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Iran Goes Nuclear: Predictive Responses to a Wicked Problem

by

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The reality of a nuclear-armed Iran has caused the international community to become more cohesive in its approach to deter Iran from its nuclear ambitions. Economic, diplomatic, and military pressure caused Iran to accelerate its nuclear weapon development to safeguard its regime's survival. In 2013, despite severe economic sanctions, tremendous diplomatic pressure and the threat of harsh military action, Iran succeeds in its quest to develop a nuclear weapon. A nuclear-armed Iran poses national security challenges and the risk of profound economic and political instability to neighboring states and the international community. This paper considers only the regional implications that a nuclear-armed Iran will have in shaping decisions by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in pursuing nuclear proliferation to balance the Iranian existential threat. A nuclear-armed Iran limits the international community's options to a policy of containment and a strategy of deterrence countering Middle East destabilization and regional nuclear proliferation. The collective failure to prevent a nuclear Iran poses regional implications and a wicked problem for the international community.

IRAN GOES NUCLEAR: PREDICTIVE RESPONSES TO A WICKED PROBLEM

> The greatest threat to U.S. and global security is nuclear proliferation by an increasing number of states.
>
> —President Barack Obama[1]

Over the past several years, Iran's nuclear program has presented a wicked problem for both the international community and the nonproliferation regimes. Multiple rounds of economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and threats of military strikes have yielded negative results as Iran continues to pursue nuclear proliferation. As the reality of a nuclear-armed Iran comes into full view, the international community has become more cohesive in its approach to deter Iran from its nuclear ambitions. During the 2012 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama stated, "Let there be no doubt that America is determined to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon and I will take no options off the table to achieve that goal".[2] Economic, diplomatic, and military pressure have caused Iran to accelerate its nuclear weapon development to safeguard its regime's survival.

In 2013, despite severe economic sanctions, tremendous diplomatic pressure, and the threat of harsh military action, Iran succeeds in its quest to develop a nuclear weapon. Shocked by the revelation of Iran's achievement, the international community realizes that Iran's success in becoming a nuclear-armed state may destabilize the Middle East. A nuclear-armed Iran poses national security challenges and risks of profound economic and political instability to neighboring states. Iran's rise as a nuclear power also creates a more dangerous strategic environment and sets the conditions for a potential regional nuclear domino effect.[3] Failure to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons would severely damage the non-proliferation regime's support and the

ability to prevent other regional states from acquiring nuclear weapons too.[4] Although, Iran's declaration of achieving a nuclear weapon may elicit a global reaction, this paper considers only the regional implications that a nuclear-armed Iran will have in shaping the decisions of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in pursuing nuclear proliferation to balance the Iranian existential threat. Before discussing the regional responses, it is important to understand Iran's nuclear history and the changes in its strategic environment that contributed to its decision to develop a nuclear capability at all cost.

Background

The genesis of Iran's nuclear program emerged with the building of its first nuclear reactor under the United States' sponsored "Atoms for Peace" program in 1957. In 1958, Iran became a member state of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and in 1968, was one of the original signatories to the 1968 Treaty on Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that became effective on March 5, 1970.[5] This treaty, commonly referred to as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), was created to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the transfer of nuclear weapons technology to non-nuclear weapon states, and to ensure that member states cooperate in developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.[6] The ultimate goal of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was to bring about the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons.

During the 1970s, Iran was provided technical, scientific, and materiel resources by the United States, West Germany and France to facilitate its peaceful nuclear energy projects. Shortly after the Islamic revolution in 1979 began, many nuclear scientists departed Iran, while the United States, West Germany, and France froze agreements and withdrew their support for Iran's nuclear program.[7] As a result, Iran abandoned its

nuclear program. The Islamic Revolution created security challenges for many countries throughout the region that had Shi'a majority or plurality populations with Sunni led governments. Bahrain and Iraq are examples of countries that experienced such challenges. The motivation behind Iran restarting its nuclear program in the 1980's and developing its nuclear infrastructure in the 1990s, was to deter Iraq's military aggression and safeguard its regime's survival.[8]

