

Domestic Politics and Nuclear Proliferation in Iran

by

Julien Bernard

Under the Supervision of

Peter Jones

Graduate School of Public
and International Affairs

A research paper submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Social Sciences

in

Political Science

School of Political Studies
University of Ottawa
2012

Domestic Politics and Nuclear Proliferation in Iran

On February 11, 2012, while the army and nation gathered in Tehran's Azadi Square to celebrate the 33rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took to the stage and vowed to release, in the upcoming days, new information regarding Iran's alleged peaceful nuclear program. As promised, in an elaborate ceremony staged only a few days later, President Ahmadinejad announced, among other things, Iranian scientists' mastery of the nuclear fuel cycle, valuable know-how bringing the country ever closer, if it so wished, to developing nuclear weapons. Arguably the case as "the nature, scale, and sequencing of the program suggests a weapons program."¹ These are the latest revelations in what has been a series of very public announcements regarding Iran's nuclear program since President Ahmadinejad took office in early August 2005. A program which was initially shunned as yet another example of the Shah's excesses and suspended by way of *fatwa* (religious edict) by Ayatollah Khomeini shortly after the 1979 Revolution, revived under President Rafsanjani in the mid-1980s at the height of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and quietly sustained beneath a veil of secrecy under President Khatami, has become the prized and very public child of the current hardline administration in Tehran.

While some would argue the nuclear program was catapulted out of obscurity in 2002 following the public disclosure of two secret nuclear sites in Iran, a uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and heavy water facility in Arak, by an Iranian opposition group now operating in exile, there is no denying President Ahmadinejad has deliberately

¹ CHUBIN, Shahram (2006), Iran's Nuclear Ambitions, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p. 45.

and vehemently popularized the once secret nuclear program. As Naji explains, the President seldom misses the opportunity to speak on the issue, delivering “firebrand speeches on the subject all over Iran.”²

To the nuclear program’s new public face has been added an unprecedented belligerent nuclear posture³. While in the past negotiations between the European powers and Iran have yielded some results, most notably President Khatami’s voluntary suspension of enrichment-related activities and acceptance of the Non Proliferation Treaty’s (NPT) Additional Protocol in 2003, President Ahmadinejad, shortly after taking office, resumed uranium enrichment and at the time of writing, negotiations only just resumed (April 2012 in Istanbul) following more than a year of deadlock.

These latest dynamics in Iran’s already perplexing nuclear saga deserve particular attention. According to realist intuitions, the long-time reigning theory and model by which to study nuclear weapons proliferation, “states will seek to develop nuclear weapons when they face a significant military threat to their security that cannot be met through alternative means.”⁴ However, the nuclear program’s newfound public face and inflexibility come at a time when Iran’s security environment has been altered to its advantage⁵. Although far from a faded memory, Iran’s devastating war with Iraq has long passed, two of Iran’s foremost security concerns⁶ have been resolved with the forced ouster of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan and the American military footprint in the region is finally winding down, seen most recently with the

² NAJI, Kasra (2008), *Ahadinejad: The Secret History of Iran’s Radical Leader*, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, p. 132.

³ CHUBIN (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 90.

⁴ SAGAN, Scott D. (1996), “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb”, *International Security*, vol.21, no. 3, p. 54.

⁵ CHUBIN (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 3.

⁶ JONES, Peter (1998), “Iran’s Threat Perceptions and Arms Control Policies”, *The Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 52.

withdrawal of the remaining US combat forces from Iraq in late December 2011. Although much uncertainty in the region remains in spite of these latest developments, no external threats exist for which Iran would require a nuclear deterrent⁷. In fact, the only possible threat which Iran could face springs from its uncompromising desire to acquire nuclear weapons-related technology, a desire often compared to a “runaway train with no brakes”⁸ by President Ahmadinejad and his hardline colleagues, making the regime’s perceived need for a nuclear weapons capability (of course according to a realist perspective) a self-fulfilling prophecy⁹. Of course and in spite of its enhanced security environment, a “conspirational interpretation of politics”¹⁰ is bound to continue in Iran, this belief that subversive forces, both foreign and domestic, are plotting to undermine the Islamic Republic of Iran at every corner (this paranoia has certainly increased following the United States’ invasion of Iraq and policies of calling for regime change¹¹), however, as some have already pointed out, “hard-liners will find it increasingly difficult to justify their policies and their retention of power by referring to a hostile, predatory external environment”¹².

⁷ CHUBIN, Shahram (2001a), “Iran’s Strategic Environment and Nuclear Weapons” in KEMP, Geoffrey et al., “Iran’s Nuclear Weapons Options: Issues and Analysis”, Washington D.C.: The Nixon Center, p. 17.

⁸ NAJI (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁹ PERKOVICH, George (2003), “Dealing With Iran’s Nuclear Challenge”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p. 8.

¹⁰ ABRAHAMIAN, Ervand (1993), Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, p. 112.

¹¹ Some authors have argued that these fears have been at least partially attenuated following the release of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) in 2007 by the U.S. Intelligence Community which emphasized Iran’s decision to forego weaponization of its nuclear program in 2003, significantly reducing the likelihood of an impending U.S. military strike. See THALER, David E., NADER, Alireza, CHUBIN, Shahram, GREEN, Jerrold D., LYNCH, Charlotte and WEHREY, Frederic (2010), Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads: An Exploration of Iranian Leadership Dynamics, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (National Defense Research Institute), p. 99.

¹² CHUBIN, Shahram and LITWAK, Robert S. (2003), “Debating Iran’s Nuclear Aspirations”, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4, p. 104.

That being said, any analysis of nuclear weapons proliferation in Iran would be hard-pressed to completely disregard Iran's perceived vulnerability, as far more than simple power asymmetries enter the threat perception calculus of state leaders, as constructivists rightfully argue. However, what the above exposé does accomplish is to vindicate the very sound assumption that what security imperatives may have accounted for the nuclear program's revival in the mid-1980s may not account for the program's continued persistence¹³. Let's remember, while the nuclear program was reactivated (1986) at the height of the Iran-Iraq War, largely confirming realist intuitions (reactivated in response to power asymmetries), since then, "the program has been marked by persistence rather than urgency. As the absence of a crash program would suggest, the motives for investing in a nuclear option stem more from political than security imperatives."¹⁴

Scholars have long advocated for a more nuanced approach to the study of nuclear weapons proliferation, with this in mind, this study will attempt to unravel the following question: What principal motivation accounts for Iran's current hardline administration's public and determined quest for nuclear weapons-related technology? Adopting a domestic politics model of nuclear weapons proliferation, it will be argued that Iran's current nuclear policy is designed as a calculated ploy, set forth by the regime's hardliners, to undermine and discredit the regime's internal opponents¹⁵. As Chubin

¹³CHUBIN (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁵ GREEN, Jerrold D., WEHREY, Frederic and WOLF, Charles Jr. (2009), Understanding Iran, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (National Security Research Division), p. 28.

explains, “The domestic power struggle over resources and power is still the main issue in Iran. The nuclear issue is one — albeit critical — aspect of it.”¹⁶

The domestic politics model of nuclear weapons proliferation offers a unit-level analysis of the causes of nuclear weapons proliferation, focusing on a specific set of actors which have historically played a determining role in a number of proliferation case-studies. Sagan identifies these key actors as being:

“the state’s nuclear energy establishment (which includes officials in state-run laboratories as well as civilian reactor facilities); important units within the professional military (often within the air force, though sometimes in navy bureaucracies interested in nuclear propulsion); and politicians”.¹⁷

The first variant of this approach holds that powerful interest groups (scientific-military-industrial complex) often develop following a state’s decision to invest in nuclear technology. The scientific and military communities especially have much to gain from the state’s decision to stay the nuclear course for reasons as varied as funding and prestige¹⁸. These parochial interests drive these actors to build broader coalitions, which for example, can push the scientific community to inflate the advantages of a nuclear breakthrough or encourage the military to relay skewed threat perceptions to their leaders increasing the value of a nuclear deterrent¹⁹.

In Iran, there is some evidence suggesting the formation of a nuclear lobby, although pieces of physical evidence are few and far between. Some authors claim “the head of [Iran’s] AEO [(Atomic Energy Organization)] is among the most vocal

¹⁶ CHUBIN, Shahram (2008), “Understanding Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions”, in CRONIN, Patrick M. (ed.), Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security, Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, p. 55.

¹⁷ SAGAN (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 63-64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

proponents of the program”²⁰ and that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), with its growing presence in government, is actively campaigning for a nuclear weapons capability as it is most likely to “oversee their storage, training, and deployment infrastructure.”²¹ Others refute these facts altogether²², setting the stage for this model’s second variant.

The second variant of the domestic politics model, the one adopted throughout this paper, focuses on politicians’ “perceptions of the bomb’s utility and of its symbolism.”²³ It must be understood that Iran has entered a period of revolutionary upheaval, and identity crisis of sorts that pits the forces embracing reform against those advocating “retrogressive tradition.”²⁴ While the twin pillars of the conservatives’ power base, notably their material and ideational supremacy over their internal rivals, were strengthened in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 Revolution, largely the product of the revolutionary fervor which swept the country and Ayatollah Khomeini’s implicit, although at times wavering support, following the death of the Father of the Revolution, this superiority was gradually usurped and undermined by two consecutive two-term presidencies. This period in Iranian history, that of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and Mohammad Khatami’s (1997-2005) tenures as president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, according to President Ahmadinejad and many of his hardline

²⁰ GREEN et al. (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²¹ GREEN et al. (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²² “Iran has no military lobby for the ‘bomb’, like Pakistan, nor a civilian-scientific lobby, like India.” See CHUBIN (2001a), *op.cit.*, p. 78.

²³ HYMANS, Jacques E. (2006), “Theories of Nuclear Proliferation: The State of the Field”, *Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 13, no. 3, p. 455.

²⁴ TAKEYH, Ray (2006), Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic, New York, NY: Times Books, p. 3.

colleagues, amounted to an era of great “betrayal of the revolution”²⁵. This, many argue, because both Rafsanjani and Khatami threatened their political survival, “directly undermining the hard line conservatives’ prerogatives”²⁶.

While his election may have come as a surprise to many, if not all, domestic and international spectators, soon after taking office, there would be little speculation on how Ahmadinejad would seek define his tenure as president of the Islamic Republic. As Takeyh notes, “Ahmadinejad came into office determined to rekindle the revolutionary fires that seemed long extinguished”²⁷, the same fires which had catapulted the conservative hardliners at the pinnacle of the Iranian polity nearly three decades earlier. In his quest, President Ahmadinejad has attempted to exploit and manipulate the nuclear issue in two distinct but interrelated ways. First, President Ahmadinejad has attempted to exploit the nuclear issue in an attempt to foment and manufacture a crisis with the West, thereby renewing the populace’s long-held feeling of embattlement. As Wehrey et al. explain, President Ahmadinejad has illustrated “the combined utility of a siege-like mentality and the issue of nuclear power in consolidating internal support for the regime”²⁸.

Second, there has been a concerted effort to craft a concrete link between the nuclear program and Iranian national identity²⁹. Ahmadinejad and those around him have attempted to depict the nuclear program as embodying, at times rather too perfectly, those

²⁵ ANSARI, Ali M. (2007), “Iran Under Ahmadinejad: The Politics of Confrontation”, *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 47, no. 393, p. 11.

²⁶ TAKEYH (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 49.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

²⁸ WEHREY, Frederic and al. (2009a), Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (Project Air Force), p. 11.

²⁹ TAKEYH, Ray (2009), Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 250.

core principles that animated the 1979 Revolution: self-reliance, independence and equality³⁰. As Green et al. explain, the nuclear program has gained an almost “mythic significance in linking these [...] themes.”³¹

In closing, it should be remembered that even “clandestine nuclear programs are taken seriously by the opponents and tacit nuclear deterrence works”³², however, if a nuclear program is to gain added symbolic meaning, as in a tool for internal political consumption and legitimation which will be argued the case in Iran, nuclear intentions need to be known. Therefore, what was described in the introductory paragraphs of this section, notably the popularization of the nuclear issue and an unprecedented belligerent nuclear posture, at the very least gives reason for this study’s hypothesis. As Chubin writes, “Above all, the nuclear issue is one of symbolism”³³.

This paper will be divided as follows. The first section will give the reader an overview of the political landscape in Iran, ultimately describing why the domestic politics approach to nuclear proliferation is almost uniquely suited to study the proliferation puzzle in Iran. Section two and three will analyze Rafsanjani and Khatami’s tenures as president of the Islamic Republic, respectively. More specifically, these sections aim at deconstructing the reasons why the nuclear program has come to be utilized in such a way by President Ahmadinejad and his hardline followers. President Rafsanjani’s onslaught on the material vested interests of the conservatives and President Khatami’s assault on the conservatives’ ideational supremacy will take center stage. A

³⁰ CHUBIN, Shahram (2001), “Whither Iran: Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security”, *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 41, no. 342, p. 74.

