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## Toward Transatlantic Cooperation in Meeting the Iranian Nuclear Challenge

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*In collaboration with the Atomic Energy Commission (CEA)*

**George Perkovich**

*Winter 2005*



**Security Studies  
Department**

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Ifri  
27 rue de la Procession  
75740 Paris cedex 15 France  
Phone : 33 (0)1 40 61 60 00

Eur-Ifri  
Avenue d'Auderghem, 22-28  
1060 Brussels - Belgium  
Phone : 32 2 238 51 10

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## *Proliferation papers*

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Though it has long been a concern for security experts, proliferation has truly become an important political issue over the last decade, marked simultaneously by the nuclearization of South Asia, the strengthening of international regimes (TNP, CW, MTCR) and the discovery of fraud and trafficking, the number and gravity of which have surprised observers and analysts alike (Iraq in 1991, North Korea, Libyan and Iranian programs or the A. Q. Khan Networks today).

To further the debate on complex issues that involve technical, regional and strategic aspects, Ifri's Security Department organizes each year, in collaboration with the Atomic Energy Commission (*Commissariat à l'énergie atomique*, CEA), a series of closed seminars dealing with WMD proliferation, disarmament and non proliferation. Generally held in English, these seminars take the form of presentation by an international expert. The *Proliferation Papers* is a collection, in the original version, of selected texts from these presentations. The presentation on which this report is based occurred on June 20, 2005.

George Perkovich is vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. A prolific writer, Perkovich's work has appeared in a range of publications, including *Foreign Affairs*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Weekly Standard*, *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*. He is co-author of the major Carnegie report, *Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security* (2005). He wrote *India's Nuclear Bomb*, which *Foreign Affairs* called "an extraordinary and perhaps definitive account of 50 years of Indian nuclear policymaking" and the *Washington Times* called an "important...encyclopedic...antidote to many of the illusions of our age." The book received the Herbert Feis Award from the American Historical Association and the A.K. Coomaraswamy Prize from the Association for Asian Studies.

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# Introduction

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The United States and the European Union share basic objectives in nuclear nonproliferation. Both recognize this convergence of interest and therefore, largely, trust that they are aligned in their purpose. Where transatlantic tensions arise is over divergent assessments of the most effective means of achieving shared objectives. The current challenge over Iran's nuclear program provides an opportunity, indeed a necessity, for the U.S. and the European Union to converge.

In simplest terms, key Republicans who influence U.S. policy do not believe that international treaties such as the NPT, the CTBT or international institutions such as the IAEA or UN are effective instruments for preventing states such as North Korea, Iran, and, previously, Iraq and Libya from acquiring nuclear weapons. Such instruments constrain "good actors" who are not threats, while providing cover to be exploited by "bad actors" who are threats. The only effective way to deal with bad actors is to coerce them and/or preferably to remove them from power and facilitate their replacement by more compatible actors. The time and energy spent negotiating and supporting treaty-based approaches to nonproliferation would be better used to concentrate pressure against the bad guys.

European states appear more confident that international treaties, institutions and diplomacy can prevent proliferation and organize effective action to reverse illegal proliferation that might occur. There seems to be a general sense that the black-and-white distinction between good guys and bad guys is not as stark as the U.S. tends to make it, and, in any case, dealing with the bad guys requires international consensus and cooperation that only will come through patient diplomacy and adherence to rules. The new E.U. nonproliferation strategy expresses willingness to use force in the worst cases, but, unlike comparable American documents, does not appear bullish about the effectiveness of military action.

In the specific area of nuclear nonproliferation, U.S. support for the NPT is limited by the defense establishment's belief that neither the U.S. nor friendly governments should eliminate their nuclear arsenals, notwithstanding international expectations that the NPT requires a genuine commitment to this objective. Democrats and Republicans share this view widely. The U.S. continues to assign high value to nuclear weapons and therefore sees the NPT as a slippery slope. In a world with current or potential violators of nonproliferation norms and rules, doubts about the feasibility of verifiable nuclear disarmament give U.S., French, Russian and other officials an excuse not to think seriously about a regime in which no one is allowed to have nuclear weapons. By contrast, many in the E.U. believe it is worth genuinely trying to create a rule-based world in which all actors forswear possession of certain designated types of weapons.

