

Misperceptions and Impediments in the US-Iran Relationship

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Winston Churchill once described Russia as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” For many Americans and many Iranians, this phrase readily applies to how they perceive the other nation- as the complex politics, economics, culture and ideologies of both countries have stoked confusion and turmoil for the past thirty years. These complexities are even more pronounced when examining how Iran and the United States interact with one another, as the on and off history of conflict between the two has created an intricate political legacy that defines the policies of both nations to this day. However, within this long and convoluted history, one element which had remained constant on both sides is a marked trend of political and strategic misperception. Both the United States and Iran have based their policies and strategies around very fixed, and often very inaccurate, images and assumptions regarding the others intentions.

The Iranian-American relationship has been one of the most bitter in the modern world. This hostility largely draws from the events of the early 1980s, where it was Iran which, more than any other third-world power, humiliated the U.S. in the hostage crisis of 1979-1981.¹ The images of the hostage crisis, combined with subsequent confrontational policies (such as attacks on Persian Gulf shipping in the mid-1980s) and woeful tales of internal repression, solidified the image of Iran as that of ‘a crazy outlaw’ nation whose acts were illegal, unpredictable and irrational. The effects of such characterizations run deep within American policy- every President from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush have vilified Iran. The US has found it possible to negotiate with East Asian states that have fought and killed tens of thousands of Americans² but it has found it harder to find a minimal negotiating ground with, the country which, while not killing Americans, has

inflicted humiliation on it- Iran. For Iranians, it the U.S. which has long dominated their country, removing its elected prime minister Mossadeq in a coup in 1953, sustaining the Shah in the decades that followed and then imposing sanctions and various forms of containment on the Iranian economy even since the 1979 revolution. To many, the US is seen as protecting and subsidizing the state of Israel, in its suppression of Palestinian national rights. Furthermore, many Iranians believe that the US was also involved in urging Iraq to attack Iran in September 1980.³

However, recent events following September 11th 2001, the US war in Iraq, and the international crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear program have brought many of the issues within the US-Iranian relationship to the forefront of international relations.⁴ At one level this is an argument about power in the Middle East and, by extension, in Central Asia and West Asia, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, and about the influence of Iran in the changed strategic climate prevailing since the three great upheavals of recent years – the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the ousting of the Taliban in 2001 and the occupation of Iraq in 2003.⁵ The United States is seeking to impose a new regional order, between and, in some measure, within states in the Middle East and is also seeking to establish itself as a strategic military and economic power in Central Asia. Yet in all of this Washington finds itself faced with the power of Iran, a country that has been, on an off, a hegemonic power in the region for three thousand years and which, while it has abandoned some of the revolutionary zeal of the post-1979 period, still has regional goals incompatible with those of the USA.⁶

However, this growing political conflict between Iran and the United States is only compounded by the high degree of suspicion and animosity on both sides, the belligerency demonstrated by each in statements about the other and, not least, the ideological convictions held by the leaderships in both Tehran and Washington.⁷ The Bush administration needs an enemy to justify his war on terror, and despite the evident distance between the Islamic Republic and Al Qaeda, Tehran seems best suited to filling that role. And as the Bush administration needs a threat, therefore, they are likely to find it, and possibly promote it, in Tehran.⁸ Moreover, those in charge in Tehran, especially

after the election of Ahmad Ahmadinejad in June 2005, are themselves seeking to raise the tone of strategic and ideological confrontation and retain a set of revolutionary illusions about domestic and foreign policy that may cost the Iranian people dear.⁹

Thus, the propensity and effect of misperception within the American-Iranian relationship is vast. However, while many of these misperceptions find their origins in social and cultural trends, what makes misperception unique in the US-Iran relationship is both in the manner they are generated, as well as the manner in which they are utilized. The trend of misperception was first studied by noted academic Robert Jervis in his analysis of the decision making behaviour of states in conflict.¹⁰ According to Jervis, states, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union, unconsciously and intentionally misperceive each others intentions.¹¹ While most misperceptions finds their roots in the political and social cultures of the respective nations, intentional misperception is conducted on a strategic level to further justify certain strategic positions and strategies adopted by the concerned nation. With this phenomenon in mind, this paper will highlight the perceptions and misperceptions that characterize the U.S.-Iranian relationship. It will discuss the bilateral realities that contribute to the negative images and perceptions that the Iranians have about the Americans and vice versa, as well as how they are utilized. In interrogating this process, examination will be directed in the framework of four poignant issues: Iran's suspected nuclear programme, issues of terrorism, the Afghanistan and Iraq war and human rights issues.

