

Iran, Nuclear Challenges

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Abstract: This article provides a critical scrutiny of the growing scholarly writings on Iran's nuclear program, debunking the paradigmatic certainty of various works regarding Iran's "nuclear ambition." This is followed by a detailed examination of the history and chronology of Iran's nuclear diplomacy, covering such issues as Iran's compliance with the IAEA standards, Iran-EU negotiations, the question of objective guarantees, etc. The article concludes by calling for "good faith" negotiations in order to settle the current disputes on Iran's nuclear program.

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Introduction

The appearance of a globalized threat perception of Iran can be deceiving, often as part of a broader "clashing civilizations" thesis. The emerging alternative perspective that cites the "shared" or "parallel" interests of Iran and the United States in the post-9/11 context could be the potential basis for a comprehensive agreement between Tehran and Washington. The argument that Iran needs a deterrent nuclear shield misses the point: yes some of Iran's neighbors have nuclear weapons, but in each case the logic of their proliferation, e.g., Cold War or the competition in the sub-continent, evades Iran. Suffice to say that Iran does not see in its interest a dangerous and costly nuclear arms race siphoning off precious resources, nor does it foresee any reason for a military confrontation with the US. – if anything, US's military debacle in Iraq is instructive regarding the limits of US power and the inadvisability of a similar dangerous gambit against Iran. On the other hand, unlike Iraq under the Baathist regime, Iran harbors no ill intentions toward any of its neighbors, does not feel threatened by the regional powers, and has not invaded any country for the past 250 years.

Today, nearly four years after the United States-led invasion of Iraq on a flimsy counter-proliferation pretext, Iran is increasingly subjected to a similar campaign of vilification and disinformation by the intrusive Western superpower and her allies, calibrated to rationalize coercive policies. Concomitant with the dangerous quagmire in Iraq are serious efforts to legitimate punitive sanctions on Iran, accused of harboring illicit "nuclear ambitions." Increasingly, doubts about a historical *déjà vu* warranting a careful scrutiny of "facts" about Iran are brushed aside by a whole array of US official and non-official, i.e., expert, will to knowledge aimed at manufacturing consensus on Iran's nuclear "threat" and a 'rollback' strategy.

Case in point, an American nuclear expert has stated: "No one in the international community doubts that Iran's hidden objective in building enrichment facilities is to build nuclear bombs."^[1] But, the appearance of a globalized threat perception of Iran can be deceiving, given the dissenting voices in the international community,^[2] particularly on the part of the developing nations,^[3] that question what is approximating an article of faith or 'truth paradigm' on the part of many pundits in the US. For those sages of happy disbelief, of Iran's declared intentions of peaceful nuclear work, their species of certainty is the inheritance of acquired characteristics previously seen in the disastrous US-Iraq war; despite the dearth of empirical evidence and their reliance on dubious information, for them the jury is already out and any doubt about Iran's "nuclear intentions" must be "a case of naivete compounded by gullibility."^[4]

Yet, even in the US Government, there is no "groupthink" on this pseudo-paradigm wrought with contrary facts and cognitive anomalies (see below), e.g., the Director of National Intelligence, John Negraponte, testified in February 2006 that Iran had not "produced or acquired the necessary fissile material" for nuclear weapons.^[5] Irrespective, the following month, March 2006, the White House released a new national security document identifying Iran as posing the "greatest challenge," following the justification that Iran represents a "strategic threat to our security interests in vital regions, the nuclear nonproliferation regime, and the international community."^[6]

Contrasting such a Manichean "enemy image"^[7] of Iran, often as part of a broader "clashing civilizations" thesis,^[8] is an emerging alternative perspective that cites the "shared" or

“parallel” interests of Iran and the United States in the post-9/11 context as the potential basis for a comprehensive agreement, i.e., a “grand bargain,” between Tehran and Washington.[9] While the long history of US-Iran diplomatic alienation militates against “single issue” negotiations, the more sweeping “grand bargain” approach as presently articulated is nonetheless infected to some extent by the same unfounded fear of an Iranian proliferation pervading the hawkish perspectives on Iran, albeit with a more nuanced reference to Iran’s alleged quest for a credible nuclear deterrence against external threats, the American ‘Leviathan’ first and foremost. This miscalculates Iran’s own assessment of risks to its national security and the non-nuclear military needs of meeting those risks. Debunking such distortions about Iran is a *sine qua non* for a successful breakthrough in the stalemated relations between Iran and the US. More than an epistemological ‘house cleaning’, the latter requires, however, a paradigmatic shift in the hitherto coercive approach toward Iran by the United States.