³¹ GREEN et al. (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³² KHAN, Saira (2010), *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted Conflict and Proliferation*, New York, NY: Routledge, p. 23.

³³ CHUBIN (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 12.

great deal of time and space is devoted to these first three sections, for it is impossible to understand the present without first making sense of the past. The fourth section will discuss in detail what has been described above, highlighting the recent transformations in Iran's nuclear policy. Lastly, a concluding section will propose the best way forward in dealing with Iran's nuclear dilemma.

1. Iran's Political Landscape: A Case of Factional Politics

First on the menu is a detailed examination of the reasons behind the Islamic Republic's factional politics. This section ultimately seeks to justify the approach privileged in this paper, namely the domestic politics model of nuclear weapons proliferation. The second part to this section provides a brief overview of the four main political groupings or factions in Iran. An exhaustive description of each faction's political agenda, objectives, power base and so on will be found in subsequent sections of this paper. For the time being, a picture of each faction will be painted in broad strokes, enough to highlight the main points of contention and convergence from one faction to the next.

1.1 Factional Politics

Rarely do governments, especially revolutionary ones, escape the grip of party politics or factionalism³⁴. Political infighting almost invariably ensues following times of revolutionary upheaval. Whereas revolutionary struggles have the uncanny ability to channel the energies of the most incompatible of political forces in the pursuit of a common goal, notably the overthrow of the ruling regime, in post-revolutionary years their objectives clash with each group setting its sights on the assumption of ultimate power³⁵. Although periods of great turmoil, as is prolonged war or economic crises, can unite a nation and bridge the ideological gap between a regime's power brokers, political dissension is a fact of life in modern government. The reasoning behind this assertion is simple: political groupings of like-minded politicians (i.e. factions) or political parties

³⁴ MOSLEM, Mehdi (2002), Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, p. 2.

³⁵ Much of the same holds true, albeit to a lesser extent, for long consolidated regimes, whether democratic or authoritarian.

constantly jockey for power and influence, knowing full well the benefits of consolidating their political gains which in some societies may even lead to great wealth, prestige and the sources of patronage invariably raising the stakes.

Although such a view of politics would seemingly make the domestic politics model of nuclear weapons proliferation, an approach which envisions these weapons and programs as “political objects of considerable importance in domestic debates and internal bureaucratic struggles”³⁶, applicable to nearly all cases of nuclear weapons proliferation, arguably this approach’s greatest downfall, Iran is unique in that unlike other great modern-day revolutions like in Russia and China, “differences have progressively increased rather than decreased throughout post-revolutionary years.”³⁷ Whereas a singular vision of the state generally triumphs, in Iran, this battle rages on. As Brumberg explains, “the debate over the ideological legacy of that great event [(the Islamic Revolution)] has not been settled in favor of any one vision.”³⁸ This is because certain characteristics that traverse Iran’s political system nurture factionalism, making this feature particularly acute and noteworthy in Iran. The following section will examine those characteristics unique to Iran that make its domestic politics fertile ground for factionalism.

1.1.1 Political Islam

From the 1979 Islamic Revolution was born a novel form of government, unprecedented not only in human history but “In many regards, it is also an innovation in

³⁶ SAGAN (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 55.

³⁷ MOSLEM (2002), *op.cit.*, p. 2.

³⁸ BRUMBERG, Daniel (2001), Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, p. 2.

the Shi'a theory of government"³⁹. It combined a unique blend of both republican and theocratic modes of governing and institutions. While republicanism was instituted, largely in the form of a popularly elected parliament (majlis) and president, the regime's religiousness would ultimately prevail. This fact very much palpable in the first few articles of the Iranian Constitution, adopted on 24 December, 1979. According to Article 4 (Islamic Principle), "All civil, penal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria."⁴⁰ Put simply, the Qur'an and will of God was to be the source of all laws⁴¹, which brings us to the first cause of factionalism in Iran, that of secondary ordinances⁴². Here, Chehabi deserves to be quoted at some length. According to the author,

Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which theoretically is the basis of the dominant ideology and hence of all legislation, addresses only a limited range of issues and these almost all fall into the realm of private law. Traditional Islam has very little to say about many questions of public policy, which means that Islamists have to invent a lot by deducing rules and regulations from principles that do not address those issues. And since they engage in this act of invention on the basis of a religion that admits of distinct interpretations, they invariably disagree with each other.⁴³

Like most, if not all religions, Islam was never designed nor meant to address issues of public policy. The antiquity of Islam alone, never mind its private character, renders it nearly inoperable for the exigencies of modern times⁴⁴. Having adopted Islam to serve

³⁹ HUNTER, Shireen T. (1992), Iran After Khomeini, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, p. 15.

⁴⁰ TSCHENTSHER, A. (1994), *A Translation of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, available at http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00t____.html. Accessed March 4, 2012.

⁴¹ HUNTER (1992), *op.cit.*, p. 21.

⁴² BRUMBERG (2001), *op.cit.*, p. 129.

⁴³ CHEHABI, H. E. (2001), "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective", *Government and Opposition*, vol. 36, no. 1, p. 56.

⁴⁴ BOROJERDI, Mehrzad, "Paradoxes of Politics in Postrevolutionary Iran", in ESPOSITO, John L. and RAMAZANI, R. K. (eds.) (2001), Iran at the Crossroads, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 21.

this once unimaginable purpose, there is no wonder that factionalism reigns in Iran: it “was built into the political system right from the beginning of the existence of the IRI.”⁴⁵

1.1.2 Khomeini’s *Velayat-e Faqih*

The single most important innovation and principal reason for the Iranian regime’s exceptionalism is Ayatollah Khomeini’s concept of *velayat-e faqih* (rule of the jurispudent). While in and of itself not contributing to Iran’s factional politics, the way in which this concept was put into practice has greatly impeded political accord. Enshrined in the Constitution, *velayat-e faqih* “holds that a specially selected religious leader must ensure that decisions and policies are consistent with the state’s over-riding purpose of maintaining the umma in a fit condition to hasten the appearance of the mahdi.”⁴⁶ In other words, the Supreme Leader sits atop the institutional pyramid and has his hand in nearly all government matters⁴⁷. While Khomeini, who occupied the position of Supreme Leader until his death in 1989, is often commended for having stayed above the political fray thereby limiting the effects of factional infighting⁴⁸, his tenure is nonetheless marred with inconsistencies. He is renowned for oscillating on policies, backtracking on issues and articulating contradictory decrees, the result of which has

⁴⁵ RAKEL, Eva Patricia (2009), Power, Islam, and Political Elite in Iran: A Study on the Iranian Political Elite from Khomeini to Ahmadinejad, Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, p. 4.

⁴⁶ JONES, Peter (2011), “Succession and the Supreme Leader in Iran”, *Survival*, vol. 53, no. 6, p. 105.

⁴⁷ “The Supreme Leader is constitutionally empowered to set forth the general policies of the state, supervise the execution of those policies, command the armed forces of the state, declare war and peace, determine the suitability of the President, and appoint and dismiss key officials including the supreme judicial authority, the various military commanders, members of various governmental bodies, and the head of the state media.” SHERRILL, Clifton W. (2011), “After Khamenei: Who Will Succeed Iran’s Supreme Leader?”, *Orbis*, vol. 55 no. 4, p. 633.

⁴⁸ NADER, Alireza, THALER, David E. and BOHANDY, S. R. (2011), The Next Supreme Leader: Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (National Defense Research Institute), p. 17.

been dubbed “an ideological mishmash that is probably unmatched in the history of constitutionalism.”⁴⁹ According to Green et al.,

This approach [to governing] grew out of a need to reconcile two frequently contradictory currents underpinning Khomeini’s political philosophy of the Islamic republic: an isolationist, combative, and excessively dogmatic current, which might be termed *Jihadi*, and a more integrative, flexible, and pluralistic current, best described as *Ijtihadi* [...].⁵⁰

The problem with Khomeini’s two ideological currents is that when viewed separately, completely different versions of an Islamic state emerge. Both can be used to justify entirely different Islamic states, one that is authoritarian and the other democratic.

Although Khomeini may have been genuinely attracted to conflicting visions of an Islamic state⁵¹, several authors have pointed to several other more practical considerations for his oscillations. First, fluctuating on issues and policies meant preventing any one faction from reigning supreme over the others, which could have spelled disaster for the Islamic Regime⁵². By providing ammunition to all factions, none could gain enough power so as to threaten either the survival of the Islamic regime or his position as undisputed Leader. Second, the sending of mixed signals nurtured a certain degree of conflict between the factions, ultimately solidifying his position as Supreme Leader. According to Brumberg, “in the short term a controlled measure of ideological competition may enhance a leader’s authority by giving him the means to arbitrate and thus limit conflict.”⁵³ While unintended, his inconsistent views have become the most potent of weapons in the factional power struggle: “since each faction can make an

⁴⁹ BRUMBERG (2001), *op.cit.*, p. 107.

⁵⁰ GREEN et al. (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵² BAKTIARI, Bahman (1996), Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran: The Institutionalization of Factional Politics, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, p. 84.

⁵³ BRUMBERG (2001), *op.cit.*, p. 35.

equally plausible case that its vision of politics is an authentic expression of the founding father's wishes, the ideological field is open to twists and turns."⁵⁴ Consequently, while factions are debating competing views of an Islamic state, all base their claims on a single man's vision engaging all factions in an intense ideological wrestling match.

What seems like an already explosive situation was compounded by Ayatollah Khomeini's dying days. Ideological consistency was again shelved when Khomeini's ill health forced the succession issue to be addressed. From the start, with the position of Supreme Leader having been specifically crafted for Khomeini and for "problems deriving from the informal character of the traditional mode of selecting Shi'a religious leaders"⁵⁵, the succession issue was sure to test the Islamic Republic. For reasons none other than political expediency, the concept of *velayat-e faqih* was dealt a severe blow with the 1989 constitutional amendments. While the 1979 Constitution held that the Supreme Leader be a Grand Ayatollah or source of emulation (*Majra-e-Taqlid*), the highest rank within the Shi'a clerical establishment, the 1989 reforms scrapped the required religious qualifications of the Supreme Leader and instead privileged secular worldly knowledge⁵⁶.

Although little else in terms of planning and execution could have spared the Islamic Republic from the succession debacle as not a single "high ranking cleric accepted Khomeini's concept of ruling jurist [(*velayat-e faqih*)]"⁵⁷, the fact remains that a position once set aside for the most esteemed, revered and learned cleric was now open to the most astute of religious politicians. Appointed to succeed Khomeini was Seyed Ali

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁵ In Shi'a Islam, there is no formal procedure by which a cleric becomes a source of emulation. "Religious leaders are recognized as a *Majra-e-Taqlid*, or they are not." HUNTER (1992), *op.cit.*, p. 19.

⁵⁶ ABRAHAMIAN (1993), *op.cit.*, p. 35.

⁵⁷ BRUMBERG (2001), *op.cit.*, p. 143.

Hosseini Khamenei, former president of the Islamic Republic (1981-89) and a middle-ranking cleric whose religious credentials had been precipitously and artificially elevated to that of Ayatollah shortly before his ascension to the position of Supreme Leader, contravening Shi'a tradition and generating disdain from the clerical community⁵⁸. Lacking Khomeini's charismatic and religious authority among both the religious establishment and population at large, the political situation has gone from competitive to downright hostile. As Moslem writes, "Since his [(Khomeini's)] death, these differences have intensified to the extent that discord among the elite has become the most salient feature of politics in the IRI."⁵⁹

1.1.3 Institutional Duality

Lastly, political competition has been woven into the institutional fabric of the Islamic Republic. As pointed out earlier, the Islamic Republic's institutional structure is comprised of both republican and religious or revolutionary institutions. A final cause for Iran's factionalism can be found in this institutional duality. Unelected religious supervisory bodies and revolutionary institutions exist in parallel with the more conventional institutions of the state. Therefore, for nearly every institution in Iran there exists a corresponding institution fulfilling many of the same roles and functions, instilling a permanent rivalry between them⁶⁰. As Moslem explains, "a host of institutions and bodies are legally empowered to duplicate, challenge, constrain, and even nullify the decisions made by the central government."⁶¹ This complex institutional

⁵⁸ ANSARI, Ali M. (2006), *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs (second edition), p. 56.

⁵⁹ MOSLEM (2002), *op.cit.*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ DJALILI, Mohammad Reza (2001), *Iran: L'illusion Réformiste*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, p. 48.

⁶¹ MOSLEM, Mehdi (2002b), "The State and Factional Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran", in HOOGLUND, Eric (ed.), *Twenty Years of Islamic Revolution: Political and Social Transition in Iran since 1979*, New York, NY: Syracuse University Press, p. 25.

arrangement is most evident when examining the religious counterweights to the few elected institutions in the Islamic Republic.