The Iranian Nuclear Program

More than anything else, it is this issue which is most emblematic of the gulf between the two countries. The Iranian nuclear program itself has a long history, having originally being started under the Shah during the 1960s. The program was later discontinued by Ayatollah Khomeini, only to be revived again under President Rafsanjani during the 1990s.¹² The recent crisis largely began in 2003, as existence of the Natanz facility was ascertained and global attention was directed toward Iran and its nuclear ambitions.¹³

Currently, the situation has escalated to its highest point to date, as the Security Council deliberates on the possible diplomatic options and strategies to pursue in order to dissuade Iran from its goal of domestic uranium enrichment.¹⁴

While events advance at a dizzying pace, one element that has remained constant throughout the nuclear crisis is a clear effort by both sides to manipulate public and international perceptions. During the course of the crisis, both nations have made tangible efforts to manipulate both their own image, and that of the other side. Within this phenomenon, Iran has largely been represented internationally as irrational, duplicitous and dangerous. In a similar vein, within Iran and sympathetic nations, the United States has been portrayed as a self-serving imperialist intent on advancing a destabilizing and war-like agenda.¹⁵ In essence, misperception within the nuclear issue is both conducted, and capitalized upon.

The Iranian Position

Since the initial revelation of the Iranian nuclear program, Iran has made a consistent public position that its nuclear goals are peaceful in nature. As it has stated on many occasions, Iran's objective is to develop a viable nuclear energy infrastructure.¹⁶ While most security analysts can maintain the primacy of weapons manufacture in Iran's agenda, much European and American analysis overlooks Iran's concrete economic and social objectives in seeking nuclear power. In pursuing this agenda, Iran is attempting to fulfill several long-standing economic goals. These involve the diversification of the Iranian economy away from a reliance on oil,¹⁷ the reduction of domestic oil consumption (thereby increasing foreign exports¹⁸), the stimulation of economic growth in peripheral industries, and finally, diversification of Iran's energy infrastructure in the face of staggering demographic trends (that being a population of 85 million and growing fast). Iran also has a legal basis in its position, as from the perspective of international law, Iran is within their rights to pursue these aims. Iran is a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatory and possesses the right under Article 4 of the treaty to pursue and

develop peaceful nuclear energy.¹⁹ To reinforce this position, it should be noted that at present no *direct* evidence has been found that clearly illustrates the actual construction of a nuclear weapon.²⁰

However, despite these facts, it is indisputable that Iran has conducted questionable activities within the scope of its nuclear program, and it is within this field that the real roots of the issue are to be found. In every sense, the Iranian nuclear crisis is a crisis of confidence, as both the IAEA and many nations are not secure in believing that Iran is pursuing a peaceful nuclear agenda. The tally of evidence which has propelled the crisis is quite long, and for most this is of sufficient quantity to justify such a lack of confidence. One notable example is the existence of the Natanz facility itself, as the case has been made that the construction of such a facility (being underground), combined with evidence of undeclared nuclear research, is a clear violation of the NPT.²¹ Furthermore, Iran has also failed to provide an explanation behind Ahmadinejad's public assertion that Iran was conducting research with P-1 and P-2 centrifuge method, a technology Iran had previously declared had been abandoned.²²

The lack of international confidence towards Iran also stems from political differences between Iran and much of the rest of the world. In particular, the election of President Ahmadinejad and the abrupt change in Iran's foreign policy position to a more confrontational stance does not present the international community with a positive image of Iran. Nor has the president's hard-line rhetoric provided much hope for successful negotiations. This dubious image of Ahmadinejad's Iran was further reinforced by the unusual nature of Iranian bilateral diplomacy taken prior to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) referral vote, which saw Iran make threatening statements to its immediate neighbours as well as to the USA itself.²³ These statements, combined with the perceived unwillingness of Tehran to work towards a compromise with the main concerned parties, namely Russia and China have confirmed to many the futility of pursuing diplomatic initiatives with the new government in Tehran.²⁴

Within the field of popular perception, the present situation has provided the Iranian government with a very useful opportunity to mobilize the domestic population. While the existence of contradictions, as well as the dangers posed by the changes in Iranian foreign policy²⁵ is evident to many within Iran they are factors which are not given any attention in official public media. In reacting to the crisis, the Iranian government has managed to effectively redirect popular attention towards the nuclear program into different channels. To do so, the Iranian government has framed its nuclear policy within a framework of highly appealing popular nationalism. Within this context, the government's foreign policy actions are based on a steadfast commitment to pursue Iran's national rights, as well as resisting malicious foreign agendas. This message is also conveyed abroad with the intention of gaining support from like-minded populations and governments. A notable example is Ahmadinejad's 2005 UN speech, where he accused the west of "*trying to enforce a system of nuclear apartheid.*"²⁶

