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PREDICTING IRAN'S NUCLEAR STATUS: A KALEIDOSCOPE OF FUTURES

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Jonathan Willens

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To all those who sacrifice freely to protect liberty.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

PREDICTING IRAN'S NUCLEAR STATUS: A KALEIDOSCOPE OF FUTURES

by

Jonathan Willens

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Charles Town, West Virginia

Professor Jonathan S. Lockwood, Thesis Professor

This study explores whether or not the rogue state of Iran will develop nuclear weapons. In addition, this study analyzes the potential strategic ramifications of Iran's nuclear status, particularly for the United States, Russia, Israel, and Iran. The Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP) is used to systematically forecast Iran's nuclear status, as well as events surrounding Iran's nuclear status. Data for the research comes mostly from scholarly, secondary sources. This study's findings show that Tehran will probably become an atomic power if it refrains from promoting jihadist operations. However, Tehran will probably *not* become an atomic power if it does indeed sponsor jihadist operations. The conclusion explains how this study contributes to a better understanding of the Iranian nuclear issue and the global proliferation of nuclear weapons. Moreover, the conclusion offers suggestions for further research on Iran's nuclear program.

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## ***Chapter 1***

### ***A Nuclear Quandary***

#### **Introduction**

The United States and other nations are trying to prevent rogue (outlaw) states from producing nuclear (atomic) weapons. Rogue states (often coined as such by Western powers), such as North Korea, Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, frequently eschew international sanctions, are undemocratic or repressive, and foment various forms of domestic or transnational violence. Some of them seek access to a variety of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including biological, chemical, nuclear, and space-based weapons. It is possible that even non-rogue nuclear powers would be unable to deter rogue states from using nuclear weapons (Blank 2004, 20).

Western states are concerned that rogue states may use or threaten to use nuclear weapons, or provide nuclear weapons to other rogue states or transnational groups. A rogue state's political leadership is often deemed to be irrational (Jakobsen 2007, 102) or rebellious against the global community. The irrational government can even act against its own national strategic interests, sometimes jeopardizing the safety of a region or the entire world. America, among others, is attempting to stifle weapons proliferation by thwarting rogue states' access to nuclear technologies.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is charged with monitoring nuclear facilities and nuclear activities in various nations. Yet the rogue Libyan and North Korean states were both able to run secret nuclear weapons programs (Zaborski 2005, 153). As Williams points out, Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan established a covert

network that sold atomic technologies to a number of states, including Libya and North Korea (2007, 118-29). Many of Khan's nuclear clients may be further spreading WMD around the world. Khan's illicit network "exported gas centrifuges and production capabilities, as well as designs for nuclear weapons, to other, mostly Muslim countries to turn a profit and provide additional business for their international collaborators" (Albright and Hinderstein 2005, 112).

Rogue states may eventually develop and possibly use nuclear weapons against countries or entire regions. Isolated and aggressive states could even use space-based technologies to launch destructive nuclear attacks on free or peaceful adversaries. Hence, influential states are working to keep atomic weapons out of the hands of hostile powers. Rogue states face technological barriers to producing plutonium, enriching uranium, and constructing the delivery mechanisms for carrying out nuclear attacks. Worldwide improvements in missile defense systems could even alter outlaw states' nuclear calculations. However, hostile powers will have strategic reasons for acquiring highly devastating atomic weapons. Such armaments could serve as effective deterrents against alien interference in rogue-state domestic or regional affairs. U.S. allies would likely hesitate to confront bellicose nuclear-armed powers politically or militarily. Ultimately, this study seeks to answer the following *general* research question: Will rogue states produce nuclear weapons?

The rogue state of Iran (or the Islamic Republic), even without nuclear weapons, has intimidated regional neighbors and Western powers. Yet according to the West, Iran may be processing highly enriched uranium (HEU) for military purposes.

The Europeans and Americans seem to agree that the Iranians at a minimum are seeking enrichment and other fuel-cycle facilities not only to fuel reactors but also

to give themselves the capability to produce HEU for nuclear bombs, should they decide to acquire such weapons. (Einhorn 2004, 24)

China, Russia, and India appear to back Iran's right to generate nuclear power, but they are at least outwardly opposed to Iran's development of "the bomb." The Eastern states prefer "that Iran's nuclear issue be resolved within the framework of the IAEA and not outside it" (Tarock 2006b, 660). Iran asserts that it wants nuclear energy for economic reasons. Iranian leaders "insist that they want to use nuclear energy for electricity generation to maximize oil exports and increase hard currency earnings" (Samii 2006, 63). Nevertheless, Tehran's *actual* intentions remain unclear to the world.

Tehran may attempt to construct nuclear weapons for either offensive or defensive purposes. The Iranian ayatollahs might want to further promote a Shi'a concept of jihad, or "armed struggle" (Lewis 2003, 30-42), through nuclear intimidation. The mullahs might also want to protect their homeland from military invasions. Still, the United States, Russia, Israel, or others may prevent the Islamic Republic from reaching its strategic goals. There are indeed a number of circumstances and events that may determine Iran's nuclear status. Ultimately, this study seeks to answer the following *specific* research question: Will Iran develop nuclear weapons?

Disastrous consequences could occur if an influential state miscalculates in dealing with Iran's nuclear developments. Thus, national security officials and analysts throughout the world are seeking a swift and favorable resolution to the Iranian atomic issue. A war over Iran's nuclear program could ignite a conflagration of terrorism, global jihad, revolution in predominantly Islamic countries, religious and ethnic strife within and between nations, and paralyzing disruptions to the global economy. War could occur even if Tehran never makes its nuclear weapons operational. As a result of the Iranian

nuclear issue, weapons proliferation as a whole may spiral out of control. If Iran produces atomic arms, then countries from the Middle East to East Asia could decide to forego any adherence to nonproliferation treaties. Nuclear arms races could spawn wars among regional rivals seeking to acquire first-strike capabilities. Accordingly, national security officials and academics are attempting to determine whether or not Iran will develop nuclear weapons.

## Literature Review

Extensive qualitative literature exists on Iran's nuclear activities. For the most part, though, scholarly (academic) journal articles and books that have been through a peer-review process fail to *systematically* answer this study's specific research question. The authors typically avoid forecasting Iran's nuclear developments methodically. Some of the authors do make tentative predictions. Yet the researchers generally do not fully employ social science analytical models or theories to forecast Iranian decisions. Many of the authors also express ideological biases. On the other hand, they do provide robust data and logic to prognosticate Tehran's nuclear decisions and capabilities. Authors supply vast background material regarding Iran's nuclear program. The substantive scholarly literature mainly *explains* or *describes* Tehran's actions, rather than *predicts* Tehran's actions. Still, this literature review section explores academic works that at least implicitly forecast whether or not Iran will acquire the ability to use "the bomb."

Tarock (2006a and 2006b) does not specifically say if Tehran will develop nuclear weapons, but he does suggest that Tehran is probably *not* seeking the bomb. He portrays an Iran that opposes ideologically such instruments of warfare. Iran "has repeatedly denied that it intends to become a nuclear state, and Iran's supreme leader,

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has issued a *fatwa*, a religious ruling, against nuclear weapons” (Tarock 2006b, 647). Tarock uses a mainly Marxist philosophy to show that Iran is content with its current nuclear status. He presents Iran as a beleaguered nation that is threatened consistently by the imperialistic United States. He claims that “to the Iranians, the pressure to give up the development of nuclear technology is seen as yet another attempt by the West to keep Iran underdeveloped and weak” (Tarock 2006a, 93). However, he also uses Marxist, historical, and Realist approaches to explain that Tehran *may yet* produce atomic arms.

Tarock explains four reasons why Tehran might continue its nuclear program. These reasons include the Iraqi invasion of Iran and a history of foreign aggression against Iran, post-1979 U.S. and Israeli military threats, Western suspicion of Tehran’s nuclear program, and recent Western rejections to become involved economically in Tehran’s nuclear industry (Tarock 2006b, 652-53). The main issue for Tarock has little to do with Iran’s future capabilities. Mostly, he expresses the view that the United States and other Western powers would be responsible for a nuclear-armed Tehran. He perceives Tehran as more cooperative than Washington in seeking to resolve the issue. Tarock stresses that “Iran has agreed to sign an additional protocol agreement that would allow the IAEA unrestricted inspections of its nuclear sites, as well as sign a new agreement pledging that it would never engage in making nuclear weapons” (Tarock 2006a, 93).

Tarock’s works are informative, yet filled with excessive biases. He objectively draws on primarily Marxist ideas throughout his articles. The problem is that he often uses overtly subjective language to make points. For instance, Tarock argues that

put in political terms, there is a clash here between a superpower intolerant of a perceived dissident and 'rogue' state, and an assertive and old but glorious civilisation that has had the 'temerity' to challenge that superpower in a region where Washington demands submission. (2006b, 647)

Tarock is correct in that the United States wants Iran to be more compliant with American interests. However, if Washington truly demanded submission, then the U.S. would perhaps have a *greater* role in controlling Tehran's nuclear activities and managing the oil flow from the Persian Gulf. The United States would also have a greater say over democratic reforms in Iran and the rest of the Middle East. In addition, Tarock ignores much of the accessible evidence showing that Tehran may already be working on a covert atomic program.

Tarock exaggerates his claims, although at times his biases are quite subtle. He notes that a nuclear-armed Iran "will bring about a balance of power between the region's two major antagonists: Tel Aviv and Teheran" (Tarock 2006a, 93). His argument is a valid one. On the other hand, *Jerusalem*—not Tel Aviv—is the capital of Israel. Tarock's prejudices against Israel and the United States detract from his useful Marxist and even Realist insights about the Iranian nuclear program. He could have developed one or more theoretical models to mitigate bias from his article systematically.

Zunes (2005) implies that Tehran will not develop atomic weapons. He does note that Iran *could* run a clandestine nuclear arms program (Zunes 2005, 5). In Zunes's view, Iran has credible reasons for constructing nuclear weaponry, based on Structural Realist premises. He thinks that Iran might want to counterbalance Pakistan's power in South Asia and Israel's power in the Middle East. Nonetheless, he mostly supplies evidence and reasoning pointing toward a non-atomic future for Iran. He uses a Marxist mindset to portray how the hegemonic U.S. is distorting Iran's nuclear goals. Zunes says the

following: “When the IAEA published a detailed report in November 2004 concluding that its extensive inspections had revealed no evidence of Iran pursuing a nuclear weapons program, the Bush administration responded by attempting to oust the IAEA director” (2005, 4). Zunes thinks that the United States is trying to unduly coerce Iran, as well as a global institution. He additionally discusses what he perceives as Western hypocrisy. Zunes mentions that “President Bush decided to unfreeze America’s nuclear weapons production and launch a program to develop smaller tactical nuclear weapons for battlefield use” (2005, 6). Zunes contrasts U.S. actions with Iranian actions. He says that “Teheran has called for the establishment of a nuclear weapons-free zone for the entire Middle East” (Zunes 2005, 6). Zunes gives the impression that Tehran appreciates collective security. In effect, he uses a Liberal mindset to further illuminate why Tehran might shun atomic weapons. Zunes hints that Iran is interested in exploiting a form of Liberal Institutionalism. Ultimately, he thinks the evidence signaling that Iran wants to develop atomic arms is highly questionable.

Zunes articulates some well informed, albeit biased ideas for forecasting Iran’s nuclear activities. Like Tarock’s articles, Zunes’ article has some important limitations. Zunes presents no developed models for predicting Iran’s future nuclear status. Still, he mostly employs Marxist thinking to analyze the issue. He says that

having already successfully fooled most of Congress and the American public into believing that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq had an active nuclear weapons program, the Bush administration and congressional leaders of both parties are now claiming that it is Iran that has an active nuclear weapons program. (Zunes 2005, 4)

Thus, Zunes accepts the premise that the U.S. government tricked the American people into supporting an invasion of Iraq. Moreover, he showcases one-sided evidence to show

that Iran is probably not producing atomic weapons. Zunes attempts to make the U.S. seem irrational for its concerns over Iran's nuclear developments. He says that "Democratic congressional leaders have contributed to the Bush administration's alarmist rhetoric about a supposed nuclear threat from Iran" (Zunes 2005, 4). As other sources reveal, there is plenty of credible evidence showing that Iran may be generating atomic power for military purposes. Zunes provides negligible data to counter his own preconceived notions. He unscientifically and perhaps misleadingly predicts Iran's future nuclear capabilities.

Dueck and Takeyh (2007) do not specifically say that Iran will develop atomic weapons. However, they do explain that Tehran is *close* to developing atomic weapons and that Washington has few good options for stopping Tehran. Dueck and Takeyh think "the United States must . . . avoid the twin risks of rollback and appeasement, and instead pursue containment supplemented by some direct, hard bargaining with Iran. Such a strategy represents the only chance that the United States still has to prevent Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons" (2007, 205). The authors imply that the U.S. has failed to strike a middle ground between hegemonic behavior and appeasement toward the Iranians.

As the authors show, Tehran has already achieved many successes with its atomic program, amidst Washington's strategic confusion over how to deal with Tehran's nuclear intentions. Iran has achieved much of its nuclear progress clandestinely. In 2002, "it suddenly appeared that Iran had not only constructed a sophisticated uranium enrichment capability but was also busy developing a plutonium route to nuclear power" (Dueck and Takeyh 2006, 191). The international community cannot be certain of Iran's

current or future nuclear activities. Again, the main question for Dueck and Takeyh is *when*, rather than *will* Tehran develop an atomic device. They say that “Iran’s cantankerous conservatives seem united on the notion that the Islamic Republic should have an advanced nuclear infrastructure that will offer it an opportunity to cross the nuclear threshold at some point” (Dueck and Takeyh 2007, 195). The authors ultimately explain that it is up to Iran to become or to not become an atomic power. Tehran just needs to exploit the appropriate nuclear technology.

Dueck and Takeyh draw on Fundamental Realism, Structural Realism, and a political process model to show that Iran will probably produce nuclear arms. The authors do not fully develop (or even say they are using) the political process framework or the Realist frameworks, but they do use the three frameworks to show why the Islamic Republic is on the pathway to nuclear autonomy. They mostly employ the Fundamental Realist philosophy. Dueck and Takeyh posit, “As with most states, a combination of fears and opportunities, concerns and ambitions are propelling the recalcitrant theocracy toward the option of assembling the bomb” (2007, 192). The authors may be correct in concluding that Tehran’s ambitions and fears drive the Iranian atomic program. Many of Iran’s ambitions are regional, and Iran can achieve further regional power through nuclear intimidation against Middle Eastern nations, South Asian nations, Central Asian nations, and the hated United States.

Dueck and Takeyh’s article is thorough and mainly unbiased. They do unfortunately refer to the Iraq War as a “quagmire” (Dueck and Takeyh 2007, 202). Perhaps this is not a tremendously biased statement, but the authors do not aptly assess why the war should be labeled as such. U.S. forces are certainly tied up in Iraq and have

experienced many troubles there. However, Dueck and Takeyh could have avoided using language that displays a subjective statement of the facts on the ground in Iraq. One of their main ideas is that in the absence of extremely adroit U.S. diplomacy, Iran will construct atomic weapons eventually. They may underestimate American capabilities vis-à-vis Iran's nuclear status due to biases regarding the Iraq War. Nevertheless, Dueck and Takeyh supply a vigorous inductive analysis of Iran's potential nuclear future.

Schake (2007) posits that Iran is on course to become a nuclear power in the future. He draws on open-source intelligence to analyze the Islamic Republic's atomic program. For instance, Schake indicates, "We do not know with any reliability the nature of Iranian command and control, either for the development programs or for the weapons' operational employment. We do not know the location or even the existence of the full array of laboratories and manufacturing plants" (2007, 10). Schake does not definitively say whether or not the Islamic Republic will become an atomic power. Still, like Dueck and Takeyh, Schake thinks that Iran will develop nuclear weapons at some point in the time. "Perhaps the most important thing we do not know about the Iranian nuclear program is when it will produce nuclear weapons" (Schake 2007, 10). Schake also articulates *why* he thinks a nuclear Iran is almost inevitable. He explains that the Islamic Republic may now be in command of its own atomic destiny. Iran may no longer need to rely heavily on other nations for technical assistance. The Islamic Republic may already possess the material and scientific expertise to construct nuclear arms. Again, similar to Dueck and Takeyh, Schake thinks that the United States is virtually powerless to stop Iran from developing atomic weapons. "Lost in the debate about how to prevent Iran from crossing the nuclear threshold is the fact that we lack the ability to prevent it.

The Iranians have the indigenous technical ability, and possibly the nuclear material, to build nuclear weapons right now” (Schake 2007, 3). Schake does not think the United States will either diplomatically or militarily thwart Iran from constructing the bomb.

Schake’s article is insightful, well sourced, and mostly unbiased. However, he does not discuss his study’s key limitation. He does suggest that the U.S. can deter Iran from *using* atomic weapons. On the other hand, he ignores the idea that an international coalition could apply joint economic, political, or military actions, to keep the Islamic Republic out of the nuclear club. Schake focuses excessively on Iranian capabilities but not enough on American and global influence over Iran’s atomic status. The United States and its allies may never be able to prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons, yet Schake could better account for the *possibility* that the U.S. or a multi-national coalition could stifle Iran’s nuclear program. Nonetheless, Schake skillfully outlines Iran’s atomic progress. He forms a well-crafted analysis that the Islamic Republic will construct nuclear arms.

Kechichian (2007) asserts that Iran will likely weaponize its nuclear program. He thinks “Iran will probably become a nuclear power sometime within the next ten years” (Kechichian 2007, 283). Thus, Kechichian unwittingly makes the same point as Schake and Dueck and Takeyh. To Kechichian, it is a matter of *when* (not if) Iran develops atomic weapons. He uses a Realist philosophy to predict Iran’s nuclear status. “In fact, the Iranian desire to acquire nuclear weapons is long-standing policy, spanning two generations of successive pre- and post-revolutionary leaderships” (Kechichian 2007, 283).

There are indeed stark differences between pre- and post-revolutionary Iran. Nevertheless, Kechichian shows that Iran might develop nuclear weapons regardless of the government in Tehran. One can infer from his article that the consequences of a *theological* (post-revolutionary) nuclear Iran are probably worse than the consequences of a *secular* (pre-revolutionary) nuclear Iran, due in part to the ideological differences between the Arab governments and Iran's government. Additionally, Kechichian emphasizes that Arab governments think the Islamic Republic is seeking increased power in the Middle East—not increased energy independence. Few of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders have “accepted the Iranian rationale to harvest nuclear power for energy purposes” (Kechichian 2007, 285). Kechichian effectively spotlights Iran's nuclear pathway. He contends that Tehran will exploit ongoing circumstances in the Middle East to acquire the bomb. Kechichian asks, “Why would Iran not build on its current accomplishments, including the goal of regime change in Baghdad, and exercise effective hegemony throughout the Gulf region as a nuclear power?” (2007, 294) The Iraqi Ba'ath Party was a major impediment to Iranian power in the Persian Gulf and the greater Middle East. After the removal of Saddam Hussein, the Islamic Republic gained further regional authority. Kechichian explains that Iran can now use nuclear weapons to exert more strategic influence over the Gulf States.

Kechichian raises valid points throughout his paper, yet his work is somewhat biased. He does draw on Realist philosophy to predict Iran's future nuclear status, but he also expresses his own Marxist leanings. For instance, Kechichian says,

Anger and vengeful nationalistic emotions, which could be – and were – exploited and manipulated in the West as elsewhere, failed to resonate in the Gulf. . . . Many wondered why their leaders tacitly supported the war against Iraq, which was waged on false, even fraudulent, premises. (2007, 295)

This sort of language distracts from the important message that Kechichian is trying to relay. He argues persuasively that Iran will become an atomic power and exert greater strategic pressure over the Gulf nations. Still, his opinions about the Iraq War affect his study's validity. He confuses the Iraq War with the Iranian nuclear issue. (For a thorough explanation of social science validity, as well as social science reliability, see Yin 2003, 39-55.)

Cirincione (2006) avoids making a definitive prediction about Iran's future nuclear status, but he does inductively explain that Iran is poised to develop nuclear arms. He shows how Tehran is covertly refining material for atomic weapons. He says that "for the past two decades, Iran has been engaged in a secret multifaceted program to assemble the equipment and facilities necessary to make these nuclear materials" (Cirincione 2006, 75). Cirincione exposes Iran's nuclear capabilities and intentions. More importantly, he illuminates how Iran's present nuclear track may unfold over time. He emphasizes that "Iran is trying to minimize embarrassing disclosures of past weapons-related activities, persist in its fuel production activities, and force the rest of the world to accept a fait accompli" (Cirincione 2006, 80). Cirincione suggests that Tehran will develop atomic weapons in the absence of international pressure against Tehran's atomic program.

Cirincione does not follow strict systematic reasoning. Still, he does provide unbiased inductive arguments about Tehran's nuclear program, based on Tehran's employment of the nuclear fuel cycle process. Cirincione details Iran's nuclear mining, milling, conversion, and enrichment activities to demonstrate that the point of Iran's program is to develop nuclear arms (2006, 77-79). Therefore, he draws on factual evidence and physical science data to explain that Iran is clearly on the path to joining the

atomic club. His views on the nuclear issue are overwhelmingly objective. One of his only subjective remarks is the following: “If we have learned anything from the ill-fated Iraq war, it should be that worst-case assessments should never form the basis for government action” (Cirincione 2006, 80). Cirincione is saying that U.S. decisionmakers must be cautious about how to proceed with Iran due to U.S. difficulties in Iraq. He fails to chronicle exactly how the two scenarios are linked. However, Cirincione’s subjective comment regarding the Iraq War probably does not influence his perception of whether or not Iran will eventually construct nuclear bombs. It is a common and unfortunate trend that many authors feel the need to state their slanted opinions about the Iraq War, especially in essays that are supposed to objectively examine the Iranian nuclear issue.

Amuzegar (2006) thinks Iran is probably *not* producing nuclear weapons, although he does not specifically say if Iran will weaponize its atomic program in the future. He draws on recent historical evidence to claim that the United States exaggerates the Islamic Republic’s atomic motivations and capabilities. Amuzegar says that “Tehran’s alleged guilt so far has largely been based on its *motivation* rather than actual *involvement* in an impermissible act. . . . Yet, even on the *intention* score alone, many analysts find the West’s charges based on uncorroborated evidence, questionable intelligence and unauthenticated documents” (2006, 96). According to Amuzegar, the Western powers have failed to find any concrete information of an Iranian nuclear program, but the United States insists on punishing Iran. He also thinks the U.S. is protecting Israeli national interests. Amuzegar posits that Jerusalem is impeding a resolution to the nuclear issue, saying that “Washington’s near obsession with the fate of Iran’s nuclear program now, as compared with its blissful unconcern during the 1970s, is

clearly the nature of the Islamic regime as Israel's arch enemy and the principal non-Arab supporter of the groups endangering Israel's security" (2006, 105). He also uses Realist principles to show why Iran *might* seek to develop atomic weapons. He notes, "A nuclear Iran would strengthen the theocratic oligarchs' sense of invulnerability at home and abroad, and would weaken opponents within and outside the country" (Amuzegar 2006, 96).

Amuzegar does not challenge his own reasoning. For example, Amuzegar says, "One-upmanship in getting tough with the Islamic Republic has transcended U.S. neocon think tanks and pro-Israeli action committees to become a campaign issue for potential Democratic and Republican candidates in the 2008 presidential race" (2006, 90). Due to the fact that Amuzegar hints that he strongly dislikes Israel and the neocons (a term he does not define), his results must be called into question. It is possible that his excessive concentration on Israel hinders his perception of Iranian nuclear intentions and actions. Additionally, Amuzegar ignores reasons for the Western mistrust of Iran—a mistrust partially due to Iranian-backed operations in Lebanon and Iraq. His perceptions favor Iran at the expense of the United States' concerns. He simply dismisses and excludes evidence related to Iran's atomic violations. However, he proficiently explains that the Islamic Republic may lack the technological skills for producing nuclear weapons in the near future. Amuzegar emphasizes that "a number of nuclear scientists question Iran's ability to master the chemistry involved in large-scale conversion" (2006, 99). He also evaluates other scientific, as well as strategic barriers to Iran's atomic progress. Regrettably, he makes implicit forecasts about Tehran's nuclear future that are confusing and biased (although his article is mostly an explanatory rather than a predictive study).

Fitzpatrick (2006b) puts forward that Iran will probably assemble atomic weapons. He never definitively says that Iran will join the nuclear club. Still, he draws on Fundamentalist Realism to predict a nuclear future for the Islamic Republic. Fitzpatrick says that “the case of Iran is likely to prove that, as with Pakistan and North Korea, a country that is determined to acquire nuclear weapons will do so” (2006b, 535). In other words, he thinks that the Islamic Republic will follow its strategic ambitions to actually become an atomic power. Nonetheless, Fitzpatrick draws on Liberal Institutionalism to consider the potential for a *non*-nuclear Iran. Fitzpatrick thinks the global community may have time to thwart Iran’s nuclear-arms developments. He notes, “There is still a diminishing prospect that the threat of enforcement action by the Security Council or its individual members and the inducements they offered to Iran may yet persuade Tehran to delay its weapons program” (Fitzpatrick 2006b, 535). Therefore, he suggests that nations and international institutions can prevent Iran from acquiring a military nuclear capability. Fitzpatrick offers solid data and perceptive analyses in his article. However, he provides little evidence as to why the Islamic Republic might *not even try* to generate nukes. He also never explicitly develops any social-science theories or models for predicting Iran’s nuclear status.

Mokhtari (2006) offers that Tehran will possibly refrain from developing nuclear arms. He does not decisively predict Iran’s future nuclear capabilities, yet he thinks Iran is mainly seeking nuclear *technologies*. If his assessment of Iranian intentions is correct, then the Islamic Republic may not produce any atomic weapons. Mokhtari says, “What matters to Iranians is the perception of nuclear capability, for it serves their deterrence needs without a nuclear test” (2006, 362). According to Mokhtari, Iran wants to shield

itself from foreign intervention and a loss of Iranian sovereignty. He draws implicitly on aspects of nationalism, Fundamental Realism, Structural Realism or balance-of-power politics, and Institutional Liberalism, to explain that the Iranian people, along with their ruling clerics, seek recognition in scientific and other fields. Mokhtari explicates that Iran wants to achieve domestic security and global recognition through atomic progress. He illuminates further—“Iranians do not have territorial ambitions and have not attacked a neighbor for more than a hundred years. . . . The ambition that Iranians hold is cultural. They want to be respected and their country to become a regional center of culture, learning, technology, and commerce” (Mokhtari 2006, 363). Thus, Mokhtari posits that the Islamic Republic seeks power, but not necessarily at the expense of other nations’ interests. He also feels that Iran has a need to assert its inherent freedom to generate nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. He claims that

Iranians are not likely to give up what they consider to be their right to master science and technology, and nuclear fuel processing has come to symbolize that right. Iran’s preoccupation with independence will not allow the nation to accept dependence on foreign suppliers of nuclear fuel. (Mokhtari 2006, 362)

Mokhtari supplies a meaningful, albeit limited study on the Iranian nuclear program. His article is objective and allows for various nuclear developments inside Iran. He does not completely dismiss the possibility that Iran may eventually construct atomic arms, since he presents an Iran that is willing to fiercely protect Iranian autonomy. However, he highlights that Tehran can realize its strategic goals *without* weaponizing its nuclear program. The main problem is that Mokhtari excludes Iran’s ideological stances and previous strategic behavior that some nations may perceive as deceptive or aggressive. Although Mokhtari may discount some of Iran’s nuclear intentions, he still capably explores the Iranian state’s independent mindset regarding nuclear matters.

Despite some significant limitations and biases, the aforementioned works all supply this case study with thoughtful analyses and raw information on Iran's nuclear program. This literature review includes scholarly sources that do *not* draw on step-by-step deductive research approaches. The peer-reviewed journal articles are also mostly explanatory and descriptive. However, the authors do at least make implied forecasts. Perhaps a *scientific predictive* model should be used to envisage Iran's nuclear status.

## Research Design

This paper is a qualitative predictive study that systematically forecasts whether or not Iran will develop nuclear weapons. Iran's nuclear program represents an excellent test case for predictive research into WMD proliferation. North Korea is visibly showing signs of atomic cooperation with the international community. No one, including the United States, the European Union-3 (the EU-3, consisting of Great Britain, France, and Germany), and Israel, is overtly implying the need to consider preventive or preemptive military strikes against North Korea. Hence, the international community remains largely focused on *Iran's* nuclear decisions. Due to the near-term possibility of a war involving the Islamic Republic, national security analysts are concerned with predicting the Islamic Republic's future strategic capabilities. This paper uses the Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP) technique to evaluate deductively whether or not Iran will develop atomic weapons. This LAMP study draws on previous and current Iranian nuclear activities to help *forecast* Iranian nuclear exploits. Moreover, this paper's LAMP model uses two distinct scenarios to assess how various state actors, including the United States, Russia, and Israel, will influence Iran's atomic developments. No scientific study

is without limitations. Nevertheless, the LAMP can be used to methodically predict an array of futures. A full discussion of this thesis's design and constraints follows.

Data collected for this research paper mostly come from current secondary sources. These secondary sources are academic in nature. They include scholarly articles from online journals such as *Middle Eastern Review of International Affairs (MERIA)*. Articles from *MERIA* and most of the other journals were found through three main search engines: Ebsco, ProQuest, and Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO). A few scholarly books further supply this study with information regarding the Iranian nuclear program. Extensive information was collected from book authors with expertise in national security affairs, such as Timmerman (2006) and Corsi (2005). Ultimately, this LAMP paper synthesizes the collected evidence from secondary literature to look into Iran's nuclear future.

The Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction is a research model that systematically forecasts the future. Step-by-step, the LAMP predicts how strategic circumstances or events may unravel. The LAMP is anchored in rational choice theory. Like with other rational choice analyses, it is assumed that all actors are unitary actors, i.e., there is one leader or group of leaders that determine the actor's behavior. In the LAMP, a national actor makes decisions as a single unit or entity. A state has perceptions of an issue, and conducts a cost-benefit analysis on how to best deal with the issue. Factional domestic politics are largely overlooked when it comes to implementing final decisions. Interest groups, political competition, political processes, media, bureaucracies, and public opinion are largely marginalized (Wiarda 1996, 16). It is assumed that the leadership makes choices for the entire country, regardless of whether

all segments of the country's population or even all segments of the government agree with the leadership's decisions. A summary of the LAMP procedure is included below. The summary is italicized and directly quoted from Lockwood and Lockwood (1993, 27-28). The formula information in Step 6 is *also* italicized and taken from Lockwood and Lockwood (1993, 38). An additional narrative analysis of the LAMP follows the synopsis of the LAMP.

Lamp procedure:

1. *Determine the issue for which you are trying to predict the most likely future.*
2. *Specify the national "actors" involved.*
3. *Perform an in-depth study of how each national actor perceives the issue in question.*
4. *Specify all possible courses of action for each actor.*
5. *Determine the major scenarios within which you will compare the alternate futures.*
6. *Calculate the total number of permutations of possible "alternate futures" for each scenario.*

$$X^Y=Z$$

*X=the number of courses of action open to each actor.*

*Y=the number of national actors involved (assuming that each actor has the same number of courses of action open to it).*

*Z=the total number of alternate futures to be compared.*

7. *Perform a "pairwise comparison" of all alternate futures to determine their relative probability.*

8. *Rank the alternate futures for each scenario from highest relative probability to the lowest based on the number of “votes” received.*
9. *Assuming that each future occurs, analyze each alternate future in terms of its consequences for the issue in question.*
10. *State the potential of a given alternate future to “transpose” into another alternate future.*
11. *Determine the “focal events” that must occur in our present in order to bring about a given alternate future.*
12. *Develop indicators for the focal events.*

No social science model can definitively predict the future, but the LAMP can help an analyst make robust forecasts about what will likely transpire. The LAMP evaluates a variety of possible alternate futures. The analyst simply determines the *relative* probabilities of those alternate futures. According to the LAMP, assigning absolute percentages is impractical. The present and future are constantly in flux, and updating a LAMP study would be difficult if absolute percentages had to be consistently recalculated (Lockwood and Lockwood 1993, 91-92). For this reason it is preferable to rank order the alternate futures to forecast the most probable developments. The goal of the LAMP is not to serve as a clear crystal ball, in which all events can be predicted with complete accuracy. The LAMP *does* show how different actors perceive and influence a specific issue or challenge. The future is the result of a collective freewill (Lockwood and Lockwood 1993, 26). Actors make decisions that combine to shape a course of strategic events. Those decisions merge in different combinations to form a variety of alternate futures. The relative probabilities of alternate futures change from one scenario

to the next. Therefore, rank ordering the alternate futures depends on varying strategic developments. The LAMP explores potential *consequences* for the issue as well. Different alternate futures will yield different strategic costs for the actors. The LAMP thus examines the alternate futures and their corollary consequences. Moreover, the forecaster assesses possible focal events and indicators to see how the strategic situation may develop or shift over time.

This study's research design contains a number of biases and limitations. One of the limitations includes the fact that the LAMP does not assign absolute percentages to alternate futures. Lockwood and Lockwood explain that assigning strict percentages to future events is both arbitrary and impossible (1993, 92). The future is too complex to make perfect forecasts. An analyst has a difficult enough time explaining the present and the past. Still, one future could be much more likely, for instance, than twenty-six other futures. If the relative probabilities of the twenty-six futures are miniscule, compared to one likely alternate future, then the LAMP will merely serve the purpose of letting the analyst know that there may be better analytic techniques for forecasting. On the other hand, relative probabilities in general are valuable, since they lend themselves to scholarly examination more than arbitrary absolute percentages might. Sometimes qualitative rank-ordering is preferable to stringent quantification. The LAMP is imperfect but avoids using unfounded numerical calculations.

Another limitation is that this paper cannot draw on all relevant information concerning Iran's nuclear program. This paper only analyzes unclassified data. Even if all pertinent information was available for the issue, the information would still not be sufficient to perfectly forecast the future. In addition, this study analyzes very few

unscholarly sources. This paper mostly employs evidence from *academic* journal articles and *academic* books. The scholarly writings are flawed but are more comprehensive than most of the unscholarly works.

A further problem involves choosing national actors. A number of actors may influence Iran's nuclear decisions. Still, it is challenging to determine if specific nations can actually play a major role in determining whether or not Iran will produce atomic weapons. This paper assesses the *central* actors who can influence Iran's nuclear status. That being said, this LAMP study could mistakenly overlook some nations, just as it could grant undue importance to other nations.

Similarly, it is a challenging task to present the full range of strategic options open to each actor. A nation may deal with an issue in a variety of ways. However, the LAMP often presents an actor's potential choices in general terms. Lockwood and Lockwood note that without computer support, it is difficult to account for numerous strategic options (1993, 91). This study defines the *broad* choices available to each actor. Indeed, an excessive "concern with details can often be at the expense of being able to step back and see their larger implications" (Renshon 2003, 80-81). This paper does *not* rely on computer support to help calculate alternate futures. Moreover, myriad strategic options would unnecessarily complicate the LAMP process.

