

Nuclear Strategy & Power: Assessing the Nuclear Strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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Introduction

Experts consider Iran to be an emerging state in the company of China, India and Brazil. Indeed, Iran's importance as a regional and ideological power is growing, and the contest over Iran's nuclear program is one of the most controversial debates in international relations. Yet, how Iran's leaders balance hard security principles, ideology and domestic politics in its decision-making is poorly understood, especially with regard to its nuclear program.

This research fills this gap by applying a new theoretical framework to Iran's decision/policymaking process in the context of international crisis negotiations over the status of Iran's nuclear program. In contrast to traditional approaches to nuclear strategy which focus on military aspects, it explains how states trade on the possession of nuclear technologies to achieve a range of political goals not achievable through the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Analytical Approach

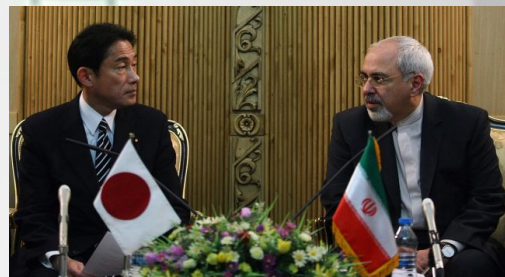
Policy Genesis ➔ Debate & Proposal ➔ Leadership ➔ Implementation

Research Findings

- There is a huge gap between the status that the Iranian leadership believes Iran deserves, and the current status of the country. Thus, for the Islamic Republic, it is a crucial national interest to regain deserved regional and international status.
- Building a weapon would put Iran in the same pariah category as North Korea, contradicting the Iranian leadership's top priority to attain an international status akin to that of Japan.
- The optimum strategy is to trade away possession of the full nuclear fuel cycle in order to establish diplomatic relations with the international community, thereby improving Iran's power position regionally and globally.

Research Questions

- 1 - How can we best analyze the nuclear policies of Iran?
- 2 - What impact do Iran's nuclear policies have on its regional power and status?
- 3 - What kind of a state does Iran aspire to be as it develops its nuclear energy capabilities? A rogue like North Korea? Or a wealthy, integrated member of the international community like Japan?



Significance

The results of this research project will contribute to what will remain a lively academic and public policy debate. If a comprehensive solution is reached at the end of the current negotiating cycle, the final agreement will place Iran under unique obligations for a mutually agreed period of time. Pending the eventual relative normalization of Iran's obligations, the debate about the Iranian leadership's decision-making processes and intentions will likely continue. The findings of this research will additionally be useful in the study of other NPT member states and their nuclear-related policies. Indeed, a suitable precedent will be imperative amid the surge in the number of NPT signatories – 65 in 2010 - which have recently expressed interest in developing nuclear program.

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