Another historical déjà vu

It has been observed that many Iranians are convinced that under the guise of combating Iran’s nuclear ambitions, the US and her allies are engaged in a “psychological warfare” intended to weaken the post-revolutionary resolve of Islamic Iran.[10] As Iran endeavors toward technological and scientific progress by exercising its “inalienable right” to have an independent nuclear fuel cycle as an integral aspect of its pursuit of nuclear energy, the mounting outside pressures to deprive Iran of this right have brought to mind the earlier examples of injustices and double standards engraved on the nation’s collective memory.

The current discussions in the UN Security Council on punitive measures against Iran for refusing to forfeit its nuclear rights echo the tenor of debates in the Council in 1951, when Iran’s struggle to nationalize its oil industry was touted as a threat to international peace and security.[11] Despite a temporary, albeit oppressive, setback caused by the 1953 CIA-led coup that restored the monarchical dictatorship, the people of Iran eventually managed to succeed in nationalizing the oil industry, thus setting a historical precedence for their contemporary struggle to implement their nuclear rights, notwithstanding a long chain of broken promises of nuclear cooperation from abroad.

Indeed, history plays a prominent role in the formulation of Iran’s peaceful nuclear strategy oriented toward maximum self-reliance in light of the numerous instances when under illegal pressures by certain powers, valid and binding contracts to build nuclear power plants were unilaterally abrogated, nuclear material rightfully purchased and owned by Iran was illegally withheld, and the exercise of Iran’s right as a shareholder in several national and multinational nuclear power corporations was obstructed; this is not to mention the unjustified and coercive interventions that were routinely made in order to undermine, impede and delay the implementation of Iran’s nuclear agreements with third parties.[12]

Unfortunately, these historical facts often bypass the expert commentaries on Iran’s nuclear program, particularly by those who suggest a basis for discriminatory treatment of Iran in lieu of its past “concealments.”[13] These authors conveniently overlook that Iran would not have resorted to the concealment of any of its perfectly legal activities had it not been repeatedly denied the nuclear assistance and access to nuclear technology in violation of Articles I and II of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Neither the prior discriminations against Iran can be papered over, nor should the UN Security Council or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) view the past shortcomings of Iran’s obligations to report its nuclear activities in a vacuum of due consideration of those discriminations.

Iran’s “Non-Compliance” and Corrective Actions Revisited

Much has been made of the fact that the IAEA, in spite of extensive monitoring of Iran’s facilities particularly since 2003 and failing to register any ‘smoking gun’ corroborating the weaponization charges, has refused to give Iran a ‘clean bill of health’; Dr. ElBaradei, has stated that the IAEA is not in a position “to conclude that there are no undeclared nuclear material or activities in Iran.” It is noteworthy, however, that Mr. ElBaradei himself has admitted that “the process of drawing such a conclusion...is a time consuming process”[14] and, per the Addendum to the 2005 IAEA Safeguard Implementation Report, released in June, 2006, there are 45 other countries in the same category as Iran, including 14 European countries.

The difficulties of proving a negative notwithstanding, which fuels the self-propelling truth

paradigm above-mentioned by adding another conceptual knot to dispense with the bar of empirical verification, the pattern of “steady cooperation” between Iran and the IAEA since 2003, and the Agency’s admission of “good progress” respecting Iran’s conscientious efforts to address the past shortcomings and technical “failures” to report, deserve attention. In September 2005, a resolution adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors criticized Iran for its “many failures and breaches of obligation,”^[15] thus paving the way to the subsequent dispatch of Iran’s dossier to the Security Council. This was much to the chagrin of Iran’s delegates to the IAEA, who have pointed out that per the IAEA’s own conclusion of a year earlier, since 2003 “good progress has been made in Iran’s correction of those breaches and in the Agency’s ability to confirm certain aspects of Iran’s current declarations, which will be followed up as a routine safeguards implementation matter.”^[16]

A quick tour of Iran’s “corrective steps” documented in more than a dozen IAEA reports over the past few years thins considerably the glacier of accusations effortlessly holding together the Iran proliferation paradigm, showing in fact the latter’s failure to enumerate the proofs and why the offered explanations do not hold. As of this writing, since 2003, the IAEA has conducted more than 2200 inspector days of inspection of Iran’s facilities, including short-notice visit of military sites unrelated to Iran’s nuclear programs, exceeding the scope of Iran’s obligations under its safeguards and monitoring agreements with the IAEA. All the IAEA reports since November 2003 have been exonerating Iran of any suspicion of diversion of nuclear activities and material to non-peaceful purposes, e.g., the IAEA report of February 2006 reaffirmed the previous report’s finding that the Agency “has not seen any diversion of nuclear material to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.”^[17]