The first significant change in Iran's strategic security environment came as a result of its eight year Persian Gulf War with Iraq (1980-1988). Iraq initiated the war without an official declaration or announcement. After years of fighting a war which eventually turned in Iran's favor, Iraq employed chemical weapons against Iranian forces. This resulted in thousands of Iranian soldiers' deaths without Iran having the ability to either deter or retaliate in kind to Iraq's employment of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). After learning of information regarding Iraq's nuclear ambitions in 1985, Iran restarted its nuclear program, turning to North Korea and China for assistance.[9] The 1991 Gulf War further revealed that Iraq had come extremely close to becoming nuclear capable. Concerned about a potential nuclear-armed Iraq along its borders, Iran initiated an effort to develop an advanced nuclear infrastructure with potential military application.[10]

At the turn of the Century, Iran saw more changes in its strategic security environment that heightened growing concerns for protecting its regime. Over the last decade, Iran had become more ambitious in advancing its nuclear program to produce nuclear weapons and deter the United States from attempting a regime change. Later, Iran's stated rationale shifted to deterrence of the United States. In 2001, the United

States initiated OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan along Iran's eastern border in response to the September 11th attacks which made Iran uncomfortable. During the 2002 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush labeled Iran as one of the three rogue regimes that created an "axis of evil" along with Iraq and North Korea.[11] Iran's perceived threat by the United States became abundantly clear and its survival overtly threatened by the world's reigning super power.

For the first time in its military history, the United States executed an unprovoked invasion of the sovereign state of Iraq along Iran's western border in 2003. The ultimate purpose was regime change. Although the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the destruction of the Iraqi military eliminated Iraq's security threat to Iran, it also confirmed mounting Iranian fears of strategic encirclement and provided evidence to Iran that the United States had the military capability and political will to undertake regime change.[12] With the United States Armed Forces conducting combat operations along the Iranian borders coupled with a growing United States military presence throughout the Persian Gulf and Middle East, the sum of the Iranian fears was conceivable. According to Lawrence Wilkerson, the former Chief-of-Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, former United States Vice President Dick Cheney rebuffed a May 2003 Iranian government conciliatory proposal for direct, comprehensive negotiations about all major issues, grievances, and conflicts to include Iran's nuclear program.[13] Iran now viewed the United States as its new existential threat.

Iran has maintained a frigid relationship with the United States since the 1979 Iranian Hostage Crisis. The United States military presence and influence in the Middle East has made this relationship even more frozen over the last decade. The regime

change in Iraq and the strategic positioning of United States Armed Forces in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East only contributed to Iran's security concerns. These changes in Iran's strategic security environment intensified the need to make nuclear proliferation a vital protective undertaking for the current Iranian regime's survival. Iran's success in becoming nuclear-armed will cause its regional neighbors to respond to Iran's new regional power status.

Regional Responses

A nuclear-armed Iran increases the national security concerns of the neighboring states in the Middle East. Mitchell Reiss wrote a working paper for the Council on Foreign Relations that presented some possible options on how these neighboring states would respond to a nuclear-armed Iran. They are as follows:

> Self-help: in which some of Iran's neighbors decide that they cannot place their country at the mercy of Iran's mullahs and cannot place their trust in the United States or the collective will of putative security partners, and so decide to enhance their own defense by improving their conventional weapons capabilities or acquiring their own nuclear arsenals; bandwagoning: in which Iran's neighbors (with the exception of Israel) move to tailor their domestic and foreign policies to accommodate Tehran's preferences; and balancing: in which Iran's neighbors (including Israel) move closer to the United States or form some type of collective security arrangement (perhaps with the United States as a member) as a way to resist and counter the increase in Iranian power.[14]

The pursuit of nuclear proliferation by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt poses an exponential threat to regional security with possible global implications. To predict the likely response by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, we must consider their historical relationships with Iran, their industrial and/or nuclear infrastructure capability to produce their own nuclear weapon, and the geo-political situation that weighs in their decision-making based on interest and influence.

