Spring 2019

Understanding Iran: Attempts at Unravelling the Structures That Determine Iranian State Behaviour

Simran Gupta
Bard College

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Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

By

Simran Gupta

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Right before the events of the Iranian Revolution Iran used to be one of America's biggest allies in the Middle East. According to historian James A. Bill stated: "Few international relationships, have had a more positive beginning than that which characterized Iranian-American contacts for more than a century."[1] Under Mohammad Reza Shah Iran aligned itself with the western bloc during the cold war. Throughout his reign, Reza Shah was championing western values and education systems within Iran[2] and agreeing to join an anti-Soviet pact sponsored by the Eisenhower administration[3], which placed him in the same camp with Israel against much of the Arab world. When he nearly lost power in the early 1950s, the CIA worked with him and MI6 in orchestrating a coup within Iran that helped secure his position.[4]

The removal of the Shah during the 1979 revolution shocked the world. Even though there was some clear evidence that different groups within Iran ranging from clerics, students and workers were unhappy with him, the CIA was confident that he would remain in power.[5] It was during the revolution that the fate of American-Iranian relations were sealed. The Iranian Hostage crisis occurred during the revolution, where the American embassy was held hostage for 444 days

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[1] John Dumbrell and Axel R. Schäfer, *America's 'Special Relationships': Foreign and Domestic Aspects of the Politics of Alliance* (London: Routledge, 2009), 154.

[2] Shokrollah Hamdhaidar, "Education during the Reign of the Pahlavi Dynasty in Iran (1941–1979).," *Teaching in Higher* Education *13*, no. 1 (2008).

[3] The Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)." U.S. Department of State Archive

[4] Ebrahimiam, Bethany Allen. "64 Years Later, CIA Finally Releases Details of Iranian Coup." *Foreign Policy*, June 20, 2017.

[5] 1. Gasiorowski J. Mark, "The Causes of Iran's 1953 Coup: A Critique of Darioush Bayandor, Iran and the CIA," *Iranian Studies* 45, no. 7 (2012

by a group of protesters. Till date, the US has no diplomatic presence in Iran as a direct result of the hostage crisis.[6]

The hostage crisis that occurred during protests that were a part of the revolution resulted in the construction of the current Iranian regime as an enemy of the US. Along with cutting all diplomatic ties, heavy sanctions were also put on Iran. Recently, Recently, Iran, North Korea, and Iraq were the three states in the Axis of Evil according to George Bush after 9/11. Even though it was difficult to see a connection between the Sunni attackers and the Shi'i Iranian state. Bush gave the world a clear choice: "you're either with us or against us." Iran was clearly not given that choice in particular. As a state in the "Axis of Evil," Iran was not with the US and was therefore against them.[7] You can see this kind of mistrust in the reaction to President Obama's peace talks with Iran. The transformation of Iran as a pro-West state to a theocracy has made it hard to discuss Iranian politics without a certain level of bias.

Even though the US had cut off all diplomatic relations with Iran, it could not avoid Iran on the world stage. As one of the most powerful states in the Middle East, America's middle east policy has to deal with Iran. After 1979 American has switched between threats of force, sanctions and economic incentives to influence Iranian behavior. Madeleine Albright then the American Secretary of State met the Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi at the UN for the first time since the events of the 1979 revolution. Even though nothing much came from these talks and the US went on to accuse Iran of being directly involved in bombing a Saudi American military base. Engagement with Iran became critical when its nuclear program was revealed.

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[6] Office of the Historian, The Iranian Hostage Crisis, H.R. Doc.
[7] Bush, George. "2002 State of the Union Address." Speech, Congress, Washington DC, January 29, 2002.

Moreover, since this revelation, the pattern of threats and incentives to influence Iranian behavior have continued.[8]

Currently, Iran is one of the most influential actors in the Syrian crisis and has been a major part of several negotiations.Therefore, the US has to consider its policy decisions very carefully, and certain decisions can have substantial implications on longterm American-Iranian decisions. In April 2018, President Donald Trump labeled Iran's Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a 'terror group'. This is the first time the US has formally labeled another country's military as a "terrorist group." In response, the Iranian government labeled the American military as a terrorist group. The IRGC is a very important actor in Iran and plays a significant role in its nuclear decisions. The IRGC's role in Iran is highlighted in the constitution, and the commander of the IRGC directly reports to the Supreme Leader. Policy decisions like this showcase an inherent misunderstanding of the Iranian state.[9]

Imagine a meeting of the National Security Council advising the President on a deal about the Iranian nuclear programs. For every suggestion that is made, there has to be some form of logical explanation behind it. The American foreign policy decision-making apparatus is deliberately constructed in a way that the different branches of government act as a check for the activity of the other. "The Constitution has been described as an invitation to struggle between the President and Congress over the making of foreign policy. Compared to every other liberal

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[8] *Al Jazeera*. "Timeline: Iran-US Relations." June 25, 2009.
[9] Natasha Turak. "How Trump's Terrorist Designation of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Impacts Its Economy." *CNBC*, CNBC, 12 Apr. 2019

democracy, the U.S. conducts foreign policy in a cumbersome way. Safeguards built into the Constitution prevent tyranny, yet they frequently pit Congress against the executive branch."[10]

The goal here is to ensure that all foreign policy decisions that are made by the American state are in line with American interests and not partisan interests. Different branches of the government debate and advice each other to produce foreign policy. This system will then lead to a discourse where an individual proposing a policy will have to convince others within this system that if we take x course of action, it will result in y as the product and will, therefore, benefit the United States and secure its interests. Because foreign policy decisions are related to a different country or different countries, the result y would also depend on the response from the country/countries the policy is directed towards. Once you factor in possible responses from the other country/countries another element has to be added to the foreign policy discourse and the product becomes more complicating. Now policymakers have to prove how the x course of action would result in z course of action by the target country and therefore produce the desired result y. To predict the target countries behavior, policymakers can draw from different sources of information. These sources of information can range from negotiations with the target country, history with the target country, intelligence collected by intelligence agencies and advice from political scientists. The amalgamation of information from these sources informs foreign policy decisions by elements within the American foreign policy decision-making apparatus. Now take a country like Iran, if American foreign policy makers draw purely from US historical relations

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[10] How U.S. Foreign Policy Is Made." Foreign Policy Association.

with the current Iranian state, it will account for Iran as an unreliable and hostile state in most case scenarios.

The goal of this paper is to determine if Iran is a rational actor and to determine the basis of its rationality. If Iran is categorized as an unpredictable and unreliable state, more coercive and isolation based foreign policy decisions would make the most sense. However, if an effort is made to understand the state's rationality there can be more effective policies that would be more likely to produce the behavior policy makers desire without causing more instability in the international community.

The next three chapters will try to understand the rationality behind the decisions that the Iranian states make. The first chapter will be focusing on the problematic aspects behind realist assumptions and the Iranian state, The goal of the combination of the introduction and the chapters is to prove to the reader that by looking at the Iranian state through away from a realist framework we can get a richer understanding of Iranian interests and foreign policy decisions.

International Relations as a field sees itself as a social science that exists to help the society. To help produce a more stable order IR theories need to help hegemonic powers like the US understand states like Iran. IR scientists recognize the notion that uncertainty leads to instability, and their research is dedicated to understanding this uncertainty. The second chapter will look at how the Iranian state has securitized its structure as a product of the Iranian revolution while the final chapter will look at how the Iranian decision- making apparatus functions, with a focus on nuclear weapons.

CHAPTER 1

Is it impossible to understand and predict Iranian state behavior? Is Iran an irrational state? Members from both Iranian and American governments have vocally expressed their distrust for the other country. US National Security Advisor Anthony Lake called Iran a rogue state in 1994[11]; Henry Kissinger asked Iran to decide whether Iran was a country or a cause. [12] While these statements can be looked at as a result of the political inclinations of the people who made them, claims like this are in line with how realists can describe the Iranian state in the field of international relations. Iran is a revolutionary Islamic state. When trying to understand or explain Iranian state behavior, both its Islamic and Revolutionary nature need to be taken into account. Otherwise, Iranian behavior can be described as irrational and, therefore, no particular method will be successful in understanding or predicting Iranian state behavior. This chapter will be focusing on realism and the implications of the assumptions that realists make when it comes to studying of states like Iran. The goal of this chapter is to understand the validity of an inherently 'eurocentric' realist framework on 'East-centric' actors like Iran and to challenge the realist assertion of universality in its applicability.

The field of International Relations tries to help produce tools that can help describe state behavior. The direct influence of IR academia on policy is not very clear and is heavily debated,

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[11] Lake, Anthony. "Confronting Backlash States." *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1994.
[12] Shehab Khan "Henry Kissinger Warns Destroying Isis Could Lead to 'Iranian Radical Empire'." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 7 Aug. 2017.

but you can see some usage of the language developed by IR theorists in the policy discourse. IR as a discipline self-categorizes itself as a social science. The goal of any social science is contributing to our understanding of society by utilizing a scientific methodology. There can be multiple paths through which IR theorists can influence foreign policy. They can help advice policy makers through think tanks and consultancy firms, or they can just become foreign policymakers.[13]

The interesting thing about the field of IR is that it is not a 'vague holistic' entity. IR scientists are trying to make sense of world order. As a social science, the goal of the theories developed by IR scientists needs to be generalizable and contribute to society overall. The field is not homogenous; multiple researchers are looking at different events. "Some people are close, and some are distant from policymaking. However, the various places are in a mass of partly competing and partly complementary programmes which, if they were all present in one person, or, indeed, in a few, would represent extreme psychological disturbance." [14] Political scientists develop and work with theories that explain state behavior. In social science, there is an expectation of developing theories that can be generalized and applied in different scenarios. A historian and a political scientist might study the same event and even have the same goal to understand the factors that led up to this particular event. However, while history as a discipline does not support generalizing conclusions from one historical event to another, political scientists

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[13] Michael Nicholson, "What's the Use of International Relations?," *International Studies* 26, no. 2 (April 2000), JSTOR.
[14] Michael Nicholson, "What's the Use of International Relations?,"186

science uses these events as empirical evidence to support and develop theories that can be generalized.[15]

Realism is one of the oldest if not the oldest theories in the field of international relations. It continues to define the discipline. Realism provides a state-centric framework in which states are rational actors making security maximizing decisions. According to the realist theoretical framework, the international order in anarchic and there is no single global governance. A state's main goal in the system is to survive, and the only way a state can guarantee its survival is by maximizing its power. A regional hegemon is the most secure state in the system. However, to maintain its status in the system, it needs to prevent the rise of any other regional hegemons. In this way, great powers only worry about other great powers, and smaller states don't play an important role in the study of the system. This is a very basic framework that focuses on the survival of the state; any other action is perceived as unnecessary and potentially harmful. Realism "sets itself up as a no-nonsense practical science of international politics."[16]It tries to explain the international system through a bare minimum. Realism tries to explain state behavior in an anarchic setting based on human nature. While critics of realism have called it, outdated proponents of the theory have stated: "Human nature has not changed since the days of classical antiquity."[17] However, these classical theories that describe human nature come from a period where all humans were not looked at or treated the same. If realism is trying to provide a universal framework for understanding state behavior based on states behaving rationally, it will

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[15] . Charles A. McCkelland, "The Function of Theory in International Relations," *The Place of Theory in the Conduct and Study of International Relations* 4, no. 3: 303

[16] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), [6], digital file.

[17] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*,9

be producing the idea of irrational and rogue actors because they do not behave in a manner in line with a very specific notion of human behavior.

IR theories borrow from various disciplines while trying to make their analytical frameworks. An interesting theme in IR theories -- realism, constructivism, and liberalism -- is the usage of terms and concepts borrowed from psychology. For example, in IR language States can either exist within an international order or an international community. The term community has a social aspect to it. Inanimate objects do not form a community; communities are formed of individuals. Therefore, if we look at the international order as a community, states act as individuals living within that community. The main feature of this community within the realist framework is that it exists in a state of anarchy. In other words, the individuals living in this particular community do not have a central authority governing them. Therefore, in their attempt to answer the question of why do states behave the way that they do behaviors take is a cognitive analysis. The very usage of the term state behavior within certain theory reduces the state to an individual. You are not looking at domestic politics, individual leaders, political beliefs, regime types but instead creating a community of individual actors (states) that are making decisions and behaving in a particular way. The state is the object of analysis. However, because states are comprised of people, IR theorists like Realists try to understand how would an individual behave in an anarchic model.