Ordinarily, had Iran’s nuclear dossier not been subjected to egregious political manipulations and an avalanche of biased media reporting, this finding by the IAEA alone would have probably sufficed to preclude Iran’s referral to the Security Council given the legal framework of Iran’s nuclear program sanctioned by Article IV of the NPT. Instead, Iran today finds itself subjected to yet another flagrant manifestation of Security Council double standards^[18] and willful imposition of arbitrary criteria supplanting the NPT regime, irrespective of its remedial initiatives that have addressed the past deficiencies and have successfully resolved a bulk of the so-called “outstanding questions.” Concerning the latter, a chief bone of contention regarding the sources of contamination of Iranian equipment with traces of highly-enriched Uranium (H.E.U.) has been largely resolved in Iran’s favor after the environmental samplings and other related investigations by the Agency confirming Iran’s explanation regarding the foreign sources of contamination.^[19]

This aside, the proponents of Iran proliferation paradigm often fail to take into consideration the fact that per IAEA’s own June 2003 report, Iran did not violate its obligations to report about the nuclear facilities under construction in Natanz or Arak. Pursuant to a subsidiary agreement between Iran and the IAEA, Iran is not obligated to report such activities until 180 days prior to the introduction of nuclear material and, in both those cases, the Iranian government’ notification of the IAEA fully met the timeline set by this agreement. Nor was Iran obligated to report the small quantity of nuclear material imported from China in early 1990s, since the total imported uranium was “less then one effective kilogram,”^[20] i.e., well below the reporting threshold specified under Article 95 of Iran’s safeguard agreement with the IAEA.

Another bone of contention centers on the heavy water reactor in Arak that, once completed, will serve various pharmaceutical, agricultural, and other peaceful purposes and, yet, has been vehemently pre-judged as weapon-related – again without the slightest evidence. As Hans Blix has noted, “but there are other countries in the world that have heavy water reactors.”^[21] The same argument applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to Iran’s uranium enrichment facility in Natanz. It poses no more threat to the non-proliferation regime than the similar facilities in Japan, South Korea, and Brazil, to mention a few of more than 12 countries engaged in uranium enrichment activities. Can one claim that all these countries are working to develop nuclear weapons? Although it is fully covered by the IAEA inspection regime,^[22] the Natanz facility nonetheless serves in many ways the surrogate role for the non-existing ‘smoking gun’, placed on top of the heap that is the level of dogma, or rather calculated paranoia, about Iran’s nuclear program.

Recently, the IAEA Director-General has stated: “A lot of what you see about Iran right now is assessment of intentions...But one of the lessons we learned from Iraq is that we really need to be very, very careful coming to conclusions because these issue make the difference between war and peace.”^[23] To add to EIBaradei’s insight following a well-established tradition in international relations, they also make the difference between perception and misperception, as well as

between the various legitimate and not so legitimate, i.e., propaganda, sources of “soft power.”[24]

Soft Power of US-Israeli Disinformation on Iran

Designed misperception, systematic disinformation, propagated fear and even paranoia over Iran’s nuclear program reflect, theoretically speaking, the missing links in the current discourses on “soft power,” which focus almost entirely on the attractions of values, ideology, culture, etc., and neglect the limiting cognitive syndrome of distorted images.

If Iran today finds itself subjected to flagrant double standards at the Security Council, and the heat of sanctions in retaliation to Iran’s refusal to forfeit its nuclear rights, it is not because the opponents of Iran have had the upper hands with the objective facts verifying their allegations against Iran, nor due to the relative sophistication of their public discourses or diplomatic prowess. Rather, a great deal of their ability to get the UN to go along with their wish list against Iran is attributable to the seducement of the systematic propaganda and fabrications about Iran’s “intentions.”[25] Consequently, the truth paradigm about Iran’s nuclear proliferation has become immune to falsifiability, insulated from Iran’s declared (proliferation prohibiting) intentions or, for that matter, the scope of inspections and findings by the IAEA in lieu of Iran’s cooperation, transparency, and offers of objective guarantees (see the next section). This is partly due to the related soft power of labeling, i.e., demonizing Iran as a member of “axis of evil.” This nightmare image of Iran is recycled *ad infinitum* by the concerted efforts to disseminate as facts certain conjectures and self-serving hypothesis, e.g., about Iran’s “as-yet undiscovered secret nuclear weapon program.”[26]

