

CHAPTER 5

THE DAY AFTER IRAN GETS THE BOMB

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Many analysts believe that a nuclear-ready Iran will act rationally and respond positively to Western-style cost-benefits analysis. Iran's clerical leaders are not suicidal, this argument goes, and do not seek a military confrontation with either the United States or Israel, because of the tremendous damage their country is likely to suffer.

Others argue that Iran has responded to classic deterrence in the past, and can be deterred successfully in the future. They point to the brief but brutal confrontation in November 1987 between the U.S. Navy and Iranian Revolutionary Guards forces who were using three offshore oil platforms as bases for harassment attacks against shipping in the Gulf. The United States destroyed the oil platforms and sank a number of Iranian ships, and Iran ceased its aggressive tactics. A nuclear Iran may talk aggressively, but in practice it can be contained and deterred.

But as I will argue in this chapter, this interpretation of Iranian behavior overlooks key facts, among them:

- Iran's motivation for seeking nuclear weapons;
- Iran's long record of support for international terrorism, including terror attacks against U.S. military targets in Beirut (Marine Barracks, 1983) and Dahran (Khobar Towers, 1996); and,
- The internal dynamics and core values of the regime.

DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC MOVES

Conclusion 1: Iran will not Give Up Its Nuclear Capabilities through Negotiation.

After 16 months of intensified International Atomic energy Agency (IAEA) inspections during which Iran agreed to suspend

uranium enrichment and to stop building enrichment centrifuges, the Iranian leadership decided to reverse course and resume enrichment activities. On June 12, 2004, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi announced that Iran “won’t accept any new [safeguard] obligations. Iran has a high technical capability and has to be recognized by the international community as a member of the nuclear club. This is an irreversible path.”

Kharrazi essentially pointed to the red line, indicating that Iran had no intention of abandoning its work to master the entire nuclear fuel cycle, from uranium mining, milling, conversion, and enrichment, to spent fuel reprocessing. “That somebody demands that we give up the nuclear fuel cycle . . . is an additional demand,” he said. “We can’t accept such an additional demand, which is contrary to our legal and legitimate rights,” he said. “No one in Iran can make a decision to deny the nation of something that is a source of pride.”¹ That “pride” clearly does not stem from mastering civilian nuclear technology, since Iran has been working in this area since its first U.S.-built research reactor went critical in November 1967.²

Similar statements about Iran’s nuclear intentions have been made by Hasan Rohani, head of the Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, and the regime’s chief nuclear negotiator; Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei; and recently-elected leaders of Iran’s Parliament, or *Majlis*. Even so-called “moderate” President Mohammad Khatami said his country had no obligation to respect the IAEA injunctions. “Nothing stands in the way” of renewed centrifuge activity, he declared on July 15, 2004, shortly after Iran broke the seals the IAEA had placed on key production equipment. “We are not committed any longer to the promise to expand the suspension to include building centrifuges because they [Britain, Germany, and France] failed to keep their promise of closing Iran’s dossier,” he said.³ On July 28, the IAEA reported that Iran had resumed production of uranium hexafluoride gas. That same day, an IAEA Governing Board member state circulated a two-page intelligence report alleging that “Iranian middlemen . . . are in the advanced stages of negotiations in Russia to buy deuterium gas” as a booster for thermonuclear warheads.⁴

Iran has insisted on mastering the fuel cycle even though its insistence has caused delays and increased the cost of building the

Bushier nuclear plant. To meet proliferation concerns, Russia initially offered to deliver reactor fuel worth \$30 million for Bushier over a 10-year period starting in 2001, taking the spent fuel rods back to Russia for reprocessing.⁵ But Iran subsequently rejected the Russian demand. In June 2003, the Russian government – eager to get paid and to conclude additional nuclear deals with Iran – offered to guarantee deliveries of nuclear fuel regardless of whether Iran acceded to the “Additional Protocol,” a key IAEA demand. Finally, in October 2003, Russian defense minister Sergey Ivanov declared, during a visit to Canada, that Russia would only supply the fuel if Iran made good on its pledge to sign a contract for returning spent nuclear fuel to Russia.⁶ By that point, Iran was unveiling to the IAEA its own nuclear fuel fabrication and reprocessing capabilities, making the whole question of Russian fuel deliveries and reprocessing moot.

