DEBATING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY NEXUS: THE CASE OF IRAN

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ABSTRACT

DEBATING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY NEXUS: THE CASE OF IRAN

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The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the consequences of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in terms of international security and to propose a more comprehensive and coherent theoretical framework through a critical review of the current approaches through the Iranian nuclear crisis. Nuclear weapons have always been an important source of debate in the international security literature, due to enormous impact of their emergence and proliferation on international politics. In this thesis, optimistic and pessimistic approaches which are two main schools of thought on the proliferation of nuclear weapons are examined in detail and their approaches to the Iranian nuclear crisis have been put forth. From this point of view, the relation of nuclear weapons with the important concepts and variables such as the causes of wars, deterrence and defense, offense-defense balance, regime type and their role in civil-military relations were discussed. In this study, which critically discusses the current literature, it has been proposed that the possible consequences of the proliferation of nuclear weapons will be more coherently explained by the stability-instability paradox rather than the optimistic-pessimistic binary. The thesis, which takes the Iranian nuclear crisis as a case study, argues that despite cumulative approaches of the optimist and pessimist schools in the current literature, if Iran obtains nuclear weapons, the likely results will be more sophisticated. Based on the

stability-instability paradox, the thesis argues that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, strategic stability will increase but sub-strategic stability will be eroded.

Keywords: Nuclear weapons, Nuclear proliferation, Iran, International Security, Stability-instability paradox

ÖZ

NÜKLEER SİLAHLARIN YAYILMASI VE ULUSLARARASI GÜVENLİK BAĞINI TARTIŞMAK: İRAN ÖRNEĞİ

Öncel, Rıfat
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Bu tezin amacı, nükleer silahların yayılmasının uluslararası güvenlik bakımından sonuçlarını değerlendirmek ve İran nükleer krizi üzerinden, mevcut yaklaşımlara eleştirel bir gözle yaklaşarak daha kapsamlı ve tutarlı bir teorik çerçeve önermektir. Ortaya çıkışları ve yayılmalarının uluslararası politikada meydana getirdiği büyük etkilerden dolayı, nükleer silahlar, daima uluslararası güvenlik literatüründe önemli bir tartışma kaynağı teşkil etmiştir. Bu tez çalışmasında, nükleer silahların yayılması hususunda iki ana düşünce ekolü olan iyimser ve karamsar yaklaşımlar ayrıntılı bir şekilde incelenmiş, İran nükleer krizine dair yaklaşımları ortaya konmuştur. Buradan hareketle, nükleer silahların savaşların nedenleri, caydıcılık ve savunma, saldırı-savunma dengesi, rejim tipi ve sivil-asker ilişkilerindeki rolleri gibi önemli kavramlarla ve değişkenlerle olan ilişkisi tartışılmıştır. Mevcut literatüre eleştirel bir şekilde yaklaşan bu çalışmada, nükleer silahların yayılmasının muhtemel sonuçlarının iyimser-karamsar ikileminden ziyade, istikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksu yardımıyla daha tutarlı bir şekilde açıklanacağı ileri sürülmüştür. İran nükleer krizini örnek olay olarak alan tez çalışması, mevcut literatürdeki kümülatif iyimser ve karamsar yaklaşımlara karşın, İran'ın nükleer silah sahibi bir devlet olması durumunda, ortaya çıkacak sonuçların daha sofistike olacağını öne sürmektedir. İstikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksundan yola çıkarak, tez İran'ın nükleer silah sahibi

olması durumunda stratejik istikrarın artacağını ancak stratejik olmayan istikrarın aşınacağını iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nükleer Silahlar, Nükleer Silahların Yayılması, İran, Uluslararası Güvenlik, İstikrar-İstikrarsızlık Paradoksu

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LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

CSA	Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement
EU	European Union
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JPOA	Joint Plan of Action
LEU	Low Enriched Uranium
MAD	Mutually Assured Destruction
MID	Militarized Inter-State Dispute
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
P5+1	The United States, The United Kingdom, Russia, China, France, and Germany
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WWII	World War II

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1.Statement of the Problem and the Aim of the Study

Nuclear weapons have occupied a central role in international politics ever since their introduction onto the world stage in 1945 when the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The level of destruction unprecedented until this event demonstrated the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. The emergence of nuclear weapons has had a fundamentally changing effect on inter-state relations. The use of war as a mean of power-raising has become much more costly and dangerous. Nuclear weapons are unique in their destructive capacity that they have significantly changed the cost-benefit calculations of states.

Nuclear proliferation is widely considered to pose a grave threat to peace and security in the international system because of their destruction capacity in the hands of irresponsible actors. It is believed that a nuclear escalation could kill millions of human beings, which has brought out a significant concern that proliferation of these weapons must be controlled and restrained. Although there have been intense efforts to prevent spread of nuclear proliferation, new countries have emerged as the candidates of having their own bombs. While the increasing propensity among the states to pursue their own nuclear weapon programs exacerbated the concerns in the policy circles, it also has led a lively debate among the academic community.

Iran's nuclear program has been one of the hottest debates in international relations at least for a decade. Although P5+1 (the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) and Iran reached an agreement in July 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Trump Administration's decision to withdraw from the deal in May 2018, revitalized the concerns. Although, the IAEA stated that Iran continues to fulfil its obligations under the JCPOA, the fate of

the agreement is uncertain and Iranian nuclear dispute will seem to be a major area of concern within the international security debate in coming decades.

This thesis problematizes the current academic debate regarding the Iranian nuclear crisis, critically engages it and proposes different theoretical framework to better explain the dispute with Iran. The research question of the study is that how Iran's nuclear program has shaped the international security debate? And the main argument of the study is that existing literature of nuclear proliferation is insufficient in explaining the nuclear crisis with Iran. Rather than proliferation optimism and proliferation pessimism, this thesis proposes stability-instability paradox to enhance the explanation of the debate regarding the consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran.

The basis of the discussion of proliferation in the literature of international relations revolves around the issues of security and stability. The debate is whether nuclear weapons stimulate peace, stability, and security in inter-state relations or they undermine the international stability by creating mistrust, irrationality, and uncertainty. Kenneth N. Waltz and Scott D. Sagan are the two scholars who put eloquent analyses on the causes and consequences of nuclear proliferation and the debate reflects two major schools of thought, the proliferation optimists and the proliferation pessimists.[1]

The optimistic camp, pioneered by Waltz, argued that the introduction of nuclear weapons into the state calculations have prevented major wars from occurring because of the fear that all warring parties would face a total annihilation as a result of a possible nuclear exchange. The logic follows that crises do not escalate towards major wars due to the changed state behavior which is now become more prudent and cautious. Proliferation optimists emphasized the stability and the lack of major

[1] The arguments of the proliferation optimists and proliferation pessimists are comprehensively examined in the next chapter of this study. For a major debate, see Kenneth N. Waltz, "More May be Better," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate (3rd. Edn.),* ed. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013).

war during the Cold War where they argue that it was the bomb that kept the Cold War as cold. Furthermore, they argue that nuclear weapons enhance the security of the states, reduce the risk of miscalculations in the decision-making process and uncertainty in the international system.[2]

The pessimistic camp, pioneered by Sagan, argued that nuclear weapons create risks of being used irrationally, accidentally or inadvertently which may lead to deterrence failures. Furthermore, they suggest that proliferation attempts trigger preventive strikes by existing nuclear-armed states which pose a significant risk to international stability. Furthermore, newly emerged nuclear states are generally weak, and authoritarian which could prevent the safety and command and control of nuclear weapons. Troubled civil-military relations and ties to insurgent groups may produce incentives for these states to transfer the bomb terrorist groups or violent non-state actors. Accordingly, the pessimists argue that a nuclear exchange could be a real possibility in the wake of miscalculations, irresponsible behaviors, and accidents.[3]
This thesis will problematize the existing literature on Iran's proliferation, which revolves around optimism and pessimism where the main accounts bring only partial explanations. In order to increase the explanatory power of proliferation theories and enhance the understanding of the likely consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran, this study argues that a third way could help in this objective which can go beyond the simple binary classification of optimism and pessimism.

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[2] Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Kenneth Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Better," *Adelphi Papers*, 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981); Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities, *The American Political Science Review*, 84 (3) (September 1990): 731-745; John J. Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security*, 9 (3): 19-46; John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15 (1) (Summer 1990), 5-56.

[3] Peter Douglas Feaver, "The Politics of Inadvertence*," Security Studies*, 3 (3) (Spring 1994): 501-508; Peter Douglas Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Bruce G. Blair, "Nuclear Inadvertence: Theory and Evidence," *Security Studies*, 3 (3) (Spring 1994): 494-500; Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

1.2.Theoretical Framework of the Study

The scholarly literature on the causes and consequences of nuclear proliferation is enormous. Scholars discussed the effects of proliferation on international stability, regional stability, and domestic stability.[4] Driven motivations to search for nuclear weapons are also thoroughly examined.[5] Many scholars adopt security-based approaches to nuclear proliferation[6] while others defended that there are non-security sources of proliferation who underlined normative, psychological, and ideational factors.[7] Recent scholarship move beyond this debate by analysing the relationship of nuclear assistance among states which they argue as the main reason of proliferation.[8]

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[4] Waltz and Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons.*

[5] For instance, see Scott D. Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security*, 21(3) (Winter 1996/97): 54-86.

[6] William Epstein, "Why States Go—and Don't Go—Nuclear," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 430 (1) (March 1977): 18–28; Richard K. Betts, "Paranoids, Pygmies, Pariahs, and Nonproliferation," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1977: 157–183; Nuno P. Monteiro and Alexander Debs, "The Strategic Logic of Nuclear Proliferation," *International Security*, 39(2), (Fall 2014); Stephen M. Meyer, *The Dynamics of Nuclear Proliferation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15 (4) (Summer 1990): 5–56; Bradley A. Thayer, "The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation and the Utility of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," *Security Studies*, 4 (3) (Spring 1995): 463–519.

[7] Etel Solingen, "The Political Economy of Nuclear Restraint," *International Security*, 19 (2) (Fall 1994): 126–169; T.V. Paul, "Nuclear Taboo and War Initiation in Regional Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 39 (4) (December 1995): 696–717; Nina Tannenwald, "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use," *International Organization*, 53 (3) (Summer 1999): 433–468; Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Etel Solingen, N*uclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); Jacques E.C. Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions: Scientists, Politicians, and Proliferation* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[8] Matthew Fuhrmann, "Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements," *International Security*, 34 (1) (Summer 2009): 7–41; Matthew Fuhrmann, "Taking a Walk on the Supply Side: The Determinants of Civilian Nuclear Cooperation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (2) (April 2009): 181–208; Erik Gartzke and Matthew Kroenig, "A Strategic Approach to Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (2) (April 2009): 151–160; Matthew Kroenig, "Exporting the Bomb: Why States Provide Sensitive Nuclear Assistance," *American Political Science*

However, this study does not discuss the causes of nuclear proliferation. Hence, the driven motivations behind the Iran's nuclear program are not the subject of this study. Rather, it tries to explore the consequences of proliferation where it attempts to discover the possible security outcomes of a nuclear-armed Iran. It shifts 'nuclear weapon possession' from a dependent variable to independent variable in order to bring explanations to how the possession of nuclear weapons influences the stability and security within the international system.

The major concern regarding the Iranian nuclear program is the prospects of what behavioral patterns would Iranian state perform if it acquires nuclear weapons. A nuclear-armed state's behavioral patterns inescapably affect the international security because the unique nature of nuclear weapons brings out significant changes in key concepts of international politics such as deterrence, crisis behavior, militarized conflicts, or war. Thereby, the decade-old proliferation debate on Iran has revolved around the likely consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran on a range of issues from the geopolitical rivalries in the Middle East to the likely dangers posed against to international stability.

It is widely argued that nuclear weapons provide their possessors security, deterrence, and status in international politics.[9] Similarly, nuclear weapons bring equation to inter-state relations by shifting the distribution of power among states whose capabilities may greatly differ in conventional terms.[10] It is also argued that

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Review, 103 (1) (February 2009): 113–133; Matthew Kroenig, "Importing the Bomb: Sensitive Nuclear Assistance and Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (2) (April 2009): 161–180; Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010); and Matthew Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance: How "Atoms for Peace" Programs Cause Nuclear Insecurity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012).

[9] For instance, see Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (Manchester, NH: Ayer Co. Publications, 1946); Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate (3rd. Edn.)* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013).

[10] For instance, see John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15 (1) (Summer 1990), 5-56; Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15 (3) (Winter 1990/1991), 7-57; Bruce Bueno de

nuclear weapons create caution and prudence in statesmen which diminishes the eagerness to adventurism, miscalculations, and misperceptions in decision-making process.[11] Hence, nuclear weapons have pacifying effects on inter-state relations because of the possible catastrophic costs of a nuclear escalation. This logic found its evidence from the Cold War rivalry between the US and the USSR where two countries avoided a major war although they were engaged in fierce security competition throughout the world. Similarly, after the end of the Cold War, states that possess nuclear weapons never fought a major war with each other.[12]

On the other hand, the persistence of lower level conflicts among nuclear-armed countries as well as several proxy wars in different geographic locations has posed a question. Why do nuclear-armed states continue to fight sub-strategic conflicts although they never engage in major conventional wars or a nuclear exchange? During the Cold War, the US and the Soviets fought several proxy wars throughout the world and Pakistan and India engaged in many low-level conflicts over disputed territories and populations. It is clear that nuclear-armed countries continue to launch minor conventional aggressions although they carefully avoid major wars because of the risk of nuclear escalation.

Mesquita and William H. Riker, "An Assessment of Selective Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*," 26 (2) (June 1982), 283-306.

[11] For instance, see Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (Manchester, NH: Ayer Co. Publications, 1946); Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008); Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities, *The American Political Science Review*, 84 (3) (September 1990): 731-745.

[12] Although the Kargil War between India and Pakistan in 1999 is demonstrated as an except to this trend by some authors because of the death toll in the conflict exceeded 1.000 of which number is defined by the Correlates of War as the threshold of a militarized dispute to transform into a war, another case could be made. It can be argued that Pakistan's essential motivations were not bold in initiating the Kargil conflict. Pakistan desired to enhance her leverage over India, demonstrate her support to local insurgents, and attract international attention to her dispute with India. See, Feroz H. Khan, Peter R. Lavoy, and Christopher Clay, "Pakistan's Motivations and Calculations for the Kargil Conflict," in Peter R. Lavoy, ed., *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 64-91 and Colin H. Kahl and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Iran and the Bomb: Would a Nuclear Iran Make the Middle East More Secure?," *Foreign Affairs*, 91 (5) (September/October 2012), 161-162.

The proliferation debate on Iran seems to be significantly influenced by the empirical evidence suggested above. In the last decade, several works examined the Iranian case by using theoretical approaches and a fruitful debate has emerged from the works of the leading scholars in the field of International Relations. Proliferation optimists and proliferation pessimists examined the possible consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran where they maintained the main premises they previously advocated on the issue of nuclear proliferation. While the optimists argued that a nuclear-armed Iran would not be different from the Soviet Union or China and it would have every incentive to act rationally, the pessimists argued that a nuclear-armed Iran would not behave as a rational actor and it would cause deterrence failures which may create a nuclear escalation.[13]

The essential arguments on Iran put forward by optimist can be briefly summarized as follows: Nuclear weapons have little offensive value and they are by nature for deterrent purposes. Iran is a rational actor that pursues nuclear weapons solely for its security which is jeopardized by the US. There are significant restraining factors on Iran to pursue offensive aims if it acquires nuclear weapons. Iran has no incentive to provide nuclear capabilities to non-state armed groups but rather it has every incentive to protect its arsenal. The IRGC's involvement of Iran's nuclear program poses no danger because the IRGC has nothing to do with nukes; furthermore militaries often behave more prudent than civilians in terms of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons will diminish Iran's military spending because once a state obtains the bomb, it will not need more conventional capabilities. Finally, nuclearization of

[13] Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz with Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate (3rd. Edn.),* ed. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 195-198; Scott D. Sagan, Kenneth N. Waltz, and Richard K. Betts, "A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster," *Journal of International Affairs*, 60 (2) (Spring/Summer 2007), 135-150; Colin H. Kahl and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Iran and the Bomb: Would a Nuclear Iran Make the Middle East More Secure?," *Foreign Affairs*, 91 (5) (September/October 2012), 157-162; Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Is Nuclear Zero the Best Option?" *The National Interest*, 109 (September/October 2010), 88-96; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb: Nuclear Balancing Mean Stability," *Foreign Affairs*, 91 (4) (July/August 2012: 2-5; Scott D. Sagan, "How to Keep the Bomb from Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, 85 (5) (September/October 2006): 45-59.

Iran will not necessarily beget more proliferation in the Middle East because of the external ties and alliance commitments of other regional states.[14]

On the other hand, the pessimists argue that Iran is not a rational actor, but rather it embraces a revolutionary ideology where it aims regime change in the Middle East; hence Iran could utilize nuclear weapons for forced regime change in the region. Iran has not strict civilian control on its nuclear program which exacerbates the risks of miscalculations, accidents, and inadvertent use. The heavy involvement of the IRGC in Iran's nuclear program poses a considerable risk of nuclear escalation because the IRGC is a radical military organization with significant external operations. Iran will not decrease its conventional military spending because historical evidence demonstrates the opposite trend where newly emerged nuclear states also boosted their conventional spending. The clandestine conduct of the nuclear program by the Iranian state further jeopardized the safety and command and control mechanism which may lead to deterrence failures and a nuclear exchange. Iran may provide nuclear capabilities to violent non-state actors because of its decades old intensive relations with these groups.[15]

What is remarkable in this debate is that the proponents of optimism and pessimism both focus on the different aspects of the issue by selectively reading the Cold War history and Iran's foreign and security policy. However, the historical record of the behavioral patterns of nuclear-armed countries demonstrates that neither optimists nor pessimists are completely true in their arguments. Rather, both of the accounts bring partial explanations while missing several significant factors. By critically engaging the existing literature, this study proposes a third way which is beyond optimism and pessimism in order to better explain the nuclear crisis with Iran.

[14] Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons,* 195-198.

[15] Ibid.

The major questions that shaped the debate can be defines as follows: Do nuclear weapons provide their possessors a deterrent? Have nuclear weapons offensive or defensive value? Do nuclear weapons decrease conventional spending? Do civil-military relations have effects on command and control of nuclear weapons? Does regime type have effects on command and control of nuclear weapons? On the other hand, while admitting the vital importance of these questions for the Iran case, this study proposes that the most important question regarding the issue is: why do the nuclear-armed states continue to engage in limited conflicts although they avoid a nuclear or major conventional war? The analysis of the debate on Iran demonstrates that this last question, in fact, has potential to bring explanations to several questions raised by proliferation theorists.

In recent research, quantitative studies which utilize sophisticated statistical tests and software have also been increasing through the last decade. For instance, the relationship between nuclear weapon possession and the initiation of militarized disputes are examined in recent years with sophisticated analyses.[16] Within the scope of this study, the most important lacking dimensions in mainstream scholarship on nuclear strategy are the effects of proliferation on militarized disputes, low-intensity conflicts, crisis behavior, and escalation control, among others. After discussing the mainstream literature of proliferation and its proposals over the Iranian nuclear crisis, this study argues that the possible effects of a nuclear-armed Iran on international security could be better explained by stability-instability paradox.

Stability-instability paradox is a theoretical construct that is being used to explain why sub-strategic conventional conflicts arise between nuclear-armed states, although they are mutually deterred by the nuclear capabilities. While the mutually

[16] Robert Rauchhaus, "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypotheses: A Quantitave Approach," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (2) (April 2009), 258-277; David Sobek, Dennis M. Foster, and Samuel B. Robison, "Conventional Wisdom? The Effect of Nuclear Proliferation on Armed Conflict, 1945–2001," *International Studies Quarterly*, 56 (1) (2012), 149–162; Mark S. Bell and Nicholas L. Miller, "Questioning the Effects of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 59 (1) (2015): 74-92.

assured destruction (MAD) has prevented states from escalating the tensions into a major conventional war or a nuclear exchange, the question is why the militarized inter-state disputes (MID) are so persistent between nuclear-armed adversaries. Stability-instability paradox has brought an explanation to this phenomenon which is originally developed during the Cold War in order to discover the reasons why the US and the Soviets fought several costly and detrimental proxy wars throughout the world, despite avoiding a direct confrontation.[17] While stability-instability paradox is used to explain the Cold War confrontations of the US and the USSR and the ongoing crises between Pakistan and India, it is not utilized within the debate regarding Iranian nuclear crisis. By applying the paradox to the Iran's case, this study also aim to contribute to the nuclear proliferation literature.

Glenn Snyder argues that "the greater the stability of the 'strategic' balance of terror, the lower the overall stability at its lower levels of violence" and maintains that "…firm stability in the strategic nuclear balance tends to destabilize the conventional balance."[18] Robert Jervis by interpreting the Snyder's account, argued that "to the extent that the military balance is stable at the level of all-out nuclear war, it will become less stable at lower levels of violence."[19] Thereby, the stability-instability paradox reflects the idea that the emerging stability created by MAD produces greater instability, meaning that the probability of limited conflicts or provocative state behaviors will increase but will be seen as relatively safe since they remain below the threshold of a major war or a nuclear escalation.

Within this context this thesis asks several questions envisioned by the stability-instability paradox. What effects nuclear weapons have on inter-state conflict behavior? Do nuclear states prevent major wars by deterring aggressions and

[17] Glenn Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," in Paul Seabury, ed., *The Balance of Power* (San Fransico: Chandler, 1965): 184-201.

[18] Ibid., 198-199.

[19] Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 31.

bolstering defense? Do nuclear weapons have offensive or defensive value? Do nuclear weapons erode the credibility of conventional forces? Does proliferation of nuclear weapons bring stability and equality to inter-state relations? Does proliferation of nuclear weapons causes instability in regional politics? And most importantly, why nuclear-armed states continue to engage in limited conflicts although they avoid a nuclear or major conventional war?

1.3.The Methodology of the Study

This study seeks to arrive at valid inferences over how Iran's nuclear program has shaped the proliferation debate. After doing that the study proposes a particular approach to bring more explanatory power to proliferation theories regarding the Iranian case.

The study embraces explanatory model meaning that it seeks ways to enhance understanding on a particular topic by suggesting different hypotheses than existing debate on the Iran's proliferation attempt. It believes that the most important feature of a theory is its explanatory power, as Kenneth Waltz succinctly puts it.[20] Nevertheless, it has inescapably a predictive nature because of the fact that despite the enormous debate, Iran has no nuclear weapons. Thereby, enquiring the likely consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran is basically a theoretical discussion which should be noted.

The major works dealing with the effects of nuclear proliferation on the international security are mostly qualitative. Several important works in the literature used comparative case study method, particularly examining the South Asian case. Nevertheless, more and more quantitative studies began to be published in leading journals in the field which used advanced statistical techniques, among others. This study uses case study method where it focuses on single case. As a matter of course, both qualitative and quantitative studies in the literature are used in order to increase the robustness of the study.

[20] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1979).

The level of analysis of this study is the international system meaning that it enquiries an event related with a particular state but has wider consequences well beyond the sovereignty of the state under question. On the other hand, the object of the analysis of this study is possession of nuclear weapons. Hence, the level of analysis and the object of analysis suggest that this study problematizes how nuclear weapon possession by a particular state affects international security.

The main problem of research on the likely consequences of nuclear proliferation has been the lack of sufficient sources of observation. Major studies in the field mostly dealt with the nuclear balance of terror among the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.[21] Generally, the opponents of nuclear proliferation underlined this lack of empirical evidence and urged that it would not be scientifically convenient to make causal inferences from a single case.[22]

1.4.Argument of the Study

This thesis will argue that the debate over Iran's nuclearization suffers from an accurate theoretical framework which is supported by historical evidence. The study claims that there is a better way to formulate the likely consequences of Iran's proliferation than suggested by proliferation optimists and proliferation pessimists. The stability-instability paradox could explain the Iranian case because it separates the strategic stability and sub-strategic stability. Since the historical evidence demonstrates that nuclear weapons have varying effects on the strategic and sub-strategic levels, the stability-instability paradox has greater potential to explain the

[21] For instance, Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (Manchester, NH: Ayer Co. Publications, 1946); Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959); Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008); Herman Kahn, *On Escalation* (New York: Praeger, 1965); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987); Charles L. Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962).

[22] For instance, Scott D. Sagan, "More Will Be Worse," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate (3rd. Edn.),* ed. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013); Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Steven E. Miller, "The Case against a Ukrainian Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (3) (Summer 1993), 67-80.

likely consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran. Accordingly, the study found that both the optimists and the pessimists have significant points in their arguments but their explanations are partial because they both dismisses crucial dimensions of the effects of nuclear weapons. This thesis will put that both the optimism and pessimism have their own merits in the proliferation debate on Iran. On the other hand, the stability-instability paradox encompasses the key arguments proposed by the optimists and the pessimists which make it a more relevant theory in explaining the Iranian case. This thesis will contend that Iran's acquiescence of the bomb will increase strategic stability while decrease the sub-strategic instability.

The stability-instability paradox argues that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, for instance a major war between Iran and the US will be prevented. Furthermore, Iran is a rational actor, and a nuclear escalation will not occur in the international system. On the other hand, since nuclear weapons enhances the power, security and deterrence of their possessors, Iran's regional stance in the Middle East as well as its international conduct will be emboldened which may increase the likelihood of more limited conflicts, crisis, and provocative behaviors. In other words, a nuclear-armed Iran's bilateral relations with the current nuclear powers, particularly with the US will become more balanced and equal which in turn will prevent a major conventional war or invasion attempts against Iran. The unbreakable deterrent power of nuclear weapons will bring stability among nuclear states. However, as the paradox suggests, a nuclear-armed Iran will embolden its stance in the Middle East, and become more assertive in its foreign policy which may likely to aggravate existing crises in the region and the likelihood of low level conflicts will emerge between Iran and other Middle Eastern states. This emboldened stance is a direct result of the awareness on nuclear powers that no country dare to invade them by envisaging a nuclear catastrophe. Thereby, the trap is that while nuclear weapons bring stability at the strategic level by preventing major wars or nuclear escalations, it produces incentives to engage low level limited conflicts.

After the introduction, the rest of this thesis proceeds in three main chapters. In the first chapter, I outline the essentials of optimist and pessimist arguments on nuclear

proliferation which includes the causes and consequences of nuclear proliferation. In doing so, I explore how such observations could help with examining Iran's nuclear program. I conclude that existing theories do not address the puzzle of this study because of the fact that their observations overstress either the international system or the agent-level analysis. I argue that mainstream scholarship focuses almost exclusively on whether nuclear weapons bring either strategic stability or sub-strategic stability. After elaborating proliferation optimism and proliferation pessimism, the chapter introduces the concept of the stability-instability paradox, its main assumptions, and hypotheses in order to propose the third way.

In the second chapter, I present a detailed history of Iran's nuclear program from the early development during the Shah Pahlavi in 1950s to the signature of the JCPOA in June 2015. The chapter includes the main problematic areas concerning Iranian nuclear crisis such as Iran's secret uranium enrichment, its clandestine facilities, the imposition of sanctions, and the rounds of negotiations for years. The chapter particularly assesses the nuclear diplomacy between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the international community. The technical dimension of Iran's nuclear activities is not the subject of this study and it already requires extensive nuclear physics knowledge, so I basically bypassed it, except some vital points. The chapter also gives an assessment of the JCPOA and its consequences in order to provide a background to the last chapter. The second chapter concludes that Iran followed a "hedging" strategy which means that it achieved the required technology to build the bomb but delayed it for the foreseeable future with coming to the terms with the P5+1.

The third chapter discusses the likely effects of a nuclear-armed Iran for the international security and stability. I firstly provide the optimist and pessimist arguments on Iran where the optimists argue that Iran's development of the nuclear weapon would bring stability and the pessimists contend that Iran's acquiescence of the bomb would cause deterrence failures, nuclear exchange, and terrorist seizures. After critically engaging these arguments, I propose stability-instability paradox in order to explain the probable effects of a nuclear-armed Iran for international

security and stability. I underline Iran's regional politics, threat perception, and power projection capabilities after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in order to support the hypotheses of the stability-instability paradox. The chapter concludes that Iran's obtain of the bomb would provide strategic stability while in the meantime it would also undermine sub-strategic stability.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

2.1. Introduction

The emergence of nuclear weapons has brought profound effects on the international system. It significantly changed the key issues of international relations such as balance of power, causes of wars, uncertainty, arms race, and most importantly deterrence. What lies at the core of the deterrence[23] has been that the nuclear weapons have created a balance of terror by establishing MAD between states which guarantee a total annihilation of all actors in question.[24] Thereby, nuclear weapons have significantly decreased incentives for initiating a war. As Thomas Schelling argued 'war has become, it is said, so destructive and terrible that it ceases to be an instrument of power.'[25] This major change in the nature of deterrence has dictated states to act with far more prudence.

The inherent security dangers of nuclear weapons held states responsible for managing them while in the meantime it also produced incentives in order to preclude these weapons from spreading to other countries. From the beginning, states

[23] Mesquita and Riker define credible deterrence as the 'possession of sufficient nuclear capabilities to assure one's relevant adversaries of their destruction in the event of war.' See, Mesquita and Riker, "An Assessment of the Merits of Selective Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 26 (2) (1982), 291.

[24] For the effects of nuclear weapons on International Relations, and particularly on the deterrence, see Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (Manchester, NH: Ayer Co. Publications, 1946); Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959); Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008); Herman Kahn, *On Escalation* (New York: Praeger, 1965); Charles L. Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); Glenn H. Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," in Paul Seabury ed., *The Balance of Power* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965).

[25] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 18

those having nuclear weapons have pursued two major objectives in terms of the proliferation of these weapons. First, they understood that in order to have a credible deterrence, building survivable nuclear arsenal and securing it from external aggression is a must. Second, the proliferation of the nuclear weapons has been a serious danger that must be inhibited. [26] On the other hand, it was seen during the late Cold War that there has been a growing appeal to nuclear weapons as more and more nations had started their own nuclear programs. This demand has been facilitated by the spread of nuclear technological know-how to periphery countries from the major powers or non-state networks.

Spread of nuclear programs and transfer of nuclear know-how and technology throughout the world led to a debate between two schools of thought whether this must be a concern for the world peace or not.[27] Proponents of nuclear proliferation claims that the nuclear weapons and subsequently established MAD between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War was the foremost factor of stability and it prohibited both powers from going to war despite numerous crises.[28] On the contrary, the opponents of nuclear proliferation contend that nuclear weapons

[26] Mesquita and Riker, "Selective Nuclear Proliferation," 283.

[27] For an assessment of contesting approaches toward nuclear proliferation, including the recent literature which utilizes advanced quantitative techniques, see Alexander H. Montgomery and Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Predicting Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (2) (April 2009): 302-328. For an earlier literature, see Jacques E. C. Hymans, "Theories of Nuclear Proliferation," *Nonproliferation Review*, 13 (3) (2006): 455-465 and Peter D. Feaver, "Optimists, Pessimists, and Theories of Nuclear Proliferation Management: Debate," *Security Studies*, 4 (4) (1995): 754-772.

[28] For major proponents of nuclear proliferation, see Kenneth N. Waltz, "More May be Better," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate (3rd. Edn.),* ed. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013); John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15 (1) (Summer 1990), 5-56; John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (3) (Summer 1993), 50-66; Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15 (3) (Winter 1990-1991), 7-57; John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*, 10 (4) (Spring 1986), 99-142; David J. Karl, "Proliferation Pessimism and Emerging Nuclear Powers," *International Security*, 21 (3) (Winter 1996-1997), 87-119; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and William H. Riker, "An Assessment of Selective Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*," 26 (2) (June 1982), 283-306; Jordan Seng, "Less is More: Command and Control Advantages of Minor Nuclear States," *Security Studies*, 6 (4) (Summer 1997), 50-62.

may be used irrationally, inadvertently, or accidentally in tense situations or limited conflicts that would bring a total annihilation.[29] The most eloquent and concise debate over the issue thus far has been the one between Kenneth N. Waltz and Scott D. Sagan. The debate provides valuable insights over the possible effects of nuclear proliferation and the likely behavior of emerging nuclear states. The following parts of this chapter discusses the arguments of both authors as well as other leading theorists on nuclear proliferation in order to shed light which questions dominate the literature about the nuclear weapons.

