

# An Iranian Bomb And The Stink Of American Intervention

Shanzezy Rashid \*

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## Abstract

This paper examines the fundamental right of the Iranian nation to carry out the development of their nuclear program by presenting a series of arguments. It highlights the misguided intentions of the primary countries engaged in opposition to Iran's nuclear program, i.e USA, and Israel. It delineates the importance of Iran having its own nuclear program by referring to arguments made by scholars such as Kenneth Waltz, and aims to depict the inherently flawed nature of postulations that suggest Iran's obtaining nuclear weaponry is detrimental to the Middle East and the world, and therefore US sanctions are essential to pressure them to abandon the program. It cements the notion that US opposition is primarily, in the simplest terms, based on a need to bully the nation for mercenary purposes. The central, pro-nuclear stance of this paper is supplemented with relevant sections that address various facets of counter arguments, leading up to the final conclusion which asserts the importance of not only clearing a path for Iran's nuclear program but implementing damage control by making reparations for the economic losses the nation has incurred as a direct result of the international response to the nuclear program.

## 1 Introduction

From 'USA's most favored nation' status for reprocessing U.S. supplied fuel, [Nik10] to a nation sagging under the weight of exhaustive economic sanctions to counter their nuclear program, Iran has weathered all the facets of western attention. [Pri21] Before the 1979 revolution, Iran enjoyed genial terms with the US, but after Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah who was the last remnant of the Pahlavi dynasty, was deposed, things took a sharp turn. Prior to the revolution, there was an undoubted unspoken assent to the established fact that Iran was going to pursue nuclear weaponry. In fact, it can be argued that the US has played a major role in the development of the Iranian nuclear program. The US provided Iran with its first nuclear reactor, inaugurated at Tehran University

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\*Advised by: David Rezvani, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH. Author's School: Bay View High School, Karachi

in 1967, as well as the weapons grade uranium needed to fuel it. Though, at the time this was part of a peaceful civilian nuclear technology program initiated by President Eisenhower, it transgressed into a full fledged nuclear program due to the Iranian oil boom of the 1970s. The nation utilized the resources pouring in to train their scientific minds and cover their technological bases, resulting in the nuclear conundrum faced today.

After the 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini established Iran as an Islamic republic with a strongly anti-Western narrative. He also put a prompt stop to nuclear pursuits by declaring all weapons of mass destruction a crime against humanity and thus indubitably forbidden in Islam. However, in this day, after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the quest for nuclear weaponry focuses less on religious mandates, and more on a newfound sense of nationalism established on western defiance. [Ins15]

The premise of this paper is to essentially argue in favor of the development of an Iranian nuclear program in the present age by presenting reasoning for western support and collaboration that would allow the nation to reach its utmost security potential. The scholarly debate around Iran's nuclear program puts scholars like Kenneth Waltz at the forefront in examining how nuclear proliferation could actually have positive safety implications. The issue has also drawn significant criticism from notorious scholars such as Scott Sagan, and Colin K. Hal who uphold the belief that global security is threatened by the rise of nuclear weapons, especially nuclear weapons obtained by those in the global south. [Kah12]

The paper will address various facets and concerns relating to the Iranian nuclear program and will finally tie in to the primary argument that Iran should be given an open avenue to pursue its nuclear program. Firstly, it will establish nuclear inevitability that should be at the core of all conversations carried out in regards to this issue, then it will discern the need to see the lack of merit in most western opposition to the program as this opposition is based entirely on the race for regional hegemony. Later, this paper will talk about the impact of an Iranian nuclear program on Iranian proxies like Hezbollah, which have allowed for Iran to be labelled a state sponsor of terrorism and thus have been foundational in the pretenses upheld by governments like the Trump administration in curtailing the nuclear process. Then, the paper will address and rebut other arguments of anti-nuclear proliferation scholars that have dominated the Iranian nuclear program debate. Finally, this paper will establish the need for all parties involved in nuclear opposition to Iran to not only concede through sanctions relief but to also supplement the economic growth of the nation in order to make reparations for robbing the Iranian nation and its people of stability, of progress, and of life.