An example of applying cognitive decision-making models in realism is the utilization of game theory in explaining state behavior in realism. The game theory is designed to understand decision making in social contests. Here individual actors are making decisions based on understanding how individual agents would behave in different scenarios. The game theory treats

these individual agents as rational actors who are thinking about the best possible course of action

to take, based on their assumptions on what the other actor they are dealing with is thinking. The

game theory is a predictive theory – it that predicts individual behavior in an interactive setting.

IR theorists have used it also to predict state behavior. Here, the state is treated as a cohesive

decision-making unit. The model does not look at the nature of the leadership within the state but

instead just focuses on the interactive setting the states are in. Prisoner's Dilemma is one of a

standard example of a game and how conditions influence individuals to make decisions that

would not benefit them.[18]

The usage of the Prisoner's Dilemma to explain state behavior has become a norm in realist

literature. In the prisoner's dilemma, two prisoners have committed a crime together. They are

separated, and given the following options, if one of them confesses, he is given a lighter

sentence, and the other one receives a harsher sentence and if none of them confess they both can

get away with the crime. The prisoners are not allowed to interact with one another. If they don't

confess and the other prisoner confesses first, they would have the risk of receiving a harsher

sentence, but there is also a chance that if the other prisoner does not confess and they can get

away with no punishment. Here they have to make their decision based on what they think the

other prisoner will do. Some IR theories like realism use the Prisoner's Dilemma as an

explanation of how a state feels in an anarchic setting. The main factor affecting the prisoner's

decision is the situation the prisoner is in. The goal of this theory is to provide the most probable

outcomes based on this situation. Another criteria for this decision is that the prisoner does not

care about the wellbeing of the other prisoner and would not have any limitations in confessing

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[18] 1. Duncan Snidal, "The Game Theory of International Politics", *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (October 1985)

and letting the other prisoner take a longer sentence. There has to be a clear sense of self, the other and the imminent threat of a longer sentence that is driving action here. These cognitive assumptions are then placed on states as actors, whereby the virtue of sovereignty they can identify a self, another and a similar understanding of threats to their survival.

Therefore when this theory is used to determine probable state behavior, the main factors affecting the state's decision-making process is what it believes is the way that how the other states in the international community will possibly behave, and what foreign policy decisions will increase the chances of its survival in the international community. As a rational actor, the prisoner's desired outcome is the shortest sentence possible. While he gains the most from coordinating with the other prisoner and not talking, he can lose the most by not talking if the other prisoner has the intention to talk. Another assumption in the Prisoner's dilemma is that both individuals value their freedoms over the wellbeing of the other prisoner. Who they are, what crime they have committed, their individual beliefs and backgrounds do not matter. The same logic is applied to states by realists. In a zero-sum game, where a state's survival depends on the decisions made by other actors in the system it will make decisions that will maximize the chances of its survival. Realists can then identify the scenarios in which the survival of the state is maximized and then predict the possible ways that it would behave. In the prisoner's dilemma, the uncertainty about the other prisoner's actions drives them to confess and receive a shorter sentence rather than to rely on an uncertain collaboration. The same logic is applied to state behavior. The application of the Prisoner's Dilemma is one of the many examples of using anthropomorphic models to explain state behavior.[19]

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[19] Snidal, "The Game Theory of International Politics", 26

States are reduced to anthropomorphic rational actors. This logic is used to explain wars, international treaties, and other state behaviors. Even if a state would benefit from cooperating with another state, it might not cooperate with the state because doing so might also risk the chances of its survival more. This logic is used by realists to explain the Security Dilemma. In order to to be more secure in an anarchic world, a state would grow its military arsenal, as a result of this other states in the system would feel more insecure and therefore increase their military arsenal, this would lead to an arms race where all countries within the system would get even more insecure, and the overall system would become unstable. You could identify several key assumptions in the security dilemma. These assumptions are the core of realism. The states exist in a state of uncertainty, their main goal is to guarantee their survival by maximizing their power, and they are rational actors.[20] These assumptions are treating the state as an individual who is making maximizing rational decisions. Predictions are made based on what would a person do when he is in this particular position. Different schools of thoughts in IR complicate the simple security analysis by adding dimensions like norms and identities within their predictive theories.[21]

As discussed before is one of the most enduring and potentially the oldest theory in International Relations. One of the reasons for its longevity is the assertion that human nature is inherently unchangeable. It has been described as a 'big tent, with room for several different theories', as a framework.[22] As the field of international relations is filled with debates about how these debates addressed is reflective of how realism sees itself as a very basic framework. Constructivism looks at the production of norms and the production of identities as a function of

[20] Donnelly, *Realism and International*, 9
[21] ibid 30
[22] Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?,'" *Security Studies* 6 (1996): 26

learned behaviors. The basis of constructivism lies in the social construct theory. According to

constructivists, the international community is not naturally anarchic. The anarchy and the

self-help nature of the states is a product of norms that are constructed by the actors within the

system. It challenges the notion of the structure of the international as being the detrimental factor

in analyzing state behavior. The structure of the system is a result of the decisions made by the

states within the system. Alexander Wendt critiques the realist model for treating identities of

individuals as exogenous to the decision making the process. In an anarchic order, states would

have no other option but to act as self-help agents. Therefore, when the structure is taken as a

given or natural order, then realist theory is the only one that makes sense and state behavior can

be predicted by focusing on the self-help nature of the state. [23]

    However, if the structure of the international community is analyzed as a result of different

behaviors within the system the grounds for predicting that behavior changes. If you remove the

assumption of anarchy being the natural state of the international community, then there are other

factors you can look at. How states behave in the international community can be analyzed

through patterns of behaviors in the system that have produced norms. Like realists,

constructivists are also drawing from theories of human behavior especially social constructivism.

Social constructivism analyses human behavior under the assumption that our reality is a

construction of human activity. Knowledge and learning are also products of this constructed

reality and the lessons learned by engaging in social activities.

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[23] Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of
   Power Politics." *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992)

"Communications and interactions entail socially agreed-upon ideas of the world and the social patterns and rules of language use (Ernest, 1999). Construction of social meanings, therefore, involves intersubjectivity among individuals. Social meanings and knowledge are shaped and evolve through negotiation within the communicating groups (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Any personal meanings shaped through these experiences are affected by the intersubjectivity of the community to which the people belong".[24]

Our interactions are governed by rules that have been determined by previous behaviors. These rules have been established by what behaviors are deemed okay or not okay. Some social contracts are legally binding but some are not, but we still follow them. This is a product of human nature. If two people are speaking to each other in a room full of other people having other conversations simultaneously, they will try to lower their voices. Nothing is obligating them to keep their voices down, but this is a product of learned social behaviors. These people are choosing to follow these rules in an anarchic setting where no central authority is governing their behavior. [25]

The norms that govern state behaviors in the international community can be seen as the same norms or social contracts that people form. One example of this is nuclear proliferation. Nuclear weapons are the most effective deterrents but why don't more states have them? This is because of the norms that govern the international community has constructed it as a taboo. One hundred eighty-nine states in the international community have signed the NPT. There was a collective agreement in the international community about five legitimately having nuclear weapons states while the rest of them would not. The states that have not signed the treaty or have pursued nuclear weapons are states that are not behaving according to the norms set by the

[24] Kim, B. (2001). Social constructivism. In M. Orey (Ed.), Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology
[25] Wend, Alexander "Anarchy"400

international community. However, the presence of nuclear weapons in India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel can be seen as exceptions that prove the rule. These countries prove that any country can acquire a nuclear weapon, but most countries in the international community have chosen not to do so because of the norms that were produced in the international community. Another example of construction in the international community is the notion of sovereignty. Sovereignty is a norm in the current order. Wars and interventions are not seen as norms in the current order. When a state infringes another state's' sovereignty, there is a reaction from the international community. Even if the reaction does not compound to any form of action from the community, the reaction proves that a norm does exist. To become a member of the international community, your sovereignty has to be recognized by the other members of the international community.

For constructivists, states engage with each other based on preset rules. Like realists, the state is the object of analysis. Another example of personification of the state in constructivism is how states choose which state is a friend they want to deal with or a foe. For the US Canada is a friend, but Cuba was a foe. This was not established because of a natural order but through historical interaction between the two states. Some Realists will argue that the norms are a function of power in the international community and what constructivists do not necessarily contradict realist theory. Actors behave according to the social constructs that have been defined and set by the hegemonic actors within the international community and act according to them. States are not pursuing nuclear weapons because powerful actors within the international community have set the rule because they have the normative power to set these norms. "Lying at the heart of a realist perspective on human nature, even before power or fear, is the observation

that human beings are a social species."[26] A state is acting out fear of other states in the system; this is happening in an inherently social setting because it is based on the interaction of actors within a system. Moreover, it is the social aspect of human nature is the driving force that is responsible for the decisions made by states. Moreover, states that do not behave according to this can be described as rogues for constructivists or as irrational actors by realists.

However, the idea of an unchanging concept of human nature is problematic when you take into account that the geographical center for realism was mid-twentieth century United States with the contribution of scholars from France and England. "They shared a common humanistic worldview in the sense that they had received similar extensive secondary schooling in liberal arts and they believed that people could only experience themselves as human beings by engaging with others in the public sphere."[27]There was a clear distinction of a self and the other, in realist this basic idea has been translated to how states see themselves. These realists were motivated by ideas that were formed in the west and shaped through experiences in the west. These ranged from Thucydides during the times of the Peloponnesian War or Machiavelli during the Renaissance Wars. Many Western and Eastern Philosophers have tried to answer the question of how would man behave in an anarchic setting when trying to identify key aspects of human nature. The state of nature question touches upon the issue of 'How would a man behave when there is no rule of law when he has to fend for himself and when he is in an anarchic setting like a forest. Realists look at works by Hobbes, Nietzsche, and Freud from which they take the image of

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[26] Nexon, Daniel. "Constructivist Realism or Realist-Constructivism?" International Studies Perspectives, 2004.
[27] David Orsi and Max Nurnus, eds., *Realism in Practice: An Appraisal* (E-International Relations, 2018), 7, digital file.

a man who solely makes decisions that will help him survive in hostile conditions.[28] Even within realists, there has been a debate about the role of human nature in political theory between classical realists who emphasize human nature and structural realists who emphasize the role of the structure of the international community and the balance of powers. However, Kenneth Waltz who has been dubbed as the father of structural realism stated that "The influence behind my preference [balance-power] is partly Immanuel Kant and partly Reinhol Niebuhr...Niebuhr concluded his dim view of human nature that domestically and internationally the ends of security and decency are served better by balanced than by concentrated power. "[29] The security dilemma as discussed previously stems from the Game Theory and is social in nature. This shows that structural realism is not inherently independent of a degree of analysis of human nature stemming from western philosophy.

As a discursive tradition, different theories in IR have been developed by building on each other or debating other theories. However, this core issue of where does this concept of human nature comes from or where does our basis of rationality come from. These assumptions of human nature cannot be taken for granted because they are not universal. They just became universal by who wrote them and where they were written. The notion of an imperfect human comes primarily from western Christian thought "sinfulness, and human frailty necessitates the mercy and help of God for the attainment of the final goal." However, In Hinduism man can be perfect and Hindu doctrines "embrace the view that human perfection, understood as a state of enlightenment and freedom from rebirth, must occur on earth in a human body, so much so that reincarnation back into the world is the necessary presupposition to ensure the achievability of the goal." Western

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[28] Orsi and Nurnus, *Realism in Practice*,7.