2.2. The Proliferation Optimism

Proliferation optimists argue that nuclear weapons prevent great power war and generate stability in the international system.[30] Proliferation optimism takes state as rational actors. As Waltz argues states are unitary actors within the international system. There is no higher authority or hierarchical structure in that system, rather anarchy reigns within it which forces every state to pursue its own security. Thus, states are in a self-help situation where no one will come to save them in case of their survival at stake.[31] Consequently, states decide their own fate and pursue nuclear weapons when they contemplate that their security would face a grave danger in the near term, particularly from a more powerful country. This rationality provides states

[29] For major opponents of nuclear proliferation, see Scott D. Sagan, "More Will Be Worse," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate (3rd. Edn.),* ed. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013); Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Peter Douglas Feaver, "The Politics of Inadvertence*," Security Studies*, 3 (3) (Spring 1994), 501-508, Peter Douglas Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Peter Douglas Feaver, "Neooptimists and the Enduring Problem of Nuclear Proliferation," *Security Studies*, 6 (4) (Summer 1997), 126-136; Jeffrey W. Knopf, "Recasting the Optimism/Pessimism Debate," *Security Studies*, 12 (1) (Autumn 2002), 41-96; Bruce G. Blair, *The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings University Press, 1993); Bruce G. Blair, "Nuclear Inadvertence: Theory and Evidence," *Security Studies*, 3 (3) (Spring 1994), 494-500; Steven E. Miller, "The Case against a Ukrainian Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (3) (Summer 1993), 67-80; Peter R. Laroy, "The Strategic Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation," *Security Studies*, 4 (4) (Summer 1995), 695-753.

[30] David J. Karl, "Proliferation Optimism and Pessimism Revisited," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 34 (4) (August 2011): 619-41; Kenneth N. Waltz, "More May be Better," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate (3rd. Edn.),* ed. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013).

[31] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1979).

to being aware of other states' national security and interests, hence reducing the risk of miscalculation and adventurism.[32]

2.2.1. Deterrence and Defense

What lies at the core of deterrence is that its success is contingent upon the force which it is based not being used. In other words, the effectiveness of the deterrence approximates to maximum when a state is not being forced to use the deterrent instrument under question against an adversary. Bernard Brodie calls this an "anomaly" where "deterrence is meaningful policy only when we are fairly confident that the retaliatory instrument which it relies will not be called upon to function at all."[33] Thus, if a state appeal to use the force which is the driving power of its deterrence, it means that deterrence is failed. It is widely argued that conventional deterrence had failed numerous times throughout the history. On the contrary, proliferation optimists contend that nuclear deterrence significantly changed the nature of deterrence in a way that it has become absolute.[34]

The dynamics of nuclear weapons are different from that of conventional weapons. That difference is fundamental since it directly affects deterrence and defense of nations. According to Waltz, the military aspect of the self-help system logic dictates nations to deter would-be attackers in their own means, namely defense or

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[32] Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Kenneth N. Waltz, "More May be Better," in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate (3rd. Edn.),* ed. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013): 37-40.

[33] Bernard Brodie, "The Anatomy of Deterrence," *World Politics*, 11 (2) (January 1959), 175.

[34] Brodie argues that in conventional era, the strenght of deterrence was relative rather than absolute and it was being influenced by important variables such as the amount of state power as well as strong incentives to use of force. However, emergence of nuclear weapons significantly decreased the incentives to appeal to military instruments, particularly in terms of initiating a major war because it has made the expectation of victory obsolete and significantly increased the possible harm a state could be taken from initiating a war. Deterrence is transformed from a relative strategic policy into an absolute one due to the fact that nuclear weapons pose a military force that cannot be defend with any means which ultimately guarantee a calamitous punishment for an adversary. See, Bernard Brodie, "The Anatomy of Deterrence," 173-191.

deterrence. In the case of a would-be attacker, defense is provided by the persuasion, and deterrence is realized by the ability to punishment. Defense makes the attacker to deal more difficulties in order to achieve its objectives. Whereas deterrence creates awareness on the attacker that its aggressive behavior would led to its own punishment where its gains will be overshadowed by much more loses, even the total destruction. This type of deterrence can be granted by second strike capabilities, of which nations have will be able to impose devastating costs on the intended attackers.[35] Thereby, deterrence does not reflect what a state will do, but rather it is closely related with what state can do.[36]

Deterrence in the conventional world is not credible due to the facts that the threat is "distant, limited, and problematic."[37] Hence, nations do not avoid from conventional wars, even when their military forces are inferior to that of the enemy, being aware of the fact that defeat and damage taken will be limited. On the contrary, nuclear weapons are so powerful that they impose unlimited costs to the parties of the war. As Waltz suggested "nuclear weapons purify deterrent strategies by removing elements of defense and war-fighting."[38] Waltz's belief in nuclear deterrence is so strong that he argues the nuclear deterrence is proved to be the real alternative of a liberal dream of world government and nuclear weapons were the main tools that provided peace for last sixty-five years.[39] In elsewhere, he argues that "those who like peace should love nuclear weapons" and argues that "they are the only weapons

[35] Waltz, *More May be Better*, 5; Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 20.

[36] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *The American Political Science Review*, 84 (3) (September 1990), 733.

[37] For a detailed comparison of deterrence among conventional and nuclear worlds, see Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," 731-745.

[38] Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities, 732, 743; Waltz, *More May be Better,* 9.

[39] Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Is Nuclear Zero the Best Option?" *The National Interest*, 109 (September/October 2010), 91-92.

ever invented that work decisively against their own use" indicating the deterrent nature of nuclear weapons which provides unbreakable defense.[40]

In conventional world, perceptions and credibility plays a larger role than in nuclear world due to the fact that the quality of information about adversary's force capabilities, strategies, and leadership styles are not sufficient. This diminishes the states' capability of prediction from war outcomes by making military and strategic calculations a difficult task. On the other hand, this uncertainty increases the probability of war because of the miscalculations or cognitive errors of leaderships who might prospects from war.[41] On the contrary, in the nuclear world, the calamitous consequences of a possible nuclear war are easy to be contemplated by actors which unavoidably induce them to put their behavior restraint.[42]

For this reason, the possibility of war in a nuclear world is much more unlikely. Even if a war occurred, it would be a limited one that would not threaten the vital strategic interests of the countries. Risk of miscalculations will be minimized and statesmen become more prudent as a result of the awareness facilitated by nuclear weapons.[43]

Hence, the unique deterrent value of nuclear weapons provides their possessors more security and influence. With the shift in power balance, a non-nuclear state is not only militarily and strategically weakens against nuclear-armed states, but it also loses its relative diplomatic influence vis a vis the nuclear state. It is argued that

[40] Ibid., 93.

[41] John J. Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security*, 9 (3) (Winter 1984/1985), 20; Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 20.

[42] Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities, 734; Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War," *International Security*, 15 (3) (Winter 1990/1991): 13.

[43] Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Waltz, *More May be Better,*33-37.

nuclear weapons derogate the value of conventional superiority.[44] They weaken the effectiveness of conventional military capabilities in shaping the outcomes of developing events in the international scene.[45] This originates from the increased deterrence value of the newly emerged nuclear state. Nuclear weapons significantly enhance the deterrence ability of their possessors. Conventional capabilities, regardless of their size, cannot compensate for the deterrent value of nuclear weapons. As Mearsheimer puts it "formidable conventional forces simply do not have and can never have the deterrent value of nuclear weapons."[46] Gartzke and Jo argue that 'shifts in the military potential brought about by nuclear proliferation almost certainly alter the balance of power' by enhancing their possessors' ability to punishment on its adversaries.[47]

Some scholars, pre-eminently Scott Sagan advocates that the argument which claims nuclear weapons enhance the deterrence of states is seriously flawed.[48] For Sagan, organizational dynamics of the state institutions, particularly that of the army, rebuts Waltz's claims of deterrence and defense. The militaries present organizational features such as military biases and routines, as well as narrowly defined interests. The excessive power in the hands of militaries, in turn, greatly increases the risks of deterrence failures, miscalculations, and accident use of nukes which Waltz assumed them to be granted. [49]

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[44] Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," 19-46.

[45] Daniel Deudney, "Unipolarity and Nuclear Weapons," in G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, and William C. Wohlforth (ed.), *International Relations Theory and the Consequences of Unipolarity*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 303.

[46] Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," 20.

[47] Erik Gartzke and Dong-Joon Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Dispute," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 53/2 (April 2009), p. 213, 216.

[48] Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[49] Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 42-43.

Proliferation pessimists emphasized that the 'long peace' during the Cold War is a delusion. The maintenance of the peace in the Cold War was realized with far greater difficulties and hardships than perceived by scholars those are generally the opponents of nuclear proliferation.[50] Sagan asserts that the U.S. military and the administrations had contemplated preventive strikes against Soviet Union or China numerous times before they develop nuclear weapons.[51] Similarly, after acquiring nuclear weapons, Soviets were emboldened against the West Berlin in her demands, contemplating that her nuclear arsenal will deter the U.S. from taking action to protect West Germany.[52] Furthermore, Sagan also argues that the major reason triggered the Kargil War was Pakistan's acquiescence of nuclear weapons which emboldened its foreign and security policy. He underlined that Pakistani military perceived their newly acquired nuclear arsenal as an instrument that cause India to back down on Kashmir, however this was miscalculation.[53] Thereby, Sagan rejects Waltz's argument that nuclear dyads do not fight with each other and argues that Waltz is unnecessarily magnifies the peace effects of nuclear weapons.

2.2.2. The Offense-Defense Balance

It is widely defended among proliferation optimists that the real value of nuclear weapons lays at their defensive power. For instance, Kenneth Waltz argued that nuclear weapons best serves to states when used with defensive purposes. Waltz maintains that the driving motivation behind states' pursue of nuclear weapons is their lasting search for survival within the self-help international system. He posits that nuclear forces would be guarantee of state security, new nuclear states will have every incentive to protect and maintain them, rather than using them for offensive

[50] Miller, "The Case against a Ukranian Nuclear Deterrent," Foreign Affairs, 70-71.

[51] Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons*.

[52] Sagan, "How to Keep the Bomb from Iran"

[53] Sagan and Waltz, "Is Nuclear Zero the Best Option?" 94.

purposes.[54] Ultimately, Waltz contends that "no one has discovered how to use nuclear weapons other than deterrence."[55] Similarly, Mearsheimer contends that nuclear weapons make aggressions for territorial gains unlikely since the attacker would know that its own severe punishment would take place if its counterpart falls into a desperate situation. Therefore, nuclear weapons, in essence, are the weapons which are most efficient in defensive purposes, rather than offensive ones. [56]

For Van Evera, nuclear weapons have changed the offense-defense balance, making defenders far more advantaged owing to the fact that the defenders would have greater will in nuclear escalation. Emergence of nuclear weapons led to the disappearance of one of the two most important conflict dynamics, the *capability*. In conventional conflicts, *will* and *capability* are the two decisive factors for the outcome, however, in nuclear escalation only *will* matters. In other words, nations which resist aggressors in order to protect their homeland have greater *will* than those who pursue conquests, which is the main source of advantage for them.[57]

Proliferation pessimists approach to the defensive value of nuclear weapons with prudence. Sagan argues that other than defensive purposes, nuclear weapons would also serve as coercive instruments, particularly in the hands of greedy states. For instance, Sagan argues that Israel and Pakistan's major motives for developing the bomb were more related with deterring conventional threats, however, the driving force behind Iraq and North Korea's nuclearization attempts were probably originated from desiring to achieve coercive instruments.[58] Thereby, Sagan

[54] Waltz, "More May be Better," 37-40.

[55] Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, "A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster," 144.

[56] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 20.

[57] Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War," 13.

[58] Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?" 57.

emphasizes the domestic politics and type of regime in determining the value of nuclear weapons in terms of offense or defense. Sagan challenges the idea that nuclear weapons are inherently defensive military tools and argues that whether nuclear weapons have defensive or offensive value is contingent upon states those which possess them.

2.2.3. Frequency and Intensity of War

What kept the Cold War as cold has been a key controversial topic for decades. There have been some structural and behavioral components of stability that prevented a large scale war between the US and the USSR. According to John Lewis Gaddis, emergence of nuclear weapons was the most decisive element of those behavioral factors.[59] He contends that even the other components of stability were ensured, in the absence of nuclear weapons, the level of stability would likely to be lower and willingness to go to a major war would be as high as was in the previous periods of history. Despite often faced with miscalculations, state elites throughout the history preferred war when they contemplated that, possible gains would exceed those of the costs from the outcomes. In other words, when optimistic evaluations from the war outcomes are higher than pessimistic predictions, states preferred war.[60]

In the nuclear world, because of the catastrophic consequences of a possible nuclear escalation, rational actors do not take risks to wage a conventional war with their nuclear-armed adversaries. Nuclear weapons fundamentally changed the expectation from war and it modified the victory dynamics. While older wars required defeating the enemy army in order to force the state under question into surrender or desired terms of the triumphant, nuclear weapons rendered a military victory obsolete because nuclear weapons could immediately bring the adversary on its knees. Schelling underlines that "victory is no longer a prerequisite for hurting the enemy."[61] What significantly shifted these calculations has been the emergence of

[59] Gaddis, "The Long Peace," 99-142.

[60] Ibid., 120.

[61] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 22.

nuclear weapons because they have created prudence and restraint on statesmen in their state conduct and crisis behavior.[62]

Mearsheimer contends that nuclear weapons have significant positive outcomes on the stability and peace, for three reasons. First, they make aggressions for territorial gains unlikely since the attacker would know that its own severe punishment would take place if its counterpart falls into a desperate situation. Hence, nuclear weapons, in essence, are the weapons which are most efficient in defensive purposes, rather than offensive ones.[63] Nuclear weapons have brought a revolution in military affairs that significantly diminish the prospect of war because of the inherent danger of mutual annihilation, making the frequency of wars little but intensity of them devastating. [64]

Second, existence of nuclear weapons in the international system fill the gap between states, creating a more equal system in terms of power distribution which ultimately led to a more stable and equal relations among states. [65] Since a likelihood of war is relatively high between a nuclear nation and a non-nuclear one, when the number of nuclear states increases, then the probability of war decreases owing to the fear of retaliation.[66] As long as states have nuclear weapons which are not vulnerable to attacks, conventional capabilities do not count. Third, nuclear weapons make miscalculations and related-errors less likely due to the fact that once the MAD is ensured, the impacts of alliance dynamics or arms races will greatly diminish.[67]

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[62] Gaddis, "The Long Peace," 120-123.

[63] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 20.

[64] Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," 13.

[65] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 20.

[66] Mesquita and Riker, "Selective Nuclear Proliferation," 292.

[67] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 20.

It is also underlined that nuclear weapons have pacifying effects on states which traditionally pursued gaining territory and launched preventive attacks, driven by the worries that their security is in danger. The emergence of nuclear weapons rendered these aggressive behaviors obsolete by ensuring states that their defense will be based on an unbreakable deterrence over potential enemies. This pacifying effects spread towards other businesses of states as diplomatic relations, foreign and security policies have begun to be conducted in a more transparent, and cooperative manner. Within this scope, Evera argues that 'the possibility of nuclear proliferation should thus be seen as a net benefit to peace in Europe.'[68]

Proliferation pessimists oppose the view that nuclear weapons have been the essential cause of peace and they always prevent a major war. Pessimists argue that even mutually assured destruction exists among rational states, a probability of nuclear war is always viable. Because in order for nuclear deterrence to work, there should be a certain risk of a nuclear war.[69]

2.3. The Proliferation Pessimism

Proliferation pessimists underline particular key issues that question the allegedly "peace-making" effects of nuclear weapons. These accounts are generally revolved around a problematic belief about nuclear stability and ignorance about the risks of proliferation. Considering the first, nuclear pessimists thought that the absence of major war between superpowers during the Cold War does not mean stability was exist in the system. Rather, numerous serious crises and limited conflicts aroused during the period which demonstrates the fragility of the so-called nuclear peace. Second, the nuclear optimists' belief in stability stems from the fact that they assume states as rational actors which always act prudent without external and domestic influences. However, pessimists assert that decisions are not always taken by rational

[68] Evera, "Primed for Peace," 13-14.

[69] Robert Powell, "Nuclear Brinkmanship with Two-Sided Incomplete Information," *American Political Science Review* 82 (1) (1988), 155–78; Robert Powell, "Nuclear Deterrence and the Strategy of Limited Retaliation," *American Political Science Review* 83 (2) (1989), 503–19; Charles Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

calculations by a single unitary entity, but rather, by various organizations with competing interests.

2.3.1. Regime Type and Domestic Politics

Proliferation pessimists argue that, there is no rational calculation behind states' seek for nuclear weapons because states are not unitary entities, rather they consist of varying actors with distinct interests.[70] Sagan suggests Waltz to open up the black box in order to understand the organizations at play within a state. Nuclear optimists' idea of stable deterrence is based on a rationalist assumption -which is not empirically tested- that avoiding war is the national interest of newly emerging nuclear states.[71]

Steven Miller makes the point that the real effect of the nuclear weapons on peace and stability is not known. Although he concedes that nuclear weapons have had significant contribution to the peace during the Cold War however he underlines the fact that there were several other factors counted by Gaddis which were also at play during that period, each significantly contributing to the peace and stability. Accordingly, he argues that one cannot precisely evaluate the real contribution of nuclear weapons on stability in the Cold War as other major elements may had a greater effects, degrading the role of nuclear weapons. Thus, the idea that nuclear weapons were the decisive element of the stability in the post-war period, Miller argues is 'not a fact but… an interpretation, largely based on the evidence of a single case.'[72]

Scott Sagan contends that irrational military organizations with characteristics of "common biases, rigid routines, and parochial interests" will have significant impact

[70] Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons," 55; Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 63; Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, "A Nuclear Iran," 138.

[71] Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 71.

[72] Miller, "The Case against a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," 69.

on the decisions of states that would led to the failures of deterrence and to jeopardize the safety of nuclear forces.[73] Proliferation pessimists argue that proliferation of nuclear weapons raises the risk of accidental detonations which could bring out catastrophic consequences. [74] As Sagan argues "nuclear weapons well have made *deliberate* war less likely, but the complex and tightly coupled nuclear arsenal we have constructed has simultaneously made *accidental* war more likely."[75]

Furthermore, those states emerging as new nuclear powers are likely to face internal instabilities that raise the possibility accidents or inadvertent use of the bomb.[76] Pessimists assert that optimists misunderstood the issue by examining the deliberate use of nukes in domestic conflicts. Rather than deliberate use, internal conflicts and civil wars would cause accidental detonations or sabotages that could be made by frustrated personnel during a possible crisis.[77] Hence, the fragile domestic structures of new nuclear states pose a significant problem for the safety of nuclear arsenals. For Sagan, those states where political bonds are loose and state authority is not sufficiently established would raise the likelihood of deterrence failures if they acquire nuclear weapons.

Sagan further contends that recent nuclear states such as Israel, India and Pakistan, then South Africa and North Korea have developed their nuclear program in a clandestine manner for certain periods which further raised doubts on the safety. Covert nuclear development programs inhibits necessary monitoring efforts and public debates which in turn squeeze the program within the security elites' own

[73] Sagan, *The Limits of Safety*.

[74] Ibid., 264.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 100-101.

[77] Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 75-76; Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 101-102.

interests. What is more is that nuclear weapons cannot be tested in clandestine programs, obstructing the discovery of safety problems.[78]

Proliferation pessimists also warn that lesser states have not sufficient capabilities to neither develop nor control of survivable nuclear forces. It may provoke nuclear neighbors to launch preventive strikes. The economies of lesser states are weak and they lack necessary resources which would likely to prevent them from developing invulnerable nuclear arsenal. They generally lack territorial deep or sea exits in order to use geography for the protection of nuclear weapons. [79] This further increases their vulnerability. Moreover, lack of resources would cause problems in command and control systems, and safety measures which in turn may induce these weapons to be used accidentally or inadvertently, or fall into the hands of terrorists.[80] The state elites in lesser countries may not behave maturely, may tickle for war and the use of nukes. Ultimately more nuclear states mean more individuals having power and control over these weapons which unavoidably increase the risk of irrational behavior, accidents, captures by terrorists, or use without authority.[81]

Proliferation pessimists urge about the likely fragile deterrence of emerging nuclear states as it would cause accidents, terrorist seizure, or preventive attacks.[82] Van Evera believes that these risks are manageable by current nuclear states by the limits imposed by them on the scale of proliferation, prohibiting a possible preventive attack, and providing technical support to those countries 'capable of maintaining

[78] Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 98; Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 72-76.

[79] Matthew Kroenig, "The History of Proliferation Optimism: Does It Have a Future?," *Journal of Strategic Studies* (38) (1-2) (2015), 114; Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 39.

[80] Michael Levi, *On Nuclear Terrorism*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Feaver, "The Politics of Inadvertence*,"* 501-508.

[81] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 39.

[82] Kroenig, "The History of Proliferation Optimism," 117; Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," 14.

secure deterrents' and providing assurance over the security of non-nuclear neighbor states.[83]

On the other hand, proliferation optimists Mesquita and Riker asserted that nuclear proliferation may decrease the likelihood of war among weak states. They argue that new nuclear states, although they are undeveloped, have sufficient infrastructural capacity to secure second strike capabilities. They can use their airports or geographic depth to dissipate nuclear arsenal to ensure survivability. By so doing, conventionally inferior countries could easily overcome their military weaknesses by developing a number of strategic nuclear weapons which will ensure its security by deterring the likely aggressor.[84] Therefore, proliferation in third world countries would be a good thing for avoiding war which in turn will enhance regional and international stability and peace.

Proliferation optimists like Waltz argues that internal stability would not be in danger in new nuclear states because firstly, nuclearization declines the pace of arms race, reducing the cost paid by governments for conventional weapon systems.[85] Waltz argues that despite the conventional wisdom that weak states would be more prone to using their nuclear weapons in crises, he contends that they will only use them when their ultimate survival being at stake. Because these states already have inferior conventional capabilities, they will have every incentive to protect their nukes to counter a more powerful aggressor enemy. Waltz recognizes that a nuclear world will be more peaceful because of the fact that no country will take the risk of forcing another to fall into a desperate position which incite the latter to appeal to nukes in order to grant its survival. Waltz does not state the threshold that designates the danger of survival.

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[83] Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," 14.

[84] Mesquita and Riker, "Selective Nuclear Proliferation," 292.

[85] Waltz, *More May be Better*, 10-11.

Proliferation optimists argue that states with fragile political and economic situations do not pose a danger to the regional stability. Development and maintenance of a nuclear program needs a long and difficult process involving high-tech knowledge, technology, and human capital with required skills which are so hard to find by less developed countries. Furthermore, these countries often suffer from bad political management which unintentionally undermines their nuclear development. Thus destabilized countries already will lose the necessary resources to develop it. Moreover, nations can be able to develop nukes even during the difficult times but in case of a domestic chaos, they would have no incentives to use it. Instability or competition for power does not encourage parties to use these weapons in a volatile environment.[86]

Waltz argues that the nuclear pessimists' fears of coup d'etats or risk of falling into a tyranny are viable for every nation, not solely for newly emerging nuclear states. These fears would occur in every country. Moreover, in case of a civil war scenario within a country, the possibility of a party to launch a nuclear strike on another is a fact, however this one would be 'national tragedy, not an international one' that unlikely to produce global nuclear escalation.[87]

Waltz rejects the idea that radical states at home may use nukes in adventurously abroad, say for revolutionary purposes. For Waltz, being internally radical does not necessarily mean for these states to be radical abroad.[88] Furthermore, he argues, in order for a state to be radical abroad, it must have an overwhelming power projection capacity because it will be forced to deal with other nuclear states.

[86] Jacques E. C. Hymans, "Botching the Bomb: Why Nuclear Weapons Programs Often Fail On Their Own – and Why Iran's Might, Too," *Foreign Affairs* 91 (3) (May/June 2012): 44-53; Waltz, *More May be Better*, 10-11.

[87] Waltz, *More May be Better*, 10-11.

[88] Ibid., 11-17.

2.3.2. Building Survivable Nuclear Forces

Possessing nuclear weapons entails certain requirements and responsibilities which should be guaranteed by the possessor state. By acquiring the bomb, emerging nuclear states become vulnerable against possible preventive strikes from an adversary nuclear state due to the fact that a state cannot achieve survivable nuclear forces immediately. When survivability does not available, then the MAD does not come into play which leaves new nuclear state deprived of second strike capability, rendering her unguarded against a preventive strike. Thereby, ensuring survivability is a key for new nuclear states in order to deflect an outside intervention and maintain its domestic stability. This argument is shared by both the proliferations optimists and proliferation pessimists. That is secure retaliatory strike capacity is a prerequisite for survivable nuclear forces. What the scholars differ is that how easy to achieve such capacity.

Proliferation pessimists emphasize that new nuclear states increase the chance of unauthorized use of the bomb.[89] They also consider that new nuclear states have not required organizational and economic resources to invest "adequate mechanical safety devices and safe weapons design features." As long as they do not supply these needs, their nuclear arsenal will remain crude. New nuclear states carry the worries of being disarmed so that they could make hasty decisions to use the bomb rather than waiting; thus preventive strikes is a real risk.[90]

Sagan, with applying the organizational theory, suggests five factors that would possibly inhibit military organizations to ensure survivable nuclear forces which are a must for stable deterrence. First, military organizations desire their budgets to be consistently increased and they do like to use money for the enhancement of the number and quality of the conventional weapon systems such as the aircrafts or

[89] Peter Feaver, "Command and Control in Emerging Nuclear Nations," *International Security*, 17 (3) (Winter 1992/1993).

[90] Miller, "The Case against a Ukranian Nuclear Deterrent," 71; Kroenig, "The History of Proliferation Optimism," 115; Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 71-72; Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 72-76.

missiles. Thus, they avoid as much as possible from investing to build fortified positions for nuclear weapons such as concrete shelters or missile carrying trains. Huge amount of resources needed to take these measures further encourage military leaders to disregard the necessity of rendering the nuclear forces invulnerable.[91]

Second, military organizations are generally conservative structures. They resist creating new units and systems as well as designing new missions in order to enhance the survivability of nuclear forces.[92] Third, war plans sometimes may not include the role of second-strike options, particularly leaders think of preventive or pre-emptive strikes. In this scenario, military high command simply disregards the importance of invulnerability factor. Sagan argues that military structures are more inclined to appeal preventive strikes originates from their organizational biases.[93] This risk is more likely to aggravate for countries where the civilian administration on military organizations weak or does not exist.[94]

Fourth, even if the military organizations agree to take necessary measures, they cannot easily adapt to the emergent needs because of the army's accustomed standards, procedures, and routines. What is more important is that military routines could be identified from another country by espionage activities which would engender the discovery of information on how the state in question behaves militarily.[95] Fifth, military organizations learn slowly and painfully which is

[91] Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 86-90; Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 58-60.

[92] Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 58-60.

[93] For a detailed analysis why military organizations may be more proclivity to use preventive strikes, see Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security*, 18 (4) (Spring, 1994), 75-85.

[94] Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 58-60.

[95] Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 74-85; Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 58-60.

generally too little and too late. Militaries generally understand only when they failed in wars that they did not monitor, assess, and ameliorate their vulnerabilities.[96]

2.3.3. Civil-Military Relations and Character of Military Organizations

Proliferation pessimists problematize the loose civilian-military relations on the safety and command and control structures of nuclear weapons. According to Sagan, military high commands generally have an offensive culture, believing that the one who launched the first nuclear strike would take the advantage. This factor could significantly increase the likelihood of a preventive strike or use of the nukes in a limited conflict where survival is not at stake.[97] Furthermore, pessimists contend that the possibility of the accidental use of the nukes will rise in weaker states since unaccountable and non-transparent military structures in some way could provide these weapons to terrorist groups or insurgent movements.[98]

Sagan argues that even in the United States, where civil-military relations have been democratic and mature, the army insisted to use nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union in during the Cuban missile crisis which indicates the risk of escalation in even democratic countries. He maintains that the future nuclear states appear to be those who have troubled civil-military relations. What's more important is that, in these states, militaries are diffused into the society, having businesses in key economic sectors, manipulating the segments of population, and conducting paramilitary activities with proxies abroad.[99] Sagan demonstrates that there are crucial organizational factors that make deterrence fragile. Characteristics inherent to bureaucratic structures of military organizations risk nuclear weapons to be used inadvertently or accidentally.

[96] Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 71-72; Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 58-60.

[97] Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 63.

[98] Kroenig, "The History of Proliferation Optimism," 117; Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 63.

[99] Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 42-43.

According to Sagan, Waltz's analysis over the nuclearization of weaker states is flawed because he simply disregards the organizational effects by seeing the state as a unitary actor.[100] Sagan suggests that nuclear weapon development processes are long in countries which have troubled civil-military relations. He argues that armies have prominent role in many developing or underdeveloped nations, particularly those who pursue nuclear weapons. This situation only exacerbates the organizational problems originate from military organizations considering the building of survivable nuclear forces.[101] Sagan rejects the Waltz's position on new proliferators, defending that more states with nukes will exacerbate the risk of accident use of these weapons. Waltz disagrees with the argument that weak civil-military relations in new nuclear states would cause an escalation. He contends that neither Soviet Union nor China had a democratic civilian controls on military, rather the army had a significant role in politics in both nations. Furthermore, even if the army has full authority, this rather may be better because high commands traditionally have been patriotic people who do not fancy of uncertainties which make them even more rational than civilian decision makers.[102]

Waltz against the belief that weaker or fragile states where political and social bonds loose, may show more tendency to use nuclear weapons since their rule was unrestrained and non-transparent. He contends that although these types of states embrace a harsh and hostile rhetoric to foreigners, they will not appeal to nukes, since that policy directly jeopardize their leaders' ruling ability and staying in power because of the likely massive retaliatory attacks.[103]

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[100] Sagan, Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?" 63-64; Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization," 98-99.

[101] Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 63; Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, "A Nuclear Iran," 138; Scott D. Sagan, How to Keep the Bomb from Iran,"

[102] Waltz, *More May be Better*, 11-17.

[103] Waltz, *More May be Better*, 11-17; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb: Nuclear Balancing Mean Stability," *Foreign Affairs*, 91 (4) (July/August 2012): 2-5.

2.3.4. Nuclear Weapons and Neighborly Relations

It has been a controversial topic that whether existing rivalries or hostilities among the new nuclear states are likely to cause an escalation because of the fact that they share common borders. Proliferation pessimists argue that proliferation in neighboring states that have historical enmities and territorial disputes is highly dangerous.[104] For instance, Sagan counts India and Pakistan, North Korea and South Korea, and Iran and Saudi Arabia and argued that disputed borders and historical enmities would cause escalations or nuclear accidents among these countries.[105] Sagan argues that new nuclear states, because of loose organizations, inexperience, lack of human resources and technical capabilities, carry the risk of accidental or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons.[106]

Similarly, Miller doubts that the nuclear weapons which were at Ukraine's disposal during the Cold War would likely to cause instability after the dissolution of the Soviet Union due to the fact that Ukraine and Russia share long and contentious borders. [107] Miller indicates that Ukraine's lack of experience on nuclear weapons may cause irrational behavior or inadvertent or accidental use of these weapons. Since these weapons were under the monitor of the Soviets during the Cold War, Ukraine neither had had trained personnel, and required organizational procedures nor intellectual or doctrinal experience among its elites.[108] Furthermore, Ukraine lacked sufficient command and control and warning systems. Moreover, its nukes were not operational, meaning that they were not survivable, being invulnerable

[104] Miller, "The Case against a Ukranian Nuclear Deterrent," 72-74, 75-79; Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 100.

[105] Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 72-76.

[106] Sagan, *The Limits of Safety;* Sagan, *More Will be Worse*, 72-76; Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 100.

[107] Miller, "The Case against a Ukranian Nuclear Deterrent," 71.

[108] Ibid., 72, 75.

targets for Russian preventive strike. What is more is that nuclear weapons at Ukraine soil designed for attacking the United States, Ukraine will lack the capacity to repositioning and reprogramming these weapons against Russia.[109]

Likewise, it is argued that Ukraine will need nuclear deterrent due to the fact that the bilateral relations among Russia and Ukraine will likely to deteriorate in the future because of the geographic proximity and historical enmities, besides other factors. Since Ukraine is conventionally significantly inferior to Russia, it would not deter a possible Russian territorial aggressions or blackmails.[110] Accordingly, keeping the nuclear arsenal at its hands will be the only realistic guarantee of Ukraine's security and territorial integrity against Russian attacks, driven by imperialistic objectives yet to remain.