The LAMP is also limited in terms of its scenario approach for determining alternate futures. The scenario approach is an advantage of the LAMP, but scenarios are chosen according to the author's perception of the issue. An author of a LAMP study chooses what *he* thinks are the most important scenarios regarding the issue at hand. There are many possible strategic circumstances to explore, and each one could

fundamentally change the study's findings. This paper appraises the status of Iranian-backed jihadist activity to construct two plausible and competing scenarios. Nonetheless, different authors may disagree with this paper's choices for scenarios, as the authors may consider alternate, yet equally objective scenarios for assessing the Iranian nuclear program. Analysts could even use this paper's scenarios, while at the same time choosing different relative probabilities for the alternate futures. An analyst may develop forecasts according to his own unique view of Iran's nuclear program.

This study assumes that a state represents a unified entity and implements decisions as a rational actor. In reality, nations often maintain complicated political processes. States remain domestically at odds over what to do about the Iranian nuclear issue. Still, this paper assumes that the national actors eventually make decisive and coherent choices in terms of their own national interests.

This study makes predictions early on in the LAMP process. However, the later analytical steps could serve to alter the original pairwise comparisons. When using the LAMP, the analyst rank-orders the alternate futures even before he evaluates the *potential consequences* of the alternate futures. In reality, nations occasionally look forward in time and appraise the likely strategic consequences of their actions. A state might make decisions only after thoroughly considering the consequences of those decisions. States also possess limited capabilities to act according to their own interests. In a LAMP study, the section on national perceptions (step 3 in the LAMP process) serves as the main foundation for rank ordering alternate futures. This paper, though, discusses states' capabilities in the section on national perceptions, in the section on state options (step 4 in the LAMP process), and in other sections as well. By accounting for

the actors' strategic capabilities and the actors' considerations of the consequences, this study ensures that Iran's nuclear status is not simply tied to the actors' preferences.

Additionally, some of the works cited in this study are laden with implicit biases and overtly subjective comments. While some of the biases are negligible, other biases detract from what are otherwise meaningful studies. Many authors have preconceived notions about national security affairs. Authors frequently ruin their own studies by displaying personal nationalistic, internationalist, or other political views. They conduct research to buttress their preconceived notions. The authors often draw on a misleading or narrow set of data. A limited degree of bias is understandable, but like scientists, *social* scientists should remain skeptical. Accordingly, this paper makes every effort to filter the biased information. This study highlights the overtly subjective evidence, and often excludes excessively subjective evidence.

Outside experts did not play a role in performing the pairwise comparisons and voting on or rank-ordering the alternate futures. There are no surveys, focus groups, or interviews, either with Iran experts or WMD experts. Yet this study carefully scrutinizes and synthesizes a wide range of academic literature. This paper even draws on a few *non-scholarly* sources. It should be noted that the LAMP does not require primary research to answer the specific research question scientifically and precisely. This paper is sufficiently comprehensive and academically robust, without the primary sources of evidence.

Also, this is not a paper that draws heavily from the hard sciences. This is a social science study that focuses on *national security* concerns. A few technical nuclear

issues are discussed only to illuminate possible strategic aspects of Iran's nuclear program.

Some may consider the very reference to Iran as a rogue state to be biased. Iran certainly does not consider itself to be an outlaw nation. For the purpose of conceptual clarification, this study draws on the U.S. or Western view of rogue states, in contrast to alternative perceptions of rogue states. (See chapter 1 for an explanation of rogue states in the modern strategic era.)

In this study, chapter 2 highlights steps 2 and 3 of the LAMP. This chapter specifies the major national actors and explores their views of the Iranian nuclear program. Step 3 covers the actors' *strategic* connection to the issue at hand. However, step 3 also discusses how the nations' *historical* links to the issue shape their perceptions. Chapter 2 shows why and how the Iranian nuclear program matters to influential nations. This chapter establishes the basis for the actors' strategic decisions.

Chapter 3 delves into Steps 4-8—the heart of the LAMP analysis. This chapter begins by showcasing the two major scenarios within which to compare the alternate futures (step 5). Next, the LAMP displays the strategic options available to each actor (step 4). This study presents step 5 before step 4 to provide greater clarity to the reader, since step 5 sets the stage for step 4. The LAMP, in step 6, then calculates the total number of alternate futures for each scenario. After the calculations, chapter 3 displays the relative probabilities for the alternate futures in *two* tables, since there are *two* scenarios. The relative probabilities are determined by comparing the likelihood of each alternate future against the likelihoods of every other alternate future. Then, separately for each scenario, the alternate futures are rank-ordered from the highest to the lowest

relative probabilities. Two tables display the rankings, and the tables are followed by a narrative analysis of the alternate futures. Overall, chapter 3 explores *how* and *why* Iran will develop or not develop nuclear weapons. This chapter shows that Iran will have to navigate strategically through a geopolitical sea of resistance to become a member of the nuclear club.

Chapter 4 includes steps 9-12. This chapter starts off by evaluating the potential consequences of the alternate futures. The consequences vary according to the different scenarios for the alternate futures. After analyzing the consequences, chapter 4 discusses potential focal events, which are strategic markers that may signal the coming about of a particular future. The focal events are then followed by various indicators (predictors), which are strategic markers that may signal the coming about of a particular focal event. The indicators may be thought of as the focal events for the focal events. Last, this chapter examines the possibilities for transpositions (shifting futures). Some alternate futures may indeed morph into other alternate futures, depending on strategic developments related to the Iranian nuclear issue. This study presents the transpositions *after* the indicators, since the transpositions may flow naturally from the indicators. Put differently, some of the indicators may serve as precursors for a changing future. This study's section on transpositions marks the end of the LAMP process on Iran's atomic program. To summarize, chapter 4 spotlights the potential consequences of Iran's future nuclear status. This chapter also shows how Tehran's nuclear status, and how events *surrounding* Tehran's nuclear status, may unfold or change over time.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusion. First, the conclusion explains how this study contributes to a better understanding of the Iranian nuclear issue and the global

proliferation of nuclear weapons. Second, chapter 5 suggests potential changes to the LAMP to better answer this study's specific research question. And third, the conclusion offers ideas for further academic study on Iran's nuclear program. Chapter 5 indeed shows that analysts can exploit the diagnostic power of predictive research.

National security analysts may use the LAMP process to glimpse into the strategic future. Events and circumstances from the past and present will not necessarily follow the same strategic course indefinitely. In other words, history alone is incapable of precisely forecasting alternate futures. Therefore, the LAMP systematizes evidence and scholarly insights to help analysts look forward in time. Specific aspects of the LAMP technique will become clearer throughout this study. The upcoming analysis sections make *detailed* predictions about Iran's atomic developments. Still, the LAMP process enables the reader to follow clearly a logical and *step-by-step* forecast of Iran's nuclear status. Will Iran develop nuclear weapons? Let us first explore the strategic views of the four main actors.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Cast of National Actors**

This chapter explores the primary actors involved in determining Iran's nuclear status. First, this chapter uses step 2 of the LAMP to specify who the primary actors are. Step 2 does not only name the specific actors, but also provides brief explanations for *why* the specific actors were chosen. Next, step 3 of the LAMP presents the actors' perceptions regarding the Iranian nuclear program. Step 3 covers more than the states' strategic views on the issue. It also details the states' goals and objectives for dealing with or mitigating the prospects of a nuclear Iran. Finally, chapter 2 offers a chapter summary.

In addition, this study takes an innovative approach to presenting the actors' perceptions. A particular state's perceptions are explored through the mind of the state itself. Put differently, an actor's perceptions are viewed from the inside, or through the eyes of the actor's leadership. For example, this study expresses Iran's perceptions through a distinctive *Iranian* voice. The Iranian leadership as a whole is assumed to speak and act for the entire Iranian state, regardless of dissenting views. This is not a perfect method for forecasting strategic thinking or strategic behavior, yet it serves the purpose of simplifying, without over-simplifying, the primary states' decisions regarding Iran's nuclear program. Moreover, this study makes the assumption that a state acts in its own interests, irrespective of who the key decisionmaker for the state might be at a specific point in time. To summarize, then, the state acts as a personified entity, and the state leadership acts in accordance with the state's strategic interests. Individual leaders and political blocs certainly shape governmental intentions and decision-making

processes. Yet according to this study, the state acts according to interests that endure beyond the political lifespan of a state official or political bloc. State interests are shaped over time through culture, geography, history, systems of governance, and other factors. The topics that shape state interests will not be discussed exhaustively in this study. Still, chapter 2 thoroughly explores the perceptions of the main actors involved in the Iranian nuclear issue.

## **Actors**

The four main actors in this study are the United States, Russia, Israel, and Iran. All four states play a direct role in influencing Iran's future nuclear status. Other states, such as China and India, were considered. However, at this point it remains unlikely that those actors will play a direct and decisive role in the Iranian nuclear issue. Secondary and tertiary actors are not granted strategic "choices" in the LAMP analysis.

### ***The United States***

The United States is a key actor in the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia. American bases and troops are spread throughout the area, while U.S. naval vessels patrol the Persian Gulf. Washington *may* have the capacity to prevent Tehran from developing nuclear weapons. The U.S., as an involved regional and global power, is a primary actor in the Iranian nuclear issue.

### ***Russia***

The Kremlin is the main supplier of nuclear technology to the Islamic Republic. Moscow also provides Tehran with military and diplomatic support. Russia may not be a global superpower, but it has the potential to directly influence whether or not Iran

develops nuclear weapons. Russia is located in close proximity to Iran and is one of Iran's closest partners. Thus, Russia is a primary actor concerning the Iranian nuclear issue.

### *Israel*

Israel is the foremost military power in the Middle East. Jerusalem maintains a modern and powerful air force, and wants to see Tehran remain outside of the nuclear club. Israeli miscalculations toward Iran could actually compel the Iranians to develop nuclear weapons. Yet regardless of whether or not Jerusalem will thwart Tehran's atomic progress or unwittingly promote it, Jerusalem has the capability to influence Tehran's atomic status. Hence, Israel serves as a primary actor in this study.

### *Iran*

Tehran's nuclear status is the focus of this study. Several states can influence Iran's decision-making process and affect Iran's capabilities, yet *Iran* will ultimately develop or not develop atomic weapons. By virtue of Iran playing a major role in its own nuclear weapons program, Iran is a primary actor regarding the Iranian nuclear issue.

## **Perceptions**

This section on perceptions explores each actor's strategic views and objectives. Once again, a state is assumed to act as a personified entity, with interests that supersede any individuals or groups within the state. All four actors have different views about the Iranian nuclear program. Their *goals* are unique as well. Actors do share certain interests. For example, both the Americans and the Israelis feel threatened by the Islamic Republic. Nonetheless, Washington's ultimate interest is to do what is best for the

United States, while Jerusalem's ultimate interest is to do what is best for Israel. In addition, this section expresses an actor's views through the actor's strategic mind. The writing may appear biased at times. However, this section actually takes on the mindsets of the primary actors, using scholarly evidence to explain the actors' perceptions. A Russian voice, for example, is used to express Russian views and goals. Still, the reader should note that the opening paragraph for each state's perceptions is written from the vantage point of a neutral observer. This section also uses a neutral voice for the chapter summary.

***U.S. Perceptions—how does the United States perceive the issue in question?***

The United States claims that Iran seeks to produce nuclear weapons. Washington thinks that Tehran continues to hide technical and strategic aspects of the Iranian nuclear program. The U.S. views the Islamic Republic as being a duplicitous state. In addition, America perceives Iran to be led by radical theocrats. The radical theocrats, according to the United States, would possibly threaten nuclear war to bring economic and physical destruction to the Middle East or other areas of the world, including the New World. The U.S. believes that Iran might actually use nuclear weapons against the U.S., Europe, or Israel. The United States also remains concerned about the potential for rogue states or terrorists to gain access to Iranian nuclear assistance or Iranian nuclear weapons. Even if Iran avoids nuclear cooperation with U.S. adversaries, the U.S. would still be alarmed that an *atomic* Iran would, without fear of American reprisals, encourage massive jihadist operations. Ultimately, the United States wonders whether or not a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue is possible. The U.S. is working to refashion the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia into more

Western-friendly regions. However, Iran's nuclear aspirations are hindering U.S. influence across the Islamic world and beyond. Washington remains skeptical about the efficacy of bargaining with Tehran. America feels unsure about negotiating with a state that undermines Western interests such as global counterterrorism and nonproliferation efforts. To provide an in-depth look at the U.S. perspective, the following ideas are articulated *solely* from the *U.S.* vantage point.

The Islamic Republic is trying to produce atomic weapons. Tehran has already failed "to fulfil both the letter and the spirit of its obligations under the safeguards agreement," or under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Bowen and Kidd 2004, 257). Iran has "secretly built dozens of facilities dedicated to producing highly enriched uranium and plutonium for its bomb program," including "the hex plant in Isfahan, the secret centrifuge production workshops in Tehran, the buried centrifuge plant in Natanz, and a laser enrichment plant at Lashkar Abad" (Timmerman 2006, 287). Tehran's production of nuclear energy is troubling enough to Washington, yet Tehran may have done more than just develop nuclear materials at secret sites. Iran may also "possess a significant nuclear force and the missiles to deliver them" (Timmerman 2006, 308).

Iran's nuclear capabilities are certainly a result of Iran's domestic progress. Nonetheless, Iran receives nuclear and missile-technology assistance from various state and non-state actors. Tehran has benefited from Dr. A.Q. Khan's network. The Pakistani nuclear scientist, Dr. Khan, received funds from the mullahs, which in turn contributed to Khan's ability to supply nuclear material to other nations . . . and possibly non-state actors. One of Dr. Khan's customers may have been al-Qa'ida (Williams 2007, 121). His work with Iran, though, is more extensive. He "personally agreed to supervise the

building of a cascade of thirty thousand centrifuges (a task that no Iranian was equipped to perform) at the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant” (Williams 2007, 119).

Iran has obtained geopolitical assistance and missile and nuclear technology from many states. Europe does not help Iran militarily. However, the Islamic Republic still benefits from European diplomatic and economic cooperation, and may continue to benefit in the future if the mullahs intimidate Europe with land-, sky-, or sea-based terrorism. Russia is building power reactors in Iran and supplying Iran with nuclear materials (Timmerman 2006, 237, 287). Russian assistance is curious, since the ayatollahs have stated repeatedly that the Islamic Republic has the right to develop a nuclear bomb. Nevertheless, the Russian-Iranian relationship is straining U.S. counterproliferation efforts.

China and North Korea’s successful sales to Iran, and their cooperation with Iran, could show other states that selling military or dual-use hardware to rogue states is profitable—both economically and strategically. China, Pakistan, and North Korea have all supplied Iran with modern nuclear technology (Timmerman 2006, 103-06, 121-26). Global nuclear proliferation is proceeding covertly. The nuclear customers (such as Iran) and suppliers (such as China) are often opposed to a wide range of U.S. strategic interests.

Moreover, Iran could offer nuclear materials to terrorist groups or future jihadist powers. Tehran has already smuggled arms to the Palestinian territories—arms to be used in attacks against Israeli targets (Sinai 2004, 55-56). At the very least, the clerics threaten regional stability by sending sophisticated weaponry to the Palestinians. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process may indefinitely stall from Iranian meddling. Moreover,

the ayatollahs might provide nuclear weapons to Hizbollah (the Party of God) to intimidate Israel or launch atomic strikes against Israel. The Islamic Republic already serves as Hizbollah's spiritual-military patron. "In the eyes of the Bush administration . . . Hizbollah is a dangerous Iranian creation that promotes Tehran's radical ambitions and forms an integral part of a dangerous and growing Shi'a bloc across the region" (Fuller 2007, 139). The late Hizbollah and Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps operative Imad Mughniya had "been coordinating suicide attacks in southern Iraq" (Emerson 2006, 217). Also, the Party of God has brought violence and instability to its home state of Lebanon.

Washington remains worried about the global propagation of atomic arms. "The current crisis has exacerbated American concerns that Iran has made significant progress towards acquiring nuclear weapons despite American and international efforts to control the trade in nuclear technology" (Bowen and Kidd 2004, 267). Libya has thus far stuck to its decision to abandon a nuclear agenda. Japan has refrained from developing atomic weapons, which could be used to deter other East Asian powers. U.S. counter-proliferation efforts suffered a serious yet manageable blow with Indian and Pakistani nuclear advancements. However, India and Pakistan (in spite of its radical elements) are not rogue states. Iran *is* a rogue state.

Chief U.S. officials recognize that North Korea, Syria, and rogue organizations could enter into nuclear-weapons partnerships with Iran. The Islamic Republic does often make decisions for strategic—as opposed to overtly religious—reasons, as "Khomeini's ideology did not preclude close relations with Arab-nationalist and secular-Baathist Syria—which has in fact turned into Iran's main regional ally" (Menashri 2007, 155). Despite being religious radicals, the mullahs are indeed practical. Tehran's current

relations with Damascus are based on mutual Syrian-Iranian interests concerning Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, and the United States. Iran's friendships with Syria, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Mahdi Army in Iraq, stifle U.S. designs for the Middle East. Damascus and Tehran could certainly cooperate on nuclear matters, with the ultimate aim of threatening the West or Western allies. And then there is North Korea. Pyongyang and Tehran each face problems with Western-backed regional adversaries. Iran could continue to collaborate with North Korea on nuclear matters, since they are both opposed to American counterproliferation efforts.

Khamenei may damage nonproliferation efforts across the planet. Indeed, Iran might cooperate on atomic developments with Socialist Venezuela. President George W. Bush does not wish to see Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez acquire atomic capabilities, or embark on energy deals that will keep the Socialist government in power. "The possibility of a nuclear threat from Venezuela was intensified by Chavez's close relations with Iran, where he had received the country's highest state medal for supporting Tehran in its nuclear standoff with the United States" (Williams 2007, 151). Iranian nuclear proliferation would certainly jeopardize American strategic interests throughout the world.

Iran is the father of contemporary jihad. "The ousting of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his pro-Western regime in the 1979 Iranian revolution sparked a wave of religious fundamentalism and was inspirational for pan-Islamic groups like the Brotherhood" (Emerson 2006, 239). Still, Iran does not merely propagate dangerous ideals. Tehran's aim is to spread radical Islam in ways that will hurt America.

The Iranian revolution in Iran has been held up as an example to Muslims throughout the world, exhorting them to reassert the fundamental teachings of the

Qur'an and to resist the intrusion of Western—particularly United States— influence into the Middle East. (Hoffman 2006, 90)

Sunni extremists have followed Tehran's anti-American philosophy, rhetoric, and strategic and tactical actions. The Iranian Revolution even reintroduced the religious use "of the suicide murderer" (Lewis 2003, 142). Also, "Khomeini's designation of the United States as 'the Great Satan' was telling, and for the members of Al-Qa'ida it is the seduction of America . . . that represents the greatest threat to the kind of Islam they wish to impose on their fellow Muslims" (Lewis 2003, 163). American culture, both "liberal" and "depraved," poses great threats to Shi'a *and* Sunni jihadist forces.

The mullahs are to blame for many forms of global jihadist activity. Once again, Iran's revolution has even influenced Sunni revolutions. "Radical Islamic regimes now rule in the Sudan and for a while ruled in Afghanistan, and Islamic movements offer major threats to the already endangered existing order in other countries, notably Algeria and Egypt" (Lewis 2003, 24). The Sunni and Shi'a remain enemies in some countries. However, Iran's influence has somewhat bridged the Sunni-Shi'a divide. Tehran "champions genuinely popular issues that resonate across the Muslim world. It reflects a revolutionary spirit of resistance with deep appeal to populations who feel impotent and who crave bold leadership that will assert their dignity against the United States and Israel" (Fuller 2007, 147).

"The only solutions that can rectify the problem are those that deny the Islamic Republic its nuclear arsenal or those that enable Iranians to cast aside theocracy and its aggressive ideology and instead embrace freedom" (M. Rubin 2006, 4). The United States thinks that Iran is a nation which lacks respect for secular, liberal principles. Tehran would be even more dangerous with nuclear capabilities. Washington has at least

maintained relations—albeit strained at times—with a nuclear-armed Islamabad. There are plenty of radicals in Pakistan, but the government there is reasonable with the United States (due to a partnership left over from power balancing during the Cold War). Tehran's support for terrorism, though, has undermined Washington's power for over twenty-seven years. Iran may develop nuclear weapons to further spread jihadist terror.

The Party of God is known for contributing to numerous terrorist operations. The Islamic Republic—aside from offering spiritual and ideological support—provides Hizbollah with millions of dollars in funding every year (Corsi, 2005, 136). Hizbollah has worked with Tehran to take hostages, bomb allied installations, execute suicide bombings, and target people for assassination. The late Imad Mugniyah (a Hizbollah operative) frequently served as the key link between Iran—often through the Iranian Pasdaran (the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps or IRGC)—and terrorist organizations. He likely aided al-Qa'ida with preparations for the September 11 terrorist attacks (Timmerman 2006, 270-71). Hizbollah does strike non-American targets as well. U.S. intelligence “believes Mugniyah was involved in the Christmas Eve 1999 hijacking of an Air India aircraft, which was taken over by Islamic terrorists armed with knives and scissors” (Corsi 2005, 135). Moreover, in 1985, the Party of God hijacked TWA Flight 847 and murdered US Navy Petty Officer Robert Stethem (Emerson 2006, 212; Corsi 2005, 132). Iran's clerical rule has suffered very little, despite the fact that the mullahs' both outwardly and secretly support terrorism. Hizbollah may engage in increasingly violent terrorism if it is backed by a *nuclear* Islamic Republic.

Washington wants Tehran to stop advancing global jihad. The Islamic Republic has backed al-Qa'ida's anti-American exploits since the 1990s. Post-9/11, Iran actually

sent helicopters into Afghanistan “to evacuate al-Qaeda fighters and their families” (Timmerman 2006, 274). Additionally, “Mugniya reportedly met with al-Zarqawi in Iran” (Emerson 2006, 217). The late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was the Sunni terror mastermind (leader of al-Qa’ida in Iraq) who fomented religious violence among Iraq’s Shi’a and Sunni. Ultimately, America will not be able to achieve its objective of thwarting global jihad if the ayatollahs produce nuclear weapons and hold the world hostage to Iran’s theocratic dictates.

“With the demise of Saddam’s regime in neighboring Iraq, an Iranian nuclear weapons program has lost any compelling strategic rationale” (Chubin and Litwak 2003, 102). Saddam Hussein did ignite a horrific war against the Islamic Republic. He battled with Iran for regional supremacy and Iran was left exhausted by the hostilities. Now there is a Shi’a-led government in Iraq that poses no threat to Iran’s borders. Tehran does not *need* nuclear weapons to deter Baghdad.

The Islamic Republic’s first leader was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Khomeini was a fanatical Shi’a Muslim who conducted domestic and foreign policies based on his perception of Islamic principles. His view was that “Islam is politics or it is nothing” (Lewis 2003, 7-8). In other words, he thought that Islam and politics are one in the same. Now, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other Iranian leaders—clergymen and non-clergymen—are following in Khomeini’s spiritual footsteps. Khamenei called liberal democracy “the source of all human torment” (M. Rubin 2006, 4). Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad puts forth troubling ideas as well. “Recent apocalyptic references by Ahmadinejad—who may just believe that he can hasten the return of the Hidden Imam, a Messianic Shiite figure, through violence and war—raises the stakes”

(M. Rubin 2006, 3). Ahmadinejad wants to erase Israel from existence and thinks that the Holocaust is a hoax (M. Rubin 2006, 2). The Islamic Republic is religiously intolerant. This religious intolerance *could* translate into a regional or global atomic war.

The U.S. is disturbed by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's repeated use of harsh rhetoric against Israel. Ahmadinejad, with the mullahs' backing, threatens Israel's very existence, through nuclear, terrorist, and jihadist saber rattling. "Combining anti-American and anti-Jewish sentiments, Ahmadinejad has made anti-Israeli rhetoric a defining characteristic of his presidency" (Menashri 2007, 158). Iran also links its rhetoric to its nuclear developments and improved missile technologies. "The Revolutionary Guards showed off Shahab-3 missiles during the annual military parade in Tehran on September 22, 2004, festooned with banners that read, 'Israel must be wiped off the map'" (Timmerman 2006, 306). Therefore, the global community should *seriously* consider Iran's nuclear motives.

Iran jeopardizes global resource supplies and worldwide commerce. An increase in Iran's strategic power could threaten oil-rich U.S. friends throughout the Middle East. If tensions rise between Tehran and Washington, then Tehran might threaten to attack Saudi oil fields or U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia. Iran could work with terrorist groups to attack or threaten to attack Saudi Arabia, thereby damaging the global oil economy and the U.S. economy (Corsi 2005, 186-88). Iranian intelligence services or proxies—such as Saudi Hizbollah—could attack U.S. forces to disrupt energy production. The Iranians might even exploit their own naval or missile capabilities to start a maritime war in the Persian Gulf, severely complicating energy distribution and civilian shipping through the Strait of Hormuz (Corsi 2005, 188-91). Of course, a nuclear-emboldened Khamenei can

use his military and intelligence services to upset the oil economy in Iraq as well. The Iranians want greater control over the disputed Shatt al-Arab waterway. Hence, the mullahs could militarily threaten Iraq's energy production and commerce in Gulf waters. The clerics also can use al-Qa'ida, Hizbollah, and other terrorists or insurgents to attack Iraq's oil infrastructure.

A nuclear Iran would also imperil international trade as a whole. An atomically-armed Tehran can use its navy, army, and other security services to dampen commerce from the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. A nuclear Iran could use its newfound military and strategic power to gain control over oil and gas production in the Caspian Sea, thereby limiting international energy exploration in the Caspian region (Zaborski 2005, 154-55). Trade in non-energy related areas, including high-tech and agricultural trade, would suffer if nuclear war breaks out over resource extraction in the Caspian Sea or elsewhere. Global commerce as a whole would suffer amidst nuclear *or* non-nuclear military conflict in Central Asia or the Middle East. The potential for a regional Persian Gulf conflict—instigated by Iran—would drain states' economic resources as they prepare for war. Also, an increased Iranian naval presence in the Gulf could make it difficult for Western powers to provide security for civilian shipping.

***Russian Perceptions—how does Russia perceive the issue in question?***

Russia has two main goals concerning the Iranian nuclear issue. Moscow wants to keep the Islamic Republic out of the nuclear club *and* maintain a Russo-Iranian strategic alliance (with Moscow being the “more equal” partner in the alliance). One problem for the Kremlin is that radical Islamist influences have consistently threatened Russian and former Soviet lands. Iran can either stir up or help control jihadist

movements across Russian territory or the Russian near abroad. Therefore, Moscow seeks friendly relations with Tehran. However, Russia also considers that a nuclear Iran would pose dangers regarding nuclear terrorism in Central Asia and the Caucasus. An atomic Tehran could additionally launch ballistic missiles into Russia itself, if Russo-Iranian relations sour over time. Still, Russia faces Western political, economic, and even military penetration throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as Western penetration throughout Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Moscow may increasingly be tempted to accept a nuclear Iran as the price to pay for thwarting Western strategic ambitions. Ultimately, Russia's security and economy will remain in peril for the foreseeable future, due to both Iran *and* the West. This paper will now explore the Iranian nuclear issue through Russian eyes.

The international community is trying to decipher whether or not Tehran seeks atomic arms. No one can completely determine Iran's intentions. Still, "Moscow is convinced that Tehran wants to develop nuclear weapons" (Delpech 2007, 43). Recent evidence shows that the Islamic Republic is inclined to conduct many nuclear activities in secret. "In December 2002 a series of satellite photographs revealed that in addition to Bushehr, Iran was building two new nuclear facilities, one a centrifuge plant near the city of Natanz and the other a heavy-water plant near the city of Arak" (Freedman 2006, 43). Iran has indeed worked on its atomic program for over two decades.

The Russians suspected that, beginning the mid-1980s, the elite and conservative Corps of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution were orchestrating . . . parallel nuclear research for military purposes, unbeknownst to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and possibly even to President Muhammad Khatami. (Orlov and Vinnikov 2005, 53)

As time progressed, the Iranian government as a whole made the firm decision to construct atomic weapons. “By the end of the 1990s, Iran’s nuclear intentions and programs, particularly nuclear cooperation among Iran, North Korea, and Pakistan, raised suspicions in Moscow” (Orlov and Vinnikov 2005, 53). Moscow *remains* distrustful of Tehran’s covert regional and interregional atomic relationships.

Russia is concerned about how to thwart Iran’s military nuclear advancements. “Iranians have . . . made substantial progress in nuclear research and development and engineering on their own, and they did so much faster than either the Western powers or Moscow could have foreseen” (Orlov and Vinnikov 2005, 60). Currently, irrespective of any outside help, the Iranians are on track to produce atomic weapons. The world must understand that Russia only supplies the Islamic Republic with *civilian* nuclear aid (as opposed to *military* nuclear aid). “Russia’s nuclear exports to Iran . . . did not and could not facilitate Iran’s nuclear weapons program” (Orlov and Vinnikov 2005, 60). Russia has too much to lose, both regionally and globally, from an atomic Iran. “Whatever attempts Iran is now making to build nuclear weapons are primarily taking place in the research centers, laboratories, and factories that were set up under the shah with U.S. assistance” (Sarukhanian 2006, 64). Tehran also might be supplementing its program with unknown facilities stretched across or even *under* the Iranian landscape. Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic could produce nuclear arms within a short time span. “Iran would be capable of building a nuclear weapon just several months after having accumulated sufficient quantities of weapons-grade nuclear materials” (Orlov and Vinnikov 2005, 54). Russia would then witness the birth of a powerful Islamist neighbor. Therefore, Moscow must act quickly if it is to alter Tehran’s nuclear-weapons intention

or capability. The Kremlin may not have time to stop the Islamic Republic. Nevertheless, Russia should contain Iran and work diplomatically with Iran, for the benefit of Russia and the world.

A nuclear Iran would endanger Russia and the Russian near abroad. “Russia is concerned about the proliferation of WMD close to its borders” (Bahgat 2006, 326). First and foremost, the Islamic Republic would be a military threat to Russia proper. Hence, Russia must defend its vast territories, in part by ensuring that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons or capable nuclear delivery systems. The Russo-Iranian partnership is strong but may weaken in the future. Moscow realizes that Tehran could exploit an atomic capability to punish Moscow politically over energy-related issues or methods for fighting Islamist terrorists. The Kremlin also cannot allow Tehran to engage Moscow in a game of mutually assured destruction (MAD). Russia must sustain the military upper hand over the Islamic Republic. Only a *nuclear* Iran could imperil Russian society, by threatening the Russian people with nuclear devastation. In short, an atomic Iran “is not likely to serve Russia’s security policy” (Bahgat 2006, 326).

Unfortunately, Russia would be outmaneuvered militarily in the near abroad, if the Islamic Republic were to develop nuclear weapons. An atomically-emboldened Iran may try to reclaim parts of the predominantly Shi’a state, Azerbaijan, to acquire further ideological influence, to gain more control over energy sources at the Kremlin’s expense, or simply to make a power grab. “Although it might hope to defeat Iran militarily, Russia’s conventional forces would probably not be capable of mounting sustained deployments in defense of Azerbaijan” (Zaborski 2005, 155-56). In other words, Iran may produce nuclear weapons, and in doing so change Russia’s strategic calculus for

Central Asia and the Caspian Sea. Russia wants to keep Azerbaijan under Russia's strategic and economic umbrella. However, Tehran may develop nuclear arms and attempt to knock Baku out of Moscow's close geopolitical orbit.

Moscow is certainly a powerful player regarding energy-related and military developments in the Caspian Sea basin. On the other hand, a nuclear Iran would diminish the Kremlin's regional strength. Tehran could more readily threaten moves to shut down energy projects and transportation routes from the area. "Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow and Tehran have failed to agree on the legal status of the Caspian Sea and have advocated different pipeline routes to carry the Caspian's hydrocarbon resources to global markets" (Bahgat 2006, 326). The Islamic Republic might use its atomic capability to increase its naval presence and intimidate other Caspian states. Iran's influence around the basin would weaken Russia's alliance system. Already, some former Soviet states have developed strategic ties with the West. "Increasingly, political and military patterns of US-NATO interests . . . have been complimented with the clear gravitation of Azerbaijan and Georgia toward closer politico-military ties with the United States and NATO" (Mesbahi 2004, 120). Therefore, Russia is currently occupied with the strategic growth of the West throughout the former Soviet Union. Tehran could develop nuclear weapons and *further* complicate Moscow's aim to control events across the near abroad. Russia must not lose power in the Caspian Sea. The sea is rich with resources, and acts as a buffer against Iranian or Western incursions into Russia.

Radical Islamists surround and infiltrate Russia and former Soviet territory. The Kremlin is not so concerned that Iran would willingly give nuclear weapons to terrorists.

Moscow *is* concerned that jihadists, supported or emboldened by an atomic Iran, would steal or somehow illicitly gain access to nuclear materials. In 2004, Chechen guerillas killed “186 children after seizing a school in Beslan. On the first day of the hostage crisis, President Vladimir Putin dispatched additional troops to guard Russia’s under-secured nuclear facilities” (Allison 2006, 51). Nevertheless, Russian nuclear material is still open to theft. An atomic Tehran may not back Chechen terrorists in the future. Indeed, the Islamic Republic is not fueling Chechen separatism in the present, nor is Iran fueling other jihadist insurgencies throughout the Russian near abroad. “The fact that Tehran has largely stayed out of the Islamist struggle in Chechnya and has been restrained in promoting its ideology in the former Soviet Republics is a testimony to the success of Russia’s diplomacy” (Takeyh 2003, 26-27). Russian diplomacy, though, will weaken if Iran exploits a nuclear capability to promote Islamist ideologies. Nuclear-armed ayatollahs might provide financial assistance or training to co-religionists, irrespective of whether the Muslim extremists are Sunni or Shi’a. Russia could hesitate to attack the terrorists or launch missiles into the Islamic Republic. After all, Iran would be capable of retaliating with nuclear weapons.

Tehran’s power is limited by the ethnic makeup of the former Soviet states. “Islamic Iran tried to export its revolution to the Caucasus and Central Asia, but the predominantly Turkic populations would not receive Iran’s brand of political Islam” (Vakil 2006, 57). That being said, there are also positive similarities between Central Asian Muslims and Iranian Muslims.

Historically, Soviet Islam, while belonging predominantly to the Sunni tradition, was not particularly hostile to Iran, due partially to the significance of sufi tariqahs in the North Caucasus and to a lesser degree in Central Asia, and their

spiritual connections with Iranian and Shi'i saints and Imams. (Mesbahi 2004, 114)

Overall, the Islamic Republic maintains a combination of similarities and differences with the Russian near abroad that allow Russo-Iranian relations to flourish. Even a *nuclear* Tehran could not export its revolution across Central Asia. There are simply too many cultural and diplomatic barriers to Iranian expansion.