Turkey

Turkey and Iran are regional rivals who have maintained an uneasy relationship of conflict, competition, and cooperation, shaping the history of the Middle East.[15] This back and forth relationship is based on ideological friction points, religious differences, and regional power struggles that have always existed between the two nation states. A fundamental ideology is that Turkey purports secular democracy and Iran, radical Islamism.[16] Although Turkey and Iran have had their share of disputes, they have not confronted each other in armed conflict since the 18th Century Turkish-Iranian War. Since the Islamic Revolution, both countries have been suspicious of the other supporting dissidents from their respective countries and promoting its religion and nationalism in the region.[17]

Since the 2002 Turkish national election during which the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power, Turkey has cooled its relationship with the United States resulting in an improved relationship with Iran. In support of this argument, consider the following four points below:

1. Turkey opposed the war in Iraq and refused to be part of the coalition;
2. Turkey disagreed with the United States in regard to Israel's military operations in Lebanon;[18]
3. Turkey supported Iran's right to produce nuclear power for peaceful purposes and opted for soft power as a means to achieving a diplomatic solution rather than levying economic sanctions, and
4. Turkey and Iran have established a security and energy cooperation arrangement to combat terrorism and gain better control of their borders.[19]

The security cooperation arrangement contributed immeasurably to improving Turkish-Iranian foreign relations and lessening their suspicions about harboring groups that threatened each individual state's security. In an effort to defeat both the Kurdish

insurgent group Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) against Iran and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) terrorist group against Turkey, Turkey and Iran developed security cooperation in 2008 to share intelligence and coordinate military operations against the two groups.[20]

The two main points of convergence between Turkey and Iran have been those of economic interest and an unexpected overlap in policy toward the Iraqi Kurds.[21] When the international community was considering dividing Iraq into three areas, both Turkey and Iran were against a separate Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. As a result of their energy cooperation, Turkey has become more reliant on Iran's energy resources which may impact their response to a nuclear-armed Iran and its influence. On the other hand, Turkey has become a vital regional trade partner for Iran, especially as Iran endured stiff economic sanctions. Case in point, Turkey and Iran's trade volume increased tenfold from just over $1 Billion United States dollars in 2000 to reaching just over $10.2 Billion United States dollars in 2008.[22] Turkey's relationship with Iran stemmed on a dependence on energy and hopes of becoming an important energy corridor between the Caspian, the Middle East, and Europe.[23]

Turkey does have the industrial base with an additional three nuclear reactors being built by 2015, as well as the technical and scientific expertise to build its own nuclear bomb.[24] Notwithstanding this, research and development, and building a nuclear infrastructure require a significant amount of time to accomplish. Therefore, it is very unlikely that Turkey will pursue its own nuclear proliferation for several reasons. First, Turkey is a signatory to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, has advocated international support to non-proliferation, and supports the creation of a WMD free zone in the Middle

East.[25] Second, due to Turkey's historical position against nuclear weapons in the region, Turkey would likely avoid either a nuclear arms race or escalation of tensions with Iran. Third, Turkey being a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) should be provided a collective security umbrella to deter Iran from any pre-emptive conventional or nuclear attack without massive retaliation.[26]

NATO's firm commitment to Turkey's collective defense is essential to dissuade Turkey not to seek proliferation of nuclear weapons. Any decision by Turkey to develop its own nuclear weapon would cause an irreparable rupture in its relationship with both NATO and the European Union.[27] Turkey pursuing nuclear proliferation would also create a wicked problem for NATO in regard to its relationship with Israel. Turkey would be protected under the NATO charter from any pre-emptive strikes from Israel, but Israel would have to live with another nuclear-armed country in the region. Turkey is not a threat to Israel although their relationship has declined in the last few years, but a nuclear-armed Turkey would make for a good conversation at cocktail parties in diplomatic circles. A Turkish strategist making a point regarding a nuclear-armed Iran mentioned that, "Turkey survived the Cold War with the neighboring Union of Soviet Socialist Republics under the protection of the NATO's umbrella, and it could do so again".[28]

Although the security cooperation, economic cooperation, trade partnership, and bilateral relationship between Turkey and Iran has improved in recent years, Iran's rise in power status by becoming a nuclear-armed state would likely force Turkey to once again look at Iran as a threat to their security. Ideological, religious, and hegemonic regional ambitions contribute to underpinning this perception. A sectarian conflict in

