lotfian "Threat Perception and Military Planning in Iran: Credible Scenarios of Conflict and Opportunities for Confidence Building," in *Military Capacity and the Risk of War: China, India, Pakistan, Iran,* ed. Eric Arnett (Oxford, 1997).

The second set of arguments concentrate on the flaw of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime. The selective application of the regime and its creation of a legitimate five-membered nuclear club are introduced as the primary reasons for Iran's lack of compromise with the international community.[14] This neoliberal institutionalist literature argues that Iran's lack of full compliance with the NPT regime can be explained by the relative cost of compliance in the face of an Israeli and Pakistani nuclear threat in the region. Moreover, the perceived double standards put on Iran given the other non-compliers increases the Iranian costs for suspending its nuclear program. Neoliberal institutionalism has explanatory power in explaining Iran's insistence on its nuclear program. However, it fails to explain the duality in the application of the NPT regime on the part of the USA. According to the neoliberal institutionalist logic, the USA would derive the same benefits from each and every state's compliance with the NPT regime. Therefore, the US focus on Iran at the isolation of others is not explicable under neoliberal institutionalist logic.

The third set of arguments focus on norms, identities and other ideational factors driving states towards nuclearization and denuclearization. This constructivist literature emphasizes the Iranian Revolutionary discourses such as independence, historical victimization due to a colonial past, prestige and self-reliance in the Iranian nuclearization context. Moreover, the constructivist literature also focuses on nuclear weapons as symbols of scientific and technological development and modernization.[15]

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[14] See George Bunn, "The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty: History and Current Problems," *Arms Control Today* 33 (December 2003); Jean du Preez, "Half Full or Half Empty? Realizing the Promise of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," *Arms Control Today* 36, (2006); Chaim Braun and Chrtistopher F. Chyba, "Proliferation Rings: New Challenges to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," *International Security* 29:2 (2004); Henri Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, eds., *Checking Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,* (Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, January 2004); Sepehr Shahshahani, "Politics Under the Cover of Law: Can International Law Help Resolve the Iran Nuclear Crisis," *Boston University International Law Journal* 25 (2007); Anthony H. Cordesman, "Iran and the United States: The Nuclear Issue," *Middle East Policy* 15 (Spring 2008): 19-29.

[15] Homeira Moshirzadeh, "Discursive Foundations of Iran's Nuclear Policy," *Security Dialogue* 38:4 (December 2007): 527; Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,* (New York: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002), 74. Also for a list of literature mentioning the role of norms and identity in Iran's nuclear program, see George Perkovich, 'Dealing With Iran's Nuclear Challenge', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (April 28, 2003):1-16; Jahangir Amuzegar, "Nuclear Iran: Perils and Prospects," *Middle East Policy* 8 (Summer 2006): 90-112; Mustafa Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power," *The Middle East Journal* 60 (Spring 2006): 207-32; Kai-Henrik Barth, "Scientists, Clerics and

The constructivist literature would be expected to treat the US emphasis on the Iranian nuclear issue with reference to the existence of international non-proliferation norms, notably the NPT regime. In this respect, the USA might insist on Iran to suspend its nuclear program, as any state's defection from the NPT regime would be a blow to the regime's credibility. Although constructivist accounts provide us with valuable insight on the role of nuclear symbols as possible dynamics behind Iran's nuclear program, it fails to account for the duality of the USA in imposing the NPT not to Israel, India and Pakistan, but to Iran.

The fourth set of arguments take into account the role of domestic politics in driving states towards nuclearization. A considerable amount of literature on Iran focuses on the implications of domestic politics and the role of policy-making elite on the nuclear program.[16] The role of the Supreme Leader, the president, nuclear scientists and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps are referred as the determiners of the Iranian nuclear policy. Similarly, there is also research concentrating on the political economy aspect of nuclearization, which places the domestic political groups' response to internationalization at the center of analysis.[17] The domestic politics literature provides

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Nuclear Decision Making In Iran," (Presentation in Georgetown University, June 22, 2007); Mahdi Mohammad Nia, "Understanding Iran's Foreign Policy: An Application of Holistic Constructivism," *Alternatives, Turkish Journal of International Relations* 9:1 (Spring 2010); Caroline F. Ziemke, "The National Myth and Strategic Personality of Iran: A Counter-Proliferation Perspective," in *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, U.S. Interests and World Order*, ed. Victor A. Utgoff, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 89.

16 Caroline F. Ziemke et al., *Leadership Dynamics and Nuclear Decision-Making in Islamic Republic of Iran* (Institute for Defense Analyses, 2005); Fariboz Mokhtari, "Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Presidency: What Does Iran Really Want?" *American Foreign Policy Interests* 28 (2006); Schmuel Bar et al., "Iran's Nuclear Decision-Making Under Ahmadinejad" (Draft paper presented at Eight Herzliya Conference on the Balance of Israel's National Security, "Israel at Sixty: Tests of Endurance," The Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, Lauder School of Governmet, Diplomacy and Strategy, Insittute for Policy and Strategy, January 20-23, 2008); Kai-Henrik Barth, "Scientists, Clerics and Nuclear Decision Making In Iran" (Presentation in Georgetown University, June 22, 2007); Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security;* Chen Kane, "Nuclear Decision-Making In Iran: A Rare Glimpse," *Brandeis University Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Middle East Brief* 5 (May 2006); Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions* (Washington DC. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006)*;* Charles C. Mayer, "National Security to Nationalist Myth: Why Iran Wants Nuclear Weapons" (MA Thesis Submitted to the Security Studies to Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, 2004); Jahangir Amuzegar, 'Nuclear Iran: Perils and Prospects,' 90-112.

17 See Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007).

a powerful explanation for the Iranian insistence on the nuclear program despite all carrots and sticks targeted at it. However, it does not explain why the international community is especially concerned for the Iranian case.

An alternative explanation for the Iranian nuclear program is the Iranian ambition to become a leading power in the Middle East region. Although there are scholars who link Iran's nuclear program to having a greater say in the regional affairs, such scholarship is devoid of a proper theoretical framework.[18] This niche can be addressed by a study focusing on the implications of the Iranian nuclear program for international and regional status-quo. In this respect, it is the contention of this thesis that power transition theory can provide us with a theoretical perspective that could be used to analyze the impact of the Iranian nuclear program on global and regional balances of power.

Power transition theory is based on A.F.K Organski's seminal work World Politics in 1958. In contrast to the neorealist assumption that the international system is marked by anarchy, power transition theory assumes the existence of a hierarchy in the international arena. Organski depicts this hierarchy like a pyramid, where a global hegemon sits at the top and less powerful states are scattered at the lower ends. The hegemon sets the rules of international interaction. Given the existence of the USA as the dominant power in the international arena, it projects its domestic way of extracting resources to the international system as the status-quo. At the political, economical and ideological levels, the US-defined status-quo is visible in its promotion of democracy, human rights, open liberal economy and international institutions. The USA often makes use of political and economic incentives as well as sanctions to make other states align with the global stability. When these are challenged, then the global stability is challenged, as a result of which the USA resorts to force. The states which benefit from the international status-quo set by the USA are stabilized under the American hegemony. However, a dissatisfied power which does not benefit much from this status quo may challenge the dominant power. If that dissatisfied state achieves power parity

[18] See Bruno Tetrais, “The Iranian Nuclear Crisis,” in *The Crescent of Crisis: U.S.-European Strategy for the Greater Middle East,* eds. Ivo Daalder, et al. (New York: The Brookings Institution, 2006), 26; Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,*16.

with the dominant power, an armed conflict may erupt. While power parity among two dominant powers might lead to stability according to the neorealist theory, the power transition theory argues that power parity between a dominant power and a dissatisfied challenger leads to armed conflict. As such, dissatisfaction by one rising power with the status quo set by the hegemon and the achieved power parity between the two leads to an armed conflict.

This thesis argues that the rationale behind the Iranian nuclear program is its ambition to become a regional power in the Middle East. A rising GDP level, large population, rich oil reserves and a nuclear program renders Iran as a possible candidate to acquire regional dominant power status. A rising Iran with nuclear weapons could challenge Israel as the sole nuclear power holder in the region and as the major US ally. Moreover, a rising nuclear Iran would also be problematic given the US presence and US interests in the region. However, the sole rise in Iranian power does not determine its ambition to achieve a power transition. Iran is dissatisfied with the international economic, political, ideological and nuclear status-quo. The USA is aware both of the implications of a weapons-oriented nuclear program on the further rise of Iranian power and of the Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo. Due to its implications for a global and regional power transitions, the international community backed by the USA places much emphasis on curbing the Iranian nuclear program. The empirical analysis indicates that there is a correlation between the level of Iranian dissatisfaction and on the type and harshness of the response Iran gets from the international community.

1.4 The Methodology

Given the existence of two research questions, there are two dependent variables to be dealt with in this thesis. The first dependent variable is the international community's specific concern about the Iranian nuclear program. The second dependent variable is the Iranian insistence on its nuclear program. Each of these two dependent variables will be explained by two independent variables used in power transition analysis, which

is relative power and dissatisfaction with the status-quo.

Power transition theory places much emphasis on domestic economic development level in explaining nations' rise in power. A high GDP is assumed to lead to more military build-up. Therefore, this thesis measures the relative power variable through GDP, military expenditures, military capabilities, size of the army, population and oil reserves. As such, statistical data will be used for the measurement of relative power. On the other hand, there has been a scholarly confusion among power transition theorists on the measurement of the dissatisfaction variable. While some scholars use the similarity of alliance portfolio as a measure of dissatisfaction, others concentrate on domestic systems similarity. Still others adopt a multiple approach to dissatisfaction, merging many factors such as ideological differences, satisfaction with the international norms and arms build-up. Given the strong relevance of domestic politics in Iran's nuclear strategy, this thesis takes the domestic systems similarity as one measurement criteria of dissatisfaction. In a similar vein, dissatisfaction with the international norms, membership to international and regional organizations and arms build-up will also be discussed in the same context.

1.5 Design of the Study

In line with the above mentioned scope and purposes of the thesis, the next chapter will provide an empirical account of the nuclear order. The first part of the chapter will give a historical background of the nuclear non-proliferation regime with a special emphasis on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Following a brief section on the aims of the NPT, the successes and failures of the regime in the changing security environment of the post-Cold War and of the post-9/11 periods will be discussed. The final section of the chapter will be allotted to a historical account of the Iranian program, including the initiation of the nuclear program under Shah's rule, the suspension of the program with the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the restart of the program in the post Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 and the latest Iranian nuclear crisis in 2002. This empirical background will

form the basis for a theoretical discussion.

The third chapter will review the theories of nuclear proliferation. Major international relations theories including neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism and domestic politics will be discussed in this context. An evaluation of the strength and limitations of these theories in explaining the Iranian nuclear program is central to this chapter. Afterwards, power transition theory will be presented as an alternative theory to explain nuclear proliferation.

The fourth chapter will apply the power transition perspective to the Iranian nuclear program. The first part of the chapter will review the pre-9/11 and post-9/11 security environments and power balances in the Middle East. The chapter will then discuss the changes in military balances in the post-9/11 period, with a specific emphasis on GDP levels, military expenditures, military capabilities of relevant nations, size of the army, population and oil reserves. Afterwards, the chapter will talk about the US led status-quo both at the regional and global level. The following section will evaluate the Iranian stance to this status-quo. Domestic systems similarity, membership to international and regional organizations, dissatisfaction with the international norms, and military build-up will be taken as the key independent variables to evaluate the Iranian dissatisfaction with the US-led status-quo. Finally, policy options taken by the US as the dominant power in the face of a dissatisfied Iran will be explored.

The last chapter will be the conclusion of the thesis. The final chapter will summarize the findings of the study, and will discuss the practical and theoretical implications of this study for future research.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a historical background of the Iranian nuclear program, which will form the empirical basis of a theoretical discussion to be pursued in the coming chapters. The first sections will be devoted to an historical overview of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. A section will be spared to the successes and failures of the non-proliferation regime. Then the development of the Iranian nuclear program during different periods of the Iranian state will be explored. Finally, the Iranian nuclear crisis of 2002 and the subsequent relations between Iran and the international community will be discussed.

2.2 The Historical Background of the Non-Proliferation Regime

Nuclear non-proliferation regime is an international initiative designed to prevent yet non-nuclear states from acquiring nuclear weapons technology and information. The USA, which had then the monopoly over nuclear technology, was the first country to raise its concerns about the spread of nuclear technology due to its very recent memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The initial US nuclear policy can be described as denial, where the US chose to restrict its domestic nuclear firms to share any nuclear information with other countries. However, the Soviet acquisitions of nuclear capability

in 1949 lead the US to drop its policy of denial and share its nuclear information with its close ally, the UK.[19] Seeing the commercial success of British firms from nuclear technology transfer, the USA adopted the policy of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and nuclear non-proliferation starting from 1946.[20]

The first US non-proliferation effort was the Acheson-Lilienthal and Baruch Plans of 1946. In December 1945, representatives from three nuclear power holders, the USA, the Soviet Union and the UK agreed on the creation of a UN body to promote nuclear energy for peaceful purposes given the huge destructive capability of nuclear weapons.[21] For this purpose, the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) was created in January 1946. The members of a special advisory committee in the US Department of State - Under-Secretary of State Dean Acheson and the Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority David Lilienthal - issued a report to be presented to the UNAEC, which stated the need to create an international authority that would monitor the use of fissile materials on all nuclear facilities and issue licenses to countries who want to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.[22] The plan also recognized the need for the US to destroy its own nuclear capabilities.[23]

Fearing that destroying US nuclear capabilities would be risky in the face of tense relations with the Soviet Union, President Truman appointed Bernard Baruch as the American representative to UNAEC and demanded him to rearrange "the Acheson-Lilienthal Plan" in a way that the US would not destroy its nuclear capabilities until the Soviet Union assures them of its inability to acquire nuclear weapons.[24] Accordingly, the new "Baruch Plan" called for the creation of an agency under the jurisdiction of the

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19 Chao and Niblett quoted in Arzu-Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi* (Ankara*:* USAK Yayınları, 2009), 13.

20 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi,* 14.

21 "Acheson-Lilienthal and Baruch Plans of 1946," *U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian Website,* accessed March 12, 2011, http://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/BaruchPlans.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

UN Security Council, which would possess the sole right to inspect the development of nuclear capabilities, be exempt from the vetoes of UNSC permanent members, be supported by military forces and perform inspections in the facilities of non-nuclear states.[25] Moreover, the plan stipulated the start of inspections in nuclear states including the Soviet Union for the US destruction of its own nuclear capabilities.[26] Unfortunately, the Baruch Plan failed when faced with strong Soviet opposition.[27]

In contrast to Truman's protectionist policy on the transfer of nuclear information and technology, President Dwight Eisenhower opted for a nuclear policy prioritizing nuclear assistance to other countries that wish to acquire nuclear energy peaceful purposes. In his "Atoms for Peace" speech addressed at the UN General Assembly in December 1953, he proposed to share nuclear technology and knowledge for peaceful purposes with other states through the establishment of an international agency.28 The speech led to international negotiations for such an agency, which ended up with the establishment of The International Atomic Energy Organization (IAEA) in 1957.29 Nuclear weapons states started providing non-nuclear states with nuclear reactors for research purposes and with nuclear training.[30] One reason for the US to focus on the peaceful energy aspect of nuclear technology was "to offset the unfavorable American image as created through the Hiroshima and Nagasaki incidents."[31] Therefore, the US sought to promote the "uses" of nuclear technology for mankind, such as electricity generation.[32] However, the nuclear technology used in

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25 Bunn, "The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: History and Current problems."

26 Ibid.

27 "Acheson-Lilienthal and Baruch Plans of 1946."

28 "Atoms For Peace," (Speech delivered before The General Assembly of the United Nations on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, December 8, 1953), accessed March 10, 2011, http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/Deterrence/Atomsforpeace.shtml.

29 Bunn, "The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: History and Current problems,"

30 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi,* 14.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

energy generation facilities for peaceful purposes could also be used for producing plutonium to be used in nuclear weapons. There was a blurring line between peaceful nuclear energy and nuclear weapons.

2.2.1 The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The share of nuclear technology had exacerbated the US concerns about nuclear non-proliferation due to the blurring line between nuclearization for peaceful energy purposes and for military purposes. The Soviet Union, UK and France had already gone nuclear by 1963. The Department of Defense in 1963 decided on a list of 14 states which could get nuclear capability in less than a decade, by looking at their nuclear motivations.[33] The states on the list were "major industrialized Group of Seven allies of the United States plus China, Czechoslovakia, India, Israel, Poland, and Sweden."[34] While both the Soviet Union and the US compromised on the need to take actions against such nuclearization threats, they had diverged on the means.[35] While the US proposed a "multilateral naval force with nuclear weapons" under NATO command, the Soviet Union demanded the US to break existing treaties with its allies granting US the permission to deploy nuclear weapons on their territory to protect them against any possible Soviet attack.[36]

Following negotiations under the UN as initiated by Ireland, both the Soviet Union and the USA relinquished their previous demands and submitted a nuclear non-proliferation draft treaty to the 18-Nation Disarmament Conference in January 1968.[37]

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33 Bunn, "The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: History and Current problems,"

34 Ibid.

35 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi,* p. 16.

36 Bunn, "The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: History and Current problems."

37 "Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Chronology," *Federation of American Scientists Website,* accessed March 10, 2011, http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/npt/chron.htm.

62 countries including the US, UK, Soviet Union signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in July 1968, whose primary aim was to hinder the further spread of nuclear weapons.[38]

2.2.2 The Goals and Principles of the NPT

The goals and principles of Nuclear-Non-Proliferation Treaty can be categorized under three pillars, which are nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the right to peaceful use of nuclear technology.[39] According to the Treaty, the five nuclear countries at the time, the USA, UK, Russia, China and France, will retain their nuclear capabilities; will refrain from transferring nuclear weapons to non-nuclear states; and will not provide non-nuclear states with any technological assistance to acquire, develop and control nuclear weapons.[40] The Treaty stipulates all non-nuclear powers not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons.[41] The Article IV of the Treaty recognizes the right of every nation to pursue nuclear energy research and nuclear energy production for peaceful purposes.[42] However, the Treaty obligates all non-nuclear states to succumb to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, which provide Agency with the authority to monitor and control all the nuclear activities in non-nuclear states in order to ensure that they are producing and using nuclear technology for peaceful purposes only.[43] Although five states are given the nuclear

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38 Ibid.

39 Celalifer-Ekinci, İran Nükleer Krizi, 16.

40 "Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," *International Atomic Energy Agency Website,* accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf.

41 "Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," *Federation of American Scientists Website,* accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/npt/.

42 "Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf.

43 "Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/npt/.

monopoly, Article VI of the Treaty encourages these five states "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."[44]

The Treaty came into force with the signature and ratification by 40 countries in 1970. 187 countries are party to the Treaty as of 2011. Still, the non-proliferation regime as created by the NPT has not been without outliers. While the Article VI of the Treaty encourages five nuclear states to gradually reduce and finally drop their nuclear capabilities, this provision is not binding. Believing that this led to the creation of a hierarchy among countries as "nuclear haves" and "nuclear have-nots," some states have never signed the Treaty. [45] India did not sign the Treaty on the grounds that it created nuclear "double standards" and "discrimination."[46] Similarly, emphasizing the security problems with India, Pakistan also refrained from signing the Treaty.[47] Israel has never become a party to the Treaty either, and is believed to posses up to 200 nuclear weapons today.[48] North Korea has been the first state to benefit from Article X in 2003, which gives states the right to withdraw from the Treaty in case of "extraordinary events that jeopardize the supreme interests of its country."[49]

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44 "Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf

45 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi,* 17.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 "Israel, Nuclear Weapons," *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Tutorial Website,* accessed March 9, 2011, http://www.nti.org/h_learnmore/npttutorial/chapter05_15_israel.html.

49 "North Korea Nuclear Activities," *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Tutorial Website,* accessed March 9, 2011, http://www.nti.org/h_learnmore/npttutorial/chapter05_16_north_korea.html Also see Article X of NPT in "Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf.

2.2.3 Successes and Failures of the NPT

The NPT has so far accomplished much in setting and consolidating the non-proliferation regime. Today, 187 states are signatory to NPT, with the exception of India, Israel and Pakistan and North Korea.50 It is estimated that if it were not for the existence of NPT, there would now be "30 or more countries with nuclear weapons."51

Still, the success of the NPT regime does not preclude the fact that the regime has also suffered major challenges. Some countries which were not considered to acquire nuclear weapons or to work on nuclear weapons technology proved to have acquired nuclear weapons or attempted to do so. In this respect, South Africa, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine had nuclear weapons; and Argentina and Brazil had a nuclear program.52 However, all these countries gave up their nuclear weapons and stopped their nuclear programs with security guarantees and incentives provided by the USA and Russia.53 Although the nuclear threat was appeased by the non-proliferation of these countries for a couple of years, the memory of the nuclear threat has been revived in the new security environment created after 9/11 terrorist attacks. In this context, "the theft or sale of various nuclear materials from the former Soviet Union states; nuclear black market activity such as the network operated by A.Q. Khan out of Pakistan; threats by North Korea to share nuclear technology with states or non-state actors hostile to the US; and violations of IAEA nuclear safeguard standards by Iran" have become main security threats in the post-9/11 period.54

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50 Marvin Miller and Lawrence Scheinman, "Israel, India and Pakistan: Engaging the Non-NPT States in the Nonproliferation Regime," *Arms Control Today* (December 2003), http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_12/MillerandScheinman.

51 Bunn, "The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: History and Current problems."

52 Ibid.

53 For further detail, see Bunn "The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: History and Current problems."

54 "Non-proliferation," *The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Web page,* accessed May 10, 2010, http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/policy/nonproliferation/.

2.2.4 Nuclear Inspections in the Framework of NPT

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has the responsibility to monitor and control all the nuclear-related activities in non-nuclear countries to ensure that they are for peaceful purposes only and in compliance with the NPT. NPT obligates all non-nuclear states to sign a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA, under which states "declare" their nuclear activities, facilities and material.[55] IAEA confirms the nuclear information provided by non-nuclear states through further inspections and surveillance.[56] However, states' declaration of their nuclear facilities, material and activities has become a major issue for the NPT regime, as the IAEA officials were only allowed to inspect facilities which the state deemed fit.[57]

IAEA's inspection problem first arose during the first Iraqi War, when secret Iraqi nuclear facilities were discovered.[58] The problem was further consolidated by North Korea, who declared its intention to withdraw from the NPT regime in 1993 and evaded IAEA inspections thereafter.[59] The need to strengthen the IAEA's inspection authority resulted in the introduction of the Additional Protocol in 1998. The Additional Protocol provides IAEA with the authority to do inspections on a state's nuclear sites or other sites where nuclear activities are supposed to be performed without prior notification.[60] However, the introduction of the Additional Protocol has not wholly eliminated the inspection challenges as its signature is voluntary.[61]

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55 "IAEA Safeguards," *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Tutorial Website,* accessed 21 April, 2011, http://www.nti.org/h_learnmore/npttutorial/chapter05_04_iaea_safeguards.html.

56 Ibid.

57 Celalifer-Ekinci, *Iran Nükleer Krizi,* 18.

58 Ibid.

59 "IAEA Safeguards." http://www.nti.org/h_learnmore/npttutorial/chapter05_04_iaea_safeguards.html.

60 Celalifer-Ekinci, *Iran Nükleer Krizi,* 18.

61 "IAEA Safeguards." http://www.nti.org/h_learnmore/npttutorial/chapter05_04_iaea_safeguards.html.

2.3 The Iranian Nuclear Program

2.3.1 Iranian Nuclear Program Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran

The Iranian nuclear program is the product of Iranian strategic relations with the US, which started under the rule of Shah in the late 1940s. The USA is the first country to provide Iran with scientific and technological assistance for the build up of a nuclear program. The US assistance can be attributed to increasing US interests in the Middle East, particularly "the strategic value of the oil reserves" and "the necessity of containing Soviet expansionism."[62] In the aftermath of World War II, Iran, along with Turkey, Greece and Italy, was listed by the US as a country to be turned towards the West and to be protected against Soviet expansionism.[63] This regional conjuncture was accompanied by domestic economic problems in Iran throughout the 1950s, which resulted in economic, military and technical assistance to Iran during Truman's presidency.[64] The US assistance to Iran was prolonged during Eisenhower's presidency as well, who devised what was to be called "Eisenhower Doctrine" as a response to the need to strengthen the "Northern tier" of non-Communist Middle Eastern countries facing Soviet threat through economic assistance and military guarantees.[65]

Iran was introduced to nuclear science and technology in these very years when the US economic, military and technological relations were intensified.[66] These years coincide also with Eisenhower's efforts to share nuclear science and technology with non-nuclear countries through his "Atoms for Peace" project in 1953. The USA

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62 Mustafa Kibaroğlu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43:2 (March 2007): 223-224.

