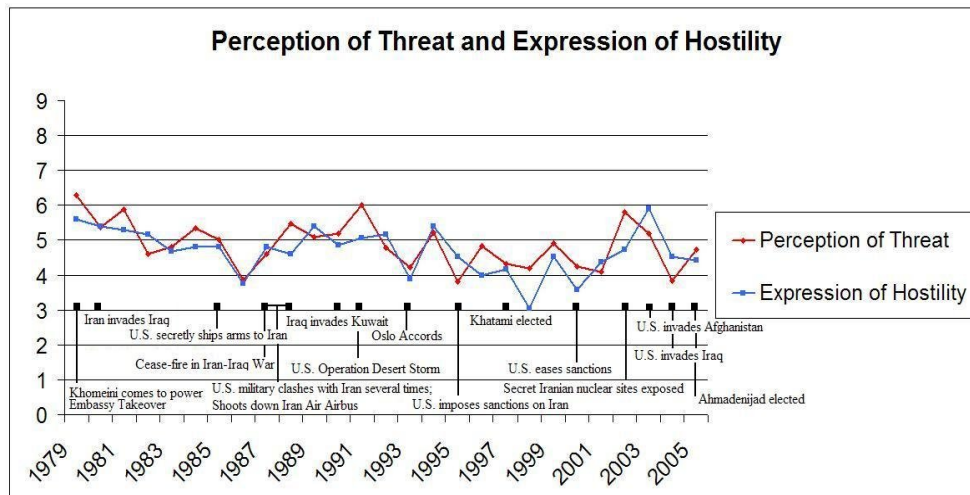


White Paper No. 4

What Makes Tehran Tick?

Options for Israel and the USA to Prevent a Nuclear-Armed Iran



9 May 2006

Iran Policy Committee

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**What Makes Tehran Tick
Table of Contents**

Introduction	3
The Nature of the Regime	3
Nature of the Regime: Shaped in the Crucible of the Iran-Iraq War	8
<i>Velayat-e Faqih</i> —Ideology of the Revolution	9
Iran’s Quest for Leadership of Islamic World	12
Iranian Regional Hegemonic Behavior	13
The Domestic Ideological Revolution	20
Iranian Regime Threat to U.S. National Security Interests	22
Iranian Perception of Threat and Expression of Hostility	29
Principal Queries	30
Scholarly Literature	31
Data Collection	31
Sources	31
Coding	33
Hypotheses	34
Iran’s Attitudes toward the United States	35
Iranian Perception of Threat From the United States	36
Iranian Expression of Hostility Towards the United States	40
Iran’s Attitude towards Israel	43
Iran’s Use of Rhetoric to Prop up its Government	50
Iran’s Battle against the United States and the West	53
Policy Considerations and Options	54
Policy 1: The Diplomatic Option	57
Coercive Diplomacy	59
Policy 2: The Military Options	60
Israeli Military Options: Conventional Methods	61
Israeli Nuclear Options	63
Iranian Military Options: Iranian Military Force Structure	65
Iranian Nuclear Options	68
United States Military Options	68
U.S. Nuclear Options	69
U.S. Regional Defensive Capability	69
Option 3: Regime Change	69
Destabilization	72
Delisting the MEK Serves U.S. National Security Interests	74
Conclusions	76
Appendix A	78
Appendix B	91

**What Makes Tehran Tick
Charts, Graphs, and Maps**

Persian Empire, Map, 550-330 BC.....	15
Figure 1: Iran's Perception of Threat and.....	36
Figure 2: Polynomial Regression of Iran's Perception of Threat and Expression of Hostility toward the United States and Israel	38
Figure 3: Iran's Expression of Hostility toward Israel over Time.....	46
Figure 4: Percentage of Iranian Statements Expressing Hostility toward the United States and Israel.....	46
Figure 5: Percentage of Iranian Statements Expressing Hostility toward the United States and Israel.....	47
Figure 6: Percentage of Iranian Statements Perceiving Threat to Iranian Areas of Interest.....	50
Figure 7: Average Intensity of Perception of Threat to Iranian Areas of Interest	51
Figure 8: Average Iranian Expression of Hostility toward the United States and Israel.....	52

FIRST DRAFT

What Makes Tehran Tick— Options for Israel, the United States, and the World Community

Introduction

The title, “What makes Tehran tick,” arises from Iran’s puzzling behavior: As Tehran moves closer to confrontation with the international community, rather than seeking to avoid a clash, Iran becomes even more aggressive in its rhetoric and its actions. Three questions flow from this puzzle and guide the analysis that follows: 1) What is the nature of the Iranian regime? 2) What difference does the regime’s character make as it travels down the road to a nuclear-armed Iran? 3) And what is the international community prepared to do about the Iranian regime, given its nature, capability, and intent to acquire the bomb?

The Nature of the Regime

An Islamo-Fascist State Seeking to Lead the Muslim World and to Confront the West

Regarding the character of the Iranian regime, it presides over an Islamo-fascist state, which attempts to survive by exporting its radical (Islamist) conception of Islam throughout the world. While extreme Islam derives from the first centuries of the religion, modern Islamism surfaces following Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ascent to power in Iran during 1979. The Khomeini regime attempted to transform the dream of re-creating a global Islamic rule from an unattainable ideal to an achievable goal by Islamist groups.

Moreover, Tehran gave these groups worldwide political-military support. In this regard, the Iranian Revolution attempted to turn Tehran into the global capital of Islamists—similar to the historic relationship between Moscow and Marxism.¹ While Moscow acted as the fountainhead of communism, Tehran seeks to be the wellspring of Islamism. Even for groups that ostensibly rejected Iranian leadership, they nevertheless benefited from Tehran’s largesse and prominence.

Although Iran was not directly involved in the 9-11 attacks, on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush correctly described the perpetrators as radical Muslims and extremists who stood on the shoulders of fascists, Nazis, and tyrants.² And in an October 2005 National Endowment for Democracy address, President Bush portrayed the ideology motivating terrorists as Islamo-fascism.³

¹ Mohammad Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism: The New Global Threat*, Washington DC: Seven Locks Press, 1993 and 2001.

² Bush, George W. Address of the President to the Joint Session of Congress and the American People. Washington, DC: White House, 20 September 2001; available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

³ President George W. Bush Discusses War on Terror at National Endowment for Democracy. Washington, DC: White House, 6 October 2005; although Bush uses the term Islamo-fascism in the context of individual terrorists, such as Osama bin Laden, this White Paper considers the Government of Iran as presiding over an Islamo-fascist state.

Some call this evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant Jihadism; still others, *Islamofascism*. Whatever it's called, this ideology is very different from the religion of Islam. This form of radicalism exploits Islam to serve a violent, political vision: the establishment, by terrorism and subversion and insurgency, of a totalitarian empire that denies all political and religious freedom [emphasis added].

But the September 11 attacks about which Bush spoke in his National Endowment address did not initiate the U.S. war on global terrorism.⁴ Rather, the theocrats of Tehran fired the first shots in that war when they rode the pinnacle of a peoples' revolt to drive the Shah from power only to seize power for themselves. On February 11, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini assumed office in Iran, riding high on the slogan "Death to America." Thereafter, repeated terrorist attacks on Americans soon began on a worldwide basis from a variety of fellow travelers.⁵

The Khomeini revolutionary slogans are a part an Islamofascism package. They combine anti-American and anti-Israeli chants, Islamist (radical) theology, totalitarian government, and appeals for popular support by scapegoating ethnic minorities.⁶ Khomeini's Iran became the quintessence of Islamofascism: a political entity organized in the Western state structure, yet embodying all the political features of a state ruled by an exclusive, repressive few. In this sense, Iran is organized like traditional Western fascism.

The Iranian regime's political repression, tyranny, and original mass appeal recreate a prior historical supremacy that is totalitarian nature. Iran is an Islamofascist state because it combines a radical brand of religious jurisprudence with reclaiming what its theocrats consider as their rightful position at the center of the Muslim world.⁷ As stated above, unlike traditional European fascism, religious ideas drive Iranian ideology. Using religion as a cover for repression allows the regime in Tehran literally to get away with murder, in the name of God.

By contrast, Hitler got away with murder by harnessing a pseudo-mythical Christianity to racist chauvinism; he bolstered his support within Germany by blaming ethnic groups, such as Jews, Gypsies, and other minorities, for Germany's socio-economic woes; Mussolini enhanced his popularity by demanding a rebirth of the Roman Empire through colonialist and racist expansion. With a hint of religiosity, Milosevic followed a similar approach, faulting ethnic Albanians for difficulties faced by Orthodox Christian Serbs in Kosovo. Likewise, but with an overdose of religion, Khomeini used radical rhetoric against political enemies, such as the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK) and ethnic minorities, such as the Kurds, to consolidate his hold on power.⁸

⁴ The Bush address to the National Endowment for Democracy is available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051006-3.html>

⁵ Daniel Pipes, "Death to America," *New York Post*, 8 September 2002.

⁶ Christopher Hitchens is one of the first to use the term "fascism with an Islamic face." *Nation Magazine*, 8 October 2001, available from <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011008/hitchens20010924>

⁷ Walter Mead describes the post-9/11 threat of Islamist militancy as "Arabian fascism," although Islamists advocate religious rather than ethnic solidarity. See Mead in *Power, Terror, Peace, and War: America's Grand Strategy in a World at Risk*, NY: Knopf Publishing Group, 2004.

⁸ Rouleau, Eric, "Iranian left and right slugging it out in chaotic fighting body," *The New York Times*, 14 June 1980, P. 2, "... tens of thousands of militants in sympathy with the People's Mujahideen were standing in line outside the

A straight line links Khomeini to Ahmadinejad; but that line has an upward tilt and points like a nuclear missile at the Jewish State and its main supporter, the United States. In other words, the shift in behavior from Khomeini to Ahmadinejad is one of degree not kind. On one hand, Iran's antagonistic stance under Ahmadinejad seems novel; on the other hand, official Iranian support for terrorism, development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs, as well as anti-Israel and United States rhetoric have been par for course since at least the 1980s.

That said, the spike in rhetoric from Tehran during 2006 and its persistent conflict with the West raise the issue of whether Tehran's revolutionary clock ticks even louder under Khomeini, Khamenei, and Ahmadinejad than under Rafsanjani and Khatami?⁹ To address such issues, this study collected thousands of statements of the Iranian leadership from 1979-2005 and conducted a qualitative assessment for the year 2006.

While its ideological rhetoric becomes louder, Iran's nuclear clock ticks faster. It is the convergence of a renewed hateful nature and accelerating pace of bombmaking that foreshadows a nuclear-armed Islamist Iran of tomorrow. Hence, the world pays more attention to the Iranian clerics of today than to Tehran's tyrants of yesterday.

Iran's behavior reflects the ideology of the clerical regime focused on the 1979 Revolution and perpetual struggle against the enemies of its particular brand of Shiite Islam. In this connection, the Iranian regime faces two interrelated but distinct conflicts. One is within the world of Islam; the other is with the West.

First, the leadership of Iran seeks to leverage the 1979 Revolution and *Velayat-e Faqih* (rule of the supreme religious jurisprudent) ideology into a leadership role within the entire Muslim world.

Second, the Iranian leadership, stuck in a time warp, believes it is locked in an ideological battle against the encroaching forces of modernization, globalization, secularization, and democratization. Because Israel and the United States personify these four factors, these allies are bound to come in conflict with a radical Islamist Iran.

On one hand, faced with these conflicts within the Islamic world and with the two Satans—Israel and America—Iran races to get the bomb before the West is able to converge on a policy that empowers the Iranian opposition to change the regime in Tehran. On the other hand, the international community races against the clock to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

stadium...Khomeini supporters from the Party of God, known as the Hezbollahi, approached calling for "Death to Massoud Rajavi!"..."there is only one party," they chanted, "the Party of God, and one chief, Ayatollah Khomeini."..."Do you hear?" Mr. Rajavi asked as he addressed himself to the Hezbollahi. "We are neither Communists nor pro-Soviet as you claim. We are fighting for the total freedom and independence of Iran."

⁹ Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani served two terms as the fourth President of Iran from 1989 to 1997, lost on the second round ballot to Tehran Mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the 2005 Iranian presidential election, and serves as Chairman of the Expediency Council of Iran, which supposedly resolves legislative issues between the Parliament and the Council of Guardians and advises the supreme leader Ali Khamenei on matters of national policy.

In the context of a race between two timepieces, it is imperative to understand what makes Tehran tick, before a ticking time bomb becomes a mushroom cloud, to borrow from the Bush administration rhetoric in justifying the takedown of Saddam Hussein of Iraq in 2003. The apparent absence of WMD in Iraq, however, should not allow Iran to get away with its quest to become a nuclear-armed state.

Based on an examination of thousands of statements of the Iranian leadership, Tehran's heightened enmity is "renewed" rather than "new." The animosity reflects the clerical leadership's attempts to recapture a level of revolutionary and ideological fervor rarely seen in Iran since the termination of the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war in 1988.

When Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa—religious edict—to kill British author, Salman Rushdie, for publishing a blasphemous book, *Satanic Verses*, in February 1989, Khomeini sought to reinforce the religious zeal of the Revolution. He gained experience in rekindling religious zeal by labeling the United States the "Great Satan," and Israel as the "Little Satan." Later in 1980, Khomeini embraced the Iran-Iraq War as the war of Islam against the infidels, and "a divine gift bestowed upon us by God."

The heightened rhetoric also represents a bid to bring down international and especially Arab/Muslim condemnation on Washington for its unwavering support of Israel. By diverting attention from its own contentious nuclear issues with the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Iran may hope to wring concessions out of the United States in ongoing negotiations over Iraq.¹⁰

It is, after all, the presence of U.S. ground forces in both eastern and western neighboring countries plus U.S. naval and air forces in the Persian Gulf that constitutes the most important obstacle to Iran's drive for regional power.¹¹

A number of factors have led the Iranian regime to be concerned about its grip on power, most important among them, domestic issues ranging from a deteriorating economy, restless youth population, ethnic unrest, and declining dedication to the values of the Revolution. The gathering pressures on the clerical regime in Tehran are evident in March 2006 comments made by Ali Larijani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and its top nuclear negotiator, to a closed-door session of Iran's Parliament:

*...the preservation of the regime has the highest priority and the Supreme Leader has placed the safeguarding of the regime at the top of Iran's foreign policy strategy in the nuclear issue.*¹²

Extensive research based on the regime's rhetoric and actions suggests that Iran's leadership perceives a closing window of opportunity in which to take action to preserve and project power.

¹⁰ "Iran: Threatening Israel to Get to the United States?" *Stratfor*, 18 August 2004.

¹¹ "Iran's Bid for Regional Power: Assets and Liabilities" *Power and Interest News Report (PINR)*, 06 September 2004.

¹² U.S. Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI) Dispatch, "Desperate Clerical Measures." March 24, 2006 (Volume II, No. 6).

Attempts to revive its ideology have likely been judged inadequate by the Iranian leadership to maintain itself in power; indeed, regime survival is a principal reason for its resort to an accelerated program of militarization, from development of nuclear weapons to expanded efforts at enhancement of existing conventional weapons systems. The regime seeks to prop itself up by creating conflict with the West and appealing to the Muslim population in the region on the issues of technological and military advancement, as well as anti-Israeli rhetoric.

In the mindset of Iran's clerical and revolutionary leadership, its nuclear weapons program and actual national identity (which includes the ideological component) have become fused to such an extent that no conceivable package of economic or even security concessions from the outside world can possibly prevail upon it to give up its quest for nuclear weapons status.

The regime that took power in Tehran with the 2005 ascendance of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidency marked a break with the domestic and foreign policy themes of the Khatami years (1997-2005). Gone is the "Dialogue of Civilizations" that characterized Khatami's rhetoric especially in the early years of his presidency: In its place is a far more militant and strident rhetoric from the onset that challenges the world to confront Tehran's accelerated nuclear weapons development program. This same regime supports terrorists across the Middle East and beyond, attempts to incite Shiite unrest across the Persian Gulf, and sends its agents to run interference in Iraq.

While Ahmadinejad provides the public face of the clerical regime in Tehran, the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dominates and directs Iranian policy with a cadre of clerics who surround and support him. Understanding their motivations is key to deriving an accurate threat assessment of the danger Iran poses to Israeli and American national security interests as well as to overall stability in the Middle East region. An accurate threat assessment is critical to the formulation of appropriate Israeli, American, and international policy that most effectively confronts Tehran's challenges to the world and encourages the rise of a democratic leadership that will play a constructive, instead of obstructive, role in the momentous changes coming to the Middle East.

In addition to domestic challenges from its own population, the regime in Tehran perceives itself threatened in a geostrategic sphere as well. According to this view, either one of these, or certainly a combination of both, could spell the end of the regime, if not managed effectively. Domestically, thousands of anti-government demonstrations, protests and strikes by the students, teachers, and workers have been alarming to Ahmadinejad's cabinet, dominated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Geo-strategically, the implacable press for democracy, modernity, and a globalized liberal, consumerist culture (as personified by the United States and its local ally, Israel) threaten the very foundations of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The aging clerics who led the Revolution understand that it is increasingly unlikely that they will ever achieve the full realization of their vision of a pure Islamic society at home and Persian domination of the Middle East abroad. Ayatollah Khamenei and the small group of mullahs who actually govern Iran see their window of opportunity for such dreams closing rapidly and have chosen to take radical action to save their regime and the ideals of their Revolution.

That their own, overwhelmingly young, population has little affinity for their ascetic version of Shiism or a hegemonic regional policy is irrelevant to the clerics, whose primary objective is preservation of their own privileges of power. Ahmadinejad and his war-age-cohort of veterans from the Iran-Iraq War, including the powerful Revolutionary Guards, are to be the leading edge of the clerics' campaign, combining as they do both revolutionary fervor and a military mindset. It is their mission to lead Tehran's new offensive that manifests itself as a two-front struggle: the struggle for leadership of the Islamic world and a struggle of civilizations against modernization, globalization, secularization, and democratization, which are embodied in the United States and Israel.

Nature of the Regime: Shaped in the Crucible of the Iran-Iraq War

The eight-year long war between Iran and Iraq was a searing experience for those who lived through it. The repercussions continue to emerge, long after the 1988 ceasefire: With the 2005 rise to power of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his cohort of IRGC and *Bassiji* war veterans, a kind of echo effect is playing out in Iranian society, setting the remaining true believers in the radical ideology of the Islamist Revolution against democratic reformers and a whole new generation.¹³ The consequences of this confrontation will set the future course for Iran, Iraq, Israel, and the entire Middle East region.



The leadership of the Iranian regime that took power following the 2005 presidential elections in large part is comprised of veterans of the Iran and Iraq War. Analysts had noted for a number of years prior to the ascension of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the growing power of the Revolutionary Guards, including their assigned responsibility for Iran's ostensibly "civilian" nuclear development program. By early 2006, Ahmadinejad had succeeded to a great extent in consolidating power on behalf of supreme leader Khamenei and filling many top Iranian regime positions with Revolutionary Guards comrades.¹⁴ Ahmadinejad himself is a former *Bassiji* and a commander of the IRGC.¹⁵

Khomeini's ability to characterize the war as a battle between the pure Islamic ideals of his young revolutionaries and the secular Ba'athist philosophy of the pan-Arabists was based on imbuing Iranian society with "themes of solidarity, sacrifice, self-reliance, and commitment". His success in doing so enabled the regime to consolidate its hold on power and, in the psyches of the generation that fought the war and saved the nation, fused the ideology of the regime and the Revolution with concepts of patriotism and loyalty to the nation-state itself.¹⁶

¹³ An Iranian paramilitary force created by Ayatollah Khomeini in November of 1979 to provide volunteers for shock troops in the Iran-Iraq War, *Bassiji* members constitute a branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

¹⁴ For instance, 13 out of 21 of Ahmadinejad's Cabinet Ministers hail from the IRGC. See *Iran Focus*, "18 of 21 new ministers hail from Revolutionary Guards, secret police," and also "Revolutionary Guards and allies sweep Iran's new cabinet," August 14, 2005.

¹⁵ Kuntzel, Matthias, "A Child of the Revolution Takes Over" *New Republic* April 24, 2006

¹⁶ Takeyh, Ray, "A Profile in Defiance." *The National Interest*, Spring 2006.

This is the disturbing dynamic that so alarms the world, as it listens with growing concern to the religious zealotry of the Iranian president who cannot seem to put the memories of that war behind him. Despite the defeat of the Iraqi leader, Ahmadinejad still harbors a visceral hatred for the Western powers that armed and supported him. In his view, Western public pronouncements of support for international treaties and prohibition of weapons of mass destruction that somehow did not extend to Iranians when their nation was invaded are the height of hypocrisy. The tacit or explicit support of most of Iran's Arab neighbors for Iraq during the war is not forgotten either and feeds Ahmadinejad's mistrust and suspicion of the world around him.

Domestically, the overly easy transition of a new generation of Iranian youth to peacetime pursuits, such as Western pop culture, angers Ahmadinejad and the other religiously-devout revolutionaries who bitterly nurse their grievance at a nation insufficiently-grateful for their sacrifices.¹⁷ What may be most galling to these career warriors is the inescapable fact that, while the radical ideology of the Islamist Revolution carried Iran through the war years, the horror of that experience also extinguished much of the zeal of the Revolution among ordinary Iranians and called into question the leadership capabilities of the clerical regime.¹⁸

Now given their chance at power, Iran's war generation is determined to drag its society back to the radical, politicized Islamism that so inspired its earlier years. By reviving the moral cohesion and stern discipline that drove the Revolution of Khomeini, it seems that the Supreme Leader Khamenei and Ahmadinejad are hoping against hope to save themselves and their regime, when most Iranians have moved forever beyond that joyless philosophy.

Based on their formative experiences in the Iran-Iraq war, however, Ahmadinejad and the IRGC cadre he's installed in power are convinced that Iran has the right to, as well as an existential need for, regional hegemony, but that the only way to ensure such an outcome is to resuscitate Khomeini's Islamist ideology, link it to a larger network of Islamists and Muslim population in the region, and set out to take on the international community.

Ahmadinejad's millennialist perspective, limited world experience, and contempt for U.S. and Western prowess and culture constitute a serious danger for the international community—but the fact that the Supreme Leader and the rest of Iran's clerical leadership share such an outlook is even more worrisome. What is clear is that this regime sees a nuclear weapons capability as a guarantor of regional dominance and as a result a guarantee for their survival in light of growing internal dissent.

***Velayat-e Faqih*—Ideology of the Revolution**

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Hardy

Khomeini's defining *Velayat-e Faqih* ideology was first developed through a series of lectures that he delivered to his theological students while in exile in the Iraqi city of Najaf. Its basic theme is the necessity of imposing moral, Islamic behavior on human society to create an atmosphere in which Muslims are able to live devoutly, in compliance with the demands of Allah. Khomeini and other extremist Shiite clergy believe that Allah already has handed down in the Sharia all the laws required to order human existence and that all that is left is for Muslims to implement it through the dominance of an Islamic state.



In a March 2006 article, the Iranian weekly newspaper, “Partow’ eh Sokhan,” considered the mouthpiece of the Ayatollah Yazdi, explained in an editorial the contempt of *Velayat-e Faqih* thinking for democratic principles:

People have no rights and count for nothing in an Islamic rule; it is God that reveals his commandments to the supreme leader, Imams and Ayatollahs in order for them to carry out...The measure of the legitimacy and authority of the Islamic rule is not in the majority vote of the people; in general, people are too stupid to be involved in a process for which they are simply not qualified.¹⁹

Such arrogation by the Iranian Shiite clergy of the sole prerogative to govern in an Islamic society, however, is actually without precedent in Shiite thought and practice. Although a number of Shia ayatollahs had been writing and speaking about a system similar to *Velayat-e Faqih* since the mid-1960s, their concepts were geared more to a systematization of theological issues that would eliminate the arbitrariness of individual spiritual leaders. Their thinking was intended for application in the religious sphere, but Khomeini applied the ideas to actual governance of a state, and that was a real departure from Shiite tradition.

Far more common have been the “quietist” and Sufi currents, of which the Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani (Iranian-born but living in Iraq for many decades) is a prominent representative. During Iran’s revolutionary period, the “quietist” current had small chance of predominating, though, not least because it had become demonized as a “pro-Shah” position; in such an atmosphere, only radical political activism was acceptable.

And finally, Shia tradition, unlike Sunni Islam, holds a special place for *ijtihad*, the practice of interpretation of the Koran and the Hadiths by respected, senior religious clerical figures. Khomeini’s innovations, however, that took Iran’s Shia clergy into day-to-day governance of a nation state, went far beyond any earlier precedent. According to Olivier Roy, “the Iranian Revolution is the only Islamist movement in which the clergy played a decisive role” and then proceeded to establish a religious monopoly over the entire society.²⁰

In many ways, Khomeini’s system shares more in common with other totalitarianisms of the 20th century, such as fascism and communism, than it does with anything genuinely Islamic. The absolute power of the *Velayat-e Faqih* structure in society is the functional equivalent of

¹⁹ Iran Press News, March 5, 2006.

²⁰ Roy, Olivier, *The Failure of Political Islam*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994.

communism's Leading Role of the Party, while the *Komiteh* model of "morals police" mimics that of the ubiquitous Cheka/NKVD/KGB. The parallel hierarchies of ideological and state organizations, with the unvarying supremacy of the former over the latter, also follow the communist model. The Iranian regime's ideological hierarchy, despite a constitution that proclaims the rights of the electorate, is entirely un-elected: the Supreme Leader is assisted by a Guardian Council, and an Islamic judiciary, completely beyond the electoral influence of the ordinary people.

The state institutions, as defined by the Iranian constitution, seem more democratic, in that lip-service is paid to elections and voting. In practice, however, Iran's electoral processes are merely a chimera of genuine civil society, because the conservative clergy of the ideological infrastructure, control every aspect of popular participation in their government; in practice, thousands of would-be candidates for the *Majlis* (Iran's parliament) can be disqualified at the whim of the clerics, all the national media are state-controlled, and street gangs such as the *Bassij* militia can be and are mobilized to threaten and intimidate voters.

The party line in a communist or fascist party state could be found in the pages and on the channels of the state-controlled media organs, such as *Pravda* or *Tass*, and it is not much different in Iran's Islamo-fascist state: there, the ruling clergy's line comes down to the people in sermons at the weekly Friday mosque services.²¹

Other aspects of the Khomeini system mark it as illegitimate from a theological perspective, as well. Khomeini's eventual insistence that the imperatives of *Velayat-e Faqih* take precedence even over the Koran and the Hadiths, his subordination of the Sharia to the Iranian constitution, and his iconoclastic treatment of the centuries-old role of the clergy in Shiite tradition serve to de-legitimize from the start the theological underpinnings of his own Revolution. Khomeini's radical departure from reliance on Sharia as the sole foundation for the judicial norm, in fact, gives to Iran a secular model of government.

Purely political exigencies of the post-Khomeini succession elevated to national leadership a supreme leader (Khamenei) who, far from holding the highest position within the clerical institution, was not even an ayatollah, but merely a *hojjat al-islam*, at the time of his hasty designation.²² So lacking in proper moral authority was Khamenei, in fact, that he was stripped of his ability to issue *fatwas* in Iran. The stature of the supreme leader, thus, has been discredited, even within the contrived parameters of *Velayat-e Faqih*.

As soon as the outlines of Khomeini's political intentions became obvious in the early 1980s, *Velayat-e Faqih* was rejected by the majority of the then-living grand ayatollahs. The Revolution itself was carried along on the zealotry of Khomeini's former theology students, not through the conviction of its Shiite establishment.

Khomeini further destroyed the clerical institution by promoting to positions of political power clerics who fulfilled criteria of political allegiance rather than according to religious rank. His 1981 repudiation of the Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari essentially ended the legitimacy of

²¹ Ash, Timothy Garton, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam." *New York Review of Books*, Volume 52, Number 17 (November 3, 2005).

²² *Ibid*

Velayat-e Faqih and turned the Iranian Revolution into just another power grab by ruthless thugs. Lacking any real theological foundation, their grip on the country is maintained only through a repressive system of totalitarian control; their extended success in doing so, has devolved, predictably, into massive corruption that is now bankrupting the country.²³

Iran's Quest for Leadership of Islamic World

When the regime in Tehran came to power on the wave of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Ayatollah Khomeini and his ideological cohorts intended not only to take political and religious control of Iran, but fully expected that their ideology of *Velayat-e Faqih* would seize for Persian Shiites the leading role in the Islamic revival of the late 20th century.

We have a huge position in the Islamic world. No country other than Iran can lead the Islamic world; this is a historical position.

—Muhammad-Javad Larijani, August 7, 1989, principal foreign policy advisor to Rafsanjani²⁴

When circumstances inside Iran converged in the 1970s to forge “an unprecedented alliance between a radical intelligentsia and a fundamentalist clergy,”²⁵ the Pahlavi dynasty collapsed and a violently-anti-Western collection of religious extremists took power.

Their guiding ideology, *Velayat-e Faqih* (Rule of the Jurisprudent), was conceived by the Ayatollah Khomeini during his years of exile in Najaf, Iraq and breaks with centuries of Shiite tradition in its demand that the clergy not only exert influence on society, but actually participate in, and indeed dominate the governance of society. According to this vision, until the return of the Mahdi can usher in a period of just rule on earth, a suitable representative must govern in his place. That representative is defined by *Velayat-e Faqih* as a senior member of the Shiite clergy, who has achieved the supreme status of *marja'al-taqlid* (worthy of emulation, object of imitation).