Russia can never really trust Iran, but is capable of manipulating Iranian actions. "Moscow is in a very strong position to influence decision-making in Tehran because it is Iran's principal nuclear supplier" (Bowen and Kidd 2004, 273). If Russia stopped assisting Iran's nuclear or military activities, then its capacity to shape Iranian behavior and foreign policy would decrease. The Kremlin understands that its warm relations with the Islamic Republic may be short-lived. There is "a nagging fear in Moscow that one day a thaw in the Iranian-American relationship would cause Russia to lose its place to America and the West as Tehran's preferred partner in the petroleum, atomic energy and weapons spheres" (Katz 2006, 126). Iran could even abandon military or nuclear cooperation with Russia, while instead favoring military or nuclear cooperation with China, the EU, India, or Islamic powers. Russia may implicitly threaten to reduce nuclear and weapons supplies to Iran. Such a threat could force the mullahs to come clean about their secret atomic activities. As long as the Kremlin provides Iran with weapons and limited nuclear expertise, then Iran may be sufficiently satisfied to remain outside the nuclear club. The Islamic Republic may push forward with its atomic program, irrespective of Russian diplomacy. Still, Moscow at least has some control over Iran's capability to produce nuclear weapons. Russia can scale back strategic collaboration with Iran as Russia sees fit. Additionally, the Kremlin may remove its

diplomatic cover for Tehran's nuclear program, due to clerical policy toward "enemies" of the Islamic Revolution. "Russia hardened its attitude to some extent after Ahmadinejad's statement that he prays for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's death. He continuously escalated international tension by putting forward ideas such as destroying Israel and removing it from the world map" (Aras and Ozbay 2006, 140).

Nonetheless, the Kremlin does not wish to lose strategic and economic power in the Middle East.

In the absence of a comprehensive nuclear and missile non-proliferation regime in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, . . . or a drastic Iranian abandonment of its nuclear program, Russian-built nuclear facilities in Iran...would probably remain a realistic target of preemptive military strikes by the United States and especially Israel. (Mesbahi 2004, 113)

Moscow has already lost enough Middle Eastern strategic partners in recent years. The Kremlin knows that "losing" the Islamic Republic to the West or anyone else would severely damage Russia's strategic and economic welfare. The Soviet Union lost influence in the Middle East "when Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel. The Russians subsequently lost a major client in the aftermath of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, with the imposition of international sanctions ending lucrative arms purchases by Baghdad" (Russell 2005b, 109). The United States was also unrestrained enough to attack Iraq for a second time in 2003, although there was no significant threat to American national security. Washington's second attack against Iraq obliterated Moscow's economic ties to the Ba'ath Party. This time, in relation to the current nuclear predicament, Russia will work arduously to keep the U.S. war machine from recklessly invading yet another sovereign state.

Even if Iran does achieve a nuclear capability, it is possible that the global community may compel Iran to construct *only* a small number of deliverable nuclear warheads. Russia does have the backing of key states and institutions across the world.

During the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting on June 15, 2006, the Russian and Chinese presidents, Putin and Hu Jin Tao, underlined the necessity to solve the Iranian nuclear problem through peaceful means. They also pointed out the absence of any alternative to civilian, political and economic measures against Iran. (Aras and Ozbay 2006, 142)

Regrettably, the United States is jeopardizing the opportunity for a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

Russia very much needs Iran's help as a military, political, diplomatic, and economic partner. Tehran has helped Moscow to direct the future of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and South Asia.

In the area of regional conflicts, Russia and Iran were cooperating in maintaining the shaky cease-fire in Tajikistan, were aiding the Northern Alliance in its battles against the Taliban in Afghanistan, and were jointly supporting Armenia against Azerbaijan, which neither wanted to emerge as a major force in the Caucasus. (Freedman 2006, 40)

“Russia and Iran have continued to cooperate on policy in Afghanistan, particularly as the defeat of the Taliban sent ripple effects across the region, damaging both countries' interests and leading to their cooperation on curtailing the drug trade” (Vakil 2006, 57).

The point is that Tehran supports many Russian strategic policies.

Ultimately, Russia must keep Iran reliant on Russian assistance. The Russo-Iranian “partnership” should always favor the Kremlin. Nevertheless, Iran is an extremely important military and business partner . . . or satellite. “Russia's strategy has been to sell lower quality weapons at considerably lower prices, and to do so means selling to poorer client states, some of whom are inevitably going to be rogue regimes”

(Mizin 2004, 74). Moscow is *not* supplying Iran with the finest in Russian military technology. Moreover, few states are eager to buy or capable of buying Russian weapons in large quantities. “Russia’s lone bastion of political-military support, Syria, cannot afford to purchase massive amounts of Russian military hardware. India too is moving away from what had been Cold War dependency on Russian-built arms” (Russell 2005b, 109). The Kremlin must engage in military and scientific trade deals with Iran.

Tehran must realize that Moscow’s support for Iran is conditional. “A close Russian association and involvement in Iran’s nuclear program would endanger its ties with the West. Indeed, several Russian companies had been penalized by the United States for providing assistance to Iran’s nuclear program” (Bahgat 2006, 326). Russia could sacrifice the Islamic Republic to the international community if the clerics’ atomic ambitions endanger Russia’s economic strength or geopolitical influence. Moscow has already sacrificed Ba’athist Iraq.

The Islamic Republic must stop provoking the Americans and the Israelis. Moscow would like to have amicable relations with Washington, despite American intransigence. The Kremlin also has economic and diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv. “Russia is a main trade partner to Israel and has special relations with the Jewish state due to the approximately one million Soviet Jews who emigrated to Israel” (Bahgat 2005b, 28).

The United States and Israel might act in concert or individually to destroy Iran’s nuclear program. Tehran should not dismiss the possibility of a Western attack, “in which the United States and/or Israel initiates strikes against Iranian nuclear sites or launches a full-scale ground operation, similar to the one in Iraq” (Sarukhanian 2006, 69).

Israel might not be able to conduct any meaningful land incursions into Iran. However, the U.S. could sustain ground operations against the Islamic Republic, in the event that the U.S. decides another armed conflict is unavoidable. “A ground operation is not very likely, although we should not exclude it completely given the inclination of the ‘neo-conservatives’ in charge in the United States to take high and sometimes unjustified risks” (Sarukhanian 2006, 69). Consequently, Tehran ought to become more responsible in its nuclear and political dealings with the West. Russia will not diplomatically protect a *confrontational* Iran.

Tehran may never develop atomic weapons. However, Russia must be prepared to deal with and manipulate a nuclear Iran. The world at large should also find the means to deter *and* work with the mullahs, regardless of the Islamic Republic’s nuclear capabilities. The clerics would not decide to carelessly launch atomic missiles at Israel, the United States, or any other power. “Iran is one of the few countries in the Middle East with a *systemic* administrative structure, which envisages the long and careful development of key foreign and domestic policy decisions” (Sarukhanian 2006, 65). Put differently, the Iranians have a governmental system of checks and balances. Moreover, the various Iranian factions wish to remain in power, and they cannot remain in power if they start atomic wars. The Iranians know that they could never “win” a nuclear exchange with the West. “So it seems unlikely that one fine day, under the pressure of some ayatollah or a fanatic from the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, Iran will launch a nuclear missile against Israel or hand over an Atom bomb to Lebanon’s Hezbollah” (Sarukhanian 2006, 65). The Islamic Republic’s *political* culture would prevent the mullahs from resorting to a nuclear war that could result in state-martyrdom.

Nonetheless, Moscow will continue monitoring the ayatollahs' nuclear activities, since Tehran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would damage Moscow's influence in the Islamic world and beyond.

***Israeli Perceptions—how does Israel perceive the issue in question?***

Israel wants Iran to remain a *non*-nuclear power. The Israelis think that military operations or tough international sanctions are necessary to get the mullahs to abandon the Iranian nuclear program. Jerusalem currently does not assume that the global community will execute any tough economic or diplomatic measures against the regime in Tehran. Therefore, Israel views military force, or at least the threat of military force, as the most practical way for the West to keep Iran out of the nuclear club. Israel might be the sole power to act on the West's behalf. Israelis remain concerned that neither the United States nor Europe will confront Iran militarily. However, Jerusalem rejects the premise that it must live with the consequences of a hostile, nuclear-armed Islamic state that maintains an ideological disposition that espouses the destruction of Zionism. Israel believes the supreme leader and his followers might even launch nuclear attacks against the small Jewish state to end Zionism for good. Furthermore, Jerusalem is concerned that Tehran may sponsor new and intense terrorist operations against Israel. Jerusalem's fight against Hizbollah and Hamas would become more difficult to sustain. Iran might supply terrorists with better operational assistance, since the nuclear-armed clerics would be able to deter large-scale Israeli retaliation against Iranian targets. Thus, one of Israel's top strategic priorities is to deny Iran nuclear arms. Israel believes its capacity to exist and thrive as a Jewish state may depend on the Islamic Republic's atomic status. The

remainder of this subsection investigates the Iranian nuclear quandary from a strictly Israeli perspective.

Israel will work diligently to prevent Iran from becoming an atomic power. “Israeli officials do not believe that Iran’s nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes. Rather, the Israelis claim that Iran is secretly developing a nuclear weapons programme. They also accuse Tehran of deceiving the international community and that it has no plan to abandon its nuclear weapon ambition” (Bahgat 2005b, 38). Iran wants atomic arms to spread radical ideology, terror, and destruction throughout the Middle East and beyond. Western concessions may do little to stifle Iran’s nuclear aspirations. Thus, *Israel* must, if necessary and if possible, ensure that the Islamic Republic neither secretly nor overtly joins the nuclear club.

The Jewish state maintains a modern and robust defense posture. That being said, Israel must also sustain a viable economy to spend militarily in the future, and to allow Israeli society to function. Therefore, Jerusalem faces a pressing dilemma. “Iran’s nuclearization might spur an expensive arms race that would drain resources away from more productive purposes in the Israeli economy” (Sadr 2005, 67). A large-scale arms race could, over time, dampen Israel’s technological, financial, and commercial growth. Military procurements are not cheap . . . economically or politically.

For the time being, Israel is the *only* Middle Eastern nuclear power. Israel “has maintained a strict policy of denying nuclear weapons capability to potential rivals. In line with this policy, known as the Begin Doctrine, Israel attacked and destroyed Iraq’s nuclear plant at Osiraq in 1981” (Bahgat 2005a, 404). Iran may pose greater challenges to Israel’s security than Saddam Hussein’s Iraq did.

That most Iranians embrace religious and cultural diversity is irrelevant; the clergy and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—their ideological enforcers—wield the power. It is the stranglehold of ideologues over the Iranian state that makes a nuclear Iran so dangerous. (M. Rubin 2006, 3)

Israel has been able to survive in spite of Iran's proxy wars with, and terrorist actions against the Israelis. However, a nuclear-armed Tehran would change the calculus of the entire Israeli-Iranian strategic relationship. The Islamic Republic's membership in the atomic club may serve as a prelude to increased attacks against Israeli interests and Israeli territory. "Iran might be emboldened to attack Israel through conventional means or terrorist proxies with little fear of retaliation" (Sadr 2005, 66). The Jewish state must also consider Israeli demographics. Israel realizes that "the concentration of three-quarters of its population on a narrow strip of coastline from Ashkelon to Haifa makes it extremely vulnerable to nuclear strikes" (Israeli military calculations 2006, 1). The point is that Jerusalem should continue its nonproliferation strategy in the Middle East, since relinquishing that strategy would enable Iran to develop nuclear weapons.

Tehran's missiles are designed to carry nuclear warheads. Iran acquires missile technologies and constructs missiles for offensive means and offensive ends. "Israel's concerns over Iran's nuclear capability are magnified by the fact that Iran already possesses a surface-to-surface missile known as Shehab-3 missile" (Bahgat 2005b, 38). The Iranians may presently lack the capacity to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles. However, Iran's military capabilities are improving, as the global community takes minimal diplomatic and economic action against the clerical regime. In addition, Tehran's *existing* missiles represent enough strategic problems for Jerusalem to deal with. Iran has "intermediate-range missiles capable of hitting targets within a 1,200-kilometer range, including Israel and Saudi Arabia. These missiles are not very accurate and cannot

carry a heavy payload, making them suitable mainly for delivering nuclear or chemical warheads rather than conventional ones” (Gasiorowski 2007, 126). Hence, Iran’s missile activities expose Iran’s nuclear weapons agenda.

*Iran’s* anti-Semitic rhetoric is particularly dangerous, as Iran may actually develop the nuclear capability it needs to kill hundreds of thousands or millions of Israelis. “Former Iranian president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani remarked . . . that ‘the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything. However, it will only harm the Islamic world. It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality’” (Israeli military calculations 2006, 1). Iran has on many occasions turned its anti-Jewish sentiments into action. “There is ample precedent that the Islamic Republic acts on its ideology, motivated as much by anti-Semitism as by denial of Israel’s right to exist. Iranian diplomats and intelligence agents coordinated the devastating 1994 attack on the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina” (M. Rubin 2006, 3). At present, Tehran is much stronger militarily than it was during the 1990s. Iran may now try to eradicate Jewish sovereignty by threatening to bring about a nuclear holocaust in Israel.

Iran’s hatred for the Jews resonates throughout the Islamic world. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is the spokesman for this hatred. “On December 14, 2005, four years to the day after Rafsanjani threatened a nuclear first strike against Israel, Ahmadinejad delivered a televised speech in which he called the Nazi murder of 6 million Jews a fabrication” (M. Rubin 2006, 2). The Islamic Republic’s hostile stance toward Israel is designed to generate further hatred toward the Israelis. “Ahmadinejad’s heightened rhetoric against Israel and the Jews in general is clearly calculated to persuade the Arabs, most of whom are Sunni Muslims, to accept the leadership of Shiite Iran in a

pan-Islamist effort to destroy Israel” (Taheri 2006, 105). A nuclear-armed Iran would be capable of conducting nuclear attacks against Israeli territory, thus minimizing Iran’s need for clients or allies. On the other hand, Tehran might inspire radical Islamists across the region and the world to execute further and more intense jihadist campaigns against Israel. The mullahs could also organize attacks against Jewish populations residing *outside* of the Jewish state.

If Iran develops nuclear weapons, then Israel will increasingly face jihadist terrorism. The Islamic Republic already employs terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hizbollah “to encircle Israel with Islamist movements” (Menashri 2007, 160). Tehran may use its nuclear deterrent to foster even deadlier terrorist operations against Israel in the future. “Trusting that the Israelis would not wish to escalate a conflict to the point of nuclear exchange, Iran might perceive itself as having a freer hand to harass Israel by increasing funding for groups like Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad and encouraging additional suicide attacks” (Sadr 2005, 66). Iran’s support for Hamas is intolerable. Still, the mullahs’ support for Hizbollah (the Party of God) is much worse. The Party of God poses greater threats to Israel’s existence than Hamas does, considering that the Party of God remains ideologically and politically linked to Tehran. In other words, Hizbollah has better access than Hamas to Iranian weaponry. Iran has “armed the Lebanese branch of the Hezbollah with a whole new generation of theater missiles capable of striking any target in Israel” (Taheri 2006, 100). Hizbollah may never gain access to Iranian nuclear arms. Nonetheless, Iran could, without fearing Israeli reprisals, compel Hizbollah to launch missiles at Israel. Tehran could also use terrorism to plunge Lebanon into greater

chaos, forcing Jerusalem to fight terrorists across Lebanese territory. Israel would then have limited conventional recourses for dealing with Iran.

The world should not forget that the Islamic Republic often takes strategic risks in the Middle East, despite the ayatollahs' "pragmatic" foreign policy in Central Asia and elsewhere. Tehran's boldness was evident when it sparked the Israeli-Hizbollah conflict in the summer of 2006 to mask the mullahs' nuclear intentions. "The level of Iranian support for Hizbollah before, during and after recent hostilities in Lebanon has strengthened suspicions that Iran's posture toward Israel has taken a harder, more aggressive and somewhat risk-prone turn" (Israeli military calculations 2006, 1). The Islamic Republic could take advantage of membership in the nuclear club to become even bolder in its support for terrorism. Consequently, Israel might suffer further terror-related bloodshed.

Another problem is that the Islamic Republic's development of atomic weapons could cause proliferation to soar throughout the Middle East. "Iran's nuclear arming would significantly increase prospects for a nuclear arms race in the region. Iran also might share nuclear-weapons technology with Syria, in light of the growing ties between these two states" (Fitzpatrick 2006a, 21). If Tehran produces atomic weapons, then the international community will be hard-pressed to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) across the Middle East or even other parts of the Islamic world.

Jerusalem understands that Tehran's nuclear arms could fall into the hands of rogue states or terrorist organizations. Iran could deliberately supply others, such as Hizbollah, with nuclear weapons or nuclear assistance. However, a "greater danger may be transfer without explicit state involvement, by an Iranian version of the A.Q. Khan

network acting on its own, as Khan did with Libya” (Fitzpatrick 2006a, 21). The Pakistani Khan’s network offered nuclear help to Iran, severely undermining global nonproliferation measures. Several states acquired Pakistan’s atomic technologies through the black market. Hence, world powers should realize that Iran’s nuclear weapons might end up on the nuclear black market as well.

The mullahs might never employ or give away nuclear weapons, but might instead use nuclear *deterrence* to weaken adversaries. The world has thus far failed to take robust diplomatic action against the Islamic Republic. The West avoids confronting Iran militarily. Tehran may calculate that the West’s and the broader world’s lack of action will continue, as long as the Islamic Republic does not invade powerful states. “With a nuclear weapons option acting as a deterrent to U.S. and allied action against it, Iran would likely lend greater support to terrorists operating against Israel, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Europe, and the U.S.” (Sokolski 2005, 52). Western resolve in the war on terrorism might crumble. Jihadists could then focus their power on taking over moderate Arab governments. No one would be able to stop Iran’s theocratic ambitions, unless a state or coalition of states was willing to risk a nuclear war or a drawn out conventional and asymmetric conflict with Iran.

The world appears ill-equipped to stifle Iran’s intentions. For a variety of reasons, states fail to deal appropriately with the atomic issue.

Israel is aware of the ambiguities and even the contradictions of the Russian position, of America’s dilemma as a result of domestic policy and the Iraq war, and, while it appreciates the trust the Europeans have continually demonstrated, it is conscious of the limits of their resolve should the situation deteriorate. (Delpech 2007, 68)

Much of the world is worried that confronting Iran with UN resolutions could force the mullahs to arm themselves with nuclear weapons. The international community, including the West, tries not to upset the clerical regime. Therefore, states use futile diplomatic techniques to entice the ayatollahs into changing Iranian behavior.

Diplomacy can only work when both sides are sincere. Like an abused spouse, Western policymakers blame themselves rather than understand the fault is not theirs. There is no magic formula waiting to be discovered. To Tehran the West is naïve. More diplomacy will only give the Islamic Republic time to achieve its nuclear goal. (M. Rubin 2006, 4)

States such as Russia and China often make excuses for Iran, since those states would like to retain their diplomatic and economic contacts with the Islamic Republic. Regrettably, the Iranians cannot be appeased. “Israeli officials have argued that the cost of doing nothing regarding Iran’s nuclear programme may be the most expensive outcome” (Bahgat 2005b, 38). That expensive outcome is an Iran that can spread nuclear terror. Of course, Tehran could also use its nuclear deterrent to disrupt global energy prices and stifle freedom in Iran and throughout the Middle East. “The Revolutionary Guards are preparing for not one, but dozens of Tiananmen Squares” (M. Rubin 2006, 4). Unlike Beijing, though, Tehran will display brutality abroad, not just at home. The costs of an Iranian nuclear program do come in many forms.

Israel realizes that it may have to act alone in taking military action against the Islamic Republic. Israel’s “deputy defence minister, Ephraim Sneh, summed up Israeli sentiment by saying that the countries that would not bomb Auschwitz were not going to bomb Iran’s nuclear production facilities” (Israeli military calculations 2006, 2). The world would almost certainly condemn any Israeli military action against Iran. Jerusalem was never applauded for its attack on Iraq’s nuclear facilities. Still, the United States and

Europe cheered silently for the air strikes against Iraq, and there are those today who would cheer for air strikes against the Islamic Republic.

An Israeli intervention against Iran, especially if successful, would probably make a lot of people happy, for nobody really has any idea how to resolve the problem. But who would dare admit it? Probably no one, especially in the region, but in Europe also. There should be no illusions on this point. (Delpech 2007, 68)

Israel realizes that sacrificing short-term diplomatic relations with various global powers may be the small price to pay for bombing Iran's nuclear facilities.

Israel possesses the strategy, as well as the capacity to hinder Iran's nuclear program. Jerusalem "has developed several defensive and offensive capabilities in preparation for a possible military confrontation with Tehran. These include a missile defence system called Arrow and a second-strike nuclear option – submarines" (Bahgat 2005b, 39). Israel's robust defense system and second-strike nuclear option enable the Israeli military to attack Iran, while minimizing Iranian reprisals. The Islamic Republic would have difficulty calculating what percentage of its missiles could actually reach Israeli targets. There is a danger that Iran could unleash terrorist proxies on Israel. However, a *nuclear*-armed Iran may conduct intense asymmetric warfare against Israel, *regardless* of whether or not Israel attacks Iran. Besides, the Jewish state will endure no matter what form of warfare the Islamic Republic engages in, with the possible exception of nuclear warfare. Jerusalem is also capable of deterring or defeating all of Tehran's allies. "Hizbullah, despite its evident resilience, is no match for the Israeli Defense Force, especially if ground forces were fully unleashed, as many Israelis think they should have been recently in Lebanon. Tehran's Syrian ally would not be in a position to respond on Iran's behalf" (Israeli military calculations 2006, 2). Thus, state and non-state actors alike cannot help Iran to prevent or fend off Israeli air strikes. Israel maintains a

powerful and modern air force. “The United States recently delivered F-161 aircraft with extra fuel tanks, whose range would preclude the need for a refueling stop on the way from Tel Aviv to Iran” (Sadr 2005, 61). Jerusalem’s air, ground, and naval forces will continue to develop. Israel will also adjust its strategy to counter Iran’s military advancements. Tehran may receive assistance from Moscow or others, yet the Islamic Republic is still vulnerable to attack.

Jerusalem could force Tehran to reconsider pursuing an atomic weapons capability.

It would not be necessary to destroy all Iran’s nuclear facilities, which are dispersed all over the country, but only the most critical ones, and other targets, for example the Iranian centres of power. To delay the program would make sense if the objective is to keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of the current regime. (Delpech 2007, 68)

Unfortunately, Israel has only limited information on Iranian nuclear sites. “Iran’s political isolation from the Western world has meant that there are fewer diplomats, business people, and spies inside the country to provide accurate intelligence as to the location and character of its nuclear capabilities” (Sadr 2005, 61). Still, Jerusalem has sufficient information regarding the locations of Iranian political, military, and industrial facilities. Israel could execute the military option *or* alter the mullahs’ nuclear intentions.

### ***Iranian Perceptions—how does Iran perceive the issue in question?***

Iran wants to develop atomic weapons. Tehran’s goal is to produce nuclear arms in spite of U.S., Israeli, Russian, or international pressure. Iran overtly generates highly enriched uranium (HEU) and has at the very least *almost* mastered the nuclear fuel cycle. The Islamic Republic also hides atomic plans from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as the ayatollahs continue their clandestine weapons program. Tehran

secretly constructs nuclear arms to mask its intentions for joining the nuclear club. However, Iran's overt statements about the need for nuclear weapons, along with Iran's missile-related activities, demonstrate that Iran seeks to manufacture nuclear weapons. The Islamic Republic is on a strategic course that cannot easily be altered. Iran continues to strive for the capacity to deter conventional and non-conventional attacks against Iranian territory, and for expanded regional and worldwide influence. Using a generic voice for the Iranian state, the upcoming paragraphs explain thoroughly why the Islamic Republic wants to become a nuclear power.

Iran's adversaries have sought to conquer Iran through coercive diplomacy and invasion. "The history of foreign invasions of Persia/Iran from Alexander the Great in 131 BCE to the present US threat of war is a powerful reminder to the Iranians of that long history of foreign hostility towards them" (Tarock 2006b, 653). Many states treat the Islamic Republic with contempt. "According to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, his country is a model for Islamic countries and thus is opposed by the United States" (Tarzi 2004, 101). "Across the political spectrum, Iran's policymakers want the United States to acknowledge that Iran is a regional great power in the Middle East" (Kupchan 2005, 108). Washington threatens sanctions, revolutions, and war. Perhaps the United States will be less bold in its pronouncements and intentions when Iran grows more powerful militarily and scientifically. Tehran is continually harassed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is largely a puppet of American imperialism. "Some Iranians currently believe that, even if they accept the Additional Protocol, more demands will be forthcoming and that such concessions will open the door for the United States to seek regime change" (Chubin and Litwak 2003, 112). In

addition, European nations have treated the Islamic Republic unfairly since the time of Khomeini's revolution.

It should also be recalled that when in the 1990s Iran asked Germany and France to honour the nuclear agreements they had signed with it under the old regime, they refused to do so. For a while France even refused to negotiate for the return of about \$1 billion that it had received from the Shah under those agreements. (Tarock 2006b, 660)

Iran is a sovereign, powerful, and ancient land. The Iranian people should not be expected to outsource domestic nuclear decisions to the Great Satan (the United States), the Great Satan's minions, or anyone else. "Having learned during the war with Iraq that imported weapon systems are rendered useless as the supply of spare parts and ammunition could be cut off as easily as shutting off a spigot, Iran's deterrence must of necessity be self-generated and self-reliant" (Mokhtari 2005, 211).

The Islamic Republic will resist temptations to negotiate away Iranian independence at any global forum or with any global institution. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is perhaps more aware than anyone of the dangers the worldwide community poses to the Islamic Republic's strategic autonomy. "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 predicated on global opinion and treaties" (Dueck and Takeyh 2007, 196). Iran will chart its own nuclear course.

International hatred of Iran helped to foster Saddam Hussein's aggression against the Iranian people. "Iraq's invasion of Iran, Arab and US support for the invader and the deafening silence of all when Iraq used chemical weapons against Iranians, disabused Iranians of any doubt that Iran's interests had to be safeguarded by Iranians and Iranians

alone” (Mokhtari 2005, 226). The Sunni Arab states appreciated Saddam’s attack on the Shiite, non-Arabic Islamic Republic. Washington and European capitals were eager to see the Iraqi dictator crush Ayatollah Khomeini’s electrifying Islamic revolution. The West allowed Iran to be ravaged. “The question that preoccupied Tehran was not only the entire Western world’s support for Baghdad, but also its unacceptable silence on Iraq’s use of weapons prohibited by the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of biological and chemical weapons” (Delpech 2007, 13).

Iran will not allow itself to be weakened by antagonistic nations. A nuclear-armed Iran could potentially have deterred Saddam Hussein’s invasion in 1980. The Islamic Republic would have been spared years of turmoil and bloodshed. “The 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war resulted in more than a million casualties, ended with no peace treaty, and left major territorial disputes unresolved” (Bahgat 2007, 5). Tehran could have consolidated domestic and military power more quickly, had Hussein been fearful of a massive Iranian nuclear response.

The United States also might think twice about threatening a nuclear Iran or engaging a nuclear Iran in battle. America already fought the Islamic Republic in a tanker war. As it stands now, the Great Satan encircles Iran and attempts to quash Iranian influence across the Middle East.

Iran’s leaders are aware of the US military forces in . . . Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and United Arab Emirates (UAE) and air and naval assets in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, Mediterranean Sea, as well as more in the continental United States. (Simbar 2007, 59)

No one, no matter how powerful, should attempt to control Iranian society or institute governmental change in Iran. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei “believes Iranian appeasement in

the face of western pressure will not allay Tehran's concerns but only invite further pressure" (Sadjadpour 2007, 126).

Iran requires a nuclear deterrent to demonstrate its defensive strength to the Great Satan.

North Korea possesses nuclear weapons, and so the United States has not attacked it and is being forced to engage with Pyongyang. Saddam Hussein's Iraq did not possess nuclear weapons—but was believed to be trying to acquire them—and so the United States was willing to invade and overturn the Baathist regime. (Pollack 2006, 366)

As long as Iran follows Iraq's atomic course, rather than North Korea's atomic course, then Washington will be waiting for the opportune moment to strike Iran militarily. The U.S. recently defied the international community by removing Saddam Hussein from power. After America regains lost military and political strength, there is little to deter it from attempting regime change elsewhere in the future. "Of course, changes in the U.S. administration in elections or the problems facing the United States in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere, may delay or speed up such an eventuality" (Tarzi 2004, 101). A less bold American president or further problems in the "war on terror" may stifle U.S. imperial ambitions. Still, "the war in Iraq and the rhetoric used by Bush officials that painted Iraq at the beginning, not the end, of a global regime change strategy has clearly increased the desire for a nuclear deterrent in Tehran" (Wolfsthal 2005, 19). Iran should transform its nuclear plans into a nuclear reality, to thwart or repel a U.S. attack.

The Islamic Republic can use nuclear deterrence to prevent further encroachments on its territory. For example, a nuclear Iran would never become a satellite state of Russia. "In the last two centuries Iran has lost substantial territory to the Soviet Union/Russia" (Bahgat 2005b, 28). "During World War II, the Soviet Union invaded

northern Iran and refused to withdraw from Iranian Azerbaijan after the war had ended” (Vakil 2006, 56-57). Iran will not allow Russia to dictate Iran’s geopolitical decisions or nuclear choices. Unfortunately, Tehran is already relying excessively on the Kremlin for strategic support.

The Islamic Republic also seeks to protect itself on its Eastern frontier. India and Pakistan have atomic weapons. Thus, Tehran should manufacture nuclear weapons to deter New Delhi and Islamabad from infringing on Iranian land or maritime interests. Pakistan could eventually pose a critical regional danger to the Islamic Republic. “The possibility of the collapse of the current military government and its displacement by a radical Sunni regime with access to nuclear weapons is something Iran feels it must guard against” (Dueck and Takeyh 2007, 194). A nuclear Iran might even be able to establish a robust strategic alliance with Pakistan or India. Such an alliance could act as an enduring bulwark against excessive, non-Islamic foreign interference in Tehran’s regional affairs.

Iran enjoys diplomatic protection, due to its strategic relations with Russia, China, India, and various Non-Aligned states. If America “decides to take military action against Iranian nuclear facilities, Arab governments would have difficulty justifying the bombing of another Muslim country to their domestic constituents” (Bahgat 2007, 12). Also, the Eastern nations “have much at stake in the stability and economic development and independence of Iran” (Tarock 2006b, 647). Indeed, Iran has skillfully cultivated relations with the East as part of a non-aggressive agenda to project power. “The fact that in the very recent past Iran has signed energy and trade agreements worth billions of dollars with China, India and Pakistan is illustrative of Iran’s new foreign policy direction” (Tarock 2006b, 659). Tehran has specifically reached out to Beijing to prevent

global institutions, regional institutions, or coalitions of the willing from taking diplomatic or military action against the Islamic Republic. “Iran’s aim *vis-à-vis* China has been rather clear and straightforward from the beginning to win Beijing’s support and thus divide the major powers” (Calabrese 2006, 11). Moscow encompasses the other key piece of Iran’s strategic shield. “Iran has been able to exploit the regional, commercial, and strategic linkages with its old nemesis, knowing full well that Russia will favor its domestic and regional priorities over those of the international community” (Vakil 2006, 57). “Both countries have . . . been co-operating very closely in the Muslim republics of Central Asia” (Tarock 2006b, 649). Russia has provided Iran with weapons and nuclear assistance, and Russia will remain close to Iran as long as Russo-American ties continue to be strained.

Still, the Islamic Republic is not immune from an American attack. Washington attacked Afghanistan and Iraq in quick succession, and has sustained a “military presence in the region” (Bahgat 2005a, 412). The Great Satan

is allied with Pakistan, which borders Iran on the east and possesses nuclear weapons and sophisticated delivery systems. The United States is also a strong ally of Israel, located 600 miles to the west and capable of launching a nuclear strike against Iran with its long-range missiles in a matter of minutes. (Zunes 2005, 6)

Most Non-Aligned and pro-Iran states simply lack the strength to help Iran form a powerful coalition against the United States. Also, the Great Satan will try to strike deals with the Russians, Chinese, and others to persuade Iran’s allies to abandon the Iranian people. The ayatollahs, therefore, must convince Eastern and non-aligned Islamic states to stand up for Tehran’s “‘right’ to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes” (Delpech

2007, 18). A favorable consensus on Iran's nuclear rights will go a long way toward the weaponization of Iran's nuclear program.

If Iran develops nuclear forces, then the EU-3 will completely desert the U.S. policy of aggression and subversion against Iran. Europe is fractured and indecisive. Europe has demonstrated a pattern of lacking the will to confront Iran politically (Pollack 2006, 370). Iran is advancing on the world stage as Europe increasingly loses relevance in strategic matters (Taheri 2006, 105). The Islamic Republic also "sees its growing commercial ties with Europe, especially Germany, as a source of leverage over the Europeans" (Eihorn 2004, 26). An atomically-armed Iran may isolate America from America's Western allies. Even more importantly, the reality of a *nuclear* Islamic Republic might force a lonely Washington to negotiate further with Tehran, destroying all U.S. hopes of overthrowing the ayatollahs.

States quickly adapt to new atomic developments. The Big Satan (the United States) and the Little Satan (Israel) may continue to threaten the Islamic Republic. However, those threats may subside over time, just as American threats have subsided against North Korea. "The North Korean model suggests that a presumed nuclear capability may not only avert a preemptive American strike but generate its own set of economic rewards and future security guarantees" (Takeyh 2003, 23). Most importantly, Iran knows that aside from possibly Israel and the U.S., the world will acquiesce to Iran's new atomic status.

Tehran must sustain a *practical* nuclear strategy. One objective is to produce the weapons covertly. "Iran may . . . sooner or later receive a relatively clean bill of health from the IAEA. Tehran may calculate that it could . . . use its resumed, overt enrichment

operations to mask its parallel clandestine program” (Einhorn 2004, 27). Another Iranian priority is to develop robust interstate relations and make statements (public and private) that lower the level of alarm among Eastern and Middle Eastern rulers. Part of “Tehran’s political strategy consists of challenging information on its nuclear programme by recalling the errors of judgement concerning Iraq’s supposed weapons of mass destruction” (Delpech 2007, 19). Iran should produce nuclear arms cautiously. Saddam’s nuclear error “was that he . . . got caught midstream in the 1991 war and was not able to rebound fast enough before the 2003 war” (Russell 2005a, 208). (The full quote from Russell says that Hussein developed atomic weapons too *slowly*. However, *Russell’s* perception is not necessarily part of *Iran’s* perception, since Iran has *also* worked slowly on its own nuclear program. The point is that Iraq was slow *and* reckless—not just slow.) If the Islamic Republic becomes careless, then more of its neighbors or enemies might construct atomic weapons, or rally behind the Great Satan and attempt to dismantle the Iranian government. The world could also *begrudgingly* let the U.S. invade Iran. Therefore, Tehran must conceal its nuclear intentions and capabilities to avoid the fate of a partially Americanized Iraq. Iran may escape the American gauntlet by running secret nuclear facilities and conducting nuclear disinformation campaigns.