63 Ibid., 224.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Mustafa Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power," Middle East Journal 60:2 (206): 213.

engaged in nuclear science and technology transfers to Iran, which can be explained by the US desire to augment its "share in the burgeoning nuclear market."[67] Under Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program, two countries started negotiating a cooperation agreement for the manufacture of peaceful nuclear energy, which would open the Iranian market to US investment in Iranian nuclear industry.[68]

In 1967, Tehran Nuclear Research Center (TNRC), which has been one of Iran's chief nuclear facilities, was opened in Tehran University.[69] The facility possessed a 5 megawatt nuclear research reactor and could produce up to 600 grams of plutonium on a yearly basis.[70] Iran signed the NPT in 1968 and ratified it in 1970, thereby acquiring the inalienable right to have access to peaceful nuclear energy technology.[71] The regional developments in the early 1970's also shaped the Iranian plans to accelerate its nuclear program. In this respect, the successive US President Nixon adopted the policy of "strengthening Iran in order to deter Soviet designs in the region," which would be called the "Nixon Doctrine."[72] Other regional developments at the time were the conflict between Israel and the Arab countries that erupted in 1973 and the subsequent oil crisis that "led to a significant increase in Iranian economy."[73] Moreover, Stanford Research Institute provided a study suggesting that Iran's electricity need would amount up to 20.000 megawatt by 1990.[74] As a result of these regional developments and a boom in Iranian economy following the oil crisis, Shah declared his intent to expand the

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67 Ibid.

68 "Iran's Nuclear Program," *Newsweek Online,* July 20, 2008, accessed May 13, 2010. http://www.newsweek.com/2008/07/19/iran-s-nuclear-program.html.

69 Mohammad Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History," *Paywand*, October 2, 2003, accessed March 13, 2011, http://www.payvand.com/news/03/oct/1015.html.

70 Ibid.

71 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 31.

72 Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 213.

73 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 32

74 Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History,"

Iranian nuclear program to cover a 23.000 megawatt nuclear capacity by 2000.[75] To this end, the Shah founded the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in 1974.[76]

The Shah's willingness to expand Iran's nuclear energy power by cooperating with US companies for the establishment of several nuclear reactors in Iran would help the US to "recover the cost of oil that it was buying from Iran."[77] However, the Iranian nuclear market was not only open to the US investors. As a matter of fact, Iran negotiated a deal with Kraftwerk Union of West Germany to build two reactors in Bushehr, which would produce 1200 megawatt electricity.[78] Another Iranian deal to produce electricity was with the French company Framatome for the build-up of two 900 megawatt reactors.[79] With 10-year French-Iranian cooperation for the build-up of five additional nuclear reactors on the Iranian territory amounting up to 4 billion US dollars, France became "Iran's largest industrial partner."[80] In 1974, Iran invested $1 billion in uranium enrichment plant owned by Eurodif, a multilateral consortium of France, Belgium, Spain and Italy.[81] Apart from these nuclear investment agreements, the Shah also sent hundreds of students to various US and European universities to study nuclear physics, so that the technical and scientific nuclear cadre needed to operate these facilities would be formed.[82]

In May 1974, the US Atomic Energy Commission made negotiations with Iran

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75 Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 213-214.

76 For a detailed account of AEOI, see Ghannadi Maragheh, "Atomic Energy Organization of Iran," (Presentation in World Nuclear Energy Association Annual Symposium, London September 4-6, 2002).

77 Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History."

78 "Iran's Nuclear Program," *Iran Watch,* September 2004, accessed May 21, 2011, http://www.iranwatch.org/wmd/wponac-nuclearhistory-0904.htm.

79 Ibid.

80 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 33.

81 "Iran's Nuclear Program," http://www.iranwatch.org/wmd/wponac-nuclearhistory-0904.htm.

82 Darhorin quoted in Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 33.

to build up new facilities in Iran for uranium enrichment.[83] The deal was expanded during the Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's visit to Tehran in November 1974, which resulted in $15 billion cooperation agreement between Iran and US in March 1975 for the establishment of eight nuclear reactors with a capacity of 8,000 mega-watt.[84] Nuclear cooperation continued during Carter's presidency, who signed an agreement with Iran, giving it "the most favored nation" status, and the US-Iran Nuclear Agreement, which was aimed to manage of transfer of nuclear material to Iran in 1978.[85]

There are various accounts of Shah's intentions for the build-up of nuclear bomb. On the one hand, Shah's accounts suggest that the Iranian nuclear program was only for peaceful purposes and he was not interested in acquiring nuclear weapons at the time, as USA had promised to provide Iran with a good amount of conventional weapons.[86] On the other hand, the founder of AEOI, Dr. Akbar Etemad, suggested that Iran had bought uranium from South Africa in 1970's and had been engaged in plutonium extraction experiments, which would only be used in nuclear bombs.[87] Still, all the Iranian nuclear activities supported by both European states and the US came to a halt with the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979.

2.3.2 Iranian Nuclear Program after the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran

The US-Iranian relations underwent dramatic changes with the Iranian Hostage Crisis, as a result of which Iran came to be regarded as a "hostile" country rather than a US

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83 Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 214.

84 Sahimi Quoted in Kibaroğlu, ""Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 214.

85 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 34. For a detailed account of the US-Iran Nuclear Deal, see "Iran: The US-Iran Nuclear Energy Agreement" (Confidential, Briefing Paper State, Washington DC, October 20, 1978): 1, DNSA Item Number IR01605.

86 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 35.

87 Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History."

ally.[88] The USA not only broke the bilateral nuclear agreements, but also engaged in a "policy of denial," where she encouraged European states to break their deals with Iran and discouraged other countries from transferring any nuclear technology to Iran.[89]

The first Supreme Leader of Iran, Imam Khomeini, started an anti-Westernization and "anti-modernization" project in both domestic and foreign policy.[90] This was also evident in the nuclear field. While the 90 % of the Bushehr-1 reactor and the construction of 50 % of the Bushehr-2 facility were complete by the Revolution, the clerical regime rejected to continue with the military and technological modernization after the Revolution.[91] As a matter of fact, all nuclear facilities were left to degradation, all AEOI projects were canceled, the Bushehr was proposed to be transformed into a grain sail and a massive brain drain of nuclear scientists occurred.[92]

The first attempts to resume the Iranian nuclear program are the result of the eight-year-long Iraq-Iran War, which implied the possible advantages of modern military and nuclear technologies for Iran during the war.[93] Iraq had bombed Iran's civilian population, nuclear facilities and industrial cities during the war, leading to a great damage on the part of Iran.[94] Facing the colossal destruction caused by war, the clerical regime soon realized that the possession of modern military technology, and possibly the possession of nuclear weapons would have discouraged Iraq to engage in a war with Iran.[95] Apart from the Iran-Iraq War, the severe post-revolutionary energy crisis also contributed to Iranian plans to resume its nuclear program. While the

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88 Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 215.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., 216.

91 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 36.

92 Kai-Henrik Barth, "Scientists, Clerics and Nuclear-Decision Making in Iran."

93 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 36.

94 Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History,"

95 Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 216.

population was rising rapidly, the oil production decreased, leading to a rise in domestic consumption.[96] By resuming its nuclear program, Iran was planning to meet the domestic demand for energy through nuclear energy and to export oil to other countries.[97]

The president of the time Hashemi Rafsanjani's first attempt to revive the nuclear program was to turn to the German Kraftwerk Union to finish the uncompleted Bushehr project. Iran asked Germany to allow Kraftwerk Union to deliver nuclear reactor materials and technical documentation, which it had already paid for before the Revolution.[98] Still, the German government refused to allow for the delivery of the nuclear material to Iran.[99] Afterwards, Rafsanjani turned to French Framatome, for a deal either on two reactors with a capacity of 950 mega-watt at Darkhovin or on the construction of the a research center at Isfahan, which was also refused by the French government.[100] The non-cooperative attitude of both European countries can be attributed to the pressures of the USA, who had broken all economic, political and military ties with Iran after the Revolution.[101] A consortium of Argentinean, German and Spanish firms proposed Iran to complete the Bushehr-1 project in late 80s.[102] However, this project was never realized due to the US pressure.

Unable to get the expected assistance from its former European partners, Iran turned its face to the East. Iran signed a nuclear agreement with Pakistan in 1987, according to which 39 Iranian nuclear scientists could have the chance to advance their

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96 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 37.

97 Stern quoted in Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 37.

98 Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History,"

99 Ibid.

100 Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 217.

101 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 37.

102 As a matter of fact, some European countries such as Spain, Czech Republic and Poland made several attempts to cooperate with Iran on the completion of unfinished nuclear facilities and on the sales of nuclear and technical material to Iran throughout 90s. However, all these European attempts were hindered by US pressures. See Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History."

nuclear skills on Pakistani facilities and reactors.[103] Iran signed a similar deal with Argentina to supply uranium enriched up to 20 % and to allow the training of Iranian nuclear scientists and technicians at an Argentinean nuclear institute.[104] Despite these cooperation agreements with Pakistan and Argentina, the biggest nuclear partners for Iran during 90s did not happen to be Pakistan and Argentina, but China and Russia.

China first provided Iran with uranium hexafluoride, which is used in uranium enrichment activities.[105] In 1991, both countries made a deal, according to which China would provide Iran with 20 mega-watt research reactors.[106] Similarly, both countries signed another agreement in 1994, which covered the construction of a 300 mega-watt hydraulic nuclear reactor near Tehran.[107] The conversion and production facilities at Isfahan are known to have been completed also by Chinese aid.[108] Similar to the French and German cases, China also felt the US pressure to deter or cancel all these nuclear agreements with Iran. As a matter of fact, China decided not to sell the hexafluoride conversion system to Iran, in exchange for US guarantees to allow its nuclear companies to sell nuclear technology to China.[109] Still, despite various US pressures on China, Iran and China maintained their nuclear cooperation even after the Iranian nuclear crisis of 2002.

Iran signed its first deal to complete the Bushehr facility with the Soviet Union in 1990; however, the deal could not be fully realized due to financial problems.[110] Then in 1995, Iran and Russia signed another agreement with the Russian Ministry of

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103 Vaziri quoted in Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 217.

104 Ibid.

105 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 37.

106 Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 217.

107 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 38.

108 Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs," 217.

109 Landay quoted in Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 38.

110 Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History."

Atomic Energy for the completion of Bushehr reactors.[111] According to the agreement, Russia would construct light water reactors of 1000 mega-watt each in Bushehr, engage in a scientific and technological cooperation with Iran and Iran would send 20-30 nuclear physics students at the graduate level to Russia on a yearly basis.[112] Moreover, both countries also made a deal to construct a uranium enrichment facility with gas centrifuge, which faced with the hard opposition by the USA.[113] However, the USA could not convince Russia to break the deal, as Russia needed the money to be derived from this agreement due to its post-Soviet period financial problems.[114] Unable to deter Russia from the agreement, the USA started claiming that the plutonium to be produced in the reactors as well as the technical know-how the Iranian scientists would acquire on the facilities would be used by Iran to develop nuclear weapons.[115] Still, none of these pressures completely deterred Russia from nuclear cooperation with Iran. The Russian-Iranian cooperation was maintained in the post-2002 period as well, when 99 % of the Bushehr facility was completed.[116]

The historical account of the Iranian nuclear program indicates that Iran first engaged in the peaceful energy program during the Shah era with US backing. Germany, France and the USA were the primary nuclear partners of Iran. However, the Iranian Islamic Revolution changed the course of the program. The break of political, economic and military relations with the US and its European allies also had negative implications for the Iranian nuclear program. However, the conjunctural changes within the region pushed Iran for a resumption of the nuclear activities after the Iran-Iraqi War. While scientifically and technically supporting Iran for peaceful nuclear energy production before the Islamic Revolution, the USA engaged in a propaganda of labeling Iranian effort for the revival of its nuclear program as an effort for nuclear

111 Ibid.

112 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, p. 39.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 Sahimi, “Iran's Nuclear Program Part I: Its History,”

116 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 41.

weaponization. Such US claims took on a serious tone starting from 2002, when CIA issued a report claiming that Iran had achieved uranium enrichment capacity needed for nuclear weapons production.[117]

2.4 The Iranian Nuclear Crisis in 2002

2.4.1 The Disclosure of Secret Nuclear Facilities in 2002

In 2002, Alireza Jafarzadeh, who is an active dissident of the Iranian government, a former spokesperson of the US office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran[118], and a former member of People's Mujahedin of Iran[119], revealed in a press conference held in Washington D.C that Iran had secret nuclear facilities in Natanz and Arak. According to Jafarzadeh's speech, the Natanz facility contained nuclear enrichment technology and the Arak facility contained a heavy water reactor, both of which could be used for the development of nuclear weapons. The revelation of both facilities was an opportunity for the USA to support its claims that Iran was building nuclear weapons. Upon an investigation on the satellite photos of Natanz and Arak, USA

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117 For a detailed analysis, see James Risen and Judith Miller, "CIA Tells Clinton an Iranian A-Bomb Can't Be Ruled Out," *New York Times,* January 17, 2000.

118 The National Council of Resistance of Iran refers to a political umbrella entity of several Iranian organizations and individuals living in exile, founded in 1981 in France. Its main aim has been to establish a democratic and secular government in Iran. The council has a wide field of activity, including freedom of religion, minority rights, human rights, women rights, an open bazaar economy, a peaceful foreign policy, compliance for international law, regional and international cooperation and nuclear non-proliferation. See "About National Council of Resistance of Iran," *National Council of Resistance of Iran Website,* accessed March 21, 2011, http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/.

119 People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran is originally a militant group of university students assembled around Islamic-Marxist/Socialist ideology in 1965. While the organization sided with the clerics and supported the overthrowing of Shah during the Revolution due to their anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist stance, it withdrew its support after the revolution, when its mixture of Islamic, feminist and leftist ideology clashed with that of the new government. Today, it is the main organization of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. See Holly Fletcher, "Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK) (aka People's Mujahedin of Iran or PMOI)," *Council on Foreign Relations Website*, April 18, 2008, accessed March 21, 2011, http://www.cfr.org/iran/mujahadeen-e-khalq-mek-aka-peoples-mujahedin-iran-pmoi/p9158.

concluded that Iran had nuclear intentions surpassing the attainment of peaceful energy.[120] Apart from the USA, the initial third party actors to be involved with the crisis were IAEA and the three major European powers - Germany, France and the UK - also known as the EU-3. All three actors displayed differing strategies regarding the solution of the crisis. While the USA was inclined to use hard power methods such as military intervention, the European countries favored diplomatic negotiations. Still, the firsthand authority to address the issue happened to be IAEA.

2.4.2 IAEA Inspections

Iran had declared its liability to the non-proliferation regime by ratifying the NPT in 1970. Accordingly, IAEA had the authority to inspect and monitor Iran's nuclear activities to ensure that all nuclear activities are for peaceful purposes only. The Iranian nuclear crisis following the revelation of formerly undeclared Natanz and Arak facilities in 2002 was a secret facility crisis, as Iran presumably had not notified IAEA of the Natanz and Arak facilities as a part of its responsibilities specified by the safeguards agreement. As a result, IAEA attended the issue through its visits to Iran and its inspections of both facilities. The agency responsible for performing negotiations with IAEA at the time in Iran was the Atomic Energy Agency of Iran, for at the very beginning of the crisis, the issue was regarded to be a technical issue rather than a political one.

On February 25, 2003, IAEA Director General ElBaradei paid his first inspection visit to Iranian Arak and Natanz facilities. ElBaradei reported that he was "taken aback" by the technological and scientific advancement in the Iranian nuclear program and confirmed that there had been a breach of NPT.[121] Following this inspection visit, ElBaradei and Iran agreed to negotiate the signing of Additional

120 Talha Köse, *Iran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti* (Ankara: SETA, 2008), 86.

121 Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,* xv.

Protocol, which would provide IAEA with the authority also to monitor and inspect all declared and undeclared nuclear sites without prior notification.[122] However, it should be noted that while the IAEA focused on Iran's neglectfulness in notifying IAEA about its nuclear activities, the Safeguards Agreement between Iran and IAEA confirm the opposite. According to the agreement, Iran was not necessarily responsible for notifying IAEA of the construction of the Natanz facility. Iran was only responsible for notifying IAEA of the existence of Natanz facility 180 days prior to the transfer of any nuclear material to the facility.[123] Therefore, the mere existence of the Natanz facility did not necessarily mean a breach of the Agreement, although it was reflected to be so by the international community.[124]

Iran pursued a mildly conciliatory strategy in its relations with IAEA. In this respect, Iran allowed the Agency inspectors to visit and inspect some of its facilities in Iran in March and May which it was not obligated to do so under NPT.[125] It also submitted a report to IAEA declaring for the first time its heavy water production facility project at Arak in June 2003.[126] In June 2003, IAEA issued two reports stating that Iran had failed to fulfill some of its obligations under Safeguards Agreements such as "reporting of nuclear material, the subsequent processing and use of the material and the declaration of facilities where the material was stored and processed."[127] The report also stated that there had been several findings of highly enriched uranium in diversified nuclear sites, which was refused by Iran on the grounds that they might be remnants of contaminated material from abroad.[128]

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122 Ibid.

123 International Atomic Energy Agency, "The Text of the Agreement Between Iran and the Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," *IAEA Website,* December 13, 1974, accessed April 2, 2011, http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc214.pdf.

124 Mohammad Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program Part III: The Emerging Crisis," *Payvand Website,* June 10, 2003, accessed April 5, 2011, http://www.payvand.com/news/03/oct/1039.html.

125 Celalifer-Ekinci, *Iran Nükleer Krizi,* 44.

126 Ibid.

127 Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,* xv.

128 Ibid.

In August 2003, Atomic Energy Agency of Iran provided a report to IAEA informing the Agency of its "heavy water reactor program, Iran's use of previously imported UO2 in experiments to produce UF4, 'bench scale' conversion experiments and Iran's past interest in laser fusion and spectroscopy."[129] The highly enriched uranium found on various nuclear sites and Iran's acceptances of previous uranium conversion experiments lead IAEA in September 2003 to urge Iran sign the Additional Protocol by October 31.[130] On October 9, 2003, Atomic Energy Agency of Iran issued a letter to IAEA acknowledging that Iran performed various nuclear related laboratory and benchmark experiments between 1981 and 1993.[131]

In a November 2003 report, IAEA concluded that Iran had been engaged in developing a uranium centrifuge enrichment program for 18 years and a laser enrichment program for 12 years.[132] In this respect, Iran had acknowledged its failure to fully inform IAEA of its nuclear-related activities, including the production, irradiation and conversion activities, thereby breaching its obligations under NPT.[133] It was also stated in the same report that Iran was willing to temporarily suspend all its nuclear related activities, not to produce feed material for enrichment processes and not to import enrichment related items.[134]

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129 See "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *IAEA Website*, 26 August 2003, accessed April 4, 2011, http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2003/gov2003-63.pdf.

130 Köse, *Iran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti,* 87.

131 Specifically, Iran acknowledged that it had performed bench scale preparation of UO2 at the Isfahan Nuclear Technology and bench scale preparation of ammonium uranyl carbonate (AUC), UO3, UF4 and UF6 at the Tehran Nuclear Research Center (TNRC). For further detail, see "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *IAEA Website,* November 26, 2003, accessed March 12, 2011, http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2003/gov200375.pdf.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

2.4.3 EU-3 Iranian Negotiations on the Nuclear Issue

Following the crisis in 2002, the major powers of the European Union -France, Germany and UK- attended the issue with the US backing, which did not have any diplomatic relations with Iran since the Revolution.[135] Despite differing interests, these three major European powers, called EU-3, took a unitary stance towards the Iranian nuclear issue. Contrary to the US preference for "hard power" resolution strategies such as military intervention and regime change, the EU-3 agreed on pursuing diplomatic negotiations with Iran. Since the onset of the crisis in 2002, the EU has been the primary actor conducting diplomatic negotiations with Iran for the resolution of the nuclear crisis. The primary foreign policy objective for the EU-3 regarding the resolution of the issue has been to convince Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment program. While the EU-3 seemed successful in attaining this objective at the first stages of negotiations, this success did not exhibit continuity. As a matter of fact, EU-3's success in solving the issue depended very much on the domestic political conjuncture in Iran. In this respect, the EU-3 and Iranian diplomatic negotiations displayed differential outcomes under the rule of two Iranian presidents, President Mohammad Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

2.4.3.1 Negotiations with the EU-3 under President Khatami

The first set of bilateral diplomatic meetings between EU-3 and Iran started in 2003 under Khatami's presidency. Overall, Iran's relations with the EU-3 over its nuclear program under Khatami's presidency reflected elements of pragmatism, moderation and conciliation. As the representative of the reformist faction of the Iranian population, Khatami sought to pursue a realist and pragmatic rather than a value-driven foreign

[135] Monica Tocha, "The EU and Iran's Nuclear Program: Testing the Limits of Coercive Diplomacy," *College of Europe EU Diplomacy Papers* 1 (2009): 3.

policy.[136] Among his foreign policy objectives was to diminish Iran's isolation, to revive the domestic economy through international financial agreements, and to establish more dialogue and cooperation with the external world.[137] Khatami's approach to the Iranian nuclear issue was also pragmatic in that he favored diplomatic negotiations as a key to avoid confrontation with the international community and further international isolation.

Up until mid-2003, AEOI was the agency responsible for both the political and technical aspects of the nuclear program.[138] However, in mid-2003 Iran felt that "the gravity of the negotiations required high-level official attention," thereby leading to the meeting of Supreme National Security Council for the first time to discuss the nuclear

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136 "Factions" in Iranian politics are organizations and parties, who converge on the Islamic state ideology after 1979 Islamic Revolution, but diverge from each other on the nature of the political system to be constructed and of daily policy-making. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran is depicted by some scholars as a monolithic entity ruled by theocracy, it is in fact composed of several formal and informal power centers that compete with one another. Similarly, all domestic factions occupying certain formal and informal power centers compete or cooperate with each other on formulation of various policies including the nuclear program. The three main factions in Iranian domestic politics are the conservative traditionalists, reformists and hardliners. The conservative traditionalists are situated at the center of the political spectrum and they support the regime. They place high emphasis on the religious rule of the Islamic Republic; and they have stakes in the bazaar economy, for which they advocate free market economy, fewer regulations on trade and less taxation. As for foreign policy making, their stakes in the bazaar economy induce them to advocate a conciliatory and pragmatic foreign policy, where higher interaction with the outside world gains importance. The majority of this group includes clerics and religious personages in the cities of Qom or Tehran. Certain state institutions such as the Guardian Council, the Special Court for the Clergy and the Assembly of Experts are also associated with the conservatives. The reformists are originally a number of clerics and groups formerly identifying themselves with the conservative camp. In late 1980s, they started to advocate an industry-based economy, modern banking and integration to the capitalist world. While they advocated moderation and reform for the internal state policies, their mottoes for foreign policy were "pragmatism and rationalism" rather than "tradition and conservatism." They could attract the attention of the academics, journalists, students and of moderate clerics, who advocated Iran's isolation in the international arena. The last faction is hardliners, which is a radical group emphasized the protection of the Islamic regime established by the Islamic Revolution against internal and external enemies. The primary body affiliated with this group is the volunteers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps who served in the Iran-Iraq war of 1980. Although all three factions agree on the prolongation of the nuclear program for peaceful energy purposes, they differ from each other on how to handle the issue with the international community. This discussion has been taken from, Wilfried Buchta, Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic (Washington DC.: The Washington Institute for Middle East Policy, 2000), 2-3; Mehdi Moslem, Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 95-105; and Mehram Kamrava, "Iranian National Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities," Middle East Policy 14:2 (Summer 2007): 88.

137 Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,* 83.