Iraq or elsewhere in the Middle East could find Turkey and Iran on opposite sides. In the meantime, Turkey may likely develop a nuclear infrastructure for peaceful energy purposes. This will reduce Turkey's reliance on both Iranian and Russian energy resources. Turkey's membership with NATO and its guaranteed protection provides Turkey with the best strategic option to balance the Iranian nuclear threat and influence. NATO would have little choice but to promote the following policy:

> Containment, deterrence, and reassurance: containment to ensure that the political and strategic fallout of Tehran's acquisition of nuclear status remain limited; deterrence to counter any attempt by Iran to directly threaten NATO interests; reassurance to avoid friends and allies embarking on their own nuclear programs and to ensure that other perceived risks and threats would not be neglected.[29]

Although, Turkey and Iran have enjoyed a cordial relationship over the last several years, a nuclear-armed Iran will increase Turkey's anxiety regarding Iran's hegemonic influence. The benefit of Turkey pursuing proliferation of a nuclear weapon does not outweigh the cost of political and economic sanctions Turkey will face breaking its strategic alliance with the United States and the potential dismissal from the NATO common security umbrella.[30] For these reasons, Turkey will likely seek a soft power approach to a nuclear-armed Iran and abandon any option of proliferating nuclear weapons in response to Iran's new power status. However, Iran's relationship with other regional states may cause a different reaction in response to its nuclear-armed status.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia and Iran are regional rivals who have deeply rooted disdain for each other based on religious, ideological, and political differences. Although Saudi Arabia and Iran have enjoyed brief moments of cordial relations, their relationship has

always been fueled with competition, suspicion, distrust, and hegemonic rivalry. Mitch Reiss in describing the Gulf Cooperation Council's bandwagoning, provides the best reflection of Saudi Arabia's view towards its contentious and polarized relationship with Iran in saying that, "their strategic interests are too much opposed, religious and cultural difference too large, wariness of Tehran's ability to arouse their Shi'a populations too great."[31] Saudi Arabia and Iran's relationship in the past has not always been as contentious as it is today.

Both countries enjoyed a more cordial relationship prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. During the 1979 Islamic revolution, bad sentiments emerged out of fear of Shi'a fundamentalism by radical Iranian Shi'a clergy which manifested security concerns for Saudi Arabia.[32] Not only is Saudi Arabia an oil rich area where its Shi'a minority is concentrated but Iraq also is, and until recently it had a Sunni minority led government. Shi'a Iranians feel a sense of civilization superiority or rather a sense of cultural supremacy in comparison to Gulf Arabs.[33] The Ayatollah Khomeini possessed a deep resentment towards the Saudi monarchy for supporting Iraq during the Persian Gulf War and after his death in 1989, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran improved.[34] Since then, Saudi Arabia and Iran resumed a rather lethargic relationship that thawed during the 1990's and into the early 2000's.

Prior to 2003, there were three regional powers in the Middle East: Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime created an intense rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran to fill the void of a lost regional power. The Saudi-Iranian relationship deteriorated after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected as president of the Islamic Republic of Iran whose politics and temperament were often reminiscent of the

early days of revolutionary radicalism.[35] Iran's radical fundamentalism calling for Muslims to remove the Saudi royal family, seize its oil wealth, and strip it of its role as protector of Islamic sacred places caused the Saudis great concerns.[36] With the deep bilateral tension that already exists between Saudi Arabia and Iran, a nuclear-armed Iran will be perceived as an existential threat to Saudi Arabia, thus pushing the Saudis to acquire their own countervailing deterrent.[37]

In September 2003, the *Guardian* reported that Saudi Arabia conducted a strategic security review that included three options in regards to the possible acquisition of nuclear weapons: to acquire nuclear capability as a deterrent; to maintain or enter an alliance with an existing nuclear power that would offer protection; to try and get a regional agreement with a nuclear-free Middle East.[38] Let's consider the three options. First, Saudi Arabia, with its vast resources, is capable of developing an infrastructure to develop its own nuclear weapons. However, Saudi Arabia will face the same challenges as Turkey in long lead times to develop their nuclear infrastructure, research and development, as well as, technical and scientific expertise. Saudi Arabia may also acquire nuclear technology from Pakistan based on their religious affinity, strong friendship, and shared strategic interests.[39] Acquiring nuclear weapons from Pakistan would be legal under the Non-proliferation Treaty, as long as the nuclear weapons were kept under Pakistani control.[40]