Iran is far more resilient than Iraq. Some of Iran’s resiliency stems from environmental and demographic factors. “Iran would be far more difficult to invade and occupy than Iraq. Iran has more than three times Iraq’s population and land mass, and the country has far more mountains and other geographic hindrances to invasion and occupation” (Zunes 2005, 6). Also, the people of the Islamic Republic believe in their

nation. “The Iranians see themselves as the lineal descendants of a 2,500-year-old-civilization that bequeathed to the world its first superpower (the Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great, Darius, and Xerxes) and a long string of great powers that stretched from the Parthians and the Sassanids to the Safavids” (Pollack 2006, 366). Iran “has the largest population in the Middle East, the world’s third largest oil reserves, the second largest natural gas reserves, and aspirations to again become the region’s major power” (Cirincione 2006, 75). In addition, religion plays a vital role in Iranian society. “To the legacy of Persia’s imperial greatness can be added the pride of the Islamic Revolution” (Pollack 2006, 366). At present, Iran is most likely powerful enough to deter or repel a foreign invasion. Nevertheless, Tehran must adapt strategically with the times. “The Iraqi offensive against Iran, especially the massive air strikes on ports and oil refineries in the Persian Gulf, showed the clerics that modern military technology, especially weapons of mass destruction, could make a decisive difference in war” (Kibaroglu 2006, 216). “As Iranians look around their region, four nuclear-armed countries—Russia, Pakistan, India, and Israel—loom prominently” (Fitzpatrick 2006b, 531). A nuclear capability may now be necessary for Iran to defend itself from aggressive powers. “For Iran this is a weapon of deterrence and power projection” (Dueck and Takeyh 2007, 195).

Iran’s defense posture must involve expanded Iranian autonomy. In other words, the Islamic Republic should move to covertly and overtly, and militarily and ideologically defend itself at home by extending its influence throughout the Middle East and beyond. The point is that Iran can secure its independence by bolstering Iranian power abroad. Nuclear weapons may allow the Islamic Republic to safely propagate the

Islamic Revolution, without fear of retribution from geographically proximate or distant states.

Iranian influence in Iraq could be assured if Iran produces nuclear weapons. The United States might be more willing to cede control of Iraqi politics, defense, and economics to Iran. The Islamic Republic would gain energy-related concessions from Iraq. Tehran would also make sure that Baghdad is in no position to frustrate Iranian national security. “Tehran sees the influence it has carefully cultivated within Iraq’s Shi’a community as a source of leverage vis-à-vis the United States” (Einhorn 2004, 26). Iran certainly does not wish to witness a strong American-Iraqi alliance. An Iranian nuclear capability guarantees that the U.S. will refrain from offering excessive support to anti-Iranian factions in Iraq. There would also be no more repeats of Saddam Hussein’s invasion. Fortunately for Iran, the “breakdown of Iraq removes a historic barrier to projection of Iranian power at a time when the United States is eager to leave its Arab burden behind” (Dueck and Takeyh 2007, 194).

Ayatollah Khomeini ignited the *Islamic* Revolution. To this day, “Iran generally presumes to speak for pan-Muslim causes, rarely invoking its own Shi’ite character” (Fuller 2007, 147). One of Iran’s pan-Muslim causes is in Lebanon, where Hezbollah (the Party of God) “survived a 34-day war with Israel that expanded its popularity throughout the entire Arab world” (Bahgat 2007, 6). Lebanon rests within reach of the ayatollahs’ control. Granted, Syria is a major force in Lebanon. Nevertheless, amicable Iranian-Syrian relations will bolster Hizbollah’s role in managing Beirut. A *nuclearized* Iran may not be necessary for Lebanon to remain a center for training freedom fighters. However, if Tehran develops the bomb, then the Supreme Leader will more easily be able

to direct Hizbollah and Hizbollah's allies to drive out Western forces from Lebanese territory.

The Supreme Leader will not rest until Jerusalem is back in Islamic hands. "For the clerical community, Israel remains a pernicious state usurping Islamic lands and denying legitimate Palestinian aspirations" (Takeyh and Gvosdev 2004, 46). Tel Aviv may never agree to give up large swaths of land voluntarily. However, if Iran aims atomic missiles at Europe, then the Israeli government may lose its already minimal European support. A nuclear Tehran would also have a freer hand to manage revolutionary activities in Jerusalem and other parts of Israel. Iran's nuclear capability may provide a strategic shield for Hamas, Hizbollah, and other freedom fighters. The West would probably avoid direct involvement in another foreign quagmire. American support for Israel could whither, as Islamic forces reclaim sacred land that has been lost over time to the Crusaders and the Jews.

### *Chapter Summary*

Each primary actor maintains its own perceptions about the Iranian nuclear program. The United States views Iran as a major threat to regional and global stability, and seeks to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Jerusalem similarly views Tehran as a major threat. Indeed, the nuclear issue is more pressing to Israel than to the United States. Israel, due to its geographical position, remains vulnerable to any increase in Iran's strategic power. Russia is yet another primary actor that wants to keep the Islamic Republic out of the nuclear club. Moscow does maintain a strategic partnership with Tehran. Russia also benefits economically and politically by supporting Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Still, the Russo-Iranian partnership is far from a true alliance, and

Russia does not want a powerful nuclear state to emerge in the Middle East. Iran probably wants to develop nuclear weapons. Iran's ideology, history, and geography dictate that Iran possesses a strong incentive to acquire the bomb.

Tehran may or may not become an atomic power. Indeed, all four primary actors have the capacity to shape Iran's nuclear intentions and capabilities. It can be difficult to decipher *how* the four states can influence Iran's nuclear status. Therefore, the next part of the LAMP delineates the actors' strategic options, explains two disparate scenarios that may influence the actors' strategic decisions, and evaluates alternate futures.

## **Chapter 3**

### ***Iran's Destiny: Will Iran Produce Atomic Weapons?***

The goal of this chapter is to determine whether or not Iran will develop nuclear weapons. However, this chapter does more than simply answer this study's specific research question. As the reader will find, the question actually asks for more than just a "yes or no" response. Chapter 3 provides the strategic contexts in which a range of alternate futures may take place, and calculates the relative probabilities for each alternate future. Moreover, this chapter shows that an actor's choices stem naturally from the actor's perceptions. In other words, an actor's views and goals are translated into action. Circumstances often exist in which an actor cannot or does not choose its preferred option. States may lack the willpower or capabilities to make certain decisions. Still, an actor typically refrains from making choices that blatantly contradict the actor's perceptions. State decision-making serves state interests. Ultimately, chapter 3 explains *why* and *how* the alternate futures may come about.

Chapter 3 covers steps 4-8 of the Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP). In this paper, step 5 of the LAMP is presented before Step 4. Step 5 establishes the strategic scenarios, which provide the *context* for step 4—the actors' choices. Step 4 is then followed by step 6. Step 6 calculates the number of alternate futures that could occur in each scenario. The calculations are based on the total number of possible combinations of the actors' choices. In step 7, every alternate future is matched up against every other alternate future, to determine their relative probabilities. Pairwise comparisons, which compare the likelihood of one alternate future against all other alternate futures, are performed in Appendix A. The results are displayed in *two*

tables in chapter 3, since this paper uses *two* scenarios. Afterward, step 8 of the LAMP ranks the alternate futures from the highest to the lowest relative probability. *Two* tables are once again used because there are *two* scenarios in this paper. Last, chapter 3 provides a narrative analysis that dissects the alternate futures. The narrative analysis demonstrates *why* and *how* the primary actors may choose to implement their respective decisions. Overall, chapter 3 explores multiple pathways in which Iran may develop or not develop nuclear weapons.

## Scenarios

This paper illuminates two distinct scenarios. One scenario includes an Iran that does *not* sponsor jihadist violence. The other scenario deals with an Iran that *does* back radical Islamist violence. The concepts of *jihadist* violence and *radical Islamist* violence are used interchangeably in this study. Jihad most generally represents “a call to mobilize the resources, energies, and capabilities of individuals in the service of” Allah and Islam (Phares 2005, 22-23). Phares recognizes that jihad can also represent a call to arms to preserve or spread Islamic principles or Islamic territory (2005, 23-25). Lewis interprets jihad as moral striving or armed struggle (2003, 30). In this paper, the term jihad implies the actual use *or* threatened use of force by radical Islamists. Radical Islamists, or jihadists, are simply those who conduct or plan to conduct jihad against the “unbelievers” (non-Muslims or Muslims who do not support the radical Islamists’ version of Islam). The radical Islamists want theocratic control over states and entire regions. Their ultimate goal is to establish a global empire. The Islamic Republic has already forged ties with Shi’a jihadists (i.e. Hizbollah) *and* Sunni jihadists (i.e. Hamas). Nonetheless, in this chapter the differences between radical *Shi’a* Muslims and radical

*Sunni* Muslims are immaterial. Moreover, “the difference in the perception of jihad between Shi’is and Sunnis remains one of words and emotions, rather than one of substance and deeds” (Moghadam 2003, 6). (See appendix A for an explanation of terrorism and its relation to jihad.)

The two scenarios in this study are linked with specific research question. Tehran’s nuclear status may indeed be determined by whether or not Tehran sponsors jihadist violence. In other words, Iran can shape its global image by supporting or by not supporting radical Islamist operations. Iran, through its support or lack of support for global jihad, will either invite or discourage resistance to Iran’s nuclear program. This diplomatic, economic, or military resistance may come from the international community, a coalition of the willing, a formal alliance, or one single state. The resistance, or lack thereof, would be orchestrated by the United States, Russia, or Israel. The primary actors, excluding Iran, would either act in concert or individually, to solve *or* avoid solving the nuclear issue. Each primary actor will react according to its own state interests. For instance, Russia may sustain its strategic relations with Iran, even if Iran supports jihadist operations against Israel. Alternatively, Israel may consider that an Iranian-backed jihadist attack on Russia would warrant an Israeli military strike against Iran, since the jihadist attacks against Russia could signal future terrorist activity against Israel.

Both scenarios offer practical contexts for delineating state decision-making. For example, Tehran’s decision to sponsor jihadist operations could serve to intimidate or embolden the other primary actors. Alternatively, by *not* sponsoring radical Islamist violence, the Iranians could lull the other primary actors into a false sense of security, or

encourage the primary actors to move strategically against an Iran that appears weak. The importance of this study's scenarios will become even more evident as this study progresses further.

***Scenario 1—Iran does not sponsor jihadist violence***

Iranian-backed jihadists do not conduct severe or sustained attacks within the near future. Between 2008 and 2013, they may cause less infrastructural damage and kill fewer people, or simply carry out minor attacks sporadically. Tehran at least temporarily denies ideological, political, and economic support to major jihadist operations. The mullahs *refrain* from igniting jihadist violence to ensure that no one invades Iran. In all likelihood, the Middle East would probably experience fewer radical Islamist attacks—especially in Iraq, Israel, and Lebanon.

***Scenario 2—Iran sponsors jihadist violence***

Iranian-backed jihadists conduct at least one severe or sustained attack within the near future. Between 2008 and 2013, they cause more infrastructural damage, kill more people, or carry out more *intensive* attacks. Tehran provides ideological, political, or economic support for jihadist operations. The mullahs ignite jihadist violence to reinvigorate the principles of the Iranian Revolution. Radical Islamists would likely execute major attacks throughout the Middle East—especially in Iraq, Israel, or Lebanon. Still, the jihadists may also target the United States, Russia, or other powers.

**Courses of Action**

All four primary actors are capable of shaping Iran's nuclear status. The actors also make choices that are in line with their respective perceptions of the Iranian nuclear

issue. Still, this does not necessarily mean that a state will choose an effective option. After all, Iran's nuclear status might depend on the actions of all of the primary actors. None of the four states are considered more important than the others in determining whether or not Iran constructs the bomb. That being said, the United States has the most options available to it due to the extensive reach of American power. The U.S. is assumed to implement an option before any other actor does. America's decision will then influence Russia's decision on how to deal with the Iranian nuclear program. Israel moves third in this strategic game, after Israel deciphers the U.S. and Russian maneuvers. Iran moves last, because its "choice" ultimately provides the answer to this study's specific research question. Other valid studies could certainly change the order of moves. Nevertheless, in this chapter the actors' options are pieced together in various combinations to form the alternate futures.

***U.S. Options—what are the United States's possible courses of action?***

1. The United States offers diplomatic overtures.

Washington relies on diplomacy to convince Tehran to shun all nuclear-weapons ambitions. America's first diplomatic overture would be to abandon its doctrine of regime change in Iran. There may be some implied *threats* of force. However, the United States would not attempt to overthrow or continually discredit the Iranian government. The U.S. could then make further gestures of diplomatic goodwill toward the clerical regime. The United States would likely offer Iran political, financial, commercial, and energy-related concessions. For instance, the U.S. may treat the Islamic Republic as a partner in dealing with events throughout Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Washington would also stop proposing political and economic sanctions against Tehran.

The U.S. might even allow its own firms to embark on energy exploration ventures with Islamic Republic. Overall, the Americans would adopt a friendlier strategic posture toward the Iranians. The United States would calculate that it needs Iran's assistance to stem the tide of chaos and terror across the Middle East and South Asia. Once again, it is important to note that Washington *relies* on diplomacy. This means that the United States may also employ subversive tactics.

## 2. The United States employs subversive tactics against Iran.

Washington relies on subversion to end Tehran's nuclear program. The United States calculates that the diplomatic option and the military option are insufficient to solve the atomic issue. America seeks to undermine Iran's nuclear position by drawing on a variety of aggressive and non-aggressive methods. The Americans might even convince the Israelis to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities. The U.S. *could* avoid direct international condemnation, if the *Israelis* invade Iran. Washington might rely on Jerusalem, since the United States cannot afford geopolitically or economically to take further military action in the Middle East or South Asia. American troops will probably continue conducting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, the U.S. would retain the option of employing low-level force against the Islamic Republic. American officials might even *threaten* to invade Iran.

Subversion is useful due its flexible nature. American subversion against Iran would probably involve both military and non-military actions. Such subversive actions may include political sanctions, economic sanctions, naval blockades in the Persian Gulf, air and space reconnaissance, intelligence and paramilitary operations, cyber attacks, jamming radar or electronic systems, amassing troops close to the Iranian border,

supporting opposition groups in Iran, engaging Iran in small-scale conventional battles, or fighting proxy wars in Lebanon, Iraq, or elsewhere. Washington's subversive activities could expose Tehran's nuclear infrastructure to the global community, thereby weakening the ayatollahs' political resolve regarding nuclear weapons. The U.S. might also force a diplomatically or economically isolated Iran to abandon the nuclear option. Ultimately, Washington can exploit a number of subversive tactics to remain in control of an ever-evolving atomic crisis. Once again, it is important to note that Washington *relies* on subversion. This means that the United States may offer diplomatic overtures as well.

### 3. The United States invades Iran.

U.S. officials decide that only an American military attack can keep Iran out of the nuclear club. An American invasion includes the *willful* breach of Iranian territory. Washington could either offensively *or* defensively attack the Islamic Republic. Put differently, an *unprovoked* United States could attack Iran, or *provocative* Iranian actions could instigate American attacks against Iran. An American raid could include missile, air, space-based, or naval strikes on physical targets (nuclear facilities, vehicles, buildings, critical infrastructure, resources, or people—troops, government officials, or civilians), special-forces operations, violent naval incursions into Iranian waters (including assaults on ships and ports), ground assaults, or even an unlikely full scale occupation of the Islamic Republic. Such assaults are designed to alter Tehran's nuclear intentions or destroy Tehran's nuclear capabilities. Low-level skirmishes along the Iranian border would *not* constitute a U.S. invasion. Any attacks must include sustained military strikes, or military strikes designed to cause extensive destruction—as opposed to lobbing missiles into the open desert for rhetorical reasons. It is important to note that

although the United States invades Iran, the U.S. would still employ subversive tactics and *might* offer diplomatic overtures.

***Russian Options—what are Russia’s possible courses of action?***

1. Russia curtails strategic assistance to Iran.

Moscow stops or slows down its military, diplomatic, energy-related, and nuclear support to Tehran. Four primary reasons could account for Russia’s transformed strategic stance toward the Islamic Republic. First, Russia may calculate that Iran is causing an excessive burden for Russian political, economic, or energy-related ties with Western, Middle Eastern, or Central Asian states. Second, Moscow may discover that Iran is actually producing nuclear weapons. Third, regional ethnic or religious conflicts could jeopardize the Russo-Iranian relationship. Fourth, Russia might need to focus its strategic attention on more pressing developments in the Russian near abroad. The Kremlin, whichever reason it chooses, ultimately determines that Iran is disposable. Moscow leaves Tehran’s nuclear fate to the rest of the world.

2. Russia continues providing Iran with strategic assistance.

The Kremlin provides Tehran with weapons, energy-related assistance, nuclear expertise, and diplomatic cover. There are myriad reasons why Russia would continue its support for Iran. One possibility is that Moscow might be angered by Western involvement in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The West has already supported Kosovo’s independence from the Slavic nation of Serbia. Another possibility is Russian anger over America’s missile defense system. As far as Russia is concerned, the defense system is aimed to negate Russia’s offensive missile capabilities, which would allow the United States to encroach on Russia’s traditional sphere of influence.

Alternatively, Moscow might support Tehran due to considerations that involve the West less directly. Russia, for instance, may not feel that Iran is actually capable of developing nuclear weapons. Russian officials might even ignore Iran's atomic progress, so as to advance Russo-Iranian cooperation on economic and energy issues. Furthermore, Moscow may seek an enduring strategic alliance with Tehran to control developments across South Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. A Russo-Iranian alliance would ensure that the Kremlin would be capable of shaping the mullahs' regional policies. And then there are Russia's financial concerns . . . Russia grows economically as it sells arms and offers nuclear expertise to Iran. Moscow would, therefore, attempt to block any Western measures that endanger Moscow's financial links with Tehran. Russia calculates that if it supports Iran's "peaceful" nuclear program, the Americans and Israelis will *not* spark a war with the Islamic Republic.

Russia must exercise great caution in seeking to drain both Iranian and Western power. In all likelihood, Russia would not wish to see another war erupt in the Middle East, Central Asia, or South Asia, especially since America's presence on Russia's periphery has already grown since September 11, 2001. Russia helps Iran so that Russia can divert Western attention away from Central Asian and Eastern European affairs. On the other hand, Moscow worries about Tehran as well. Russia does not want the Islamic Republic to become an unstoppable regional power. Therefore, Moscow may occasionally scale back its support to Tehran, to ensure that Russia maintains strategic control or dominance over Iran.

***Israeli Options—what are Israel's possible courses of action?***

1. Israel yields to other states or institutions to deal with Iran's nuclear program.

Israel decides that *others* should take the lead in keeping Iran out of the nuclear club. Jerusalem would stay out of the atomic issue for three main reasons. One of the reasons is that military force might not end or significantly slow down Tehran's nuclear capability. Another reason is that the strategic consequences for Israel may exceed the strategic benefits. Lastly, the U.S., a coalition of states, or the international community could sufficiently pressure Israel to refrain from attacking Iran. That being said, various powers might have to provide diplomatic concessions or security assurances to Jerusalem.

## 2. Israel employs martial action against Iran or Iranian proxies.

Israel engages Iran militarily. It is possible that Israel could launch a major attack on Iranian armed forces, paramilitary forces, proxies (in Iran, Iraq, Syria, or Lebanon), or terror training camps, to demonstrate Israel's military superiority. Jerusalem could conduct the attacks within or outside of the Islamic Republic. Such a show of strength might compel Tehran to willingly abandon its nuclear weapons activities. Israel could also target Iran's nuclear infrastructure, military installations, or government institutions. These attacks could even eliminate Iran's *capability* to develop nuclear weapons. A ground or naval invasion would be extremely difficult, since unlike the United States, Israel does not have large-scale control of the seas or a network of bases spanning the Middle East and Central Asia. Still, Israel would use its air or missile capabilities to keep Iran out of the nuclear club.

*Iranian Options—what are Iran’s possible courses of action?*

1. Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons.

Iran remains a non-nuclear state. There are three main reasons for this “decision.” First, it is possible that a state, coalition of states, or the international community as a whole prevents Iran from joining the nuclear club. The major powers may diplomatically force Iran to shut down its nuclear activities. A state or groups of states may even invade the Islamic Republic. Military attacks may indeed compel the mullahs to stop developing atomic arms. Additionally, military attacks could destroy Iran’s nuclear or missile facilities, thereby leaving Iran with no *capacity* to develop nuclear weapons.

Second, Iran might fail to develop the necessary nuclear or military infrastructure to weaponize its program. Tehran may experience problems with the fuel cycle, centrifuge construction, or nuclear warhead production. Iran might lack the *domestic* capability to become a nuclear power.

Third, Tehran could, of its own volition, forego the atomic option. The Islamic Republic may conclude that it can better achieve its domestic, regional, and global objectives, *without* nuclear weapons. For example, the mullahs might improve their asymmetric warfare capabilities or develop space-based weapons. Iran may also avoid the nuclear option, to stave off attacks from foreign powers. The ayatollahs would likely grant international weapons inspectors full access to the clerical regime’s nuclear facilities.

2. Iran develops nuclear weapons.

Tehran produces atomic weapons because it is willing and able to do so. The Islamic Republic denies international inspectors complete access to Iranian nuclear

facilities. No foreign force actually prevents Iran from developing atomic arms. Ultimately, the main point is not simply that Iran has constructed nuclear weapons, but that Iran is indeed capable of detonating a nuclear explosion.

## Calculating the Alternate Futures

This section explains how to calculate the total number of alternate futures for each scenario. The mathematical method for calculating the alternate futures comes from Lockwood and Lockwood (1993, 38).

$$X^Y=Z$$

X=number of strategic options

Y=number of actors

Z=number of alternate futures

X varies among the actors in this study, since the U.S. has 3 (not 2) available options.

For the United States:  $X^Y=Z$ , or  $3^1=3$ , so  $Z=3$

However,  $X=2$  for the rest of the actors combined, since they all have 2 available options.

For Russia, Israel, and Iran:  $X^Y=Z$ , or  $2^3=8$ , so  $Z=8$

Z for the United States is then multiplied by the Z for the other actors.

$$3 \times 8=24, \text{ so } Z=24$$

There are twenty-four alternate futures in each of the two scenarios. The next section actually displays every combination of the actors' options.

## Pairwise Comparisons

Within a scenario, each alternate future is compared against every other alternate future. Put differently, an alternate future is paired off against another alternate future

and the “winner” of the competition is granted a vote in the appropriate table below. The process is repeated until all of the alternate futures are matched up in one-on-one competitions against all other alternate futures. After completing all of the pairwise comparisons, the alternate future with the most votes has the highest relative probability. The actual procedure for the pairwise comparisons is displayed in appendix A. Moreover, the tables below use variables to showcase the actors’ choices in the different futures. The variables are defined after each table.

**Table 1. Votes from the pairwise comparisons for Scenario 1 (Iran does *not* sponsor jihadist violence)**

| Alternate Future # | U.S. | Russia | Israel | Iran | # of Votes |
|--------------------|------|--------|--------|------|------------|
| 1                  | D    | C      | Y      | X    | 21         |
| 2                  | D    | C      | Y      | N    | 22         |
| 3                  | D    | C      | M      | X    | 14         |
| 4                  | D    | C      | M      | N    | 11         |
| 5                  | D    | A      | Y      | X    | 9          |
| 6                  | D    | A      | Y      | N    | 23         |
| 7                  | D    | A      | M      | X    | 13         |
| 8                  | D    | A      | M      | N    | 14         |
| 9                  | S    | C      | Y      | X    | 18         |
| 10                 | S    | C      | Y      | N    | 16         |
| 11                 | S    | C      | M      | X    | 12         |
| 12                 | S    | C      | M      | N    | 8          |
| 13                 | S    | A      | Y      | X    | 18         |
| 14                 | S    | A      | Y      | N    | 20         |
| 15                 | S    | A      | M      | X    | 16         |
| 16                 | S    | A      | M      | N    | 13         |
| 17                 | I    | C      | Y      | X    | 6          |
| 18                 | I    | C      | Y      | N    | 2          |
| 19                 | I    | C      | M      | X    | 3          |
| 20                 | I    | C      | M      | N    | 0          |
| 21                 | I    | A      | Y      | X    | 7          |
| 22                 | I    | A      | Y      | N    | 5          |
| 23                 | I    | A      | M      | X    | 4          |
| 24                 | I    | A      | M      | N    | 1          |

D=Diplomacy

S=Subversion

I=Invasion

C=Curtail strategic assistance  
 A=Assistance continues  
 Y=Yield to others  
 M=Martial action  
 X=Does not develop nuclear weapons  
 N=Develops nuclear weapons

*Note:* The procedure for the pairwise comparisons is presented in appendix B.

**Table 2. Votes from the pairwise comparisons for Scenario 2 (Iran sponsors jihadist violence)**

| Alternate Future # | U.S. | Russia | Israel | Iran | # of Votes |
|--------------------|------|--------|--------|------|------------|
| 1                  | D    | C      | Y      | X    | 5          |
| 2                  | D    | C      | Y      | N    | 7          |
| 3                  | D    | C      | M      | X    | 17         |
| 4                  | D    | C      | M      | N    | 13         |
| 5                  | D    | A      | Y      | X    | 0          |
| 6                  | D    | A      | Y      | N    | 5          |
| 7                  | D    | A      | M      | X    | 12         |
| 8                  | D    | A      | M      | N    | 11         |
| 9                  | S    | C      | Y      | X    | 18         |
| 10                 | S    | C      | Y      | N    | 13         |
| 11                 | S    | C      | M      | X    | 23         |
| 12                 | S    | C      | M      | N    | 4          |
| 13                 | S    | A      | Y      | X    | 15         |
| 14                 | S    | A      | Y      | N    | 13         |
| 15                 | S    | A      | M      | X    | 22         |
| 16                 | S    | A      | M      | N    | 8          |
| 17                 | I    | C      | Y      | X    | 18         |
| 18                 | I    | C      | Y      | N    | 2          |
| 19                 | I    | C      | M      | X    | 19         |
| 20                 | I    | C      | M      | N    | 1          |
| 21                 | I    | A      | Y      | X    | 16         |
| 22                 | I    | A      | Y      | N    | 10         |
| 23                 | I    | A      | M      | X    | 18         |
| 24                 | I    | A      | M      | N    | 6          |

D=Diplomacy  
 S=Subversion  
 I=Invasion  
 C=Curtail strategic assistance  
 A=Assistance continues  
 Y=Yield to others  
 M=Martial action  
 X=Does not develop nuclear weapons

N=Develops nuclear weapons

*Note:* The procedure for the pairwise comparisons is presented in appendix B.

### Ranking the Alternate Futures

This section ranks the alternate futures from the highest to the lowest relative probability. The future with the highest relative probability has the most “votes.” Therefore, in this section the futures are “rank-ordered from ‘most likely’ to ‘least likely’ based upon the number of votes received” (Lockwood and Lockwood 1993, 43). Since there are *two* scenarios, the results are once again organized in *two* separate tables.

**Table 3. Rank-ordering the futures for Scenario 1 (Iran does *not* sponsor jihadist violence)**

| Alternate Future # | U.S. | Russia | Israel | Iran | # of Votes |
|--------------------|------|--------|--------|------|------------|
| 6                  | D    | A      | Y      | N    | 23         |
| 2                  | D    | C      | Y      | N    | 22         |
| 1                  | D    | C      | Y      | X    | 21         |
| 14                 | S    | A      | Y      | N    | 20         |
| 9                  | S    | C      | Y      | X    | 18         |
| 13                 | S    | A      | Y      | X    | 18         |
| 10                 | S    | C      | Y      | N    | 16         |
| 15                 | S    | A      | M      | X    | 16         |
| 8                  | D    | A      | M      | N    | 14         |
| 3                  | D    | C      | M      | X    | 14         |
| 7                  | D    | A      | M      | X    | 13         |
| 16                 | S    | A      | M      | N    | 13         |
| 11                 | S    | C      | M      | X    | 12         |
| 4                  | D    | C      | M      | N    | 11         |
| 5                  | D    | A      | Y      | X    | 9          |
| 12                 | S    | C      | M      | N    | 8          |
| 21                 | I    | A      | Y      | X    | 7          |
| 17                 | I    | C      | Y      | X    | 6          |
| 22                 | I    | A      | Y      | N    | 5          |
| 23                 | I    | A      | M      | X    | 4          |
| 19                 | I    | C      | M      | X    | 3          |
| 18                 | I    | C      | Y      | N    | 2          |
| 24                 | I    | A      | M      | N    | 1          |
| 20                 | I    | C      | M      | N    | 0          |

D=Diplomacy  
 S=Subversion  
 I=Invasion  
 C=Curtail strategic assistance  
 A=Assistance continues  
 Y=Yield to others  
 M=Martial action  
 X=Does not develop nuclear weapons  
 N=Develops nuclear weapons

**Table 4. Rank-ordering the futures for Scenario 2 (Iran sponsors jihadist violence)**

| Alternate Future # | U.S. | Russia | Israel | Iran | # of Votes |
|--------------------|------|--------|--------|------|------------|
| 11                 | S    | C      | M      | X    | 23         |
| 15                 | S    | A      | M      | X    | 22         |
| 19                 | I    | C      | M      | X    | 19         |
| 9                  | S    | C      | Y      | X    | 18         |
| 17                 | I    | C      | Y      | X    | 18         |
| 23                 | I    | A      | M      | X    | 18         |
| 3                  | D    | C      | M      | X    | 17         |
| 21                 | I    | A      | Y      | X    | 16         |
| 13                 | S    | A      | Y      | X    | 15         |
| 4                  | D    | C      | M      | N    | 13         |
| 14                 | S    | A      | Y      | N    | 13         |
| 10                 | S    | C      | Y      | N    | 13         |
| 7                  | D    | A      | M      | X    | 12         |
| 8                  | D    | A      | M      | N    | 11         |
| 22                 | I    | A      | Y      | N    | 10         |
| 16                 | S    | A      | M      | N    | 8          |
| 2                  | D    | C      | Y      | N    | 7          |
| 24                 | I    | A      | M      | N    | 6          |
| 6                  | D    | A      | Y      | N    | 5          |
| 1                  | D    | C      | Y      | X    | 5          |
| 12                 | S    | C      | M      | N    | 4          |
| 18                 | I    | C      | Y      | N    | 2          |
| 20                 | I    | C      | M      | N    | 1          |
| 5                  | D    | A      | Y      | X    | 0          |

D=Diplomacy  
 S=Subversion  
 I=Invasion  
 C=Curtail strategic assistance  
 A=Assistance continues  
 Y=Yield to others  
 M=Martial action

X=Does not develop nuclear weapons

N=Develops nuclear weapons

## **Narrative Analysis of the Most Likely Alternate Futures**

This section analyzes the three most likely futures for each scenario. Also, this section answers this study's specific research question—will Iran develop nuclear weapons? A full discussion of *every* future would make this study excessively long. Many of the alternate futures need not be treated in depth, since those futures are highly improbable. However, evaluating the three most likely futures is sufficient to portray a variety of possibilities, while at the same time avoiding repetitive explanations for why the actors choose particular strategic options. This study will now explore pathways by which Iran may or may not become a nuclear power.

### ***The Most Likely Futures in Scenario 1***

#### 1. Alternate Future #6

Alternate Future #6 is the most likely alternate future. The United States makes diplomatic overtures to Iran, Russia provides nuclear assistance to Iran, Israel leaves Iran's nuclear fate up to others, and Iran develops nuclear weapons. The U.S. makes the first move, and American officials are concerned that

targeting Iran's nuclear facilities risks leaving other covert facilities and Iran's cadre of nuclear technicians untouched. More important, any overt military attack would give Tehran a *casus belli* either to withdraw from the NPT or to rally Islamic Jihadists to wage war against the U.S. and its allies more directly. (Sokolski 2005, 52)

The U.S. is also worried that “any misstep in the campaign to deter Iran from developing nuclear technology that might be used for an atomic bomb could lead to an explosion in the cost of oil” (Dickey 2006, 38). Thus, since Iran does not support intense jihadist

violence, the United States assumes that it can work with the Iranian government. Tehran avoids stirring up radical Islamist terror, which presents Washington with an opportunity to seek a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue. “A constructive engagement with Tehran has the potential of convincing Iran to use its influence and intelligence capabilities to reduce tensions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and on the West Bank” (Bahgat 2007, 17). The Islamic Republic would not necessarily cut off financial or spiritual support to its jihadist allies. The point is that Iran curtails its proxies’ militant operations so as to focus global attention away from the Iranian nuclear program.

Moscow exploits Washington’s diplomacy by continuing to sell weapons and technologies to the mullahs. Thus, the Kremlin ensures its strategic partnership with the Islamic Republic. “Although Russia will not be happy if Iran gains nuclear weapons, it is still, in Russian strategic thinking, vital to pursue the Iranian nuclear program as a facilitator of regional geopolitical considerations and a prerequisite for securing a place in the global power-production market” (Aras and Ozbay 2006, 135-136). Moscow also seeks to block Washington from gaining global strength at the Kremlin’s expense. “Nuclear diplomacy, particularly in the Iranian case, provides an opportunity for Russia to emerge as a globally responsible actor and to challenge U.S. unilateralism, which has created a sense of encirclement in Russia after increasing American involvement in Eurasia” (Aras and Ozbay 2006, 144).

The Israelis are overwhelmed by the situation, so the Israeli government yields to U.S. and world pressure and refrains from conducting military action against Iran or Iranian satellites. Israel wants to avoid attacking Hizbollah in Lebanon, which could spawn destruction across Lebanese society and create a further Islamist backlash against

the Jewish state. An attack against Tehran's nuclear facilities would be especially difficult. "Iranian nuclear installations are reported to be scattered throughout the country, in urban areas and in underground locations, and are protected by sophisticated defence systems" (Bahgat 2005b, 38). In addition, Jerusalem must take its foreign relations into account. "Iran's neighbors" will not

allow Israel use of their air space or territory against Iran due to the combined fear of backlashes and long-term harms to their economic and other ties with Tehran. Already, leaders of Turkey, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan have reassured Iran that this will not happen. (Afrasiabi and Kibaroglu 2005, 261)

The Shi'a-led government in Iraq is also opposed to an Israeli invasion of Iran. Simply put, Jerusalem doubts its military capabilities to deal with the issue, realizes it lacks the foreign backing to conduct a military campaign, and fears the consequences of its military option. Hence, Israel does not interfere with American diplomatic overtures toward Iran.

Undeterred, Tehran uses its political freedom of action to expand its nuclear capabilities and construct deliverable nuclear weapons. The exact timeline for this process is uncertain, but Iran's atomic weapons program would reach the point of no return by 2013, since the other actors did not take sufficient measures to thwart Iranian intentions or capabilities. "Iranian officials believe that the US military forces have their hands full in Iraq and Afghanistan and the United States has neither the stomach nor the resources to embark on another military confrontation" (Bahgat 2005b, 33). Iran may feel "that now is the best time to accelerate its nuclear program" (Schake 2007, 7). From Tehran's point of view, Washington has no choice but to engage in diplomacy. Yet regardless of U.S. setbacks or improvements in Afghanistan or Iraq, Iran wants nuclear weapons as a hedge against future U.S. aggression toward the Islamic Republic.

“Nuclear weapons – however crude – and nuclear-capable delivery systems – however rudimentary – are perceived by Tehran as the only equalizers against America’s high-tech conventional weaponry, deployed so effectively in the two wars against Iraq” (Ayooob 2006, 151). The Islamic Republic would also want to hedge against powers such as Russia or Pakistan.

The Islamic Republic has made tremendous inroads in the Middle East. Tehran “is hovering on the verge of serious success. Its clients are close to power in Iraq, Lebanon, and among the Palestinians. Its popularity among Arabs and Sunnis is at an all-time high” (B. Rubin 2007, 61). At present, the mullahs possess the power to solidify and extend their doctrine of expanded autonomy. Iran could provide nuclear cover to its satellites, who in turn could provide a jihadist buffer against foreign intrusions on Iranian sovereignty.