138 Kane, "Nuclear Decision-Making In Iran: A Rare Glimpse," 5.

crisis.[139] After this SNSC meeting, the nuclear decision-making elite decided that one person should coordinate all the committees involved in the nuclear issue, who happened to be Hassan Rowhani.[140]

Rowhani's negotiations with the EU-3 in 2003 ended with the intended results on the part of the E3, where Iran seemed to be convinced to temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment activities and sign the Additional Protocol under Tehran Declaration.[141] Iran signed the Additional Protocol of NPT in December 2003, in Vienna, thereby acknowledging the IAEA additional inspection authority to inspect both declared and possible undeclared activities without prior notification.[142] However, the signing of the Additional Protocol did not wholly resolve the issue. The situation got even more complicated in 2004, when IAEA accused Iran of "reporting failures and inconsistencies."[143] As a matter of fact, IAEA found previously unrevealed nuclear enrichment designs on certain Iranian facilities in February 2004, which the Agency thought to be provided by the Pakistani A.Q. Khan network, and condemned Iran for not fully disclosing its nuclear activities.[144]

While Iran's initial reaction to the IAEA report included a ban on the entrance of IAEA inspectors on Iranian nuclear facilities and the demolishing of the Lavizan nuclear site under the inspection of IAEA officials; it still compromised with the IAEA on a plan to alleviate the international community's concerns related to the disclosure of

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139 Ibid.

140 Bill Samii, "Iran: Nuclear Decision Making Undergoes Changes," *Radio Free Europe Radio Free Website,* August 9, 2005, accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1060544.html.

141 Köse, *Iran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti,* 87. Also See Celalifer Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi*, 220.

142 "IAEA Safeguards Overview: Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols," *IAEA Website,* December 11, 2010, http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Factsheets/English/sg_overview.html

143 Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East*, 172.

144 Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,* xvii.

all nuclear activities.[145] However, when the IAEA head ElBaradei issued a report in June 2004, condemning Iran for not fully complying with IAEA inspections, Iran declared its intention to resume its nuclear activities temporarily suspended with the Tehran Declaration.[146] The crisis was resolved in November 2004 with the Paris Agreement, signed between Iran and EU-3, according to which Iran reiterated its commitment to NPT, promised to voluntarily apply the Additional Protocol of NPT, agreed to cooperate with the IAEA on inspections and to suspend all enrichment and processing related activities in exchange for certain economic incentives and peaceful nuclear energy transfer by the EU.[147] Iranian chief negotiator Hassan Rowhani stated that Iran had agreed on the Paris Agreement with an attempt "to improve relations with the West."[148]

The rapprochement between Iran and EU-3 as created with the Paris Agreement was not long-lived, either. The relations got again complicated with another ElBaradei report stating that Iran, while complying with IAEA inspections, still withdrew information regarding certain nuclear activities.[149] Upon this report, EU-3 wanted Iran to permanently suspend the nuclear program, which was rejected by Iran on the grounds that peaceful nuclear energy is the right of every nation and the permanent suspension of the nuclear program would be against the Paris Agreement.[150] In a Geneva meeting with EU-3 officials in May 2005, Iran ensured the EU-3 to wait until the new European proposal due at the end of July 2005, despite its previous intention to resume the nuclear enrichment activities.[151] Iran kept this promise until July 26, 2005, when Iranian President Khatami declared Iran's wish to restart its nuclear activities instead of waiting

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145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.

147 See Köse, *Iran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti,* 99-100; and Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi,* 225-226.

148 Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, xviii.

149 Celalifer-Ekinci, *İran Nükleer Krizi,* 229.

150 Ibid.

151 Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, xviii.

for the pending EU proposals.152

The historical account between 2003 and 2005 indicates that Iran, despite ups and downs, pursued a peaceful, moderate and conciliatory foreign policy on the nuclear issue between 2003 and late 2005. Iran was open to negotiation with the EU-3 until Khatami's July 26 declaration, which appeared only six days before the presidential elections in Iran. Khatami lost presidency to his rival Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on August 2, 2005, after which the conciliatory tone of Iranian foreign policy on the nuclear issue experienced significant transformations.

2.4.3.2 Negotiations with the EU-3 under President Ahmadinejad

Iran's moderate and pragmatic foreign policy approach to the handling of the nuclear issue underwent changes in the post-2005 period. This period is identified first by an uneasiness on the part of Iran voicing its demands to restart the temporarily suspended nuclear program and then by an outright confrontational attitude towards the international community when the hardliner President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came to power.

When the hardliners gained dominance in the Iran's parliament in 2004, they raised their concerns that reformists were risking Iran's national interests by the pursuit of such a soft foreign policy strategy with the international community for the settlement of the nuclear crisis.[153] Then on August 2, 2005, the hardliner candidate Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gained victory in the presidential elections. On August 5, 2005, EU offered a package of incentives for Iran to stop its enrichment activities. In exchange for Iran's compliance with international nuclear regime, EU-3 offered

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152 Ibid.

153 Shahram Chubin, "The Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program," *United States Institute of Peace, The Iran Primer* Website, April, 2, 2001, accessed January 21, 2011, http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/politics-irans-nuclear-program.

cooperation in a wide range of issue areas including nuclear energy, transportation, communication, investment and trade with Iran; EU support for Iran's membership in WTO; and regional cooperation on fight against drug trafficking, nuclear weapons trade, terrorism and on the nuclearization of the Middle East.154 Unsatisfied by the incentives offered by EU, Ahmadinejad immediately rejected the proposal as "ridiculous and disparaging" and "irrevocably" resumed uranium processing activities on August 8.[155] Although Khatami also wanted to resume the temporarily suspended nuclear activities after IAEA inspections, he still showed a willingness to cooperate and establish dialogue with the international community. On the other hand, President Ahmadinejad displayed a non-cooperative attitude towards the incentive packages by EU-3 immediately after he came to power, by declaring that Iran would "irrevocably" resume its uranium enrichment activities.

In February 2006, following the long-time US proposals to refer the Iranian nuclear issue to UN, the issue began to be discussed in the Security Council.156 In June 2006, the High Representative for CFSP and Secretary General Javier Solana of the European Union presented a new package of proposals to Iran to re-open negotiations. The package included "a promise to support the construction of light water nuclear reactors and the sale of commercial planes to Iran, a conference on regional security issues, a long-term energy partnership between the EU."157 However, Iran rejected the Solana package and did not suspend the enrichment and the processing activities.

Ahmadinejad was committed to the revolutionary ideals of protecting the country against external enemies and of preserving the country's military self-reliance. As Dueck emphasizes, "the international indifference to Saddam's war crimes and Tehran's lack of an effective response has led Iran's war veteran President to perceive

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154 Köse, *İran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti*, 89, 100.

155 Ibid., 89.

156 Ibid., 90.

157 Roberto Dominguez, "Iran: A New Challenge to EU Foreign Policy," *European Union Miami Analysis* 4:20 (August 2007); 7.

that the security of his country cannot be predicated on global opinion and treaties."[158] Ahmadinejad regarded the EU as acting at the command of the United States and IAEA, who were, in Ahmadinejad's words, "bullies determined to prevent Iran's progress and advancement."[159] As a result, Ahmadinejad breached the Paris Agreement, declined EU's new incentive packages offering economic cooperation and security guarantees, resumed uranium enrichment activities, and "adopted a more belligerent posture towards the EU, the IAEA and the United States."[160] Since Ahmadinejad's coming to power in late 2005, Iran has also ignored the international threats to stop the enrichment program, either in the form of UN sanctions or U.S. military strikes.[161]

2.4.3.3 Referral of the Issue to the UNSC and UN Sanctions

Given Iran's reluctance to permanently suspend its nuclear program despite the incentives proposed by EU-3, the USA finally convinced the international community to refer the issue to the UN Security Council. UN Security Council passed four rounds of sanctions against Iran for not suspending its nuclear activities.

The first one was passed in December 2006 and required all UN member states to prevent the supply, sale or transfer of nuclear-related technology, goods and materials to the Iranian territory.[162] The second one was passed in March 2007 and sought to prevent other states from dealing with several nuclear, chemical and industrial entities as well as several individuals and organizations associated with the Revolutionary

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158 Colin Dueck and Ray Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Challenge," *Political Science Quarterly* 122:2 (2007): 196.

159 Kamrava, "Iranian National Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities," 96.

160 Ibid., 95.

161 Ibid.

162 See "UN Security Council Resolution 1737," *International Atomic Energy Agency Website*, December 27, 2006, accessed March 12, 2011, http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeairan/unsc_res1737-2006.pdf.

Guard Corps and Bank Sepah, who were supposed to be actively involved in the ballistic missile development program.[163] The third round of sanctions, passed in March 2008, called for a ban on the sale and transfer of nuclear-related items to Iran; a withdrawal of financial assistance by companies in other states trading with Iran; freezing of financial assets of organizations and individuals associated with the Iranian nuclear program; and closer monitoring of the activities of two Iranian banks, Bank Melli and Bank Saderat.[164] Upon co-decision by European governments, the second and third rounds of sanctions were applied in an even expanded manner. Accordingly, the second round of sanctions forbade the entrance of Iranian persons to the EU territory, who were related either with the sale of nuclear weapons or with Iranian nuclear program, and foresaw the freezing of their assets.[165] The third round was expanded by the EU to include a freezing of bank accounts in various European capitals and the introduction of new restrictions on trade.

In June 2010, UN Security Council passed the fourth round of sanctions against Iran. According to this,

> "Iran shall not acquire an interest in any commercial activity in another state involving uranium mining, production or use of nuclear materials and technology; all states shall prevent the supply, sale or transfer to Iran any military equipment such as artillery systems, warships or missiles; states shall take all necessary measures to prevent the transfer to Iran of technology or technical assistance related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons; and Iran's use of the international financial system shall be blocked, particularly its banks when they may be used to fund proliferation and nuclear activities."[166]

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163 See "UN Security Council Resolution 1747," *International Atomic Energy Agency Website*, March 24, 2007, accessed March 12, 2011, http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeairan/unsc_res1747-2007.pdf.

164 See "UN Security Council Resolution 1803," *International Atomic Energy Agency Website*, March 3, 2008, accessed March 12, 2011, http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/unsc_res1803.pdf.

165 Köse, *Iran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti,* 95.

166 "Citing UN's Failure to Clarify Nuclear Ambitions, UN Imposes Additional Sanctions," *UN News Centre Website*, accessed December 12, 2010, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34970&Cr=iran&Cr1.

On July 23, 2010, EU presented an even hardened package of sanctions against Iran. The sanctions package targets banking and oil and gas sectors. As far as oil and gas sector is concerned, the sanctions prohibit the transfer of any material or technology that can be used in refining, exploration and the production of liquefied natural gas.[167] As for the banking sector, there will be a closer control on Iran-connected banks operating in the EU and bank transfers to and from Iran, including freeze of previously unsanctioned Iranian banks.[168]

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a historical background of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and of the Iranian nuclear program. An historical overview of the Iranian nuclear program shows that Iran was one of the main benefactors of US nuclear technology transfer during the Shah period. However, the worsening of bilateral relations following the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the subsequent Hostage Crisis ended the American nuclear technology transfer to Iran. While the Iranian nuclear program came to a halt during Ayatollah Khomeini era, the destructive experience of Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 reintroduced the need for military self-reliance. As a result, the nuclear program was restarted during Ayatollah Khamenei era.

Following the 2002 nuclear crisis, the EU-3 initiated diplomatic negotiations with Iran for the resolution of the issue. These negotiations included several incentive packages offered to Iran in exchange for its abortion of the nuclear program. The two presidential periods in Iran exhibited different reactions to EU incentives. While the Khatami government seemed more willing to cooperate with the EU, the Ahmadinejad government pursued a more outright foreign policy towards the EU. As a result, Iran faced several rounds of UN sanctions as well as unilateral sanctions imposed by the EU.

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167 Ian Traynor, "EU to Introduce New Iran Sanctions," *Guardian Online,* June 15, 2010, accessed December 12, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/15/eu-sanctions-iran-nuclear-programme?INTCMP=SRCH.

168 Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the theoretical background for the analysis of the Iranian nuclear issue. The first section will be devoted to an exploration of the major theories of nuclear proliferation. In this respect, a theoretical foundations of neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism, and domestic politics will be discussed. Afterwords, the contribution and limitations of these theories in explaining the Iranian nuclear issue will be discussed. Finally, power transition will be presented as an alternative theory to explain the Iranian rationale for the nuclear program as well as the international community's pressure on Iran.

3.2 An Overview of Theoretical Perspectives on Nuclear Proliferation

3.2.1 Neorealism

Realist theories focus on the international security environment in explaining the motivations of states' actions. Waltzian neorealism assumes that states exist in an anarchic international environment. In the absence of a central authority setting certain rules, norms and institutions for international interactions, individual states rely on self-

help measures to ensure their own survival. As a systemic theory, Waltzian neorealism sees the distribution of power in an anarchic international setting as the main source of states' foreign policy choices. Therefore, it assumes states to be unitary actors, or black boxes, where domestic political concerns do not matter in decision-making. The distribution of power provides information to the states within the system, with which the states enter into a cost-benefit analysis to determine the most profitable course of action for them. In that sense, neorealism is a rationalistic theory, which emphasizes the role of external security calculations in states' foreign policy decisions.[169]

According to the realist theory, the external security environment of a state may provide powerful incentives to states for acquiring nuclear capability. Nuclear weapons can be developed as deterrents against overwhelming conventional military threats.[170] One common explanation for nuclear weapons proliferation is that states may acquire nuclear weapons as a response to emerging nuclear threats.[171] Scholars such as Waltz, Gaddis and Morgan argue that nuclear weapons have much deterrent capability due to their immense destructive capability.[172] Waltz argues that "nuclear weapons dissuade

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[169] For a detailed discussion on neorealism, see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979); Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1987); Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1999); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Charles Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics* Vol. 50 (October 1997): 171–201; Charles Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* Vol. 19 (Winter 1994/95): 50–90. For an account of defensive and offensive positionalism see Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "Offense– Defense Theory and Its Critics," *Security Studies* Vol. 4 (Summer 1995):660–91; Eric Labs, 'Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims," *Security Studies* Vol. 6 (1997): 1–49.

[170] Scott Sagan, "Why do States Build Nuclear Weapons: Three Models in Search of A Bomb," *International Security* 21:3 (Winter, 1996-1997): 57.

[171] Ibid.

[172] According to realist literature, the huge destructive capability of nuclear weapons renders them credible deterrent forces. See Scott D. Sagan, "Why do States Build Nuclear Weapons," 57; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Nuclear Realities," *The American Political Science Review* 84:3 (1990): 731-745; Kenneth N. Waltz, "More May Be Better," *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed*, ed. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2003), 3-46; Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Revolution: International Politics Before and After Hiroshima* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 58-77; Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67; Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. Georg, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 117-120; Michael Howard, *Causes of War* (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2nd ed., 1983), 278-279; J. L. Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*

states more surely than conventional weapons do" due to their mutual destruction capability and their domination of war strategies.[173] Similarly, in explaining why great superpowers were relatively cautious in risking war with one another despite many crises, Gaddis argues that the existence of nuclear weapons as well as "the direct evidence of what they can do when used against human beings has given this generation a painfully vivid awareness of the realities of war that no previous generation has had."[174] Nuclear programs are steps toward acquiring nuclear weapons capability. Accordingly, realist theories would argue that Iran would want to continue its nuclear program to acquire the capability to build nuclear weapons in order to secure itself.[175]

The realist accounts of US concerns with Iran's nuclear program center around the implications of the program for the security and stability in the Middle East. First of all, the USA sees the prevention of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons crucial for the prevention of an arms race in the region.[176] A nuclear Iran is expected to cause the nuclearization of other Middle Eastern countries, most notably Turkey, Egypt

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10:99 (1986): 120-121; R. Powell, "Nuclear Deterrence and the Strategy of Limited Retaliation," *American Political Science Review* 83 (1989): 503-520; Paul K. Huth, "The Extended Deterrent Value of Nuclear Weapons," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34:2 (Jun., 1990): 270-290.

173 Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Nuclear Realities," 737-743.

174 Gaddis, "The Long Peace," 121-122.

175 For a list of literature discussing Iranian nuclear ambition with reference to external strategic environment, see Quillen, "Iranian Nuclear Weapons Policy," 17-24; Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Calculations," 21-28; Ray Takeyh, "Time for Detente with Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2007); Efraim Inbar, "The Need to Block a Nuclear Iran," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Vol. 10 (March 2006), pp. 85-104; Sagan, "How to Keep the Bomb from Iran," 45-59; Justin Logan, "The Bottom Line on Iran: The Costs and Benefits of Preventive War versus Deterrence," *CATO Institute Policy Analysis* (December 2006): 583; Ali M. Ansari, "Iran and the United States in the Shadow of 9/11: Persia and the Persian Question Revisited," in *Iran In The 21st Century,* eds. *Homa Katouzian and Hossein Shahidiin* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Saideh Lotfian, "Nuclear Policy and International Relations," *Iran In The 21st Century,* eds. Homa Katouzian and Hossein Shahidiin (New York: Routledge, 2008); Shannon N. Kile, ed., *Europe and Iran: Perspectives on Non-Proliferation*, (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Report 21 2005); Wyn O. Bowen and Joanna Kidd, "The Iranian Nuclear Challenge," *International Affairs* Vol. 80 (2004): 257-276; Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, "Iran's Nuclear Program and The Future of US-Iranian Relations," *Middle East Policy* Vol. 16 (Spring 2009): 121-133.

176 Özcan and Özdamar, "Iran's Nuclear Program and The Future of US-Iranian Relations," 121-133.

and Saudi Arabia.[177] Secondly, in the post-9/11 security environment, the USA fears that nuclear weapons can be transferred to terrorist organizations in the Middle East. In that context, the USA has declared Iran to be the sponsor of terrorism due to its support for Hamas and Hezbollah in Syria and Lebanon against Israel.[178] Thirdly, the USA fears that a nuclear Iran would threaten the Israeli existence and military supremacy in the region.[179] Israel is the only nuclear power in the region. A nuclear Iran would not only give rise to further military build-up on both sides, but it would also cause problems with bilateral deterrence between Iran and Israel in a multipolar environment where other states also go nuclear.[180]

From a neorealist perspective, Iran's nuclear ambitions could be explained with reference to two security related issues. First, Iran's another perceived security threat is from the USA. The American invasion of Afghanistan and its overthrowing of the Taliban regime in 2001 and the deployment of troops in Iraq coupled by the fall of the Saddam regime in 2003 led to the weakening of Iran's two rivals in the region.[181] However, now surrounded by the American military presence on its west and east, Iran fears from a US invasion or attack on the Iranian territory.[182] Iran's relations with the USA have been cold since the Iranian Hostage Crisis and the Islamic Revolution in 1979.[183] In the post-9/11 period, the USA is concerned with Iran's change of regional balance through its nuclear weapons program.[184] On the other hand, Iran's perceived security threats are further fueled every time a U.S. official talks about the "axis of

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177 Inbar, "The Need to Block a Nuclear Iran," 89.

178 Özcan and Özdamar, 'Iran's Nuclear Program and The Future of US-Iranian Relations', 121-133. Also see, Anthony H. Cordesman, "Iran and the United States: The Nuclear Issue," 19-29.

179 Ibid.

180 Inbar, "The Need to Block a Nuclear Iran," 91.

181 Gawdat Bahgat, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran," *International Studies Perspectives* 7 (2006): 129.

182 Ibid.

183 Ansari, "Iran and the United States in the Shadow of 9/11: Persia and the Persian Question Revisited," 108.

184 Lotfian, "Nuclear Policy and International Relations," 162.

evil," "regime change," or "pre-emptive strike."[185] From a realist perspective, one reason that could make Iran consider obtaining nuclear weapons is changing the balance of power to Iran's advantage, thereby preventing others states such as the US from occupying and controlling their state.[186]

Secondly, the existence of new nuclear states in the vicinity of Iran such as Pakistan, Israel and India leads Iran to follow a new security policy based on self-sufficiency and deterrence.[187] The Pakistani case poses an indirect security threat to Iran. In the post-9/11 period, threat perceptions of the international community have come to emanate not only from states but also from non-state actors including terrorist groups. The sale of or the theft of nuclear material by terrorist groups from nuclear states has become a primary security issue.[188] Although Pakistan has been feared to engage in the sale of nuclear material to terrorist groups, it has not been placed on the list of countries supporting a leading terrorist organization, Taliban.[189] The fact that USA has not taken any action towards Pakistan's nuclear program has led Iran to believe that the USA will not attack a country possessing nuclear capability.[190] Israel, on the other hand, poses a more direct threat to Iran's existence and security.[191] Israel is the sole nuclear power holder in the Middle East and it is also not party to NPT. All these security threats are further exacerbated by Iran's perceived weakness in conventional weapons. Having a nuclear threat in its neighborhood, Iran seems to

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185 Mayer, *National Security to Nationalist Myth: Why Iran Wants Nuclear Weapons,* 29.

186 Ziad Khalil Abu Zayyad, "Why Iran Wants Nuclear Weapons," *Middle East Post Website,* February 10, 2008, accessed February 21, 2011, http://www.middleastpost.com/96/why-iran-wants-nuclear-weapons/.

187 Lotfian, "Nuclear Policy and International Relations," 151. For Iran's theat perceptions, also see Lotfian, "Threat Perception and Military Planning in Iran: Credible Scenarios of Conflict and Opportunities for Confidence Building," 195-215; Daniel Byman et. al., *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era* (Santa Monica: 2001).

188 "Non-proliferation," http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/policy/nonproliferation/.

189 Lotfian, "Nuclear Policy and International Relations," p. 161.

190 Ibid.

191 Mayer, *National Security to Nationalist Myth: Why Iran Wants Nuclear Weapons,* 29.

concentrate on its nuclear program for the purposes of deterrence.[192] From a realist perspective, Iran sees its nuclear weapons as a substitute for its weak conventional arms infrastructure, thereby serving as an "insurance policy" towards any nuclear threats in the region.[193]

Although realist paradigm provides us with an understanding of Iranian security threats and their implications for the nuclear program, it fails to account for many dilemmas. First of all, Israel and USA poses only a vague threat for Iran due to the absence of any deep historical or existential enemy in its imminent neighborhood, contrary to the Pakistani and Indian case.[194] It could be argued that Iran has "no urgent strategic rationale, due to the lack of any existential threats or imminent enemies."[195] Secondly, Iran's major regional challenger, Iraq, had already been neutralized in 2003, which leaves Iran with no urgent need for nuclear weapons. Thirdly, Iran's insistence on its nuclear program also increases Israel's perception of security threats and its military build-up, thereby creating a security dilemma for itself. The security dilemma may be further fueled by the nuclearization of other states in the region.

3.2.2 Neoliberal Institutionalism

The second school of thought explaining the Iranian nuclear issue is neoliberal institutionalism, which is a rationalistic theory of international cooperation. It adopts a rationalistic position in explaining the dynamics behind the establishment of international regimes and international organizations.[196] It follows the same neorealist

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192 Lotfian, "Nuclear Policy and International Relations," 161.

193 Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,* 73.

194 Ibid., 74.

195 Ibid.

196 Robert O. Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches," I*nternational Studies Quarterly* 32:4 (1988): 386. For a list of literature on Neoliberal Institutionalism, see Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," *World Politics* 38: 1

assumptions that international system is marked by anarchy, in which unitary and rational states engage in a cost-benefit analysis in order maintain their interests. The common point between realism and neoliberal institutionalism is that they have much explanatory power in explaining the conflict among self-seeking states that derive from a clash of interests. However, what is missing in such an inference is that there might not only be a clash of interest but also a convergence of interest among these self-seeking and rational actors, as a result of which cooperation may occur. Both realism and neoliberal institutionalism recognize there is room for cooperation in an anarchic international order. Although both theories acknowledge that states may benefit from cooperation on certain occasions, they diverge on the nature of those benefits. Neorealism argues that states calculate their relative gains before entering into cooperation, whereas neoliberal institutionalism suggests that there is much more room for cooperation as states seek absolute gains.[197] In that sense, it can be argued that neoliberal institutionalism is more optimistic than realism on international cooperation.[198]

One central notion of neoliberal institutionalism is transaction costs.[199] According to North, transaction costs include "the costliness of information, the costs

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(October 1085): 226-254; Stephen Krasner, "Regimes and Limits of Realism: Regimes as Autonomous Variables," *International Organization* 36:2 (1982): 497-510; Barbara Koremenos, Charles Lipson, Duncan Snidal, "The Rational Design of International Institutions," *International Organization* 55:4 (Autumn 2001): 761-799; Robert O. Keohane, "Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge after the Cold War," in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate,* ed. David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin, "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory," *International Security* 20:1 (1995); Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism," *International Organization* 38:2 (1984); Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42: 3 (Summer 1988); Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," in *Cooperation Under Anarchy,* ed. Kenneth A. Oye (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); David O. Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

197 For a more detailed discussion on "relative gains" vs. "absolute gains," see Joseph Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42:3 (1988): 485-508; Joseph Grieco, Robert Powell and Duncan Snidal,"The Relative Gains Problem for International Cooperation," *American Political Science Review* 87:3 (1993): 729-743.