In application, this policy has proved to be highly successful. By linking the progress of the nuclear program to cultural attitudes of national pride, the government has garnered an incredible amount of support from the population. Telling evidence in this regard is the massive outpouring of support within Iran following the president's statement that Iran had successfully enriched uranium.²⁷ Through this endeavour, the Iranian government has also successfully presented highly defined and highly negative representations of the concerned parties on the other side of the crisis, such as Germany, France, Britain and the United States. Often the public position emphasizes the baseless nature of their statements, while committing to continued compliance with IAEA inspectors and safeguards (despite continued non-compliance).²⁸

The American Position

In parallel with Iran, the American position within the nuclear crisis has generated positive and negative attitudes both domestically and internationally. Much of the criticism towards current US strategy is linked with the Bush administrations failures in

Iraq, both in improperly assessing the threat posed by Saddam Hussein, and in committing the United States to a prolonged and destructive conflict based on specious evidence.²⁹ During the 2004-2005 Iranian-European negotiations, the Bush administration drew heavy criticism for not participating in the negotiations.³⁰ This criticism was further heightened as media reports detailing potential plans for nuclear strikes within Iran intertwined with latent fears of overly militaristic trends within the American government.³¹

The interest that the United States has in blocking the Iranian nuclear program is not a new phenomenon. Since its inception, the Bush administration has made a concerted effort to isolate and act against Iran. The current policy climate has largely emerged from the ashes of past failures, such as a prior effort to bring Iran to the Security Council in 2003.³² Furthermore, the position that the United States has taken with regard to the Iranian nuclear program is also a continuation of its policy of isolating and “containing” so-called “rogue states,” a policy which it has pursued in numerous forms for over a decade.³³

In the current crisis, however, the United States has been measured in its approach to Iran. Despite criticism for non-involvement, the US has supported the European negotiations and did so until the talks were discontinued. Upon their failure, the US then placed its full support behind the office of the IAEA in assessing the threat posed by Iran and the possible responses. Furthermore, in its public statements the US has consistently emphasized a diplomatic solution. In a recent statement, President Bush re-iterated this position, stating that “*the diplomatic options are just beginning*”.³⁴ However, it should be noted that the United States has tempered such statements with vague implications towards a more forceful position, such as their assertion of a unity among many countries on a basic principle that “*Iranians should not have a nuclear weapon, the capacity to make a nuclear weapon, or the knowledge of how to make a nuclear weapon.*”³⁵ In manipulating perceptions of its foreign policy, the United States has closely followed past actions. One notable element being the steadfast refusal of the United States to

acknowledge the Iranian economic motives behind nuclear energy, stating instead that Iran has no need for additional forms of energy.³⁶

While there has been much speculation regarding military action (to which the United States has ambiguously replied that “*all options are on the table*”³⁷) they have not yet taken an overt position of hostility towards Iran on the nuclear issue, although that may very well change in the near future. At the moment, the United States is putting its faith and effort into international institutions. While doubtless it is concerned about the threat that a nuclear Iran would pose to both regional stability and US interests, the US approach to Iran is largely dictated by the overarching concern of sustaining the viability of the NPT treaty. Within this context, the US administration sees Iran’s actions as a threat against the NPT regime and the established system of nuclear order.³⁸ As the NPT regime has come under pressure from numerous proliferation instances in the recent past,³⁹ the Iranian nuclear issue is being approached with the intention of gaining a victory for the NPT regime and maintaining the status quo in the face of defiance. Also by taking a strong stance in defence of the NPT, the United States has so far managed to redirect or avoid further criticism (particularly from internal sources) of its own failures to reduce its nuclear stockpile in accordance with its NPT commitments.⁴⁰

To many in the US government, the IAEA, and other concerned parties, this approach is both legitimate and necessary. A lingering fear within the United States and other western nations is the future transference of nuclear technology (particularly towards countries of questionable international record). Further diplomatic moves by Tehran have served to heighten this proliferation anxiety, with Iran’s recent offer of nuclear exchange to Sudan being a case in point.⁴¹ Regarding the larger American strategy, the United States seems to be focusing on diplomacy while analyzing potential military options. Attuned to the high amount of international anxiety surrounding the program and well aware of the difficult situation it has found itself in Iraq, the United States seems confident it can create a multi-lateral response to Iran. In many ways, this would be a coup for the United States, as it has been trying to undertake such an initiative for some time. However, with the high level of concern surrounding the nuclear crisis, the opportunity may have finally

presented itself. This position is best described by R. Nicholas Burns, the under secretary of state who has led the diplomatic negotiations for the administration. According to Burns, “*what they have done is created a coalition against them, they have forced a dynamic where they will have some action against them, whether it is in the Security Council, or outside the Security Council by like minded nations.*”⁴²