## 2. Alternate Future #2

Alternate Future #2 is the second most likely alternate future. This future is similar to Alternate Future #6. The U.S. still uses diplomacy, Israel still yields to others, and Iran still develops nuclear weapons. However, the difference is that in Alternate Future #2, Russia curtails its strategic assistance to Iran. Russia makes a strategic decision to reduce support for Iran. Moscow may withhold its support for Tehran, since Washington shows good will to Moscow and the world by adopting a less aggressive posture and engaging Tehran diplomatically over the nuclear issue. The Kremlin certainly does not wish to contend with a nuclear Islamic Republic in Central Asia. Vladimir Putin may already “have been offended by any proposal even to discuss dividing the region into spheres of influence with Iran since this would imply that Tehran

is the equal of Moscow, at least in this part of the world” (Katz 2008, 207). However, if Iran were to develop nuclear weapons, then Prime Minister Putin and the Russians may have little choice but to cede additional regional power to Iran.

Also, the Kremlin might actually think, know, or discover that the Islamic Republic is about to produce nuclear weapons, or that the Islamic Republic has the potential to produce a massive stockpile of nuclear weapons. Since Russia wants to keep Iran out of the nuclear club, Russia would reduce or withdraw diplomatic, economic, or military support for Iran. Moscow would hope that Washington and others would develop a more aggressive approach against Tehran. Nevertheless, in this explanation for Alternate Future #2, Iran still becomes an atomic power.

Finally, Russia may worry that Iran could reciprocate America’s diplomatic overtures and that an American-Iranian partnership could emerge. “Tehran’s rapprochement with Washington may change many regional balances from the perspective of Russian priorities in the region” (Aras and Ozbay 2006, 144). Another problem is that an American-Iranian relationship may bolster Iran’s regional and international status. Washington’s strategic posture would improve as well. Still, Moscow chooses to punish and undermine Tehran by withdrawing diplomatic, weapons, and nuclear assistance, in the hopes that Washington and Tehran’s nuclear settlement would prove to be excessively costly or unproductive over time—in both economic and political terms—for Washington and Tehran. Russia might then resume its close strategic partnership with Iran. In the meantime, Russia would look for new partners in the energy, nuclear, and weapons sectors.

Israel simply restrains itself in the hopes that American diplomatic overtures and Russia's withdrawal of support will prove effective. Once again, though, Iran produces nuclear weapons. "The decision to give up the nuclear aspiration is a strategic decision. States, however, are capable of overcoming most of the technological hurdles and will endure economic hardships if they perceive nuclear weapons as essential to their survival" (Bahgat 2005a, 413). Since no major power has provided Iran with a good enough incentive to forego the nuclear option, Iran continues on its nuclear course. Iran cannot trust the United States to stay out of Iranian affairs. Tehran also wants to protect itself against Moscow's ambitions. "For if Khamene'i did indeed suggest that Moscow and Tehran divide the Middle East and Central Asia into spheres of influence, Putin's rejection of this may have been seen in Tehran as showing that he does not intend to concede any part of the region to Iran" (Katz 2008, 207).

Moreover, the Islamic Republic develops the *capability* to assemble and deliver the bomb. Tehran produces nuclear materials of sufficient quality and quantity for nuclear weapons. "The vigorously developed missile industry of Iran is supposed—along with Russian-supplied aircraft—to provide reliable carriers for potential nuclear warheads" (Mizin 2004, 76). Even if there were gaps in Iran's program, Iran could still receive assistance from state or non-state actors. In the nuclear market of the twenty-first century, "there are more buyers and sellers and despite increasing international efforts to restrict trade in nuclear technology and material, there is a black market for such trade" (Bahgat 2005a, 406). Ultimately, Iran takes advantage of U.S. diplomatic overtures. Tehran becomes a nuclear power.

### 3. Alternate Future #1

Alternate Future #1 has the third highest relative probability. This future appears to follow a similar course to Alternate Future #2, since the U.S. engages Iran diplomatically, Russia curtails strategic assistance to Iran, and Israel lets others decide Iran's nuclear status. The major distinction is that in Alternate Future #1, Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. Russia's withdrawal of strategic support may force the Islamic Republic to abandon its atomic program. "The decision to halt or abandon nuclear programs occurs when officials in a state are convinced that their country would be better off economically, diplomatically and even militarily without nuclear weapons than with them" (Bahgat 2005a, 413). Tehran would simply calculate that it is vulnerable diplomatically, commercially, or militarily to foreign coalitions. The mullahs might feel vulnerable to the United States in specific. Even though Washington has engaged cooperatively with Tehran, any bold actions on the part of Tehran, such as developing nuclear weapons, could change the American stance toward Iran. In the past, the mullahs have "tried to avoid actions that might lead to military confrontation – which would be extremely unpopular – reducing Iran's hostility toward the United States during the 1990s, backing away from a war with the Taliban in 1998, and avoiding conflict with U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq" (Gasiorowski 2007, 129). Tehran may back away from developing the bomb to save itself from a future American, or possibly Israeli invasion. In addition, the Islamic Republic may only face minor regional threats, which it would not want to inflame by pursuing atomic weapons. Without Russian support, Iran could face further animosity from Middle Eastern or Central Asian states. Yet a

weakened Iraq or a weakened Pakistan might sooth Iran's nerves about its decision to sacrifice the nuclear option.

Alternatively, Iran may not possess the *capability* to develop nuclear weapons. Tehran might never master the scientific and engineering skills to produce the necessary nuclear materials, or Tehran might fail to construct the appropriate delivery systems. Additionally, Iran's nuclear program could suffer from a lack of internal or external funding. Iran would probably lack the oil or natural gas funds to properly invest in its atomic weapons program.

### ***Synopsis of the Most Likely Futures in Scenario 1***

This subsection provides an overall analysis of the most likely futures in Scenario 1. Those futures, taken as a whole, provide several key insights. First, the U.S. will probably rely on diplomacy to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Diplomacy is the first choice for the United States, since American troops are already engaged in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. forces are also spread throughout the world, but must be prepared to handle strategic emergencies. The point is that Washington does not possess infinite resources or infinite manpower to fight with Iran militarily. The United States thinks that even subversion is a risky strategy. Americans could pay a high price for subversion if that subversion sparks a war with the Islamic Republic. Indeed, the U.S. would then worry about sacrificing too many lives and too much economic strength. It is possible that Washington could choose diplomacy because it calculates that diplomacy will offer the best solution for keeping Iran out of the nuclear club. The U.S. may think that invading the Islamic Republic is the most *effective* option. However, since Iran has refrained from backing jihadist operations, the United

States has little political recourse for attacking Iran. Subversion would probably be more effective than diplomacy. Nonetheless, from the U.S. standpoint, diplomacy is the most practical option to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons *and* to avoid further animosity from the Islamic world and beyond.

Second, if Russia continues its strategic assistance to Iran, then Iran will probably develop nuclear weapons. Moscow does not want Tehran to become a nuclear power. However, the Kremlin must consider the importance of its economic and strategic interests with the Islamic Republic. Russia may feel it needs an alliance with Iran to counter U.S. influence in the Russian near abroad. In addition, Russo-Iranian energy deals and weapons deals provide Russia with strategic advantages over Iran. Put differently, the Iranians are strategically dependent on Russia. Tehran needs Moscow's technical expertise in nuclear and military matters. Another reason that Russia would continue its strategic assistance is that Iran and Russia share an interest in stifling the ambitions of other actors in Central Asia, the Middle East, South Asia, and possibly even Europe. Ultimately, the main idea is that if Moscow continues providing Tehran with strategic assistance, then absent U.S. subversion or an American or Israeli invasion, Tehran will likely join the nuclear club.

Russia may realize that the Islamic Republic is about to develop atomic weapons. The Kremlin might calculate that an Iran with a *limited* nuclear capability is preferable to an Iran that feels encircled by the world militarily. Moscow does not want to see bloodshed from the Middle East spill over into Central Asia. Thus, Russia provides diplomatic cover for the Islamic Republic to prevent an American-Iranian or Israeli-Iranian war. The Russo-Iranian partnership offers a plethora of benefits to the Kremlin.

Therefore, regardless of whether or not Washington employs diplomacy or subversion, Moscow will probably continue supporting Tehran strategically, even if Moscow's support leads to a *nuclear* Tehran.

Third, Israel does not interfere with U.S. or Russian actions. Jerusalem may be pressured by Washington to stay out of the nuclear issue. Israel may also want to avoid any deterioration in the already tenuous Russo-Israeli relationship. Even more important, Israel might lack the will or capability to attack Iranian forces, Iranian proxies, or Iran itself. Israel may be too fractured by economic problems or political calculations to take decisive military action. Besides, the Jewish state might be concerned that if it employs the military option, then the Jewish state could experience a surge in terrorism.

Once again, Israel might think that it is *incapable* of hindering Iran's nuclear progress. The Jewish state may feel that it lacks the intelligence and military capacities to alter Iran's nuclear intentions or capabilities. Jerusalem, therefore, either willingly or under compulsion, "chooses" to let others deal with Tehran. Still, Israel chooses a course of action that *increases* the chances for a nuclear Iran.

Fourth, Iran will probably develop atomic weapons. Perhaps a joint effort between the United States and Russia could prevent such an eventuality. If the U.S. employs diplomacy and Russia curtails strategic assistance to Iran, then Iran might be hard-pressed to become an atomic power. The United States would like to avoid another war in the Islamic world. That being said, American diplomacy will probably not, by itself, alter Tehran's nuclear motives or nuclear capabilities. In addition, U.S. diplomatic overtures, under the mantra of offering "carrots and sticks," would do little to damage Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Russia may experience difficulty in influencing Iran's nuclear status. If Russia stops supporting Iran, then Iran will probably still develop atomic weapons—since the U.S. will probably not engage in subversion, and Israel will probably not conduct military operations. The Islamic Republic may no longer even require Russian assistance. In the end, Tehran may face little resistance from Washington *or* Moscow.

### ***The Most Likely Futures in Scenario 2***

#### 1. Alternate Future #11

Alternate Future #11 has the highest relative probability. The U.S. employs subversion, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel employs martial action, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The United States decides that subversion is the best choice to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Ultimately, the U.S. thinks that diplomacy cannot satiate Iran's appetite for power and influence. From the American vantage point, Iran must be confronted for continuing to spread global jihad. A nuclear Islamic Republic could actually use nuclear weapons or promote even more intense radical Islamist activity. In U.S. eyes, Iran would not be easily deterred militarily. The main problem that Washington faces, though, is that American troops are busy fighting the war on terror throughout the world. U.S. officials calculate that a military invasion of Iran would be too costly in terms of U.S. lives and the U.S. economy.

Still, Washington may use sanctions, draw on intelligence capabilities, employ paramilitary operations, establish blockades, back anti-Iranian groups in the Middle East and elsewhere, and conducts other measures to keep Tehran out of the nuclear club. President Bush has already "authorized the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control to ban transactions between U.S. citizens and Iranian banks accused of financing

Tehran's missile program and its main security force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)" (Newkirk 2008, 34). Washington now decides to continue pursuing similar measures more vigorously. The U.S. could also strengthen the Proliferation Security Initiative. "One of the most successful achievements of the PSI was in October 2003 when the U.S., U.K., German, and Italian governments worked together to arrange the diversion of a shipment of centrifuge components bound for Libya" (Bahgat 2005a, 421). Thus, Washington works with its allies to more closely monitor and interdict shipments passing through the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, and other international waters. This would make it increasingly difficult for Iran to do commercial, nuclear, or military business. The U.S. also ensures that a "significant U.S. military presence remains" across Iran's regional neighborhood (Gasiorowski 2007, 130). Washington may even take the opportunity to use more "surveillance drones" over Iranian airspace, "to gather information on its nuclear weapons program and defense capabilities" (Vakil 2005, 187). The U.S. could expose this information and force Iran to give up its nuclear activities. Finally, the United States may encourage Israel to attack Iran's governmental, military, or atomic installations.

Russia supports, or at least does not interfere with the American position. Moscow decides to curtail its strategic assistance to Tehran. "In December 2005, when Tehran rejected Moscow's offer to proceed with uranium enrichment in Russia, some observers believed this was the last straw and that Russia would take a harder line. This was not the case" (Delpech 2007, 41). However, in light of Iran's jihadist exploits, Russia cringes. The Kremlin willingly cuts off its tenuous partnership with the Islamic Republic, out of fear that jihadist groups will target the Kremlin's interests. In addition,

Moscow would curtail its strategic support for Tehran, since it does not want to create a permanent rift in Russo-American relations. Russia tacitly accepts that Israel would probably, with U.S. support, invade Iran. The Jewish state likely does attack the Islamic Republic. Israel would probably use Iraqi airspace to invade Iran and destroy Iran's nuclear weapons facilities and some Iranian missile facilities. Israel could also aggressively fight Iran or its proxies outside of Iranian territory, in which case Iran might even lose its *inclination* to develop nuclear arms. Jerusalem would prefer the more decisive option of invasion. Either way, though, U.S. subversion and Israeli martial action prevent Iran from constructing the bomb.

## 2. Alternate Future #15

Alternate Future #15 is the second most likely alternate future. This future is in some ways similar to Alternate Future #11. In both futures, the U.S. employs subversion, Israel employs martial action, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. However, in Alternate Future #15, Russia decides to provide—instead of curtail—strategic assistance to Iran. “Russian-Iranian nuclear relations continue even under the worst international conditions, based on a mutual understanding that Iran satisfies Russian objectives and Russia protects Iranian interests” (Aras and Ozbay 2006, 145). Russia calculates that the mullahs' jihadist operations will not harm Russia's national or economic security.

Moscow continues to supply Tehran with diplomatic, nuclear, and weapons aid. “Though not the biggest customer for Russian weapons, Iran is an important one that Moscow does not want to lose. Iran is one of the only customers the Russian atomic-energy industry has. Gazprom has plenty of customers, but it does not want to compete with other gas suppliers for markets” (Katz 2006, 129). This Russo-Iranian relationship

will grow since Iran is more desperate for weapons to fend off the U.S. and Israel. Iran has already “bought Russian MiG and Sukoi combat aircraft, T72 tanks, Kilo class diesel submarines, and surface-to-air missile systems. Russian companies also appear to be primary suppliers of Iran’s ballistic missile programmes (training, testing equipment, and components)” (Delpech 2007, 39). Russia will attempt to continue its military sales to Iran, although the U.S. may interdict or deter a number of covert or overt arms shipments. Still, Moscow sustains its vital commercial and strategic partnership with Tehran.

The Kremlin also maintains its partnership with Iran to ensure that the United States does not seek undue influence in the Middle East at the expense of Russia. It is bad enough that the U.S. has already inserted itself into Central Asia. “The greatest risk for Russia is that the American (or American-led intervention will succeed and replace the present Iranian regime with a pro-Western one that drastically curtails economic cooperation with Russia” (Katz 2006, 129). Ultimately, the Kremlin remains undaunted by Tehran’s nuclear program. Russia either thinks that it can manage the risks posed by an Iran with a minimal nuclear weapons capability, or that Iran will not even develop nuclear weapons in the first place.

Moscow’s continued support for Tehran does not deter Washington or Jerusalem from taking assertive measures. The United States engages in subversion against Iran. U.S. subversion includes ideological, diplomatic, and logistical support for Israeli military strikes against Iran or Iranian proxies. The American-Israeli alliance effectively overrides Russian assistance to the Islamic Republic. Inherent weaknesses in the Russo-Iranian alliance are exposed. Washington and Jerusalem deny Tehran a nuclear

capability through subversion and force, showing that Moscow is incapable of protecting Tehran's nuclear program.

### 3. Alternate Future #19

Alternate Future #19 has the third highest relative probability. This future appears analogous to Alternate Future #11. Both futures include a withdrawal of Russian strategic assistance, Israeli martial action, and a *non*-nuclear future for Iran. Still, in Alternate Future #19, the United States actually invades the Islamic Republic.

Although Iran has relatively large ground forces, its armored units, air force and navy are weak and antiquated. Formidable mountains and deserts protect its borders, and its major cities are well inland, so Iran cannot easily be conquered. However, its oil industry is very vulnerable. (Gasiowski 2007, 130)

The U.S. would retain the capacity to damage Iran's oil industry *and* shatter Iran's nuclear weapons infrastructure. "There is no doubt that Iran, despite its recent arms acquisitions, including cruise and anti-aircraft missiles, would be no match for America's weapons power" (Delpech 2007, 36). Washington decides that Tehran's support for jihadist aggression must be met with swift and overwhelming force. It is too risky, in the U.S. view, to allow a supporter of radical Islamist violence to develop nuclear weapons. Therefore, the United States attacks Iranian governmental, military, or nuclear installations. The governmental installations may include oil or natural gas networks.

Alternate Future #19 may not be the most likely future, but the combination of actions taken by the United States, Russia, and Israel, has the highest probability of keeping Iran out of the nuclear club. This high probability is due to the fact that the Kremlin does not interfere with the U.S. decision to invade the Islamic Republic. "In summer 2006, Russian policy was still ambiguous, even after the Lebanon crisis which showed Tehran's increased nuisance capability" (Delpech 2007, 46). Yet Russia may

now decide that Iran's sponsoring of jihad poses tremendous threats to Russia's physical safety, territorial interests, and commercial assets. Alternatively, Moscow might realize that it cannot stop Washington from conducting military operations against Iran. The Kremlin may indeed *want* to sustain its strategic relationship with the Islamic Republic. However, Russia might think that it can avoid American political and economic pressure by taking measures to tacitly support the U.S. military campaign.

Israel then joins a military alliance with the U.S. to destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure or alter Iran's nuclear calculations. "Iran's air-defense capabilities are limited, so U.S. warplanes and missiles can strike almost any target inside Iran easily and repeatedly. Israel can carry out limited air strikes inside Iran as well" (Gasiorowski 2007, 130). Another possibility is that Jerusalem could fight Tehran *outside* of Iranian territory or engage Tehran in proxy wars. This would force Tehran to reconsider its strategy and funding for the Iranian nuclear program. Nevertheless, Israel will undertake some sort of martial action against Iran. In Alternate Future #19, due to the actions of foreign powers, the Islamic Republic either becomes unwilling to acquire the bomb, or becomes incapable of acquiring the bomb.

### ***Synopsis of the Most Likely Futures in Scenario 2***

This subsection provides an overall analysis of the most likely futures in Scenario 2. Those futures, taken as a whole, provide several key insights. First, the United States will probably employ subversion against an Islamic Republic that actively supports jihad. It cannot be stressed enough that the U.S., as much as it would like to keep Iran out of the nuclear club, is nervous about invading Iranian territory. Washington is simply too worried about the potential consequences. The United States may invade Iran, and if it

does, then Iran will probably not develop nuclear weapons. Once again, though, the U.S. will likely use subversive activities, such as paramilitary operations, intelligence operations, economic and political sanctions, media campaigns, and possibly naval, air, or land blockades to prevent weapons or nuclear materials from entering Iran. The United States might even employ paramilitary and intelligence operations against Iran's nuclear or military facilities. In addition, Washington could engage in proxy wars with Tehran, forcing Tehran to divert its focus away from assembling the bomb. The main point is that America's subversive activities would be designed to alter Iran's nuclear *intentions*. Still, the United States may use subversion to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear *capability*, especially if that subversion includes an Israeli invasion of Iran's nuclear or military facilities. Washington could also support opposition groups within Iran. That support might effectively alter Tehran's intentions *or* capabilities. In the end, U.S. subversion will probably be effective in preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Second, Russia will likely withdraw strategic assistance to Iran, further paving the way for a *non*-nuclear Iran. Moscow may stop supplying Tehran with diplomatic, nuclear, and weapons assistance. Yet even if the Kremlin does curtail its strategic support, it will still have less of an impact in Scenario 2 than the United States or Israel. After all, Russia probably would not engage Iran militarily, and probably lacks the necessary resources and intelligence to prevent Iran from constructing nuclear arms in the first place—barring a massive Russian invasion or atomic strike, both of which the Russians would not consider any time soon. There is even a chance that Moscow would assist Tehran in the event of a U.S. attack against Iran. After all, Russia wants to keep

Iran as a strategic partner for Russia's own economic development, regional power, and global influence. Nevertheless, Russia maintains strategic leverage over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. The Kremlin would probably be inclined to exert that leverage to minimize the threat from a *jihadist* Iran. Thus, if Russia stops supporting Iran, then Iran is indeed less likely to develop nuclear weapons.

Third, Israel will probably employ martial action against Iran. Jerusalem would calculate that if Tehran sponsors jihadist operations, then the Jewish state would have to *militarily* prevent an irrational, radical Islamic Republic from developing nuclear weapons. In all likelihood, the martial action will include a military assault on Iran, especially if the U.S. has Israel invade Iran as part of a U.S. strategy of subversion. The invasion would probably be successful for the Israelis. The Jewish state may actually thwart Iran from attaining the *capability* to construct the bomb. Israel would likely conduct military attacks against Iran's nuclear and military installations. Jerusalem may also target Tehran's government facilities, perhaps further altering Iran's nuclear *intentions*. The mullahs might ultimately determine that developing nuclear weapons would encourage additional Israeli or U.S. attacks against the Islamic Republic.

Jerusalem could also execute measures that fall short of invasion. It is possible that Israel may fight proxy wars with Iran, or fight Iranian forces stationed *outside* of Iranian territory. If the United States takes the initiative in actually invading Iran, then Israeli officials may decide that an Israeli invasion is unnecessary. The U.S. might even compel the Jewish state to avoid taking *any* aggressive measures against the Islamic Republic. Eventually, though, with Washington's political, logistical, and financial

support, Jerusalem will probably execute some sort of military action to prevent Tehran from joining the nuclear club.

Fourth, Iran will likely be overwhelmed by the other actors. The top three alternate futures *all* lead to a non-nuclear Tehran. A joint American-Israeli invasion would almost certainly deny Iran a nuclear capability. That being said, either the United States or Israel alone could prevent Iran from developing the bomb. Russia's decision is not entirely irrelevant. The top alternate futures are not set in stone, and if Moscow provides strategic assistance to Tehran, then Tehran will at least have a *greater* chance of constructing atomic weapons. Still, Russia will likely withdraw its support for the Islamic Republic. The Kremlin would be quite concerned about a *nuclear* Iran that actively sponsors global jihad. Overall, then, Tehran is not strong enough politically or militarily to ensure itself a nuclear future.

### ***Answering the Specific Research Question***

Will Iran develop nuclear weapons? As long as Iran does *not* sponsor radical Islamist operations, then Iran probably *will* join the nuclear club. Tehran can escape the global spotlight by maintaining a low jihadist profile. The United States and Russia would think that they could negotiate with the Islamic Republic. Israel, without U.S. assistance, would have little political support for targeting Iran militarily. Ultimately, if the United States or Russia insists on drafting compromise solutions with Iran, then the mullahs will probably develop nuclear arms.

Alternatively, the Islamic Republic may sponsor jihadist operations. If Tehran does indeed advance jihad, then Tehran probably will *not* join the nuclear club. Iran's support for radical Islamist violence would further illuminate the potential dangers of a

*nuclear* Iran to the United States, Russia, and Israel. Washington would not view diplomacy as the most viable option. The United States would either attack the Islamic Republic or engage in sustained and intense subversion. Moscow might be sufficiently alarmed by Tehran's radical behavior. In the event of Iranian-sponsored jihadist operations, the Russians are likely to curtail strategic assistance to Iran. Israel would likely calculate that its life is at risk. Therefore, the Jewish state would probably conduct military attacks against Iran. Overall, if the U.S. or Israel determines that a *jihadist* Iran must be confronted with force, then the mullahs will be hard pressed to develop nuclear weapons. Tehran simply lacks the military strength to protect its nuclear program from either of the two Western powers. Thus, Washington or Jerusalem will probably ensure that Iran remains *incapable* of constructing the bomb.

It is reasonable to ask which of the two scenarios is the most likely. A systematic answer to that question, though, is beyond the realm of this study. Both scenarios are feasible, since Iran has reasons to support *and* not support jihad in the near future. Nevertheless, by analyzing the top three futures for Scenario 1, this study concludes that the Islamic Republic will probably develop nuclear weapons. By analyzing the top three futures for Scenario 2, this study concludes that the Islamic Republic will probably *not* develop nuclear weapons. Each scenario presents unique circumstances. Hence, the answer to the specific research question varies, depending on the strategic context. Still, the four major actors will have to face consequences, no matter which scenario occurs, and no matter which alternate future unravels. The next chapter predicts those consequences. Chapter 4 also shows how one alternate future can transform into another

alternate future, and explores events that could signal the coming about of a particular future.

## **Chapter 4**

### ***Strategic Implications and Signposts***

Chapter 4 showcases steps 9-12 of the LAMP. This chapter starts off with Step 9. Step 9 explores the potential consequences of the most likely alternate futures. The purpose of this is to show that the main actors will probably not solve the Iranian nuclear issue simply by determining the outcome of Iran's nuclear status. The nuclear crisis may be "solved," but other crises may arise as a result of the actors' choices.

Next, step 11 and step 12 further enhance the predictive capability of the LAMP. Step 11 assesses focal events, which are strategic markers that could signal the coming about of a particular future. Step 12 assesses indicators (predictors). Indicators are simply strategic markers, which could signal the coming about of a particular focal event. In effect, the indicators are the focal events of the focal events. Steps 11 and 12 are closely related sections of the LAMP that pave the way for step 10.

In this study, step 10 marks the last step of the LAMP. Step 10 examines how alternate futures may transpose or merge into other alternate futures. The future may indeed shift as time progresses and events unravel. Step 10 illuminates the fact that Iran's nuclear status and the circumstances surrounding Iran's nuclear status are subject to change. In this paper, the transpositions *follow* the indicators. The indicators come first, since they may alert the analyst to potential changes in the future.

Chapter 4 ends with a chapter digest. This digest ties the last pieces of the LAMP (steps 9-12) together with the heart of the LAMP analysis (steps 4-8). The digest also provides a link between the last few steps of the LAMP and this paper's conclusion.

Overall, chapter 4 shows that the Iranian nuclear issue carries many implications for global security.

## **Consequences**

This section predicts the consequences of the most likely alternate futures. Indeed, this section employs step 9 of the LAMP to discuss possible strategic ramifications for the four main actors—the United States, Russia, Israel, and Iran. An actor may have to endure negative repercussions, even if that actor is successful in affecting Tehran’s nuclear status. So although the United States, Russia, Israel, and Iran possess the power to influence whether or not Iran joins the nuclear club, those states still lack the power to completely engineer the future. Nonetheless, actors may also *benefit* from their decisions. Step 9 includes the negative *and* positive ramifications for each main actor. This section will now analyze consequences for the top three alternate futures in each scenario.

### ***Potential Consequences of Alternate Future #6 in Scenario 1***

In this alternate future, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia provides strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran develops nuclear weapons. The potential consequences for each actor are explained separately.

#### **1. The United States**

The United States must be prepared to deal with the repercussions of a more powerful and possibly more aggressive Iran. “Western attempts to conciliate Iran would be tougher since Tehran could maintain that it achieved nuclear weapons despite opposition from the West. Since it is so powerful, why should it make any concessions at

all to a side it sees as frightened and in historic decline?" (B. Rubin 2007, 62) Iran will have a nuclear deterrent, enabling it to spread its Shi'a Islamist influence, sometimes violently, across the Middle East. This may pose problems for Washington's strategy of fostering democracy and secular ideals across the Islamic world.

An Iranian nuclear deterrent would . . . probably function much as Soviet nuclear weapons did during the Cold War, amplifying Iran's diplomatic leverage within the region and complicating but not erasing the effects of American military commitments. (Dueck and Takeyh 2007, 205)

American influence will wane in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Iran recently refrained from supporting jihadist movements. The mullahs decided to maintain a low profile and shore up their strength while developing nuclear arms. Yet now Tehran might actually provide further funding and logistical support for Islamist terror groups. Iran has already shown the proclivity in this century to promote jihad. "Iran began to provide support to firebrand Iraqi Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army, which fought two major battles with U.S. forces in 2004, opposed the U.S.-backed constitution adopted by Iraq in October 2005, and increasingly attacked Iraqi Sunnis and U.S. forces in 2006 and early 2007" (Gasiorowski 2007, 126). Even today, "the Iranian capital is regularly accused by Washington of harbouring members of Al Qaeda" (Delpech 2007, 36). So the United States will have to endure a future in which the Islamic Republic once again becomes a jihadist power.

Another major problem for the U.S. involves nuclear proliferation as a whole. Would-be atomic powers would take advantage of the U.S. failure to deal successfully with the Islamic Republic.

As for negotiating directly with Tehran . . . , it would foster the view internationally that the only risk in violating required NPT inspections would be getting caught at it — and that the consequence of getting caught would amount to being bribed to limit only those activities the inspectors managed to discover. (Sokolski 2005, 53)

Since Iran develops nuclear weapons, other states in the Middle East, Central Asia, and perhaps Latin America or the Far East may develop nuclear weapons to either shore up their own defense doctrines, or in some instances to balance against Iran. Nevertheless, certain states may forego the nuclear option. These states would count on Washington to provide them with assistance in high-tech weaponry. “Countries such as Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia might be forced to deepen their ties with the United States or seek American permission to expand their nonconventional military arsenals” (Vakil 2005, 188).

The U.S. might have to alter many of its military strategies. Washington may decide that isolationism is a more attractive approach in foreign affairs. Alternatively, the U.S. could engage in a massive military buildup, spend billions of dollars on strategic and theater missile defense systems, and draft new plans for preventing and fighting nuclear wars. No matter which strategies the United States chooses, it may have to contend with rising trade and energy costs. A *nuclear* Iran would possess increased naval capabilities for blocking foreign access to energy resources in the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Tehran could even develop low-tech countermeasures for disrupting American sea forces from protecting civilian shipping. “Iran has surely attempted to determine the weakest points of the U.S. Navy. The 1998 attack on the USS *Cole*, has no doubt been a topic of interest for Iranian strategists” (Logan 2006, 8). Moreover, Iran would use terrorism and piracy to hinder oil production and commercial activity from the

Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. Tehran would almost certainly go after the weaker Gulf Arab states to impair the global economy. "Terrorism in Saudi Arabia . . . provides Iran with a quick, effective way to manipulate international oil prices" (Sokolski 2005, 58). The point is that the United States might need a grand strategy for providing increased naval security in the Islamic world. Still, if the U.S. chooses a more isolationist track, then it may reduce its global or regional naval impact, leading to a spike in terror incidents across the Middle East and South Asia. It is not exactly clear *how* American strategies might change. The likelihood, though, is that major U.S. strategies *will* change.

Finally, Washington's relations may sour with Moscow. The U.S. would likely be angered over Russia's decision to provide Iran with strategic assistance. Problems between Washington and Moscow would be exacerbated, including differences over ideologies, military doctrines, missile defense, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, energy resources, and European and Central Asian border disputes. Russia would indeed become the United States's political enemy.

## 2. Russia

Tehran's nuclear status will affect Moscow but it is not entirely clear *how*. At least for a time, Russo-Iranian relations may remain strong, as Russia will probably supply Iran with missile and dual-use technologies and Iran will support Russian policies in Central Asia. Nevertheless, there is a chance that the relationship will deteriorate.

A nuclear-armed Tehran may harm Moscow's interests in Russia, the Russian near abroad, and beyond. Central Asian governments could be intimidated by Iran's new stature or simply choose to bandwagon diplomatically and economically with the emerging Iranian state. Thus, the Islamic Republic may acquire leverage over energy

production and trade in the Caspian Sea. Russia may have to treat Iran as more of a partner in developing Central Asian resource markets. Also, powers such as India may accept Iran's nuclear status and forge closer strategic or economic ties with Iran at the expense of Russia.

It is even plausible that Moscow would witness political strife on its borders, since the mullahs would feel emboldened to support Islamist movements and discourage secular governments in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In the past, "Iran needed good relations with Russia (and so did not get involved in Chechnya or push too hard to gain influence in Moscow's former Muslim provinces) and even sided, in practice, with Christian Armenia against Muslim Azerbaijan" (B. Rubin 2003, 73). Yet a nuclear Iran would become increasingly powerful and may reduce its support for some of Russia's regional policies. Tehran may still want a strategic partnership with Moscow. However, the Islamic Republic may gain relative power in the Russo-Iranian relationship, thereby forcing the Kremlin to become more cautious in its regional dealings with the mullahs.

Finally, Moscow's relations with Washington may deteriorate further. The U.S. would likely be angered over Russia's decision to provide Iran with strategic assistance. "If Moscow were to sell Iran weapons that could greatly complicate the military position in the Persian Gulf region, the United States would most likely react in a highly negative manner" (Freedman 2006, 47). These Russian arms sales to Iran would put American forces at risk.

Such sales might include the new Russian ship-to-ship missiles with ranges of 120-280 kilometers that could threaten the U.S. fleet not only in the Persian Gulf but in the Indian Ocean, along with the improved version of the SAM-300 anti-aircraft missile that could engage American aircraft at high altitudes. (Freedman 2006, 47)

Other problems between Moscow and Washington would be exacerbated as well. Those problems include differences over ideologies, military doctrines, missile defense, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, energy resources, and European and Central Asian border disputes. The United States would indeed become Russia's political enemy.

### 3. Israel

Jerusalem must contend with a *nuclear* Tehran. This means that Iran and its allies will be emboldened to stage attacks against Israeli targets, as well as *possibly* other Jewish targets from Latin America to Western Europe. Already, "Lebanese Hizballah possesses thousands of missiles based in Israel's proximity" (Amuzegar 2006, 103). Hizballah is just waiting for an excuse to unload those missiles on the Jewish state over a period of time. Yet it is not just the Shi'a jihadists that will threaten Israel. Sunni jihadists from Hamas, for instance, will push even further for a "one state solution," in which there would be no Jewish autonomy. And Iran would certainly support Hamas's cause. In January 2002, "Israeli commandos seized the freighter *Karine A*, which apparently was transporting a large shipment of arms and explosives from Iran to the Palestinian Authority" (Gasirowski 2007, 126). That being said, Iran is even closer with the new Hamas leadership than it was with the Palestinian Authority (Fatah) leadership. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process would ultimately die in light of Iran's nuclear capability. "With Hamas winning more over Fatah—and Fatah pushed toward a harder line, perhaps even a deal with Iran—no Palestinian leader would negotiate seriously. This is already true, and it would be even more so" if Iran had nuclear weapons (B. Rubin 2007, 62).

Shi'a and Sunni jihadists alike would act with less fear of Israeli retribution. They would have access to increased Iranian weaponry for the purpose of weakening Israeli society over time. Jerusalem might hesitate to confront Tehran directly, since Tehran has acquired a nuclear deterrent. Therefore, Israel could remain locked in a long-term war with Iranian proxies, resulting in numerous Israeli and jihadist casualties. Jerusalem might beat back the jihadists or even carry out an invasion against Iran. Still, Israel would incur massive levels of violence. Israel would also face difficulty turning Iran back into a *non-nuclear* state.

Jerusalem may have to deal with the emergence of several new nuclear powers in the Middle East. These powers may include state actors such as Syria. Tehran might even supply Damascus with nuclear materials, technologies, facilities, and weapons. Moreover, Iran could knowingly provide groups such as Hizbollah with atomic arms, or such groups could steal atomic arms from Iran.