Some proliferation optimists adopt a selective approach where they argue that proliferation will be beneficial for peace and security for those countries which have strong economic and technical infrastructure as well as expecting an aggression from superior military power. For Mearsheimer, the ideal country for nuclear proliferation was Germany, because of the fact that it has the strong economic infrastructure and resources to conduct, develop, and control a nuclear weapon program.[111] According to Mearsheimer, the Soviets were a 'legitimate conventional threat' to Germany which makes it to think for developing nuclear deterrence. Inhibiting blackmails from nuclear states may be the other concern for Germany. Furthermore, as a strong country in terms of economy but not military, nuclear weapons would fill this gap between the two measures for Germany.[112] Similarly, Evera suggests that Germany is

[109] Ibid.

[110] Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 44-45; John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (3) (Summer 1993), 50-66; Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation," 99.

[111] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 36.

[112] Ibid.

the ideal country to have nuclear weapons in post-Cold War settings. He contends that nuclear weapons would make Germany to feel secure which in turn prevents its possible aggressive stance.[113]

Mearsheimer argues that 'Europe will be more stable if Germany acquires a secure nuclear deterrent, but proliferation must not go beyond that point.'[114] Evera argues that dozens of nuclear states would be a disaster for European security because the incapable countries would likely to fail to safely develop and control nuclear arsenals. Ultimately, he argues that the US "should seek to confine proliferation sharply- ideally, to Germany alone."[115]

2.4. Stability-Instability Paradox

Stability/Instability paradox has been an important concept to elaborate the relationship among nuclear stability, conventional stability, and deterrence. Karl Deutsch and J. David Singer described stability as "the probability that the system retains all of its essential characteristics: that no single nation becomes dominant; that most of its members continue to survive; and that large-scale war does not occur." Furthermore, they suggest that such systems have self-regulation abilities in order to handle with emergent problems that would put its survival at stake.[116] Gaddis argues that successful function of the self-regulation depends on the existence of agreements over the common fundamental interests or objectives to achieve.[117]

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[113] Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," 43.

[114] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 8, 38.

[115] Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," 43, 54.

[116] Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, "Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability," in James N. Rosenau, ed., *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory*, re. Ed. (New York: Free Press, 1969), 315-317.

[117] John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*, 10 (4) (Spring 1986), 103-104.

The stability-instability paradox is widely credited to Glenn Snyder who argued that "the greater the stability of the 'strategic' balance of terror, the lower the overall stability at its lower levels of violence" and maintains that "…firm stability in the strategic nuclear balance tends to destabilize the conventional balance."[118] Before Snyder, military historian Liddell Hart had also emphasized the paradoxical consequences of nuclear weapons. He had argued that "to the extent that the H-bomb reduces the likelihood of full-scale war, it increases the possibilities of limited war pursued by widespread local aggression."[119] Similarly Robert Jervis put that "to the extent that the military balance is stable at the level of all-out nuclear war, it will become less stable at lower levels of violence."[120] Similarly, Paul Kapur defines stability/instability paradox as "the inverse relationship between the probability of nuclear and conventional military conflict" where "the likelihood of nuclear conflict declines, the risk of conventional war increases, and as the likelihood of nuclear conflict increases, the risk of conventional war declines."[121]

According to stability-instability paradox, acquiescence of nuclear weapons by states creates a paradox. Nuclear weapons enhance strategic stability, but in the meantime, they undermine sub-strategic stability. The possibility of nuclear escalation is ruled out in militarized disputes between nuclear-armed adversaries because of the likely catastrophic costs. States, being aware of this perception or contemplation, prefer to initiate low level conflicts by embracing more aggressive stance in order to force its adversary to make concessions on a disputed issue. States those which initiate disputes believe that they could alter the bargaining position in favor of themselves

[118] Glenn Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," in Paul Seabury, ed., *The Balance of Power* (San Fransico: Chandler, 1965): 198-199.

[119] B. H. Liddell Hart, *Deterrent or Defense*, (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1960), 23.

[120] Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 31.

[121] S. Paul Kapur, "Stability-Instability Paradox," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Political Behavior*, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2017), 799.

and contemplate that the benefits of initiating a limited conflict could overweigh its costs.[122] This perception and the ensuing state behavior engenders limited conflicts which in turn diminishes sub-strategic stability.

2.4.1. The Causes of the Sub-Strategic Instability

The stability-instability paradox asserts that nuclear weapons generate sub-strategic instability. The term sub-strategic instability reflects that nuclear weapons produce incentives for states to engage into low level conflicts, provocative behaviors, or blackmail attempts. These types of acts do not constitute major conflicts or nuclear escalation, but rather, remain as significantly restrained. Emerging strategic stability created by MAD produces greater likelihood of sub-strategic instability, meaning that the probability of limited conflicts or provocative state behaviors will increase but will be seen as relatively safe since they remain below the threshold of a major war or a nuclear escalation.[123]

According to the paradox, sub-strategic instability occurs because of the states' doubts over the credibility of the nuclear forces. Since statesmen are aware of the fact that nuclear weapons could only be used as a last resort in order to survive, they perceive that no state appeal to use the bomb for disputes which are local or periphery that are not vital for state survival. Hence, this belief triggers states to engage disputes with their adversaries, even though they have nuclear weapons. As Liddell Hart asked "would any responsible government, when it came to the point, dare to use the H-bomb as an answer to local and limited aggression?"[124] meaning that limited aggressions and local offenses may likely to remain without a punishment involving nuclear weapons. Hence, nuclear weapons work toward a

[122] Christopher J. Watterson, "Competing Interpretations of the Stability-Instability Paradox: The Case of the Kargil War," *The Nonproliferation Review*, 24 (1-2): 86-87, 98-99.

[123] Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," 198-199; Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy*, 31.

[124] Hart, *Deterrent or Defense*, 23.

strategic stability while in the meantime also working against the sub-strategic stability by providing flexibility for states to engage into low-level conflicts.

The stability-instability paradox posits that more nuclear stability, in fact, erodes the effectiveness of deterrence which in turn increases the probability of conventional conflicts. States devise policies to lower the level of nuclear stability in order to enhance their deterrence and credibility such as the doctrines of first use or counter-force or developing deliberate risky policies such pre-delegating the launch authority to militaries rather than civilian statesmen. As Kapur argues "...attaining a very high degree of nuclear stability might not make the world safer. Rather doing so make the world more dangerous by undercutting deterrence and making conventional conflict more likely."[125]

As Jervis puts it "statesmen often feel that in order to protect their vital interests they must demonstrate their willingness to risk war, which in turn requires belligerent tactics and a refusal to make more than minimal concessions."[126] The introduction of nuclear weapons into the calculations of states made cooperation and conflict intertwined more than ever where states perceived that mutually assured destruction forces them to cooperate and avoid from war. On the other hand, the significant need to avoid from war also produces incentives to exploit the situation by compelling the adversary to come to the demanded terms. Since mutually assured destruction prohibits a major war, it decreases the credibility of the nuclear forces in the usage of limited conflicts.[127] Jervis maintains that "when the costs of going to war are so high, the threat do so is undermined. Credibility then becomes both crucial and

[125] Kapur, "Stability-Instability Paradox," 800.

[126] Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy*, 30.

[127] Ibid., 30-31.

problematical. States use -and are forced to use- tactics designed to convince the other that mutual disaster will result if the latter does not make concessions. "[128]

In order to ensure the nuclear stability, nuclear deterrence must work and the prerequisite for nuclear deterrence is the credibility of the threat of nuclear exchange. Ironically, threatening with the appeal of nuclear bomb is inexorably linked to the nuclear stability because rational actors do not engage into major conflicts or nuclear escalations when they believe that their adversaries have credible nuclear forces at their disposal. Then how to ensure that credibility?

In sum, when parity[129] among nuclear states is achieved, nuclear stability increases which in turn lead conventional stability to decline. The United States and the Soviet Union never engaged into a major conventional war or a nuclear conflict during the Cold War, however, they fought on many fronts, particularly with proxy forces in a range of countries from Korea to Vietnam, and Nicaragua to Afghanistan.[130] Stability-instability paradox suggests that both the US and the USSR have huge amounts of nuclear bombs which created MAD and the nuclear stability was at its pinnacle. Nuclear weapons make states' expectations from a major war so costly that in order to avoid a nuclear exchange, all parties in a specific dispute pursue their interests in limited conventional conflicts where their national interests were not so vital that effects their survival.[131]

[128] Ibid., 33.

[129] Parity means that both countries have sufficient nuclear weapons in their arsenals to survive at the first strike of its adversary and having ability to launch a retaliatory strike. In other words, when parity exists, parties have survivable nuclear forces in their arsenals which have ability to absorb an enemy strike and launch a retaliatory one. This is the basic principle of mutually assured destruction.

[130] Gaddis, "The Long Peace," 99-142; John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987); Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," 731-745; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, 18 (2) (Fall 1993): 44-79.

[131] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 99.

2.4.2. The Consequences of the Sub-strategic Instability

In order to overcome the credibility problem, nuclear-armed states raises the stakes of war or adopt doctrines to increase that the use of nuclear weapons is a real possibility. During the Cold War, the US deployed tactical nuclear forces in Western Europe and adopted counter-force doctrine in order to increase the credibility of its nuclear threat against the Soviets. It was a major policy that was perceived by the US as an effective deterrent against a possible Soviet conventional aggression towards the Western Europe. [132] Inferior to India in terms of nuclear capabilities, Pakistan deployed tactical warheads and adopted counterforce doctrine where the Pakistani decision-makers perceived that it enhances the credibility of their deterrence against the Indians. Furthermore, delegation of the authority to field commanders of launching a nuclear attack by Pakistan was a crucial factor that rapidly increased both the probability of nuclear escalation and the credibility of the threat of nuclear use.[133]

Nuclear-armed states would adopt counter-value and counter-force doctrines to promote the credibility of their nuclear forces. The counter-value doctrine suggests that a nuclear-armed state will adopted a stance that target its adversary's cities in order to destroy its population, infrastructure, and natural resources. On the other hand, the counter-force doctrine envisions that a state would target its adversary's military components in order to eliminate its warfighting capabilities. It is widely believed that targeting military rather than cities has been a far acceptable policy choice due to the concerns of morality as well as to restrain the effects of nuclear weapons. Rather than a massive retaliation of counter-value doctrine which would completely destroy the adversary and cause a humanitarian disaster, the limited effects of counter-force doctrine is an easier option. Thus, the embrace of the

[132] Glenn Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," 184-201.

[133] Rajesh M. Basrur, *South Asia's Cold War: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective* (New York: NY, Routledge, 2008).

counter-force doctrine inescapably increases the likelihood of nuclear conflict which in turn enhances the credibility of the nuclear threat.[134]

Nuclear-armed states boost the credibility of their nuclear arsenal by becoming more aggressive. For instance, if a state is inferior to its adversary in terms of nuclear capabilities and is in danger of an existential threat in a possible nuclear escalation, it could adopt the doctrine of first use. Embracing a posture that envisions a nuclear first use increases the credibility of the nuclear threat which in turn signals the adversary that it would be faced with catastrophic costs far greater than its expected benefits from a conventional aggression. The historical record demonstrates that conventionally inferior nuclear-armed countries appealed to the first-use doctrine in order to deter their adversaries from a conventional attack, eliminating their conventional superiority. In case of a Soviet aggression towards the Western Europe, the US had threatened the Soviets with a nuclear retaliation. Similarly, conventionally superior India was deterred by Pakistan's threat of first use in case of an aggression.[135]

The research demonstrates that once a state obtains nuclear weapons, it pursues its main objectives more assertively and coerces its adversaries to concede their initial demands.[136] Nuclear-armed states become more aggressive because they feel confident that their nuclear umbrella will protect them, deterring potential aggressor

[134] Kapur, "Stability-Instability Paradox."

[135] Ibid.

[136] Mathew Kroenig, "Beyond Optimism and Pessimism: The Differential Effects of Nuclear Proliferation," *Managing the Atom Working Paper, No. 2009-14*, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University, November 2009; Matthew Kroenig, "Force or Friendship? Explaining Great Power Nonproliferation Policy," *Security Studies*, 23 (1) (2014), 1-32; Erik Gartzke and Matthew Kroenig, "A Strategic Approach to Nuclear Proliferation," The Journal of Conflict Resolution, 53/2 (April 2009); Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 45 (5), (April 2009), 278-301; Erik Gartze and Dong-Joon Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 45 (5), (April 2009), 633-652; Erik Gartze and Dong-Joon Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 45 (5), (April 2009), 633-652.

states which in turn likely to undermine regional stability.[137] It is argued that the US, the UK, France, Russia, South Africa, Israel, China, and India engaged in low level conflicts with non-nuclear states.[138] Pakistan's acquiescence of the bomb engendered stability-instability paradox in its relations with India. Basrur argues that "Pakistan's deterrence shield gave it the opportunity to place India under pressure" where "aware of the risk of escalation they have kept to a relatively less risky level below that of conventional war. The paradox created free space for Pakistan and India to initiate lower level conflicts which was also the case between the US and USSR in Afghanistan, and Vietnam, among others.[139]

Major conventional conflict was perceived both by India and Pakistan too risky where they calculated that exploiting the lower level unrests could promote their interests.[140] It was argued that the major outcome of the nuclearization of Pakistan vis a vis India was that Indian political and military freedom of action was extremely contained by Pakistan's new nuclear capacity because Pakistan was inferior in terms of conventional capabilities. Being empowered by nuclear weapons, Pakistan significantly enhanced its diplomatic power.[141] Krepon makes the point that "Pakistan's support for separatism and militancy in Kashmir has notably coincided with its acquisition of covert nuclear capabilities."[142] Likewise, Kapur contends that

[137] Kroenig, "The History of Proliferation Optimism," 117-118.

[138] Mark S. Bell and Nicholas L. Miller, "Questioning the Effects of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 59 (1) (2015): 85.

[139] Rajesh M. Basrur, *South Asia's Cold War: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective* (New York: NY, Routledge, 2008), 58.

[140] Sumit Ganguly, "India-Pakistan Nuclear Issues and the Stability-Instability Paradox," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 18 (October/December 1995), 326.

[141] Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001): 45-46.

[142] Michael Krepon, "The Stability-Instability Paradox, Misperecption, and Escalation Control in South Asia," in Michael Krepon, Rodney W. Jones and Ziad Haider (eds.) *Escalation Control and the Nuclear Option in South Asia* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2004).

Pakistani leaders came to believe that this danger of nuclear escalation, by insulating Pakistan from Indian conventional attack, would allow Pakistan not simply to ensure its own security, but also to pursue a strategy of limited conflict against Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir.[143] Hence, the crisis in South Asia demonstrates that the stability-instability paradox produces incentives for states to transform the crises into competition of resolve and also search for bargaining power.

The change in state behavior raises the risk of militarized low-level conflicts, even though it does not escalate to a major war or nuclear exchange, as in the cases of the US-USSR and the Pakistan-India rivalries.[144] Acquiescence of nuclear weapons increases the probability of lower level conflicts, frequency of crises, and threats of use of force.[145] In both nuclear symmetries and nuclear asymmetries, nuclear-armed states are more likely to engage MIDs and they are more inclined to use of force which may bring out fatalities.[146]

Moreover, newly emerged nuclear states have more propensities to conflict initiation than currently existing nuclear states. They are more inclined to appeal the nuclear weapon card in the midst of the crises.[147] Bell and Miller argues that in asymmetric nuclear dyads, not major wars but the probability of low level conflicts increases

[143] Paul S. Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia is Not Like Cold War Europe," *International Security* 30 (2) (Fall 2005), 143.

[144] See, Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); Krepon, "The Stability-Instability Paradox, Misperecption, and Escalation Control in South Asia," Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace;" and Kapur, "Ten Years of Instability in a Nuclear South Asia," *International Security*, 33 (2) (Fall 2008): 71 -94; Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*.

[145] Rauchhaus, "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypotheses," 260.

[146] Ibid., 269.

[147] Michael Horowitz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (2) (April 2009): 234-57.

because of the newest interests of nuclear-armed state which dictate her to embolden her stance. Nuclear weapon acquisition expands the national interests of their possessors, which raises the probability of initiating militarized inter-state disputes by these states.[148] Robert Rauchhaus found that the likelihood of a major war between two countries with nuclear weapons decreases, and the likelihood of a crisis initiation and limited use of force between two countries with nuclear weapons increase.[149]

Nuclear-armed countries also raise the uncertainty in international system by testing their adversaries' resolve by following brinkmanship policy.[150] The brinkmanship suggests that rather than military capabilities, the demonstration of resolve and determination would play a key role in the outcome of the conflicts.[151] Beardsley and Asal found that crisis duration between a nuclear state and a non-nuclear one is shorter than those crisis involving two non-nuclear states because non-nuclear states have fewer incentives to escalate the crisis where the risk of appealing nuclear weapons raises. They also argue that nuclear states predominate over their non-nuclear counterparts in crises bargaining due to the non-nuclear state's perception of high conflict costs if it prefers to push up its demands.[152] It is also argued that non-nuclear states back down their demands and do this in a shorter period of time against their nuclear opponents. Gartzke and Jo contend that nuclear states would more likely to achieve their objectives than non-nuclear states even without fighting

[148] Bell and Miller, "Questioning the Effects of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict," 74-92.

[149] Rauchhaus, "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypotheses," 269.

[150] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 99-100, 111.

[151] Watterson, "Competing Interpretations of the Stability-Instability Paradox," 87-88, 98-99.

[152] Beardsley and Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," 278-301.

a war.[153] They argue that when faced with nuclear states, non-nuclear countries soften their demands and prefer to back down or concede. [154]

Therefore, nuclear weapons enhance the diplomatic power of their possessors. Nuclear-armed countries prevail at the diplomatic table more than their non-nuclear counterparts.[155] Hence, following brinkmanship policy perceived by states to beneficial where they contemplate that the situation is appropriate for exploitation. For instance, Pakistani behavior in Kargil conflict was designed to increase the bargaining leverage of the country in Kashmir dispute by attempting to compel India to back down from its demands. Similar strategy was also used by India where Indian authorities threatened Pakistan with the use of nuclear weapons while also pressing the US for diplomatic favor in order to compel Pakistan to cease its support to insurgent groups in the region.[156]

Thus, the essential importance of nuclear weapons in crisis conditions is not their military impacts on the battlefield, rather their effects on warring parties over the expectations from the war. In case of a nuclear escalation, the war dynamics change for both sides and the war itself transforms into a competition of resolve. Now, the war becomes "war of dares and challenges, of nerve, of threats and brinkmanship, once the nuclear threshold is passed."[157] Thus, Schelling indicates that nuclear weapons stretch nerves on both sides, turning the war into a resolve of resisting to

[153] Gartze and Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," 209-233.

[154] Ibid., 210, 225.

[155] See, Beardsley and Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," 278-301; Gartze and Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," 209-233; Erik Gartzke and Matthew Kroenig, "A Strategic Approach to Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (2) (April 2009), 152.

[156] Rajesh M. Basrur, *South Asia's Cold War: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective* (New York: NY, Routledge, 2008), 59, 61-62.

[157] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 111.

the temptation to use nukes while unavoidably feeling the perpetual fear of being attacked first by the enemy.

Those states who adopt brinkmanship policy desires to heighten the risks and expected costs from war and deliberately push the dynamics of the conflict further closer to a nuclear threshold in order to force adversary to capitulate or back down from its demands.[158] Thus, it suggests that a competition of limited military capabilities where states could benefit from the conflict with their own military means. On the other hand, the brinkmanship suggests a competition of resolves rather than military capabilities, the demonstration of resolve and determination would play a key role in the outcome of the conflicts.

Recent research asserts that the number of nuclear weapons matters because those states which have more bombs in their arsenals demonstrate more resolve in crises and they are more likely to reign over their rivals due to their nuclear superiority.[159] However, even though a state has nuclear superiority it has no incentive to make a war because there is no guarantee to disarm the adversary's arsenal in complete manner which could leave the retaliatory strike a significant possibility.[160] Nuclear weapons derogate the available options for stronger states by eliminating the credibility of their conventional forces.[161] Once its adversary obtains nuclear weapons, conventionally stronger state will be deterred from taking a military action. Daniel Deudney argues that "the nuclear acquisition efforts of North Korea, Libya,

[158] Watterson, "Competing Interpretations of the Stability-Instability Paradox," 87-88, 98-99.

[159] Matthew Kroenig, "Nuclear Superiority and Balance of Resolve," *International Organization*, 67 (1) (2013): 141-71.

[160] Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," 734.

[161] Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

Iraq, and Iran all appear to be motivated, at least in significant part, by the desire to establish a restrain on American power."[162]

To sum up, nuclear weapons have effects that lower the militarization of wars, and increase the chance to skip the protracted conflict. As Schelling puts "unconditional surrender" of WWII now should be reassessed as "unconditional destruction" in a possible nuclear escalation.[163] Thus, the expected costs were so high that in order to avoid a nuclear exchange, both countries pursue their interests in limited conventional conflicts where their national interests were not so vital that effects their survival.

2.5. Conclusion

The debate on the nuclear proliferation and international security, as this chapter demonstrated, revolves around some major issues in the international and state level. The international level deals with the deterrent value of nuclear weapons, their offensive or defensive features, and their impact on the war onset. In the state level, the character of actors, regime type, building survivable nuclear forces, neighborly relations, and civil military relations are the major areas of controversy, regarding the effects of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, stability-instability paradox offers a more nuanced approach, taking the effects of nuclear weapons as separate dimensions. This study will embrace stability-instability paradox while assessing the likely consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran by focusing the strategic stability and sub-strategic stability.

[162] Deudney, "Unipolarity and Nuclear Weapons," 305.

[163] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 23.

CHAPTER 3

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM: FROM THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT TO THE JCPOA

3.1. History of Iran's Nuclear Program

Generally, it is argued that Iran had taken concrete steps toward weaponization of its nuclear program by producing highly enriched uranium and operating heavy water reactors after 2002 because of the uncover of secret facilities. However, countries such as the United States and Israel accused Iran for developing nuclear weapons as early as mid-1980s.[164] The exact dates of the development stages of Iran's nuclear program are controversial given the fact that Iran had covertly conducted critical dimensions of its nuclear activities that could be related with weaponization. The crisis concerning Iran's nuclear program began in 2002 after the revelation of Iran's clandestine nuclear facilities and activities.

Iran, from the beginning, advocated an official position that they need electricity from nuclear plants to meet domestic energy needs and to create an oil production surplus for exporting which in turn could provide the country large sums of foreign currency. On the other hand, the international community insisted that Iran's violations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), its secret facilities, and covert uranium enrichment activities posed a significant nuclear weapon proliferation problem. After years of severe sanctions, rejections, and negotiations, in July 2015, the agreement called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was reached between Iran and the P5+1 (the United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany). The agreement envisaged Iran to halt its enrichment activities and to limit its nuclear program for peaceful purposes in return for the lift of sanctions.

[164] Gawdat Bahgat, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran," *Iranian Studies* 39 (3) (September 2006), 307-308.

3.1.1. Early Development: 1950s-1979

Iran's nuclear research program dates back to 1950s when the US administration began to provide technical assistance to the country under the Atoms for Peace Program. In 1957, Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi has signed a cooperation agreement with the US administration for the nuclear program. Regarding that objective the first nuclear research center was established in Tehran in 1959. In 1967, Tehran Research Reactor, the first of its kind in Iran, became operational.[165] In 1968, Iran has become a party to the NPT.[166] After Iran's signature of the NPT, European countries had begun to invest in Iran's nuclear energy sector. For instance, Kraftwerk, a West German company reached an agreement with Iran in 1974 to build two nuclear reactors in Bushehr while the French firm Framotome agreed with Iran to build two reactors in Darhovin same year.[167]

The 1970s was a period that Iranian nuclear efforts had accelerated thanks to the technical support coming from Western powers such as the UK, France, West Germany, alongside with India and South Africa.[168] In 1974, Iran's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) entered into force. At the time, the American – Iranian relations were highly friendly where the then US President Richard Nixon was referring Iran as the "regional policeman" in the Middle East.[169] In July 1978, during the Carter Presidency in America, the US and Iran signed an agreement on nuclear

[165] Michele Gaietta, *The Trajectory of Iran's Nuclear Program* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 5-7.

[166] "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," *United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs*, http://disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/npt; The full text of the NPT is available at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/1970/infcirc140.pdf (accessed: April 5, 2018).

[167] Gaietta, *The Trajectory of Iran's Nuclear Program*, 14-16.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Daniel H. Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law: From Confrontation to Accord*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7.

technology exchange and nuclear security where the US designated Iran as "the most favored nation."[170] Shah Pahlavi always publicly emphasized that his pursuit of nuclear technology was for peaceful purposes in order to increase the wealth and prosperity of Iranian people as well as to meet the country's growing demand.[171] However, it was known that the importance attached to the nuclear program by the Shah has always become more related with enhancing Iranian prestige, influence, and standing of Iran in the Middle East, rather than economic considerations and in some way the Shah might have contemplated developing nuclear weapons.[172]

3.1.2. Iran's Nuclear Program after the Islamic Revolution

The declaration of the Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979 and the ensuing Hostage Crisis rapidly deteriorated the bilateral relations between Iran and the US where President Carter immediately ended the assistance for Iran's nuclear program, imposed sanctions, and frozen Iran's financial assets.[173] Regarding the nuclear program, the sanction had of particular importance because it banned Iran from importing any material that could be related with its nuclear program after mid-1980s. This prohibition, in time, paved the way for Iran to search for underground networks to supply required nuclear technology to further advance its nuclear program and begin secretly enriching uranium. In the initial years of the revolution, Iranian leadership has seen the nuclear program as an inefficient and costly military strategy, a contradiction to the orders of Islam. Following the Revolution, Supreme

[170] Daniel Poneman, *Nuclear Power in the Developing World*, (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 88.

[171] David Patrikarakos, *Nuclear Iran: The Birth of an Atomic State*, (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 51.

[172] Poneman, *Nuclear Power in the Developing World*, 126; David Patrikarakos, *Nuclear Iran: The Birth of an Atomic State*, (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 59; Ali Vaez and Karim Sadjadpour, *Iran's Nuclear Odyssey: Costs and Risks*, (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, 2013), 4.

[173] Patrikarakos, *Nuclear Iran,* 106.

leader Ayatollah Khomeini has suspended the nuclear program, halting the construction of new plants, while many nuclear experts abandoned the country.[174]

Iranian interest on nuclear research revitalized in the following years because of the search for a deterrent against Iraq. Between 1980 and 1988, the war with Iraq had made the nuclear program a priority for Iran. A particular cause was that Iraq's use of chemical weapons during the midst of the war in 1984 ranged the alarm bells in Iran. Subsequently, Iran had accelerated its nuclear program and increased its uranium enrichment efforts which resulted international sanctions over the country. After the Islamic Republic, Iran's choices to advance its nuclear program were significantly constrained as the US and the Western countries ceased the cooperation with Iran and the US banned the nuclear-related sales to Iran. Beginning with early 1990s, facing harsh opposition from Western countries, Iran had contemplated that it had to implement its nuclear program in clandestine manner.[175] In 1995, the US put sanctions on trading with Iran as well as the sale of Iranian petroleum on the grounds of Iran's nuclear activities. In 1996, US President Bill Clinton has approved the embargo decision to be applied to Iran on the grounds that it has been trying to acquire nuclear weapons. Clinton Administration has also developed and adopted dual containment strategy against Iran along with Iraq with establishing no-fly zones, adopting economic and UN embargoes.

It was claimed that in late 1980s, Iran has acquired uranium enrichment program, and technical assistance related with nuclear facilities from the infamous Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan[176] who is known to have supplied such technology to

[174] Bahgat, "Nuclear Proliferation," 309.

[175] Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law,* 19.

[176] Pakistani metallurgical scientist, Abdul Qadeer Khan born in 1936 in Bhopal under the rule of British India. After the end of the British rule and the subsequent partition in 1947, he and his family moved and settled in Karachi, Pakistan. A.Q. Khan studied phsysics and mathematics and completed his BSc degree in the University of Karachi in 1960. After working for a few years, he left his position and went to West Germany to study metallurgical engineering. Aftermath, he attended Delft Universiy in Holland, graduating in 1967 and then earned his PhD in 1971 from the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. He got easy acces to enrichment facilities and sensitive nuclear-

Pakistan, Libya and North Korea. A.Q. Khan visited Bushehr in February 1986 and January 1987 in order to examine Bushehr nuclear power plant to repair which was bombed by Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War.[177] It is argued that A.Q. Khan network provided Iran with technical assistance, manufacturing knowledge, and designs of centrifuges which led to the birth of Iran's clandestine uranium enrichment activity.[178]

In 1989, the leader of the revolution Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini died and Ali Hoseyni Khamenei becoming the supreme leader while Akbar Hasami Rafsanjani came into the President office. Aware of Iran's isolated position in the West, Rafsanjani concluded that he had to cooperate with Russia, China, and North Korea in order to advance the nuclear program. China and North Korea supplied Iran missile and uranium mining technology as well as uranium ore and plans for building required facilities.[179] Between 1990 and 1992, China had supplied Iran with research reactors and technical equipment for enrichment. While Chinese help was limited because of the intense American pressure, the major move came from Russia in 1995.[180] Despite the American criticism, in 1995, Iran reached agreement with Russia on the completion of the Bushehr light water reactor in four year's period.

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related documents when working for Physical Dynamics Research Laboratory in Amsterdam. Being extremely concerned with India's test of nuclear weapon in 1974, A.Q. Khan though that Pakistan also had to obtain this bomb. He stole nuclear technology and provided Pakistani authorities, which made him the "father" of the Pakistani atomic bomb. In time, he argued that his possession of nuclear technology was giving him an extraordinary power and prestige, leading him to establish an illicit network, clandestinely supplying nuclear technology to undesirable states such as Libya, North Korea, and Iran. It is believed that during late 1980s, Iran and A.Q. Khan intensively and secretly cooperated to develop Iran's uranium enrichment capacity. See, Jeremy Bernstein, *Nuclear Iran*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 66-75.

[177] Bernstein, *Nuclear Iran*, 158.

[178] Vaez and Sadjadpour, *Iran's Nuclear Odyssey,* 8.

[179] Bernstein, *Nuclear Iran*, 76-77.

[180] Bahgat, "Nuclear Proliferation," 310.

Due to shortcomings and delays, the reactor could only be completed in 2010. Moscow's agreement with Iran reflected traditional Russian policy which contemplated short-term economic and political benefits over the longer term strategic consequences.[181]

In 1999, Iranian President Muhammad Khatami became the first Iranian leader to visit Saudi Arabia after the revolution. Khatami expressed concern about Israel's nuclear weapons in a joint statement with King Fahd. The designation of Iran as a member of the "axis of evil" by George W. Bush after the 9/11 terrorist attacks has cause significant concerns in Iran's national security considerations. In his state of the union address, Bush designated Iran a member of the axis of evil along with North Korea and Iraq. He argues that "Iran aggressively pursues these weapons (missiles and weapons of mass destruction) and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom."[182] Bush further claims that states like Iran, North Korea, and Iraq are searching ways to obtain nuclear weapons and they could transfer nuclear weapons to terrorist groups in order to attack or blackmail against the US or its allies.[183] Furthermore, in the National Security Strategy Document of 2002, the Bush Administration also indicated that the US will deal with rogue states preemptively, without waiting them to attack the United States or its allies.[184]

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[181] Richard L. Russell, *Weapons Proliferation and War in the Greater Middle East: Strategic Contest*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 77.

[182] "Text of President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address," *The Washington Post*, January 29, 2002, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm (accessed: February 11, 2019).

[183] Ibid.

[184] The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, *The White House*, September 2002, available at https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf (accessed: April 27, 2019), 15.

In 2002, Iran had signed a new deal with Russia to speed up the construction of the Bushehr nuclear plant. During the administrations of President Khatami and his predecessor Rafsanjani, nuclear weapons were mainly perceived by Iran as a strong deterrent against the US, preventing a possible invasion attempt by the former.[185] Because the memories regarding Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons and invasion of Iran's territory were fresh in Iranian mindset, nuclear weapons were perceived as the ultimate solution to prevent another aggression. It was not until 2002 when the Iranian dissident Alireza Jafarzadeh[186] informed the world about the Iran's secret facilities that the international community had not regarded the likelihood of Iran's weaponization of its nuclear research. In 2002, Jafarzadeh revealed that Iran has been conducting uranium enrichment activities at the facility in Natanz, near the city of Esfahan and had a heavy water reprocessing plant at Arak which is not considered as part of peaceful nuclear research, rather for military dimension of nuclear technology.[187] On February 9, 2003 President Khatami acknowledged that there is a nuclear facility at Natanz.

It was argued after the IAEA officials' inspection at Iran's facilities that the centrifuges were similar to Pakistani design which indicated the assistance of A.Q. Khan to Iran. Described as the father of the Pakistani nuclear bomb, it was claimed that A.Q. Khan had frequently travelled Tehran to share his expertise with Iranians.