[29] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 8

and Eastern philosophers have both tried to answer the state of nature question. For Hobbes, humans need an order by submitting to a sovereign to form a civil society, because in the state of nature, i.e. in a condition without government. Because in a state of nature "no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[30]

In contrast to this Ibn Tufayl wrote about the state of nature in Hayy ibn Yaqzan about a "boy who grows up on a remote island, alone and without contact to human civilization, and who finds God solely through intellectual endeavor." Ibn Tufayl has a lasting legacy in both Islamic and western thoughts. He was inspired by Sufism and his book is reflects concepts from the Quran and Arabic-Islamic philosophy. "It holds that, while human life is an expression of the perfection of God, who has revealed his essence in Creation the ideal of a "complete" or even "perfect" human being cannot come to fruition unless an individual's are linked to his or her God-given mind."[31] Here the experience in the state of nature is not just driven by self-interest but self inquiry, and the relationship between the self and God is one of the factors driving human action. Because their version of a self-interested human being that is making its decisions based on survival in an anarchic setting are informed by philosophy stemming from a Judeo-Christianic world and there is a complete dismissal of alternative explanations stemming from different

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[30] Charles Edward Merriam, "Hobbes's Doctrine of the State of Nature," *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 3 (1906): 150
[31] Sebastian Gunther, "Ibn Tufayl's Philosophical Novel Hayy Ibn Yaqzan and the Quest for Englightenment in Classical Islam" (lecture transcript, Indiana University, April 15, 2014).

cultures that had different systems of knowledge. While Nietzsche was known for his sustained

criticism on Christianity, his work still existed within the Christian structure. This is important

because in after Said's *Orientalism*[32] several fields have gone through a period of self analysis and

tried to produce frameworks that would help address the biases that had been Said had discussed.

Fields that operated under the assumption of objectivity realised the element of bias introduced by

the nature of the source material they had been using.

Hobbes' work in itself had a very explicit civilizational bias. He was trying to speculate how

humans would behave when there are no social contracts and when there is a complete absence of

any governing body, through his analysis he is producing a hostile reality where man is

responsible for ensuring his survival, and all his actions can then be compounded on the basis of

survival, "it because it is at least possible that virtually anything might be judged necessary for

one's preservation, this theoretically limited right of nature becomes in practice an unlimited right

to potentially anything, or, as Hobbes puts it, a right to all things. He contrasts this to a civilized

society because the state of nature is a constant state of war where all men are making private

judgments, therefore to avoid this chaotic state of nature and submit to a mutually recognized

public authority."[33] Hobbes is an interesting link between constructivists and realists because his

works have also laid the foundation of the social construct theory. In a civilized society, people

behave based on social constructs and norms, and their actions are not purely based on human

nature but inform their decisions based on constructed ideas like 'good' and 'bad'. "They are

curious about the causes of events and anxious about their futures; according to Hobbes, these

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[32] Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books

[33] Lloyd, Sharon A. and Sreedhar, Susanne, "Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

characteristics incline people to adopt religious beliefs, although the content of those beliefs will differ depending upon the sort of religious education one has happened to receive."[34] There is a civilizational bias in Hobbes writings, and he writes about the savage in pockets of America were still in the state of nature. His conception of the savage and civilized shows a linear path from one to the other. Civilization is the better structure, and the savage will eventually move towards this model. The notion of civilizing a backward group of people eventually became the philosophy justifying communism. Christianity also came in as a tool to civilize savage populations. Now that we have reached a point in the western academic discourse where the problematic aspects of the distinction between the savage and the civilized are being addressed. Hobbes used savage communities as an example of the state of nature and then used their state as an example of the simplest state of human existence in an anarchic, unlike his civilized society that functioned based on customs and norms. Realism and those who criticize realism as a theory need to address this bias in its foundational logic.

Whether realists are overemphasizing the centrality of human nature has been debated, but the reliance on the unchanging state of human nature needs to be addressed. Because how we studied and wrote about the 'savage' world has changed, and the concepts that we had taken for granted as being universal are not universal but products of a Eurocentric view of the world. We can confidently state that human beings are social by nature and from an evolutionary perspective survival is the primary goal of any species, but survival in a biological perspective means the ability to reproduce. These are two elements of human nature that we can safely take as being true, but as a social creature there can be multiple mechanisms driving human actions, as

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[34] ibid

discussed above alternate and supplementary explanations about human nature exist outside the Western world. Islamic and Hindu philosophies don't place the idea of being good as exogenous to human nature. Human beings are capable of being good as a product of the cyclic nature of life in Hinduism, while according to the Quran and within certain schools of Islamic philosophy they can reach close to perfection through self-inquiry and accessing the information that God has created them with through self-inquiry. However, the image of an inherently flawed and selfish human being is a direct product of Christian thought, that necessitates these imperfections to explain a merciful God who guides and forgives in the attainment of a person's final goal.

By paying attention to other philosophical approaches to human nature outside the Western world, there is an emphasis on an internal struggle that produces behaviors. In this context no clear sense of self is bound; there are infinite versions of the self that can be accessed. While Hinduism and Islam had been dubbed as savage religions that were products of savage societies that had been yet to be civilized they produced radically different explanations of human nature, even though according to Hobbes these societies were the very examples of humans in the natural state. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to define human nature by conducting a thorough survey of Eastern and Western philosophers to produce a potential well-rounded explanation of human nature, it invites the reader to question the basis of the dismissal or non-inclusion of Eastern philosophies in the realist framework that is meant to describe how the entire international community function. A more nuanced understanding of human nature can help produce a richer explanation of how states behave. International Relations is what Said would describe as a secular field, and realists emphasize the notion that things like religion and domestic politics are exogenous to foreign policy decisions. However, the theory itself does not address

that it by excluding East-centric voices as sources of information, it has already attached itself to a Judeo-Christian worldview and originates from works by philosophers writing in a Judeo-Christian structure. Therefore actors that do not make cognitive decisions that are in line with this particular model are deemed irrational. Another example of taking from Judeo-Christian structures is that the idea of a rational actor comes directly from Enlightenment. Enlightenment was a period where there was a push towards using reason and rationality to question existing system, actors made rational decisions that were not based on existing norms that were socially binding, but instead it produced "a criterion of rational validity which acts as a standards against which opinions and convictions can be upheld by rational examination."[35]

During the Enlightenment, there was an emphasis on reason and the mechanisms of reason. Hobbes describes humans as rational actors making decisions to ensure survival in a setting without any social constructs in the context of the discourse during the enlightenment period. When we look at a state like Iran, the Supreme Leader along with all the clerics have taken rigorous courses on logic. "Islamic logic is largely Aristotelian logic as systemized by Avicenna." [36] Islamic logic or the discourse around logic in the Islamic world influenced by the Greeks started in the 8th century, landmark works by Avicenna in Arabic and then the subsequent critiques to the works of Avicenna. During their training in places like Qom, clerics start learning logic and philosophy from the age of 12; they have an intense, rigorous course load in school logic that has been a stable tradition in the Islamic world since the 8th century. The most powerful agents making decisions in Iran are heavily trained in logic. Therefore, there must be a rational

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[35] Axel Honneth, "Enlightenment and Rationality," *The Journal of Philosophy* 84, no. 11 (1987): 170.
[36] John Walbridge, "Logic in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition: The Recent Centuries," *Islamic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 60,

explanation behind Iranian decisions, but this rationality might be more in line with the original Enlightenment conceptions of rationality that rejects existing structures but instead focuses on reason through self-inquisition. Therefore even though Iran exists in a Westphalian state system, where sovereignty and borders are defining features of a state, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a radically different state than the state that existed before 1979 and is a direct product of a struggle (revolution) against its predecessor.

Even though realism treats identity as exogenous to foreign policy decision making there is a very clear sense of self and the other, there is a very clear definition of security and rational decisions are based on this sense of self and other. Realism assumes that states have a clear sense of self. The decisions they make and the behaviors they learn are based on this sense of self. A state is defined as a government, boundaries, a population, and control over the population. This is a Westphalian notion of a state comes from 1648 after the 30 years war and is seen as the birth of the international community that IR theorists study and is a direct product of a Eurocentric history but is treated as a universally accepted concept. .The actions and behaviors of these states work are analyzed through a Westphalian sense.[37] The actor that is making a decision is a Westphalian sovereign state. A state that participates and consciously thinks of itself by the territory it controls. Domestic politics is separate from international relations because in the international arena a state is interacting with other states that work and exist independently. We need to acknowledge that it might be problematic if realism takes for granted that every state has a sense of self that is tied to the Westphalian concept and therefore it is the primary actor under analysis when it comes to predicting state behavior. The most powerful actor in Iran, the Supreme

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[37] Peter M. R. Stirk, "The Westphalian Model and Sovereign Equality," *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2012): 641

Leader is not an agent who serves Iranian interests, but instead, his role is to guide the Iranian government on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. While the Iranian government is responsible for making actual foreign policy decisions, the Supreme Leader's advice is binding to the state. This does not mean that the Iranian state exists independent of the international community, the brutal Iraq-Iran war right after the birth of the Islamic Republic instilled the importance of securing the state's borders through deterrence, but the Iranian government has to follow the guidance of the Supreme Leader which complicates the narrative and therefore shows how another form of reason that is used by Iran to make rational decisions.[38]

Why does this matter? Because Realism tries to provide the model in which we understand and study state behavior. It is through this framework that we recognize rogue and irrational states. In an uncertain world states and policymakers do not want to interact or depend on states that are unreliable and unpredictable. An unpredictable and unreliable state translates to instability in the international system. IR theory and models do not do much when it comes to appeasing state leaders when it comes to unpredictable states. If the field recognized the problematic assumptions in the very basic aspects of its theories, then it would be able to give policymakers a better understanding of the country they need to deal with. Through the next two chapters, I want to directly challenge or add another dimension to implied assumptions about the Iranian state behavior to determine if we included Iran's revolutionary and theological nature, under the realist framework would we be able to observe any patterns of rationality.

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[38] Berenskoetter, Felix. 2017 "Identity in International Relations." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. 2 May. 2019.

CHAPTER 2

According to realism, domestic politics is exogenous to foreign policy decisions. Domestic politics are separate from foreign policy decisions because the states are interacting with other sovereign states and its these interactions that directly impact foreign policy decisions. A state identifies itself by its territory and borders. Different mechanisms function for decisions made inside and outside these borders. For realists in the international arena, state decisions are made purely for survival. Here survival means protection from outside intervention and attacks. However, the Iranian state existed well before the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It already had a well- defined territory, the state building process after 1979 did not concern itself much around the protection of its territory but around the protection of the ideas of the revolution and the revolution itself. In this chapter, the existence of a military force that works both domestically and internationally to protect the revolution shows how the current Iranian state ties its survival to the continuation of the revolution. Protection of its territory from the international community is not the primary driver of Iranian foreign policy decisions. Here Iran is not operating purely as a Westphalian state that exists by its territory, but instead, it is operating as a revolutionary state that already had a territory but exists by a revolution. By being a recognized member of the international community, Iran is a state. However, it does not behave like a 'normal' state because our conceptions of a normal state and its interests limit our understanding

and analysis of states like Iran. In this chapter, I will be looking at the idea of how the state has securitized any threats to the ideas of the 1979 Revolution as threats to its very existence.

The term government generally refers to "holders of authority, the members of the cabinet, and more generally to the authority, the members of the cabinet, and more generally to the authoritative structures of the state."[39] This definition does not distinguish between legitimate or illegitimate forms of government. However, Instead, it recognizes authority as one of the features defining institutions like governments. Iran is a very interesting state to study in this context. The Iranian constitution was created in a state of urgency, after a violent revolution. The Islamic Republic of Iran is a theocratic republic. Born as a product of a bloody revolution there is something very deliberate about the current Iranian state structure. Some intertwined networks and powers are present throughout the governmental structure. The primary goal of these structures is not to ensure a balance of powers, but instead, the goal of these structures is to ensure the longevity of the revolutionary state. The 1979 Revolution did not start as an Islamic revolution, but through Khomeini's leadership, it transformed into one. However, because the initial participants of the revolution had not set out to create an Islamic republic or a state that is officially ruled by Islamic laws. Khomeini and his followers had to deal with the potential:- coups from within the state or imperial threats from outside to ensure the longevity of the state. The goal of this chapter is to navigate the institutions that were set up to combat threats to the revolution from within Iran.