Israel's regional neighborhood would almost certainly become more dangerous. "After the Israeli-Hizbollah war of 2006, Hezbollah began to push for a larger role in Lebanese politics, organizing a series of demonstrations to intimidate its largely Sunni opponents" (Gasiorowski 2007, 127). Hizbollah would now push for even greater control of Lebanon, and Shi'a jihadists in Iraq would push for a strict interpretation of Islamic law. Both Hizbollah and the Iraqi jihadists would probably employ violence to achieve their religious and societal goals. "Under the protection of Iran's nuclear umbrella, Damascus would be more aggressive toward Israel, in subverting the Lebanese government, and in promoting insurgency in Iraq" (B. Rubin 2007, 61).

Political divisions between Iran and its neighbours on ethnic and religious lines would probably deepen, tensions surrounding Israel's regional role would

increase and an eroding security climate in the Middle East would have an impact on global oil economics. (Huntley 2006, 732)

Also, radical Islamist uprisings in places such as Jordan could increase instability on Israel's borders. The Middle East as a whole may remain unstable and under tyrannical rule. This tyrannical rule would almost certainly take on an increasingly *jihadist* nature.

It should not be discounted that Iran may actually launch a nuclear attack against Israel.

If Iran had nuclear bombs it might well use them to attack Israel, a situation that would produce hundreds of thousands of deaths—especially if a nuclear exchange followed—and provoke the biggest crisis in the region's history. This is a terrifying possibility no matter how low one assesses its chances of happening. (B. Rubin 2007, 58)

Israel "has developed several defensive and offensive capabilities in preparation for a possible military confrontation with Tehran. These include a missile defence system called arrow and a second-strike nuclear option – submarines" (Bahgat 2005b, 39). Still, based on the Islamic Republic's theocratic perceptions, the mullahs may decide to strike the Jewish state with atomic weapons. Jerusalem would then respond in kind and with greater force. Israeli retribution may destroy the Iranian state. However, if Israel's missile defense system proves ineffective, then Israel could be left in shambles and its remaining population terrorized by jihadist groups.

#### 4. Iran

Tehran may face three main drawbacks from its new nuclear capability (which will be discussed later). Yet Iran will likely reap many benefits. Tehran will probably gain ideological, strategic, and commercial power throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and beyond. First, Iran minimizes threats from the United States and Israel. Those Western powers are less likely to invade a *nuclear* Islamic Republic. Iran

will almost certainly use its proxies to conduct jihadist attacks against Israel, as well as American forces stationed overseas. Tehran may even sponsor terror attacks against the American homeland. Hizbollah already has forces stationed in the New World, including places such as Brazil. Due to the U.S. open-border policy, it would not be too difficult for Hizbollah to sneak its members into the United States and execute attacks against U.S. targets. Washington would hesitate to strike back with overwhelming force against a nuclear Iran.

Second, Iran's nuclear deterrent may allow Iran to pursue its policy of expanded autonomy. In other words, Iran might be able to protect itself *and* extend its influence to various states. "Iran could attempt to extend deterrence to external goals, such as the pursuit of regional hegemony or attempts to dominate Iraq, Azerbaijan, or even Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries" (Logan 2006, 17-18). "Even an independent-minded Iraqi government would feel that a strong, neighboring Iran was a more important factor to please than a distant and fickle United States" (B. Rubin 2007, 62). A nuclear Tehran will also gain greater influence in Beirut. Supreme Leader Khamenei may use Hizbollah to spread Iran's political and religious influence across Lebanon. There are indeed instances in which Iran cannot directly manipulate governments across the Islamic world. Still, the mullahs may support jihadist factions in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere, to weaken foreign governments and ensure Iran's position as a rising Asian power.

Third, Iran may achieve greater diplomatic and economic strength. States such as the United States might be forced to accept Iran's new status as a nuclear power. Those states will have to grant Iran further concessions and influence. Tehran might be allowed

to gain access to business ventures and advanced scientific technologies, as multinational firms tap into Iran's vast energy potential.

Iran may vastly improve its global position relative to other powers. Already, "for the past several years, Iran has successfully cultivated commercial and energy ties with major Asian and European powers" (Bahgat 2007, 16). At the expense of Russia, a nuclear Iran could now improve its domestic energy production by expanding ties with states in Europe, East Asia, and Central Asia. Central Asian governments could be intimidated by Iran's new stature, or simply choose to bandwagon diplomatically and economically with the emerging Iranian state. Thus, the Islamic Republic may acquire leverage over energy production and trade in the Caspian Sea. Russia would then have to treat Iran as more of a partner in developing Central Asian resource markets. Also, states such as India may accept Iran's nuclear status and forge closer strategic or economic ties with Iran. The Islamic Republic might expand its relations with a range of Non-Aligned states, or even expand its relations with anti-American states. Iran may promote a strategic relationship with Venezuela to counter U.S. regional and global ambitions. This type of relationship would certainly be profitable, since both Iran and Venezuela are interested in advancing their respective energy industries.

Fourth, Iran may be able to bolster its military relations and capabilities. Since Iran is now a member of the nuclear club, some states will accept this fact and engage in major weapons deals with the Islamic Republic. Moreover, "Iran would, like North Korea, have the potential to export fissile materials, nuclear weapons development technologies and expertise, or even completed operational weapons" (Huntley 2006, 732). Some of those deals may be covert. After all, many states would still seek to avoid

tensions with the United States. Russo-Iranian strategic ties could grow stronger or weaker, depending on how Iran maneuvers to gain influence throughout Central Asia. Nevertheless, at least for a time, Russia will probably supply Iran with missile and dual-use technologies. Other Eastern, Non-Aligned, or Arab states may also jump into the fray. Eager to expand their own influence in the Islamic world, Beijing and New Delhi may supply Tehran with military equipment to ensure that Chinese or Indian interests are not threatened by a nuclear Islamic Republic.

Iran would almost certainly develop sophisticated military capabilities on its own. It could then supply advanced weapons to Syria, further strengthening or recapturing the Iranian-Syrian alliance. The mullahs would also demonstrate their new-found strength by embarking on new naval programs in the Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea, and possibly other waters across the Islamic world. Tehran would also generate new naval, land, air, and space capabilities for protecting its nuclear arsenal and for finding enhanced means to launch nuclear missiles or detonate nuclear explosions. A nuclear Iran will use military procurements to achieve expanded autonomy.

Fifth, Iran may spread its theocratic influence across the Islamic world and beyond. Tehran will almost certainly become a greater sponsor of terror, as it improves terror training camps in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, in Iran itself, and possibly in Iraq. "A tidal wave of recruitment to radical Islamist movements throughout the Arab world would take place and these groups would be more aggressive in fighting regimes (notably in Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt), including the use of violence" (B. Rubin 2007, 61). Aside from just its terrorist credentials, Iran's strict interpretation of Islamic law may gain credibility throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. Tehran has

already demonstrated its capability to inspire Islamist movements. “Those groups which would become the leading opposition forces—the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, Hizballah in Lebanon; Hamas among the Palestinians, and so on—were new groups created in the Islamic revolution’s wake” (B. Rubin 2003, 71). Central Asian governments will probably remain secular. However, Iran could weaken these governments by tacitly supporting Islamist cultural movements in states such as Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. Eventually, the Islamic Republic’s theocratic influence may gain more traction in the Balkans, Latin America, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. This would be an indicator that Iran could extend its religious power to all regions of the globe. Not all regions or states would accept the Iranian version of Islam, or any other strict interpretations of Islamic law. Still, a place such as Great Britain or Argentina may permit the domestic development of Iranian-backed Islamist mosques or social institutions.

Once again, Iran may face three main problems as a result of its nuclear weapons capability. One of those problems is establishing internal control over the entire nuclear weapons program—not to mention weapons, devices, or vehicles designed for nuclear attacks. The mullahs do support groups such as Hizbollah, but the mullahs themselves will want to determine *if* they should use their nuclear arsenal, and when and where they might do so. Iran may decide to give atomic weapons to its allies. However, there is no guarantee that these allies would follow Iranian instructions for using or not using nuclear arms. It is possible that Tehran would never provide its friends or satellites with nuclear capabilities. Nevertheless, Iran will still expend resources to protect its atomic weapons program from proxies or domestic rogue elements. The Islamic Republic will have to

safeguard nuclear facilities, nuclear components, nuclear technologies, nuclear research, nuclear strategic plans, nuclear designs, nuclear materials, nuclear weapons, non-nuclear weapons, non-nuclear weapons designs, non-nuclear weapons research, and so forth.

Another negative consequence is regional proliferation. Proliferation even includes the spread of non-nuclear weapons and technologies. Iran's enemies may decide that the only way to counter Iran is to increase spending on either nuclear or non-nuclear weaponry. State and non-state actors may purchase, develop, or otherwise acquire massive amounts of high- *or* low-tech arms. Yet the greatest danger to Iran is a regional nuclear arms race. "Iran's acquisition is likely to precipitate serial proliferation in neighboring states, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and possibly even, one day, Iraq. It will exacerbate tension between Sunni and Shi'ite, and Arab and Persian communities" (Schake 2007, 16). Iran's Middle Eastern neighbors may never attain the technical capability or strategic wherewithal to develop nuclear weapons. That being said, a nuclear arms race could provoke violent clashes among many of the region's actors. At the very least, the Middle East would suffer politically and economically from ideological posturing, paranoid leaders, and paranoid populations.

The last main problem for Iran is that it may experience hostility from certain foreign powers. Some predominantly Islamic states may adopt a less-than-favorable approach to engaging diplomatically or economically with the Islamic Republic. Such states could include Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. It is possible that these states could grow even closer with the United States, resulting in the permanent large-scale presence of American forces in the Middle East. In addition, the United States and Israel may choose to subvert Iranian influence or even strike Iranian nuclear targets after discovering

Iran's nuclear capability. The Europeans may support American-Israeli efforts, since Iran proved that Euro-Iranian negotiations were futile. Tehran could then respond to the West but might suffer politically, ideologically, culturally, militarily, and economically in the process. Russia and other Eurasian powers may eventually turn their backs on Iran as well. If a Russo-Sino-Indo-Central Asian alliance comes to view the Islamic Republic as a rogue state, then the alliance may squeeze the Islamic Republic out of the nuclear, natural gas, and oil markets. Western states could potentially join forces with Eastern or Middle Eastern states to dismantle Iran's proxies through subversion or force. Iran would be cornered strategically, left only with its nuclear weapons—if even that.

Ultimately, the consequences for Iran would probably be more positive than negative. The mullahs would experience challenges in establishing governmental control over their nuclear program, but they would also reap many strategic and commercial benefits from their new nuclear capability. Many capitals would work with Tehran diplomatically, economically, and possibly militarily. The states that shun Iran may be hard-pressed to scale back Iran's nuclear weapons program or to prevent the spread of Iranian regional influence. The Islamic Republic may still face some Western animosity. Yet it is likely that the world as a whole, including the West, would feel forced to accept the emergence of a *nuclear* Iran.

### ***Potential Consequences of Alternate Future #2 in Scenario 1***

In this alternate future, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran develops nuclear weapons. The potential consequences for each actor are explained separately.

## 1. The United States

The consequences for the U.S. are similar to those in Alternate Future #6. However, in Alternate Future #2, Russo-American relations improve. Since Russia curtails its strategic assistance to Iran, Russo-American tensions decrease on issues ranging from Balkanized regions to the peaceful uses of space. Moscow would not quite become Washington's strategic ally. Still, the U.S. and Russia would work more cooperatively to solve problems in Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Far East. Washington may, at the very least, gain Moscow's full diplomatic support for dealing with the North Korean nuclear program.

## 2. Russia

Some of the consequences for Russia are comparable to those in Alternate Future #6. However, in Alternate Future #2, there are a couple of important differences. Iran would make it a point to create more problems for Russia in Central Asia. Tehran might openly support Islamist movements in places such as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Another possibility is that Iran could forge close alliances with other Asian powers, such as China, to counter Russia's energy and political interests across the Islamic world. If nothing else, Russia would have a difficult time preventing Iran from gaining more power in the Caspian region. Russia and Iran, along with other regional states, already face problems over "how to demarcate their maritime borders, divide the considerable petroleum reserves believed to lie underneath the seabed, and regulate the transshipment of oil and gas across the Caspian" (Katz 2008, 209). Since Russia has abandoned Iran, Iran will become even less cooperative with Russia in dealing with maritime and resource issues.

Yet the situation for Moscow may actually become much worse. As Iran further enhances the operational capabilities of its nuclear and missile forces, it may decide to point its weapons toward an “uncooperative” Kremlin. There is also a remote chance that Iran may sponsor low-level maritime terrorism against Russia. This terrorism could occur in the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, or elsewhere.

Last, Russo-American relations improve. Since the United States does not invade yet another nation, Russo-American tensions decrease on issues ranging from Balkanization to the peaceful uses of space. The United States was previously ready “to order NASA to procure more services from the Russian aviation and space agency and to pay for some additional work on the International Space Station. The Iranian link, however, was the only obstacle to this” (Mizin 2004, 77). Now that Russia has distanced itself from Iran, fewer obstacles can impede Russo-American relations in outer space and on Earth. Washington would not quite become Moscow’s strategic ally. Still, Russia and the U.S. would work more cooperatively to solve problems in Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Far East.

### 3. Israel

The consequences for Israel are nearly the same as those in Alternate Future #6. One possible difference is that in Alternate Future #2, Israel could receive a modicum of Russian diplomatic support for Israel’s fight against the Iranian-backed jihadists. Moscow might be sufficiently alarmed by Tehran’s nuclear capability that it assists Jerusalem against the radical Islamist forces.

#### 4. Iran

The consequences for Iran are similar to those in Alternate Future #6. However, in Alternate Future #2, Russo-Iranian relations will almost certainly sour. Moscow sided with Washington, and so Tehran will be less inclined to consult with the Kremlin about spreading Iranian ideological, political, and economic influence throughout the Russian near abroad. Disputes over access to Caspian Sea energy resources may intensify. In addition, Russia will not restore its strategic assistance to a *nuclear* Islamic Republic. There is even a chance that Russia will become Iran's political enemy, especially if Iran vigorously supports Chechen radicals or jihadist groups across Central Asia.

#### ***Potential Consequences of Alternate Future #1 in Scenario 1***

In this alternate future, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The potential consequences for each actor are explained separately.

##### 1. The United States

If the United States uses diplomacy to successfully thwart Iran's nuclear program, then Iran might choose to develop other powerful weapons, or even revive its support for jihadist operations. In terms of jihadist operations, Iran may become more inventive in attacking U.S. interests. "Terrorists are increasingly using media outlets and the internet (5<sup>th</sup> dimensional space) to wage havoc" (Hazim and Bunker 2006, 444). Tehran may by itself, or through its state or non-state allies, promote a fierce campaign of cyber warfare against the United States, although the mullahs and their friends may lack the technical skills to wage this type of warfare effectively. In terms of developing powerful weapons, Iran could work on constructing biological, chemical, and space-based arms. Thus,

Tehran might still gain the military power to spread its influence across the Islamic world and beyond. However, there is no guarantee that Iran will produce these deadly weapons. There is also no guarantee that Iran's possession of these *alternative* arms would be as useful as Iran's possession of *nuclear* arms.

A *non-nuclear* Iran would be tentative in sponsoring radical Islamist activity. Yet the United States might still face an Islamic Republic that attacks U.S. interests in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the rest of the Middle East. Iran might not assist or direct major attacks against American or other Western targets, for fear of incurring massive conventional or possibly nuclear retaliation. Tehran would lack the capability to strike back with nuclear weapons. The United States and its Western or Islamic allies *could* still suffer from Iranian terrorism. After all, Tehran might calculate that Washington would continue a diplomatic strategy for resolving crises. Iran would think that a nuclear U.S. would be hesitant to respond aggressively to Iranian-backed jihad, since Iran has already complied with the United States' nuclear nonproliferation agenda.

Overall, violence would probably decrease throughout the Middle East. There is a *chance* that violence and war might increase in the region, due to long-standing ethnic, religious, and ideological feuds, and due to the absence of nuclear deterrence. Nevertheless, the prospects of a nuclearized Middle East and a nuclearized world would decrease. Thus, the U.S. could more safely control energy developments and commercial activity across the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf regions. Washington would also retain its influence over political developments in the Islamic world. Ultimately, no regional challenger could offer nuclear threats to impede America's involvement in Middle Eastern, Central Asian, or South Asian affairs.

Russo-American relations improve. Since Russia curtails its strategic assistance to Iran, Russo-American tensions decrease on issues ranging from Balkanization to the peaceful uses of space. Moscow would not quite become Washington's strategic ally. Still, the U.S. and Russia would work more cooperatively to solve problems in Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Far East. Washington may, at the very least, gain Moscow's full diplomatic support for dealing with the North Korean nuclear program.

## 2. Russia

Moscow benefits from this alternate future, as Tehran is denied entrance into the nuclear club. First, Iran remains dependent on Russia for weapons and weapons technologies. Iran may improve its domestic military programs or receive military support from Western nations. However, Moscow will still orchestrate the majority of foreign arms deals with Tehran. Second, Russia retains a high level of influence in economic and political affairs in Central Asia. Tehran is unable to sufficiently contend with Moscow for control over energy resources in the Caspian Sea. The Islamic Republic also becomes hesitant to support jihad in Central Asia, especially since it could face a military response from a nuclear-armed Russia. A non-nuclear Iran might even lose the ability to fund and inspire many Shi'a and Sunnis theocrats. The bottom line for Russia is that Central Asia will remain secular.

Russo-American relations improve. Since the United States does not invade yet another nation, Russo-American tensions decrease on issues ranging from Balkanized regions to the peaceful uses of space. Washington would not quite become Moscow's strategic ally. Yet Russia would benefit from America's peaceful *and* effective choice

for keeping Iran out of the nuclear club. Russia and the U.S. would work more cooperatively to solve problems in Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Far East. Washington may even provide Moscow with increased technological support or energy-related assistance.

### 3. Israel

After Iran realizes that it will not develop nuclear weapons, it still promotes the destruction or “peaceful takeover” of Israel. Tehran adamantly supports Hamas’s political struggle against the Jewish state. The Islamic Republic calls for an ideological changing of the guard, not only in the Palestinian-claimed lands of the West Bank and Gaza, but in Israel as well. Tehran pushes for Muslims to help shift the demographics in Israel by giving birth to more children than the Jews, and by flooding Israel and the disputed territories with Muslim refugees.

Iran might also call for increased jihadist violence against Israel. This violence would be designed to cripple the Jewish state’s economy and strike fear into the hearts of its citizens. Jerusalem would probably endure Tehran’s strategy of a peaceful revolution. Furthermore, Israel would likely endure Iran’s jihadist exploits. That being said, at the very least the Israelis will experience low levels of Iranian-backed physical aggression. Jerusalem may even have to fight cyber wars against Tehran.

### 4. Iran

Iran does not face dire consequences, but Iran cannot fully implement its doctrine of expanded autonomy. Tehran is denied entrance to the nuclear club. Thus, Iran cannot as easily spread its religious, political, military, or economic power throughout the Middle East or the Islamic World. First, Iran’s influence diminishes in economic,

cultural, and societal affairs in Central Asia. Iran is unable to sufficiently contend with Russia or the United States for control over energy resources in the Caspian Sea. The Islamic Republic also becomes hesitant to support jihad in Central Asia, especially since it could face a military response from a nuclear-armed Russia. Second, foreign powers would not supply Iran with vast military assistance. Iran would be incapable of improving its weapons technology quickly. Third, the Islamic Republic struggles to fuel conflict in Israel and Lebanon, much less anywhere else in the world. Iran is still able to use proxies to fight Western or Western-backed powers. Yet states will not fear a *non-nuclear* Iran as much as they would fear a *nuclear* Iran. Last, Tehran's Islamist ideology is weakened. The Islamic Republic may not acquire the political stature necessary to spread an Islamist ideology throughout the Middle East or elsewhere. Ultimately, Iran might lose the ability to fund and inspire many Shi'a and Sunnis theocrats.

Still, the Islamic Republic may acquire benefits due to its non-nuclear status. Iran might feel forced to develop alternative strategies or military capabilities for protecting and expanding Iranian power. These strategies and capabilities may turn out to be better for Iran than nuclear weapons would have been. In other words, Tehran could develop space-based weapons, construct modern air-defense systems, or simply improve its operational tactics. Iran may still spread violent jihad, but it could find ways to do so without attracting global attention.

In addition, foreign powers may support Iran's energy sectors. They may support Tehran's civilian nuclear program, as well as Tehran's recently lagging oil industry. "Despite boasting the second-largest oil reserves in the world, Iran's economy grew only moderately, with much of the oil windfall devoted to financing the country's steep

gasoline subsidies. When the government cut the subsidies last summer and rationed gas, violent riots erupted in Tehran” (Over the barrel 2008, 70). Now, Iran will probably improve its oil production and distribution capabilities by drawing on increased foreign assistance. Iran can use its bolstered energy industries to stave off civil unrest.

Eventually, the Islamic Republic may actually sponsor jihad at a low level, while at the same time increasing its economic power and global political stature. Germany or China, for instance, would not use Iran’s support for Hizbollah as justification for abandoning growing business ties with Iran. Iran’s financial relations would even deter American and Israeli aggression. States will not willingly allow their investments in Iran to be destroyed by the U.S. or Israel.

The Islamic Republic will still remain a key player both regionally and globally, but regionally in particular. “Squeezed between the two significant sub-regions of the Caspian and the Persian Gulf, Iran will be the linkage interregional state; as all key dynamics of the region, energy, politics and ideology, will in one way or the other, by design or default, go through Iran” (Mesbahi 2004, 130). Therefore, a diplomatically rejuvenated Iran would likely retain its ideological and economic influence in Central Asia and the Middle East. Many states in those regions would simply lose their fear of Iran if the mullahs dropped the nuclear option.

Finally, it should be understood that Tehran is in a position to resume its support for jihad. This will be difficult, as Iran has already acquiesced to American diplomacy. Iran would be viewed as the aggressor. Yet Iran never abandoned its Islamist principles. America’s diplomatic overtures allows for the mullahs to spread Iranian influence throughout Iraq and Lebanon. This influence is not simply economic. This influence is

also political, or theocratic. Indeed, Iran is able to use its political culture of theocracy to control jihadist groups in Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the Islamic world. Tehran will remain poised to spread jihad violently. However, after relinquishing its nuclear program, Iran may refrain from sponsoring large-scale attacks in the *near* future. Iran has lost the chance to exert nuclear leverage over other states, but has not lost the will or even the power to unleash jihad against the enemies of the revolution. Tehran will promote expanded autonomy in innovative ways.

### ***Potential Consequences of Alternate Future #11 in Scenario 2***

In this alternate future, the United States engages in subversion, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel employs martial action, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The potential consequences for each actor are explained separately.

#### 1. The United States

Violence would probably decrease throughout the Middle East. There is a *chance* that violence and war might increase in the region and beyond, due to long-standing ethnic, religious, and ideological feuds, and due to the absence of nuclear deterrence. Most important, Iran would respond to U.S. and Israeli aggression, by conducting or sponsoring terror attacks across the world, particularly against Western targets. U.S. interests in the Levant and the rest of the Middle East would almost certainly suffer. Israel may incur most of the Iranian violence, especially if Israel actually invades Iran. Hizbollah and Hamas would likely conduct large-scale jihadist operations against Israel.

Terror attacks may eventually shatter the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, weaken democratic movements in Lebanon, and possibly spark a wave of political instability in Jordan. Jerusalem would probably respond militarily against the jihadists.

This military response may ignite refugee flows or genocide across the region, possibly further embroiling the United States in Middle Eastern conflicts. On the other hand, Israeli martial action could be sufficient to scare Tehran into inaction. The Iranians might be incapable of standing up to the Israeli military. Iran may conclude that if it responds violently against Israel, then it would incur further Israeli attacks.

Moreover, the only martial action the Jewish state might take in the first place is to attack Iran's proxies, or to attack Iranian forces located *outside* of Iran. In this case, it would be less likely that violence or chaos would sweep the Middle East uncontrollably. The U.S. might then be able to help establish greater regional security. Indeed, some semblance of security—however tenuous—is often a precondition for America's political, economic, and military interests to advance in the Middle East.

In addition, the prospects for a nuclearized Middle East and a nuclearized world would decrease. The United States will have safeguarded its nonproliferation interests. Thus, the U.S. could control energy developments and commercial activity across the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf regions, despite Iranian-sponsored piracy or maritime terrorism. Amuzegar says that in the event of a U.S. invasion, that "Iranian naval and air forces could attack oil facilities and tankers in the Persian Gulf and choke off oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz" (Amuzegar 2006, 103). Yet this may also happen if the U.S. engages in subversion with Iran. The mullahs would certainly need some type of recourse for punishing the United States.

The problem for Tehran, though, is that its own response of subversion is unlikely to last, as the American navy and American allies would regain control of the sea lanes and oil infrastructure, possibly by orchestrating military operations against the Iranian

navy and regional jihadist forces. Saudi forces might even retaliate against Iran by carrying out mass slaughters of Shi'a residing in eastern Saudi Arabia. After all, Riyadh would suffer socio-economic problems if Iranian-sponsored jihadists were to attack Gulf-State or Iraqi energy networks. Past events demonstrate that the Saudi government is willing to execute massive internal clampdowns on the Kingdom's adversaries. Nonetheless, Washington would retain its influence over many political developments in the Islamic world, including developments in Saudi Arabia. Regional Islamist challengers would be unable to offer credible nuclear threats to impede America's involvement in Middle Eastern, Central Asian, or South Asian affairs (with the possible exception of Pakistan if it becomes a more cohesive and radical state in the future).

Also, Russo-American relations improve. Since Russia curtails its strategic assistance to Iran, Russo-American tensions decrease on issues ranging from Balkanization to the peaceful uses of space. Moscow would not quite become Washington's strategic ally. Still, the U.S. and Russia would work more cooperatively to solve problems in Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Far East. Washington may, at the very least, gain Moscow's full diplomatic support for dealing with the North Korean nuclear program.

## 2. Russia

The fallout from U.S. subversion and Israeli military action could spill over into Russia or the Russian near abroad. Jihadists could operate near Russia's borders in Central Asia, perhaps serving to weaken Central Asian governments, or even damage Russia's commercial and energy-related interests in the region. The point is that regional instability would increase in the short term. However, Russia may receive U.S. and

Israeli diplomatic, military, and intelligence help to counter jihadist activity. Also, Washington would assure Moscow that Russian financial interests would be compensated for, in the event that Russia lost Iran as an economic partner. Regardless of U.S. or Israeli assistance, Russia would probably lose a strategic and commercial partnership with a key partner—Iran. The Kremlin will possibly witness another increase in U.S. troop levels throughout the Islamic world. In short, Russia will have to ensure that American forces do not overreach and further extend their influence throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, or South Asia. Ultimately, Russo-American ties would remain tenuous but manageable.

### 3. Israel

The consequences for Israel overlap with some of those for the United States. Those overlapping consequences, with a few alterations, are now echoed to emphasize the ramifications to the Jewish state. Violence would probably decrease throughout the Middle East as a whole. Nevertheless, there is a *chance* that violence and war might increase in the region and beyond, due to long-standing ethnic, religious, and ideological feuds, and due to the absence of nuclear deterrence.

Iran would respond to Israeli and U.S. aggression by conducting or sponsoring terror attacks across the world, particularly against Western targets. American interests along the eastern Mediterranean and the rest of the Middle East would almost certainly suffer. Still, Israel may incur most of the Iranian violence, especially if Israel actually invades Iran.

If it were to come to an Israeli intervention, it is likely that Iran would attack Israel, with either Shehab 3 missiles, renewed Hizbullah attacks on the north of Israel or terrorist attacks against Israeli interests and civilians outside Israel. Or it

might use a combination of all three . . . if Israel were seen as the aggressor. (Delpech 2007, 69)

Iran also could employ “nonconventional suicide-bombing tactics” against the Jewish state (Vakil 2005, 187). Such tactics might involve using planes or ships as guided missiles. Tehran could even use these same suicide tactics to murder Jews across the world. In addition, Hizbollah, Hamas, and al-Qa’ida would probably attempt to conduct large-scale jihadist operations against Israel.

Terror attacks may eventually shatter the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, weaken democratic movements in Lebanon, and possibly spark a wave of political instability in Jordan. Jerusalem would probably respond militarily against the jihadists. This military response may ignite refugee flows or genocide across the region, possibly sparking further worldwide condemnation of Israel.

On the other hand, Israel’s initial martial action could sufficiently scare Tehran into inaction. So Tehran might limit its jihadist attacks against the Jewish state in the first place. Iran might feel incapable of standing up to the Israeli military. Tehran may think that if it responds violently against Israel, then Iran or its close allies would incur further Israeli attacks.

Another possibility is that the only martial action the Jewish state might take is to attack Iran’s proxies, or to attack Iranian forces located *outside* of Iran. In this case, it would be less likely that violence or chaos would sweep the Middle East uncontrollably. Jerusalem might then be able to work with the Arab states and Turkey to establish greater regional security. Still, the Islamic world could shun Israel, if Israel’s initial martial action draws the ire of Arab, Turkic, and Pashtun peoples.

Finally, Israel might not have to worry about political backlash from Russia. Israel could receive a modicum of Russian diplomatic support for Israel's fight against the Iranian-backed jihadists. Moscow might be sufficiently alarmed by Tehran's nuclear capability that it assists Jerusalem against the radical Islamist forces. In addition, Russia might offer diplomatic and logistical support to Israel if Iran's jihadist behavior affects Russian commercial ventures, Russian homeland security, or political stability in the Russian near abroad.

#### 4. Iran

U.S. and Israeli action could reduce the mullahs' ability to spread Iranian political, military, and economic influence throughout the Islamic world and elsewhere. American sanctions and blockades simply eat away at Iran's *economic* health. Already, in terms of sanctions, "the U.S. has had some success discouraging international financial institutions, public and private, from making capital available to Iran" (Schake 2007, 18). These sanctions will probably continue until Iran changes its behavior.

Tehran could still foster jihad. That being said, U.S. support for anti-Iranian state and non-state actors from the Middle East would hinder Iran's ability to attack Western or allied targets. The mullahs would be forced to fight domestic, cross-border, or local naval battles, before they could concentrate their full attention on fighting states such as the U.S. or Israel. Israel would probably damage Iranian nuclear, military, and government facilities. Yet the Islamic Republic would also suffer civilian casualties. Most important, a joint American-Israeli operation could target Iran's proxies across the Islamic world and elsewhere. This may leave Iran with less recourse to strike allied targets at the time and place of Iran's choosing. Tehran would provide its friends with

plenty of logistical support, funding, and weapons to attack Western targets. However, Iran would also be diverting funds from its energy sectors and basic domestic services. Tehran could not sustain a fight for very long, even if its proxies hold out for a while. Thus, Iran must resolutely demonstrate its power to force what, in any event, would likely be a disadvantageous truce for Iran. The Islamic Republic would successfully attack U.S. and Israeli targets around the world. On the other hand, Iran will suffer commercially, militarily, politically, and perhaps ideologically and culturally in the process. There is even a chance that the U.S. might work with Iranian domestic forces to institute regime change in Iran.

Iran might be able to reignite jihadist sentiments around the world, but this would probably not be for Iran's direct benefit. U.S. and Israeli actions against Iran may embolden al-Qa'ida, not to mention Iranian proxies. Still, American subversion would somewhat close off Iran from its friends. The mullahs may even lose their lifeline to the Caspian and Mediterranean Seas. In addition, it is possible that Syria, to safeguard its own interests, will abandon Iran. Damascus may attempt to protect its territory by negotiating with the American-Israeli alliance. (*Stratfor* has signaled in numerous reports that in actuality, Syria is *already* drifting away from Iran and moving toward a possible accommodation with the West). Ultimately, Iran will almost certainly lose the capacity to act as the jihadist leader of the world...at least for a while. Tehran will not even be left with a token nuclear weapons capability.

### ***Potential Consequences of Alternate Future #15 in Scenario 2***

In this alternate future, the United States engages in subversion, Russia provides strategic assistance, Israel employs martial action, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The potential consequences for each actor are explained separately.

#### 1. The United States

The consequences for the U.S. are similar to those in Alternate Future #11. However, in Alternate Future #15, Russo-American relations deteriorate. The U.S. would likely be angered over Russia's decision to provide a *jihadist* Iran with strategic assistance. Problems between Washington and Moscow would be exacerbated. Those problems include differences over ideologies, military doctrines, missile defense, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, energy resources, and European and Central Asian border disputes. Russia would indeed become one of the United States's main political enemies.

#### 2. Russia

Russia would retain its strategic and commercial relationship with the Islamic Republic. Russo-Iranian relations remain strong, as Russia will probably supply Iran with missile and dual-use technologies, and Iran will support Russian policies in Central Asia and beyond. The two states work together to raise the costs for the U.S. to do political, military, or economic business in the Caucasus, Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Ultimately, Russia may benefit from both American and Iranian actions. *Washington* helps Moscow by keeping Tehran out of the nuclear club. This American action keeps Iran dependent on the Kremlin strategically and economically. *Tehran* helps Moscow by orchestrating jihadist operations against the United States. This

forces the U.S. to use money and manpower to counter Iran and Iranian-backed jihadists. As long as Washington is preoccupied with Tehran, Moscow may gain regional or perhaps global power at the expense of Washington.

The U.S. would likely be angered by Russia's decision to provide Iran with strategic assistance. Problems between Moscow and Washington would be exacerbated. Those problems include differences over ideologies, military doctrines, missile defense, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, energy resources, and European and Central Asian border disputes. Washington would become Moscow's political enemy.

Russo-Israeli relations reach a low point. Iran is one of Russia's primary strategic and commercial allies. That being said, Israel chose to take aggressive action against Iran or Iranian allies, thereby interfering with Russia's diplomatic course for dealing with the Iranian nuclear program. Hence, Jerusalem may become Moscow's political enemy.

### 3. Israel

The consequences for Israel are similar to those in Alternate Future #11. The main difference is that in Alternate Future #15, Russo-Israeli relations reach a low point. Iran is one of Russia's primary strategic and commercial allies. That being said, Israel chose to take aggressive action against Iran or Iranian allies, thereby interfering with Russia's diplomatic course for dealing with the Iranian nuclear program. Moreover, in the event of an Israeli invasion, Israel might have to deal with the fallout from the collateral damage against Russians. "Iran's power plant in Bushehr is nearly completed. Several hundred Russian technicians work at the plant. Their lives would be put at risk by aerial bombardment, which would likely ignite a harsh reaction from Moscow on whom Israel depends for much of its oil imports" (Afrasiabi and Kibaroglu 2005, 261).

The Kremlin may reduce oil shipments to Israel and force the Israelis to seek energy from other states *or* other sources. Overall, then, Moscow may become Jerusalem's political enemy.

#### 4. Iran

The consequences for Iran are nearly the same as those in Alternate Future #11. One possible difference is that in Alternate Future #15, a non-nuclear Iran could receive Russian weapons and diplomatic support to counter the American-Israeli alliance. The Kremlin might be sufficiently alarmed by U.S. and Israeli aggression that it decides that a jihadist Iran is the lesser of the evils. Moscow's arms assistance to Tehran would probably be covert. Russia would want to avoid as much backlash from the United States as possible. Still, Moscow *may* eventually withdraw its support for Tehran. This would almost certainly happen if the Islamic Republic fueled jihadist activity in the Russian near abroad.