American officials place more stock in the eternal value of military superiority, including in nuclear forces, to prevent the spread and potential use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, while many Europeans focus on the proliferation-stimulating effects of U.S. policies and postures.

Nuclear industry interests further constrain U.S.-European cooperation on nonproliferation tactics. Most importantly, U.S. and French (and Russian) nuclear establishments resist new approaches to managing the nuclear fuel-cycle. The Iranian case would be politically more manageable if all other countries, not only Iran, were being asked to forgo construction of new uranium enrichment and plutonium separation facilities. Such a moratorium would be requested to give the international community time to reconcile the acute and somewhat conflicting needs to stem weapons proliferation and find new non-fossil-fuel sources of electricity production. American, French, and Russian nuclear industries understandably wish to block serious consideration of this approach, while others in Europe and around the world think a moratorium would be wise, all things considered.

Each of these different U.S. and European approaches to nonproliferation has some merit. It is reasonable to think that no one approach is wholly right or wholly wrong. The wisest strategy would be to blend them more than the relevant governments have to date. The U.S. is learning, perhaps belatedly, that it cannot solve the hardest proliferation cases without international cooperation, and that such cooperation requires more diplomacy than many in Washington might prefer. This evolution has not yet extended to the point where a consensus exists that the U.S. should be willing to significantly limit its own military power in return for international support for tough enforcement of a rule-based system designed to keep all actors from acquiring nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. The U.S. still has quite a way to go before meeting the E.U. half way. For their part, key European states, perhaps excepting the United Kingdom, underestimate the necessity of coercion – ranging from diplomatic-economic isolation to military force – to deal with the toughest cases. A much greater reluctance appears in Europe than in the U.S. to ignore the doctrine of the sovereign equality of states when coercing “bad guys” to change their behavior. If the first George W. Bush Administration had an attitude of “shoot first, ask questions later,” Europeans are more inclined to harbor doubts and a feeling of guilt, both of which result in a strong hesitation to act.

# Challenges and Opportunities in the Transatlantic management of Iranian file

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Iran may mark a significant mutual adjustment in both the U.S. and the E.U. positions, though. In word and tone, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns signaled in testimony to the U.S. Senate on May 19 that the State Department (if not the entire U.S. government) recognizes the need to attend to Iranian political and diplomatic sensitivities and to coordinate policy closely with the negotiators representing the European Union. He also enunciated objectives that echo those of the November 2004 Paris agreement. President Bush, Secretary of State Rice and other U.S. officials have refrained from responding belligerently to provocative Iranian acts and statements such as the resumption of operations at the Isfahan uranium conversion plant, in August 2005, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's aggressive speech at the UN in September, and his menacing remarks towards Israel in October. The Bush Administration did not challenge the November proposal by Russia to involve Iran in a uranium enrichment enterprise in Russia.

## ***Iranian ambition, Transatlantic tension***

The U.S. and the E.U. agree that a nuclear-armed Iran would sharply exacerbate regional insecurity and almost certainly give rise to similar programs in other Middle Eastern states, reversing the trend set in Iraq and Libya. The nonproliferation regime would not likely survive such a breakout, while the Middle East would become even more dangerous. To make matters worse, if Iran "gets away" with acquiring nuclear weapons after having been caught cheating on its nonproliferation obligations and entering into plea-bargaining with the European Union about restitution, the transatlantic recriminations will be profound. Hard-liners in the U.S. will blame European fecklessness and reaffirm the most bellicose instincts in the U.S. policy community. Many in European governments and populations will argue that Washington was indispensable to a possible diplomatic resolution of the Iranian case, but withheld the necessary cooperation, and therefore sabotaged diplomacy. The Iraq wounds will be reopened and deepened.

