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Utilizing Strategic Culture as a Tool to Tailor U.S. Deterrence Policy Towards Iran

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UTILIZING STRATEGIC CULTURE AS A TOOL TO TAILOR U.S. DETERRENCE POLICY TOWARDS IRAN

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Ryan Preston Taylor

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ABSTRACT

The geostrategic environment since the end of the Cold War has drastically changed the way United States (U.S.) policymakers develop strategies to combat a wide range of hostile threats facing the country, especially in the field of the deterrence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Iran is such an actor, who poses one of the greater proliferation threats in the world and continues to commit hostile actions in the Middle East. In this post-Cold War environment, it is imperative that the United States develop a tailored deterrence strategy to meet this challenge. Past deterrence strategies popular during the bipolar era of the Cold War focused on the idea of a "rational actor," one in which an adversary theoretically would similarly make decisions to how U.S. leadership thinks about the values of a cost-benefit analysis of any strategic action. However, with the emergence of new and asymmetric threats, it has become apparent that not all actors in the world think in the same way as U.S. leaders. Starting in the Cold War era, the concept of strategic culture emerged, which sought to understand the cultural drivers behind state behavior. Strategic culture is a field of research which gives insight into another culture, and how their values, norms, and perceptions shape the way that they view rational decision making on a cost-benefit analysis. This field of study can provide explanations for decisions that others might make; how/when to go to war, what constitutes the rationality to pursue or use WMDs, and what values they hold which are exploitable. By using strategic culture as a tool to tailor a deterrence strategy, the United States will be better able to formulate policy to contain, deter, and defeat adversaries. This report will use the Islamic Republic of Iran as a case study to present its threat to U.S. strategic objectives, explain how strategic culture can be used to understand threats from Iran, and then assess its strategic culture to use in the formulation of a tailored deterrence policy against the Islamic Republic.

KEYWORDS: strategic culture, taqiyya, intercontinental ballistic missile, deterrence, Kahn, Schelling, terrorism, WMD, nuclear, proliferation

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I dedicate this thesis to my family, who through their international and civic engagement opened the prospect for me to take part in this field, and with their support always gave me a higher level to attain.

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CULTURE: A POLICY BLUEPRINT

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

Sun Tzu – The Art of War

The above quote by the famed ancient Chinese general, military strategist, and philosopher Sun Tzu offers counsel to anyone reading and studying his works of the importance of culture when deciding military and diplomatic policy. Throughout history and conflict, wars have been waged, and battles have been miscalculated due to the misperceptions of adversaries. How an opponent acts or reacts is based on the deep-seated cultural values, norms, and perceptions which dominate their strategic thinking.

During the Peloponnesian Wars, Thucydides described in the Melian Dialogue how Athens approached the neutral nation-state of Melos with a vastly superior army and demanded that the Melians either pay fealty and tribute, or face annihilation. Athens was shocked when the Melians refused this ultimatum, as they believed that Melos would capitulate under such circumstances. However, the Melians based their strategic decision upon their belief that the Gods would favor their cause because of their perception that they were morally in the right.[1] As a result, the Athenians besieged the island of Melos, and quickly routed their armies, executing the adult men and selling the women and children into slavery.

Even though a lack of insight into Melian strategic thinking caught the Athenians off-guard, they still had the necessary military power to come out of the situation victorious and relatively unscathed. This is an important example of how an opponent will not always act in a

[1] Thucydides, *The Melian Dialogue (416 B.C.)*, V.84-116, http://lygdamus.com/resources/New%20PDFS/Melian.pdf.

predictable manner, even if conventional wisdom (as understood by the Athenians) seems to dictate a particular course of action and outcome. A lack of understanding of an opponent's culture and their basis for decision-making caused strategic miscalculation. While there are countless examples of states being strategically surprised by the actions of others as a result of differing cultures, belief systems, or frames of reference, it is imperative to understand why this occurs so that U.S. policy, planning, and national interests can be best served.

This paper will attempt to:

- Describe the current threat emanating from Iran;
- Make a case for a new and tailored deterrence policy, by first recounting the evolution of traditional deterrence policy, and discounting the fallacies associated with it;
- Introduce the examination of strategic culture as a tool which can provide insight into Iran's strategic decision-making process;
- Analyze Iran's strategic culture, including their norms, values and identity as developed through its history and experience; and,
- Offer suggestions as to how Iran's strategic culture can play a role in assisting the formulation of a tailored U.S. deterrence strategy towards that nation.

Iran is currently a hostile actor vying for dominance in the Middle East. A long history of painful experiences such as foreign intervention and covert actions, suppression of dissent, coups, revolutions, proxy conflict, economic sanctions, and terrorism has cemented an animosity in its elite towards the United States and the west. Complicating matters, the United States does not have a history of trust towards the Islamic Republic and its nuclear ambitions because Iran has an extensive record of cheating on nuclear deals it has made. Due to a long history of secret nuclear development, flaws within the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (J.C.P.O.A.), and the U.S. withdrawal from the J.C.P.O.A., this animosity has been exacerbated.

As an aggressive actor attempting to expand its influence within the region, Iran has sought to enhance its military capabilities. These advances can be seen in currently possessed and potentially attainable systems, such as guided weaponry, warhead miniaturization, offensive and defensive cyber capabilities, expansion of its missile arsenal, and area-denial proficiencies. Furthermore, Iran's record of utilizing terrorist proxies to achieve strategic objectives causes further concern for U.S. and allied leadership.[2] If Iran were to successfully develop or acquire a nuclear weapon, there would be a risk of proliferation in the Middle East that might prove to be irreversible.

To understand how to develop a tailored approach to address this threat, it is essential for one to know the evolution of U.S. deterrence strategy. Since the first usage of atomic bombs on the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, intellectuals like Bernard Brodie made a case for a deterrence theory which would prevent a nuclear war from destroying the planet. In the period that followed, two theorists became the leaders in this debate, Herman Kahn and Thomas Schelling. They came to very different conclusions as to how deterrence is most likely to be credible and provide stability. In the end, the United States adopted a hybrid strategy which combined the two theories, with more emphasis on Schelling's limitations of defense forces. However, neither Schelling nor Kahn's theories took into account the full range of threats that evolved in the post-Cold War environment, most notably the variety of actors that would emerge (each with their unique perspective on what they consider to be rational actions). Fallacies associated with Cold War deterrence theories made it clear that a new framework needs to be

[2] Daniel Byman, "Proxy Power: Understanding Iran's Use of Terrorism," Brookings Institute, July 26, 2006, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/proxy-power-understanding-irans-use-of-terrorism/.

established, one in which cultural attitudes and decision-making processes of certain leaders would need to be considered in order to tailor specific strategies on a case-by-case basis.

The study of strategic culture arose during the Cold War and would seek to fill the gaps in U.S. leader's understanding of how other world leaders might act in response to cultural norms and biases embedded within their psyche. Strategic culture can be used as a model to serve as a tool to tailoring deterrence strategies. Strategic culture is defined by Harvard professor and expert on Strategic Culture Alastair Iain Johnston as, "an integrated system of symbols… that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences."[3] These strategic preferences can include such things as negotiating styles, modes of behavior, necessity to acquire or proliferate weapons of mass destruction, and decisions of when to initiate conflict. Factors such as geography, historical experiences, fears, and myths and symbols play a role in formulating a state's specific strategic culture. The difficulty of tailoring U.S. deterrence policy towards both state and non-state actors is that their intentions can be unclear. Strategic culture seeks to explain how elite confirmation of culturally-endorsed outcomes plays a role in the decision-making process, and how states often justify actions regarding WMDs in cultural terms.

To analyze Iran's strategic culture, one must first look at factors such as the background of Iran from its ancient past to the present and how history explains cultural phenomena such as the creation of a caste system, fear of conquerors, and clerical involvement in its decision-making process. Iran's identity must also be studied, including how it views the concept of "us versus them," Shi'a influence on society, as well as the existential threats currently facing the nation. Thirdly, quantifiable Iranian values such as power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence will further explain the factors that

[3] Alastair Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 32-64.

shape Iranian strategic culture. Iranian norms must also be understood, to help explain what influences drives its actions in the international arena, noting certain cultural orientations such as honor, pragmatism, and pessimism. Finally, the degree to which Iran adheres to international norms, acquires, transfers/proliferates, and uses WMDs must be observed using a strategic culture framework. By taking these factors into account, one will be better able to develop and tailor a deterrence strategy vis-a-vis Iran using strategic culture as a tool.

THE IRANIAN THREAT

"We must combat the plans of the arrogance [i.e. the West, led by the U.S.] with jihad for the sake of Allah. Jihad for the sake of God does not only mean military conflict, but also means cultural, economic, and political struggle... The planning for the struggle against them should include both defense and offense. The power-hungry order led by the United States of America is the perfectly clear embodiment of 'the concept of the enemy.' America has no human morality. It carries out evil crimes under the guise of flowery statements and smiles... The U.S. has aspired for decades to infiltrate the region and regain its lost reputation. The Americans wish to infiltrate Iran with the [J.C.P.O.A.] agreement, whose fate in Iran and in the U.S. is still unknown. But we have decisively blocked this path, and we will do anything to keep them from infiltrating Iran economically, politically, and culturally."[4]

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei – Speech at the Iranian Shi'a Ahl Al-Bayt Organization Conference, August 15th, 2015

Iran presents one of the most serious current security challenges to the United States. A history of mistrust and animosity between the two countries has led to a situation that could erupt into conflict and violence at any point. Furthermore, Iran's past behavior of cheating on arms control and nuclear agreements is a cause of grave concern among U.S. and global leaders, especially due to the concessions made to Iran under the J.C.P.O.A. In addition to the skepticism among those who believe Iran is still hedging its bets on a nuclear future, an existent, clear evolution of Iranian weapons capabilities may indicate that these causes for concern are coming to fruition.

If Iran developed a nuclear weapon or any other powerful WMD, there is a distinct possibility that other countries in the region would also seek a similar capability. This cascade of nuclear proliferation would undoubtedly transform the world's nuclear balance and would

[4] "Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei In Mid-August 2015: 'The U.S. is the Perfectly Clear Embodiment Of The Concept Of The Enemy'; 'We Must Combat The Plans Of The Arrogance With Jihad For The Sake Of Allah,'" Memri Reports, September 1, 2015, https://www.memri.org/reports/iranian-supreme-leader-khamenei-mid-august-2015-us-perfectly-clear-embodiment-concept-enemy#_edn1.

greatly complicate U.S. and its allies' presence in the region. Additionally, Iran has a history of supporting proxy terrorist groups to advance its ideological cause and give it an asymmetrical global reach, which causes further instability.

Iranian Animosity Towards the United States

While a long history of invasion and coercion from outside powers has led to an Iranian strategic culture that is wary of foreigners, the modern Iranian animosity towards the United States specifically began in 1953 with the ousting of the Iranian Prime Minister Muhamad Mossadegh though a U.S.-British devised coup, which restored the Persian monarchy and placed pro-western Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, in power. Known as Operation Ajax, this coup was devised to reverse the effects of Prime Minister Mossadegh's nationalism of the Iranian oil industry, a move favored by western powers who had previously controlled the natural oil resources in the region.[5] While promoting policies from which the western powers benefitted, the Shah was an aggressive authoritarian autocrat who subjugated the Iranian citizenry, leading to a growing citizen resentment over the next two decades.

This resentment came to a boil in 1979 in what became the Islamic Revolution of Iran, when demonstrators deposed the Shah and appointed exiled cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as the Supreme Leader. Along with revolutionary attitudes to impose regime change, the revolution also rejected the notion of the insertion of Americanism into Iranian culture.[6] A deeper crisis then ensued when student demonstrators broke into the American embassy and held

[5] Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, "64 Years Later, CIA Finally Releases Details of an Iranian Coup," *Foreign Policy*, June 20, 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/20/64-years-later-cia-finally-releases-details-of-iranian-coup-iran-tehran-oil/.

[6] Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 81.

U.S. diplomats hostage for over a year. Anti-American sentiment was a useful tool to focus the anger of the Iranian populace, consolidate the revolution, and was engrained in the psyche of both the Iranian leadership and the common people.

The Iranians became further incensed against the United States and the international order during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980, in which Saddam Hussein sought to seize the southwestern Iranian province of Khuzestan (an area bordered by Kuwait and the Persian Gulf) hoping to take control of the land held by a primarily Sunni population.[7] During the war, Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran, which led Iran to begin to distrust the international community's ability to contain treaties.[8] The suffering from these attacks led to Iran's future exploration of its chem-bio program, though it was initially rejected as being against Iran's Islamic beliefs.

Iran's animosity towards the U.S. was exacerbated by the U.S. commitment of its navy to the Persian Gulf to protect shipping and smaller oil-producing Sunni Arab states, such as Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.[9] During this tension, the United States also accidentally shot down an Iranian civilian airliner killing all 290 passengers.[10] This accident further sustained hatred of the U.S. from inside Iran.

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[7] John Stoessinger, *Why Nations go to War,* Tenth Edition (Nelson Education, 2010), 294.

[8] Kerry Kartchner, "Strategic Culture and WMD Decision Making," In *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, ed. Jeannie Johnson, Kerry Kartchner, and Jeffrey Larsen, (Springer, 2009), 59.

[9] Stoessinger, *Why Nations go to War,* 294.

[10] Stoessinger, 294.

Within this ongoing conflict, the idea of martyrdom, or sacrificing oneself for a cause, was prevalent. Iranian soldiers who died in battle would elevate their families' standing in society. Martyrdom was so widely accepted that the Iranian clergy would even recruit teenagers with special permission from Ayatollah Khomeini to enter heaven if they were to die.[11] This idea of martyrdom played an integral part in extending the Iran-Iraq war for eight years.

In 1996, the U.S. government, under the administration President Bill Clinton, imposed sanctions against Iran, citing them as the world's most dangerous state sponsor of terrorism.[12] The sanctions came in response to Iran's nuclear program and direct support for terrorist groups such as Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah.

In 2010, Iran became further infuriated when the United States, in cooperation with Israel, developed and launched a cyber-attack called Stuxnet, which was created to delay the Iranian program to develop nuclear weapons.[13] The virus destroyed nearly one fifth of the centrifuges in the Iranian's Natanz nuclear power plant.

Because of the tense history of conflict with and meddling by western powers, and the need for a scapegoat for all manner of internal ills, Iran considers the United States to be one of its foremost adversaries. As Iran continues to increase its power and influence in the region, it also seeks to minimize U.S. power. It is vital for the United States to recognize Iran as one of the

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[11] Stoessinger, 294.

[12] Alison Mitchell, "Clinton Signs Bill Against Investing in Iran and Libya," *The New York Times,* August 6, 1996, https://www.nytimes.com/1996/08/06/world/clinton-signs-bill-against-investing-in-iran-and-libya.html.

[13] Josh Fruhlinger, "What is Stuxnet, Who Created it and How Does it Work?," CSO Online, 2019, https://www.csoonline.com/article/3218104/malware/what-is-stuxnet-who-created-it-and-how-does-it-work.html.

most dangerous and unpredictable strategic adversaries in the region, and to focus its military, economic and diplomatic resources to contain and combat this threat.

Iranian Record of Cheating on International Agreements

In 1970, Iran signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (N.P.T.). This treaty allows countries to pursue the peaceful uses of nuclear technology if they adhere to certain safeguards and limitations. Since then, Iran's intentions regarding the uses of nuclear energy has fluctuated. In 1987, it was discovered that Iran began to meet and cooperate with the AQ Khan proliferation network and receive transfers of nuclear technology. This included "over 2000 components and sub-assemblies for P-1 centrifuges, as well as components of P-2 centrifuges, which enrich uranium faster than P-1 centrifuges."[14]

The next major instance of Iranian proliferation action occurred in 2002, when the political wing of the anti-Iranian terrorist group Mujahideen-e Khalq revealed that Iran had been building secret nuclear facilities not known to the United Nations.[15] These facilities included a uranium enrichment plant at Natanz, and a heavy water plant at Arak, which the United States characterized as "an across the board pursuit of WMDs."[16] The discovery of this facility, and Iran's refusal to cooperate with International Atomic Energy Agency (I.A.E.A.) inspectors, eventually forced Iran in 2004 to acknowledge its activities and promise to suspend uranium enrichment. In 2005, the I.A.E.A. determined (by a vote of 22-1) that Iran had broken its

[14] Jeffery DeIviscio et al., "Iran, the United States and a Political Seesaw," *The New York Times*, 2012, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/04/07/world/middleeast/iran-timeline.html#/#time5_227.

[15] DeIviscio, "Iran, Seesaw."

[16] DeIviscio, "Iran, Seesaw."

promise and was not in compliance with the safeguards agreement.[17] In 2006, Iran was referred to the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council and had additional protocols levied. That year, Iran nevertheless ceased to adhere to the protocols and other non-binding inspection procedures, and overtly admitted for the first time that it had enriched uranium.[18]

In 2009, the United States, France, and Britain released a statement that Iran had been constructing a secret nuclear power plant near the holy city of Qom.[19] This announcement was made days after Iran informed the I.A.E.A. of this plant's existence, and was thought by U.S. intelligence agencies to be a desperate move because the Iranians had determined that the U.S. was going to reveal their discovery of the facility.[20] Then, in 2011, the I.A.E.A. released a report detailing an organized effort before 2004 to develop a nuclear weapon.[21] The next three years entailed increasing sanctions and negotiations until finally a deal was signed with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015.[22]

The J.C.P.O.A. is a 159-page agreement that limits Iranian sensitive nuclear activities and compels cooperation with I.A.E.A. inspectors in return for the removal of previously imposed

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[17] "Iran Proliferation Issues," Arms Control Association, 2018, https://www.armscontrol.org/taxonomy/term/140.

[18] "Iran Proliferation Issues," Arms Control Association.

[19] "Iran Proliferation Issues," Arms Control Association.

[20] "Iran Proliferation Issues," Arms Control Association.

[21] Kelsey Davenport, "The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a Glance," Arms Control Association, May 2018, https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/JCPOA-at-a-glance.

[22] U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Executive Order 13608," May 1, 2012, https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/fse_eo.pdf.

sanctions.[23] However, some significant flaws in the J.C.P.O.A. do not entirely address the issue of Iranian proliferation and allow for an open-ended pathway at the end of its sunset provisions for Iran to pursue nuclear weapons. This opened-ended pathway is worrisome because up until this time, Iran has cheated on its nuclear promises, and has made its intention to obtain nuclear weapons apparent.

During his testimony to U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, former Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Robert Joseph identified five flaws of the J.C.P.O.A. that are detrimental to the assurance of non-proliferation by the Iranian state. These are: ineffective verification; providing a pathway to nuclear weapons; busting the sanctions regime; failure to prevent a breakout; and, failure to limit ballistic missiles.[24] Instead of applying the usual twenty-four-hour notice that most intrusive inspection regimes call for (especially with a country prone to cheating), the J.C.P.O.A. allows for a twenty-four-day notice, which Iran can further delay by referring the inspection procedure to the U.N. security council.[25] This agreement only includes declared sites, which is concerning because Iran has used undeclared military bases in the past to cheat on agreements.[26]

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[23] Davenport, "(JCPOA) at a Glance."

[24] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, "JCPOA: Non-Proliferation, Inspections, and Nuclear Constraints: Testimony Prepared by Dr. Robert Joseph," 113th Cong., 2015, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/080415_Joseph_Testimony.pdf.

[25] U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Relations, "JCPOA."

[26] Shashank Bengali, Ramin Mostaghim, "Iran Says Military Sites are Off-Limits for Nuclear Inspections Despite U.S. Pressure," *Los Angeles Times*, August, 30, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-iran-nuclear-20170830-story.html.