Future Options: Sanctions and Military Action

It is in the debate over potential responses to the crisis where the misperceptions on both sides end up influencing the course of events. Both Iran and the United States have moulded their positions around ingrained cultural and strategic misperceptions, and both are likely to act within their respective contexts. For the United States, the Cold War goal of containment and isolation is still the desired objective, particularly on a multi-lateral basis, as this in turn fulfils the goal of preserving an American led international system. For Iran, the objective is the opposite, as the Iranian approach largely falls on a history of aggressive self-reliance in the face of collective sanction. This drive, and its nationalistic framing, can be seen in Iranian public statements over the course of the crisis. For instance, President Ahmadinejad’s response to the threat of security council resolutions, where he stated that “*the Iranian nation won’t give a damn about such useless resolutions,*” as well as the statements of government ministers emphasizing Iran’s strength in the face of adversity, gives insight into this line of reasoning.⁴³

Regarding the future course of events, the current state of affairs is precarious and largely depends on how the Security Council decides to proceed in the medium and long term. Should Iran be clearly indicted as being in default, and should future diplomatic options be exhausted, then it is likely that there will be a motion before the Security Council to undertake disciplinary action. Based on the IAEA vote in March, a rough consensus currently exists regarding the need for some measures to be taken.⁴⁴ It is in this form of action that much controversy exists. At present, there are two main options: Sanctions and Military Action.

It is in the sanctions option that much of the past experience in approaching Iran comes into effect. In keeping with Iran's long-standing pariah status, numerous sanction options have been floated within the IAEA that largely emphasize containment and other isolating measures. As for sanctions, there are two likely courses that will be proposed. The first are "light sanctions" and mainly involve coercive measure designed to limit Iran's accessibility to its neighbour's and vice versa. This option would involve travel bans to certain countries, limits on Iranian citizens travelling abroad, the removal of Iran at international events (particularly sporting events), and other general restrictions that would reduce Iran's international interaction.⁴⁵ A stronger approach would likely focus on denying Iran conventional military equipment and "dual use" technology (civilian technology easily converted to military applications) and cutting off international lending to Iran.⁴⁶

Should the situation escalate to require strenuous action, the option of economic sanctions could be much more destructive. Despite official Iranian statements by Ahmadinejad and other government officials who emphasize the resolute nature of the Iranian economy, Iran's economic foundations are particularly vulnerable to any form of collective action by the western powers. This is due to the present system of buy-back contracts Iran uses in its oil and gas industry. The nature of this system allows for foreign companies to construct and operate installations for a set number of years, following which the facility would be taken over by Iran.⁴⁷ While this ensures Iranian control over its oil fields, it presents a special weakness as it forces Iran to depend on external sources to apply the necessary technology to create the necessary infrastructure. Should a set of sanctions be comprehensive enough to target and restrict technology transfers, the damage to the Iranian economy would be extreme (it should be noted that this is an option the IAEA has considered recommending).⁴⁸ However, while containment has always been presented as a desired goal, questions still remain regarding its effectiveness. Iran has been a nation with a startling ability to "go it alone" in the past and succeed and the failures of multi-lateral sanction regimes are well documented.⁴⁹

While sanctions options are being considered, there is still much speculation regarding potential military action. However, at present, the realistic options regarding a military strike are limited. Any viable strike against the Iranian nuclear program would have to be an airborne campaign, amongst which the United States would be the main participant.⁵⁰ However, such an air campaign, even if limited, would also be a major undertaking requiring a significant political and logistical commitment by concerned nations.⁵¹ While the United States does have the military potential to meet such a challenge (and Iran lacks the ability to stop them), there are several re-enforcing facts that preclude such a decision. Those being: that such an action would be unable to completely halt the program, Iran is in a very good position to create further difficulties in Iraq, and that the United States' political position in the Middle East is already quite precarious.

With few military options available on both sides, the likely course of action will involve more diplomacy, political manoeuvring and media manipulation. In many ways, the US-Iranian conflict is very much a war of words and images, where great investment is made by both nations in the hope that the consistent application of soft power will yield some tangible results in the future. Such hopes are not inconsequential, as there seems to be little possibility for an immediate solution to the crisis. The effort of simultaneous demonization and self-justification further complicates the crisis, as both nations have legitimate concerns behind their positions. Unfortunately, the legitimacy of these concerns, and any means of rational dialogue in addressing them, are often drowned out on both sides by the weight of history, popular opinion, and entrenched political interests. As both have larger ambitions of regional influence and potential hegemony, the whole scale manipulation and use of political attitudes will perpetuate, and will likely perpetuate the present conflict for years to come.