It is reasonable to conclude from Iran's behavior that Iranian decision-makers have not made a strategic decision to forgo the capability to acquire nuclear weapons. Rather, Tehran appears to be making tactical decisions to balance its desire not to become an international pariah with its concern that security and status interests may argue for preserving a nuclear weapon option. If Iran's overriding interest is to guarantee

fulfillment of its “right” to a secure supply of electricity from nuclear technology, then that “right” can be met fully and cost-effectively through international cooperation. France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Russia, the United States, and China should assure Iran that its nuclear reactor program can proceed without interference.

If, however, Iranian leaders also intend to obtain the materials necessary to produce nuclear weapons, they have no right to do so, under Article II of the NPT. In this case, the EU-3 and the UN Security Council should act to prevent Iran from obtaining such materials. The problem, of course, is that the evidence available to “prove” whether a state is seeking nuclear weapons is often ambiguous, and the NPT does not provide sufficient guidance for the international community to enforce its central injunction against nuclear weapon proliferation. The challenge before the international community today is to rule out that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons and to give Iran every incentive—positive and negative—to meet its energy, political, and security needs without technologies that pose inherent threats of nuclear weapon proliferation.

Iran’s clear noncompliance with its safeguards obligations, its extensive pattern of deception, and lingering unanswered questions regarding its work on uranium enrichment technologies and its experimentation with polonium, which can be used in nuclear weapon triggers, raise unavoidable doubts about its commitment to use nuclear technology and materials exclusively for peaceful purposes, as required under Article II of the NPT. While Iran should not be denied the “right” to nuclear energy, Tehran’s record has made it unsafe for the international community to permit Iran to produce weapon-usable uranium or plutonium. Fortunately, there are ways to satisfy Iran’s nuclear energy interests and the world’s security interests. Iran can rely on guaranteed cost-effective international supplies of fuel services to meet its energy needs.

While the U.S. and Europe seek changes in several facets of Iranian behavior, including human rights and support of terrorist organizations, Washington, Berlin, London and Paris appear to agree practically that the objective of dealing with Iran’s nuclear activities is so important that achieving it alone would be a tremendous boost to international security: *Iran’s implementation of an agreement to develop peaceful applications of nuclear energy without acquisition and operation of uranium enrichment and plutonium separation capabilities.* This objective recognizes that it will be politically impossible to seek Iran’s abandonment of nuclear technology altogether. Neither Iran nor many other states would accept this objective.

On this much – and it is quite a lot – France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States seem to agree. From the standpoint of nonproliferation and Transatlantic relations, maintaining agreement on the objectives vis-à-vis Iran is vital.

Iran senses this, too. For reasons of Persian pride, nationalism, internal politics and economic interest, Tehran wants badly not to be isolated in the international system, most importantly by a unified Europe and the United States. Thus, Iran struggles to find a formula that would allow it to master the nuclear fuel-cycle while making the rest of the world feel that it has guarantees that Iran could not produce nuclear weapons. Iran believes that Washington will find no such guarantees sufficiently

objective; therefore Tehran hopes to devise guarantees that would satisfy European negotiators (and Russia and China) and split them from Washington. In this way, Iran would gain the minimum nuclear capability it seeks, escape international isolation, and split the E.U. from the U.S., thereby improving Iran's bargaining position for the ultimate goal of normalizing relations with Washington.

***Tactical anticipation and the coordination of strategies***

The U.S. and Europe must coordinate tactical planning much more extensively than they have to date. The character and extent of Iran's nuclear program will not be resolved in one year, nor will Iran's position on Israeli-Palestinian relations and terrorism. Tehran inevitably will create crises to extract better terms or test whether terms on offer are the best that can be had, as it did in August when it broke its agreement with the EU-3 and resumed uranium conversion work at Isfahan. The U.S. Congress or other actors can be expected to say or do things that may inflame tensions. Statesmen and women in Europe and the U.S. should anticipate such developments and structure tactical plans to shape them. A full spectrum of both coercive and positive steps must be identified and agreed upon to gradually increase or relieve pressure on Iran, commensurate with moves Tehran makes either toward or away from the agreed U.S. and European objective of persuading Iran to forgo national enrichment of uranium and separation of plutonium. To cooperate in the necessary tactical planning, the U.S. and leading European states must overcome wariness that has accumulated in recent years.