The second flaw is that the J.C.P.O.A. does not wholly stop Iran from producing fissile material. Even though multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions called for cessation of all enrichment actions, the nuclear deal leaves Iran with an extensive enrichment infrastructure.[27] Within the confines of the deal, Iran can use this infrastructure to cheat and "sneak out," as well as reprocess plutonium when the deal expires.[28] Before the deal occurred, the I.A.E.A. found blueprints for nuclear weapons, and in the intervening years, Iran has rebuffed I.A.E.A. attempts to adequately access sites and documents.[29]

A third flaw in the J.C.P.O.A. is the busting of the sanctions regime that was put into place through over a decade of efforts.[30] These sanctions were put in place in 2002 by the United Nations, European Union, and other individual countries in an attempt to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.[31] In total, Iran is likely to obtain $20 billion in sanctions alleviation.[32] This easing, in turn, will almost eliminate the economic leverage that the U.S. had built up over the years. Alongside an extensive effort to acquire nuclear weapons, Iran is also known to support terrorist organizations and regimes hostile to U.S. interests. The money

[27] U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Relations, "JCPOA."

[28] U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Relations, "JCPOA."

[29] U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Relations, "JCPOA."

[30] Ilan Berman, *Iran's Deadly Ambition: The Islamic Republic's Quest for Global Power* (Encounter Books, 2015), 2-3.

[31] "Iran Nuclear Crisis: What are the Sanctions?" *BBC News*, March 30, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15983302.

[32] Berman, 3.

realized through the lifting of sanctions could ostensibly be utilized to support such efforts in the future.[33]

Fourth, the ability for Iran to breakout is not permanently addressed. Before the J.C.P.O.A. negotiations, Iran was perceived to have a breakout time between two and three months. Under the restrictions placed on the deal, the breakout time is theoretically increased to 12 months, assuming Iran cooperates with the limitations set in place. However, once the deal's sunset provisions come into play, the breakout time would then be accelerated back to the two to three month timeframe.[34] If the United States were worried about this breakout time in the past, it would not make sense that it would be accepting of the same breakout time in the future, especially as Iran would be even more dangerous with its advancing military technology, economy, and influence.

Finally, the J.C.P.O.A. does not limit Iran's continuation of its Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (I.C.B.M.) program. During negotiations and since the deal was implemented, Iran has developed, advanced, and tested ballistic missile technology through its space launch program. The pursuit of this capability directly challenges the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929, which stipulates that "Iran shall not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons."[35] This is worrisome because the space launch vehicles that Iran is attempting to acquire is easily transferrable to intercontinental ballistic missile weaponry. If Iran is actually serious about giving up its desire for nuclear weapons, why would it break faith with a

[33] Berman, 6.

[34] Eli Lake, "Obama Kept Iran's Short Breakout Time a Secret," *Bloomberg Opinion*, April 21, 2015, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2015-04-21/obama-kept-iran-s-short-breakout-time-a-secret.

[35] United Nations Security Council, 6335th meeting, "Resolution 1929" June 9 2010, https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/s/res/1929-%282010%29.

Security Council resolution for an expensive technology that is deemed worthless without a nuclear payload?

In April 2018, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Israel's intelligence services had uncovered over 100,000 files secretly hidden in Iran detailing "Project Amad," which was the secret Iranian nuclear weapons program operating without the knowledge of international inspectors in early 2000s.[36] In his presentation to the press, Netanyahu described the files as containing, "incriminating documents, incriminating charts, incriminating presentations, incriminating blueprints, incriminating photos, incriminating videos, and more."[37] Furthermore, the Prime Minister noted that he shared the files with the United States, which further confirmed the legitimacy of the find.

Documents from Project Amad state that its goal was to, "design, produce, and test, five warheads, each with a 10-kiloton yield, for integration onto a missile."[38] This is equivalent to about five of the bombs the United States used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Netanyahu claimed that Iran has lied about their nuclear weapons program, and that they continued to lie to the I.A.E.A. about compliance with the requirements of the nuclear deal.[39] Because of this information, the Israeli Prime Minister asserted that the Iran deal was founded on lies. Partly due to these documents, President Trump pulled out of the J.C.P.O.A. in May 2018, making the nuclear future of Iran even more uncertain.

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[36] Mike Ciandella, "Netanyahu Reveals Evidence that Iran Lied About its Nuclear Weapons Program," *The Blaze,* April 30, 2018, https://www.theblaze.com/news/2018/04/30/netanyahu-reportedly-set-to-give-speech-saying-israel-has-proof-iran-is-cheating-on-the-nuclear-deal.

[37] Ciandella, "Netanyahu Reveals Evidence."

[38] Ciandella, "Netanyahu Reveals Evidence."

[39] Ciandella, "Netanyahu Reveals Evidence."

It is important to note that up until this point, the U.S. intelligence apparatus had stated that Iran has complied with the nuclear deal even as the United States has left it. Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats stated that "we continue to assess that Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities we judge necessary to produce a nuclear device."[40] Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) Gina Haspel also noted that, "at the moment [Tehran is] in compliance."[41]

The path taken by Iran up to this point closely mirrors the strategy utilized by North Korea in its journey to a nuclear capability. It is entirely possible, given Iran's history of cheating, that it would attempt to bide its time and break from the restrictions and requirements set in place from the J.C.P.O.A. Also, a future pathway to nuclear weapons is open to Iran, with associated economic benefits, if the Iranians are willing to wait patiently.

Current and Evolving Weapons Capabilities

A significant cause for concern to U.S. security interests in the Middle East is the current and evolving weapons advances emanating from Iran. In addition to its space launch program, Iran has also partaken in the continued purchase, development, and fielding of ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, and submarine weaponry. Also, Iran has made a robust effort towards establishing an air and missile defense capability, seeking to increase its area denial aptitude in regions of importance. The previous President of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Andrew Krepinevich, noted in his report *Critical Mass* that Iran is likely in the

[40] Jason Lemon, "Iran Nuclear Deal is Working Despite Trump's Withdrawal, U.S. National Intelligence Director Says," *Newsweek*, January 29, 2019, https://www.newsweek.com/iran-nuclear-deal-working-trump-withdrawal-1310135.

[41] Lemon, "Iran Deal Working."

future to seek, acquire, and master technologies such as guided weapons, warhead miniaturization, and cyber competence to establish themselves as the premier power in the Middle East.[42]

An advanced technology that is highly-alluring to Iran is guided weaponry. Guided weapons are so attractive because of the accuracy and economy-of-force capabilities that they give to both conventional and nuclear weapons employed by a country's military. For example, if Iran were to gain a nuclear capability (even one with low yield), a robust guidance system would allow those weapons to have a more substantial effect. It has been shown that guided weaponry significantly increases the conventional capabilities of a military, as well. In *Critical Mass*, Andrew Krepinevich states that conventional precision-guided munitions could achieve nuclear-like effects by targeting specific nuclear infrastructure, causing devastation similar to a WMD.[43]

Warhead miniaturization is one of the key technical hurdles that must be mastered in order to achieve an effective nuclear missile arsenal.[44] Missiles are extremely important to a country's nuclear capability because they allow a 24/7 readiness capability that can be delivered faster and more assuredly than through any other means. Countries with a weaker economy, such as Iran or North Korea, would likely seek shortcuts to field a nuclear missile arsenal.[45]

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[42] Andrew Krepinevich, "Critical Mass: Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East," *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*, 2013, 36, https://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/Nuclear-Proliferation-in-the-Middle-East.pdf.

[43] Krepinevich, 36.

[44] Krepinevich, 37.

[45] Krepinevich, 37.

Because of Iran's educated workforce and science community, it is likely that they would be better equipped than other rogue countries (such as North Korea) to quickly master this technology. Furthermore, Iran's already well-developed military production capabilities make warhead miniaturization and integration with existing weapons systems more feasible.

Thirdly, Iran is likely to acquire more highly-evolved cyber technology. Cyber technology is developing faster and becoming more integrated with military operations worldwide. After being affected by Stuxnet, Iran has worked diligently to enhance its offensive and defensive cyber capabilities. If Iran is not able to obtain a robust cyber defense, they may delegate a decentralized launch authority for their missiles so that they would be able to conduct a military operation if they suspected that their systems were subject to sabotage. Andrew Krepinevich also notes the possibility that a non-state actor could potentially target Iranian sensor capabilities via cyber-attack, making them believe that a missile strike was imminent in order to start an all-out war.[46] Investing in cyber also gives Iran the ability to better protect its own systems. From the Iranian point of view, it is essential that their systems are not vulnerable to hacking, as it would allow other countries to exploit weaknesses in their systems, and possibly rendering them useless.

As previously stated, Iran has continued to invest in ballistic missiles and space launch technology. While it was estimated that Iran would have an I.C.B.M. capability before now, it has not yet definitively demonstrated this aptitude.[47] The majority of Iran's current ballistic

[46] Krepinevich, 40.

[47] Steven Hildreth, Cyrus Jabbari, "Iran's Ballistic Missile and Space Launch Programs," Congressional Research Service, August 1, 2018, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/IF10938.pdf.

missile stockpile derives itself from short to medium-range Scud-B and Scud-C missiles, which originated from Soviet-designed R-17 missiles.[48]

Inferring from recent tests of short and medium-range ballistic missiles, it is likely that Iran is primarily focusing its attention on improving accuracy.[49] The bulk of Iranian heavy artillery rockets and ballistic missiles are tactical, with a range of 500 kilometers or less.[50] While Iran has demonstrated competency in developing these Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (S.R.B.M.s), it still depends on outside sources (such as North Korea) for materials and fundamental mechanisms.[51] The S.R.B.M. capability is a primary necessity for Iranian military strategy because it allows them to operate and hold the U.S. and its allies' bases under threat in the Gulf region. For example, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's (I.R.G.C.) airspace division, Amirali Hajizadeh, has stated that Iran is capable of striking U.S. forces and aircraft carriers in the region if they encroach on strategic locations.[52] Due to the recent improvement in Iranian missile capabilities, U.S. bases such as the "Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, the Al Dhafra base in the United Arab Emirates, and the Kandahar base in Afghanistan" are susceptible to

[48] "SS-1 'Scud'," Missile Threat: CSIS Missile Defense Project, June 15, 2018, https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/scud/.

[49] "SS-1 'Scud'," Missile Threat.

[50] Hildreth and Jabbari, "Iran's Space Programs."

[51] Hildreth and Jabbari, "Iran's Space Programs."

[52] Laura Widener, "Iran Says New Missiles Can Strike US Ships in 435-Mile Radius," *American Military News*, October 17, 2018, https://americanmilitarynews.com/2018/10/iran-says-new-missiles-can-strike-us-ships-in-435-mile-radius/.

successful strikes by the Iranian military.[53]

Concurrently alongside the S.R.B.M. program, Iran has continued to develop and produce Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (M.R.B.M.s) which retain ranges up to 2,000 kilometers.[54] According to the National Air and Space Intelligence Center (N.A.S.I.C.), the number of launchers that Iran possesses is undetermined. However, Iran has publicly stated that it had mass-produced Shahab-3 M.R.B.M.s.[55] To ensure a second strike capability in the case of a pre-emptive strike by another country, Iran has begun to construct an underground network of bunkers and launch facilities.[56] These M.R.B.M.s would be capable of reaching targets as far as Cairo on the western front, and Islamabad on the eastern.[57] While sanctions and export controls have made the acquisition of key components of M.R.B.M.s more difficult, Iran has exploited frailties within non-proliferation regimes or worked alongside nations willing to evade those laws in order to acquire a medium range capability.[58]

While an explicit I.C.B.M. capability has not been operationally demonstrated, Iran has still sought to enhance its ambitious space launch program, either for national pride or national

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[53] "Iran Warns U.S.: Your Mideast Bases Are Within Range of Our Missiles," *Haaretz News*, November 22, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/u-s-bases-are-within-iranian-missiles-range-iran-revolutionary-guards-sayt-1.6677208.

[54] Steven Hildreth, "Iran's Ballistic Missile and Space Launch Programs," Congressional Research Service, December 6, 2012, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R42849.pdf.

[55] Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, "Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat," National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC), 2017, https://www.nasic.af.mil/Portals/19/images/Fact%20Sheet%20Images/2017%20Ballistic%20and%20Cruise%20Missile%20Threat_Final_small.pdf?ver=2017-07-21-083234-343.

[56] Hildreth and Jabbari, "Iran's Space Programs."

[57] Hildreth, "Iran's Ballistic Missile and Space Launch Programs."

[58] Hildreth and Jabbari, "Iran's Space Programs."

use. The issue for U.S. defense concerning the Iranian space launch program is the inherent connection between this technology and I.C.B.M.s. The U.S. Intelligence community has noted that it is likely that Iran desires an I.C.B.M. capability in order to provide a strategic counter/deterrent to the United States.[59] Since 2008, Iran has successfully launched multiple Space Launch Vehicles (S.L.V.s) and continues to develop other S.L.V.s capable of carrying heavier payloads.[60] Admiral Bill Gortney from the U.S. Northern Command stated, "Iran may be able to deploy an operational I.C.B.M. by 2020 if the regime chooses to do so."[61]

In order to maintain control over its regional borders and economic chokepoints, Iran has pursued area denial (A2/AD) capabilities to inhibit the U.S. and others from navigating freely and exercising their strategic objectives within the Gulf region and surrounding areas. These unique capabilities pose a serious threat to the United States in economic strongholds such as the Suez Canal, Bab el-Mandeb, Persian Gulf, and especially the Strait of Hormuz.[62] Due to the narrowness of the Strait of Hormuz (through which 20% of the world's petroleum shipping passes), Iran would have a reasonable chance of threatening commerce and denying access to the resources of the Persian Gulf by utilizing "fast attack craft (FAC's), suicide boats, anti-ship cruise missiles, and mines."[63]

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[59] Hildreth and Jabbari, "Iran's Space Programs."

[60] Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, "Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat," NASIC.

[61] Hildreth and Jabbari, "Iran's Space Programs."

[62] James Gentry, "China's Role in Iran's Anti-Access / Area Denial Weapons Capability Development," Middle East Institute, April 16, 2013, https://www.mei.edu/publications/chinas-role-irans-anti-access-area-denial-weapons-capability-development.

[63] Gentry, "China's Role Area Denial."

Iran is reported to be aggressively pursuing these capabilities, most notably anti-ship cruise missiles and air defense systems. Due to an expiring U.N. arms embargo in 2020, Iran is likely to purchase submarine launched anti-ship cruise missiles and torpedoes to improve its naval and A2/AD capabilities.[64] Commenting on the pending end of the embargo, Iranian Deputy Defense Minister for international Affairs Second Brigadier General Mohammad Ahadi stated, "Increasing the capabilities of various types of ballistic and cruise missiles, the acquisition of a new generation of fighter jets as well as... vessels and submarines with various weapons capabilities are among the new plans of the ministry."[65] The U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence noted that these developments are a clear indicator that Iran is continuing to place more importance on the ability to control the maritime environment in its security posture.[66]

In addition to its anti-ship weapons, Iran has continued to expand its air and missile defense. A missile defense system would not only help Iran maintain dominance over chokepoints and other areas of importance, but would be extremely useful if Iran wished to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike and would need to defend itself against any retaliatory capabilities.[67] The most recent and notable development in the Iranian missile defense arsenal is the homegrown Bavar-373 air defense system, which apparently and successfully intercepted an incoming missile during recent testing. An Iranian Brigadier General described the Bavar-373

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[64] "Iran to Purchase Anti-Ship Missiles After 2020," Track Persia, March 3, 2017, www.trackpersia.com/iran-purchase-anti-ship-missiles-2020/.

[65] "Iran Plans to Boost Ballistic, Cruise Missile Capabilities: Defense Ministry," *PressTV*, September 1, 2018, https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/09/01/572885/ballistic-cruise-missile-Mohammad-Ahadi-Defense-Ministry.

[66] "Iranian Naval Forces: A Tale of Two Navies," Office of Naval Intelligence, February 2017, https://www.oni.navy.mil/Portals/12/Intel%20agencies/iran/Iran%20022217SP.pdf?ver=2017-02-28-082634-643.

[67] Krepinevich, "Critical Mass," 40.

as "more powerful and more reliable" than the current S-300 Russian system, which was fielded in 2016.[68] The Bavar-373 is more attractive to the Iranians, because of its above-stated reliability, and its domestic manufacturing. Iranian officials have stated that these defensive capabilities will never be included in any future arms-control negotiations.[69]

Use of Terrorist Proxies

Although first characterized as a state sponsor of terrorism in 1984, Iran began to utilize terrorist organizations after its Islamic Revolution of 1979 as an extension of its ideology, and to execute dissidents around the globe.[70] To complete these objectives, Iran utilizes its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force, which is responsible for military operations (both public and covert) outside of Iran's borders.[71] In these foreign operations, the Quds Force seeks to provide funding, weapons, and protections for terrorist groups it is backing. To this day, the U.S. State Department still characterizes Iran as the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism.[72]

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[68] "Iran's Homegrown Missile Defense System Successfully Tested: Commander," *Tasnim News Agency*, September 10, 2018, https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2018/09/10/1824898/iran-s-homegrown-missile-defense-system-successfully-tested-commander.

[69] "Iran's Homegrown Missile Defense," Tasnim.

[70] Byman, "Proxy Power."

[71] Yaniv Kubovich, "Iran's Long Arm: What Is the Elite Quds Force That Attacked Israel From Syria," *Haaretz News*, May 11, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-iran-s-long-arm-who-is-elite-force-that-attacked-israel-from-syria-1.6075400.

[72] U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2016," 2017, https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/index.htm.

Iran has for many years supported terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, who before 9/11 had killed more Americans than any other terrorist organization.[73] Currently, Iran provides close to one billion dollars per year split between Hezbollah (~$700,000,000), other Palestinian groups (~$1,000,000), and other terrorist organizations.[74] The primary target of Iranian backed terrorism is Israel, which is the target for the bulk of attacks sponsored by Iran. Utilizing these proxy terrorist forces allows Iran to continue to oppose the Jewish State, give them prestige within the Muslim world, and undermine any peace process that could be reached with Israel.[75]

These forces pose an asymmetric threat to U.S. forces and their operations, as well as to U.S. diplomats and civilians abroad. Iran can use terrorist organizations to extend their own power, and to have a more genuinely global reach and influence. They can serve as a deterrent against U.S. military incursions, forcing the nation to carefully consider any actions that they might take against the Islamic Republic, because of the threat of terrorist retaliatory acts. Finally, concerns about terrorism that utilizes WMDs arise from Iran's close connections with these organizations. Because Iran has patronized and cooperated with terrorist groups and provided them with weapons, funds and training, it is not unreasonable to assume that Iran would be likely to utilize existing terrorist networks to implement covert WMD attacks.

Conflict and Risk of Proliferation in the Middle East

Despite previously mentioned constraints put in place via the J.C.P.O.A., Iran still retains

[73] Byman, "Proxy Power."

[74] Ambassador Nathan Sales, Coordinator for Counterterrorism at State Department, Panel for the Washington Institute's Center for Near East Policy, https://www.washington institute.org/policy-analysis/view/tehrans-international-targets-assessing-iranian-terror-sponsorship.

[75] Byman, "Proxy Power."

the ability and capacity to develop a nuclear bomb within one year of deciding to do so.[76] If Iran were to acquire a nuclear weapon, it is likely that other countries in the region would also seek a nuclear capability to offset the bipolar struggle between Iran and Israel (whom most defense analysts believe already have nuclear weapons). Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt as the states most likely to pursue nuclear weapons capability should Iran acquire them.[77]

The Saudi prince, intelligence chief, and the ambassador to the United States, Turki al-Faisal, has already stated that Saudi Arabia might follow suit in response to an Iranian nuclear arsenal.[78] Saudi Arabia and Iran have a deep historical rivalry, exacerbated by religious tensions. Iran and Saudi Arabia see themselves as the world's leading Shi'a and Sunni powers respectively. Being the historical birthplace of Islam and holding the two most significant religious sites (Mecca and Medina), Saudi Arabia has always seen itself as the leader of the Muslim world. However, this idea was challenged in 1979 by the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which wanted to establish itself as the leader of the Muslim world and export its particular type of theocracy beyond its borders.[79]

While not fighting each other directly, these tensions have been playing themselves out in proxy regional conflicts (e.g. in Yemen) in a way that is similar to the Cold War fought between the Soviet Union and the United States. The removal of Saddam Hussein resulting from the U.S.-

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[76] Henry Sokolski, "In the Middle East, Soon Everyone Will Want the Bomb," Foreign Policy, May 21, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/21/in-the-middle-east-soon-everyone-will-want-the-bomb/.