Standing in the way of the Iranian parliament is the Council of Guardians, a powerful religious supervisory body composed of twelve members, six of which are clerics appointed by the Supreme Leader while the rest are lay jurists selected first by the head of the judiciary then approved by parliament. This veto-wielding supervisory body is constitutionally mandated (articles 91 to 99 of the Constitution) to oversee the activities of parliament, establishing both its membership and ensuring the compatibility of all laws passed with the Islamic criteria⁶². The stalemate and competition that ensued between these twin institutions is exemplified best by the creation of a second religious supervisory body, the Expediency Council. Founded in 1988 by Khomeini himself, this appointed 31-member body, along with performing an advisory role to the Supreme Leader, was in essence created to mediate quarrels between parliament and the Guardian Council⁶³.

In the Islamic Republic, the presidency is also offset by a parallel institution, that of the Supreme Leader. These two institutions essentially split the functions typically assumed solely by the presidency in most all presidential systems, effectively causing these two institutions to compete with one another. While the president has control over economic and socio-cultural policies, the Supreme Leader assumes command of foreign policy and the armed forces⁶⁴. Here too, tensions between these parallel institutions are finally boiling over with President Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Khamenei locked

⁶² BUCHTA, Wilfried (2000), Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic, Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, p. 59.

⁶³ *Iran: Who Holds the Power?*, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/iran_power/html/expediency_council.stm. Accessed March 16, 2012.

⁶⁴ RAKEL (2009), *op.cit.*, p. 36-37.

in a “dirty and raw political battle.”⁶⁵ Both men are desperately trying to build coalitions of loyal supporters around them in the hopes of solidifying their respective positions.

As mentioned earlier, this institutional duality pervades the entire system of the Islamic Republic, affecting nearly all institutions and not only the elected ones. For example, juxtaposed to the regular armed forces is the IRGC: the first charged with protecting the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic and the second with defending the Revolution. Although performing separate functions, they regularly compete for prestige and access to and control over the country’s latest weapons systems. Likewise, “The SCC [(Special Court for the Clergy)] is another example of an institution that functions outside of, and parallel to, the judiciary.”⁶⁶

The combination of all these elements, piled one on top of the other, make for an extremely competitive and factious political system. Islam’s openness to distinct interpretations and indifference to issues of public policy, Khomeini’s controversial ideological legacy and Khamenei’s disputed legitimacy and the Islamic Republic’s institutional duality provide ample room for political factions to battle it out for power. So much so that this has led many experts to contend that “The primary characteristic of Iranian politics is its intense struggle for power”⁶⁷. It is against this backdrop that the domestic politics model of nuclear weapons proliferation will be applied. For an approach that views nuclear weapons programs as a means for tilting the balance in favor of a specific constituency or group within a state, the Islamic Republic’s factious political system provides this model with an unparalleled case study. In such a competitive and

⁶⁵ ABDO, Geneive (2011), *Iran: Ahmadinejad vs Khamenei. Does Ahmadinejad's fall empower or hurt the West in its troubled relationship with the Islamic republic?*, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/201162994514399969.html>. Accessed March 16, 2012.

⁶⁶ RAKEL (2009), *op.cit.*, p. 35.

⁶⁷ CHUBIN (2008), *op.cit.*, p. 47.

factional political system, individuals will stop at nothing to protect and enhance their authority. Precisely this will be argued the case with regards to nuclear weapons proliferation in Iran: the program is not geared towards alleviating an external menace, but targeted rather towards the regime's internal opponents.

1.2 The Factions

Before probing the various political factions in Iran, it should be noted that while an outwardly stringent typology is used to label each faction, this categorization is by no means rigid. Anyone with the slightest insight into Iranian politics will attest to the difficulties in assessing Iran's political scene. With no party discipline to speak of and with many political figures displaying chameleon-like qualities, changing their colors to best suit their immediate political interests, the factions in Iran should be viewed as extremely porous and malleable groupings of politically like-minded individuals.⁶⁸ Therefore, the following typology seeks only to account for general trends, attempting to bring order to a somewhat chaotic political scene⁶⁹.

1.2.1 The Traditional Conservatives

Without question the faction that has benefited the most, both economically and politically since the 1979 Revolution, the traditional conservatives are made up of ardent supporters of the Islamic Revolution and vision of Ayatollah Khomeini. Its membership includes some of the most prominent members of the Iranian political elite, including Khamenei himself. Being so closely associated with the political clergy, they have come

⁶⁸ BUCHTA (2000), *op.cit.*, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Following the banning of political parties in 1983, experts have long referred to the concept of political factions to group politically like-minded individuals in Iran. The typology presented in this paper is based solely on the typology of these long established works. Although experts disagree on how to label each faction, this has little bearing on their final classification, all recognize the same general trends. For a non-exhaustive list of these works, see BUCHTA (2000), MOSLEM (2002) and BAKTIARI (1996).

to dominate many, if not all nonelected institutions of the state, including the religious supervisory bodies and parastatal foundations (vast and unaccountable state conglomerates). With such perks under their belt, it is not surprising that they are committed to defending the status quo, denouncing at first glance any sign or attempt at political, social and economic liberalization⁷⁰.

1.2.2 *The Principlists*

Best conceived as a hardline splinter group from the traditional conservatives, the principlists first organized in the wake of the reform movement that swept the country in the second half of the 1990s⁷¹. The bulk of its membership is comprised of Iran's war generation with many of its members, including Ahmadinejad, formerly filling the ranks of the IRGC in Iran's long war with Iraq. As such, they have become somewhat of the strong-arm of the traditional conservative faction, applying "their war mentality to domestic debates."⁷² With their self-professed goal of reclaiming the revolution, they consider themselves locked in a "postwar struggle against the forces of liberalization"⁷³. This fact became especially clear following the election of Ahmadinejad in the summer of 2005. He believes there is a Third Revolution to be had, a revolution that would "rid the country of liberal and secular influences and establish a truly Islamic government."⁷⁴ The principlists do however differ from their traditional conservative counterparts on issues relating to the economy, particularly corruption⁷⁵. Whereas the traditional

⁷⁰ International Crisis Group (2002), "Iran: The Struggle for the Revolution's Soul", ICG Middle East Report N.5, p. 11. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,ICG,IRN,4562d8cf2,3de74fd34,0.html>. Accessed March 18, 2012.

⁷¹ TAKEYH (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 223, 225.

⁷⁴ NAJI (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁷⁵ JONES, Peter (2012), "Learning to Live with a Nuclear Iran", *The Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, p. 201.

conservatives have amassed great wealth from their access to the corridors of power, Ahmadinejad, while campaigning for the presidency, successfully painted himself as “a champion of the common people against the cancer of corruption and immorality in government.”⁷⁶

1.2.3 The Pragmatists

With Rafsanjani as this faction’s unofficial flag bearer, the pragmatists are economically liberal, arguing that if the Islamic Republic is to stand the test of time, it must be founded on an industrialized and modernized economy⁷⁷. Although liberal in the economic sphere, this faction is both socially and politically conservative, expressing disdain for political reform and the relaxation of social codes. Rafsanjani has, however, demonstrated a great degree of flexibility, aligning himself at one time or another with both the traditional conservatives and reformists on various issues.

1.2.4 The Reformists

In a remarkable display of ideological transformation, these one-time radicals (formerly the Islamic left) best known for their prominent role in the US Embassy take-over and ensuing hostage crisis (1979-81), are now on the leading edge of Iran’s growing reform movement. Following their expulsion from the political scene in the early 1990s, which engendered a deep revision of their political ideology, this faction reemerged in the mid-1990s embracing all things liberal⁷⁸. Under the leadership of Khatami, this faction championed calls for wholesale political reform. Although a self-professed proponent of

⁷⁶ NAJI (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 69. The reader should bear in mind that Ahmadinejad’s main adversary in the 2005 presidential election was Rafsanjani, well known in Iran for his great wealth stemming from the farming and exportation of pistachio nuts. While perhaps genuine convictions, it is unlikely his campaign slogans against the abuses of government were devoid of any political and strategic calculations.

⁷⁷ AMUZEGAR, Jahangir (1993), *Iran’s Economy Under the Islamic Republic*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., p. 47.

⁷⁸ BJORVATN, Kjetil and SELVIK, Kjetil (2008), “Destructive Competition: Factionalism and Rent-Seeking in Iran”, *World Development*, vol. 36, no. 11, p. 2316.

Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih* (a prerequisite for official political participation in Iran), Khatami garnered great support from the Iranian youth, intellectual class and independent media for his commitment to political transparency and moderation. His vision for a modern Iran included a vibrant civil society, respect for the rule of law, greater political participation, strong representative institutions and Iran's economic and political reintegration into global society⁷⁹.

With the Islamic Republic's factional politics exposed, it is now time to turn to the crux of the matter, the simmering factional conflict which has been slowly brewing for the last 20 years. The central focus of the following two sections will be on the gradual usurpation of the twin pillars of the traditional conservatives' power base, that is their material and ideational supremacy.

⁷⁹ ANSARI (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 114-116.

2. The Rafsanjani Presidency: The Era of Reconstruction

Rafsanjani assumed the presidency (1989-97) of the Islamic Republic at a time when the economy was in a state of complete disrepair. Only a short year earlier (20 July, 1989), Khomeini had finally agreed to the terms of UN Resolution 598, which brought an end to what was the longest conventional inter-state conflict of the 20th century. However, by that time 8 years of protracted conflict with Iraq's international war machine⁸⁰ had already left its mark. Postwar gross domestic product (GDP) figures, along with most macroeconomic indicators, paint an extremely bleak economic picture. According to Amuzegar,

Even at the end of 1991/92 — some 14 years after the revolution, and 3½ years after the Iran-Iraq war — real GDP had still only reached a level less than 2 per cent above that of 1977/78, putting the overall annual growth rate for the 14-year period at little more than two-tenths of 1 per cent.”⁸¹

Although the Islamic Republic regularly blamed its war with Iraq for its poor economic performance in the first decade following the revolution, the Islamic Republic's own economic policies should shoulder its fair share of the blame. That is to say “The revolution's ‘costs’ in economic terms have been staggering.”⁸² With the war over, Rafsanjani sought to redress and rationalize many of the Islamic state's inefficient economic policies, setting in motion an era of economic reconstruction upon taking office. Before delving into Rafsanjani's economic reforms, Iran's post-revolutionary economic structure will be examined with the aim of uncovering the traditional conservatives' revenue stream.

⁸⁰ Iraq's war machine benefited from the help of many international partners, including the United States and many Western European countries, which provided Iraq with both economic assistance and military intelligence during its war with Iran.

⁸¹ AMUZEGAR (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 330.

2.1 *The Islamic Republic's Economic Structure*

From the very beginning, the Islamic regime had to cultivate the support of two very specific constituencies within Iran in order to ensure its long-term survival. As Hunter explains, “In practice, the Islamic regime’s survival has thus far depended on maintaining the support of its two constituencies — the merchant class and the traditional clergy, and the lower classes”⁸³. Alienating either of these two constituencies, especially in the early years of the revolution, would have spelt disaster for the Islamic Republic. Not only do the lower classes or downtrodden (*mostazafan*) represent a large segment of society in Iran, as in most societies around the world, but also in Iran’s case, they afforded the Islamic regime tens of thousands of war martyrs in its war with Iraq. As for the traditional merchant class (*bazaaris*), it has historically been “the bastion of nearly all popular political protest movements” dating back to the Tobacco Rebellion (1891-92) and was a key strategic ally of the traditional conservatives and clergy in the 1979 Revolution⁸⁴. Both groups therefore needed special accommodation in the new order in Iran. In so doing, the Islamic regime would strive to provide both groups a privileged position in the country’s economy.

2.1.1 *An Islamic Economy*

In the early days of the revolution, the theme of ‘social justice’ animated much of the Islamic state’s economic policies. As Amuzegar explains, “Islamic economics [...] promised to create a healthier and more desirable society through an equitable distribution of wealth, and greater social welfare for the so-called disenfranchised,

⁸³ HUNTER (1992), *op.cit.*, p. 63.

⁸⁴ ASHRAF, Ahmad (1988), “Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions”, *Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 539.

dispossessed, and deprived masses (*mostazafan*).”⁸⁵ In line with this overriding concern, the Revolutionary Council, the chief decision-making body prior to the first Iranian parliament (July 1980), launched an expansive expropriation and nationalization campaign in the summer of 1979.

Although set in motion “to safeguard the redistributive nature of the revolution”⁸⁶, at the time the state’s seizure of the economy also made sound economic sense. As Maloney explains, “This ideological predisposition converged with the practical imperatives of imposing order over Iran’s revolutionary chaos”⁸⁷. For obvious reasons, the tumultuous and uncertain revolutionary period pushed many of the country’s business leaders to flee, leaving many businesses without an executive body and triggering a massive flight of capital⁸⁸. Furthermore, many of the expropriated assets’ balance sheet was in the red, forcing government intervention or risk further economic deterioration⁸⁹. At the end of the day, “between 80 and 85 per cent of the country’s major production units” fell into the hands of the state⁹⁰. However well intentioned, these early statist policies would prove extremely lucrative business for the conservative and clerical leadership, yet detrimental to the economic health of the country.