Although Saudi Arabia is capable of producing or acquiring a nuclear weapon, it is not likely to do so for four reasons. First, Saudi Arabia will have to contend with Israeli pre-emptive military strikes. Based on Israel's history of conducting pre-emptive strikes against both Iraqi and Syrian nuclear facilities in the past, Saudi Arabia would be

no exception. Second, Saudi Arabia would be subject to the same intense pressure that Iran experienced in regards to political and economic sanctions. However, Saudi Arabia would be approached differently than Iran due to its regional, religious and economic importance. Third, by proliferating nuclear weapons, Saudi Arabia would secede from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and create a split in its long standing relationship with the United States. Fourth, Saudi Arabia would be abandoning the lead in establishing the Middle East as a Weapon of Mass Destruction Free Zone to leading the Middle East to a potential regional arms race which would likely be destabilizing. [41]

The second option presents two courses of action for Saudi Arabia that will be less contentious with the international community and provide a nuclear deterrent. Saudi Arabia could request assistance from the United States to extend its nuclear umbrella to protect the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The United States' response in deterring Iran's interference in Iraq and Afghanistan responsible for deaths of United States servicemen and women, as well as, preventing Iran from becoming nuclear-armed (under this scenario) casts doubt whether or not the United states would act credibly to defend GCC interest when it appears to have been reluctant to defend its own.[42]

The most likely course of action for Saudi Arabia is to counter what Saudi Arabia would likely consider multiple regional threats - Israel and Iran - by turning to Pakistan.[43] Pakistan has the ability of extending its nuclear umbrella thereby deterring the Iranian nuclear threat against Saudi Arabia. This is not to say that Saudi Arabia will not accept security guarantees from the United States. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan both are Sunni led majority countries, both are threatened by the India-Israel defense cooperation, and

both invested in Pakistan's nuclear program development by which Saudi Arabia provided two billion United States dollars in support.[44] The third course of action in creating a WMD Free Zone would not pass the feasibility test. The problem with this course of action is that it is in direct conflict with Israel's vital national security interests. It is doubtful that Israel will ever disarm its nuclear arsenal and place its survival at risk. However, if this approach is focused on all countries in the Middle East except Israel, then it can be achieved by persuading Iran to abandon its nuclear ambition.

A nuclear-armed Iran would be an existential threat to Saudi Arabia and weaken its influence in the region. However, it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia would develop its own nuclear capabilities but rather turn to Pakistan and United States to provide strategic deterrent guarantees. The benefit of Saudi Arabia proliferating nuclear technology to balance Iran's power in the region does not outweigh a potential uncontrollable Middle East arms race that could serve to both destabilize the region and collapse the non-proliferation regime that has helped decrease nuclear proliferation in the past.[45] Despite the perceived decline of American influence in the Middle East, strong United States commitment to the survival of the Saudi regime and its territorial integrity is the best reassurance to ensure Saudi Arabia does not seek nuclear weapons.[46] Although, Saudi Arabia and Iran have not enjoyed a pleasant relationship, Egypt's relationship with Iran has been even worse.

Egypt

Egypt and Iran have endured a hostile relationship over the past several decades that can be characterized by distrust and disdain. However, their relationship has not always been so tenuous. Although the 1950's and 1960's were highlighted by

ideological differences, Egypt and Iran enjoyed good bilateral relations during most of the 1970's. In fact, after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Iran even endorsed the Egypt-Israeli peace effort. Two events resulted from the 1979 Islamic Revolution that severed the Egyptian–Iranian relation: the Ayatollah Khomeini condemned the Egyptian-Israel peace treaty; and Egypt allowed the ousted Shah of Iran to take refuge in Egypt, where he later died.[47] In 1980, Egypt joined Saudi Arabia in providing support to Iraq during the Persian Gulf War further dividing an already fractured relationship.