[77] Krepinevich, "Critical Mass," 50.

[78] The Associated Press, "Prince Hints Saudi Arabia May Join Nuclear Arms Race," *The New York Times*, December 6, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/07/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-may-seek-nuclear-weapons-prince-says.html.

[79] Jonathan Marcus, "Why Saudi Arabia and Iran are Bitter Rivals," *BBC News*, November 18, 2017, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42008809.

led invasion of Iraq in 2003 created a serious power vacuum in the region and has caused various Middle Eastern powers and terrorist groups (such as the Islamic State) to compete for influence. Since then, the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings in the Arab world further caused instability, giving Iran and Saudi Arabia further opportunity to promote their influence and brand of Islam, especially within Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, and Lebanon.[80]

The strategic rivalry seems to be getting worse because Iran appears to be gaining strength. In Syria, after more than seven years of civil war, President Bashar al-Assad (who is sympathetic to, and receives significant support from the Iranian regime) seems to have solidified his continued rule.[81] Even though there is still Kurdish opposition to the Syrian ruling regime in the Northeast, as well as in another rebel stronghold, it appears likely that Assad will remain in power, thus giving Iran a strategic boost.

Saudi Arabia has also continued to involve itself in a violent and costly civil war waging in Yemen between the Saudi/U.S/United Kingdon/French-backed government of Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, and the Houthi Shi'a Muslim rebel movement in the northern Saada province.[82] The coalition fighting against the Houthi rebels fear a permanent Iranian presence in a Shi'a-majority state. There have been accusations from Saudi Arabian and U.S. officials that Iran is providing funding, weapons, and logistical support to the Houthi rebels – claims that Iran

[80] Marcus, "Saudi Iran Rivals."

[81] Christopher Phillips, "The World Abetted Assad's Victory in Syria," *The Atlantic*, August 4, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/08/assad-victory-syria/566522/.

[82] "Yemen Conflict Explained in 400 Words," *BBC News,* June 13, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-44466574.

denies.[83] To address this regional struggle, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former Defense Secretary James Mattis proposed a ceasefire and negotiations to halt the three years of conflict in Yemen.[84]

The Turkish Ambassador to the U.S., Namik Tan, also stated that Turkey would not tolerate Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and would not close the issue of whether their country would acquire nuclear weapons as well.[85] Andrew Krepinevich claims that an Iranian nuclear weapon would likely cause other significant players in the region to seek capabilities of their own. Saudi Arabia would possibly acquire a "Sunni Arab Bomb" in response to Iran's "Shi'a bomb."[86] Saudi Arabia could potentially outsource its nuclear capability as well, relying on another primarily-Sunni nation such as Pakistan to deploy nuclear weapons on its soil.[87] It is also likely that other global superpowers would seek to back critical players in the region to support their objectives.[88] If this were to be so, the Middle East could devolve into an even more dangerous proxy front, similar to the Cold War.

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[83] "Yemeni Conflict," *BBC News*.

[84] Carol Morello, Missy Ryan, "U.S. Says the Time to End the Saudi-Backed War in Yemen is Now," *The Washington Post*, October 31, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-says-the-time-to-end-the-saudi-backed-war-in-yemen-is-now/2018/10/31/67d930ea-dd2c-11e8-b3f0-62607289efee_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e88316ec5365.

[85] Jeremy Herb, "Ambassador: Turkey 'Cannot Tolerate' Iran Getting Nukes," *The Hill*, December 8, 2011, https://thehill.com/policy/defense/198237-ambassador-turkey-cannot-tolerate-iran-getting-nukes.

[86] Krepinevich, "Critical Mass," iii.

[87] Krepinevich, "Critical Mass," 61.

[88] Krepinevich, "Critical Mass," 61.

Review

The Iranian threat is significant, because of the destabilizing activities in which it currently takes part, as well as the implications and potential of a breakout into a nuclear state. In the case of an Iranian breakout, it is extremely likely that the Middle East would devolve into further chaos, which would threaten U.S. and allied interests in the region, and ultimately even more broadly. To address this threat, it is imperative that the United States tailor its WMD deterrence and non-proliferation strategy to be directed specifically for Iran.

The deterrence strategy used during the Cold War may not be sufficient to tackle this challenge, mostly because it assumed that actors around the world make rational decisions in the same way that the American policymakers do. On the contrary, Iranian leaders have a completely different cultural background in contrast with the leadership of the United States. Because of this, U.S. deterrence strategy may need to be reevaluated to consider Iranian values and rationality. By understanding the evolution and fallacies associated with previous U.S. deterrence strategies, the task of generating an approach by U.S. leadership may lead to a greater understanding of the complexities and uncertainties of nuclear deterrence.

THE EVOLUTION OF UNITED STATES DETERRENCE POLICY

"Deterrence itself is not a pre-eminent value; the primary values are safety and morality."[89]

Herman Khan – In Defense of Thinking, 2009

In order to understand why a tailored deterrence strategy is necessary to contain and defeat the Islamic Republic of Iran if conflict were to break out, one must understand the foundation and evolution of American deterrence policy up to this point. While deterrence did not fail during the Cold War, a new threat environment has emerged where a single formula or theory is not enough to contend against these threats. By understanding the fallacies associated with traditional Cold War deterrence, devising a modern approach that improves upon the shortfalls of previous deterrence theory will be simpler to attain.

The idea of deterrence at its core is a military strategy in which one side attempts to manipulate an opponent's strategic calculus with the possible threat of reprisal to a hostile action. By doing so, an opponent will be less likely to assume that any initial action will meet their objectives, and will therefore be deterred from pursuing those goals. Deterrence has been present throughout the history of humanity, but took on a completely different role in global affairs with the advent of nuclear weapons.

On August 6th and August 9th, 1945, the world forever changed when U.S. President Harry Truman ordered the dropping of two atomic bombs, "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" on the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki respectively.[90] The bombs caused massive devastation

[89] Paul Dragos Aligica, and Kenneth R. Weinstein, eds, *The Essential Herman Kahn: In Defense of Thinking* (Lexington Books, 2009), 35.

[90] "Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," History, December 20, 2018, https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/bombing-of-hiroshima-and-nagasaki.

and convinced the Japanese to surrender, ending the Second World War. By observing the devastation that these weapons would cause in a wartime scenario, intellectuals and leaders began to examine how atomic bombs would alter the perceptions of warfare and victory in the nuclear age.

One of the first atomic age defense intellectuals to extensively write on the changes to American military strategy was Bernard Brodie. In his magnum opus, *The Absolute Weapon*, Brodie spoke about the altering effects that nuclear weapons would have upon U.S. security policy, stating: "Thus the first and most vital step in any American security program for the age of atomic bombs is to take measures to guarantee to ourselves in case of attack the possibility of retaliation in kind. Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them."[91] In making that statement, Brodie was not for the moment concerned about who would *win* the next war in which atomic bombs would be used, but rather how any such war might be avoided.

The conception of this idea led to the exploration by academics, strategists, scientists, and those in many other civilian and military occupations to begin to formulate theories of how to prevent a nuclear war; or if prevention were to fail, how to win it. These thoughts and plans were designed with a Soviet Union adversary in mind, as in August 1949 that country completed its first nuclear test, ushering in the inevitability of a nuclear weapon stockpile buildup.[92] While many persons wrote about and had an influence on the subject, two leading intellectuals stood out above the rest, Herman Kahn and Thomas Schelling.

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[91] Bernard Brodie, ed., *The Absolute Weapon* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1946).

[92] Lawrence Freedman, "Strategy for an Atomic Stalemate," *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 60.

Kahn's Credible Deterrent

Herman Kahn first started theorizing about nuclear deterrence strategy at the RAND Corporation, where he helped further provide analysis and criticism regarding the nuclear strategy of the Eisenhower Administration known as the New Look.[93] The New Look was an effort to minimize the conventional military gap between the Soviets and western powers in Europe by utilizing as leverage the higher numbers of nuclear weapons the U.S. had in its stockpile at the time. This doctrine was also known as "massive retaliation," which attempted to solve the problem of communist expansion by making it clear that Soviet aggression anywhere would be met with a nuclear attack, "at a time and place of America's choosing."[94] If provoked, the United States affirmed that they would enact a nuclear first strike.

However, analysts at RAND such as Herman Kahn noted certain fallacies and shortfalls within the New Look. For instance, the Eisenhower administration never specified the amount of aggression that would qualify to trigger U.S. massive retaliation. The Eisenhower administration bet on the fact that this ambiguity would serve as enough of a disincentive that the Soviets would default to being cautious. However, critics believed that this policy left an "invitation" for the Soviets to preemptively utilize a first-strike on U.S. bomber bases, leaving the Americans without a nuclear capability and force them into a ground war against a much superior conventional force.[95]

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[93] Louis Menand, "Fat Man," *The New Yorker*, June 27, 2005, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/06/27/fat-man.

[94] Menand, "Fat Man."

[95] Branislav Slantchev, "National Security Strategy: The New Look, 1953-1960," January 1, 2014, http://slantchev.ucsd.edu/courses/ps142j/lectures/new-look.pdf.

To address the problems with massive retaliation, Herman Kahn toured the country delivering lectures through Princeton University's Center for International Studies. This series of lectures was eventually published in a comprehensive volume (with other added material) known as *On Thermonuclear War*.[96] Within this extensive text, Herman Kahn mapped out what he believed was necessary to establish a credible deterrent.

By recognizing that a breakout of nuclear war was entirely possible, Herman Kahn stated coldly and objectively that if nuclear war were to occur, tens to hundreds of millions of humans could perish. Going further, he stated that, "a thermonuclear war is quite likely to be an unprecedented catastrophe for the defender… But an 'unprecedented' catastrophe can be a far cry from an 'unlimited' one."[97] Even though the loss of such life would seem unthinkable to the leadership of the United States, Kahn argued that unless the United States was able to demonstrate its willingness to wage war and lose massive numbers of its citizens and amounts of infrastructure (no matter how undesirable), and that it could still accept those losses and survive, its deterrence strategy would have no meaning.[98]

In response to the Eisenhower administration's policy of "massive retaliation," Kahn put forth the idea that only having an offensive and first-strike capability based on nuclear weapons alone was not conceivable, moral, or credible.[99] Herman Kahn's solution to the issues related to deterrence, while thoroughly presented and complex in his book, can be simplified into the idea of maintaining a credible "second-strike" capability. He wrote, "At the minimum, an adequate

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[96] Menand, "Fat Man."

[97] Menand, "Fat Man."

[98] Menand, "Fat Man."

[99] Herman Kahn, and Evan Jones, *On Thermonuclear War*, (Routledge, 2017), https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781351501798.

deterrent for the United States must provide an objective basis for a Soviet calculation that would persuade them that, no matter how skillful or ingenious they were, an attack on the United States would lead to a very high risk, if not certainty, of large-scale destruction to Soviet civil society and military forces."[100] For utility purposes, this minimum and appropriate goal of deterrence condensed itself into three points: Deterring a direct attack on the Homeland; Extended Deterrence; and, Lex Talionis.[101]

Deterring a direct attack on the homeland was the first of Kahn's goals to establish deterrence. To do so, the United States would need to establish a system to make nuclear weapons survivable. In completing this objective, the U.S. would seek a broad and almost limitless range of capabilities to deter attacks. For instance, the U.S. might have a number of threats to Soviet leadership, military forces, civilian population, and infrastructure, such as buried and reinforced missile silos and other "counterforce" capabilities.[102] Kahn argued, that if nuclear weapons were not survivable, then it would make the U.S. rely on quick reaction to deter a direct attack, making the U.S. seem "trigger happy."[103] This could in part make opponents compelled to strike first, because Kahn notes in a nuclear war that a first strike carries a huge advantage for the one enacting it.[104]

Secondly, and going hand-in-hand with deterring a direct attack, was the idea of extended deterrence. In Kahn's view, the threat of Soviet invasion of U.S. allies (especially those in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) challenged U.S. credibility in its deterrence policy.

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[100] Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War*, 557.

[101] Kahn, 126.

[102] Keith B. Payne, *The Great American Gamble* (National Institute Press, 2008), 37.

[103] Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War,* 158.

[104] Kahn, 144.

Opposing the original Eisenhower doctrine of a sizeable but straightforward nuclear offensive threat, Kahn alleged that, "extended nuclear deterrence based on a threat that would be suicidal if executed could be viewed as an incredible bluff, and could consequently invite challenges."[105] In order to re-establish this credibility, the United States would need to ensure an extended deterrence for its allies against the Soviets.

Kahn estimated that to achieve extended deterrence, the United States would need to create and maintain reliable missile, air, counterforce, and civil defense systems. As noted earlier, Kahn believed that in order to establish a credible deterrent, the United States would need to solidify in the enemy's mind that the country was completely ready to engage in a nuclear war, and escalate if need be, all the while protecting its citizenry.[106] If the enemy believed that the United States was committed to defending itself first and foremost, then it would lend more integrity to its vow that it would also then provide its allies protection under its nuclear umbrella. Furthermore, building up these defenses would diminish an enemy's first strike capability, thus giving itself the necessary resources to provide a credible deterrent, and also save as many lives as possible if a nuclear exchange were to occur.[107]

Finally, Kahn believed that the idea of "Lex Talionis" was essential in his strategy.[108] Lex Talionis (or, an eye for an eye) refers to the principle of Talion Law, which was prevalent in Babylonian, Biblical, and Roman law, in which one would "receive as punishment precisely

[105] Payne, *Gamble*, 30.

[106] Payne, 36-38, 53.

[107] Payne, 53.

[108] Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War,* 126.

those injuries and damages they had inflicted upon their victims."[109] This policy translated into deterrence strategy describes the ability to engage in small levels of retaliation in response to small level attacks. The idea is that if the United States could reply to any Soviet attack in kind, then it would be able to alter the Soviet decision-making process, e.g. that an attack against the United States would be worthless because the same amount of damage would be dealt back simultaneously. Also, when added to the other two of Khan's goals of deterrence (Protecting the Homeland and Extended Deterrence) and the mechanisms of which they entail, Kahn thought that the Soviets would have no other choice than to assume that the United States would be able to control and "deliberately initiate nuclear escalation, if necessary, to protect vital interests."[110] These assurances would give the United States credibility in the Soviet view, which Khan saw as "a threat that leaves little to chance."[111]

Schelling's Threat that Leaves Something to Chance

During this period when intellectuals were debating the philosophy, uses, and the future of nuclear weapons, one other theorist stood out as a leader on the debate alongside Kahn. However, this person played an antithetical role. Thomas Schelling was an economist who had also spent time at the RAND Corporation, and his work concerned nuclear deterrence as well. Most of his writings came to be compiled into the 1960 study, *The Strategy of Conflict*.

In this work, Schelling came to an almost entirely different and distinct solution to what Kahn had suggested previously as the solution to establishing a credible deterrent against the

[109] The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Talion Law," Encyclopedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/talion.

[110] Payne, *Gamble,* 52.

[111] Payne, 52.

Soviet threat. In what eventually became known as the doctrine of "Mutual Assured Destruction" (M.A.D.), Schelling argued, in sharp contrast to Kahn, that, "Deterrence is based on the threat that leaves something to chance."[112] M.A.D. can be condensed to the idea that the destructive power of nuclear weapons is so mighty, that an attack by either adversary would invite a response that would be unacceptably lethal and destructive. However, if both sides were to commit to keeping their defenses open and leaving a retaliatory or second-strike capability intact by ensuring the survival of their nuclear weapons, then neither side would participate in an action that could potentially escalate to nuclear war because it would result in the mutually-assured destruction of both parties.

Three main themes arise from Schelling's theory of deterrence that leaves something to chance: The targeting of urban-industrial targets is sufficient enough to achieve deterrence; defenses of any sort are inherently destabilizing; and, that one does not need a logical deterrent threat to deter war.[113] In contrast with Kahn, Schelling believed that a nation did not need a broad range of capabilities to hold hostage a variety of enemy targets, but that merely targeting the urban industrial complex of an enemy (populations and industrial assets) was sufficient to achieve the desired outcome.[114] Schelling argued that by doing so, a nation would put under threat the critical elements of what an adversary's leadership holds valuable. If a nation were to end a nuclear exchange with their cities and population destroyed, then it would not be viewed as beneficial to have a conflict escalate to that point in the first place.[115]

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[112] Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict,* (Harvard University press, 1963), 187.

[113] Payne, *Gamble*, 32, 40-49, 51.

[114] Payne, 51.

[115] Payne, 45-49.

The second theme prevalent throughout Schelling's theory of a threat that leaves something to chance is the belief that defenses are inherently destabilizing. Because the idea of M.A.D. is that neither side would wish to take part in an action that could escalate into a nuclear exchange (which would quite likely result in the assured destruction of both sides), defenses which could eliminate or undermine that balance would then incentivize either side to strike first to gain the advantage.

In what he coins as "the reciprocal fear of surprise attack," Schelling stated, "If surprise carries an advantage, it is worthwhile to avert it by striking first. Fear that the other may be about to strike in the mistaken belief that we are about to strike gives us a motive for striking, and so justifies the other's motive. But if the gains from even a successful surprise are less desired than no war at all, there is no 'fundamental' basis for an attack by either side."[116]

What Schelling conveyed in this message is that if one side could withstand a retaliatory response from an opponent after an initial first strike, it might lead the opponent with a lesser defensive advantage to strike first (in fears that if they do not, they will be outmatched in an exchange). However, if neither side contained a defensive capability, the only result of nuclear war would be the destruction of both sides.[117] As a result, Schelling's theory calls upon the elimination of civil, air, and missile defense, so that an enemy will believe that the balance of M.A.D. is credible.

Finally, the third principal component of Schelling's deterrence strategy is the acknowledgment that a nation does not need a logical deterrent threat to deter war. In distinction

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[116] Thomas Schelling, "The Reciprocal Fear of Surprise Attack," The RAND Corporation, May 28, 1958, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2007/P1342.pdf.

[117] "The Role of Missile Defense in Nuclear Deterrence," https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1020094.pdf.

to Kahn's threat that leaves little to chance, Schelling noted that deterrence works through a fog of war, in which the uncertainty of escalation leads both sides to be averse to actions and accidents that could potentially escalate into nuclear war.[118] In addition, an actor such as the United States could purposely escalate a conflict, to "intimidate an adversary and expose him to a shared risk, or deterring him by showing that if he makes a contrary move he may disturb us so that we slip over the brink whether we want to or not, carrying him with us."[119]

This nuclear game of chicken became known as "brinksmanship," in which Schelling described the applicability of the United States "rocking the boat" by deliberately letting a situation get somewhat out of hand, to coerce an adversary to back down out of fear of further escalation.[120] Instead of Kahn's approach to establishing a credible deterrent by being able to control escalation at any time that one wishes (with a broad range of capabilities), Schelling instead believed that deterrence would be kept intact by the vague notion of uncontrolled escalation, thus not needing a logical deterrent.

Cold War Nuclear Policy

While Schelling and Kahn were the primary spokesmen in the debate on nuclear strategy during the Cold War, and both subsequentially influenced U.S. nuclear planning, it is apparent that Schelling's theories were the ones that primarily guided U.S. leadership in the development of nuclear policy vis-à-vis the Soviets and other adversaries. Even though there were some early missile defense endeavors (e.g. Project Nike, which employed nuclear tipped proximity missiles

[118] Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict, 187.