## 2 Nuclear Inevitability

Initially, the establishment must be made that whatever perspective scholars maintain on whether or not Iran should be permitted to develop its nuclear program, it is indeed inevitable that this program will be developed. There

is a consensus that, in a very short amount of time, as little as a few weeks, Iran has the capability to enrich a stockpile of over 40 kilograms of 60% enriched uranium to weapons grade, all between International Atomic Energy Agency visits. [fR222] Essentially, the nation has the theoretical ability to produce enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon in a very short breakout time.

All this time, they have only been deterred on the basis of tedious, painstaking bureaucratic procedures and the looming threat of harsher, greater sanctions. The nation had to settle for the infamous JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) that provided limited sanctions relief from the P5+1 in exchange for significant concessions in Iran's program. However, after President Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, Iran declared that it would not follow through with the imposed nuclear restrictions after May 2019. Still, upon the election of Joe Biden, former President Rouhani made evident the expressed desire to return to the JCPOA in order to provide Iran with immediate sanctions relief. All the aforementioned information may suggest an argument against the one postulated here, that the restoration of the JCPOA will lead to nuclear non-proliferation, and Iran will be rendered incapable of pursuing a nuclear weapons project. However, my argument stands that the terms of the agreement do indeed limit Iran's nuclear activities, but only so that the process of nuclear development is carried out with the renewed benefits of an economy that comes with fewer sanctions and thus a higher influx of resources. As previously established, Iran has all the necessary requirements for developing nuclear weapons if need be. Therefore the delay brought forth by the limiting nature of the JCPOA is nothing but a roadblock in a more clandestine, slower nuclear project.

### **3 Regional Hegemony Through Nuclear Opposition**

Moreover, a sizable amount of this paper will be dedicated to a discussion centering around why the opposition to the Iranian nuclear program is rather inadequate in terms of how much merit it must be granted in this debate, as it is based less on global security and more on the superpowers of the world's maintenance of regional hegemony. The U.S. has long campaigned for a nuclear-free Middle East, and scholars like Scott Sagan, and those in agreement with him, have maintained the notion that Iran's having nuclear power poses a threat to the stability of the region through its sponsoring of proxies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, and the Assad regime in Syria. [EH10] The common argument made refers to how these organizations backed by Iran, will intensify in the threat they pose to the opposing side due to the surge in power they will receive solely through connection to a nuclear state. [Ede11]

However, this argument just addresses symptoms of Middle Eastern problems, not the roots of the dysfunctional aspects of this region. The argument that is to be reinforced here is that the U.S. appears rather inconsistent with

their peacekeeping narrative in the extent to which they are willing to hinder Iran's nuclear ambitions. The reasoning behind their intentions appears to be maintaining stability within the region, but this pursuit of peace is not visible in other measures promulgated by the U.S. For example, Biden recently proclaimed that the U.S. was not going to 'wait forever' for Iran to rejoin JCPOA, and if needed force would be resorted to as a probable last measure. [REU22] This says more about the peacekeeping intentions of the U.S. than anything.

Moreover, the more palpable threat in the region is Israel. Israel does not have internationally acknowledged nuclear weaponry, nor have they openly declared possession. However all signs point to ownership. [Acn20] Alongside that, U.S. officials first discovered the covert Israeli nuclear program in 1960 during the Eisenhower administration, but as it has not been publicly confirmed or acknowledged, no steps have been taken to limit Israeli capabilities. The U.S. is fairly willing to accept Iran simply having nuclear capability, yet Israel remains opposed to any enrichment potential at all. This makes complete sense; why would Israel not want to remain the sole nuclear power in the region? The kind of leverage that comes with nuclear ability alone is immense, much less being the only nation with nuclear ability in the entirety of the region. Yet, the negative impact of this power imbalance must be acknowledged. As scholars such as Kenneth Waltz have pointed out, Israel has bombed Iraq and Syria in separate incidents to prevent a challenge to their nuclear monopoly, and surely they would not hesitate to do the same in Iran. [Wal12]