## The Regional and Local Contexts

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The importance of coordinating tactics to deal with the specific, immediate problem of Iran's nuclear activities cannot be overstated. At the same time, some problems can be solved more readily by thinking bigger, too. This is even more difficult for the overworked and politically distracted ministerial-level leaders who are necessary to articulate and implement "big thinking." In this case, the need is for a common strategy to shape the regional and global environments in which Iran, Iraq and other Middle Eastern states will make nuclear policies in the future.

### ***Regional stability: a long-term discussion***

Iran's size, resource base, history, and mobilized population will always make it a major power in the Persian Gulf region and the broader Middle East. Stability in Iraq and the broader region therefore requires cooperation, or at least shared rules of the road, among Iran, Iraq, the Gulf Cooperation Council states, more distant neighbors, and, of course, the United States. If there is to be an easing of pressures toward proliferation of nuclear (and chemical and biological) weapons in this region, progress must be made in constructing a regional security system. Iran should know that the more its smaller neighbors fear it, the more they will seek protection from the United States. Similarly, the United States and Iran's neighbors should communicate that Iran need not fear interference in its affairs if it eschews capabilities and activities that threaten others. A regional security dialogue should be convened to facilitate this process of communication and regional rule making. European states can play vital roles in such dialogue as they may be regarded as influential, relatively honest brokers.

In parallel with structuring a regional security dialogue, the United States, the EU, and others must not ignore Iran's location in a volatile region. Iran is a major regional power, but it must take into account the power that the United States, Israel, Pakistan, Turkey, and some day a rebuilt Iraq could deploy to block Iran's interests. The U.S., Israel and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons, and Iraq sought to acquire them while it was waging war against Iran. In this environment, Iran and others may be tempted to seek nuclear weapons to balance power. This is an unstable situation over the long-term. Clearly a strategic imperative exists to intensify efforts to create of a zone free of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons in the Middle East. The U.S. and the European Union should do more to promote this objective.

The U.S. and the European Union also must exercise leadership in strengthening global nonproliferation rules. This would simultaneously

facilitate progress with Iran and make it harder for other states to exploit ambiguities in existing rules.

Several rules must be changed or added to prevent states from acquiring nuclear technology under the guise of peaceful purposes and then, with capability in hand, turning to make nuclear weapons. The IAEA, as a key step, should establish that its Board of Governors will order nuclear cooperation to be suspended with a state that the director general reports is in “serious breach” or “noncompliance,” or when an “unacceptable risk of diversion” exists or the agency cannot carry out its mission. Failure of IAEA board member states to act on their own Agency’s factual findings and statute, as happened in September when Iran was found in noncompliance but not reported to the Security Council, weakens international institutions and encourages actors in Iran who threaten international security. The UN Security Council, or, if this proves too politically difficult, lesser international bodies, should establish the norm that a state withdrawing from the NPT would remain responsible for violations committed while still a party to the treaty. France has taken the lead promoting variations of such a rule and other states should be encouraged strongly to support it. The Security Council – or, initially, other international groupings beginning for example with the Nuclear Suppliers Group -- should also establish that if a state withdraws from the treaty—whether or not it has violated it—it may no longer make use of nuclear materials, facilities, equipment, or technology that it acquired from another country before its withdrawal. Such facilities, equipment, and nuclear material should be returned to the supplying state, frozen or dismantled under international verification. (A state’s failure to comply with these obligations would strengthen the legitimacy of military action to dismantle the relevant facilities and equipment.) None of these important global steps can be implemented without close U.S. and European cooperation.

Experts and officials in the E.U. and the U.S. have developed other rules that would strengthen enforcement of nonproliferation norms. Now that the 2005 NPT Review Conference ended in failure, the most pressing challenge is less to devise better rules than it is to build international support for accepting and enforcing them. The important tension between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states runs through the E.U. itself, and in some ways between the E.U. and the U.S. If the U.S. and the E.U. cannot achieve unity of purpose and agenda in strengthening international nonproliferation rules that would greatly augment the diplomacy to persuade Iran to accept similar rules, then the long-term future looks bleak indeed. There is a broader venue problem -- consensus requirements render the NPT Review Conference and the Conference on Disarmament useless, and the G-8 and NATO are not sufficiently representative – but if the U.S. and the E.U. cannot work as one, there is virtually no prospect of mobilizing much of the rest of the world to deal with the proliferation threat in Iran and beyond.

