

IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SECURITY OF THE MIDDLE EAST: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is a growing risk that could turn into major wars, thereby destroying the very existence of a small state or deforming the demographic, political and social environment of a larger state. WMD are divided into four major categories. They are chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons. Since the mid-1980s, Israel, the United States (US), and other Western powers have accused Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons capability. Iranian officials have repeatedly denied these accusations and claimed that their nuclear programme is designed for utilizing nuclear energy for power generation. This situation was further intensified when Iran's undeclared nuclear activities from 1984 to 2002 were revealed by the Iranian authority in the early 2000s. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the European Union (EU) have engaged in prolonged negotiations with Iran to verify her adherence to its Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) commitments.¹ The Iranian case is an ongoing event with an indefinite future. Whilst the US and other major powers are getting impatient to see positive actions by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the IAEA is trying to get Iran's cooperation through diplomatic negotiation. The first to possess and use a nuclear weapon was the US, during World War II (WWII). It was quickly followed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1949. Later, the United Kingdom, France and the Peoples Republic of China joined the nuclear arms race. Amidst fear to an uncontrolled nuclear proliferation, the five initial nuclear weapon members began to discuss the method of controlling nuclear weapons proliferation. The NPT negotiation began in the mid-to-late-1960s and finally entered into force on 5 March 1970.² A number of the premises of the NPT have temporarily legitimized the arsenals of the five states that had already developed nuclear weapons. It forbade other signatories to develop such weapons, but included no strategy to persuade states that refused to sign and

1. Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT). The Treaty rests on two pillars: non-proliferation and disarmament. That is, the commitment by non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty not to pursue nuclear weapons; and the equal commitment by nuclear-weapon states to move towards nuclear disarmament. The aim of NPT is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to foster the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of disarmament. The Treaty establishes a safeguards system under the responsibility of the IAEA, which also plays a central role under the treaty in areas of technology transfer for peaceful purposes.
2. IAEA, *Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons*, IAEA Information Circular INFCIRC/140, 1970, p. 1

it relied on the promise of the signatories to use nuclear materials for peaceful purposes only.³ States such as India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea have taken advantage of the weaknesses in the treaty and have managed to develop their own nuclear weapon capability.⁴ Energy security concerns and fears of climate change are making nuclear power more attractive. But with that, more states are seeking to master the nuclear fuel cycle to ensure a supply of nuclear fuel. The concern, however, is that the mastering of fuel cycle means states will have the ability to enrich uranium or separate plutonium, which means more states may become closer to having nuclear weapons production capability.⁵ The threats from existing nuclear weapons are still imminent. Strategic reliance on these weapons by nuclear weapon states and their allies undoubtedly motivates others to pursue them. Future plans to replenish and modernize these stockpiles create a sense of suspicion among many non-nuclear-weapon states.

Aim

To analyze the implications of Iran's nuclear program on Iran and the security of Middle East.

IRAN'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY, AND ITS ROLE IN THE SECURITY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post Revolutionary Era. After the 1979 revolution, Iran has made initiatives to improve relations with her neighbors, particularly Saudi Arabia as part of her strategy to increase diplomatic relations with developing and non-aligned countries, as part of an effort to build trade and political support, now that she has lost her pre-revolutionary US backing. At the same time, Iran takes stances against the US and Israel as her major threat to her national security and as part of her stance for supporting the Palestinians. After the Iran- Iraq war, her relations with the EU have dramatically improved to the point where Iran is a major oil exporter and trading partner for countries such as Italy, France and Germany. China and India have also emerged as friends of Iran. Iran maintains regular diplomatic and commercial relations with Russia and the former Soviet Republics. However, the Russian sales of military equipment and technology to Iran have raised concern to her neighbors and the US, especially when Iran has an important national interest in Central Asia which

3. Peaceful use of nuclear technology include health care, agriculture and energy production, but could not divert them to non-peaceful purposes.

4. Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, *Towards a safer world, Statements of the IAEA Director General, IAEA homepage, 2003 (Online)*. <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/2003/ebTE20031016.html> (16 September 2007).