Iran can be expected to continue this type of commercial nuclear hardball with its suppliers. As it gains expertise and capabilities, Iran could conceivably sever its commercial relationship with Russia and operate the reactor on its own under IAEA safeguards, until it decides to reprocess the spent fuel for a nuclear weapons arsenal.

Ignoring this recent history, a July 2004 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Task Force on Iran report suggested a grand nuclear bargain to the ruling clerics in Tehran. Under the CFR proposal,

Iran would be asked to commit to permanently ceasing all its enrichment and reprocessing activities, subject to international verification. In return, the international community would guarantee access to adequate nuclear fuel supplies, with assurances that all spent fuel would be returned to the country of origin, and to advanced power generation technology (whose export to Iran is currently restricted).⁷

But Tehran’s leaders have already rejected this approach; saying “pretty please” won’t help. The Islamic Republic wants to retain these capabilities because it wants to use the “legend” of nuclear power to mask its break-out capabilities. Iran’s negotiating record with the IAEA shows that the only nuclear bargain it finds of interest is one that runs out the clock, playing on the delusions of the willfully naïve and the appeasers until Iran has enriched enough uranium for a modest arsenal. France, Britain, and Germany have further

encouraged Iran toward intransigence by allowing it to break the IAEA seals on centrifuge production equipment with impunity.

Conclusion 2: Iran will Leverage Its Friends and Suppliers.

The Islamic Republic has few real friends. Syria and Libya were allies in its 8-year war against Iraq; and while Syria has remained true, Libya has not. There are indications that Iran's ruling clerics fear what Qaddafi will tell the United States and Britain about their shared uranium enrichment procurement efforts, following Libya's unilateral decision in December 2003 to surrender its nuclear weapons programs and equipment to the United States and Britain. Unconfirmed reports suggest that Iran has been arming the Libyan Combat Islamic Group at camps in southern Iran, after Qaddafi expelled the group from Libya in 1997. The group initially relocated to Afghanistan, where it worked with al Qaeda, but relocated to Iran after the United States expelled the Taliban regime in late 2001.⁸ A nuclear-ready Iran will feel more brazen to "punish" Qaddafi for cooperating with the United States and Britain by supporting this and other Libyan opposition groups. It also will reinforce ties with Syria, using Syria as a transit point for arming Hezbollah in Lebanon for stepped up attacks on Israel. It may be tempted to share weapons of mass destruction (WMD) technologies with Syria.

If friends are few, suppliers are many. The Islamic Republic's military and strategic relationship with North Korea goes back to the early 1980s and, because of the secrecy of both regimes, is not well-known to the general public. Iran's *Shahab-3* missile program was developed with North Korean, as well as Russian assistance. Former Revolutionary Guards commander Major General Mohsen Rezaei was a key player in the military exchanges with North Korea, and frequently traveled to Pyongyang to observe missile tests and purchase equipment. Considered by regime insiders as a nationalist, not an Islamist, Rezaei's continued involvement in Iran's strategic weapons programs is another indicator that all factions of the ruling elite consider the acquisition of broad-based WMD capabilities critical for the regime's survival. In late June 2004, new reports surfaced that Iran had been purchasing highly enriched uranium (HEU) from

North Korea over the previous 2 years. A nuclear-ready Iran could step up these purchases as a counter to international inspections or surveillance of its own enrichment plants.

Russia has been a major supplier of conventional weapons and nuclear and missile technologies. Indicators of Russia's willingness to help Iran's nuclear weapons program first surfaced nearly a decade ago when President Yeltsin's advisor for Ecological Affairs, Alexei Yablokov, revealed that part of the \$800 million nuclear deal signed between Russia and Iran in January 1995 included a Russian offer to supply a complete centrifuge enrichment plant.⁹ This was further confirmed when the complete text of the accord was published in May 1995 by the Natural Resources Defence Council in Washington, DC.