#### ***Potential Consequences of Alternate Future #19 in Scenario 2***

In this alternate future, the United States invades Iran, Russia curtails strategic assistance to Iran, Israel employs martial action against Iran, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The potential consequences for each actor are explained separately.

##### 1. The United States

The consequences of this future appear to be similar to those of Alternate Future #11. However, in Alternate Future #19, the consequences for the United States are far worse. A U.S. invasion of Iran would constitute yet another U.S. attack on a predominantly Islamic country. This would be intolerable not only for Iran's most valued patrons, including Hizbollah and Hamas, but would even be intolerable for groups such

as al-Qa'ida. Islamic populations at large would become quite angered by American military actions. "An attack on the Bushehr power plant would run the risk of many civilian casualties in addition to other collateral damage, including an environmental disaster dreaded by all U.S. allies in the Persian Gulf region" (Amuzegar 2006, 103). "Moreover, an aerial attack on Iran after the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan will take anti-Americanism in the Muslim world to unprecedented heights and multiply the threat of terror attacks on the United States and its allies" (Ayooob 2006, 157). Iran would almost certainly form a strategic alliance with al-Qa'ida in the event of a U.S. invasion. This alliance could even coalesce during the run-up to an American attack on the Islamic Republic.

As a result of the invasion, America's strategic problems would intensify or multiply in the near term. Iran and its allies would conduct asymmetric warfare against the United States, both inside and outside of Iranian territory. Additionally, friendly governments to Washington could be overthrown, or at least be tied up fighting Sunni and Shi'a jihadists. This would spoil the chance for many democratic reforms throughout the Islamic world. The United States would also suffer serious economic setbacks, due to jihadist terrorism against American, regional, and global commercial interests in the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea regions. Washington may be forced to increase its financial and military commitments to protect its friends and assets in the Gulf, the Levant, the greater Middle East, and beyond.

Terrorists could actually attack production and distribution networks of oil and natural gas, leading to a global energy crisis. Gas prices would almost certainly spike. Perhaps most important for the U.S., higher energy costs would create additional strains

on the U.S. economy, making it difficult for the U.S. to sustain massive troop levels abroad. America could then become more isolationist and reduce its overseas commitments.

The greatest danger to the United States would involve jihadist attacks against American targets. Terrorists could indeed strike at U.S. territory, murdering American combatants or non-combatants and causing massive infrastructural damage. Jihadists may even use cyber warfare to cripple U.S. communication systems. The United States might grow accustomed to facing attacks from groups such as Hizbollah. Still, the U.S. may endure the terrorists' operations and crush the terrorists at home and abroad. Washington would receive minimal strategic help from overseas. Yet Russia might assist the United States with diplomatic, intelligence, and possibly military support, as the Russians would increasingly become concerned about the jihadist threat to the Russian homeland. Washington may face down all of Tehran's responses to an American invasion. However, there is always the potential for a war-weary United States to suffer from domestic infighting, an entrenched economic slowdown, military exhaustion, and strategic confusion. At a great price, the U.S. may thwart Iran's nuclear weapons program *and* thwart Iranian-sponsored jihad.

## 2. Russia

The consequences for Russia are similar to those in Alternate Future #11. However, the consequences are more acute in Alternate Future #19. After all, in Alternate Future #19, Russia must deal with the strategic aftershocks of its decision to acquiesce to the United States's *invasion* of Iran. "On March 23," 2007, "fifteen British naval personnel were seized by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in the

northern Persian Gulf” (Henderson 2007, 1). Russia may now face this same sort of maritime aggression in the Caspian Sea or elsewhere, at least for a while. The Russians may also face even *harsher* threats. Iran and its jihadist partners might think that since Russia cut strategic assistance to Iran, Russia is fair game for terrorism and other violence. In addition, American-Iranian and Israeli-Iranian fighting could unintentionally spill over into the Russian near abroad. Moscow’s commercial activities may suffer as a result. Yet Iran would still remain a *non*-nuclear power. So Russia would not have to compete bitterly with Iran for influence across Central Asia. The Kremlin may lose its strategic partnership with the Islamic Republic, but the Kremlin may also gain generous diplomatic, economic, military, and strategic concessions from the United States.

### 3. Israel

The consequences for Israel are comparable to those in Alternate Future #11, especially the consequences involving better Russo-Israeli relations. However, in Alternate Future #19, the stakes are much higher. The U.S. invasion of Iran will not just result in serious consequences for the United States. Due to American actions, Israel will *also* suffer jihadist violence, including jihadist maritime terrorism both in and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Israel will indeed pay a strategic price for employing *its own* martial action against Iran. However, Iran and its proxies will attempt to inflict terror on Israel to get back at the United States. Terrorist groups the world over would probably even attack Jewish targets located outside of the Middle East. Moreover, Iran’s proxies are not the only ones who would go after Israelis and non-Israeli Jews. Groups such as al-Qa’ida might attack Israeli and Jewish targets, and radical leftists and rightists across various regions might assault Jews physically and with propaganda. The states of

the Islamic world would be in no position to assist the Jewish state. This is because the Arab, Turkic, and other nations would have to deal with their own groups of radicals, as a result of American military action against yet another Islamic state. Still, it bears repeating that Israel will experience jihadist violence, even if the United States had only employed subversion. Israeli military action is sufficient to spark attacks against Israelis and Jews. Once again, the Jewish state might endure a massive conflict, or even an all-encompassing holy war. Nevertheless, a “victorious” Jewish state would face remarkable political, military, and economic strains, and possibly sustain many casualties. This is particularly so in the event that Arab governments are overthrown by radical Islamists. Israel would constantly fight to avoid trading “land for” the “peace” of non-existence.

#### 4. Iran

The consequences for Iran are seemingly comparable to those in Alternate Future #11. In Alternate Future #19, though, there are a few differences, including the fact that Iran will receive more worldwide support from Islamists and from Islamist supporters. Arab, Turkish, and other governments may not support Iran. However, Islamists and regular Muslims alike will point to an American-Israeli conspiracy that seeks to destroy powerful states in the Islamic world. The casualty figures and infrastructural damage in Iran may be enormous. Thus, due to help from groups ranging from al-Qa’ida to the Iranian citizenry, Iran will receive further backing for conducting jihadist operations against the enemies of Islam. Iran *might* use domestic and foreign support to fight the U.S. and Israel to a stalemate. Yet a stalemate remains highly unlikely. “Iraq’s experience in particular showed how quickly the US troops were able to defeat Saddam Hussein in April 2003, even if they have since encountered unforeseen difficulties”

(Delpech 2007, 12). Iran may be bigger than Iraq, but Iran is not immune to the unrivaled firepower and unmatched strategic reach of the United States. Various European or Asian states might even side militarily with the Western alliance. If this happens, then Iran's largely unconventional military campaign could be defeated rather quickly.

Iran may still use its own forces or proxies to inflict massive casualties and infrastructural damage on the U.S. and Israel. Nevertheless, a *non-nuclear* Iran will scramble for ways to fight on, while attempting to keep its society intact. "A conflict could lead to political upheaval in Tehran, even if the Iranian nation were to unite against an attack from outside" (Delpech 2007, 36). The government in Tehran may indeed remain vulnerable for some time. Washington might not seek regime change after its invasion of Iran, due to economic costs and previous American invasions of states in the Islamic world. That being said, it is *possible* that the U.S. will overthrow the Iranian government or that Iranian domestic forces will depose the mullahs.

## **Focal Events**

Focal events may signal the emergence of a particular future. This section discusses potential focal events for the top three alternate futures in each scenario. The discussion is concise, forecasting what could happen in *general* strategic terms. It is pointless to go into excessive detail about focal events, due to numerous uncertainties concerning the Iranian nuclear issue. This section simply offers a range of possibilities that analysts can easily pinpoint as likely strategic markers for the future. Besides, the section on indicators will further delineate the various focal events. At least some of the focal events may never occur and some of them may occur differently than this paper

predicts. This study may even miss certain focal events completely. Analysts cannot make perfect forecasts, as the future is too unknowable for the human mind to fully comprehend.

### ***Focal events of Alternate Future #6 in Scenario 1***

In Alternate Future #6, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia provides strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran develops nuclear weapons. The possible focal events for this future are all numbered with roman numerals and explained succinctly.

#### **I. A shift in the American cultural landscape.**

The United States changes course and decides to focus more of its attention on domestic matters. Washington is either unable or unwilling to take on a foreign adversary such as Iran.

#### **II. Politico-military circumstances afflict the Western alliance (American-Israeli alliance).**

The United States and Israel are politically and militarily unable to respond to Iranian behavior. This may occur due to a variety of strategic challenges facing Washington and Jerusalem.

#### **III. Iran becomes stronger diplomatically and internally.**

Iran gains domestic power and maintains solid relations with regional powers. This enables the mullahs to form a clear strategic vision for the Islamic Republic. Tehran can also focus its economy on technological and military growth.

***Focal Events of Alternate Future #2 in Scenario 1***

In Alternate Future #2, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran develops nuclear weapons. The possible focal events for this future are all numbered with roman numerals and explained succinctly.

**I. A shift in the American cultural landscape.**

The United States changes course and decides to focus more of its attention on domestic matters. Washington is either unable or unwilling to take on a foreign adversary such as Iran.

**II. Politico-military circumstances afflict the Western alliance, despite any favorable American and Israeli relations with Russia.**

The United States and Israel are politically and militarily unable to exploit Russian help to alter Iranian behavior. This may occur due to a variety of strategic challenges facing Washington and Jerusalem.

**III. Iran becomes stronger internally and diplomatically, despite any worsening Iranian relations with Russia.**

Iran gains domestic power and maintains solid relations with regional powers. This enables the mullahs to form a clear strategic vision for the Islamic Republic. Tehran can also focus its economy on technological and military growth.

***Focal Events of Alternate Future #1 in Scenario 1***

In Alternate Future #1, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons.

The possible focal events for this future are all numbered with roman numerals and explained succinctly.

I. A shift in the American cultural landscape.

The United States changes course and decides to focus more of its attention on domestic matters. Washington is either unable or unwilling to take on a foreign adversary such as Iran.

II. Politico-military circumstances afflict the Western alliance, despite any favorable American and Israeli relations with Russia.

The United States and Israel are politically and militarily unable to exploit Russian help to alter Iranian behavior. This may occur due to a variety of strategic challenges facing Washington and Jerusalem.

III. Iran loses the capacity to sustain or protect its military intentions or capabilities.

Iran cannot resist internal or external pressure to relinquish its nuclear weapons program. Tehran decides that attaining the bomb is no longer feasible—at least not at an acceptable cost.

***Focal Events of Alternate Future #11 in Scenario 2***

In Alternate Future #11, the United States engages in subversion, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel employs martial action, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The possible focal events for this future are all numbered with roman numerals and explained succinctly.

I. The United States is constrained militarily but is still able to maneuver against Iran due to a favorable strategic atmosphere.

The United States is already embroiled in military conflict. Still, the U.S. can subvert Iran's nuclear weapons program by taking advantage of shifting interstate relations, and by using overt Iranian hostility as a justification for American subversion.

II. Iran strengthens its military power but faces geopolitical resistance as well.

Iran likely strengthens its armed forces quantitatively and possibly qualitatively. That being said, the United States—with help from others throughout the global community—fosters geopolitical resistance to Iran.

### ***Focal Events of Alternate Future #15 in Scenario 2***

In Alternate Future #15, the United States engages in subversion, Russia provides strategic assistance, Israel employs martial action, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The possible focal events for this future are all numbered with roman numerals and explained succinctly.

I. The Western alliance is embroiled in protracted strategic conflict.

The Western alliance enters into a period of protracted military and strategic hardships. Still, the U.S. and Israel can take advantage of their military power and hamper Iran's nuclear weapons program.

II. Iran becomes stronger militarily and diplomatically, but faces geopolitical resistance as well.

Iran likely strengthens its armed forces quantitatively and possibly qualitatively, and receives (at least short-term) diplomatic support. That being said, the United

States—with help from others throughout the global community—fosters geopolitical resistance to Iran.

*Focal Events of Alternate Future #19 in Scenario 2*

In Alternate Future #19, the United States invades Iran, Russia curtails strategic assistance to Iran, Israel employs martial action against Iran, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The possible focal events for this future are all numbered with roman numerals and explained succinctly.

I. The United States is unconstrained militarily and is able to maneuver against Iran amidst a favorable strategic atmosphere.

Washington substantially reduces its military engagements. Also, the U.S. can subvert Iran's nuclear weapons program by taking advantage of shifting interstate relations, and by using overt Iranian hostility as a justification for American subversion.

II. Iran strengthens its military power but faces geopolitical resistance as well.

Iran likely strengthens its armed forces quantitatively and possibly qualitatively. That being said, the United States—with help from others throughout the global community—fosters geopolitical resistance to Iran.

III. The Western alliance adopts an overtly violent posture against Iran and the Iranian nuclear program.

Washington and Jerusalem fix their military eyes on Iran. The American-Israeli alliance becomes determined to settle the Iranian nuclear issue through force, due to strategic, political, diplomatic, and technological reasons. The alliance broadcasts its military intentions blatantly.

## Indicators

Indicators (predictors) may signal the emergence of a particular focal event. This section discusses potential indicators for the focal events of the top three alternate futures in each scenario. Indeed, indicators offer a mechanism for closely monitoring the Iranian nuclear issue. If analysts know what predictors to look for, then they can better understand the actions that various actors eventually take to influence Iran's nuclear status. Analysts would possibly gain a clearer perception of how the future unfolds. Overall, this section discusses a variety of strategic indicators to provide transparency for looking forward in time. This section also *restates* the focal events to analyze the indicators in their proper contexts. In other words, the predictors are linked directly with the focal events.

A focal event in this study may list multiple indicators, yet it is possible that one or even none of the indicators for a focal event would actually transpire. After all, indicators are placed toward the end of a multilayered approach to predicting the future. It is difficult for an analyst to forecast any focal event with total precision. Once again, scholarly studies cannot make exact predictions, so analysts approach the future by offering a range of feasible possibilities. Therefore, this study explores a range of feasible indicators to show how focal events *may* emerge.

### *Indicators of Alternate Future #6 in Scenario 1*

In Alternate Future #6, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia provides strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran develops nuclear weapons. The possible indicators for this future are all numbered and explained briefly under various focal events (which are numbered as roman numerals).

## I. A shift in the American cultural landscape.

The United States changes course and decides to focus more of its attention on domestic matters. Washington is either unable or unwilling to take on a foreign adversary such as Iran.

### 1. The Democrat Party gains control of the U.S. presidency.

The Democrat Party has already articulated a platform of greater reliance on diplomacy. The party is “calling for expanded dialogue” with Iran (Cordesman 2008, 19). If a Democrat enters the oval office in January of 2009, then the United States would be more willing to compromise with foreign adversaries, including the Islamic Republic. Indeed, the mullahs may engineer this outcome in American politics. The United States withdrew from Lebanon in the 1980s, partially due to the fact that like today, “Iran possessed the power to create conditions that would alter U.S. public opinion and effectively force America’s expulsion” (Thrall 2007, 8). In 2008 or even 2012, Tehran could signal a willingness to cooperate more with Democrats. Iran would call for expanded dialogue, just as the Democrat Party has. The American public would then pursue a “softer” approach to foreign policy by electing Barack Obama or someone similar to the presidency.

### 2. Social or economic ills plague American society.

The United States might face tremendous social or economic hardships. First, the U.S. may experience rising fuel costs and shortages of energy for domestic consumption. Second, the U.S. could enter into a full blown recession. Third, the crime rate may soar in America, especially throughout American cities and along the border with Mexico. Fourth, U.S. anti-war movements might gain traction. Overall, the United States

experiences too much civil strife to take aggressive political, economic, or military action against Iran.

II. Politico-military circumstances afflict the Western alliance (American-Israeli alliance).

The United States and Israel are politically and militarily unable to respond to Iranian behavior. This may occur due to a variety of strategic challenges facing Washington and Jerusalem.

3. The U.S. is engaged in conflict in the Islamic world or beyond.

Washington's military eye is diverted from Iran. First, the United States could remain involved militarily in stabilizing Afghanistan and Iraq. Second, a crisis could break out between the U.S. and a powerful state such as Russia or China. Third, the U.S. may expand its war against jihadists or jihadist supporters throughout the Islamic world. Fourth, Washington may fight other actors that are not currently on the American radar screen. If any of these situations occur, then the United States will be hard-pressed to confront Iran with political, economic, or military force. Washington may need Tehran's help to balance against other powers. The U.S. may also lack the will or capability to invade or subvert Iran, so the U.S. would feel pressured into compromising with Iran.

4. A further rise in Russian nationalism occurs.

A nationalistic Russia will seek as much military and economic power for Russia as possible, regardless of U.S. interests. Since Iran has not sponsored any major or sustained jihadist operations, the Kremlin has no problem providing diplomatic, nuclear, and weapons support for Iran. A rise in Russian nationalism may be marked by a Russian arms buildup, increased Russian military maneuvers throughout the Russian near

abroad, or the Kremlin's increased centralization of power. The point is that Moscow will undermine Washington's diplomatic efforts with Tehran.

5. Israel becomes paralyzed strategically.

It is possible that Israel may lack the power or will to take any military action against Iran or Iran's proxies. Jerusalem is already unsure of itself after its failure to smash Hizbollah in the summer of 2006. In addition, Hamas may aggressively engage the Israelis on its own terms, thus causing Israel to concentrate its resources on fighting a war closer to home against Palestinians. There is even a chance that Russia could threaten military action against Israel. After all, the Kremlin does not wish to see Israel harm Russia's strategic or financial interests with Iran.

III. Iran becomes stronger diplomatically and internally.

Iran gains domestic power and maintains solid relations with regional powers. This enables the mullahs to form a clear strategic vision for the Islamic Republic. Tehran can also focus its economy on technological and military growth.

6. Iranian ultra-hardliners lose influence.

If Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) loses domestic political power, then the U.S. would feel that diplomacy could convince the mullahs to abandon their nuclear weapons program.

7. Iran further masters nuclear technologies.

Tehran acquires the scientific and engineering capabilities to produce nuclear material that is suitable for nuclear arms.

Recent revelations of extensive Iranian nuclear program facilities point to Tehran's strong efforts toward the appropriation of a full-fledged nuclear cycle program that could allow the indigenous manufacturing of nuclear weapons, in contravention of Russian allegations to the contrary. (Mizin 2004, 79)

“Iran’s current enrichment efforts have moved and will continue to move it closer to being able to deploy nuclear weapons even if key elements of its weapons-design and production activity have been halted or suspended” (Cordesman 2008, 25). This may be an indicator that the Islamic Republic is close to developing atomic weapons. However, this indicator *may* only be discovered through surveillance or intelligence operations, especially if Iran stops touting its nuclear progress, or if Iran denies international inspectors access to *all* of its nuclear sites and activities. “Western intelligence agencies” have claimed “that they acquired a laptop and other documentation that once belonged to an Iranian nuclear technician and that contained research relevant to a nuclear weapons program” (Crail 2008b, 44). Agencies may continue to discover this sort of information in the future. Also, “international seismic monitoring” could identify Iranian nuclear tests, “even when the tests are underground” (Schake 2007, 15).

Still, intelligence and scientific monitoring would do little to thwart Iran’s nuclear capabilities. The information would only provide Iran’s enemies with the knowledge that diplomacy has failed. Perhaps no one is capable of revealing Iran’s atomic progress. Tehran already has the advantage that its “ongoing covert research” is “very easy to disperse and conceal” (Cordesman 2008, 25).

In addition, if Russia or other states supply Iran with technical assistance in the nuclear field, then Iran will likely further master nuclear technologies. “As for North Korea, whose partnership with Iran over ballistic missiles is well documented, it is not impossible that it has also collaborated with Tehran on some joint nuclear activities, as Japanese sources regularly claim” (Delpech 2007, 17). Iran would certainly benefit from atomic cooperation with other states. The mullahs may draw on foreign support to

master the nuclear fuel cycle. Nevertheless, with or without foreign support, Iran's continued nuclear advancements indicate that Iran will join the nuclear club.

8. Iran increases its acquisition of missiles and missile technologies typically used for nuclear weapons.

The world may discover Iran's missile capabilities by using surveillance and intelligence. Yet regardless of whether or not the world discovers Iran's atomic advancements, Iran acquires the necessary missiles and missile technologies to weaponize its nuclear program. "In an effort to overcome its growing deficit in conventional military capability, Iran has invested heavily in an indigenous missile program" (Bahgat 2007, 8).

Iranian Defense Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar announced . . . that Iran has developed a new, 2,000-kilometer-range ballistic missile. At that range, the new missile, named Ashura after the Shiite holy mourning ceremony, could strike targets throughout the Middle East, Turkey, and southern Europe. (Crail 2008a, 34)

The defense minister simply made an announcement regarding Iran's missile capabilities. However, if the declaration is true *and* Tehran continues to improve its rocket systems, then Tehran will be on the verge of making its nuclear weapons operational. Russia or other states may wittingly or unwittingly support Iranian efforts. Iran has already received missile assistance from Russia and North Korea (Delpech 2007, 16). Also, China and Pakistan may have assisted the Islamic Republic (Delpech 2007, 17), and they may do so in the future as well.

9. Iran increases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

An increase in Iran's rhetoric against the Big Satan and the Little Satan could signal that Iran is about to develop nuclear weapons. The point is that an emboldened Tehran, on the verge of joining the nuclear club, would flout its anti-Israeli and anti-

American sentiments. The Islamic Republic might then gain further support from both Sunni and Shiite jihadists. In Scenario 1, this Iranian rhetoric would be just that—rhetoric. Tehran would talk about the problems that the U.S. and the Jewish state pose for peace in the Islamic world and the world as a whole. Iran would not sponsor, even ideologically, any attacks against the United States, Israel, or American allies in the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic would feel undeterred in expressing its animosity toward the Great Satan and the Jewish state. Tehran could even host global forums discussing the need to peacefully erode Israeli sovereignty.

10. Iran decreases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

The Islamic Republic does *not* want to draw attention to its impending nuclear breakout. Thus, Tehran holds its tongue and avoids engaging in rhetoric against Washington and Jerusalem. Iran could even make statements about living a peaceful co-existence with Israel.

### ***Indicators of Alternate Future #2 in Scenario 1***

In Alternate Future #2, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran develops nuclear weapons. Many of the indicators in this alternate future are similar to the indicators in Alternate Future #6. Therefore, in this sub-section, only new or altered indicators will be discussed in any detail. The possible indicators for this future are all numbered and explained briefly under various focal events (which are numbered as roman numerals).

I. A shift in the American cultural landscape.

The United States changes course and decides to focus more of its attention on domestic matters. Washington is either unable or unwilling to take on a foreign adversary such as Iran.

1. The Democrat Party gains control of the U.S. presidency.

This is the same as Indicator 1 in Alternate Future #6.

2. Social or economic ills plague American society.

This is the same as Indicator 2 in Alternate Future #6.

II. Politico-military circumstances afflict the Western alliance, despite any favorable American and Israeli relations with Russia.

The United States and Israel are politically and militarily unable to exploit Russian help to alter Iranian behavior. This may occur due to a variety of strategic challenges facing Washington and Jerusalem.

3. The U.S. is engaged in conflict in the Islamic world *or* beyond.

This is similar to Indicator 3 in Alternate Future #6. The only difference is that for the indicator here in Alternate Future #2, a crisis would almost certainly not break out between the United States and Russia.

4. Russo-Iranian tensions rise.

A crisis evolves between Russia and Iran. Moscow and Tehran may compete for energy resources or political influence in Central Asia or the Caucasus. It is possible that Russo-Iranian tensions could rise due to disputed territorial divisions in the Caspian Sea. Russia and Iran could also take opposite stances on issues involving ethnic, religious, or cultural conflicts throughout the Caucasus, Central Asia, South Asia, or the Middle East.

5. Israel becomes paralyzed strategically.

This is similar to Indicator 5 in Alternate Future #6. The only difference is that for the indicator here in Alternate Future #2, Russia would almost certainly *not* threaten to attack Israel.

III. Iran becomes stronger internally and diplomatically, despite any worsening Iranian relations with Russia.

Iran gains domestic power and maintains solid relations with regional powers. This enables the mullahs to form a clear strategic vision for the Islamic Republic. Tehran can also focus its economy on technological and military growth.

6. Iranian ultra-hardliners lose influence.

This is the same as Indicator 6 in Alternate Future #6.

7. Iran further masters nuclear technologies.

This is similar to Indicator 7 in Alternate Future #6. The only difference is that for the indicator here in Alternate Future #2, Russia would almost certainly provide Iran with *less* technical assistance in the nuclear field.

8. Iran increases its acquisition of missiles and missile technologies typically used for nuclear weapons.

This is similar to Indicator 8 in Alternate Future #6. The only difference is that for the indicator here in Alternate Future #2, Russia would almost certainly provide *less* assistance to Iran's missile programs.

9. Iran increases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

This is the same as Indicator 9 in Alternate Future #6.

10. Iran decreases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

This is the same as Indicator 10 in Alternate Future #6.

*Indicators of Alternate Future #1 in Scenario 1*

In Alternate Future #1, the United States engages in diplomacy, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel yields to others, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. Many of the indicators in this alternate future are similar to the indicators in Alternate Future #6 and Alternate Future #2. Therefore, in this sub-section, only new or altered indicators will be discussed in any detail. The possible indicators for this future are all numbered and explained briefly under various focal events (which are numbered as roman numerals).

I. A shift in the American cultural landscape.

The United States changes course and decides to focus more of its attention on domestic matters. Washington is either unable or unwilling to take on a foreign adversary such as Iran.

1. The Democrat Party gains control of the U.S. presidency.

This is the same as Indicator 1 in Alternate Future #6 and Alternate Future #2.

2. Social or economic ills plague American society.

This is the same as Indicator 2 in Alternate Future #6 and Alternate Future #2.

II. Politico-military circumstances afflict the Western alliance, despite any favorable American and Israeli relations with Russia.

The United States and Israel are politically and militarily unable to exploit Russian help to alter Iranian behavior. This may occur due to a variety of strategic challenges facing Washington and Jerusalem.

3. The U.S. is engaged in conflict in the Islamic world *or* beyond.

This is the same as Indicator 3 in Alternate Future #2.

4. Russo-Iranian tensions rise.

This is the same as Indicator 4 in Alternate Future #2.

5. Israel becomes paralyzed strategically.

This is the same as Indicator 5 in Alternate Future #2.

### III. Iran loses the capacity to sustain or protect its military intentions or capabilities.

Iran cannot resist internal or external pressure to relinquish its nuclear weapons program. Tehran decides that attaining the bomb is no longer feasible—at least not at an acceptable cost.

6. Iranian ultra-hardliners lose influence.

This is the same as Indicator 6 in Alternate Future #6 and Alternate Future #2.

7. Iran's nuclear progress, or lack thereof, is exposed.

Intelligence and surveillance exposes Iran's capabilities. The Iranian government, international inspectors, domestic opposition groups, or foreign intelligence sources expose publicly that Iran has not mastered nuclear technologies. This revelation turns out to be true. Iran lacks either the will or the capability to produce nuclear weapons. Tehran might provide evidence for a non-nuclear Iran by allowing international inspectors full access to all of Iran's nuclear sites. Additionally, the international inspectors could show that Iran has been operating nuclear activities clandestinely. Iran might then forego its nuclear option to maintain allies and diplomatic respect. Tehran could even expose itself by scolding Moscow publicly, since Moscow curtailed its strategic support to Tehran. Moreover, anti-clerical groups inside and outside of Iran

may reveal human or technical intelligence that shows Iran's true nuclear intentions or capabilities. Thus far, Iran's domestic "opposition has handed over extremely precise data, often confirmed by international inspections, which remains the principal source of information" (Delpech 2007, 19).

8. Iran's lack of ability to construct deliverable nuclear missiles is exposed.

The reasons for this follow the same logic employed in explaining indicator 7.

9. Iran increases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

Iran uses harsh rhetoric against the United States and Israel to mask Iran's failure to produce nuclear weapons. Tehran is engaging in a last-ditch effort to establish a phony nuclear deterrent.

10. Iran decreases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

Tehran realizes that it cannot develop nuclear weapons. Therefore, Iran accepts the need to alter its behavior, at least for a while, to stave off an American-Israeli attack. The mullahs stop insulting the Americans and the Israelis in an attempt to gain strategic concessions from the West regarding a variety of Middle Eastern affairs.

### ***Indicators of Alternate Future #11 in Scenario 2***

In Alternate Future #11, the United States engages in subversion, Russia curtails strategic assistance, Israel employs martial action, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The possible indicators for this future are all numbered and explained briefly under various focal events (which are numbered as roman numerals).

I. The United States is constrained militarily but is still able to maneuver against Iran due to a favorable strategic atmosphere.

The United States is already embroiled in military conflict. Still, the U.S. can subvert Iran's nuclear weapons program by taking advantage of shifting interstate relations, and by using overt Iranian hostility as a justification for American subversion.

1. The U.S. is engaged in conflict in the Islamic world *or* beyond.

Since the United States is already engaged in violent conflicts, it would probably not invade Iranian territory. Washington would lack the resources, manpower, military capabilities, or political will to attack Iran.

2. Russo-Iranian tensions increase.

Russia and Iran would argue over energy issues or political disputes in the Caucasus, Central Asia, South Asia, or the Middle East. Any major disagreement, in combination with the mullahs' jihadist activity, would be enough to make Moscow cut off its strategic relationship with Tehran. The Kremlin does not want a jihadist Iran to obtain nuclear weapons. If an aggressive Iran did develop nuclear weapons, then Russia would potentially lose control over political and economic events in the Russian near abroad.

3. Iran increases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

If actors are poised to strip Iran of its technical capability or political will to develop nuclear weapons, then Iran still might attempt to threaten the United States and Israel with terrorist attacks. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei might issue a fatwa (religious edict) that calls for an Islamic Holy War against the West. It is also possible that Iran would simply issue *vague* threats about annihilating the U.S. and Israel. Tehran

would be making threats from a position of strategic weakness, signaling that its hopes for a nuclear future are fading.

#### 4. Russo-American tensions wane.

In response to Iran's jihadist exploits, a Russo-American partnership emerges. Russia and the U.S. form a tacit alliance to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Moscow and Washington sufficiently resolve their outstanding issues involving missile defense, regional policies, counterterrorism doctrines, energy supplies, and democratic ideals and practices. This rapprochement signals that Russia will cooperate with the U.S. by curtailing strategic assistance to Iran. The Pentagon had been "ready to purchase a number of Russian-made armaments (specifically helicopters for use in Afghanistan by the Northern Alliance), but only after Moscow severed its ties with Tehran" (Mizin 2004, 77). Since Moscow is now abandoning Tehran, Washington and Moscow might embark on the same types of arms sales that Washington considered for the conflict in Afghanistan. The United States and Russia establish more of a common vision for stifling jihadist influences throughout the world. Russo-American cooperation indicates that Iran will not reach its nuclear objective.

#### II. Iran strengthens its military power but faces geopolitical resistance as well.

Iran likely strengthens its armed forces quantitatively and possibly qualitatively. That being said, the United States—with help from others throughout the global community—fosters geopolitical resistance to Iran.

#### 5. Iran embarks on a massive arms buildup.

Tehran produces or acquires numerous weapons stockpiles to fend off foreign adversaries. If Iran makes or receives chemical or biological weapons, then that would

be an almost sure sign that Iran is *not* on the road to achieving a nuclear capability. Iran may also increase its military expenditures for small arms. The mullahs would stockpile these small arms in anticipation of—or in the midst of—wars or proxy wars with the United States or Israel.

6. Washington seeks measures to strengthen its nonproliferation and counterproliferation policies.

At first glance, it appears as though Washington is embarking on an effort to thwart nuclear and weapons proliferation as a whole. However, the United States engages in talks with allies and non-aligned states about keeping dangerous weapons out of the hands of Iran in specific. U.S. officials meet with a variety of world leaders to discuss measures for preventing and seizing shipments of nuclear, weapons, and dual-use equipment headed for Iran. Washington might be especially concerned about Iran's connections with rogue states, such as North Korea.

North Korea has extensive experience in shipping legitimate and illegal goods. . . . Sea routes are the least attractive because of the threat of maritime interception under the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). By contrast, the likelihood of detection and interdiction by PSI through land routes is virtually zero (Hecker and Liou 2007, 10).

Pyongyang could certainly ship goods to Iran through porous borders and tribal regions. *Non-state* terror groups can also transfer nuclear materials or weapons technologies through those same areas, possibly in cooperation with North Korea.

Thus, due to proliferation threats from non-state actors, rogue states, and even *non-rogue* states, Washington seeks better unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral measures to stop proliferation in the skies, in the seas, and on land. The U.S. simply thinks that the mullahs can exploit too many open transit routes to Iran. American officials indicate that

the United States is even prepared to inspect or block shipments to Iran from leading global powers. A state such as China or India may not appreciate this U.S. posture. Nonetheless, Washington is signaling to the world that it will take serious measures to keep Tehran out of the nuclear club.

***Indicators of Alternate Future #15 in Scenario 2***

In Alternate Future #15, the United States engages in subversion, Russia provides strategic assistance, Israel employs martial action, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The possible indicators for this future are all numbered and explained briefly under various focal events (which are numbered as roman numerals).

I. The Western alliance is embroiled in protracted strategic conflict.

The Western alliance enters into a period of protracted military and strategic hardships. Still, the U.S. and Israel can take advantage of their military power and hamper Iran's nuclear weapons program.

1. The U.S. is engaged in conflict in the Islamic world *or* beyond.

This is the same as Indicator 1 in Alternate Future #11.

2. Russo-Israeli tensions increase.

As Russia grows more powerful strategically, it asserts its influence across various regions. This assertion causes Russo-Israeli discord over political conflicts in the Middle East. In all likelihood, the biggest area of disagreement would come from differences over how to handle Iran's jihadist activities. Moscow would want to handle Tehran diplomatically. The Kremlin thinks that aggression against Iran might compel Iran to seek a nuclear deterrent, further damaging Russia's nonproliferation interests. Still, Israel is more likely to suffer from Iran's jihadist exploits. Jerusalem is not

concerned about Moscow's economic or strategic relationship with Tehran. The Jewish state feels it cannot afford to let a jihadist Iran weaponize its nuclear program. Thus, Russo-Israeli disagreements over Iran and the Middle East as a whole ignite a massive rift in Russo-Israeli relations. Russia chooses to defy Israel and continue assisting Iran strategically. Israel defies Russia by confronting Iran militarily.

3. Iran increases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

This is the same as Indicator 3 in Alternate Future #11.