5. *ibid*.

is the Caspian Sea oil.⁶ In relation to the regional and international Muslim states, Iran shows strong commitment to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), especially with Saudi Arabia. Using the OIC as a platform to demonstrate its stabilizing role in the region, Iran had called for an emergency OIC meeting, as an immediate action after the September 11 incident, urging Muslims around the world to adopt a stern policy and engaging a holy war (*jihad*) against global terrorism.⁷ Iran's softer policy towards the US had started even before the September 11 incident when Iran convinced the US to share her perception on the Taliban threat. Another important regional actor that affects Iran's foreign policy is Turkey. Between the two, their security relations depend very much on the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)⁸ that requires both states to cooperate in common security matters such as reconstruction of Afghanistan (one of ten ECO members), arms and drug trafficking, terrorism and border security from Kurdish insurgency. As for Saudi Arabia, Iran had closer ties with her during the early years after the revolution so as to gain support from regional Muslim states. However, most of the Arab states especially Saudi Arabia, are not happy when Iran began to interfere in the Iraqi political turmoil. The Arabs states also raised concern when Iran supported the Palestinians and Lebanese in conflicts against Israel. Iran's interference in those issues has threatened the Arab leadership in the Arab-Israel conflicts and Sunni domination of the previous Iraqi government. .

Iran's Security Policy in the Post Revolutionary Era. The 1979 revolution had resulted in the end of Iran's relationship with the US and the emergence of a new ideology consisting of two concepts: export of revolution and independence from both the East and West.⁹ However, the direction of Iran's foreign policy since then has been inconsistent. Iran's domestic, foreign, and security policies cannot be separated. Looking at her security policy, it can be characterized firstly by, Iran's need to ensure that the regime stays in power, and maintain its commitment to revolutionary ideals. Secondly, on border issues with neighboring states, Iran has tended to support the status quo with regards to territorial integrity, has avoided major military provocations, and has shown cooperation with her neighbors. the Iranian government has initiated a number

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 258

8. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO, is an inter-governmental regional organization established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for the purpose of promoting economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the Member States. ECO is aspired through cultural, historical affinities, infrastructural and business links and has embarked on several projects in priority sectors including energy, trade, transportation, agriculture and drug control. Current membership is Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

9. D. Byman, S. Chubin, A. Ehteshami, J.D. Green, Iran's security policy in the post-revolutionary era, RAND, 2001, p. 97

of adjustments on its national security interests and foreign policy priorities to enhance its national security and optimize gains from solidarities and alliances. These include adopting a new flexible approach toward the US; forging closer ties to Russia and Europe; improving Iran's role and image in the international community and international organizations; fostering better relations with the Arab world; stabilizing relations with Turkey, Pakistan, and Iraq; enhancing regional cooperation; and exploring new security arrangements.

Iran's Policy on Weapons of Mass Destruction. Iran seeks WMD for several reasons. First, Iran has plausible geo-political reasons. One of Iran's earlier reasons was the terrible damages to her cities and deaths of her population from Iraqi missile attacks during the Iran-Iraq War.¹⁰ In addition, nuclear developments in neighboring states such as Israel, Pakistan and India have also provided causes for concern to Iran. In addition to enhancing her deterrence capability, the WMD is a guarantee of status, forcing states to pay attention and treat her as an equal. Currently, Iran's missiles arsenals are her high-prestige weapon system that demonstrates the level of Iranian technical sophistication. Iran's long-range missiles as means of delivery system is part of her WMD development programme. Since Iran is currently pursuing to develop her nuclear infrastructure, Israel and other neighbors are worried that Iran may be using her uranium enrichment facilities to produce weapon-grade nuclear material. Until now Iran has no intention of stopping her nuclear enrichment programme as required by the Additional Protocol.¹¹

Regional and Extra-Regional States Standpoint on Iran's Nuclear Development Programme

a. Arab States' Stance on Iran's Nuclear Development Programme. The Arab states standpoint towards Iran's nuclear development programme is derived from the GCC policy and views from influential Arab leaders. All of these countries share a common sea lane with Iran. The non-GCC countries that are close to the Iranian borders are Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon with only common policy between the GCC, and the rest of the Arab states with Iran is the common dislike for Israel. Iran has been a concern to the Arab states for a long time, with an ongoing issue of Iran's 1970 occupation of three small islands claimed by the UAE; Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa.¹² The general non-proliferation policy of the GCC are mentioned