In the wedding of the *Velayat-e Faqih* ideology to the political leadership of a nation state (and especially through the creation of such structures as the Assembly of Experts, the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council, and the Clerical Courts), Khomeini and his radical clerical supporters imparted a spatial dimension to the Iranian Revolution, which was perceived by Arab and other neighboring countries to be as much a grab for regional hegemony as a vehicle for the global expansion of Islam. Iran's geographical location at the center of the Muslim world—in the middle of Arabs, Turks, Central, and South Asians—easily evokes memories of Persian empires past that spanned much of this territory.

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ Mohammad Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism: The New Global Threat*, Washington DC: Seven Locks Press, 1993 and 2001.

²⁵ *Ibid*

The true velayat-e-faqih is in Iran. This velayat is responsible for the entire Islamic world.

- Muhammad-Javad Larijani, August 7, 1989, principal foreign policy advisor to Rafsanjani ²⁶

Iran's move to export the ideology of its Revolution was seen by its largely Sunni neighbors as a typical case of national aggression by an upstart would-be hegemon and, resisted in large measure by Saudi and other financing from rich (and frightened) Gulf sheikhdoms, was met head-on by a complete refusal to condemn Saddam's invasion of Iran in 1980 and, indeed, an active backing for it.

Iranian Regional Hegemonic Behavior

The resurgence of Iranian hegemonic designs under the Khamenei-Ahmadinejad regime in the Persian Gulf, Caucasus, and Central Asian regions contains both ideological and geostrategic aspects. Historically, Persian Empires have spanned huge swathes of these regions: the greatest of these, under storied kings Cyrus and Darius, stretched from Egypt in the west far into Central Asia, Pakistan, and India in the east, and from as far north as Greece and Turkey to well down along the coast of today's Arabian Sea. Later, during the first millennium CE, the domain of the Persian Sassanid Empire eventually encompassed not only modern day Iran and Iraq, but also the greater part of Central Asia and the Near East, including at times the regions corresponding to present-day Israel, Turkey, and Egypt. The Safavid Empire, which ruled Persia from 1502-1736, originated among a militant Sufi order centered among Turkish people living west of the Caspian Sea and eventually included much of the Caucasus and Mesopotamia.

²⁶ Mohammad Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism: The New Global Threat*, Washington DC: Seven Locks Press, 1993 and 2001.

Persian Empire, 550-330 BCE (Israel Science and Technology Homepage -- <http://www.science.co.il/Maps-Near-East-Empires.asp>)



During the reign of the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran experienced a revival of historical pride in its Persian culture. The Shah's grandiose ambitions and autocratic rule grew increasingly unpopular among ordinary Iranians and never more so than in the wake of his 1972 anniversary celebration of 2,500 years of Persian culture. This extravagantly expensive event was held among the ancient ruins of Persepolis, where world leaders were feted, wined, and dined in a small city of air conditioned, beautifully-appointed tents, some of which were decorated in the style of their guests' nations.

In 1971, Iranian forces occupied the Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, Tunb al Kubra (Greater Tumb), and Tunb as Sughra (Lesser Tumb), located at the mouth of the gulf between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Iranians were reasserting historic claims to the islands, although the Iranians had been dislodged from these islands by the British in the late nineteenth century. In 1992, the UAE emirate of Sharjah reached an agreement with regard to Abu Musa, but, as of 2006, Ras al Khaymah (another UAE emirate) remained in dispute with Iran over the Greater and Lesser Tumbs.²⁷

Iran also periodically has laid claim to Bahrain, based on its seventeenth-century defeat of the Portuguese and subsequent occupation of the Bahrain archipelago. Even though Arabs pushed the Iranians out of Bahrain in 1780, the Shah attempted to raise the Bahrain question again when the British withdrew from areas east of Suez, but dropped his claim after a 1970 United Nations (U.N.)-sponsored plebiscite showed that Bahrainis "overwhelmingly preferred independence to Iranian hegemony."²⁸

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 introduced a new threat to stability in the Persian Gulf, as Khomeini's Islamist clerics quickly made clear their intentions to spread its revolutionary ideology throughout the region. The small Arab nations of the Persian Gulf with their large Shia populations were seen as primary targets by Tehran. The radical regime in Tehran soon began to

²⁷ "Territorial Disputes," *U.S. Library of Congress*. Available online at: <http://countrystudies.us/persian-gulf-states/94.htm>

²⁸ *Ibid*

supply Persian Gulf Islamist organizations with funding, weapons, logistics, and terrorist training.

One of the most visible and dramatic developments to result from this policy was the 1981 failed coup d'état in Bahrain, as the clerics once again attempted to revive Iran's claim to Bahrain, this time primarily on the grounds that the majority of Bahrainis were Shia Muslims. Operating through an Iranian-based Islamist group called The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, Iran plotted the assassination of Bahrain's leadership in an effort to spark a popular uprising of Bahraini Shia and engineer the ultimate installation of a theocratic government in Manama. The Tehran coup plotters had even selected an Iranian-based Iraqi cleric, Hojjat ol-Islam Hadi_al-Modarresi, who was to have been put in power as supreme leader of a government of clerics. The coup was foiled when Bahraini security forces were alerted to impending events.

Iran's regime also was responsible for numerous attacks in Kuwait during the 1980s. On 12 December 1983, local Islamist extremists backed by Tehran launched six suicide attacks against targets in Kuwait; the most deadly of these was a bomb-laden truck assault against the American Embassy in Kuwait City, which killed five people and injured 62 others. The French Embassy and several Kuwaiti installations also were destroyed that day. Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the emir of Kuwait, fought back against the Islamists, instituting a tough anti-terrorism bill and imposing emergency measures. More attacks followed, including the hijacking of a Kuwaiti airliner, an attack against the emir's motorcade, bombings of Kuwaiti cafes, assassination of a newspaper editor, and sabotage of Kuwait's oil facilities.²⁹

In a defensive response to the dangers posed by the Iran-Iraq War and the political violence associated with Iran's Revolution, the six Persian Gulf states of the Arabian Peninsula—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981. Although security was not explicitly addressed among the initial provisions of the pact, clearly over the years since then, managing common security challenges collectively has developed into a key objective.³⁰

Saudi reactions to Iran's Islamic Revolution, as described earlier in this study, have swung wildly over the years, reflecting the complex interplay of economic, ideological, and geopolitical elements in the relationship between Saudi monarchs and Iranian clerics. As noted in other sections, Saudi rulers reacted with considerable initial alarm to the Iranian Revolution on both an ideological and geopolitical level. Saudi sensitivity to Khomeini's efforts to export his Revolution was especially acute because of the heavy concentration of Saudi Arabia's minority Shia population in its Eastern province, situated along the Persian Gulf, which is also the location of most of its major oil fields. Iranian subversion among this Shia population naturally touched off serious concern in the Kingdom, where strict adherence to the Islamist Wahhabi strain of Sunni Islam forms one of the pillars of Saudi rule.

As discussed above, too, the Saudi response to the Iranian Shia challenge included massive funding for Wahhabi missionary and mosque construction activities around the world, as well as diplomatic, financial, and logistical support to the *mujahedeen* fighting the Soviet invasion of

²⁹ Pipes, Daniel, "Kuwait's Terrorism Policy Sets an Example." *Wall Street Journal*, 18 November 1986.

³⁰ "Collective Security under the Gulf Cooperation Council," *U.S. Library of Congress*. Available online at <http://countrystudies.us/persian-gulf-states/96.htm>

Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia, along with most of the Arab Middle East, also supported Saddam Hussein's Iraq in its bitter 1980-88 war with Iran—not out of any particular affinity for Baghdad's secular Ba'athist regime or its expansionist objectives, but rather to preserve an Arab, Sunni-controlled buffer zone to counterbalance the aggressive Shia offensive coming out of Tehran.

The Saudi-Iranian rivalry subsided during the 1990s. Saudi Arabia reexamined its policy of containing Iran. Crown Prince 'Abdallah bin 'Abd al-Aziz took over the day-to-day running of the Kingdom's affairs after a November 1995 stroke sidelined his half-brother, King Fahd; Abdullah's efforts to improve regional relationships then led to a real rapprochement between Tehran and Riyadh. The 1997 election of the "moderate" president Khatami in Iran and the December 1997 Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Tehran ushered in something of a honeymoon period for the two Gulf states.

With the rise of Revolutionary Iran, the Persian Gulf policy of the United States, echoing Saudi concerns, had become one of dual containment, designed to maintain a rough balance of power between Iran and Iraq. Except for the aberration of the Irangate incidents in the mid-1980s, U.S. diplomatic and intelligence support had all gone to Iraq, during the Iran-Iraq war, for similar reasons. In June 1987, the United States took the exceptional step of reflagging eleven Kuwaiti oil tankers with the Stars and Stripes in order to protect the flow of Persian Gulf oil after Iran had begun targeting Arab oil tankers with missile attacks.

The U.S. failure to overthrow Saddam Hussein during the First Gulf War preserved a rough balance of power in the Gulf region, but subsequent sanctions, intrusive IAEA inspection program, and establishment of northern and southern no-fly zones in Iraq, seriously eroded the effectiveness of the Iraqi side of that balance. Small Gulf states found themselves confronted with a relatively strengthened Iran and, following the lead of Saudi Arabia, took the steps they felt they needed to maintain their sovereignty. The sentiment expressed by Qatar's Foreign Minister Shaykh Hamad bin Jasim is illustrative: "...we cannot afford to have enemies in the region."³¹

When Khatami was elected president of Iran in 1997, it was hoped that Iran's regional policy had changed. Former Iranian president Rafsanjani was received in Bahrain quite warmly in March 1998, Qatar received a constant stream of high level visitors from Iran and even accepted visits of Iranian warships, and Omani officials spoke out against the U.S. policy of isolating Iran. Even Kuwait, which more closely supported the U.S. line on Iran, followed a more nuanced approach in its dealings with Iran; in Kuwait's case, an Iranian balance to the threat from Baghdad was perceived as necessary.³²

With the ouster of Saddam Hussein in March 2003 and the rise of the radical former IRGC commander, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to Iran's presidency in August 2005, however, concern among Iran's neighbors once again is on the upswing. Indeed, that concern never really dissipated entirely; there was more than a little skepticism about Iranian designs in a joking comment by Bahrain's Crown Prince Shaykh Hamad bin 'Isa, who was quoted in 1998 telling a

³¹ Teitelbaum Joshua, "The Gulf States and the End of Dual Containment." *MERIA Journal*, September 1998 (Volume 2, No. 3).

³² *Ibid*

U.S. official “In Iran you have three people in charge: you have Khamenei, who is in charge of religion and terrorism. You have Rafsanjani, and he is in charge of business and terrorism. And then you have Khatami, and he is in charge of internal politics, moderation, and terrorism.”³³

Iran’s Gulf neighbors once again are watching Tehran’s behavior with trepidation. Its insolent confrontations with the international community, the IAEA, and now the UN Security Council over its nuclear weapons program stir concern among the small Gulf countries that, with Saddam out of the way and Iraq making a halting progress towards stabilization and establishment of a democratic system, a nuclear-armed Iran would once again feel powerful enough to intimidate its neighbors.

The rhetoric emanating from an Iranian president whose rationality arouses some doubt is causing yet another reevaluation of regional relations among Middle East, Caucasus, and Central Asian countries. Iran’s Revolutionary Guards commander, Yahya Rahim Safavi, led naval war games in the Persian Gulf in early April 2006, during which Iran tested several new weapons systems. Safavi’s comments to Iranian state television were a show of typical IRGC bravado, but defined Iran’s expanding regional ambitions in a way sure to add to the unease of Iran’s Gulf neighbors: “*The Americans should accept Iran as a great regional power...*”³⁴

Similar comments by Iran’s supreme leader Khamenei aired on Iranian state-television on 25 March 2006. “The depth of our nation’s strategy and revolution has reached Islamic countries of the region, Palestine, North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent,” Khamenei said to chants of “Death to America.”³⁵

Barely veiled Iranian threats about shutting off the flow of oil through the Straits of Hormuz, which links the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, alarm the oil producers in the region and have Saudi Arabia, for one, reportedly considering purchasing or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons from Pakistan if Iran goes nuclear. According to information reported in April 2006, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had just completed their second round of high-level defense cooperation talks since the beginning of the year and reportedly “signed a strategic defense agreement that could pave the way for Islamabad to help Riyadh launch a nuclear program.”³⁶

A member of Saudi Arabia’s *Shura* council, Muhammad Abdullah al-Zulfa, expressed concerns felt by the entire Gulf region: “As a Gulf area, we don’t want to see Iran as the major power in the area. And we don’t want to see Iran having this nuclear weapon, where it will be a major threat to the stability of the Gulf area and even to the Arab world altogether.”³⁷ The Saudi leadership is acutely aware of its status as the sole remaining bulwark to Iranian expansionism in the Persian Gulf but whether it is up to the task is much less clear.

Iran’s resurgent ambitions extend well beyond the Persian Gulf. Although the Islamic Republic’s first expansionist efforts during the 1980s were checked in the Persian Gulf by the Iran-Iraq War and the determination of the U.S. not to allow Iran to achieve local dominance, and its forays

³³ *New York Times*, 12 April 1998.

³⁴ “Iran says military threats not in US interests,” *Reuters*, 5 April 2006.

³⁵ “Supreme leader: Iran’s ideology spans N. Africa to India,” *Iran Focus*, 25 March 2006.

³⁶ “Saudis consider nukes to achieve ‘balance of terror’ with Iran,” *World Tribune*, 17 April 2006.

³⁷ Heath, Allister, “Ahmadinejad’s Iran: A Monster of Our Own Making,” *The Spectator*, 9 February 2006.

into Central Asia were stymied by Saudi Arabia during the course of the war against the USSR in Afghanistan, Tehran's leadership since 2005 quickly has proven itself an ideological throwback to the Khomeini years, equally as fixated on expanding Iran's geopolitical influence as far and widely as possible as the leaders of the Revolution were in 1979.

In a March 2006 speech to *Bassiji* forces, Mohsen Rezai, the Secretary General of Iran's State Expediency Council, left little doubt about Iran's blueprint for regional domination: "[The West] believes that if we master nuclear technology, we will be transformed into a regional superpower and will dominate 17 Muslim countries in this neighborhood."³⁸

Regime changes in Kabul and Baghdad have changed the balance of power across a wide region. The U.S. ouster of the Taliban and Ba'athist regimes placed these territories into play, a situation the U.S. intends to dominate for the expansion of democratic rule, but which Ahmadinejad fully intends to seize upon to spread Iran's influence. As Amir Taheri points out, "Iran is now the strongest presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, after the US." Moreover, as he notes, Iran "has turned Syria and Lebanon into its outer defences, which means that, for the first time since the 7th century, *Iran is militarily present on the coast of the Mediterranean*."³⁹ [Emphasis added]

The 14 November 2005 confidential strategic accord signed between Iran and Syria was intended to preempt possible international punitive measures against either party and includes a sensitive section "dealing with co-operation and mutual aid during times of international sanctions, or scenarios of military confrontation with the West." Diplomatic sources told *Jane's Defense Weekly* that this section also "includes Syria's commitment to allow Iran to safely store weapons, sensitive equipment or even hazardous materials on Syrian soil should Iran need such help in a time of crisis."⁴⁰

Ahmadinejad's bid for control of the Palestinian confrontation with Israel may be stymied by a nationalist-minded Hamas, as well as by an al Qaeda effort to intrude into the same area of operations, but is not likely to end.

The collapse of the Soviet Union opened up across Central Asia and the Caucasus region a new version of Rudyard Kipling's late 19th century Great Game, this one focused on the area's huge oil and natural gas resources. This time around, the contest for economic and political influence includes three major powers (Russia, China and the U.S.), plus local fiefdoms Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan and an assortment of interested powers on the periphery of the Caspian Basin: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, and Turkey. Giant multinational oil companies, such as Exxon-Mobil, Dutch Shell, Russia's Gasprom and Transneft, France's Total and Elf, Britain's BP, and various Chinese firms all are vying for stakes in the enormous profits anticipated from the opening up of the region to international commerce. The competition for oil and gas pipeline routes is intense and organized crime bosses, corrupt Ministers, and the militaries of a dozen countries are among the players.

Iran is making a play for an ambitious expanded program of trade and infrastructure investment in Central Asia and the Caucasus, in response to U.S. attempts to isolate it geopolitically. As

³⁸ "Nuclear Iran will dominate 17 Mid-East nations – official," *Iran Focus*, 25 March 2006.

³⁹ Taheri, Amir, "The Frightening Truth of Why Iran Wants a Bomb." *Telegraph*, 16 April 2006.

⁴⁰ Hughes, Robin, "Iran and Syria Sign Mutual Assistance Accord." *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 21 December 2005.

might be expected, Tehran focuses most of its attention on areas with which Iran shares strong ties of culture and history, such as Tajikistan and western Afghanistan but also is working to create a network of links to institutions of other former republics of the Soviet Union across Central Asia and the Caucasus. Among such initiatives are a number of large road, rail, tunnel, and hydroelectric projects in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Additionally, Iran's Caspian Oil Company is actively pursuing development of its offshore oil fields in a determined bid to stay competitive with the other four nations of the Caspian littoral. Iran also is involved in a variety of reconstruction projects in Afghanistan.⁴¹

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) comprises yet another forum in which Tehran is attempting to expand its influence in the Central Asian region. This powerful six-member security alliance includes Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Iran, along with Mongolia and Pakistan, currently has observer status at the SCO but is seeking to upgrade its membership status and has offered an expanded Eurasian energy partnership with Moscow in an effort to make its case.⁴²

Iran's relationship with Afghanistan has been a complex and shifting one. For instance, new information obtained at some point since 2002 from a high-level Taliban official's tribunal session in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba shed new light on Iran's relationships in Afghanistan in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. According to details described in a March 2006 *Weekly Standard* article, this information alleges that Iran secretly agreed to assist the Taliban in its war against U.S. forces in October 2001. A transcript of the session was released by the Pentagon on 3 March 2006 and includes admission by the official (identified elsewhere as the former governor of Herat Province in Afghanistan, an area traditionally heavily influenced by Iran) that he participated in a meeting between Taliban and Iranian officials in which the Iranian pledge of support was alleged to have been provided.⁴³

Finally, the Ahmadinejad regime's April 2006 enthusiastic welcome to visiting Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir is viewed by analysts as yet another attempt to expand Tehran's reach into a sympathetic Arab capital at a time when both Iran and Sudan face mounting international pressure: Iran over its nuclear weapons program and Sudan over Arab genocide against black African villagers in Sudan's Darfur region. Ahmadinejad referred to their shared status as global pariahs at a joint press conference upon Bashir's arrival in Tehran: "The Iranian and Sudanese nations and governments have a joint enemy that is constantly creating obstacles in the way of their advancement, and hatch plots against them."⁴⁴

The Iranian regime's tendency to hegemonic behavior is nothing new. What alarms observers since the most extremist elements of the Iranian power structure have ascended to the top leadership positions in Iran from 2005 forward, is the urgency and bellicosity of Tehran's

⁴¹ Kucera, Joshua, "Iran Expanding Ties with Central Asian States to Counterbalance US Geopolitical Pressure." *Eurasia Insight*, *Eurasianet.org*, 13 April 2006.

Available online at

http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041305b_pr.shtml

⁴² Moscow Itar-Tass, 14 April 2006.

⁴³ Joscelyn, Thomas, "The Iran-Taliban Affair." *Weekly Standard*, 9 March 2006.

⁴⁴ "Arab-parast president: Iran and Sudan two pillars of the arabs' culture," *Iran News*, Apr 24, 2006.

foreign policy pronouncements and initiatives. Combined with Iran's drive to acquire a nuclear weapons capability, bold interference in neighboring Iraq, and expanded support for Islamist terrorism, such aggression threatens to further inflame conflicts and relationships both near and far from Tehran.

The Domestic Ideological Revolution

The Tehran regime's clash with the West plays out on two stages: the domestic and international. In both areas, the IRGC that has been assigned to revive the ideology and impose it on a reluctant Iranian population as well as export it by way of Shiite vector populations in the near abroad. The IRGC domestic repressive role is backed up by its control of all of Iran's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and missile programs. Its international assignment is carried out by the IRGC Qods Force, which maintains close links with a rogue's gallery of terrorist movements.

The extremist ideological viewpoint of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his selected Executive Branch, headed by President Ahmadinejad, has shown limited appeal either at home or abroad. Nonetheless, driven by the imperative to hang on to political power, Tehran's ruling clerics seek to impose a renewed revolutionary fervor on the domestic population by means of brutally repressive policies. Understanding that the value system of the 1979 Revolution is engaged in an existential conflict with a western culture that is comparatively more attractive to Iranian youth, Tehran uses every tool of oppression at its disposal to restrict western influence spread by the technologies of global communication.

Hence, the administration cracks down against journalists, writers, students, Internet bloggers, and others who rally for freedom of speech. The harsh revival of *Sharia* social strictures and punishments across Iran is evidence of the regime's failure to inspire its people; incessant demonstrations, rebellions, and uprisings are evidence that even coercion has its limits. Until the final implosion of this regime, however, domestic repression in Iran likely will increase in intensity and brutality as its leaders become more desperate to head off the rising power of quest for democratic freedoms by the Iranian population.

The early collapse among the traditional Iranian Shiite clergy of the ideological legitimacy for Iran's Revolution presented Khomeini and his remaining supporters with a dilemma. As Hiro describes it, the unity of the successful revolutionary forces rapidly began to come apart, as the various factions each demanded implementation of its own vision for post-Shah Iran. These visions ranged from the strict Islamic regime that Khomeini planned to liberal, secular ideas about social democracy, to socialism and communism. Khomeini recognized the danger fragmentation posed to the stability of Iran and moved swiftly to consolidate physical control over the country and to impose the Islamist structures over society that would ensure his own personal authority based on the doctrine of the Rule of the Jurisprudent.⁴⁵

The hasty 1979 national referendum on the question of whether Iran should be an Islamic republic based on *Velayat-e Faqih* and the presidential elections of January 1980 that brought Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr into the civilian government proved only a temporary and duplicitous façade for Khomeini's real intentions, which were never about sharing power with others. Bani-

⁴⁵ Hiro

Sadr was soon impeached and fanatic supporters of the most radical clerics were organized into military forces tasked with implementing a crackdown on any and all opposition to Khomeini's emerging rule. The following two years were marked by extensive violence as groups vied for power; the regime responded by carrying out mass arrests and executions, many of the latter staged in public. On some days, the total number executed exceeded 100 persons per day.⁴⁶

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC or *Sepah-e Pasdaran Enghelab-e Islami*, also called the *Pasdaran*) the shock troops of the regime, were assigned a mandate to defend the Revolution from both foreign and domestic enemies. In addition to being unleashed on Khomeini's domestic opponents, the IRGC played a key role in meeting the onslaught of Saddam Hussein's armies in 1980 and bore the brunt of much of the worst fighting throughout the war. The *Qods Force* (or Jerusalem Force) was formed as the training arm of the IRGC and quickly took on the role of spear of the Revolution, by establishing terrorist training camps and other outposts in Iran's near abroad. Terrorism has been a key instrument of Tehran's foreign policy since the earliest days of the Revolution and the *Qods Force* maintains links with such terrorist organizations as Hamas, Lebanese and other Hizballah groups, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and al Qaeda. IRGC hit teams have been responsible for dozens of assassinations of regime dissidents and opponents in the decades since the 1979 Revolution.

The IRGC, however, was prohibited by the Ayatollah Khomeini before his death in 1989 from becoming actively involved in politics; in addition, the Iranian constitution prohibits members of the armed forces from direct engagement in politics.⁴⁷ Clearly, over the last several years, but especially with the 2005 ascendancy of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidency, that taboo has been broken. The rise to power in Iran of the generation of IRGC members who survived the crucible of the Iran-Iraq war brought to the top echelons of government a group of individuals who yearn to resurrect the ideological fervor of the war years.

The *Bassiji Mostazafan* ("Mobilization of the Oppressed") forces were a mass movement and volunteer militia consisting mostly of underage youth and older men created by Khomeini in 1979 and militarized under the command of the IRGC after the war with Iraq began in September 1980. During that war, hundreds of thousands of *Bassij* child-volunteers marched in human wave formations to their deaths across the minefields, clearing a pathway for the regular Iranian armed forces, with only a plastic "key to Paradise" hung around their necks. Since the end of hostilities with Iraq in 1988, the *Bassij* has grown both in numbers and influence and have been deployed, above all, as shock troops and as a vice squad to enforce religious law in Iran.⁴⁸ It was *Bassij* and other vigilante militias, backed by the regular police forces, which invaded the student dorms at Tehran and other Universities in 1999, beating, arresting, and killing students, to crush their democratic reform movement.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ "Terror and Repression," Country Studies, Iran. *U.S. Library of Congress*. Available online at <http://countrystudies.us/iran/26.htm>

See also "The Iranian Revolution," History: fsmitha.com. Available online at www.fsmitha.com

⁴⁷ Yasin, Kamal Nazer, "Iran's Revolutionary Guards Making a Bid for Increased Power." *Eurasianet.org*, May 19, 2004. Available online at www.eurasianet.org

⁴⁸ Kuntzel, Matthias, "A Child of the Revolution Takes Over: Ahmadinejad's Dreams." *The New Republic*, April 14, 2006.

⁴⁹ Special Report from Iran, the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), July 15, 1999; see also Foundation for Freedom in Iran, July 9, 1999 (available online at <http://www.frii.org>)

Ahmadinejad reportedly served as a *Bassij* instructor during the Iran-Iraq war and, like many Iranian veterans of that conflict, appears to have been profoundly affected by his experiences.⁵⁰ In public, Ahmadinejad often wears the black-and-white *Bassij* scarf, and makes frequent references to “*Bassij* culture” and “*Bassij* power,” as if propelled by a righteous belief that those who defended the nation and the Revolution in those battles are somehow entitled to impose their ideology on the rest of society.

There is a kind of nostalgia for this revolutionary heritage, which springs from a recognition of, and disappointment in, the fading allure of the ideology that so captivated them in the heady early days of the revolution. Back in 1994, radicals like Ahmadinejad, having been unable in well over two decades of revolution to “impose...a coherent model for an Islamic economy or society” or to successfully export and establish such a model abroad, now “can only fight a rearguard action.”

The influence of the martyr complex in Iran has extended beyond the war years to form the ideological underpinnings for the cult of the suicide bomber, so integral to contemporary terrorist operations. Announcements in 2005-2006 of the formation across Iran of suicide brigades that, reportedly, are attracting thousands of volunteers ready to attack American, Israeli, British, and other Western interests around the world, fit completely into this tradition, but also demonstrate the regime’s attempts to characterize its conflict with the West as a religious battle of survival.

Veneration for the revered figures of early Shia Islam and an abiding belief in the ultimate return of the vanished 12th Imam demonstrate the power of deeply rooted beliefs when combined with the regime’s propaganda machine to maintain a hold over some members of an outwardly modern population in Iran.

The manipulation of such beliefs by Ahmadinejad and the radical clerics of the *Hojjatieh* society are leading Iranian society in dangerous directions that mix the self-destructive ideological convictions of the *Bassij* cultists with nuclear brinkmanship and regional military confrontation. If Iran continues along this path, or appears poised to make good on its repeated threats against Israel, the U.S., and the international community, the result could well be the apocalyptic outcome that Ahmadinejad seems to be seeking. It may not be an outcome that the Iranian people expect or want.

Iranian Regime Threat to U.S. National Security Interests

Given the Islamo-fascist nature of the Iranian regime, at issue is what difference it makes. An Islamo-fascist regime with nuclear weapons is an unacceptable outcome. And because Iran is intent on acquiring the bomb, the regime is a huge threat to American interests.

<http://www.iran.org/humanrights/students.htm>); and also “Iran Hopes,” *Committee of Correspondence* (an Internet blog site), 13 July 2005. Available online at

<http://www.angelfire.com/ky/kentuckydan/CommitteesofCorrespondence/index.blog?from=20050713>

⁵⁰ Kuntzel, Matthias, “A Child of the Revolution Takes Over” *New Republic* April 24, 2006

The Iranian regime that took power in August 2005 poses a direct challenge and a threat to U.S. national security interests as well as to those of the Middle East region as a whole. This threat is essentially a geo-strategic threat that emanates from Tehran's hegemonic objectives in the Persian Gulf, Caucasus, and Central Asia. The radical Islamist ideology of *Velayat-e Faqih* is ideologically bankrupt, both domestically inside of Iran and externally among other Shiite populations, but a hard core of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Force (IRGC), *Bassij* members, and radical clerics remain committed to its values and have chosen to use it as the underpinning of their expansionist goals.

The Khamenei-Ahmadinejad axis is absolutely determined to acquire nuclear weapons, because it understands that an atomic bomb is the regime's only credible defense against the encroaching forces of democracy and modernization. Precisely for that reason, the current Islamist regime in Iran must not be permitted to reach nuclear weapons status.