Case in point, a recent report of the Intelligence Committee of the US House of Representatives on Iran’s nuclear program has alleged that Iran has pursued weapons-grade uranium and has tested nuclear capable missiles. That report has irked the IAEA, which has officially communicated to the US Congress, calling the report “outrageous and dishonest,” containing “incorrect and misleading assertions,” and **has** offered evidence to refute its central claims, drawn in part from “incriminating” pseudo-intelligence allegedly contained in an Iranian computer laptop.[27] Unfortunately, the IAEA’s strong rebuttal fell on deaf ears and the relevant US lawmakers have not bothered themselves with other contrary information, such as by the US Government, which has confirmed that Iran does indeed need alternative energy sources other than the depleting non-renewable oil, or by the respected nuclear scientist, David Albright, who has questioned a New York Times story about the above-said laptop as containing “serious and deep flaws.”[28] A clue to the bias of US media against Iran, the newspaper’s editors, who saw fit to give front page prominence to their initial story, refused to publish Albright’s letter and relegated it to their website, worth quoting:

“William J. Broad and David E. Sanger repeatedly characterize the contents of computer files as containing information about a nuclear warhead design when the information actually describes a reentry vehicle for a missile. This distinction is not minor, and Broad should understand the difference.”[29]

Such flagrant discrepancies about “facts” on Iran’s nuclear program are even more pronounced in the relentless Israeli government and media propaganda against Iran, aimed to deflect attentions from Israel’s nuclear arsenal and, simultaneously, to provide a rationale for Israel’s continuous proliferation without an iota of international backlash. Recently, Israel has even dispensed with its long-standing “strategic ambiguity” about its nuclear arsenal, by making veiled nuclear threats against Iran. The greater the force of Israeli, and pro-Israeli, false alarm about Iran, e.g., by claiming that Iran will reach a “point of no return” within six months, the lower the threshold of distrust in the validity basis of the truth paradigm on Iran above-mentioned, or so it seems one we scrutinize the mainstream media in both Israel and the US. Conspicuously absent in the US media is any critical scrutiny of Israel’s hidden motives, in light of the recent high-profile criticisms of its “apartheid” policies vis-à-vis the oppressed Palestinian people.[30] In a word, the “Iran threat” serves Israel’s policy of depicting itself as a (potential) victim and thus continuing with its militarism, proliferation, and its callous disregard for a viable Middle East peace, or a nuclear-weapons free zone in the Middle East, which Iran has endorsed enthusiastically. Such principled initiatives by Iran are geared to build confidence with the international community and to dispel any doubts about Iran’s nuclear program.

Subjective and Objective Guarantees On Iran’s Peaceful Nuclear Program

The proponents of Iran proliferation paradigm rely on a caricature of Iran's leadership's "intentions" or "state of mind" by making it look like Iran's declared desire to "join the nuclear club" is revealing of its proliferation tendency. This is untenable, however, and the weight of evidence suggests to the contrary, that is, Iran's consistent rejection of nuclear weapons on moral, political, and security grounds, following a religious edict, *fatwa*, by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, banning the manufacturing, stockpiling, deployment and use of nuclear weapons.[31] In his speeches before the UN General Assembly in 2005 and 2006, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reiterated Iran's antipathy toward nuclear weapons and the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's program.

From Iran's vantage point, the myth of nuclear security is a cliché that is incompatible with the global needs of the international community in dire need of deconstruction. Nuclear might did not prevent the break up of Soviet empire, nor has it proved a factor in recent conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere. The argument that Iran needs a deterrent nuclear shield misses the point: yes some of Iran's neighbors have nuclear weapons, but in each case the logic of their proliferation, e.g., Cold War or the competition in the sub-continent, evades Iran. Besides, Iraq's WMD threats have disappeared as well, leading some pundits to shift attention to the "US threat." [32]