10. R. Takeyh, Re-imagining US-Iranian relations, *Survival*, 44(3), 2002, p. 29

11. S. Squassoni, *Iran's nuclear program: recent developments*, CRS Report for Congress, CRS, 2006, p. 2

12. S. Henderson, *The Elephant in the Gulf: Arab states and Iran's nuclear program*, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 2005 (Online). <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/print.php?template=C05&CID=2424> (13 November 2007).

by the GCC Supreme Council in every summit, demanding the international community to make the Middle East region free from all forms of WMD including nuclear weapons.¹³ GCC fears for Iran's nuclear activities, which was affirmed during the GCC 26th Summit in Abu Dhabi on 20 February 2006, calling for a Middle East free from the WMD and urged Iran cooperate with the IAEA.¹⁴

- b. Israel's Stance on Iran's Nuclear Development Programme.** Israel is Iran's major threat and adversary in the Middle East and Israel's foreign policy in the region is the most important factor that affects Iran's national security and the Middle East regional security. Therefore, to understand this situation it is very important to examine Israel's policies in the Middle East. The main aim of Israel's policies is to dominate the Middle East, either by its own military power or supported by allies, or by economic domination.¹⁵ The Israeli national security doctrine originated in the early 1950s places major emphasis on the role of deterrence and preemption. Israeli leaders feared that the combination of Arab rejection of the legitimacy of the Jewish state, narrow borders, and the absence of strategic depth, would lead to repeated military challenges.
- c. The United States, European Union, Russia and China's Stance on Iran's Nuclear Development Programme.** The US is more concerned about the future of Iran's oil supply while the EU, China and Russia are more concerned about their economic investment in Iran. However, as situation progresses, some of these states have shifted their stance to some extent in order to balance-up the situation. The US is justifying its opposition by asking why Iran seeks to develop nuclear power for civil use, when its exports of oil and gas already shows that she has enough energy resources. At the same time, based on the eighteen years of undeclared nuclear activities, the US is certain that Iran is developing her nuclear weapon.¹⁶ As for the EU, the organization has been working closely with the IAEA to solve the Iran's nuclear issue through diplomatic means. As a result, Iran had temporarily suspended her enrichment activities from December 2003 until February 2006. A formal initiative on Iran's nuclear development programme began on 15 November 2004, when Iran signed an agreement with the EU regarding

13. The closing statement of the twenty-sixth session of the supreme council, Gulf Cooperation Council King Fahad Summit on 18–19 December 2005, GCC homepage (Online). <http://www.gcc-sg.org/sessions/cs026.html> (13 November 2007).

14. GCC fears Iran nuclear activities, TMC Net News, 24 February 2006, TMC Net homepage (Online). <http://www.tmcnet.com/usubmit/2006/02/24/1404366.htm> (13 November 2007).

15. I. Shahak, The continuing aims of Zionist policies in the Middle East, Middle East Council Journal (Online). http://www.mepc.org/journal_shahak/shahak16.asp (18Apr2007).

16. S.Y. Mousavian, Iran and the West: the path to nuclear deadlock, *Global Dialog*, Vol.8, No. 1-2, 2006, Pp. 70-71.

Iran's nuclear development programme.¹⁷ In the agreement, both the EU and Iran reaffirmed their commitment to the NPT and Iran's rights as the NPT signatory is recognized without discrimination.