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[39] Shahin, Emad El-Din. "Government." In *Islamic Political Thought*, edited by Gerhard Bowering, 68-85. STU - Student ed. An Introduction. Princeton University Press, 2015. 68

As a theocratic republic the modern Iranian government has two sections: The elected

representatives and the appointed representatives, they are supposed to work together to ensure

the day to day working of the state. This duality within Iran's identity as a state has translated into

the creation of a clerical shadow government and has redefined the nature of power in the state.

As the Islamic Republic, Iran is both a democracy and a theocracy. It has a legal system that is

based on both secular and Islamic law. The Supreme Leader of Iran is the Chief of State; the

President is the Head of Government; there is a cabinet selected by the president. The Assembly

of Experts elects the Supreme Leader, and the President is elected through direct elections. The

legislative branch consists of the Islamic Consultative Assembly that is directly elected, the

Judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court and other subordinate courts. All these bodies are

considered to be legitimate centers of power in Iran. These bodies are responsible for running the

country, and since most of these offices are elected positions, they are supposed to represent the

Iranian state overall. Scholars have different opinions about how the dual state structure

functions. The clerical establishment monitors the activities of the democratic state and has veto

power over certain decisions.[40] However, another important thing to note here is that the position

of the Supreme Leader is an appointment for life. Therefore there is the issue of temporality that

affects his power within the state. Because of a long time in power, the clerical establishment is

inherently conservative in nature and resists any form of radical changes; they can veto policies

that they do not agree with and control the entry of new officials into the government and hence

act as a conservative check on democracy.

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[40] The World Factbook: Iran." Central Intelligence Agency. February 01, 2018.

There is an agreement between scholars that formal and informal centers of power exist within Iran.[41][42] The formal centers of power would include institutions that are formally enshrined within the Iranian constitution, and the informal center of power comprises of the clerical establishment that is a part of every level of the government. There is a debate within Iranian scholarship between the relationship between the two centers of power and how they interact with each other. While some scholars argue that these centers of powers are constantly at odds. They work despite each other, and the unofficial center of power within Iran only exists to oppose and resist the actions of the elected officials to keep it from moving away from the ideas of the 1979 Revolution. Whereas some scholars argue that the two centers of power work together for the state to operate.

Arjomand brings a different perspective to the discussion when it comes to these two centers of powers. His work is not focused on the interaction between the formal and informal centers of powers, but instead, he looks at the nature of the informal center of power. He argues that the only reason Iran has an informal center of power is that the Iranian Revolution is still not over and the informal center of power's role is to make sure the revolution does not stop. He for him the goal of the unofficial center of power within Iran is not to preserve the ideas of the revolution but to push the revolution forward.[43]

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[41] Gregory F. Giles, the crucible of radical islam: iran's leaders and strategic culture to *Know Thy Enemy: Profiles Of Adversary Leaders And Their Strategic Cultures*, ed. Barry R. Schneider, 2nd ed. (n.p.: DIANE Publishing Company, 2003),

[42] Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?: The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

[43] Arjomand, Said Amir. *After Khomeini: Iran under His Successors*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

There is a link between this duality within the Iranian state system and the revolution itself. Arjomand argues that one of the primary reason why Iran's clerical administration is so powerful is that the revolution never ended. Ayatollah Khomeini designed Iran's constitution a very specific way to make sure that the ideas of the revolution were preserved and that the ideas of the revolution carried on. The Iranian constitution has protected the existence of certain institutions (Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, Council of Guardians) from ensuring that the Iranian revolution would continue.

The Iranian state looks the way it does as a result of the post-revolutionary decisions made by Khomeini and his followers. You had the Provisional Government consisting of the remnants of the pre-revolutionary state structure and a clerical shadow government on the other side. Ayatollah Khomeini held a referendum where people had to choose between a monarchy and the Islamic Republic. He also made an explicit decision to include the word "democratic" in the title. People of Iran voted overwhelmingly for the Islamic Republic. This will make sense if we put this referendum in context with the fears of the Iranian people and the lived memories of those who were voting for the Islamic Republic. The people of Iran had just gotten rid of the Shah through the revolution, and it made sense why they would be wary about having another monarchy to replace what they had gotten rid of. Without any strong organized opposition in the post-Revolutionary period, the revolutionaries had the nominal power to define the state they planned to create. Khomeini's critics opposed the referendum because the term Islamic Republic

was not clearly defined and this seemed like a deliberate decision on his part.[44] Without clearly defining the theocratic republic he had the power to shape it according to his will.

Khomeini's task after the referendum was to translate the undefined concept of an Islamic Republic into a working constitution. He infused the doctrine of vilayat al-faqih or the guardianship of the Jurist into the Iranian constitution. "According to him, Islam necessitated the establishment of a government to uphold the principles and laws of the shari'a and implement its injunctions. In this government, the jurists should play a major role as the most knowledgeable about Islamic law and as representatives of the Imam."[45] The constitution that was drafted was presented to an elected assembly of experts that were essentially pro-Khomeini clerics. This version of the constitution laid the foundation for the role of the Supreme Leader by creating a position that had "virtually all ultimate power through almost no defined duties". This position was held by Khomeini during his lifetime, another religious leader or a religious committee after his death. The religious side of the Iranian government was in control of the forces, ratifying or electing the president, and a set of veto powers. According to this constitutional set up, the ultimate seat of power within Iran would always belong to religious authority.[46] This religious authority was also not limited by any specific period. With their veto powers and the power to ratify the constitution, he would have more power than any other elected representative who was in office for a limited period. He would be the executive chief of the state beginning June 4, 1989; he would be appointed for life by an Assembly of Experts.

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[44] Keddie, Nikki R., and Yann Richard. *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981. 258
[45] Shahin, Emad El-Din. "Government." 83
[46] Keddie, Nikki R., and Yann Richard. *Roots of Revolution 258*

The Assembly of Experts along with the Council of Guardians both acts as another layer of clerical and theological checks on the activities of the selected section of the government. "The Assembly consists of 86 clerics who, after being vetted by the Council of Guardians, are popularly elected to 8-year terms."[47] The Guardian Council, in turn, consists of six theologians and six legal experts, the supreme leader appoints the six theologians, and the legal experts are nominated by the head of the judiciary [who is nominated by the supreme leader] and elected by the Majles. According to the structure adopted by this version of the constitution in late 1979 Khomeini's constitutional position gave him most powers without any specific responsibilities. It also allowed that powerful clerics "could remain behind the scenes, encouraging a sort of backward mode of political operation."[48]

According to the current set-up of the Iranian government, it is the Islamic Republic. There is an attempt to balance out the role of the religious and elected branches of the government. In this setup Supreme Leader is the chief of state, the President, who is elected by popular vote acts as the head of the government. After the Iraq-Iran war "the constitution was amended to centralize executive power in the Office of the President and abolish the prime ministry."[49]

Presidential candidates need to be vetted by the Guardian Council. "Out of the nearly 500 people who registered as prospective candidates for the June 2009 race, the Guardian Council approved just four for inclusion on the ballot". [50] His power is secondary to the supreme leader, "who serves as the final arbiter on foreign policy, media, nuclear-related decisions, and military

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[47] Giles, Gregory F. The Crucible of Radical Islam. 143
[48] Keddie, Nikki R., and Yann Richard, *Roots of Revolution* 259
[49] Kahlaji, Mehdi. *Tightening the Reins: How Khamenei Makes Decisions*. Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2017. 53
[50] Bruno, Greg, and Jamal Afridi. "Presidential Power in Iran."

and national security". The President carries out the "functions of the executive as outlined in Iran's <u>constitution</u>, duties that range from appointing ambassadors and cabinet ministers to planning and executing the national budget." He also has the responsibility of national planning, and budget and state employment affairs."[51] The President's powers have shifted over time, while the constitution was being written there was a deliberate decision by the framers of the constitution to limit the President's powers to prevent a coup. His powers and responsibilities have increased over time. He can control important resources of the state like the oil revenues, and the appointment of "thousands of high-ranking functionaries in a highly centralized system of government." [52] This makes the President more than a nominal figurehead, and there have been public clashes between the supreme leader and the President over certain issues. In 2017 President Rouhani had commented that the position of a religious leader must happen based on "people's will an invitation", this was seen as an attack on the life-long appointment of the Supreme Leader. In response to President Rouhani's comments, clerics that were sympathetic to Khamenei argued that "the legitimacy of the leader or the rule of the Islamic jurist (Velayat-e-Faghih) is divine." [53] Here you can see the tension between divine will and notions of democracy playing out. By not defining a clear distinction between the religious and democratic aspects of the government in the spirit of the constitution this unique discourse is possible in Iran.

The cabinet consists of a Council of Ministers selected by the President, but the supreme leader has a certain degree of control over appointments to several ministries. The legislative branch is formed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly or Majlis-e Shura- ye Eslami. There are

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[51] ibid

[52] ibid

[53] Bruno, Greg, and Jamal Afridi. "Presidential Power in Iran."

290 seats within the Majles, 285 members are directly elected in single and multi-seat constituencies by 2 round votes, and there is 1 seat each for Zoroastrians, Jews, Assyrian, Chaldean Christians, and Armenians. All candidates of the Majlis need to approve by the Guardian Council. The Judicial branch of the government is formed by the Supreme Court consisting of the president and judges.

 The Supreme Court president is appointed by the head of the High Judicial Council that is formed by the prosecutor general, 3 clerics, in consultation with Supreme Court chief justices. Unlike other legal systems, the judiciary branch does not have constitutional review powers.[54] The Council of Guardians review legislation passed by the parliaments and it can rescind laws if it deems them "un-Islamic". "The Council of Guardians is empowered to interpret the constitution, and a ruling by three-fourths of its members has the same weight as the constitution itself."[55] The Expediency Council acts as the final arbiter for legislative gridlock between the Council of Guardians. It consists of the heads of the three branches of the government and the clerical members from the Council of Guardians; the Supreme leader appoints other members to the council for a five-year term. The Expediency council can also pass certain "emergency" laws. It is supposed to keep a check on the Supreme Leader if he is not able to solve a state problem.[56]

Here you can see how the constitution and the revolutionary apparatus is set up in a way where the clerical administration and the elected members of the government are constantly interacting with each other. The office of the Supreme Leader is extremely powerful, but that does not take away from the fact that the office of the President also has its powers and he is not just a

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[54] The World Factbook: Iran." Central Intelligence Agency. February 01, 2018.
[55] Giles, Gregory F. The Crucible of Radical Islam: Iran's Leaders and Strategic 142
[56] ibid 143

nominal figurehead. As a theocratic republic the clergy does a lot of behind the scenes work and in some way controls the entry of different elected officials into the government.

Like its government structure, there is a duality in Iran's military branch. Along with the traditional military, you also have the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. This provides a crucial layer of power to the clerical administration and the supreme leader in particular. The Islamic Republic of Iran regular forces or the Artesh include the ground forces, the navy, and an air force. In addition to this Iran has an Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps(IRGC).[57] "Conceived as principal defenders of the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps has evolved into a vast institution with political, economic, and military power."[58] Unlike the Iranian Military, the role of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard was to protect the revolution itself. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps has its ground resistance forces, navy, aerospace forces, and the Qods force; it also has proxies in Hezbollah. "The Quds Force is primarily responsible for all Iranian intelligence activities, and covert operations conducted abroad."[59] It estimated to be comprised of 15,000 personnel, but even the Iranian does not know the true size of the force. "Members are selected for both competency and their allegiance to the Islamic principles of the 1979 revolution."

