

## Iran and Regional Hegemony

- Iranians feel bitter about the US and British involvement in the removal of Prime Minister Mossadeq
- Iranians are in favor of democratic values but are bitter towards American foreign policy
- Ayatollah-most powerful man in Iran

*To what extent is the nuclear issue a legitimate threat? Or is it paranoid propaganda?*

- problems in Iran: hidden centrifuges, government hasn't let UN inspectors in, heavy water reactors (aren't needed to create nuclear energy), underwater bunkers
- amount of facts available to the public is not enough to make a decision

- Pascal's Model

	<u>Bomb</u>	<u>No Bomb</u>
Believe	OK	OK
Don't Believe	X	OK

- Should we assume that they do have one because the implications are so great? –people assume that they have started the problem, not that they have a bomb

- Iran the US have poor relations→ reason for US to assume Iran has a bomb
- Iran only wants bomb because Israel has it?→could lead to an Arab cold war where other Arab nations are competing for arms
  - Arms races with Gulf states who are afraid of Iranian power→ margin of error becomes greater because there are more states with these weapons
  - Rational, pragmatic calculations of Arab nations
- Where does the uranium come from?
  - Black market
  - NPT: can trade peacefully, but Iran is no longer part of the Treaty
- Iran needs bomb for protection—poor economy
- fear: loose nuke that will go to a non-state actor (Hezbollah)
  - Syria has dirty bombs but they won't funnel them to Hezbollah because there will be backlash
- geographically, Iraq and Afghanistan on either side of it→ US on both sides
- Pakistan and al-Qaeda fighters in the north

*Is it credible that Iran would use the weapon in the region?*

- blank leverage
- uranium can be traced

- Iran's "get out of jail free card"—act with impunity because they have the ultimate check over American actions
- no ties with America
- can be argued that Iran is one of the most democratic countries besides Israel
  - To what degree is the decision making process lost at the top (Ayatollah)—theocracy and being lost in the ideology
- Iran people's opinions: Would the people say the leaders are weak if the nuclear program were stopped?
- Iranian government chooses candidates—pseudo-democracy
- liberalism of youth—wait until these youth are in control of the government?
- Iran is not a diversified economy—petro-state

*Practically, what can the US do?*

- open diplomatic communication—what would that do to US credibility?
  - There isn't really credence if you give them a meeting because it is already a legitimate state
  - What could be achieved if the US met with Ahmadinejad
  - International pressure to do something
  - Conflict of interest because Iran is trying to undo the impact of US support in the Middle East; not many areas of compromise (little overlapping interest except for economic/oil)
  - Sending lower-level diplomacy to Iran?
- Iran wanting to help in Afghanistan
  - Iran is creating grassroots Iranian networks
- convince them to not have a bomb or force them to not have a bomb—diplomatic vs. military
  - Iranians want diplomatic connections with the US
- solution: either maintaining a regime or giving up the bomb, NOT both through:
  - Sanctions or military intervention—unilateral effort is unlikely
  - What is the effect on the Iranian people?—forcing them to pick a side between the country or values of democracy may lead to blowback or a change in ideology
- Israel might act unilaterally if it found out that Iran did have the bomb
- stable Iraq is in Iran's interest
  - Iran is supporting conflicting groups→ they do intend to create chaos in Iraq
- nationalist government in Iraq is best counter for Iran
- nuclear clock, Iraq clock, youth clock

- if Iran is trying to destabilize Iraq, who are they supporting?
  - Wouldn't it be in Iran's best interest if there was a stable Iraq that they could exert influence on?
  - Iraqis have a sense of nationalism—Saddam creating a strong sense of Iraqi identity
- cultural/language differences—Persians vs. Arabs
- Iran has aspirations to become the dominant regional power
  - Israel vs. Hezbollah war—Arab states quietly supported Israel because they didn't want Iran to have a greater influence in the Middle East

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- if the US isn't going to help Iran by taking a different approach, they should not be involved—international community involvement
- open diplomatic ties—begins to encourage Iranians to rethink their nuclear capabilities
  - Shows Iranians that they are entitled to self-respect
  - Economic coercion and threats of force have not worked
  - Whoever has leverage will make the difference
    - Even before the negotiations start
    - Gradual recognition→ can't give them the biggest thing first
    - They have yet to earn full diplomatic relations
- transparent nuclear program
- face-to-face direct negotiations
  - Low-level delegates have met
  - During Cold War, US was talking to Moscow but that did not mean that there was a concession→ prevented the advancement of nuclear
    - But they had an embassy and more diplomatic relations that Iran and US do now
  - Fosters more understanding
- role of Israel in this discussion→ US relationship with Israel?
  - Public perception?
- putting UN sanctions on Iran's gas imports—international community's last bargaining chip
  - Destabilize regime
  - US doesn't have leverage to convince international community to do so
  - Effect on oil prices?→ OPEC states can make up for the loss
  - Effect on elections→ Ahmadinejad could be voted out of office
  - Not practical now

CONCLUSION: open up low-level diplomatic ties between the United States and Iran