Iran and Conflicts in the Middle East. Major security issues in the Middle East have been due to conflicts and crisis between the Arabs and the Israelis to include the long going Palestine–Israeli crisis. Iran's recent involvement in regional major war was the Iran-Iraq War (1980 - 1988). The war started in 1980 when Iraq invaded Iran for the sovereignty over the waterway between the two countries, the Arvand Rud (Shatt al-Arab).¹⁸ Iran was isolated throughout the eight years war with virtually no allies. She finally signed the UNSC Resolution 598 in July 1988 which led to a cease-fire on 20 August 1988.¹⁹ after the US Invasion of Iraq in 2003.²⁰ Prior to its invasion on Iraq, the US has invaded Afghanistan in 2001, which was the first major action taken by the US in its fight against terror.²¹ The defeat of Taliban in Afghanistan and later Saddam Hussein has freed Iran from old enemies and potential threats on both its flanks. Iran is now the strongest Islamic state in the region thus giving her big opportunity to emerge as a leading power in the region.²² With that reputation and current Iran intervention in Iraq and the Arab-Israel conflict, not only Israel but even the Arabs are threatened by Iran.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

Energy Needs and Technological Development. In March 1974, the Shah envisioned a time when the world's oil supply would run out and declared, "Petroleum is a noble material, much too valuable to burn. We envision producing, as soon as possible, 23000 megawatts of electricity using nuclear plants".²³ Bushehr would be the first plant, and would supply energy to the inland city of Shiraz. In 1975, the Bonn firm Kraftwerk Union AG, a joint venture of Siemens AG and AEG Telefunken, signed a contract worth \$4 to \$6 billion to build the pressurized water reactor nuclear power plant. Construction of the two 1,196 MW nuclear generating units was subcontracted to Thyssen Krupp and was to have been completed by 1981. President Gerald Ford signed a directive

17. IAEA, Communication received from the permanent representatives of France, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Kingdom concerning the agreement signed in Paris on 15 November 2004, Information Circular, INFCIRC/637, 26 November 2004.

18. L.G. Potter and G.G. Sick (ed), *Iran, Iraq and the legacies of war*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, Pp. 29-30.

19. Ibid., Pp. 60-61

20. L.G. Potter and G.G. Sick (ed), *Iran, Iraq and the lagacies of war*, p. 201

21. Ibid., p. 201

22. Ibid.

23. Gwadat Bahgat, Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran. *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3, September 2006

in 1976²⁴ offering Tehran the chance to buy and operate a U.S built reprocessing facility for extracting plutonium from nuclear reactor fuel. The deal was for a complete ‘nuclear fuel cycle’.

Iran’s Stance. The Iranian nuclear programme has been controversial although the development of a civilian nuclear power programme is explicitly allowed under the terms of the NPT; there have been allegations that Iran has been illicitly pursuing a nuclear weapons programme, in violation of the NPT. The Iranian government says it sees nuclear power as a way to modernize and diversify its energy sources, other than its large oil and gas reserves. The Iranian public, nearly all political candidates and the current government are unified on this point.²⁵Iran says that nuclear power is necessary for a booming population and rapidly industrializing nation. In fact, Iran’s enrichment programme was openly discussed on national radio and IAEA inspectors have even visited Iran’s uranium mines. Iranian politicians compare its treatment as a signatory to the NPT with three nuclear armed nations that have not signed the NPT, Israel, India and Pakistan.²⁶ Each of these nations developed an indigenous nuclear weapons capability, Israel by 1968, India by 1974 and Pakistan by 1998. There is no provision in the Non-Proliferation Treaty or anywhere else that allows Non-Proliferation Treaty rights to be declared as forfeited. Indeed other US-allied nations which were caught conducting secret nuclear experiments have not been declared as having forfeited their NPT rights.

Present Status. On April 10, 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad²⁷ announced that Iran had successfully enriched uranium. President Ahmadinejad made the announcement in a televised address from the northeastern city of Mashad, where he said “I am officially announcing that Iran joined the group of those countries which have nuclear technology”. The uranium was enriched to 3.5% using over a hundred centrifuges. At this level it could be used in a nuclear reactor if enough of it was made²⁸. Uranium for a nuclear bomb would require around 90% enrichment and many thousands of centrifuges to be built

24. Nuclear programme of Iran. “Directive of U.S President Gerald Ford”. History. 1970s. Wikipedia. Internet: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_Program_of_Iran

25. For Tehran Nuclear programme is a matter of national pride. Yale Global. Internet: <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=5448>.