After intense U.S. criticism, President Yeltsin acknowledged at the Moscow summit on May 10, 1995, that the agreement with Iran contained military as well as civilian nuclear technology and material, but insisted that it had been "concluded legitimately and in accordance with international law and no international treaties were violated in the process." Yeltsin added that Russia was now amenable,

to separate those two. In as much as they relate to the military component and the potential for creating weapons grade fuel and other matters – the centrifuge, the construction of shafts – we have decided to exclude those aspects from the contract. So the military component falls away and what remains is just a civilian nuclear power station with light water reactors, which are designed to provide heat and power.¹⁰

Since that time, world attention has focused on Russia's ongoing negotiations with Iran over Bushier, not its involvement in the Iranian centrifuge enrichment program or the supply of know-how and expertise. In its public reports, the IAEA has pointedly excised all references to the "foreign sources" of Iran's centrifuge enrichment and reprocessing equipment.

Russia's role in helping Iran to design and build the nuclear-capable *Shahab-3* missile is much better known and well-documented than North Korea's. On July 20, 2003, production missiles were delivered to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, following

a final evaluation test that demonstrated that the *Shahab-3* was capable of launching a nuclear warhead to targets up to 800 miles distant, bringing Israel and U.S. bases throughout the Middle East into range. Top military and strategic advisors to Presidents Yeltsin and Putin have argued that Russia's long-term strategic interests are best-served by a powerful Iran capable of checking U.S. power in the Persian Gulf. Accordingly, Russia defied U.S. pressure throughout the mid and late 1990s by continuing to provide assistance to the Iranian missile programs, despite U.S. sanctions and threats of a cut-off in space cooperation.¹¹

Far from alienating Russia, a nuclear-ready Iran will exploit this long-standing relationship in ways that on the surface could appear contradictory. On the one hand, Iran might grudgingly agree to a Russian cut-off in assistance to the Bushier nuclear plant—thereby allowing Russia to appear “helpful” to Western nations seeking to apply pressure on Iran to abandon its clandestine nuclear capabilities. But at the same time, the Russian government could “wink and nod” at “nongovernment actors” who provide nuclear assistance and technology to Iran through grey market deals, just as they did with Iran's missile programs.

If the United States and its allies take Iran's case to the United Nations (UN), Iran will seek Russia's support in preventing UN Security Council sanctions or resolutions authorizing the use of force. To achieve Russian cooperation, Iran's leaders will offer Russia commercial inducements (oil and gas development contracts, industrial contracts, etc.) and strategic inducements, such as a pledge not to support Islamic groups in Chechnya and elsewhere opposing Russian rule. Iran played a similar game with noteworthy success during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) rewarded Iran for its refusal to tolerate anti-Soviet resistance activities by Afghan refugees with extensive covert arms deliveries from the USSR and its surrogates. The Soviet-Iran arms relationship emerged into the open in June 1989, when the two countries signed a \$1.9 billion arms transfer agreement that included MiG 29 jet fighters and T-72 tanks.¹²

Communist China is another key partner. China's assistance to Iran's nuclear programs began with the supply of a subcritical

“training reactor” in 1985. China has helped Iran exploit uranium mines in Yazd province, giving Iran an unsafeguarded source of nuclear material for enrichment; it has supplied milling plants, and reportedly, a facility for producing uranium hexafluoride gas for enrichment centrifuges. Chinese assistance to Iran’s nuclear efforts was so extensive by 1991 that President George H. W. Bush issued a rare public rebuke to China’s leaders.¹³ Iran has now acknowledged having built many of these facilities, and has opened some of them to inspection by the IAEA, which has been careful in its public reports not to name names or even identify the countries involved in transferring critical technologies and design information.

A nuclear ready Iran will leverage trade for political support from China as well—both to restrain the IAEA, and when that fails and Iran’s case is referred to the UN, to veto UN Security Council action.

Conclusion 3: Iran will Attempt to Drive a Wedge between Europe and the United States.