[185] James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and Its Complications," *Foreign Affairs*, 89 (2) (March/April 2010), 36.

[186] Alireza Jafarzadeh moved to the United States before the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. He studied civil engineering, obtaining his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and a master's degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Jafarzadeh was the spokesperson of National Council of Resistance of Iran whose Washington Office was closed by the US Department of State for its alleged ties to People's Mujaheden of Iran which was designated as a terrorist organization in the US. This designation was removed in 2012 by a decision taken by then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Currently, Jafarzadeh is the Deputy Director of the Washington office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran and he is a frequent commentator in leading media outlets in the United States. He has a book titled *The Iran Threat: President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis* published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2007.

[187] Gaietta, *The Trajectory of Iran's Nuclear Program*, 73.

While the IAEA officials argued that the facility at Natanz could be for uranium enrichment purposes, Iran asserted that they were not in violation of the NPT, and no nuclear material existed at the facility. Then the Director General of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei concluded that Iranian hide the facility in order to prevent the revelation of their technology supply network which they get clandestinely due to the sanctions.[188] The concealment of the facility in Natanz marked a turning point for Iranian nuclear crisis as it engendered a serious confidence and credibility problem on Iran's intentions. ElBaradei described Iranian political elite as "people who were willing to deceive to achieve their goals and that we should not accept any attestation without physical verification."[189]

On the other hand, Iranian officials were persistent in the discourse that Iran's nuclear program was solely peaceful. Iran's political elite generally downplayed the issue, arguing that there was exaggeration about Iran and the world does not need to make a new war for causes that indeed do not exist. For instance, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator between 2003 and 2005 and the current President Hassan Rouhani argued that Iran's fault was "nothing more than the failure to declare, some experiments and receiving some material and equipment. Such failures to declare are not uncommon among the NPT members." Hence, the accusations on Iran for transforming its nuclear program into weapon development were simply a part of the campaign but not a true fact, for Rouhani.[190]

During the Khatami's Presidency, Iran attempted to repair the relations with the US and softened its policies on the nuclear issue where some compromise occurred between 2003 and 2004 in order to prevent transferring the nuclear dispute to the

[188] Mohamed ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times*, (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2011), 114.

[189] ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception,* 115-117.

[190] Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law*, 27.

UNSC.[191] In September 2003, the IAEA monitored the nuclear facilities in Iran's soil and asked this country to suspend all activities related with uranium enrichment, to declare all uranium enrichment activities and to sign the Additional Protocol which brings enhanced measures to NPT.[192]

In November 2003, the IAEA stated in their report that Iran's violations of the NPT shows that Iran has been following a "policy of concealment" and its cooperation with the IAEA still remain limited. In the report, it is stated that numerous times, Iran has failed to report its nuclear material, the use and processing of that nuclear material and declaring its facilities where these materials has been stored and processed.[193] On the other hand, the report argued that even though Iran's failures were several, the IAEA has not evidence that Iran was developing nuclear weapons while the IAEA was not also in a position that Iran's nuclear program was completely in peaceful situation.[194]

In 2003, it was alleged that religious leader Ayatollah Khamenei ordered to suspend again the nuclear program due to the fact that the US occupied Iraq on the grounds that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Khamenei said that the use of nuclear weapons was forbidden by religion. Iran voluntarily committed to suspend uranium enrichment due to fears of an American invasion attempt. The IAEA inspectors

[191] Gaietta, *The Trajectory of Iran's Nuclear Program*, 95-98.

[192] "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *IAEA*, GOV/2003/69, September 12, 2003, available at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2003-69.pdf (accessed: March 20, 2018).

[193] "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *IAEA*, GOV/2003/75, November 10, 2013, Available at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2003-75.pdf (Accessed: March 20, 2018); and also see, "Implementation of NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," IAEA, GOV/2003/40, June 6, 2003, Available at http://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2003-40.pdf (Accessed: March 20, 2018).

[194] Ibid. Also see, "Implementation of NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," IAEA, GOV/2003/40, June 6, 2003, Available at http://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2003-40.pdf (Accessed: March 20, 2018).

revealed that they found a high level of enriched uranium in the inspections they conducted at the Kalaya power company in Tehran. In late 2003, Iran signed the Additional Protocol, however never ratified it. On the other hand, Iran implemented the provision of the Protocol between 2003 and 2006 and subsequently announcing that it would not implement it anymore.[195]

In January 2004, the IAEA Director General stated that Iran had failed to inform the IAEA about the designs of P2 advanced centrifuge. The IAEA underlined that the centrifuge could be used for uranium enrichment. In January 2004, Iran acknowledged that the A.Q. Khan network has supplied the design plans for the P2 advanced centrifuge.[196] Later in the same year, the IAEA concluded that Iran's purchase of the design plans and components for the P2 centrifuge from the A.Q. Khan network dates back to 1987.[197] Similarly Iran did not declare the designs of IR-40 fuel assembly in Esfahan. In terms of inspection, Iran failed to provide access of the IAEA to the Arak site where heavy water reprocessing was taking place. The heavy water reactor, beginning with its concealment has always been a key concern, regarding Iran's intentions as the facility at Natanz. Bernstein argued that "everything about this reactor is suspicious" and the reactor posed a "significant proliferation issue."[198] Although Iranian officials argued that the reactor was built to replace the Tehran research reactor, there was simply no evidence that Iran was planning to abolish the reactor in Tehran. The crisis over the Arak heavy water

[195] "Status of the Additional Protocol," *IAEA*, (Last Update: December 21, 2018), Available at https://www.iaea.org/topics/additional-protocol/status (Accessed: December 30, 2018); "Fact Sheet: Iran and the Additional Protocol," *Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation*, July 14, 2015, Available at https://armscontrolcenter.org/factsheet-iran-and-the-additional-protocol/ (Accessed: December 30, 2018).

[196] ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception,* 126-127.

[197] Ibid., 167.

[198] Bernstein, *Nuclear Iran*, 159.

reactor sowed serious mistrust and distaste between Iran and the IAEA where Tehran provided only limited and random cooperation.[199]

In June 2004, the IAEA adopted a new resolution, "recalling Iran's voluntary decisions to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and to permit the Agency to verify that suspension" and regretting that "those commitments have not been comprehensively implemented." The report in general, once again, emphasized the limited cooperation of Iran and criticized Iran for not complying with its entire commitments in timely manner, often delaying key requirements.[200] In the aftermath of that resolution, Iran renounced its commitment to voluntarily suspending its uranium enrichment in 2005.

In November 2004, Iran signed the Paris Agreement with United Kingdom, France, and Germany (EU-3) which provided Iran opportunities for nuclear, technological, and economic cooperation in return for stopping its uranium enrichment program. The negotiator of the agreement was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rouhani.[201] Khatami administration agreed to suspend uranium enrichment activities and to implement the NPT's Additional Protocol, but later stepped back on the grounds that the deal was "unbalanced" after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came into the office in August 2005. The Paris Agreement had also failed due to its temporary nature; the parties to the agreement could not compromised on their proposed frameworks where the EU-3 wanted Iran to eliminate all activities related with uranium enrichment and Iran desired to maintain ura2nium enrichment partially in return for technological and economic aid. It was Iran's red line that enrichment

[199] Ibid., 159-162.

[200] "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *The IAEA*, GOV/2004/49, available at https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Iran%20GOV200449.pdf (accessed: March 24, 2019).

[201] Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law,* 31-32.

activity should take place in Iranian soil. For Iran, it was the inalienable right of the nation.[202]

3.1.3. Iran's Nuclear Program during Ahmadinejad Presidency

Ahmadinejad's coming into the office disrupted the already limited cooperation on the nuclear issue. Ahmadinejad who was embracing populism, nationalism, and who was in claim of returning the revolutionary core of the republic, reversed Khatami's nuclear policies. According to Ahmadinejad, Khatami conceded the revolutionary principles of the Islamic republic by compromising the nuclear issue with the West. Accordingly, he fired senior advisers responsible for Iran's nuclear negotiations served under Khatami.[203] Although Iranian official stance on the nuclear issue persistently underlined the peaceful nature of the program, the conservatives contemplated that given the hardships experienced during the war with Iraq, the only solution to ensure regime survival was achieving nuclear deterrence.[204] In 2004, then the Commander of the IRGC, Yahya Rahim Safavi asserted that Khatami's nuclear diplomacy harmed Iranian deterrence by providing confidential information to the West in nuclear negotiations.[205]

For Ahmadinejad, Iranian nuclear program was also a matter of national cause which encouraged him to exploit the controversy with the West to increase nationalism at home.[206] Furthermore, Ahmadinejad perceived that nuclear weapons would not only deter the US or Israel, it even significantly contribute to Iran's regional

[202] Ibid.

[203] Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Iran: Stuck in Transition*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 219-221.

[204] Ali. M. Ansari, *Modern Iran: The Pahlavis and After* (2nd ed.) (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 333.

[205] Cited in Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 165.

[206] Ali. M. Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 278.

aspirations.[207] During the Ahmadinejad's Presidency, Iran strived to downplay the nuclear related problems and overtures for cooperation on regional matters from the ensuring stability in Afghanistan, and Iraq as well as the role of Hezbollah and the establishment of the government in Lebanon.[208] In late 2005, the IAEA adopted a new resolution, referring Iran to the United Nations Security Council. The resolution emphasized Iran's failures on reporting its "nuclear material, its processing, and its use, as well as the declaration of facilities where such material had been processed and stored."[209]

After the resolution, the IAEA took the issue to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in February 2006. As a response to this, Iran gave up its voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol which was not still officially ratified. From this point, the UNSC adopted a tougher stance on Iran's nuclear program where carrots and sticks policy was embraced. According to that, Iran's compliance with the demands would bring economic incentives while its non-compliance would cause severe economic sanctions.[210] Despite the threats of sanctions, Ahmadinejad accelerated nuclear program, laid the foundation for Arak heavy water reactor.

In 2006, The UNSC brought embargo on the import and export of uranium enrichment and ballistic missile materials to Iran. In June 2006, the P5+1 offered Iran to freeze its nuclear activities in return for economic incentives and argued that in case of the offer was rejected Iran will face with sanctions.[211] Before waiting for Iranian decision, the UNSC put economic sanctions on Iran beginning with June

[207] Lindsay and Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb," 36.

[208] Ehteshami, *Iran: Stuck in Transition*, 221.

[209] IAEA Board of Governors, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," September 24, 2005, available at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2005-77.pdf (accessed: March 17, 2018).

[210] Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law,* 31-34.

[211] ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception,* 195-199.

2006 and continuing with resolutions in December 2006, February 2007, and March 2008.[212] In October 2007, the US sanctioned the IRGC, driven by the worries that this actor involved in nuclear proliferation activities.[213] The IAEA Director General reported in 2008 that military related entities and companies as well as the companies under the defense industry involved in Iran's nuclear program, and the country should clarify their roles in nuclear research.[214]

Barrack Obama's coming into the office after the Presidential Elections in the US in November 2008 created some optimism to the parties for resolving the nuclear dispute. After Obama's election victory, then Iranian President Ahmadinejad congratulated Obama and sent a message that he is expecting a real change in bilateral relations between Iran and the US.[215] Corresponding with the expectations, Obama took a step in March 2009 and released a statement, congratulating Iranian New Year. Obama stated that "my administration is now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us… This process will not be advanced by threats… We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect."[216]

Hence emphasizing dialogue and respect rather than threats, Obama Administration had cleared its position over the issue which was in direct contrast with the previous

[212] See the list of resolutions adopted by the UNSC, regarding Iran's nuclear program: "UN Documents for Iran: Security Council Resolutions," *Security Council Report*, available at https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-resolutions/?ctype=Iran&cbtype=iran (accessed: March 24, 2019).

[213] "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran," November 19, 2008, 3-4, Available at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2008-59.pdf (accessed: March 17, 2018).

[214] Ibid.

[215] ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception,* 286.

[216] Helene Cooper and David E. Sanger, "Obama's Message to Iran Is Opening Bid in Diplomatic Drive," *The New York Times*, March 20, 2009, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/21/world/middleeast/21iran.html (accessed: March 24, 2019).

Bush Administration. A day after Obama's message, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamanei responded Obama in a skeptical manner where he argued that Iran does not see any change in American policies toward Iran and it will not be easy to forget American crimes carried out against Iran, from the support of the Iranian opposition groups, siding with Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War, and the freezing of Iranian assets and severe sanctions imposed upon the country.[217] Thus, it was understood that bringing out a diplomatic solution to the nuclear dispute required far greater steps to be taken than simply softening the discourse.

On April 8, 2009, The United States involved nuclear negotiations with Iran, following China and Russia. On September 25, American, British and French officials have shared press releases on Iran's construction of underground nuclear facilities without informing the IAEA. Ahmadinejad administration denied allegations that it tried to keep the facility secret. In September 2009, negotiations between the parties revitalized where the US and Russia prepared a proposal which envisioned supplying Iran necessary fuel to power Tehran research reactor in return for transferring 1,200 kg low-enriched uranium (about 80 percent of Iranian stockpile) from Iran to Russia and France.[218] The plan could allay the worries of the international community on the one hand, and could provide Iran the recognition that it has right to enrich uranium.[219] On October 1, Iran accepted to hand over 200 kilograms of low-enriched uranium to Russia for conversion into fuel rods for scientific purposes, but it stepped back from its decision in November.

On November 5, it was announced that Iran would allow the entry of international inspectors into nuclear facilities nearing its existence. The fuel swap deal ultimately could not produce the desired outcome and stalled as Iran and the US could not

[217] "Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismisses Barack Obama's overtures to Iran," *The Guardian*, March 21, 2009, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/mar/21/ali-khamenei-barack-obama-iran (accessed: March 24, 2019).

[218] Trita Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 120-125.

[219] Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law,* 44-45.

comply on the timing and the amount of the low enriched uranium to be transfer out from Iran.[220] On the other hand, during the ongoing negotiations, Iran's declaration of its secret uranium enrichment facility at Fordow has undermined the talks between parties, worsening the deep confidence problem. It is argued that Iran had built and hid this facility as a backup option in case of an American strike on facilities at Natanz, which was a real possibility immediate after the 9/11.[221]

After the failure of the fuel swap deal, Iran announced on February 9, 2010 that it would begin enriching uranium indigenously up to 20 percent to power the Tehran research reactor. Two days later, President Ahmadinejad declared that Iran is now a nuclear state.[222] After this development, the crisis has reached its peak because Iran acknowledged that it enriched uranium at 20 percent rate and it did not need an enrichment that would be conducted in another country, the policy offered by P5+1.[223] On January 10, 2010, US President Barrack Obama rejected Israel's request for a missile attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. It was reported in the media that the cyber attacks by the US and Israel on Iran's Natanz nuclear facilities led to the disruption of many centrifuges and engines. In February 2010, the IAEA Director reported that Iran was still operating enrichment facilities in Natanz and constructing a new one at Fordow, among other that were planned to be constructed.

On February 10, 2010, the US Treasury Department designated IRGC and the commander of the organization General Rostam Qasemi as 'proliferators of weapons

[220] ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception,* 307-310.

[221] Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice,* 123.

[222] ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception,* 312.

[223] Gaietta, *The Trajectory of Iran's Nuclear Program*, 158-159.

of mass destruction.'[224] Furthermore, the Department also indicated the issue that the IRGC is 'assuming greater responsibility' for the course of Iran's nuclear program.[225]

In order to save Tehran research reactor fuel swap deal, with the endorsement of the Obama Administration, Turkey and Brazil pursued new rounds of negotiations with Iran. On May 17, Iran, agreed that the dispute over its nuclear program to be resolved in the mediations of Turkey and Brazil. The 10-point Tehran declaration[226] published by the three countries together envisaged Iran's sent out of 1,200 kg low enriched uranium to Turkey in return for 120 kg of uranium fuel rods for the reactor in Tehran. The deal was not accepted by the West on the grounds that it does not sufficiently eliminate the worries, regarding Iran's suspension of its uranium enrichment however the demand of suspension was not on the table in the previous fuel swap deal.

Hence, while Turkey and Brazil were working towards reaching an agreement with Iran, the US withdrew from its previous position and accelerated its pressure on the UNSC to impose new sanctions upon Iran.[227] The US emphasized the fact that during the previous deal in October 2009, 1,200 kg LEU was equal to 75 percent of Iran's total stockpile of LEU while after the Tehran Declaration, it amounts only to 50

[224] U.S. Department of Treasury, "Treasury Targets Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," February 10, 2010, Available at https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg539.aspx (accessed: March 13, 2018).

[225] Stephen Kaufman, "Iranian Decisions Increasingly Being Made by Revolutionary Guard," *America.gov*, February 17, 2010. Available at http://www.america.gov/st/peacesecenglish/2010/February/20100217145832esnamfuak0.6569178.html (accessed March 13, 2018).

[226] The full text of the Declaration is available at the website of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/17_05_2010-joint-declaration-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-turkey_-iran-and-brazil_.en.mfa (Accessed: December 30, 2018).

[227] David E. Sanger and Michael Slackman, "U.S. is Skeptical on Iranian Deal for Nuclear Fuel," *The New York Times*, May 17, 2010, Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/18/world/middleeast/18iran.html (Accessed: December 30, 2018).

percent which meant that Iran would still have capacity to develop a bomb, theoretically even if the parties struck a deal.[228]

On June 9, 2010, the Vienna Group (The United States, France, Russia, and the IAEA) rejected the deal and hours later the UNSC imposed new sanctions on Iran by adopting Resolution 1929, because of the latter's non-compliance with its international obligations related with the nuclear program. This new sanction was encompassing the IRGC and fifteen IRGC affiliated companies that would have a role in nuclear program.[229] A decision was made for new military, commercial and financial sanctions on Iran. While the nuclear cooperation with Iran was forbidden, the countries were given the permission to search Iranian aircrafts and vessels in case of doubtful situation. On October 29, Iranian nuclear scientists Mecid Şehriyari lost his life while Feridun Abbasi was wounded by two separate bombers attacked by motorcycle. The Iranian administration blamed the US and Israel for the attack.[230]

The negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran in Geneva in December 2010 and subsequently in June 2011 in Istanbul have not produced any desired outcome due to the sharp disagreement over the preconditions to initiate deeper discussion. While the US was persistent in their demand from Iran to entirely stop its uranium enrichment, Iran was also resolute that enrichment is its undeniable sovereign right to pursue nuclear technology as well as its desire to the lift of the sanctions.[231] On May 10, the Bushehr nuclear power plant went into operation. On May 24, the IAEA has

[228] Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law,* 49.

[229] "Security Council Imposes Additional Sanctions on Iran, Voting 12 in Favour to 2 Against, with 1 Abstention," United Nations Security Council, June 9, 2010. Available at https://www.un.org/press/en/2010/sc9948.doc.htm (accessed March 13, 2018).

[230] "Iranian nuclear scientist killed in motorbike attack," *BBC*, November 29, 2010, available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11860928 (accessed: March 20, 2018).

[231] Julian Borger, "Iran nuclear talks end on a vague note," *The Guardian*, December 7, 2010, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/07/iran-nuclear-talks-end (accessed: March 25, 2019); "Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy With Iran," *Arms Control Association*, available at https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/Timeline-of-Nuclear-Diplomacy-With-Iran (accessed: March 25, 2019).

announced that Iran has increased its centrifuges and uranium enrichment activities. On November 8, the IAEA report stated that Iran is conducting a secret uranium enrichment program. Iran denied claims, contending that the evidence was manufactured. In June 2011, then Secretary of State and then Secretary of Treasury Timothy Geithner stated that the IRGC '...continues to play an important proliferation role by orchestrating the import and export of prohibited items to and from Iran, is involved in support of terrorism throughout the region.'[232]

In November 2011, the IAEA presented its new report on Iran's nuclear activities which provided new details. According to the report, Iran could have pursued activities as a part of the nuclear weapon development between 2003 and 2004. The report argued that "Iran has carried out activities that are relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device." It was claimed that Iran was supplied nuclear material and equipment by individuals and entities affiliated by the military, secretly sought ways to produce its own nuclear material, got information on the nuclear weapon development via clandestine channels, and put efforts to develop an indigenous design of a nuclear weapon.[233] The ramifications of the report were unique as the IAEA, for the first time, assertively concluded that Iran may have pursued nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the report was criticized and its credibility was questioned because of the data used by the IAEA was provided by foreign intelligence agencies.[234]

The P5+1 and Iran continued negotiations throughout 2012, beginning in Istanbul in April, then in Baghdad in May, and in Moscow in June, all producing no concrete

[232] Hillary Rodham Clinton & Timothy Geithner, "Joint Statement on Iran Sanctions," June 23, 2011, Available at https://still4hill.com/2011/06/23/secretaries-clinton-geithner-joint-statement-on-iran-sanctions/ (accessed: March 17, 2018).

[233] "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *The IAEA*, GOV/2011/65, available at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2011-65.pdf (accessed: March 25, 2019).

[234] Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law,* 54-55.

results. However, the ongoing negotiations in early 2013 in Almaty, Kazakhstan stimulated both parties to compromise where the P5+1 asked Iran to halt uranium enrichment temporary and Iran as well lean toward the proposal. On February 23, 2013, the Iranian Atomic Energy Authority announced the presence of new uranium deposits and the locations of 16 nuclear plants to be built. Iran sat on the negotiating table in Kazakhstan with P5+1, but no results were obtained. On March 3, the Iranian media reported that 3,000 new generation uranium enrichment centrifuges were produced at Natanz nuclear facilities.[235] After a series of discussions in Istanbul and Almaty between March and April 2013, the parties once again could not be able to come to an agreement.[236]

On May 24, 2012 negotiations between Iran and 5 + 1 in Baghdad brought no positive consequences. On July 1, the European Union began its embargo on Iranian oil. The Iranian administration stated that they would prevent the ship traffic in Hormuz Strait and to start missile tests. The EU has expanded the scope of sanctions on Iran to include finance, metal, natural gas and money transfers. On July 12, the route map of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to the 5 + 1 countries was welcomed by Iran but was not accepted owing to the fact that it would take a long time to implement. On August 30, the IAEA has issued a report that Iran has conducted suspected experiments which could be related with nuclear weapon development and has installed a large portion of the centrifuges in the facility underground in Fordow.[237]

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[235] Yeganeh Torbati, "Iran Says Building 3.000 Advanced Centrifuges," *Reuters*, March 3, 2013, Available at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear/iran-says-building-3000-advanced-centrifuges-idUSBRE92205T20130303 (Accessed: March 16, 2018).

[236] Kelsey Davenport, Daryl G. Kimball, and Greg Thielmann, *Solving the Iranian Nuclear Puzzle: Toward a Realistic and Effective Comprehensive Nuclear Agreement*, (3rd. Edn.) (Arms Control Association, June 2014), 48.

[237] David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "Inspectors Confirm New Work by Iran at Secure Nuclear Site," *The New York Times*, August 30, 2012, Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/31/world/middleeast/nuclear-inspectors-confirm-iranian-progress.html (Accessed: March 16, 2018).

Even though Ahmadinejad strongly criticized the Khatami's nuclear diplomacy, he was also forced to engage into diplomatic negotiations. He had acknowledged that international sanctions related with the nuclear dispute had significantly damaged the Iranian economy, and its banking sector, although he traditionally adopted a strong rhetoric that sanctions have any considerable effects neither Iran's economy nor its military.[238] The severe sanctions, particularly on those strategic commodities such as oil and gas had significantly harmed the country's economy and the wealth of its people which in turn aggravated the pressure over the central government, alongside with the ever increasing reactions from the masses to authoritarianism. He argued that "our banks cannot make international transactions anymore," and "there are barriers in transferring money, there are barriers in selling oil."[239]

3.1.4. Rouhani Presidency and the Nuclear Deal

On June 15 2013, Hassan Rouhani, former chief nuclear negotiator of Iran from 2003 to 2005, elected as Iran's new President and came into the office on August 3. The new President brought out optimism as Obama and Rouhani mutually expressed their desires to resolve the issue. Rouhani stated that "Iran has a serious political will to solve the nuclear problem while protecting the rights of the Iranian people as it seeks to remove concerns of the other party."[240] Obama administration, similarly argued that "the inauguration of President Rouhani presents an opportunity for Iran to act quickly to resolve the international community's deep concerns over Iran's nuclear program."[241] Overcoming the calamitous sanctions was seemed to be the foremost

[238] Amuzegar, "The Islamic Republic of Iran," 32.

[239] Thomas Erdbrink, "Ahmadinejad admits impact of financial sanctions on Iran," *The Washington Post*, November 1, 2011, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/ahmadinejad-admits-impact-of-sanctions-on-iran/2011/11/01/gIQAvBIacM_story.html?utm_term=.3bf51ca08cce (accessed: April 24, 2019); Adrian Blomfield, "Mahmoud Ahmadinejad concedes Iran sanctions hurting economy," *The Telegraph*, September 5, 2012, available at https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9523230/Mahmoud-Ahmadinejad-concedes-Iran-sanctions-hurting-economy.html (accessed: April 24, 2019).

[240] Joyner, *Iran's Nuclear Program and International Law,* 57.

[241] Ibid.

priority for Iran under the Rouhani Administration despite the country were suffering many problems in its domestic scene. Although the expectations from the moderate President Hassan Rouhani was high, Rouhani postponed the demands for advancing freedoms and reforms in order to resolve the nuclear dispute which was seen as a more pressing concern for regime's survival.[242]

On August 28, the IAEA has reported that Iran slows down its uranium accumulation activities. On September 19, Obama, in his letter to Rouhani, said that if Iran allay the ambiguities on its nuclear program and cooperate, the sanctions would be relaxed in return. On September 27, the first direct contact between the US and Iran after the 1979 revolution took place. Obama announced that they discussed Iran's nuclear program on the phone with President Rouhani.[243]

On October 14, 2013, talks between P5+1 and Iran started again in Geneva. At the end of the talks, the parties announced that they would meet again in November. On November 11, Iran announced that they would cooperate to resolve the issues take part in the IAEA reports, will give controlled inspection permit to international auditors for the Gchine mine and heavy water production facility in Arak. On November 24, parties reached an interim agreement called as the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) to temporarily freeze Iran's nuclear activities where Iran accepted to temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment activities while limiting its level of enrichment up to 5 percent. Iran also agreed not to open new nuclear related facilities for enrichment or reprocessing, and to permit the IAEA to fully monitor and inspect

[242] Gülriz Şen, "Nükleer Müzakereler ve Yaklaşan Meclis Seçimleri Işığında Ruhani Dönemi'nde İran'da Reform Hareketi'ne Bir Bakış," *ORSAM (Center for Middle Eastern Studies)*, July 30, 2015, Available at http://orsam.org.tr/tr/nukleer-muzakereler-ve-yaklasan-meclis-secimleri-isiginda-ruhani-donemi-nde-iran-da-reform-hareketi-ne-bir-bakis/ (Accessed: December 30, 2018). For a more detailed analysis on Iran's relations with the US under the Presidency of Hassan Rouhani and his approach towards the nuclear negotiations, see Gülriz Şen, "Ruhani Döneminde İran-ABD İlişkileri," *IRAM (Iran Research Center)*, April 2017.

[243] Gaietta, *The Trajectory of Iran's Nuclear Program*, 187-188.

its nuclear program.[244] In return, the United States agreed to provide limited sanction relief amounts to $7 billion, providing Iran spare parts for its air forces, and lift sanctions on Iran's auto industry. The six-month deal provided the parties with the necessary time for the final settlement, and became a milestone in achieving a permanent solution.[245]

On January 20, 2014, the JPOA came into force. The IAEA confirmed that Iran implemented the necessary actions regarding limiting its nuclear program and the US and the EU declared their proposal on sanction relief. From February to June 2014, a series of meetings were held in Vienna between P5+1 and Iran in order to reach an agreement on the agenda and framework where the objective was preparing a draft for permanent agreement.[246] On July 18, the length of the interim agreement was extended by four months. On August 27, the Iranian Atomic Energy Authority has begun to change the Arak heavy water reactor, which was still under construction, to produce less plutonium. No explanation has been made about how much plutonium the reactor will produce. On November 24, the temporary agreement was extended by seven months after the final agreement could not be reached. The parties announced that they are aiming to reach a final agreement on the political framework agreement at the latest on March 31 and by July 1.

On January 15, 2015, representatives of P5+1 with Iran started a new round of negotiations in Geneva. The meetings lasted three days. On February 18, Iran and P5+1 representatives began negotiations for two days in Austria's capital city Vienna this time. On March 3, speaking at the US Congress, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said an agreement would mean that Iran would become a nuclear state.

[244] US Department of Defense, "Press Availability After P5+1 Talks," November 24, 2013 Available at https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/11/218023.htm (accessed: March 14, 2018).

[245] Farhad Rezaei, *Iran's Nuclear Program: 1979-2015: A Study in Proliferation & Rollback*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 219.

[246] Davenport, Kimball, and Thielmann, *Solving the Iranian Nuclear Puzzle,* 49.

On March 17, the parties came together in Lausanne, Switzerland. Three days later the meeting was interrupted. On March 25, negotiations in Lausanne continued. On April 2, Iran and P5+1 countries have reached consensus on negotiations. The parties agreed on the draft agreement and decided to sign the final text on June 30.[247]

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was reached on July 14, 2015 between the P5+1, alongside with the EU and Iran.[248] The agreement basically devised Iran to limit its nuclear activities solely for peaceful purposes in return for lifting the nuclear-related international sanctions on the country. According to the agreement Iran halts uranium enrichment at Fordow facility, and the heavy water research reactor at Arak will be converted to a facility to enhance peaceful nuclear activities while the JCPOA also imposed a strict verification and safeguard protocols in order to closely oversee possible violations of the agreement.[249] On October 18, 2015, the deal came into effect and the necessary steps were begun to be taken by the participant countries. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verified on January 16, 2016 that 'Iran has fully implemented its required commitments' described in the JCPOA[250] and subsequently the US and the EU have lifted nuclear-related sanctions on Iran.[251]

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[247] US Department of State, "Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program," April 2, 2015 Available at https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/04/240170.htm (accessed: March 14, 2018).

[248] The full text of the JCPOA available at: https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/245317.pdf (Accessed: March 18, 2018).

[249] Rezaei, *Iran's Nuclear Program,* 224-225.

[250] US Department of State, "Secretary of State's Confirmation of IAEA Verification," January 16, 2016, https://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/2016/251284.htm (accessed: March 14, 2018).

[251] The European Council, "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and restrictive measures," November 10, 2017, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/iran/jcpoa-restrictive-measures/ (accessed: March 14, 2018).; US Department of State, "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/ (accessed: March 14, 2018).

3.2. The JCPOA and its Consequences

Since arriving to the JCPOA, it could be argued that Iran transformed the nuclear diplomacy into a competition of resolve which facilitated Iran to become a threshold nuclear power thanks to its hedging strategy. Iran retained its nuclear program albeit with significant limitations. It is argued that Iran used hedging strategy. Ariel Levite defines hedging as "a national strategy of maintaining, or at least appearing to maintain, a viable option for the relatively rapid acquisition of nuclear weapons, based on an indigenous technical capacity to produce them within a relatively short time frame ranging from several weeks to few years."[252] Conducting a policy of nuclear hedging is meaning that Iran has obtained the technical ability, technology, and material that it may easily transform its civilian nuclear research into a weaponized program in a short period of time. By doing so, Iran could have desired to preserve its alternative policy choices in case of a situation that renders its survival in danger. Thus, after achieving the technical capability to produce the bomb, it would be a matter of political decision to get to the bomb.[253] Hence, Iran could be a latent nuclear power and has a virtual deterrence as it is the case of the Japan.[254]

Wyn Q. Bowen and Jonathan Brewer recognized that Iran's past record of building and operating secret nuclear facilities, its concealment of banned nuclear materials, and its violations of general commitments under the NPT extremely demonstrated the country's move toward a nuclear hedging state.[255] They maintain that the politico & military dynamics of the nuclear program and Iran's failure to respond the IAEA or UNSC resolutions further increased the doubts over Iran's nuclear intent.[256] The

[252] Ariel E. Levite, "Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited," *International Security*, 27 (3) (Winter 2002), 72.

[253] Russell, *Weapons Proliferation and War in the Greater Middle East,* 78.

[254] Llewelyn Hughes, "Why Japan Will Not Go Nuclear (Yet)," *International Security*, 31 (4), (Spring 2007): 67-96.

[255] Wyn Q. Bowen and Jonathan Brewer, "Iran's Nuclear Challenge: Nine Years and Counting," *International Affairs,* 87 (4) (2011): 923-943.

[256] Ibid., 923.