198 See Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches."

199 Cornelia Navari, "Neoliberal Institutionalism," in *Security Studies: An Introduction,* eds. Paul D. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2nd edition, 2008), 39.

of measuring the valuable attributes of what is being exchanged and the costs of protecting the rights and policing and enforcing agreements."[200] The international institutions can reduce transaction costs by providing information to the system on "rule-making, negotiating, implementing, enforcing."[201] Therefore, the presence of international institutions brings greater opportunities for the states to cooperate with one another. Still, following the rationalistic assumption of neoliberal institutionalism, Keohane admits that if there were no mutual benefits for parties to gain from an agreement, there would be no need for international institutions.[202] Keohane argues that "institutions should persist as long as, but only so long as their members have incentives to maintain them."[203] It follows from the neoliberal institutionalist logic that institutions may cease to exist when states no longer see any individual benefits from that cooperation. For instance, Keohane recognizes that relative power positions of the members are also reflected to the institutions; and as a result, disadvantaged governments seeing benefit in an agreement outside the established institution may opt out.204 This explains why states may breach their commitments to the regimes.[205]

From a neoliberal institutionalist perspective, the NPT can be argued to be the result of a rational interest calculation by individual states who opt for a collective

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200 Douglas C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 27.

201 Navari, "Neoliberal Institutionalism," 39.

202 Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches," 386.

203 Ibid., 387.

204 Ibid.

205 For a list of literature on Neoliberal Institutionalism and its critics, see Robert Jervis, "Realism, Neoliberalism and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate," *International Security* 24:1 (1999); Robert O. Keohane, "Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge after the Cold War," in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate,* ed. David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin, "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory," *International Security* 20:1 (1995); Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism," *International Organization* 38:2 (1984); Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42:3 (Summer 198); Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," in *Cooperation Under Anarchy,* ed. Kenneth A. Oye (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); David O. Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

compromise on not to acquire nuclear weapons in exchange for security. However, such a compromise will prevail so long as it serves the interests of all. The flaws of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation regime deserve scholarly attention at this point. Scholars such as Jean du Preez and George Bunn discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the non-proliferation regime in addressing international security issues in the post-9/11 era.[206] The recent Pakistani and Indian nuclear proliferation despite the regime, the North Korean withdrawal from the NPT, the heightened role of non-state actors such as Pakistani A.Q. Khan Network in nuclear build-up and nuclear trade, the fear of nuclear knowledge and technology transfer to terrorist organizations and Iran's insistence on its nuclear program despite its membership to the Treaty are some of the issues that can be addressed by the neoliberal institutionalist theory.

While the USA has never fully dropped the unilateral military strike option against Iran from its agenda, it has also acted in coordination with international institutions in the resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue. The USA has closely observed the IAEA negotiations with Iran. Furthermore, it has also backed the EU-3 initiatives to persuade Iran sign the Additional Protocol and cooperate with IAEA on inspections in return for certain security and economic incentives. From a neoliberal institutionalist perspective, the US decision to stress the importance of the NPT regime and to support any multilateral initiative to solve the issue in coordination with international institutions can be explained by certain US interests which are hardly any different from the ones set forth by the realist accounts. The possibility that a nuclear Iran might cause a nuclear arms race in the region may present a strong incentive for the US to ensure Iran's compliance with the NPT regime. The fear that Iran might provide nuclear weapons to terrorist organizations in the region might be regarded as another incentive for the USA to persuade Iran to comply with the NPT regime. Moreover, the US emphasis on the NPT regime may be explained by the fact that USA has taken a more cautious approach towards the unilateral military strike option after it has experienced

[206] For further detail, see Bunn, "The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty: History and Current Problems," and Preez, "Half Full or Half Empty? Realizing the Promise of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

its costs during the Iraqi War.[207] In either case, neoliberal institutionalism suggests that the US emphasis on the NPT regime can be explained by the benefits the US will get from Iran's full compliance with the regime.

Iran has been a party to NPT and has signed the comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Neoliberal institutionalism would expect Iran to comply with the regime as long as it gains certain security benefits from it. However, Iran has raised its concerns about the selective application of the regime by the international community. First of all, Iran sees the exclusive right of five nations to retain their nuclear capabilities as specified by the NPT as hypocrisy.[208] Secondly, there are two nuclear states, Pakistan, and Israel in its close vicinity, who are not party to the NPT. Still, these countries' nuclear programs have not been challenged by great nuclear powers as has been the case with Iran's nuclear program. Iranian officials have declared that "the exclusive right of five permanent members of the UN Security Council to retain nuclear weapons with the toleration of Israel makes non-proliferation a truly futile expectation."[209] From a neoliberal institutionalist perspective, Iran's breach of IAEA safeguards can be explained with the relative cost of compliance in the face of an Israeli and Pakistani nuclear threat in the region. Israel's non-cooperation, in terms of its refusal to be subject to the NPT regime and IAEA inspections, also increases Iran's costs for complying with the regime. As a result, NPT regime is not an adequate incentive for Iran to stop its nuclear program.[210]

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207 Köse, *İran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti*, 36.

208 Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security*, 73.

209 Ibid.

210 For a list of literature discussing Iran's nuclear ambitions with regards to NPT regime, see Sokolski and Clawson, eds., *Checking Iran's Nuclear Ambitions;* Shahshahani, "Politics Under the Cover of Law: Can International Law Help Resolve the Iran Nuclear Crisis," 369; Chaim Braun and Chrtistopher F. Chyba, "Proliferation Rings: New Challenges to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," *International Security* 29 (2004): 5-49; Anthony H. Cordesman, "Iran and the United States: The Nuclear Issue," 19-29.

3.2.3 Constructivism

Besides these rationalistic theories, some scholars emphasize the role of meaning structures, ideas, identities and norms in shaping states' behavior. Constructivism is a school of thought which argues that "the world is constituted socially through intersubjective interaction," where agents and structures mutually constitute one another.[211] Constructivist approach suggests that it is non-material and ideational factors are what shape states' practices.[212] The constructivist literature in International Relations has been adopted to explain the establishment of international institutions and to understand international security.[213] Two most common non-material factors discussed by constructivist scholars are identities or our perception about ourselves, and norms.[214] The foreign policy discourse of a state, which is a set of statements about the state's identity and its perception of "legitimate code of conduct," shapes the state's foreign policy behavior, preferences and interests.[215] Systemic constructivists such as Wendt argue that the meaning structures at the international level shape foreign policy behavior.[216] Still, Wendt does not wholly dismiss the importance of unit-level discourses and states' role, although limited when compared to systems-level norms, in

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211 Matt McDonald, "Constructivism," in *Security Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 59-60. Also see, Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46:2 (1992), 391-425.

212 McDonald, "Constructivism," 61.

213 For a list of constructivist scholarship in international relations, see Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," 391-425; John Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity* (London: Routledge, 1999); Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security* (Ithaca, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996); Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson and Raymond Duvall, *Cultures of Insecurity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Martha Finnemore, *National Interests and International Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

214 McDonald, "Constructivism," 61.

215 Doty quoted in Moshirzadeh, "Discursive Foundations of Iran's Nuclear Policy," 522.

216 See Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

determining states' behavior.[217] Constructivist scholars like Onuf define domestic discourses as central to states' foreign policy making.[218]

Constructivist literature on nuclear non-proliferation argues that nuclear norms and symbols can lead both to nuclearization and denuclearization. Sagan argues that the question of nuclearization and denuclearization is also determined by deeper norms and shared beliefs about the legitimacy and appropriateness of nuclear weapons.[219] A constructivist approach to the NPT regime would discuss the establishment and observation of the regime with reference to the existence of non-proliferation norms at the international level. For instance, Tannenwald adopts the international "nuclear taboo" notion to explain why not so many states have gone nuclear so far.[220] However, there are also norms that encourage acquisition of nuclear weapons. Some scholars focus on nuclear weapons as symbols of technological development, prestige and modernity.[221] O'Neill argues that nuclear weapons may symbolize technical prowess, modernity or as full recognition as a member of the world system.[222] Although literature on prestige as a motive for nuclear weapons acquisition is sparse, individual case studies on several states such as France, China and Australia indicate that these

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217 Ibid.

218 Smith quoted in Moshirzadeh, "Discursive Foundations of Iran's Nuclear Policy," 522. Also see Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

219 Sagan, "Why do States Build Nuclear Weapons: Three Models in Search of A Bomb," 73.

220 See Nina Tannenwald "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use," *International Organization* 53 (1993): 433-468.

221 For a list of constructivist accounts of nuclear proliferation and non-proliferation, see Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Maria Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Barry O' Neill, "Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige," (Draft presented to Department of Polical Science, UCLA, 2002), 4. Also for literature on nuclear weapons as a source of prestige, see John Meyer, "The Changing Cultural Content of the Nation-State: A World Society Perspective," in *New Approaches to the State in the Social Sciences,* ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Evan Luard, *War in International Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Dana, Eyre and Mark Suchman, "Status, norms, and the proliferation of conventional weapons," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identities in World Politics,* ed. Peter Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Peter Lavoy, "Nuclear myths and the causes of nuclear proliferation," *Security Studies* 2 (1993).

222 O' Neill, "Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige," 4.

countries sought prestige through nuclear weapons.[223]

The constructivist literature would be expected to treat the US emphasis on the Iranian nuclear issue with reference to the existence of international non-proliferation norms, notably the NPT regime. In this respect, the USA might insist on Iran to suspend its nuclear program, as any state's defection from the NPT regime would be a blow to the regime's credibility. On the Iranian side, the constructivist literature on Iranian nuclear program argues that the nuclear program has certain symbolic meanings for Iran. For Iran, the nuclear program is compatible with Iranian Revolutionary discourses such as "independence" and "justice."[224] Both discourses are intimately related to the "historical victimization," where the "Iranian glorious past" has been disturbed by "(semi)-colonial" invaders such as the USA, UK and Russia.[225] While this has led to a feeling of underdevelopment and dependence on the outside world, the Islamic Revolution has promoted the ideals of independence, equality and self-reliance. The nuclear weapons symbolize these very Revolutionary ideals of prestige, independence, equality and self-reliance.[226] Besides being the symbol of Revolutionary ideals, nuclear weapons also symbolize development, scientific and technological advancement and modernization.[227] Apart from this scholarly work on nuclear symbols as the drivers of

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223 See, Wilfred Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's New 'Old Thinking': The Concept of Limited Deterrence," *International Security* 20:5 (1996); James Walsh, "Surprise down Under: The Secret History of Australia's Nuclear Ambitions," *Nonproliferation Review* 5: 1 (1997).

224 Moshirzadeh, "Discursive Foundations of Iran's Nuclear Policy," 527.

225 Ibid., 529.

226 Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,* p. 74. Also for a list of literature mentioning the role of norms and identity in Iran's nuclear program, see Perkovich, "Dealing With Iran's Nuclear Challenge," 1-16; Amuzegar, "Nuclear Iran: Perils and Prospects," 90-112; Kibaroğlu, "Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power," 207-32. Barth, "Scientists, Clerics and Nuclear Decision Making In Iran;" Nia, "Understanding Iran's Foreign Policy: An Application of Holistic Constructivism;" Ziemke, "The National Myth and Strategic Personality of Iran," 89.

227 See Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,* p. 74; Kai-Henrik Barth, "Scientists, Clerics and Nuclear Decision Making In Iran," (Presentation in Georgetown University, June 22, 2007), and Mahdi Mohammad Nia, "Understanding Iran's Foreign Policy: An Application of Holistic Constructivism," Alternatives, Turkish Journal of International Relations, 9:1, Spring 2010.

Iranian nuclearization, some scholars focus on the Iranian strategic personality, which shape its relations with the international community on the nuclear issue. Ziemke argues that "all nations are the product of a historical experience, [which] provides the blueprint for its strategic personality: how it sees its relationship to the outside world, assesses its options and national interests, and makes decisions about how to act."[228] Relying on Shiite Islam and the Iranian Revolution in her analysis, Ziemke defines Iranian strategic personality as "introverted, intuitive, feeling," which creates tensions with the American "extroverted" strategic personality in the resolution of deterrence issues.[229]

While constructivist accounts provide us with valuable insight on the role of nuclear norms and institutions as possible dynamics behind Iran's nuclear program and the specific US emphasis on Iran, they fail on many occasions. First of all, the argument that the US concern on Iran stems from its generic emphasis on the continuation of the NPT regime does not hold viable. For one thing, the USA was the main technological, scientific and financial supporter of the nuclear program during the Shah regime. For another, Iran is not the only country with a nuclear program. As a matter of fact, several non-NPT states such as India and Pakistan have performed nuclear tests and Israel has developed nuclear weapons. Similarly, North-Korea has withdrawn from the NPT regime and declared itself to be nuclear state. However, the USA has not responded to the Israeli, Indian and Pakistani proliferation with multilateral sanctions as tough as those of Iran. Although there is no conclusive evidence that Iran's nuclear program is aimed at nuclear weaponization, the US backed international community has imposed four rounds of sanctions on Iran. The selective application of the NPT regime on Iran by the USA suggests that it is not driven by international non-proliferation norms in the Iranian case. Secondly, while nuclear symbols may have a place in the Iranian nuclear program, as Sagan argues, symbols and ideas do not have power on their own but are reshaped and manipulated in the hands of certain groups who would have a stake in

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228 Ziemke, "The National Myth and Strategic Personality of Iran," 89.

229 See Caroline F. Ziemke, *Strategic Personality and the Effectiveness of Nuclear Deterrence: Deterring Iran and Iraq* (Institute for Defense Analysis Paper, September 2001).

them.[230]

3.2.4 Domestic Politics

A group of scholars have sought to explain nuclearization with reference to domestic politics. One prominent scholar is Scott Sagan, who highlights the role of domestic players on nuclearization, either supporting or hindering the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Sagan suggests that whether acquisition of nuclear weapons may serve national interests or not, it may serve the parochial interests or personal interests of certain players.[231] A state's nuclear energy establishment, the military establishment, and politicians in states whose political parties and public's support nuclear acquisition can lead the state towards nuclearization.[232] These actors are not the passive recipients of top-down decisions, but they all engage in a governmental political game where they try to persuade one another in the need for acquiring nuclear weapons. When the groups favoring nuclear proliferation form a strong coalition thereby surpassing the influence of other players in the game, nuclear proliferation option may become the governmental decision-making resultant.

Similarly Graham Allison refers to sub-national foreign policy formation in explaining nuclearization with his "bureaucratic politics" model, which he introduced in his 1969 book Essence of Decision.[233] In Allison's bureaucratic politics model, "each

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230 Sagan, "Why do States Build Nuclear Weapons," 76.

231 Ibid. p. 63.

232 Ibid., p. 64.

233 For a list of bureaucratic politics literature, see Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (NewYork: Longman, 1999); I. M. Destler, *Presidents, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Policy: The Politics of Organization Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); William I. Bachus, *Foreign Policy and the Bureaucratic Process: The State Department's Country Director System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Graham Allison and Peter Szanton, *Remaking Foreign Policy: The Organizational Connection* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Stephen D. Cohen, *The Making of United States International Economic Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1977); Francis E. Rourke, ed., *Bureaucratic Power in National Politics* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978);

national government is a complex arena for intra-national game," where "the decision-maker of national policy is not one calculating individual but rather a conglomerate of large organizations and political actors."[234] According to the model, the governmental actor is not a unitary agent but rather a number of individual players occupying a certain position, which define the players' preferences, interests, capabilities and responsibilities. Therefore, only national security interests, but also domestic political interests and organizational interests play an important role in making decisions on foreign policy issues.[235] What determines each player's impact on results is "power," which Allison operationalizes as "a blend of bargaining advantages, skills and will in using these bargaining advantages and other players' perception of them."[236] The decisions and actions of governments are "intra-national political resultants," meaning the decision is "not a solution to a problem chosen among other options," but rather a result of the compromise, conflict and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence.[237]

Although there are ample amount of work discussing the role of central decision-makers and the domestic political factions on Iranian nuclear decision-making, they do not engage much into a thorough theoretical discussion. A good application of the domestic politics literature on Iranian nuclear program, on the other hand, is advanced by Etel Solingen, who argues that leaders and ruling coalitions' response to "internationalization" is the main reason for the states' differing nuclear behavior.[238] Leaders and ruling coalitions favoring internationalization have greater incentives to

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John Spanier and Eric M. Uslaner, *How American Foreign Policy is Made* (New York: Holt, Rine- hart & Winston, 1978); Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and Eugene R. Wittkopf, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process* (New York: St. Martin's Press, I979); Morton H. Halperin, Priscilla Clapp and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington DC.: Brookings Institute Press, 2nd ed., 2006); Jerel A. Rosati, "Developing a Systematic Decision-Making Framework: Bureaucratic Politics in Perspective," *World Politics* 33:2 (January, 1981): 235.

234 Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision,* 255.

235 Ibid.

236 Ibid., 300.

237 Ibid., 295.

238 Solingen, *Nuclear Logics,* 5.

"avoid the political, economic, reputational and opportunity costs of acquiring nuclear weapons, because costs impair their domestic agenda."[239] Solingen argues that Iran is an inward-oriented country ruled by domestic groups, who derive certain material interests from the country's economic self-sufficiency, nationalist values, and Islamic regime.[240] Due to the negative implications of an open-economy to the economic standing of these domestic groups within the regime, these groups do not favor internationalization.[241] Due to the political elites' reluctance to be integrated into an open economy, the nuclear program does not lead to any economic costs. Moreover, the nuclear program contributes to the self-sufficiency of the Iranian regime. Other scholarly work on the implications of domestic politics on Iran's nuclear program do concentrate on the role of the Supreme Leader, the presidents, the nuclear scientists within the regime and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.[242]

Domestic politics literature provides a powerful explanation for the Iranian nuclear program. However, it suffers from the major weakness that Iran has started its nuclear program during the Shah period and has since been insistent on its nuclear program regardless of the domestic groups approach to internationalization. Even during a reformist president's leadership like Khatami, Iran reiterated its commitment to its peaceful nuclear program on many occasions. Neither the overthrowing of Shah and the transition to an Islamic regime, nor the power balances among the reformist and hardliner camps at the domestic level has led to any changes in Iran's final decision to pursue its peaceful nuclear program. The shift in power balances at the domestic level only affected Iran's relations with the international community on the resolution of the

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239 Ibid.

240 Ibid., 175-186.

241 Ibid.

242 Ziemke et al., *Leadership Dynamics and Nuclear Decision-Making in Islamic Republic of Iran*; Mokhtari, "Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Presidency: What Does Iran Really Want?"; Bar et al., "Iran's Nuclear Decision-Making Under Ahmadinejad;" Barth, "Scientists, Clerics and Nuclear Decision Making In Iran;" Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security;* Kane, "Nuclear Decision-Making In Iran: A Rare Glimpse;" Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions;* Mayer, "National Security to Nationalist Myth: Why Iran Wants Nuclear Weapons;" Amuzegar, "Nuclear Iran: Perils and Prospects," 90-112.

nuclear issue, but not the nuclear program itself.

3.3 An Alternative Theoretical Perspective: Power Transition Theory

3.3.1 The Foundations of the Power Transition Theory

While the last grand debate in international relations scholarship concentrated on the war between realism and liberalism, the realist paradigm did not go without internal schisms.[243] Structural realism, which has long dominated the realist paradigm, has been challenged first by neoclassical realism, which recognized the actions of states with reference to systemic variables and domestic variables at the same time. Zakaria and Snyder assume that the state institutions', leaders', and political elites' ability to extract domestic resources and mobilize public support affect their international political outcomes.[244] Another internal schism manifested itself as the division between "offensive" and "defensive" realism, which diverged from each other on the question of states' intentions. While the former argues that the primary intent of states in international relations is to seek power maximization, the latter refutes this proposition and argue that the balance of power among states may favor the defender to simply

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243 J. DiCicco and J. Levy, "Power Shifts and Problem Shifts: The Evolution of the Power Transition Research Program," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43:6 (1999): 679.

244 For a list of literature on Neoclassical Realism, see: Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton: University Press, 1998); Steven E. Lobell, Norin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaffero, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009); Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51 October (1998); Randall Schweller, "Tripolarity and the Second World War," *International Studies Quarterly* 37:1 (1993); Randall Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19:1 (1994); Randall Schweller, "Neorealism's Status-quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?," *Security Studies* 5:3 (1996); Randall Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Randall Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *International Security* 29:2 (Fall 2004); Randall Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton: University Press, 2006); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Thomas J. Christenson, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

protect its security.[245]

Despite such subtleties, all these realist variants share certain assumptions and propositions. They all assume that states are the main actors of international relations, which rationally seek to preserve or maximize their security interests in an international domain marked by anarchy.[246] Moreover, they all propose that international conflict and cooperation is shaped by the distribution of power and that "high concentration of power in the system are destabilizing in the sense that they generally give rise to blocking coalitions and often lead to war," thereby hindering the rise of an hegemon at the same time.[247] Therefore, all these realist variants are "balance of power theories," although they all diverge from each other on the specifics of who balances and under what conditions.[248]

The Power transition theory marks a second division within the realist paradigm. Introduced by A.F.K Organski in his seminal work World Politics (1958) and further developed by Organski and Kugler (1980), Kugler and Lemke (1996), Tammen (2000) and Lemke (2002), the power transition theory challenges the core assumptions and propositions of the balance of power theories. The power transition theory diverges from the balance of power theory on three main assumptions. First of all, power transition theory assumes that international domain is not marked by anarchy but hierarchy. Second, power transition theory refuses neorealist assumption that bipolarity

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245 For Offensive Realism, see John Mearsheimar, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (NewYork: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001). For Defensive Realism, see Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation in Southwest Asia: Balancing and Bandwagoning in Cold War Competition," in *Dominoes and Bandwagons*, eds. Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 35:2 (1991); Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War, Vol. 1: Structure of Power and the Roots of War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* 19:3 (1994/95)*;* Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisitied," *World Politics* 50:1 (1997); Charles L. Glaser, "The Necessary and Natural Evolution of Structural Realism," in *Realism and Balancing of Power: A New Debate*, eds. John A. Vasquez and Colin Elman (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003).

246 DiCicco and Levy, "Power Shifts and Problem Shifts," 679.

247 Ibid.

248 Ibid.

achieved through power parity between two great powers leads to peace; and instead argues that power parity leads to conflict. Third, power transition theory challenges the static view of nations' power.

In his initial formulation of the theory, Organski depicted the international system not as anarchy but as hierarchy. Organski delineated this hierarchy like a pyramid, where a dominant power sits at the top, great powers are situated in the middle and less powerful states are scattered at the lower ends. Although there is an absence of central authority in the international arena, there are "established patterns or international orders" that shape states' interactions[249] The privilege for setting the rules of international interaction is in the hands of the dominant power in the system. The totality of these specific patterns of interaction employed internationally in economic, political and military terms is called status-quo by Organski.[250] The dominant state sets the status-quo by an international projection of its way of extracting political and economic resources domestically to the international arena.[251] Lemke argues that such a projection has both material and immaterial benefits to the dominant power. On material terms, the established patterns bringing political and economic benefits domestically can also reap benefits for the dominant power if employed internationally.[252] On immaterial terms, the established patterns which have proved successful domestically can legitimize the dominant power's leadership internationally.[253] In either case, the dominant power has the incentive to preserve and reinforce the international status-quo in political, economic and military terms.

However, not all states benefit from the status-quo set by the dominant power. The degree of reaping benefits from the international status-quo is not the same among

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249 Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 22.

250 A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 325.

251 Douglas Lemke and William Reed, "Regime Type and Status Quo Evaluations: Power Transitions and the Democratic Peace Proposition," *International Interactions* 22 (1996): 146.

252 Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*, 22.

253 Ibid.

the dominant power, great powers and small powers. Organski and Kugler argue that certain great powers may become dissatisfied with the status-quo, as the status-quo has been established without them having a say to it and the resources have already been allocated.[254] In cases where rising nation is denied certain benefits that are already shared by the dominant power and its great power allies at the time of the status-quo construction, that nation may become dissatisfied and challenge the status-quo.[255] The rising power may act like a parvenu, who thinks that if it has already risen to power in the existing unfavorable status-quo, it would have risen even much under a status-quo from which it would reap greater benefit.[256]

Contrary to the neorealist theory, power transition theory expects a conflict between the dominant power and the rising dissatisfied power when they achieve power parity. The conflict is expected to be more probable and intense when parity approaches[257] However, the theory suggests that neither the power parity nor dissatisfaction can alone lead to conflict. The power transition theory argues that a power parity between great powers that are benefiting from the international status-quo and are satisfied with it do not challenge the dominant power.[258] The likelihood of war increases only when there is a congruence of parity between a dominant power and a dissatisfied challenger. The empirical findings of many power transitions scholars prove the hypothesis that a congruence of power parity and dissatisfaction with the status quo leads to war, while a near or full power parity between a dominant power and a satisfied great power may lead to integration.[259]

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254 A.F.K Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 19.