The problem with such shifting extrapolations of a nuclear weapons need from Iran's national security concerns is that they not only ignore Iran's national security policies and doctrines, often assuming a more privileged understanding of the country's national security needs and prerogatives than the decision-makers in Tehran. Suffice to say that Iran does not see in its interest a dangerous and costly nuclear arms race siphoning off precious resources, nor does it foresee any reason for a military confrontation with the US. – if anything, US's military debacle in Iraq is instructive regarding the limits of US power and the inadvisability of a similar dangerous gambit against Iran. On the other hand, unlike Iraq under the Baathist regime, Iran harbors no ill intentions toward any of its neighbors, does not feel threatened by the regional powers, and has not invaded any country for the past 250 years. With respect to its Persian Gulf neighbors in particular, Iran has promoted the idea of collective security, and has offered to sign non-aggression pacts with them. Iran's conventional army is one of the strongest in the Middle East and powerful enough to deter any future aggressions.[33] At the same time, Iran is concerned about nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, which is why Iran is adamant about preserving, fully implementing, strengthening and universalizing the NPT.[34] The NPT cannot be sustained in the long-run, however, if the rights of member states are not respected and the nuclear haves of Security Council are allowed to draw arbitrary red lines under the guise of "closing NPT's loopholes." [35]

In order to allay any international concerns that Iran's nuclear program remains exclusively and indefinitely peaceful, Iran has taken several important initiatives, including the following:

Pursuant to an understanding with the European troika (i.e., Germany, France and United Kingdom) in October 2003, Iran began and continuously maintained for two years a voluntary suspension of uranium enrichment activities as a confidence building measure, as well as signed and implemented the intrusive Additional Protocol of the IAEA, which paved the way to one of the most expansive and intrusive IAEA inspections. In March 2005, Iran offered several important measures toward providing "objective technical guarantees" as called for by the so-called Paris Agreement. These were:

- a. Open fuel cycle, to remove any concern about reprocessing and production of plutonium;
- b. Ceiling of enrichment at LEU (low-enriched uranium) level;
- c. Limitation of the extent of the enrichment program to solely meet the contingency fuel requirements of Iran's power reactors;
- d. Immediate conversion of all enriched Uranium to fuel rods to preclude even the technical possibility of further enrichment.

In July 2005, Iran went even further and officially proposed: "Allow the Agency to develop an optimized arrangement on numbers, monitoring mechanism and other specifics for an initial limited operation at Natanz, which would address our needs and allay [their] concerns." [36]

In his address to the UN General Assembly on September 17, 2005, Iran's President expressed Iran's readiness to engage in serious partnerships with private and public sectors of other countries for uranium enrichment in Iran "in order to provide the greatest degree of transparency." Iran's suggestion, still on the table, is an exact replica of the proposal by the IAEA experts on Multinational Approaches to Nuclear Fuel Cycle

Activities.[37]

In March, 2006, Iran proposed establishing regional consortia for fuel-cycle development with countries inside and outside the region, with joint ownership and division of labor based on the expertise of the participants.

Sadly, Iran's actions and proposals have so far made little headway in breaking the barrier of politically-motivated moves at the IAEA and UN Security Council, reminding us that it takes more than a "better argument" to win the day in the international arena wrought with a hegemonic power hierarchy.[38] The international interlocutors dealing with Iran on the nuclear issue have proved themselves unprepared to revise their fears or concerns as a result of Iran's offers of objective guarantee, despite their initial "positive reactions" to some of Iran's proposals and initiatives. As a result, Iran feels justifiably frustrated by the evidences of bad faith negotiation and unfulfilled promises on the part of Iran's European partners in nuclear negotiations.

Pressure Tactics and Bad-Faith Negotiations with Iran

From Iran's vantage point, the Paris Agreement of November 2004 collapsed principally because the EU3 never honored its recognition, in the said agreement, of "Iran's rights under the NPT exercised in conformity with its obligations under the Treaty, without discrimination." Thus, no sooner had the ink dried on the agreement, which recognized Iran's suspension of enrichment activities, as a "non-legally binding, voluntary" confidence-building measure, when the EU3 began singing a different tune, demanding a "permanent suspension." This is patently clear in a letter written by the British Political Director, John Sawers, to his American, French, German, and EU Commission colleagues, in March 2006: "We may also need to remove one of the Iranian arguments that the suspension called for is "voluntary." We could do both by making the voluntary suspension a mandatory requirement to the Security Council, in a resolution." [39]

Magnifying such vivid examples of bad-faith negotiation was the fact the EU never fulfilled their pledge of "firm commitments" to provide trade and nuclear and non-nuclear technological assistance to Iran, confining themselves to vague and indeterminate promises. They insisted instead on permanent suspension, without bothering to seriously consider Iran's proposals. In his above-cited letter, Sawers had suggested "to put together a package that could be presented to the Iranians as a new proposal," and this subsequently materialized in the form of a "package of incentives" submitted to Iran on June 6, 2006. Although this package was officially endorsed by the United States and contained references to "security" issues, the US State Department spokesperson told reporters on the same date that "U.S. participation in security guarantees" is "not on the table." [40]