Britain, France, and Germany have been trying since the fall of 2003 to convince Iran to abandon the most dangerous elements of its previously undeclared nuclear program. European Foreign Ministers have announced a series of “agreements” and “understandings” with Tehran aimed at freezing Iran’s uranium enrichment, reprocessing, and heavy water programs. In exchange, the Europeans have pledged to block U.S. efforts to get the IAEA to refer Iran’s noncompliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to the UN Security Council for eventual sanctions. So far, Iran has found excuses for not respecting its commitments to the Europeans without any ill effects. Even after the IAEA announced that Iran had broken IAEA seals on its centrifuge production equipment in late July 2004, the Europeans refused to cancel a scheduled negotiating session with the Iranians in Paris.

The Islamic Republic has faced down Europe before. In 1997, after a German court convicted the Tehran leadership of having ordered the gangland murder of Iranian Kurdish dissidents at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin, the European Union (EU) recalled its

ambassadors from Tehran and issued arrest warrants for top Iranian government officials. Iran denied the verdict, refused to hand over its officials, and the EU sent its ambassadors back to Tehran a few months later.

A nuclear-ready Iran will seek to turn Europe against the United States and Israel, offering lucrative trade agreements and superficial concessions at the IAEA to win EU backing. As further inducements, Iran could offer intelligence on terrorist groups operating in Europe (some of which it may itself be funding), or even concessionary oil supply arrangements. It could invite European journalists to tour its nuclear facilities, as a demonstration of Iran's peaceful intent. Should Europe adopt a harder line and back U.S.-led sanctions or military force, however, Iran could step up work on its *Shahab-4* missiles, said to have sufficient range to target European capitols.

STRATEGIC AND MILITARY MOVES

Conclusion 4: The Regime's Core Values will Drive It Ineluctably toward Aggressive Military Action, Not Responsibility.

Until recently, U.S. policy toward Iran has been driven by two underlying assumptions. The first assumption was that there were "moderates" within the ruling elite who sincerely wanted to cooperate with the United States, and who had serious differences with hard-liners in areas of critical U.S. interest¹⁴. The second was that the United States could offer them sufficient incentives (or inflict enough pain on the hard-liners) to convince the clerics to change those policies the United States found objectionable: in this case, to freeze and ultimately abandon nuclear weapons development. For nearly 2 decades, these assumptions have rarely been debated, let alone challenged, except by a select group of analysts.

But as I have argued elsewhere,¹⁵ the drive to obtain nuclear weapons and a broad spectrum of WMD capabilities is only one of five goals that unite the ruling clerical elite. These are the core values that form the bedrock of this regime, and will shape the actions of a nuclear-ready Iran. The remaining four are:

1. Maintaining the Islamic Republic at all costs, starting with the system of *Velayat-e faghih* (absolute clerical rule). Iran's ruling clerics

understand that their regime is increasingly unpopular at home. In July 1999, students at universities across the country revolted. While the regime has managed through heavy-handed repression to break the back of organized opposition, the signs that trouble is brewing just beneath the surface are many.

On the eve of the February 2004 parliamentary elections, 117 reformist members of Parliament resigned *en masse* to protest having been barred from running. The reformers had been seeking a “kinder, gentler” Islamic Republic, not an end to absolute clerical rule. The resulting election sweep by hard-liners effectively marked the end of the reform movement mirage. Iranian voters massively boycotted the elections but as of yet have not managed to otherwise challenge the regime, which has emerged emboldened from the election crisis.

At the same time, regime leaders fear foreign support for the pro-democracy movement, and increasingly view the proliferation of satellite radio and television broadcasts into Iran from abroad with alarm. As the United States contemplates providing support for the pro-democracy movement, we must understand that Iran’s new nuclear capabilities increase the stakes. A nuclear-ready Iran will not stop at violently suppressing domestic dissent, but will actively seek ways of lashing out at what it sees as the sources of that dissent: the United States and Israel. Similarly, any outbreak of dissent inside Iran, whether fueled by outside forces or not, will be blamed on the United States and Israel.

2. Aggressive expansion of Iran’s influence in the Persian Gulf region to become the predominant power, militarily, politically, and eventually economically. The Islamic Republic has a long history of using terror and subversion against neighboring states to achieve its goals. With a real or virtual nuclear arsenal at its disposal, Iran’s leaders may be emboldened to take more aggressive steps to assert its pre-eminence and to weaken competitors. A few examples include:

Saudi Arabia. Iran will resist Saudi efforts to step up oil production in order to lower world oil prices, and will want Saudi Arabia to feel the heat of Iran’s new power. A nuclear ready Iran could feel emboldened to step up its support for Saudi terrorist groups and direct them to sabotage or otherwise attack Saudi oil installations, should the Saudis refuse to decrease production.