⁸⁵ AMUZEGAR (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁸⁶ ALIZADEH, Parvin (2000), “Introduction”, in ALIZADEH, Parvin (ed.), The Economy of Iran: Dilemmas of an Islamic State, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, p. 3.

⁸⁷ MALONEY, Suzanne (2004), “Islamism and Iran’s Postrevolutionary Economy: The Case of the *Bonyads*”, in TÊTREAUULT, Mary Ann and DENEMARK, Robert A. (eds.), Gods, Guns, and Globalization: Religious Radicalism and International Political Economy, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 192.

⁸⁸ HAKIMIAN, Hassan and KARSHENAS, Massoud (2000), “Dilemmas and Prospects for Economic Reform and Reconstruction in Iran”, in ALIZADEH, Parvin (ed.), The Economy of Iran: Dilemmas of an Islamic State, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, p. 34.

⁸⁹ EHTESHAMI, Anoushiravan (1995), After Khomeini: The Iranian Second Republic, New York, NY: Routledge, p.86.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

The sum of the nationalized assets, which included the former holdings of the deposed Shah of Iran and his close associates, were either transferred directly to the state or, and more controversially, placed under the direct control of semi-public religious foundations (*bonyads*). In principle, these religious foundations were designed to serve as non-profit charitable organizations, assigned the task of fulfilling “the new state’s commitment to social justice”⁹¹. However and in spite of this stated mission, these religious foundations have come to “form one of the pillars of the conservatives’ power.”⁹²

Operating under the auspice of charitable organizations and with the many advantages this grants them, particularly the virtual absence of public oversight⁹³ and generous government funding (at one time consuming some 58 per cent of the national budget⁹⁴), these religious foundations have been able to extend their activities well beyond that of assisting only the deprived and disadvantaged. As Saeidi explains,

“With no governmental discretion over their expenses, no shareholders, no public accounts, and no well-defined legal status, they have been operating autonomously from the government, and have acted like giant private monopolies rather than charity organizations caring only about the welfare of the poor.”⁹⁵

Loyal only to the Supreme Leader (the Supreme Leader personally selects “the heads of the foundations”⁹⁶) and possessing sizable assets (in fact, “The Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled is the biggest economic entity in the Middle East” with total revenues (6,000 billion rials) surpassing the government’s income through taxation

⁹¹ MALONEY (2004), *op.cit.*, p. 192.

⁹² International Crisis Group (2002), *op.cit.*, p. 36.

⁹³ MALONEY (2004), *op.cit.*, p. 192.

⁹⁴ BUCHTA (2000), *op.cit.*, p. 73.

⁹⁵ SAEIDI, Ali A. (2004), “The Accountability of Para-governmental Organizations (*bonyads*): The Case of Iranian Foundations”, *Iranian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, p. 485.

⁹⁶ RAKEL (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 38.

(5,500 billion rials) in 1994⁹⁷), these religious foundations have become powerful vehicles of patronage, with an elite group of conservatives sitting firmly in the driver's seat.

Religious foundations take part in a range of highly politicized activities with the aim of bolstering the conservative and clerical elite. Although funneling “a considerable portion of their profits”⁹⁸ to the Office of the Supreme Leader and to other conservative members of the political elite, their activities extend far beyond mere financial support. Along with the state-owned enterprises, religious foundations offer the promise of social mobility, providing highly sought-after salaried jobs to the regime's faithful even in times of economic stagnation⁹⁹. In sum, “The foundations have become pivotal actors in the power struggle among different factions of the Iranian political elite, not only in terms of mass mobilization, ideological indoctrination and repression, but also as financial resources of the Conservative faction.”¹⁰⁰

2.1.2 *The 'Bazaar-Mosque Alliance'*

Of all social constituencies in Iran, the country's traditional merchant class is perhaps most important. As touched upon earlier, Iran's traditional merchant community (tradesmen and shopkeepers) has played a key role in almost all major political protest movements in Iran, through their ability to mobilize thousands by closing up shop, long before its involvement in the 1979 Revolution. Just as historically prevalent is this community's close relationship with the clergy, the so-called ‘bazaar-mosque alliance’.

⁹⁷ RAKEL, Eva (2007), “Conglomerates in Iran: The Political Economy of Islamic Foundations”, in FERNANDEZ JILBERTO, Alex A. and HOGENBOOM, Barbara (eds.), Big Business and Economic Development: Conglomerates and Economic Groups in Developing Countries and Transition Economies under Globalization, New York, NY: Routledge, p 12.

⁹⁸ BUCHTA (2000), *op.cit.*, p. 50.

⁹⁹ CRANE, Keith, LAL, Rollie and MARTINI, Jeffrey (2008), Iran's Political, Demographic, and Economic Vulnerabilities, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (Project Air Force), p. 81.

¹⁰⁰ RAKEL (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 39.

As Zabih explains, “they have been traditional allies of the mullahs and for centuries the two have been mutually dependent.”¹⁰¹ Moslem chronicles this centuries-old mutual dependence best. According to the author,

“Due to their religious sentiments, the bazaaris needed the services of the ulama to bless their day-to-day commerce in addition to needing the goodwill of the clergy, who had close ties with the state and with the population at large. In return, the merchants paid religious taxes and other funds to the ulama to conduct religious ceremonies and create religious schools. By themselves the bazaaris could not exercise enough sociopolitical power; however, in this alliance, through affiliation with the ulama, they became a powerful social force that the state had to reckon with.”¹⁰²

This close relationship alone, however, was not enough to trigger the politicization of the country’s traditional merchant community in favor of the 1979 Revolution: “the Shah’s persecution of the bazaar was most certainly one important stimulus to revolution.”¹⁰³

In January 1963, the Shah launched an expansive economic modernization campaign, known as the White Revolution. As Green explains, “Modernization in Iran was geared to bypassing the bazaar while rendering it politically and economically obsolete.”¹⁰⁴ The Shah’s concerted effort to undermine the bazaari merchants included: measures to increase domestic economic competition with the creation of a modern banking and industrial sector, undermining both the bazaar’s “money-lending role” and competitiveness¹⁰⁵; an antiprofitereing and inflation campaign (1975) ultimately affecting tens of thousands of small businesses and shopkeepers through “Prison terms of up to

¹⁰¹ ZABIH, Sepehr (1979), Iran’s Revolutionary Upheaval: An Interpretive Essay, San Francisco, CA: Alchemy Books, p. 27.

¹⁰² MOSLEM (2002), *op.cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁰³ GREEN, Jerrold D. (1982), Revolution in Iran: The Politics of Countermobilization, New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, p. 42-43.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

five years, forced internal exile, and confiscation of property”¹⁰⁶; and increased taxation with the bazaris’ proposed inclusion in the national system of social security¹⁰⁷. In the final analysis, although the bazaar’s historical alliance with the clergy may have played a role, it was ultimately “their common understanding of the economic, political, and cultural threats posed by the shah’s modernizing programs”¹⁰⁸ which led the bazaar to endorse and subsidize the revolutionary forces.

The bazaar’s support for the 1979 Revolution paid off, with the revolutionary forces “defending an economic system conducive to the interests of the bazaris.”¹⁰⁹ A cornerstone of this strategy was implementing a restricted trade policy, thus insulating domestic economic forces from international competition. As Amuzegar explains, “Trade became vastly restricted and regulated, and the exchange system became multiple and controlled. Imports became a virtual state monopoly for most of the 1980s.”¹¹⁰ In addition to an outright ban on certain imports, the Islamic Republic implemented a complex import licensing scheme, a foreign exchange allocation system and a variety of tariff and non-tariff barriers if not preventing, at least complicating the importation of allowed items¹¹¹. In sum, the bazaris were “in fact the prime beneficiaries of a largely captive and uncompetitive domestic market.”¹¹²

Skillfully concealed beneath the powerful revolutionary themes of social justice and self-sufficiency, the traditional conservatives succeeded in consolidating “non-

¹⁰⁶ MILANI, Mohsen M. (1994), The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic, Boulder, CO: Westview Press (Second Edition), p. 98.

¹⁰⁷ GREEN (1982), *op.cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁸ MALONEY (2004), *op.cit.*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁹ MOSLEM (2002), *op.cit.*, p. 59.

¹¹⁰ AMUZEGAR (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 140.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144-145.

¹¹² FARUQUI, Munis D. (1998), “Iran: Renegotiating a ‘Revolutionary’ Identity”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vo. 33, no. 1, p. 2074.

official sources of income outside the fiscal tools”¹¹³ vital to their political supremacy and financial independence from the state. However, the religious foundations, state-owned enterprises and traditional merchant community would come under considerable scrutiny with the election of Rafsanjani as president of the Islamic Republic in August 1989. With his sights set on rebuilding the economy following nearly a decade of war and inefficient economic policies, Rafsanjani’s economic reforms would do much to undermine the material vested interests of the traditional conservatives.

2.2 Rafsanjani’s Reforms

Believing that poor economic performance would lead to the revolution’s ultimate undoing, Rafsanjani set out to drastically revamp the Islamic Republic’s economic system. In other words, “if there ever existed an ‘Islamic’ model of development in revolutionary Iran, it was shelved after 1989.”¹¹⁴ Rafsanjani’s administration would reverse course on many of the regime’s earlier statist economic policies, privileging instead “Economic liberalization and the retraction of the state.”¹¹⁵ Whether intended or not, it was especially those economic policies which allowed the traditional conservatives’ material interests to flourish unabated that were the prime suspects behind the Islamic Republic’s disappointing economic performance.

2.2.1 Privatizations

Rafsanjani’s first five-year development plan (1989/90-1993/94) called for a massive privatization campaign of state-owned industries, with the private sector’s share of the market expected to almost triple in size “from the 25-30 per cent in the late 1980s

¹¹³ AKHAVI-POUR, Hossein and AZODANLOO, Heidar (1998), “Economic Bases of Political Factions in Iran”, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 7, no. 13, p. 75.

¹¹⁴ EHTESHAMI (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

to 75-80 per cent in the course of the 1990s”¹¹⁶. Although the government planned on returning some expropriated industries to their original owners¹¹⁷, it was on the Tehran Stock Exchange, reactivated following a decade of inactivity, where most of the nationalized industries earmarked for sale would be sold¹¹⁸. While falling well short of forecasts, a number of state-owned enterprises from the National Iranian Industries Organizations (representing 50 per cent of all available shares on the stock market), state-owned companies from virtually all sectors (mining, pharmaceutical, heavy industry, manufacturing, banking and industrial companies), the Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled and the Martyr’s Foundation were listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange with stock transactions reaching record levels for the year 1990/91 (65 billion rials)¹¹⁹.

While the religious foundations were largely spared from the initial phase of the privatization process, offering an insignificant portion of their assets to private investors, privatization, as Khalatbari explains, was not to be limited in scope:

“The various existing foundations, and also the banking system, were excluded from the by-law, though it was generally understood that at some stage the question of privatization should be considered as a general movement towards recognition of the institution of the market as the ultimate power”¹²⁰.

In the end, conservative obstructionism (in addition to various other obstacles, including an unproven and outmoded national stock exchange and over-valued shares¹²¹) stalled and ultimately hijacked the privatization process. Feeling pressure from the religious

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹¹⁷ BAKTIARI (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 194.

¹¹⁸ AMIRAHMADI, Hooshang (1990), Revolution and Economic Transition: The Iranian Experience, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, p. 254.

¹¹⁹ EHTESHAMI (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 106-107.

¹²⁰ KHALATBARI, Firouzeh (1994), “The Tehran Stock Exchange and Privatisation of Public Sector Enterprises in Iran: A Study of Obstacles to the Private Sector Development”, in COVILLE, Thierry (ed.), The Economy of Islamic Iran: Between State and Market, Tehran: L’Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, p. 188.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 189-190.

foundations, the conservatives passed a law (1994) granting privileged access to shares to individuals associated to the war, whether relatives of the war dead, prisoners of war and war devotees¹²². Knowing full well that these individuals did not possess the financial resources to purchase these shares, the law recognized the religious foundations as their official representatives¹²³. Consequently, “the Stock Exchange [became] more and more an instrument for exchanging ownership from one group of public sector to another group.”¹²⁴

Despite Rafsanjani’s privatization program’s great many shortfalls, several state-owned businesses, used to propagate official state ideology and ensure the social mobility of revolutionary forces, were sold to the private sector. Although the religious foundations managed to elude the privatization trend relatively unscathed, their long term survival was threatened, enough to generate a harsh backlash from sitting conservatives in parliament. Whereas Rafsanjani’s Cabinet “received an unprecedented vote of confidence from the 261 Majlis deputies” in 1989, a battle took place over his second Cabinet (1993) with the incumbent finance minister, blamed for the privatizations, being ultimately rejected¹²⁵. However, his first term’s shortfalls did not diminish Rafsanjani’s resolve to lessen the traditional bazaar’s role in the economy in his second term in office.