255 Ibid.

256 Douglas Lemke and William Reed, "Power Is Not Satisfaction: A Comment on de Soysa, Oneal, and Park," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42:4 (1998), 512.

257 Jacek Kugler, Ronald L. Tammen, and Brian Efird, "Integrating Theory and Policy: Global Implications of the War in Iraq," *International Studies Review* 6:4 (2004), 15.

258 Douglas Lemke, "The Continuation of History: Power Transition Theory and the End of the Cold War," *Journal of Peace Research* 34:1 (1997), 22.

259 See Suzanne Werner and Jacek Kugler, "Power Transitions and Military Buildups: Resolving the Relationship between Arms Buildups and War," in *Parity and War,* eds. Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Woosang Kim, "Power Parity, Alliance and War from

3.3.2 The Measurement of Key Variables

The measurement of the power, hierarchy, status-quo and dissatisfaction has been a theoretical concern for the power transition scholars since the introduction of the theory. The discussion on the measurement of power precedes another central question raised by power transition scholars as to source of national power. In his 1958 work, Organski criticizes the balance of power theories for treating the national power as static.[260] On the contrary, by looking at the power shift among dominant and rising countries in the 18th and 19th century Europe, he concludes that a nation's power comes from within, from their levels of industrialization.[261] As a result, as opposed to what balance of power theories suggest, "The relative powers of countries can change independently of other countries, as those with the faster rates of growth catch up and overtake those that grow slowly.[262] Subsequent work on power transition theory reiterated the assumption that internal development and growth is the main reason for the differentiation of power between the dominant power and the challenger; and therefore, a differentiation in the internal growth rate of nations is the main dynamic behind all international interactions.[263]

Initially, Organski proposed six criteria to measure a a nation's power, which are economic development, demography, national morale, resources, geography and the efficacy of political structure.[264] Organski dropped the national morale, resources and

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1648 to 1975," in *Parity and War,* eds. Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger;* Brian Efird, Jacek Kugler and Gaspare Genna "From Conflict to Integration: Generalizing the Dynamic of Power Transitions," *International Interaction* 29:4 (2003).

260 Organski, *World Politics*, 1958, p. 287.

261 Organski quoted in DiCicco and Levy, "Power Shifts and Problem Shifts," 683.

262 Kugler and Lemke, *Parity and War*, 7-8.

263 See Organski, *World Politics*, 287-90, 337-38; Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger,* 24-27; Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace,* 26-27.

264 DiCicco and Levy, "Power Shifts and Problem Shifts," 686-687.

geography variables and concentrated on population size, economic development and the efficacy of political structure for the ease of measurement.[265] In their 1980 work, Organski and Kugler embrace GNP as the main instrument to measure economic development and population size as the main sources of national power.[266] Later de Soysa, Oneal and Park replicated Houweling and Siccama's analysis with the Correlates of War (COW) composite index and GDP in their 1997 work.[267] The Correlates of War composite index includes demographic, military and industrial components of national development, thereby adding the military power variable to their analysis. Efird et. al. defines hierarchy or the relative power among nations as "the objective ability of one nation to impose its preferences on the opponent by persuasion if possible and by force if necessary."[268] Organski and Kugler treat the rising challengers that are within the 20 % of the dominant nation's as having the potential to acquire power parity.[269]

In their 2000 work, Tammen et. al. place the United States at the top of the international hierarchy as the dominant power.[270] The current great powers are China, Japan, a Germany dominated EU, and Russia.[271] France, Brazil and Italy are labeled as the middle powers.[272] Given the existence of the USA as the dominant power in the

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265 Ibid., 687.

266 Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger,* 85.

267 Indra de Soysa, John R. Oneal, Yong-Hee Park, "Testing Power-Transition Theory Using Alternative Measures of National Capabilities," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41:4 (August 1997): 510. Also see, H. Houweling, and J. Siccama, "Power Transitions as a Cause of War.," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32 (1988): 87-102.

268 Brian Efird, Jacek Kugler and Gespare Genna, "From War to Integration: Generalizing the Dynamic of Power Transition," *International Interactions* 29:4 (2003): 299.

269 This 20 % threshold has been used by many power transition scholars including, Efird, Kugler and Genna, "From War to Integration: Generalizing the Dynamic of Power Transition;" Houweling, and Siccama, "Power Transitions as a Cause of War;" Birol Yeşilada, Brian Efird and Peter Noordijk, "Competition Among Giants: A Look at How Future Enlargement of the EU Could Affect Global Power Transition," *International Studies Review* 8 (2006); Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*.

270 Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler, Douglas Lemke, Carole Alsharabati, Brian Efird and A.F.K Organski, *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Chatham House Publishers of Seven Bridges Press LLC, 2002), 6.

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid., 7.

international arena, it projects its domestic way of extracting resources to the international system as the status-quo. In this respect, the political, economical and ideological projection of US defined status-quo is visible in its promotion of democracy, human rights, open liberal economy and international institutions to the international system.[273] The main concern for USA is to preserve and further promote this international status-quo. The IMF and WTO regimes as the promoters of a worldwide open liberal economy, the US attempts for regime change in different parts of the world, the defensive military organizations such as NATO, and the multiplicity of democratic international institutions establishing certain diplomacy as the norm for interaction among states can all be regarded as the components of the status-quo set by the USA. Great powers that benefit from this status-quo are satisfied with it; and therefore, even if they have the potential to achieve power parity with the dominant power, they do not challenge it. On the contrary, they become fully integrated into the status-quo to further benefit from it. Although power transition theory has initially been introduced to predict future war by revealing patterns of international conflict, some power transition scholars have also embraced the theory to explain regional cooperation and integration. Efird, Kugler and Genna analyze the Germany-UK cooperation in the post-World War II period with power transition theory.[274]

There is little academic compromise on the measurement of dissatisfaction among power transition theory scholars. The two most commonly employed measurement for dissatisfaction are "the similarity of alliance portfolios" and "the similarity of domestic systems." Introduced by Bueno de Mesquita, the similarity of alliance portfolios argument suggests that dyads with similar alliance portfolios are more satisfied and less likely to fight with one another, while dyads with dissimilar alliance portfolios are more likely to wage war when they achieve power parity.[275] On

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[273] Lemke, "The Continuation of History: Power Transition Theory and the End of the Cold War," 24.

[274] See Brian Efird, Jacek Kugler and Gespare Genna, "From War to Integration: Generalizing the Dynamic of Power Transition," 310-312.

[275] For a list of literature employing the similarity of alliance portfolios as the measurement of status-quo satisfaction, see Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Risk, Power Distributions, and the Likelihood of War," I*nternational Studies Quarterly* 25:4 (1981): 541–568; James D. Morrow, "On The Theoretical

the other hand, scholars such as Lemke concentrate on the similarity of economic and political systems employed domestically and suggest that states with dissimilar political and economic systems to the ones employed by the dominant power are more likely to challenge it when they achieve power parity.[276] Apart from these two arguments, Werner and Kugler propose extraordinary military build-up as an indicator of challenger's dissatisfaction with the status-quo.[277] Tammen and Kugler adopt a broader set of variables to measure the Chinese dissatisfaction with the international status-quo set by the US. Their dissatisfaction indicators include the existence of a territorial dispute, arms build-up directed against each other, compliance with the international rules, participation in the political and economic blocs, ideological disputes and the absence of binding patterns of trade and cooperation between states.[278]

Basis of a Measure of National Risk Attitudes," *International Studies Quarterly* 31:3 (1987); Curtis S. Signorino and Jerey M. Ritter, "Tau-b or Nor Tau-b? Measuring the Similarity of Foreign Policy Positions," *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (1999); Bueno de Mesquita, "Measuring Systemic Polarity," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 19:2 (1975): 187–216; Bueno de Mesquita, "Systemic Polarization and the Occurrence and Duration of War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 22:2 (1987): 241–267; Bueno de Mesquita, "An Expected Utility Theory of International Conflict," *American Political Science* Review 74:4 (1980): 917–931; C.W. Ostrom, JR and J. H. Aldrich, "The Relationship Between Size and Stability in the Major Power International System," *American Journal of Political Science* 22:4 (1987): 743–771; R. J. Stoll, "Bloc Concentration and the Balance of Power," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28:1 (1984): 25–50; R. J. Stoll, and M. Champion, "Capability Concentration, Alliance Bonding, and Conflict Among the Major Powers," in P*olarity and War: The Changing Structure of International Conflict,* eds. A. N. Sabrosky (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1985); Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); C. H. Kim,"Third-Party Participation in Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35:4 (1991): 659–677; W. Kim, "Alliance Transitions and Great Power War,"*American Journal of Political Science* 35:4 (1991): 833–850; W. Kim and J. D. Morrow, "When Do Power Shifts Lead to War?" *American Journal of Political Science* 36:4 (1992): 896–922; D. Lalman and D. Newman, "Alliance Formation and National Security," *International Interactions* 16:4 (1991): 239–253; P. D. Huth, D. S. Bennett, and C. Gelpi, "System Uncertainty, Risk Propensity, and International Conflict Among the Great Powers," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36:3 (1993): 478–517.

276 See Douglas Lemke, "Great Powers in the Post-Cold War World," in *Balance of Power,* eds. T.V Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Lemke and Reed, "Regime Types and Status Quo Evaluations," 143-164.

277 See Suzanne Werner and Jacek Kugler, "Power Transitions and Military Buildups," in *Parity and War,* eds. Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 187-207.

278 Ronald L. Tammen, and Jacek Kugler, "Power Transition and China-US Conflicts," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* Vol. 1 (2006): 46-50.

3.3.3 The Application of the Model to Regional Power Transitions

While power transition theory has been adopted by many scholars to explain global power shifts, there has also been an attempt to adapt the theory to power transitions at the regional and local level. Lemke's "multiple hierarchy model" suggests that international system is composed of parallel hierarchies functioning similarly at the regional level.[279] In the multiple hierarchy model, Lemke puts smaller pyramids depicting regional hierarchies within the international pyramid introduced by Organski. The "sub-hierarchies" within the overall international system display similar characteristics to those of the global hierarchy.[280] There is a local dominant state that sits above smaller powers in the region. Like the global dominant power, the local dominant sets the local status-quo in the system. When one of the local great powers dissatisfied with the local status-quo achieves parity with the local dominant power, the probability of war is high.[281] As the local challengers cannot exert any significant military and political influence at the global level, they seek to become influential at the regional level.[282] Lemke has applied his theory to African regional hierarchies to explain the sources of local conflict in the region.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on a theoretical discussion of the major international relations theories on nuclear proliferation. The theoretical discussion has shown that while neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism, and domestic politics have contributed to understanding the various aspects of the Iranian nuclear issue, they also

279 Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace,* 48.

280 Ibid., p. 49.

281 Ibid.

282 Ibid.

exhibited several weaknesses. In this respect, the power transition theory has been presented as an alternative approach.

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM FROM A POWER TRANSITION PERSPECTIVE

4.1 Introduction

This thesis will focus on the application of power transition theory to the Iranian case. An overview of the pre-9/11 and post-9/11 relations among relevant countries involved in the region is necessary to see the shifts in regional balances. The analysis of this shift will be supported by quantitative data on the indicators of national power. Following this background information, the chapter will discuss the characteristics of the US led status-quo and the Iranian stance towards this status-quo. The chapter will end with an analysis of the current and future possible policy options for both parties in the resolution of nuclear crisis.

4.2 Regional Balances in the Pre-9/11 Period

An analysis of the change in regional balances in the post-9/11 Middle East requires an overview of the Middle East in the pre-9/11 period. During the Cold War, the Middle East was the zone of superpower rivalry, who sought to contain each other's expansion in the region. The US presence in the region goes back to 1950s, when its primary interest was the protection of Gulf oil against Soviet expansion. The protection of oil against the Soviet Union was important for “the US global hegemony,” due to its

implications for the maintenance of the US military power and for the workings of its chief industries in a worldwide capitalist economy.[283] However, the US control in the region was not only limited to preventing the Soviet expansion, but it was also extended to prevent the rise of any regional power as the regional hegemon. Because, the rise of any Middle Eastern state as the regional hegemon would also increase the stakes of that state to have an extended control by this state on the Gulf oil.[284] As a result, the US policy towards the Middle East manifested the characteristics of a hegemonic relationship in the region.[285] While it established a clientalistic and dependent relationship with the small, oil-rich Gulf States, it sought to prevent the rise of any potential regional power to ensure its own control over oil.[286]

One Middle Eastern country with which the USA established good relations during Cold War was Saudi Arabia. The rich oil reserves made this country important on the US security agenda. As a result, the USA extended its security guarantees to Saudi Arabia against a possible Soviet seizure of Saudi oil fields.[287] While the rich oil reserves seemed to increase the strategic importance of this country, "it did not translate into Arab power."[288] Because, the petrodollars were "recycled," meaning they were again channeled to the West through Arab investment in Western real estates, banks and imports.[289] Fearing that the establishment of a citizens' army could lead to a "nationalist coup," Saudi Arabia chose to spend much on American arms instead, thereby feeding its strategic weakness.[290] Such an increased dependence on the USA hindered the possible

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283 Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Middle East in the World Hyerarchy," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 14:2 (2011): 233.

284 Ibid., 215.

285 Ibid.

286 Ibid., 215-216.

287 James A. Russell, "Strategy, Policy and War in Iraq: The United States and the Gulf in the Twenty-First Century," in *Critical Issues Facing the Middle East: Security, Politics, and Economics*, eds. James A. Russell (Gordonsville: Palgrave McMillan, 2006), 204.

288 Hinnebusch, "The Middle East in the World Hyerarchy," 232.

289 Ibid.

290 Ibid.

rise of this oil-rich country as a potential regional hegemon in the long run.[291]

Another country that the USA had friendly relations in the region was Iran. While the US was in cooperation with Iran under pro-American Shah's rule in a wide range of areas including military, technological and nuclear energy support, the bilateral security relationship intensified with the UK's withdrawal from Suez in 1971, leaving a security vacuum to be filled by the US.[292] During Shah's rule, Iran had overall friendly relations with other countries in the region as well. It had good relations with Pakistan and Turkey on the Northern Tier, with pro-Western Gulf States of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and moderate regional powers such as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Israel.[293] Moreover, it was a member of Western-led regional formal alliances, such as the Baghdad Pact. In short, the two biggest American allies in the region against Soviet expansion happened to be Saudi Arabia and Iran.

While the alliance with Saudi Arabia has been prolonged to this date, the favorable relations between the USA and Iran were not long-lived. The overthrowing of pro-American Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi with the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and the following Iranian Hostage Crisis led to the break-up of friendly relations between Iran and the USA.[294] Iran replaced its pro-American international stance with a more self-dependent, isolationist and nationalistic foreign policy. The Iranian foreign policy under Ayatollah Khomeini can be summarized under two pillars, which are “pan-Islamism” and “neither East nor the West” policy.[295] Under the first pillar, Iran sought to undermine Americanism adopted by close US allies in the region such as Kuwait,

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291 Ibid.

292 Russell, “Strategy, Policy and War in Iraq,” 204.

293 Manochehr Doraj, “Iran's Regional Foreign Policy,” *Interpreting the Middle East: Essential Themes*, eds. David S. Sorenson (Boulder: Westview Press, 2010), 363.

294 In February 1979, a group of Islamist students and groups associated with the Iranian Islamic Revolution of February 1979 took over the US Embassy in Iran. They took 52 Americans hostage for 444 days with an attempt to take the revenge of the 1953 coup led by the USA against Iran's democratically elected government at the time. This event came to be known as the Iranian Hostage Crisis.

295 Doraj, “Iran's Regional Foreign Policy,” 364.

Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt and to export its Islamist regime.[296] Moreover, Iran also started to extend its financial, ideological and military assistance to certain Shiite movements in the region, such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.[297] This policy ended up with a worsening of relations with these countries, exacerbating Iran's isolation in the region. The "neither East nor West" policy meant the Iranian attempts to become an independent regional power, looking for the support of neither Western powers such as the USA nor the Eastern powers such as the Soviet Union.[298] As such, the post-revolutionary Iran's challenge was not limited to the US interests in the Middle East only. Iran also challenged the Soviet policy under bipolar Cold War politics, by supporting anti-communist movements in Afghanistan.[299]

Given the Iranian policy change, the USA adopted another policy of containment in the region, this time against the export of the Islamist regime. In the Middle East, Islam is argued to be "a supra-state counter-hegemonic identity," occasionally used by states aspiring to be regional hegemons "to unite the region against the global hierarchy."[300] The US priority to contain the exportation of the Iranian Islamic regime to the region can also be interpreted as an attempt to hinder the use of Islam as a supra-national identity to mobilize the region against the US hegemony. The transition from friendly to cold relations between the USA and Iran was most visible during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, where the USA decided to extend military support to Iraq in order to hinder the emergence of Iran as a strong regional power.[301] While Iraq enjoyed the military support of the international community, Iran suffered both from the war itself and from the economic sanctions as well as arms

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296 Ibid.

297 Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Military Balance in the Middle East* (Washington D.C.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 245.

298 Doraj, "Iran's Regional Foreign Policy," 364.

299 Ibid., 366.

300 Halliday quoted in Hinnebusch, "The Middle East in the World Hierarchy," 217.

301 Russell, "Strategy, Policy and War in Iraq," 204.

embargoes imposed on the regime.[302] As a result, the war left Iran with high military and economic costs. Meanwhile, the USA maintained its security guarantees to Gulf States in exchange for Soviet containment, access to oil and the US non-intervention in their domestic regimes throughout 1980s.[303] On the other hand, Iran distanced itself further from other states in the region by withdrawing from Baghdad Pact, ceasing its diplomatic relations with Morocco, Jordan and Egypt, and worsening its relationship with Israel.[304]

While Iran became militarily weakened, economically devastated and further isolated in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88, Iraq emerged as the leading Arab power in the Gulf region with strong WMD and nuclear ambitions.[305] However, Iraq still did not have the regional hegemon status and the whole region was under the influence of the USA. The Iraqi ambition to become a regional hegemon soon manifested itself with its invasion of Kuwait. First of all, Iraq revived the rhetoric of Arab nationalism in the region, by urging the oil rich Arab states to share their oil revenues with poorer Arab countries and not to allow the USA to use their bases.[306] To the Iraqi strategic thinking, Kuwait seemed to be an "artificial state," created by the Western powers with an attempt to hinder the Iraqi access to the Gulf.[307] Therefore, the acquisition of Kuwait would give economic benefits to Iraq. On the part of the USA,

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302 The US sanctions on Iran started with the Iranian Hostage Crisis. During Carter Administration, the sanctions banned the sale of Iranian oil to the USA, put an embargo on exportation and financial activities from Iran, and banned the US citizens from traveling to Iran. Most of these sanctions were in force only until the hostage crisis came to an end. However, Iran met with a second round of sanctions came during the Iran-Iraq War. The sanctions included a prohibition on financial assistance and loans by the USA and various international finance institutions to Iran during the war. The USA also extended the sanctions to include an arms embargo to Iran. For a detailed account of the US sanctions on Iran since 1979, see Herman Franssen and Elaine Morton, "A Review of US Unilateral Sanctions Against Iran," *The Middle East Economic Survey* 45:34 (August 2002).

303 Russell, "Strategy, Policy and War in Iraq," 204.

304 Doraj, "Iran's Regional Foreign Policy," 366.

305 Avner Cohen, "Continuity and Change in Israeli Strategic Thinking: Reflections in the Wake of Operation Iraqi Freedom," in *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East: Directions and Policy Options in the New Century,* eds. James A. Russel (Gordonsville: Palgrave McMillan, 2006), 39.

306 Hinnebusch, "The Middle East in the World Hierarchy," 234.

307 Ibid.

the Iraqi acquisition of Kuwait territory would lead Iraq to have "hegemony over 40 per cent of world oil reserves - at a time when American reserves had shrunk from 34 to 7 per cent of the global total."[308] Moreover, the USA was aware that Iraq was not dependent on the USA unlike Saudi Arabia and it was using oil as a political tool to threaten the USA to pursue a favorable solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict.[309] Given the Iraqi threat of becoming a regional hegemon, the USA felt the need to re-ensure its hegemony over Middle Eastern oil and engaged in the Gulf War of 1990-1991 with Iraq.[310] The rise of Iraq was restricted to an extent with the destruction of Iraqi military capabilities during the war and with ensuing trade sanctions and arms embargoes on Iraq.

Another powerful state in the region worth mentioning is Israel, who stood as the sole nuclear power holder in the region since 1967, and had increased its conventional military capabilities between 1974 and 1990 to a considerable extent.[311] One explanation about the Israeli nuclearization is the memory of the Holocaust, which had led the founders of the Israeli state to be over-concerned about the national security of Israel.[312] While the regional isolation of the Israeli state due to the Arab-Israeli conflict might have fed the Israeli security calculations for nuclear weapons, it is suggested that Israel never wanted to use its nuclear capability in the Arab-Israeli conflict due to the "geographical asymmetry" between Arab countries on the one hand and the Israeli state on the other.[313] Moreover, Israel has never fully acknowledged its nuclear capability. As a matter of fact, Israel played the "policy of opacity," not signing the NPT, not declaring itself as a nuclear state, but at the same time giving occasional hints to other regional powers about its nuclear capabilities.[314] The Israeli "policy of

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308 Ibid., 35.

309 Ibid.

310 Ibid.

311 Cohen, "Continuity and Change in Israeli Strategic Thinking," 39.

312 Ibid., 36.

313 Ibid.

314 Ibid.

opacity" has been responded by another "policy of opacity" by the US, who has not been insistent on the Israeli denuclearization due to the sensitivity of the issue to Israeli national security calculations, although it posed threats to its already established international nuclear status-quo.[315]

Iran had good relations with Israel prior to the Iranian Revolution of 1979; however, the relations got on an ideological overtone during Ayatollah Khomeini era. Ayatollah Khomeini adopted the "Israel must be annihilated" rhetoric in the very first years of the revolution.[316] The clerical elites of Iran rejected the legitimacy of the Israeli state due to the perceived threat posed by Zionism to the Muslim Middle East in general.[317] This ideological opposition manifested itself as ideological, financial and military support by Iran to various terrorist organizations challenging the Israeli state. Apart from this ideological clash, there was no historical or existential enmity between two countries during 80s and 90s. Contrary to its close American ally, Israel seemed more concerned about the rise of the Iraqi state as the regional power than that of Iran during the Iran-Iraq War years. In this respect, the Israeli bombing of Iraqi nuclear facility in Osirak of 1981 can be seen as an Israeli attempt to hinder the nuclearization of Iraq and its rise as a regional power. However, this attempt proved futile, as Iraq emerged as the great regional Arab power following the Iran-Iraq War. Although the ensuing Gulf War could hinder the rise of Iraq as a regional hegemon, Iraq still continued to be the major Arab power in the region.

While, the Middle Eastern power balances favored Iraq as the major Arab power and Israel as the sole nuclear power in the region, the fall of the Soviet Union marked a change both at the global level and in the Caspian and Caucasus regions. At the global level, the superpower rivalry ended; and as a result, the USA emerged as the single dominant global power. At the regional level, the Soviet influence on Muslim countries

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315 Ibid., 37.

316 Jalil Rohandel, "The Nuclear Controversy in the Context of Iran's Evolving Nuclear Strategy," in *Europe and Iran: Perspectives on Non-Proliferation*, ed. Shannon N. Kile (SIPRI Research Report No. 21, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64-65.

317 Cohen, "Continuity and Change in Israeli Strategic Thinking," 45.

in the Caucasus and Caspian regions such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan was released. Situated between the Caspian and Caucasus on the North and the Gulf region and Middle East on the East, Iran had a favorable geopolitical condition to exert its influence on those regions. The elimination of the Soviet influence on its northern border provided Iran with the opportunity to exert more influence on the newly independent countries. By taking advantage of the weakness of these newly established republics, Iran supported the Islamist movements and sought to increase its influence on the region.[318]

The fall of the Soviet Union created a fertile ground for Iran to exert more influence on the Caspian and Caucasus regions. However, the US presence in the Middle East did not diminish with the end of the global superpower rivalry. The existence of Israel as the sole nuclear power in the region; the diminished power of Iran due to the Iran-Iraq War, the economic sanctions, and the arms embargoes by the USA; and the status of Iraq as the major Arab power summarizes the power balances in the Middle East until 9/11. As such, the region lacked any regional hegemon and was marked by two types of states, which are the small Gulf States dependent on the USA and the revisionist bigger states challenging the status-quo set by the USA as the dominant global power.[319] While Israel and Saudi Arabia were major US allies, Iran and Iraq ended up with nationalistic and independent foreign policies towards the USA as the global hegemon. A change in the regional and global security environment in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks led to a redefinition of US security interests. With the subsequent US intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, the power balances were disrupted in the region.