Whether intended as rhetorical bluster or whether for internal or external consumption, the aggressiveness of the Iranian leadership's pronouncements during the Ahmadinejad presidency increased steadily in the period from August 2005 into 2006. The U.S., Israel, and the international community must understand, however, that such statements as the following one from Hassan Abbassi, Ahmadinejad's chief strategy advisor, cannot be dismissed as mere talk when they come from a country like Iran that is driving for a nuclear weapons capability, maintains close relations with a range of terrorist organizations, repeatedly threatens genocidal warfare against a neighbor, and trumpets its hegemonic ambitions to all who would listen.

*"We have a strategy drawn up for the destruction of Anglo-Saxon civilization... we must make use of everything we have at hand to strike at this front by means of our suicide operations or by means of our missiles. There are 29 sensitive sites in the U.S. and in the West. We have already spied on these sites and we know how we are going to attack them." -- Hassan Abbassi*⁵¹

Iran's hegemonic ambitions for the Middle East region and beyond could not be more clear than the following words from Ahmadinejad:

*"We must believe in the fact that Islam is not confined to geographical borders, ethnic groups and nations. It's a universal ideology that leads the world to justice. We don't shy away from declaring that Islam is ready to rule the world. We must prepare ourselves to rule the world."*⁵²

*"The Iranian nation has the potential to quickly become an unrivalled world power by obtaining modern technology."*⁵³

⁵¹ Hassan Abbassi, head of the Iranian Center for Security Doctrines Research of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

⁵² "Iran leader: 'Islam to rule the world', *WorldNetDaily.com*, 10 January 2006. Ahmadinejad reportedly was speaking to a group of Iranian religious students in the holy city of Qom.

⁵³ Iranian Official News Agency, 7 May 2006. Ahmadinejad was quoted speaking to a group of commanders of Iran's paramilitary Bassiji force in Tehran and widely understood to be referring to the acquisition of nuclear weapons capabilities.

Given the utter lack of urgency with which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had dealt with Iran's nuclear program prior to August 2002, the public revelations in that month by the Iranian opposition group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), served as a bombshell. Whether or not American or other Western intelligence services possessed accurate classified information about Iran's nuclear status before then, the one international agency responsible for monitoring such programs, the IAEA, apparently did not have actionable intelligence with which to press Iran on the basis of its signatory status to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The terms of that treaty, which Iran signed and ratified in 1968, require it to submit all of its nuclear-related facilities and material to IAEA inspections. This includes all sources or special fissionable material and all facilities where such materials are being used, processed, or produced anywhere in the country. The NCRI's Aug 2002 revelations about Iran's previously secret nuclear weapons research and production sites at Natanz and Isfahan blew the lid off nearly two decades of the Tehran clerical regime's efforts to build a nuclear weapon, hidden from international view and in violation of its treaty obligations.

Subsequent opposition revelations and an IAEA inspection program that began in February 2003 quickly confirmed to a stunned international community that Iran had built up an extensive nuclear research, development, testing, and production infrastructure. In addition to the civilian nuclear reactor at Bushehr that the Russians were building, the list of Iran's facilities grew to include as many as perhaps 300 sites, among them the following:

- An enormous nuclear enrichment facility at Natanz that includes two huge underground centrifuge halls and a centrifuge pilot plant, in full operation since January 2006
- A heavy water production plant at Arak capable of producing plutonium (the second route to production of a nuclear weapon)
- A centrifuge testing facility at the so-called "Kala Electric Company" in Abali
- A laser enrichment facility at Lashkar Abad (aka Lavizan-Shian) that was razed to the ground, with surface dirt and 7,000 trees removed, to hide evidence from the IAEA
- A sprawling conversion facility at Isfahan, used to convert uranium "yellowcake" into uranium hexafluoride, the feedstock for enrichment centrifuges
- A new laser enrichment center at Lavizan 2, built with equipment removed from the Lavizan-Shian site
- Extensive tunnels and hardened underground bunker sites near Tehran and elsewhere, built to hide Iran's nuclear weapons program, elements, and perhaps missiles
- A widespread use of national universities, such as the Imam Hussein University (formerly the 30-acre American Embassy diplomatic complex in Tehran), for nuclear weapons research and development

Since the IAEA initiated its investigations of Iran's nuclear weapons program in 2003, Iran has continued to intimidate, obfuscate, and prevaricate, only admitting to nuclear capabilities as they become publicly revealed, and bullying and threatening anyone who dared stand in the way of its nuclear ambitions. Consistently and repeatedly, Iran has failed to report to the IAEA key nuclear-

related activities, elements, facilities, materials, and transactions as required by the provisions of the NPT.

There can be no doubt that Tehran's current regime has concluded that only acquisition of nuclear weapons can keep it in power and that it will allow nothing, least of all mere treaty obligations, to deter it from attaining that objective. Indeed, even as the Security Council ramped up its pressure on Iran during the spring of 2006 to comply with its demands, Iran not only flat out refused to halt its enrichment activities, but threatened to withdraw from the NPT if such pressure did not end.

Illustrative of Iran's contempt for and defiance of international regulatory mechanisms is the admission by Iran's former chief nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rowhani, who admitted brazenly that Iran played "cheat and retreat" with the IAEA and the European Three (Britain, France, and Germany—the EU-3). Quoted in the state-run daily *Kayhan*, and speaking of Iran's November 2004 agreement with the EU-3 to suspend enrichment, Rowhani was quoted as saying that

*"It may seem on the surface that we have accepted the suspension. But in reality, we have used the time to alleviate many of our shortcomings. We continued building centrifuges until the Paris Accord [November 2004]. After June [2004], we doubled our efforts to make up for the suspension. We have not suspended work in Isfahan, even for a second. Arak has not been suspended at any time."*⁵⁴

Parallel to Iran's nuclear weapons program is its equally alarming ballistic missile program because it provides Iran with the delivery system required to convert a nuclear bomb into a nuclear weapon. The Shahab-3 program consists of two tracks: a liquid-fuel medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM), the range of which already has been extended to 2,000 kms., and a solid-propellant missile program designed to serve as the basis for an eventual satellite launch capability as well as an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Former Iranian Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani boasted of the Shahab-3's enhanced accuracy and range in August 2005, saying that the nuclear-capable liquid-fueled Shahab-3 at that time could strike any target within a 2,000 km. radius, including any Israeli or U.S. base in the Middle East.⁵⁵

In addition, according to Jane's Defense Weekly, in late 2005 Iran bought 18 medium/intermediate range ballistic missiles from North Korea with a range of at least 2,500 kms. Major General Amos Yadlin, head of the Israeli Defense Forces Intelligence Branch, declared in April 2006 that Iran had taken delivery of some of these missiles, known in the West as BM-25s. With their 2,500 km. range, these surface-to-surface models can reach parts of Europe.⁵⁶ As these missiles are based on an older, liquid fuel technology, their acquisition by Iran puzzled analysts, who speculated that their inclusion at this time in the Iranian inventory could be intended as a stop-gap measure intended to provide an immediate capability that Iran's Shahab-3 missiles could not.⁵⁷ Why Iran should perceive a near-term need for such capability is the more ominous question.

⁵⁴ *Kayhan*, 23 July 2005.

⁵⁵ Middle East Newline (MENL), 3 August 2005.

⁵⁶ Schiff, Ze'ev, "Iran buys surface-to-surface missiles capable of hitting Europe." *Haaretz*, 27 April 2006.

⁵⁷ "Iran Acquires Ballistic Missiles from DPRK," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, January 04, 2006.

New and startling information, reportedly obtained in May 2006 from Britain's MI-6 intelligence service, seemed to confirm the worst fears of U.S. and other Western national security establishments about Iran's nuclear program, namely that Iran's fanatic clerics would share nuclear technology with terrorists. Although it has long been known that Iran has provided safe haven and safe passage to a number of Taliban and al Qaeda top leadership figures who fled the American assault in Afghanistan after 9/11, the possibility that Iran would share Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) know-how, materiel, or technology with them was considered speculative.

This report, however, identified a group of Pakistani scientists, allegedly working in Iran's nuclear weapons program, who have been "advising al-Qaida on how to weaponize fissionable materials it has now obtained." Clearly, such cooperation could not have occurred without the authority of Iran's top leadership. Here, then, is the nightmare scenario about which President George W. Bush and others have warned repeatedly: a nexus between a rogue regime, its terrorist associates, and nuclear weapons.⁵⁸

Additionally, consideration about whether Iran or terrorists actually would use a nuclear or other WMD were they to acquire such capability received a clear indication of the extremists' thinking with a pair of *fatwas*, issued one apiece by the Shiite and Sunni camps. A February 2006 *fatwa* issued by extremist clerics in Qom which stated that "Shari'a does not forbid the use of nuclear weapons"⁵⁹ echoes the May 2003 *fatwa* issued by a prominent Saudi cleric, Sheikh al Fahd, who granted Usama bin Laden and other Islamist terrorists permission to use WMD, thus providing moral justification for use of nuclear and other WMD against enemies.⁶⁰

The West dismisses as cynical or unimportant details such as these *fatwas* at its peril: within the upper ranks of both Shiite Revolutionary circles and the international Sunni *jihad*, much time and effort is expended on just such ideological and theological issues in genuine attempts to align attack activities with traditions of Islamic jurisprudence.

The more commonly envisioned scenario is that Iran would use a nuclear weapons capability as a kind of insurance policy, to cover its aggressive moves in the conventional arena. As Michael Rubin, an expert on Iran at the American Enterprise Institute noted in a recent interview, "The real threat isn't that Iran will drop a nuclear weapon on Washington, but rather that with a nuclear deterrent, its leadership will become so overconfident that it will lash out with conventional terrorism."⁶¹

Regime overconfidence is evidenced by repetitious dismissive statements by Ahmadinejad and others indicating their belief that the United States is ideologically and militarily exhausted. The

⁵⁸ Thomas, Gordon, "Brit MI6 confirms bin Laden nukes." *WorldNetDaily.com*, 7 May 2006. See also "Bin Laden and the Bomb," by David Albright, Kathryn Beuhler, and Holly Higgins, which appeared in the January/February 2002 issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, and which speculated about links between Pakistani nuclear scientists and the Taliban and al Qaeda.

⁵⁹ Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), February 16, 2006 (Special Dispatch Series Number 1096).

⁶⁰ "Osama bin Laden's Mandate for Nuclear Terror," *JINSA Online*, 10 December 2004.

⁶¹ "Dealing with Iran," an interview by Kathryn Jean Lopez with Michael Rubin, of the American Enterprise Institute, for National Review Online. April 25, 2006. Available online at <http://www.nationalreview.com/script/printpage.p?ref=/interrogatory/rubin200604250606.asp>

vehemence of the animosity towards Israel indicates Iran's acknowledgement of the potentially most imminent threat facing its continued grip on power.

From a geopolitical standpoint, Iran fears for its ability to stay in power, believes it is entitled to a grander role in the region, and is seized with an ideological fervor that infuses its political calculations. Philip Zelikow, counselor at the U.S. Department of State is clear on this point: "The fallacy in a lot of the arguments about security assurances . . . is the assumption that the agenda of the current government in Iran is fundamentally entirely defensive...Unfortunately, we're engaged in a process with a regime that is dictatorial in its practices and revolutionary in its aims, with an agenda for destabilizing neighbors and the broader Middle East."⁶²

Israel is a geopolitical entity whose existence Tehran cannot tolerate without jeopardizing its own survival. Israel represents all that threatens the radical clerics' rule, but especially is a proximate reminder of the power of the United States, whose protection it enjoys, and whose determination to democratize the Middle East poses a clear and present danger to the mullahs' own vision for the future.

Israel is acutely aware of Iran's intentions to "wipe it off the face of the map," and its own existential threshold for national self-defense constitutes one of the most critical elements of the volatile situation Iran has created.

In an April 2006 interview, Israel's outgoing Minister of Defense, Shaul Mofaz, said: "Of all the threats we face, Iran is the biggest. The world must not wait. It must do everything necessary on a diplomatic level in order to stop its nuclear activity." He added: "Since Hitler we have not faced such a threat."⁶³

The biggest challenge for both the United States and Israel is how to judge the real status of Iran's nuclear weapons program. The ultimate goal is not preventing a nuclear-armed Iran from launching, but rather ensuring that this extremist regime does not reach nuclear weapons status at all. Accurate, actionable intelligence is the *sine qua non* of this challenge, but as the chairman of the U.S. House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Michigan), acknowledged in late April 2006, mixed messages surround Iran's nuclear capabilities; with American intelligence capabilities unable to provide a clear picture of the situation, he admitted, "we really don't know" how close Tehran is to developing a nuclear weapon.⁶⁴

Dissonance at the top levels of American leadership about Iran, about its objectives, and most importantly, about its nuclear weapons program, transmit a message of disarray and hesitation to Tehran. National Intelligence Director John Negroponte said in early April 2006 that Iran, while determined to acquire a nuclear weapon, remained as many as 10 years away from having the material it needs to build one. But, a week before, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had brushed aside suggestions that Iran was far from nuclear weaponry and said the world believes Iran already has the capacity and the technology that lead to nuclear weapons.

⁶² Dombey, Daniel, "Bush Advisor Dismisses Call for Talks with Iran." *Financial Times*, 24 April 2006.

⁶³ "Iran 'worst threat to Jews since Hitler,'" *News Telegraph*, 24 April 2006.

⁶⁴ "Rep. says Iran's Nuke Capability Unknown" *Associated Press, Washington Post*, April 23, 2006.

Iran Policy Committee

It is in the national security interests of the United States that fledgling democratic administrations in Afghanistan and Iraq succeed in establishing the rule of law and prosperous civil society based on fair and representative principles of governance. The understood value of the potential benefits to the peoples involved has been demonstrated time and again, as, given the chance, millions have braved terrorist threats, bombing, and killing, to turn out to vote. It is not in the interests of radical Islamism that such values and ideals should take root and spread throughout the Middle East and beyond. This fundamental clash of civilizations defines the confrontation between U.S. national security objectives and Iran's extremist clerical regime. Acquisition of the ultimate weapon by that regime would constitute a devastating setback to the cause of liberty and modernization and would present the United States with a far more dangerous challenge than now exists.

Iranian Perception of Threat and Expression of Hostility

Recall the questions that guide this inquiry: First what is the nature of the regime in Iran? Second, what difference does its character make. Third, what is the international community prepared to do in light of the nature of the regime and what difference it makes?

With respect to the second question regarding what difference an Islamo-fascist regime makes, consider the following: Because the regime is Islamo-fascist in nature, it expresses hostility and justifies such hostility as a result of claims of perceived threats to it. In this regard, revolutionary ideology and religious claims undergird both expression of hostility and perception of threat.

To test whether perception of threat and expression of hostility move in tandem as expected, this inquiry collected perception and expression statements, content analyzed them, and used the results to draw inferences about the role of ideology as a driver in the Iranian regime's decision making.

Coders collected public statements from regime sources over the period 1979-2005. The purpose of content analysis is to "infer the characteristics and intentions of sources from inspection of the messages they produce."⁶⁵ the current research drew upon prior work by the Stanford University Studies in International Conflict and Integration. Those researchers describe content analysis as "a scientific way to measure attitudinal variables in international conflict, when personal interviews, questionnaires and direct observations of the decision makers in action are unavailable."⁶⁶

Because the Ayatollahs of Iran are unlikely to submit to western psychological screening anytime soon, it is left to scholars to infer their cognitive preferences from available information, namely their public discourse.

The overall aim of the content analysis study is to analyze how and why Iran's attitudes toward Israel and the United States evolved over time. A first goal was to determine the relative degree of threat Iran perceived from the Israel and the United States and how those perceptions of threat changed over time. A second purpose was to determine how Iran expressed hostility and to trace the relative intensity of its expression of hostility over the duration of the regime. And a third aim was to determine the role of ideology in explaining why perception and expression correlate across time.

The methodology measures consistency and variability of perception of threat and expression of hostility statements. A principal research issue is whether or not there is a significant correlation between Iran's perception of threat and expression of hostility. The study of regime statements and related events seeks to determine to what extent Iran's perception of threat from Israel and from the United States drives the hostility toward each since the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Researchers collected an extensive set of public statements by the top leadership of the Tehran regime, placed them into a large database, and sorted the statements into two major categories:

⁶⁵ Ole Holsti, 1964, concurring with Charles Osgood.

⁶⁶ Stanford University Studies in International Conflict and Integration, p. 609.

perception of threat statements and expression of hostility statements. Coders also created historical event timelines to provide a control data set of actual events that occurred 1979-2006. Mapping perception, hostility, and events facilitates making conclusions about the future behavior of the Iranian regime.

At issue is how to determine to what degree pragmatic national interest considerations and Iran's ideological motivations each drive Iranian hostility. researchers hypothesized that variability in regime statements that respond to events, and existence of correlation between perception of threat and expression of hostility statements would tend to support a conclusion that Tehran's foreign policy vis-à-vis the U.S. and Israel was based, at least to some extent, on pragmatic considerations; if Iranian hostility did not respond to events, however, it would tend to demonstrate a predominant role rather for ideology.

An assumption underlying the research is that officially-expressed Iranian hostility not identified as a response to perceived threat derives from the influence of ideology. The ideology in question is the *Velayat-e Faqih*, which serves as the blueprint for every administration of the clerical regime in Tehran since the Ayatollah Khomeini first imposed its harsh strictures on the Iranian people.

The resulting data indicated that the public rhetoric of the Iranian regime vis-à-vis the U.S. remained relatively consistently intense with respect to the perception of threat and also hostility over the period under review, but did not explain why such rhetoric changed little during periods when Iranian regime actions indicated a shrewd appreciation of objective geopolitical circumstances. Two explanations are possible: either regime statement consistency is a reflection of its ideological character or public regime statements capture expression of a consistently high level of perception of threat that is inexplicably out of sync with the known course of historical events.

Principal Queries

Based upon an extensive database of the Tehran regime leadership's statements collected from the period of 1979-2005, researchers employed analytical methodology (described in greater detail below) to derive conclusions that could be substantiated empirically. This study formulated two principal queries for analysis:

- To what extent does Iran's perception of threat from the United States and Israel drive the hostility that has characterized the Iranian regime's attitude toward these two countries since 1979?
- To what extent does the Iranian regime's own unique ideology drive Iranian expressions of hostility?

A subordinate query which this study attempts to address relates to the correlation between the Iranian regime's apparent perception of threat emanating from the United States and its continuous expression of hostility directed back at the United States, but also towards Israel.

- To what extent does Iranian expression of hostility (originating from the regime's ideological character) drive in turn its perception of threat from the outside?

Scholarly Literature

Content Analysis has been an important component of international relations scholarship since the 1960's. Robert North describes the scientific basis of content analysis in his groundbreaking book *Content Analysis: A Handbook with Applications for the Study of International Crisis*: "The central decision-making functions include *the cognitive interpretation of incoming information*--what is it and what are its dimensions and what are its characteristics and properties; its affective evaluation – is it good or bad, supportive or threatening? The formulation and explication of intention or policy; and the affective ordering of preference."⁶⁷

The study conducted by the IPC matches previous content analysis studies in historical significance and magnitude. The first of two benchmark content analysis studies was conducted by Robert North in 1967 and titled "Perception and Action in the 1914 Crisis." The other was authored by Edward Azar and titled "Conflict Escalation and Conflict Reduction in an International Crisis: Suez, 1956."

This study followed the same academic processes as these studies, and closely resembles them in size and scope. The present inquiry is unique, however, in that rather than relegating content analysis to historical study of past circumstances, the IPC seeks to use the techniques of content analysis to shed light on matters of urgent and pressing concern to the international community.

Data Collection

Coders concerned with the reliability of data collected a large number of data points from Iranian regime sources; the final number of statements collected exceeded 2,400. By point of comparison, the two benchmark studies in the field, those of Azar and North, collected 835 and 5,000 statements respectively. Rather than trying to catalogue the universe of statements from the Iranian regime over the last 26 years, a task of nearly impossible size, the IPC research team decided to conduct a targeted sampling. By pulling speeches from the two weeks surrounding three different dates: Embassy Takeover Day (4 November), Jerusalem Day (the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan), and May Day (1 May), the research team obtained a sample of topical statements spread across the year. Embassy Takeover Day is a yearly celebration of the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran. Jerusalem Day is a holiday created by the Iranian regime to call for opposition to Israel. May Day is a neutral control date to ensure reliability.

North suggests in the book *Content Analysis* that for a sample to be statistically significant, it should include at least 25 statements. This study went above and beyond this requirement, collecting an average of 25 statements for each of the three time periods each year, yielding a total of over 75 statements per year.

Sources

⁶⁷ North, Robert, "Content Analysis: A Handbook with Applications for the Study of International Crisis."

To control data sources and ensure reliability in sample size and content, all data were collected from two reporting databases: the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) and the BBC International Monitoring Reports. FBIS microfiche archives were accessed first to obtain the requisite 25 statements from each date set for each year, and then the BBC Reports were used as a supplement.

All relevant archives were personally searched by research staff rather than merely using search engines, so as to avoid any technical exclusion programs or biased search techniques. Researchers used a tiered priority system for gathering statements most closely related to the regime power structure. Statements from the supreme leader, President, and Prime Minister were the top priority, followed by important ayatollahs and major government officials. Secondary sources included minor government officials and state controlled media outlets.

Coding

The definition of a statement is a slightly modified version of the definition of a signal by Azar in “Conflict Escalation and Conflict Reduction in an International Crisis: Suez, 1956.” Azar defines signals as “a verbal or physical event on a specific date, by a specific actor, directed toward a specific target, regarding an issue of mutual concern.”⁶⁸ This current project focused on statements that expressed Iran’s perception of threat emanating from the United States or from Israel; likewise, all statements describing any, or in some cases, an absence of hostility, inclusive of value judgments of policy actions, were designated as expressions of hostility.

All statements were coded by topic, for either the United States or Israel, then secondarily coded as being a perception of threat or an expression of hostility statement.

All collected statements were then broken down into their component parts according to the methods of North. A team coded the statements based on the efficiency of the statement in expressing itself, in other words, by its intensity.

The technical breakdown of each statement’s components is as follows:

- 1) Citation: Full citation including document number in one box
- 2) Quotation: Whole sentence(s)
- 3) Perceiver: This is almost invariably the author of the statement; usually is the name of the author, but if not specific, perceiver was referred to as a state agency or, if a lesser person, Iranian official or Iran, the country
- 4) Perceived: The perceived is the acting nation, or the nation described in the statement. That which is perceived is a country or person, not an action or ideal. Sorting perceiver and perceived also allowed researchers to more easily sort the data for analysis. The perceived is synonymous with the subject of the sentence.
- 5) Target: Whatever the Perceived affects, that is, the direct object of the subject.
- 6) Descriptive Connector: The purpose was to isolate the key phrase in the statement that demonstrates the intensity of either threat perceived, or hostility expressed. The descriptive connector is used to rank each statement in intensity of feeling expressed.

Each statement was then ranked relative to the other statements for intensity of feeling expressed (either perception of threat or expression of hostility) as specified by Azar and North’s studies. In conformity with principles established by North, each statement was ranked from 1-9 relative to the other statements, and then they were ordered on a normal distribution curve. When assigning a 1-9 value to each statement, two independent coders were used, so as to ensure consistency. By using two independent coders, higher objectivity was also attainable.

⁶⁸ Azar, Edward, “Conflict Escalation and Conflict Reduction in an International Crisis: Suez, 1956.”

Hypotheses

Entering into this study of Iranian regime statements about Israel and the United States, the task was to find whether the clerical regime's commitment to *Velayat-e Faqih* as the identifying ideology of the Islamic Revolution would prove a constant factor in the regime's perception of threat and expression of hostility over the entire time period from 1979-2005, or a variable one.

Researchers were to determine if actual events on the ground, even the most regionally notable events, exert a correspondingly significant effect on the Iranian regime's external outlook, as measured by perception of threat or expression of hostility, and whether Ayatollah Khomeini and his ideological successors were driven more by ideological concerns or by the pragmatic, flexible behavior more commonly associated with other nation states. This premise was an important one because of its implications for the formulation of U.S foreign policy vis-à-vis Iran: if the usual carrot and stick approaches were deemed ineffectual because of the Iranian regime's single-minded pursuit of its ideologically-motivated objectives, then very different policy strategy would be in order.

Initial research results indicated that perception of threat and expression of hostility were so very closely correlated, and seemed to trend similarly in almost every year. The question then became whether the linkage between these two factors was because either a) perception of threat drove expression of hostility or b) because both perception of threat and expression of hostility were a function of a more basic characteristic of the regime.

Essentially, are expression of hostility and perception of threat merely two facets of the same phenomenon, a phenomenon driven ultimately by the regime's hostile ideology? To examine this possibility, the study constructed a number of event timelines against which to compare the trend lines for perception of threat and expression of hostility. Results showed an inconsistent pattern: The Iranian regime sometimes but not always issued official leadership statements reflecting perception of threat and expression of hostility in relation to actual events in the overall Middle East region, and especially in the Persian Gulf neighborhood of Iran.

Researchers also noted that although Iranian expression of hostility and perception of threat did vary somewhat from year to year, they oscillated only in the narrow band between intensity values of 4-6 on a scale of 1-9. Despite the fact that Iran and the United States have had enormous changes in their relationship over the course of the last 27 years, Iran's perception of threat and expression of hostility did not move from this narrow band. This tight pattern suggested the possibility that Iran's attitudes toward the United States were relatively fixed, and that their attitudes were based more on judgments about the nature of the regime and the nature of the United States than on direct security threats posed by the United States.

Interestingly, it became apparent with these comparisons that, while clearly reacting upon occasion to definite events in the region with statements that indicated a perception of threat and expression of hostility, the Iranian regime was not always reacting with alarm or hostility to events that posed a direct threat to its own well-being or survival.

Instead, the Tehran regime seemed to be reacting on numerous occasions to events related specifically to the Arab-Israel conflict; the regime's perception of threat statements more

accurately reflected its perception Israel's threat to *Arab* or *Palestinian* interests, rather than to regime own immediate concerns. In the same vein, the Iranian regime's expressions of hostility regularly were directed at Israel, even though Israel had not obviously elicited such expressions by any of its own statements or actions directed offensively at Iran.

The final working hypothesis suggested that Iran's particular ideology of *Velayat-e Faqih* indeed does form the basis for much regime behavior, including many of its statements reflecting perception of threat and expression of hostility. The environment, in which Iran operates, however, is multifaceted and involves far more than only Israel and the United States. Most importantly, Iran is waging struggles on two major fronts, of which its focus of hostility vis-à-vis Israel is only one subordinate element.

Iran's clerical leadership intended to seize leadership of the Islamic revival with its 1979 revolution and believed that establishment of an Islamic regime in Tehran coupled with aggressive expansion throughout the region would achieve that end.

As the inevitable regional and international backlash to Iranian and Shiite pretensions began to develop, however, Tehran found itself blocked and opposed on multiple fronts. The ongoing frustration inherent in this conflict is one major source for the clerical regime's perception of threat.

The second major front on which Iran's leadership has been engaged since launching the Revolution is the one that pits radical Islamism in general against the West as a whole and the United States in particular. In this battle, Iran views Israel as a local proxy for its protector and sponsor, the United States.

Although Israel in and of itself neither can nor wishes to pose an existential threat to the sovereign state of Iran, as an economically thriving democracy planted in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world, Israel clearly does represent for Islamist Iran the leading edge of a much broader, vastly more threatening civilizational challenge from the Western world.

From this perspective, then, the study hypothesized that Iran's leadership perceives an indirect threat/expression of hostility dynamic with the State of Israel in which its true enemy is the United States. Incapable of taking on the world's superpower directly, Iran instead channels some of its leadership's most inflammatory statements about threat and hostility toward Israel. This understanding does not, however, lead directly to a conclusion that Iran intends to, or will, act out its threatening or hostile statements directed at Israel.

The possibility cannot be excluded though, either by Israel or the United States, and appropriate policy options must be formulated to ensure that both countries are prepared to deal with such an eventuality. In particular, because the Iranian regime is driving urgently to acquire a nuclear weapons capability, the United States must take seriously the Iranian regime's rhetoric, whether it is based ultimately on an extremist ideology or reflects a genuine geopolitical sense of threat.

Iran's Attitudes toward the United States

I tell you what it is that Americans want to uproot: The nation's wish to be independent, Islam which makes this nation reject tyranny, the spirit of struggle which is buried deep in the heart of every individual in this nation and the spirit of not surrendering to force.

-- Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 1997

Throughout the 27-year study, Iran perceived a steady and significant level of threat from the United States and also expressed a steady and high level of hostility. There furthermore exists a high level of correlation between perception of threat and expression of hostility in this data set.