26. James Acton and Joanna Little, “The Use of Voluntary Safeguards to Build Trust in States Nuclear Programmes: The Case of Iran”. London, Verification Research Training and Information Centre, 2007. p.90 (VERTIC verification matters, no.8).

27. Michael Eisenstadt. “Iranian Nuclear Weapons (Part I): The Challenges of U.S. Preventive Action”. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2003. p.2 (Policy watch, #760). Part 2 by Michael Knights; part 3 by Jeffrey White.

28. Nuclear Programme of Iran. History, 2000 to August 2006. Wikipedia. Internet: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_program_of_Iran#Views_on_Iran.27s_Nuclear_Power_Program.

and operated. On April 13, 2006, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, that the Security Council must consider “strong steps” to induce Tehran to change course in its nuclear ambition.²⁹ President Ahmadi nejad vowed that Iran won't back away from uranium enrichment and that the world must treat Iran as a nuclear power, saying “Our path is very clear. We shall continue with our activities within the regulations of the IAEA and the NPT. According to international law, Iran has the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

IMPACT OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Nuclear Issues in the Middle East. The Middle East is a region with the highest number of conflicts since WWII compared to the rest of the world. These continuous conflicts were caused by deep-rooted problems that led to insecurity and political instability in most states.³⁰ The Lebanon and Palestine issues alone had led to eight wars since 1948 involving most Arab states, Iran and Israel. Added to the list are Iranian Revolution (1979), Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), Iraq invasion of Kuwait(1990), the Gulf War between the US and Iraq (1991) and finally the US invasion of Iraq (2003). Those were major wars that brought the region to the present level of conflict and security complication. Such insecurity that existed over a long period has resulted in an arms race of conventional and unconventional weapons between regional states.³¹ The fragile security environment is currently worsened by numerous regional states developing combinations of WMD such as nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. These states are also developing or acquiring long-range missile capability for the WMD delivery system.³² In addition, the presence of ‘the axis of evil’ and ‘the rogue states’ as branded by the US, such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria have increased the level of regional insecurity, as they are subjected to the US intervention that could harm the security in the Middle East. international organisations such as the UN and the IAEA are currently under pressure to take stern action against Iran's nuclear development programme.

International Concern on Iran's Nuclear Development Programme. International concern, especially by the UNSC and the US on Iran's nuclear development is mainly on its intention to build nuclear weapons. Through IAEA

29. Nicholas R.Burns. “A Conversation on Iran and U.S. National Security”. Washington, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution, February 14, 2007.

30. G. Baghat, Prospects for nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East, *World Affairs*,**169**(4), 2007, p.163

31. Ibid.

32. A.H. Cordesman, K. Al-Rodhan, and B. Roshan, Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East:The impact on the regional military balance, Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, Washington DC, 2005, Pp. 3-5

inspections, Iran's uranium enrichment activities conducted in a pilot enrichment plant can be used to develop weapon-grade material for nuclear weapon development. In an earlier inspection by the IAEA in 2003, small amounts of Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU)³³ particles were detected at the nuclear sites in Natanz pilot plant. Iran admitted that she had purchased some used uranium enrichment equipment from Pakistan³⁴ and claimed that the HEU particles found were contaminants from the used enrichment equipment.³⁵ Iran however, on 11 April 2006 admitted that they had actually conducted some enrichment research processes but had only enriched the uranium to 3.5% U-235, which is reactor-grade uranium (3% to 4% U-235) to produce safe nuclear energy.³⁶ Iran also admitted that she was pursuing a laser enrichment research that had already begun in the 1970s. The UNSC and the US concern over Iran's intention to develop nuclear weapons increased when Iran finally admitted in November 2005 that she was also being supplied with information on casting and machining of parts for nuclear weapons. Based on the current information gathered by the IAEA and on the 2005 US National Intelligence Estimate, the calculated earliest time that Iran may be able to build a nuclear weapon is in 2015.³⁷

Iran's Nuclear Development Programme and the Growing Insecurity in the Middle East. Iran's nuclear development has affected regional views on her role in the Middle East security. To discuss this issue further, it is very important to understand Iran's security role in the Middle East. Iran is building its defense industry to ensure self-sufficiency and military supremacy in order to achieve reliable strategic deterrence against its adversaries, regionally and internationally.³⁸ The complex relations between Iran-Arab, Iran-Israel and Arab-Israel are the main reasons for the complications in the Middle East security issues. The feeling of insecurity within the Middle East states is very high. On the other hand, the level of trust between states is very low.