In 1981, after the assassination of the Egyptian President al-Sadat, Iran reciprocated by memorializing his murderer with a street in Tehran.[48] To provide an introspective on this frozen relationship, Egypt is the only Arab country and one of the three major countries that Iran has not re-established full diplomatic relations with along with Israel and the United States.[49] Egypt and Iran are also on opposite ends of the spectrum regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Egypt has played a prominent role in the Middle East peace process while Iran has supported a more radical approach that undermines Egypt's influence. Egypt views Iran's influence on Hamas and Hezbollah as a threat to its own mediating efforts in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[50] It is plain to see why a nuclear-armed Iran would impact Egypt's security and proliferation decisions.

Egypt is one of the most populated, educated, and modern countries in the Middle East. In an article written by Bruno Tertais in 2007, he indicated that "Egypt is the only state in the region that has both the security and prestige motivations and the indigenous technical knowhow to go nuclear."[51] Egypt does possess the infrastructure, as well as technical and scientific knowhow to develop its own nuclear weapon. A nuclear-armed Iraq puts Egypt in a very precarious geo-political situation based on its

prominent role in the Middle East peace process. The best case scenario for Egypt is that Iran can be persuaded to abort its nuclear weapons program.

Although Egypt views a nuclear-armed Iran as an existential threat, it is unlikely that Egypt will pursue nuclear proliferation to balance this threat for five reasons. First, Egypt is in turmoil and is focused on internal stability to safeguard its citizens and reestablishing its, honor, prestige, and national identity. This process of change may take Egypt well into the next decade before they are willing and able to regain their regional status. Second, Egypt would have to experience the same intense pressure that Iran experienced in regards to political and economic sanctions. Third, Egypt too will be subjected to an Israeli preemptive strike against their nuclear facilities. Although, Egypt and Israel have maintained a reasonably good relationship over the years, there is no reason to expect that Israel would be willing to give Egypt a reprieve, and no reason that Egypt would not already know that.[52]

Fourth, similar to Turkey and Saudi Arabia, Egypt would have to abandon its strong advocacy of denuclearizing the Middle East. Case in point, in February 2006, Egypt made it clear that it opposed Iran's nuclear program by voting to transfer the Iranian crisis from the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors to the United Nations Security Council.[53] Fifth, Egypt would risk damaging its strategic alliance with the United States, a critical partner in negotiating a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Egypt has played a central role in the Middle East inspiring Arab nationalism and becoming a vital player in the Middle East peace process. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's inflammatory rhetorical attack towards Israel tends not only to

undermine Egypt's influence but complicates the Egyptian government's pursuit of a generally constructive policy towards Israel.[54]

Egypt's government would likely have no response to a nuclear-armed Iran based on their current geo-political challenges. Domestic issues and re-establishment of the Egyptian government will likely take center stage for the remainder of this decade. It is important to note prior to the ousting of the Egyptian President Mubarak, the Egyptian Brotherhood had encouraged its government to develop a nuclear capability not to deter Iran but rather to terrify Israel."[55] Since the Muslim Brotherhood is likely to have a major influence in the new Egyptian government, nuclear ambition will not be totally abandoned for the foreseeable future. Prior to the loss of power by Egyptian President Mubarak, research indicated that Egypt was the most likely of the three Arab countries addressed in this report to develop its own nuclear weapon. Now, only history will tell if the Egyptians are resilient enough to regain their prominence in the world and continue their quest toward peace in the Middle East.

Prior to Iran becoming nuclear-armed, Arab states expressed concerns about the Non-Proliferation Treaty's weakness not serving Arab interest if it failed to disarm Israel and compel it to join the treaty as a non-nuclear state.[56] This argument has very little traction since Israel is not a treaty signatory. However, it does make for a relevant argument in the case of a collective enforcement between Iran and the international community. The predicted responses by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt toward nuclear proliferation varies based on their national interests, external influences, and perceived threat from Iran. Changes in the Middle East strategic environment based on a nuclear-armed Iran will shape policy decisions by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt

based on measured and calculated risks, benefits, and opportunities. Security guarantees, strategic alliances, and reassurances by other states, international organizations, and international institutions will contribute to their decision-making. The collective failure by the international community in preventing Iran from becoming nuclear-armed would require Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to reconsider their deterrence and defense options.[57]