### ***Iranian society: permanences and changes***

This essay has focused primarily on the U.S. and the European Union as represented by France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Another subject deserving attention is the context in which Iranian leaders will decide on how to guide their nuclear and related policies. I was able to gain

impressions of this context on a visit to Tehran in March. This was before the elections that surprisingly brought Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidency, but ongoing interactions with Iranian officials and scholars indicate that many Iranians continue to think along the lines I found in March, even as the Revolutionary Guard camp represented by Ahmadinejad presses for more bellicose policies. Admittedly, these impressions are limited, derived from interactions with elite in Tehran ranging from advisors to conservative politicians, Western-trained scholars, students, reformers, and current officials. The overall conclusion is that Iranian decision-makers feel that their situation is far from desperate.

High oil prices have greatly enhanced national revenue and have allowed the government to keep popular disaffection manageable. Infrastructure has improved and parks and public spaces are well kept. Tehran bustles with activity on the streets and construction all around. Shops are filled with imported electronic goods. Traffic is horrendous, even as major roadways and a subway have been added. Young businessmen are optimistic about their economic prospects, though they would like various economic reforms to be implemented. Yes, people complain about the government and the economy, but one senses awareness that things could be worse.

The removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, and the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan have greatly improved the sense of security. One cannot overstate the intensity of memories of the 1980-88 war with Iraq. So many Iranian families suffered losses in the war and experienced the fear of Iraq's use of chemical weapons. Walking around Tehran University in March I saw walls adorned with posters portraying grotesque photographs of victims of the war – almost 20 years after hostilities ended. Iranians are relieved that Saddam and his regime are gone. The Taliban, too, frightened many Iranians with its violent sectarian Sunni ideology. Iranians feel that Sunni extremists, including Osama Bin Laden, are terrorists and that Iran – Shiites – are more immediate targets than Americans. So the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan created welcome results.

As a result of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the broader U.S. campaign for democracy, Iranians feel that Shiites are in the best position ever to have their rights as a beleaguered minority protected. Iraq now is led by Shiites (the majority there), but even where they remain a minority, as in Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, they are gaining opportunities to participate in politics and to have their rights better protected. The overall impression is that history is moving in beneficial ways.

Notwithstanding the good news for Shiites in Iraq, it is important to note that Iranians draw cautionary lessons from the turmoil and bloodshed there: if Iraq represents regime change and a transition to democracy, it is frightening. Iranians extrapolate from Iraq not the danger of sectarian conflict -- Iran is much more homogenous -- but rather the danger of partisan bloodletting and chaos reminiscent of the early years of the Iranian Revolution.

From the above a general impression forms that Iranians do not want to rock the political boat – shake it a bit, maybe enough ideally to throw the office of Religious Leader overboard, but not so much as to

capsize it. This fear of capsizing, of major political upheaval, gives the impetus to established authorities. Average people realize this and simply retreat from politics and lower their expectations. The bloodshed and chaos of Iraq shows how much worse things could be and leads people to hope somehow for incremental peaceful change. Indeed, Iran's own revolution shows how much worse things could be. Most urbanites do not like the idea of Iran being seen as a pariah state – it rubs off on them as individuals, and limits their freedom of movement and opportunities to participate in international life. They blame “the mullahs” for what frustrates them. Corruption is always obnoxious, but when religious leaders are corrupt, the injury is doubled by the hypocrisy of its perpetrators. Still, if the choices are between the existing system and political upheaval, people prefer the existing system and the hope that a new leader will make it work better.