As it was mentioned above, there was much emphasis paid to protect threats to the revolution from within Iran. Domestically it is the police that is responsible for quashing any protests against the supreme leader. Historically any protests against the supreme leader have

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[57] The World Factbook: Iran." Central Intelligence Agency. February 01, 2018.
[58] Bruno, Greg, Jayshree Bajoria, and Jonathan Masters. "Iran's Revolutionary Guards." Council on Foreign Relations, 14 June 2013. Web. 14 Dec. 2018.
[59] Banerjea, Udit. "Revolutionary Intelligence: The Expanding Intelligence Role of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps." *Journal of Strategic Security* 8 no.3,2015.98

been quashed by the police force. "The main security, military, and judicial branches of Iran's coercive apparatus are the police (Nirou-ye Entezami-ye Jomhouri-ye Eslami-ye Iran, or NAJA), the Basij, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The police are under the control of the Interior Ministry, which the constitution has placed under the president's purview. The head of the NAJA is appointed by the Supreme Leader and serves as commander-in-chief of Iran's armed forces, effectively limiting the interior minister's authority to logistical, equipment, and support issues."[60] The IRGC's volunteer militia force called the Basij that is responsible for domestic actions. Iran's. By manpower the Basij is the largest security organization within Iran. "When fully mobilized, the Basij is capable of commanding nearly 1,000,000 men."[61] The Basij is a decentralized popular force that can be mobilized across the country on short notice. Majlis volunteered dispersed and arrested protesters after the 2009 Green Revolution, and hence they were able to destroy the momentum of the opposition.

Both the IRGC and the Basij are outside the control of the Ministry of Interior. "The head of the IRGC reports directly to the Supreme Leader, and under Iran's constitution the Supreme Leader alone reserves the right to undertake the "appointment, dismissal, and acceptance of resignation of" the chief commander of the IRGC."[62] Ayatollah Khamenei "Khamenei began refashioning the IRGC into not only an economic and political tool but also a potent force that would be utterly loyal to him. IRGC's economic and political activities were designed to occur entirely outside the scope of the government's executive branch. Nor would the IRGC be

[60] Golkar, Saeid. "Iran's Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire." The Washington Institute. January 05, 2018
[61] ibid 94
[62] Kahlaji, Mehdi. *Tightening the Reins: How Khamenei Makes Decisions*. 53

accountable to any other governmental branch, whether economically, judicially, or politically,"[63] after the end of the Iraq-Iran war. He did not decrease the scope of the military in the post-war period, but instead, restructured it into a powerful force that was still loyal to him. He also appointed commanders and deputies to prevent power from centralizing into one individual. "In many cases, deputies reported (and still report) directly to him rather than to their commanders. In this way, he has been able to control the organization through parallel channels."[64] Even though the Basij falls under the IRGC, Khamenei appoints its commander. Clerics also work within the IRGC; they serve as the representatives of the Supreme Leader and monitor and report to him the organization's activities. "These representatives, who enjoy authority beyond their social roles, are also responsible for approving all promotions within the IRGC."[65] Here you can see how intricately the clerical administration is intertwined with the activities of the IRGC and what degree of control it has over all aspects of other governmental branches.

Because the goal of the corps is to protect the revolution and not just the Iranian State its duties exists beyond just military confrontation. The constitution does not mandate the participation of the guards in day to day affairs, but it does not prohibit it. Because the role of the IRGC is not explicitly stated or explained within the constitution, it gives the IRGC increased flexibility when it comes to its powers. The constitution states that the IRGC is supposed to protect against the enemies of the constitution. It does not explicitly mention who these enemies are and this gives more leeway to the actions of the IRGC. As a result of this, the corps has been heavily involved in crushing domestic opposition parties like the Tudeh. Members of the IRGC

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[63] ibid
[64] ibid 54
[65] ibid

have infiltrated different levels of the Iranian domestic sphere. Even the Council of Guardians has a history of privileging IRGC veterans in parliamentary elections.[66] Article 147 of the Iranian constitution also highlights the role of the military during times of peace. This provides another justification for the IRGC activities and presence in the Iranian government. "In a time of peace, the government must utilize the personnel and technical equipment of the Army in relief operations, and for educational and productive ends, and the Construction Jihad, while fully observing the criteria of Islamic justice and ensuring that such utilization does not harm the combat-readiness of the Army."[67] This article is used by different IRGC generals to justify their involvement with other projects of the government.

Before the 1979 Revolution, Iran's primary intelligence apparatus was known as SAVAK or the National Security and Intelligence Organizations. SAVAK was created with the help of the US and Israel to control the Soviet threat. After the revolution, the Islamic government set up a new intelligence organization known as the SAVAMA that inherited the same intelligence apparatus as SAVAK. "However, SAVAMA was more interested in finding and eliminating the Revolution's opponents—at home and abroad—than in collecting information."[68] Currently, the primary intelligence arm of the Iranian Government is the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). "Meanwhile, the IRGC has grown into a potent political force itself, using its intelligence capabilities to gain control over the internet, telecommunications, and key economic sectors."[69] Its Intelligence branch is loyal to the regime, and its importance and scope have

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[66] Alfoneh, Ali "The Revolutionary Guards' Role in Iranian Politics" *Middle Eastern Quarterly* 14 no. 4,2008. 1
[67] Kahlaji, Mehdi. *Tightening the Reins: How Khamenei Makes Decisions*. 54
[68] Banerjea, Udit. "Revolutionary Intelligence: 93
[69] ibid 94

expanded after the event of the 2009 revolution. The threat from the protests triggered a massive reorganization of the intelligence apparatus. "The IRGC conducted a secret purge within MOIS, removing hundreds of intelligence agents and directors from their positions.10 This solidified the IRGC's control of Iran's intelligence apparatus and weakened the government's ability to challenge the IRGC's authority and to impede its activities in cracking down on dissenters."[70] As a result of the restructure the clerical regime was able to shut down the opposition, maintain its legitimacy and the IRGC was able to consolidate its power.

The clerical shadow government that exists within Iran can be described as a security state or a deep state.[71] A security state creates a dynamic where the people submit to the actions of the security state in exchange for the extended feeling of security. This is because a security state creates a world where it is the masculine protector and the people are the good women who need to submit to the state.[72] Because of the nature of governmental power, the state has complete nominal power when it comes to defining threats, and in the Iranian example, the state has also defined the survival of the state as the survival of the ideas of the Revolution. You could see this play out when "Rafsanjani resigned from his position as deputy commander of the armed forces and conceded his power to Khamenei. He did so under the gravely incorrect assumption that the Iran-Iraq War's end would mean a warning of the military role in Iranian society."[73] Here Khamenei was able to expand the power of the military even after the war was over because he

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[70] Kahlaji, Mehdi. *Tightening the Reins: How Khamenei Makes Decisions*.54

[71] "Democracy vs Deep State." In *Government of the Shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty*, 104-32. London: Pluto Press, 2009.

[72] Young, Iris Marion. "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2003): 1-25.

[73] Kahlaji, Mehdi. *Tightening the Reins: How Khamenei Makes Decisions*. 53

defined the notion of a threat to the Iranian state that extended beyond the war and territorial security. The revolutionary nature of the Iranian state allowed Iran to place threats to ideas of the Revolution, i.e. the threats to the position of the Supreme Leader and the power of the clerical regime in the same category as the threat of war.

Temporality is another important factor affecting the power of the clerical shadow government in Iran. Wilson whose work focuses on shadow government structure emphasizes the idea that the security state is a conservative actor that remains in power for a longer time than the legitimately elected government. This will also make sense when it comes to Iran if we put it in perspective of the time the executive officers and the appointed officers spend in office whereas the amount of time the Supreme Leader and other clerics hold power. New officials enter a system that is already dominated by structures that have existed before their entry and will continue to exist beyond their exit. Wilson agrees with Young about the trade-off between rights and security when it comes to the deep state. However, he also adds that the deep state or a security state has most of its power in a state of emergency. The deep state is the most powerful when a threat exists. According to him the deep state serves as a form of continuity and prevents domestic politics from creating any radical changes like the policy that is being made. So for him, the reason why domestic elections do not matter as much is that the deep state is preventing any changes to happen. You cannot pinpoint to a specific body and say that they form the deep state. A deep state is hidden according to its very nature. The elected government provides a legitimizing medium for the actions of the deep state. Ovenden talks about the nature of secret keeping in state systems, Arguing that Ovenden's arguments are more in line with Wilson. There are two levels of secrets kept by the government: deep secrets and shallow secrets. Deep secrets

are secrets ones that the general public has no idea that the government has. Shallow secrets are secrets those that the public knows that the government is hiding. Wilson would argue that the deep state is a product of deep secrets that the people do not even know the government is hiding. He would argue that media sources are wrong when they try to point towards a specific body as being the deep state.[74]

Young's securitization logic would explain why the general public does not pay much attention to the actions of the security state. They do not question the actions of their legitimate government when it comes to matters of national security. If they do not question these actions, they won't question the influence of a shadow actor that is supervising these actions. The general public will submit to certain policies like the good women while masculine protectionist institutions like the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Council of Guardians continue their activities. If they react or question the office of the Supreme Leader in the form of protests the nature of their actions would be defined as a threat to the state and would be shut down by force. "While democracies fear external enemies, undemocratic regimes fear their populations, whose choices and aspirations they suppress by military means. A unified and consolidated elite composed of the IRGC officer corps enables the Islamic Republic to maintain a tough international stance while repressing unrest at home."[75]

The Iranian Revolution created the Iranian state system, and any threats to the ideas of the revolution can be securitized to a threat to Iran itself. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps can continue its activities abroad because of this continuous Revolution. Securitization logic would

[74] Ovenden, Kevin, and Paul Mason. "Face to Face with the Deep State." In *Syriza: Inside the Labyrinth*, 104-32. London: Pluto Press, 2015.
[75] Alfoneh, Ali "The Revolutionary Guards' Role in Iranian Politics" 14

explain the IRGC's activities abroad. For example, Thomas argues that Iran's involvement in the ongoing war in Yemen is not important to Yemen's civil war. However, to be explained as an effect of the securitized revolution. Specifically, it would explain why Iran is still involved in Yemen. Young would argue that Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps takes on the role of the masculine protector when it conducts military operations abroad. Even if these activities do not produce any important results, the performative aspect of these actions results in the formation of a strong security state. In other words, the IRGC is not as interested in the outcome of the civil war in Yemen as much as it is trying to assert its position within the Iranian state.

Additionally, Iran is a rentier state, i.e. its economy relies mostly on exports and not the taxes it collects from its citizens. This takes away another form of checks and balances that would exist in a typical democracy. Because of its history as a rentier state, the government does not owe answers to the people about its spending.[76] Instead, it takes the role of the masculine protector that is providing services like safety and security at almost no cost. In return, it requires complacency from the people it serves.

The Iranian Revolution did not start as a religious revolution. Dissatisfaction with western imperialism, the Shah's activities, and laws, economic conditions resulted in dissatisfaction and protests from several groups including students, communists, and peasants. Khomeini's leadership and organization helped redefine the nature of the revolution. Khomeini's goal was to create a lasting theocracy and to do so; he securitized the revolution in a way that helped him create a strong clerical shadow government. For a working model of an Islamic Republic

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[76] Shambayati, Hootan. "The Rentier State, Interest Groups, and the Paradox of Autonomy: State and Business in Turkey and Iran." *Comparative Politics* 26, no. 3 (April 1994): 307-31.

presented by Mawdudi a Pakistani imam whose party pioneered politicizing Islam and generated

support for an Islamic state in Pakistan, "the society and the state should be subordinate to the

authority of Islam is revealed in the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet, if the government

discarded the revealed laws, it became illegitimate, and its authority ceased to be binding." In

Mawdudi's "the-democracy" Islamic law took precedence over everything else.[77] This can be one

of the explanations behind the centrality of the shadow clerical government within Iran. If you

look at specific sections of the Iranian constitution, you will notice patterns within the

government structure that are produced to prevent coups against the Supreme Leader who in any

way or form. The Iranian state as we know it was born as a reaction to a coup in a certain sense,

and it still looks at coups from within as the biggest threats to its survival.