Iraq. The Iranian government pursued an aggressive campaign of subversion against the Iraqi Governing Council following Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. It supported renegade Shiite cleric Muqtada Sadr, beamed anti-American propaganda into Iraq on 42 Arabic-language radio and television stations, and built a network of social services in southern Iraq that bested those provided by the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). A nuclear-ready Iran could step up subversion inside Iraq (attacks on oil installations, U.S. and Iraqi forces), with the goals of scaling back Iraqi oil exports, driving the United States to withdraw its troops, and preventing the emergence of a strong central Iraqi government that could challenge Iran.

Qatar. Iran is competing with Qatar to attract international investment to develop a massive shared gas field in the Persian Gulf. (The Iranians refer to the offshore gas field as South Pars; the Qataris call it the North Dome.) They are also competing to supply natural gas to India and Pakistan.¹⁶ Fear of a natural gas “glut” could lead Iran to seek to limit foreign investment in Qatari gas projects.

Turkey. Iran’s main economic competitor in the region is Turkey. Should Turkey’s secular parties or the military replace the current Islamic governing party, Iran could resume its support for Islamic terrorist groups to destabilize Turkey.

3. Calls to end the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf, which the Islamic Republic views as a direct challenge to its predominance. The Islamic Republic has long sought to force the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from the Gulf. Since the testimony of former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Louis Freeh on December 18, 2003, in a civil suit against the Islamic Republic of Iran brought by families of the Dhahran victims, Iran’s direct involvement in the bombing has become a matter of public record. The Iranian attack was aimed at causing casualties unacceptable to the U.S. public that would force a U.S. withdrawal from Saudi Arabia.¹⁷

In the past, the regime’s use of terror against U.S. targets has been selective, as Iran carefully gauged the U.S. response. A nuclear ready Iran will feel emboldened to launch terrorist attacks on U.S. forces wherever they are stationed in the region as the price of U.S. retaliation dramatically escalates. To step up pressure on the United

States to withdraw its forces, Iranian surrogates could also launch attacks against countries that host U.S. military bases (Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates [UAE], Bahrain, Oman), and on U.S. naval ships patrolling the Gulf. (It is my judgment that Iran is less likely to seek to close the Strait of Hormuz, since this would cripple its own oil exports, or to openly challenge U.S. warships passing through the Strait, if it can achieve its goal of a U.S. military pullout through other means).

4. Active subversion of the Middle East peace process. Notwithstanding the vicious anti-Semitic rhetoric of its leaders, the Islamic Republic views Israel as a competitor. The ruling clerics fear that if the peace process succeeds, Israel will become the predominant economic power in the region and the partner of choice for the Arab world, Turkey, and Central Asia, instead of Iran. A nuclear-ready Iran will seek to broaden the struggle against Israel by expanding its support for terrorist groups based in the Palestinian territories, Syria and Lebanon. If war between Israel and its Arab neighbors were to break out, Iran has made clear it would throw its support behind Syria.

Conclusion 5: Iran Hopes Nuclear Capability will Deter a U.S. or Israeli Conventional Strike.

The chronology of Iranian nuclear development, which has accelerated rapidly since the September 11, 2001, attacks on America, strongly supports the view that Iran's leaders believe they can deter an American conventional attack with the threat of nuclear retaliation. "Iran's national defense doctrine has been based on the assumption that it will, one day, fight a war with the United States, plus its Arab allies and Israel," writes Iranian analyst Amir Taheri.

The central assumption of Iranian strategists is that the U.S. cannot sustain a long war. It is therefore necessary to pin down its forces and raise the kill-die ratio to levels unacceptable to the American public. In the meantime, Iran would put its nuclear weapons program in high gear, and brandish the threat of nuclear war as a means of forcing the U.S. to accept a ceasefire and withdraw its forces from whatever chunk of Iranian territory they may have seized.¹⁸

Iran's leaders have become increasingly bold in brandishing the threat of using nuclear weapons against Israel should the Israelis attempt a conventional strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. This is dramatically different from the Cold War logic of mutually-assured destruction, since it states that Iran would escalate a conventional conflict into a nuclear exchange.