Therefore, it is evident that it is not the nuclear ambitions of Iran that threaten the safety of the area, but the preservation of Israel's desire to be the sole nuclear power in the region that is setting fires all across the Middle East. One could argue that Israel poses more of a threat to the stability of the Middle East as it is a nation at odds with the most dominating forces of the region because of its controversial and oppressive politics. Therefore, U.S. and Israeli opposition of the Iranian nuclear program is indeed not based on international peace, rather its foundation is on an unending race for regional hegemony against anti-west regimes and the capacity to impose western sentiments in the region through military eminence, and thus it must be not be regarded with credibility that it often is, when the international community shapes its opinion on Iran's nuclear program.

## 4 Who Gets The Bomb?

There is an ongoing and eminent scholarly debate within the international relations forum on what the rise of nuclear weapons in the Middle East means for global security. The debate against nuclear proliferation is spearheaded by professor Scott Douglas Sagan, who has posed many insightful anti-nuclear arguments, but a key one that will be focused on here relates specifically to Iran. Sagan essentially declares that unstable nations cannot be trusted with the complex ownership mechanisms of nuclear power, they cannot be trusted to not boost the external aggression displayed to other states. To cement his

claim, Sagan gives the example of the Kargil war, and how acquiring nuclear weapons gave Pakistan a newfound sense of confidence, which prompted them to ready their missiles for a nuclear attack. They were hindered only by the order of civilian prime minister, Nawaz Sharif. [Sag06]

This argument falls short when applied to the Iranian nuclear program. Firstly, there are multiple dimensions that must be considered when examining the role of Pakistan and India in the nuclear debate. One of these dimensions that is certainly worth addressing is, how in 1991, the Prime Ministers of two nuclear powered nations, India and Pakistan, entered into an agreement with one another specifying that they would not be launching any sort of attacks on the other party. [M.88] Since then, both countries have resided in relative peace with no major warfare, when prior there had been two significant wars in 1965 and 1971. Further connecting this to Iran is essential to the debate, as Iran borders 13 sovereign states, including Pakistan and Afghanistan. These are not states that can boast diplomatic prowess or internal stability, therefore it can be beneficial for Iran to strengthen their own role in the region, in order to avoid deadly skirmishes. Another way in which the Pakistani Nuclear Program mirrors that of Iran is U.S. opposition. The U.S. was unsuccessful in hindering the A.Q. network then, and it will indeed be unsuccessful in hindering a nation that already has an established nuclear breakout capability now.

Moreover, Sagan's claims establish that there should be some sort of criterion for a nation to be given nuclear power and, by consequence, that the countries that have acquired internationally acknowledged nuclear power are indeed worthy of it. [LT10] Russia and the United States possess 90% of the world's nuclear power, and the two nations are hardly models of globally appropriate behavior. [Faf22] Take Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in 2014 or the U.S.'s invasion of Iraq in 2003. The invasion of Iraq was in complete violation of the U.N. charter, killing and displacing innumerable civilians. [Sla04] At the very least Russia faced a semblance of consequences through EU sanctions, investment bans, tourism services bans etc, while to this day the U.S. remains complacent in the face of committed atrocities.

This depicts with immense clarity that a criterion in nuclear ownership is ineffective, and campaigning for a nuclear zero world is rather unrealistic. Therefore, it has to be all or nothing, and if it cannot be nothing (as in, we cannot eradicate nuclear weapons as a whole) then why not highlight the path to 'all' (a solution whereby nations can be encouraged to strengthen their borders, and enforce protection onto themselves).

If we cannot eradicate the nuclear threat in its entirety, then why pick and choose which nation deserves to have that level of international influence? This kind of judgment cannot be formed by an unswayed, unbiased entity, and therefore it simply cannot be formed. Following this train of thought, the Islamic Republic of Iran has just as much a right to the same extent of national security as does the U.S., as does Russia. Especially given that Iran is constantly threatened by the nuclear adversary and infallible U.S. ally, Israel. What is the logic then, beyond maintaining regional hegemony and nuclear weaponry as a

leveraging tool, to deny Iran the fundamental and sovereign right to national protection?