In many ways the surprising results of the Iranian elections confirm these pre-election impressions. Iranian experts explain that citizens voted for Ahmadinejad because he was transparently not corrupt and he is not a mullah. He lived in a modest home with no signs of ill-gotten wealth and represented a departure from the rest of the Iranian leadership who have been clerics – Khomeini, Khamenei, Rafsanjani, Khatemi, et al. Ahmadinejad also campaigned for redistribution of wealth and economic justice, another way of expressing frustration with the Iranian system. In short, he was a non-religious protest candidate, a vehicle through which people demanded change through elections, rather than upheaval. The resistance that Ahmadinejad has encountered since taking office suggests that voters did not know fully what they were getting, and that the established power centers will not give up their advantages easily. At the center of all this, sits the unelected leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, who balances power among competing groups and preserves the clerical establishment and theocratic system.

An important elaboration should be made here, one that American commentators most need reminding of. The political system that the E.U., the U.S. and many Iranians fairly criticize as anti-democratic happens to be constitutional. The office of the non-elected Supreme Leader, and the powerful Guardian Council that derives from it, are mandated by the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which itself was the product of the popular revolution of 1978-79. This constitution represented a compromise between republicans – whose interests were reflected in the creation of a parliament and directly elected president – and Islamists who, following Ayatollah Khomeini, insisted on rule by the most outstanding religious jurisprudence. For significant political change to come to Iran, especially democratic change, the constitution must be changed. Constitutional change is extremely difficult to negotiate in any country, especially as one with a civil society as large, diverse and sophisticated as Iran's. Revolution is one way to change a constitution, but a highly risky one that Iranians do not want to experience again. So if the constitution is to be changed politically, outsiders who wish to support such change should think in terms of their own experiences with writing, negotiating, and implementing changes to their own constitutions. In what ways could the international community help or hinder constitutional ratification in Europe, or constitutional amendments in the U.S.? Perhaps the answer to this question could inform our policies toward Iran.

The greatest fear that most of my interlocutors expressed was of “radical” conservatives tied to the Revolutionary Guards and newly potent factions elected to the Parliament. These elements, many of them veterans of the Iraq war, are financially and ideologically wedded to relative autarky. They benefit from Iran’s economic isolation and would lose out if the economy and polity were opened up to international competition. An example of this group’s mentality and interests was the takeover by Revolutionary Guards of the new Imam Khomeini airport as it was due to open. The takeover appeared to be economically motivated – the occupiers wanted to capture the income from airport services – but the state’s incapacity to resolve the issue for almost two years has demonstrated the limitations not only of the elected leadership’s power but also that of the Religious Leader. The airport still sits vacant and unused.

It is precisely this Revolutionary Guard element that Ahmadinejad represents, even if many voters did not understand the significance of this connection. Thus, many supporters of Khatemi, Rafsanjani, and, more broadly, of Iranian integration with international society, are now mobilizing to counter Ahmadinejad. Iranian internationalists are in an awkward position, though, as they do not want to be associated with a U.S. government that clearly seeks regime change in Iran.

Iranians take some comfort from international antipathy toward the U.S. government. Iranians emphatically welcome visiting Americans and profess admiration for “America”, but they also worry that the U.S. government could act aggressively toward Iran. Awareness of international disaffection toward the U.S. government (demonstrated in many ways, including international polls) therefore reduces Iranian fears that the U.S. would risk aggression against Iran. Liberal-minded Iranians feel that U.S. attacks would unify the nation around the government in Tehran and set back prospects of gradual reform, including efforts to diminish the role of the non-elected Supreme Leader.

Finally, consistent with these impressions, Iranian elite see the “nuclear issue” primarily in symbolic terms. This is not to diminish the importance of these perceptions. The nuclear issue in Iran, as in most countries, is an elite affair. Most people’s concerns are much more immediate, prosaic and close to home. But for elite, the nuclear issue is about modernity, prowess, national superiority, and anti-colonialism. Iranian officials insist they are seeking nuclear technology for peaceful purposes within the rights granted under the NPT. Most discussants in Iran argue that nuclear weapons would do Iran little good, but that Iran should acquire nuclear technology in order to modernize. This is not a detailed, rigorous analysis, but rather a common equation of nuclear technology with modernity – nuclear technology proves that a society is smart and advanced. Efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear technology are seen as colonial discrimination, an effort to keep Iran from becoming an advanced country. The fact that the U.S. and Israel are seen to be leading the charge against Iran deepens the feeling that inherent hostility toward Iran is driving the dispute, not specific concerns about particular Iranian activities. Iranian officials smartly play on this by offering unprecedented monitoring of their nuclear activities to prove that Iran is playing by the rules. Rejections of these offers are seen as evidence that the U.S.-Israeli axis is determined to keep Iran down no matter what Iran offers.