2.2.2 *Economic Modernization*

Reminiscent of the deposed Shah’s White Revolution, Rafsanjani’s second term in office was marked by his affront on the traditional merchant community. As Moslem explains, “economic initiatives of Rafsanjani resembled economic policies of the shah,

¹²² SAEIDI (2004), *op.cit.*, p. 493.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 493-94.

¹²⁴ KHALATBARI (1994), *op.cit.*, p. 200.

¹²⁵ EHTESHAMI (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 54, 63.

and thus once again the bazaaris found their economic livelihood in danger.”¹²⁶ Increased government regulations on the sale of goods were aimed at undermining the bazaar’s financial clout and role in the marketplace.

Created in 1994 and chaired by Rafsanjani himself, the Committee for Adjustment of Bazaar adopted and enacted many of these anti-bazaari policies. This Committee’s two main objectives “were to control price fluctuations in the market and to combat brokers and middlemen involved in the distribution and selling of goods.”¹²⁷ This was accomplished by setting ceiling prices on 18 essential goods and forcing merchants, producers and importers to place price tags on their goods¹²⁸.

Undoubtedly, the most damaging policy for the traditional merchant community was the creation of government-run chain stores (*Refah* chain stores). Launched in 1995,

“They [(the government)] realized that policies such as price control and price fixing would not be enough to do away with the well-entrenched system of the bazaar, so through the creation of the *Refah* chain stores, the government began competing with more traditional retail shops.”¹²⁹

This effort was a deliberate attempt at undermining the financial viability of bazaari merchants and supplanting the traditional bazaar with a modern economic institution, still very much active to this day.

Although Rafsanjani left much to be desired from his 8 years in office (in addition to falling short on his reconstruction effort, his administration also spawned massive corruption¹³⁰, a legacy which would later come to haunt him in his second bid for office in 2005), one can expect little else from a political system fraught with factionalism.

¹²⁶ MOSLEM (2002), *op.cit.*, p. 128.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹³⁰ WRIGHT, Robin (2000), “Iran’s New Revolution”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 1, p. 135.

However, Rafsanjani did manage to pose a significant threat to the traditional conservatives' material interests. Many of the country's inefficient and unproductive state-owned industries exchanged hands and if it weren't for the conservatives changing the tide of the privatization process from the public to the semi-public, how the religious foundations (boasting their own set gross inefficiencies¹³¹) would have fared if not for the traditional conservatives' prominence in the fourth majlis (April 1992- March 1996) is unfortunately unknown. Furthermore, the activities of the traditional merchant class, responsible for major commodity price distortions and other economic obfuscations, were finally subject to government regulations. Although all these policies made for a more sound and rational economic system, in the eyes of the traditional conservatives, this was a major blow to their material prerogatives. Unfortunately for the conservatives, Rafsanjani's presidency was but the beginning of their troubles, as his "tenure served as the midwife of the reform movement"¹³² still to come.

¹³¹ SAEIDI (2004), *op.cit.*, p. 485.

¹³² TAKEYH (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 43.

3. The Khatami Presidency: A breath of Fresh Air

Perhaps the greatest threat to the traditional conservatives' political supremacy came in the form of the election of Khatami as president of the Islamic Republic in August 1997. Arguably the regime's greatest miscalculation to date, Khatami, a reformist candidate and former Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance until his resignation (in the face of parliamentary pressure) in 1992, was allowed to stand for office despite a significant number of other pro-reform candidates not making it past the Guardian Council's vetting process (in fact, 234 potential candidates were disqualified from running for the presidency, leaving but 4 candidates to dispute the election¹³³). The entrenched leadership, "sure of it's candidate's victory [(conservative and Speaker of the Parliament Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri)], allowed a free and fair election to take place"¹³⁴. However, Khatami's landslide victory in 1997 (netting 70 per cent of the popular vote with a 91 per cent voter-turnout) was only the first of 4 consecutive electoral defeats inflicted by reformists on their conservative counterparts in just over 4 years (1997 and 2001 presidential elections, the first local council elections in 1999 and the sixth majlis elections in 2000)¹³⁵. With all major elected power centers firmly in their grasp, the reformists hoped to enact sweeping changes, changes threatening to severely undermine the traditional conservatives' ideational prerogatives.

Whereas Rafsanjani concentrated his efforts as president on rebuilding the economy, Khatami's focus was on liberalizing the established political and social systems. As Takeyh explains, "President Khatami and his allies sought to achieve a new

¹³³ BUCHTA (2000), *op.cit.*, p. 31.

¹³⁴ AMUZEGAR, Jahangir (1998), "Khatami's Iran, One Year Later", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 76.

¹³⁵ EHTESHAMI, Anoush and ZWEIRI, Mahjoob (2007), Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, p. 33.

form of government — an Islamic democracy.”¹³⁶ Chief among his priorities was correcting what they believed was the imbalance between the republican and theocratic trends in the Constitution¹³⁷. As Ehteshami writes, “Khatami [...] had very real electoral commitments to reforming the system and opening it up to public scrutiny and accountability.”¹³⁸

With the conservatives and clerical leadership set on preserving the government’s despotic tendencies and institutions, which grants them substantial weight in the decision-making process and on which their political survival depends, Khatami’s reform program (bolstered by his popular mandate) constituted a great ideational challenge for the entrenched leadership. As Gheissari et al. explain, “The conservative clerics saw Khatami’s election in 1997 as the beginning of the end: a direct threat to the ideological foundations of the Islamic Republic, which support the power networks that sustain the clerics at the helm of the Iranian body politic.”¹³⁹ With some “70 per cent of the highest state power positions [...] filled through appointments by the fundamentalists”¹⁴⁰, any talk of political reform and democratization threatened to severely undermine the conservatives’ political supremacy. Although Khatami did attempt to enact his own political reforms, the regime’s greatest challenge sprang up from civil society, finally awakened following his election. The independent press and civil associations (particularly student groups) flourished under his administration and proved unrelenting

¹³⁶ TAKEYH (2009), *op.cit.*, p. 6-7.

¹³⁷ BUCHTA (2000), *op.cit.*, p. 122.

¹³⁸ EHTESHAMI, Anoush et al. (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹³⁹ GHEISSARI, Ali and NASR, Vali (2005), “The Conservative Consolidation in Iran”, *Survival*, vol. 47, no. 2, p. 177.

¹⁴⁰ SEIFZADEH, Hossein S. (2003), “The Landscape of Factional Politics and Its Future in Iran”, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 57, no. 1, p. 58.

in their public criticism of the regime, denouncing even the position of Supreme Leader and Khomeini's foundational concept of *velayat-e faqih*¹⁴¹.

3.1 Khatami's Islamic Democracy

Although the Islamic regime features a whole host of unelected institutions, none is more important than the Guardian Council. With the Supreme Leader appointing six of its members and with the other six recommended first by the judiciary (who's Chief Justice is also appointed by the Supreme Leader) then approved by parliament, the Guardian Council's views are highly likely to be in line with that of the regime. With the authority to vet candidates for parliamentary, presidential and Assembly of Experts (an institution composed of 86 popularly elected clerics charged with designating the Supreme Leader's heir from within its own ranks) elections and power to veto legislation passed by parliament, the Guardian Council carries a disproportionate weight in the overall decision-making process in the Islamic Republic. History demonstrates that the Guardian Council has proven neither shy, nor circumspect, in wielding this authority. For example, from the time Khatami took office in 1997 to the end of his second term in 2005, "the Council of Guardians vetoed 111 of his 297 bills"¹⁴², it managed to ensure a conservative victory in the 2004 parliamentary elections by disqualifying half of the 8200 candidates (including many incumbent reformist parliamentarians)¹⁴³ and engineered a second victory in 2005 by allowing only eight candidates from a field of more than a

¹⁴¹ For the press' criticism see BAKHASH, Shaul (2001), "Reformists, Conservatives and Iran's Parliamentary Elections", in KECHICHIAN, Joseph A. (ed.), *Iran, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf States*, New York, NY: Palgrave, p. 19. For the students' criticism see MENASHRI, David (2001), *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society and Power*, Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, p. 144-146.

¹⁴² GHEISSARI, Ali and NASR, Vali (2004), "Iran's Democracy Debate", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 2, p. 100.

¹⁴³ SAGHAFI, Morad and EHSANI, Kaveh (2004), "The New Landscape of Iranian Politics", *Middle East Report*, no. 233, p. 17.

thousand to participate in the presidential elections¹⁴⁴. Understandably, any attempt at reforming the Guardian Council would generate great controversy and dissent, especially among conservatives who view and utilize this institution as a means for ensuring their political supremacy. Be that as it may, Khatami, staying true to his campaign promises and with the Guardian Council standing firmly in the way of his vision of a truly Islamic democracy, took the battle to the conservatives' doorstep.

In September 2002, Khatami introduced “two key bills to the Majlis”¹⁴⁵ (commonly referred as Khatami's ‘twin bills’), one of which “was meant to delimit the power of the Guardians' Council in disqualifying candidates for the national elections. The other aimed at enhancing the president's constitutional power.”¹⁴⁶ With regards to the first bill, Khatami was advocating nothing more than the application of the Constitution. As Rezaei explains, “since 1991, the Council of Guardians has interpreted Article 99 of the constitution as giving them the authority to bar candidates on the basis of their ‘competency or merit’ in religious and political matters.”¹⁴⁷ However, according to Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, former heir apparent to Ayatollah Khomeini and president of the Assembly of Experts charged with drafting the 1979 Constitution, Article 99 was never intended “to convey the notion of vetting the qualification of candidates”¹⁴⁸.

Although these bills and a great many other reform initiatives, including a bill to amend the restrictive press law passed by the fifth and conservative majlis, were struck

¹⁴⁴ EHTESHAMI et al. (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ CHRISTENSEN, Janne Bjerre (2011), Drugs, Deviancy and Democracy in Iran: The Interaction of State and Civil Society, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, p. 77.

¹⁴⁷ REZAEI, Ali (2003), “Last Efforts of Iran's Reformists”, *Middle East Report*, no. 226, p. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Montazeri quoted in SAMII, A. William (2001), “Iran's Guardians Council as an Obstacle to Democracy”, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 55, no. 4, p. 646.

down by the Guardian Council or reluctantly withdrawn under pressure from the Supreme Leader himself, all was not lost for Khatami. More important than any reform initiative, Khatami “succeeded in transforming the political discourse.”¹⁴⁹ While failing to bring about any real change in the form of new legislation, “Khatami’s greatest legacy is popularizing the alphabet of democracy in a land long accustomed to autocracy.”¹⁵⁰

3.2 Civil Society’s Awakening

Both clerics and secular intellectuals have for some time now challenged the entrenched leadership and have produced some of the most significant critical appraisals of the Islamic Regime. From this long line of critical thinkers, Montazeri, Mohsen Kadivar¹⁵¹ and Abdolkarim Soroush¹⁵² feature most prominently. Prior to Khatami’s election in 1997, all three of these reformist thinkers “put forth new religious and political formulations that in different ways differed with the theocratic vision of *velayat-e faqih*.”¹⁵³

Montazeri, while still Supreme Leader-in-waiting, regularly criticized the activities of the government leading up to his forced resignation as Khomeini’s heir on 27 March, 1989. As expected, his public criticism of the regime sharpened following his resignation, issuing a religious decree “according to which in Islam no single clergy (the

¹⁴⁹ EHTESHAMI et al. (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁰ MILANI, Mohsen M. (2001), “Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran”, in ESPOSITO, John L. and RAMAZANI, R. K. (eds.) (2001), Iran at the Crossroads, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 21.

¹⁵¹ For a good review of Kadivar’s thoughts see KADIVAR, Mohsen (2011), “Wilayat al-Faqih and Democracy”, in AFSARUDDIN, Asma (ed.), Islam, the State, and Political Authority: Medieval Issues and Modern Concerns, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 207-224.

¹⁵² For a good review of Soroush’s thoughts and writings see VAKILI, Valla (2001), “Abdolkarim Soroush and Critical Discourse in Iran”, in Esposito, John L. and VOLL, John O. (eds.), Makers of Contemporary Islam, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 150-176.; SOROUSH, Abdolkarim, SADRI, Mahmoud (tr. and ed.) and SADRI, Ahmad (tr. and ed.) (2000), Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵³ GHEISSARI et al. (2004), *op. cit.*, p. 101.

Supreme Leader) should be the ultimate political authority.”¹⁵⁴ As for Kadivar, a student of Mantazeri, he attacked Khomeini’s rendering of *velayat-e faqih*, arguing it has no basis in Shia theology or law¹⁵⁵. An outspoken detractor of the regime since the early 1990s, Soroush has become one of the most important lay critics of the Islamic Republic¹⁵⁶. He argued against a single interpretation of Islam, undermining the Supreme Leader’s religious and authoritative power and “perceived as a serious challenge to the revolutionary doctrine and to the modus operandi of Khomeini’s disciples in power.”¹⁵⁷

While these figures and others played an important role in the reform movement’s emergence as a serious contender in Iranian politics, prior to Khatami’s election in 1997, these critical perspectives carried limited clout, seldom escaping the bounds of clerical and intellectual circles¹⁵⁸. “Khatami’s message [, on the other hand,] reached a larger national audience”¹⁵⁹, finding receptive ears throughout society and inspiring thousands to enter this war of words. The press and student groups in particular, armed with this newfound political consciousness, quickly took advantage of the new political freedoms and opportunities provided by Khatami’s election to openly challenge the regime’s despotic tendencies and press their demands for democratic reform.