Irrespective, in late August, 2006, Iran provided a detailed, point by point, reply to the package of incentives, and posed pertinent questions with respect to the one-page package's content. As of this writing, there has been no formal response to Iran's reply, which was combined during Fall 2006 with intense negotiations between Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, and the EU's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, whose public statements of real progress were ignored by the US and EU3 ministers who were more keen on getting a Security Council consensus for action against Iran. [41]

In fact, in retrospect, given the US's a priori determination to turn the UN Security Council against Iran, the Iran-EU negotiations appear to some extent as an exercise in futility. A paper on "Options for Addressing Iran's Nuclear Program at the UN Security Council" was circulated by the US Mission to UN in October 2004, stating: "the United States has long believed that Iran's nuclear activities must be reported to the UN Security Council...the UNSC has the legal authority to require Iran to stop [its enrichment program]. A cursory look at the behavior of US Permanent Representative to the UN, John Bolton, leaves no doubt that the US Government was constantly weary of any breakthrough in Iran-EU negotiations that fell short of the US's maximum demands. Repeatedly, Bolton and other top US officials stated that the US "kept all options open" and was "not relying on the Security Council as the only tool in our toolbox to address this problem." [42]

This recalls the insight of certain political scientists who maintain that the scenario of "option preservation" is tantamount to "flirts with disaster." According to Snyder and Diesing, "Option preservation...risks being bested in the crisis contest of wills." [43] Another pitfall of this approach, as seen in the Iran nuclear negotiations, is that it casts doubt on the sincerity of diplomatic venues – as a ruse for follow-up "stick" approach, all the more reason to avoid the metaphoric "carrot and stick" metaphor in such negotiations. Such metaphors operate on the

assumption that a country such as Iran responds well to naked or veiled threats or pressure, indeed an unfounded assumption soundly refuted by the record of Iran's behavior vis-à-vis foreign threats. Commensurate with its size, geography, proud history, and religio-political tradition, today's Iran is inaccessible as a target of external pressures that will yield only negative results, especially when a popular cause such as Iran's national rights are on the line. In addition to the domestic context of foreign policy-making, Iran's regional status and international prestige is yet another important consideration for the country's foreign decision-makers who have the responsibility to ensure that there are no side-effects from the nuclear negotiations adversely impacting the net of Iran's national interests. There is a complex interaction among issues and the fluid dynamic of Middle East's post 9/11 strategic environment has simultaneously posed new challenges as well as new opportunities for Iran's foreign policy.

To elaborate on the regional dimension of the nuclear issue, many Iranians are convinced that Iran's counter-hegemonic stance vis-à-vis the intrusive power of the United States lies at the heart of US's unwillingness to achieve a paradigm shift away from the hitherto coercive approach toward Iran, often dubbed as "regime change" approach.[44] So far, the US Government has done little to dispel this perception, and therefore it is puzzling to see that nowadays the US officials claim to have adopted a new, multilateral approach toward Iran without, however, showing any tangible signs of having jettisoned the previous unilateralist, and coercive, approach, which lurks behind the current failure of nuclear negotiations.

Hence, US's 'outsourcing' of its coercive Iranian policy to her European partners and playing "good cop, bad cop" with them vis-à-vis Iran does not make for ascendancy of a new multilateral policy, in light of France's leading role in sponsoring the UN sanction resolution on Iran. Rather, it simply means in effect a new dimension for US's "unipolar moment," passingly questioned by France, and to a lesser extent Germany, prior to the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. Much has happened in the span of few years however and, mending its transatlantic fissures with Washington partly through a common cause over Iran, Paris has also fully replicated US's nuclear doctrine and thus closed an important cognitive gap as well.[45]

More recently, the British government has followed suit by opting to modernize its Trident nuclear-armed submarines instead of pursuing a prudent obverse policy in tandem with its disarmament obligations.[46] In both cases, veiled references to Iran's nuclear menace have been made to compensate for the legitimation deficits of such imprudent nuclear policies. The question, of course, is whether or not this strategy holds water in the long run or, in fact, ends up exacerbating those deficits by highlighting the hypocritical double standards, exclusionary practices, and blatant (Foucauldian) disciplinary practice of censoring Iran via projected intentions and the attendant images while they themselves are mired in reprehensible habits of nuclear proliferation.