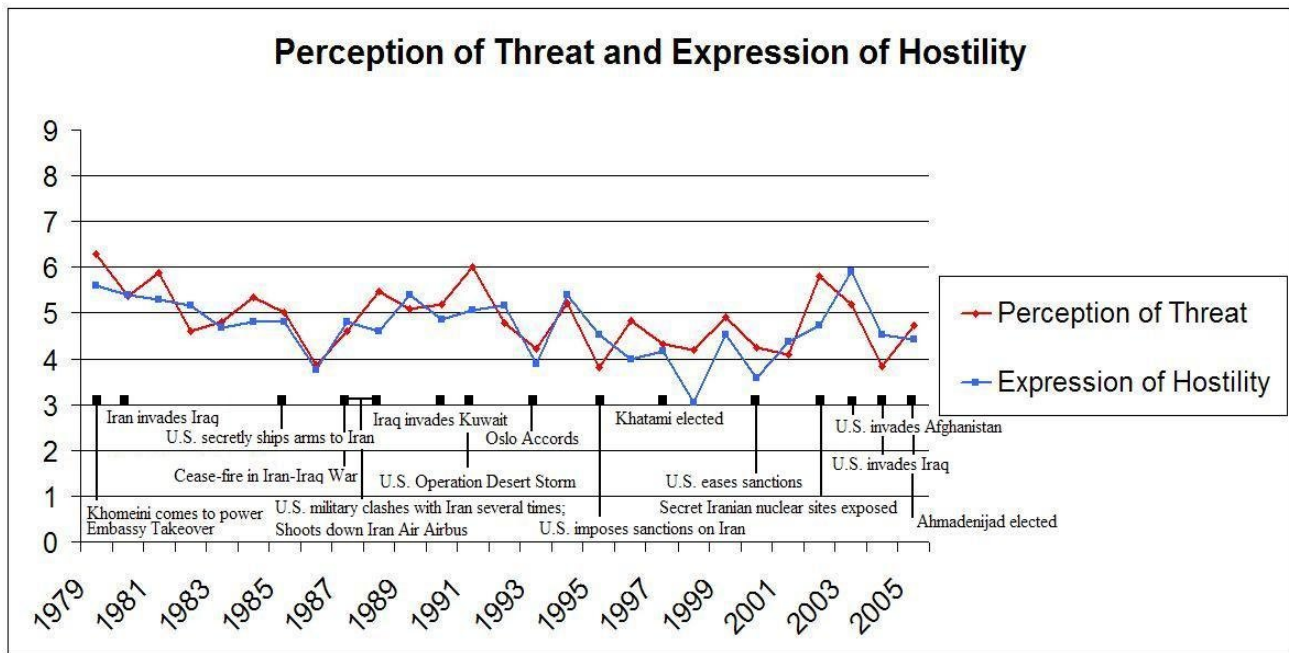


Figure 1: Iran's Perception of Threat and Expression of Hostility toward the United States

As the data indicate, Iranian perception of threat and its expression of hostility declined consistently from 1979 to 1986. The Tehran regime's hostility toward the United States predated the Revolution and as such, forms part of the Khomeini clerics' antipathy to the West in general. Smoldering resentment toward the United States for its support of the Shah (as well as its leadership of cultural and economic globalization, modernization, and the spread of secular democracy) exploded into the Embassy takeover and subsequent hostage crisis of 1979-81. Using 1979 as a base of reference, when the United States was supporting the Shah, the arch-enemy of the clerical regime, it is hard to imagine that Iranian threat perception and expression of hostility could ever peak higher. While Iranian perception of threat never exceeded this peak of 1979, it reached extremely close values around the Gulf War and during the buildup to the invasion of Afghanistan. Clearly these periods were very stressful for the Iranian regime as they felt the influence of the United States in the region rising.

Iranian Perception of Threat From the United States

Iran Policy Committee

Year	Value	Year	Value	Year	Value
1979	6.28	1988	5.48	1997	4.31
1980	5.36	1989	5.1	1998	4.19
1981	5.89	1990	5.19	1999	4.92
1982	4.6	1991	6	2000	4.24
1983	4.81	1992	4.78	2001	4.1
1984	5.34	1993	4.23	2002	5.81
1985	5	1994	5.21	2003	5.2
1986	3.86	1995	3.82	2004	3.84
1987	4.61	1996	4.83	2005	4.74

Table 1: Average Iranian Perception of threat from the United States

The overwhelming American response that the 9/11 attacks brought to the Middle East likely was not anticipated as well by Iran as by al Qaeda. The influx of U.S. troops, first into Afghanistan and then into Iraq, with accompanying naval assets in the Persian Gulf, by 2003 had in large part physically encircled Iran. supreme leader Khamenei had listened to President George W. Bush's January 2002 State of the Union address, in which he labeled Iran part of an "axis of evil," and drawn his conclusions. The spike in perception of threat values which the Iran-U.S. graph displayed above shows for the time period coinciding with the U.S. campaign against the Taliban demonstrates Tehran's alarmed initial reaction. Interestingly, the precipitous dive in both threat perception and expression of hostility that followed seems to indicate that the regime's anxieties calmed somewhat as the U.S. became increasingly bogged down in Iraq, or that the regime deliberately toned down its rhetoric as it came under fire for its nuclear program.

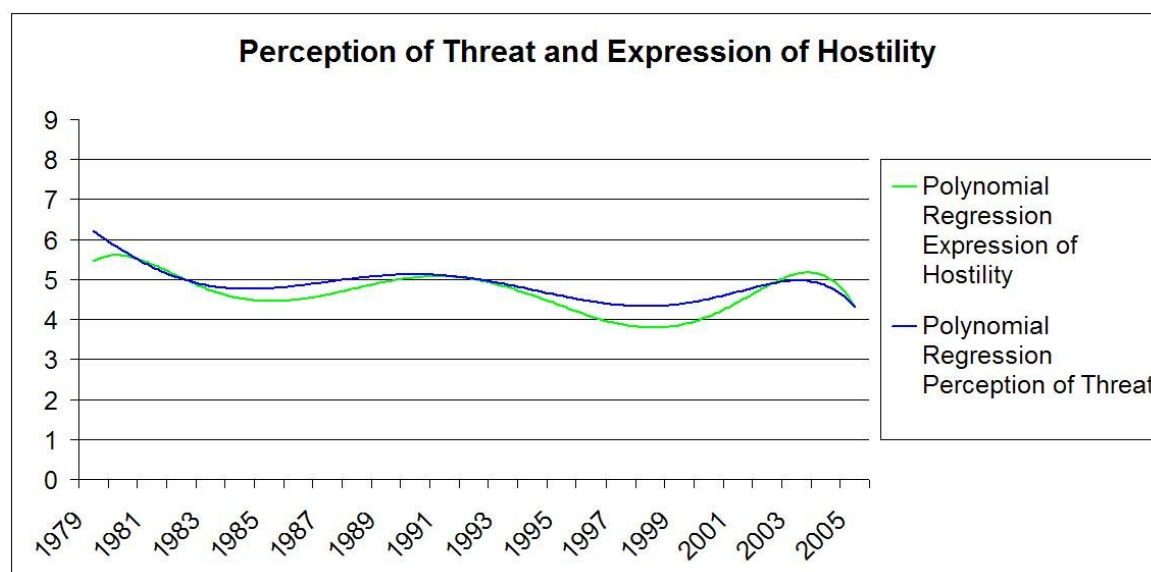


Figure 2: Polynomial Regression of Iran's Perception of Threat and Expression of Hostility toward the United States and Israel

This polynomial “best fit” line demonstrates how closely the trends in Iran’s expression of hostility and perception of threat track. The most interesting detail in the above graph is that perception of threat and expression of hostility have a very high degree of correlation, and trend similarly in almost every single year. One potential inference from this fact is that perception of threat has a significant influence on Iran’s expression of hostility.

Another important possibility is that perception of threat and expression of hostility are viewed through the regime’s tinted ideological lens, and that they reinforce each other in a circular form. The relatively narrow banding of these scores around the median of “5” indicates that there is a force “pulling” Iran’s rhetoric to a relatively constant middle point.

Consider the following: if Iran’s leadership were sealed in a vacuum and unable to ascertain or respond to external events, it seems reasonable that, from year to year, their rhetoric would remain relatively constant. Thus, Iran’s relative average perception of threat each year would remain constant at a value of “5.” If, however, we could hypothesize a leader who was completely free from past biases or ideology, and responded purely to events and real threats, then the yearly score would fluctuate from 1-9 as the relative level of threat increased or declined.

In the year when the United States posed the relatively lowest threat to Iran, the perception of threat would be 1, whereas in the year of highest threat, perception of threat would be 9. Neither of these results is what the data show, however.

What the data seem to indicate is that Iran is responding to world events, but that there is a very strong force normalizing their perception of threat, or “pulling” it back to the middle at 5. This “pulling” force may be identifiable with the Iranian leadership’s pre-existing opposition to basic western values of democracy and liberty.

Despite the fact that Iran seems to be responding to clear threats at some times, at other times its perception of threat seems to be completely disconnected from events on the ground. From 2002-2004 as the United States invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, the regime's perception of threat from the United States actually fell.

In the year leading up to the ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war, however, the regime's perception of threat actually rose, and it continued to rise slightly over the next 5 years even after the conclusion of hostilities. The frequent disconnect between events on the ground and Iran's perception of threat introduced the possibility that there was another more fundamental aspect of the regime's psychology that might be driving its perception of threat.

Low variation from year to year in the regime's perception of threat, coupled with the persistently high levels of threat that it perceived (even in times of relative quiet or even rapprochement with the United States) indicated strongly that the regime believes its fundamental interests were in conflict with the mere existence of the United States.

Although the research has not had the opportunity to track statistical data on Tehran's rhetoric for 2006, the regime seems actually to be seeking to provoke both Israel and the United States, perhaps to feed and justify its own offensive needs and desires, or to re-stoke the fading revolutionary fervor of the days of its founding.

Iranian Expression of Hostility Towards the United States					
Year	Value	Year	Value	Year	Value
1979	5.588	1988	3.613	1997	4.159
1980	5.4	1989	5.407	1998	3.054
1981	5.28	1990	4.852	1999	4.526
1982	5.154	1991	5.061	2000	3.579
1983	4.684	1992	5.152	2001	4.375
1984	4.803	1993	3.893	2002	4.731
1985	4.8	1994	5.407	2003	5.912
1986	3.76	1995	4.522	2004	4.514
1987	4.804	1996	4	2005	4.417

Table 2: Average Iranian Expression of Hostility toward the United States

As noted above, even the rather consistently hostile relationship between Iran and the U.S. after the 1979 Revolution, has had its high and low points. American overtures to Iran in the 1980s, intended to secure the release of kidnapped hostages, eventually included back channel dialogue and the provision of U.S. weapons to the Tehran regime (at a time when official U.S. policy was backing Saddam Hussein's Iraq).

In the lead-up to the March 2003 launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, more back channel discussions between U.S. military forces and the Tehran regime were intended to secure an agreement from Iran to refrain from stirring up Shiite populations in southern Iraq following the toppling of the Iraqi Ba'athist regime, in return for a U.S. pledge to back off from pressuring Iran over its nuclear weapons program.⁶⁹

Then, in December 2003, U.S. military cargo planes airlifted over 150,000 pounds of emergency medical supplies in the wake of the devastating Bam earthquake.⁷⁰ In April 2006, however, another U.S. offer of humanitarian aid to Iran after yet another earthquake was met with refusal. And yet, with one apparent dip (during the early years of the Khatami presidency), Iranian rhetoric fairly consistently remained unremittingly hostile towards the United States, in seeming contradiction of the actual bilateral discussions, exchanges, and even cooperation, that were taking place.

The data would suggest, once again, that the polycentric clerical regime in Tehran functions simultaneously on a number of levels that can leave Western analysts both confused and frustrated. Consideration of this issue is necessary because of the obvious hypothesis that the inherently hostile nature of the Iranian Revolution and its radical ideology of *Velayat-e Faqih* were both understood and intended by Ayatollah Khomeini and his cohorts to be existentially threatening to the values of modern Western civilization. From that deliberately hostile starting point, then, Tehran's clerical regime reasonably might expect a corresponding defensive reaction from the West that would be threatening to its own premise and intentions.

⁶⁹ "The Iranian Game," Stratfor, April 24, 2003; see also "Foggy Wars: The U.S.-Iranian Confrontation," Stratfor, August 9, 2004.

⁷⁰ "U.S. airlifts disaster aid into Iran," CNN, December 30, 2003.

Thus, the clerical regime's perception of threat (and expressions of hostility) vis-à-vis the international community, as led by the United States and other Western powers, would derive from acknowledgement of the fundamental conflict between the values of liberal democracy and those of the revolutionary Islamist regime in Tehran.

They probe every corner of the great trench that the Iranian nation has established to block the enemy's influence.

-- Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 2000

The 1979 Iranian Revolution in large part was aimed at the Westward-leaning, mostly secular monarchy of the Shah. The Shah's notorious secret police, SAVAK, which once secured his rule, turned into a major factor that unified the population, eventually ending his rule. Corruption and economic factors played an important role, too, in the anger, frustration, and unhappiness that brought so many sectors of the population into the Shah's overthrow, but do not explain the ultimate success of the Islamist, theologically-backward-looking agenda of the Khomeini faction.

If economics had been uppermost, then Communist, Tudeh, or other Marxist-socialist models might have served; indeed, Khomeini's Revolution included liberal measures of Marxist and Third World revolutionary themes. But, once in power, Khomeini showed his true colors and purged the regime from any liberal minded and secular leaning elements consolidating power in the hands of the clergy. It was the radical, reactionary, violent Islamist ideology that took over in the end, all other societal concerns were violently, forcibly submerged beneath that ideology⁷¹—which Iran's new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, acting on point for the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, now is attempting to revive to an intensity and ferocity not seen since the early days of the Revolution.

Khomeini was fully cognizant from the start that his *Velayat-e Faqih* ideology would prove offensive, hostile, and threatening to Israel, his Arab neighbors, and to Western civilization as a whole, with its expanding trends towards modernization and democratization. It was for this reason above all that Khomeini's forces quickly created the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) to defend and export the Revolution. The regular Iranian army retained its territorial defense mission (including contingency responsibility for forays into the near abroad) but never was entrusted with the special mission of the Revolution itself, which was both defense and export.

Given the intentionally-hostile nature of the Tehran regime's identifying ideology (*Velayat-e Faqih*) and its fanatically-dedicated defenders and vectors of the Revolution (the IRGC), it is incumbent on the analyst to attempt to quantify the regime's externally-oriented perception of threat and expression of hostility toward Israel, the United States, and the international community as a function of its own inherently hostile nature. Such analysis serves in the present study to complement and enhance consideration of the Tehran regime's perception of threat and expression of hostility as independent, although correlated, factors. The combined results of all

⁷¹ Roy, Olivier, "The Failure of Political Islam". Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994 (p. 175).

such analysis, in turn, support the conclusions about the nature of the Iranian regime and crafting of policy recommendations that will best defend U.S. national security.

Iran's Attitude towards Israel

Supporting the Zionists is as bad as supporting Nazi Germany and Hitler.

Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei 1998

The vehemence of the Tehran regime's enmity towards Israel is something of an anomaly in the history of Persian relations with Jews. Historically, Islam generally treated Jews and Christians under its rule about the same, and quite often, with a greater tolerance than Christianity has shown religious minorities in its territories. Despite harsh references to Jews in the Koran, and especially in Muhammad's own relations with the Jews of the region around Mecca and Medina, Muslims and Jews, in fact, share a monotheistic belief and many dietary and social customs. As a result, Jews, although consigned to *dhimmi* status (as were Christians), could and did participate in the mainstream of life under Muslim rule.⁷²

Treatment of Jews in Persia has varied greatly, but the worst expressions of anti-Semitism, including persecutions and pogroms, seem to coincide most closely with the upheavals that outside influences and conquerors brought. Anti-Semitism (or xenophobia in general) is not a trait usually associated with the indigenous Persian population or its ancient Zoroastrian faith. With the despite the Iranian regime's rising hostility towards Israel, Iranian Jews, too, live in an increasingly precarious situation.

While there is an official policy of freedom of religion, Iran's Jews are made to know in many ways that they are identified by the radically-anti-Semitic administration of Ahmadinejad first and foremost with their co-religionists in Israel. Jewish schools in Iran are staffed mostly by Muslims and the Bible is taught in Farsi, not Hebrew. Radio broadcasts from Israel are often jammed.⁷³ Still, the Jewish community in Iran has been represented in the *Majlis* since 1997 by Maurice Motamed, an Iranian Jew whose reportedly excellent relationship with the reformist supporters of former President Khatami allowed him to champion Jewish interests in the legal and social areas.

Since its modern inception, the State of Israel has shared a geostrategic position and concerns similar to those of Iran, as it has had to defend its own existence and identity against the far more numerous Muslim Arabs that surround and threaten it.

As a free market democracy during the Cold War years, Israel became an outpost of the Free World and, through its strategic alliance with the United States, a bulwark against Soviet inroads among socialist Arabs. Such commonalities in defense requirements, quite reasonably, drew Iran and Israel together in the decades before the 1979 Revolution, albeit discreetly.

This congruency of interests in an anarchic and often chaotic environment tended to supersede the obvious differences in culture and religion between Iran and Israel and led the two countries to seek stability and security for their respective regimes within the framework of a discreet alliance that allowed a united front to oppose the multiple external threats that faced them both.⁷⁴

⁷² Pipes, Daniel, "The Politics of Muslim Anti-Semitism." *Commentary*, August 1981.

⁷³ Young, Annette, "Iran's Jews face growing climate of fear." *Scotsman*, 7 May 2006.

⁷⁴ Sobhani, Sohrab, "The Pragmatic Entente: Israeli-Iranian Relations, 1948-1988." This well-researched paper was a Ph.D. dissertation presented to the Department of Government at Georgetown University in February 1989.

Thus it was that Iran accorded Israel recognition upon its birth in 1948, a recognition reaffirmed publicly by the Shah in 1960 (although after the Revolution that recognition was rescinded).

Aside from purely geostrategic considerations, Iran and Israel have had other reasons for maintaining a friendly bilateral relationship: demographic and economic interests also have played an important role in their foreign policy. The historical presence of a Jewish minority in Iran dates to the Babylonian captivity, after which not all captives freed by Cyrus the Great chose to return home. There were some 100,000 Jews living in Iran when the State of Israel was formed in 1948 and their status there and ability to migrate to Israel surely affected, in some measure, the deliberations of Israel's first national leadership, which established good relations with the Shah.

In general, those Jews who remained in Iran prospered over the next quarter century; under the Shah Reza Pahlavi, Iran was a generally secularized country, oriented towards the West. This situation allowed the Jews an emancipated existence and they played an important role in the economic and cultural life of Iran during the years of his rule.⁷⁵ Indeed, when persecution of Jews in neighboring Iraq under Saddam Hussein sent thousands fleeing, many found safe haven inside Iran.

Israel's external energy needs also provided a close fit with Iran's huge petroleum resources and, under the Shah, the sale of Iranian oil to Israel was one of the most important features of the relationship. Israeli technical expertise in agricultural areas was especially well-suited to Iran's small-scale requirements and its prowess in military technology was perceived by the Shah as an important source of hardware for his plans to expand and modernize his armed forces while developing, in the process, an indigenous military-industrial base as well.

The Shah's military imperative reached a climax with a 1977 oil-for-arms agreement, under which Israel, among other things, agreed to assist Iran to develop a missile system capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Upgrades to Iran's aircraft armaments, 120 mm and 155 mm self-propelled guns, and other weapons systems were among other agreements between the two.⁷⁶

The seeds of today's antagonism between Iran and Israel began to grow with the rapid development of a virulent anti-Semitism among Arab Muslims that had barely existed in the Middle East before the development of the Zionist movement in the late 19th century and the advent of the Israeli state in 1948. To be sure, the European and especially, Nazi, versions of anti-Semitism, were quite familiar to Arabs and nowhere more so than among the Arab population of Palestine. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, played a leading role in arousing Arab hatred of Jews in the 1920s and 1930s, and became closely identified with the wartime Nazi regime in Germany. Strains of thought from certain German political philosophers, such as Martin Heidegger, infiltrated the thinking of some Islamic clerics, including Iran's own radical Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi. With the establishment of their own country in 1948, however, and in one fell swoop, Jews cast off their *dhimmi* status in Muslim lands, established a modern nation state on land Muslims considered their patrimony (the *Waqf*),

⁷⁵ "The Jews of Iran," *The Jewish Virtual Library*. Available online at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/iranjews.html>

⁷⁶ Sobhani

and to make matters even worse, single-handedly defeated the combined Arab armies of five countries.

Although, as noted above, Iranians, for a variety of reasons and for the most part, did not share the new Arab enmity towards all things Jewish, the Pahlavi Dynasty had sown seeds of anger and resentment among Iran's deeply traditional Shiite clergy long before the Israeli state came into being. This antipathy among this particular group would have repercussions with enormous significance for Jews and Israelis in later years.

Iran's monarchs steadily had been curtailing the traditional power of the Shiite clergy ever since the first efforts of Reza Pahlavi Shah (1925-1941) to centralize and modernize the state. His socioeconomic reforms, while widely popular among ordinary Iranians, chipped away at many of the economic privileges long considered their due by the clergy. On the cultural front, inspiration brought home from a 1934 trip to Turkey, led to steps to improve the status of women and otherwise institute secular changes in what had been a deeply traditional society. The resentment engendered among the Shiite clergy over such modernization smoldered and grew even more bitter with the land reform program of Muhammad Reza Shah (1941-1979) that reached its full development in his 1961 White Revolution.⁷⁷

Khomeini's years in Najaf were formative ones, in terms of the development of his peculiar ideology. He had been raised in a deeply religious family and educated in the Sharia, ethics, and spiritual philosophy. Some of his earliest writing, attacking secularism, previewed his convictions, more fully developed in his later *Velayat-e Faqih* ideology, that only religious leaders were fit to ensure that Muslim society complied with Sharia. Anti-Semitic motifs emerged as well, reflecting European anti-Semitic themes, but also hearkening back to early Koranic references, as well as to the teaching of Khomeini's mentor, the Ayatollah Abol-Shassem Kashani, who had opposed foreign influences in Iran in the early years of the 20th century and harbored intensely anti-Semitic sentiments as well.

The Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, who sits on the influential Assembly of Experts (which elects the Supreme Leader) and is the spiritual advisor and mentor of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was a student of the Ayatollah Khomeini and shares—perhaps exceeds—his hatred for Jews and invocations to violence against Israel. Khomeini's rise to power forced more than 50,000 Jews to flee to Israel.⁷⁸

The research of the Iran Policy Committee sought to quantify the changes in Iran's perception of threat from Israel and the intensity of its expression of hostility toward Israel. Iranian executive, legislative, judicial, and military leadership figures quite often issue official statements reflecting perception of threat and expression of hostility that not only do not always correspond to known events on the ground, but that are in conflict with one another as well. Although it is beyond question that the Supreme Leader and the clerical leadership closest to him wield ultimate power in Iran, other power nodes in the Expediency Council, the *Majlis*, the IRGC or even the Shiite clerical establishment do vie at lower levels for the chance to influence decisions made at higher levels.

⁷⁷ Hiro, Dilip, "The Iranian Labyrinth." Nation Books, New York, 2005.

⁷⁸ "Iran," Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR). Available online at <http://www.axt.org.uk/antisem/archive/archive1/iran/iran.htm>

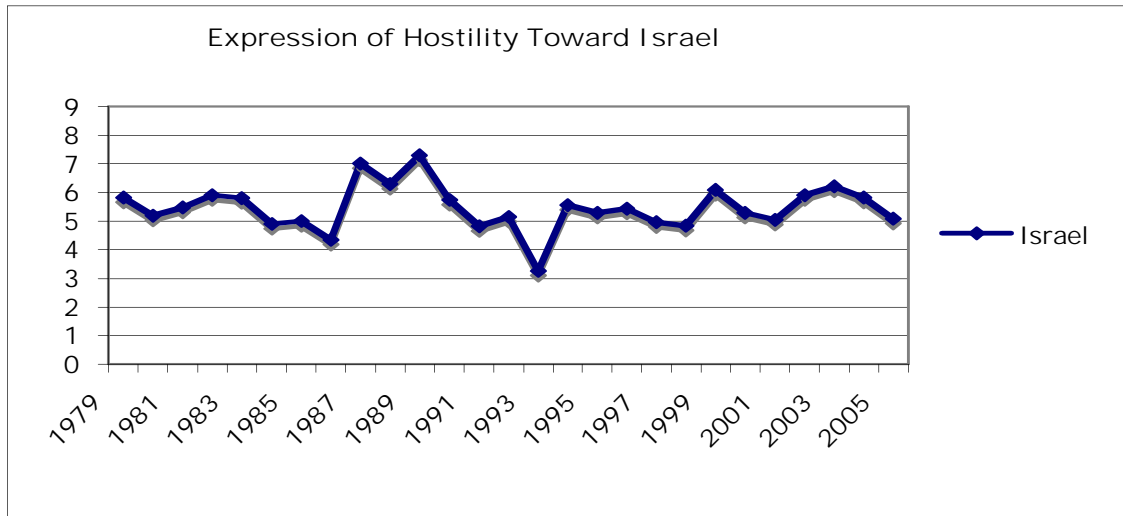


Figure 3: Iran's Expression of Hostility toward Israel over Time

A good example of this multifaceted and not always straightforward aspect of the Iranian regime is the drumbeat of expression of hostility statements from Tehran directed towards Israel during the 1980s; such statements, at least on the surface, seemed to contradict what is now known about the rather cozy relationship between Tel Aviv and Tehran at a time when Iran was providing Israel with a significant discount on its oil purchases and Israel was selling hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of food, military equipment, and weapons systems to support Iran in its war against Iraq.

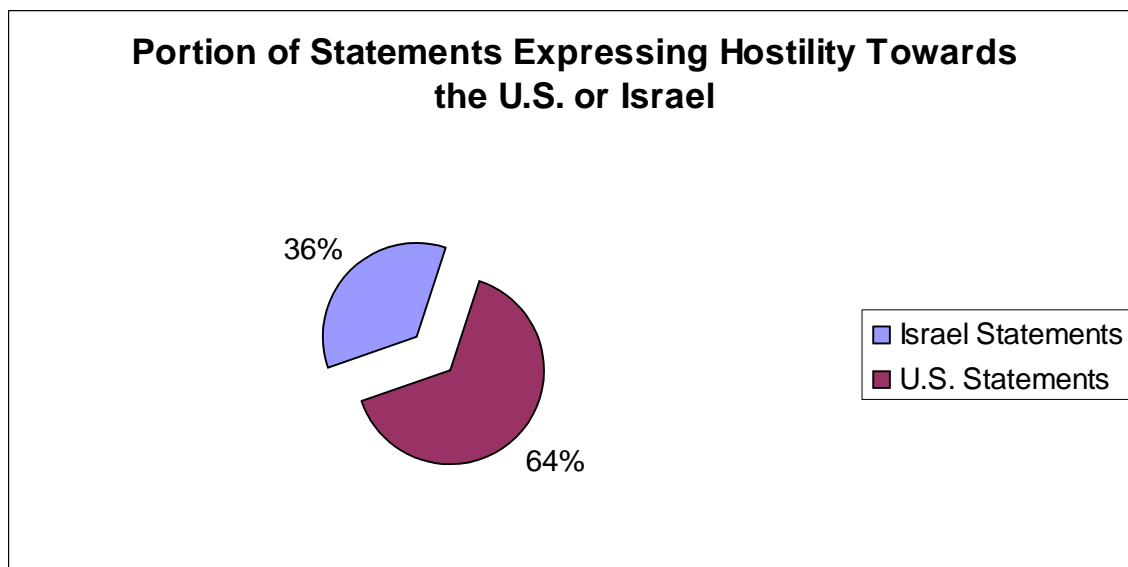


Figure 4: Percentage of Iranian Statements Expressing Hostility toward the United States and Israel

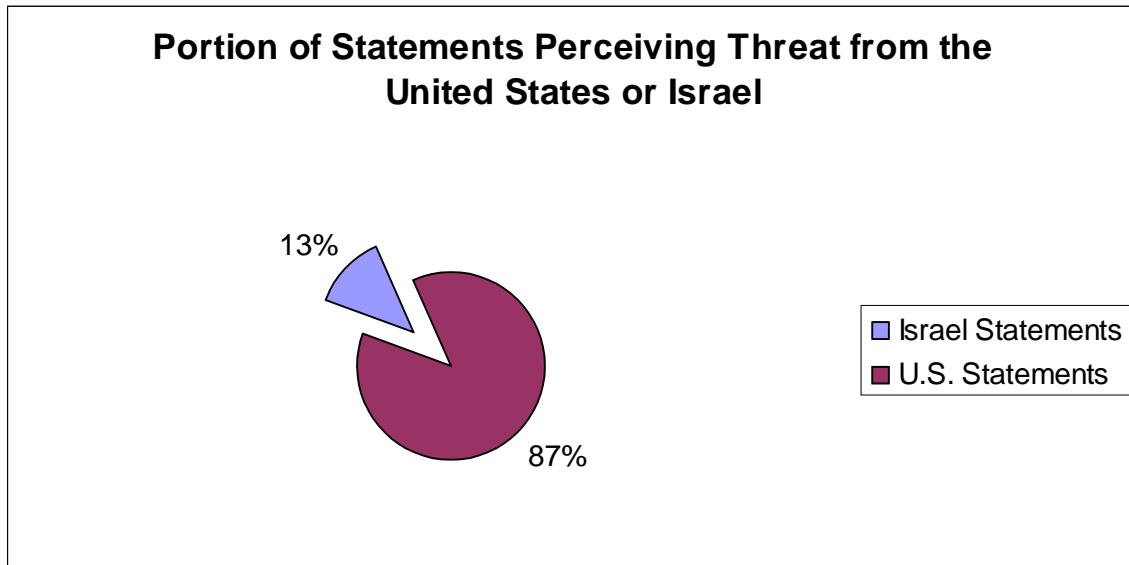


Figure 5: Percentage of Iranian Statements Expressing Hostility toward the United States and Israel

Figure 4 shows that out of the universe of expression of hostility statements collected by the IPC research team, 36% (515) were directed at Israel and 64% (919) were directed at the United States. By contrast, Iran seemed to perceive very little threat from Israel. The number of perception of threat statements referring to the United States remained relatively constant (938), but only 137 statements assessed a threat from Israel (Figure 5).