[119] Barry Nalebuff, "Brinkmanship and Nuclear Deterrence: The Neutrality of Escalation," Princeton University, 1986, http://faculty.som.yale.edu/barrynalebuff/Brinkmanship_and_Nuclear_Deterrence.pdf.

[120] Nalebuff, "Brinkmanship."

to overcome the hit-to-kill accuracy problem), which were in opposition to Schelling's hypothesis that such efforts were destabilizing, none of them were adopted to a great magnitude, or even close to a magnitude of what Kahn would have recommended.[121] Furthermore, it was also a prudent decision by U.S. policy makers because such systems were expensive, and the technology was not well-developed. It is also apparent that Kahn's theories were not mainstream in U.S. decision making, due to the lack of large-scale civil and air defense preparations in the U.S. homeland.[122] While the U.S. maintained counterforce capabilities within its nuclear arsenal (e.g. Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle warheads) that corresponded to Kahn's thinking, the emphasis in U.S. policy more closely followed Schelling's theories by ensuring an effective nuclear triad that had a strong second-strike capability.

Schelling's deterrence strategy offered a technical engineering solution to the nuclear problem, by creating a numerical solution for the number of weapons needed for a second-strike capability in order to hold an enemy hostage. Robert McNamara, Defense Secretary for Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, famously created the metrics for what he deemed to be the "unacceptable damage" needed to sustain a deterrence against an adversary, which was defined as "20-25 percent population and 50 percent industry."[123] If the United States could create a survivable nuclear force (via the nuclear triad of bombers, missiles and submarines) which retained the capability of inflicting this amount of damage on an adversary as a second-strike capability, then it would lead to credible deterrence and thus stability. This policy was also more straightforward to sustain, as a precise number and capability of weapons

[121] Zach Berger, Kristin Horitski, and Abel Romero, "U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense: An Overview of Current and Future Ballistic Missile Defense Capabilities," Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, 2016, 4.

[122] Payne, *Gamble*, 121.

[123] Payne, 21.

would be cheaper to maintain than following Kahn's policy of essentially unlimited buildup of nuclear forces, which would be too costly to create, maintain and control.

Furthermore, due to the view that the buildup of defensive forces and the fielding of offensive forces which threatened targets other than cities/industry was destabilizing, M.A.D. left open the possibility of arms control and diplomacy between adversaries.[124] Schelling notes in his Nobel autobiography that the role of arms control in U.S. nuclear policy "should be oriented toward measures that precluded either side's acquiring a pre-emptive capability, a 'first-strike' capability as it was called. And this objective, somewhat paradoxically, entailed arranging for the safety not of populations and industrial assets but of retaliatory nuclear weapons."[125]

Downsides and Fallacies of Kahn and Schelling's Theories

In the end, Schelling's theories were justified with U.S. religious principles as to whether the use or possession of nuclear weapons were ethical, and helped define the mainstream thinking regarding deterrence for decades to come.[126] However, as one looks to apply deterrence theory to the modern threat environment, it becomes apparent that the theories made prominent during the Cold War are fallible, not entirely relevant, or even unachievable.

Herman Kahn's credible deterrent was unlikely to succeed. Firstly, in order to achieve the all-around capabilities needed to hold the full range of enemy targets hostage and create a defensive infrastructure sufficient to make an opponent recognize U.S. credibility in the event of

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[124] Schelling, Strategy of Conflict, 136, 176, 230.

[125] Thomas Schelling, "Biographical," The Nobel Prize, 2005, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/2005/schelling/biographical/.

[126] "U.S. Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on War and Peace," Nuclear Files, May 3, 1983, http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/ethics/issues/religious/us-catholic-bishops-pastoral-letter.htm.

an escalation, the United States would have needed to spend more money and resources than was feasible at the time. It was determined that "at each level of damage the defense had to spend three times as much as the offense."[127] Much of the required technology was not available at the time, e.g. missile defense. While substantial improvements have been made that could be successfully applied to other threats and situations, the United States does still not have the capacity to track, target, and intercept a vast arsenal of nuclear weapons. While some could argue that it depends on how much priority a nation puts on achieving these systems determines their actual achievability, policymakers and legislators would not likely be willing to spend massive amounts of funding (possibly harming the U.S. economy), investing in systems that are not proven or achievable at the time.

Furthermore, in contrast to Schelling, Kahn's buildup of capabilities did not leave much room for arms control to reduce threats and costs. Kahn's theories called for a massive military buildup to ensure credibility, which arms control efforts would limit. Instead, Schelling's theory identified a critical number of survivable assets, thus ensuring a second-strike capability, that would therefore convince enemy leadership that an attack would not be worthwhile. For policymakers at the time, Kahn's ideas put limits on the potential promise and effectiveness of diplomacy and was not a path worth taking.[128]

Schelling's theories ultimately contained downsides and fallacies which negated their effectiveness in applying deterrence to a range of competitors in what became the post-Cold War environment. Unlike Kahn, Schelling's theories contained no "Plan B" in case deterrence failed. Because of his view that defenses were destabilizing, and populations needed to be left

[127] Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 238.

[128] Payne, *Gamble*, 155.

unguarded to establish deterrence, the entire population of the United States would be vulnerable if there were to be a nuclear exchange. Fear of this threat is not unreasonable, as accidents have occurred throughout history via miscalculations, and in the fog of war.

Secondly, Schelling's theory of the United States being able to "rock the boat" in order to escalate a conflict so that the Soviets would eventually de-escalate did not take into account that an opponent may be able to "rock the boat," as well.[129] The level at which a nation would stop "rocking the boat" is entirely unclear. If both sides believed that they would be able to get the other side to "chicken out" then it is possible that a conflict could unintentionally escalate to a nuclear exchange.[130] Because the idea is that uncertainty would cause both actors to act cautiously in the fog of war, it overlooks the fact that this is no certainty at all… which would be a massive and unacceptable gamble for political, military or strategic planners alike.

Most importantly, for both Kahn and Schelling's deterrence strategies to work, an enemy had to be a rational actor. Keith Payne defines this traditional definition of rationality as, "a mode of decision-making that logically links desired goals with decisions about how to realize those goals."[131] Rational actors will choose a course of action, because they have weighed the cost-benefit analysis based upon "available information," and that a particular "course is calculated to be most suitable for achieving the preferred goal."[132] However, United States policymakers assumed that the rationality of other nations would mirror their own rationality, leading those nations to make predictable decisions. For example, it was accepted that the

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[129] Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 260.

[130] Payne, *Gamble*, 261.

[131] Keith Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction,* (University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 7.

[132] Payne, 7.

Soviets would have a similar rationality as the United States, as seen through McNamara's metric that one could achieve a deterrent by holding 20 to 25 percent of a population, and 50 percent of a country's industry at risk.

However, the question remains whether there are opponents in the world who do not have the same value hierarchy as the United States, and what would they deem to be unacceptable damage? If someone such as Saddam Hussein, a man who sacrificed and murdered untold millions of his own people to achieve his goals, had a nuclear arsenal, would the United States truly be able to hold his population at risk as a credible deterrent? Rationality in the sense of Schelling and Kahn, which influenced nuclear policy during the Cold War, did not take into consideration the value hierarchy, decision making, honor, religion, and critical cultural drivers of behavior that determine how an unknown variety of adversaries would make their decisions. Included in internationally-recognized political analyst John Stoessinger's monumental work, *Why Nations Go to War*, are a myriad of case studies (e.g. Hitler's attack on Russia, Saddam Hussein's wars with Iran and Kuwait, the "Sixty Years' War" between the Israelis and Arabs, the India and Pakistan's conflicts, etc.) in which a lack of understanding of an opponent's thought processes led to miscalculations which resulted in conflict.[133] This recognition that wars and conflicts often occur because of a fundamental lack of insight into an opponent's decision-making processes is a strong motivation for U.S. deterrence policy to be re-examined, so that the nation will not make similar mistakes in the future.

[133] Stoessinger, *Why Nations go to War.*

Change to a New Deterrence Model

Robert Jervis identifies four waves of thinking in deterrence theory.[134] The first, as seen primarily through those such as Bernard Brodie, acknowledges the need for a deterrence strategy in the newly formed atomic age. The second wave, headed by theorists such as Schelling and Kahn continued to develop these theories, often utilizing game theory and a "rational actor" model to provide a strategic concept for policymakers. Because of the gaps within these traditional deterrence frameworks, a third wave of deterrence emerged, one which sought to determine how traditional deterrence theory would play out when empirically tested against case studies, and how conventional deterrence failed against "irrational" actors.[135]

After the Cold War, alongside the new and changing threat environment, the fourth wave of deterrence began to take shape, one that is continuing to this day. This fourth wave gradually began to view the applicability of deterrence to face not only large strategic competitors, but also non-traditional threats such as rogue states, terrorist networks, and asymmetric warfare.[136] Instead of having narrow or shortsighted approaches to deterring competitors, it is more applicable to tailor specific and appropriate strategies to different adversaries. This strategy includes emphasizing the fact that these other opponents do not view nuclear weapons in the

[134] Frans-Paul van der Putten, Minke Meijnders, and Jan Rood, "Deterrence as a Security Concept Against Non-Traditional Threats," Clingendael Institute, June 2015, https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2015/clingendael_monitor_2015_en/2_deterrence_as_a_security_concept_against_non_traditional_threats/.

[135] Van der Putten, Meijnders and Rood, "Deterrence as a Security Concept."

[136] Van der Putten, Meijnders and Rood, "Deterrence as a Security Concept."

same sense that the United States does, and that they have different value systems which influence the strategic choices that they make.[137]

Review

Soon after the first atomic bombs were used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States, intellectuals began to ponder how to avoid and deter nuclear war during the arms race which was bound to ensue. The first attempt by the Eisenhower administration emphasized massive retaliation and an offensive first strike capability to dissuade enemy forces from initiating conflict on any level. Herman Kahn noted the problems associated with this early deterrence theory, becoming a leading scholar on the subject. Kahn's theory of deterrence underscored three necessities; deterring an attack the homeland by making nuclear weapons survivable, obtaining a reliably extended deterrence to allies by bolstering homeland defenses, and creating flexible offensive forces which would be able to strike back in kind to any weapons an opponent might have.

Concurrently with Kahn, Thomas Schelling arose as the other leading academic on deterrence theory. However, Schelling's positions were often in direct opposition with Kahn's, staging the debate for theoretical supremacy regarding deterrence in the Cold War era. Schelling's theory called upon the realization that a capability to inflict a second-strike upon urban-industrial targets was sufficient enough to dissuade an opponent from offensive action, that homeland defenses are inherently destabilizing, and that one does not need a logical deterrent to prevent a nuclear war.

[137] Jeffrey Knopf, "The Fourth Wave in Deterrence Research," *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, (2010): 1-33.

In the end, Schelling's theories were more sought after by U.S. leadership than Kahn's, as they were quantifiable, affordable and achievable, and they left the door open for diplomacy and arms control. However, the theories of both Schelling and Kahn relied upon the notion that an opponent would be a rational actor, applying the same cost-benefit analysis and human values that the United States would. It became apparent in the post-Cold War environment that new and emerging threats and opponents were not necessarily going to think about rationality in the same manner as the United States, thus ushering in third wave deterrence theory.

It is essential to be aware of this history of U.S. deterrence policy in order to establish that today's threat environment, and the range of appropriate responses, are quite different from what they were when these earlier strategies and policies were prevalent. If one were to try and implement these previous models to the present geo-political situation and current U.S. military strategy, then the United States would be at a disadvantage, since many emerging threats and actors think in terms different than what the U.S. would have previously thought possible or rational. While scientific/military technology and deterrence policy has changed and improved exponentially since the Cold War, it is still critically important for U.S. leadership to consider and understand the motivations and justifications driving the policy decisions of opponents, so that it can best avoid or be fully-prepared for potential conflicts.

In order to establish a system in which the United States can tailor nuclear policy based upon the variety of ways that a current adversary can react, or the actions that such an adversary might consider rational, it is imperative that a framework be established to act as a supplemental tool to assist the appropriate creation of these policies and strategies. To the benefit of the United States, such a tool was developing alongside the previous deterrence strategies used by our nation. This paper will attempt to examine and reaffirm this tool, and related areas of study as a

necessity for the United States to tailor nuclear policies towards an array of adversaries. This tool is known as strategic culture.

STRATEGIC CULTURE AS A SUPPLEMENTAL TOOL FOR WMD POLICY

"People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against."[138]

Sam Huntington – The Clash of Civilizations

From the end of the bipolar era of the Cold War there emerged a new threshold for policymakers to begin debating the utility of tailored deterrence strategies and implementing them. Third-wave deterrence strategy acknowledged that one would need to gain access to the thoughts, motivations, and value hierarchy of any adversary, so that one could attempt to predict the sort of behavior or action that this opponent would be likely to take. The emergence of constructivism contributed to this change, by realizing that cultural variables play a role in the formulation of a state's identity and decision-making structure.[139] Out of this need for a new policy framework, the concept of "strategic culture" emerged to respond to this challenge.

At its core, strategic culture emphasizes how leaders of other nations make grand strategic decisions based in large part upon cultural influences. This is important to consider, because the use of Cold War deterrence strategy in a post-Cold War environment can cause policymakers to have difficulty in understanding the intentions, reasoning, and likely actions of new and fundamentally different adversaries, often due to mirror imaging based on previous experience.

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[138] Sam Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* (Simon & Schuster, 2011).

[139] David Haglund, "What Good is Strategic Culture?," In *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, ed. Jeannie Johnson, Kerry Kartchner, and Jeffrey Larsen, (Springer, 2009), 21.

What is Strategic Culture?

The Beton Michael Kaneb Professor of National Security and Military Affairs at Harvard University, Stephen Peter Rosen, defines strategic culture as the "beliefs and assumptions that frame… decisions to go to war, preferences for the offensive, expansionist or defensive modes of warfare, and levels of wartime casualties that would be acceptable."[140] However, strategic culture in simple terms is the values, norms, and perceptions embedded into a state's cultural identity that play a role in shaping the grand strategic decisions which that state makes. While western rationality is primarily rooted in empirical testing (making decisions on a cost-benefit calculus through trial and error), other cultures have an entirely different perception of the pathways to deciding what a universal truth is; which could be based upon past experiences, spirituality, or other sacred values.[141] This statement does not mean that states which make decisions based upon these other modes of thought are not "rational," but instead within their spheres of thought, they have created a different system of rationality with which they calculate the costs and benefits related to strategic objectives.

It is important to note the many sources from which a strategic culture emerges (both physical and intangible), such as geography, history, national symbols, and numerous others.[142] When considering a state's geography, influences such as proximity to great powers, contested boundaries, natural resources, and allies or enemies in the vicinity one's territory influence a nation's culture. As an example, Iran has throughout its history been invaded continuously or

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[140] Jeffrey Lantis, "From Clausewitz to Constructivism," In *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, ed. Jeannie Johnson, Kerry Kartchner, and Jeffrey Larsen, (Springer, 2009), 39.

[141] Lantis "Clausewitz to Constructivism," 39.

[142] Lantis, 40.

influenced by outside powers, fought to control its boundaries and resources (as seen in the eight-year war with Iraq), and is in close proximity to self-proclaimed enemies of its ideology (Sunni Arabs, Israel). This constant fear and paranoia resulting from its geographical circumstances can help explain why Iran would wish to obtain the largest and most potent ballistic missile system in the entire Middle East.[143]

Secondly, history and experience have an immense role in the creation of a state's strategic culture. A prominent author on strategic culture, Jeffrey Lantis asserts that because international relations theory has categorized states into multiple classes such as, "weak to strong, colonial to postcolonial, and premodern, modern, and postmodern," the idea is raised that states in these different categories face different strategic challenges.[144] The evolution of states from these different categories can influence how their strategic preferences and cultures change, as well.

States with a long and extensive history often have a complex strategic culture that has evolved through the years. Iran is such a state, which has experienced most of the changes listed above. Powerful national experiences, such as the development and persecution of the Shi'a religion, outside intervention, revolution, and massive numbers of casualties in war have modified the way that Iranians view the world, what they believe that they need to do to keep their national narrative alive, and their country safe and prosperous.

Strategic culture can also arise from the variant myths and symbols consistent with a society's cultural narrative. John Calvert notes that the idea of myths within the study of strategic culture can refer to, "a body of beliefs that express the fundamental, largely unconscious or

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[143] Michael Elleman, "Iran's Ballistic Missile Program," The Iran Primer, August, 2015, https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-ballistic-missile-program.

[144] Lantis, 40.

assumed political values of a society – in short, as a dramatic expression of ideology."[145] These myths and symbols can take many forms, such as critical texts, influential figures, national narratives, and spiritual traditions and values. Iran has exhibited behavioral traits that stem from national myths present within their society. One example would be a legacy of anti-westernization left behind from the influence of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who was the face of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and served as the Iranian Supreme Leader until his death.

Alongside with understanding the sources from which strategic culture emanates, it is important to note how a strategic culture gets passed from generation to generation, and who controls it. In most cases, leadership and elites within the political system get to interpret their nation's history and develop a foreign policy which reflects their culture. Jeffrey Lantis asserts that it is, "clear that elites are often the purveyors of the common historical narrative."[146] Some of the political institutions from where these elites control their cultural narrative to enact strategic foreign policy are military organizations, political parties, and domestic coalitions.[147]

Some cultural narratives are more prone to be held tighter by the ruling elites, depending on the type of society. For example, Iranian society has a considerable difference, in terms of holding and exercising power, between its elites and regular population, reminiscent of the caste systems present throughout Iran's long history. Because there is a significant gap in power between Iranian elites and those in the lower classes, rising to a position of power or gaining an influential role usually necessitates nepotism and/or birthright status. Consequently, it would be harder for new leaders to emerge with a different outlook on foreign policy and Iran's cultural

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[145] John Calvert, "The Mythic Foundations of Radical Islam," *Orbis* 48 (2004), 29-41.

[146] Lantis, "Clausewitz to Constructivism," 42.

[147] Lantis, 42.

narrative, because acceptance into the elite society would necessitate adherence to the social and political principles previously set by past leadership.

Lantis further states that strategic culture is likely to change for three reasons: External shocks, foreign policy behavior, and elite confirmation.[148] An external shock would be an occurrence from outside of the society or nation that challenges existing norms, and which requires an immediate response. Foreign policy behavior indicates that strategic culture may change if a foreign policy objective comes into conflict with already held and contradictory beliefs in a strategic culture. Finally, elite confirmation is necessary for a change in strategic culture to be accepted into society. Berger states that strategic culture is a "negotiated reality," discussed and decided upon among a nation's elites. Because of this, elites act as the gatekeepers as to whether or not changes to strategic culture are in line with the reality that they previously set forth.[149]

What Role does Strategic Culture have in Tailoring Policy?

Jack Snyder, the Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Relations at Columbia University, was among one of the first to suggest that strategic culture could play an influential role in predicting the nuclear strategy of opponents. In his study on Soviet nuclear strategy, his analysis declared that because, "elites articulate a unique strategic culture related to security-military affairs," that, "a set of general beliefs, attitudes, and behavior patterns with regard to nuclear strategy has achieved a state of semi-permanence that places them on the level

[148] Lantis, 44-45.

[149] Lantis, 45.

of 'cultural' rather than mere policy."[150] By researching these influences upon Soviet culture, Snyder concluded that the Soviet military, influenced from a history of insecurity and authoritarian control, "exhibited a preference for the preemptive, offensive use of force."[151] This analysis proved correct, as seen through Russia's declared nuclear force doctrine of "escalate to de-escalate," in which Russia would use nuclear weapons in a conventional conflict preemptively in order achieve their strategic objective, and then de-escalate the conflict.[152]

This analysis of Russian nuclear policy can readily correspond to other cultures and how they make their decisions regarding WMD. While Snyder's thoughts on Soviet culture influencing its nuclear policy was among the first studies in strategic culture, the field has since expanded, offering fuller and better insights into the mechanisms that influence state strategic decision making. Kerry Kartchner has observed that strategic culture is essential to understanding another state's WMD decision-making for three reasons. Firstly, he recognizes that research into strategic culture as a research program is vital to formulating and implementing U.S. national security and foreign policy.[153] Strategic culture, in its essence, can help bridge the gap between the previous lack of understanding into how opponents reason. Chair of the Department of International Affairs at Texas A&M University Valerie Hudson stated:

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[150] Jack Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options," Rand Corporation, 1977, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2005/R2154.pdf.