33. High enriched uranium (HEU) is uranium enriched to 20% or above in the isotope U-235; low enriched uranium (LEU) is uranium enriched to between 0.72% and less than 20% U-235.

34. Ibid.

35. IAEA, The Islamic Republic of Iran and agency verification of Iran's suspension of enrichment-related and reprocessing activities for safeguards, 31 January 2006, Brief by the Deputy Director General, 2006.

36. S. Squassoni, Iran's nuclear program, p. 3

37. Calculations of nuclear weapons production are generally based on estimates of fissile material production. Assuming Iran has the necessary amount and quality of uranium hexafluoride to feed the enrichment plant, the necessary components for building 1000 or 3000 centrifuges, and the necessary engineering skills to keep such cascades operating with few mishaps and little downtime. A cascade of 1000 P-1 centrifuges could produce one bomb's worth of HEU (25 kg) in 2.2 to 2.7 months; and that a cascade of 3000 P-1 centrifuges could produce the same amount in 330 days. Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Iran's Strategic Weapons Programmes: A Net Assessment, Routledge, UK, 2005, p. 33

38. Ibid, p. 175

THE UNITED NATIONS' ROLE AND EXTRA-REGIONAL STATES' REACTIONS TOWARDS IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The uproar of Iran's nuclear development programme was generated by the US who is worried about WMD and nuclear weapon proliferation by its branded rogue state that could become supplier of such weapons to another branded rogue state or even worse, to other violent non-state actors. Taking measures from its 2001 Nuclear Posture Review, the US, supported by its strong allies the EU3, has demanded Iran to stop its nuclear programme through the UNSC and its professional body, the IAEA. The IAEA however, tends to be very diplomatic and patient in its actions against Iran's slow cooperation. Even some of the reports seem to contradict each other. In one report, the Director General of IAEA is saying that Iran is giving its cooperation to the IAEA, and free from developing weapon-grade material, but at the same time making a statement that there are still some nuclear activities that cannot be verified. These are the main reasons for the US dissatisfactions of the IAEA's conduct of inspections in the verification process. However, as of September 2007, the IAEA has given assurance that Iran has not conducted a process to produce nuclear weapons. Despite the US allegations that the IAEA is trying to cover-up Iran's non-compliance act, the Agency is actually trying to contain the situation from escalating to another military action. Since the US, Israel and France have given a stern warning of a possible military action against Iran, the IAEA is trying to avoid another Gulf War by buying time so that a diplomatic resolution can be achieved. The IAEA also believes that Iran's nuclear energy is for the good of world energy because as Iran continues to produce safe nuclear energy, she can still produce oil for the world and the US as the world top oil consumer. The Agency believes that Iran's nuclear problem should be solved using a soft approach because even if Iran is developing her nuclear weapon, she still has a long way to go. Therefore, if the international community is against a nuclear weapon Iran, enforcing sanctions of nuclear weapon material and technology is sufficient enough to ensure that Iran does not acquire any nuclear weapon capability. The 2003 Iraq invasion which was initially triggered by a nuclear non-proliferation initiative should be used as an example that use of force is a counter-productive action and will not help resolve the issue. Since the US has a high national interest stake in Iran's and the rest of the region's oil, it should begin to plan for a new initiatives to provide security guarantees to the Middle East by directly engaging Iran and stop the threatening strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Role of International Community. The International Community should mediate to ensure that Iran's nuclear crisis is resolved amicably. The Iran has the right to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purpose within the confines of NPT and her right must be respected. To ensure that Iran does not venture into nuclear weapons and cooperates with IAEA the efforts should be made through diplomatic channels. The issue must not be allowed to escalate to armed conflict as it would be disastrous for the international peace and security of Middle East.