However, there are certainly looming questions and security concerns that have been posed in the past, that warrant further scholarly investigation. Indeed, criticisms of this ‘all or nothing’ notion are criticisms that go to the very heart of the concept of nuclear proliferation. Scholars such as James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh have pointed out that Iran going nuclear would strengthen a geopolitical imbalance in the Middle East, and the risk of conventional and even nuclear war in the region would be escalated. [LT10] Many have stated that the risk of an accidental nuclear launch is also accelerated. These are certainly powerful concerns in their own right as they address the possibility of potential harm to all the members of the world community. The assertions and examinations of this paper, and most existing bodies of research are largely theoretical assumptions and predictions. Even if these speculations are based on fact, they are still speculations and thus they must be treated as such in the course of real action. Previous scholarly criticisms of the Iranian nuclear program do indeed address some valid safety concerns, and these concerns should be alleviated in their own right through added safety measures and extreme vigilance, however they may not be substantial enough to be reason for the eradication of the entire program.

## 5 Iran: The Big Bad Terrorism Sponsor

A common argument wielded against a potential Iranian nuclear program is that it would strengthen the intensity of terrorist activities it sponsors throughout the region. One of these organizations is Hezbollah, and this paper will be putting the onus on Hezbollah specifically, as it is the one most heavily affiliated with Iran, even to the extent that it has been labeled an “Iranian Project” by some. [Luc09] The organization’s historical narrative is heavily interlinked with Iran, and the nation also provides Hezbollah with \$700 million per year in funding. [Lan21] The primary question that arises when examining the Iranian nuclear program in light of Hezbollah is that if Hezbollah is supplied with the immense additional strength of being backed by a nuclear powered nation, what does that mean for regional safety? Is bolstering Hezbollah a positive or negative?

These questions pose a valid dilemma, and thus many have postulated the argument that Iran’s nuclear program could be detrimental to the stability of the region. However, the assertions of this paper maintain that this organization is indeed not democratic, is indeed a militia on its way to a rocky transition into a political party, but it is still a suitable alternative to the conditions of relative instability that the region would be faced with, had Iran not strengthened the dominance of Hezbollah by association. Hezbollah’s role in Syria is especially significant, as it has been one most heavily criticized, but upon further examination, it is uncertain whether the organization played as heinous a role as they were ascribed. If Hezbollah did not have Iranian support to the degree that it does, they would have withdrawn from the region. Without their support,

the Assad Regime in Syria would have an avenue to collapse, and without the Assad Regime, the people of Syria would be faced with alternatives to occupy governmental positions that would make the tyranny, and brutality of the Assad Regime pale in comparative incompetence. Hezbollah intervened in Syria to eliminate ISIS, and they would likely establish a stronghold once more, so would militant Al-Qaeda groups that have always scrambled for regional power, like Al-Nusra. Therefore, it can be inferred from the aforementioned speculations that Iran's indirect and direct strengthening of the organization is less a vessel for the creation of further insecurity, rather it is one of the few things protecting Syria and the surrounding region from the dominance of organizations like ISIS that have never had the interests of the people in mind, or at heart.