But they have also hinted that they seek nuclear weapons (and the missiles needed to deliver them) to give them new offensive capabilities. Iran's Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani told reporters after a September 25, 1998, military parade that Iran would strike "in a way the Israelis cannot imagine" in the event Israel should launch a preemptive attack on Iran. "Today, we are much stronger than in the past. The most clear example is the *Shahab-3*. It will make the Israelis ponder about putting an end to the arms race one day," he said. Banners with the slogan, "Israel must be wiped off the map" in both Farsi and English, were hung from the *Shahab-3* missiles put on parade. Shamkhani explained: "We have written on the warhead of the *Shahab-3* that this will not land in any Islamic country. . . . Of course, this program will be pursued, and we will have the *Shahab-4* and even the *Shahab-5* to respond to our defense needs."¹⁹

At times, Iran's leaders speak with a kind of millennial exaltation when evoking a nuclear exchange with Israel. In a speech in Tehran in October 2000, former president Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani clearly stated that Iran believed it would come out the winner. "In a nuclear duel in the region, Israel may kill 100 million Muslims," Rafsanjani said. "Muslims can sustain such casualties, knowing that, in exchange, there would be no Israel on the map."²⁰

Rafsanjani expanded on this doomsday calculus in a oft-cited Friday prayer sermon in Tehran on December 14, 2001, noting "the use of a [single] nuclear bomb in Israel will leave nothing on the ground," whereas an Israeli strike on Iran "will *only damage* the world of Islam" [emphasis mine]. Rafsanjani said that Israel would be "removed from the region and the world of Islam [as] 'extraneous matter'," and that "those who have gathered together in Israel would one day be dispersed again." This is not the language of mutually assured destruction or deterrence. This is the language of genocide.²¹

When asked about the possibility of Israel launching a preemptive strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, Rafsanjani boasted to al-Jazeera television on September 18, 2003, "We are not worried about Israel and its threats. If Israel committed such an error, we would give it a slap it would never forget – not only during several years, but for all its history."²²

Rafsanjani gets credited with having revived Iran's stalled nuclear program, first as Parliament Speaker in the early 1980s, and later as President from 1989-97. He now heads the Expediency Council, a leadership body capable of overturning the legislature or even the Islamic Republic's main religious court, the Council of Guardians. Once labeled a moderate by the *Washington Post* and the State Department, "either Rafsanjani fooled diplomats and pundits alike, or moderate in Iran implies first-strike use of nuclear weapons," scholar Michael Rubin commented.²³

Other government spokesmen have reinforced Rafsanjani's threats, as Israeli officials began warning publicly that a preemptive strike against Iranian nuclear sites could become necessary. Seyed Masood Jazayeri, spokesman for Iran's Revolutionary Guards, accused Washington of using its "wild dog" – Israel – to go after Iran's nuclear programs. If Israel tried to disrupt the Iranian program, it "would be wiped off the face of the Earth and U.S. interests would be easily damaged," he warned in July 2004.²⁴ President Khatami added that Iran would consider the United States co-responsible for an Israeli attack. "In the international arena, America's capital is Tel Aviv, not Washington. It's the Zionists who dominate the United States," he told reporters as he emerged from a Cabinet meeting. He also announced that Iran had resumed uranium enrichment activities.²⁵

The clarity of Iran's threats should not be dismissed as mere exaggeration or wishful thinking. A nuclear-ready Iran is likely to goad Israel into launching a preemptive attack, after it has dispersed its nuclear material to ensure that it survives the strike. If the regime feels threatened – from domestic dissent, or foreign attack – the risk of nuclear miscalculation is enormous.