This pattern strongly indicates that Iran perceives little direct threat from Israel, but that it nonetheless is extremely hostile towards it. Indeed, the number of Iranian statements that perceived any threat from Israel was so low that there were not even enough statements to conduct a reliable statistical analysis about their intensity over time. The near absence from the Iranian leadership of perception of threat statements about Israel for the period strengthens the argument that Iran's expressed hostility towards Israel often reflects ideological rhetoric rather than any genuine sense of threat emanating from Israel.

This particular piece of information led the research to an important and unexpected realization that emerged from the historical record. It became apparent through comparison of the perception of threat/expression of hostility trend lines with the various events timelines, that there was both more and less than met the eye with respect to Iran's relationship with Israel. During periods of time when Israel clearly posed, and was perceived by Iran to pose, absolutely no imminent threat to the regime or the country, the shrillness of Tehran's rhetoric towards Israel did not diminish. This reality presented a puzzle to the IPC analysts, who considered the most obvious explanation, that Iran's motivations have been driven consistently over the last decades by its radical ideology.

While the regime's *Velayat-e Faqih* ideology is clearly fundamental to its view of the world, this explanation fell short of explaining Tehran's single-minded focus on the small State of Israel, because in and of itself, Israel historically has projected little animosity in word or deed that

posed a clear or present threat to either the Iranian regime or to the Persian people. It was only when the IPC Team began to look at the broader context in which Iran's radical clerics had essentially thrown down a gauntlet to the entire Western world that its enmity towards Israel began to make sense. This understanding opens the possibility that Tehran's expressions of hostility toward Israel reflect hostility by proxy for the greater clash of civilizations that Tehran views itself as a leader in.

In other words, it may be that Iran's radical, reactionary clerical regime perceived Israel as a representative outpost of the broader Western forces of globalization and modernization that, in fact, did and do pose an existential threat to Tehran's *Velayat-e Faqih* ideology in a way that Israel alone never could.

Iran shares no border with Israel, and so long as it does not threaten Israel, it would have no need to fear Israel's military. The encroachment of the ideals of democracy, liberty, and freedom of the press and speech, however, threaten the regime's grip on power. Tehran's return expressions of hostility toward Israel (and support for the Palestinians and various terrorist organizations fighting Israel) may be understood in this context to be a kind of proxy hostility, whose ultimate target in fact is the U.S. and the West.

The very existence of Israel also poses a challenge to Tehran's second major ideological goal: gaining leadership in the Islamic world. To portray itself as a potential leader of the radical Islamic world it must take a strong stance against Zionism and Israel. The Israel-Palestine conflict is a naturally hot button that the regime can press anytime it feels the revolutionary fervor of its people flagging, or to energize its radical base.

Thus, even though Israel historically has posed no threat to the Persian people, since 1979 the regime in Tehran has gone out of its way to create a conflict with Israel to buttress its position as a revolutionary force for Muslims across the region, and to energize its own radical base at home.

To understand the period of the 1980s and the empirical data collected, it is useful to place the decade in historical perspective; in this regard, the IPC took particular care to capture the Iran-Israel relationship as it evolved in radically new and often contradictory directions during these ten years.

The study finds that the relationship between Iran and Israel in that context appears almost symbiotic. Iran was literally fighting for its life to repel the onslaught of Saddam Hussein's armies, which had invaded Iran in 1980; Israel had already fought four wars with its Arab neighbors to defend its own existence and faced a continuous threat to its northern border from the forces of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which had found safe haven in southern Lebanon.

From the Israeli perspective, the Arab threat, both personified and backed by Saddam Hussein, made Iran's survival in its defensive war against Iraq the preferred choice between two evils.

The research analyzed the data in more recent Iranian perception of threat from and expressions of hostility towards Israel and the U.S. (since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989), also took into consideration regional events from the 1990s forward to 2005.

Among the external events captured in the several events timelines were the First Gulf War (1991), increasingly intrusive IAEA Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) inspections regimes in Iraq, the Oslo Accords period followed by the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000), and eventually, the sequence of events unleashed by the attacks of September 11, 2001, which brought large numbers of U.S. and other Western military troops to Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Gulf region in general.

In light of the dearth of significant perception of threat from Israel, and Tehran's willingness to even cooperate with Israel when its own existence comes into question, it would appear that Iran's consistently bellicose rhetoric toward Israel must derive from a fundamental opposition to Israel's existence rather than as a response to events in the region.

The regime's hostility to Israel derives its momentum from Iran's existential engagement in a two-front war: the war against the West and its war for leadership of the international Islamic revival. The fact that Tehran perceives no direct threat from Israel, however, does not mean its hostility should be discounted. As part of its twin quests for leadership in the Islamic world and against the forces of modernization, secularization, globalization, and democratization conflict between Iran and Israel is most certainly a significant possibility.

Iran's Use of Rhetoric to Prop up its Government

The peoples are prepared to hear the good news of unity...Islamic unity is in the benefit of Muslims and against the interests of the superpowers...

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 1984

Iran utilizes a rhetoric based on hatred to drum up domestic support and portray western culture and influence as anti-Muslim. Like many other repressive regimes, Iran does not hesitate to paint a picture of an external-internal struggle that is based upon notions of the outside world as dangerous. By manufacturing visions of existential threats to its statehood, the Revolution, and Islam, the Iranian regime seeks to redirect frustration, anger, and malaise away from itself and towards outside influences.

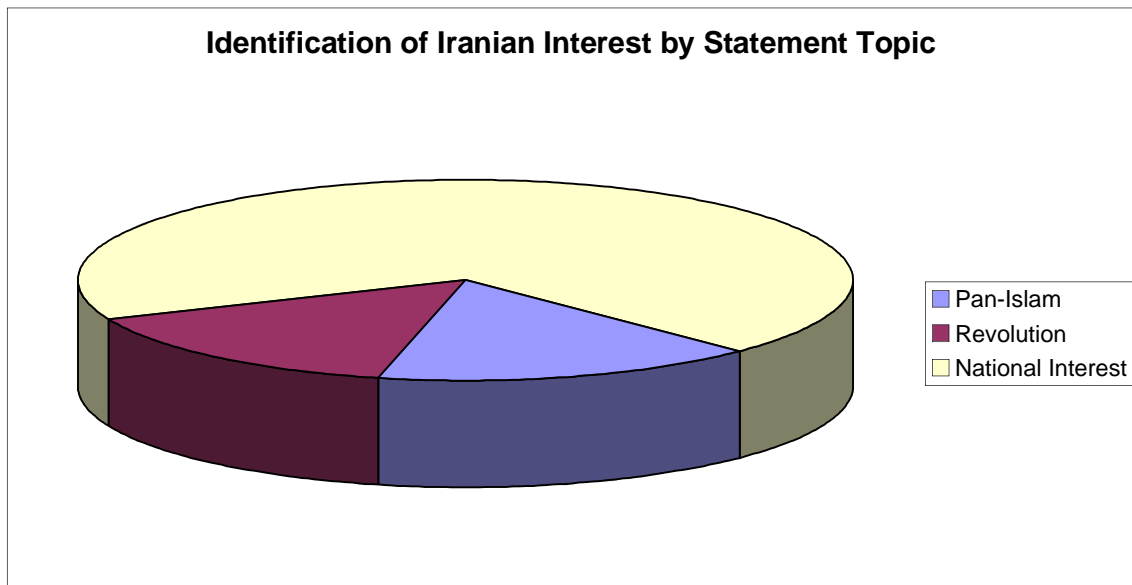


Figure 6: Percentage of Iranian Statements Perceiving Threat to Iranian Areas of Interest

The researchers broke down all of the regime's perception of threat statements into three categories: statements that dealt with threat to Islam and Islamic peoples, threats to the Iranian Revolution and its growth, and traditional expressions of threat to security, economics, or the nation. In fully 16% of its statements, Iran identifies its interest with those of Muslims in general, and 15% of the time, the regime describes its interests in terms of the Revolution. Together this means that the leadership in Iran defines over 31% of the threats to its interests as threats to religious interests such as the interests of Muslims in general or the Revolution in particular. By emphasizing the threat the United States poses to religion so heavily, the regime seeks to trigger emotional responses against the West and cause people to rally behind the regime.

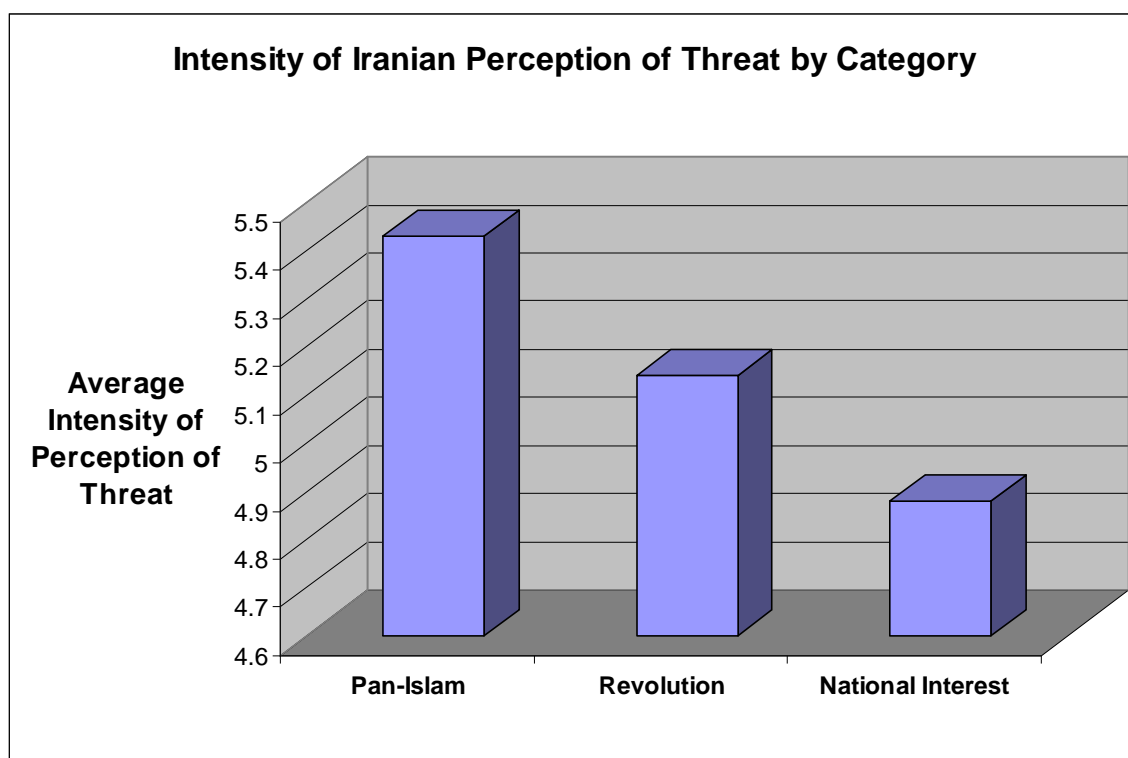


Figure 7: Average Intensity of Perception of Threat to Iranian Areas of Interest

Not only does the regime frequently use the rhetoric of threat to religion and culture to inflame public opinion against the West, it also ramps up the intensity of its rhetoric when addressing perceived Western threats to Islam or to the Revolution. The above graph demonstrates that the average intensity of the threat perceived to religious and revolutionary interests is significantly higher than regime's perceived threat to its traditional national interest.

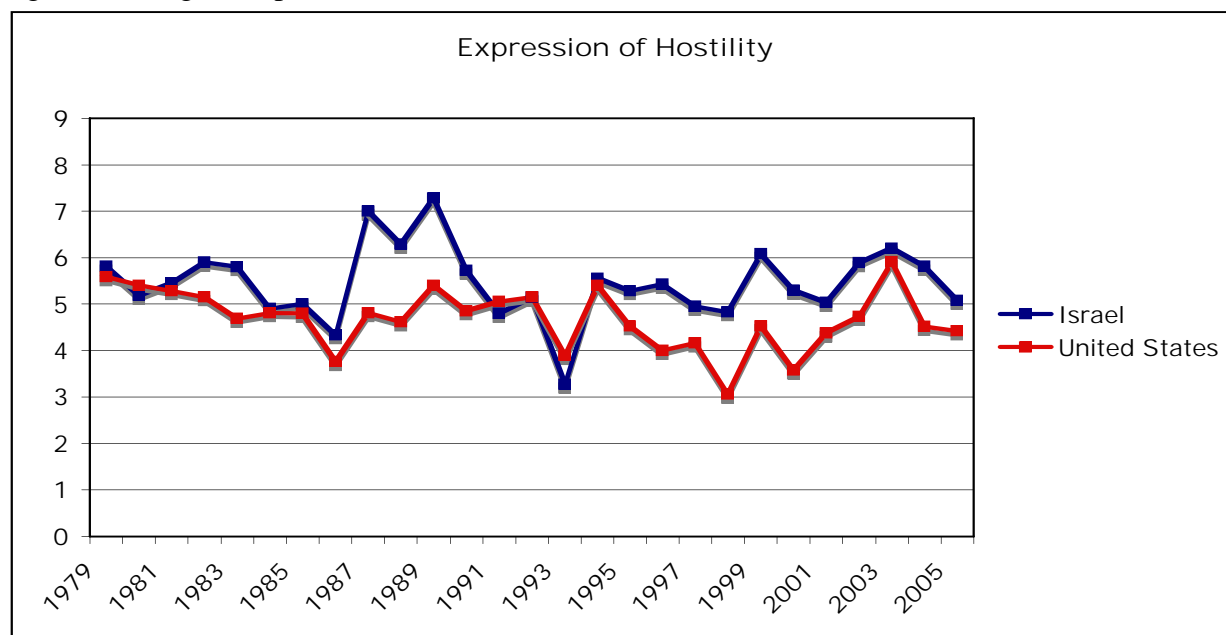


Figure 8: Average Iranian Expression of Hostility toward the United States and Israel

This graph tracks Tehran's expression of hostility toward both the United States and Israel. The data indicates two things about Tehran's attitude toward these two nations: Tehran is consistently more hostile toward Israel than the United States, and that Tehran's expression of hostility toward Israel and the United States trend together in almost every year.

The fact that Tehran is consistently more hostile toward Israel despite the lack of significant perception of threat from Israel is very unusual, and implies that there is much more behind the regime's hostility toward Israel than the politics of threat and response. The most plausible explanation for this apparent anomaly is that the regime's attitude toward Israel is very strongly influenced by its preexisting biases and ideology.

The second issue raised by comparing expression of hostility toward the United States and Israel is why Iran's expression of hostility trends the same in nearly every year. This data reinforces the argument made earlier that some of Iran's hostility toward Israel may be antipathy-by-proxy from Tehran's hatred of the United States. If indeed Israel serves as a local representative of the United States and the values it embodies, it would be natural for Tehran to ramp up its rhetoric against Israel in tandem with increased antagonism toward the United States.

These data also reinforce the argument that Tehran uses bellicose rhetoric toward the United States even in the absence of a significant threat from either, to inflame public opinion against the West and Israel and to portray itself as the avatar of true Islamic faith.

This graph together with the preceding one belie the commonly suggested theory that Iran's bellicose stance is merely a result of the fact that Iran lives in a "tough neighborhood" or feels threatened by its neighbors. On the contrary, this data indicates that Iran does not fear for its security nearly as much as it fears the encroaching influence of Western civilization in contradiction with its fundamentalist religious and revolutionary beliefs, and that its bellicose rhetoric is a result of its own ingrained beliefs.

Since Ahmadinejad's ascendancy the regime has more aggressively stepped up its rhetoric in an attempt to generate popular support in its perceived battle against the West. Furthermore, it has accelerated its pursuit nuclear weapons, which represent the *sine qua non* for regime survival. The conflux of these two disturbing trends: vitriolic posturing and increased nuclear activity, makes Iran perhaps the greatest threat to the international community today.

Iran's Battle against the United States and the West

Iran's 1979 Revolution launched the current iteration of Islamic conflict with the West that had been suppressed since the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Soviet Empire. The 70-year-long reign of communism across a vast swathe of Eurasia and the protracted global stand-off of the Cold War prevented Islam from emerging as a power while the two superpowers vied for domination.

Once that clamp began to loosen with the slow-motion collapse of the Soviet Union, culminating in its defeat in Afghanistan, and the perceived retreat of the United States in the face of attacks and losses in Tehran, Beirut, and Mogadishu, Islam experienced a resurgence of belief and confidence. A virulently militant form of Islam re-emerged across the Muslim world, inspired by the inflammatory philosophy of the Egyptian Sayyed Qutb, the Pakistani Mawlana Sayyid Abu A'la Mawdudi, and earlier writers dating back to Ibn Tamiyyah and Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab.

In the case of Iran, its current leadership cohort came of age in the street protests that brought down the Shah, who was viewed as an American puppet, and was then hardened in the crucible of war with Iraq, which was backed militarily by the United States. The experience in the Iraq war defines the strategic outlook of the regime's current generation of leaders, an outlook that perceives conflict with the United States as inevitable and acquisition of a nuclear deterrent as the only way to preserve the regime's hold on power and maintain Iran's territorial integrity.⁷⁹

Constant friction between Iran and the United States since the Revolution on a range of issues, such as Tehran's support for terrorist groups dedicated to the destruction of Israel; its development of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs; and its blatant interference in the emerging democratic process in Iraq, have kept alive the mutual hostility and perception of threat for both Iran and the United States.

The Ahmadinejad regime remains obsessed with the United States and heavily preoccupied with the American presence on its borders. The United States, as a symbol and the personification of individual liberty, equality of opportunity for all, separation of religion and state, democracy, freewheeling capitalism and open markets, remains the principal obstacle to achievement of the clerical regime's Revolutionary objectives. To Ahmadinejad and his cohort of survivors from the Iran-Iraq War, the United States appears to be leading a global conspiracy designed to prevent Iran from dominating the Middle East.

Although the American military dispensed with two serious threats to Iranian sovereignty when it defeated the Taliban in Afghanistan and overthrew the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, it is now dawning on the Iranian leadership that U.S. President George W. Bush genuinely is dedicated to encouraging the spread of democracy across the Middle East.

Iran has confronted the United States consistently since the 1979 Revolution, but not until the ascendance of Ahmadinejad had Iran perceived that it could win a conventional war. The regime

⁷⁹ Takeyh, Ray, "Diplomacy will not end Iran's nuclear programme" Council on Foreign Relations, December 21, 2005.

has historically pursued its objectives indirectly: proxy terrorist groups such as Hizballah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad mounted attacks against Israel; the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) *Qods* Force ran training camps for a hodge-podge of international terrorist groups that carried hatred and destruction to a checklist of battlefields, from Bosnia to Chechnya and North Africa.

Whether or not the clerical regime actually believes it can prevail in a diplomatic or military face-off with the United States is moot, as it may have concluded that such a confrontation is inevitable. With its Revolution fizzling and its *Velayat-e Faqih* ideology failing to take root externally, the regime's own grip on power is increasingly unstable. It is likely that the Iranian regime decided during the late 1990s to accelerate its nuclear weapons program in the belief that nuclear weapons could serve as an insurance against United States sponsored regime change while simultaneously allowing it to pursue hegemony within the Persian Gulf region. The example of an American kid-glove approach to North Korea contrasted sharply with the fate that befell non-nuclear Iraq.

Iran's apparent eagerness to broadcast its progress with its nuclear program, even to the point of seeming to invite a pre-emptive military strike from either Israel or the United States, seems a puzzling miscalculation for a regime that gives every indication of being characterized by a nuanced subtlety. Years of carefully-staged diplomatic initiatives, crafted to portray Iran to the international community as "sober, judicious, and aggrieved" while pushing quietly and inexorably towards mastery of nuclear technology,⁸⁰ seem recently to have been jettisoned rather abruptly in favor of a far more confrontational foreign policy.

Policy Considerations and Options

This study set out to consider the fundamental questions that motivated the escalating projection of hostility that defines the Iranian regime under the Supreme Leader Khamenei and his president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The frequency and intensity of threatening statements by the clerical leadership also targeted the United States and other Western members of the international community, but clearly had become measurably more hostile in the months since Ahmadinejad became Iran's president in August 2005.

This alarming observation formed the basis for a content analysis study by the IPC of statements by leading members of Iran's clerical regime that indicated perception of threat from Israel and the United States and expression of hostility toward Israel and the United States over the period since the Revolution, 1979-2005. Results of that study have been described elsewhere in this work but were most significant for the correlation (within a defined band) between perception of threat and expression of hostility with regard to the United States, and for the surprising dearth of statements indicating any perception of threat from Israel.

These statistical results led to the conclusion that, although the Iranian regime generally responded to perceptions of threat in a reasonable manner, that is, by projecting a return expression of hostility outward, some normative force also acted consistently over the time-

⁸⁰ Hanson, Victor Davis, "Has Ahmadinejad Miscalculated?" *National Review Online*, April 7, 2006.

frame to hold those closely-associated values for perception of threat and expression of hostility within a remarkably narrow statistical range.

The regime's radical ideology could be responsible for that constraining influence on what otherwise might have been expected statistically to be a rather wider fluctuation in recorded values for the two trends, given that the United States-Iran relationship over time has experienced definite ups and downs. Even when the deceptive nature of the Iranian regime was factored in, as evidenced in its many statements that were deliberately at variance with the known facts about events on the ground, the IPC concluded that the regime's measurably consistent levels of ideological fervor must have played a key role in the motivation for issuing even those statements.

With regards to the Iran-United States dynamic, the research results showed that the Iranian leadership, over a period of 27 years, perceived and expressed that the United States represented the most significant threat to the survival of its regime, which had become so closely identified with its *Velayat-e Faqih* ideology as to be functionally inseparable. The arrival into the region of large numbers of U.S. military forces following the attacks of 9/11 was the most tangible evidence of American resolve to counter the ideology of radical Islam. Despite the significant differences (and even rivalry) which separate Shi'ite Iran's *Velayat-e Faqih* from the Salafist-Wahhabi thinking of al Qaeda, Tehran's clerical leadership concluded that President George W. Bush's intentions to expand democracy in the Middle East posed a credible challenge to its own regional objectives, both geopolitical and ideological.

During that same period of time (1979-2005), the Iranian regime also perceived little or no genuine threat to itself or its ideology from the State of Israel. Because Israel represents for the Iranian regime an outpost of Western civilization in the Middle East, however, and is a close regional ally of the United States, Israel received a full measure of the regime's expression of hostility statements. The IPC decided that Iran's hostility towards Israel was a kind of proxy hostility, displaced from the real target of its fear and wrath, the United States. It must be emphasized that the indirect nature of Iran's hostility towards Israel did not and does not make it any less real or dangerous for Israelis; to the contrary, Israel's proximity to Iran probably increases the likelihood that Iran may seek to carry out the kind of attacks its rhetoric suggested.

Israel's civilian and military leaderships are acutely aware of their status as Iran's target. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, speaking at a weekly Cabinet meeting in late April 2006, named Iran as Israel's most serious threat, saying "From the point of view of seriousness, this tops the State of Israel's list; it is potentially an existential threat."⁸¹ Outgoing Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz agreed: "Of all the threats we face, Iran is the biggest."⁸²

Indeed, Iran consistently has sponsored terrorist organizations that have carried out numerous attacks against Jews and Israel; also, whenever U.S. facilities or personnel have been perceived to be both accessible and vulnerable to Iranian attack, the Iranians have struck. The April 1983 suicide bombing of the American Embassy and October 1983 truck bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut, and Iran's active involvement in providing explosives, logistics, training,

⁸¹ Keinon, Herb, "Olmert Lays Convergence Groundwork" *Jerusalem Post*, 24 April 2006.

⁸² "Iran 'worst threat to Jews since Hitler,'" *UK Telegraph*, 24 April 2006.

weapons, and direct militia support to the terrorist units fighting U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq since the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003 underline that reality.

The outcome from the study led naturally to further research to discern what were Iran's true intentions with regards to Israel. The principal query that guided this research was: To what extent does Iran seek nuclear weapons, support terrorism, oppose an Arab-Israeli peace settlement, and interfere in neighboring countries in response to perceived external and/or internal threats and to what extent is this regime driven mainly by a hostile ideology that requires expansion in order to retain its identity and survive? The answers to this query should significantly affect the formulation of United States and Israeli national policies.

Additionally, it was necessary to consider the most fundamental nature and motivations of the current regime in Tehran, especially in light of its growing offensive capabilities in the conventional and non-conventional areas. Specifically, if it were determined that Iran's leadership conformed to the definition of a "rational actor", then it would be expected that Tehran would value continued survival of the country above any other alternative or combination of alternatives.

In such a case, appropriate policies, including the ultimate, credible threat of military strikes against the regime and regime change, would be expected to exert a modifying influence (however temporary) on Iranian leadership behavior. Of course, even rational actors may be so absolutely committed to a foreign policy objective, such as acquisition of nuclear weapons, that even the most credible and dire of threats affect them only fleetingly, and even then only in the context of evasive tactics, designed merely to buy time in which to achieve the strategic goal of weaponization.

If, however, Iran's leadership were deemed "irrational", then no combination of containment, deterrence, negotiations, offers or threats could possibly deter it from proceeding on a pathway highly likely to result in the destruction of not just the regime, but even the country as well. The potentiality for this outcome is not as preposterous as it may seem at first glance, given the apocalyptic, messianic character of many of the statements made by Iran's president Ahmadinejad and other figures within or close to the clerical leadership. As described in earlier sections, Ahmadinejad's fervent belief in the mystical elements of Shiite Twelver Islam raise the possibility that he may actually believe in the imminent return of the Disappeared Twelfth Imam (the Mahdi) and furthermore, may be convinced that his role demands that he facilitate that desired event by contributing however possible to an outbreak of chaos in the Middle East sufficient to usher in Armageddon and the Day of Judgment.

The puzzle for analysts of the Iranian regime is to decide whether the real power in Iranian policy, the Supreme Leader and his closest clerical supporters, also hold such eschatological beliefs, or are they only using their fanatical IRGC acolytes to play a game of political brinkmanship with the West in such a way that will exact a maximum of concessions for the regime.

What is indisputable is that Iranian politics is highly nuanced, immensely complex, and often indecipherable to Western analysts. The apparent scarcity of good intelligence information about

Iranian capabilities, intentions and motivations available to Western policymaking circles certainly heightens the risks inherent in any game of brinkmanship.

The Iranian clerics almost-certain awareness of the Western analysts' confusion adds yet another degree of danger to the situation, as they cannot be certain at which point a miscalculation by frustrated or frightened opponents might tip the mutual perception of threat and expression of hostility over from rhetoric to military action. Here again, calculations about the Tehran regime's essential rationality or irrationality figure into judgments about their deliberate intention to instigate just this sort of overreaction on the part of either Israel or the U.S.

If Iranian intentions are accepted to be acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability, at whatever the cost just short of regime destruction, then it is precisely regime destruction that not only must be threatened, but carried out, if we are to ensure that this extremist Islamist regime never possesses the capability to deliver a nuclear weapon against anyone, anywhere. As discussed earlier in this study, it is the conclusion of the IPC Research Team that the Khamenei-Ahmadinejad regime believes it has a small and closing window of opportunity in which to save itself and has chosen revival of its Revolutionary Islamist ideology in combination with an aggressive foreign policy, and nuclear weapons development as the tactics with which to make its attempt at survival.

This particular leadership may already have concluded that it will not survive a military confrontation with the United States but may prefer such confrontation to passively awaiting its demise at the hands of encroaching democratic change and/or its own restive population. In any case, as pointed out by Edward N. Luttwak in his May 2006 article in the *Commentary* magazine, it is entirely illogical to believe "...that a regime that feels free to attack American interests in spite of its present military inferiority would somehow become more restrained if it could rely on the protective shield of nuclear weapons."⁸³

An accurate understanding of the actual status of Iran's nuclear weapons program, therefore, is vital to the drawing of the "red lines" that will designate that point beyond which Iran cannot be permitted to continue to work. It has been suggested that the ultimate red line for Israel is that point at which Iran is literally on the verge of—or a screwdriver's turn away from—acquiring a deliverable nuclear weapon. At such point, Israel will need military strike options that permit it a 90% or greater certainty that a military strike against key nodes in Iran's nuclear program facilities will set that program back by at least ten years. It is beyond doubt that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has been at work on such options for some time now and that they are realistic.

Policy 1: The Diplomatic Option

The importance of the diplomatic efforts to halt Iran's nuclear program must be underscored. While Tehran wants to make its program into a bilateral issue with the United States and, secondarily with Israel, so as to generate regional support for their actions, the issue of a nuclear Iran is of immense concern to the entire international community, including Arab governments in the region. In sharp contrast to South Africa, the Ukraine and Libya, who abandoned their

⁸³ Luttwak, Edward N., "Three Reasons Not to Bomb Iran—Yet." *Commentary*, May 2006.

nuclear programs in exchange for cooperation with the international community and its various agencies, Iran has deliberately gone out of its way to resist the efforts of the IAEA and the United Nations in peacefully resolving this dispute, thereby challenging the authority of both organizations.