US intelligence community, being aware of this fact, asserted in 2015 that "we also continue to assess that Iran does not face any insurmountable technical barriers to producing a nuclear weapon, making Iran's political will the central issue."[257]

Iran's historical violations of its commitments under the NPT and its clandestine nuclear activities caused a deep lack of confidence between Iran and the international community over Iran's peaceful use of nuclear energy. El-Masri contends that "the biggest problem facing the IAEA over Iran is a lack of transparency" due to the fact that it caused a grave mistrust between Iran and the international community because of the former's ambiguous reasons for conducting concealed activities.[258] Entessar argues that the West embraced a carrot and stick policy towards Iran in order to overcome Iran's transparency problem in particular, and its numerous non-proliferation violations in general, encouraging Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment and related activities that would lead to the weaponization in return for softening some sanctions or for providing other economic benefits. If Iran would not comply, then the scope and intensity of sanctions would become heavier.[259] However, throughout the nuclear crisis, Iran had not fulfilled its obligations by failing to report nuclear facilities, activities, and material, failing to provide information on the designs of facilities, failing to give full access to the IAEA inspectors, failing to meet UNSC resolutions, and most importantly secretly operating facilities in a way that could be defined for weaponization purposes.[260]

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[257] James R. Clapper, "Statement for the Record Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, *Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, February 26, 2015, 6, available at https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Clapper_02-26-15.pdf (accessed: March 17, 2018).

[258] El-Masri, "Iran: Between International Right and Duty," 96.

[259] Nader Entessar, "Iran's Nuclear Decision-Making Calculus," *Middle East Policy*, 16 (2) (Summer 2009), 34.

[260] Samar El-Masri, "Iran: Between International Right and Duty," *Middle East Policy*, 17 (3) (Fall 2010): 94-96.

The JCPOA has immediately been assessed by scholars and differing views have emerged whether the deal was a good one or not. Those who supported the deal generally put forward that the JCPOA is the biggest success in the history of the treaties on non-proliferation which means the JCPOA is more comprehensive and more rigid than for instance the NPT, the Lausanne, and the Additional Protocol. For instance, Mark Fitzpatrick claims that the JCPOA "is better than all three of its antecedents… and can be characterized as Lausanne-plus, Additional Protocol-plus and NPT-plus." He even contends that the deal could be a game-changer in American-Iranian relations and would precipitate the ground for a possible rapprochement among the two countries for the first time since the Islamic revolution of 1979.[261]

Similarly, prominent historian of Iran, Ervand Abrahamian argued that the agreement between Iran and the US before the JCPOA "is a very good deal" and Iran is "quite willing to give up the bomb." Abrahamian underlined that the crisis over Iran's nuclear dispute in the past originated from Bush's desire from Iran to completely remove her nuclear program, but that was unacceptable for Iran. He contends that Iran's pursuit of nuclear program stems from achieving enhancements in energy, medicine, education, as well as prestige.[262] Likewise, eminent historian of Iran Ali Ansari argues that the JCPOA has "hallmarks of a significant diplomatic achievement" and a "triumph" for Iranian foreign policy elite.[263]

On the other hand, those who opposed to the treaty, maintain that the JCPOA is a quiet limited deal which solely addresses the problem in the short-term while conceding crucial deficiencies to Iran which possibly will be exploited by this

[261] Mark Fitzpatrick, "Iran: A Good Deal," *Survival*, 57 (5), 2015: 47-52.

[262] "Professor Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Expert, Meets with Upper School History Students at Poly," *PolyPrep*, April 5, 2015, available at https://www.polyprep.org/page/parents?pk=762346 (accessed: January 5, 2018).

[263] Ali M. Ansari, "The End of the Beginning? The July 2015 Iranian Nuclear Deal," *The RUSI Journal*, 160 (4) (2015): 24-29.

country in the future by weaponizing its nuclear program. For instance, Eliot Cohen, Eric Edelman, and Ray Takeyh adopt a very harsh position regarding the deal and argue that the JCPOA "ranks as one of the most deficient arms control agreements in history." They emphasize that Iran is not a normal state, rather a revolutionary one which has been a fact that the US administrations for decades could not grasp. As long as Iran's revolutionary character continues, they claim, a long-term and lasting agreement cannot be achieved. The authors further and defend that the US should use every means at its disposal to overthrow of the Islamic regime in Iran in order to guarantee a permanent treaty that would solved the Iran issue forever.[264]

It was underlined that the JCPOA has only dealt with nuclear-related issues, rather than general US-Iran relations. Nevertheless, it was the conventional expectation that the deal would be a crucial step that facilitates a rapprochement between Iran and the US and ease the intense geopolitical rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Şen contends that the US have always perceived the JCPOA as the first step for Iran to soften its foreign policy and back down from regional ambitions, however, Iran vehemently underlined that the JCPOA encompasses only nuclear-related concerns. These contrasting perspectives keep bilateral relations antagonistic which is one of the most important problems that impede normalization of Iran's relations with the US.[265] Current American administration assesses the JCPOA as a failed attempt to finalize Iran's ambitions to produce nuclear weapons, to end its "sponsorship of terrorism" and its policy of exporting the revolution abroad.[266] As Nasr argues,

[264] Eliot Cohen, Eric Edelman, and Ray Takeyh, "Time to Get Tough on Iran: Iran Policy After the Deal," *Foreign Affairs*, 95 (1), (December 2015): 64-75.

[265] Gülriz Şen, "After the Nuclear Deal: Opportunities and Challenges of Iran's Reintegration," *Journal of Iranian Studies*, 2 (1) (2017), 101-102.

[266] Mike R. Pompeo, "Confronting Iran: The Trump Administration's Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, 97 (6), (November/December 2018), 60.

"Washington seems to believe that rolling back Iranian influence would restore order in the Middle East."[267]

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia along with Israel has staunchly demonstrated their opposition and anger to the JCPOA where they argued the deal would give time to Tehran in order to further advance its nuclear and geopolitical ambitions. In order to alleviate concerns, President Obama struck arms agreements with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait, promising large amounts of American weaponry to their defense. By doing this, the US paradoxically increased the security dilemma in the eyes of Iran. Since Iran was already conventionally disadvantaged to Saudi Arabia and its allies, the large American assistance only widened this gap.[268] Thereby, the JCPOA Agreement could not be able to ameliorate neither the tension between Iran and its neighbors nor its relations with the United States. Trump Administration's withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018 and the key members of the administration such as the Secretary of the State Mike Pompeo's and the National Security Advisor John Bolton's tough stance on Iran have only increased Iranian nationalism and sense of isolation which strengthened Iranian hardliners.[269] For Iran's political elite, Trump Administration's essential objective is not to reach a common understanding with Iran, but rather, to achieve a regime change in the country.[270]

3.3. Conclusion

The failure of the JCPOA to bring stability to Iran's standing in the international scene which has roots in the transformation of the regional politics after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The dispute on Iran's nuclear program and the regional threat

[267] Vali Nasr, "Iran Among the Ruins: Tehran's Advantage in a Turbulent Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, 97 (2) (March/April 2018), 108.

[268] Nasr, "Iran Among the Ruins," 114-115.

[269] Clément Therme, "Post-Withdrawal Iran," *Survival*, 60 (6) (2018), 235-236.

[270] Ibid., 236.

perception has been significantly shaped by Iran's growing influence after the US invasion of Iraq. Emerging power vacuum after the fall of Saddam Hussein and the subsequent civil war in Iraq, the uprisings in the Arab world after 2010, increasing sectarianism, and the spread of violent non-state actors throughout the region are inextricably linked to the debate on Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Iran is still considered to be a major threat to the region in Israel's security perceptions. Its ballistic missile program may provide Iran opportunity to strike targets at Israeli territory. Israel's failure in its war on Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006 demonstrated significant Iranian support and influence on Hezbollah. Israel came to the conclusion that as long as a regime change in Tehran does not take place, Iran could sustain a proxy war against Israel. A possible war between Iran and Israel supported by the US still considered being a significant concern in the region because it will likely to engulf the entire region.

Despite the signing of the JCPOA, Israel and Arab states' threat perception from Iran has not declined and principal concerns could not be alleviated. The United States' withdrawal from the nuclear agreement in May 2018 further triggered the uncertainty concerning the Iran's nuclear program, Gulf states' response, and the future American policy. Several Arab states led by Saudi Arabia believed that Iran has still imperialistic ambitions in the Middle East which has originally dates back to the Shah Era in Iran. In contemporary politics, Saudi Arabia believes that Iran is attempting to realize this goal by its revolutionary foreign policy agenda and its mobilization of Shia populations throughout the region. Accordingly, Iranian aspirations should not leave unchecked which ultimately would jeopardize the survival of the Saudi regime. Thereby, the securitization of Iran by the Gulf states as well as Iran's assertive stance continue to shape the trajectory of the Middle East politics, protracting existing conflicts and exacerbating the fault lines.

Within this background, the debate on the Iran's nuclear program and its effects on the regional stability and international security have been shaped. However, as the proceeding chapter will argue, the existing debate is mostly based on partial

approaches to the issue where many accounts selectively read the history. The main problem in the current debate is the lack of clarity in connecting international relations theories to regional politics in the Middle East. In the last chapter, this study will propose stability-instability paradox to better explain how Iran's nuclear program has shaped the international security debate by providing a theoretical approach that connects the regional dynamics and nuclear proliferation.

CHAPTER 4

REVISITING THE PROLIFERATION DEBATE: STABILITY-INSTABILITY PARADOX AND IRAN

4.1. Introduction

The preceding chapters presented major nuclear proliferation theories in order to grasp the main assumptions and premises of the proliferation debate and then examined Iran's nuclear program, taking it from the early development until to the signature of the JCPOA. Building on these chapters, this chapter will first discuss the main arguments of proliferation optimists and pessimists on Iranian case and then propose stability-instability paradox as a third way to explain the probable effects on international security if Iran develops nuclear weapons. Proliferation optimist and pessimist explanations over the possible consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran is partial, both disregarding empirical evidence. This chapter will frame the issue within the stability-instability paradox which asserts that strategic/nuclear stability and sub-strategic/conventional stability are inversely correlated. In this chapter, it will be argued that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, a strategic stability will emerge in the Middle East which means that there will be no full-scale conventional war or a nuclear attack involving Iran. On the other hand, Iran's nuclearization will undermine sub-strategic stability which means that empowered by its nuclear umbrella Iran will become more aggressive that is likely to cause frequent crises, skirmishes, and low-level conflicts with its adversaries such as Saudi Arabia or Israel.

4.2. Proliferation Optimism on Iran

Proliferation optimism argues that Iran's aspiration for nuclear weapons stems from the country's perception of an existential threat from the U.S. Iran felt itself in grave danger after George W. Bush's axis of evil statement, defining Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as rogue states, in 2002 and the subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003 within the policy of preemptive strike. As a country significantly inferior to the US conventional capabilities, the only choice Iran had to seek was nuclear forces, in

order to prevent a possible US invasion like that of Iraq. Accordingly, Iran will only use nuclear weapons to deter aggressive actions, no more.[271] Hence, nuclear weapons will provide Iran an unbreakable deterrent which in turn can prevent a war. Iran, armed with nuclear weapons, can deter possible aggressions by its adversaries. Hence, a nuclear-armed Iran enhances stability and peace in the Middle East.

Nader Entessar in his analysis of the nuclear decision making process in Iran, considering the influential groups of actors ultimately argues that 'the single most important driving force in Iran's nuclear calculus is its threat perception' rather than energy security, prestige, or great power status.[272] Likewise, some other scholars argue that Iran's aggressive foreign policy and military actions, including its nuclear program, and its support to Hezbollah or Hamas derive from the country's search for deterrence against possible military actions of the US or its allies.[273]

According to Waltz, Iran is not a revisionist country and has not territorial claims over its neighbors' territories. Rather than territorial expansion, Iran desires its interests to be secured in the Strait of Hormuz. He contends that Iran "can be considered a status quo power as far as territorial claims are concerned" and this policy will not seem to be changed in future.[274] Waltz believes that there is no reason for Iran to pursue offensive external aims, but rather, there are crucial factors of restraint. Nuclear weapons are for deterrence purposes and aggressive actions abroad will immediately be responded by other nuclear powers. Iran would be aware of that

[271] Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 180-181, 193; Sagan and Waltz, "Is Nuclear Zero the Best Option?" 92.

[272] Entessar, "Iran's Nuclear Decision-Making Calculus," 33.

[273] See for instance Shahram Chubin, "Iran's Power in Context," *Survival*, 51 (1) (2009): 165-190; Mohsen Milani, "Tehran's Take: Understanding Iran's U.S. Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, 88 (4) (2009): 46-62; Mehran Kamrava, "Iranian National-Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities," *Middle East Policy*, 14 (2) (2007): 84-100.

[274] Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 195-198.

fact. Because of that Iran will not attack Israel even if acquires the nuke. A nuclear escalation between Iran and Israel is a distinct possibility because of the fact that despite their hostile rhetoric they have no vital interests at stake such as disagreements over territories or politics.[275]

Proliferation optimists consider that emerging nuclear states have a positive impact on deterrence in regional level because of the increased uncertainty in terms of nuclear escalation. More nuclear states in a specific region mean that contemplating who will deter who in case of a crisis is being harder, which in turn forces states with nukes to avoid risky actions.[276] Thus, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it cannot use it for offensive purposes because other nuclear states are likely to retaliate against Iranian aggressions. A nuclear-armed Iran will be deterred by other nuclear states, particularly by the United States and Israel. Hence, Iran will not venture to utilize its nukes for revisionist policies, given the fact that its nuclear arsenal will restrain Iran's behavior in crisis because of the risk of total annihilation.

Furthermore, optimists argue that new nuclear states create balance and equality against existing nuclear states which in turn enhance stability both in regional and international contexts.[277] For instance, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, nuclear balancing will come into play against Israel which may likely to increase stability in the Middle East.[278] Hence, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, more equality will emerge both in the Middle East against Israel, and in the international scene, against currently nuclear states, particularly against the US. Hence, Iran's obtain of the bomb will have pacifying effects on its relations with its traditional adversaries.

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[275] Ibid.

[276] Mesquita and Riker, "An Assessment of Selective Nuclear Proliferation," 283-306; Waltz, *More May be Better*, 11-17.

[277] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," 5-56.

[278] Waltz, "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb," 3.

For optimists, the control of nuclear forces by the IRGC would not be different from that of the control by civilians or another actor within Iran. Waltz simply says that IRGC has nothing to do with nukes, other than keeping them for deterrence purposes as any actor would do.[279] The problematic civil-military relations in Iran and the excessive influence of the IRGC on politics will not impact how a nuclear-armed Iran behaves. Since nuclear weapons have only defensive and deterrent value, the IRGC has nothing to do with nukes.

Iran will have no incentive to provide nuclear weapons or related materials to non-state armed groups, and will have every incentive to protect its arsenal. Waltz argues that the possibility of Iranian supply to non-state armed groups such as Hezbollah with nuclear material will be constrained by the fact that the US intelligence and surveillance capabilities ultimately detect it. If Iran attempts that policy, it would take a great risk of punishment by other nuclear states. Furthermore, transferring these materials to groups like Hezbollah means that the country will lose the control of nuclear forces entirely.[280] Therefore, the IRGC will have no incentive to transfer these weapons to violent non-state actors, particularly Hezbollah because it cannot remain as secret due to advanced intelligence gathering capabilities of the US. Iran will also be aware of the fact that if it transfers nuclear weapons to Hezbollah, it will completely lose control of the group and its nuclear arsenal. Furthermore, the influential role of the IRGC in the command and control of Iranian nuclear weapons does not matter. History often demonstrated that military commands behave more prudent than civilian politicians in crises.

Accordingly, Waltz argues that a nuclear Iran will not be different than that of Soviet Union or China; rather it will demonstrate same behavioral patterns because of the systemic dynamics of international structure. States are rational actors and Iran will behave just as the Soviets or Chinese did. According to Waltz, Sagan, by

[279] Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz with Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 195.

[280] Ibid.

overemphasizing the domestic factors, overlooks the international systemic considerations. International system dictates states to ensure their survival and states are rational actors. Waltz argues that Iran, despite its harsh rhetoric, has been a rational actor that desires to deter a possible aggression into its territory.[281] Hence, Iran will behave rationally, even if it is armed with nuclear weapons. There is no incentive for Iran as a rational actor to use nuclear weapons. Similarly, regime type does not matter. As Waltz suggests, being radically at home does not necessarily being so abroad. Although Iran embraced a harsh rhetoric in its foreign policy discourse, it has not revisionist goals.

4.3. Proliferation Pessimism on Iran

Proliferation pessimists argue that Iran has been a revolutionary state since 1979, pursuing regime change in neighboring countries. A nuclear Iran will more aggressively follow this path and will increase its destabilizing policies towards the Middle East.[282] Sagan states that 'Tehran's concerns about forced regime change is its central motivation for wanting to acquire nuclear weapons.'[283] For Sagan, it is flawed to compare a nuclear-armed Iran with China or Soviet Union, but rather, Iran could be compared with Pakistan where Sagan asserts that the two countries shares an unstable ideology, undemocratic civil-military relations, and official ties with non-state armed groups, including the Taliban and Hezbollah.[284]

Sagan argues that "Iran would be the most dangerous proliferator" among other rogue states of Iraq or North Korea, and Iran is "combining strongly aggressive tendencies… with a lack of strong civilian leadership control over the ideologically radical military organization –IRGC- that manages the country's nuclear power and

[281] Ibid.

[282] Lindsay and Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb," 35; Colin H. Kahl and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Iran and the Bomb: Would a Nuclear Iran Make the Middle East More Secure?" *Foreign Affairs*, 91 (5) (September/October 2012), 157.

[283] Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 210-211; Sagan, How to Keep the Bomb from Iran."

[284] See, Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, "A Nuclear Iran," 139; Sagan, How to Keep the Bomb from Iran."

nuclear weapons programs."[285] Sagan rejects Waltz's argument that Iran will demonstrate behavioral patterns like Soviets or China, for three reasons. Iran's ideology is not a prudent one that avoids risks. Its state structure is not centralized that guarantee consistent decision-making. And it lacks strong civilian authority over its military.

Proliferation pessimists problematize the authority that would control the nuclear forces in Iranian state and extrapolated that the IRGC will most likely to be the actor that takes the control. The IRGC was in the past responsible for nuclear technology transfer deals which were carried out covertly, for the protection of nuclear facilities, for overseeing the research on delivery systems, and for general administration of Iranian nuclear weapon program.[286] The IRGC's clandestine relations with non-state armed groups would be a grave risk for command and control activities. Nuclear armed IRGC would significantly increase its military activities abroad that might fuel regional instability, and even cause wars. Sagan claimed that the IRGC's close relations with radical clerics in Iran, further aggravates this actors' reliability.[287]

Iran's mostly clandestine nuclear weapon activities further raised the dangers of safety and problems of effectiveness. Since Iran could not be able to openly monitor and test its nuclear program because of its covert nature, the program remains more vulnerable to errors. Sagan underlined that the IRGC clandestinely conducted Iran's relationships with terrorist movements which made the IRGC showing characteristics of "a deadly mixture –nuclear command and control responsibilities and terrorist ties

[285] Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 200-201; Sagan, How to Keep the Bomb from Iran." For similar arguments, see Matthew Kroenig, "Time to Attack Iran: Why Strike is the Least Bad Option," *Foreign Affairs*, 91 (1) (January/February 2012): 76-86.

[286] Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, "A Nuclear Iran," 141; Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 210-211; Sagan, How to Keep the Bomb from Iran;" Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, "A Nuclear Iran," 141.

[287] Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 210-211.

in the same organization."[288] He argues that this creates grave dangers for the regional and international security. First, the IRGC would attack American targets with more confidence. Second, it may augment its weapon, material, and logistic support to non-state armed movements and terrorist groups in their attacks against Israel. Third, it would boost its destabilizing activities towards the Middle Eastern countries.[289]

According to Sagan, beside the excessive power in the hands of the IRGC, the organization also maintains close ties with Iran's radical clerics. Sagan emphasized that these clerics advocate the development and use of nuclear weapons and justified this by referring the Quran.[290] The IRGC's relations with the central government in Tehran constitute another problem. Sagan mentions the past experiences that the IRGC conducted aggressive actions towards other countries without neither the authorization nor the knowledge of the central government. Although Sagan's real focus is on the domestic risks of a nuclear Iran, he also rejects Waltz's argument about the regional proliferation and argues that it will led to a spread of nuclear weapons throughout the region.[291]

For pessimists, Iran will likely to be different than the Soviet Union or China, in contrast with Waltz's claim. Sagan defines Iran as a personalized dictatorship and he argues that the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons and the risk of deterrence failures increase in these regimes.[292] He argues that Iran has not a stable ideology, its

[288] Kahl and Waltz, "Iran and the Bomb,"158; Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 211; Scott D. Sagan, How to Keep the Bomb from Iran."

[289] Kahl and Waltz, "Iran and the Bomb," 158; Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 211; Scott D. Sagan, How to Keep the Bomb from Iran."

[290] Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 211.

[291] Sagan, How to Keep the Bomb from Iran;" Sagan and Waltz with Rapp-Hooper, "Iraq, North Korea, and Iran," 212-213.

[292] Scott D.Sagan, "Armed and Dangerous: When Dictators Get the Bomb," *Foreign Affairs*, 97 (6) (November/December 2018): 35-43.

government model is not centralized as were in the Soviets or in China, and strict civilian control over military does not exist. Rather, Sagan argues, Iran has been a revolutionary state since 1979 when the Islamic Republic declared, and its main motivation to pursue nuclear weapons would be to force regime changes in the Middle East. [293] A nuclear-armed Iran could opt to integrate nuclear weapons into its conventional war-fighting capabilities which could rapidly increase the chance of conflict. Hence, Iran could blackmail or provoke its adversaries by the threat of use of bomb in order to gain diplomatic or military leverage. Iran could do this not only against its regional rivals but also against the United States.

For pessimists, Iran is not a normal state but has been a revolutionary one since 1979 and its major aim in the Middle East is to export its revolution. Iran's destabilizing activities are not determined rationally, but under the strong influences of the IRGC and the clerical establishment. The clerical establishment in Iran is as strong as to become a key input in the formation of new foreign policy if Iran acquires the bomb. Since the clerics are not informed with the rational calculations of prudent decision-making process, they would act with revolutionary zeal, miscalculations, or misperceptions. Furthermore, the IRGC has close ties with radical clerics in Iran which would further jeopardize the safety and command & control systems of nuclear weapons. In this scenario, deterrence failures are likely because of the high risks of accidental use or inadvertent use.

According to Sagan, it is likely to unfold three major problems if Iran armed with nuclear weapons of which those problems were experienced in Pakistan case. He argues that after obtaining nukes, new nuclear states emboldened in their behavior which increases the propensity of initiating militarized inter-state dispute. Secondly, new nuclear states exacerbate the risk of terrorist seizure of nuclear weapons. And thirdly, new nuclear states are more inclined to engage into cooperative relationships

[293] Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, "A Nuclear Iran,"139; Sagan, "How to Keep the Bomb from Iran."

with terrorist organizations which create possibility that they could sale nuclear weapons or nuclear technology to these actors.[294]

Hence, the pessimists consider that nuclear weapons have not only defensive value, but rather, they can be used with offensive purposes as well. Iran as a radical state, has several incentives to appeal its nuclear arsenal in order to enhance its interests, particularly the exporting its revolution abroad. Iran could transfer nuclear weapons to violent non-state actors. Since Iran has a decades-old strict relations with influential non-state armed groups such as Hezbollah, possible Iranian attempts to provide these groups the bomb constitutes a grave concern. It is argued that utilizing these groups has been a part of general Iranian strategy in order to compensate its conventional weaknesses and advance its national interests abroad. The IRGC has given intensive training to Hezbollah militias and supplied sophisticated military equipment, including missiles, along with huge financial assistance.

The proliferation optimists mainly argue that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it will promote stability, security, and equality in the international system while the pessimists argue that it will raise the risks of a nuclear or major conventional war, accidents, and inadvertent use. Both the optimists and pessimists selectively read the history of nuclear weapons and avoid the empirical evidence that don't fit their theories. For instance, while Kenneth Waltz mainly dealt with the Cold War history and the international system, Scott Sagan generally emphasized domestic politics, the US history, particularly civil-military relations. Therefore, a perspective that combines systemic analysis and domestic factors is needed.

In the debate, Waltz embraced rationalism and his neorealist theory while Sagan adopted organizational theory. Hence, the proliferation debate generally, and regarding Iran particularly reflects that there are merits in both the accounts of the optimists and pessimists. However, this leads to a partial understanding of the issue where both of the accounts lacking key dimensions about the likely effects of nuclear weapons. The main problem with the optimist account is that it lacks sub-systemic

[294] Ibid.

effects of nuclear weapons such as changing state behavior or changing interests. Kenneth Waltz overlooks these factors by excessively setting forth the debate from his neorealist theory of International Relations. On the other hand, pessimist accounts disregard the strong deterrent power of nuclear weapons, and reject the very fact that nuclear weapons, indeed, prevented a major war for about seven decades.

This study proposes that nuclear weapons have not cumulative effects on international security as the mainstream literature suggested. Rather, nuclear weapons have contrasting effects that proliferation cannot be defined as completely a positive or a negative matter. In the preceding part of this chapter, this study will propose stability-instability paradox to provide more comprehensive understanding on the likely effects of nuclear proliferation. By focusing on Iranian nuclear crisis, the study will suggest that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it would likely to engender key consequences for international security where both the optimists and pessimists find support to their arguments. By so doing, the study proposes a third way which is beyond optimism and pessimism to explain the likely effects of nuclear proliferation on international security. Thereby, the paradox will also demonstrate the limits of neorealist IR theory as well as the shortcomings of the organizational model in explaining the nuclear proliferation.

4.4. Beyond Optimism and Pessimism: Stability-Instability Paradox and Iran

The stability/instability paradox reflects the idea that the emerging stability created by mutually assured destruction produces greater instability which increases the probability of limited conflicts or provocative state behaviors which are seen as relatively safe since they remain below the threshold of a major war or a nuclear escalation.[295] Within the context provided by stability-instability paradox, in this chapter it will be argued that if Iran develops nuclear weapons, a strategic stability and a sub-strategic instability would likely to occur in the Middle East.

[295] Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," 31.

4.5.1. Strategic Stability

Strategic stability in terms of Iranian case will be provided by the two significant factors. Firstly, stability-instability paradox suggests that Iran's current defensive security posture will continue even if it acquires nuclear weapons because Iran is a rational actor that currently not has vital interests at stake. Secondly, the paradox argues that Iranian nuclear weapons will prevent a major war between Iran and the United States or between Iran and its regional adversaries. Hence, as the paradox envisions, Iran's rational defensive stance and its nuclear deterrent will provide stability at the strategic level.

4.5.1.1. Iran's Defensive Stance

Stability-instability paradox suggests that states are rational actors. As proliferation optimists argue it does not matter which states to proliferate because states seek nuclear weapons for defensive and deterrent purposes, as Iran has been. Iran will only appeal to nuclear weapons if its survival is fallen into stake. Rather than defending its homeland, and deterring a possible invasion attempt, there will be no incentive for Iran to use nuclear forces for offensive purposes. Iran has pursued nuclear weapons in order to prevent a possible American invasion after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Because the United States invaded Afghanistan and after Iraq while the then US President George W. Bush defined Iran as a member of "axis of evil" along with Iraq and North Korea. The 2002 the National Security Strategy Document defined "rogue states" and presented the possible American responses, including non-proliferation and counter-proliferation measures. The document stated that "the United States has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security" and underlined that "to forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively."[296]

Similarly, Israel's threat of use of force has also played a significant role in Iran's increasing threat perception. Lastly, Iran's fear of its neighbor Pakistan's nuclear

[296] The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 15.

bomb was also a facilitating factor in Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapon capacity due to the risk of an open conflict in Afghanistan or a possible hostile government in Pakistan.[297] Closely examining the Iranian defense policy, its huge investments in unconventional capabilities, and its support to violent non-state actors demonstrates that Iran is not real a conventional threat that could be able to make aggressions against its adversaries. Despite its harsh rhetoric and its involvement into many conflicts, in its core, Iran is a defensive power.

Violent non-state actors have been an important component of Iran's foreign and security policy for decades and this importance has only increased after the uprisings in the Arab world. The dissolution of the weak states in the Middle East and North Africa has produced strong incentives for non-state armed groups to extend their influence in domestic and regional politics. By mobilizing their supporters, these actors have formed substantial military components and by claiming rule on territories and natural resources they established semi-state structures. These groups have also embraced sectarian agendas where they consistently blamed each other as apostates. Hence, the rise of violent non-state actors have intensified both the regional rivalry and also exacerbated the sectarianism in the Middle East. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia used and exploited these groups in order to enhance their position in the region. While Saudi Arabia supported these groups in order to counter growing Iranian influence, Iran's relations with non-state actors has been a long-standing one which dates back to Islamic Revolution.

On the other hand the violent non-state actors have also been a primary instrument for Iran to balance Israeli military forces in the region. As it was the case in 2006 Lebanon War, Iran used violent non-state actors to restrain Israel's freedom of action and deter it from taking aggressive actions in contrast with Iranian national interests. In Spring 2006, empowered by Iranian support, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine joined the Hezbollah's campaign against Israel and carried out rocket and mortar

[297] Geoffrey Kemp, Shahram Chubin,Farideh Farhi, and Richard Speier, *Iran's Nuclear Options: Issues and Analysis*, (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2001).

attacks against Israeli territory. Israeli army's retaliatory strikes which target Lebanese population and Hezbollah's intensification of firing rockets to Israel escalated the situation on the ground. Israeli army launched large scale military intervention against Lebanon in July 2006. Iran had threatened Israel that if Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) attack Lebanon, Iran will move with "crushing response," however Iran significantly exhibit restraint in its behavior and acted with prudence throughout the war. It was remarkable that Iranian army's chief of staff stated during the war in Lebanon that Iran will "never militarily" engage into the war.[298]

While Iran and Hezbollah have decades-old close relationship, it was after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 that produced incentives for Iran-Hamas cooperation. The American pressure on Arab states to cease their support to Hamas paved the way for Iran to fill the vacuum. Iranian support played a vital role in Hamas's strengthening its position in Gaza in 2007 and its subsequent clashes with Israel between 2008 and 2014. Despite sectarian differences, Iran and Hamas engaged into a pragmatic relationship and found the common interest of opposing Israel. Supporting Hamas helped Iran with its encirclement strategy against Israel through Palestinian territories because Iran expanded its reach with using this violent non-state actor.[299]

The emergence of the Islamic State (or ISIS) in 2013 and its rapid territorial gains through Syria and Iraq in the summer of 2014 was a game-changer development. It facilitated both the fragility of the weak states as well as the Shia mobilization in a region-wide scale. The Popular Mobilization Units (Hashd al-Sha'bi) formed in Iraq after the grand ayatollah Sistani's fatwa, who is a prominent symbol among Iraqi Shia population. Sistani called Iraqis to unite against the common enemy and defend the homeland. The dissolution of the Iraqi national army after its horrible battle

[298] Matteo Legrenzi and Fred H. Lawson, "Iran and Its Neighbors Since 2003: New Dilemmas," *Middle East Policy* (21) (4) (Winter 2014), 106.

[299] Thomas Juneau, "Iran Under Rouhani: Still Alone in the World," *Middle East Policy*, 21 (4) (Winter 2014), 100.

performance against the Islamic State militants further enhanced the role and influence of Shia militias.[300] Similarly, in Syria, Hezbollah increasingly engaged into the civil war in order to counter Islamic State threat and preserve Assad's government. Iran mobilized Shia militias in the conflict in Syria not only from Iraq, Syria or Lebanon but also from Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to keep Assad regime in power.[301]

Iran has also used these paramilitary forces for extending its reach throughout the weak Arab states and for projecting power around its main rivals, Israel and Saudi Arabia in order to encircle them by operating ally forces in neighboring countries. Iran has boosted its support of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Badr Brigade and Mahdi Army in Iraq, Army of Muhammed in Pakistan, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine, Houthis in Yemen by supplying them vast amount of military equipment and financial incentives.[302] All of these groups embrace Shiism, except Hamas, and all received substantial training and funds by the IRGC in order to enhance either Iranian or Shia interests abroad.[303]

By investing heavily in long-range missile systems Iran increased the threat perceptions of its neighbors. For instance Iran has continued to launch long range

[300] Kirk H. Sowell, "The Rise of Iraq's Militia State," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 23, 2015, available at http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=59888 (accessed: February 24, 2019).