# Conclusion

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This description of how the nuclear issue is seen politically in Iran does not preclude the possibility that the men actually driving Iranian technological development and policy have elaborated strategic plans to make use of a nuclear deterrent. The point is that such discussions do not feature in the political debate over the issue and over the negotiations with the EU-3. Iran's past and current nuclear activities documented by the IAEA suggest the intention of acquiring at least the capability to manufacture nuclear explosives. When asked, "what security benefits would Iran gain from the nuclear capabilities it is now seeking?" Iranians tend to answer that the capability to produce a bomb is enough to deter any of Iran's regional adversaries from militarily threatening it. They point out that no one would threaten to attack Japan, because Japan can produce plutonium, has stockpiles of the material, and a full range of missile capabilities. Iranians say they merely want to exercise the rights that Japan has exercised in playing by the rules.

If the foregoing gives a sense of the context in which Iranians will decide which outcomes of negotiations would meet their interests, one last tactical point should be made. Iranian leaders have been shaken by the negative attention, pressure and potential isolation they have experienced over the nuclear issue in the past two years. They do not want the matter referred to the UN Security Council in part because this would be humiliating – an insult to national pride and to the leadership's protection of national interests. Ostracism of such a great nation as Persia – Iran – would be a major set back.

Hence, Iranian leaders see themselves in a contest over isolation with the U.S. Iran loses if the U.S. rallies the international community to isolate Iran; Iran wins if it can split the U.S. (and Israel) from the international community. The European Union is the pivotal player here. Whoever "gets" the European Union wins, because a combined U.S.-E.U. front will likely pick up Russia and be able to isolate Iran. Whereas, if Europe defects from the U.S., Iran will not be isolated. And, if the U.S. and the E.U. split, Iranians feel they will be able eventually negotiate an accommodation with the U.S. on better terms than if the U.S. and the E.U. are unified in isolating Iran.

Since August, however, when Iranian leaders discovered that the EU-3 would not acquiesce in Iran's wish to enrich uranium, and the new government in Tehran discarded its nuclear negotiators, a "look East" policy has gained fashion. Some Iranians, particularly hard conservatives, argue that Europe is irrelevant if not undesirable, and that Iran should give primacy to China, Russia, India and other eastern powers. Asia is of rising economic importance and has enough cash to meet Iran's investment and

energy export needs. Asian powers also will not condition relations with Iran on human rights and other nettlesome issues. Tactically, by appearing less interested in accommodating Europe and more attracted to the East, Iranians feel that they can weaken E.U. demands.

Among other things, the foregoing impressions should inspire caution that the next Iranian president should not be expected to move quickly or decisively to resolve the nuclear contest with the international community, as represented by the EU-3. Hashemi Rafsanjani is the only leading candidate with international experience and outlook, and is known as a deal-maker. The other candidates would take even longer to get their international footing, and would be even more constrained by competing factions within Iran's murky politics. But even if Rafsanjani wins election, he would have a weak mandate and would have to validate his reputation as the consummate deal-maker. This means he would have to obtain greater gains than his countrymen can imagine any other leader could obtain from not only the E.U. but also the U.S.

There is no evidence that Berlin, London, Paris and Washington have done the necessary groundwork or mobilized the necessary political leadership to create a deal as complicated and comprehensive as would be necessary for Iranian leaders to portray a permanent cessation of fuel-cycle activities as an overall great victory for the Iranian nation. The U.S. and E.U. governments will exhaust themselves merely devising and developing tactics to prevent irrevocable short-term gains in Iran's capacity to produce nuclear weapons, while leaving strategic resolution to the undefined future.