Hasan Nasrullah, the leader of Hezbollah, openly proclaims, 'Hezbollah's budget, its incomes, its expenses, everything it eats and drinks, its weapons, and rockets are all from the Islamic Republic of Iran.' [Raf16] Therefore it can surely be inferred that Hezbollah is a proxy and a tool for the Iranian nation to settle regional squabbles. Yet, if the presence of Hezbollah is eliminated entirely, that leaves an avenue open for the Assad regime to collapse. While this instance may have positive implications, those implications are outweighed by the ramifications of a governmental collapse. The U.S. has often utilized the presence of ISIS to maintain western control, and it has played a major role in the way extremist violence has spread like wildfire. Meanwhile Saudi Arabia has created a market for ISIS to sell oil smuggled out of captured cities, which is a major source of funding for the organization's heinous activities. [MM115] Therefore, without the support of the Iranian nation that is consolidated with the presence of nuclear weapons, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, as well as other external actors, will likely doom Syria to an anti-Hezbollah regime that exploits the pain and suffering of the Syrian people in order to solidify their regional dominance and comprehensive control. This leads into my primary argument about how the Iranian Nuclear Weapons project must be further developed in order to promulgate the only chance the Syrian people have for a fair and representative government.

Still, there have been scholarly concerns about the safety of nuclear weapons when they are in proximity to extremist groups. There are factions within Hezbollah that are certainly not ethical in their motivations, and these factions may pursue a course of action involving the hijacking of Iranian nuclear weapons to the point where the welfare of the entire region could be thrust into the hands of a few awry individuals. It is unlikely that they will use the weapons, however it is entirely possible that they may mishandle them or utilize them as leverage in negotiations that bring about outcomes that are not in favor of the welfare of the Iranian or Syrian people. This paper does assert that it is in the intrinsic nature of the possession of nuclear weapons by any country, be that in the global south or the north, that they may be open to being intercepted by any entity and thus this is not necessarily an argument against Iran but an argument against nuclear weaponry in general. It is still worth consideration; however all that can be done to prevent these scenarios is to ensure the utmost protection of nuclear weapons, as it is simply not feasible to eliminate them all together.

## 6 Final Thoughts: How to Let Iran Be

An important factor to consider in this nuclear debate is whether or not Iran actually wants nuclear weapons. Iran has a nuclear capability, but it has waited around for several years, toying with agreements, diplomatic talks, and bureaucratic measures. When the U.S. and the former Soviet Union went nuclear, they did it as fast as they could. However, it is likely that Iran is following the model of nations like Japan, that have all the perks of staying in the Treaty of Non Proliferation while also maintaining fuel cycle technologies. [Bul74] Perhaps there is a reason that Iran is dragging its feet on this path almost unnecessarily. Adopting a policy of slow proliferation is a means of avoiding harsh sanctions, while also being able to use the threat of arsenal establishment to one's favor on the negotiations table and garner acceptance to one's demands. Under the 1994 agreed framework project, North Korea was awarded with a supply of light water reactor plants and half a million tons of free heavy oil annually. [aca22] Additionally, developing and updating nuclear weapons is an extremely expensive endeavor. Many such factors coalesce into a theoretical notion that acquiring weapons-grade nuclear power may not be all that high on Iran's list of priorities, and that they may be expecting greater, larger concessions in a revised JCPOA agreement.

Still, a fundamental argument of this paper is that the U.S., EU, Israel, and all other involved entities must concede. They must concede to the will of the Iranian nation for self determination through a strong nuclear weapons project, not just because, as highlighted above, it is inevitable, but because it is the right thing to do. They must let Iran be for all the reasons highlighted in this paper above, and the way they can do this will be outlined below.

Trump mocked and undermined JCPOA throughout his 2016 campaign, and in 2018 he pulled out of the deal altogether, calling it a 'horrible one sided deal that never should have happened.' But now, Biden is scrambling to get Iran to re-enter the deal, realizing that even with sanctions Iran is well on their way to a nuclear program. Though it sounds unlikely, perhaps a chord has been struck with the U.S. Perhaps they are on their way to see how the role of the undeserved sanction tool in international trade, if not done in accordance with humane guidelines, is cruel and restrictive, and has an overwhelmingly unjust impact on the people. The people of Iran have been impacted in innumerable ways and harrowing tales of deprivation haunt the bodies and minds of every citizen. The healthcare industry has deteriorated rapidly, a lack of insulin being one of the most prevalent issues, and one capable of causing the most harm. Unemployment pervades most households, and inflation has made it so that the prices of ordinary necessities have soared, far beyond the reach of the common citizen. Maintaining even the pretense of a regular life is a struggle punctuated by numerous insurmountable hurdles. [Meh20]