[301] Ali Alfoneh, "Tehran's Shia Foreign Legions," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 30, 2018, available at https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/01/30/tehran-s-shia-foreign-legions-pub-75387 (accessed: February 24, 2019). It was argued that about 10.000 to 12.000 Afghan fighters were under the command of the IRGC and fought in Syria. See, Colin P. Clarke and Phillip Smyth, "Where Is Assad Getting His Fighters From? (It's Not Just Lebanon and Iraq)," *The National Interest*, January 2, 2018, available at https://nationalinterest.org/feature/where-assad-getting-his-fighters-its-not-just-lebanon-iraq-23899 (accessed: February 24, 2019).

[302] Chubin, "Is Iran a Military Threat?" 77.

[303] Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 223.

ballistic missiles, violating the UNSC Resolution 2231. Iran's enthusiasm on developing expensive and wearing ballistic missiles is another problem. It is underlined that except for Iran, no country built long range missiles without pursuing nuclear weapons.[304] Iran's heavy investment in missile reflects the country's desire to improve its deterrence and defense since by deploying missiles Iran could increase its ability to retaliate against its adversaries with relatively low costs.[305] Iran supplied missiles to Hamas and Hezbollah against Israel and Houthi forces against Saudi-led coalition which is still poses one of the significant concerns for Israel and Saudi Arabia.

As Iran's significant support to violent non-state actors, its huge investments in ballistic missile program, and its involvement in many conflicts throughout the region demonstrates, Iran desires to defend its homeland away from its own territory. Tehran perceived that its "forward defense" strategy is working given the fact that thanks to the Iranian efforts, the Islamic State is degraded in strategic locations such as Damascus, Baghdad, and Erbil.[306] Back in May 2011 before the Syrian civil war, General Qassem Suleimani, the commander of the IRGC's elite Quds Force wing, in his address to students at the Haqqani Theological Seminary, referred the Arab Spring as providing Iran and the Islamic Revolution 'greatest opportunities.' He stated that 'Today, Iran's victory or defeat no longer takes place in Mehran and Khorramshahr. Our boundaries have expanded and we must witness victory in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. This is the fruit of the Islamic Revolution.'[307] Hence, for

[304] Robert Joseph, "JCPOA: Non-Proliferation, Inspections, and Nuclear Constraints," *Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, August 4, 2015, Available at http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/080415_Joseph_Testimony.pdf (accessed: March 17, 2018).; David A. Cooper, "Iran's Enduring Ballistic Missile Threat," *Statement before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa,* June 10, 2015, Available at http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA13/20150610/103582/HHRG-114-FA13-Wstate-CooperD-20150610.pdf (accessed: March 17, 2018).

[305] Chubin, "Is Iran a Military Threat?" 78.

[306] Nasr, "Iran Among the Ruins," 112-113.

[307] Cited in Alfoneh, *Iran Unveiled*, 233.

the IRGC, the regional situation brought an opportunity to defend Iran outside of their borders, keeping the threat away while facilitating the Iranian interests in the entire Middle East.

Much before that substantial Iranian support to Hezbollah concluded with Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon after the war in 2006 where Hezbollah militias produced significant costs for Israeli armed forces.[308] This "forward defense" posture originates from the fact that Iran has not sufficient conventional capabilities and sufficient manpower to protect its soil in case of an aggression. Iran's conventional capabilities are not only significantly inferior to its major adversary United States, but it is also not match with its regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia or Israel. Hence, this poses a dilemma that given the Iran's great asymmetric capabilities, why its conventional capabilities are such weak? The dilemma has its roots at the Islamic Revolution, dating back to 1979.

After the Islamic revolution, Iran has been faced with persistent severe sanctions that prevented the modernization of Iranian army which was dependent on the western assistant. The sanctions has also hindered indigenous efforts to modernize the army since the country's economy greatly suffered from the reduced revenue from oil and gas exports, and lack of foreign investments, among other domestic financial problems. The operational effectiveness and power projection capability of Iranian army is highly questionable.[309] For instance, during the Iran-Iraq War, the US Navy had easily eliminated most of the Iranian naval forces in the Gulf which had left Iran to carry out hit and run attacks by gunboats. Similarly, during the Iraq's invasion, American forces have taken control for about a month which Iran could not be able to accomplish for eight years.[310]

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[308] Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Middle East Middle Powers: Regional Role, International Impact," *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 11 (42) (Summer 2014), 40.

[309] Michael Wahid Hanna and Dalia Dasse Kaye, "The Limits of Iranian Power," *Survival*, 57 (5) (2015), 178.

[310] Russell, *Weapons Proliferation and War in the Greater Middle East,* 73.

In terms of land, naval, and air capabilities, Iran's conventional war fighting ability is mediocre and its capacity to project power is no match to its regional ambitions.[311] It lacks modern tanks and armored vehicles of Western standards which are largely obtained by several Middle Eastern countries. Similarly, its air force is essentially old and outdated, while its major rivals in the region such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE have high performance F-16s, F-15s, and Eurofighter Typhoons. Furthermore, Israel and Turkey are F-35 multi-role fighter customers, which plane is considered to be a future air power of the NATO. The situation is also similar in naval forces. Iran's amphibious platforms are generally outmoded most of which had been bought during the Shah era. Lacking advanced frigates or corvettes, Iran invested anti-ship missiles, mine warfare, and fast missile boats.[312] Iran has attempted to compensate these deficiencies by appealing more and more Russian and Chinese defense products which could provide the country of high-tech modern equipment with a moderate cost. Russian air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles and Chinese anti-ship missiles boosted the Iranian capabilities. However these systems remain as exceedingly limited when dealing with sophisticated American supplied naval and air forces to Iran's rivals.[313]

On the other hand, after the Islamic Revolution, it was also a deliberate policy that Iranian leaders preferred to shift investing from Iran's national army which has been seen as a threat to the newly established regime towards the IRGC and the Basij militia. Thereby, the defense spending moved from conventional land, naval, and air forces to asymmetric capabilities.[314] The IRGC and the Basij militias have seen by the Iranian leadership as reliable revolutionary forces which could both defend the republic against anti-revolutionary movements and better project Iranian power

[311] Chubin, "Is Iran a Military Threat?" 80.

[312] Hanna and Kaye, "The Limits of Iranian Power," 178-180.

[313] Ibid.

[314] Russell, *Weapons Proliferation and War in the Greater Middle East,* 72.

abroad. Particularly, the IRGC could be able to get sophisticated weapon systems at its disposal whether produced in Iran or bought from foreign countries like Russia or China.[315] Iran's profound lack of technologically equipped army and modern military hardware because of the severe American embargoes and its isolated position in the international system produces incentives for Iran to appeal asymmetric capabilities in order to compensate its conventional weaknesses. By doing so, Iran has also enhanced its "strategic depth" throughout the Middle East where it could increasingly challenge its adversaries in the region.[316]

The comparison of the military spending of Iran and its regional rivals is also telling. Saudi Arabia alone spends five times more than Iran's in defense, purchasing advanced American weaponry against Iran's obsolescent military arsenal. The defense spending of Saudi Arabia in 2017 was $69.4 billion while Iran's remained at $14.5 billion. Iran's defense spending was also overshadowed by its other rivals, Turkey and Israel which spent $18.2 billion and $16.5 billion respectively in their defense.[317] It is also remarkable that Saudi military spending increased by 74 percent between 2008 and 2015, jumping to $90.3 billion. Saudi Arabia purchased advanced combat aircrafts, effective air and missile defense systems, along with sophisticated land and naval platforms, particularly from Western suppliers. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia, along with Iran's other regional rivals Egypt and UAE are among the top 5 major arms importer countries in the world between 2013 and 2017. After India, these countries take 2nd, 3rd, and 4th places in the share of global arms imports. Comparing to 2008-2012, between 2013 and 2017, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and UAE,

[315] Sadiq al-Husna, "Essay: Iran's Revolutionary Guard,"147.

[316] Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Strategic Depth, Counterinsurgency, and the Logic of Sectarianization: The Islamic Republic of Iran's Security Doctrine and Its Regional Implications" in Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (eds.) *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 166-167; Chubin, "Is Iran a Military Threat?" 72-73.

[317] Pieter D. Wezeman, "Saudi Arabia, armaments and conflict in the Middle East," *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, December 14, 2018, Available at https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2018/saudi-arabia-armaments-and-conflict-middle-east (accessed: March 1, 2019).

increased their defense spending by 225, 215, and 51 percent respectively.[318] The US has played a particularly key role in these countries' defense procurement. In order to eliminate Iran's growing influence, prevent further Iranian expansion, and strengthen the defense and deterrence of Iran's rivals, the US provided Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern states with advanced and sophisticated weapon systems.[319]

Therefore the regional and international threat perceptions from Iran do not originate from this country's conventional capabilities, but rather from its unconventional military investments where the IRGC and the militia forces have become a key instrument for Iranian state to compensate its conventional weaknesses.[320] By adopting a "forward defense" strategy, Iran desired to overcome its difficulties in defending its borders and enhancing its deterrence by extending its presence abroad thorough proxy forces.[321] Like the Pakistan's exploitation of non-state armed groups such as Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Tayyibai and Jaish-e-Mohammed for overcoming its conventional inferiority against India, particularly Hezbollah has become a crucial instrument of Iran's foreign and security policy.[322] Faced with economic difficulties, lack of foreign arms suppliers, and insufficient indigenous achievements, Iran has begun to focus its asymmetric capabilities which have become a crucial part of Iranian security policy.

As this part argues that since Iran has been using violent non-state actors and advancing its ballistic missile program in order to deter its adversaries and ensuring

[318] Pieter D. Wezeman, Aude Fleurant, Alexander Kuimova, Nan Tian, and Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2017," *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, March 2018, available at https://www.sipri.org/publications/2018/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2017 (accessed: March 1, 2019).

[319] Vali Nasr and Ray Takeyh, "The Costs of Containing Iran: Washington's Misguided New Middle East Policy, *Foreign Affairs*, 87 (1) (January-February 2008), 86.

[320] Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Strategic Depth, Counterinsurgency, and the Logic of Sectarianization," 169; Chubin, "Is Iran a Military Threat?" 77.
[321] Nasr, "Iran Among the Ruins," 111.

[322] Erica D. Borghard and Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Hizbullah and Iran's Nuclear Program," *Survival*, 55 (4), (2013), 96.

its defense away from its territorial boundaries. Thereby, as the stability-instability paradox suggests there is no incentive for Iran to use nuclear weapons for offensive purposes, but rather it would ensure the security of its nuclear arsenal. Iran will ensure that its nuclear arsenal will be protected from accidents as well as from falling into the wrong hands, such as terrorist groups or violent non-state actors. Therefore, stability-instability paradox argues that in contrast to the pessimist expectations, there would be no reason for Iran to transfer its nuclear arsenal to Hezbollah or any other actor. Because Iran, first and foremost, wants to enhance its capabilities to defend its homeland, it will also use nuclear weapons for the same objective.

4.5.1.1. Iran's Deterrent

Stability-instability paradox argues that nuclear weapons bring stability and equality to international system by neutralizing the conventional imbalances, and ensuring mutually assured destruction. Hence, a nuclear-armed Iran will deter a possible aggression by the United States or Israel on its territory which means that a major war both in the international level and regional level will be prevented. Therefore, Iran's acquiescence of the bomb prevent a major war between Iran and the US or Israel. Iran as a nuclear power will also deter its adversaries in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia from engaging into a direct military confrontation with Iran. Thus, the paradox suggests that if Iran obtains nuclear weapons, there will be no major war in the Middle East involving Iran. As the previous part argued, Iran's essential goal has been to avoid an occupation, so that it would not appeal the bomb for territorial aggressions in an offensive manner. Understanding the context where the suspected weaponization of Iran's nuclear program was started is closely related with the developments following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the Middle East.

The 9/11 attacks by Al-Qaeda against the United States have brought out significant consequences for Iran's nuclear program, Iran-American bilateral relations, and the regional politics in the Middle East. As Ray Takeyh argued the period after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 to American invasion of Iraq in 2003 expresses one of the most important moments for the US-Iran relations. "A combination of fear, hope, and necessity would drive the two antagonists into an uneasy and tentative relationship that was bound to be shattered in the midst of recrimination and mutual accusations

of bad faith."[323] Aftermath of the terrorist strikes, in his union of address, Bush designated Iran a member of the axis of evil along with North Korea and Iraq. He argues that "Iran aggressively pursues these weapons (missiles and weapons of mass destruction) and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom."[324] Bush further claims that states like Iran, North Korea, and Iraq searching ways to obtain nuclear weapons and they could transfer nuclear weapons to terrorist groups in order to attack or blackmail against the US or its allies.[325] Similarly, in the National Security Strategy Document in September 2002, the Bush Administration urged that the US will not wait its adversaries to attack, but rather, will act "preemptively if necessary."[326] Bush Administration's invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, his axis of evil speech, the National Security Strategy Document, and the rapid toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003 significantly increased Iran's threat perception from the US where Iran feared that a possible US attack was imminent.

After the 9/11, the then Iranian President Khatami had demonstrated his sympathy and offered his condolences to the US and the American people. However, the Iranian conservatives either remained silent or embraced a discourse that 9/11 was a White House plot in order to justify American intervention into the Middle East.[327] Khatami had reformist objectives, which mainly consists of diminishing Iran's

[323] Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 206.

[324] "Text of President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address," *The Washington Post*, January 29, 2002, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm (accessed: February 11, 2019).

[325] Ibid.

[326] "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," 15.

[327] Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 206-207.

isolation from the regional affairs and international scene. He particularly attempted to normalize Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia, and to repair bilateral relations with the US.[328] The geopolitical rivalries and threat of religious extremism in Afghanistan had created crucial shared interests between the US and Iran for decades. However, the Bush Administration's harsh rhetoric and its embrace of preemptive actions prevented the normalization of the relations. The following developments weakened the influence of Khatami and the empowered the hands of Iranian conservatives.

On the other hand, the US War on the Terror campaign removed Saddam Hussein from Iraq and Taliban from Afghanistan which were, in fact, two major adversaries of Iran. Thereby, initially, the war on terror significantly increased Tehran's security, leaving it free from a major threat at its neighboring states. However, the strong American involvement in the regional politics and its rapid spread of military presence with various bases jeopardized Iran's feeling of insecurity to an important extent. The US held Iran responsible for the growing turmoil and spread of violence in Afghanistan and Iraq where Iran was also blamed by internal fractions in Lebanon. [329] During this process, the US State Department officially designated IRGC as proliferator of WMD and its Quds Force as sponsor of terrorism in the region.

Iran's increasing influence after 9/11 has some underlying reasons. The Bush Administration contemplated that changing regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq would remove the terrorist safe havens, eliminate state sponsors of terrorism, and facilitate a transition to liberal democratic government model. Thereby, the war on terror was beyond the military response to the terrorist strikes of Al-Qaeda and perceived by the Bush Administration as a strategic asset in order to redesign the American adversaries. However, the process after 2003 has demonstrated that the costs well exceeded the benefits where the Afghanistan and Iraq became serious liabilities for the US. The invasion of Iraq has brought challenging consequences, in contrast with the expectations that after an easy military victory against Saddam Hussein, building

[328] Ehteshami, *Iran: Stuck in Transition*.

[329] Nasr and Takeyh, "The Costs of Containing Iran," 85.

a stable successor regime would not be an easy task. The US embroiled into a civil war where several insurgent and extremist forces moving against it which ultimately brought out significant humanitarian and financial costs.

The protracted conflict for years in Iraq decayed American prestige and shrank its endurance to maintain its campaign in Iraq. On the other hand, Iranian influence was gradually rising, for some crucial reasons. Firstly, it was paradoxical that the American invasions after the 9/11 removed Iran's two adversaries from power, namely the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Before the American military interventions, Iran was encircled by a Sunni axis with extremist elements formed by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Taliban. It was also Saudi policy to fund Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons, in line with its grand policy to contain Iran.[330] Thanks to American military interventions, Iran's security is enhanced and its main adversaries in the region are eliminated. Particularly, Iran's major adversary Saddam Hussein's ousting from power eliminated a significant military counterweight for Iran.

Secondly, the US' inability to form a coherent Iraqi state caused power vacuum in the country which was filled by violent non-state actors and terrorist movements. The rapidly deteriorating security in Iraq generated widespread violence throughout the country among the various non-state groups compete for power. Increasing presence of Al-Qaeda in this turmoil provided incentives for Iran to mobilize Iraqi Shia population to counter the extremist Sunni movements. Al-Qaeda's engagement into the chaos and Iran's increasing mobilization of Iraqi Shia population escalated the conflicts while transforming it into a sectarian struggle. Furthermore, American designed new Iraqi constitution institutionalized sectarianism in Iraq's domestic scene by establishing quotas for Shia, Sunnis, and Kurds. Rather than solidarity to

[330] Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 222.

Iraqi state and Iraqi nation, emerging political structure favored sectarian solidarities under the government of Shia politician Nouri al-Maliki.[331]

Beginning in Iraq, the rift between Iran on the one hand and the US, Israel and the Gulf states on the other, has gradually increased till contemporary Middle Eastern politics. Iranian political elite and the national security establishment have already been seeing the US as a major enemy and its principal challenger in the Middle East since the declaration of the Islamic Republic in 1979. As Anoushiravan Ehteshami stated "Iran holds an almost paranoid and conspiratorial view of the United States' role and actions in the Middle East and sees almost every US initiative as a direct or indirect assault on Iran's regional interests."[332] Jahangir Amugezar argues that 'the enmity towards the United States has been the cornerstone of the Islamic regime's identity, legitimacy and staying power from day one.'[333] Kayhan Barzegar similarly contends that regional policy designs among Iran and the United states have reached to an extent of contrast that 'today, actions that Washington considers to be security-enhancing are regarded by Tehran as bringing insecurity to the region.'[334]

As the stability-instability paradox argues if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia will lose the effectiveness of its far greater conventional forces because nuclear weapons remove conventional inferiority by providing their possessors the 'absolute weapon'[335] which produces equality among nuclear states

[331] Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Arab Uprisings and the MENA Regional States System," *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 11 (42) (Summer 2014), 22.

[332] Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Tehran's Tocsin," in Alexander T. J. Lennon (ed.), *Contemporary Nuclear Debates: Missile Defense, Arms Control, and Arms Races in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 152.

[333] Jahangir Amuzegar, "The Islamic Republic of Iran: Facts and Fiction," *Middle East Policy*, 19 (1) (Spring 2012), 31.

[334] Kayhan Barzegar, "Balance of Power in the Persian Gulf: An Iranian View," *Middle East Policy*, 17 (3) (Fall 2010): 75.

[335] Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon.*

and superiority against the non-nuclear states.[336] A nuclear-armed Iran will obtain more equality in its relations with the US and Israel which has also nuclear arsenal. Only small amount of nuclear weapons will provide a deterrent for Iran against the US or Israel because they cannot know whether Iran would have second strike capability if it launches a preventive strike on it. Given the high risk of an American/Israeli attack on Iran, nuclear weapons will prevent such an act, as the stability-instability paradox envisions.

If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it will also deter its regional rivals, foremost Israel and Saudi Arabia. The tensions have its roots aftermath of the declaration of the Islamic Republic in 1979 and it reached its peak when America invaded Iraq. Iran's rising power and its expanding influence strained its relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia where many proxy wars were experienced from Lebanon and Syria to Yemen. However, nuclear weapons will prevent the possibility that the current clashes between these actors from escalating to a major conventional war.

As stability-instability paradox argues, if Iran obtains nuclear weapons it will provide strategic stability in the Middle East meaning that the current fierce security competition involving Iran, the US, Israel, and Gulf states will not be transformed into a major war or a nuclear escalation. As it is argued in the previous part, Iran will only appeal its nuclear arsenal for defensive purposes, and its adversaries will avoid a large military confrontation with Iran which would unavoidably carry the risk of escalating to a nuclear level with catastrophic consequences for all sides. For instance, the United States thought to engage directly with military means to Cuba during the missile crisis however it was deterred by the mutually assured destruction where the Soviets could launch the US soil with nuclear weapons. Recently, the US has hesitated to use military strike against the North Korea's nuclear weapon

[336] Kroenig, "Beyond Optimism and Pessimism: The Differential Effects of Nuclear Proliferation," 1-37; Kroenig, "Force or Friendship? Explaining Great Power Nonproliferation Policy," 1-32; Kroenig, "Exporting the Bomb," 113-133.

program but it was deterred by this country's nuclear weapons.[337] Similarly, during the Cold War, the tense bilateral relationship between China and the Soviet Union despite the existence of territorial disputes did not lead to a major war. Both nations were aware of the fact that a major war could be a total annihilation of both nations because of the survivable nuclear forces at their hands.[338] Hence, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it will prevent a major conventional conflict in the Middle East.

4.5.2. Sub-Strategic Instability

The stability-instability paradox contends that nuclear weapons produce incentives that cause sub-strategic instability. The term sub-strategic instability reflects that nuclear weapons stimulate states to engage into low level conflicts, provocative behaviors, or blackmail attempts. These acts do not escalate major conflicts or nuclear war, but rather, they remain as lower level conflicts or skirmishes. The paradox argues that nuclear-armed countries raise uncertainty in the international system by exploiting the nuclear fear in order to coerce their adversaries.[339] A nuclear-armed Iran may flex its muscles in regional conflicts and may adopt more aggressive posture to test the resolve of the US, Israel, and Gulf countries. Iran might feel less restrained and become more aggressive in backing the minority Shia groups in a region-wide scale against Saudi Arabia, in supporting Hezbollah and Hamas against Israeli national security, and in general incentivizing Shia mobilization.

Sub-strategic instability also emerges from the credibility problem. States contemplate that no country dare to use nuclear weapons until their survival would be in danger, hence states get incentives for limited adventurism to pursue their

[337] Fred Kaplan, "The Unspeakable Truth: What Bush Dares Not Say about North Korea," *Slate*, January 7, 2003, Available at http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2003/01/the_unspeakable_truth.html (accessed: March 25, 2018).

[338] Rajesh M. Basrur, Michael D. Cohen, and Ward Wilson, "Correspondence: Do Small Arsenals Deter?" *International Security*, 32 (3) (Winter 2007/2008): 202-214.

[339] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 99-100, 111; Watterson, "Competing Interpretations of the Stability-Instability Paradox," 87-88, 98-99.

national interests.[340] Accordingly, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it would work toward a strategic stability while in the meantime also working against the sub-strategic stability by providing flexibility to Iran, triggering it to engage into low-level conflicts in the Middle East. Since Iran's decision making process is not a transparent one, Iran's regional behavior already includes a great degree of uncertainty. If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it will likely to increase the current uncertainty in order to make its nuclear arsenal more credible in the eyes of its adversaries.

4.5.2.1. Increased Frequency of Limited Military Conflicts

According to the paradox, Iran's achievement of a nuclear status will encourage it to take bolder steps in regional disputes. Iran, as a rational actor will be aware of the strategic stability supplied by its nuclear umbrella, will ensure that there will be no major war or a nuclear escalation. This perception has been the fundamental reason that incentivizes states to initiate lower level conflicts in order to enhance their interests since the start of the Cold War. Particularly, nuclear-armed states which dissatisfied with the status-quo, deliberately escalate tensions to a certain level where they bargain in a perceived stronger position. Nuclear weapons promote the security and power of their possessors which in turn expands their interest and influence areas where they want to project more power. The research demonstrates that once a state obtains nuclear weapons, it pursues its main objectives more assertively and coerces its adversaries to concede their initial demands.[341] This change in state behavior raises the risk of militarized low-level conflicts, even though it does not escalate to a major war or nuclear exchange as in the cases of the US-USSR and the Pakistan-India rivalries.[342] Hence, as the paradox asserts, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons,

[340] Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror;" Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy*; Hart, *Deterrent or Defense*.

[341] Kroenig, "Beyond Optimism and Pessimism," 1-37; Kroenig, "Force or Friendship?" 1-32; Gartzke and Kroenig, "A Strategic Approach to Nuclear Proliferation," 151-160; Beardsley and Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," 278-301; Gartze and Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," 633-652.

[342] See, Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); Krepon, "The Stability-Instability Paradox;" Kapur, "India and

the likelihood of crisis initiation in the Middle East will increase because nuclear weapons will expand Iran's desired interests and embolden its stance to achieve those objectives.[343]

A nuclear armed-Iran will likely to act more aggressively in regional issues, being aware of its newly achieved nuclear umbrella which in turn will increase the chance of small conflicts. This does not mean that Iran could use nuclear weapons for offensive purposes, but rather the existence of nuclear weapons at its arsenal would make Iran more assertive, forcing its adversaries to give up their demands. Therefore, stability-instability paradox contrasts with the optimists' idea that nuclear weapons would bring peace to the Middle East. Adversely, a nuclear-armed Iran will further strain the already fraught regional politics. Nuclear weapons will restrain Iranian behavior in order to avoid a major war or nuclear escalation, but not for low level, sub-strategic conflicts. For elaborating the likely destabilizing consequences of a nuclear-armed Iran, examining the regional politics particularly after the Arab uprisings is important.

The mass popular demonstrations and the social upheavals have engendered significant implications for Middle East security landscape. The uprisings began in late 2010 in Tunisia and spread through Middle East and North Africa further deepened the fault lines in the Middle East by dismantling already fragile state structures and creating power vacuums.[344] The decades-old rules of authoritarian governments from Tunisia, and Libya to Egypt, and Bahrain had shaken by mass

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Pakistan's Unstable Peace;" and Kapur, "Ten Years of Instability in a Nuclear South Asia,"71 -94; Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*.

[343] Kroenig, "Beyond Optimism and Pessimism," 1-37; Kroenig, "Force or Friendship?" 1-32; Gartzke and Kroenig, "A Strategic Approach to Nuclear Proliferation," 151-160; Beardsley and Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," 278-301; Gartze and Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," 633-652.

[344] Gawdat Bahgat, Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Neil Quilliam (eds.), *Security and Bilateral Issues Between Iran and Its Arab Neighbours*," (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

demonstrations. While the governments in Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and Egypt were toppled, other countries managed to control events and maintain their power. Even though peaceful transition processes occurred in some countries, and events got controlled by others, the uprisings have weakened state structures in the region due to growing sectarian agendas, remnants of the old regimes, and the emergence of extremist movements.[345]

With their resource wealth economy and smaller populations, Gulf monarchies remained resolute and stable because of their double-track strategy. Leading by Saudi Arabia, Gulf states like Bahrain, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar demonstrated flexibility in their governance where they provided financial incentives to population for their obedience to state in line with their rentier bargaining model.[346] On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain also adopted a tough stance and harshly cracked down the protestors. The uprisings in the region, the emergence of the power vacuum, persistent domestic turmoil and Iran's interventions to the events by supporting opposition forces triggered the tensions between the Gulf countries and Iran.

The increasing security competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia diffused towards the weak Arab states in the absence of central authority and increased the animosities. The withdrawal of American forces from Iraq in 2011 only facilitated the clash of contrasting interests between regional adversaries and aggravated the sectarian dynamic that has been at play for a while in regional politics. Saudi Arabia along with GCC sent troops to Bahrain in order to crush the demonstrators that consist of Bahrain's large Shia population. Bahrain's own government also rapidly cracked down the people's protests with severe measures. Saudi Arabia also supported the anti-regime forces in Syria in order to topple Bashar al-Assad regime from power, one of the Iran's closest allies, a member of the so called "axis of

[345] Hinnebusch, "The Arab Uprisings and the MENA Regional States System," 10.

[346] Mehran Kamrava (ed.) *Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

resistance." On the other hand Iran endorsed protestors throughout the Arab world, except Syria. The conventional wisdom in Iran was that the protests would collapse corrupt governments and led to the establishments of Islamic regimes which could share with the same principles with Iran in regional affairs.

The so-called "Arab Spring" was perceived by Iran an opportunity initially where it could enhance its interests beyond its borders, particularly with advancing the Shia cause and restraining Israeli freedom of action. On the other hand, for Ahmadinejad, the conflict in Syria was a plot engineered by the West and Israel against the "axis of resistance."[347] Iran and Hezbollah's steadfast support to Syria is reflecting strong Iranian aspirations to maintain the "axis of resistance" which was adopted by Iran against the growing alliance between the US, Israel, and America's Sunni Arab partners. The protracted conflict because of the strong military and financial supplies of Iran and Saudi Arabia to their proxies in Syria, particularly, exacerbated the hostilities between these countries.[348]

Iran's substantial support to Assad regime and Hezbollah's heavily involvement in the civil war in Syria, Iranian backing of anti-Saudi Arabia Houthi rebellion, its endorsement of Shia cause in Bahrain, and its general stance that promote social upheavals in the Arab world significantly deteriorated Iran's relations with Gulf states. The contrasting position between Iran and Hamas in the uprising in Syria also estranged Hamas from Iran.[349] Iranian soft power and Hezbollah's prestigious stand in the Arab street were also lost their power after their persistent backing of the Assad regime.[350] After years of unresolved fight, Syria has become a key

[347] Awadh Al-Badi, "Saudi-Iranian Relations: A Troubled Trajectory," in Gawdat Bahgat, Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Neil Quilliam (eds.), *Security and Bilateral Issues Between Iran and Its Arab Neighbours*," (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 200.

[348] Emile Hokayem, "Iran, the Gulf States, and the Syrian Civil War," *Survival*, 56 (6) (2014): 59-86.

[349] Ehteshami, "Middle East Middle Powers: Regional Role, International Impact," 41.

[350] Hinnebusch, "The Arab Uprisings and the MENA Regional States System," 14.

battleground for the fierce security competition in the region where Shia militias from different backgrounds has been fighting with Sunni non-state actors significantly paid by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

The civil war in Yemen which erupted in late 2014 by the failure of a political transition process in the post-Arab spring further complicated the issue.[351] The Saudi-led coalition's military campaign and blockade in Yemen in order to support Mansour Hadi government against Shia Houthi rebels further aggravated the sectarian tensions while bringing out a humanitarian disaster.[352] Mostly Sunni countries formed the coalition has believed that the Houthi forces have been backed by Iran where the latter desires to expand its influence. Saudi Arabia's leading role in the formation of the joint military coalition reflected that a growing alliance was emerging against Iran in the post-Arab Spring Middle East and that the threat perception from Iran has been shaped in a broader Arab context.[353] For Saudi Arabia, Houthis' operations in Yemen were a part of the Iranian policy which designed for encircling the country.[354] The deteriorating situation in Yemen reached its peak when al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State exploited the opportunity by seizing territories in parts of the country. The armed conflict between the Houthi forces and Mansour Hadi government in Yemen transformed into an extended battleground of the sectarian power competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia plus the UAE.

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[351] Alia Chungtai and Faisal Edroos, "Yemen conflict: Who controls what," *Al Jazeera*, January 16, 2019, available at https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2016/08/yemen-conflict-controls-160814132104300.html (accessed: February 21, 2019).

[352] "Yemen crisis: Why is there a war?" BBC, December 18, 2018, available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423 (accessed: February 21, 2019).

[353] Shireen Hunter, "Iran's Policy towards the Persian Gulf: Dynamics of Continuity and Change," in Gawdat Bahgat, Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Neil Quilliam (eds.), *Security and Bilateral Issues Between Iran and Its Arab Neighbours*," (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 13, 22.

[354] Awadh Al-Badi, "Saudi-Iranian Relations," 201.

Saudi Arabia's execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr in January 2016 further strained relations with Iran because the cleric has an importance and a symbolic value for Shia populations of the Gulf where he consistently criticized Saudi government and supported the popular protests. After the execution, some groups in Iran stormed and set fire the Saudi Embassy in Tehran.[355] The event has led to significant consequences for Iran's relations with the Gulf states where tensions rapidly escalated to a new high. Saudi Arabia has cut its diplomatic ties with Iran, evacuated its diplomatic mission in Tehran and urged Iranian diplomats to leave the country in 48 hours.[356] Furthermore, the Gulf states followed Saudi Arabia in downgrading their diplomatic relations with Iran. Bahrain and Sudan severed their diplomatic relations with Iran, urging Iranian diplomats to leave their countries. Similarly, the UAE also downgraded its relations with Iran, replacing its ambassador with a chargé d'affaires, and Kuwait and Qatar also recalled their ambassadors to Tehran.[357]

The sectarian rift between Shia and Sunnis has increasingly grown over the course of the varying crises in the Middle East from Syria to Yemen, and Lebanon to Bahrain. The sectarian component in armed conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen has escalated tensions and fueled proxy wars throughout the region between Iran and its main

[355] Ben Hubbard, "Iranian Protestors Ransack Saudi Embassy After Execution of Shiite Cleric," *The New York Times*, January 2 , 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/03/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-executes-47-sheikh-nimr-shiite-cleric.html (accessed: February 24, 2019).