[151] Lantis, "Clausewitz to Constructivism", 35.

[152] Mark Schneider, "Escalate to De-escalate," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings Magazine*, February 2017, https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2017-02/escalate-de-escalate.

[153] Kartchner, "Strategic Culture WMD," 57.

"differences in moral reasoning based on culture may skew traditional assumptions of rational-choice theory."[154]

Secondly, in conjunction with the Sun Tzu quote used earlier within this report, Kartchner notes the importance for strategists to "know one's enemy."[155] This point is essential because it does not merely relate to how a single opponent may formulate policy or other strategic decisions. Instead, strategic culture can also provide insights about how others (e.g. allies and neutral nations) will react to state power, assurances and mutual-defense treaties, and the degree to which they will have faith in the United States. Hypothetically, if a nation were to attempt to create an international coalition to take on a problem or opponent (either by sanctions, force, or negotiations), strategic culture can provide policymakers with a framework to achieve an appropriate solution and plan of action.

Finally, when a group or state decides that it wishes to pursue or proliferate WMDs, they "often justify their policies and actions in cultural terms."[156] Strategic culture is a useful tool to understand these decisions because it can help identify the influences that shape the leadership's thought processes and makes it easier to predict strategic behavior. By using strategic culture, the United States will be able to understand why a nation chooses to pursue WMDs, whether it be for legitimacy purposes; in response to a national tragedy, as a bargaining tool, etc. Furthermore, it is essential that this examination of strategic culture contain a unique focus on the perspective

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[154] Hudson cites two books by Amartya Sen, *Choice, Welfare, and Measurement* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982); and *On Ethics and Economics* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

[155] Kartchner, "Strategic Culture WMD," 57.

[156] Kartchner, 57.

of the state's leadership, because the U.S. emphasis should be on countering these weapons, and not merely attempting to explain another culture's society.

In his framework for analyzing strategic culture and WMD, Kartchner recognizes that strategic culture can have a profound effect on the ways in which U.S. leadership can create tailored nuclear policies which take into account how other cultures make decisions regarding WMD. These cultural decisions include adhering to international norms, acquiring WMD, proliferating WMD, and using WMD.[157] By analyzing these subsections of the overall framework laid out by Kartchner, one can begin to make the links between strategic culture and tailoring deterrence policy, citing them as a "template for human action."[158]

A model for analysis applies to each of these subsections, allowing one to understand a country's likelihood to implement these decisions regarding WMD. This model consists of three predispositions which must be in place for a country to enact these strategic policies. One, an action must be deemed "rational" within the system defined by that case study's strategic culture. Rationality in this sense means that the costs and benefits of an action are deemed acceptable or bearable, and this action must be endorsed by the members who hold that strategic culture.[159] Second, any action must be deemed appropriate by the holders of a certain strategic culture as, "enabling the group, organization, or state to achieve culturally endorsed outcomes."[160] If actions concerning WMD are seen to improve a particular culture's standing, or enable the group to new heights, then it may be more likely that they will pursue that action.

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[157] Kartchner, 55.

[158] Kartchner, 58.

[159] Kartchner, 60.

[160] Kartchner, 60.

Third and finally, the means and ends of any action regarding WMD must be consistent with the values and "repertoire or palette" emanating in that specific culture.[161] What is important to note is that any given culture can have completely different responses, thoughts, and palettes from each of these subsections, which makes the study of strategic culture so important. If the United States would not pursue a certain type of action regarding WMD because it is deemed "irrational," it does not mean that another culture would not have a different interpretation of morality, or threshold for punishment, when it comes to those same decisions.

International norm adherence describes the extent to which a country would comply and accept international law and common notions of acceptable behavioral. Kartchner remarks that international norms are both, "the explicit values" recorded in international law and non-proliferation regimes, as well as "implicit assumptions, values, and rules underlying international attitudes toward WMD, such as the nuclear taboo."[162] Norm adherence is the first factor to note when researching a country's strategic culture and WMD, because a culture with a predisposition to break these norms is more likely to pursue and possibly use nuclear weapons. Also, there are strong cultural indicators, such as a preference for, "rejecting, ignoring, or flouting such norms," which allow for the closer study and prediction of state behavior regarding WMD.[163]

Secondly, if a country decides to break with international norms concerning WMD, it is then important to note the cultural influences which encourage that state to acquire WMD. The root of most cultures to acquire WMD stems from "domestic sources of motivation," where

[161] Kartchner, 61.

[162] Kartchner, 58.

[163] Kartchner, 60.

culture is filtered through "recent experiences."[164] Most often, as Kartchner notes, nearly every state that has decided to pursue WMD acquisition has occurred in, "the immediate aftermath of some national defeat, humiliation, or other crisis."[165] Large shocks, defeats, or embarrassments to a nation often change its strategic calculus and thinking within the leadership. By acquiring WMD, a state may believe that it will be able to avoid any similar national crisis in the future.

Thirdly, by using strategic culture, one may be able to indicate a state's likelihood to transfer or proliferate WMDs to a third party. Once again noting a state's lack of desire to comply with international norms, or determination to oppose them, a state or culture may seek to transfer and proliferate WMD. A culture's threat environment or isolationism makes it more prone to do this. By arming third-party groups such as terrorist organizations or rogue states, a country may be able to either counterbalance opposition alliances or even receive funding through WMD or ballistic missile sales if they find themselves cut off from the rest of the world economically.[166] While noting that these courses of action are pragmatic, one can also find a cultural perspective in a state's decision to transfer or proliferate WMD, by how they justify it within their leadership and society.

Finally, strategic culture can give better insight as to when a nation or group would allow for the usage of WMDs. While most would think that nuclear weapons and WMD are only for offensive and defensive uses, there are other options for use that certain cultures might deem acceptable. For example, merely maintaining, but not utilizing, nuclear weapons for a

[164] Kartchner, 60.

[165] Kartchner, 61.

[166] Kartchner, 62.

"traditional Cold War deterrence" purpose might be deemed appropriate for some cultures, as seen through the 1983 U.S. Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on War and Peace.[167]

To further link the connection between using WMDs and strategic culture, Barry Schneider identified five reasons as to why a state may choose to utilize WMDs; "To fracture an allied coalition;" "To attack or defeat the United States at home;" "[To] defeat or decimate a U.S. expeditionary force;" "Secure an endgame;" and, "To avenge the defeat of a regime."[168] Cultures that are more prone to act in these manners must be further analyzed to establish a predictive framework that U.S. policymakers can utilize to tailor WMD strategy.

While not an exact science, strategic culture has enough credibility to be taken seriously as a research program or framework to be utilized by those who influence and develop U.S. security policy. One should note that this field of study is not meant to be a replacement for deterrence policy, but rather act as a supplemental tool to gain insight into the minds and likely behavior of the leadership of nations and groups around the globe. Valerie Hudson states: "We may not be able to predict choice and construction of a particular response by a particular member of the culture, but we can know what is on the shelf and what is not."[169]

It is essential that U.S. leadership seriously considers strategic culture as a tool or framework on which to base U.S. tailored deterrence strategy. However, as more discoveries are made within this field about what it can offer to U.S. policymakers, there is still room for more research on how it can play a role. By applying the strategic framework to historical case studies,

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[167] "U.S. Catholic Bishops," Nuclear Files.

[168] Kartchner, "Strategic Culture WMD," 63-64.

[169] Valerie Hudson, ed., *Culture and Foreign Policy* (Boulder Co: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 1–24.

one may be better able to provide explanations and predictions for threat anticipations, negotiating styles, surprise attacks, and decisions to acquire and utilize WMDs.[170]

Review

This chapter has described how strategic culture became an important consideration after the need for a new strategy became apparent as the threat environment evolved following the end of the Cold War era. Strategic culture at its core is the attempt to understand how an opponent makes strategic decisions based upon key cultural influences. Factors such as geography, past experiences, spirituality, and myths and symbols within a culture will affect how it views itself and the world. The focus within strategic culture is aimed at the elite leadership of a nation or group, because they are the ones who are most likely to define and sustain a cultural narrative, as well as make any strategic decisions.

This chapter also examined what role strategic culture can play in tailoring a deterrence strategy towards an opponent. Past studies, such as Jack Snyder's analysis of Soviet strategic culture, and its preference to use preemptive force, set a precedent that strategic culture can be a practical field of study. Kartchner furthered this application of applying strategic culture to state WMD behavior by establishing certain requirements that a state must generally adhere to. These requirements are: whether or not adhering to international norms, acquiring, transferring, or using WMD are deemed rational within a case study's strategic culture; and whether these decisions are confirmed by the leadership that it will enable a group; and are consistent with the values that emanate from a culture.

[170] Kartchner, "Strategic Culture WMD," 60.

Now that the argument has been put forth that that strategic culture should be applied in the development and application of U.S. deterrence policy, this paper will analyze Iranian strategic culture, and offer policy options as to how the United States can tailor a strategy to address the threat from that nation. It is important to note that this report does not advocate that strategic culture become a replacement for current U.S. deterrence policy, but to instead act as a viable element that policymakers can use to reaffirm or challenge existing and potential strategies.

IRANIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

"We are Hussein's men, and this is our epoch. In devotion we are the slaves of the Imam; Our name is 'zealot' and our title 'martyr.'"[171]

Poems by the first Safavid king, Shāh Ismā'il (1501-1524)

Throughout Iran's vibrant domestic history and regular interactions with outside powers, it has acquired a unique culture that influences the strategic choices that it makes. By analyzing these underlying societal factors, one will be better able to grasp the Iranian strategic culture. This chapter will provide an examination of the relevant history of Iran; how the country generally identifies itself; the dominant cultural values that are pervasive in Iranian society; what norms characterize Iran's behavior; and how Iran's strategic culture has affected its rationality and policy on acquiring, proliferating, and utilizing WMD.

Iranian History

Contributing editor of Foreign Policy magazine Christian Caryl once described Iran as an, "odd fusion of Islam and late twentieth-century revolutionary politics."[172] However, there is an experience that began in ancient times that has led to the current Islamic state. Mr. Willis Stanley, an expert on Iranian strategic culture from the Institute of Public Policy, describes the scope of Iranian civilization as a, "continuity of human history in and around the Iranian plateau that extends from the emergence of Neolithic society and agriculture around 8000 BCE through

[171] R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantel of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 173.

[172] Christian Caryl, *Strange Rebels: 1979 and the Birth of the 21st Century* (New York, Basic Books, 2014), 11.

to the present day."[173] Throughout this period, there have been certain trends that have remained pervasive in Iranian society; absolute kingship, and the concept of Valayat-e Faquih (rule of the jurisprudent).[174]

Stanley further asserts that despite the immensely long history of Iran, it is most constructive to begin the analysis of Iranian strategic culture with the formation of the Achaemenid Persian Empire established by Cyrus the Great in 559 BCE.[175] By co-opting elites of different tribes and conquered enemies, Cyrus was able to establish a bureaucracy in which the ruler practiced absolute kingship, and was able to exercise decision making with god-granted authority. This tradition of a "god-granted authority" ruling over the Persian people continued throughout time and included the rise and fall of many empires that conquered the lands of Iran, e,g, Alexander the Great in 331 BCE, the Parthian Empire in 163 BCE, and the Sassanian empire 400 years later.[176] The establishment of these various empires and different rulers definitely contributed to the deep insecurity felt by Iranian natives regarding the influence of outside powers who would conquer and attempt to impose their cultural values on to Iranian society.

The next great transformation in Iranian society came in the mid-seventh century CE with the fall of the Sassanid Empire to the incoming Umayyad armies of Islam. Up until this point, Zoroastrianism was the primary religion in Iran, which had been institutionalized by the Sassanians. They had also established a caste system, which separated persons of "low birth,"

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[173] Willis Stanley, "Persian Origins of Iranian Strategic Culture," In *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, ed. Jeannie Johnson, Kerry Kartchner, and Jeffrey Larsen, (Springer, 2009), 137.

[174] Stanley, 137.

[175] Stanley, 137.

[176] Stanley, 142.

and at the same time solidified the powers of the elites.[177] Islam was able to take such a strong hold on Iranian society due to the current weakness of the Sassanian Empire, and because of the benefits, e.g. lower taxes and fair treatment between social classes, that Islam offered those who were willing to subscribe to its membership and devotion.[178]

During this time, the great schism of Islam occurred. This had to do with the intra-Arab matter, which attempted to decide the rightful successor of Muhammad as the leader of the Islamic religion. This conflict led to civil war. Those who believed that the followers closest to Mohammad should become the secular leaders of the religion became the Sunnis (and were the Umayyads). Those who wished to follow Mohammad's successor via his bloodline, his brother in law Ali, became known as the Shi'a (which means the partisans of Ali).[179] When Ali was murdered, his son Hussein sought to rise against the Sunni Umayyad caliphate, and his followers were slaughtered. This death of Hussein has been forever cemented in the psyche of the Shi'a branch of Islam, and has created a reverence for what is known as martyrdom, to die in a stand for their faith.[180]

As a defeated political movement, the Shi'a were forced to live in a society while resenting those who ruled over them, and in whom they did not believe. Instead of looking to a political figure for leadership, the Shi'a instead believe in the power of the Imam, who is seen as

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[177] Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Zoroastrianism," Encyclopedia Britannica, March 9, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Zoroastrianism.

[178] "History of Iran: Islamic Conquest," Iran Chamber Society, http://www.iranchamber.com/history/islamic_conquest/islamic_conquest.php.

[179] "History of Iran" Iran Chamber Society.

[180] Stanley, "Persian Origins," 143.

a religious leader descended from Ali.[181] This insecurity in government can be seen in the modern day with the existence of two leadership elements acting within Iran, a parliamentary body and a clerical body.

It would take centuries, multiple changes in rulership, and invasions (such as the Abbasid dynasty and the Mongol conquests) for Iran to begin to establish its own national identity, this time in Shi'a structure. In the 16th century CE, the Safavid empire established itself in what is now modern-day Azerbaijan and began to take over the greater part of Iran, as well as the Iraqi provinces of Baghdad and Mosul.[182]

The leader of this dynasty was recognized as a Shah, and established Shi'a Islam as the predominant religion. In a fashion that was in step with Iranian tradition, the Shahs would exercise absolute kingship over Iranian policy. In addition to this massive change in the law of the land, Shi'a Imams were also able to establish a caste system which allowed the faith elite to create obligatory taxes and other tools of power separate from the actual government.[183] Iran eventually united with the Qajar Shah dynasty, which would continue to rule from 1796 to 1925.

At this point in Iranian history, responding to and resisting physical threats from outside influencers was a top priority for the Iranian elite. Ottomans, Indians, Russians, and a contrary Sunni government forming in what would eventually be known as Saudi Arabia began to place pressure on Iran in geopolitical rivalries. This paranoia of outside influence exacerbated itself further by rising western influences in the region, primarily by Great Britain and its allies, as

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[181] Stanley, 143.

[182] The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Safavid Dynasty," Encyclopedia Britannica, May 25, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Safavid-dynasty.

[183] Stanley, "Persian Origins," 145.

well as the Russians; These powers worked to place Iran into their respective spheres of influence.

This fear of westernization led to the Constitutionalist Revolution, which sought to establish a Parliament (Majlis) which represented the merchant elite of Iranian society. However, this was further complicated for the ulama (religious elites), when in 1925, Reza Shah Pahlavi attempted to modernize Iran, which gave western powers much more power and influence within the Persian state. Because of this, the ulama began to experience a loss of control and state influence, and the Shah began to appropriate other aspects of traditional Iranian industries such as trade. During World War II, the Shah was exiled, and his son would ultimately become the next ruler of Iran.

This suspicion and acrimony between the Shah-controlled state and the ulama came to a boil when the Shah consolidated his power in 1953, with the help of the U.S. and British intelligence services, and began to further insert himself into spheres where the ulama traditionally ruled.[184] In many cases, the reforms made by the Shah (known as the white revolution) directly opposed conservative Iranian behaviors by accepting Western excesses such as the relaxation of clothing restrictions for women and the reformation of the educational system.[185] In response, the clerics began to sow the seeds of revolt within Iranian Society.

This conflict eventually led to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, when the clerical elite was able to establish another supreme leader of their own, this time acting under the justification and authority of Islam. A new constitution was created which established three branches of government (executive, legislative, and judiciary), but with the critical caveat of religious

[184] Stanley, 147.

[185] Stanley, 148.

oversight.[186] The work of this new government has been in a constant state of flux, as all policy decisions and candidates must be vetted by the clerical elite.[187]

Iranian Identity

The Iranian identity can be seen as the view that the nation is a protector and leader of Shi'a Islam around the world, influenced strongly by a mix of internal and external paranoia. Throughout Iran's history, it has continuously been susceptible to outside powers that have attempted to change Iranian culture through blatant aggression and from the inside out. In recent history, this was worsened by attempts by western powers to change and exploit Iranian society and resources to benefit their own policy goals. This has made Iran extremely wary. Furthermore, Iran borders or is in the vicinity of many countries which it deeply opposes, making it take a hardline and asymmetric approach regarding its foreign policy and power-projection decisions.

The fact that Iran has a rich and compelling history that spans thousands of years is the source of a self-realized legitimacy as a central player on the world stage. Willis Stanley asserts that, "Iranian nationalism was born and flourished alongside the development of civilization and empire."[188] Even during occupation by other entities, Iranian elites were able to survive and continue an Iranian national identity by cooperating and utilizing already established bureaucracies to assist and co-opt the conquering empires.[189]

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[186] Stanley, 148.

[187] Stanley, 138.

[188] Stanley, 151.

[189] Stanley, 150.

The modern Iranian regime uses its Shi'a ideology and history of oppression to identify itself as being apart from others.[190] Shi'a Islam was a perfect fit for the Iranians due to its ability to help establish a clerical caste system (reminiscent of previous established Sassanian systems under Zoroastrianism), complete with the recognition of an absolute ruler.[191] Shi'a Islam plays a critical role in the formulation of Iranian policy, due to the concept of Velayat-e Faqih, in which any laws passed by Iranian parliament has to receive the approval of the clerical elite.[192]

The Shi'a sect fits perfectly with the Iranian narrative of exploitation and persecution from outside powers and influences. Throughout Iran's history, those who practiced Shi'a Islam were driven underground in the practice of their faith and recognized different political leadership than the foreign rulers who were occupying Iran at the time.

Iran's hostility towards the west evolved over a number of years but reached its peak during the Iranian revolution and ultimately United States' backing of the Saddam government during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980. This opposition to the new and radical Islamic regime solidified the opinion within Iran that the United States and its allies are committed to the failure of the Islamic Republic.[193] The Shi'a leadership galvanizes popular support, opinion and sentiment against the west, and the United State in particular, by employing religious-based epithets such as "the Great Satan" to demonize and define any enemy as intensely evil.[194]

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[190] Stanley, 149.

[191] Stanley, 150.

[192] Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran* (London: IB Tauris, 1997).

[193] Stanley, "Persian Origins," 149.

[194] Hamid Dabashi, "Who is the 'Great Satan'?," *Al Jazeera*, September 20, 2015, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/09/great-satan-150920072643884.html.

Iran also seeks to solidify its Shi'a identity by backing other governments and utilizing proxies that help export its ideology and project power, often putting it at direct odds with Sunni governments which surround Iran, not to mention the state of Israel. Iran has supported terrorist Shi'a organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthi rebels, which have destabilized the region and keep it in a state of continuous conflict. Consequently, Iran has an extremely hostile and mistrustful rival relationship with many local regional powers.