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[77] Shahin, Emad El-Din. "Government." 83

CHAPTER 3

This chapter will be focusing on Iran's nuclear program. The Iranian Nuclear program has been grounds for international skepticism and debate over the last few decades. "While Iran's leaders long insisted the country was not building nuclear weapons, its enrichment of uranium and history of deception created deep mistrust."[78] Iran has faced heavy sanctions and alienation within the international community. In this chapter, I will be tracing. I will be tracing the discourse surrounding nuclear weapons within Iran. The goal of this chapter is to see which center of power within Iran has had a higher degree of influence when it comes to decisions made about nuclear energy within Iran. For this purpose, I will be tracking the positions of Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Khamenei, Prime Minister Moussavi and President Rafsanjani. I will also be focusing on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and its position on nuclear weapons. I will be contrasting the stances different centers of powers have to the decisions Iran has made in front of the international community during negotiations. The goal of this chapter is to see why Iran's nuclear program is difficult to study especially because of the multiplicity in the centers of power present in the country.

Iran is notorious for breaking deals it makes with the international community when it comes to nuclear issues. However, if we look at the Iranian state and its structure as described in

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[78] Bloomberg, Jonathan Tirone |. "Iran's Nuclear Program." The Washington Post. May 08, 2018.

Chapter 2, it makes sense why Iran's nuclear policy is so unpredictable. There are multiple

centers of power within the Iranian state. These centers of powers are a product of the

securitization of the revolution, and they exist to ensure that the Supreme Leader and the clerical

regime are the most powerful actors in the state. There is a subsection of IR theory that states that

the behavior of religious states cannot be predicted or analyzed by traditional IR paradigms. Their

theological nature makes them unpredictable because they do not follow the same rationality

other secular states follow. "The very nature of non-secular regimes, it is assumed, makes them

different from the interest-maximizing state upon which the traditional concepts and theories of

international politics are premised."[79] According to this logic, the theocratic nature of Iran would

make it difficult to predict and analyze its behavior.

The idea that we cannot explain the behavior of theological states precisely because they are

theological is problematic because that would put us in a position where we are defending the

universality of a model that is not universal and placing blame on the theological state.

Being an Islamic Republic does not make it unpredictable, but the structure of government

that is formed as a result of the Iranian Revolution makes it unpredictable to theorists who are

looking for 'normal' state behavior. The Iranian Revolution happened in 1979; the Iraq-Iran war

took place between 1980-1988. Iran participated in the war, approached the international

community for help but also claimed to follow fatwas by the Supreme Leader when it came to the

usage of chemical and nuclear weapons in the war. Political analysts have doubted the existence

[79] Korab-Karpowicz, W. Julian, "Political Realism in International Relations", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

or the importance of these fatwas. This chapter wants to show that there might have been a very viable possibility that these fatwas are the reason why Iran has never developed or used nuclear or chemical weapons even if it meant losing the war. [80]This does not prove that Iran is an irrational or unpredictable actor because it is an Islamic state, but instead shows another form of rationale followed by the Iranian state. Iran did acquire the materials required to develop to produce nuclear and chemical weapons when it felt its territory was threatened.

A Brief History of the Iranian Nuclear Program:

The Iranian Nuclear program began under the Shah in the 1950s through Eisenhower's Atom For Peace program. Atoms for Peace provided technologies and educational support for countries interested in pursuing civilian programs. "As a participant in the program, Atoms for Peace laid the foundation for Iran's nuclear program beginning in 1957." The Shah established the Tehran Nuclear Research Center in the University of Tehran in 1967, which provided Iran with a 5-megawatt nuclear research reactor. Iran's nuclear program almost disintegrated after the Revolution of 1979, when. "[m]uch of Iran's nuclear talent fled the country in [its] wake " partly because of "Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's opposition to nuclear technology."[81] Once Iran's diplomatic ties between with the West had been cut off most of the information about the nuclear program was based on a narrow amount of intelligence that had been collected.[82] Since 2003, Iran has been participating in a series of negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency,

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[80] Porter, Gareth. "When the Ayatollah Said No to Nukes." Foreign Policy. October 17, 2014.
[81] Hirsh, Michael. "Iran Was Closer to a Nuclear Bomb Than Intelligence Agencies Thought." Foreign Policy. November 13, 2018.
[82] ibid

France, Germany, and the United Kingdom but these negotiations have fallen through because of intelligence reports of Iran not following the terms of the negotiations.[83] To understand Iran's nuclear program, we need to identify the key actors and their roles in nuclear decision making.

Nuclear Weapons and State Survival:

Three main factors can describe decisions made by the Iranian state: how it sees the world around it; what goals it has; and how Iranian leaders think of the role of Iran in the on the international level. As discussed in the first chapter according to realists states exist in a state of anarchy. Anarchy results in the production of self-help states that rely on the balance of power and deterrence. States are seen as rational actors that make power maximizing decisions to increase their chances of survival in an anarchic order. Nuclear weapons are seen as the ultimate deterrent, and some voices within Iran push for nuclear weapons explicitly for deterrence purposes. However, they are also cautious because the acquisition of nuclear weapons might alienate Iran from the international community and hence decrease its security.

According to scholars, the Iranian state has three main goals: ensuring regime survival, protecting the homeland against external threats and expanding its regional influence. Iranian leadership makes decisions for Iran based on these goals because the survival of the state is tied to these explicit goals.[84] This can be tied to a constructivist argument that Iranian state behavior is

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[83] "Iran." Nuclear Threat Initiative - Ten Years of Building a Safer World.
[84] Davis, Lynn E., Jeffrey Martini, Alireza Nader, Dalia Dassa Kaye, James T. Quinlivan, and Paul Steinberg. "Influencing Iran." In *Iran's Nuclear Future: Critical U.S. Policy Choices*, 7-18. RAND Corporation, 2011.

tied to its identity and what it thinks of itself with respect to the international community. As a revolutionary state, for Iran, the survival of the state also means the survival of the regime and the survival of the positions that have been secured as a result of the revolution. " The notion that, simply by being a state, the revolutionary state has joined an international society in which it is expected to share certain interests, rules, and norms and cooperate in the working of certain common institutions with 'old regime' states is likely to seem unacceptable to the revolutionary leaders."[85] For a revolutionary state, the ideas of the revolution are tied to the survival of the new state in a world order that is resistant to revolutions. In the context of Iran, the survival of the state also means the survival of the regime and the survival of the positions that have been secured as a result of the revolution. While studying Iran a lot of US policymakers have dismissed fatwas passed by the Supreme Leader when it comes to nuclear weapons. This dismissal would make sense in a realist analysis of Iran, but if we look at Iran in a constructivist sense, its survival is not just tied to the international community, but also preserving ideas of the revolution internally. This is why the IRGC 's purpose is to protect the ideas of the revolution internally and abroad explicitly. The value and the reliability of the fatwa by the supreme leader should be measured with this in mind.

In the next section of this chapter, I will be looking at actors within the Iranian state specifically. I will be focusing on the power given to them by the Iranian constitution on decisions regarding nuclear weapons, their official stance on a nuclear weapon and how have they potentially impacted Iran's nuclear weapons programs.

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[85] Armstrong, J. D. *Revolution and World Order: The Revolutionary State in International Society*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 1.

Constitutional Power of the Supreme Leader

The Supreme Leader is the most powerful actor in Iran. "The Supreme Leader is considered the epicenter of Iran's theocratic authority structure and the ultimate arbiter of Iranian politics."[86] He advises the Iranian government through fatwas, i.e., "legal opinion drawn from religious law, can be devoted to any topic, large or small.[87]" While fatwas are not usually binding and are opinions from religious scholars that Muslims seek out for guidance, a fatwa by the Supreme Leader is always binding to the Iranian government. By virtue of the binding nature of his fatwas, the Supreme Leader has the final authority over all decisions made by the Iranian state including decisions regarding nuclear weapons. Even though the Supreme Leader's fatwas are binding for the Iranian government, "he is not constrained by his previous fatwas, which he can alter or reverse, or the opinions of other mujtahids (Islamic jurists).' However, Khomeini formalized the supremacy of raison d'etat over the tenets of Islam as the core principle guiding domestic and foreign policy decision making in Iran." [88]

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[86] Boroujerdi, Mehrzad, and Kourosh Rahimkhani. "The Office of the Supreme Leader: Epicenter of a Theocracy." In *Power and Change in Iran: Politics of Contention and Conciliation*, edited by Brumberg Daniel and Farhi Farideh, 135-65. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016.
[87] MacFarquhar, Neil. "Fatwa Overload." Foreign Policy. April 17, 2009.
[88] Eisenstadt, Michael; Khalaji, Mehdi , *Nuclear Fatwa; Religion and Politics in Iran's Proliferation Strategy*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2011, 115.

The Expediency Council mediates between the Parliament and the Council of

Guardians by advising the Supreme Leader on parliamentary laws the Council of Guardians

deems un-Islamic. Moreover, if he believes that expediency calls for the acquisition, deployment,

or use of nuclear weapons, religious principles would not prevent the Islamic Republic from

doing so. Iranian decision making, therefore, bears to an extraordinary extent the imprint of one

man's personality and politics—unaffected by the will of other men, the decisions of other

institutions, or even the moral scruples of religion."[89] Apart from external international pressures

from the international community, Khomeini and Khamenei have had the largest influences on

the shifts in the Iranian nuclear program.

Ayatollah Khomeini's Stance of Nuclear Weapons:

When Ayatollah Khomeini came into power after the 1979 Revolution, he shut down Iran's

nuclear program. He and stopped construction projects for reactors., In 1982, Iran sought to

resume work on the Bushehr reactors, partially due to the regime's recognition of the financial

complexity of halting the commercial reactor project. Khomeini decided to restart Iran's nuclear

weapons program after the devastating 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war.[90] "A 2009 internal IAEA

working document reports that in April 1984, then President Ali Khamenei announced to top

Iranian officials that Khomeini had decided to launch a nuclear weapons program as the only way

to secure the Islamic Revolution from the schemes of its enemies, especially the United States and

Israel."[91] It was under Khomeini in 1987 that Iran acquired key components to restart its nuclear

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[89] Eisenstadt, Michael; Khalaji, Mehdi , *Nuclear Fatwa; Religion and Politics*, 115.
[90] "Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP)." Nuclear Threat Initiative - Ten Years of Building a Safer World.
[91] "Iran's Nuclear Program." Council on Foreign Relations.

program from A.Q, Khan. A.Q. Khan was the Pakistani nuclear physicist, and he founded the uranium enrichment program for Pakistan's atomic bomb project. The Iranian leadership has admitted to their attempts at trying to acquire materials for the development of nuclear weapons, but they have firmly denied developing them. In May 2004, the Iranian government submitted certain documents to the US delegation, " the document shows that the two ministries had procured the chemical precursors for mustard gas and in September 1987 began to manufacture the chemicals necessary to produce a weapon — sulfur mustard and nitrogen mustard. However, the document also indicated that the two ministries did not "weaponize" the chemicals by putting them into artillery shells, aerial bombs, or rockets."[92]

Khomeini had issued a fatwa that forbade the Iranian government from pursuing a nuclear weapons program during the Iraq-Iran war. There has been significant skepticism about the existence and the reliability of this particular fatwa because of the conditions in which it was produced. In a conversation with Mohsen Rafighdoost, a minister of IRGC during that period claimed that Khomeini had stated "It doesn't matter whether it is on the battlefield or in cities; we are against this. It is *haram* [religiously forbidden] to produce such weapons. You are only allowed to produce protection." I will be looking at the influence and opinions of different IRGC leaders later in the chapter, but it is important to note here that Khomeini never explicitly told him that his statement was a fatwa. According to Rafighdoost Khomeini did not need to specify his statement was a fatwa but Rafighdoost took it as one. Such a statement by the Supreme Leader is legally binding for the Iranian government, but the interesting aspect of this is that Rafighdoost

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[92] Porter, Gareth. "When the Ayatollah Said No to Nukes."

claimed that Khomeini had no prior knowledge of the procurement of materials for nuclear and

chemical weapons[93]. In a sense, this implies that the Supreme Leader was not necessarily involved

in that part of the process, and Iranian leaders and the ministry of defense have some form of

independence to make such decisions. Khomeini's word has an impact on the final verdict and the

final result of the nuclear weapons program, but he did not have complete oversight on the

activities of the IRGC. However, here we can also see the importance of the IRGC leaders

directly reporting to Khomeini. They have an extremely high level of autonomy to make

decisions. Rafighdoost founded the IRGC, and his loyalty to Khomeini is still translated to the

current structure of power in the IRGC. [94] This ensures that the Supreme Leader has a powerful

military unit backing his words, and ensuring that the government follows the Supreme Leader.