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318 Barry Rubin, "Iran: The Rise of a Regional Power," *The Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10:3 (September 2006), http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/issue3/jv10no3a10.html.

319 Hinnebusch, "The Middle East in the World Hierarchy," 225.

4.3 The Regional Balances in the Post-9/11 Period

4.3.1 The US Interests in the Region

The Al-Qaeda attacks on the American territory in 2001 had far reaching effects on the Middle East. A redefinition of major US interests at the global and regional level led to crucial changes in the Middle Eastern regional balances specifically. While certain US priorities regarding the region remained unchanged during this period, some others got further emphasized in the post-9/11 American security documents.

In the post-9/11 period, the basic US interests and priorities for the Middle East region has been claimed to be countering terrorism, hindering the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, maintaining "stability of oil supplies and prices," ensuring the "domestic stability of pro-American regimes" and US-allies, ensuring Israel's security and promoting democracy and human rights.[320] Since the terrorist attacks, the USA has seemed to direct most of its attention to combating terrorism in the Middle East. The basic rationale for focusing on the Middle East is the US contention that most of the global terrorist organizations extract their human resources and financial support from domestically unstable regimes in the region.[321] Moreover, according to this US security doctrine, while extracting their resources from unstable Middle Eastern regimes, the terrorist organizations are also believed to reinforce anti-Americanism in the region.[322] Not only global terrorist organizations, but also state sponsored terrorism is perceived as a challenge to US interests in the region. In that respect, Iranian regime exportation rhetoric has long been categorized under state-sponsored terrorism by the USA.[323]

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320 Nora Bensahel and Danil L. Byman, *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East: Conflict, Stability and Political Change* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2003), 2.

321 Ibid.

322 Ibid., 3.

323 Ibid.

With the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the conventional capabilities of both states have deteriorated. Therefore, the USA as well as its close ally Israel stand as the greatest conventional weapons holders in the region today. The USA has currently 200.000 forces only in Iraq and Afghanistan.[324] Moreover, Israel has the qualitative superiority of conventional weapons and ballistic missile capabilities.[325] The acquisition of WMD's by any other regional power may disrupt the US and Israeli military superiority in the region.[326] Moreover, the US contention is that the WMD's may also pose a challenge to the regimes who enjoy US security guarantees in the region, thereby leading to a possible "loss of confidence" in the USA.[327]

Some regional pro-American regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman have always been an important part of the US security agenda due to their large oil reserves. However, it is estimated that the USA meets a large portion of its oil needs from Canada and Mexico, instead of these Middle Eastern countries.[328] Still, oil has a strategic importance for the USA not only for domestic use, but it is also as a global commodity, which has strong implications for the integration of increasingly liberalizing developing countries with the world economy.[329] The oil shock of 1973 has shown that any political instability in the region such as the Arab-Israeli may have far reaching affects on the whole globe. The USA sees political stability in the region as a crucial factor to stabilize global oil prices and supply. Therefore, the maintenance of security guarantees to these pro-American regimes still plays an important role for the protection of the US oil interests in the region.

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324 Doraj, "Iran's Regional Foreign Policy," 376.

325 Marvin C. Feuer, "US Policy and Middle East Armed Forces,"in *Armed Forces in the Middle East: Politics and Strategy*, eds. Barry Rubin and Thomas A. Keaney (London: Franc Cass Publishers, 2002), 45.

326 Bensahel and Byman, *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East,* 3.

327 Ibid.

328 Ibid., 207.

329 Russell, "Strategy, Policy and War in Iraq," 206.

The resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is still an important issue for the USA. As the only democratic country in the Middle East, Israel has been perceived by the USA as the only projector of the US type political system in the region. Israel has been the greatest receiver of military and economic aid provided by the USA.[330] However, the Arab-Israeli conflict is believed to create a challenge for the USA in maintaining its friendly relations both with Israel and with several Arab countries under US security umbrella.[331] Therefore, the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is believed to be advantageous to the USA for securing its other interests in the region.

Political transformation within the Middle Eastern regimes has become more accentuated in the US security doctrine in the post-9/11 period. In this respect, the promotion of democracy and human rights has been suggested as key themes of the US foreign policy in the Middle East. Scholars explain the US emphasis on democracy both in normative and pragmatic grounds. On the normative level, "political and economic freedom, respect for human rights, and the rule of law" have been designated as the core US values to be embraced by the whole world.[332] On the practical level, the USA buys into democratic peace argument that democratic regimes rarely fight one another. One key rationale behind the US decision to bring down the authoritarian regime in Iraq was the US contention that a democratic Iraq would help spread democracy to other non-democratic states in the region.[333] According to the US security calculations, this could have a long-term impact on the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the region.[334] Moreover, democratic regimes are believed to bring more domestic stability. The argument is that when the interests of a larger segment of populations are voiced and met, there are fewer stakes for internal conflicts.[335] By bringing stability,

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330 The US military and economic assistance to Israel amounts up to $ 70 billion since 1949. See Feuer, "US Policy and Middle East Armed Forces," 45.

331 Bensahel and Byman, *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East,* 4.

332 *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*, *2000,* quoted in Bensahel and Byman, *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East,* 18.

333 Russell, "Strategy, Policy and War in Iraq," 202.

334 Ibid.

335 Bensahel and Byman, *The Future Security Environment in the Middle East,* 2002, 19.

democratization in the Middle East is believed to diminish the support to terrorist organizations in the region. However, it should also be recognized that the US political transformation ideal has received much criticism from academic scholars and the international community. The short-term influences of the US democratization ideal have proved highly problematic. The regime change in Iraq led to more instability than stability in the country, with which the USA could not manage. Moreover, the political transformation ideal has also been challenged as a superficial rationale masking the real American intentions for attaining material interests in the region, notably securing oil.

4.3.2 The Economic and Military Balances in the post-9/11 Period

A redefinition of US interests in the post-9/11 security environment led to a US intervention first in Afghanistan in 2001 and then in Iraq in 2003. The US rationale for the intervention in Afghanistan was to eliminate the Al-Qaeda terrorist establishment. The rhetoric of military intervention in Iraq, on the other hand, concentrated on the existence of WMD's and their possible supply to terrorist organizations in the region.

One not clearly acknowledged reason, on the other hand, was the rising dependency of the USA on oil, which could be eased with the invasion of Iraq as the possessor of large oil reserves. However, Saddam's regime stood as a barrier before the global markets' access to Iraqi oil.[336] Moreover, a continued control over the Middle Eastern oil would have implications on the global power transitions. Several power transition researches have shown that China has the potential to become the next dominant power at the global level thanks to its swift rise in GDP levels.[337] The alignment of Iraq with the US-led status-quo through an invasion would provide the

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336 Hinnebusch, "The Middle East in the World Hierarchy," 237.

337 See Ronald L. Tammen, and Jacek Kugler, "Power Transition and China-US Conflicts," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* Vol. 1 (2006); and Birol Yeşilada, Brian Efird and Peter Noordijk, "Competition Among Giants: A Look at How Future Enlargement of the EU Could Affect Global Power Transition," *International Studies Review* 8 (2006).

USA with "a new compliant swing producer" in the Middle East, thereby strengthening its hand in the face of a rising China.[338] A Middle East closely aligned with the USA would secure the US interests in the region and reassert its dominance on the region in case of a possible confrontation with a rising China. While Iraq was the most powerful Arab country in the region before the US intervention, the economic and military devastation of the country led to a loss of regional status with the war. Similarly, the intervention in Afghanistan left this country with diminished military power in the region.

One puzzle the US intervention in Iraq left behind has been the power vacuum in the Gulf region. While the USA labeled Iran and Iraq as "rogue states" and adopted a policy of "dual containment" to both countries following the Gulf War, both rivals served to counterbalance one another in the region.[339] From a US security perspective, a powerful Iraq could balance against a largely populated and oil-rich Iran, who has long embraced the Shiite regime exportation rhetoric.[340] The fall of its life-long rival Iraq on its western border, and the fall of Afghanistan on its east could provide Iran with a space to become the potential regional power. The US intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan is not understandable as far as the possible rise of Iranian power is concerned.

A closer look at the economic and military power of the major states in the region seems to support this scenario. According to power transition theory, the GDP levels, military expenditures, size of the army, conventional weapons holdings and population size are the common denominators of a country's power. The Table 4.1 on GDP levels suggests that oil-rich Saudi Arabia has a higher GDP level. Although Iraq is also an oil-rich country, it experienced a severe drop in GDP during the 2003 Iraq War. While it could redeem its previous economic power starting from 2004, it is far beyond that of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel. As per 2009, Iran has the highest GDP among all four countries in the region. The Israeli economic power falls behind the oil-rich

338 Hinnebusch, "The Middle East in the World Hierarchy," 237.

339 Edmund Herzig, "Regionalism, Iran and Central Asia," *International Affairs* 80:3 (2004): 505.

340 Russell, "Strategy, Policy and War in Iraq," 200.

countries in the region, excluding war-torn Iraq.

Table 4.1 Total GDP at Current Prices (in billion $)

STATES	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Iraq	86.0	89.5	84.0	56.2	91.4	97.9	111.3	115.7	128.9	151.5
Iran	407.6	419.4	464.9	500.7	560.5	660.5	726.3	834.5	913.1	894.9
Israel	129.0	130.9	131.2	135.3	144.5	160.5	174.3	188.1	199.6	205.8
Saudi Arabia	262.3	256.2	277.6	317.2	369.4	464.7	527.2	580.5	742.8	620.4

Data taken from Penn World Table Database, http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/

As far as the military expenditures is concerned, Saudi Arabia has the highest military expenditure in the region. The second country spending much on military build-up is Israel. Iran ranks third in terms of military expenditures. Although 8.6 % of its GDP is allocated to military expenditures, Iraq 's military expenditures in US dollars fall behind that of Israel and Iran.[341] The 2003 statistics on the number of military personnel suggests that the largest number of military personnel belongs to Iran. Israel falls behind Iran in terms of military personnel. While Iraq's number of military personnel in 2002 was 397.000, which was close to that of Iran with 448.000, the number fell to 50000 in 2003.

Table 4.2 Total Military Expenditures in Million $ at 2008 Prices and Exchange Rate

STATES	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Iraq	-	-	-	-	2.0	2.8	2.3	2.0	5.2	4.1	4.6
Iran	7.8	8.5	6.1	7.5	9.2	11.4	12.7	10.4	7.0	-	-
Israel	12.1	12.6	14.0	13.1	12.5	12.9	13.6	13.4	13.0	12.3	13.0
Saudi Arabia	24.7	26.3	23.1	23.2	25.8	31.1	35.5	40.9	40.1	41.2	42.9

Data taken from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute http://www.sipri.org

341 "Worldwide Military Expenditures Database 2011," *Global Security Newswire*, accessed July 21, 2011, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/spending.htm.

Table 4.3 Total Number of Armed Personnell

STATES	2000	2001	2002	2003
Iraq	429000	423000	397000	50000
Iran	513000	478000	448000	440000
Israel	179000	181000	181000	183000
Saudi Arabia	140000	120000	110000	106000

Data taken from SIPRI Facts on International Relations and Security Trends Database, http://first.sipri.org/

Although Iran has military superiority to Israel in terms of military personnel, Israel has a marked military superiority in terms of conventional weapons holdings. Due to arms embargoes on Iran during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, Iran suffered in terms of conventional weapons build-up. It should be recognized that while the numbers given in the Table 4.4 are indicative of the conventional power discrepancy among four states, they fail to account for the US military impact on the region. Although Saudi Arabia seems to be weak in terms of conventional weapons capabilities, it is a major recipient of US security guarantees. The US military presence in Iraq following the Iraq War of 2003, the US security guarantees to several Gulf States including Saudi Arabia render Iran even more limited in terms of conventional weapons capabilities. Israel's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons capabilities extend the military gap between Israel and Iran even farther. Israel possesses Jericho II and Jericho III long-range ballistic missiles, Dolphin submarines which are also speculated to be nuclear-capable cruise missiles and 205 aircraft which are believed to be able to deliver nuclear weapons.[342] As Israel does not openly announce itself as a nuclear state, the estimations about the number of nuclear warheads Israel is far from being definite. Still, the number of warheads is speculated to vary between 100 and 350.[343] The quality of the nuclear capabilities is thought to be similar to that of India and Pakistan.[344]

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342 This data is taken from SIPRI database on Israeli nuclear capabilities, updated last in 2008. For more information see, "SIPRI Database on Israeli Military Capabilities,"SIPRI Website, accessed May 12, 2011, http://first.sipri.org/search?country=ISR&dataset=armed-forces&dataset=military-expenditure&dataset=nuclear-forces.

343 Cohen, "Continuity and Change in Israeli Strategic Thinking," 33.

344 Ibid.

Table 4.4 Total Number of Conventional Weapons Holdings

STATES	2000	2001	2002	2003
Iraq	7,780	7,340	6,820	7,080
Iran	6,040	6,650	6,600	5,960
Israel	15,430	17,370	17,490	17,730
Saudi Arabia	5,390	5,100	4,830	4,860

Data taken from SIPRI Facts on International Relations and Security Trends I

One advantage of Iran to all the Middle Eastern nations is its big population. The 2009 data on population indicates that Iran has a population of 76 million, while Iraq has 29 million and Saudi Arabia 23 million. Israel is the smallest state with a population of 7 million.[345] The numbers suggest that with its high GDP rates, big population and superiority of military personnel may render Iran a possible candidate to fill the power vacuum left by Iraq in the Gulf region in 2003. However, the numbers also indicate the limitations of Iran to attain that regional power status. First, Iran's economic functioning deserve more attention for a sound prediction of its prospect to become a regional power. Second, the weak conventional weapons capabilities of Iran cannot compete with the American presence in the region and the Israeli nuclear and missile capabilities.

Table 4.5 Population

Country	Population (million)
Israel	7
Iran	76
Iraq	29
Saudi Arabia	23

Data taken from World Penn Table

345 Data is taken from "Penn World Table Database," *Penn World Table Website*, accessed 21 June 2011, http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/.

Although Iran's total GDP level in US dollars is high, its GDP growth rate in percentages is rather low.[346] As a matter of fact, Iran started industrialization long before most of its regional counterparts; however, its economy relies largely on oil.[347] The major industries include petroleum, petrochemicals, metal fabrication, textiles, cement and food processing such as sugar refining and vegetable oil production.[348] The lack of diversification in the industrial sector has led to the emergence of a link between oil export rates and GDP growth rates. The "boom" and "bust" phases in oil export rates are directly reflected to GDP growth.[349] Apart from oil dependency and lack of industrial diversification, another factor contributing to low GDP growth levels is the economic structure. The Iranian economy is run mostly by state enterprises, "para-governmental organizations" such as bonyads, and foundations.[350] Lack of a well-functioning private sector, an inward-looking economy and oil-dependency lead to low levels of GDP growth rates in percentages.

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346 According to IMF predictions, the GDP growth rates in percentages for Iran is lower than that of Saudi Arabia for years 2012 and 2013. For instance, the IMF prediction for Iran is 5.0 and 5.2 for 2012 and 2013 respectively. On the other hand, the IMF prediction for Saudi Arabia is 11.2 and 9.9. Still, the predictions between 2012-2016 predict a stable growth for Iran, while there is a steady decrease in growth for Saudi Arabia. This indicates the economic rise of Iranian power, though in a slow pace.

347 Massoud Karshenas and Hassan Hakimian, "Managing Oil Resources and Economic Diversification in Iran," in *Iran in the 21st Century: Politics, Economics and Conflict,* eds. Homa Katouzian and Hossein Shahidi (New York: Routledge, 2008), 197.

348 "The World Factbook: Iran," *Central Intelligence Agency Website,* accessed July 13, 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html.

349 For a more detailed analysis of Iranian oil boost and oil boom periods between 1982 and 1998 and how they are reflected to GDP growth rates, see Karshenas and Hakimian, "Managing Oil Resources and Economic Diversification in Iran," 199.

350 Bonyads were the royal foundations and charity trusts formed during Shah Reza Pahlavi era. Iranian Revolutionaries of 1979 nationalized these foundations with an attempt to redistribute the income to the poor segments of the society as well as the to the families of the Revolutionary Guard Officials during the Revolution. Today, most of the non-oil sector in Iran economy is run by bonyads. They are tax-exempt and not controlled by the government, which gives them a crucial economic power in the country. Also see, Karshenas and Hakimian, "Managing Oil Resources and Economic Diversification in Iran," 201.

Table 4.6 Oil Production in Barrels Per Day (bbl/per day), 2009 Estimates

Country	Oil (bbl/per day)
Israel	3,806
Iran	4,172,000
Iraq	2,399,000
Saudi Arabia	9,764,000

Data taken from CIA World Fact Boook

Despite the low growth rates in GDP percentages and the oil-dependency of Iranian economy, Iran ranks the 19th economically most powerful nation and the 4th largest oil producer in the world.[351] With its oil-rich territory, large population, large amounts of military personnel and high GDP level, Iran far exceeds the Israeli, Saudi Arabian and Iraqi national power in terms of GDP, population, oil and military personnel. The primary factor that contributes to the Israeli state to become a counterbalancing power to the rise of Iran is its conventional weapons superiority and its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities. In this respect, the attainment of nuclear capabilities may be conceived by Iran as a policy option to make up for the weakness of conventional weapons capabilities. While it is not clear whether Iran's nuclear program is intended for peaceful or military purposes, Iran already has a missile program. Although there is no "automatic relationship" between the missile program and nuclear program, the production of the missiles may also be used for firing nuclear warheads.[352] In the late 80s, Iran developed its first missile with the help of North Korea.[353] Today, Iran has an active medium-range ballistic missile program.[354] Within the scope of the program, Iran has so far developed the SHAHAB-3 missile and is now working on the SHAHAB-4

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351 For GDP estimations, see "Global Security Newswire Military Expenditures Data," *Global Security Newswire Website*, accessed July 14, 2011, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/spending.htm. For the rankings of oil producing countries, see "The World Factbook: Oil Production," *Central Intelligence Agency Website,* accessed July 13, 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2173rank.html.

352 Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,* 46-48.

353 Ibid., 46.

354 Cohen, "Continuity and Change in Israeli Strategic Thinking," 46.

and -5 versions of it.[355]

Given the superiority of Iran to Iraq, Israel and Saudi Arabia in terms of population, oil, size of the military personnel and GDP level, the nuclearization of Iran would mean a blow to the only counterbalancing factor to the conventional and nuclear superiority of Israel. Iran and Israel seem to be two possible candidates to fill the power vacuum left by Iraq in the aftermath of 2003 war in a region encircled by the USA. Nuclearization could provide Iran with a leverage to challenge the Israeli state as the nuclear hegemon of the region and to become a regional power. Therefore, the nuclearization of Iran with a large population, high GDP level, oil, and a favorable geopolitical condition could lead to a power transition in the region.

4.4 The Global and Regional Status-Quo

While the USA is the global dominant power, it has also dominance over the Middle East region both through its military presence in the region as well as its extended security umbrella to its two closest allies in the region, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Power transition theory predicts that the global and regional status-quo is set by the global or regional dominant power. As the dominant power, the USA has sought to project its domestic political and economic system to the whole globe. In this respect, the US-led global and regional status-quos have similarities.

At the global level, the USA has actively engaged in the spread of democracy, the supremacy of international institutions, rule of law, respect for human rights and liberal market economy. The USA has had a marked success in the projection of its domestic economic regime. Governments have increasingly adopted liberal market economy, especially since the fall of the Soviet Union. This economic status-quo set by the USA is vanguarded by three international institutions, which are World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO). These

[355] Ibid.

institutions control the integration of newly emerging economies to the status-quo through established guidelines, rules and norms. The integration of the maximum number of countries to this economic status-quo means higher economic benefits for the USA. At the political level, the USA has long engaged in the spread of democracy and human rights discourse. A closer look at various international institutions such as the United Nations and WTO reveals the existence of democratic elements in the functioning of such institutions. The USA spreads its liberal norms through multiple human rights institutions such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, European Court of Justice, among others.

In a similar vein, the USA also seeks to maintain the power balance established once it became the dominant power in the post-World War II period. The current NPT regime is a projection of the international military status-quo in 1960s and 70s, when the five nuclear power holders were determined as global great powers. By recognizing the possession of nuclear capabilities by five nuclear power holders at the time, the NPT created an exclusive club of nuclear states. It is no coincidence that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council are the very five states who have the exclusive right of nuclear power. The NPT regime has sought to maintain this nuclear status-quo by declaring nuclear weapons acquisition by any other country as illegitimate.

The USA seeks to project the elements of the global status-quo in its dealings with the Middle East. The reformulation of US interests regarding the Middle East in the post-9/11 period proves this case. In the initial phases of its fight against terrorism, the USA first introduced “the axis of evil” rhetoric, addressing to three non-democratic regimes which are Iraq, Iran and North Korea. As a result, the USA not only linked the issue of terrorism and the search for weapons of mass destruction capabilities to non-democratic regimes, but also created a legitimate space for the “regime change” rhetoric. The issue of terrorism and WMD's has direct security implications for the USA. The acquisition of WMD's, or even nuclear weapons, by terrorist organizations create a new security environment, where states are confronted by non-state actors. Given the decentralized and non-territorial organization, the unpredictable and not

easily detectable behavior of terrorist groups, they pose a challenge to any US strategy for retaliation. Besides such security concerns, the US imposition of democracy as a strategy to solve the security problems in the region also shows its projection of American domestic political system to the international arena.

For the USA, another meaning of securing the regional status-quo in the Middle East means the preservation of the current military and political balances in the region to its advantage. The USA would want to preserve its close ally Israel's position as the sole nuclear power in the region, as Israel is the only regional power that has been integrated into the US status-quo. With its democratic government, highly liberal economy and Western style military capabilities, Israel is backed by the USA as the only country in the region which has been successfully integrated to the US led status quo. Moreover, its nuclear power renders Israel as the most powerful state in the region. Apart from Israel, the friendly relations with an oil-rich Gulf States including Saudi Arabia would protect the US interests about oil supply and price stability in the region. Any instability among oil-rich Gulf States may lead to oil price and supply instability in the region, which would in turn have repercussions over the functioning of the liberal market economy globally. Iraq has also been aligned with the USA since the 2003 War, thereby reasserting the US dominance on the majority of Middle Eastern oil. The alignment of Iraq with the USA provides the USA with the opportunity to re-assure its position as the dominant power over the Middle Eastern oil in the face of China as a rising global power. Iran stands as the only major country to pursue an independent and nationalist foreign policy in the region. Moreover, Iran is politically, economically and ideologically isolated from the global status-quo in many respects. The nuclearization of Iran may pose a challenge both to the military superiority of Israel and to the US interests in the region. A nuclear Iran can lead to a power transition in the region, which could mean a blow to the US led status-quo in the region, from which USA derives economic and political benefits. Moreover, the nuclearization of Iran can also affect the global power transitions, by challenging the US control over the Middle Eastern oil in the face of a rising China.

4.5 Is Iran Dissatisfied with the Status-Quo?

The power transition theory assumes that the existence of a rising power does not necessarily lead to a conflictual power transition. The rising power's stance towards the status-quo established by the dominant power is the main factor determining the nature of the transition. Therefore, the Iranian stance towards the global and regional status-quo set and led by the USA is important to better analyze the nuclear issue between Iran and the USA.

Iran has a favorable geopolitical situation thanks to its location between the Middle East, the Gulf region and the Caspian Basin. Despite its favorable geopolitical situation, coupled with its relatively high GDP levels, a large population and oil supply, Iran does not enjoy the leading power status in the region. Some scholars have brought into attention the Iranian ambition to become a leading power and to have a greater say in the regional affairs in explaining the Iranian nuclear program.[356] Especially since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran is very isolated in the region. The USA has pursued a policy of isolation towards Iran with the trade and arms embargoes or by denying international financial institutions' help to this country during turmoil years. Iran's feeling of isolation also resonates at the regional level. Iran is a non-Arab and Shiite state, which has made it difficult for it to find strategic allies among Arab countries in the region.[357] That is why Iran has sought to have good relations with India and China with an attempt to counterbalance its tense relations with the USA in the last couple of years.[358] Moreover, a quest for legitimacy, prestige and technological development has also comprised Ayatollah Khamenei's rhetoric on the need for a nuclear program.[359] Iran clearly sees an advanced nuclear program, whether for peaceful or military purposes, as an indicator of being an self-dependent, modern and technologically advanced country.