[356] Martin Chukov, "Saudi Arabia cuts diplomatic ties with Iran after execution of cleric," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2016, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/03/saudi-arabia-cuts-diplomatic-ties-with-iran-after-nimr-execution (accessed: February 24, 2019).

[357] Declan Walsh, "Gulf States Guarding Their Interests in Saudi-Iran Rift," *The New York Times*, January 5, 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/06/world/middleeast/kuwait-iran-feud-saudi-arabia.html (accessed: February 24, 2019); Ian Black and Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Bahrain, Sudan and UAE follow Saudis in diplomatic action against Iran," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2016, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/04/bahrain-cuts-diplomatic-ties-with-iran-in-row-over-saudi-execution-of-shia-cleric (accessed: February 24, 2019); Tom Finn, "Qatar recalls envoy to Iran after attacks on Saudi missions: State News," *Reuters*, January 6, 2016, available at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-iran-qatar-idUSKBN0UK23Z20160106 (accessed: February 24, 2019).

adversary Saudi Arabia.[358] Particularly, the protracted conflict in Syria, Saudi-led coalition's military intervention into Yemen, and Iranian support to Houthi Rebels against the Yemeni Government have aggravated the relations and expanded the geopolitical competition.

Iran and Saudi Arabia blame each other for the instability and conflicts in the region. The opinion pieces written by Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and his Saudi counterpart Adel Bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir have full of mutual accusations. For Iran, Saudi Arabia has an "Iranophobia" and it keenly strives for undermining the nuclear deal, and confronting Iran in regional issues by triggering instability in Yemen by a military campaign, putting a persistent pressure on the West against Iran, and adopting a provocative behavior against Iran. Zarif argues that Saudi Arabia's strong support for religious extremism and its widespread sponsorship of terrorism throughout the region has been the main problem that prevents peace and stability in the Middle East.[359] On the other hand, Saudi Arabia claimed that Iran is still a revolutionary state and it is strongly supporting its proxy forces throughout the region to change regimes in line with its own interests. Al-Zubeir argues that in order to create a peace in the Middle East, Iran should renounce its sectarian and expansionist policies as well as its support for terrorism.[360]

Despite their avoidance of a direct confrontation, Iran and Saudi Arabia have entered a fierce security competition, encompassing several countries where both states supported their proxy forces, paramilitary groups, foreign fighters, and incumbent governments. Although, the Rouhani administration put great effort to resolve the

[358] Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (eds.) *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[359] Mohammad Javad Zarif, "Mohammad Javad Zarif: Saudi Arabia's Reckless Extremism," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/11/opinion/mohammad-javad-zarif-saudi-arabias-reckless-extremism.html?_r=0 (accessed: February 21, 2019).

[360] Adel Bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir, "Can Iran Change?" *The New York Times*, January 19, 2016, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/19/opinion/saudi-arabia-can-iran-change.html (accessed: February 21, 2019).

nuclear dispute in order to repair the relations with the US and the European countries, they did not show eagerness to improve increasingly bitter relations with the Gulf countries. However, this is not the outcome stemmed from solely Iranian foreign policy choices, but Saudi Arabia has also avoided any steps that pave the way for rapprochement with Iran. The logic in Saudi foreign and security policy is that unless Iranian influence in Iraq, Syria, and other countries with Shia minorities cease to exist, putting the relations with Iran on the right track is not possible.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia, in line with Israel has thought that nuclear deal with Iran further jeopardized their security, lifting the economic sanctions on Iran where the country could fed its regional military activities more aggressively. This security landscape is explained by some scholars that the Middle East is experiencing a Cold War as was the case with the US and the USSR during the 20th century.[361] A nuclear-armed Iran will only intensify this Cold War dynamic, making it more fragile and more conflict prone.

The tensions composed of fierce regional power struggle, and aggravated sectarian cleavages could be transformed into militarized disputes if Iran obtains nuclear weapons. Iran's nuclearization will likely to exacarbate the security dilemma in the Middle East with risk of militarized disputes. Emerging nuclear countries would become more prone to aggressive behavior that fuels regional instabilities or aggravates the existing ones. For instance, it was argued that Pakistan's obtain of nuclear weapons facilitated this country's more assertive attitude, including the appeal to use of force towards India over the disputed issues.[362] The so called Arab Spring and particularly the ongoing civil war in Syria have embittered Iran's relations with some regional countries such as Saudi Arabia which has been

[361] F. Gregory Gause III, "Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War," *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper,* No. 11, July 2014; Peter Salisbury, "Yemen and the Saudi–Iranian 'Cold War," *Chatham House Research Paper*, February 2015.

[362] See, Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace;" and Kapur, "Ten Years of Instability in a Nuclear South Asia," *International Security*, 33 (2) (Fall 2008): 71 -94.

competing against Iran in numerous conflicts throughout the region. It is believed both in Arab countries and Israel that a nuclear armed Iran would likely to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy and would boost its support to armed movements such as Hezbollah and Hamas or allied proxy actors in countries like Yemen, Bahrain, or Iraq.[363]

It is more likely for new nuclear states to exploit the nuclear fear of its adversaries.[364] Arab states fear that Iran would more aggressively play the Shia minority card if it would join the atomic club.[365] Iran's increasingly embittered relations with several Arab countries, make the perceived Iranian threat for Arab countries even higher than that of Israel. It is argued that the Saudi state indicate a nuclear Iran would be an actor that would be worse than living with Israel.[366] Some Arab states consistently urged that they will not remain silent on Iran's nuclearization and that they will also start their own nuclear weapons program in order to counter the emerging threat.[367]

Beside Saudi Arabia, nuclearization of Iran will also be a vital national security concern for Israel because it neutralizes Israel's nuclear monopoly in the region and it will perceived by Israel as an existential threat.[368] Ensuring Israel's security has

[363] Ellis and Futter, "Iranian Nuclear Aspirations," 84-85.

[364] Horowitz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict," 234-57.

[365] Dalia Dassa Kaye and Eric Lorber, "Containing Iran: What Does It Mean?," *Middle East Policy*, 19 (1) (Spring 2012), 58.

[366] Ellis and Futter, "Iranian Nuclear Aspirations," 80-93.

[367] For instance, Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia stated in March 2018 that "Saudi Arabia does not want to acquire any nuclear bomb, but without a doubt, if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible." See, Patrick Wintour, "Saudi Crown Prince Warns It Will Build Nuclear Bomb if Tehran Does the Same," *The Guardian*, March 15, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/15/saudi-arabia-iran-nuclear-bomb-threat-mohammed-bin-salman (Accessed: November 20, 2018).

[368] Ehteshami, "Middle East Middle Powers: Regional Role, International Impact," 45.

been on the major concerns of the US regarding its behavior throughout the Iranian nuclear crisis. Iran's political elite came to the conclusion that American arguments on alleged dangers of nuclear terrorism and Iran's possible transfer of nuclear material to violent non-state groups were pretext in order to disguise the real aim which is maintaining Israel's nuclear monopoly.[369]

Iran-Israel relations in fact were friendly during the Shah Era and it continued even after the Islamic Revolution where Israeli leaders emphasized Iran's geopolitical importance for Israel. They argued several times that Iran was Israel's natural ally in the Middle East, in line with the Israeli strategy of forming periphery alliances with non-Arab states as was also the case with Turkey. Israel even provided intelligence to Iran to bomb Saddam Hussein's nuclear facilities and pressured the US to enhance its relations and sell weapons to Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. The Israeli decision-making calculus was that the effects of Islamic Revolution and Khomeini's radical discourse were temporary, and it might be good for Israel to keep Iran as an ally state with the help of Iranian moderates.[370]

The cease of Soviet support to Arab countries after the dissolution of the USSR and Iran's growing influence in the meantime changed the security landscape and perceptions in the Middle East both for Iran and Israel. While Iranian political elite concluded that strengthening its relations with its Arab neighbors would serve better for its national security interests, Israeli leaders understood that Iran's antagonistic revolutionary objectives were not temporary. Furthermore, increasing Iranian power after the Cold War its hostile rhetoric also led Israel to be estranged from Iran and to start closer relations with Arab states. As Ephraim Sneh, then the member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs & Defense Committee argued "there is the old periphery and the new periphery. The old periphery was aimed to outflank the Arab enemies of

[369] Kayhan Barzegar, "Nuclear Terrorism: An Iranian Perspective," *Middle East Policy*, 21 (1) (Spring 2014), 35.

[370] Trita Parsi, "Israel-Iranian Relations Assessed: Strategic Competition From the Power Cycle Perspective," *Iranian Studies*, 38 (2) (2005), 254-256.

Israel. That was the case of Iran at that time. Now we should have a new periphery to outflank Iran."[371] Beginning with these changes in the security landscape and threat perceptions, Israel-Iran relations further strained until contemporary politics. Nuclearization of Iran is perceived as an existential threat by Israel and Israel's existence in the Middle East is not recognized as legitimate by Iran.

Iran's threat perception from Israel has been a fact which particularly aggravated after Israel's consistent threats to attack Iranian nuclear facilities. For instance, Iran's influential external military operator, General Qassem Suleimani feared that Israel would launch a preventive strike against Iran, or exploited its conflict with Hezbollah as a pretense to launch an offensive against Iran.[372] Furthermore, Iran, has perceived Israel's nuclear weapons as the ultimate tool to maintain its occupation in Palestine and other disputed territories captured by Israel in wars after 1948.[373] Besides, for Iranians, Israel's nuclear weapons have been the foremost factor that induces instability and insecurity in the wider Middle East. Moreover, it demonstrates the weakness Iran to Israel in terms of military capability, and scientific and technological achievements.[374]

During 2009-2010, Israel with the help of the US, increased its cyber warfare against Iran's nuclear program where the Stuxnet virus targeted Iran's IR-1 centrifuges in the enrichment facility at Natanz. The cyber-attack was unprecedented and it caused significant delays in Iran's achievement in uranium enrichment.[375] Alongside with

[371] Cited in Trita Parsi, "Israel-Iranian Relations Assessed: Strategic Competition From the Power Cycle Perspective," *Iranian Studies*, 38 (2) (2005), 260.

[372] Ibid, 235.

[373] Gawdat Bahgat, "A Mideast Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone. Pie in the Sky," *Middle East Policy*, 22 (3) (Fall 2015): 35.

[374] Ibid., 33

[375] Kumuda Simpson, *U.S. Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran: From the War on Terror to the Obama Administration*, (New York: NY, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 101.

the cyber-warfare, Israel has also launched an assassination campaign in order to halt Iran's progress on its nuclear program. Iranian nuclear scientists such as Mostafa Ahmadi Rohsan and other high-profile scientists were murdered between 2010 and 2012. Although it never accepted, Israel was the main suspect behind these assassinations.[376]

Israel opposed any measure or agreement that may carry the possibility of enhancing Iranian power. In September 2012, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in his address to UN General Assembly urged about the level of uranium enrichment Iran achieved and rebuked the US that if it does not take action, Israel will deal with Iran with its own means.[377] When the P5+1 countries signed with Iran the JCPOA in July 2015, and the interim nuclear agreement previously in November 2013, Israel vociferously demonstrated its rejections. In Israeli security perception, the lift of the sanctions on Iran would free that country to further its support to groups like Hezbollah and Hamas. Relieved from economic difficulties, Iran would more aggressively deal with Israel and would create more troubles for its security. What is more important for Israel is the danger of the recognition of Iran's nuclear program by international community.[378] Should this be the case, Israel's nuclear monopoly will disappear while Iran will also promote its prestige and power in the region.

During the war in Syria, Israel adopted a containment strategy against Iranian aspired groups where its essential motivations has been to restrain increasing Iranian influence and to prevent the seizure of sophisticated weapon systems into the hands

[376] Mehdi Hasan, "Iran's nuclear scientists are not being assassinated. They are being murdered," *The Guardian*, January 16, 2012, available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/16/iran-scientists-state-sponsored-murder (accessed: April 28, 2019); Kumuda Simpson, *U.S. Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran: From the War on Terror to the Obama Administration*, (New York: NY, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 102.

[377] Simpson, *U.S. Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran,* 111.

[378] Thomas Juneau, "Iran Under Rouhani: Still Alone in the World," *Middle East Policy*, 21 (4) (Winter 2014), 103.

of Hezbollah, among other anti-Israeli armed movements.[379] Hence the Syrian civil war has also been a battleground between Iran and Israel where the former desired to keep its ally at power and the latter aimed to keep Iranian backed groups in check. Keeping Assad regime at power is also important for Iran in order to encircle Israel. By maintaining close government in the country and providing Hezbollah operation space, Iran enhances its power projection capability into the Levant region, particularly towards Lebanon and Palestinian territories, hence increasing its deterrent power against Israel.[380]

In Iran's security orientation, Israel has been the "lesser Satan," the foremost ally of the "great Satan" United States. As Sohrabi argues "a key tenet of Iran's foreign policy is its refusal to recognize the state of Israel."[381] Thus, Iran's antagonism to Israel not just related with the security concerns but also with contrasting identities. The combination of the antagonistic identities and security interests made Iran a "rejectionist" state in the Middle East, impeding the normalization of its relations with the US and Israel.[382] Hence, one of the defining interests of Iranian state is to oppose American dominated Middle East where Israel, and Saudi Arabia are also playing influential roles. This has been one of the crucial facts that designated Iranian defense and foreign policy where Iran championed the Palestinian cause and anti-Americanism against Israel and it also supported anti-Saudi armed or non-armed opposition groups throughout the region.

Although Iran has never recognized Israel as a legitimate state in the Middle East and strongly emphasized a rhetoric that calls the destruction of the Jewish State, it acted

[379] Ehteshami, "Middle East Middle Powers: Regional Role, International Impact," 46.

[380] Hokayem, "Iran, the Gulf States, and the Syrian Civil War," 71; Juneau, "Iran Under Rouhani," 98.

[381] Hadi Sohrabi, "Clerics and Generals: Assessing the Stability of the Iranian Regime," *Middle East Policy*, 25 (3) (Autumn 2018), 42.

[382] Juneau, "Iran Under Rouhani," 95.

with prudence against Israel until today. Despite the high tensions and problematic areas such as Palestine, Iran's ballistic missile inventory, and Israel's role in American influence in the region, both countries exhibited restraint in their policies and deliberately avoided a direct military confrontation. Iran and Israel basically have not contrasted vital interests at stake but rather they desire to expand their influence and project more power by exploiting the harsh discourse. As Ray Takeyh argued for Iran "Israel may be an ideological affront and a civilizational challenge, but it is not an existential threat mandating provision of nuclear weapons."[383] On the other hand, the developments in the Gulf have significant importance for Iran because of its geostrategic location which provides access to the international market for petroleum trade.[384]

If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, its relations with Israel will also be significantly influenced. As the stability-instability paradox suggests, Iran's nuclearization will bring balance and equality to Iranian-Israeli relations where Israel's exceptional nuclear power status will be eliminated. Being aware of Iran's newly obtained nuclear deterrent, Israel will avoid a direct military confrontation with Iran. Hence strategic stability will be ensured within the system because of the prevention of a major conventional war or a nuclear exchange.

On the other hand, a nuclear-armed Iran will likely to deal more aggressively with Israel. Iran might increase its support to violent non-state actors, provide them with more military materials, including missiles in order to produce further costs for Israel in the Middle East. Iran's acquiescence of the bomb might empower Hezbollah or Islamic Jihad in their military campaigns against Israel where these actors would perceive that Iran's nuclear deterrent will protect them. A nuclear-armed Iran would also likely to trigger more instabilities with Israel where two countries might engage into proxy wars in weak states throughout region in order to enhance their standing and to increase their diplomatic leverage. As two nuclear-armed states, Iran and

[383] Ray Takeyh, "Iran Builds the Bomb," *Survival*, 46 (4) (2004), 53.

[384] Takeyh, "Iran Builds the Bomb," 53.

Israel may exploit the power vacuums in the Middle East which in turn would likely to aggravate existing security dilemma between the two states. Alarmed with Iran's nuclearization, Israel may follow more aggressive unilateral policies without the consent of the US which also would be a factor for the occurrence of more crises in the region. Taking all these factors, Iran's obtain of the bomb will increase the chance of lower level militarized disputes between Iran and Israel.

4.5.2.2. Increased Frequency of Non-Military Crises

As the stability-instability paradox maintains if Iran acquires nuclear weapons it would likely to embolden its foreign and security policies in the Middle East. It is widely argued that Iranian state of conduct after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and particularly aftermath of the so called Arab Spring, has already been showing aggressive posture. The second sources of sub-strategic stability in the Middle East will be the increased likelihood of diplomatic crises cause both by Iran's emboldened stance in the region.

Nuclear-armed states have more advantages than non-nuclear states in diplomatic disputes and the former generally reigns in the bargaining process even without fight because non-nuclear states are more likely to concede.[385] Hence, given the extremely tense regional geopolitics a nuclear-armed Iran could opt to integrate nuclear weapons into its conventional war-fighting capabilities in order to better enhance its position on diplomatic table, regarding the disputes in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. Iran could follow brinkmanship policy by raising the risk of a nuclear escalation in order to coerce Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, forcing them to cease their support to opposition forces in Syria, to stop the military campaign in Yemen, and to give up spreading Wahhabism to Iraq.

Iran's nuclear weapons will diminish the impact of Israel's coercive diplomacy capacity due to Iran's nuclear weapons will eliminate the Israel's current

[385] See, Beardsley and Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," 278-301; Gartze and Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," 633-652; Gartzke and Kroenig, "A Strategic Approach to Nuclear Proliferation," 152.

conventional superiority and its exceptional nuclear power status. As long as the country under question does not believe in the credibility of the threats, coercion will fail. In order for coercive diplomacy to be effective, the threats behind them must be perceived as credible by interlocutor country. [386] Nuclear weapons make conventional capabilities obsolete which in turn renders that coercion credibility supported by conventional supremacy is no longer valid. The emergence of this weakness on the side of Israel shrinks its bargaining power in diplomatic negotiations. Accordingly, the risk for Israel to backing down its initial objectives or concede Iran's demands will increase. Hence, a nuclear-armed Iran will deal with Israel on the table in an equal position and this will generate Iran incentives to trigger disputes with Israel in order to enhance its standing.

Rather than military terms, along with the expanding influence of Hezbollah, Iranian influence mainly heightened with Iran's close ties to the large Iraqi Shia population in the absence of a strong central authority in Iraq.[387] The tradition of the revolutionary Shia movement after the 1979, ushered with the increasing Shia influence in the Middle East after the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq has posed a significant challenge to the regime stability in several countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait. As Nasr puts it "the Shia ascendancy in Iraq is supported by and is in turn bolstering another important development in the Middle East: the emergence of Iran as a regional power."[388] Hence, the clash between the Shia and the Sunni constitutes an important element of the current rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia and nuclear weapons have the potential to change the power balance between the two in favor of Iran.

[386] Kroenig, "Beyond Optimism and Pessimism," 1-37; Kroenig, "Force or Friendship? Explaining Great Power Nonproliferation Policy," 1-32; Kroenig, "Exporting the Bomb," 113-133.

[387] Matteo Legrenzi and F. Gregory Gause III, "The International Politics of the Gulf," in Louise Fawcett (ed.) *International Relations of the Middle East*, 4th edn. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 306.

[388] Nasr, *The Shia Revival,* 212.

Beside the sectarian tensions, geopolitical competition seems to remain a major concern in Iran's relations with its Gulf neighbors. In several weak states, Iran has been conducting proxy wars with Saudi Arabia. Nuclear weapons enhance the diplomatic advantage of their possessors so that if Iran obtains nuclear weapons, it would likely to more aggressively deal with geopolitical problems in the region. In recent years, Iranian backed proxy forces have operating in several countries like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen against Saudi backed actors. It is also claimed that Iran frequently intervened domestic affairs of weak Arab states in order to undermine stability of the Saudi regime.

Iran's possible integration of its nuclear weapons into the bargaining process with Israel or Gulf countries would likely to complicate existing fault lines, further straining Iran's relations with these actors. Strengthened with the nuclear umbrella, Iran would become more and more defiant towards the crisis areas in the Middle East. Iran could recklessly consolidate its support to Hezbollah, Hamas, and Houthis, among others which could trigger more non-military conflicts and diplomatic crises. On the other hand, even without Iran's support, Hezbollah would perceive that it will be protected by Iranian nuclear umbrella so that it can increase its involvement in the regional crises by taking bolder steps.[389] Even though Israel or Gulf countries agree to concede to Iran because of their avoidance of the bomb, the United States would likely to intervene into the crises against Iran's heightened aggressiveness.

4.6. Conclusion

Despite the structural domestic problems ranging from popular unrest to stagnation and unemployment, Iran's intensive engagement into the various conflicts in several countries has posed a crucial dilemma after 2003. The 9/11 terrorist strikes and the ensuing US war on terror have significantly shaped Iran's regional politics and its force posture. The invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq by the US led to the collapse of the central governments which in turn triggered societal and sectarian cleavages. The decline of Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan and the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq after the US interventions had abolished Iran's two major adversaries. On the other hand, rapid involvement of the US in regional affairs raised Iran's threat

[389] Lindsay and Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb," 37.

perception and sense of containment. Israel's war in Lebanon 2006 and Iran's facilitated support to violent non-state groups further jeopardized the regional security. The so-called Arab Spring expanded Iran's regional involvement where Iran felt that it could overcome its isolation. The overthrown of authoritarian regimes and ensuing intra-state conflicts engendered region-wide power competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The rise of violent non-state actors with sectarian discourse complicated the struggle and increased the enmities between Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia which have been already in intense security competition.

A series of aforementioned significant developments beginning with the American invasion of Afghanistan shifted the center of gravity in the Middle East from the Levant to Persian Gulf. The traditional pillars of Arab security architecture against Iran are no longer exists as Iraq and Syria are significantly weakened and unable to establish full and independent authority on their territories.[390] The traditional crisis of the region, the Palestinian case was overshadowed by the increasingly embittered relations between Iran and its adversaries. The torn apart of the political order in the Middle East led by intensive social upheavals redefined the regional relations. The struggle for power in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen rendered previous problems obsolete, transforming regional politics a competition of security and influence. The militarization of the Persian Gulf diminishes the prospects for peace and stability in the short-term regional politics.

If Iran possesses nuclear weapons, stability-instability paradox will come into play because Iran might not only use nuclear weapons for defensive purposes but also for projecting more power abroad. Iran would particularly deal with Israel on more equal terms as it will eliminate the exceptional nuclear status of Israel. Iran's acquiescence of the bomb will provide strategic stability while exacerbate the current sub-strategic instability. In other words, a nuclear-armed Iran's bilateral relations with the current nuclear powers, particularly with the US and Israel will become more balanced and equal which in turn will prevent a major conventional war or invasion attempts against Iran. The unbreakable deterrent power of nuclear weapons will bring stability

[390] Nasr, "Iran Among the Ruins," 115.

among nuclear states. Similarly, Iran's newly emerged nuclear umbrella will also prevent its regional adversaries' from waging a war against Iran which would also contribute to the strategic stability.

However, as the paradox suggests, a nuclear-armed Iran will embolden its stance in the Middle East, and become more aggressive in its foreign policy which may likely to aggravate existing crises in the region and increase the likelihood of low level conflicts. By utilizing the power of the bomb, Iran will likely to enhance its regional and international standing and will gain more prestige and influence. In that scenario, Iran will likely to reign in diplomatic table and it will force its adversaries to concede more in the diplomatic table. After obtaining the bomb, Iran might test the limits of both the US and its regional rivals by following brinkmanship policy. This emboldened stance is a direct result of the awareness of nuclear powers that no country dare to invade them by envisaging a nuclear catastrophe. Iran's increasing aggressiveness on the other hand will likely to further deepen current fault lines in the Middle East, contributing Iran's regional isolation and protracting the presence of American military forces in the region. All in all, each of these factors would raise risk of more crisis, and lower level conflicts. Thereby, the trap is that while nuclear weapons bring stability at the strategic level by preventing major wars or nuclear escalations, it produces incentives to engage low level limited conflicts.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Nuclear proliferation has always been one of the major sources of concern in international security. The unprecedentedly huge impact of the nuclear weapons on the battlefield has significantly changed the international relations. Many scholars argued that the essential reason why the Cold War was kept as cold is the emergence nuclear weapons and their catastrophic impact. Even some scholars assert that nuclear weapons were not the only cause of the absence of a major war during the Cold War, they admitted that nuclear weapons played a prominent role for the United States and the Soviet Union to avoid from a direct military confrontation.

Nuclear weapons have significantly changed one of the essential concepts of the international relations, which is deterrence. Deterrence is signaling the adversary that its aggression would be punished to an extent that the costs of its actions will be well beyond its benefits. In conventional world, deterrence strategies often failed mainly because of the lack of an asymmetric punishment instrument, among others. Historically, even stronger states could not deter its weaker adversaries in many instances because of the contemplation of the weaker actors that their punishment will be limited. Hence, the international system experienced several great power wars throughout the history. In contrast, in nuclear world, the punishment is so precise and greater that pacified the inter-state relations, preventing them from waging war to each other in the awareness that aggression will be punished as a total destruction. The evidence from the Cold War and the ensuing crises between Pakistan and India suggests that nuclear weapons prevent major wars because of the mutually assured destruction. If a state use the bomb, it is certain that a retaliatory second strike will target itself of which established the fact that one does not simply use the nuclear weapon. Because of this, nuclear weapons have defensive value rather than offensive.

On the other hand, proliferation of nuclear weapons has unavoidable risks which could bring out catastrophic consequences for humanity. There are several factors that cause deterrence failures which could trigger a nuclear exchange, accidental detonations, or inadvertent use. Proliferation pessimists emphasized this aspect of the issue, arguing that the confidence in nuclear deterrence is too much and too dangerous. States could behave irrationally and irresponsible as several "rogue" states attempted to develop their own nuclear weapon development programs in the past. Nuclearization of these states has been seen as a serious problem for the stability and security of the international system. Furthermore, another concern originates from the fact that even states behave rationally, competing and parochial interests of the intra-state groups endangers the safety of nuclear arsenals, accidents, and even a nuclear war.

Thus, it seems not possible to assess the proliferation issue as better or worse because of the fact that nuclear weapons have contrasting effects. While they prevent great power war, they also inescapably carry several significant risks. This thesis argued that stability-instability paradox has potential to move the proliferation debate beyond the optimism and pessimism because it has greater empirical evidence provided by the history of the effects of nuclear weapons on international relations. The paradox embraces the position of proliferation optimism that nuclear deterrence is really robust that preventing major wars. Furthermore, it also agrees with optimists that nuclear weapons are for deterrent purposes. The historical evidence demonstrates that nuclear weapons prevented major wars between the US and the USSR or between India and Pakistan. Hence, stability is ensured at the strategic level. There is no major conventional war because of the nuclear deterrence and there is no nuclear war because nuclear weapons are for only deterrent purposes.

On the other hand, the paradox problematizes the persistence of lower level instabilities among nuclear-armed states although they never escalate to major conflicts or nuclear exchanges. Nuclear deterrence is so strong that nuclear-armed states work against the credibility of the nuclear deterrence in order to promote their

interests, which in turn triggers lower level militarized conflicts or non-military diplomatic crises. The perception that nuclear weapons cannot be used other than ensuring survival, produce incentives for nuclear-armed states to initiate crises and limited conflicts to enhance their standing in the system. Nuclear weapons, thus, trigger conflicts at sub-strategic level which is periphery to state interests, rather than vital.

It has been this reasoning that cause several proxy wars and diplomatic hostility between the US and USSR and between India and Pakistan. Particularly, recent quantitative research supports the stability-instability paradox, which demonstrates that nuclear weapons provide their possessors security, power, and diplomatic influence which in turn produce more aggressive state behavior. States with nuclear weapons are more likely to initiate crises and limited conflicts or they are more prone to coerce the non-nuclear states. Therefore, stability-instability paradox disaggregates the consequences of nuclear weapons in contrast with the proliferation optimism and proliferation pessimism which approach to the issue with cumulative consequences.

Iran's nuclear program posed a major source of debate in the international arena for decades where the international powers accused Iran for developing nuclear weapons by weaponizing its nuclear energy program. While such accusations have existed beginning with the 1980s by the United States and Israel, it was the revelation of Iran's secret nuclear related facilities in 2002 that made Iran's nuclear program as the top concern of the international agenda. In 2002, Iranian opposition group revealed that Iran was running a uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and operating a heavy water reactor in Arak of which facilities have elements that could not be defined as peaceful nuclear purposes.

The facilities in Natanz and Arak constituted the essential source of the Iranian nuclear crisis. Iran's concealment of these facilities and its covert uranium enrichment activities created a deep lack of confidence among the international circles, from the very beginning. Iran generally downplayed the issue, arguing that

Iran's failure to declare some facilities and supply of material was not meant that the country was building nuclear weapons. Even though, the IAEA inspectors indeed could not entirely verify that Iran's nuclear program has a military dimension, Iranian progress on the uranium enrichment, its concealment of the facilities, and its clandestine supply of nuclear material from A.Q. Khan illicit network led the IAEA and the international community to conclude that Iran's nuclear program was not solely peaceful. Years of severe sanctions, threats of use of force, assassinations and cyber-attacks as well as the rounds of negotiations could not be able neither to halt Iran's uranium enrichment nor to strike a deal.

Hassan Rouhani's coming into the Presidential Office in Iran in March 2013 and the US President Barrack Obama's efforts facilitated the nuclear diplomacy where after a series of meetings and discussions, the parties came to the terms and agreed on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in June 2015. It was envisioned in the agreement that Iran will halt uranium enrichment and transform the structure of the nuclear facilities into peaceful research centers in return for the lift of international sanctions. Although there is a disagreement over the value of the deal, it can be argued that it temporarily ended Iran's capacity to develop nuclear weapons for the short term. On the other hand, given the agreement's temporary nature, it is uncertain what will happen when the expiration date is come. The United States' withdrawal from the deal in May 2018 under the Trump Administration only increased the volatility of the agreement and carries the risk of engendering a new nuclear crisis with Iran.

Whether the fate of the JCPOA will be a success of a failure, the debate over the nuclear proliferation and international security nexus remains one of the key topics of international security. The debate among the proliferation optimists and proliferation pessimists yet to remain, defending their approaches on the Iran case. Optimists claim that a nuclear-armed Iran will remain as a rational actor that could only appeal the use of nuclear weapons as a last resort which is the situation that its survival is at stake. Nuclear weapons are for deterrent purposes and they have defensive value. Hence, states do not use nuclear weapons to territorial conquest or

for other objectives. For optimists, a nuclear-armed Iran will prevent a major conventional war in the Middle East by deterring its adversaries because nuclear weapons provide an unbreakable deterrent to their possessors, making an invasion attempt directed toward them futile. Hence, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, an invasion attempt by the US will be prevented which was indeed a real possibility after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Proliferation optimists contend that Iran's acquiescence of the bomb will not cause a nuclear war because of the reign of the mutually assured destruction (MAD) within the international system. Iran or any state simply cannot use nuclear weapons for offensive purposes because if they do, another nuclear-armed state will certainly launch a nuclear retaliatory strike which could bring out a total annihilation. Furthermore, states are rational actors as Iran is as argued above. Optimist assert that a nuclear-armed Iran will have no incentive to transfer the bomb to violent non-state groups like the Hezbollah even it has close relationship with them. Because nuclear weapons are so valuable that Iran will have incentive to keep them in case of deterring a far stronger adversary.

Proliferation pessimists reject the optimist position from the very beginning that Iran is a rational actor. For pessimists, Iran is not a normal state but a revolutionary one since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iran's main motivation in the Middle East has been to export its revolution and to force regime change. Pessimists argue that Iran will exploit the power of nuclear weapons in order to achieve these objectives which significantly increases a nuclear exchange. Nuclear weapons are not solely for deterrent purposes but it could be used for offensive purposes, too. Pessimists assert that the optimists' confidence in deterrence is dangerous because it is likely that if Iran obtains the bomb, several factors will emerge that led to the deterrence failures which could again cause a nuclear war. For pessimists, Iran is a strictly authoritarian regime which has troubled civil military relations and its nuclear program has been under the IRGC command which has close relationship with "terrorist movements." Hence, Iran's acquiescence of the bomb would significantly increase the possibility of accidents, inadvertent use or transfer of nuclear weapons to terrorist groups.