With the conservatives still shell-shocked over their crushing electoral defeat and reluctance to challenge Khatami’s supermajority mandate and popular policies, the now reformist-controlled Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance seized the opportunity to approve some 200 new licenses for newspapers and periodicals within a year of

¹⁵⁴ RAKEL (2009), *op.cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁵⁵ MENASHRI (2001), *op.cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁵⁶ RAKEL (2009), *op.cit.*, p. 117.

¹⁵⁷ MENASHRI (2001), *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁵⁸ KAMRAVA (2003), “Iranian Shiism under Debate”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 102.

¹⁵⁹ MILANI (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 42.

Khatami's election, "raising daily circulation by one third."¹⁶⁰ By the end of 1998, some 880 new publications were now in circulation across Iran¹⁶¹. One observer monitoring the situation noted that:

"So bold did the press become, with a vibrant corps of investigative journalists the like of which Iran had never seen, that, for the first time in modern Iranian history, Iranians *chose* to get their news from domestic sources, as opposed to foreign ones. As one Western diplomat commented, the quantitative growth was matched by a dramatic increase in qualitative output, such that it was difficult to keep pace with the flow of information."¹⁶²

No stone was left unturned with the press calling for major reforms and questioning basic revolutionary principles, which included *velayat-e faqih*¹⁶³.

Student associations soon followed suit with student activism reaching its boiling point in July 1999. Triggered by the closure of a popular reformist daily (*Salam*), students staged nation-wide protests, something not seen since the 1979 Revolution¹⁶⁴. The students' message grew apace however, from one of anger over the publication ban on *Salam* to generalized indignation over the Islamic regime's policies and practices. As Menashri notes, "The criticism voiced by students exceeded mere dissatisfaction with policy to encompass basic dogmatic conceptions and revolutionary practice."¹⁶⁵ The students' slogans were wide and varied, from demanding greater political freedoms to denouncing *velayat-e faqih* and Khamenei personally¹⁶⁶.

With the steady erosion of the ideological underpinnings of the regime by both student associations and the press, the conservatives mounted an unprecedented

¹⁶⁰ AMUZEGAR (1998), *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁶¹ TAKEYH (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 190.

¹⁶² ANSARI (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁶³ BAKHASH (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁶⁴ MENASHRI (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144-146.

counterattack, “bringing together all the assets of the forces opposed to Khatami”¹⁶⁷ (including the judiciary, intelligence ministry, *Basij* militia, state media and Office of the Supreme Leader) and featuring particularly brutal tactics. By mid-July 1999, violent crackdowns on student demonstrations by Islamic vigilantes and later the security forces squashed the protests. By the late 1990s, “Virtually the entire reformist press was closed down”, popular reformist leaders and journalists were jailed (including Kadivar) and a series of chain murders of opposition leaders and writers (murders for which the intelligence ministry would later be found guilty of orchestrating) shocked the country¹⁶⁸.

For many Iranians and international observers, Khatami’s prudent response to the conservative backlash on the student protests came to define his presidency. Far from endorsing the students’ movement, Khatami, facing pressure from IRGC commanders and the conservatives, denounced the protesters¹⁶⁹. For the length of his presidency, Khatami remained averse to open confrontation with his detractors, even when it meant abandoning his loyal supporters. When the stability of the Islamic regime was at stake, “[Reformists] ultimately opted for conformity, disillusioning their once ardent supporters.”¹⁷⁰

Reminiscent of Rafsanjani’s presidency, conservative obstructionism did much to stymie Khatami’s reformist agenda. Khatami’s longing for democratic reform however was not lost on the population. Student associations and the domestic press pushed calls for reform farther than Khatami ever could, “[crossing] virtually every ‘Red Line’ that

¹⁶⁷ GHEISSARI et al. (2005), *op. cit.*, p. 177.

¹⁶⁸ BAKHASH (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 13-15.

¹⁶⁹ GASIOROWSKI, Mark J. (2000), “The Power Struggle in Iran”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 7, no. 4, p. 32.

¹⁷⁰ TAKEYH (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 50.

had been established in Iranian politics”¹⁷¹. Rather than democratic adjustments, civic groups demanded wholesale democratic reform, undermining not only the conservatives’ political supremacy but also their economic interests. As Ansari explains, “while the apparent focus of the reformists has been on political and social change”, the conservatives “recognize that their economic power rests very firmly on political domination.”¹⁷² Consequently, the conservatives reacted with a no-holds-barred assault to safeguard their political and economic vested interests. While their voices may have been muted, their silence is not likely to last. According to one observer, “Because of the reformist moment of 1997-2004, and the manner in which it ended, the debate over the configuration of the state will not be able to avoid the subject of democratization from now on.”¹⁷³

It is through this very specific reading of Iranian modern history, one which much like the conservatives and Ahmadinejad especially, views both presidencies previously discussed as a serious deviation from the revolutionary path, that it is argued in the next section that “It is through this prism of domestic politics and rivalries that the nuclear issue should be viewed.”¹⁷⁴ With the conservatives on the verge of losing the ideological battle over the hearts and minds of the Iranian populace, the conservatives needed a comeback strategy, and quick. The nuclear issue, it will be argued, is an important part of this strategy.

¹⁷¹ EHTESHAMI et al. (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁷² ANSARI (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 141.

¹⁷³ SAGHAFI et al. (2004), *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁷⁴ CHUBIN (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 54.

4. President Ahmadinejad: Full Circle Politics

While the election of Ahmadinejad as president of the Islamic Republic in August 2005 bewildered many, the fact that a hardline candidate won the bid should not have surprised the attentive Iranian observer. The narrative of Iranian modern history offered up to this point leaves little doubt as to what was to follow. The outcome of the election was virtually decided only days before the nation took to the polls for the first round of the election¹⁷⁵. “[A]t a high-level meeting at the residence of Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, [...] it was decided the Ahmadinejad had to be supported”¹⁷⁶. With the *Basij* militia and IRGC out in full force to realize the Supreme Leader’s wishes, widespread allegations of vote rigging, reported discrepancies in the polling and the liberal forces’ boycott of the election, the little-known Mayor of Tehran triumphed in the end against Rafsanjani in a run-off election. Of course, the regime did not allow mistakes from the past to be repeated, this time leaving nothing to chance.

On 3 August 2005, Ahmadinejad became, at least officially, the second most powerful figure in Iran, second only to the Supreme Leader. His election alone, however, did not guarantee his preeminence on the nuclear dossier. Unlike most nuclear proliferation case studies where the head of state is necessarily the chief decision-maker on nuclear matters, there is no clear-cut lateral power structure below the position of Supreme Leader in Iran. Informal networks rule in the Islamic Republic. As Thaler et al. explain, “The more powerful, influential and well-connected the individual or individuals leading an institution, the greater the weight that institution gains in policymaking and

¹⁷⁵ NAJI (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

implementation within Iran.¹⁷⁷ What stands for all institutions in Iran, also holds true for the presidency. Hence, it is often one's proximity to the Supreme Leader and informal network (familial ties, experiential, clerical, financial, political and other commonalities), rather than official title, which determine actual influence and weight in the decision-making process¹⁷⁸. Combined with the fact "that the president [...] wields little authority in matters of defense despite his chairmanship of the [Supreme Council for National Security]"¹⁷⁹, the single most important authority on matters relating to the nuclear program¹⁸⁰, it becomes extremely difficult to establish who and to what extent an individual can influence the nuclear calculus in Iran (beyond the fact that the Supreme Leader has the final word). That being said, while Ahmadinejad may not have the only or most authoritative voice on nuclear matters in Iran, he certainly speaks loudest¹⁸¹. His "populist embrace"¹⁸² of the nuclear program, although not necessarily increasing his weight in the decision making process, landed him the position of "de facto spokesman"¹⁸³ or leading political personality on nuclear related matters. A position still very much important, especially in the context of this paper which focuses on the legitimizing powers of the nuclear discourse in Iran.

With the detailed examination of the identity crisis facing the Islamic Republic complete, this paper now turns to the principlists' response to what they viewed as nearly two decades of revolutionary betrayal.

¹⁷⁷ THALER et al. (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁷⁹ GREEN et al. (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁰ THALER et al. (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹⁸¹ It is important to keep in mind that although this paper focuses exclusively on Ahmadinejad, it does recognize the multiplicity of political figures involved in the nuclear decision-making process. Ahmadinejad is one, albeit critical component, of this process.

¹⁸² GREEN et al. (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁸³ NAJI (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 132.

4.1 *The Politics of Manufacturing Conflict*

For some states, the motivational basis for objectionable conduct in international affairs can be just as powerful, depending on the objective sought, than those for commendable international behavior. As Nincic explains, “behavior of renegade regimes is positively related to an externally apprehensible purpose, that purpose being to maintain and strengthen their hold on power, that is to consolidate their domestic positions.”¹⁸⁴ In Iran’s case, international crises have long been the fuel with which the regime nourished its consolidation of power: “This policy of provoking deliberate confrontation is rooted in a domestic calculation of benefit.”¹⁸⁵

No one understood the intrinsic value of international conflict better than Ayatollah Khomeini himself. So much so that “Khomeini bequeathed to his successors an ideology whose most salient division was between the oppressors and the oppressed.”¹⁸⁶ Throughout Iran’s post-revolutionary history, Khomeini constantly exploited this division by manufacturing or at least drawing out conflict with these so-called exploitive regimes to solidify his position at home. First came the students’ seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran in November 1979 following the Shah’s admittance to the United States for medical treatment, interpreted by students as an American plot to subvert Iran’s nascent revolutionary movement. Although an event initially ignored by Khomeini, he quickly came to embrace the students’ initiative as a means to displace the regime’s liberal elements. Propelled by the populace’s nationalistic vigor, Bazargan, the provisional government’s moderate prime minister, and his cabinet

¹⁸⁴ NINCIC, Miroslav (2005), *Renegade Regimes: Confronting Deviant Behavior in World Politics*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, p. 14.

¹⁸⁵ THALER et al. (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁸⁶ TAKEYH (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 62.

resigned and the Islamic forces swept the Assembly of Experts and parliamentary elections leaving the drafting of the new constitution to Khomeini's design¹⁸⁷.

Even Iran's war with Iraq, although instigated by Saddam Hussein, was nonetheless, as Khomeini put it, "'a blessing' for the Islamic Republic."¹⁸⁸ As Takeyh notes,

"On September 22, 1980, yet another international conflict convulsed the republic and paved the way for the complete control of the state by Khomeini and his narrow collection of disciples — Iraq's invasion of Iran. The Iraqi invasion was intended to destroy the theocratic regime, but it ended up buttressing the revolution and subverting the remaining moderates within the republic."¹⁸⁹

Again, Khomeini exploited this conflict to dismiss Bani-Sadr, then president of the Islamic Republic, and clamp down on secular parties, student organizations and intellectuals¹⁹⁰.

Lastly, only months before his death, Khomeini's fatwa against Salman Rushdie in February 1989, effectively placing a bounty on his head for his alleged defamation of the Prophet Muhammad in his book *The Satanic Verses*, was again a calculated move to undermine the growing trend in parliament towards rapprochement with the West¹⁹¹. In sum, "At every step of the way, the clerical militants had exploited external crisis to accelerate the pace of the revolution and purge the regime of undesirable elements."¹⁹² The Islamic Republic's tendency to exploit foreign policy issues for domestic political gains would reassert itself with Ahmadinejad's election as president of the Islamic Republic. As Ansari explains,

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25-26.

¹⁸⁸ HUNTER (1992), *op.cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁸⁹ TAKEYH (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26-27.

¹⁹¹ BAKHASH, Shaul (1986), *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, New York, NY: Basic Books, p. 279-278.

¹⁹² TAKEYH (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 26.

“For all the importance of international affairs to the Ahmadinejad presidency, it should be kept in mind that the central consideration was always the establishment of domestic hegemony. The international stage was an arena in which domestic political rivalries could be played out — a reality frequently overlooked by observers in the West — as well as the vital means for consolidating domestic control.”¹⁹³

4.2 Ahmadinejad: Reclaiming a Faded Memory

With the proven utility of external crisis in galvanizing internal support for the regime and Ahmadinejad’s campaign promise to “rekindle the early days of the revolution under the Ayatollah”¹⁹⁴, Ahmadinejad quickly set his sights on Iran’s clandestine nuclear program. It was during his election campaign, long before his election, where Ahmadinejad made it no secret that, once president, he would turn the nuclear issue into a rallying cry for the regime and more importantly, the revolution¹⁹⁵. In doing so, his apparent purpose has been to rejuvenate the revolution’s fading élan, making the revolution once again relevant while justifying his and the regime’s own being.