The Iranian leadership propagates animosity with the U.S. whenever possible in order to bring the people together via a common hatred of a common enemy and maintain even tighter control over the society using fear of an evil and predatory "other." Furthermore, Israel has often conducted direct military and cyber strikes against Iranian facilities, forces, and allies. In response, Iran has maintained a bellicose criticism of Israel, has called for the extinction of the Jewish state, and its military officials have recently stated that it can wipe Israel off of the map.[195]

Iranian Cultural Values

Utilizing the 6-D Hofstede model on national culture, one can better understand the dominant cultural values that are pervasive within Iranian society. The 6-D Hofstede model was originally created by the renowned cultural analyst, professor Geert Hofstede, and focused on explaining how values in the workplace are influenced by culture.[196] This model has evolved to

[195] Chris Pleasance, "Iran Warns it Will Wipe Israel Off the Map and 'Any Action Against Us Will Lead to Their Elimination'," *The Daily Mail,* January, 28, 2019, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6640047/Iranian-commander-threatens-Israels-destruction-attacks-state-TV.html.

[196] "National Culture," Hofstede Insights, https://www.hofstede-insights.com/models/national-culture/.

become applicable worldwide in academic settings and is accepted as a tool that can be readily used in the analysis of strategic culture.

These six dimensions of the 6-D Hofstede model (Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation, and Indulgence) can give relevant insights into how Iranian values differ from other cultures, which is central to understanding how cultural values impact decision making on a strategic level. Each of these dimensions is rated on a scale from 1 to 100, and the number indicates how likely a society is to adhere to a particular value in everyday life.

Power distance identifies the attitudes held by a society regarding whether or not individuals are equal.[197] With a score of 58 out of 100, Iran is designated to be a hierarchical society in which most individuals have a designated place. The score coincides with Iran's long tradition of establishing multiple caste systems. It is clear that the designated leaders of Iranian society are the holders of its strategic culture, and that the populace generally accepts this environment as fair and acceptable. This could reasonably explain why the leaders in this society think of themselves as higher status than others, giving them unquestionable authority and the ability to place their policy objectives in positions of high importance.

The Individualism score represents "the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members."[198] In this category, Iran scores a 41 out of 100, indicating that it is a collectivist society. In collectivist societies, there is an emphasis on the concept of "losing face"

[197] "What About Iran?," Hofstede Insights, https://wwaw.hofstede-insights.com/country/iran/.

[198] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

for offenses and failures committed.[199] Additionally, nepotism occurs in the process of inclusion for groups.

Regarding Iranian strategic culture, the fact that it is a collectivist society plays a role in the structure of Iranian leadership, as well as how Iranians may act in according to their values. For example, with an emphasis on the loss of face, it may influence how Iranians negotiate deals, or whether or not they might back down from a particular policy goal or objective. Furthermore, it adds to the theory that Iranian strategic culture is held by the societal elite, who seek to consolidate their power and dictate the national narrative through the use of close relatives (nepotism), and those of the same or higher class.

The Masculinity score refers to the amount that a society is "driven by competition, achievement and success, with success defined by the winner."[200] A lower score on this scale indicates that society is feminine, meaning that values in society are more focused on quality of life and caring for others. The Hofstede scale compresses this down to two issues of motivation: "wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine)."[201] With a score of 43, Iran is considered to be leaning as a feminine society. With the implementation of the caste system, Iranians are designed to be in one class for their entire lives. Because of this, many would consider life in Iran to be a situation that they must make the most out of and understand that there is not much room for social or economic mobility.

[199] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

[200] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

[201] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

Fourthly, uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which a society is accepting or anxious about "ambiguous or unknown situations."[202] Countries prone to avoiding uncertainty frequently establish strict rules and codes of behavior and are unwelcoming of new ideas and behavior that they find eccentric or non-conformist. With a score of 59 out of 100, Iran is determined to have a rather strong penchant for avoiding these types of situations.

Iran's strategic culture is affected by their high uncertainty avoidance, and by their preference to hedge their bets against the future. One example is the way that Iran has conducted its nuclear activities over the years. Iran has never overtly or aggressively pursued a specific end-date to acquire a nuclear weapon. Instead, it has consistently pushed forward with development in small increments. Even if at times Iran has been amenable to temporary halts in their program (as such with the J.C.P.O.A.), they have still been able to maintain certain abilities in case they would ever need to break out and build up a nuclear arsenal quickly.

Fifth, long term orientation attempts to explain how "every society has to maintain some links with its past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future," and how society prioritizes these goals.[203] Societies that score low in this dimensions often attempt to preserve and uphold traditions and norms, and (similarly to uncertainty avoidance) view societal change with distrust.[204] Iran scores the lowest on this level with a 14 out of 100, categorizing it as a very normative society.

Hofstede describes cultures with a low long-term orientation as possessing a "great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on

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[202] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

[203] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

[204] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

achieving quick results."[205] Iran has exhibited these traits in its strategic policy. One example is its propensity to back organizations such as terrorist groups who operate under Shi'a religious beliefs and codes of behavior. Also, it is sensible that Iran has been willing to switch its nuclear program on and off, depending on what near-term benefits and results in those decisions create. The P.A.S.C.C. final report on assessing the Iranian compliance with the J.C.P.O.A. asserted that for the time being, "there is no indication that Iran intends to resume pursuing a nuclear weapons capability," and that they have put their nuclear weapons program "on ice."[206] However, coinciding interestingly with Iran's long-term orientation, it is possible that at the moment, Iran is receiving more benefits than consequences by adhering to the deal, and that it may choose to resume a nuclear weapons capability as soon as it becomes practical to do so.

Finally, the indulgence score measures the degree "to which people try to control their desires and impulses."[207] With a score of 40 out of 100, Iran is designated to be a country of restraint, being more prone to pessimism and cynicism.[208] This pessimism had been engrained into Iranian culture throughout its history, as expressed by the idea of an assault of Iranian "high culture" from outside powers.[209] While generally isolated and mistrusting its neighboring

[205] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

[206] Jeannie Johnson ed., et al. "Assessing Prospects for Iranian Compliance with the JCPOA: An Applied Case Study in Socio-Cultural Modeling and Analysis," Utah State University: Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (PASCC), November 30, 2018, 2.

[207] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

[208] "What About Iran?," Hofstede.

[209] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 11.

nations, Iran has a particularly negative and pessimistic outlook on the United States and Israel (the "Great Satan" and "Fake State" respectively).[210]

This pessimistic cultural orientation affects Iranian negotiating behavior, by affecting how it accepts is willing to engage in a deal where both parties trust each other on "good faith" standards. These perceptions of mistrust against the United States have been further exacerbated by the United States' withdrawal from the J.C.P.O.A. and may indicate that in the future, it may be extremely challenging to reconstruct or reinstate the negotiation environment that led to the original deal. The pessimistic traits ingrained in Iran's culture echoed in the J.C.P.O.A. negotiations, as negotiators considered the words of Ayatollah Ali Khameini, who stated that any American leadership (regardless of administration) was bent on conspiring against any achievements of Iran.[211]

Iranian Norms

The norms which this study seeks to uncover are related to how Iran's strategic culture affects how Iran perceives and behaves in relation to conflict, the international system, the utility of violence, and the laws of war. In the study for the Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (P.A.S.C.C.), which assessed Iran's compliance with the J.C.P.O.A., Nima Baghdadi concluded that the primary cultural orientations that played a central role in Iranian negotiating behavior were pessimism, pragmatism, and honor.[212]

[210] Johnson, 11.

[211] Johnson, 12.

[212] Johnson, 11.

However, one can link these orientations to other norms, such as overall strategic decision making, and behaviors within the international environment.

Iran views honor as an inherent Islamic value, which emphasizes its sense of, "national dignity, independence, achievements, and a powerful need for those virtues of Iranian civilization to be recognized and respected by other nations."[213] This gives Iran a uniquely elitist outlook on international affairs, in which their way of conducting strategic operations are above other nation's virtues. Also, recent Iranian memory of lethargic international attention to its people during the Iran-Iraq War (when Saddam Hussein was a clear aggressor and used chemical weapons) left Iran mistrusting of the international order. This experience gave Iran the impression that the world order based itself on power, not reciprocity.[214] This experience also connects to Iranian decision-making regarding its nuclear program. If other countries in the world can achieve an elite status by implementing and sustaining a nuclear weapons program, why shouldn't the Iranians (who believe themselves to have a superior culture) have that same right?

While pessimistic about the international order, Iran is still pragmatic in its involvement with multilateral institutions. Iran will use forums such as the United Nations and other Intergovernmental Organizations to give itself legitimacy on a world stage and advance its economic development, while also opposing resolutions and other ideas which are not in accordance with their belief system and national aims.[215]

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[213] Johnson, 11.

[214] Johnson, 20.

[215] Johnson, 20.

Other examples of Iranian pragmatism in international affairs are its heroic flexibility, "prudent deceit," and strategic patience.[216] Heroic flexibility puts a practical reality between ideas that Iran is obsessed with ideals such as martyrdom, but also being sober in how they utilize it in conflict. While most observers would assume that Iran's bombastic rhetoric about martyrdom (as seen in the Iran-Iraq war) implies that it would be a strategic tool, heroic flexibility instead proposes that martyrdom can be avoided, if it means that Iran can gain further long-term benefits from a short-term loss.[217]

Iran also practices the principle of *taqiyyah*, or prudent deceit, in international politics. Taqiyyah is the allowance within Islam for one to deny religious belief and practice in the face of persecution."[218] In line with the Shi'as experience of being persecuted and pushed underground, Schmeul Barr describes the practice as, "taqiyyah is justifiable in light of the fact that historically Shi'ites, as a minority group were subject to persecution. Such a non-ideological pragmatism rests on the rational notion of expediency (maslaha) or decision-making according to an assessment of the damage that would otherwise incur upon the community."[219] This concept was seen in practice during the Iran-Iraq war, when Ayatollah Khomeini accepted UNSC 598, which brought an end to the war. Even though it went against the Islamic Republic's ideals of fighting until victory and celebrating the martyrdom that the war brought, Iran was able to accept a logical and pragmatic choice which allowed itself to regroup and continue building the nation.

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[216] Johnson, 14.

[217] Johnson, 15.

[218] Johnson, 15.

[219] Shmuel Barr, *Iran: Cultural Values, Self-Images and Negotiation Behavior* (Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy Institute for Policy and Strategy, 2004), 15.

Strategic patience is also a norm in Iranian behavior on the world stage. Strategic patience describes the ability to withstand pressures from outside sources until a likable outcome or solution presents itself. Iran has a long history of strategic patience, whether it be in the form of negotiations, acceptance of defeat or conquest by outsiders, or even the development of its nuclear program. During the lead up to the J.C.P.O.A. negotiations, Iran was experiencing ill effects from substantial weight of sanctions imposed from the United Nations Security Council, that were resulting from its nuclear program. Even though Iran's economy was suffering, President Rouhani was able to wait until his legitimacy as president grew and nuclear program had advanced so far that Iran had more chips with which to bargain. This gave them the flexibility to extract certain concessions from the U.N., such as their ballistic missile program and uranium enrichment capability.[220] It is extremely likely that Iran will continue to implement strategic patience as a tool in future international relations.[221]

The final orientation prevalent in Iranian norms is its sense of honor. The concept of honor is prevalent in Islam, and is connected through Quranic traditions, prayers, and notions.[222] Honor in this sense encompasses dignity, integrity, and consistency through all aspects of Iranian life, including, "individual, political, social, economic, judicial, ethical, and familial commitments."[223] Baghdadi notes while connecting Iranian honor with foreign policy that, "Iran's security calculus is not always based on typical realist inputs such as power disparity. Security policy can also be about assuring the consistency of the story that a collective agent tells

[220] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 16.

[221] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 74.

[222] Johnson, 18.

[223] Johnson, 18.

itself about who it is. Satisfying nuanced self-identity needs can be costly and seemingly at odds with rational strategic objectives prescribed by realist thinking, but is often treated as a core national interest."[224] What Baghdadi means by this is that Iranian security policy is not always dictated by a sense of realism and "western viewed" rationality. Even if the result of a foreign policy decision may be "costlier" than if avoided, Iranians may instead choose to assure a consistency within their narrative, as keeping their honor alive is considered as a core national interest.

Iranians use their close-knit group of elites on the world stage to implement policy decisions. As described earlier, having an exclusive group of leaders (that are often given status through nepotism or birthright) means that policies that Iran enacts are not always, and do not need to be, in line with popular public opinion.[225] Furthermore, this plays into the fact that Iran views itself as an elite civilization by enabling its leaders to enact policies that they alone see fit.

Beliefs in WMD

Author of *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy,* Jacques Hymans noted that the decision for a country to pursue nuclear weapons is heavily weighted, and the decisions solidify within those cultural identities that are present within the leadership.[226] Kerry Kartchner also asserted that when regarding WMD, a state is more likely to reject or adhere to international norms, acquire WMD, transfer or proliferate WMD, and use WMD if "it is deemed rational within the system of shared meaning defined by

[224] Johnson, 19.

[225] Johnson, 29.

[226] Kartchner, "Strategic Culture WMD," 46.

the prevailing strategic culture;" "seen as enabling the group, organization, or state to achieve culturally endorsed outcomes;" or, the "ends and means for [this] outcome are deemed appropriate by the keepers or holders of that strategic culture."[227] In the case of Iran, gaining a nuclear capability has been rationalized in the culture, even though it took a painful national experience to affect and form its strategic view of WMDs.[228] For example, during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980, Saddam Hussein utilized chemical weapons which resulted in a gruesome loss of lives for the Iranians. Also, Iran became further jaded in relation to the international community because of its unsuccessful ability or willingness to curb or condemn the attacks. This horrific experience led to the Iranians to pursue a WMD capability.

Initially, the Iranian's would not have pursued chemical weapons due to their Islamic belief that the prophet Mohammad opposed poison.[229] However, the Iranian Supreme Leader declared that through taqiyya, it would be considered rational within their strategic culture, thus setting a precedent for the future Iranian biological and nuclear capabilities.[230]

In addition to rationality, gaining a WMD capability (especially a nuclear one) would give the Iranian elite the status that they believe they deserve, based upon the identity that they have narrated to their society throughout history. Iranian President Rouhani wrote in 2013, "To us, mastering the atomic fuel cycle and generating nuclear power is as much about diversifying our energy resources as it is about who Iranians are as a nation, our demand for dignity and

[227] Kartchner, 58-63.

[228] Kartchner, 60.

[229] Kartchner, 60.

[230] Kartchner, 60.

respect and our consequent place in the world."[231] By achieving this level of technology, alongside their largest standing army in the middle east (with 540,000 regular and paramilitary troops), Iran would become the preeminent power in the region.[232] Also, it is likely that Iran's history of distrust for outside powers, and confrontations with the west, would also incentivize them to pursue a nuclear weapons capability. If Iran were to obtain the ability to produce nuclear weapons, it is believed by the leadership that it would cause the United States and other outside powers to reevaluate their Middle Eastern policy, and possibly prevent them from interfering in the region.[233]

Finally, the ends justify the means by Iranian strategic culture as the pursuit of these new capabilities is in alignment with the practice of taqiyyah. The Iranians are willing to bend Islamic law, as they have been seen to do in cases they deem fit, in the face of threats to their national security. Because they were threatened by outside sources and persecuted for their culture, they were able to bend the religious law to their will, to give themselves "equal footing" when facing adversaries.

Strategic patience played an immense role in Iran's nuclear program, by its willingness to turn the program on and off as it saw fit. I.R.G.C. commander General Mohammad Ali Jafari stated in 2017 that the limitations of Iranian ballistic missile technology are a political choice, instead of a technological one.[234] It is entirely possible that the Iranians can put their nuclear program "on ice" with the J.C.P.O.A. because they see short-term benefits that they can "cash

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[231] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 46.

[232] Gentry, "China's Role Area Denial."

[233] Stanley, "Persian Origins," 153.

[234] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 73.

in" on, while other aspects of their nuclear weapons capability evolve, such as their space launch and ballistic missile technology. At times when regional and international circumstances are unfavorable, the Iranians can seek a future time which would be more advantageous to advance a policy or their nuclear program. General Jafari claimed, "Today, the range of our missiles, as the policies of Iran's Supreme Leader dictate, are limited to 2,000 kilometers, even though we are capable of increasing this range."[235]

In adherence to international norms, Iran has shown that while it takes part in international organizations, it is not likely to comply with every ruling made, especially if it is against the national interest of Iran. While being a signatory of the N.P.T., Iran has shown in multiple instances its willingness to go against the safeguards in place to further its nuclear program. Because of the cultural indicators that Iran possesses that that makes it more prone to break with international norms concerning WMDs, Iran is categorized as a more at-risk state to pursue nuclear weapons than others.

Iran is more likely to acquire WMDs as the military and civilian infrastructure (and its population/society as a whole) has experienced so much devastation and heartbreak, in the hopes that such acquisition might prohibit that experience from happening again in the future. The outside powers that are in a geopolitical rivalry with Iran give further incentive for it to acquire WMDs, as it perceives these other countries as existential opponents to its long-term goals. As seen in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's presentation on Project Amad, Iran has set clear goals to achieve a nuclear capability.

While there is no evidence that Iran has currently acquired nuclear weapons, there is an indication that it could transfer or proliferate upon acquisition, if it should have the desire to do

[235] Johnson, 73.

so. As stated earlier in this report, a country is more likely to be driven to proliferate if it has a particular threat environment or is isolationist. Past experience and the current geopolitical environment would incentivize Iran to use any resources it can to its advantage, including asymmetric tools like terrorism. Iran has already proved itself willing to utilize terrorist groups to achieve strategic objectives, so it is not unreasonable to suggest that they would continue this behavior by transferring or proliferating WMDs.

Finally, Iran's willingness to obtain, use, and proliferate WMDs is dependent upon what its strategic goals are at the time. However, there is a common precedent set by clerical leadership in Iran that nuclear weapons would not be tolerable under Islamic law. Supreme leader Ali Khameini has issued a fatwa (religious edict), banning nuclear weapons. It states that, "the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islam and that Iran shall never acquire these weapons."[236] In a meeting with officials of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, Khameini also noted that, "the Islamic Republic, logically, religiously and theoretically, considers the possession of nuclear weapons a grave sin and believes the proliferation of such weapons is senseless, destructive and dangerous."[237] Whether or not this religious thinking subjugates itself to taqiyya (the bending of Islamic laws for the survival of the regime) is still up for question.

However, as stated earlier in this report, while some nations would look for WMD to be used either for offensive or defensive purposes, they can also have other purposes. For example, Iran could develop and possess nuclear weapon to simply deter an adversary such as Israel,

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[236] "Leader's Fatwa Forbids Nukes," *Iran Daily News*, August 11, 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20060322134428/http://www.iran-daily.com/1384/2347/html/index.htm.

[237] "Iran Will Never Seek Nuclear Weapons: Leader," *PressTV*, February 22, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20120225143903/http://www.presstv.ir/detail/228014.html.

without ever having to use them. Iran could also use a WMD capability to serve as a counter to the United States by inhibiting its mobility in economic chokepoints in the regional waterways. Also, any WMDs that Iran has or might obtain could be useful in negotiations to limit sanctions, or to strike favorable deals with international powers. Anthony Cain has identified two reasons why Iran would deem a WMD attack appropriate.[238] The first would be, "in a defensive response to an external threat, or retaliation for an attack."[239] Secondly, Iran could use them for an offensive operation, likely through a terrorist organization. This would be enacted "to energize a global or, at least, a regional Islamic bid for power."[240]

Review

Iran's extensive history, cultural values, self-identity, and norms are all determining factors on how its specific culture dictates decisions Iran makes on a strategic scale. By analyzing Iran's strategic culture, one gains better insight into the nuances affecting Iran's policy decisions on how or when it is moral to acquire and use WMDs; what sort of thresholds of damage it is willing to suffer; and, the other cultural influences that play a role in its national decision-making ability. By creating this framework, and seeking to understand its implications, the United States will be better off in attempting to create a new policy framework to meet the current and future Iranian threat.