Strategic Options: Containment and Deterrence

According to a 2007 Research ANd Development (RAND) Corporation study, "Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons is likely to serve its interests primarily in deterring the use of military force against the regime and expanding its influence in the region rather than as a military instrument."[58] In consideration of defense options, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt's policy decision considerations will likely mirror the options previously referenced to Michael Reiss earlier in this paper: self-help in acquisition of their own nuclear weapon to deter Iran; bandwagoning to acquiesce to Iran's influence; and balancing by hedging closer to the United States or forming a collective security arrangement that may include the United States to neutralize Iran's power and influence. These options will be influenced by the international community's response to Iran's nuclear status. However, a nuclear-armed Iran does limit the international community's options to counter Middle East destabilization and regional nuclear proliferation. If the greatest threat of a nuclear-armed Iran is the potential of regional nuclear proliferation, then the best option to prevent regional states from doing so is a policy of containment and a strategy of deterrence.

This is more easily said than done because containment and deterrence in principle are both expensive and enduring over time. The success of any containment policy and deterrence strategy is hinged on the international community's ability to reassure regional states that it will protect them against Iranian nuclear, conventional, and proxy threats. According to Pletka, Donnelly, and Zarif, a coherent containment policy must include four essential components:

1. Block any Iranian expansion in the Persian Gulf region;

2. Illuminate the problematic nature of the regime's ambitions;

3. Constrain and induce a retraction of Iranian influence, including Iranian "soft power"; and

4. Work toward a political transformation, if not physical transformation, of the Tehran regime.[59]

The achievement of these containment policy objectives requires a successful strategy of deterrence. To shape Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt's decision-making, deterrence requires essentially clear unambiguous redlines, credible capability to respond to redline incursions, and confidence by regional states in the international community's reassurance that it will protect against Iranian aggression, threats, and influence.

Many have debated whether or not a nuclear-armed Iran can be contained or deterred. Similar arguments and debates occurred during the Soviet Union's rise to nuclear power in 1949 and the Peoples Republic of China's rise as a nuclear power in 1963. Many analysts predicted that the strategy of deterrence that prevented a nuclear war with the Soviet Union could not be applied to China; needless to say that the desire for self-preservation and national survival have seen China successfully deterred for almost 50 years.[60] The same is true in the case of North Korea and becoming a nuclear

power in 2006. North Korea's withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003 had zero impact on the non-proliferation regime and is to date the only country that has done so.[61] In all these cases deterrence was successful which fortifies the rationale for this approach to Iran. Iran will likely not be any different and retired General John Abidzaid, former commander of Central Command puts it best in saying, "We need to make it clear to the Iranians, the same way we made it clear to the Soviet Union and China that their first use of nuclear weapons would result in devastation of their nation. Deterrence will work with Iran."[62] As a matter of fact, nuclear deterrence has never failed with an astonishing one hundred percent success rate.

An effective containment policy and deterrent strategy requires a whole-of-government approach using diplomatic, military, economic, and informational instruments of national power. Diplomatically, the international community would have to isolate Iran from great power patrons and diminish Iran's influence to manipulate other regional states while limiting its use of proxies.[63] Having a strong deterrence strategy would allow the West to maximize its leverage of soft power. Economically, containing Iran will involve a very comprehensive approach beyond sanctions involving the international community competing with and disrupting Iranian regional and global economic strategy, and working with allies to diminish Iranian influence in energy markets.[64] Informational, reducing the impact of Iran's new power status will demonstrate to the international community that the cost of Iran becoming nuclear comes at a greater loss and retraction of Iranian influence with a residual benefit of self-protection while other regional states have strengthened their defensive capabilities through security guarantees and defense cooperation. Militarily, an assured regime

change capability is required with both offensive conventional and nuclear capability to deter Iran's regional threat, a missile defense posture that increases regional states' confidence while making Iran's capability more negligible.[65] Further, forward presence and the preservation of strong alliances that permit relatively good policy integration, military cooperation, basing, and access for coalition forces will aid in securing this approach.[66] Containment and deterrence must be a shared coalition responsibility and not an unilateral United States policy for successful implementation.