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356 See Bruno Tetrais, “The Iranian Nuclear Crisis,” 26; and Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,* 16.

357 Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,* 15.

358 Ibid.

359 Tetrais, “The Iranian Nuclear Crisis,” 26.

Therefore, it might be suggested that the Iranian ambition to attain a regional leading power status is an important rationale behind the Iranian nuclear program.

Power transition scholars have suggested various ways to measure a state's dissatisfaction with the status-quo. This study will employ multiple variables to analyze the Iranian stance towards the US-led status-quo. The similarity of domestic systems, dissatisfaction with the international norms and institutions, membership to regional and international institutions and military build-up are the variables that explain the Iranian stance towards the global status-quo. The variable of domestic systems similarity acts as an overarching variable explaining the shifts in Iranian dissatisfaction with the global status-quo and also in its dealings with the international community on the nuclear crisis. Therefore, a discussion on domestic bureaucratic changes is also necessary to understand the course of the nuclear crisis.

4.5.1 Similarity of Domestic Systems

The first variable to analyze Iran's dissatisfaction with the global status-quo is the similarity of domestic systems variable. Buchta suggests that some Western observers of the Islamic Republic of Iran depict it as a "monolithic dictatorship with totalitarian tendencies, ruled by the Islamic clergy."[360] However, such a simplified depiction of Iran misses "the complex structure of Iranian politics."[361] As a matter of fact, the Iranian regime is not easy to categorize either as an authoritarian or a democratic regime. The Islamic Republic is characterized by a duality of power since 1979 Revolution. The state is structured in a way that it embodies both religious and secular elements. While executive, legislative and judicial bodies of a democratic regime are existent in the state structure; all these elements have a twin body controlled by the clergy. For instance, the country is ruled both by a Supreme Leader appointed by the Islamic Shiite clergy and a

360 Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic,* 2.

361 Ibid.

president directly elected by the Iranian people. Similarly, there is a directly elected assembly, which is subject to another assembly controlled by the clergy. Therefore, the regime possesses both secular and theocratic elements.

However, the USA has treated Iran more as a theocracy than a democracy. Linking the issues of terrorism and WMD proliferation to the instability of non-democratic regimes, the USA engaged in a policy of political change in the Middle East. The first target of this policy was Iraq, which underwent a regime change with 2003 Iraq War. Encircled by the US military on its western and eastern front, Iran felt the next target would be itself. The US government under Bush administration had categorized Iran under "axis of evil" states and the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had adopted"regime change" rhetoric against these "axis of evil" states.[362] President Khatami of the time had voiced its concerns that the next target following the Operation Iraqi Freedom would be Iran.[363] The regime change rhetoric is highly disturbing for the Iranian political elite, for whom the preservation of the Islamic regime established by the 1979 Revolution is number one priority. Economically, the country has a closed economy, most of whose enterprises are owned and controlled by the state. Although there is a limited private sector, most of the existing private enterprises are controlled by bonyads and other revolutionary associates. Ideologically, the Islamic character of the regime puts it at odds with the Western ideals of human rights. In short, Iran's domestic political and economic system is highly different than that of the USA.

The power transition theory suggests that the rising power becomes dissatisfied with the status-quo set by the dominant power, when the status-quo does not yield any benefits to the rising power. Iran's concern about the preservation of its regime may be seen as a national security issue, which is common to all modern states. Still, the Iranian concern about its regime also has certain ideological and material aspects. Ideologically,

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362 Ray Takeyh, "Iran at the Strategic Crossroads," in *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East : Directions and Policy Options in the New Century,* ed. James Russell (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 55.

363 Ibid.

the regime is committed to the Revolutionary ideals of military self-reliance, economic self-sufficiency, nationalism and anti-imperialism. Although not all, some of these Revolutionary ideals stand at odds with the US status-quo in economic terms. In her seminal work Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East, Etel Solingen suggests that the domestic coalitions' response to "internationalization" is the main determinant of nuclear behavior.[364] Leaders and ruling coalitions favoring internationalization have greater incentives to "avoid the political, economic, reputational and opportunity costs of acquiring nuclear weapons, because costs impair their domestic agenda."[365] On the other hand, leaders and ruling coalitions favoring nuclearization tend to reject internationalization and use nukes to maintain their political position at the domestic level, which has indeed been the case with inward oriented Middle East countries that relied on economic self-sufficiency, nationalist values and regime survival.[366] In the Iranian case, groups closely associated with the Revolutionary Guards Officials, Pasdaran and bonyads largely benefit from an inward-looking economy and military self-reliance. The Pasdaran has engaged in the trade of black market goods which have been embargoed by the USA such as construction goods, Western clothing and electronics.[367] Similarly, Pasdaran and bonyads have set up their own military and industrial enterprises.[368] Having a privileged position in the military and economic functioning of the Iranian state, these groups oppose to internationalization. It is clear that the integration into global economic status-quo counters the benefits of certain groups in Iran; thereby creating a dissatisfaction with it. This has repercussions on the nuclear issue as well, as the very groups who benefit much from the existing inward-looking economic regime also favor nuclearization and military self-reliance to having good relations with the international community.

In conclusion, the American ambition to project its political and economic

364 Solingen, *Nuclear Logics,* 5.

365 Ibid.

366 Ibid., 4-5.

367 Ibid., 182.

368 Ibid., 176.

system to a politically and economically inward-looking Iran by relying on "axis of evil "and" regime change rhetoric creates high dissatisfaction within the regime. Iran avoids integration to the global status-quo, as certain domestic groups who are mostly associated with the Revolutionary cadre do not yield material benefits from it.

4.5.2 Dissatisfaction with International Norms

The second indicator of Iranian dissatisfaction with the global status-quo is dissatisfaction with international norms. In this context, the Iranian stance towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation regime tells much about Iranian dissatisfaction with some international norms. Iran is a member of International Atomic Energy Agency and party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. While Iranian membership to IAEA and NPT suggests that Iran has always been integrated to the international nuclear status-quo, there is also evidence that Iran is not fully satisfied with this nuclear status-quo.

At the outset of its establishment, the NPT outlawed the attainment of nuclear technology for military purposes except for the five countries that had already gone nuclear. The Treaty also stipulated a commitment by these five nuclear holders to gradually diminish their nuclear arsenals. As a matter of fact, the USA and Russia have signed a series of Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties, known as START I, START II and START III, with which they diminished their intercontinental and submarine-launched ballistic missiles and limited the number of their nuclear warheads.[369] Still, none of these five countries completely have eliminated their military nuclear capabilities. Iran sees the existence of an exclusive nuclear club of five countries, who are permanent UN

[369] For detailed information on START I Agreement, see "Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I)," *Federation of American Scientists Website*, accessed July 1, 2011, http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/start1/index.html. Also see "Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II), *Federation of American Scientists Website*, accessed July 1, 2011, http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/start2/; "The START III Framework at a Glance," *Arms Control Association Website*, accessed July 1, 2011, http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/start3.

Security Council members at the same time, as hypocrisy.[370] Moreover, Pakistan, India and Israel have never signed the NPT and have gone nuclear, thereby avoiding any integration to the international nuclear status-quo. Although India and Pakistan were been subject to various sanctions following their nuclear tests, the Bush administration lifted most of those sanctions in exchange for cooperation on fight against terrorism.[371] On the other hand, Israel has never been subject to pressure by the international community due to its nuclear opacity. Iran sees the inconsistency in the application of the NPT regime as double-standards and voices its dissatisfaction with it.

Iran is dissatisfied with the US led NPT regime due to its creation of nuclear-haves and have-nots. The nuclear status-quo established by the NPT regime serves to the benefit of five nuclear power holders by preserving their preferential status within the system and denies the attainment of that preferential status to others. While these five nuclear power holders enjoy the security and status provided by the nuclear weapons, Iran neither enjoys that security nor the status. Not deriving any political and material benefit from the NPT regime, Iran challenges the international nuclear status-quo with its nuclear program.

4.5.3 Membership to International and Regional Organizations

Another indicator of Iranian dissatisfaction with the regional and global status-quo is its membership to international and regional organizations. Iran has sought to isolate itself from certain international organizations, as it saw them as vehicles of globalization under a world-wide American hegemony.[372] Such an isolationist stance was compatible with the Revolutionary ideals of military and economic self-reliance. Moreover, the foreign policy of self-reliance had material implications for Iran. Military self-reliance

370 Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,* 73.

371 See Wagner, "Bush Waives Nuclear Related Sanctions on India, Pakistan."

372 Herzig, "Regionalism, Iran and Central Asia," 505.

proved to be a necessity for Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, when the international community extended military assistance to Iraq but not to Iran. While anti-Americanism had been present since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, it became more emphasized in the Iranian foreign policy thinking following the fall of the Soviet Union. With the end of the Cold War, the bipolar world order was temporarily replaced by a unipolar world order dominated by the USA at the top. Since then, "Iranian policy debate refuses to accept the emergence of an international system dominated by a single hostile superpower and it rejects the idea of a unipolar world order, arguing that the bipolar should give way rather to a multipolar order."[373] Therefore, Iran has sought to have good relations with other great powers such as Russia, China, India and Europe; and took part in organizations not dominated by the USA such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM),[374] Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).[375]

At the regional level, Iranian integration to regional organizations in the Middle East does not look promising. Most of the regionalism initiatives in the Middle East have been led by and centered around Arab states. Iran as a non-Arab and Shiite country, trying to export its regime to the region, was excluded from these regional organizations in the early years of its foundation. Moreover, Iran also isolated itself from these Arab-led organizations due to the fact that most of member Arab countries were US allies. As a result, Iran has no current membership to the major regional organizations such as the Arab League, Council of Arab Economic Unity and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. Today, Iran is only a member of OIC and OPEC in the Middle East region. While Iran's integration to the Middle Eastern regional blocks is not promising, Iran has sought to integrate itself to regional blocks in the Central Asia and the Far East. For instance, Iran is a member of Economic

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373 Ibid., 510.

374 Non-Aligned Movement is a movement by most of the developing G-77 countries, who oppose to the global world order dominated by the current great powers. They converge on an opposition to the USA for its Iraqi intervention and its attempts to stop Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs. They also criticize the current structure of the UN, which they believe to serve the political benefits of major powers.

375 Herzig, "Regionalism, Iran and Central Asia," 505.

Cooperation Organization (ECO), which is an economic block promoting trade and investment among Asian and Eurasian countries.[376] Moreover, Iran has the observer status in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Iran has particularly good relations with China in many spheres. Politically, both Iran and China has regarded "the US policy of liberal interventionism as 'imperialist' and 'hegemonic'."[377] Therefore, partnership with China raised the promises of a "great power patron" for Iran, as an alternative to the Iran-US partnership which ended with the closure of the Shah era.[378] This partnership has also fitted well with the Iranian vision of a multipolar world system not dominated by the USA. Iran has declared the existing Western-dominated world order as "worn-out" and "unfair" in nature and suggested that China-Iran partnership can have important implications for the establishment of a new world order.[379] The Iranian reasoning is that the rise of China at the global level would provide Iran with "greater space to pursue its national ambitions."[380] Economically, the growing dependency of an economically rising China on oil imports from the Middle East provides both countries with greater room for energy partnership.[381] Militarily, China has been a major supplier of conventional weapons to Iran.[382] China has also assisted the Iranian nuclear program with nuclear technology transfer for peaceful purposes.

Iranian integration into regional and international organizations reflecting a

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376 See "A Brief History of Economic Cooperation Organization," *Economic Cooperation Organization Website*, accessed 16 July 2001, http://www.ecosecretariat.org/.

377 D. Brandon Fite, *US and Iranian Strategic Competition: Competition Involving China and Russia* (Washington DC.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 11, 2011), 8.

378 Ibid., 7.

379 Ibid., 9.

380 Ibid.

381 Ibid., 11.

382 Ibid., 14-15.

multipolar world order rather than a unipolar one led by the USA indicates that Iran is dissatisfied with the global status-quo. Iran's choice of international organizations not dominated by the USA such as the Non-Aligned Movement and Economic Cooperation Organization supports the argument that Iran is dissatisfied with the US led status-quo and seeks new avenues where it could be recognized as an independent and equally developed power.

4.5.4 Military Build-up

One variable that demonstrates Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo is its military build-up. Iran has advanced missile capabilities and an ambitious missile development program. It possesses Scud B and -C missile forces as well as the Chinese CSS-8 short range missiles.[383] Moreover, Iran also has the SHAHAB-3, which is a medium-range missile.[384] Iran is engaging in a further military build-up as its current work on the SHAHAB-4 and -5 suggests.[385] Apart from Scud's and SHAHAB's, Iran is believed to develop long-range intercontinental ballistic missile capabilities which can probably shoot targets as far as the American continent.[386] While the Scuds missiles were already used during the war with Iraq, the SHAHAB missiles build-up is believed to be targeted at the American military presence in the region.[387]

Power transition scholars take into account any territorial dispute between the challenger and the rising power in their measurement of dissatisfaction. While there has been no open territorial dispute between Iran and the USA, the increasing American

383 Ian O. Lesser, "Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East: Proliferation Dynamics and Strategic Consequences," in *Future Security Environment in the Middle East: Conflict, Stability, Political Change*, ed. Nora Bensahel and Daniel Byman (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2003), 264.

384 Ibid.

385 Cohen, "Continuity and Change in Israeli Strategic Thinking," 46.

386 Lesser, "Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East," 264.

387 Ibid.

military presence on its eastern and western border, coupled by the American "regime change" rhetoric, is a prominent dynamic behind Iranian missile build-up. As a matter of fact, Iran is reported to have been increasingly extending its missile capabilities.[388] The existing missiles are said to be able to cover 1240 miles, which means they can shoot the American military installations in the region, including the Israeli military establishments.[389] Although Iran is still not fully self-sufficient in building its defense mechanisms, Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi expressed that it has increasingly become self-reliant in "designing, producing and using various kinds of missiles based on domestic knowledge."[390] A few days after Vahidi's remarks, Iran tested some medium-range missiles on the Indian Ocean.[391] Apart from the missile capabilities, Iran has recently revealed its extensive underground missile launch capabilities, which requires a level of technological knowledge as advanced as building the missiles themselves.[392]

The Iranian engagement in missile build-up is usually associated with its nuclear program. Although there is no direct relationship between a nuclear program and a missile program, an extensive missile program is seen as a sign of nuclear proliferation due to their possible use for firing nuclear warheads. Iran is insistent that its nuclear program is only for peaceful energy purposes. However, Iran has already exceeded the uranium level that is sufficient for energy production. The disclosure of secret nuclear sites, coupled by exceeding uranium enrichment levels creates a suspicion on the part of the international community that Iran might be going nuclear. Tehran has recently announced that it is deploying more advanced uranium centrifuges, which has again

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388 "Iran Seen Improving Missile Production Capabilities," *Global Security Newswire*, July 6, 2011, accessed July 10, 2011, http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20110706_5014.php.

389 Ibid.

390 Vahidi cited in "Iran Seen Improving Missile Production Capabilities," July 6, 2011, accessed July 10, 2011, http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20110706_5014.php.

391 "Iran Launches Missiles at Indian Ocean Targets," *Global Security Newswire*, July 11, 2011, accessed July 15, 2011, http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20110711_2546.php.

392 "Iran Reveals Subterranean Missile Launch Capabilties," *Global Security Newswire*, June 28, 2011, accessed July 2, 2011, http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20110628_3837.php.

triggered fears that Iran might be going ahead with a weapons development program.[393] Moreover, the IAEA inspections on the Iranian nuclear sites had disclosed the existence of Pakistani nuclear material on the Iranian facilities, which meant a technological and scientific communication between Iran and A.Q Khan Network. Similarly, the Israeli sources assert that there is currently a closer cooperation between North Korea and Iran on nuclear activity for military purposes.[394] Israeli sources claim that Iran would only benefit from the Russian aid, if its program was for peaceful purposes only.[395] The fear shared by the international community is that Iran might be following the North Korean path of nuclearization, who denied that its nuclear program had a military aspect and only declared itself as a nuclear state after it had completed its first nuclear capability.

While it is still unclear whether Iran's nuclear program is oriented towards developing nuclear weapons, the advancement in its missile technology may be taken as an indicator of dissatisfaction with the status-quo. If Iran develops a nuclear program not peaceful but for military purposes, the nuclear weapons may make up for its weakness in conventional weapons. This could provide a credible deterrence capability for Iran against the US military presence in the region as well as against Israel.

4.5.5 Trends in the Iranian Dissatisfaction with Status-Quo

The above analysis has indicated that domestic systems similarity, integration with the international norms, membership to international and regional organizations, and military build-up are the indicators of Iranian dissatisfaction with the regional and international status-quo set up by the USA as the single dominant power. Power transition scholars argue that the attainment of power parity or near power parity with

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393 "Iran Reports Advanced Centrifuge Deployment," *Global Security Newswire*, July 19, 2011, accessed July 24, 2011, http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20110719_3104.php.

394 "Iran Possibly Receiving More North Korean Atomic Aid: Israel," *Global Security Newswire*, July 8, 2011, accessed July 12, 2011, http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20110708_1574.php.

395 Ibid.

the dominant power is not enough for the emergence of conflictual power transition among powers. Only a congruence of power parity with the rising power's dissatisfaction with the status-quo is determinant on the escalation of the issue into an armed conflict. The Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo manifests itself in its relations with the international community on the resolution of the nuclear issue. The Iranian relations with the international community on the resolution of the nuclear issue have exhibited ups and downs since 2003. While Iran pursued a rather conciliatory nuclear foreign policy in its negotiations with international community before 2005, it adopted a more conflictual stance starting from 2005. This shift can be explained with reference to the changes in the domestic politics.[396] The four variables explaining a rising power's dissatisfaction with the status-quo do not stand on their own, but are bound by the perceptions of the domestic policy makers. In other words, the strength of these four variables may change in accordance with the domestic policy makers' perception of and response to them. As a result, there is a correlation between the ups and downs in relations and domestic political groups' level of dissatisfaction with the status-quo.

An analysis of the pre-2005 and post-2005 will show that Iranian dealings with the international community over its nuclear issue exhibit differences between both period. This difference can be explained by the domestic factions' levels of dissatisfaction with the status-quo. The Iranian domestic political groups' level of dissatisfaction with the international status-quo has important implications for the course of relations with the international community on the resolution of the nuclear crisis.

[396] The discussion on Iranian dissatisfaction in the pre-2005 and post-2005 periods given in sections 4.5.5.1 and 4.5.5.2 of the present thesis is based on Halit Tagma and Ezgi Uzun, “Bureaucrats, Ayatollahs and Persian Politics: Explaining the Shift in Iranian Nuclear Policy,” 2012 forthcoming.

4.5.5.1 Pre-2005 Period Nuclear Decision Making in Iran

Iran's relations with the international community over its nuclear program in the pre-2005 period reflect elements of pragmatism, moderation and conciliation. Although the government at the time was committed to the continuation of the nuclear program for peaceful purposes, it preferred cooperation with the international community for the resolution of the issue.

When the Bushehr and Arak nuclear facilities were discovered in 2002, Mohammad Khatami was serving as the president. During his presidency, Khatami represented the reformist faction of the population. He sought to pursue a realist and pragmatic rather than a value-driven foreign policy. Among his foreign policy objectives was to diminish Iran's isolation, to revive the domestic economy through international financial agreements, and to establish more dialogue and cooperation with the external world.[397] Khatami's approach to the Iranian nuclear issue was also pragmatic in that he favored diplomatic negotiations as a key to avoid confrontation with the international community and further international isolation.

Up until mid-2003, AEOI was the agency responsible for both the political and technical aspects of the nuclear program.[398] However, in mid-2003 Iran felt that "the gravity of the negotiations required high-level official attention," thereby leading to the meeting of Supreme National Security Council for the first time to discuss the nuclear crisis.[399] The nuclear decision-making elite then decided that one person should coordinate all the committees involved in the nuclear issue.[400] Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi recommended Hassan Rowhani, who served both as the nuclear negotiator and

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397 Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security,* 83.

398 Kane, "Nuclear Decision-Making In Iran: A Rare Glimpse," 5.

399 Ibid.

400 Samii, "Iran: Nuclear Decision Making Undergoes Changes."

the secretary of the SNSC.[401] Upon insistence both by the Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Khatami, Rowhani took on the responsibility.[402]

Under Rowhani as the primary manager of the nuclear issue, Iran started negotiations with EU3- Germany, UK and France. The first set of bilateral diplomatic meetings in 2003 ended with Iran's promise to temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment activities.[403] This was subsequently formalized with the Paris Agreement, under which Iran promised to sign the Additional Protocol of NPT, to fully comply with the IAEA inspections and to stop all its enrichment and processing related activities.[404] Iran signed the Additional Protocol of NPT in December 2003, in Vienna, which gave the IAEA officials extended authority of access to a country's nuclear related sites and to all nuclear related information.[405] Foreign Minister Kharrazi often emphasized "the need for the settlement of the issue" through "full cooperation with IAEA," "confidence building," "transparency" and "dialogue" in their dealing with the international community on the nuclear issue.[406]

In a speech delivered to the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council, Rowhani explained the rationales behind the temporary suspension decision. Rowhani was concerned about the referral of the issue to UN Security Council and pursued a pragmatist foreign policy strategy to delay it as long as possible. Rowhani states that there had been an emerging international consensus on the need to stop Iran's nuclear program.[407] Given the US efforts to refer the issue to the UN Security Council, this

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401 Ibid.

402 Ibid.

403 Köse, *Iran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti,* 87.

404 Dominguez, "Iran: A New Challenge to EU Foreign Policy," 6-7.

405 *"I*AEA Safeguards Overview: Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols*," IAEA Website,* December 11, 2010, http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Factsheets/English/sg_overview.html.

406 "Kharrazi Discusses Iran's Nuclear Program with Counterparts," *Global Security,* September 23, 2004, accessed January 21, 2011, http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/2004/iran-040923-irna02.htm.

407 Kane, "Nuclear Decision-Making In Iran: A Rare Glimpse," 4.

international consensus could be culminated by the imposition of economic sanctions on Iran.[408] Rowhani was aware of the implications of any confrontation with the international community leading to economic sanctions on the Iranian public, who has already been affected by economic problems resulting from Iran's international isolation since the Revolution.[409] As a reformist president, Khatami was committed to the reformist ideal of opening the country more to the external world. His reformist supporters declared that "integration into the international order and the global economy mandates accepting certain restrictions on [Iran's] nuclear program."[410] The US proposal for Iran's WTO membership and the EU-3 packages offering extended trade relations was appealing to the reformist supporters of Khatami.[411]

The analysis shows that Iran under the reformist Khatami rule was more open to integration with the status-quo. The reformist political elites had certain economic benefits to be derived from the status-quo. They adopted a pragmatic approach towards globalization and opening the country to the outside world. As the incentives put forward by the USA and the EU seemed beneficial, they agreed to temporarily suspend the nuclear program. In conclusion, Iran's dissatisfaction with the international status-quo was lower in the pre-2005 period. As a result, the resolution of the nuclear issue with the international community seemed more probable under the rule of a relatively satisfied government.

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408 Ibid., 6.

409 Ibid.

410 Takeyh cited in Solingen, *Nuclear Logics*, 182.

411 Solingen, *Nuclear Logics*, 182.

4.5.5.2 Post-2005 Period Nuclear Decision-Making in Iran

Iran's moderate and pragmatic foreign policy approach to the handling of the nuclear issue underwent changes in the post-2005 period. Iran adopted an outright confrontational attitude towards the international community when the hardliner faction gained power. The presidential elections resulted in the victory of hardliner president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on August 2, 2005. On August 5, EU-3 proposed a new incentive package offering economic cooperation and security guarantees in return for Iran's suspension of its nuclear activities.[412] Ahmadinejad immediately rejected the proposal as "ridiculous and disparaging" and "irrevocably" resumed uranium processing activities on August 8.[413]

"Seeking to put his own imprint on foreign policy," Ahmadinejad made significant changes in the composition of the SNSC.[414] A former IRGC veteran himself in Iran-Iraq War, Ahmadinejad appointed former IRGC officials to various ministerial positions including the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Commerce.[415] This has largely transformed the composition of the SNSC to the advantage of hardliners. Apart from these ministerial positions in the cabinet, Ahmadinejad also appointed former IRGC officials to prominent positions within the SNSC, such as the spokesman of the SNSC and as deputy heads of SNSC.[416] Ahmadinejad was committed to the revolutionary ideals of protecting the country against external enemies and of preserving the country's military self-reliance. As Dueck emphasizes, "the international indifference to Saddam's war crimes and Tehran's lack of an effective response has led Iran's war veteran President to perceive that the security of his country cannot be

412 Köse, *Iran Nükleer Programı ve Ortadoğu Siyaseti,* 89.

413 Ibid.

414 Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,* 38.