The United States Government has expressed its commitment to a concerted diplomatic effort at halting Iran's nuclear weapons work and was instrumental in achieving the March 2006 decision by the IAEA's Board of Governors to refer Iran to the United Nations' Security Council, and the April 2006 UN Security Council resolution demanding that Iran halt all uranium enrichment activity by the end of that month. On May 4, the United Kingdom and France tabled an American-backed resolution that, if enacted by the United Nations, would impose "measures" under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter to force Iran to suspend all nuclear enrichment activities and allow for IAEA verification. Even if such measures were opposed by Russia and China, the United States and the European Union have discussed targeted sanctions outside the United Nations framework.

The United States Government for over two years has supported the intensive efforts by the EU3—the United Kingdom, France and Germany—to negotiate with Iran its full compliance with the transparency requirements of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which Iran remains a signatory. The United States and the EU3 supported a Russian initiative that called for the enrichment of uranium outside Iran to ensure that Tehran's nuclear program was intended exclusively for civilian purposes. These efforts failed when Iran decided to restart nuclear enrichment activities at its Natanz facility, and were followed by Iran's April 2006 festive announcement it had succeeded in enriching uranium.

The international community realized that more coercive diplomacy was going to be needed to bring Iran into compliance with the demands of the IAEA and the United Nations Security Council. Even if the whole United Nations Security Council does not support sanctions, as indicated by Russia and China, such measures would in fact have negative consequences on Tehran. For example, the European Community still remains Iran's largest trading partner, despite Tehran's most recent overtures to Russia and China.

Not all diplomatic measures need be economic. If Iran continues to refuse to halt its nuclear enrichment activities, there are more coercive measures that may be applied by United Nations member states alone or in concert with others. Among these would include accelerating the pressure on Tehran concerning its abysmal human rights record, limiting the circulation of Iranian diplomats within host countries, aggressively rolling up Iranian intelligence networks in Europe and the United States, developing a multilateral program of radio and television broadcasting to Iran, and even covert operations aimed at delaying its nuclear program by sabotaging key Iranian nuclear facilities. The lists of coercive diplomatic measures that can be adopted against Iran are considerable, despite criticism that such measures would have limited effect.

Coercive Diplomacy⁸⁴

A frank appraisal of diplomatic engagement with Iran to date must conclude that such an approach is not working and probably will not ever succeed, if not stiffened with more stringent measures, such as those taken under consideration by the U.N. Security Council in May 2006. Such measures would begin exacting penalties from Iran if it does not meet Security Council demands that it return to compliance with its obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and, most importantly, cease all nuclear enrichment activities immediately. At the top of the list of penalties are economic sanctions, which will not succeed unless applied in concerted and cooperative fashion by all of Iran's major Western trading partners. Such sanctions could target Iran's oil trade, both its exports and refined imports, and might include a ban on airline travel, prohibition of a range of financial transactions, refusal of bilateral or multilateral economic assistance, and limitations on general trade.

Increased funding and strong congressional backing for radio and satellite television broadcasts into Iran would send the message that Washington wants to reach out to the Iranian people. Public statements of support from American officials in favor of imprisoned and exiled Iranian political leaders, strike and labor leaders, journalists and other media figures, would be an encouraging sign of support for the people.

The U.S. State Department can send a strong message of disapproval to the regime in Tehran by refusing to issue visas to its United Nations representatives that would permit them to travel beyond the immediate radius surrounding New York City (as occasionally has been done). American intelligence services have many measures within their abilities, including various covert action operations ranging from propaganda campaigns, to incitement of factional conflicts inside the Iranian regime, to harassment, surveillance, and offensive recruitment operations against Iranian representatives abroad. Department of Homeland Security Border and Customs agents could step up scrutiny of incoming Iranian U.N. mission diplomats, their families, vehicles, and household goods. Local authorities, too, such as the New York Police Department, might focus more attention on traffic and parking infractions by Iranian diplomats assigned to the U.N.

In the same vein, the activities of Iran's diplomatic representation at the regime's interest section in the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, as well as at the regime's UN mission in New York, should continue to be closely observed by the appropriate domestic intelligence and other agencies for possible unlawful activities that may include espionage, threat, intimidation, or unlawful lobbying with Members of Congress.

Also relevant is a threat of action by an international tribunal for Iranian leadership crimes. It might charge the leaders with support for transnational terrorism and human rights abuses. This threat might be made tangible by bringing a legal case against Supreme Leader Khamenei, the already-indicted former president Hashemi Rafsanjani, and the current president (and former interrogator/torturer/executioner and *Bassij* member) Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

⁸⁴ "U.S. Policy Options for Iran," A White Paper by the Iran Policy Committee, 10 February 2005.

Policy 2: The Military Options

As President Bush and other key administration figures repeatedly have warned, the option of military action remains on the table. The United States and/or Israel and other countries could significantly damage Iran's nuclear program, despite Iran's recent arms purchases and upgrading of its military capabilities. The timing of military actions would depend on who defines the "red line" where Iran is perceived as having nuclear weapons capability.

For American national policy, however, the political calculus is a bit more delicate, because it is the judgment of Western analysts that a unilateral pre-emptive or preventive strike by Israel against Iran would prove significantly more likely to destabilize the broader Middle East region than would a U.S. unilateral or multilateral military strike. Certainly, the tacit or explicit concurrence (or much less likely, active alliance) of Iran's Muslim and Arab neighbors in a pre-emptive or preventive strike against Iran's nuclear weapons infrastructure would greatly enhance the chances for success in such an operation, with the least collateral damage possible.⁸⁵ Pentagon planners, too, have certainly been hard at work preparing the complex planning required for such an operation.

Seymour Hersh described the early stages of such planning in a widely-noted *New Yorker* magazine piece as long ago as January 2005⁸⁶; James Fallows published an equally notable article in the *Atlantic* in December 2004 that described in great detail a Pentagon-style war game simulating preparations for a U.S. assault on Iran.⁸⁷ Hersh followed up in April 2006 with another speculative piece in the *New Yorker* which added the startling element of tactical nuclear weapons (so-called "bunker buster" bombs) to the Pentagon's purported planning scenario.⁸⁸

Overview: This portion of the paper discusses some of the military capabilities and military options available to the United States, Israel, and Iran. Broader options are available should military action be joined either by individual members of the European Union (EU) or if NATO forces were to be employed. This section does not discuss the political or the unintended consequences of the use of military actions, only the potential use of various military options and the military or asymmetric force options available to Iran to counter such actions. Additionally, any possible role for EU or NATO forces has been omitted due to the potential number of permutations.

All of the parties that are potentially involved have various strengths and weaknesses, but for the most part, the western forces and the Israelis have military force structure and command, control, and communication (C3) and the ability to sustain those capabilities that are far superior to those available to Iran. But the barriers to combined usage are high for a western coalition effort, as it would require political and operational agreements between allies and with various host nations for basing, operations and over flight rights to be worked out before using some of those forces.

⁸⁵ In this regard, see the 24 April 2006 article in the *Weekly Standard* by Lt. Gen. Thomas McInerney (Ret.), "Target Iran," which outlines in some detail the military assets that would be required for a successful military strike against Iran's nuclear weapons program and calls for an international "coalition of the willing" that would include neighboring Arab states as well as European allies.

⁸⁶ Hersh, Seymour M., "The Coming Wars." *The New Yorker*, January 24 & 31, 2004 (pp.40-47).

⁸⁷ Fallows, James, "Will Iran Be Next?" *The Atlantic*, December 2004 (pp. 99-110).

⁸⁸ Hersh, Seymour M., "The Secret Iran Plans" *The New Yorker*, April 17, 2006 (pp.30-37).

The Iranians have no external political allies that would need to be consulted before a decision to launch an offensive operation, although they may choose to inform Syria of impending action especially if the attack were to be launched against Israel or U.S. forces inside Iraq. This contact might be made because of third party agreements with multinational and regional terrorist groups that would be leveraged into any such assault and due to Syrian support for groups such as Hizballah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad et al. It would be reasonable, given comments from regime leaders, that these groups would be called into action very shortly after any overt action to “inflict pain,” on U.S. or Israeli interests in the Middle East. Some terrorism experts consider Iranian-backed or controlled groups -- namely the country's Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) operatives, its Revolutionary Guards and the Lebanon-based Hizballah -- to be better organized, trained and equipped than the al Qaeda network that carried out the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001.

The Iranian government has most likely fully integrated third party forces into its planning as it views Hizballah “as an extension of their state.... operational teams could be deployed without a long period of preparation,” said Ambassador Henry A. Crumpton, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism.⁸⁹ Due to the location of these groups and their entrenched communications, logistics, and training/support networks in Lebanon, the Iranians have significantly better positioning of credible and usable threat forces and thus have more immediate options available than do the U.S. and Israel. This third party capability also will be an issue with the western powers, as the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) *Qods* Force is believed to have operatives and cells in many western nations.

Israeli Military Options: Conventional Methods

The main conventional threats that Israel brings to bear in an attempt to destroy or set back the Iranian nuclear weapon program are air strikes, cruise missiles, and ground/direct contact missions using small groups of infiltrated special operations and/or clandestine operational forces such as those operated by Mossad. In actuality, Israel likely would launch a combination of these actions, as any single action would not be sufficient to cover the 100 to 200 sites where the Iranians are thought to conduct nuclear research and weapons work. Given the recent remarks by leadership figures proclaiming that Iran has joined the nuclear club of nations⁹⁰, the demand for knowing where the real high value targets are located will require good intelligence and networks on the ground to ferret out wheat from chaff. The Israelis would likely attempt to narrow their target selection to well under 100 targets simply to ensure they had sufficient assets to cover those targets with an acceptable probability of kill.

Iran has had the opportunity to observe U.S., coalition forces, and NATO in military actions such as Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. They also probably have noted with keen interest how the U.S. has negotiated with a belligerent and bellicose North Korea. From this experience, they have most certainly taken the lesson of needing a sound deception plan, and most assuredly, a sound concealment plan. (Recent outbursts seem to indicate that they also see some value in bellicosity as well). For

⁸⁹ “Attacking Iran May Trigger Terrorism” *U.S. Experts Wary of Military Action Over Nuclear Program* By Dana Priest, Washington Post Staff Writer Sunday, April 2, 2006; A01

⁹⁰ “Iran says it joins nuclear technology club” By Christian Oliver, Reuters, Tue Apr 11 2006

these reasons, the exact number of critical sites associated with Iran's nuclear weapons program remains unknown. Some analysts believe that it could take up to 1,000 air sorties (aircraft and cruise missiles) and post-damage assessment repeat strikes to ensure destruction of the entire nuclear program, while other analysts believe that destruction of the entire program is just not possible.⁹¹

As inspectors are unsure of the exact number of sites or locations in Iran where nuclear weapons research is being conducted, plans for a thousand sortie effort do not take into account the research sites that are yet to be discovered. That such unknown sites exist is a near certainty, given the deception and concealment programs discussed earlier and the physical proof such as traces of Highly-Enriched Uranium (HEU) discovered by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, which led them to conclude that "There are unexplained traces of enriched uranium that suggest there are more experiments in sites that are as yet unlocated."⁹²

The Iranian declaration of enrichment to the 4.8 percent level has removed doubt about their technical ability to refine uranium, but left unsaid is where such work was accomplished, how wide the knowledge base is for future continued refinement to higher grades, and just how many research sites are actually in operation.

Any plan that anticipates trying to destroy Iran's nuclear fuel cycle capability completely would require a high sortie count that would entail a significant campaign as opposed to a single strike or short series of closely coupled strike waves over several days. Only a multinational effort or an effort conducted by the United States could generate that level of sorties, which leads the IPC to the judgment that an Israeli conventional strike alone would be limited only to an attempt to delay Iran's nuclear weapons program, not destroy it. In such a scenario, most of Iran's nuclear research sites would be unaffected and unless those with the knowledge were killed, the program would probably be back in operation almost immediately and would likely have greater intensity and dedication to success. For such a single or closely coupled coordinated attack by Israel to be successful it would have to benefit from *extremely* good intelligence and every weapon fired would have to count. More specifically, that kind of intelligence would have to lead to precisely-located Desired Munitions Impact Points (DMPI) and every weapon would have to be delivered with absolute precision and function properly.

The DMPIs would likely be located in target areas drawn from a short list of known main activity sites: Natanz, Isfahan, and Bushehr to name a few, and factories that are known to manufacture centrifuge, critical chemical elements and other key components of the process. Additionally, the Israelis would likely have small sites that are known to them through prior years of intelligence work on the ground in Iran.

Israeli Special Operations Forces (SOF) and other covert/clandestine forces could be used to target key leadership, scientific, and facilities nodes, either for direct action by such forces, or to designate them for other strike weapons systems.

⁹¹ "Why Not A Strike On Iran? David E. Sanger, New York Times quoting Ashton B. Carter, and expert at Harvard on proliferation problems and W. Patrick Lang, former head of Middle East Intelligence at the DIA.

⁹² Special Report: Iran's nuclear programme, When Soft Talk Has to Stop, The Economist January 12, 2006

The use of ground forces to put “eyes on” certain targets would be a near imperative for a strike launched by a small force such as Israel would be able to muster over target. The reasoning is that a pilot in an F-15I aircraft would take off from Israel, prepared to strike primary, secondary and perhaps tertiary targets. Some of the targets might be time sensitive or relocatable, requiring near constant surveillance in the hours and minutes preceding the strike. The “eyes on” the target provided by ground observers would better enable the airborne shooters the flexibility necessary to select their secondary target if the primary is not available, or in a situation in which established rules of engagement or conditions do not allow a successful engagement of the primary aim point.

Out-of-the box scenario: A possibility that has been informally discussed in defense and intelligence circles and thus deserves some mention is that the threat of an Israeli air strike may be being used as a forcing function to pressure the U.S. into action on its own. According to this scenario, if the U.S. were to perceive a strong potential for the Israelis to strike with a force limited only by what that country could physically provide and, based on that force strength, calculated that the negative reaction across the region to an Israeli strike against a Muslim country would be overwhelming, the U.S. might determine that there would be more downside potential than if the U.S. were to just conduct the strike itself. The rationale is that given the Israeli force structure would not permit *nearly* as extensive a series of strikes as U.S. military capabilities could bring to the effort, the effectiveness and outcome of an Israeli strike would be more questionable as well.

Thus, in the final analysis, it is possible that instead, the U.S. would choose to conduct the strikes, both to maximize their potential for success and to minimize the potential for negative response from other Middle East and Muslim countries. Moreover, the U.S. would probably be blamed for complicity in any Israeli strike or be identified as the instigator, regardless of the actual level of U.S. participation.

Therefore, U.S. leadership could well conclude that U.S. national security objectives would be better served were the U.S. to take ownership of such strikes from start to finish. If the U.S. government told the Government of Israel that such strikes were going to be launched, the Israelis would certainly want to share their targeting and intelligence information, as it would be in their national interests for the strike to achieve maximum success. Such an arrangement would also allow the Israeli military the flexibility to turn the brunt of their forces loose to more effectively employ them against Hizballah, PIJ and other terrorist allies of Iran that are based closer to Israeli territory.

Israeli Nuclear Options

The main effective unconventional capability available for the Israelis to use is a nuclear strike using Israel’s Jericho II/III or ship/submarine-launched cruise missiles armed with nuclear warheads. “Israel is understood to hold up to 300 nuclear warheads of various types - more than the UK has in its arsenal. The bulk of these warheads are available for about 100 Jericho II and Jericho III missiles. Warheads are understood to be available for free-fall bombs and for 155 or 203 mm artillery projectiles.

Precise assessment of Israel's capabilities is difficult. Its WMD programmes remain secret and beyond independent verification.”⁹³ Nuclear-armed Jericho missiles could eliminate most of the known nuclear weapons sites within Iran and do so within hours. This is perhaps the only way to completely destroy the Natanz “A” and “B” sites which are extremely hardened. The Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP) complex, according to the NCRI, boasts two 25,000-meter halls, built 8 meters-deep into the ground and protected by a concrete wall 2.5 meters thick, itself protected by another concrete wall.⁹⁴

An excellent policy study conducted by a distinguished group of American and Israeli experts, led by Professor Louis Rene Beres of Purdue University, resulted in the 2003 issuance of the Final Report of Project Daniel. This groundbreaking analysis, a summary of which Prof. Beres has provided as an Appendix to this book, addressed Israel’s national defense policy and specifically addressed the appropriate role of its undeclared nuclear weapons arsenal in a strategy that includes deterrence as well as the right to a defensive pre-emptive first strike.

As Israel faces an extremist regime in Tehran that spews anti-Semitic hatred and repeated genocidal intentions, its national decision-makers must formulate policy that can defend Israel’s existence whether or not Iran’s leadership is rational. Israel does not have the luxury to conclude that Iranian rhetoric is for domestic consumption only, or that it never will be transformed into action. The right to a pre-emptive self-defense option much like that described in the U.S.’s 2002 National Security Strategy and a doctrine of deterrence based on making explicit its nuclear weapons first- and second-strike capabilities form the core of the Project Daniel recommendations.

Moreover, the authors of the Project Daniel report advise that Israel’s nuclear capability be openly described as targeted on “countervalue” targets, *i.e.*, 15 or so heavily-populated Arab and Iranian cities, scattered around the Middle East region. Potential enemies of the State of Israel should know in advance that a nuclear or even a biological weapons attack that is existential in nature unleashed against Israel will be met automatically with a nuclear response targeted against the civilian populations of 15 pre-identified Middle Eastern cities.

Therefore, for Israeli and U.S. policy, it is Iranian capabilities in the context of its nuclear weapons program that matter most. Tehran’s intentions or rationality following the acquisition of a nuclear weapon and delivery system are irrelevant if the very achievement of this objective is defined by Israel and the U.S. to be unacceptable—as both President Bush and the Israeli leadership have stated it to be on more than one occasion. In such a situation, it must follow that a policy of nuclear deterrence and maintenance of a second strike capability also are irrelevant, for it is not first use of nuclear (or certain biological) weapons that Israel and the West must prevent, but rather their acquisition by Iran in the first place.

Although Israel is assessed by most intelligence analysts to possess both a chemical and biological weapons program, it is highly unlikely that such weapons would be selected for use in any Israeli attack scenario designed to set back or destroy Iran’s nuclear weapons program. Although chemical weapons are “area denial” weapons, their main utility is to force defending

⁹³ Jane’s Information Group John Eldridge; Andy Oppenheimer Website Posted 30-SEP-2004

⁹⁴ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/iran/natanz.htm>

ground troops to dress in protective gear, which results in limitations to their mobility and degradation of their ability to fight. Moreover, the effects of these weapons tend to dissipate relatively quickly. Biological weapons have more persistent effects and could cause mass casualties but would also lack effectiveness for this task in wide use. Therefore, crossing the threshold for first use of any chemical or biological Weapons of Mass Destruction in a preemptive strike would mark a significant escalation for marginal return.

Iranian Military Options: Iranian Military Force Structure

The Iranian military is divided into two main groupings: the regular or conventional military forces comprised of the Army, Navy/Marines, and Air Force, and a second group of forces under the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), which also is referred to as the *Pasdaran* (“Guards”).

For the purposes of this paper, the regular Iranian military forces are considered to be mostly defensive forces and the IRGC, through their asymmetric capabilities and their control of all of Iran’s Scud missiles, most of its chemical and biological weapons and production of all weapons of mass production⁹⁵, are the offensive forces that could attack Israel - or anywhere else in the world - either preemptively or in response to an attack on Iran’s nuclear program. Additionally, the IRGC could leverage its military mutual defense agreements with Syria to bring that country into the fray in the event of an Israeli attack on Iran.

Therefore, most of the discussion here is centered on what the IRGC brings to bear in a military response/attack and what the conventional forces, augmented by IRGC ground forces bring to the table in the defense of the Iranian homeland. That said, the IRGC naval component is an attack/suicide force but would be used in a defense of the homeland role to harass commercial shipping and attack Naval assets in the Gulf.

The IRGC is a force that serves as the “guards of the Islamic revolution” and as such is under the direct command of the religious leadership in the country. The IRGC leadership and its members are far more ideologically focused than are the regular armed forces. The IRGC has a ground force, a naval arm, and also operates an air component. It also has two additional groupings: the *Qods* Force and the *Bassij*. The IRGC adds about 120,000 additional men to the ranks of Iran’s overall military force structure. Roughly 100,000 are ground forces, including many conscripts.⁹⁶

Iranian conventional naval, ground, and air forces appear to be primarily designed to provide a credible deterrent against attack by neighboring countries and also to serve as a coercive threat to the countries on Iran’s borders and, to some extent, those across the Gulf. Although the forces are quite capable of defending the homeland from attack by the other countries in the region, they would come up well short should they be forced to deal with a modern military such as those fielded by the Western nations. Their biggest weakness is in the air defense network and in the quality and readiness of their Air Force. In an offensive role, the Iranian Air Force would have a very difficult time maintaining the necessary level of air superiority that would be required to cover a cross-Gulf attack. As for its defensive capability, very little is known about

⁹⁵ Iran’s Developing Military Capabilities, the CSIS Press, 2005, Anthony Cordesman page 47

⁹⁶ Iran’s Developing Military Capabilities, the CSIS Press, 2005, Anthony Cordesman page 45

how Iran would deploy its air defenses. The surface-to-air missile systems that Iran possesses are a hodge-podge of everything from early U.S. I-HAWK to Russian SA-2/5/6 designs to Chinese-made variants of those early Russian designs.⁹⁷

There appears to be no central command and control system; in any case, it would be very difficult to network these various weapons systems together into an integrated system that could provide the type of coverage of a modern Integrated Air Defense System (IADS). Also, given the relatively small number of total air defense systems compared to the physical size of the country, what does exist is thinly scattered. It would be assumed that defenses would be the most dense around targets the regime holds dear. The Iranian's appear to be well aware of their shortcomings in this regard and have actively been working with the Russian government to bolster their air defenses. The Russian chief of the General Staff said recently that Russia would honor its commitments to supply military equipment to Iran, including the Tor M1, in the framework of bilateral cooperation.

At the end of 2005, Russia concluded a \$700-million contract on the delivery of 29 Tor M1 air defense systems to Iran. The Tor-M1 is a fifth-generation integrated mobile air defense system designed for operation at medium, low and very low altitudes against fixed/rotary wing aircraft, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), guided missiles, and other high-precision weapons.⁹⁸ The delivery of these systems will probably occur in the 2006-2007 time frame.

Although the individual men of the Iranian armed forces should be expected to fight fiercely – especially if they were defending their homeland – the forces are generally poorly-equipped, and the material readiness of that equipment is itself poor, due to a lack of spare parts and few-to-no recent upgrades due to embargoes over the last decades. Much of the western equipment purchased during the Shah's regime has gone without system updates and most have gone without replacement parts as well. Iran's indigenous manufacturing capability is mostly limited to ammunition, helicopters, and light aircraft. The regime has, however, put a strong focus on building rockets and missiles. These efforts have resulted in some successes. Most sophisticated equipment is purchased from Russia, China, and North Korea.

In addition to the conventional force structure, the IRGC serves as an adjunct ground force element for the conventional army, while also providing the unconventional forces for ground and maritime operations and an internal airlift capability to move its forces quickly around the country or to insert IRGC forces rapidly into an offensive operation near the borders or immediately across contiguous borders. IRGC forces could be used to augment conventional forces or in independent operations as they have their own command structure that leads directly to the Supreme Leader.

The IRGC provides the terrorist training network in its domestic camps as well as international unconventional training and operational forces through the Qods Force. The domestic reserve and internal population monitoring and militia structure are provided through its Bassij force

⁹⁷ Iran's Developing Military Capabilities, the CSIS Press, 2005, Anthony Cordesman page 72

⁹⁸ Russia will deliver air defense systems to Iran - top general, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1618116/posts> Posted on 04/20/2006 12:30:47 AM PDT

elements. A main item of note is that the IRGC “....also operates all of Iran’s Scuds, controls most of its chemical and biological weapons, and provides the military leadership for missile production and the production of all weapons of mass destruction.”⁹⁹

The command and control structure for any potential nuclear missile capability or its long range missile forces is not well understood. Based on the mission and elite nature of the IRGC, the control of these weapons could be decentralized and thus a traditional decapitation option may be less than effective. The IRGC is the force that is most trusted to remain “ideologically pure,” and thus expected to remain in direct support of the revolution under all circumstances. Under routine circumstances, it is under the orders of the Mullahs, and although it has been placed under an integrated command with Iran’s regular armed forces at the General Staff level, it retains an independent command chain below this level and generally continues to exercise as an independent force.¹⁰⁰

There is also a new and completely irregular force named the *Special Unit of Martyr Seekers in the Revolutionary Guards IRAN*. These are battalions of suicide bombers whose mission is to strike at British and American targets if Iran’s nation’s nuclear sites are attacked. According to Iranian officials, 40,000 trained suicide bombers are ready for action. The main force was first seen in March 2006 when members marched in a military parade, dressed in olive-green uniforms with explosive packs around their waists and detonators held high. Dr Hassan Abbasi, head of the Centre for Doctrinal Strategic Studies in the Revolutionary Guards, said in a speech that 29 western targets had been identified: “We are ready to attack American and British sensitive points if they attack Iran’s nuclear facilities.” He added that some of them were “quite close” to the Iranian border in Iraq.¹⁰¹

Iran also has invested in significant domestic development and foreign purchase of theater range and medium range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. The Shahab-3 ballistic missile, with a range of about 1,300 km, has become operational. This is but the first in a family of missiles that are now in various stages of research, development, and production in Iran. This family includes missiles with ranges of 1,500 km, 1,700 km, 2,000 km, 2,200 km, and 3,500 km. Israel is these missiles' publicly stated destination. It is not only declared in the speeches of Iran's top leaders, but is also inscribed on the missiles' own fuselages.

These missiles also cover parts of Russia, China, India, and Central Europe. Some of them are powered by solid fuel, which means that they are ready for launching at any point in time. The preparatory stage for such a launch is very brief, and therefore the warning time is very short. At the same time, the Iranians are developing ideas for deception: multiple warheads, for example. Iran's ballistic missile industry is racing ahead at no slower a pace than Iran's dash to enrich uranium.¹⁰² These weapons could be fitted with the conventional warheads that most of

⁹⁹ Iran’s Developing Military Capabilities, the CSIS Press, 2005, Anthony Cordesman page 47

¹⁰⁰ IBID 118

¹⁰¹ Iran suicide bombers ‘ready to hit Britain’ Marie Colvin, Michael Smith and Sarah Baxter, The Sunday Times UK, April 16, 2006 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,176-2136638,00.html>

¹⁰² Air Force Chief Views Israel Preparedness for Iranian Threat, Hizballah, Qassams Alex Fishman Interviews MG E. Shqedi Tel Aviv Yedi’ot Aharonot (Lahag [Holiday] Supplement) in Hebrew 18 Apr 06 pp 10, 11, 12, 13

them were designed to carry or could be fitted with appropriately designed nuclear weapons or chemical or biological warheads.

Iranian Nuclear Options

There is speculation that Iran may already have nuclear weapons capability or at least be on the threshold of having such capability. This speculation is fueled by a statement allegedly made on March 8, 2006 in a closed session of the IAEA. According to a press report, U.S. ambassador Gregory L. Schulte, the U.S. envoy to the IAEA, stated that Iran now has the materials to make up to ten nuclear weapons. If this is true and Iran does in fact have such weapons, there is no clear understanding of how Iran would use them, control them or store them. Russian sources have stated that Iran should have the capability within 5 years, with some saying as few as 6 months may be a possibility.

One can only speculate as to whether or not Iran would employ such weapons if the regime were to be attacked, and what their targets would be. Popular thinking on the matter is that Iran would use any such attack as a pretext for a retaliatory strike on Israel. The Iranians would have to carefully weigh the type of strike and the weapons used since the Israelis are believed to have the nuclear capability to lay waste to Iran. The other question that arises is how Iran would use any of its enriched uranium short of a high yield mode i.e. would they consider arming terrorist third parties with the capability to deliver a “dirty bomb”?

United States Military Options

The U.S. brings the greatest force potential to this situation. The U.S. Navy could blockade most of the Persian Gulf with surface ships and submarines while aircraft carrier strike and fighter assets augmented by the carrier-based E-2C Airborne Early Warning and control assets, in combination with U.S. and overseas-based USAF B-1, B-2 and F-117 stealth bombers could be used to strike targets in Iran. Such a massive and combined force could overwhelm the Iranian Air Force and the country’s main air defenses then over the next several days and weeks roam over the country to destroy almost any target in Iran.

The strikes on the nuclear facilities and the Iranian air defenses would not necessarily have to be sequential, rather there would be a mix of efforts to try to destroy as many of the defenses as possible while striking at the very high value nuclear facilities. If some of the Gulf nations were to agree to host USAF tactical air operations, then the number of air assets would rise dramatically which would give the U.S. the ability to achieve air superiority over Iran within a week and with some effort, air supremacy over portions of the country.

Navy surface ships and submarines would participate in strike operations ashore through the use of their TOMAHAWK cruise missiles. Additionally, USAF AWACS and other command and control platforms and air refueling tankers could participate from outside the Gulf, if necessary, should host nation political considerations make land-basing strike assets in the Gulf nations unworkable. The difficult part of strike operations for the U.S. or any other military remains finding those targets in the first place. Additionally, the Rules of Engagement would have to be such that the desired targets could be accessed. Given that several of the key targets have been

constructed under residential neighborhoods, this could, based on likely Rules of Engagement (ROE) make them relatively but not totally immune from air strikes.