Terrorism

The United States first began to identify Iran as a supporter of terrorist activities in 1984 under the Reagan administration. The accusations have grown more strident from year to

year, until recently the State Department described Iran as ‘the most active state sponsor of terrorism’ in 2002.⁵² The State Department document also claims that Iran provides financial, training and military support to Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Jihad and Lebanese Hizbollah as well as to ‘*to extremist groups in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Iraq- those with ties to al Qa’eda*’⁵³

However, despite this support, actually verifying that the Iranian government had a direct involvement in attacks abroad is difficult to determine. Often, these groups have their own political motivations for pursuing violent activity, which may or may not coincide with Iran’s best interests. Moreover, these groups may have relationships with different elements within the Iranian elite, as well as other wealthy people in the Middle East, who can mobilize impressive resources independent of the governments in Tehran, Riyadh and other capitals. However these accusations has been repeated so often that is almost cited universally as fact. For, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, Iran has been guilty, like Syria, of ‘inspiring and financing a culture of political murder and suicide bombings’⁵⁴ and for senior advisor Richard Perle is a state ‘up to its eyeballs in terror.’⁵⁵ Another example, which received a lot of press, was a series of appearances and op-ed articles by the late Constantine Menges, whose criticism of the Iranian government earned him much renown. According to Menges, ‘*Iran under a clerical dictatorship has been the progenitor of Islamic terrorism directed against the United States... After September 11, 2001 Iran also publicly announced training for terrorists volunteering to strike in America, and for the destruction of civilian aircraft with shoulder fired missiles...Iran’s leaders have said that, when they have nuclear weapons, they will be ready to ‘annihilate’ the Jewish state.*’⁵⁶ All of this sounds both ominous and convincing, but none of these assertions are documented in any governmental or non-governmental source. The assertions are a textbook example of ‘truth by repetition.’

Of all the accusations, the assertion of Iranian support for Hezbollah is verifiable. However, it is important to understand what the nature of this support is, and the extent to which Iran is able to influence the actions of this Shi’ite Lebanese group. It is also important to take into consideration the kind of organization Hezbollah has become in

recent years. Despite its bloody history, many within the region emphasize Hezbollah's political participation- its party members hold twelve seats in the Lebanese parliament- and openly supported its role in pressuring Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon in 2000.⁵⁷ In this regard, even U.S. allies are split to some extent.⁵⁸ These reservations reflect Hezbollah's evolution into something beyond a compliant Iranian surrogate. In short, although Iranian religionists were instrumental in aiding its establishment, Hezbollah has now taken on a life of its own. Even if all Iranian financial and logistic support were cut off, Hezbollah would not only continue, it would thrive. In short, Iran's support is not essential for Hezbollah to continue. Commentator Daniel Byman states flatly that if the United States is really serious about stopping Hizbollah, it would do better to attack Syria and Iran.⁵⁹

As for Iranian support for Palestinian groups, which is often conjured by both Tehran and Washington as critical to the current Intifadah, the Middle East peace process broke down at the end of the 90's not because of Iranian opposition or American support to Israel but because the Israelis and Palestinians could not overcome their differences.⁶⁰ Even if the United States could eliminate Iranian support for Palestinian groups overnight, this alone would not strangle PIJ, Hamas and Hizbollah, all of which could not only run off Syrian support but could also survive on nothing but Palestinian animosity to Israel.

One reason that demonization of Iran in this area has been so successful is because of cultural devices. As William Beeman explains, as soon as the 1979 revolution was born so was the 'Mad Mullah' whose crazed and wild-eyed image has become the substance of legions of editorial cartoons.⁶¹ Since the hostage crisis, Iran has continually been placed in the villain's role and as Geoffery Nunberg points out, since that time, the loaded term 'terrorist' has often been skilfully utilized by the government and the press to connote 'illegal, unpredictable and irrational bomb-throwing mad-men,' culminating in descriptions of post-revolutionary Iranian leaders as 'zealots,' 'fanatics,' 'terrorists with unresolved pathologies' and 'a group of mad mullahs.'⁶² This further compounds the *idée fixe* that Iranian grievances are irrational and domestically rooted, and therefore, it

does little good for the United States to accommodate their interests. Typical were the remarks of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice when she classified Iran under a group of nations she called ‘outposts of tyranny.’⁶³ The depiction of enemies such as Iran as villains, and Western powers as heroes has a long pedigree and the United States’ remarks of Iran constitute an almost perfect paraphrase of Edward Said’s description of Western Orientalism.⁶⁴