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[238] Kartchner, "Strategic Culture WMD," 64.

[239] Kartchner, 64.

[240] Anthony Cain, "Iran's Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction," Air War College, Air University, Maxwell Paper No. 26, April 2002, https://media.defense.gov/2017/Dec/04/2001851839/-1/-1/0/MP_0026_CAIN_IRANS_STRATEGIC_CULTURE.PDF.

TAILORING DETERRENCE POLICY TOWARDS IRAN

"Deterring future adversaries will require a detailed understanding of their goals, motivations, history, networks, relationships, and all the dimensions of human political behavior, on a scale broader and deeper than today's."[241]

Dr. Stephen Cambone, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence – Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Strategic Forces Subcommittee, April 7, 2004

This report has described the current Iranian threat to the United States. It has also examined the evolution of American deterrence policy, which has culminated in a fourth wave that emphasizes an understanding of cultural indicators that influence an opponent's decision-making process. Finally, this report provided an overview of the primary Iranian strategic culture in order to identify the variables that can be applied to the new deterrence framework. While these variables are not an infallible means to formulate U.S. deterrence policy, the importance that strategic culture must play as a tool for the future of deterrence policy is clear.

Even though there is no evidence that Iran has currently acquired nuclear weapons, it continues to enhance its I.C.B.M. capability. In traditional thinking, a country would not pursue this aptitude unless it planned to equip the missile with a nuclear payload, which would give them a strategic counter to the United States or others. Chief of General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Major General Mohammad Bagheri, further noted Iran's desire to increase its developing missile capabilities by saying, "Our defense capabilities, including missile power, is by no means negotiable and cannot be discussed with anyone."[242] However, going against this

[241] Dr. Stephen Cambone, Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, "Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Strategic Forces Subcommittee," April 7, 2004.

[242] "Senior Commander Reiterates Iran's Missile Power Non-Negotiable," *Mehr News Agency*, February 10, 2019, https://en.mehrnews.com/news/142388/Senior-commander-reiterates-Iran-s-missile-power-non-negotiable.

conventional wisdom, Iran is less likely to use their I.C.B.M.s for a nuclear attack, and is instead more likely to use tactical missiles to deliver a nuclear payload.[243]

Because of this, it is essential that the United States still make contingency plans against an uncertain future, as there are uncertain technologies and capabilities that may arise from Iran. To tailor a proper deterrence strategy, the United States will need to operate within two environments: the current state in which Iran has not broken out with nuclear weapons; and another possible environment if it does in the future. Strategic culture will assist U.S. policymakers in operating and tailoring deterrence strategies in the pre and post breakout environments by applying Kartchner's subsections of a culture's WMD decision making. The pre-breakout environment will have to consider a culture's propensity to not adhere with international norms concerning WMD acquisition and development and the decisions to acquire WMD. The post-breakout environment will have to consider the willingness of that actor to proliferate/transfer WMD technology and, most importantly, its likelihood to utilize WMD.

Pre-Breakout Environment

As noted earlier in this study, Iran is a country prone to break with international norms and taboos concerning WMD. Since its signing of the N.P.T., Iran has disobeyed multiple promises and safeguard agreements regarding its nuclear program. In addition, the Israeli intelligence services have uncovered documents which detail the explicit pursuit of a nuclear weapon in the early 2000's.

However, there is currently disagreement among Iran experts about whether or not they wish to pursue the bomb at this moment.[244] There are multiple factions at work within Iran's

[243] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 32.

leadership, whether they are hardliners, pragmatists, or reformers, who are not in complete agreement.[245] It may be that whoever within the leadership has a stronger voice may decide which WMD path Iran will ultimately pursue. With the U.S. pullout of the J.C.P.O.A., a range of influences will soon determine which of these leaders will have the most influence on the future of Iran's nuclear program. If there is some system that would allow Iran to renegotiate another beneficial nuclear deal or possibly stay within the parameters of the current one with assistance from other outside powers (e.g. Russia and/or China), it may choose to continue putting its nuclear program on ice.[246] However, if the United States and its allies continue to exert pressure on Iran's economy, it is likely that some Iranian hardliners may take the helm in advocating and advancing a nuclear capability. In any case, the United States retains options that could utilize knowledge of Iran's strategic culture to implement policy decisions during this time in which Iran has not yet acquired a nuclear weapon. It is important to note that a tailored deterrence strategy is likely to require a broad range of actions in the implementation of the policy, which could entail indirect methods such as further sanctions, and military pressure to inhibit a state's nuclear ability.

Policy Option: Internal Unrest

There is a possibility of applying pressure to Iran's leadership structure by influencing and inciting the civilian population to take or threaten action. Even with some economic relief given to Iran from the J.C.P.O.A., its economy has still grown significantly worse in the past

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[244] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 27.

[245] Johnson, 27.

[246] Johnson, 27.

years. In 2017, Radio Farda noted that the average unemployment rate in Iran is 12%, while unemployment in some cities has reached numbers of up to 60%.[247] Also, 33% of Iran's population has been reported to be in absolute poverty, while commodity prices are rising simultaneously.[248]

Because Iran has a considerable power distance between its leadership and its people, Iranian elites often pursue policies which are in line with their strategic narrative and focus on protecting themselves against strategic concerns. The Iranian leadership has expended most of the economic benefits provided via the J.C.P.O.A. on increased defense spending (ballistic missile tests, military equipment, and training), further involved the nation in regional conflicts such as in Yemen and Syria, and expanded its patronage of terrorist proxies.[249] In step with the large power distance between the Iranian population and its leadership, Iran has pursued regional destabilization instead of seeking domestic relief for its people.

Since January 2018, the Iranian public has demonstrated in nation-wide protests and other instances of domestic unrest that may indicate that it blames the regime for the U.S. withdrawal from the J.C.P.O.A., and for the new sanctions imposed upon the country.[250] If Iran reverses direction and does not show good faith in curbing its nuclear program and its general military build-up, the United States could take a different approach to nuclear policy and attempt to exacerbate these internal tensions. One way in which the U.S. can pursue this policy is to

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[247] "Iran Worried As Unemployment Reaches 60% In Some Cities," *Radio Farda*, October 2, 2017, https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-unemployment-60-percent/28768226.html.

[248] Ilan Berman, "Iran's New Revolutionary Moment," American Foreign Policy Council, August 8, 2018, https://www.afpc.org/publications/articles/irans-new-revolutionary-moment.

[249] Berman, "Revolutionary Moment."

[250] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 26.

covertly support opposition groups within Iran and the region, use social media, and launch other propaganda campaigns to sow seeds of doubt and dissatisfaction into the Iranian populace. One obstacle to the implementation of this policy are the cultural inhibitors that are in place, which would need to be overcome. As a feminine leaning society, Iranian civilians are more likely to be accepting of their current standing within the "caste" system and, as such, may not be as prone to try and initiate regime change. However, strategic culture tends to change with external shocks inflicted upon a culture, and the United States could accelerate this process by making life unbearable for Iranian elites and regular civilians via further economic sanctions and pressure. If Iranian elites choose to spend what little resources they have on military buildup and foreign involvement, the lower classes in that society may be more likely to try and break from their norms. This could create cultural changes that ultimately result in a new form of government or altered policy behavior from the Iranians.

Even if regime change is not yet possible, the United States may at least be able to put enough pressure on the regime so that it can become more of a moderate actor within the region.

Policy Option: Negotiations

Another path for U.S. nuclear policy towards Iran during the pre-breakout environment would be the use of strategic culture to gain better insight into Iran's negotiating styles. Cultural orientations noted earlier in this report can give U.S. policymakers insight as to how Iran would react to future negotiations, most notably Iran's pessimism, pragmatism, and honor. As a pessimistic nation, Iran believes that great powers such as the United States seek to undermine its development and interests which are beneficial to it. Therefore, Iran will not likely go into

negotiations as an act of trust.[251] Because of this, Iran is also likely to use any benefits from the deal to its advantage, as seen through the buildup of its military after the J.C.P.O.A. was enacted. U.S. policymakers will need to be aware of this reality, in case that any future negotiations would concede economic benefits that the Iranian leadership would use to boost its power within the region. Furthermore, the United States should emphasize certain verifiable limits on the Iranian nuclear program, such as its ability to enrich uranium, and must stipulate 24-hour access to facilities to ensure that despite a mistrust of the United States, there can be no room for a breakout capability.

The early roots of Iran's pragmatism were formulated in the way that ancient Persian elites would lend their services and bureaucratic institutions to outside powers who had invaded them in order to keep local culture alive.[252] Part of what drove Iran to the negotiating table for the J.C.P.O.A. was the crushing sanctions set by the international community which threatened the long term objectives and survival of the regime.[253] Furthermore, Iranian strategic patience allows them the ability to cede their long term goals for significant short-term benefits. The Iranian ability to go against some of its cultural codes and cooperate with agreements and deals for short-term benefits over long-term goals is problematic to U.S. policymakers. United States leadership needs to be aware of these factors so that they can include necessary caveats within negotiations and agreements that would limit these behaviors.

However, recent history shows that Iran is unlikely to simply bend to economic pressure facing the nation. A large factor in how Iran operates in the international environment has to do

[251] Johnson, 14.

[252] Johnson, 17.

[253] Johnson, 17.

with its sense of honor. If Iranian elites go into a negotiation believing that they are being strong-armed and that their dignity is at stake, then they may be more unwilling to cooperate or negotiate on good terms. U.S. negotiators and planners may wish to consider playing to the Iranian sense of honor, emphasizing that participating in negotiations is not disgraceful but instead righteous. By playing to Iran's sense of pessimism, pragmatism, and honor, the United States will have a better framework in which to operate and prepare itself for any future negotiations with the Islamic Republic.

Post-Breakout Environment

It is imperative that the United States prepare for a possible future breakout. To combat this threat, the United States will need to have already considered and developed the contingencies to combat a nuclear Iran and must have the capability in place to meet any threat. Conventional and pragmatic thinking is likely to be employed by U.S. leadership when tailoring a deterrence strategy towards Iran, but there are some indicators that strategic culture gives which will make this process easier.

The Iranian public is likely to have little to no input on the usage of a nuclear weapon, as the Iranian elite are well-known for not including public opinion in their decisions; especially in matters of national security.[254] Because of this, planners must instead focus upon Iranian leadership and the cultural values that they possess when developing a response policy. While there is longstanding stated aversion to the potential employment of nuclear weapons, the Iranian elite also believes that if it were in their national interest, and to keep the regime alive, such

[254] Johnson, 29.

usage would be considered rational. To create a tailored policy to address this problem, one must first understand the instances in which nuclear weapons are more likely to be utilized.

The Iranians have a history of demarcating the illegitimate usage of nuclear weapons, specifically the fact that indiscriminately targeting cities and population is not moral. Uzi Rubin, former head of Israel's Missile Defense Organization, noted that Iran instead seeks to use their intercontinental missiles to make up for lack of capability in its air force. He states that, "The Iranians don't see [nuclear tipped I.C.B.M.s] that way. Missiles are for them what both tactical and strategic air power are for the West."[255] By building up a vast arsenal with an array of ranges, the Iranians will be able to saturate an enemy with missiles or use cluster warheads to take out specific targets.[256] Furthermore, improving missiles in terms of range will allow Iran to spread their missile arsenal out over a wide area within its country, giving their destructive capability survivability in the case of a preemptive strike by Israel or the United States.[257]

Even against a nuclear Israel, Iranian conventional missiles with cluster payloads could cause massive devastation. By targeting and eliminating key industrial portions of Israel (electrical grid, transportation centers, chemical or nuclear plants, commercial ports, and technology workplaces), the Iranians could create enough damage with conventional weapons to provide a deterrent against Israel.

Furthermore, targeting Israeli chemical and nuclear plants would likely result in devastation similar to a WMD-type outcome, furthering the argument that Iran can employ

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[255] "Wisconsin Project Interview with Uzi Rubin on Iran's Missile Program," Iran Watch, September 17, 2009, https://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/interview/wisconsin-project-interview-uzi-rubin-irans-missile-program.

[256] "Wisconsin Project Interview," Iran Watch.

[257] "Wisconsin Project Interview," Iran Watch.

strategic patience in their nuclear program while developing their economy and conventional ballistic missile and other capabilities in the short term. Uzi further verifies this Iranian strategy by saying, "for Iran, ballistic missiles are not weapons of last resort. They see them as legitimate weapons of war to be used in any conflict."[258] Besides, a longer-range ballistic missile would prove more effective against missile defense systems in the region produced by the United States and Israel. In 2017, Supreme Leader Khamenei placed limits on the Iranian ballistic missile program, so that it would only encompass regions in direct proximity with the Middle East.[259] One such reason was to showcase its contrast with the North Korean regime, which seeks to use its Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles as a strategic counter to the United States.

Lower yield nuclear weapons (instead of intercontinental ballistic payloads) are better accepted by the Iranians. Contrary to popular belief, Iran is not likely to use their I.C.B.M.s for a nuclear payload. Instead, a tactical ability is more palatable for the Iranian leadership. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's information dump on the Iranian nuclear program indicated that the Iranians were interested in developing nuclear weapons with yields of 10 kilotons.[260] The P.A.S.C.C. report Assessing Prospects for Iranian Compliance with the J.C.P.O.A. describes the duality of Iran denouncing nuclear weapons and still legitimizing their usage. The report states that these dual "tracks" or "levels" can be legitimized as, "Iranian leaders can approve of hypothetical scenarios where nuclear weapons could be used for defensive purposes against military entities alone while simultaneously decrying the 'Western

[258] "Wisconsin Project Interview," Iran Watch.

[259] Jon Gambrell, "Iran Says Supreme Leader Limiting Ballistic Missile Range," *Associated Press,* October 31, 2017, https://www.apnews.com/a9b9ff80f4424ce5be3a4a81e04dc8dc.

[260] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 30.

paradigm' of warfare, which has a perceived history of targeting civilians and population centers."[261] This is in line with the Iranian practice of taqiyyah, in which morality designed by the leadership can circumvent traditional thought in order to allow for the practical usage of a tool which would ensure the nation's survival.

These low yield weapons would be likely to be used as a regional deterrent against Israel or other opponents in proximity, as well as an area denial measure affecting U.S. bases and influence in the region.[262] Iran's propensity to utilize asymmetric tools of warfare, such as terrorist networks, may indicate other ways in which a nuclear or radiological weapon could be used to deter an enemy. As stated by Johnson, the most likely scenario in which Iran would use a tactical nuclear weapon would be to deter Israel, area denial measures against the United States, or, "the threat of a land invasion of Iran emanating from the Arab Gulf states."[263] In any event, the decision to use nuclear weapons would most likely be to ensure the direct survival of the regime, if conventional Iranian military methods were not able to produce such a result. In line with Hudson's assertion that strategic culture can give insight as to what actions, "are on the shelf," the knowledge of possible Iranian motivations and thresholds for the use of nuclear weapons will further assist U.S. policymakers in the formulation of defense strategies to deter aggression.[264]

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[261] Johnson, 30.

[262] Johnson, 30.

[263] Johnson, 32.

[264] Valerie Hudson, *Culture and Foreign Policy*, 1–24.

Policy Option: Combating Terrorism

Due to Iran's history of using state-sponsored terrorism to carry out attacks, it is highly likely that Iran might transfer/proliferate nuclear weapons to terrorist networks to achieve strategic objectives. Because of this, the United States must continue to tailor its defense policy to address the threat of terrorism. In the National Institute of Public Policy (NIPP) study on deterring Al-Qaeda, it was determined that standard deterrence values could be utilized against certain terrorist organizations.[265] However, traditional deterrence theories created by Schelling and Kahn may not apply to all terrorist organizations, because of their asymmetric nature and a lack of a clear targets and/or critical infrastructure. The NIPP study continues to note that "no single approach to deterrence is likely to be effective in all cases, given the variation in foes and contexts."[266]

Instead, a mix of options and approaches is likely necessary to effectively deter a terrorist organization. There are multiple types of policies that can succeed in creating a proper deterrence against terrorists. One can apply a direct response method similar to Cold War deterrence policy, but the targets would, of course, be different. Instead of directly targeting terrorist camps and soldiers, who may not value their lives in the same way that the United States' civilians and soldiers do, one can still find others such as, "leaders, financiers, supporters, radical clerics, and other members of terrorist networks," who do have such values. Matthew Kroenig, a Senior Fellow in the Center on National Security at The Atlantic Council, points out the fact that before 9/11, leadership within Al-Qaeda questioned whether or not to strike at the World Trade Center

[265] Keith Payne, Kurt Guthe, Thomas Scheber, Cynthia Storer, "Deterrence and Al-Qa'ida," National Institute for Public Policy, 2012, http://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Deterrence-web.pdf.

[266] Payne, "Deterrence and Al-Qa'ida."

and Pentagon in fear of a massive U.S. retaliation despite the candor and acceptance of death from some of the lower tier members.[267]

Kroenig also notes the possibility of an indirect response to terrorist organizations. This policy, in line with third and fourth wave deterrence strategies, seeks to find other things that terrorists might hold dear. An indirect response could be in the form of targeting terrorist family members, or ideological interests (ex. holy sites). Even if this response might not be in the form of Khan's Lex Talionis with a strike back in kind, an indirect response could be some other style of punishment such as making their families homeless, taxing loved ones, blocking access for their loved ones to religious sites, and other countless possibilities.[268]

Finally, by rejecting terrorists the ability to attack with direct denial, then they may be less prone to think that they can successfully carry out an operation, because if they fail, it will weaken their cause.[269] Direct denial (also known as tactical denial) involves the providing of public evidence that a terrorist attack was unsuccessful. Kroenig argues that the success of terrorism revolves around the public message that is conveyed from an accomplished attack.[270] If attacks are unlikely to succeed, terrorists may be less willing to conduct an operation, because failed attacks harm their message and ability to instill fear into the public. To do this, the United States will need to continue improving its intelligence capabilities to become able to detect and disrupt any action or operation that a terrorist organization attempts to carry out.

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[267] Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11,* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

[268] Kroenig, "Deter Terrorism," 25.

[269] Kroenig, 28-36.

[270] Kroenig, 28.

If Iran were to attempt to use terrorist networks to implement a nuclear attack against the United States homeland, its troops, or its allies, the United States should also include within its direct denial policy a clear retaliatory stance. Even if Iran were to use covert means to hide their involvement with an attack, the United States should keep an open policy to retaliate if there is undeniable evidence that Iran was part of an attack.

Policy Option: Diminishing the Threat of Iranian Usage of Nuclear Weapons

Because of Iran's cultural consideration that tactical nuclear weapons can be justified under their code of values, the United States should consider the vigorous investment in missile defense technologies, primarily those able to operate in the regional theatres. In contrast with the traditional U.S. thinking on deterrence through the Cold War, missile defenses would prove to be more stabilizing in this case. By ensuring that the United States can destroy all or most tactical range nuclear missiles directed at its forces, the imminent collapse and destruction of the Iranian regime afterward by a U.S. response would be guaranteed. To complete this objective, the United States will need to create and field a layered defense system consisting of sensors, interceptors, and a command and control structure which can operate between the different branches of the U.S. military to ensure the immediate sharing of information and response mechanisms. This layered defense will entail technologies that will exist on the tactical, regional, and strategic stages. By employing a variety of sensor and interceptor systems, including those that are sea, air, satellite, and land-based, the United States will have an enhanced 360 awareness and response capability that will help ensure the safety of U.S. and allied troops/civilians, as well as result in the destruction of the Iranian missiles.