4. Russo-American tensions simmer.

Problems between the United States and Russia reach a boiling point. Both states remain opposed to each other on a number of strategic issues, ranging from separatist movements to counterterrorism policies. The Russians and Americans view each other as enemies. Consequently, they take incompatible stances on the Iranian nuclear issue. The Caspian states already seem "united in preventing the US from undertaking military action from bases in any of the Caspian littoral states" (Katz 2008, 210). If Russo-American tensions simmer, then Moscow will do everything in its strategic power to further deny Washington military access to the Caspian region. Russia does not feel threatened by a jihadist Islamic Republic. Even if the Kremlin does feel uneasy about Iranian actions, it still perceives the United States to be a far worse adversary. To counter Washington's subversion against Tehran, Moscow decides it must supply Tehran with diplomatic, nuclear, and weapons assistance. Russia may ensure that Iran creates problems for the United States. Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic fails to take full advantage of Russian support, since the mullahs never develop nuclear weapons.

II. Iran becomes stronger militarily and diplomatically, but faces geopolitical resistance as well.

Iran likely strengthens its armed forces quantitatively and possibly qualitatively, and receives (at least short-term) diplomatic support. That being said, the United States—with help from others throughout the global community—fosters geopolitical resistance to Iran.

5. Iran embarks on a massive arms buildup.

This is the same as Indicator 5 in Alternate Future #11.

6. Washington seeks measures to strengthen its nonproliferation and counterproliferation policies.

This is the same as Indicator 6 in Alternate Future #11.

7. Russia publicly expresses appreciation for its strategic and commercial friendship with Iran.

The Kremlin does not want to give Iran an excuse to unleash jihadist movements against Russia. Therefore, Moscow determines that it will get out in front of the issue by giving Tehran public reassurances in the media, at the UN, and at regional or global summits. Russia has too much invested in Iran's well-being to withdraw strategic support for Iran. Moscow may become slightly unnerved by Tehran's sponsoring of radical Islamist violence. Yet Russia benefits politically, militarily, commercially, and scientifically from its relations with the Islamic Republic. Once again, the Russo-Iranian partnership serves as an insurance policy that Iran will spare Russia from jihadist aggression. Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East host many jihadist movements. Iran may support the radical Islamists ideologically or financially, but

Russia has a tacit arrangement with Iran to keep the Islamist movements focused away from Russia. The Kremlin can also work with the Islamic Republic to limit the growth of other would-be regional powers. Overall, Russia is bound to Iran. Moscow cannot afford to sacrifice Tehran to Washington or Jerusalem. In the end, though, Russia's expression of support for Iran indicates nothing about Iran's eventual nuclear status.

***Indicators of Alternate Future #19 in Scenario 2***

In Alternate Future #19, the United States invades Iran, Russia curtails strategic assistance to Iran, Israel employs martial action against Iran, and Iran does *not* develop nuclear weapons. The possible indicators for this future are all numbered and explained briefly under various focal events (which are numbered as roman numerals).

I. The Western alliance is unconstrained militarily and is able to maneuver against Iran amidst a favorable strategic atmosphere.

Washington substantially reduces its military engagements. Also, the U.S. can subvert Iran's nuclear weapons program by taking advantage of shifting interstate relations, and by using overt Iranian hostility as a justification for American subversion.

1. The U.S. reduces its military commitments in the Islamic world or beyond.

Since Washington is pulling out of at least one major violent conflict, it would attain more resources, manpower, military capabilities, and political will to invade a jihadist Iran. The United States would probably continue handing over governing and security responsibilities to the Iraqi and Afghan governments. Thus, the U.S. could militarily focus its attention on the Iranian threat.

2. Russo-Iranian tensions increase.

This is the same as Indicator 2 in Alternate Future #11.

3. Iran increases its rhetoric against the United States and Israel.

This is the same as Indicator 3 in Alternate Future #11 and Alternate Future #15.

4. Russo-American tensions wane.

This is the same as Indicator 4 in Alternate Future #11.

- II. Iran strengthens its military power but faces geopolitical resistance as well.

Iran likely strengthens its armed forces quantitatively and possibly qualitatively. That being said, the United States—with help from others throughout the global community—fosters geopolitical resistance to Iran.

5. Iran embarks on a massive arms buildup.

This is the same as Indicator 5 in Alternate Future #11 and Alternate Future #15.

6. Washington seeks measures to strengthen its nonproliferation and counterproliferation policies.

This is the same as Indicator 6 in Alternate Future #11 and Alternate Future #15.

- III. The Western alliance adopts an overtly violent posture against Iran and the Iranian nuclear program.

Washington and Jerusalem fix their military eyes on Iran. The American-Israeli alliance becomes determined to settle the Iranian nuclear issue through force, due to strategic, political, diplomatic, and technological reasons. The alliance broadcasts its military intentions blatantly.

7. The Republican Party retains control of the U.S. presidency.

If the Republican Party retains control of the U.S. presidency in the 2009 election, then the United States would be more likely to invade Iran than to subvert Iran. This does not mean that the Republican Party is eager to start a war. However, the Republican

philosophy espouses the idea of taking a hard line against jihadist powers, and the Republicans may think they have been given a political mandate to attack the Islamic Republic. President George W. Bush has already invaded both Iraq and Afghanistan. The next potential president, Senator John McCain, is yet another Republican who would invade a predominantly Islamic nation.

8. Washington fails to construct missile defense systems.

If the U.S. cannot establish theater and strategic missile defense shields, then the U.S. would be more likely to invade Iran. The lack of missile defense systems would leave the United States and its allies vulnerable to an Iranian nuclear strike. A jihadist Iran might attain the capacity to penetrate American airspace with intercontinental ballistic missiles. Those ballistic missiles could carry nuclear warheads. “Aiming to counter the perceived threat from rogue states seeking to develop ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the United States hopes to deploy a limited number of missile interceptors to shield its citizens from long-range attacks” (Jakobsen 2007, 99). Also, “provided that ‘hitting a bullet with a bullet’ is feasible, an NMD will likely solve some of the credibility problems inherent in Washington’s policy of extended deterrence” (Jakobsen 2007, 107). The problem is that the United States fails to make missile defense systems operational within the near future. The technology may be promising, yet Washington feels it must move swiftly against the Islamic Republic. Hence, the U.S. determines that the best way to safeguard American and allied territory is to use military force to utterly deny Iran a nuclear capability. Washington thinks that opting for subversion would be tantamount to playing games with America’s and the world’s physical security.

9. The United States announces its plans for regime change in Iran.

Washington expresses to the global community that Tehran must be kept out of the nuclear club. The U.S. makes its intentions known via American media sources, foreign media sources, regional forums, and international forums. The announcements do indeed indicate that the U.S. will invade Iran. After all, in recent times, Washington has often broadcast its decisions to engage in combat.

10. There are public disclosures of an American-Israeli invasion of Iran.

The United States and Israel state their intentions to jointly prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Washington and Jerusalem make their statements in global and state media outlets, and at regional and international forums. The American-Israeli partnership denotes the coming about of a *non*-nuclear future for Iran. Tehran simply lacks the power to confront the Western alliance militarily. Previously, “U.S. officials have implicitly threatened to use force to destroy Iran’s nuclear program” (Gasiorowski 2007, 125). Now the United States makes good on its threat.

11. The U.S. increases its force levels and activity in the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and other regions close to Iran.

The United States increases its military presence and maneuvers throughout the waters and lands surrounding Iran. “In late 2006 and early 2007,” the U.S. “moved a second aircraft-carrier battle group into the Persian Gulf” (Gasiorowski 2007, 125). Increased naval activity will continue in the run up to an American invasion. Washington sends more ships to patrol the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Indian Ocean. The U.S. deploys additional troops and military hardware to Iraq or Afghanistan, so that the U.S. is prepared to the Islamic Republic. Washington would also

station forces across a variety of other states. American forces would have access to air, land, and naval platforms in places such as Kuwait, and possibly even places such as India and Azerbaijan. In the spring of 2007, “several Coalition expeditionary strike groups staged war games in the Persian Gulf and surrounding waters” (Newkirk 2008, 35). These exercises will intensify as the U.S. becomes poised to invade Iran.

## **Transpositions**

As time progresses, an alternate future may morph or transform into a different alternate future. Step 10 of the LAMP refers to this type of transformation as a transposition. A shift in the future may have profound strategic implications, affecting Iran’s *actual* nuclear status, or affecting the *consequences* of Iran’s nuclear status. This section explains how various transpositions could occur.

### ***Possible Transpositions in Scenario 1***

Alternate Future #6 may transpose into Alternate Future #2. In both alternate futures, the United States engages in diplomacy, Israel yields to others, and Iran develops nuclear weapons. However, Russia *provides* strategic assistance in Alternate Future #6, but *curtails* strategic assistance in Alternate Future #2. A transposition may occur in which Russia decides that it should no longer offer Iran diplomatic, nuclear, or weapons assistance. There are two primary reasons why this transposition might take place.

First, Moscow may discover that Tehran is about to enter the nuclear club. The Kremlin may figure that it still has a chance to thwart the Islamic Republic’s ambitions. Russia would remove its diplomatic protection of Iran, leaving Iran exposed to the decisions of the international community. Moscow would be scaling back any nuclear

assistance or weapons assistance so that Tehran could not weaponize its nuclear program. Russia's change of course would come too late. Iran would indeed develop a nuclear capability. On the other hand, due to Moscow's strategic transformation, the international community may become unified in confronting Iran diplomatically, economically, or even militarily.

Second, Russia may decide that its strategic relationship with Iran is not paying the appropriate dividends. Moscow would perhaps calculate that a strong Russo-American relationship is more important than a strong Russo-Iranian relationship. There is also the possibility that Tehran might develop a more hostile political stance toward Russian interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The Kremlin would then be further inclined to sacrifice Iran to the whims of the global community. Moreover, Iran could lose the capability to provide Russia with necessary economic or energy-related benefits. Moscow would, therefore, look for better commercial partners than Tehran in the weapons and nuclear industries.

Alternatively, Alternate Future #2 may transpose into Alternate Future #6. Once again, the outcome would remain the same. Tehran would still develop nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, after initially curtailing its strategic assistance to Iran, Russia later decides to resume its diplomatic, nuclear, and weapons support to Iran. Ultimately, Russia's resumption of strategic support for Iran could make it difficult for the United States, Israel, or Russia itself to deal with a future *nuclear* Islamic Republic. There are two main reasons that might explain Moscow's shift.

First, Russia may initially think that the Islamic Republic is on course to develop nuclear weapons. As time progresses, though, Moscow may conclude that Tehran is *not*

constructing the bomb. Thus, sufficiently relieved by its findings, the Kremlin decides to resume its strategic alliance with the Islamic Republic since there is no need to dismantle a productive commercial and strategic relationship with an influential neighbor. Russia's updated decision would put Iran on the fast track to developing nuclear weapons. Tehran would acquire a nuclear capability rapidly, by exploiting Moscow's resumption of nuclear fuel provisions, technical expertise, weapons assistance, and diplomatic support.

Second, Russia may discover that Iran is on the verge of producing nuclear arms. Russia may prefer for there to be no new members in the atomic club, yet Russia could eventually profit by resuming a strategic relationship with the Islamic Republic.

Similar to the Russian opposition to American policy regarding Iraq in 2002 and 2003, this Iranian imbroglio demonstrates that the Russian regime is anxious to show it is nobody's pawn and must be seriously reckoned with as a major international player, if not a reemerging superpower. (Mizin 2004, 79)

Moscow simply becomes unwilling to back Washington's global ambitions and diplomatic efforts. The Kremlin is convinced that it must protect the Russo-Iranian relationship, regardless of whether or not this relationship interferes with U.S. interests. Iran would likely seek outside assistance to protect and advance a new nuclear status. Hence, Moscow could benefit financially by selling even more nuclear equipment and military hardware to Tehran, *before* Tehran develops the nuclear weapons. Russia would be establishing an early trust with a pre-atomic Iran. Moscow and Tehran might then ensure a durable Russo-Iranian strategic partnership to deal with events across Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Caspian Sea. In the end, the Kremlin decides to resume its strategic support for the mullahs.

Alternate Future #1 may transpose into Alternate Future #2. This is possibly the most critical transposition in Scenario 1. Both alternate futures involve U.S. diplomacy,

Russia's curtailment of assistance, and Israeli inaction. That being said, in Alternate Future #2, Iran develops atomic weapons. Two key reasons may explain why the Islamic Republic would take control of its nuclear destiny, and transform from a *non*-nuclear state into a *nuclear* state.

First, Iran may acquire the capability to develop nuclear weapons, after originally lacking the capability to do so. In other words, U.S. diplomacy would never have been sufficient, in and of itself, to keep Iran out of the nuclear club. Tehran will *not* sacrifice its atomic fate to outside powers (Gerecht 2008, 98). As Washington negotiates with Tehran, Tehran works on shoring up the scientific, engineering, political, economic, and military aspects of its nuclear weapons program. Eventually, Iran takes advantage of American diplomacy to join the nuclear club.

Second, the Islamic Republic may initially respond favorably to U.S. diplomacy, but later decide that it needs nuclear weapons for strategic or ideological reasons. The point is that Iran would eventually discard American overtures. Tehran would not be changing its decision because it was fooling the United States all along. Iran might, however, change its decision because of deteriorating relations with the U.S., or because of changing Iranian calculations regarding regional adversaries. Tehran may face new or evolving threats that could render American nuclear diplomacy ineffective. For Iran, "short term compromises can be found only on issues that do not raise existential questions" (Gerecht 2008, 98). That being said, the Islamic Republic may come to believe that it needs nuclear weapons to ensure its survival as an Islamic theocracy. "Once any government has crossed the nuclear threshold, forcible regime change by an external actor is no longer a viable option" (Hemmer 2007, 45). Even foreign attempts to

promote surreptitious coups in Iran would become less viable. Thus, Iran would regain its incentive to become a nuclear power.

### ***Possible Transpositions in Scenario 2***

Alternate Future #11 may transpose into Alternate Future #15. Both futures show the U.S. engaging in subversion, Israel employing martial action, and Iran *not* developing nuclear weapons. The difference is that in Alternate Future #15, Russia provides strategic assistance to the Islamic Republic. Russia would switch from an adversarial to a supportive position toward a *jihadist* Iran.

Russia may decide that it must counter any U.S. action against Iran. The state of Russo-American relations would become quite hostile, since the Iranian-backed jihadist attack (in Scenario 2) would probably have been aimed at a Western target. Moscow would simply calculate that someone needs to roll back Washington's power. Among other issues, the Kremlin remains disturbed by U.S. missile-defense policies. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has already "expressed bitter opposition to the Bush Administration's plan to deploy a ballistic missile defense (BMD) system in Poland and the Czech Republic in order to protect Europe and the US against a possible missile attack from Iran" (Katz 2008, 207). The first problem is that Poland and the Czech Republic were formerly part of the Soviet alliance structure. Second, the Kremlin doubts Iran's capacity or willingness to launch missile strikes at the West. "Moscow has argued that Iran is not capable of launching such an attack, and that the 'limited' BMD system to be located in Central Europe is really part of a global American BMD plan aimed at Russia" (Katz 2008, 207).

Russia, in a sense, decides to fuel Iranian resistance to U.S. subversion. In the aftermath of an Iranian-sponsored jihadist attack, the Kremlin initially would determine that it must curtail strategic assistance for Iran. Russia does not want to be viewed as tacitly or overtly supporting a radical Islamic Republic. Thus, Moscow would weather the probable Western or possible Arabic outrage, and then resume its strategic and commercial partnership with the Islamic Republic. Nonetheless, Iran would still remain a *non-nuclear* power. U.S. subversion and Israeli martial action override Russia's newfound support for Iran.

Alternate Future #15 may transpose into Alternate Future #11. This may occur if Russia determines that assisting Iran will damage Russia's regional or global interests. Moscow may eventually decide that a *jihadist* Tehran is too dangerous to support, and that Tehran could turn its radical ire against Moscow. Russia would originally feel as though it could continue its relationship with Iran. Yet the Kremlin might come to fear the potential spread of Islamist violence throughout Central Asia or Russia itself. Also, Moscow may withdraw support to Tehran to avoid growing diplomatic isolation from the West or other parts of the global community.

Alternate Future #11 may transpose into Alternate Future #19. Both alternate futures result in a *non-nuclear* Iran, as Russia curtails its strategic assistance and Israel employs martial action. The major distinction between the futures is that Alternate Future #11 involves U.S. subversion, whereas Alternate Future #19 involves a U.S. invasion. This transposition mostly has ramifications in terms of the *consequences* for the issue. Still, a U.S. invasion, more so than U.S. subversion, would ensure that Iran remains a non-nuclear power. "To paraphrase a celebrated dictum, the military option is

sanctions by different means” (Amuzegar 2006, 102). The United States would come to think that sanctions and other subversive tactics are failing to meet American political objectives or are working too slowly. Thus, Washington bombs the Islamic Republic’s nuclear, military, or government facilities. The U.S. would already have troops stationed in Iran’s regional neighborhood, ready to execute their operations. It is a feasible transition for the United States to move from subversive activities to an outright invasion, especially if Iran continues its jihadist campaign.

## Chapter Digest

There are a number of ways in which the Iranian nuclear issue may unfold over time. However, it is difficult to see exactly how a future might unravel. One of the problems in predicting the consequences, transpositions, focal events, and indicators, is that no one is sure about Iran’s actual technical capacities or nuclear objectives. This is why the section on indicators lists many predictors. In other words, since no one can perfectly glean Iran’s intentions or capabilities, an analyst must illuminate a *variety* of strategic contingencies to forecast the alternate futures.

Additionally, there are fewer strategic markers as a whole for the alternate futures in Scenario 2 than there are in Scenario 1. The fact that Iran sponsors jihadist violence in Scenario 2 means that the stage has been set for more forceful action on behalf of the United States and Israel. Also, in Scenario 2, even Russia is more likely to withdraw assistance from Iran. The point is that if Iran sponsors radical Islamist violence, then few strategic events are needed to set the most probable futures in motion. Tehran’s support for jihad serves as an overarching sign of the actors’ likely decisions. Still, Alternate

Future #19 in Scenario 2 has the most indicators. This is because a U.S. invasion of Iran probably requires more specific conditions than U.S. diplomacy or U.S. subversion.

The consequences for the actors vary and depend on the combination of the actors' choices, the ultimate status of Iran's nuclear program, and the scenario in which a future occurs. It is not clear that the main actors will consider the consequences discussed in this chapter. They may consider other ramifications for the issue or even ignore certain ramifications. Indeed, a state could suffer politically, economically, and militarily, as a result of the decision it makes regarding the Iranian nuclear issue. That being said, a state may feel forced to act in a particular manner, irrespective of the implications for that state. Sometimes an actor thinks it can benefit from a choice that appears irrational to others.

This chapter has shown that the U.S. would benefit by employing subversion. The consequences of subversion carry the least costs for the United States. More important, subversive activities represent an effective way for Washington to keep Tehran out of the nuclear club. Iran simply lacks the power to stand up to U.S. blockades, sanctions, paramilitary operations, intelligence operations, and funding of Iranian opposition groups.

It is difficult to see what the best course of action would be for Russia. If the Kremlin continues assisting Iran, then Iran will probably develop nuclear weapons and become a greater threat to Russia's long-term interests. Yet if Moscow curtails its strategic assistance to Tehran, then Tehran will probably not develop nuclear weapons. This latter possibility might damage Russia's short-term commercial and strategic

interests. However, in the long run, Russia would avoid having to confront Iranian intrusions into the Russian near abroad.

Israel's surest option to thwart the mullahs' nuclear ambitions is to employ martial action. By employing martial action, Israel could suffer major consequences, as it may become a stronger magnet for global jihad and terrorism. Yet this could also happen even in the event that Jerusalem yields to others. However, if Israel yields to others, then it is still possible that due to U.S. or Russian choices, that Iran would not develop nuclear weapons. Israel will either face a hostile nuclear Iran that would promote jihad against the Jewish state, or a hostile *non*-nuclear Iran that would promote jihad against the Jewish state. The problems with Israel's military option are that the jihadist consequences could be more severe in the short term, Israel would endure casualties in its military operations, and global opinion toward Israel would sink even further. There are indeed *no* good options for Israel. For Jerusalem, it is a matter of choosing the better of two bad options. The Jewish state may decide that it trusts others to solve the Iranian nuclear issue. Additionally, Washington may force Jerusalem to show military restraint. That being said, in the event of a major Iranian-backed jihadist attack (Scenario 2), Israel would probably employ martial action against Iran, regardless of any foreign pressure against Israel's military plans.

This chapter has shown that Iran would benefit from a nuclear capability. It would likely receive strategic and commercial concessions from foreign powers. The Americans and Israelis may certainly remain hostile to a nuclear Iran. On the other hand, the United States and its allies would hesitate before invading a *nuclear* Islamic Republic. Iran could also use its new-found position to improve its military, as well as to advance

its doctrine of expanded autonomy. Tehran would even gain power in Central Asia and the Caucasus at the expense of Moscow.

In some ways Iran is the most intriguing actor in this study. Barring any kind of domestic- or foreign-instigated regime change in Tehran, Tehran will probably sustain if not raise its level of support for global jihad, especially against the Jewish state. (Of course, Iran may not raise its level of support for global jihad until *after* it develops nuclear weapons.) Iran's interests include regime change in Jerusalem, and the mullahs will likely continue to act as the leader of the Islamist resistance against the Big Satan and the Little Satan. The Islamic Republic's political culture plays a big role in defining the nuclear issue. That political culture speaks for the Iranian state and the Iranian state does not appear doomed. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad may not remain in power for long. However, regardless of the actors' decisions, the mullahs will still pursue their jihadist goals. They have been doing so since 1979, and there are few indicators that this will change any time soon. Moreover, if Tehran develops nuclear arms, then it will be able to sponsor jihad with less fear of retaliation. The overall point is that Iran wants the bomb to reinforce its jihadist goals. Those goals include the concept of expanded autonomy, in which Iran uses the specter of nuclear warfare as a means of spreading Iranian influence throughout the Middle East, the Islamic world, and the world as a whole.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

This study leads to a systematic understanding of the Iranian nuclear issue. Some unanswered questions may remain, but this study deciphers various aspects of Iran's nuclear weapons program *and* the global strategic environment. Ultimately, Tehran's nuclear program has become a matter of importance well beyond the answer of whether or not Tehran actually develops the bomb. All of the prominent actors will face strategic repercussions as a result of their decisions. In addition, the world as a whole will feel the reverberations of how the actors deal with Iran's nuclear weapons program. Overall, this section provides further context to the Iranian nuclear issue and rogue-state nuclear proliferation, and offers suggestions for studying Iran's nuclear program in the future.

The Islamic Republic may or may not develop the bomb. Nevertheless, Tehran is situated in the midst of a multi-state struggle over how to deal with rogue-state nuclear proliferation. The very problem that the United States, Russia, Israel, and others face is what constitutes a rogue state, much less a rogue *jihadist* state. Perhaps the very definition of what constitutes a rogue state is arbitrary. After all, Afghanistan is not a rogue state. The government in Kabul is not funding terrorism or dictatorial revolutions. However, Afghanistan still confronts forces that seek to destroy the current Afghan state and reestablish repressive control over the Afghan population, and possibly over other populations as well. The Taliban could even acquire nuclear weapons at some point. Although this may be unlikely, it would still represent a situation in which a jihadist group acts as a rogue actor living within a non-rogue state, causing problems related to national sovereignty, basic human rights, and global security. Of course, not all rogue

states are jihadist, as Cuba, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe may be considered as rogue states. Still, the point remains the same: Many nations seek to keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of dangerous regimes, transnational groups, and individuals. The problem is that states maintain different perceptions about rogue-state nuclear threats. These differences often confound the nations that understand the best way to solve the issue.

Iran, representing a state actor, has taken center stage in the *less-than-global*-battle to stifle nuclear proliferation. There really is no global community of nations. States often agree on the need to keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of rogue actors. That being said, the states seeking to thwart nuclear proliferation have different ideas about how and why to stop this nuclear proliferation. Hence, the question of rogue-state proliferation actually branches out into the question of why anyone should have nuclear weapons in the first place. States such as Iran are not thrilled that states such as Israel possess a nuclear arsenal. To Iran, Israel represents a rogue actor and should not be allowed to keep a strategic advantage over surrounding Islamic powers. To the United States, though, the fact that Israel maintains atomic weapons is a minimal threat, in the sense that the Israelis never revel in the prospect of destroying entire societies with atomic weapons.

We should now come back to the question of what truly justifies a rogue state. Once again, actors possess competing perceptions over what constitutes a rogue state and what to do about rogue states that seek the bomb. These competing perceptions may certainly lead to further hostilities between Washington and Moscow. Other powers are involved in the Iranian nuclear issue as well, even if they are not primary actors. These secondary or tertiary actors have their own interests to protect and will lobby

Washington, Moscow, Jerusalem, and Tehran to act in accordance with the views of lesser players.

Global collaboration may work to stifle North Korea's nuclear ambitions. However, the bigger issue is that North Korea will remain, at least for the foreseeable future, a rogue-state that suppresses its people, supports the global drug trade, and backs other rogue forces. We can tie in the North Korean nuclear issue with the Iranian nuclear issue. If Iran does indeed forego the nuclear option, then Iran will still retain its jihadist impulses, theocratic ideals, and support for terrorist groups. In effect, the Islamic Republic will remain a rogue state, regardless of whether or not it develops nuclear weapons. The only things that can change this are an internal revolution, internal change over time, or imposed change from the outside. Iran is gaining a more equal diplomatic footing with both the United States and Russia. Therefore, the mullahs have little incentive to suppress or relinquish their desire for the jihadist ideology. Washington would possibly remove a non-nuclear Islamic Republic from its list of rogue states. That being said, Iran would probably continue to act as a theocratic power, just as North Korea would continue to act as a Communist power.

So will rogue states (as defined by Western powers) develop nuclear weapons? This study draws on two different scenarios to determine whether or not at least one rogue state—Iran—will construct an atomic arsenal. As far as other rogue states are concerned, it is difficult to predict their nuclear decisions without studying the nuclear option on a state-by-state basis. Yet the test case of Iran shows that even the very decision to produce or not produce nuclear weapons may lead to regional or global wars, which would destroy lives, infrastructures, economies, and societies. And if Iran and the

other primary actors actively avoid war, then hostile interstate relations, domestic repression, and global terrorism will still persist. The world is dangerous either with or without nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, rogue states will likely continue to explore nuclear capabilities in the future. Will rogue states actually develop the bomb? Some, including Iran, *may* produce small arsenals of nuclear weapons, although rogue actors by their very nature are unpredictable. The question of what outlaw states would do with these weapons is a topic for a different study altogether.

When discussing nuclear proliferation, one should certainly keep in mind the differing concepts of rogue actors. Iran does not even think that Israel should exist. The U.S. sees Russia as a tyrannical land that offers little hope of true freedom and as a nation that forces others to submit to the Kremlin's authoritarian ways. Washington, though, will probably avoid listing Russia as a rogue state. Russia is already powerful and maintains a nuclear weapons capability. Likewise, even a less powerful state such as Pakistan may fail to meet the American definition of a rogue state, since Pakistan has already developed nuclear weapons. The point is that after a nation develops nuclear weapons, it becomes harder to curtail that nation's actions and ideologies. The United States never really contained the Soviet Union, unless containment meant allowing Russia to control Eastern Europe and manage large swaths of Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Even North Korea, a much weaker nation than Russia, has achieved a small modicum of respect since its nuclear development. Pyongyang has arguably become more accepted (than it used to be) as part of the "international community." If a non-state actor such as al-Qa'ida were to develop nuclear weapons, then many states may rush to offer "carrots and sticks" to al-Qa'ida's leadership.

Regardless of Iran's recent track record, terrorist exploits, current foreign policy positions, or support for jihadist revolution, Iran is currently merging into the international community. It appears increasingly likely that Iran will lose its rogue-state status. If Maoist China could shake a rogue-state image, then so could the Islamic Republic.

The Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP) does a reasonable job of answering this study's specific research question. Most of the findings seem to match up with reality. It is difficult to predict Iran's nuclear status or the consequences for the issue. Yet the section on perceptions demonstrates how the topic has unfolded to date. Moreover, the transpositions and indicators show how events may transpire in the future. Perhaps for this study, the LAMP does not need to make use of the perceptions to such a great extent, if at all. The trouble is that perceptions do not always translate into actions. A state may want to engage in a particular course of action, but lacks the willpower or capability to do so. The alternate futures could discuss *all* of the aspects that make up the actors decisions, including perceptions, capabilities, willpower, and external limitations. This would shorten the LAMP and reduce some of the repetitive material. One other problem in using the LAMP is that there are many actors and scenarios that will affect Iran's nuclear status. European, Gulf State, and Chinese decisions could be taken into account. Non-state actors such as Hizbollah could be accounted for as well. Still, the study would become confusing if it were to analyze several additional actors in great depth. The United States, Russia, Israel, and Iran appear to be the actors with the most say over Iran's nuclear status.

The LAMP also overlooks many of the political squabbles that are part of domestic politics. If Iran were to form a Western-style government, then this could transform future events entirely. On the other hand, Tehran may retain its theocratic political culture and pursue or not pursue nuclear weapons to achieve state objectives. This study posits that whatever decision Iran will make, it will act as a *unified* state in making its nuclear decision.

No piece of academic literature can explain or predict events perfectly. In switching from one systematic model to another, a social-science study must give up insightful ideas and evidence in the process. A single study cannot deal with every issue that goes into explaining the Iranian nuclear weapons program. This is true for social science models as hard-science evidence is often sidelined in the research. Indeed, this particular investigation offers a *strategic* analysis at the expense of a *technical* analysis. Alternatively, a study that evaluates Iran's engineering or physical-science capacity to construct the bomb may largely exclude a comprehensive strategic analysis. The best *academic* way to determine Iran's nuclear status may be to create a volume of papers that use different models of analysis. These models could be deductive and inductive, as well as strategic and scientific. Both theoretical and subject-matter experts could develop a massive scholarly project on Iran's nuclear weapons program. Future studies about Iran's nuclear status might focus on the importance of the global economy, domestic economies, domestic politics, resource and energy markets, competing ideologies and cultures, technical capabilities, human geography, physical geography, and strategies of warfare. Analysts might even use this type of academic volume to actually solve the Iranian nuclear issue. In the process, analysts could solve other related issues as well.

Analysts can use the LAMP and other models to explore many topics related to Iran's nuclear status. The deductive and qualitative LAMP framework, for example, could make use of the following questions: If Iran were to develop nuclear weapons, then what would be the consequences for global terrorism? If Iran were to develop nuclear weapons, then would various states develop missile defense systems? Will Middle Eastern states seek "the bomb" if Iran develops nuclear weapons? Would a *nuclear* Iran portend the coming of successful revolutions across the Middle East? Alternatively, a rational choice model could ask if Iran will remain a theocratic state if it develops nuclear weapons, or ask how Iran would shift its grand strategy if it develops nuclear weapons. Comparative models could predict Tehran's shifting alliance structures. Comparative *and* quantitative models could forecast Tehran's evolving military capabilities. Analysts might also draw on a variety of inductive studies to predict the threat Iran might pose to American, Russian, or Israeli homeland security. Most models are capable of explaining past, present, or future events. The LAMP is primarily confined to exploring *future* events. Still, it is constructed in such a way that makes it more effective—in many situations—than other predictive frameworks. Of course, analysts studying Iran's nuclear status are not limited to using only predictive analyses.

Perhaps this study should have asked if Iran will *pursue* a nuclear weapons capability. This study would then be premised solely on a strategic idea. The question of whether or not Iran will *actually* attain a nuclear capability is a complex hybrid of a strategic question and a technical question. It is indeed difficult to use the LAMP or any other predictive method to forecast Iran's nuclear status accurately. This study also *does* not and *could* not resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. That being said, in terms of regional

and global security, this study does reveal the magnitude of the current crisis. It also shows that the United States, Russia, Israel, and Iran possess major roles and responsibilities for crafting a solution or igniting a greater conflict.

The future will soon become the present. As the future arrives, analysts can use this study to better understand past perceptions and *misperceptions* about Iran's nuclear program. However, we should recognize that even the benefit of hindsight fails to promote a shared understanding of world developments. National security studies would probably disappear if people agreed on the same evidence and conclusions from history.

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## ***Appendices***

### **Appendix A: Terrorism and its Relation to Jihad**

Jihadists often employ terrorism in their operations. Terrorism is the willful political or apolitical act of spreading panic or chaos among populations and governments, for political, religious, economic, societal, or purely violent ends. The notion of “violent ends” refers to the idea that terrorists may execute operations for the sheer satisfaction of hurting people, even though the terrorists exploit greater political or religious aims as a cover for vicious behavior. Terrorism is often violent, although it can include non-violent methods of economic or cyber warfare. In this study, it mostly refers to violent acts or threats of violence against people or other physical targets, such as critical infrastructures. Sometimes terrorism can involve biological or chemical warfare. This study even discusses, albeit minimally, nuclear terrorism. Hoffman (2006) illuminates that one of the terrorists’ main weapons is fear. The terrorists’ battlefield joins the “front and rear, so that the enemy should at no time and in no place feel himself secure” (Hoffman 2006, 55). A terrorist organization’s battlefield could include a city, province, country, region, or—as in the case of al-Qa’ida—the world, in which most people (not simply government forces) feel threatened by terrorist operations. The battlefields could also include cyberspace or even *outer* space. No one across a terrorist zone is immune from subjection to fear. In this study, it is especially important to note that no one residing within a terrorist zone is immune from subjection to *jihad*.

## Appendix B: Pairwise Comparisons

This appendix shows the procedure for the pairwise comparisons in Scenario 1 and Scenario 2.

### *Pairwise Comparisons for Scenario 1*

Pairwise comparisons for Scenario 1 (Iran does *not* sponsor jihadist violence)—the more likely future is underlined and given a vote in table 1 in chapter 3):

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #2

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #3

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #4

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #5

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #6

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #7

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Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #19

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #20

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #21

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #22

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #23

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #24

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #3

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #4

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #5

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #6

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #7

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #8

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #9

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #10

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #11

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Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #14

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #15

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #16

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Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #18

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #19

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #20

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #21

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #22

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #23

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #24

Alternate Future #3 vs. Alternate Future #4

Alternate Future #3 vs. Alternate Future #5

Alternate Future #3 vs. Alternate Future #6

Alternate Future #3 vs. Alternate Future #7

Alternate Future #3 vs. Alternate Future #8

Alternate Future #3 vs. Alternate Future #9

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Alternate Future #3 vs. Alternate Future #23

Alternate Future #3 vs. Alternate Future #24

Alternate Future #4 vs. Alternate Future #5

Alternate Future #4 vs. Alternate Future #6

Alternate Future #4 vs. Alternate Future #7

Alternate Future #4 vs. Alternate Future #8

Alternate Future #4 vs. Alternate Future #9

Alternate Future #4 vs. Alternate Future #10

Alternate Future #4 vs. Alternate Future #11

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Alternate Future #5 vs. Alternate Future #6

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Alternate Future #22 vs. Alternate Future #24

Alternate Future #23 vs. Alternate Future #24

*Pairwise Comparisons for Scenario 2*

Pairwise comparisons for Scenario 2 (Iran sponsors jihadist violence)—the more likely future is underlined and given a vote in Table 2 in Chapter 3:

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #2

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #3

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #4

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #5

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #6

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #7

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #8

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #9

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #10

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #11

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Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #13

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #14

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Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #18

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #19

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #20

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #21

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #22

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #23

Alternate Future #1 vs. Alternate Future #24

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #3

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #4

Alternate Future #2 vs. Alternate Future #5

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