Another reason that such unfounded assertions abound is that these claims accord with the American worldview that asserts that terrorism would be unable to exist without state support. Currently the United States is engaged in dominant and long-standing relationships to many questionable governments around the world. So strong is this formulation that it is difficult for Washington (particularly for strategic reasons) to acknowledge that revolutionary groups active in allied nations may have entirely local reasons for their actions. A good example of this involves the United States’ reaction to the Bahrain uprisings in 1994, where both they and Bahrain persisted in their accusations that there existed a Shi’ah inspired plot to overthrow the regime and that Iran was behind it.⁶⁵ While this is the formal accusation, to this date neither the Bahraini government nor the United States have produced reliable evidence, which can support these claims. The United States policy of dual containment (*vis-à-vis* Iran and Iraq) provided a plausible reason for outside interference by the Iranians. It was certainly much easier to blame Iran than to admit that the local Shi’ah population was disenfranchised and willing to rise up and change it. Especially as the U.S. had just announced in July 1995 that its naval forces, headquartered in Bahrain, were to be upgraded to a full fleet, implying a sustained high level of American naval forces in the Gulf. Hence, the extent of Iranian involvement in the riots soon became secondary in the minds of the Gulf States and U.S. government. Rather, what became apparent is that the United States had to choose between two alternatives: (1) accepting that the uprisings were genuine home-grown, popular protests; or (2) utilizing the Iranian menace so as to continue supporting a status quo in which the existing regimes are already committed to protecting American interests.⁶⁶ Hence the pragmatic choice of strategic and commercial interests overruled democracy and human rights principles and once again had a strategically distorting

effect on the analysis of broader regional and social events, resulting in the 'Iranian menace' being evoked and utilized, with scant evidence, as a rationalization for complex events

There is a sinking feeling among some GCC intellectuals that the United States is fuelling some of the discord that exists between Iran and the GCC states, providing credence to the conspiracy theory that is circulating in the Gulf of the 'real' American intentions.⁶⁷ American officials do not miss a beat in reminding the region about the real danger Iran poses. A case in point was former secretary of defence William Cohen's visit to Kuwait in 2000. As the *Washington Post* reported, "visiting Kuwait, Cohen watched U.S. marines lob grenades and fire 'bunker buster' assault weapons, telling them later that he hoped film of the exercise would be broadcast so Iran might 'see how good you really are.' Each country must be very careful in dealing with Iran, Cohen said, to 'make sure they can satisfy themselves that Iran wants a peaceful stable relationship with them.'"⁶⁸ The demonizing of Iran through such American posturing and scare tactics, which foments tension and insecurity- ill-serves the fragile and volatile relationship between Iran and the GCC states and maximizes the necessity of an American presence in the minds of the Gulf States.

It should be noted, however, that Iran is not entirely innocent. Iran does openly admit support for organizations that are not highly regarded in the international community. Some of the more questionable activities of these groups, for example the Israel embassy bombing in Buenos Aires in 1992, that killed 29, has caused Iran to be saddled with guilt by association and raises real questions regarding the ethics of supporting (rhetoric or otherwise) such groups.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the rhetorical volleys launched from Tehran against the United States and its allies which are primarily intended for Iranian domestic consumption, has, unsurprisingly, alarmed many nations. Such concern is not a new phenomenon, and has been a characteristic of the Islamic Republic since its inception. For instance, Khomeini's statement elaborating Iran's new foreign policy in 1980: "*We say we want to export our revolution to all Islamic countries as well as to the oppressed countries*"⁷⁰ suggested to many in the international community the type of policies that

the new regime in Iran would be pursuing. In a similar vein, Ahmadinejad's public statement on 26 October 2005 that he would be happy if Israel were wiped from the map and the US destroyed⁷¹ (moreover, he apparently stepped on an American flag on his way to vote⁷²) create an impression that Iran espouses aggressive and terrorist-like tactics. In Ahmadinejad's case, they have a special, additional meaning for his supporters, because they signal a return to the ideals of the revolution. They are thus doubly symbolic, and of almost no practical consequence for Israel or the United States. However, the overall result of the leadership's adherence to extremist rhetoric is not surprising, as many observers equate a continuity of rhetoric with a continuity of intent.

The trend of demonizing another to explain terrorist activity (as in Bahrain) is hardly new to Iran, as Iran makes equal use of scapegoating and misdirection to divert criticism. Just as the United States has demonized Iran since 1978-79 in the worst possible terms for U.S. culture, so have Iranian leaders characterized the United States in the worst possible terms for Iranian culture. Iranian leaders have long depicted the United States as the Great Satan and an imperialistic menace to the Gulf. The vituperative, accusatory rhetoric seems to be aimed at all U.S. leaders since WW2 for unacceptable interference in Middle Eastern affairs, and for the destruction of Iranian culture and economy. Such statements are designed to act upon latent cultural attitudes of victimization, as Iranian popular historical conceptions place sole culpability of Iran's woes at the feet of the United States and other international parties, while actively ignoring the domestic Iranian actors who participated in the processes.

However, in these international dealings, both the United States and Iran have been talking as much to their own populations as *for* them. The Great Satan appellation has had less to do with American actions than with the need for the Iranian regime to attach a symbolic label to an enemy that would resonate with the Iranian public. However, just as Americans are selectively characterized by Iran, so is Iran selectively characterized by the United States. The Mad Mullah image is in effect just as much a co-creation, with the United States choosing to see (or hear) only those things that substantiate their image. Added to this is the investment both sides have in maintaining a feud. In a sense, Iran

wants to be a thorn in the side of the United States, and the United States finds complaining about that thorn politically useful.