As a secondary, but still priority concern regarding missile defense against Iran, the United States will need to prepare for the possibility of an Iranian strategic capability which could target the United States homeland. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy John Rood stated in a Hudson Institute event that the U.S. has considered multiple locations for a third Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) site on the East coast of the United States.[271] This additional location would be a significant enhancement to current U.S. capabilities, e.g. the two GMD sites located on the West coast of the United States (40 interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska; 4 interceptors at Vandenburg Air Force Base, California), that would focus on the threat of an Iranian strategic capability.[272] Rood noted that while the project is not complete, the groundwork has been laid out and environmental impact studies completed for each possible location.[273]

Policy Option: Thinking and Targeting of Leadership

Understanding that Iran's strategic culture emphasizes its leadership, the United States must find a unique way to understand its motives in the implementation of any nuclear attack, and must attempt to hold those individuals at risk. To address this challenge, certain questions must be answered to tailor deterrence, such as:

What is the Propensity of Iranian Leaders to Utilize Nuclear Weapons? Iranian leaders are more likely and willing to use nuclear weapons in direct self-defense of the regime,

[271] "The 2019 U.S. Missile Defense Review: A Conversation with Under Secretary John C. Rood," Hudson Institute, February 6, 2019, https://www.hudson.org/events/1644-the-2019-u-s-missile-defense-review-a-conversation-with-under-secretary-john-c-rood22019.

[272] "Ground-Based Midcourse Defense," Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, January 31, 2019, http://missiledefenseadvocacy.org/missile-defense-systems-2/missile-defense-systems/u-s-deployed-intercept-systems/ground-based-midcourse-defense/.

[273] "Conversation with Undersecretary Rood," Hudson Institute.

or as tools to inhibit access or invasion of critical regional locations (e.g. bases or commerce zones). Self-defense in this sense is to stop any action that would destroy the regime. While an eventual strategic counter is not out of the question, Iran's strategic culture is more likely allow for the use nuclear weapons in tactical situations.

How Does Iran View Defeat, and to What Extent can it Endure Civilian Sacrifice? If history serves as a precedent, Iran has the ability to suffer and sustain civilian sacrifice if the cause fits within its cultural narrative. During the Iran-Iraq War it is estimated that over 1 million Iranians died, many in the cause for martyrdom.[274] This battle for glory and honor had the possibility to end sooner (which could have saved countless lives), but the narrative around the idea of sacrifice and martyrdom propelled the conflict onward. When agreeing to the ceasefire as a result of outside pressures from the international community, Supreme Leader Khomeini likened it to drinking a cup of poison.[275] Iranian leaders justified the end of the conflict, where no victory was achieved, by employing heroic flexibility, which allowed them to accept a short-term loss for the long-term survival of its regime.

What Constitutes the Survival of the Regime? The Iranian regime is made up of multiple branches which operate on dual tracks. This includes a governmental body and a clerical body, which provides clerical oversight on all decisions the regular government makes. However the overall framework consists of the Supreme Leader at the top, who has final say on all policies; the President, whose power is diminished by the constitution because of its emphasis on Shi'a ideals and oversight; the Assembly of Experts, who are chosen clerics which have final

[274] Ian Black, "Iran and Iraq Remember War that Cost More than a Million Lives," *The Guardian*, September 23, 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/23/iran-iraq-war-anniversary.

[275] Roger Hardy, "The Iran-Iraq war: 25 Years On," *BBC News*, September 22, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4260420.stm.

say on who is able to run for election in Parliament; the Parliament itself, which is a body of 290 members who draft legislation, ratify international treaties, and approve the country's budget; the Council of Guardians, a clerical oversight body who deems whether or not laws passed are in accordance with Islamic Law; the Judiciary, which is the prosecutorial body of the government; and finally, the National Security and Intelligence Agencies (Standing Army, I.R.G.C., National Security Council, and Ministry of Intelligence & Security), who are responsible for keeping the integrity of Iranian borders and all force operations existing outside its borders.[276]

While extensive, the weak point within the Iranian regime is the clerical branch, who act as the gatekeepers as to what actions or laws are deemed acceptable by its strategic culture. The most important of these entities is the Supreme Leader, who is responsible for the, "delineation and supervision of the general policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran."[277] Consistent with Iran's strategic culture, the Supreme leader exercises a god-granted authority and has final say on any policies which emanate from the Iranian government. The bodies most closely associated with the Supreme Leader are the Assembly of Experts, the Council of Guardians, and the National Security and Intelligence Agencies. With the addition of the President, the leaders of these different bodies are the most likely to be the ones that hold together the fabric of Iran's strategic culture, as they have final say on all objectives and operations that come forth out of the legislative and policy arms of the government. In the case of an attack on the United States, these leaders would be the best targets to threaten and hold hostage with response measures. By having a demonstrated capability to do so, the U.S. may be able to halt a nuclear attack initiated by Iran. If that were to fail, then the successful removal of these individuals from power might be enough

[276] "The Structure of Power In Iran," PBS, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tehran/inside/govt.html.

[277] "The Structure of Power in Iran."

to create a drastic change within Iranian strategic culture…a change in where some of the reformers within government might have the opportunity to rise up and make significant changes that pull the society towards a more benign and cooperative position in the region.

In addition to understanding these answers and deciding what the most likely answers are, in any conflict with Iran, the United States must be able to hold the elite leaders at extreme threat, as they are the central to the continuation of the current regime and the power structure as a whole. To hold the leadership hostage, the United States would need to utilize intelligence as well as a flexible force structure. Intelligence will provide the U.S. policymakers with information regarding where the Iranian leadership is likely to gather or hide in the event of a nuclear attack. This actionable intelligence would provide the United States with a more credible threat to Iranian leadership, and a better chance of successfully striking it.

Additionally, the United States will need to continue modernizing its offensive forces so that they can be capable of holding the Iranian leadership hostage. Improvements, such as: accuracy of weapons systems, enhanced bunker-busting capabilities, and adjustable payloads to limit or increase destruction will provide the United States with more flexibility and credibility in holding leaders at risk. If Iran truly believes that vital individuals of its regime will not be able to survive a coordinated United States response to a nuclear attack, then it may influence them to rethink the circumstances that they would initiate a nuclear conflict.

CONCLUSION

This report has summarized the argument for how the utilization of strategic culture as a supplemental tool can assist the tailoring of U.S. deterrence policy towards Iran. Chapter I described the threat posed by Iran, which has continued to aggressively pursue military capabilities, project power, and destabilize the region. Modern Iranian animosity for the United States began with the American and British installation of the Shah in 1953, whose policies eventually drove Iranians to take part in the Islamic Revolution. Since signing the N.P.T., Iran has committed numerous violations and safeguard agreements concerning its nuclear program. Most recently, the United States pulled out of the J.C.P.O.A., a nuclear deal with Iran which would limit its uranium enrichment capabilities and breakout time in exchange for the alleviation of sanctions. This pullout occurred around the same time that Israel presented a cache of stolen Iranian documents outlining an explicit attempt to acquire nuclear weapons in the past with 10 kiloton yields.

In addition to its nuclear ambitions, Iran is also increasing its military capabilities, making it a worrisome competitor for the United States in the Middle East. Attractive capabilities to Iran are precision-guided weaponry, warhead miniaturization, and offensive and cyber capabilities. Most importantly, Iran has pursued a capable missile arsenal consisting of cruise, S.R.B.M.s, M.R.B.M.s, and S.L.V.s. The testing and fielding of these weapons are worrisome to the U.S. and its allies in the region, primarily because S.L.V.s are similar to intercontinental ballistic missiles, and the technology could easily be transferred to that capacity if Iran chose to do so. By mastering these technologies, Iran will become one of the preeminent

powers in the Middle East and could use its force to control economic chokepoints and act aggressively towards its neighbors.

Iran is currently the world's foremost state sponsor of terror and uses terrorist networks to achieve its goals abroad. The use of such networks gives Iran an asymmetric global reach, and the ability to further exacerbate tensions in regions of its interest such as Israel and Yemen. Finally, if Iran were to breakout with a nuclear weapon capability, it is highly likely that other countries in the region would follow to ensure their own security needs. Leadership within Saudi Arabia and Turkey have both stated that they would obtain a nuclear weapon if Iran chose to do so. This proliferation of the Middle East would have the potential to increase great power competition in the region by countries such as Russia and China, who would wish to support countries that could further their strategic objectives.

Chapter II explained the creation, evolution, and fallacies of traditional deterrence theory used by the United States throughout the Cold War. The advent of the atomic age ushered in a new wave of intellectuals with the goal of preventing nuclear war from occurring, and if it were to occur, how to win one. In response to the early deterrence theory of the threat of massive retaliation and overwhelming offensive force, theorists such as Herman Kahn and Thomas Schelling attempted to solve this problem utilizing a rational actor model in their distinct theories. Herman Kahn emphasized the need to have a wide range of capabilities that would need to hold all kinds of enemy targets at risk, as well as air, civil, and missile defense systems which would limit damage and assure allies that the United States was willing to extend deterrence overseas. Thomas Schelling's theory focused on the utilization of M.A.D., which entailed the prohibition of defensive systems, and the ability to ensure a second-strike capability which would target an enemy's urban-industrial complex. Schelling's theory also claimed that one did

not need to have a logical deterrent and that instead a "threat that leaves something to chance" was enough to persuade an enemy to act cautiously in the fog of war. Schelling argued that the United States could purposefully "rock the boat," and act brazenly, which would cause an enemy to stand down in the event of an escalation.

In the end, both theories played an influential role in U.S. Cold War nuclear strategy. However, it is arguable that Schelling's theories attained more of a dominant role in the policy debate due to an attainable, affordable and sufficiently survivable nuclear force, and the greater possibility of arms control and diplomacy options. As new threats emerged at the end of the Cold War, theorists noted the fallacies with Schelling and Kahn's Cold War theories of deterrence. Both theories emphasize the idea that an enemy will be "rational," meaning that they are likely to think about and make decisions the same way that the United States would in a given situation. However, third wave deterrence intellectuals explored how Kahn and Schelling's theories would not hold up in this new environment because many enemies think about rationality differently than the United States. During this time period, the study of strategic culture developed out of the need for a new understanding of how other leaders make critical decisions.

Chapter III further explained the nature of strategic culture and how it can be used to assist policymakers in making informed decisions. Strategic culture is the study of how cultural values, norms, and perceptions influence how a state makes grand strategic decisions and views the world. Influences of state's strategic culture are factors such as its geography, history, experiences with domestic and outside powers and myths and symbols prevalent throughout a culture's narrative. Additionally, elites play an immense role in the shaping of a state's strategic culture, as they are the ones typically who control the culture's narrative and act as the gatekeepers as to what changes in society are acceptable.

Jack Snyder was among the first scholars who began to link how strategic culture can predict state behavior. In his study on Soviet strategic culture, he was able to confirm that the Soviets were more prone to an offensive and decisive use of force to achieve their objectives due to cultural factors, which was later confirmed by the Russian doctrine of "escalate to de-escalate."

Kartchner emphasized how strategic culture was essential in playing a role in the formulation of WMD strategy for three reasons. First, strategic culture can bridge the gap of the previous lack of understanding the United States had into how opponents make "rational" decisions. Secondly, strategic culture will let the U.S. "know one's enemy," as well as its allies, which could play an immense part in military planning as well as diplomacy. Thirdly and finally, state decisions regarding WMD are often justified in cultural terms.

In his framework for analyzing strategic culture, Kartchner noted four subsections of state WMD decision making that strategic culture can explain. These subsections are the decisions to adhere to international norms, acquire, proliferate, or use WMDs. Kartchner further described the model of three dispositions that must first be justified within a state's strategic culture that would allow them to make these decisions. First, an action must be deemed "rational," within a culture, meaning that the cost and benefits of an action are deemed acceptable or bearable. Secondly, an action concerning WMD must be seen by the holders of a strategic culture as enabling the group, organization, or state to achieve culturally endorsed outcomes."[278] Finally, the ends and means of any WMD decision must be within the "repertoire or palette" emanating from a state's culture. By using this framework, one is better able to use strategic culture as a tool in formulating WMD policy against an opponent.

[278] Kartchner, "Strategic Culture WMD," 60.

Chapter IV provided insight into what constitutes Iran's strategic culture, by analyzing its relevant history, how it identifies itself, the dominant cultural values in its society, the norms that characterize its behavior, and how it makes decisions based upon its cultural values regarding WMD. As a society which has been around for thousands of years, Iran has a vibrant and distinct strategic culture. Throughout this history, values such as absolute kingship and rule of the jurisprudent have been consistent within Iranian society dating back to the Achaemenid Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great. The rise and fall of other empires in the region added to the broad sense of insecurity felt by Iranians, who believed that these empires would try and instill outside values within their society. However, Iranians were able to keep a cohesive national identity by lending their existing bureaucracies to conquerors, in exchange for keeping local laws and customs.

The next transformation in Iranian history was the establishment of Islam within the Middle East. During this time, the great schism of Islam occurred, concerning the successor of the Prophet Muhammed. Those who believed that the leader of the faith should be his bloodline successor were the Shi'a and mainly took up residence within the Iranian region. With the death of Muhammed's brother in law Ali, the reverence for martyrdom cemented itself into the Iranian identity. Shi'a Islam would eventually play a significant governing role within Iran in the 16th century. From this time onwards, further foreign intervention from outside powers such as the Ottomans, Indians, Russians, and other Muslim and Western powers would place geopolitical strains on Iran, by seeking to place it within their spheres of influence. These influences would further worsen Iranian paranoia. In 1979 the modern Iranian regime was born out of the Islamic revolution, which deposed the Shah and instead placed an Ayatollah as the Supreme Leader of the Republic.

The Iranian Identity is self-defined as a global protector of Shi'a Islam and distrust towards the outside world. Iran's extensive history gives itself the perception as a great and important nation, responsible for much of the world's scientific achievement. Iran uses Shi'a ideology to model its society, utilizing its caste system (reminiscent of the ancient Sassanian empire), the recognition of an absolute ruler, and the rule of clerical oversight for government decisions. Finally, Iran's self-described enemies are the United States (for its involvement with imposing the Shah), Israel, and the Sunni Muslim powers surrounding it.

Iranian values can be observed using the Hofstede 6-D model, which uses a cultural framework to establish a country's Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation, and Indulgence. This scale indicates that Iran has a large power distance between its elites and its people; is a collectivist society; is characterized as a society which focuses on quality of life instead of internal competition; has a high penchant for uncertainty avoidance; views societal change with distrust; and scores low on indulgence, indicating that it is more prone to pessimism and cynicism.

Iranian norms focus on how the country behaves and relates to conflict, the international system, the utility of violence, and the laws of war. Nima Baghdadi in the P.A.S.C.C. report on Iranian compliance with the J.C.P.O.A. concluded that three cultural orientation played a significant role in Iranian behavior; pessimism, pragmatism, and honor.

Finally, Iran's strategic culture can give indicators as to how it makes decisions regarding WMDs. While initially opposing the use of WMDs due to Islamic beliefs, it was eventually able to be rationalized using the concept of taqiyyah, where traditional concepts or taboos can be pushed aside if it will ensure the survival of the regime. Iran is prone to break with international norms, justify the acquisition of WMD, transfer or proliferate WMD technology to organizations

as a way to increase its asymmetric capabilities, and use WMD either as the means to establish a deterrent, defend the regime from strategic defeat, or as a tactical capability.

Chapter V then discussed how the U.S. could use the knowledge of Iran's strategic culture to tailor a deterrence policy towards it. U.S. policymakers will need to consider two environments in which a tailored deterrence policy will operate. One in which Iran has still not acquired a nuclear weapon, and one environment in which it does.

In the pre-breakout environment, there is the possibility to influence Iranian leadership by exacerbating tensions within the civilian population. Even with the financial considerations given to Iran through the J.C.P.O.A., its economy is still weak and there is a high amount of unemployment and poverty through the country. Instead of using the financial gains from the J.C.P.O.A. to fix the problems within their country, the Iranian elite instead chose to further build up their military, missile arsenal, and involvement in foreign theatres. By imposing a strict sanctions regime upon Iran, the United States will be able to make the Iranian populace break from their norms of accepting all policies that the elites formulate, and instead place more pressure upon them, initiating a change.

Furthermore, strategic culture can give U.S. policymakers further insight into Iranian negotiating behavior if another nuclear deal is constructed. Because Iran is a pessimistic nation, it is likely to view any attempt by the United States to strike a deal with distrust. Because of this, if future deals provide Iran with financial concessions, they are likely to be used to enhance its power within the region. To address this, the U.S. will need to ensure that there is a strict verification process within any deal so that even with Iranian distrust, there could be no instance where they could cheat or misuse funds.

In the post-breakout environment, the United States will need to address three separate challenges. The first is to combat Iranian use of terrorism. Because Iran is more likely to transfer WMD technologies to terrorist organizations, the United States will need to utilize strategies such as direct and indirect responses, as well as direct denial. Furthermore, by establishing a retaliatory policy that holds Iran responsible if it is discovered that it sponsored a terrorist attack, the U.S. is more likely to persuade Iran to not use such methods in the first place.

Secondly is the need for the U.S. to diminish the effect of an Iranian nuclear attack. It is believed that Iran is more likely to use a tactical ballistic missile in the event of conflict[279]. To deter Iran, the United States will need to ensure Iran that any attack it makes upon the U.S., its forces, and its allies will not succeed. To accomplish this, the U.S. will need to invest in missile defense technologies vigorously. Completion of this policy will include a layered defense of tactical, regional, and strategic sensors and interceptors, and the inclusion of a third GMD missile defense site on the Eastern Coast of the United States. If Iran is assured that it will not be able to use nuclear weapons to achieve its objectives, then it is more likely to be deterred.

Finally, because the Iranian elite constitutes the regime, controls all policy decisions, and is willing to endure large numbers of civilian deaths, the United States will need the capability to hold these leaders hostage and understand their decision-making. By understanding how the Iranian government is structured, U.S. policymakers can target those within the regime who are most closely linked to the grand policy decisions down the chain of command, mostly within the clerical branch. By modernizing its nuclear and conventional forces to hold these leaders hostage reliably, the United States will further be able to assure Iran that its regime would not survive in the wake of a nuclear attack.

[279] Johnson, "Assessing Prospects JCPOA," 31.

Strategic culture is not simply the basis to formulate primary nuclear policy options, but is rather a means for making a calculated argument for or against U.S. decisions. There are many historic precedents illustrating that a lack of understanding into an opponent's thinking or modus operandi can lead to miscalculation, unnecessary or ill-advised conflict, and related negative consequences. As a tool to be employed in the development of U.S. policy, strategic culture can serve as a viable element to either affirm or discourage the nation's leadership from taking particular actions. It provides further data and insights regarding the likely reactions of opponents, and therefore illuminates the possible outcomes and chances of success or failure.

When utilizing strategic culture as a tool, it is beneficial to start with an examination of historical and current cultural studies, and compare them with a policy case study (e.g. an examination of a recent conflict) to see if there is a direct connection between a nation's cultural values, norms, and identities vis-à-vis the decisions made and actions taken in the event examined in the policy case study. Kartchner describes the focus of this research as, "the link between strategic culture and the specific national security missions of assure, dissuade, deter, and defeat."[280] If there is a correlation between these cultural influences and policy case studies, then it may help further convince U.S. policymakers that strategic culture can serve an immense purpose as a tool for deterrence policy.

As Isaac Newton once wrote, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."[281] So too it is the imperative of those in the national defense and foreign policy arenas to understand the evolution of American deterrence policy, and the research already undertaken, and build upon it. The world is becoming ever more complex, and as such, the United States will

[280] Kartchner, "Strategic Culture WMD," 64.

[281] Isaac Newton, "Isaac Newton letter to Robert Hooke, 1675," HSP Discover, https://discover.hsp.org/Record/dc-9792/Description#tabnav.

need to have even more nuanced insights into the motivations and likely actions of friends and opponents when seeking to provide for the security and prosperity of the nation. It is in this realm that strategic culture can be of true benefit. By striving to better understand the nature and cultural drivers of mankind and its leaders, the United States can more effectively respond to any situation, and make the most appropriate decisions to benefit the welfare of its citizens.

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