4.2.1 The Myth of Rapprochement

Ahmadinejad wasted no time exploiting the nuclear issue to undermine the regime’s internal opponents: “The day Ahmadinejad took office in 2005, Iran rejected yet another EU3 proposal; that week he restarted uranium conversion in Isfahan, unleashing a dramatic deterioration in negotiations with the EU3 and IAEA.”¹⁹⁶ What followed was a deliberate campaign to paint the West, and especially the United States, as the enemy abroad, rejuvenating populace’s sense of embattlement: “By repeatedly discussing the

¹⁹³ ANSARI (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁹⁴ NAJI (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 150.

¹⁹⁵ TAKEYH (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 250.

¹⁹⁶ SOLINGEN, Etel (2007), *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 180. Whether Ahmadinejad himself actually took these steps or whether these events were the product of previous decisions, which simply coincided with his first week in office, is difficult to assess but he sought, nonetheless, to make the most of them.

issue — in his more than 30 trips to the provinces — as one of nuclear rights and the West’s attempt to deny them to Iran, he played on the favorite narrative of Iran’s victimhood and the need for resistance.”¹⁹⁷ A narrative not likely to make much headwind in most other countries, strikes a particular chord for Iranians. As noted earlier, the central tenant of Khomeini’s ideology and dominant rationale for the 1979 Revolution was the resistance against all forms of external subjugation¹⁹⁸. Given Iran’s long history of foreign occupation and intervention and Iran’s right, as a member-state of the NPT to pursue peaceful nuclear energy, which the regime claims to be doing, Ahmadinejad’s attempt to depict the West’s opposition to an indigenous Iranian nuclear program as a Western conspiracy designed to keep Iran technologically backward and dependent on technological hand-outs plays well on the Iranian street. Reminiscent of past tactics, the enemy abroad was the crucial variable needed to discredit the regime’s still lingering liberal elements.

It is important to note that, while Khatami’s foremost priority as president was liberalizing the political system from within, his greatest political achievements were garnered in the realm of foreign policy: in this sphere, “his achievements were nothing less than momentous.”¹⁹⁹ Tense relations with a number of Arab (Saudi Arabia foremost among them) and European countries underwent major surgery as Khatami tried to alter Iran’s international image²⁰⁰. All of his achievements abroad, however, were dwarfed by his unilateral attempt to warm relations with Iran’s longtime nemesis, the United States. In a 1998 interview with CNN, “Khatami left the door ajar for a potential normalization

¹⁹⁷ THALER et al. (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁹⁸ TAKEYH (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁹⁹ TAKEYH (2009), *op.cit.*, p. 196.

²⁰⁰ AMUZEGAR (1998), *op. cit.*, p. 81-83.

of relations with the United States.”²⁰¹ Later in his presidency, major developments took place with regards to the nuclear program, with Khatami’s voluntary suspension of uranium enrichment-related activities and acceptance of the Non Proliferation Treaty’s (NPT) Additional Protocol in 2003²⁰².

With the stage set, Ahmadinejad and his supporters began undermining these gestures of goodwill and all those who backed them. By portraying the West as the enemy,

“the principlists have used the technique in an attempt to undermine their reformist and pragmatic conservative rivals and paint them as weak, defeatist, and insufficiently revolutionary. At the same time, Ahmadinejad has posed as the leader of Iran’s resistance against so-called arrogant outside powers (especially the United States) that seek to keep Iran down.”²⁰³

All past and present attempts to accommodate the West were being effectively portrayed as those of foreign elements “against the national interest and treasonous”²⁰⁴. These accusations of foreign elements infiltrating Iran’s polity were made all the more real when Musavian, a senior member of Khatami’s nuclear negotiating team, was arrested on charges of espionage²⁰⁵. With such tactics being employed, it is hard to completely disregard the claim that “Iranian leaders [...] decided to assemble nuclear weapons not against the United States but against Iran’s own democratic movement”²⁰⁶. This strategy

²⁰¹ TAKEYH (2006), *op.cit.*, p. 112.

²⁰² Some authors contend that other aspects of the nuclear program (e.g. enrichment) actually accelerated during Khatami’s administration, again suggesting that certain elements of the nuclear program are largely out of reach of the President in Iran. Supreme Leader Khamenei is sure to be pulling some of the strings. See FITZPATRICK, Mark (2008), “The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: Avoiding Worst-Case Outcomes”, *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 48, no. 398, p. 70.

²⁰³ THALER et al. (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 76-77.

²⁰⁴ ANSARI (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 78.

²⁰⁵ GREEN et al. (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 33.

²⁰⁶ Milani paraphrased in SOLINGEN (2007), *op.cit.*, p. 181.

seems to have paid dividends with some authors relaying the fact “that the ongoing sense of international crisis did much to constrain political life and debate in Iran”²⁰⁷.

4.2.2 *Revolutionary Pedigree*

Not incidentally, the popularization of the nuclear issue has also proven valuable for principlists for brandishing their own revolutionary pedigree. For some time now, numerous experts have paid notice to “The Islamic Republic’s deliberate strategy of marrying Iran’s national identity to the cause of nuclear aggrandizement.”²⁰⁸ Chubin sums up this identity best,

“these values can be expressed as independence, equality, and respect. They reflect an extreme sensitivity to any appearance of dependence, dictation, or domination by others as well as a desire to be taken seriously, treated without discrimination, and accorded the status that Iran’s importance in the world merits.”²⁰⁹

With the pursuit of an indigenous nuclear program being portrayed by Ahmadinejad, Khamenei and others as embodying all of these core values, the principlists can be made out to be championing the revolutionary struggle, while at the same time justifying their tightening grip on power. Where others have capitulated at the heels of the West, Ahmadinejad is said to be holding strong.

A great deal of time and effort has been invested in illustrating the identity crisis raging in Iran, one “emphasizing the Islamic *Revolution* and a model of resistance and self-sufficiency, the other emphasizing the Islamic *Republic* and a model of a normal state”²¹⁰, and the great stakes at play. Should the conservatives lose this battle, they stand

²⁰⁷ ANSARI (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

²⁰⁸ TAKEYH (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 250.

²⁰⁹ CHUBIN (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 19.

²¹⁰ THALER et al. (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 119.

to lose above all their command of the economy and control over the state apparatus, in essence losing everything.

“What can be said is that the nuclear question *was* an elite issue until 2004-05, when the hard-line Majles and later Ahmadinejad decided to make it a factional one.”²¹¹ In making nuclear energy synonymous with the ongoing revolutionary struggle and convincingly portraying the West as standing in its way, forcing his opponents to close rank and rally around the flag²¹², Ahmadinejad has tried to make his identity the one the nation adopts²¹³.

²¹¹ GREEN et al. (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²¹² ANSARI (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 78.

²¹³ This has spurred a new battle with the Supreme Leader over who gets to adopt this identity and exploit it for political purposes. This point was raised in a discussion with Peter Jones.

5. Concluding Remarks: The Way Forward

With the traditional conservatives' ideational and material primacy usurped and undermined by two consecutive two-term presidencies, there was little else Ahmadinejad and the principlists could do but try to reassert themselves. Unfortunately for the international community, nuclear power was thought up to the task. In a desperate attempt to silence those who oppose them and return the country down its revolutionary path, Ahmadinejad has wielded nuclear energy and not without consequence. Although the United States' intelligence community continues to believe that there is no indication that the decision has been made to cross the nuclear threshold and acquire the bomb²¹⁴, there is still reason for alarm. For the time being, the United States and Israeli governments have stopped short of open confrontation, opting instead for increasingly painful sanctions, cyber attacks (Stuxnet) on Iran's nuclear enrichment facilities and targeted assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists (5 assassinations in two years). However, come next American presidential election in November, with Republicans already showing disdain for negotiating²¹⁵ with Iran and Israel at least hinting towards a possible military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities²¹⁶, things could and might just unravel.

²¹⁴ The classified 2011 National Intelligence Estimate reportedly draws the same conclusions as those outlined in the 2007 report, namely "that Iran has halted work on its covert nuclear weapons program." ROGIN, Josh (2011), *Exclusive: New National Intelligence Estimate on Iran Complete*, available at http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/15/exclusive_new_national_intelligence_estimate_on_iran_complete. Accessed September 2, 2012. For a skeptical view of this latest Estimate see ALBRIGHT, David and BRANNAN, Paul (2012), "U.S. Intelligence Estimates and the Iranian Nuclear Program", Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) Report, p. 1-3.

²¹⁵ CNN Wire Staff (2012), *GOP candidates offer strong words on Iran*, available at http://articles.cnn.com/2012-03-06/politics/politics_republicans-aipac_1_iranian-regime-nuclear-program-tehran?_s=PM:POLITICS. Accessed September 10, 2012.

²¹⁶ As early as 2009, the Obama administration has supplied Israel (at their request) with deep-penetrating bombs (bunker busters), of little military use if not for targeting Iran's underground nuclear facilities. LAKE, Eli (2011), *Obama Sold Israel Bunker-Buster Bombs*, available at

Although this paper argued the fact that Iran's nuclear program is primarily self-propelled, that is for reasons of domestic politics, there is still much the international community can do, particularly the United States, to stifle Iran's nuclear march. Above all else, the United States should do all it can to politically and diplomatically disarm Ahmadinejad, to take back the ammunition it has so conveniently provided him and his colleagues to castigate his rivals. As Crane explains, in reference to American support for secessionist movements in Iran, the United States should "make it more difficult for the government to use such threats, real or imagined, as pretexts for persecuting its domestic political opponents."²¹⁷ The current American administration, while a far cry from President Bush's 2002 "axis of evil speech", is still capable of making it much harder for Tehran to demonize them as the "Great Satan". Policies of engagement with Iranian society, through intellectual, student and other cultural exchanges would go a long way in diluting the regime's rhetoric. Word of mouth is the best marketing strategy.

Second, the United States and its abiding partners should put an end to the blanket sanctions regime against Iran (maintaining only smart or targeted sanctions), which inadvertently affect the common Iranian (causing hyperinflation and skyrocketing food prices²¹⁸), and instead foster Iran's economic integration into the global order. Many experts have already pointed out the fact that economic sanctions against Iran only reward the power networks which "prop up the conservative Islamic revolutionary power centers."²¹⁹ The revolutionary foundations and network of companies under the purview

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/09/23/president-obama-secretly-approved-transfer-of-bunker-buster-bombs-to-israel.html>. Accessed September 2, 2012.

²¹⁷ CRANE et al. (2008), *op.cit.*, p. 116.

²¹⁸ DEGHAN, Saeed Kamali (2012), Sanctions on Iran punish its people, not its leaders, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/11/iran-sanctions-punish-people-not-leaders>. Accessed September 10, 2012.

²¹⁹ SAEIDI (2004), *op.cit.*, p. 493.

of the IRGC (or militarized *bonyads*²²⁰) have a vested interest in keeping Iran's economy free from outside competition²²¹ and blanket sanctions, if not the regime's policies, are doing just that. Therefore, "A better strategy would be to demonstrate the benefits of economic cooperation with the U.S. and to remove economic engagement from its nationalist frame."²²² The United States' approval of Iran's bid to enter the World Trade Organization in 2005 (for which Iran eventually gained an observer status), following 21 such attempts by Iran since 2001, was a step in the right direction. However, more is needed to release the chokehold these religious foundations and militarized *bonyads* have over Iran's economy.

In closing, should the policies described above be applied and precipitate a decision to denuclearize in Iran, the factions face yet another battle. Early signs of this new factional dispute broke the surface in late 2009. Whether or not the product of the current sanctions regime against Iran, a tentative agreement was struck between the United States, France, Russia and Iran on October 22, 2009 in Geneva, whereby Iran would ship most of its known low-enriched uranium to Russia in return for fuel rods from France to be used in the production of medical isotopes (in effect delaying Iran's nuclear weapons breakout capability)²²³. All factions in Iran, conservatives and reformists alike, however, scorned the Tehran Research Reactor Deal, ultimately leading Ahmadinejad to abandon the proposal²²⁴. It looks as though no faction in Iran is willing to sit idly while

²²⁰ WEHREY, Frederic and al. (2009b), The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (National Defense Research Institute), p. 57.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²²² PERKOVICH, (2003), *op.cit.*, p. 13.

²²³ *Salvaging the Tehran Reactor Deal*, American Foreign Policy Project, available at <http://americanforeignpolicy.org/the-nuclear-file/the-iran-nuclear-stockpile-deal-what-went-wrong>. Accessed September 2, 2012.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

the other gains from an agreement, whether they agree with the terms or not²²⁵. Like all things political in Iran, negotiating a settlement with the West risks being an intensely factional affair. If an agreement is to be struck between the United States and Iran over its nuclear program, the stars will have to align perfectly, and that in both countries. In the end, it will require leaders on both sides able to rise above their respective domestic politics. Although much was said about Iran's domestic politics throughout this paper, the cunning political opposition in both countries is sure to feast on any glimmer of compromise, leaving little room for error. With presidential elections looming in both the United States (November 2012) and Iran (June 2013)²²⁶, the incumbent American president and presidential hopefuls in both countries are not likely to take this chance in the near term. Perhaps the stars will align another day.