Iraq and Afghanistan.

Largely owing to shared interests in this field, the Bush administration achieved what the Clinton administration had spent nearly four fruitless years pursuing: face to face talks with Iranian officials. As one former Clinton official has stated ‘that was our holy grail.’⁷³ However as demonization and disregard persisted regarding each others endeavours and co-operation in the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan- there has been little effort to take advantage of what might have been a crucial moment in the relationship.

After September 11 2001 it appeared as if a breakthrough might be possible: Iranian suspicions of the Taliban movement were present before the attacks, engendered by its origins in the radical Sunni seminaries of Pakistan and its close association with Islamabad’s military and intelligence services. Their animosity was exacerbated by the rising tide of drugs and instability from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan that too frequently spilled across the Iranian border. For the Taliban’s part, their extreme ascetic doctrine reviled Shi’ah Muslims as apostates, and its militants menaced Afghanistan’s Shi’ah minority. Tensions between the neighbours nearly escalated to direct conflict in August 1998, after eleven Iranian diplomats were murdered in the Taliban takeover of a Shi’ah city.⁷⁴ As a result, Iran cultivated close ties to the opposition militias that were battling the Taliban, including the Northern Alliance. This history placed Iran in a good position to assist the U.S.-led war on the Taliban regime in the fall of 2001.

Iran’s early track record was extremely promising: Tehran continued to work in tandem with the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan through the Northern alliance and among other activities, offered to allow American transport aircraft to stage from airfields in eastern Iran and agreed to perform search and rescue missions for downed American

airmen who bailed out over Iran.⁷⁵ The Iranian government was also instrumental in helping to forge a new coalition government. Although the Iranians (as mostly Shi'ah Persians) had their problems with the Sunni Pashtuns, they were instrumental in bringing in key Pashtun figures, such as former king, Zahir Shah, and incorporating them into the process. It was the United States and Iran, *working together*, that made the UN conference in Bonn- which gave birth to the Afghani interim government - a success. According to Americans who participated in the conference and the backroom negotiations, although the Pakistanis often took the credit, it was the Iranians who generally deserved it.⁷⁶

Iranian cooperation in Afghanistan has largely continued, and to date it has maintained its commitments towards Afghan reconstruction. While the United States has accused Iran of supporting “negative elements,”⁷⁷ such accusations are dubious and contradict Iran’s positive record in Afghanistan. Recent allegations of collusion between al-Qa’eda and Iranian hardliners are particularly dubious.⁷⁸ Iran’s ambassador to the UN, Javad Zarif, has denied these accusations, stating, *‘Iran has been very active in capturing, arresting, preventing the entry of al Qa’eda into Iran and once they enter Iran, in capturing them, arresting them and extraditing them to friendly governments. We have probably captured more al Qa’eda people in the past fourteen months than any other country.’*⁷⁹ Such claims contravene both the Islamic Republic’s accommodating stance toward the 2001 U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan and the well-established track record of hostility between Iran and al-Qa’eda’s ascetic strand of Sunni militancy. Al-Qa’eda’s ideology and worldview are unrelentingly opposed to the Shi’ah brand of Islam, which its theologians brand as a heretical sect. Moreover the allegations of co-operation between al-Qa’eda and Iran are shrouded by the lack of much verifiable public evidence.

Iraq

As with the Taliban, Iran’s long track record of conflict with Saddam Hussein is well established. The eight year Iran-Iraq War was so bitter and exhausting that it did not end

in a formal peace treaty and relations between the two countries did not fully resume for the ensuing sixteen years of Saddam's rule. Here too, Tehran and Washington found themselves improbably united by a common enemy, although the problematic history of U.S. policy toward Iraq and the implicit threat of Iran's affiliation with its Shi'ah majority added considerable layers of complexity and wariness. Moreover, during the Geneva talks on Iraq, it quickly became clear that the two countries had lost the spirit that they had during the Afghanistan war. By this point, both sides had reaffirmed their distrust of each other- through incidents such as Karine A⁸⁰ and Bush's unexpected remarks in the State of the Union address in which he labelled Iran as part of 'an axis of evil.'⁸¹

While Iran was not as helpful during Operation Iraqi Freedom, it should be noted that it was not *unhelpful*. The United States and Iran have many common interests in Iraq, which has provided a unique opportunity for Tehran and Washington to edge toward normalization. Tehran, like Washington, is keenly interested in avoiding a civil war and sustaining Iraq as a unitary state. Iranian elites support a democratic Iraq, fully aware that consensual arrangements for power sharing among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds are vital to Iraq's survival. Indeed, the Bush administration's satisfaction with January's parliamentary elections was echoed by Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, the reactionary head of the powerful Guardian Council, when he said: "*Iraq is now going through its election cycle. The election results are very good.*"⁸² Moreover, Iran did not undertake any endeavour to cause problems for the US-led coalition, rather, it advised various Iraqi groups to participate in the U.S.-led reconstruction.⁸³ This was critical because many of the most important Shi'ah groups, such as ad-Dawa and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), as well as key individuals such as famed guerrilla commander Al-Muhammadawi, all had support from Iran in one fashion or another during the 1980's and 1990's. In addition, Iran offered early recognition to the precarious provisional government and quickly launched efforts to expand economic and cultural ties with Iraqis.