References & Notes

* Dr.Kaveh Afrasiabi is the author of: *After Khomeini: New Directions in Iran's Foreign Policy; Iran's Nuclear Program: Debating Facts vs. Fiction*

[1] Graham Allison, "The Will to Prevent," *Harvard International Review*, Fall 2006, p. 51.

[2] E. g., Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, has stated: "Reports from Iran do not indicate a real threat to peace and security." *Interfax*, Nov., 21, 2006. In February 2005, after meeting with Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rowhani, Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, stated: "The latest steps on the Iranian side have convinced us that Iran does not have the intention to build a nuclear bomb." Quoted in Hannes Adomeit, "Russia's Iran Policy," *SWP Comments 9*, German Institute For International and Security Affairs, March 2006.

[3] On September 16, 2006 in Havana, Cuba, all of the 118 Non-Aligned Movement member countries issued a statement supporting Iran's nuclear program for civilian purposes. "Final Document of NAM Summit", September 16, 2006/Doc.1/Rev.3 Similarly, a recent statement by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) "expressed concern over ... threats and pressures on Iran by certain circles to renounce its inalienable right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes." *OIC Resolution 18/33-P.*, 2006.

[4] Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Target Iran," *Washington Times*, January 9, 2006.

[5] Peter Baker and Dafna Linzer, "US Policy on 'Axis of Evil' Suffers Spate of Setbacks,"

Washington Post, August 17, 2005.

[6] "An Interview with Undersecretary of State Robert Joseph," *Arms Control Today*, June 2006, p. 18.

[7] A relevant work is Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970). Jervis has drawn attention to the policy disasters resulting from distilling complex realities into binary, black and white images, as well as what happens when policy-makers assimilate "incoming information to their existing beliefs... People see evidence as less ambiguous than it is, think that their views are steadily being confirmed, and so feel justified in holding to their ever so firmly beliefs." Robert Jervis, "Deterrence and Perception," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Winter 1982/83), p. 21.

[8] A number of scholars have noted that Iranian pursuit of a dialogue of civilizations "has significantly affected" the normative understandings about Islam in world politics and has also contributed to a global ethics discourse. Marc Lynch, "The Dialogue of Civilisations and International Public Spheres," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29 (Summer 2000), p. 330.

[9] E.g., Flynt Leverett, "Dealing With Tehran: Assessing U.S. Diplomatic Options Toward Iran," *New American Foundation*, Dec. 2006.

[10] Ali M. Ansari, "Iran and the US in the Shadow of 9/11," *Iranian Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, June 2006, pp. 155-171.

[11] For more on this see "Statement by H.E. Dr. M. Javad Zarif, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran Before the Security Council," (New York, July 31, 2006), available on the internet: <http://www.zarif.net/speech%20html/Final%20English%20version.htm>

[12] A detailed discussion of this issue can be found in Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Good For the Shah, Banned For the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest For Nuclear Power," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2, Spring 2006, pp. 207-232.

[13] Wade L. Huntley, "Rebels Without A Cause," *International Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (2006), p. 733. Also, George Perkovich, "Defining Iran's Nuclear Rights," *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*, August 2006, available on the internet: http://www.carnegieendowment.org/static/npp/analysis_8-29-06.htm.

[14] IAEA-GOV/2006/15, paragraph 53.

[15] IAEA Report, September 2, 2005.

[16] IAEA Report, November 15, 2004.

[17] IAEA-GOV/2006/15, paragraph 52.

[18] On the issue of double standards in the Security Council, see Jane Boulden, "Double Standards, Distance and Disengagement: Collective Legitimization in the Post-Cold War Security Council," *Security Dialogue*, vol. 37, no. 3, Sep. 2006, pp. 409-424.

[19] IAEA Report, June 8, 2006. The US Government officials have supported the IAEA's finding, and some of them have told *Arms Control Today* that "the isotopic composition of the recently discovered particles appears similar to other particles that agency inspectors previously found at other sites in Iran. Those particles originated from imported enrichment-related equipment." *Arms Control Today*, July/August 2006, p. 31.

[20] IAEA Report, June 3, 2003.

[21] "Reviving Disarmament: An Interview with Hans Blix," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 36, No. 6, July/Aug. 2006, p. 13.