Potential Impact of Khomeini on the Iranian Nuclear Program:

This conversation and moment in Iranian history are used as proof of Iran never planned to

actually develop chemical or nuclear weapons. Representatives of the Iranian government claim

that the fact that they did not use chemical weapons against the Iraq-Iran war even though they

had the capabilities to do so proves that Khomeini's fatwa did exist and the Iranian government

followed it.

Even though Khomeini or of his successors had the power to reverse the fatwa, the legacy

of this conversation is still very prominent within Iran. Rafighdoost had two meetings with

Khomeini, the first one was just about Iran having the means to use chemical weapons against

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[93] ibid

[94] Porter, Gareth. "When the Ayatollah Said No to Nukes."

Iraq, and the second one was about both nuclear and chemical weapons. We can see the impact the fatwa has on the decisions regarding the usage of chemical weapons. Iran never retaliated against Iraq with chemical weapons. "The 2004 Iranian document [containing Rafighdoost chemical program submitted by Iran's permanent representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] confirms that production of two chemicals ceased, the buildings in which they were stored were sealed in 1988, and the production equipment was dismantled in 1992,"[95] Rafighdoost claimed that the fatwa forced him to not respond to chemical attacks by Iraq and eventually concede the war. In a letter explaining his decision, Khomeini said he was consenting to the cease-fire "in light of the enemy's use of chemical weapons and our lack of equipment to neutralize them."[96] We can potentially draw similar parallels regarding nuclear weaponry. However, again because of the reversible nature of fatwas, and the emphasis of the expediency of the state and the survival of the regime, the existence of the fatwa itself is not proof enough that Iran has not pursued a nuclear program.

Prime Minister Mousavi's Stance on Nuclear Weapons:

In a speech, in December 1987 Iranian Prime Minister Hossein Mousavi said Iran "is capable of manufacturing chemical weapons" and added that a "special section" had been set up for "offensive chemical weapons."[97] However, Mousavi refrained from saying that Iran had chemical weapons, and he hinted that religious considerations constrained Iran. "We will produce them only when Islam allows us and when we are compelled to do so," he said." This speech also showed that Khomeini's fatwa was still constraining the Prime Minister. The phrase "when Islam

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[95] ibid
[96] ibid
[97] ibid

allows us" referred directly to Khomeini and seeking his permission. "Former Iranian nuclear

negotiator Seyed Hossein Mousavian, now a research scholar at Princeton University, confirmed

for this article[98] that Khomeini's fatwa against chemical and nuclear weapons, which accounted

for the prime minister's extraordinary statement, was indeed conveyed in the meeting with

Rafighdoost."[99]

    This statement in a public speech can also be seen as a form of resistance from the Prime

Minister. Mousavi had played a very interesting role in Iranian politics. He had a very close

relation to Ayatollah Khomeini but had a very tense relationship with Khamenei who was

President at the time. Moussavi was Iran's last Prime Minister, and during the Iraq-Iran war "he

won a reputation as a hardliner, who denounced America as the "Great Satan", and earned some

popular support through his careful management of the economy."[100] He ran against Ahmadinejad

as a reformist candidate in 2009; he became the face of the protests that followed the 2009

elections. Even though he was loyal to Islamic principles and an avid supporter of Khomeini he

had policy goals that were not the same as Khomeini. Given his eventual path in Iranian politics,

we can conclude that he was not a compliant figure in Iranian politics. "He was an early supporter

of Iran's nuclear program, and as prime minister, in the 1980s he approved Iran's purchase of

centrifuges on the nuclear black market, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency."

[101] His statement can be read as resistance. He placed the responsibility of Iran not using chemical

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[98] This Foreign Policy article by Gareth Porter is the first article that has interviewed Rafighdoost directly about the story behind Khomeini's fatwa

[99] Porter, Gareth. "When the Ayatollah Said No to Nukes."

[100] "The Challenger Who Is Poised to Seize Iran's Presidency." The Telegraph. June 12, 2009.

[101] Worth, Robert F. "An Insider Turned Agitator Is the Face of Iran's Opposition." The New York Times. June 17, 2009.

weapons (because of his support for the nuclear program, he would have the same constraints and conflicts with Khomeini for nuclear weaponry) directly on Khomeini in a public setting.

Moussavi depended on the reversible nature of the fatwa and Khomeini's emphasis on the expediency of the state to get the fatwa on nuclear weapons reversed. Several scholars have similar opinions when it comes to decision making in the Iranian republic. "Before he died, Ayatollah Khomeini affirmed the Islamic Republic's authority to destroy a mosque or suspend the observance of the Five Pillars of Islam if such measures were rendered necessary by the "expediency" or "interests" of the regime."[102] Moussavi gave his speech around the same time as the conversation between Rafighdoost and Khomeini. This speech can be seen as being indicative of the tension between the office of the Prime Minister and the Supreme Leader. However, if we look at his power individually, he had the authority to approve the purchase of the centrifuges from the black market. As Prime Minister, he could also function and make decisions separate from the Supreme Leader. If Rafighdoost is to be believed, this happened without the knowledge of the Supreme Leader; it can be inferred that even the office of the Prime Minister had a certain degree of autonomy and power while making nuclear decisions, without the approval of the Supreme Leader in every step of the way.

The Rise of a Strong President:

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[102] Eisenstadt, Michael; Khalaji, Mehdi , *Nuclear Fatwa; Religion and Politics*, 115.

After Khomeini's death in 1989, Ayatollah Khamenei was appointed as Iran's next Supreme

Leader. He was not the first choice for the position, but Ayatollah Montazeri who was one of

Khomeini's closest students was chosen by Khomeini to be his successors in 1985, but he was

removed after he criticized the regime for human rights abuses in 1989.[103] Khamenei's presidency

had not been that remarkable, and Prime Minister Moussavi and Rafsanjani overshadowed

him.According to Farang Jahanpur, in the eight years that Khamenei had served as the President,

he served as a ceremonial president while the real power resided in the hands of Rafsanjani.[104]

"From the accounts which have emerged from the eight-hour meeting of the Assembly of Experts

which met soon after Ayatollah Khomeini's death, it is clear that the majority of the members

were initially in favor of the appointment of a three or five-member leadership; but when

Hashemi-Rafsanjani claimed that in a recent private meeting, Khomeini had intimated to him that

Khamenei was suitable for leadership, the Assembly swung behind him and appointed Khamenei

as the new leader with votes of 60 out of 76 members present."[105] For Jahanpur this shows the

establishment of the partnership between Khamenei and Rafsanjani who was later elected as the

President of Iran. On his deathbed, Khomeini also appointed a Reform Council, that consisted of

twenty-five members. The members included Khamenei, Rafsanjani, and Moussavi.

The Reform Council drew up amendments to the original constitution that helped change

the requirements that were required of the Supreme Leader. "they dropped the original

prerequisite that the leadership of the republic had to be in the hands of either a paramount faqih

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[103] "Middle East | Profile: Iran's Dissident Ayatollah." BBC News. January 30, 2003.
[104] Jahanpour, Farhang. "Iran after Khomeini." *The World Today* 45, no. 8/9 (1989)
[105] Ibid 183

or a council of senior faqihs. They decided that the Supreme Leader could be a seminary-trained

cleric with the right qualifications – "honesty," "piety," "courage," "administrative abilities," and

"versed in the political issues of the age." These changes helped pave the way for Khamenei's

appointment as Iran's Supreme Leader. They also introduced an amendment to remove the

position of the Prime Minister, and consolidate all executive power to the office of the President."

[106] The Reform Council submitted its amendments to a national referendum. In the same elections,

Rafsanjani ran against a relatively unknown politician? To replace Khamenei as president. The

results were a foregone conclusion. The amendments passed with 97 percent voting yes.

Rafsanjani won with 94 percent. The turnout, however, was less than 55 percent –a 20 percent

drop since the last referendum."[107] As a result of this Rafsanjani was constitutionally the second

most powerful person in Iran. Even before he ran for President he had significant backing from

most of the establishment: "the Chamber of Commerce, Association of Farmers, and Association

of Guilds and Trades; the Islamic Coalition Society; the Office of Imam Jum'ehs [Prayer Leaders

in Mosques]; and the heads of the large foundations, the main seminaries, and, of course, the

Revolutionary Guards." It was already accepted that he would win the election.[108] As mentioned

before he was in a way responsible for getting Khamenei appointed as the Supreme Leader. It can

be argued that Rafsanjani had used his influence within the unofficial centers of power to produce

a significant impact on the official center of power within Iran.

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[106] Abrahamian, Ervand. *A History of Modern Iran*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 183
[107] Ibid 183
[108] Ibid 190

While Rafsanjani was serving as the Speaker of the Majlis in 1988, he emphasized the need

for Iran to acquire unconventional weapons. He stated that "unconventional weapons were

'decisive' in the Iran–Iraq War, and Iran should fully equip itself both in the offensive and

defensive use of chemical, bacteriological, and radiological weapons"[109] In an interview with

Nuclear Hope magazine Rafsanjani admitted that officials in Iran were considering nuclear

weapons as a deterrent in the Iran-Iraq war. The officials he could be referring to could potentially

be Moussavi and Rafighdoost. "Rafsanjani also said he had traveled to Pakistan to try to meet

Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, who later helped North

Korea to develop a bomb, but did not meet with him." Rafsanjani's public admission of Iran

wanting to pursue nuclear weapons in the Iraq-Iran war came a year before Rafighdoost's

interview with Porter. While Rafighdoost claimed that Iran did not produce nuclear weapons

because of Khomeini's fatwa, but Rafsanjani hinted that Iran never produced them because the

threat of the Iraqi nuclear attack was diminished. "We were still at war and Iraq had come close to

enrichment before Israel [referring to an Israeli air strike against Iraq's Osirak reactor in 198]

destroyed it all," "Our basic doctrine was always a peaceful nuclear application, but it never left

our mind that if one day we should be threatened and it was imperative, we should be able to go

down the other path."[110] Here you can see Rafsanjani paid more attention to the strategic

implications of the nuclear program. "After becoming president, Hashemi-Rafsanjani was even

less guarded. He asserted that the experience of the war showed the potential of WMD and further

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[109] Samii, Abbas William (2006) "The Iranian Nuclear Issue and Informal Networks," Naval War College Review: Vol. 59 : No. 1 , Article 5, 2006. 77

[110] Wilkin, Sam. "Iran Considered Nuclear Weapons during 1980s Iraq War, Ex-president..." Reuters. October 29, 2015.

that Iran had learned that when war gets to a certain stage, the international community ignores violations of international law.[111]

Rafsanjani's Potential Impact on the Iranian Nuclear Weapons Program:

Between 1991-92 "marked a newly aggressive period in Iranian foreign policy and, significantly, a correlating strategic emphasis on nuclear weapons"[112] As a pragmatic conservative, Rafsanjani's main goal was ensuring regime survival, and he later started focusing on ending Iranian isolation from the international community. "During the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani between 1989 and 1997, Tehran publicly appealed to overseas Iranian scientists to return home to work on the nuclear programme. It also actively sought cooperation with China, Russia, North Korea, and Pakistan after Western European countries, under US pressure, refused to help."[113] Even though his government was still trying to procure materials, it was actively arguing against nuclear weapons on strategic grounds.