U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) and other agency operatives could provide targeting as described earlier in the Israeli options portion of the discussion. Press reports have indicated that the U.S. has had SOF on the ground in Iran for some time.¹⁰³ The Department of Defense has refused to confirm or deny such operations and the White House characterized one report as “riddled with inaccuracies.” It does seem likely that there are covert and clandestine operations ongoing in Iran since such operations would be prudent given the history of relations and potential for greater hostilities between the two countries.

U.S. Nuclear Options

Although senior leadership in the U.S. has been intentionally vague about use of nuclear weapons, it is the assessment of the IPC that U.S. nuclear weapons would not likely be used in any scenario involving Iran unless Iranian forces were to use WMD against U.S. forces. If such weapons were to be used in Iran, it is likely that the deeply buried facilities at Natanz would be eliminated but it is not likely that any population centers would be on the target list for nuclear weapons.

U.S. Regional Defensive Capability

Another aspect that should be considered is the ability of U.S. forces to defend not only U.S. facilities and troop concentrations in the Middle East but also some of the territories and likely targets of her allies. It is reasonable to assume that the U.S. Navy would have Ticonderoga class Cruisers and Arleigh Burke class destroyers with their Aegis weapons systems and Standard Missiles available in the Gulf south of Iran and in the eastern Mediterranean to attempt to destroy any Iranian launched ballistic missiles. Also, Patriot batteries in Israel and Iraq would be used for terminal engagements. These efforts would be in addition to those efforts for defense that the Israeli forces would muster such as the new Arrow anti ballistic missile system.

Option 3: Regime Change

The regime change option has two main variants dealing with force: nonviolent or violent. The nonviolent alternative implies that the regime is bound to fall eventually on its own, and the best strategy is to sit and wait for the natural course of events to transpire.

Broadcasting into Iran from Los Angeles radio and television channels might facilitate the process of regime change. The violent alternative implies either military invasion by external powers to aid opposition groups, funding such opposition to help them bring down the regime, and/or removing from the foreign organizations list maintained by the Department of State the principal Iranian opposition groups and unleashing them to effect regime change.

¹⁰³ US special forces 'inside Iran' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4180087.stm>

With this overview in mind, consider the best option for preventing Iran's extremist Islamist leadership from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, however, was the subject of a *New Yorker* article, by Connie Bruck, in which she surveys the spectrum of Iranian opposition groups intent on effecting regime change in Tehran.¹⁰⁴ Among these is the Shah of Iran's heir, Reza Pahlavi, who announced in late April 2006 that he was organizing a movement to overthrow the Islamic regime in Tehran by means of massive civil disobedience and replace it with a democratic government.¹⁰⁵

Other dissidents, exiles, and groups run the gamut from former Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) member Mohsen Sazegara (who favors a constitutional referendum to change the government), to student leader Afshin Matin-Asgari, and the Iranian Solidarity Council (formed in May 2006), which supports United Nations Security Council action to impose smart sanctions and an embargo against the regime and calls on the Iranian military and members of the *Bassij* forces to abandon the regime and support the people.

The oldest, strongest, and best-organized of the democratic Iranian opposition is the *Mujahedeen-e Khalq* and its associated groups under the umbrella of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), which await their chance to launch a regime-change movement from exile in Ashraf City, Iraq and Paris, France. In combination with their network in Iran, these groups are the most likely to succeed in revving up the regime change clock.

While far from united in their backgrounds and approaches to regime change, what all of these opposition figures and movement hold in common is a mounting unwillingness to tolerate any longer the repressive Islamo-fascist rule of Tehran's clerical regime and a growing determination to take action instead of waiting either for the regime to acquire a nuclear weapons capability or to implode from within.

The anti-regime movement entered a new phase after the brutal suppression of the 1999 student democratic movement destroyed all illusions about the "reformist" nature of the Khatami presidency. That six-day uprising, mostly led by the *Mujahedeen-e Khalq* and related organizations, this uprising spread to 19 Iranian cities, shook the regime to its foundations, and effectively ended the population's false expectations that reform could come from within.

Yet another chapter in brutality, terrorism, and nuclear adventurism opened in August 2005 with the takeover of Iran's presidency by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The following year witnessed a sequence of demonstrations, protests, outright uprisings, targeted assassinations of regime intelligence, military, and security personnel, and acts of sabotage against regime targets all over Iran. The regime responded with helicopter gunships deployed to fire on protesters, martial law and curfews, and a spate of new repressive measures, including arrests, detentions, jailing, torture, and executions.

Provinces on the periphery of the country, populated largely by the nearly fifty percent of Iranians who are not Persian, but rather from ethnic minorities such as Arabs, Azeris, Baluchis, or Kurds, saw constant unrest. Even in the capital, Tehran, angry young Iranians seized upon any

¹⁰⁴ Bruck, Connie, "Next Stop Iran" *The New Yorker*, March 6, 2006 (pp. 48-63).

¹⁰⁵ "Shah of Iran's Heir Plans Overthrow of Regime," *Human Events Online*, 1 May 2006.

gathering that offered the opportunity to protest against an increasingly hated regime: Soccer matches at large city stadiums and even the regime's own demonstrations organized to show national support for its nuclear program were turned spontaneously into furious outbursts against the regime for its mishandling of the economy and repressive measures against a youthful population yearning to partake of the modern pop culture enjoyed in the rest of the world.

The ancient Zoroastrian celebration of *Nowruz*, a timeless commemoration of the coming of spring, each March turns into a street festival of defiance against the disapproval of Shiite mullahs who long have sought to suppress the festivities, during which Iranians pour into the streets for a night of revelry and fire jumping.

Mysterious explosions, bombings, and reports of unidentified surveillance aircraft over Iranian air space add to an atmosphere of building suspense. In December 2005, gunmen ambushed the motorcade of Iranian president Ahmadinejad in the city of Zabol in the southeastern province of Baluchistan; although the whereabouts of Ahmadinejad at the time of the attack remain in question, his driver and a bodyguard were killed in the attack.¹⁰⁶

Then, in early January 2006, a plane carrying eleven top IRGC leaders went down near the Iraqi border, killing General Ahmad Kazemi, the commander of the IRGC's ground forces, and Brigadier-General Nabiollah Shahmoradi, who was deputy commander for intelligence. While Iranian officials blamed bad weather and dilapidated engines for the crash, other sources (such as the Stratfor intelligence analysis company) noted that there was no lack of other possible explanations, including foul play, for the incident.¹⁰⁷

Clearly, the Iranian people are reaching a point of frustration with the failures and oppression of the Tehran regime at which they are more and more willing to take action to bring about change. Despite the grim reality of security service retaliation that faces every potential dissident, Iranians across the social spectrum are overcoming their fear and finding the courage to stand up to the authorities.

Among the international community, as diplomatic patience wears thin in the wake of three years of failed European and IAEA efforts at negotiations with Iran, the threat of military strikes against Iran's nuclear weapons program gathers momentum across Western capitals, at the UN, and especially among academics, officials, and pundits in Washington, D.C.

With the war drums beating louder and louder, however, sober-minded observers, including the Iran Policy Committee, are calling for other measures first, measures to support the brave Iranians who are ready to take a stand for freedom and against repression. Empowering the democratic Iranian opposition to take control of its own liberation is not only a far more attractive option for preventing Tehran's radical clerics from obtaining nuclear weapons than military strikes, it is also imminently feasible and would strengthen the diplomatic efforts of the EU-3, the IAEA, and the UN Security Council.

¹⁰⁶ "Assassination Attempt on Iran's Ahmadinejad?" *World Net Daily.com*, 17 December 2005.

¹⁰⁷ "Tehran Insider Tells of US Black Ops," *Asia Times Online*, 25 April 2006.

With the March 2006 announcement by the U.S. Department of State that a total of \$85m will be allotted this fiscal year to broadcasting in the Farsi language targeted at the Iranian population, the U.S. government at last has taken the first tentative step towards reaching out to the Iranian people themselves. Iranians have indicated by every means at their disposal their growing antipathy to a repressive regime that has destroyed their economy through corruption, the squandering of oil income on military expenditures, squashed free speech, association and expression, and imposed religious strictures on a society that is well-educated, cosmopolitan, and yearning for the opportunity to enter a modern, globalized international community.

In all of the 27 years since the Iranian Revolution, however, no American administration has ever seriously considered the possibility of encouraging the creation of a democratic and free Iran. The United States, Western Europe, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia consistently have voiced their concerns about Iran's human rights situation without ever suggesting or encouraging the actual change of the regime.

The hopes begun in the 1990s that Iran's reform movement alone could effect democratic change have been dashed with the rise of President Ahmadinejad, his purge of Government ministries, and re-staffing by former members of the Revolutionary Guards. Starting with the smashing of the 1999 student movement, the Tehran regime has cracked down severely on Iranian civil society organizations, the press, and any intellectuals and clerics who are active participants in the reform movement. At the same time, the deterioration of the Iranian economy despite the high price of oil and the young age of the largest segment of its population serve as internal pressure points on the regime to produce in the social and economic fields.

As the diplomatic process enters a new phase, the United States along with its allies should encourage the open discussion among Iranians both internally and abroad about the future political direction of their country. To this end, the United States and willing allies should provide material, financial and technical assistance to all groups and organizations who seek a democratic Iran. To further the movement toward democracy, the West should convene a summit of Iranian opposition leaders and groups, including the leadership of the NCRI, to develop an action plan for the future of Iran. Practical steps such as creating an emergency fund for the families of political prisoners, striking workers, and dissidents should be given an immediate priority.

Destabilization¹⁰⁸

Application of diplomatic measures, even the most coercive, may not alter the regime's behavior on those issues of paramount concern to the international community, such as support for terror, pursuit of WMD (especially nuclear weapons) programs, meddling inside Iraq, and violation of its citizens' human rights. If not, then Washington should be prepared to embrace a new option, short of direct military action, but which might have the best chance for success.

The middle option would open a campaign of destabilization, whose aim would be to weaken the grip of the ruling regime over the Iranian people sufficiently that Iranian opposition groups inside the country and abroad are empowered to change the regime. To the extent that any or all

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*

of the foregoing diplomatic measures, coercive or not, are deemed useful, their application should be sustained during a destabilization phase.

This next stage of an American-led campaign to compel conformity to international norms of behavior should include explicit official encouragement to Iranian opposition groups. This is an option that has never actually been on the table and has not been explored sufficiently; this option relies on the Iranian opposition to take the lead role in coordinating a campaign for regime change and establishing representative institutions.

A critical step for the United States to take in signaling its seriousness about regime change in Tehran and that it stands with the Iranian people in their struggle for freedom is to remove the *Mujahedeen-e Khalq* (MEK) and its associated umbrella organization, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), from the Department of State's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO).

Fortunately, there is considerable movement away from keeping the NCRI and related organizations on the FTO list. A comparison of the Department of State rationale used in 2004 with that used in 2005 reveals progress on the road to removal. The Department removed from the 2005 list terms used to describe these organizations in unflattering tones during prior years. one of the most important concerns whether the MEK killed Americans. State finally acknowledges that a "...Marxist element of the MEK murdered several of the Shah's U.S. security advisers prior to the Islamic Revolution, and the group helped guard [helped protect] the U.S. Embassy after Islamic students seized it in 1979."

The MEK, whose 3,800 members currently reside under the protection of the U.S. military in Ashraf City in northern Iraq, are the largest, best-organized and most disciplined Iranian opposition group. The MEK, having been granted the civilian status of "protected persons" under the Fourth Geneva Convention in 2004, is poised to work on behalf of a democratic Iran. Their removal from the FTO list would enable their representatives to expand their organization, broadcasting, fund-raising and recruitment activities in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Together, the MEK and NCRI represent the most credible threat to the continued survival of the extremist regime in Tehran, a threat that was empirically documented by an earlier IPC study that compared public attention paid by the clerical regime to its various opposition groups—and which found through tallying the quantity of regime statements directed at such groups that it devoted the content of fully 230% more statements to the MEK than to any other group. Moreover, the steady stream of revelations since 2002, the majority of which have been verified, by the MEK/NCRI from their sources inside Iran's nuclear weapons program, demonstrate in a most graphic way the extent of this group's support network inside Iran.

Delisting the MEK Serves U.S. National Security Interests¹⁰⁹

In the final analysis, the IPC supports delisting of the MEK first and foremost because it would serve U.S. national security interests. This paper and earlier IPC white papers have described in extensive detail the nature and urgency of the threats posed by the aggressive clerical regime in Tehran, which now has reached the verge of a nuclear weapons capability and so alarmed the international community that the issue has been brought to the U.N. Security Council for action.

U.S. goals for greater democracy, economic development and equal opportunity for all the people of the Middle East meet a particular focus and challenge in Iran. Empowerment of the Iranian people, who long to achieve these goals for themselves, would result in obvious benefits to themselves and provide a symbol of hope to their neighbors. Delisting of the MEK from the FTO list is the first step. That first step will trigger a number of positive outcomes.

Delisting would reinforce the sincerity of President Bush's promise that America stands with the people of Iran in their struggle to liberate themselves and send a strong message to the Iranian people that America is on their side. Additionally, it would signal the unified resolution of the U.S. administration to support a policy of regime change in Tehran, thereby putting the clerical rulers on notice that a new option is now on the table, and that America is not limited to an infeasible military option or the failed diplomatic option. The Iranian regime would know that it faces an enabled and determined opposition on its borders; this will shift the attitude of the Ahmadinejad presidency from an offensive mode to a defensive one.

Although, as of early 2006, it appeared that a number of European parliamentary bodies, including those of the UK, Belgium, and the European Parliament itself, might lead the U.S. to delisting of the MEK from lists of terrorist organizations, a U.S. delisting would bolster the negotiating position of all official parties attempting to deal with Iran, improving the chances of eliciting better cooperation from Tehran. Even more importantly, in the longer term, friends and allies would appreciate that the United States is taking the lead in demanding that Iran honor its obligations to the international community on nuclear issues. The likelihood is that they would follow this lead.

Delisting likely would improve the ability of the MEK to collect more intelligence about Iran's nuclear program by encouraging more potential intelligence sources inside Iran to provide information. The outcome would certainly inhibit Tehran's efforts to move ahead with its nuclear weapons program. Also in the intelligence arena, delisting would serve to support an expansion of the MEK's intelligence network inside Iran on a variety of important collection requirements, including information about Iran's terrorist network throughout the Middle East, its support for terrorist groups in Iraq, and a more detailed understanding of the political situation in Iran, including leadership issues and popular sentiment. By creating doubt in the minds and commitment of lower level regime officials, the likelihood of defections to the camp of regime opponents would rise.

¹⁰⁹ "U.S. Policy Options for Iran and Iranian Political Opposition," A White Paper of the Iran Policy Committee, 13 September 2006. In view of the urgency now facing U.S., Israeli, and other national leaderships to move forward with an appropriate and effective policy on Iran, this section re-emphasizes many points made in the IPC's earlier white paper.

In terms of the Iranian people themselves, enabling the MEK would help to energize the majority who are either undecided “fence-sitters” or heretofore have been uncommitted in the absence of an active policy in favor of regime change. Allowing the MEK to assume a role among leaders of pro-democracy groups in Iran shifts the financial and organizational responsibility for regime change from external entities to the Iranian people themselves and empowers the MEK and other opposition groups to play their rightful role in organizing anti-government demonstrations and other political activity among women, students, merchants and other groups naturally interested in regime change.

The majority of Iranian clerics, who are not associated with the regime, and who are sympathetic to the MEK’s secular Islamic ideas about government, would be encouraged to take a more positive attitude toward the U.S.; many MEK leaders come from families of prominent Ayatollahs. The ability to raise funds would also greatly assist the MEK to mount expanded satellite television and radio broadcasting into Iran and to develop an integrated publication and information program not only inside Iran, but abroad as well.

The effects of delisting on U.S. and Coalition efforts to support secure democratic development in Iraq can hardly be overstated. For Iran’s IRGC, MOIS and other security services to be suddenly thrown on the defensive would force them to scale back their current large scale assistance to terrorist and insurgent forces inside Iraq (as well as those perpetrating terrorist attacks against Israel).

Other pro-Iranian groups, such as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and its armed militia wing, the Badr Organization, would have to adopt a lower profile in southern Iraq, permitting the forces of federalism, integration, moderation and democracy to advance there. Iraqi Shiite militias would find their scope for ethnic-based attacks, reprisals, and neighborhood cleansing operations more circumscribed if their principal sponsor in Tehran were threatened; by the same token, Iraqi Sunnis be able to take a more assertive role in the political process, thus helping to tamp down forces attempting to incite sectarian warfare among Iraq’s ethnic groups.

Additionally, empowerment of the MEK would allow it to officially operate as a legitimate opposition group in Iraq, thereby providing a cultural, political and religious counter-weight to the rising tide of Islamist extremism there, much of which is funded and sponsored by Tehran. This positive effect would aid the U.S.’s efforts to strengthen the position of moderate forces overall in Iraq, sending a signal to radical Iranian proxy groups in Iraq that their efforts are not welcome.

Regionally, and especially among the Gulf States, the signal would go out that small, weak neighboring countries do not have to put up with Tehran’s bullying pressures and destabilization operations anymore.

In the United States, delisting would allow the MEK and its associated larger coalition of the NCRI to open offices, organize the American-Iranian community in line with U.S. government efforts to spread democracy in the Middle East and to establish a representative government in Iran. Once the MEK is no longer an officially-designated “terrorist organization,” the United States could turn to a decision about whether to return the MEK’s weapons, confiscated at the

outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, which would relieve the American military of its current responsibility for the protection of MEK camps and personnel.

Conclusions

Recall the title of this study, “What makes Tehran tick.” That title arises from Iran’s puzzling behavior: As Tehran moves closer to confrontation with the international community, rather than seeking to avoid a clash, Iran becomes even more aggressive in its rhetoric and its actions. Three questions flow from this puzzle and guide the above analysis: 1) What is the nature of the Iranian regime? 2) What difference does its character make? 3) And what is the international community prepared to do about the Iranian regime?

Because the regime is Islamo-fascist in nature, it expresses hostility and justifies such hostility as a result of claims of perceived threats to it. In this regard, revolutionary ideology and religious claims undergird both expression of hostility and perception of threat.

Given the nature of the regime as well as its capability and intent to acquire the bomb, there are three broad options in play: diplomacy, military action, and regime change. Because diplomacy and military action do not eliminate the outcome of an Islamist Iran with nuclear weapons, they are not as attractive as regime change.

The nature of the regime is that Iran is an Islamo-fascist state. Such a state with nuclear arms is an unacceptable outcome. Diplomacy is irrelevant to the problem of the nature of the regime. Diplomacy accepts the regime as legitimate and seeks to find compromise solutions. But the West should not compromise its principles and security by negotiating further with an Islamo-fascist regime intent on getting the bomb.

Military action against nuclear sites also fails to deal with the nature of the regime. Strikes, moreover, only delay the bomb, at best. And at worst, such strikes may delay the onset of regime change. And an Iraq-like ground invasion is a nonstarter, and Tehran knows that Iran is not Iraq.

Diplomacy implies a grand bargain where the West would offer a package of economic, political, and security concessions to Iran in the hope that the regime would abandon its quest for the bomb. Military action by Israel and/or the United States suggests surgical airstrikes against Iran’s nuclear facilities at a minimum or an Iraqi-style invasion targeting regime assets. The third option consists of empowering the Iranian people through their opposition groups to bring about regime change before the regime gets the bomb.

Diplomacy divides into two parts—coercive diplomacy or a grand bargain of mutual concessions. The problem with coercive diplomacy is the tension among nations that want to dissuade Iran from going down the fast track to get the bomb while still benefiting from trade with Iran. The grand bargain is also problematic. It implies that there is a package of benefits that would persuade Iran to give up its quest for nuclear status, when Iran has rejected such proposals out of hand.

The diplomatic option is already far advanced, and planning and gaming for the military option is also proceeding at a rapid pace. The third option of regime change, however, is currently

underdeveloped and is lagging far behind the other two options. While Iran's nuclear program is in development, the international community has a narrow window of time to prepare its options for preventing or dealing with a nuclear Iran.

When diplomacy runs its course, it is imperative that the regime change option be more fully developed so that the United States is not left with only a choice between military action and doing nothing to prevent the leadership in Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Diplomats and military planners battle against time before Tehran has the expertise and technology to get the bomb. But Iran's radical President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad shortened the time for Iran to join the nuclear club. Given Iran's extensive underground and scattered nuclear sites, military action can slow but not stop bombmaking.

As diplomacy stalls and costly military alternatives surface, one emerging option is to speed up the regime change clock and slow down the nuclear clock: Force the clerical rulers from power before they get the bomb. How?

Unleash the main Iranian opposition—the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK). It has support in Iran and a sizable force in Iraq. The MEK is feared by the regime more than any group, according to research at our Iran Policy Committee (IPC), a think tank devoted to creating options for preventing a nuclear-armed Iran: State-run Iranian media assail the MEK and mention it 230% more than all other opposition groups combined.

Without MEK help, satellite assets would be even less effective in monitoring Iran's increasingly sophisticated, rapidly expanding, and effectively hidden underground nuclear program. Still, the main Iranian opposition operates on half-throttle because designation: 1) limits MEK ability to collect intelligence on regime nuclear sites and terrorist networks; 2) shuts down MEK broadcasting from the United States to Iran, while State requests \$75 million for such broadcasting; 3) forces the FBI to arrest Iranian-Americans suspected of MEK fundraising, diverting scarce Bureau resources from investigating regime violations of U.S. sanctions and intelligence operations in America.

To speed up regime change, end the MEK terrorist designation. Delisting would slow down the nuclear clock by facilitating the work of the most significant intelligence asset on Iranian nuclear programs. Removal of the MEK adds another whirling dervish to the dance of coercive diplomacy, designed to prevent a nuclear-armed Islamist Iran.

The bottom line is that only regime change by empowering the Iranian people via their pro-democracy opposition groups can solve the puzzle of what to do with an Islamist state intent on securing nuclear weapon status. Unlike other members, Iran is an Islamo-fascist state ruled by fanatical clerics undeterred by rational calculations of national interest.

Appendix A

**Israel's Strategic Future
A Report on PROJECT DANIEL
Prepared for the Iran Policy Committee**

**By
Professor Louis Rene Beres, Chair of Project Daniel**

Introduction

ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE: THE FINAL REPORT OF PROJECT DANIEL was completed in mid-January 2003 - several months before the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom - and transmitted by hand to Prime Minister Sharon. The underlying rationale of "Daniel" was the presumption that Israel urgently needs a coherent plan for dealing with authentically existential threats, and that we ("The Group") were well-positioned intellectually and professionally to design such a plan. We began with an overriding concern for the possible fusion of certain WMD-capacity with irrational adversaries. Project Daniel concluded, however, that the primary threats to Israel's physical survival were actually more likely to arise among enemies that were not irrational. With this in mind, we proceeded to consider a broad variety of complex issues concerning deterrence, defense, preemption and warfighting.

Combining legal with strategic analyses, The Group linked the concept of "anticipatory self-defense" to various preemption scenarios and to The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (September 20, 2002). We also examined closely the prospects for expanded strategic cooperation between Washington and Jerusalem, with particular reference to maintaining Israel's "qualitative edge" and to associated issues of necessary funding. Project Daniel looked very closely at a recommended "paradigm shift" to deal with various "low intensity" and long-range WMD threats to Israel, and also considered the specific circumstances under which Israel should purposefully end its current posture of "nuclear ambiguity." Overall, The Group urged continuing constructive support to the United States-led War Against Terror (WAT) and stipulated that Israel combine a strengthening of multilayered active defenses with a credible, secure and decisive nuclear deterrent. This recognizable retaliatory (second-strike) force is to be fashioned with the capacity to destroy some 10 - 20 high-value targets scattered widely over pertinent enemy states in the Middle East - an objective entirely consistent with our explicit assumption that the main goal of Israel's nuclear forces must always be deterrence *ex ante*, not revenge *ex post*.

The Group recognized a very basic asymmetry between Israel and the Arab/Iranian world concerning, *inter alia*, the desirability of peace; the absence of democracy; the acceptability of terror as a legitimate weapon and the overwhelming demographic advantage of the Arab/Iranian world. With this in mind, ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE concluded that non-conventional exchanges between Israel and adversary states must always be scrupulously avoided and that Israel must do whatever is needed to maintain its conventional supremacy in the region. Facing a growing anarchy in world affairs and an increasing isolation in the world community, Israel is strongly encouraged by Project Daniel to incorporate The Group's considered recommendations into codified IDF doctrine, and to systematically expand Israeli strategic studies into a more disciplined field of inquiry. In the end, Israel's survival will depend largely upon policies of its own making, and these

policies will be best-informed by The Group's proposed steps regarding deterrence; defense; warfighting and preemption options. Today, with the steadily advancing nuclear threat from Iran, the preemption option has become even more compelling.

ISRAEL, SUN-TZU AND THE ART OF WAR

Although The Group's collaborative analyses drew upon very contemporary strategic thinking, we were also mindful of certain much-earlier investigations of war, power and survival. One such still-relevant investigation can be found in Sun-Tzu's THE ART OF WAR. The following brief section of this paper uses Sun-Tzu to elucidate The Group's main ideas and recommendations.

Sun-Tzu's THE ART OF WAR, written sometime in the fifth century BCE, synthesized a coherent set of principles designed to produce military victory and minimize the chances of military defeat. Examined together with ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE, the Final Report of Project Daniel, the full corpus of this work should now be studied closely by all who wish to strengthen Israel's military posture and its associated order of battle. At a time when the leaders of particular Arab/Islamic states might soon combine irrationality with weapons of mass destruction, the members of Project Daniel were markedly determined to augment current facts and figures with dialectical reasoning, imagination and creativity.

Israel, we reported, must continue its "imperative to seek peace through negotiation and diplomatic processes wherever possible." Indeed, we continued: "This imperative, codified at the United Nations Charter and in multiple authoritative sources of international law, shall always remain the guiding orientation of Israel's foreign policy." What are Sun-Tzu's principles concerning negotiation and diplomacy? Political initiatives and agreements may be useful, he instructs, but purposeful military preparations should never be neglected. The primary objective of every state should be to weaken enemies without actually engaging in armed combat. This objective links the ideal of "complete victory" to a "strategy for planning offensives." In Chapter Four, "Military Disposition," Sun-Tzu tells his readers: "One who cannot be victorious assumes a defensive posture; one who can be victorious attacks....Those who excel at defense bury themselves away below the lowest depths of Earth. Those who excel at offense move from above the greatest heights of Heaven."

Project Daniel took note. Today, with steadily more menacing Iranian nuclearization, the whole world - informed by the insights of this Iran Policy Committee White Paper - should take note. Recognizing the dangers of relying too heavily upon active defenses such as anti-ballistic missile systems, a reliance whereby Israel would likely bury itself away "below the lowest depths of Earth," Project Daniel boldly advises that Israel take certain prompt initiatives in removing existential threats. These initiatives include striking first (preemption) against enemy WMD development, manufacturing, storage, control and deployment centers - a recommendation fully consistent with longstanding international law regarding "anticipatory self defense" and also with the current defense policy of the United States.

If, for any reason, the doctrine of preemption should fail to prevent an enemy Arab state or Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, the Daniel group advises that Israel cease immediately its current policy of nuclear ambiguity, and proceed at once to a position of open nuclear deterrence. Additional to this change in policy, we recommend that Israel make it perfectly clear to the enemy

nuclear state that it would suffer prompt and maximum-yield nuclear "countervalue" reprisals for any level of nuclear aggression undertaken against Israel.

Under certain circumstances, our team continues, similar forms of Israeli nuclear deterrence should be directed against enemy states that threaten existential harms with biological weapons.

What exactly are "existential harms?" Taken literally, an existential threat implies harms that portend a complete annihilation or disappearance of the state. We feel, however, that certain more limited forms of both conventional and unconventional attack against large Israeli civilian concentrations could also constitute an existential threat. In part our calculation here is based upon Israel's small size, its very high population density and its particular concentrations of national infrastructure. If the Government of Israel follows the advice of Project Daniel, prospective aggressors would understand in advance that launching certain kinds of attack would result in their own cities turning to vapor and ash.

Following Sun-Tzu, the clear purpose of our recommendation is to achieve a complete Israeli "victory" without engaging in actual hostilities. In the exact words of our Report, ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE: "The overriding priority of Israel's nuclear deterrent force must always be that it preserves the country's security without ever having to be fired against any target."

To preserve itself against any existential threats, some of which may stem from terrorist organizations as well as from states, Israel should learn from Sun-Tzu's repeated emphasis on the "unorthodox." Drawn from the conflation of thought that crystallized as Taoism, the ancient strategist observes: "...in battle, one engages with the orthodox and gains victory through the unorthodox." In a complex passage, Sun-Tzu discusses how the orthodox may be used in unorthodox ways, while an orthodox attack may be unorthodox when it is unexpected. Taken together with the recommendations of Project Daniel, this passage could represent a subtle tool for operational planning, one that might usefully exploit an enemy state's or terrorist group's particular matrix of military expectations.