[22] In his report to the IAEA Board of Governors, dated January 31, 2006, the IAEA chief, Mohammad ElBaradei stated: "Iran has continued to facilitate access under its Safeguard Agreement as requested by the Agency and to act as if Additional Protocol is in force, including by providing in a timely manner the requisite declarations and access to locations."

[23] Quoted in **Christopher Dickey**, "The Power of the Purse," *Newsweek*, Oct 20, 2006.

[24] This point is largely missing in Nye's discussion of "soft power." See Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (Persues Publishing, 2004).

[25] On Iran's peaceful intentions, see M.Javad Zarif, "We Do Not Have A Nuclear Weapons Program," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2006. Also, Zarif, "Iran: US Nuclear Fears Are Overblown," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 15, 2004. Jervis defines "intentions" as "the collection of actions that the states will or would take because that is what others are trying to predict." Robert Jervis, *Perceptions And Misperceptions in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 48.

[26] Quoted in Peter Rudolph, "Sanctions Against Iran: Options, Problems, Perspectives," *SWP Comments* 37, German Institute For International and Security Affairs, September 2005, p. 3.

[27] Letter by the IAEA dated 12 September 2006, addressed to Chairman of the Permanent Select Intelligence Committee of the US House. See *Guardian*, September 15, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,,1873114,00.html>.

[28] See William J. Broad and David Sanger, "Relying on Computer, U.S. Seeks to Prove Iran's Nuclear Aims," *The New York Times*, November 13, 2005. For more on this episode, see Siddharth Varadarajan, "Iranian Nukes: When Bullying Is Not Enough, Try Disinformation," *The Hindu*, November 21, 2005.

[29] http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20051114/ts_nm/nuclear_iran_intelligence_dc.

[30] Former US President, Jimmy Carter, has described the "abominable oppression and persecution in the occupied Palestinian territories... In many ways, this is more oppressive than what blacks lived under in South Africa during apartheid." *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 2006.

[31] The Leader's *fatwa* is reflected in the Tehran daily Kayhan, November 6, 2004. See also the Iranian Reply of August 22, 2006 to the so-called "5 + 1" package, S/2006/806, p. 2 and 12.

[32] "In large measure, Iran's leaders seek nuclear weapons to deter a U.S. attack." Quoted in Michael McFaul, Abbas Milani and Larry Diamond, "A Win-Win US Strategy For Dealing With Iran," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Winter 2006-2007). The authors dispense with any empirical proof for their allegation that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapon program and, what is more, contradict themselves when calling for "a verifiable and indefinite suspension of all enrichment activities" and, simultaneously, for a "limited and temporary suspension." Worse, their justification of serious sanctions on Iran in the absence of Iran's compliance of suspension demands rings hollow their pretensions of objectivity.

[33] For more on this see M. Javad Zarif and Reza Alborzi, "Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iran's Security Paradigm," *Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. XI, No.4 (Winter 1999-2000), pp. 2-14.

[34] "Concluding Statement by H.E. Dr. M. Javad Zarif Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN At the 2005 NPT Review Conference, New York- 27 May 2005," available on the internet: www.zarif.net.

[35] This possibility is entirely overlooked by the former IAEA official, Pierre Goldschmidt, who favors a role for the Security Council to "strengthen" the NPT. See Goldschmidt, "The Urgent Need to Strengthen Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," *Outlook Paper*, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace (January 2006).

[36] See http://www.un.int/iran/facts_about_nuclear_program, p. 53.

[37] "Multilateral Approaches to the Nuclear Fuel Cycle: Expert Group Report Submitted to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency," IAEA-INF/CIRC/640, February 22, 2005, p. 103, approaches 3, 4, and 5.

[38] A relevant theoretical work is by James Bohman, "International Regimes and Democratic Governance: Political Equality and Influence In Global Institutions," *International Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (1999) pp., 499-513.

[39] *Times Online*, March 22, 2006.

[40] See "U.S., Allies Await Iran's Response to Nuclear Offer," *Arms Control Today* (July/August 2006), p. 28.

[41] *The New York Times*, October 4, 2006.

[42] US Department of State:

<http://usinfo.stae.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Mar/06-846555.html>.

[43] Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations: Decision-Making and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 211.

[44] Richard N. Haas, "Regime Change and Its Limits," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (July/August 2005), pp. 66-78

[45] A relevant article on this issue is by David S. Yost, "France's New Nuclear Doctrine," *International Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (July 2006), pp. 701-723.

[46] "Blair Plans New Submarine Nukes," *Associated Press*, December 3, 2006.

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