Ayatollah Khamenei's Stance on Nuclear Weapons:

Khomeini's Islamic ruling against all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, was continued by Ali Khamenei, who had served as president under Khomeini and succeeded him as supreme leader in 1989. Iran began publicizing Khamenei's fatwa against

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[111] ibid
[112] "Sections: Fact Sheets & Briefs." Iran Proliferation Issues | Arms Control Association.
[113] Haleh Esfandiari, Shaul Bakhash. "The Long Career of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani." The Atlantic. March 06, 2017. Accessed May 02, 2019.

nuclear weapons in 2004, but commentators and news media in the United States and Europe

have regarded it as a propaganda ploy not to be taken seriously. Khamenei had issued the fatwa in

the mid-1990s but had not publicized it because Rafsanjani's government was already vocally

anti-nuclear weapons by then. Mousavian, the former Iranian nuclear negotiator, who confirmed

Khamenei's conversation with Rafighdoost, also stated that he recalled " seeing the letter in the

office of the Supreme National Security Council, where he was head of the Foreign Relations

Committee from 1997 to 2005."[114] Currently, the fatwa has been published online on Khamenei's

website. The online version of his fatwa available online states:

> "We believe that besides nuclear weapons, other types of weapons of mass destruction such
> as chemical and biological weapons also pose a serious threat to humanity. The Iranian
> nation which is itself a victim of chemical weapons feels more than any other nation the
> danger that is caused by the production and stockpiling of such weapons and is prepared to
> make use of all its facilities to counter such threats. We consider the use of such weapons
> as haraam and believe that it is everyone's duty to make efforts to secure humanity against
> this great disaster ."[115]

The interesting thing about this fatwa is that it is directed outwards. It serves as a message to the

international community as it was part of Khamenei's message to the International Conference on

Nuclear Disarmament in 2010. Other fatwas on his website are offering guidance directly to the

ummah (Muslim community)or the Iranian government. On the issue of privacy on social media,

the fatwa published on Khamenei's website states "the officials must safeguard the people's and

the country's security and privacy. Invading the privacy and security of the people is religiously

forbidden, and against the Islamic law and must not be undertaken."[116] This fatwa is a directive to

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[114] Porter, Gareth. "When the Ayatollah Said No to Nukes."
[115] "'Nuclear Energy for All, Nuclear Weapons for None': Ayatollah Khamenei." Khamenei.ir. April 09
[116] "Imam Khamenei's Fatwa: Invading Users' Privacy on Social Media Is Religiously Forbidden."
Khamenei.ir. April 10, 2018

officials and is legally binding to the Iranian government. You can see it as a source of guidance

that is in accordance with his position as the Grand Juror. Even though his fatwa on the issue of

Palestine does not directly address the Iranian government or officials, it is addressed to Islamic

governments and ummah again. "Today, the issue of Palestine is the first issue of the world of

Islam. Anyone who has a correct understanding of the issue of Palestine acknowledges that the

issue of Palestine is the first issue of the world of Islam. The key to defeating the enemies of

Islam is the issue of Palestine. The most important issue of the world of Islam in the present time

is the issue of Palestine. Why is that? This is because Palestine is an Islamic country. They have

come and occupied this country. They have taken it away from its people. The issue is not about

usurping a village or city. The enemy has usurped a country, and it has used it as a base for

jeopardizing the security of regional countries. One should fight against a cancerous tumor."[117]

On the nuclear issue, the language of the fatwa is directed outwards. He is speaking directly on

behalf of the Iranian government, as a representative of Iran to the international community.

Another fatwa on nuclear issues on his website uses the same language that is directed outwards.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the use of nuclear, chemical and similar weapons as a great and unforgivable sin. We proposed the idea of "Middle East free of nuclear weapons," and we are committed to it. This does not mean forgoing our right to the peaceful use of nuclear power and the production of nuclear fuel. On the basis of international laws, peaceful use of nuclear energy is a right of every country. All should be able to employ this wholesome source of energy for various vital uses for the benefit of their country and people, without having to depend on others for exercising this right. Some Western countries, themselves possessing nuclear weapons and guilty of this illegal action, want to monopolize the production of nuclear fuel."[118]

Again this fatwa is serving more as a directive to the international community. However, it does

invoke the notion of the usage of nuclear weapons being a sin.

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[117] "The Issue of Palestine Is the Issue of the Islamic World." Khamenei.ir. December 17, 2017.
[118] "Ayatollah Khamenei's Opinion on Nuclear Issue." Khamenei.ir. Accessed May 02, 2019.

Potential Impact of Khamenei's Stance on Nuclear Weapons:

While the fatwas regarding Khamenei's stance on nuclear energy available online are all directed to the outside world, the fatwa in the letter to the Supreme National Security Committee has not been released to the public or the international community. Unlike Khomeini, Khamenei's directives to whoever requested the fatwa are unknown. A question that remains unanswered is who requested this particular fatwa and under what context? Without Khamenei; himself issuing a new fatwa regarding nuclear weapons, Khomeini's fatwa would still stand and be legally binding to the Iranian government. A request for a new fatwa by Khamenei can potentially be seen as an appeal to him to reverse or amend Khomeini's fatwa. Because this fatwa was requested around the same time Rafsanjani's government was pushing against nuclear weapons, [119] it could have potentially come from the IRGC whose commanders have historically been in support of nuclear weapons.

The IRGC and Nuclear Weapons:

As mentioned in chapter 2, the end of the Iraq-Iran war was a pivotal moment for the IRGC. After the war, the guards had complete autonomy over matters of national security, and

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[119] Porter, Gareth. "When the Ayatollah Said No to Nukes."

they were only answerable to the Supreme Leader. Rafighdoost already had a very high level of autonomy during the war. Rafighdoost was " a founding member of the IRGC and was personally involved in every major military decision taken by the corps during the Iran-Iraq War, including the initiation of Iran's ballistic missile program and creation of Hezbollah."[120] He realized the need for chemical and nuclear weapons as requirements for Iran to win the war. He approached foreign governments, and upon being rejected by them, he decided his ministry would produce everything Iran would need for war. "I personally gathered all the researchers who had any knowledge of defense issues," he recalled. He organized groups of specialists to work on each category of military need — one of which was called "chemical, biological, and nuclear."[121] His specialized group had produced a plan to develop nuclear weapons and had started a chemical weapons program. The roots of Rafighdoost's ideology are still embedded in the security narrative of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. The IRGC emphasizes "independent deterrence, which is meant to ensure that Iran can independently maintain a deterrent capability to prevent future attacks." [122]After the war, the IRGC had realized the need for the presence of unconventional deterrence abilities for Iran. Currently, it controls "Iran's conventional and unconventional weapons, dominates ballistic missile production, and plays a central role in the state's nuclear program."[123] They have a high level of independence and influence in political and military affairs in Iran.

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[120] ibid

[121] ibid

[122] Davis et al., "Influencing Iran," 17.

[123]Annie Tracie Samuel, "Perceptions And Narratives Of Security The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps And The Iran-iraq War," *International Security Program Discussion Paper Series Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, May 2012, 4.

The IRGC's Stance on Nuclear Weapons:

The IRGC heads act as a cohesive unit, and do not reveal any disagreements within their ranks

to the general public.[124] The Corps has consistently had the same stance on Iran's nuclear

weapons program. "Mohsen Rezaie was the Revolutionary Guards commander during the

Iran-Iraq War and is known to have told Rafsanjani that Iran could not pursue the war with Iraq to

victory without a nuclear weapon."[125] Even as recently as 2017 the Deputy head of the IRGC

Intelligence Organization, Brigadier General Hossein Nejat stated "Iran's "nuclear technology

and enrichment" and "resistance" to "bullying powers" in the past decade forced Washington and

other world powers to come to the negotiating table and agree to the 2015 nuclear accord.[126]"

Nejat's statement is very reflective of what the top echelons of the Guards believe. Iran's

deterrence abilities are more important than its diplomatic ties. "The Guards remain controlled by

principlists who view the nuclear program as strengthening the regime in the face of internal and

external opposition. Hence, the Guards' view of the nuclear program is shaped not only by its

value as a military deterrent and source of regional and international prestige but also by its utility

as a source of ideological and political legitimacy. Principlists and the Revolutionary Guards are

less likely to support a virtual nuclear program that does not enhance Iran's military and

diplomatic power and their domestic political position. us, they are more likely to support a

decision to acquire nuclear weapons and to declare that capability for military and political

purposes."[127]

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[124] Davis et al., "Influencing Iran," 17.
[125] Annie Tracie Samuel, "Perceptions And Narratives Of Security" 4
[126] "I.R.G.C. Intelligence Commander: Our Nuclear Technology and Regional Deterrence Power Averted Attack by U.S. and Israel." Middle East Institute. Accessed May 02, 2019.
[127] Davis et al., "Influencing Iran," 17.

The IRGC's potential impact on Iran's Nuclear Program:

Several political analysts also believe that the Guards control the military aspects of Iran's nuclear program. Their control over political and economic decisions can explain their ability to expand Iran's nuclear program autonomously. The Guards are answerable directly to the Supreme Leader only, and if we look closely at Khamenei's fatwa, "The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the use of nuclear, chemical and similar weapons as a great and unforgivable sin." It does not say anything about the acquirement of nuclear or chemical for deterrence purposes. Despite the fatwas by Khomeini and Khamenei, "Iran continued its work on nuclear weapons capabilities throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, making substantial progress on learning to build crude nuclear explosives. It also made progress on miniaturizing nuclear warheads for deployment on ballistic missiles."[128] Iran has a history of concealing developments within its nuclear program. The IRGC could be the body that is responsible for these activities and make concealing them possible. Because of its independence from the Iranian government structure, the IRGC could potentially keep growing Iran's nuclear program without the knowledge of elected representatives.

Moreover, because the IRGC has produced the security narrative surrounding deterrence, their activities lie beyond the scope of the politics of individual Iranian leaders. This could also potentially explain different developments in Iran's nuclear program between 1989 to 2003, where the Iranian government was vocally anti-nuclear weapons. In 2009 Iran revealed to the

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[128] "Iran." Nuclear Threat Initiative - Ten Years of Building a Safer World.

IAEA that it was building another enrichment facility, the location of the facility was "an underground tunnel complex on the grounds of an Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) base near the city of Qom." "The plant's size, secrecy, and location on an IRGC military base led some analysts in the U.S. government to argue that Iran constructed it to produce HEU for nuclear weapons."[129]

Conclusion:

This can explain why the Iranian nuclear program has been such a contested issue to study for the international community. On the one hand, you have leaders pointing towards a fatwa that prohibits the Iranian state from using nuclear weapons. On the other hand, you have the IRGC leadership that is pushing for a nuclear weapons program and possibly actively working on it. It can be possible that those hardliners who believe Iran needs a nuclear program for its survival have been working on it, but not using them to navigate around nuclear fatwa. They want to ensure that Iran can produce nuclear weapons if it is ever required, without actually producing or using them. Rafighdoost had admitted that after the international communities response in the Iraq-Iran war he wanted to make sure that Iran would never have to rely on any other countries if need be.

Moreover, this idea makes sense when you consider the fact that intelligence reports of Iran conducting different types of tests, Iran trying to procure nuclear material and knowledge keep coming out from time to time. By doing this, they will be able to ensure the Iranian state and the

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[129] ibid

ideas of the revolution too because they are not explicitly going against the Supreme Leader. To get a better understanding of the Iranian nuclear program policymakers to need to pay more attention to the religious discourse within the country.

CONCLUSION

We need to rethink rationality in global politics in a post-colonial world. There has to be further research to determine to what extent have eurocentric and colonial assumptions limited the field of International Relations. This project just focused on the bias in Euro-centric source material that Realists have used to define human nature. By looking at Iran's history and contemporary politics I have tried to show that there is a very deliberate rationality in Iranian state behavior, and by looking at factors that are dismissed or not understood by realists, we can get a much better understanding of the state. This is not because Iran is an exception, but because these theories were never developed with states like Iran in mind. The field of IR has been developed by taking example from western history, western philosophy, western religions and has been developed by western thinkers. It would be really interesting if there was a moment where these sources are identified as inherently Eurocentric, and other Eastern theories and philosophies are also considered, and there is a moment where both theories are compared objectively. Because by never addressing or even discussing this bias, the field is actively selecting the Western world as the only legitimate source of ideas.

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