For Israel, the "unorthodox" should be fashioned not only ON the battlefield, but also BEFORE the battle. To prevent the most dangerous forms of battle, which would be expressions of all-out unconventional warfare called "counterforce" engagements, Israel should now examine a number of promising strategic postures. These postures could even focus upon a reasoned shift from an image of "orthodox" rationality to one of somewhat "unorthodox" irrationality, although Project Daniel does confine itself to prescriptions for certain defensive first-strikes using conventional weapons and massive countervalue (countercity) nuclear reprisals.

Everyone who studies Israeli nuclear strategy has heard about the so-called "Samson Option." This is generally thought to be a last resort strategy wherein Israel's nuclear weapons are used not for prevention of war or even for war-waging, but simply as a last spasm of vengeance against a despised enemy state that had launched massive (probably unconventional) countercity and/or counterforce attacks against Israel. In this view, Israel's leaders, faced with national extinction, would decide that although the Jewish State could not survive, it would "die" only together with its destroyers.

How does the "Samson Option" appear to the Arab/Iranian side? Israel, it would seem, may resort to nuclear weapons, but only in reprisal, and only in response to overwhelmingly destructive first-strike attacks. Correspondingly, anything less than an overwhelmingly destructive first-strike would elicit a measured and proportionate Israeli military response. Moreover, by striking first, the Arab/Iranian enemy knows that it could have an advantage in "escalation dominance." These calculations would follow from the more or less informed enemy view that Israel will never embrace the "unorthodox" on the strategic level, that its actions will likely always be reactions, and that these reactions will always be limited.

But what if Israel were to fine-tune its "Samson Option?" What if it did this in conjunction with certain doctrinal changes in its longstanding policy of nuclear ambiguity? By taking the bomb out of the "basement" and by indicating, simultaneously, that its now declared nuclear weapons were not limited to existential scenarios, Israel might go a long way to enhancing its national security. It would do this by displaying an apparent departure from perfect rationality; in essence, by expressing the rationality of threatened irrationality. Whether or not such a display would be an example of "pretended irrationality" or of an authentic willingness to act irrationally would be anyone's guess. It goes without saying that such an example of "unorthodox" behavior by Israel could actually incite enemy first-strikes in certain circumstances, or at least hasten the onset of such strikes that may already be planned, but there are ways for Israel in which Sun-Tzu's "unorthodox" could be made to appear "orthodox."

HOW A NUCLEAR WAR MIGHT BEGIN BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ITS ENEMIES

Israel remains the openly-declared national and religious object of Arab/Islamic genocide. This term is used in the literal and jurisprudential sense - not merely as a figure of speech. No other country is in a similar predicament. What is Israel to do? How might Israel's possible actions or inactions affect the likelihood of a regional nuclear war in the Middle East? And in what precise ways might a nuclear war actually begin between Israel and certain of its enemies?

Israel's nuclear weapons, unacknowledged and unthreatening, exist only to prevent certain forms of enemy aggression. This deterrent force would never be used except in defensive reprisal for certain massive enemy first-strikes, especially for Arab and/or Iranian attacks involving nuclear and/or biological weapons. For a limited time, Israel's enemies are not yet nuclear. Even if this should change, Israel's nuclear weapons could continue to reduce the risks of unconventional war as long as the pertinent enemy states were (1) to remain rational; and (2) to remain convinced that Israel would retaliate massively if attacked with nuclear and/or certain biological weapons of mass destruction.

But there are many complex problems to identify if a bellicose enemy state were allowed to acquire nuclear weapons, problems that belie the seemingly agreeable notion of stable nuclear deterrence. Whether for reasons of miscalculation, accident, unauthorized capacity to fire, outright irrationality or the presumed imperatives of "Jihad," such a state could opt to launch a nuclear first-strike against Israel in spite of the latter's nuclear posture. Here, Israel would certainly respond, to the extent possible, with a nuclear retaliatory strike. Although nothing is publicly known about Israel's precise targeting doctrine, such a reprisal might surely be launched against the aggressor's capital city or against a similarly high-value urban target. There would be no assurances, in response to this sort of aggression, that Israel would limit itself to striking back against exclusively military targets or even to the individual enemy state from which the aggression was launched.

What if enemy first-strikes were to involve "only" chemical and/or biological weapons? Here Israel might still launch a reasonably proportionate nuclear reprisal, but this would depend largely upon Israel's calculated expectations of follow-on aggression and on its associated determinations of comparative damage-limitation. Should Israel absorb a massive conventional first-strike, a nuclear retaliation could still not be ruled out altogether. This is especially the case if: (1) the aggressor were perceived to hold nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction in reserve; and/or (2) Israel's leaders were to believe that non-nuclear retaliations could not prevent national annihilation. As indicated earlier in this paper, Project Daniel determined that the threshold of existential harms must be far lower than wholesale physical devastation.

Faced with imminent and existential attacks, Israel - properly taking its cue from THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - could decide to preempt enemy aggression with conventional forces. Announced on September 20, 2002, this Bush-era American strategy affirms the growing reasonableness of anticipatory self-defense under international law. If Israel were to draw upon such authoritative expressions of current U.S. policy, the targeted state's response would determine Israel's subsequent moves. If this response were in any way nuclear, Israel would assuredly undertake nuclear counter-retaliation. If this enemy retaliation were to involve certain chemical and/or biological weapons, Israel might also determine to take a quantum escalatory initiative.

If the enemy state's response to an Israeli preemption were limited to hard-target conventional strikes, it is highly improbable that Israel would resort to nuclear counter-retaliation. On the other hand, if the enemy state's conventional retaliation were an all-out strike directed toward Israel's civilian populations as well as to Israeli military targets - an existential strike, for all intents and purposes - an Israeli nuclear counter-retaliation could not be ruled out. Such a counter-retaliation could be ruled out only if the enemy state's conventional retaliations were entirely proportionate to Israel's preemption; confined entirely to Israeli military targets; circumscribed by the legal limits of "military necessity"; and accompanied by explicit and verifiable assurances of no further escalation.

It is exceedingly unlikely, but not entirely inconceivable, that Israel would ever decide to preempt enemy state aggression with a nuclear defensive strike. While circumstances could surely arise where such a defensive strike would be completely rational and also completely acceptable under international law (such a policy HAS been embraced by the United States in Joint Publication 3-12, DOCTRINE FOR JOINT NUCLEAR OPERATIONS, 15 March 2005), it is improbable that Israel would ever permit itself to reach such dire circumstances. An Israeli nuclear preemption could be expected only if: (1) Israel's state enemies had unexpectedly acquired nuclear or other unconventional weapons presumed capable of destroying the tiny Jewish State; (2) these enemy states had made explicit that their intentions paralleled their capabilities; (3) these states were authoritatively believed ready to begin a countdown-to-launch; AND (4) Israel believed that non-nuclear preemptions could not possibly achieve the minimum needed levels of damage-limitation - that is, levels consistent with its own national survival.

Should nuclear weapons ever be introduced into a conflict between Israel and the many countries that wish to destroy it, some form of nuclear war fighting could ensue. This would be the case so long as: (a) enemy state first-strikes against Israel would not destroy the Jewish State's second-strike nuclear capability; (b) enemy state retaliations for Israeli conventional preemption would not

destroy Israel's nuclear counter-retaliatory capability; (c) Israeli preemptive strikes involving nuclear weapons would not destroy enemy state second-strike nuclear capabilities; and (d) Israeli retaliation for enemy state conventional first-strikes would not destroy enemy state nuclear counter-retaliatory capability. From the standpoint of protecting its security and survival, this means that Israel must now take proper steps to ensure the likelihood of (a) and (b) above, and the unlikelihood of (c) and (d).

Both Israeli nuclear and non-nuclear preemptions of enemy unconventional aggressions could lead to nuclear exchanges. This would depend, in part, upon the effectiveness and breadth of Israeli targeting, the surviving number of enemy nuclear weapons, and the willingness of enemy leaders to risk Israeli nuclear counter-retaliations. In any event, the likelihood of nuclear exchanges would obviously be greatest where potential Arab and/or Iranian aggressors were allowed to deploy ever-larger numbers of unconventional weapons without eliciting appropriate Israeli and/or American preemptions.

Should such deployment be allowed to take place, Israel might effectively forfeit the non-nuclear preemption option. Here its only alternatives to nuclear preemption could be a no-longer viable conventional preemption or simply waiting to be attacked itself. It follows that the risks of an Israeli nuclear preemption, of nuclear exchanges with an enemy state, AND of enemy nuclear first-strikes could all be reduced by certain timely Israeli and/or American non-nuclear preemptions. These preemptions would be directed at critical military targets and/or at pertinent regimes. As explained by Project Daniel, the latter option could include dedicated elimination of enemy leadership elites and/or certain enemy scientists.

ISRAEL'S POLICY OF NUCLEAR AMBIGUITY

We have seen some of the precise ways in which a nuclear war might actually begin between Israel and its enemies. From the standpoint of preventing such a war, it is essential that Israel now protect itself with suitable policies of preemption, defense and deterrence. This last set of policies, moreover, will depend substantially upon whether Israel continues to keep its bomb in the "basement," or whether it decides to change from a formal nuclear posture of "deliberate ambiguity" to one of selected and partial disclosure.

In one respect, the issue is already somewhat moot. Shortly after coming to power as Prime Minister, Shimon Peres took the unprecedented step of openly acknowledging Israel's nuclear capability. Responding to press questions about the Oslo "peace process" and the probable extent of Israeli concessions, Peres remarked that he would be "delighted" to "give up the Atom" if the entire region would only embrace a comprehensive security plan. Although this remark was certainly not an intended expression of changed nuclear policy, it did raise the question of a more tangible Israeli shift away from nuclear ambiguity.

The nuclear disclosure issue is far more than a simple "yes" or "no." Obviously, the basic question was already answered by Peres's "offer." What needs to be determined soon is the timing of purposeful disclosure and the extent of subtlety and detail with which Israel should communicate its nuclear capabilities and intentions to selected enemy states. This issue is central to the deliberations of Project Daniel, which concluded that Israel's bomb should remain in the basement as long as

possible, but also that it should be revealed in particular contours if enemy circumstances should change in an ominous fashion.

In essence, therefore, because the Report stipulates the need for an expanded Israeli doctrine of preemption, this Project Daniel statement on nuclear ambiguity means that Israel should promptly remove the bomb from its "basement" if - for whatever reason - Israel should have failed to exploit the recommended doctrine of preemption.

The rationale for Israeli nuclear disclosure does not lie in expressing the obvious; that is, that Israel has the bomb. Instead, it lies in the informed understanding that nuclear weapons can serve Israel's security in a number of different ways, and that all of these ways could benefit the Jewish State to the extent that certain aspects of these weapons and associated strategies are disclosed. The pertinent form and extent of disclosure would be especially vital to Israeli nuclear deterrence.

To protect itself against enemy strikes, particularly those attacks that could carry existential costs, Israel must exploit every component function of its nuclear arsenal. The success of Israel's efforts will depend in large measure not only upon its chosen configuration of "counterforce" (hard-target) and "countervalue" (city-busting) operations, but also upon the extent to which this configuration is made known in advance to enemy states. Before such an enemy is deterred from launching first-strikes against Israel, or before it is deterred from launching retaliatory attacks following an Israeli preemption, it may not be enough that it simply "knows" that Israel has the Bomb. It may also need to recognize that these Israeli nuclear weapons are sufficiently invulnerable to such attacks and that they are aimed at very high-value targets. In this connection, the Final Report of Project Daniel recommends that "a recognizable retaliatory force should be fashioned with the capacity to destroy some 15 high-value targets scattered widely over pertinent enemy states in the Middle East." This "countervalue" strategy means that Israel's second-strike response to enemy aggressions involving certain biological and/or nuclear weapons would be unambiguously directed at enemy populations, not at enemy weapons or infrastructures.

It may appear, at first glance, that Israeli targeting of enemy military installations and troop concentrations ("counterforce targeting") would be both more compelling as a deterrent and also more humane. But it is entirely likely that a nuclear-armed enemy of Israel could conceivably regard any Israeli retaliatory destruction of its armed forces as "acceptable" in certain circumstances. Such an enemy might conclude that the expected benefits of annihilating "the Zionist entity" outweigh any expected retaliatory harms to its military. Here, of course, Israel's nuclear deterrent would fail, possibly with existential consequences.

It is highly unlikely, however, that any enemy state would ever calculate that the expected benefits of annihilating Israel would outweigh the expected costs of its own annihilation. Excluding an irrational enemy state - a prospect that falls by definition outside the logic of nuclear deterrence - state enemies of Israel would assuredly refrain from nuclear and/or biological attacks upon Israel that would presumptively elicit massive countervalue reprisals. This reasoning would hold only to the extent that these enemy states fully believed that Israel would make good on its threats. Israel's nuclear deterrent, once it were made open and appropriately explicit, would need to make clear to all prospective nuclear enemies the following: "Israel's nuclear weapons, dispersed, multiplied and hardened, are targeted upon your major cities. These weapons will never be used against these targets except in retaliation for certain WMD aggressions. Unless our population centers are struck

first by nuclear attack or certain levels of biological attack or by combined nuclear/biological attack, we will not harm your cities."

Some readers will be disturbed by this reasoning, discovering in it perhaps some ominous hint of "Dr. Strangelove." Yet, the countervalue targeting strategy recommended by Project Daniel represents Israel's best hope for avoiding a nuclear or biological war. It is, therefore, the most humane strategy available. The Israeli alternative, an expressed counterforce targeting doctrine, would produce a markedly higher probability of nuclear or nuclear/biological war. Such a war, even if all weapons remained targeted on the other side's military forces and structures (a very optimistic assumption) would entail high levels of "collateral damage."

The very best weapons, Clausewitz wrote, are those that achieve their objectives without ever actually being used. This is especially the case with nuclear weapons; Israel's nuclear weapons can succeed only through non-use. Recognizing this, Project Daniel makes very clear in its Final Report to Prime Minister Sharon that nuclear warfighting must always be avoided by Israel.

Summing up, the Project Daniel Group recommends that Israel do whatever it must to prevent enemy nuclearization, up to and including pertinent acts of preemption. Should these measures fail, measures that would be permissible under international law as expressions of "anticipatory self-defense," the Jewish State should immediately end its posture of nuclear ambiguity with fully open declarations of countervalue targeting.

ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL AMIDST GROWING WORLDWIDE ANARCHY

In an age of Total War, Israel must always remain fully aware of those harms that would threaten its very continuance as a state. Although the Jewish State has always recognized an overriding obligation to seek peace through negotiation and diplomacy wherever possible, there are times when its commitment to peaceful settlement will not be reciprocated. Moreover, as noted earlier, there are times when the idea of an existential threat may reasonably apply to a particular level of harms that falls well below the threshold of complete national annihilation.

Examining pertinent possibilities, our Project Daniel group noted three distinct but interrelated existential threats to Israel:

1. Biological/Nuclear (BN) threats from states;
2. BN threats from terror organizations; and
3. BN threats from combined efforts of states and terror organizations.

To the extent that certain Arab states and Iran are now allowed to develop WMD capabilities, Israel may have to deal someday with an anonymous attack scenario. Here the aggressor enemy state would not identify itself, and Israeli post-attack identification would be exceedingly difficult. What is Israel to do in such a situation? The Group recommended to the Prime Minister that "Israel must identify explicitly and early on that all enemy Arab states and Iran are subject to massive Israeli reprisal in the event of a BN attack upon Israel." We recommended further that "massive" reprisals be targeted at between 10 and 20 large enemy cities ("countervalue" targeting) and that the nuclear yields of such Israeli reprisals be in very high range. Such deterrent threats by Israel would be very compelling to all rational enemies, but - at the same time - would likely have little or no effect upon

irrational ones. In the case of irrational adversaries, Israel's only hope for safety will likely lie in appropriate and operationally feasible acts of preemption.

A policy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) which once obtained between the United States and the Soviet Union would never work between Israel and its Arab/Iranian enemies. Rather, the Project Daniel Group recommended that Israel MUST prevent its enemies from acquiring BN status, and that any notion of BN "parity" between Israel and its enemies would be intolerable. Accordingly, The Group advised the Prime Minister that "Israel immediately adopt - as highest priority - a policy of preemption with respect to enemy existential threats." Such a policy would be based upon the more limited definition of "existential" described above, and would also enhance Israel's overall deterrence posture.

Recognizing the close partnership and overlapping interests between Israel and the United States, the Project Daniel Group strongly supports the ongoing American War Against Terror (WAT). In this connection, we have urged full cooperation and mutuality between Jerusalem and Washington regarding communication of intentions. If for any reason the United States should decide against exercising preemption options against certain developing weapons of mass destruction, Israel must reserve for itself the unhindered prerogative to undertake its own preemption options. Understood in the more formal language of international law, these operations would be an expression of "anticipatory self-defense."

Our Group began its initial deliberations with the following urgent concern: Israel faces the hazard of a suicide-bomber in macrocosm. In this scenario, an enemy Arab state or Iran would act against Israel without ordinary regard for any retaliatory consequences. In the fashion of the individual suicide bomber who acts without fear of personal consequences - indeed, who actually welcomes the most extreme personal consequence, which is death - an enemy Arab state and/or Iran would launch WMD attacks against Israel with full knowledge and expectation of overwhelming Israeli reprisals. The conclusion to be drawn from this scenario is that Israeli deterrence vis-a-vis "suicide states" would have been immobilized by enemy irrationality and that Israel's only recourse in such circumstances would have been appropriate forms of preemption.

ISRAEL'S PREEMPTION AND NUCLEAR WARFIGHTING DOCTRINE

International law has long allowed for states to initiate forceful defensive measures when there exists "imminent danger" of aggression. This rule of "anticipatory self-defense" has been expanded and reinforced by President George W. Bush's issuance of THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. Released on September 20, 2002, this document asserts, *inter alia*, that traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against an enemy "whose avowed tactics are wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents..." As Israel is substantially less defensible and more vulnerable than the United States, its particular right to resort to anticipatory self-defense under threat of readily identifiable existential harms is beyond legal question.

Following the Bush doctrine expansion of preemption, the Group suggested to Prime Minister Sharon that such policy pertain as well to certain nuclear and/or biological WMD threats against Israel, that this policy be codified as doctrine, and that these actions be conventional in nature. Such preemption may be overt or covert, and range from "decapitation" to full-scale military operations.

Further, the Group advised that decapitation may apply to both enemy leadership elites (state and non-state) and to various categories of technical experts who would be essential to the fashioning of enemy WMD arsenals, e.g., nuclear scientists. The Group reminded Prime Minister Sharon that any forcible prevention of enemy nuclear/biological deployment would be profoundly different from an Israeli preemption of an existing enemy nuclear/biological force. Attempts at preemption against an enemy that had already been allowed to go nuclear/biological may be far too risky and could even invite an existential retaliation. It was also recommended that any preemptions be carried out exclusively by conventional high-precision weapons, not only because they are likely to be more effective than nuclear weapons, but also because preemption with nuclear weapons could be wrongly interpreted as Israeli nuclear first-strikes. If unsuccessful, these preemptive strikes could elicit an enemy's "countervalue" second strike; that is, a deadly intentional attack upon Israeli civilian populations.

The Group advised emphatically that Israel should avoid non-conventional exchanges with enemy states wherever possible. It is not in Israel's interest to engage these states in WMD warfare if other options exist. ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE does not instruct how to "win" a war in a WMD Middle-East environment. Rather, it describes what we, the members of Project Daniel, consider the necessary, realistic and optimal conditions for nonbelligerence toward Israel in the region. These conditions include a coherent and comprehensive Israeli doctrine for preemption, warfighting, deterrence and defense.

The Group advised the Prime Minister that there is no operational need for low-yield nuclear weapons geared to actual battlefield use. Overall, we recommended that the most efficient yield for Israeli deterrence and counterstrike purposes be a "countervalue" targeted warhead at a level sufficient to hit the aggressor's principal population centers and fully compromise that aggressor's national viability. We urged that Israel make absolutely every effort to avoid ever using nuclear weapons in support of conventional war operations. These weapons could create a seamless web of conventional and nuclear battlefields that Israel should scrupulously avoid.

The Group considers it gainful for Israel to plan for very selective regime-targeting in certain residual instances. With direct threats employed against individual enemy leaders and possible others, costs to Israel could be very much lower than alternative forms of warfare. At the same time, threats of regime targeting could be even more persuasive than threats to destroy enemy weapons and infrastructures, but only if the prospective victims were first made to feel sufficiently at risk.

The Group advanced a final set of suggestions concerning the lawful remedy of anticipatory self-defense. Israel must be empowered with a "Long Arm" to meet its preemption objectives. This means long-range fighter aircraft with capability to penetrate deep, heavily defended areas, and to survive. It also means air-refueling tankers; communications satellites; and long-range unmanned aerial vehicles. More generally, it means survivable precision weapons with high lethality; and also considerably refined electronic warfare and stealth capacities.

ISRAEL'S DETERRENCE AND DEFENSE DOCTRINE

The Group strongly endorsed the Prime Minister's acceptance of a broad concept of defensive first-strikes, but just as strongly advised against using his undisclosed nuclear arsenal for anything but essential deterrence. This means that enemy states must begin to understand that certain forms of

aggression against Israel will assuredly elicit massive Israeli nuclear reprisals against city targets. For the moment we maintain that such an understanding can be communicated by Israel without any forms of explicit nuclear disclosure, but we also recognize that the presumed adequacy of nuclear ambiguity would change immediately if enemy nuclearization anywhere should become a reality.

Nuclear deterrence, ambiguous or partially disclosed, is essential to Israel's physical survival. If, for whatever reason, Israel should fail to prevent enemy state nuclearization, it will have to refashion its nuclear deterrent to conform to vastly more dangerous regional and world conditions. But even if this should require purposeful disclosure of its nuclear assets and doctrine, such revelation would have to be limited solely to what would be needed to convince Israel's enemies of both its capacity and its resolve. More particularly, this would mean revealing only those aspects needed to identify the survivability and penetration-capability of Israel's nuclear forces and the political will to launch these massive forces in retaliation for certain forms of enemy state aggression.

The Group advised the Prime Minister that Israel must always do whatever it can to ensure a secure and recognizable second-strike nuclear capability. Once nuclear ambiguity was brought to an end, nuclear disclosure would play a crucial communications role. The essence of deterrence here lies in the communication of capacity and will to those who would do Israel existential harm. Significantly, the actual retaliatory use of nuclear weapons by Israel would signify the failure of its deterrent. Recalling the ancient Chinese military thinker Sun-Tzu, who was mentioned earlier in this paper, the very highest form of military success is achieved when one's strategic objectives can be met without any actual use of force.

To meet its "ultimate" deterrence objectives - that is, to deter the most overwhelmingly destructive enemy first-strikes - Israel must seek and achieve a visible second-strike capability to target approximately fifteen (15) enemy cities. Ranges would be to cities in Libya and Iran, and nuclear bomb yields would be at a level "sufficient to fully compromise the aggressor's viability as a functioning state." By choosing countervalue-targeted warheads in this range of maximum-destructiveness, Israel would achieve optimal deterrent effect, thereby neutralizing the overall asymmetry between the Arab states/Iran and the State of Israel. All enemy targets would be selected with the view that their destruction would promptly force the enemy aggressor to cease all nuclear/biological/chemical exchanges with Israel.

As a professor of international law, I was able to assure the Group that all of our recommendations to the Prime Minister regarding Israeli nuclear deterrence were fully consistent with authoritative international law. On July 8, 1996, the International Court of Justice at The Hague (not known for any specifically pro-Israel sympathies by any means) handed down its Advisory Opinion on THE LEGALITY OF THE THREAT OR USE OF FORCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. The final paragraph concludes, *inter alia*:

The threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law. However, in view of the current state of international law, and of the elements of fact at its disposal, the Court cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in

an extreme circumstance of self-defense, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake.

The Group advised the Prime Minister that Israel must display flexibility in its nuclear deterrence posture in order to contend with future enemy expansions of nuclear weapon assets. It may even become necessary under certain circumstances that Israel deploy a full "triad" of strategic nuclear forces. For now, however, we recommended that Israel continue to manage without nuclear missile-bearing submarines. This recommendation holds only as long as it remains highly improbable that any enemy or combination of enemies could destroy Israel's land-based and airborne-launched nuclear missiles on a first-strike attack.

Israel's nuclear deterrent must be backed up by far-reaching active defenses. With this in mind, the Group emphasized that Israel take immediate steps to operationalize an efficient, multi-layered antiballistic missile system to intercept and destroy a finite number of enemy warheads. Such interception would have to take place with the very highest possible probability of success and with a fully reliable capacity to distinguish between incoming warheads and decoys.

Israel's "Arrow" missile defense system involves various arrangements with US Boeing Corporation. The Israel Air Force (IAF), which operates the Arrow, will likely continue to meet its desired goal of deploying interceptors in inventory on schedule. Arrow managers also hope to sell their product to other carefully-selected states. This would help Israel to reinforce its qualitative edge over all adversaries. Israeli engineers are continually taking appropriate steps to ensure that Arrow will function well alongside American "Patriot" systems. The Group advised that IAF continue working energetically on all external and internal interoperability issues.

In its effort to create a multi-layered defense system, Israel may already be working on an unmanned aircraft capable of hunting-down and killing any enemy's mobile ballistic missile launchers. Israeli military officials have tried to interest the Pentagon in joining the launcher-attack project, known formally as "boost-phase launcher intercept" or BPLI. For the moment, Washington appears focused on alternative technologies. The Group advised the Prime Minister that Israel undertake BPLI with or without US support, but recognized that gaining such support would allow the project to move forward more expeditiously and with greater cost-effectiveness. Also, enlisting US support for BPLI would represent another important step toward maintaining Israel's qualitative edge.

Project Daniel underscored the importance of multi-layered active defenses for Israel, but affirmed most strongly that Israel must always prepare to act preemptively before there is any destabilizing deployment of enemy nuclear and/or certain biological weapons.

CONCLUSIONS

Looking back over this paper, we have been able to consider the broad range of Group recommendations contained in ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE. These recommendations concern, *inter alia*, the manifest need for an expanded policy of preemption; an ongoing re-evaluation of "nuclear ambiguity;" recognizable preparations for appropriate "countervalue" reprisals in the case of certain WMD aggressions; adaptations to a "paradigm shift" away from classical patterns of warfare; expanded cooperation with the United States in the War Against

Terror and in future inter-state conflicts in the Middle East; deployment of suitable active defense systems; avoidance of nuclear warfighting wherever possible; and various ways to improve Israel's nuclear deterrence. Along the way we have also explored vital differences between rational and non-rational adversaries; changing definitions of existential harms; legal elements of "anticipatory self-defense;" possibilities for peaceful dispute settlements in the region; budgetary constraints and opportunities; maintaining Israel's qualitative edge; preparations for "regime targeting;" and implications for Israel of the growing anarchy in world affairs. ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE must be understood as a work in progress. The geostrategic context within which Israel must fashion its future is continually evolving, and so, accordingly, must Israel's strategic doctrine. Ultimately it must be from such doctrine that the Jewish State's particular policies will have to be derived and implemented.

Since the presentation of our original document to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on January 16, 2003, there have been a few minor "victories" in the effort to control WMD proliferation among Israel's enemies. A case in point is Libya. At the same time, the circumstances in North Korea (which has manifest ties to some of Israel's regional enemies), Iran and Pakistan remain highly volatile and dangerous. There is also evidence of expanding WMD ambitions in Egypt and Syria. At the level of terrorist groups, which are sustained by several Arab/Islamic states, new alignments are being fashioned between various Palestinian organizations and al Qaeda. The precise configurations of these alignments are complex and multifaceted, to be sure, but the net effect for Israel is unmistakably serious.

ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE is founded on the presumption that current threats of war, terrorism and genocide derive from a very clear "clash of civilizations," and not merely from narrow geostrategic differences. Both Israel and the United States are unambiguously in the cross-hairs of a worldwide Arab/Islamic "Jihad" that is fundamentally cultural/theological in nature, and that will not concede an inch to conventional norms of "coexistence" or "peaceful settlement." This situation of ongoing danger to "unbelievers" is hardly a pleasing one for Jerusalem and Washington, but it is one that must now be acknowledged forthrightly and dealt with intelligently.

The ongoing war in Iraq has demonstrated the evident weaknesses of national intelligence agencies in providing critical warnings and in enhancing strategic stability. Israel, itself, is not without a history of serious intelligence failure, and Israel's strategic future will require an enhanced intelligence infrastructure and highly-refined "backup systems."

Facing growing isolation in the world community, it will also have to fend for itself more than ever before. In the end, Israel's survival will depend upon plans and postures of its own making, and these plans and postures will themselves require a broader and more creative pattern of strategic studies as a disciplined field of inquiry.

We learn from ECCLESIASTES (34: 1) that "Vain hopes delude the senseless, and dreams give wings to a fool's fancy." Israel's strategic future is fraught with existential risk and danger; it is essential, therefore, that friends of Israel now approach this future with utter realism and candor. A nuclear war against the Jewish State would likely be undertaken as a distinct form of genocide, and there can be no greater obligation for Israel than to ensure protection from such new crimes against humanity. It is with the incontestable and sober understanding that Holocaust can take new forms at the beginning of the 21st century that Project Daniel completed its critical work.

Appendix B
Participants in the Project Daniel Research and Report

The Group is comprised of the following individual members:

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