Rejoining the JCPOA will soothe the Iranians, it will have a calming effect on the people and a restorative effect on the economy. Yet it is not enough. Diplomats from the ongoing nuclear talks in Vienna have accused Iran of making 'maximalist demands,' without specifically highlighting what demands. [Win22]



[Nam22] The EU's ambassador to the UN stated that this was the opportunity to seize the deal on the table, to take it for what it is. However, this paper firmly asserts that if there is one thing Trump was right about, it was that JCPOA is incredibly one sided. This is because the Iranian nation fails to receive an equitable payout on sanctions relief alone, and the U.S. owes it to Iran to do more. Rejoining the deal, for Iran, means conceding to nuclear latency, to halting a program that started 43 years ago, for many more. Sanctions relief is less a benefit of JCPOA and more simply what is the right of the nation. What the U.S. ought to do in terms of actually playing a positive role in the region is to have a stake in exploring the untapped economic potential of the country. This endeavor would not just stabilize the decaying economy, it would also allow the U.S. significant benefits that would not be granted through sanctions relief alone.

Iran hosts 9% and 16% of the world's crude oil and natural gas reserves. It is home to 5% of the world's metal constituent reserves. The nation is also replete with sustainable energy resources, with wind and solar energy being the most prevalent. Moreover, the Iranian youth is bursting at the seams with innovative ideas, brilliant perspectives and the kind of global curiosity that only comes with being cut off from the world for decades on end. Iran is also facing the kind of brain drain that comes within any struggling nation with an unemployment rate of 20% and an underemployment rate of 40% - 50%. The nation is unable to retain its most accomplished minds due to the failing infrastructural environment the sanctions have created, and this is indeed a national travesty. [MC21]

These aspects of the Iranian economy have been delineated not because this paper is attempting to provide reasoning for the U.S. to strengthen their already overbearing presence in the Middle East, but because recognition of the nation's incredible potential has the ability to lift the people of Iran up from the financial despair and desolation inflicted by decades of sanctions and economic failures as a direct result of the Iranian Nuclear Program. Indeed, Iran has not been allowed to go nuclear under the convenient excuse that they are not a nation that fits western definitions of national stability. Arguments against this notion are again worth taking into consideration; stability only seems to be a credible point when obtaining nuclear weaponry, but as soon as a major event happens that alters the regional or global landscape, who can say how a nuclear armed Iran would react? Still, if national stability is what the concerned nations claim to want for Iran, then it will be in their favor as well as the national interests of Iran to play a role in cementing their economy to the point where they are of the caliber that having nuclear weaponry is their undisputed right. Allowing Iran to go nuclear is in the immediate interest of the Iranian people, and thus their welfare must be conceived as a sound reason to pursue the program.

## 7 Conclusion

This paper highlights, through a series of arguments, and refutations of counter arguments, why Iran should be given access to all necessary means to become nuclear. This paper also addresses why a nuclear arms race in the Middle East may not be as unfavorable an outcome as fear mongering western media companies have portrayed it. It asserts the conviction that the U.S. must rejoin JCPOA with additional concessions in the form of investments with Iran and programs that take advantage of its curious and capable youth, as well as all its economic and strategic resources that beg to be used. This paper was meant to underline and reiterate all the reasons Iran must be nuclear, as well as how its nuclear program can be supplemented. The underlying assertion of the paper remains that Iran is a nation with the utmost potential, and innovative capabilities that can create global impact. Allowing them to go nuclear in the name of self defense is the one thing the U.S. can do to acknowledge their status as a sovereign state with international value. Therefore it is of paramount importance that nuclear weapons be pursued in a way that will cement the role of Iran in the Middle East, and if they cannot extricate themselves from the region peacefully, will allow the U.S. to reap economic benefits that will keep them satisfied, while also promulgating the interests of the Iranian people.

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