²²⁵ This point was raised in a discussion with Peter Jones.

²²⁶ Not to mention Israel's incessant lobbying for tougher actions against Iran is detrimental to the negotiating process, especially during an American election year.

Bibliography

ABDO, Geneive (2011), *Iran: Ahmadinejad vs Khamenei. Does Ahmadinejad's fall empower or hurt the West in its troubled relationship with the Islamic republic?*, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/201162994514399969.html>. Accessed March 16, 2012.

ABRAHAMIAN, Ervand (1993), *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

AKHAVI-POUR, Hossein and AZODANLOO, Heidar (1998), "Economic Bases of Political Factions in Iran", *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 7, no. 13, pp. 69-82.

ALBRIGHT, David and BRANNAN, Paul (2012), "U.S. Intelligence Estimates and the Iranian Nuclear Program", Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) Report, available at <http://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/u.s.-intelligence-estimates-and-the-iranian-nuclear-program/8>. Accessed September 2, 2012.

ALIZADEH, Parvin (2000), "Introduction", in ALIZADEH, Parvin (ed.), *The Economy of Iran: Dilemmas of an Islamic State*, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris.

AMIRAHMADI, Hooshang (1990), *Revolution and Economic Transition: The Iranian Experience*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

AMUZEGAR, Jahangir (1993), *Iran's Economy Under the Islamic Republic*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

AMUZEGAR, Jahangir (1998), "Khatami's Iran, One Year Later", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 76-94.

ANSARI, Ali M. (2006), *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs (second edition).

ANSARI, Ali M. (2007), "Iran Under Ahmadinejad: The Politics of Confrontation", *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 47, no. 393, pp. 5-104.

ASHRAF, Ahmad (1988), "Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions", *Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 538-567.

BAKHASH, Shaul (1986), *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, New York, NY: Basic Books.

BAKHASH, Shaul (2001), "Reformists, Conservatives and Iran's Parliamentary Elections", in KECHICHIAN, Joseph A. (ed.), *Iran, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf States*, New York, NY: Palgrave.

BAKTIARI, Bahman (1996), *Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran: The Institutionalization of Factional Politics*, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

BJORVATN, Kjetil and SELVIK, Kjetil (2008), "Destructive Competition: Factionalism and Rent-Seeking in Iran", *World Development*, vol. 36, no. 11, pp. 2314-2324.

BOROUJERDI, Mehrzad (2001), "Paradoxes of Politics in Postrevolutionary Iran", in ESPOSITO, John L. and RAMAZANI, R. K. (eds.), *Iran at the Crossroads*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

BRUMBERG, Daniel (2001), *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

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

CHEHABI, H. E. (2001), "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective", *Government and Opposition*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 48-70.

CHRISTENSEN, Janne Bjerre (2011), Drugs, Deviancy and Democracy in Iran: The Interaction of State and Civil Society, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris.

CHUBIN, Shahram (2001a), "Iran's Strategic Environment and Nuclear Weapons" in KEMP, Geoffrey et al., "Iran's Nuclear Weapons Options: Issues and Analysis", Washington D.C.: The Nixon Center, available at <http://www.iranwatch.org/privateviews/NIXON/perspex-nixon-irannuclearweaponsoptions-0101.pdf>. Accessed July 14, 2012.

CHUBIN, Shahram (2001b), "Whither Iran: Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security", *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 41, no. 342, pp. 11-139.

CHUBIN, Shahram (2006), Iran's Nuclear Ambitions, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

CHUBIN, Shahram (2008), "Understanding Iran's Nuclear Ambitions", in CRONIN, Patrick M. (ed.), Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security, Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.

CHUBIN, Shahram and LITWAK, Robert S. (2003), "Debating Iran's Nuclear Aspirations", *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 99-114.

CNN Wire Staff (2012), *GOP candidates offer strong words on Iran*, available at http://articles.cnn.com/2012-03-06/politics/politics_republicans-aipac_1_iranian-regime-nuclear-program-tehran?_s=PM:POLITICS. Accessed September 10, 2012.

CRANE, Keith, LAL, Rollie and MARTINI, Jeffrey (2008), Iran's Political, Demographic, and Economic Vulnerabilities, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (Project Air Force), available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG693.pdf. Accessed July 14, 2012.

DEHGHAN, Saeed Kamali (2012), Sanctions on Iran punish its people, not its leaders, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/11/iran-sanctions-punish-people-not-leaders>. Accessed September 10, 2012.

DJALILI, Mohammad Reza (2001), Iran: L'Illusion Réformiste, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.

EHTESHAMI, Anoushiravan (1995), After Khomeini: The Iranian Second Republic, New York, NY: Routledge.

EHTESHAMI, Anoush and ZWEIRI, Mahjoob (2007), Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris.

FARUQUI, Munis D. (1998), "Iran: Renegotiating a 'Revolutionary' Identity", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vo. 33, no. 1, pp. 2071-2077.

FITZPATRICK, Mark (2008), "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: Avoiding Worst-Case Outcomes", *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 48, no. 398, p. 7-99.

GASIOROWSKI, Mark J. (2000), "The Power Struggle in Iran", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 22-40.

GHEISSARI, Ali and NASR, Vali (2004), "Iran's Democracy Debate", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 94-106.

GHEISSARI, Ali and NASR, Vali (2005), "The Conservative Consolidation in Iran", *Survival*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 175-190.

GREEN, Jerrold D. (1982), Revolution in Iran: The Politics of Countermobilization, New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.

GREEN, Jerrold D., WEHREY, Frederic and WOLF, Charles Jr. (2009), Understanding Iran, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (National Security Research Division), available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG771.pdf. Accessed July 14, 2012.

HAKIMIAN, Hassan and KARSHENAS, Massoud (2000), "Dilemmas and Prospects for Economic Reform and Reconstruction in Iran", in ALIZADEH, Parvin (ed.), The Economy of Iran: Dilemmas of an Islamic State, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris.

HUNTER, Shireen T. (1992), Iran After Khomeini, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

HYMANS, Jacques E. (2006), "Theories of Nuclear Proliferation: The State of the Field", *Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 455-465.

International Crisis Group (2002), "Iran: The Struggle for the Revolution's Soul", ICG Middle East Report N.5, p. 11. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,ICG,IRN,4562d8cf2,3de74fd34,0.html>. Accessed March 18, 2012.

Iran: Who Holds the Power?, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/iran_power/html/expediency_council.stm. Accessed March 16, 2012.

JONES, Peter (1998), "Iran's Threat Perceptions and Arms Control Policies", *The Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 39-55.

JONES, Peter (2012), "Learning to Live with a Nuclear Iran", *The Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 197-217.

JONES, Peter (2011), "Succession and the Supreme Leader in Iran", *Survival*, vol. 53, no. 6, pp. 105-126.

KADIVAR, Mohsen (2011), "Wilayat al-Faqih and Democracy", in AFSARUDDIN, Asma (ed.), Islam, the State, and Political Authority: Medieval Issues and Modern Concerns, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

KAMRAVA (2003), "Iranian Shiism under Debate", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 102-112.

KHALATBARI, Firouzeh (1994), "The Tehran Stock Exchange and Privatisation of Public Sector Enterprises in Iran: A Study of Obstacles to the Private Sector Development", in COVILLE, Thierry (ed.), The Economy of Islamic Iran: Between State and Market, Tehran: L'Institut Français de Recherche en Iran.

KHAN, Saira (2010), Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted Conflict and Proliferation, New York, NY: Routledge.

LAKE, Eli (2011), *Obama Sold Israel Bunker-Buster Bombs*, available at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/09/23/president-obama-secretly-approved-transfer-of-bunker-buster-bombs-to-israel.html>. Accessed September 2, 2012.

- MALONEY, Suzanne (2004), "Islamism and Iran's Postrevolutionary Economy: The Case of the *Bonyads*", in TÉTREAU, Mary Ann and DENEMARK, Robert A. (eds.), Gods, Guns, and Globalization: Religious Radicalism and International Political Economy, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- MENASHRI, David (2001), Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society and Power, Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers.
- MILANI, Mohsen M. (1994), The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic, Boulder, CO: Westview Press (Second Edition).
- MILANI, Mohsen M. (2001), "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran", in ESPOSITO, John L. and RAMAZANI, R. K. (eds.) (2001), Iran at the Crossroads, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- MOSLEM, Mehdi (2002), Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- MOSLEM, Mehdi (2002b), "The State and Factional Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran", in HOOGLUND, Eric (ed.), Twenty Years of Islamic Revolution: Political and Social Transition in Iran since 1979, New York, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- NADER, Alireza, THALER, David E. and BOHANDY, S. R. (2011), The Next Supreme Leader: Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (National Defense Research Institute), available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1052.pdf. Accessed July 14, 2012.
- NAJI, Kasra (2008), Ahmadinejad: The Secret History of Iran's Radical Leader, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris.
- NINCIC, Miroslav (2005), Renegade Regimes: Confronting Deviant Behavior in World Politics, New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- PERKOVICH, George (2003), "Dealing With Iran's Nuclear Challenge", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, available at <http://www.iranwatch.org/privateviews/CEIP/perspex-ceip-iraniannuclearchallenge042803.pdf>. Accessed July 14, 2012.
- RAKEL, Eva (2007), "Conglomerates in Iran: The Political Economy of Islamic Foundations", in FERNANDEZ JILBERTO, Alex A. and HOGENBOOM, Barbara (eds.), Big Business and Economic Development: Conglomerates and Economic Groups in Developing Countries and Transition Economies under Globalization, New York, NY: Routledge.
- RAKEL, Eva Patricia (2009), Power, Islam, and Political Elite in Iran: A Study on the Iranian Political Elite from Khomeini to Ahmadinejad, Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- REZAEI, Ali (2003), "Last Efforts of Iran's Reformists", *Middle East Report*, no. 226, pp. 40-46.
- ROGIN, Josh (2011), *Exclusive: New National Intelligence Estimate on Iran Complete*, available at http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/15/exclusive_new_national_intelligence_estimate_on_iran_complete. Accessed September 2, 2012.
- SAEIDI, Ali A. (2004), "The Accountability of Para-governmental Organizations (*bonyads*): The Case of Iranian Foundations", *Iranian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 479-498.
- SAGAN, Scott D. (1996), "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb", *International Security*, vol.21, no. 3, pp. 54-86.

SAGHAFI, Morad and EHSANI, Kaveh (2004), "The New Landscape of Iranian Politics", *Middle East Report*, no. 233, pp. 16-23.

Salvaging the Tehran Reactor Deal, American Foreign Policy Project, available at <http://americanforeignpolicy.org/the-nuclear-file/the-iran-nuclear-stockpile-deal-what-went-wrong>. Accessed September 2, 2012.

SAMII, A. William (2001), "Iran's Guardians Council as an Obstacle to Democracy", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 643-662.

SEIFZADEH, Hossein S. (2003), "The Landscape of Factional Politics and Its Future in Iran", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 57-75.

SHERRILL, Clifton W. (2011), "After Khamenei: Who Will Succeed Iran's Supreme Leader?", *Orbis*, vol. 55 no. 4, pp. 631-647.

SOLINGER, Etel (2007), Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

SOROUSH, Abdolkarim, SADRI, Mahmoud (tr. and ed.) and SADRI, Ahmad (tr. and ed.) (2000), Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

TAKEYH, Ray (2006), Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic, New York, NY: Times Books.

TAKEYH, Ray (2009), Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

THALER, David E., NADER, Alireza, CHUBIN, Shahram, GREEN, Jerrold D., LYNCH, Charlotte and WEHREY, Frederic (2010), Mullahs, Guards, and Bonyads: An Exploration of Iranian Leadership Dynamics, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (National Defense Research Institute), available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG878.pdf. Accessed July 14, 2012.

TSCHEPHER, A. (1994), *A Translation of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, available at http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00t___.html. Accessed March 4, 2012.

VAKILI, Valla (2001), "Abdolkarim Soroush and Critical Discourse in Iran", in Esposito, John L. and VOLL, John O. (eds.), Makers of Contemporary Islam, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

WEHREY, Frederic and al. (2009a), Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (Project Air Force), available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG781.pdf. Accessed July 14, 2012.

WEHREY, Frederic and al. (2009b), The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation (National Defense Research Institute), available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG821.pdf. Accessed July 14, 2012.

WRIGHT, Robin (2000), "Iran's New Revolution", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 1, p. 133-145.

ZABIH, Sepehr (1979), Iran's Revolutionary Upheaval: An Interpretive Essay, San Francisco, CA: Alchemy Books.