415 Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guards' Role in Iranian Politics."

416 Bar et al., "Iran's Nuclear Decision-Making Under Ahmadinejad," 20.

predicated on global opinion and treaties."[417] Ahmadinejad saw EU as acting at the behest of the United States and IAEA, who are, in Ahmadinejad's words, "bullies determined to prevent Iran's progress and advancement."[418] As a result, Ahmadinejad breached the Paris Agreement, declined EU's new incentive packages offering economic cooperation and security guarantees, resumed uranium enrichment activities, and "adopted a more belligerent posture towards the EU, the IAEA and the United States."[419] Since Ahmadinejad's coming to power in late 2005, Iran has also ignored the international threats to stop the enrichment program, either in the form of UN sanctions or U.S. military strikes.[420]

The hardliners had certain material benefits to be gained from the revolutionary ideology of non-integration with the international community, military and economic self-reliance and nationalism. For instance, the IRGC has an extensive economic and military power in Iran. Their economic interests emanate from their monopoly on the importation of certain forbidden and expensive items from Iranian ports which they control.[421] Enjoying their increasing prosperity gained through this monopoly, IRGC opposes to opening the state's economy to the outside world.[422] As such, Ahmadinejad feeds the IRGC by deepening the protectionist, anti-capitalist, inward-looking state economy.[423] Both for Ahmadinejad and the IRGC, the international community's stance towards the Iranian nuclear program created "a feeling of injustice, e.g., US double standards, the West versus the technological have-nots."[424]

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417 Dueck and Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Challenge," 196.

418 Kamrava, "Iranian National Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities," 96.

419 Ibid., 95.

420 Ibid.

421 Solingen, *Nuclear Logics*, 180.

422 Ibid.

423 Ibid.

424 Walsh, "Iran and the Nuclear Issue: Negotiated Settlement or Escalation," 6.

IRGC's material interests for defying conciliation with the international community on the nuclear issue are not limited to their stakes in an inward-looking economy. IRGC has had military interests in furthering the nuclear program. In 1982, IRGC established its own weapons organization, which is independent from the regular Iranian military.[425] Moreover, they have established their own defense industry.[426] IRGC's insistence on the uranium enrichment activities, which is key to the development of nuclear material for military purposes, can be seen as a reflection of IRGC's stakes in their own defense industry.

Iranian nuclear program became increasingly politicized under Ahmadinejad's presidency. The main nuclear issue dividing the domestic politics into two camps was whether Iran should continue as "a revolutionary state willing to defy the world," or whether it should become "a normal state playing by international rules."[427] While reformists and traditionalists were on the same camp, favoring a more conciliatory attitude to the West, the hardliners, who were holding the political power, opted for a more hardened nuclear foreign policy. The Iranian dissatisfaction with the international community increased in the post-2005 period due to a revival of revolutionary ideals under the increasing political influence of the revolutionary cadre. This dissatisfaction was reflected on the Iranian dealings with the international community. The relations between Iran and the international community became tenser during this period. Believing that diplomatic negotiations with Iran have proved unsuccessful for the suspension of the nuclear program, the EU and the USA did not propose any other incentive packages to Iran. Instead, the nuclear issue was referred to the UN Security Council, which passed four rounds of sanctions on Iran, targeting its military and economic activities.

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425 Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?*, 67.

426 Ibid.

427 Chubin, "The Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program."

4.6 The US Policy Options against Rising Iranian Power and Dissatisfaction

Iran's insistence on its nuclear program despite the increasing pressure by the international community for its suspension can be explained by its ambitions to acquire a regional dominant power status. Given its increasing GDP levels, high population and oil-rich territory, Iran wants to have a greater say in the region. Israel and Iran seem to be the major candidates to fill the power vacuum left after Iraq War. The Israeli conventional and nuclear weapons capabilities render it advantageous, compared to Iran. On the other hand, Iran has a weakness in conventional military capabilities. A nuclear option can not only make up for the weakness of Iran's conventional capabilities but also strengthen Iran's hand against the US presence in the region as well as Israel. Therefore, a nuclear option can increase the Iranian stakes to become a regional power. Iran's relative power in the region is coupled by dissatisfaction with the US led status-quo both at the regional and international level. The above given analysis shows that there is a correlation between the Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo and the course of the nuclear talks between Iran and the international community. When the Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo in economic, political and ideological terms increases, it adopts a more hardened position towards the international community and stakes for the resolution of the nuclear issue decrease.

The USA as the dominant power is aware of the Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo and its strong ambition to challenge it. The USA is also aware that Iranian insistence on its nuclear program derives from its ambitions to challenge the status-quo and achieve a power transition. The power transition literature argues that the main concern of the dominant power at the international arena is to maintain the stability of the status-quo.[428] There are two options before the dominant power to preserve the status-quo against any challenger, either integration or armed conflict. Depending on the capability and willingness of the challenger to enter into an armed conflict with the dominant power, the dominant power usually prefers integration over conflict as the

[428] Tammen et. al., "Power Transition and US-China Conflicts," 37.

initial policy option. In other words, "a hierarchy dominated by a preponderant nation imposes high costs for conflict on smaller challengers and reduces costs for integration."[429] Integration was the policy option adopted by the USA in the post-World War II period in Europe. By spreading the ideas of liberal democracy and market economy, the USA hindered the emergence of any conflict with Germany and Japan as rising challengers.[430] Power transition theory assumes that conflict can erupt even in the case of a strong asymmetry between the dominant power and the challenger; however the conflict would not be as destructive as a conflict between two powers that have power parity.[431]

Given the Iranian missile build-up and its advancement in nuclear enrichment activities, Iran might be preparing itself for any attack from the USA or Israel. The USA has three specific policy options to hinder any military confrontation with Iran. The first policy option is that the USA may delay the timing of power parity with Iran. Iran enjoys high GDP rates. However, when compared to its Middle Eastern counterparts, the GDP growth rate in percentages is not that high. Moreover, while Iran has high revenues from oil, its sole dependence on oil renders it vulnerable to any oil crisis. A secure way for Iran to increase its capabilities is through its missile and nuclear technology. As a matter of fact, the USA has targeted Iran's nuclear program and oil business through sanctions, with an attempt to curb its power rise. The US insistence on the suspension of the Iranian nuclear program can be explained with the US ambition to hinder the rise of Iran, thereby avoiding any power transition at the regional level.

Secondly, the USA may integrate Iran into the international status-quo at the political, economic and ideological level. A key point for the USA is to avoid any integration attempt that may cause a binary opposition with Iran. Therefore, instead of binary negotiations, the USA can encourage multilateral attempts to integrate Iran into the status-quo. As a matter of fact, the USA has so far adopted this strategy in its dealings with Iran on the nuclear issue, by encouraging the EU-3 to negotiate with Iran.

429 Ibid., 41.

430 Ibid., 37.

431 Ibid., 40.

During the EU-3-Iran negotiations, the EU-3 offered some incentives to Iran in exchange for its suspension of its nuclear program. Such incentives included an extensive cooperation in various areas such as trade, nuclear energy and oil. Moreover, the organization of a conference on the resolution of Middle Eastern security problems was also on the incentive list. These incentives proved useful during the rule of by the reformist faction, who would derive material benefits from integrating with the global economic status-quo. On the other hand, the incentives proved futile when the hardliners attained power, who would derive material benefits from isolating the country from the global status-quo. The second policy option to integrate Iran into the global status-quo was the use of sanctions. In this respect, the USA not only adopted unilateral sanctions, but also encouraged the UN to impose multilateral sanctions on Iran. The timing of the unilateral and multilateral sanctions imposed on Iran coincides with the rise of Iranian dissatisfaction. Still, the sanctions also proved futile, as the hardliner camp did not feel affected by most of the sanctions, as they had already established their monopoly on various industries including the military.

Third, the international community can present incentives that would be appealing to reformists and traditional conservatives in Iran. As a matter of fact, the hardliners' ideological foreign policy during Ahmadinejad's rule has not gone unchallenged domestically. Iran's one of top religious authorities, Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri criticized Ahmadinejad's fixation on the nuclear issue by stating that nuclear technology should be "obtained in a way that will not create other problems, and without giving others an excuse to harm them."[432] Similarly, the expediency Council Member Mohammed Hashemi of the reformist Kargozaran party said that Ahmadinejad was unable to prevent the USA from referring the issue to UN Security Council. He emphasized that "with its next steps, America will realize all its aspirations with respect to Iran;" and therefore, they needed "skilled, experienced and moderate individuals to save the country from crisis."[433] The former chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee in the Supreme National Security Council, who was a member of the nuclear

[432] Mansharof, "Iranian Domestic Criticism of Iran's Nuclear Strategy," *Inquiry & Analysis Series* Report No. 317 (January 24, 2007), http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/121/1810.htm..

[433] Ibid.

negotiating team during Khatami's time, criticized the current government's position for not being based on rational calculation.[434] Given the internal divisions on the nuclear foreign policy, the international community can strengthen the hand of factions that are more open to integration with the global status-quo in Iran. Although this would not fully hinder the Iranian progress in its nuclear program, Iran could become more willing to resolve the issue by responding more positively to such integration attempts.

Although Iran attended multilateral negotiations with the EU during Ahmadinejad's rule, it was not wholly satisfied with the course of the multilateral negotiations dominated by a US backed EU, either. In May 2008, Iran presented a package to five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany (P5+1), called "Package for Constructive Negotiations." In the Package, Iran reiterated its commitment to its peaceful nuclear program and argued that the nuclear issue cannot be resolved with the carrots and sticks approach. Instead, Iran voiced its intention to start a series of extensive negotiations with P5+1 on a variety of issues including economy, politics, security and the nuclear crisis.[435] Moreover, it also suggested the establishment of a committee on nuclear weaponization.[436] An American backed EU policy of carrots and sticks approach implied a hegemonic and unequal relationship between the US and the EU on the one hand, and Iran on the other. By offering a series of multilateral negotiations with the P5+1, Iran showed its ambition to be treated as an equal member of the international order. The Iranian insistence on equal and multilateral negotiations also signifies the Iranian ambition to be treated as an equal and powerful nation.

The USA, along with the EU and the P5+1, has so far pursued a policy of integrating Iran to the international status-quo. Power transition theory predicts that the dominant power would only resort to military intervention as a last resort. The stakes are high that Iran as the challenger may initiate a military confrontation with USA, or with its ally Israel in the region, only when it achieves a power parity with it. Such

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434 Ibid.

435 "Full Text: Iran's Package for Constructive Negotiations," *CASMII Website*, accessed July 19, 2011, http://www.campaigniran.org/casmii/index.php?q=node/5011.

436 Ibid.

power parity can be achieved through missile and nuclear capability. However, the existence of nuclear weapons may also hinder the eruption of an armed conflict between the two due to their deterrence capability.

The classical deterrence theory argues that the mutually destructive capability of nuclear weapons render them unusable. Accordingly, when there is power parity among two powers with nuclear weapons, the stakes for an armed conflict decrease. The common example given by classical deterrence theorists is the absence of armed conflict between two superpowers during Cold War. The power transition scholars counter the deterrence theory. Organski argues that the presence of nuclear weapons does not hinder an armed conflict between a dominant power and a rising challenger.[437] The only difference is that the existence of nuclear weapons would make war more "deadly."[438] In a similar vein, Kugler advances the argument that nuclear proliferation will not be able to prevent wars.[439] The first reason is that nuclear weaponization will not eliminate a state's ambitions to enjoy the benefits of its rise of power based on domestic development.[440] Second, nuclear weapons will not change a rising power's dissatisfaction with the status-quo.[441] In short, Kugler's theory concludes that the armed conflict cannot be hindered with nuclear weapons. Moreover, such a war would cause even more destruction.

Iran's missile capabilities have been primarily targeted against a possible Israeli attack on its nuclear facilities. Given the previous Israeli attack on Iraqi Osirak facilities, Iran fears that its own nuclear facilities may experience a similar attack by Israel. The question arises as to whether Israel and Iran could start an armed conflict when both parties hold nuclear weapons. The classical deterrence theory would argue

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437 Douglas Lemke and Jacek Kugler, "The Evolution of the Power Transition Perspective," in *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of the War Ledger, e*ds. Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke (Michigan University Press, 1996), 24.

438 Ibid.

439 Kugler quoted in *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of the War Ledger,* 25.

440 Ibid.

441 Ibid.

that a war would be out of question due to the existence of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, power transition theory would argue that the possibility for an armed conflict would not be eliminated between Israel and Iran. According to the theory, building on its rise in power based on domestic development, Iran could engage in an armed conflict to attain the regional power position. However, there is yet no empirical test validating this power transition theory assumption. Therefore, a discussion on the prospect for war between Iran and Israel is an open-ended one.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the Iranian nuclear program from a power transition theory perspective. The chapter has argued that Iran's insistence on its nuclear program despite the increasing pressure by the international community for its suspension can be explained by its ambition to acquire a regional leading power status. Given its increasing GDP levels, high population and oil-rich territory, Iran wants to have a greater say in the region. Israel and Iran seem to be the major candidates to fill the power vacuum left by Iraq in 2003. The Israeli conventional and nuclear weapons capabilities render it advantageous, when compared to Iran. On the other hand, Iran has a weakness in conventional military capabilities. A nuclear option can not only make up for the weakness of Iran's conventional capabilities but also strengthen Iran's hand against the US presence in the region as well as Israel. Therefore, a nuclear option can increase the Iranian stakes to become a regional power.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to explain the Iranian nuclear crisis of 2002 from a power transition theory perspective. The crisis erupted with the disclosure of previously unknown nuclear facilities in 2002, when anti-governmental Iranians in exile brought the Iranian nuclear program into the focus of the international community. Iran was both a party to the NPT and had recognized the authority of IAEA to perform inspections on its nuclear sites. When compared to Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea, who either did not become a party to the NPT or withdrew from it, the reaction of the international community to Iranian nuclear program has been tougher. Among these, Israel has not been subjected to any sanctions; and India and Pakistan were sanctioned unilaterally by the USA, which were subsequently released. The UN Security Council imposed sanctions on both Pakistan and India only after their 1998 nuclear tests. North Korea was subjected to multilateral UNSC sanctions in 2006, upon its first nuclear test, which were then extended in 2009 when it declared itself as a nuclear state. Iran, on the other hand, has been subjected to four rounds of UNSC sanctions and unilateral US and EU sanctions, whose content is more extensive than that of North Korea. Moreover, the sanctions were imposed on Iran in the absence of any prior nuclear test and of conclusive evidence that the Iranian nuclear program is geared towards nuclear weaponization. Apart from sanctions, European countries offered several incentive packages to Iran in exchange for its suspension of the nuclear program. Despite these incentives and tough sanctions, Iran has not permanently suspended its nuclear activities. Given this account, this thesis has sought to answer two interrelated questions. The first question is why the international community is specifically concerned about the nuclear program. The second question is why Iran is so

insistent on its nuclear program despite such “carrots” and “sticks.”

An historical overview of the Iranian nuclear program shows that Iran was one of the main benefactors of US nuclear technology transfer during the Shah period. However, the worsening of bilateral relations following the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the subsequent Hostage Crisis brought an end to American nuclear technology transfer to Iran. Moreover, the USA also sought to prevent other countries such as Russia and China from cooperating with Iran on nuclear technology. While the Iranian nuclear program came to a halt during Ayatollah Khomeini era, the destructive experience of Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 reintroduced the need for military self-reliance. As a result, the nuclear program was restarted during Ayatollah Khamenei era.

The nuclear crisis of 2002 coincides with the presidency of Khatami. It is also during his presidency that the international community first engaged in the resolution of the crisis. In this respect, France, UK and Germany, also known as the EU-3, initiated a series of diplomatic negotiations with Iran. Although the USA was more inclined to adopt a hard power policy option against Iran, it still backed these negotiations. The empirical analysis of the Iranian nuclear crisis has shown that the course of these bilateral negotiations exhibited differences between pre-2005 and post-2005 periods. This breaking point coincides with the change of leadership within Iran. The EU-3 proposed several incentive packages including cooperation in trade, oil sector, regional security and nuclear technology. The Khatami government represented the reformist faction at home, which was more willing to integrate with the liberal world economy, to comply with international norms and institutions, and to eliminate Iran's isolation in the international arena. In accordance with this pragmatic foreign policy, the Khatami government accepted one of the EU-3 incentive packages and temporarily suspended its nuclear program. Although Iran experienced several problems with IAEA reports, which resulted in occasional Iranian step-backs from cooperation, Iran under Khatami government generally pursued a conciliatory and moderate nuclear policy with the international community.

This moderate and pragmatic foreign policy was replaced by a non-conciliatory

and ideological foreign policy when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad assumed power in late 2005. Representing the hardliner faction of the population, Ahmadinejad promoted the revolutionary ideals of military, economic and technological self-reliance. Shortly after his election as the president, he resumed all the nuclear activities suspended under Khatami's rule. He defied any incentive packages proposed by the EU. Given the failure of diplomatic negotiations, the USA referred the issue to UN Security Council, which imposed four rounds of sanctions on Iran targeting its oil industry, trade activities, arms imports and nuclear-related technological assistance from other countries. Apart from these multilateral sanctions, the USA and the EU imposed unilateral sanctions on Iran. Despite such tough sanctions, Iran under Ahmadinejad's rule never stepped back from its decision to continue with the nuclear program.

There is ample scholarly work explaining Iran's insistence on its nuclear program with reference to external security environment; the flaws in the international non-proliferation regime; the role of nuclear weapons as symbols of prestige, technological development and modernity; and the impact of domestic politics. All these scholarly work has made important contribution to the understanding of various facets of the Iranian nuclear issue. Another argument proposed by major scholars of Iran regarding the nuclear program is that the main rationale behind the Iranian nuclear program is its ambition to become a regional power and to enjoy the nuclear leverage to have a greater say in regional affairs. While this argument has been referred to by many, it has not been presented in a theoretical framework.

An evaluation of the change in regional balances between pre- and post-9/11 periods shows that a power transition perspective can be adopted to further explore the Iranian nuclear issue. Iran had always wanted to have a greater say on its neighborhood due to its geopolitical positioning between the Middle East, the Gulf region, the Caspian and the Caucasus. The fall of the Soviet Union has created an opportunity for Iran to exert more influence on its northern borders. The existence of Israel as the sole nuclear power in the region; the diminished power of Iran due to the Iran-Iraq War and the economic sanctions as well as the arms embargoes imposed by the USA; and the rise of Iraq as the major Arab power summarizes the power balances in the Middle East

until 9/11. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and of Iraq in 2003 created a power vacuum in the Middle East. Iran stood as one candidate to fill the vacuum left by Iraq in the region.

Power transition theory assumes that the international arena is marked not by anarchy, but by hierarchy. There is a dominant power who sits at the top of the system and some great powers who may challenge the dominant power once they acquire a power parity with it. The dominant power establishes the status-quo, in other words, the international rules of the game by projecting its domestic system to the international arena. The nature of the transition from the dominant power to the rising one is determined by the stance of the rising power to the status-quo. If the rising power gets benefits from the status-quo, then it can integrate with the system. There may still be a power transition in that case; however, the transition would not necessarily be conflictual, but peaceful. If the rising power is dissatisfied with the status-quo, then the transition may be conflictual. In line with these theoretical assumptions, this thesis has sought to measure the rise of Iranian power and its dissatisfaction with the US-led status-quo.

Power transition scholars estimate a country's power by looking at its internal development level. This thesis has adopted the total GDP levels, size of the military, military capabilities, military expenditures, population size and oil supplies as the determinants of a nation's power. The statistical data has shown that Iran has superiority in GDP levels, size of the military, oil supplies and population size when compared to Israel and Saudi Arabia. However, it suffers from the weakness of its conventional weapons capabilities. Israel stands as the major rival to Iran thanks to its superiority in conventional, nuclear and missile capabilities. At this point, the possible role of nuclear weapons for Iran to become a leading power in the region becomes clearer. A possible policy option for Iran to fill the military power gap between Israel and Iran could be the build-up of nuclear weapons and missiles. Iran has already developed medium range missiles and has an advanced program for the development of long-range missiles. While Iran has an advanced nuclear program and has exceeded the uranium enrichment limit for peaceful purposes, it still refuses the international claims that the program is

intended for military purposes. Still, scholars and policy-makers associate the advancement in the Iranian missile program to its possible uses to fire nuclear warheads.

The USA is the global dominant power and it projects its domestic system to the international arena. Democracy, liberal economy and the role of international institutions are the basics of the global status-quo led by the USA today. Moreover, the USA has a great military presence in post-2003 Iraq and in the Gulf States. It tries to project this global status-quo to the Middle East region with an attempt to preserve its material interests in the region, which are ensuring oil supply and price stability, providing security to its Gulf allies and fighting global terrorism by bringing "democratic stability" to the region. There is a lack of consensus among power transition scholars on the measurement of a rising nation's dissatisfaction towards the status-quo. This thesis has adopted domestic systems similarity, membership to international institutions, satisfaction with the international norms and arms build-up as key variables to measure Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo.

The analysis has shown that the revolutionary Iran, with a semi-democratic Islamic regime, an inward-looking economy and a self-reliant foreign policy does not benefit from the democratic and liberal market-oriented status-quo led by the USA. The USA holds the opportunity to impose the status-quo through its alliances with oil-rich Gulf States and Israel. The US military presence in Iraq, Afghanistan and in the Gulf region, coupled by the "axis of evil" and "regime change" rhetoric has increased the Iranian dissatisfaction with the dominant power. Moreover, Iran has expressed its dissatisfaction with the duality of the international nuclear order, which creates a power imbalance between the "nuclear-haves" and "nuclear have-nots" in world affairs. Its membership to international organizations not dominated by the USA and its missile build-up are the other signifiers of Iranian dissatisfaction.

The nuclear program and the missile build-up can be taken both as the indicators of the Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo and as the end-result of that dissatisfaction. A comparison of the nuclear foreign policy under Khatami's and

Ahmadinejad's rule indicates that there is a correlation between the rise of dissatisfaction and the course of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the international community. As Khatami's reformist faction was more willing to integrate with the international economic and political status-quo, Iran during his rule was more open to incentive packages offered by the EU. On the other hand, Ahmadinejad's hardliner faction had economic and military interests in the preservation of the revolutionary Iran as an isolationist, economically inward-looking state. Therefore, Iran under hardliners' rule defied EU incentives and became more insistent on the nuclear program.

A disruption of the Middle Eastern power balances with the rise of Iran as the leading regional power would hamper the American interests in the region. Given the possible implications of nuclearization for the rise of Iran, the USA has sought to hinder the further development of Iran's nuclear program. With an attempt to abort the nuclear program as well as to decrease the Iranian dissatisfaction with the US-led status-quo, the USA has sought to integrate Iran to the international status-quo by the use of EU incentive packages and UN sanctions. A power transition in the Middle East does not directly affect the US' status as the dominant power. However, it affects the global power balances, which is expected to take place between the USA and China.

One question this study could not answer regards the timing of power transition in the region. Such a study would require an advanced statistical measurement of the nations' internal development levels in terms of GDP levels and military capabilities. Most advanced level power transition studies perform a statistical analysis, which makes a future projection of nations' internal capabilities to see in what year a power transition among relevant players is possible. A similar study could be performed for the timing of a possible power transition among Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Another question that this study could not answer is the impact of nuclear weapons on the prospect of a conflictual power transition. The classical deterrence theory and the power transition theory advance two conflicting arguments related to the rule of nuclear weapons in power transitions. While the former would expect no conflict due to the mutual destructive capability of nuclear weapons, the later would expect a conflict which is even more destructive due to the presence of nuclear weapons. Still, the

absence of any empirical examples renders the latter argument not easy to be verified for the time being. This study can open the way for future power transition research on the Iranian nuclear program by addressing these two questions. However, the findings on the Iranian rise in power, dissatisfaction and domestic politics can have practical implications for the resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue. These findings can open the way for policy-makers and nuclear non-proliferation activists to find new conflict resolution strategies regarding the crisis.

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