The disagreement between the optimists and pessimists concerning the likely effects of Iran's nuclearization on the security and stability of the international system mainly stems from the characterization of the Iranian state. At the core of the debate lies the question that whether Iran is a rational actor or not. Proliferation optimism, derives from neorealist theory of International Relations (IR), takes Iran as a rational actor while proliferation pessimism, emphasizing domestic structures and bureaucratic politics, assesses Iran as an irrational actor. Hence, the character of actor poses the main divergent point between optimists and pessimists, regarding the Iranian case. The second point separates the optimists and pessimists, is that the empirical evidence regarding the robustness of the nuclear deterrence. For pessimists, optimists' attribute of confidence to nuclear deterrence is flawed because it is an assumption which is not empirically tested. Hence, even if Iran turns into a normal rational actor, there will always possibility for deliberate or accidental use of the bomb. Hence, there is no way for optimists and pessimist to comply over the general nuclear proliferation or regarding the Iran case because their hypotheses fundamentally divergent.

Both the proliferation optimists and pessimists selectively read the history in order to support their arguments. Optimists emphasize the role nuclear weapons played in keeping the Cold War as cold by overlooking the lower level military confrontations throughout the world. On the other hand, the pessimists underlined the limited instabilities during the Cold War, by ignoring the absence of a major war. Both accounts prefer to focus on the different aspects of the issue. Indeed this stems from the different theoretical models they utilize, namely neorealism and the organizational theory. Neorealism disregards the internal characteristics of the state and excessively dealt with the structure of the international system in order to explain a specific phenomenon. Organizational theory, in contrast, emphasizes the important role played by organizations within the decision-making process of states by overlooking the effects of the international structure. Hence, it is safe to claim that optimists and pessimists approach to nuclear proliferation from directly contrasting

perspectives which led them to reach partial conclusions about the consequences of nuclear proliferation.

This thesis proposed stability-instability paradox to provide a more relevant theoretical approach to the nuclear proliferation issue, regarding the Iran case. Stability-instability paradox is more relevant because it is more comprehensive, taking into consideration both the international systemic constraints as well as sub-systemic behaviors. According to the paradox, the consequences of proliferation cannot be analyzed as binary divisions such as optimism or pessimism. Similarly, nuclear proliferation has not cumulative consequences, but rather, contextual differences may likely to occur.

In this thesis, it is argued that because of the stability-instability paradox, Iran's acquiescence of the bomb will increase the strategic stability while it will decrease the sub-strategic stability. Strategic stability basically reflects the frequency of major conventional wars or nuclear escalations in the system while-sub strategic stability means the frequency of low-level conflicts or non-military crises. If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, the Middle East will not experience a major war between Iran and the US or Iran and Israel or Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iranian nuclear deterrent will prevent this to happen, waking its adversaries that their aggressions will be punished by Iran with a nuclear attack. Hence, the elimination of a major war or a nuclear attack, a strategic stability will be established within the system. It is that an American military attack against Iran after the 9/11 terrorist attacks has been a real possibility of which option has still important proponents both in the US administration and in its academia. A nuclear-armed Iran will deter the US from taking such an action which would bring stability both in the Middle East and in the international system. Hence, nuclear deterrence is the first element that ensures strategic stability, for the stability-instability paradox.

Strategic stability is also provided in Iranian case with Iran's defensive posture. Nuclear weapons are for deterrent purposes and they cannot be used for offensive objectives such as territorial conquest. Although it's harsh rhetoric and its

involvement in many conflicts in the Middle East, Iran is a defensive state that mainly desires to secure its homeland from aggressions. Iran has not any dispute with its neighbors that are vital to its national interests, but rather the tension in the Middle East has been more related with the security dilemma, and competition of power and influence. Nuclear weapons cannot be used to mitigate the effects of security dilemma or to enhance one's interests in a different country. Iran cannot use nuclear weapons to eliminate the superior conventional forces of Israel or Saudi Arabia or to provoke more aggressively the Shia minorities throughout the region. Iran could only use nuclear weapons if its territory is occupied by a hostile power. Iran's defensive posture also stems from the country's weak conventional capabilities. Iran has indeed regional ambitions but it has not sufficient conventional forces that match these ambitions. Iranian army is significantly outdated and its land, naval, and air forces in no way can match to its rivals in the Middle East. Thus, Iran's lack of power projection capacity also makes it a defensive power.

As the stability-instability paradox argues, Iran's obtain of the bomb will undermine sub-strategic stability by increasing the probability of lower level conflicts. Because Iran, empowered with newly acquired nuclear capability, will increase the uncertainty in the international system, and will test the resolve of its adversaries. The strategic stability supplied by its nuclear umbrella would give Iran the guarantee that there will be no territorial aggression against its soil. Although Iran has not vital interest that is at stake in the Middle East, it has significant regional ambitions. Given the little chance for a major war or a nuclear exchange, Iran would take bolder steps to enhance its regional interests which could trigger more crisis and limited conflicts. Iran could also deliberately initiate lower level conflicts to enhance its interests, in perception that its adversaries may concede due to their fear of Iranian deterrent. Hence, Iran could utilize the indirect influence of nuclear weapons as a bargaining power. Thus, one of the major reasons of the sub-strategic instability is in fact the belief in nuclear deterrence. The perception that nuclear weapons provide the ultimate security guarantee, dissatisfied states become more prone being aggressive or initiating conflicts.

The second major reason of why Iran's acquiescence of the bomb will undermine sub-strategic stability is related with the effects of nuclear weapons. A nuclear-armed Iran will become diplomatically more aggressive which would increase the frequency of non-military crises. Sectarianism and the rise of the violent non-state actors constitute the main dynamics that carry the risk of engendering more diplomatic crises, after Iran obtains the bomb. Since nuclear weapons make their possessors more secure and powerful, a nuclear-armed Iran may trigger existing tensions in the region by backing rebel forces, provoking Shia minorities, and facilitating its support to violent non-state actors. On the other hand, even if Iran keep its actions prudent, its proxy forces may perceive that Iranian nuclear umbrella could protect them which could led them to become more aggressive. Hence, either Iran's deliberate coercive policies or its proxies own calculations have significant potential to undermine stability in the Middle East, diminishing the sub-strategic stability.

Stability-instability paradox provides a more comprehensive and coherent theoretical framework for examining the consequences of nuclear proliferation. The main diverging point of the paradox from other accounts is that it separates the dimensions of the stability in the international system. The consequences of nuclear proliferation is not cumulative, whether say it better or worse, but rather it brings out differential effects for the strategic stability and sub-strategic stability. The analysis of the debate on the proliferation and international security nexus regarding the Iran case demonstrates that stability-instability paradox has more explanatory power than proliferation optimism and proliferation pessimism. The paradox presents a valuable tool for the scholars of proliferation in examining the complex proliferation problems in contemporary international security environment.

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APPENDICES

A: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

NÜKLEER SİLAHLARIN YAYILMASI VE ULUSLARARASI GÜVENLİĞİ TARTIŞMAK: İRAN ÖRNEĞİ

Nükleer silahların yayılması uluslararası güvenlik hususunda daima en önemli endişe kaynaklarından biri olmuştur. Nükleer silahların savaş alanındaki görülmemiş derecede büyük etkisi, uluslararası ilişkileri önemli ölçüde değiştirdi. Birçok bilim adamı, Soğuk Savaş'ın direkt bir savaşa dönüşmemesinin temel sebebi olarak nükleer silahların ortaya çıkışını ve devasa etkilerini savundu. Bazı araştırmacılar ise Soğuk Savaş sırasında büyük bir savaşın olmayışının tek nedeninin nükleer silahların olmadığını iddia etse de, nükleer silahların ABD ve Sovyetler Birliği'nin doğrudan bir askeri çatışmadan kaçınmasında belirgin bir rol oynadığını kabul ettiler.

Nükleer silahlar, uluslararası ilişkilerin temel kavramlarından biri olan caydırıcılığın doğasını önemli ölçüde değiştirdi. Caydırıcılık, düşmana, olası bir saldırganlığının maliyetinin faydalarının çok ötesinde olacağı ve cezalandırılacağının sinyalini vermektir. Konvansiyonel dünyada, caydırıcılık stratejileri çoğunlukla asimetrik bir cezalandırma silahının olmadığından başarısız olmuştur. Tarihsel olarak, güçlü devletler bile, asimetrik cezalandırma imkânlarının yoksunluğundan dolayı zayıf rakiplerini caydıramamıştır. Dolayısıyla, uluslararası sistem tarih boyunca birçok büyük güç savaşı yaşamıştır. Buna karşılık, nükleer dünyada, ceza o kadar kesin ve daha büyüktür ki, devletlerarası ilişkileri pasifleştirmiş ve saldırganlığa ket vurmuştur. Nükleer dünyada, konvansiyonel dünyanın aksine olası saldırganlığın sonucunun karşılıklı imha olacağından, savaşların çıkması engellenmekte ve caydırıcılık çalışmaktadır. Soğuk Savaş dönemnde ABD-SSCB rekabeti ve Pakistan ile Hindistan arasındaki krizlerin sınırlı kalması, nükleer silahların yarattıkları karşılıklı garantili imha nedeniyle büyük savaşları önlediğini gösteriyor. Eğer bir devlet nükleer silah kullanırsa, kendisine karşı misilleme bir nükleer saldırı

ihtimaline kesin gözüyle bakılmaktadır. Uluslararası sistemin anarşik doğasının yarattığı belirsizlik ortamında, nükleer devletler birbirine karşı caydırıcılık işlevi oynamaktadır.

Öte yandan, nükleer silahların yayılması insanlık için yıkıcı sonuçlar doğurabilecek kaçınılmaz risklere sahiptir. Atom bombasının kullanılma ihtimali, kaza sonucu patlamalar veya kasıtsız nükleer silah kullanımı gibi unsurlar caydırıcılığın ortadan kalkmasına neden olabilir. Nükleer silahların yayılması hususunda karamsar düşünen akademisyenler, nükleer caydırıcılığa duyulan güvenin gereksiz ölçüde fazla ve çok tehlikeli olduğunu savunarak sorunun bu yönünü vurgulamışlardır. Geçmişte bazı "haydut" devletler kendi nükleer silah geliştirme programlarını geliştirmeye çalıştıkları için devletler irrasyonel ve sorumsuz davranabilirler. Bu devletlerin nükleer silah sahibi olması, uluslararası sistemin istikrarı ve güvenliği için ciddi bir sorun olarak görülmüştür. Dahası, bir başka endişe, devletlerin rasyonel davransalar bile, devlet içinde biribrleriyle çekişme halinde olan dar görüşlü grupların kazalara, bilinçli veya bilinçsiz kullanımlara yol açma ihtimallerinin hiçbir zaman sıfıra indirilemeyeceğidir.

Dolayısıyla, nükleer silahların ortaya çıkardığı kompleks sonuçlar, bu silahların yayılması hususunu daha iyi veya daha kötü olarak değerlendirmeyi mümkün kılmıyor. Nükleer silahlar büyük güç savaşını önlerken, kaçınılmaz olarak önemli riskler de taşıyorlar. Bu tez, istikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksunun, nükleer silahların yayılması tartışmasını iyimserlik ve karamsarlığın ötesine taşıma potansiyeline sahip olduğunu, çünkü nükleer silahların uluslararası politika ortaya çıkardığı etkinin tarhisel olarak incelendiğinde bu paradoksu daha fazla desteklediğini savunmaktadır. Paradoks, nükleer caydırıcılığın büyük savaşları önlemesi hususunda iyimserlerle aynı görüşü savunmaktadır. Elimizdeki tarihsel veri, nükleer silahların ABD ile SSCB arasında veya Hindistan ile Pakistan arasında büyük savaşları önlediğini gösteriyor. Böylece, paradoksun ortaya sürdüğü gibi stratejik düzeyde istikrar sağlanmaktadır. Nükleer caydırıcılık nedeniyle büyük konvansiyonel savaşlar ortaya çıkmamıştır ve nükleer silahların yalnızca caydırıcı amaçlı kullanılması dolayısıyla herhangi bir nükleer savaş da çıkmamıştır.

Öte yandan, paradoks nükleer silahların devletler arasında büyük savaşları önlemesine rağmen, nükleer silahlı devletler arasında düşük seviyedeki istikrarsızlıkların sürekliliğini sorunlaştırmaktadır. Nükleer caydırıcılık o kadar güçlüdür ki, nükleer silahlı devletler çıkarlarını gerçekleştirmek ve sistemdeki durumlarını iyileştirmek için nükleer caydırıcılığın güvenilirliğine karşı çalışırlar ve bu da daha düşük seviyedeki askeri çatışmaları veya askeri olmayan diplomatik krizleri tetikler. Nükleer silahların, devletlerin hayatta kalmalarını sağlamak dışında kullanılamayacağı algısı, nükleer silahlı devletlerin krizleri başlatması için teşvik edici güdüler üretmektedir. Nükleer silahlar, bu nedenle, hayati olmaktan ziyade devlet çıkarlarına çevre olan alt stratejik düzeyde çatışmaları tetiklemektedir.

ABD ve SSCB arasında ve Hindistan ile Pakistan arasında birçok vekalet savaşı ve diplomatik düşmanlığın ortaya çıkmasına bu sebep olmuştur. Özellikle, son zamanlardaki nicel araştırmalar, nükleer silahların sahiplerine güvenlik, güç ve diplomatik etki sağladığını ve bunun da daha agresif bir devlet davranışı ürettiğini göstermekte, dolayısıyla istikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksunu desteklemektedir. Nükleer silahlara sahip devletlerin krizleri ve sınırlı çatışmaları başlatması daha muhtemeldir veya bu devletler nükleer silah sahibi olmayan devletleri diplomatik olarak zorlamaya daha eğilimlidir. Bu nedenle, paradoks, nükleer silahların yayılmaının sonuçlarını kümülatif olarak iyi veya kötü olarak değerlediren iyimser ve karamsar yaklaşımlardan metodolojik olarak ayrılmakta, meseleyi stratejik ve stratejik-altı seviyelere göre analiz etmektedir.

İran nükleer programı, uluslararası güçlerin, İran'ı nükleer enerji programını silah üretecek bir boyuta çevirdiği gerekçesiyle suçlamasıyla on yıllardır uluslararası arenada büyük bir tartışma kaynağı oluşturdu. Bu suçlamalar ABD ve İsrail tarafından 1980'lerde başlamış olsa da, 2002'de İran'ın nükleer programını uluslararası gündemdeki en büyük endişe konusu yapan gizli nükleer tesislerin açığa çıkmasıydı. 2002'de İranlı muhalif bir grup, İran'ın Natanz'da bir uranyum zenginleştirme tesisi ve Arak'ta ağır su reaktörü işlettiğinini ortaya çıkardı ve sonrasında yapılan incelemeler, tesislerinin barışçıl nükleer amaçlı olarak tanımlanamayacak unsurlara sahip olduğunu ortaya koydu.

Natanz ve Arak'taki tesisler, İran nükleer krizinin temel kaynağını oluşturuyordu. İran'ın bu tesislerin gizlemesi ve gizli uranyum zenginleştirme faaliyetleri, en başından beri uluslararası çevreler arasında derin bir güven sorunu yarattı. İran, bazı tesislerin varlığını ve nükleer çalışmalarla alakalı malzeme teminini ilan etmemesini, ülkenin nükleer silahlar inşa ettiği anlamına gelmediğini savunarak, genellikle sorunu küçümsedi. Uluslararası Atom Enerjisi Ajansı (UAEA) görevlileri gerçekten de İran'ın nükleer programının askeri bir boyutu olduğunu tam olarak doğrulayamasa da, İran'ın uranyum zenginleştirmesinde gerçekleştirdiği ilerleme, nükleer tesisleri gizlemesi ve yasadışı Abdülkadir Han ağından gizlice nükleer madde tedariki gözününe aldığından, İran'ın nükleer çalışmalarının tamamen barışçıl amaçlarla olmadığını ve İran'ın nükleer silah üretebilecek çalışmalar yaptığı sonucuna ulaştı. Yıllar süren şiddetli yaptırımlar, güç kullanma tehditleri, suikast ve siber saldırıların yanı sıra müzakere turları, ne İran'ın uranyum zenginleştirmesini durdurdu, ne de sorunu çözecek bir anlaşmaya varılabildi.

Hasan Rouhani'nin Mart 2013'te İran'da Cumhurbaşkanlığı görevine gelmesi ve ABD Başkanı Barrack Obama'nın çabaları sorunun çözümüne yönelik nükleer diplomasiyi hızlandırdı. Diplomatik görüşmeler çerçevesinde birçok kez bir araya gelen taraflar, Haziran 2015'te koşulları üzerinde anlaştıkları *Ortak Geniş Eylem Planı*'nı (JCPOA) imzaladılar. Anlaşmada, İran'ın nükleer meseleyle alakalı uluslararası yaptırımların kaldırılması karşılığında uranyum zenginleştirmesini durduracağı ve nükleer tesislerinin yapısını barışçıl araştırma merkezlerine dönüştüreceği öngörülmüştür. Anlaşmanın değeri ve sorunu çözmedeki yeterliliği hususlarında ciddi görüş ayrılıkları olmasına rağmen, anlaşmanın İran'ın kısa vadede nükleer silah geliştirme kapasitesini geçici olarak sonlandırdığı söylenebilir. Öte yandan, anlaşmanın geçici niteliği göz önüne alındığında, gerçelilik tarihi sona erdiğinde ne olacağı belirsizliğini korumaktadır. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Mayıs 2018'de Trump yönetimi altında anlaşmadan çekilmesi, anlaşmaya gölge düşürdü ve dolayısıyla İran'la yeni bir nükleer kriz yaratma riskini taşıyor.

Ortak Geniş Eylem Planı'nın kaderinin bir başarı veya başarısızlık olmasından bağımsız olarak, nükleer silahların yayılması ve uluslararası güvenlik konusundaki

tartışmalar uluslararası güvenlik literatünün kilit konularından biri olmaya devam ediyor. Nükleer silahların yayılması konusunda iyimserler ve karamsarlar arasındaki tartışma, İran örneğinde de devam etmiş, taraflar kendi tezlerini İrn örneğine uygulamışlardır. İyimserler, nükleer silahlı bir İran'ın, rasyonel bir aktör olduğunu ve nükleer silahların kullanımına hayatta kalışı tehlikeye düştüğünde son çare olarak başvuracağını savunmuştur. Nükleer silahlar caydırıcı amaçlar içindir ve savunma değeri taşımaktadırlar. Bu nedenle, devletler nükleer silahları toprak fethi için veya başka saldırgan amaçlarla kullanamazlar. İyimserler için, nükleer silahlı bir İran, düşmanlarını caydırarak Ortadoğu'daki büyük bir konvansiyonel savaşı engelleyecektir, çünkü nükleer silahlar sahiplerine kırılmaz bir caydırıcılık sağlayarak, onlara yönelik bir istila girişiminde bulunulmasını engellemektedir. Bu nedenle, eğer İran nükleer silah edinirse, 11 Eylül terörist saldırılardan sonra gerçek bir olasılık olan ve günümüzde de hala devam eden, İran'a yönelik bir ABD askeri harekâtı önlenecektir.

İyimserler, İran'ın bombaya sahip olmasının, uluslararası sistemde karşılıklı güvence altına alınmış yıkımın (MAD) hüküm sürmesi nedeniyle nükleer savaşa neden olmayacağını savunuyorlar. İran ya da herhangi bir devlet nükleer silahları saldırgan amaçlar için kullanamaz, çünkü eğer yaparlarsa, başka bir nükleer silahlı devlet missilleme yapacak bu da İran'ın zararına olacaktır. Ayrıca, İran herhangi bir devlet gibi uluslararası sistemde rasyonel bir aktördür. İyimserler, nükleer silahlı bir İran'ın, bombayı, Hizbullah gibi şiddet yanlısı devlet dışı aktörlere temin etmeyeceğini düşünmektedirler. Çünkü nükleer silahlar o kadar değerlidir ki, İran çok daha güçlü bir rakibi caydırmak durumunda kullanmak üzere nükleer cephaneliğini her şekilde korumayı tercih edecektir.

Karamsarlar, iyimser pozisyonu, İran'ın rasyonel bir aktör olduğu argümanından itibaren en başından reddediyor. Karamsarlar için İran, 1979 İslam Devrimi'nden bu yana normal bir devlet değil, devrimci bir aktördür. İran'ın Orta Doğu'daki temel motivasyonu, İslam devrimini ihraç etmek ve komşu ülkelerdeki rejim değişikliğini zorlamak olmuştur. Karamsarlar, İran'ın bu hedeflere ulaşmak için nükleer silahların gücünden yararlanacağını savunuyor. Karamsarlara göre, nükleer silahlar yalnızca

caydırıcı amaçlar için değildir, aynı zamanda saldırgan amaçlar için de kullanılabilir. Karamsarlar, iyimserlerin caydırıcılığa olan güveninin tehlikeli olduğunu iddia ediyorlar çünkü İran bombaya sahip olursa, nükleer savaşa yol açabilecek caydırıcılık başarısızlıklarına yol açabilecek faktörlerin ortaya çıkmasını muhtemel görüyorlar. Karamsarlar için İran, sivil askeri ilişkileri oldukça problemli, otoriter bir rejimdir ve nükleer programı, "terörist örgütlerle" yakın ilişki içerisinde olan Devrim Muhafızları komutasındadır. Bu nedenle, İran'ın bombayı elde etmesi, nükleer silah kullanımını, kaza ihtimallerini veya bu silahların terör örgütlerinin eline geçme ihtimallerini önemli ölçüde artıracağını savunmaktadırlar.

İyimserler ile karamsarlar arasında, İran'ın nükleerleşmesinin uluslararası sistemin güvenliği ve istikrarı üzerindeki olası etkileri konusundaki anlaşmazlık, esas olarak İran devletinin karakteristiğinden kaynaklanıyor. Tartışmanın temelinde, İran'ın rasyonel bir aktör olup olmadığı sorusu yatmaktadır. Neorealist Uluslararası İlişkiler teorisinden türeyen iyimser pozisyon, İran'ı rasyonel bir aktör olarak alırken, karamsar pozisyon, iç devlet yapılarını ve bürokratik mekanizmaları vurgulayarak İran'ı irrasyonel bir aktör olarak değerlendirmektedir. Dolayısıyla, aktörün karakteri, iyimserler ve karamsarlar arasındaki temel farkı ortaya koymaktadı. İyimser ve karamsar pozisyonları birbirinden ayıran ikinci nokta, nükleer caydırıcılığın sağlamlığına dair ampirik kanıtlardır. Karamsarlar için, iyimserlerin nükleer caydırıcılığa güvenmesi hatalı çünkü onlara göre nükleer caydıcılık ampirik olarak test edilmemiş bir varsayımdır. Dolayısıyla, karamsarlar için, İran normal bir rasyonel aktöre dönüşse bile, bombanın kasıtlı veya yanlışlıkla kullanılması her zaman mümkün olacaktır. Dolayısıyla, iyimser ve karamsar pozisyonların genel olarak nükleer silahların yayılmasının uluslararası güvenlik bakımından etkileri konusunda gerekse de İran örneği üzerinde anlaşabilemelerinin bir yolu görünmemektedir zira benimsedikleri varsayımlar en baştan itibaren farklıdır.

Hem iyimserler hem de karamsarlar, tartışmalarını desteklemek için tarihi seçici bir şekilde okumaktadır. İyimserler, nükleer silahların Soğuk Savaş'ın sıcak savaşa dönüşmemesini vurgulamakta ancak sıklıkla ortaya çıkan sınırlı askeri çatışmaları gözardı etmektedir. Öte yandan, karamsarlar her zaman risklerin veya kazaların

ortaya çıkabileceğini ve Soğuk Savaş dönemindeki sınırlı istikrarsızlıkların altını çizmekte, ancak nükleer silahların büyük savaşları önlediğini görmezden gelmektedirler. Dolayısıyla, her iki yaklaşım da problemin farklı yönlerine odaklanmayı tercih etmektedir. Aslında bu, kullandıkları farklı kuramsal modellerden, yani neorealizm ve organizasyon teorisinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Neorealizm devletin iç özelliklerini göz ardı eder ve belirli bir olguyu açıklamak için uluslararası sistemin yapısını odaklanır. Organizasyon teorisi ise, aksine, devletlerin karar alma sürecinde iç yapıların oynadıklara rollere eğilerek, uluslararası yapının etkilerini önemsemez. Dolayısıyla, bu durum iyimserlerin ve karamsarlar nükleer silahların yayılmasının sonuçları üzerinde kısmi sonuçlara varmalarına yol açmaktadır.

Bu tez, İran vakasıyla ilgili nükleer silahların yayılması konusuna daha uygun bir teorik çerçeve sağlamak için istikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksunu önermiştir. İstikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksu daha iyi açıklama getirebilir çünkü hem uluslararası sistemik kısıtlamaları hem de alt sistemik davranışları dikkate almasıyla daha kapsamlı bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Paradoksa göre, nükleer silahların yayılmasının sonuçları, iyimserlik veya karamsarlık gibi ikili bölünmeler şeklinde analiz edilemez. Benzer şekilde, nükleer silahların yayılmasının kümülatif sonuçları yoktur, fakat aksine, bağlamsal farklılıkların ortaya çıkması olasıdır.

Bu tezde, istikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksu nedeniyle, İran'ın bombaya sahip olmasının, stratejik istikrarı artıracağı ancak öte yandan stratejik olmayan istikrarsızlığı azaltacağı iddia edilmiştir. Stratejik istikrar, temel olarak sistemdeki büyük konvansiyonel savaşların veya nükleer silah kullanımının sıklığını yansıtırken, stratejik olmayan istikrar ise düşük seviyeli çatışmaların veya askeri olmayan krizlerin sıklığını ifade etmektedir. İran nükleer silah edinirse, İran ile ABD veya İran ile İsrail veya İran ve Suudi Arabistan arasında nükleer büyük bir savaşa yaşanmayacaktır. İran'ın nükleer caydırıcılığı bunun olmasını önleyecek, düşmanlarını, saldırganlıklarının İran tarafından nükleer bir saldırı ile cezalandırılacağını hususunda uyandıracaktır. Bu nedenle, büyük bir savaşın veya nükleer bir saldırının ortadan kaldırılmasıyla, sistem içerisinde stratejik bir istikrar

sağlanacaktır. Dolayısıyla nükleer caydırıcılık, istikrarsızlık paradoksu için stratejik istikrarı sağlayan ilk unsurdur.

İran örneğinde, İran'ın savunmacı bir devlet olması stratejik istikrar sağlayan diğer bir önemli faktördür. Nükleer silahlar caydırıcı amaçlar içindir ve bölge fethi gibi saldırgan amaçlar için kullanılamazlar. Sert söylem ve Orta Doğu'daki birçok ihtilafa dahil olmasına rağmen İran, esas olarak sınırlarını saldırılardan korumak isteyen savunmacı bir devlettir. İran, komşuları ile ulusal çıkarları için hayati önem taşıyan bir anlaşmazlığa sahip değildir. İran'ın agresif davranşları, daha ziyade Ortadoğu'daki güvenlik ikilemi, iktidar ve nüfuz rekabeti ile daha fazla ilgilidir. Nükleer silahlar, güvenlik ikileminin etkilerini hafifletmek veya bir ülkenin farklı bir ülkedeki çıkarlarını artırmak için kullanılamaz. İran, İsrail veya Suudi Arabistan'ın üstün konvansiyonel kuvvetlerini ortadan kaldırmak veya bölgedeki Şii azınlıkları daha agresif bir şekilde kışkırtmak için nükleer silah kullanamaz. İran, ancak toprakları düşmanca bir güç tarafından işgal edildiği takdirde nükleer silahları kullanabilecektir. İran'ın savunmacı bir devlet olması, aynı zamanda ülkenin zayıf konvansiyonel kuvvetlerinden de kaynaklanmaktadır. İran'ın gerçekten bölgesel hırsları olsa da, bu emelleri gerçekleştirebileceği yeterli konvansiyonel kuvvete sahip değil. İran ordusu önemli ölçüde eski ve modası geçmiş ekipmanla donanımlı ve kara, deniz ve hava kuvvetleri hiçbir şekilde Orta Doğu'daki rakipleriyle boy ölçüşememektedir. Dolayısıyla, İran'ın konvansiyonel kuvvetleriyle güç projeksiyonu yapabilecek bir kapasitesinin olmaması da onu savunmacı bir devlet haline getirmemektedir.

İstikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksunun öne sürdüğü gibi, İran'ın bombayı elde etmesi sınırlı çatışmaların yaşanma olasılığını artırarak stratejik olmayan istikrarı azaltacaktır. Çünkü yeni elde ettiği nükleer kapasiteyle İran, uluslararası sisemdeki belirsizliği artıracak ve rakiplerinin iradesini test etme yoluna gidecektir. Nükleer şemsiyesi tarafından sağlanan koruma, İran'a toprağına karşı herhangi bir saldırganlık olmayacağının garantisi olacaktır. İran'ın Orta Doğu'da tehlikede olan hayati bir çıkarı olmamasına rağmen, bölgesel açıdan hedefleri bulunmaktadır. Büyük bir savaş veya nükleer bir saldırı olasılığının minimuma yakın olması, İran'ı

bölgesel çıkarlarının ilerletmek için daha cesur adımlar atması yönünde teşvik edecektir. İran ayrıca, rakiplerinin İran'ın caydırıcılığından duyacakları korku sayesinde daha agrresif bir hale gelebilir çıkarlarını geliştirmek için kasten düşük seviyeli çatışmalar başlatabilecektir. Dolayısıyla İran, nükleer silahların dolaylı etkisini pazarlık gücü olarak kullanacaktır. Dolayısıyla, stratejik olmayan istikrarsızlığın ana nedenlerinden biri aslında nükleer caydırıcılığa olan inançtır. Nükleer silahların nihai güvenlik garantisi ve kullanılmayacaklarına duyulan güven, sistemdeki pozisyonlarından memnun olmayan nükleer silahsahibi devletleri sınırlandırılmış revizyonist davranışlara itmektedir. Dolayısıyla, sistemde büyük savaşlar veya bir nükleer saldırı olmasa bile çeşitli krizlerin ve askeri çatışmaların sıklığı artmaktadır.

İkinci olarak, nükleer silahlı bir İran, askeri olmayan krizlerin sıklığını artıracak şekilde diplomatik olarak daha agresif hale gelecektir. Ortadoğu'da 2003 Irak işgalinden itibaren artan mezhepçilik ve şiddet yanlısı devlet dışı aktörlerin yükselişi, İran bombayı elde ettikten sonra, diplomatik krizler doğurma riskini taşıyan ana dinamikleri oluşturmaktadır. Nükleer silahlar sahiplerini daha güvenli ve güçlü kıldığından, nükleer silahlı bir İran, isyancı güçlere olan desteğini artırarak, Şii azınlıkları tahrik ederek ve şiddet yanlısı devlet dışı aktörlere desteğini artırarak yeni krizler tetikleyebilecek ve mevcut krizleri daha şiddetli hale getirebilecektir. Öte yandan, nükleer silah sahibi bir İran eylemlerini ihtiyatlı tutsa bile, Hizbullah gibi vekil aktörler, İran nükleer şemsiyesinden duyacakları güvenle kendi başlarına daha agresf hale gelebilecektir. Bu nedenle, İran'ın kasıtlı zorlayıcı politikaları veya vekil aktörlerin kendi hesaplamaları, Ortadoğu'daki istikrarı baltalama ve stratejik olmayan istikrarı azaltma konusunda önemli bir potansiyele sahiptir.

İstikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksu, nükleer silahların yayılmasının sonuçlarını incelemek için kapsamlı ve tutarlı bir teorik çerçeve sunmaktadır. Paradoksun diğer yaklaşımlardan en önemli farkı, uluslararası sistemdeki istikrarın boyutlarını stratejik istikrar ve stratejik olmayan istikrar olarak ayırmasıdır. Nükleer silahların yayılmasının sonuçlarını, kümülatif olarak iyi ya da kötü olarak değerlendirmekten ziyade, sistemdeki istikrar parçalara bölmekte ve meselenin sofistike boyutlarına

yönelik daha iyi bir kavrayış getirmektedir. Nükleer silahların yayılması, stratejik seviyede istikrar yaratırken, stratejik olmayan seviyede istikrarsızlık yaratıcı unsurlar doğurmaktadır. Bu tez, İran örneği üzerine eğilerek, istikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksunun iyimser ve karamsar yaklaşımlardan daha fazla açıklayıcı güce sahip olduğunu göstermeye çalışmıştır. İstikrar-istikrarsızlık paradoksu, günümüz uluslararası güvenlik ortamındaki karmaşık nükleer silahlanma sorunlarını inceleyen akademisyenler için değerli bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır.

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