Role of OIC. The OIC must play a vibrant role in pursuing Iran to restrict herself to acquiring nuclear technology for peaceful purpose only. Iran must not embark upon the program to acquire nuclear weapons of mass destruction as neither it is in Iran's interest nor in the interest of the region.

Response by GCC. The GCC countries must remain unified on their stance on Iran's nuclear program. The Iran should be pursued not to disturb the stability in Middle East.

Confidence Building Between Iran and Arab World. There is a need to build confidence between Iran and Arab World. There should be a composite dialogue between GCC countries and Iran and confidence building measures must be initiated to develop trust between Iran and the Arab World.

Responsible Attitude by Iran. The Iranian leadership must display responsible attitude. The policy of confrontation would neither help Iran nor Arab World. Iran must full cooperate with IAEA and should address the concerns of international community. Iran strictly adhere to the parameters of NPT and must not deviate.

Broad Based Security. There is a growing realization that regional and internal threats are most serious for the overall security of the Middle East. The Middle Eastern countries must think of developing a regional security mechanism to ensure that all their security concerns are addressed..

US-Iran Nuclear Stand Off. If the present US-Iran nuclear standoff escalates to an armed conflict, the situation will be very dangerous for entire Middle East. Therefore the GCC countries must persuade US and Iran to resolve the issue peacefully.

Resolution of Palestine Issue. The issue of Palestine must be resolved justly in accordance with the aspirations of Arab world. This is the fundamental cause of insecurity in Middle East. If this issue is resolved there will be issues like Iranian nuclear crisis as the security situation would be stabilized.

CONCLUSION

Iran's ignorance to the NPT Safeguard Agreement has caused itself to be in a tangle of international pressure, sanctions and possible military action that have affected her international relations with regional and extra-regional states.

Iran's nuclear development programme is currently the world's primary security issue, receiving huge international and media attention that has overcome other Middle East security issues such as the Iraq and the Palestine issues.

From the study conducted, this thesis submits that Iran's nuclear facilities have reached a technological stage that it can be used to produce weapon-grade material. However, as insisted by Iran, her nuclear facilities have not been deviated to produce nuclear weapons except for peace purposes. In fact, the enriched uranium produced is still too far below weapon-grade that it confirms expert opinion's time line on Iran's capability to produce weapon-grade nuclear material.

Iran is currently giving full cooperation to the IAEA and all her nuclear facilities and products are currently under the IAEA safeguards and surveillance. However, Iran has no intention to abandon her nuclear development programme.

At the regional level, Iran has emerged as the strongest threat to Israel after the fall of the Saddam regime in Iraq. With Iran's support to the Hezbollah, Israel is currently vulnerable to Hezbollah's missile attacks supplied by Iran. Therefore, when Iran continues to develop her uranium enrichment programme, Israel decided to take preventive measures to deny Iran's capability because it is multiplying the threat to Israel. As a first step, Israel has warned Iran on a pre-emptive strike if Iran continues to pursue with the nuclear development programme.

In the mean time, the security issues between Iran and the Arabs, which have been in existence from on-going disputes is further aggravated when Iran began to threaten the Arab leadership by expanding her influence in Iraq, by supporting the Hezbollah and Hamas to fight against the Israelis. However, the GCC member states, even though concerned about Iran's domination of military power within the Muslim states, do not discuss much of the matter except for worry over nuclear contamination.

With the above mentioned situations, Iran's pursuit to develop her nuclear development programme has achieved the technological capability to develop weapon-grade material. This has great impact over the current security situations and is adding more problems to the volatile Middle East security.

This study concludes that Iran's nuclear development programme that has achieved a technological capability to produce weapon-grade material. It has contributed to the increase of insecurity level of many Middle East states thus affecting the regional security. It has also changed the status quo relations by increasing the level of insecurity of regional and extra regional states. With Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan issues in hand, the Iranian nuclear issue has added more political instability and worsened the security in the region.

Finally, on a broader scope, the turmoil and uncertainty of the Iran's nuclear development programme affects the world's speculative oil prices. Any positive or negative changes affect the world's economy.

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