U.S. OPTIONS

In my judgment, the United States has only two options if it allows Iran to achieve breakout nuclear capability: capitulation, or war. The United States might seek to encourage Iran to become a “responsible” member of the nuclear club, by opening a “dialogue” with the regime. In exchange for Iran’s agreement to abide by “rules” such as no nuclear first use, and no onward proliferation to third parties, the United States might chose to offer incentives such as:

- a resumption of normal trade and investment,
- a resumption of diplomatic relations,
- an end to stigmatizing the Islamic Republic as a member of the Axis of Evil, and
- ending “the language of regime change.”²⁶

The recent Council on Foreign Relations report opines that the underlying rationale for Iran’s persistent clandestine nuclear weapons programs is its fear of regional rivals, especially the United States. “Ultimately, only in the context of an overall rapprochement with Washington will there be any prospect of persuading Iran to make the strategic decision to relinquish its nuclear program,” the report states.

Such an analysis assumes that Iran developed nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip, which it would be willing to give up in exchange for certain concessions. But the United States repeatedly has offered to resume normal trade and investment, to hold a security dialogue with the regime, and to eschew the language of regime change, if only Iran would abandon other objectionable behavior – in particular, its support of international terrorist groups and its violent opposition to the Middle East peace process. If the Islamic Republic was unwilling to take up the offer when the costs were relatively low, why should it take the offer now when the costs are much higher? At best, the Islamic Republic might agree to a U.S. offer of trade and relations, in exchange for a pledge of no nuclear first use and no onward proliferation. But Iran’s leaders will take such a U.S. offer as a sign of weakness. Far from giving up its nuclear capability in exchange,

the Iranian regime will insist that it be treated with respect as a new member of the nuclear club. With the EU, Russia, and China in agreement to thwart strong UN Security Council action, the United States will have no levers available should Iran find a convenient excuse at some later date to break its promise and unsheath the nuclear sword.

The only other option for the United States is preemptive war. If so, it will be war in splendid isolation, and with active opposition from Europe, Russia, China, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and just about every UN member state except, possibly, Israel.

Once the United States begins a buildup of offensive forces poised on Iran's borders, the Islamic regime is unlikely to wait before it uses whatever nuclear arsenal it possesses. Its first target will not be U.S. forces, but Israel. The Islamic regime will claim to be attacking in "self-defense" (and most of world public opinion will probably agree), since the U.S. administration will be portrayed as doing Israel's bidding, as the "moderate" president Khatami asserts.

Only one Iranian nuclear-tipped missile needs to penetrate Israel's *Arrow* anti-missile defenses to devastate Israel's highly-concentrated population. Even a cowed Israeli leadership, deterred from preemptively attacking Iranian nuclear sites, can be expected to unleash its nuclear arsenal, in a tragic reenactment of the Jewish defenders at Masada 2,000 years ago, who preferred suicide to surrendering to the Roman legion.

A NUCLEAR IRAN IS NOT AN OPTION

From the foregoing, it should be clear that allowing a nuclear Iran to emerge, for as long as Iran is ruled by a radical clerical regime, is not an option any U.S. policymaker wants to face. It should also be clear that the intentions of Iran's leaders are the issue, not the capabilities of its military. If nuclear weapons alone were the problem, the United States would have security issues with Great Britain.

It is my judgment that the United States must take decisive action before Iran becomes nuclear-ready, for as long as the Islamic regime remains in power in Tehran.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 5

1. Ali Akbar Dareini, "Tehran Says No to New Oversight," *Washington Times*, June 13, 2004, accessed at <http://www.washtimes.com/world/20040612-113944-3765r.htm>.

2. This 5 MegaWatt reactor, installed at the University of Tehran's Tehran Nuclear Research Center (TNRC), was supplied by AMF Atomics, a division of American Machine and Foundry, and was initially fueled with U.S.-supplied highly enriched uranium (HEU).

3. "No Impediments for Iran to Build Uranium Centrifuges," *Gulf News*, July 15, 2004. The IAEA acknowledged that its seals had been broken on July 27.

4. "Agents Seek Russian Sale of Nuke-Boosting Gas," *Washington Times*, July 29, 2004.

5. "Russia to Supply Iran with Nuclear Fuel," *Washington Times*, August 24, 1995; see also, "Russian Nuclear Deal Worries Germans," *Iran Brief*, September 5, 1995.