A containment policy and deterrence strategy comes with some degree of risk; however, if the desired endstate is achieved and a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and further proliferation of nuclear weapons is avoided, then the risk is worth consideration. Reassurance to regional states and their confidence in the international community led by the United States' response will impact their proliferation decision-making. Since the United States has strategic alliances with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, the United States can leverage its influence in their decision-making by extending its nuclear umbrella, reassuring continued security guarantees and political support contingent on them not proliferating nuclear weapons; similar to the United States approach with South Korea and Taiwan.[67] It is understandable that such a policy option would not be acceptable to Israel's liking, but noted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Saudi Arabia is the most likely of the three countries mentioned in this paper to acquire a nuclear weapon under Pakistani control without violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty and minimizing fracturing its relationship with the West. Egypt is less likely than Saudi Arabia to seek nuclear proliferation due to its domestic issues,

leadership in the Middle East Peace process, and the potential damage of its relationship with strategic partners and the international community due to its departure from the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Last, Turkey is the least likely of the three countries to proliferate a nuclear weapon due to potential loss of NATO membership, nullifying any chance of becoming a member of the European Union, fracturing its strategic alliances, and damaging its prestige in the international community due to its departure from the Non-Proliferation Treaty

Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt's policy decisions on how to respond to Iran's nuclear power status will be guided by their regional security interests, security guarantees, and their relationship with the United States who employs a trifecta approach of containment, deterrence and reassurance. The collective interests of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt will set the tone in preventing a nuclear arms race and wider Middle East conflict; their shared goal of establishing the Middle East as a "WMD Free Zone" will affect their overall policy decisions toward nuclear proliferation. Influencers behind each country's policy decisions may be divided into four categories: power/security, culture/ideology/identity, domestic politics, and international reaction/institutions.

Turkey's policy decisions will be guided by international reaction/institutions coupled with domestic politics. It is unlikely that Turkey will pursue nuclear proliferation based on its NATO membership that would provide collective security guarantees thus preventing irreparable damage to its relationship with NATO, the European Union, and the United States. Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) will likely continue to balance its relationship with the United States while improving its relationship with Iran.

Turkey's government has taken a page from Sun-Tzu's famous quote in "keeping your friends close and your enemy closer." This decision would allow Turkey to continue a soft power approach with Iran thus increasing Turkey's regional influence as a peace-maker, while ensuring Turkish-Iranian economic and security cooperation, and trade partnership remain intact; particularly since Turkey has become energy dependant on Iran.

Saudi Arabia's policy decisions will be centered on power/security, international reaction/institutions, and culture/ideology/identity. It may be anticipated that Saudi Arabia will not pursue nuclear proliferation but rather acquire nuclear weapons from Pakistan under Pakistani control. This course of action would allow Saudi Arabia to have nuclear weapons on Saudi soil without violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty and damaging its relationship with the United States and the non-proliferation regime. This decision would support the Saudi prestige and quest for regional influence, as well as, provide a deterrent against both Iran and Israel which it considers as existential threats. Saudi Arabia would be viewed as a protector of Sunni Muslims against a Shi'a regime's threat and influence by seeking nuclear capability from another Sunni Muslim majority led state vice the United States.

Lastly, Egypt's policy decision determinant is based on domestic politics and international reaction/institutions. Egypt would likely not pursue nuclear proliferation based on their internal focus of reestablishing their government and regaining their prestige, honor, and prominence in the international community. Restoring nationalism, responding to domestic issues while repairing its strategic alliances would probably be Egypt's priority in the coming years. More importantly, non-proliferation would also

serve Egypt in regaining its regional leadership in the Middle East peace process which earned them international acclaim and consideration as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

The collective failure to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran will pose regional implications and a wicked problem for the international community. However, Iran can be deterred and contained as other nuclear nations in the past with explicitly defined redlines and unwavering commitments to respond if Iran does cross one. The Middle East would be able to adjust to a new normal with a nuclear-armed Iran, with the exception of Israel. The greatest danger for a potential regional nuclear proliferation chain reaction in the Middle East would come from Israel making a formal nuclear declaration in response to a nuclear-armed Iran. If that happens, the chance of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East increases exponentially. The United States will be in precarious dilemma to defend its policy position towards Iran when Israel has publicly declared being nuclear-armed. Middle Eastern countries would leverage the United States to either persuade Israel to disarm or deal with a nuclear-armed Middle East. This above all would severely damage the non-proliferation regime and potentially result in other countries across the globe to follow suit.

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