6. "Russia Not to Export Nuclear Fuel to Iran," <http://www.russiajournal.com/news/cnewswire.shtml?nw=40726#n40726>.

7. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft, *et.al*, *Iran: Time for a New Approach*, Council on Foreign Relations, July 2004, p. 39.

8. Con Coughlin, "Tehran Will Turn Terrorists on Gaddafi If The Former Ally Reveals Its Nuclear Weapon Secrets," *Sunday Telegraph* (London), February 29, 2004.

9. "Uranium Enrichment Program Confirmed," *Iran Brief*, May 1, 2005.

10. "Russian Nuclear Deals are On," *Iran Brief*, June 1, 1995. I provide a more detailed chronology of Iran's then clandestine nuclear weapons efforts and its suppliers in "Iran's Nuclear Program: Myth and Reality," a paper presented before the Sixth International Castiglioncello Conference, Castiglioncello, Italy, September 30, 1995. (Fifty Years of Nuclear Weapon: Proceedings of the Sixth Castiglioncello Conference, USPID, Milano (Italy), 1996.)

11. Kenneth R. Timmerman, "Russian Assistance to Iran's Missile Programs," testimony before the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics of the Committee on Science, U.S. House of Representatives, July 13, 1999.

12. "Post-Khomeini Iran: Looking for Friends," *Mednews*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, June 26, 1989.

13. "The China-Iran Nuclear Cloud," *Mednews*, July 22, 1991.

14. Many journalists and academics continue to use the terms "moderate" and "conservative" to describe the two main camps. I will discuss Khatami's "moderation" in this chapter. As for the "conservatism" of clerics such as Ayatollah Khamenei, who was educated at Patrice Lumumba University and has long

supported state control of the economy, he is about as “conservative” as Joseph Stalin. For a more detailed discussion, see “Change in Iran and Challenges for U.S. Policy-makers,” a paper delivered at a Congressional Research Service forum on Iran, January 8, 1999, available at http://www.iran.org/tib/krt/krt_index.htm.

15. See, in particular, “Fighting Proliferation through Democracy: A Competitive Strategies Approach Toward Iran”; From *Prevailing in a Well-Armed World: Devising Competitive Strategies Against Weapons Proliferation*, Henry Sokolski, ed., Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, March 2000. Versions of this thesis were presented in seminar format at the U.S. Army War College, the U.S. Department of Energy, and elsewhere.

16. In July 2004, Iran revived stalled efforts to attract investment to build an Iran-India natural gas pipeline that would cross Pakistan, either by land or in Pakistan’s offshore economic zone.

17. Freeh and his deputy for Counterterrorism, Dale Watson, described FBI interviews with participants in the attack who provided evidence to the FBI that they had been trained, funded, and armed by the Iranian government. Testimony in *Heiser v. Islamic Republic of Iran*, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. See also Kenneth R. Timmerman, *Countdown to Crisis: The Coming Nuclear Showdown with Iran*, New York: Crown Forum, 2005, pp. 188-189.

18. 20. Amir Taheri, “Recipe for Disaster,” *National Review*, November 14, 2003; http://www.nationalreview.com/nr_comment/taheri200311140918.asp.

19. “Shamkhani’s Threats,” Iran Brief, October 5, 1998.

20. Taheri.

21. Rafsanjani’s sermon was paraphrased in Tehran newspapers. This quote comes from the English-language version that appeared in Tehran. “Former Iranian President Rafsanjani on Using a Nuclear Bomb Against Israel,” MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 325, January 3, 2002.

22. “Iran’s Rafsanjani Warns Israel against Attacking Nuclear Sites,” AFP, September 18, 2003.

23. Michael Rubin, “The Iranian Ticking Bomb,” *Jerusalem Post*, February 17, 2002.

24. David R. Sands, “Tehran Breaks U.N. Seals on Nukes,” *Washington Times*, July 28, 2004.

25. “No Impediments for Iran to Build Uranium Centrifuges,” *Gulf News*, July 15, 2004.

26. Most of these proposals are drawn from the final report of a Council on Foreign Relations task force on Iran chaired by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Robert Gates. See “Iran: Time for a New Approach,” CFR, July 2004.