Just as in Afghanistan, however, Iran's cooperation did not negate U.S. concerns about its leaders' ultimate intentions. Thus, as casualties continue to mount, so too do US allegations of Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs. Paul Bremmer, the chief US administrator in Iraq, has claimed that there is "*incontrovertible*" evidence of "*meddling and interference*" by Iran, whose leaders '*know they are doing it, they know we are unhappy about it and they ought to stop it.*'⁸⁴ While the American Enterprise Institute scholar, Michael Ledeen, has claimed that 'inside Iraq there are thousands of Iranian agents at work' who had been 'committed' by Tehran to sabotage peace in post-Saddam Iraq in a 'brilliantly managed campaign to mobilize the Iraqi Shiites.'⁸⁵ Such claims become more unconvincing when the author switches, within just a few sentences, from saying there are 'more than a hundred highly trained Arab militants,' that the Iranians have smuggled into Iraq, to claiming that 'thousands of Iranian backed terrorists have been sent,' and adds that these terrorists are 'next to impossible to identify.'⁸⁶ These claims have also been highly doubted by respected observers on the ground, such as the British commander in charge of the Persian Gulf who, despite these American claims to the contrary, has said that he has seen no sign of Iranian meddling,⁸⁷ and by Ahmad Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, who has said that such allegations are '*basically unfounded.*'⁸⁸

However, the tensions between Washington and Tehran have not been helped by some Iranian leaders who have taken advantage of the deteriorating security situation to intensify their condemnations of the U.S. presence in Iraq. This represents a combination of political opportunism and authentic empathy with the plight of the Iraqi people and the manifest instability in the sacred Shi'ah shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala. For example, Khomeini's public condemnation of Operation Enduring Freedom⁸⁹ (much to the bemusement of American officials) and the Revolutionary Guard Commander's recent statement that '*given their political and military capabilities, Iran has the ability to obstruct and create problems for the American warmongering policies in the region*'⁹⁰ could easily be taken as proof of bad intent.

In the light of the events of recent years, it is clear that Washington has good reason to suspect a high degree of Iranian influence in Iraq. Yet there are some respects in which America's own policies have arguably exacerbated the tensions with Tehran over this issue. This is most obviously true because US condemnation of Iranian interference in Iraqi *and* Afghanistani affairs consciously overlooks the positive contributions made by the elected government and instead emphasizes only the negative actions of what Washington admits is merely 'a minority' within its ranks. Inconveniencing the United States is one thing; sowing turmoil in Iran's own environs is quite another. In simply pragmatic terms, any partition of Iraq or outbreak of civil war could cause spillover affects, imperilling Iran's own stability. In fact, at the height of the recent tensions in Najaf, Iran dispatched a team of diplomats to mediate between U.S. forces and the insurgent al Sadr forces.⁹¹ Washington's approach has appeared all the more questionable while its allegations have remained unproven but such incidents of Iranian co-operation have never been in dispute. As one CIA officer has claimed, '*We are absolutely 100% positive that there are Iranian operatives in town.*'⁹² But if such intelligence lay behind the charges of interference in Iraqi affairs levelled by Rumsfeld and other senior administration figures, then it is also unclear why the mere 'presence' of Tehran's agents had become synonymous with their 'interference'.

Moreover, Rumsfeld's remarks (which are repeatedly echoed in Washington) that the United States would never allow an 'Iranian-style theocracy'⁹³ to come about in Iraq is a red herring since neither Iraq's religious leaders nor its population favours clerical rule. Moreover, if Iraq stabilizes, the city of Najaf with its religious seminaries and shrines will re-assume its centrality in Shi'ah religious thought. It will be Iraq that dominates Iran religiously, not the other way around. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani commands a considerable following across the region- wider than that of any of Iran's ruling clergy. His quiet approach to clerical involvement in politics and reported aversion to Iran's theocratic system could create new Iranian adherents to the notion of separating religion from politics. In the short term, however, instability in Iraq is only fuelling the fires of extremism throughout the region.

Human Rights

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other organizations continue to document cases of arbitrary arrest, torture and excessive punishment for ridiculous ‘crimes,’ summary executions, political killings and the use of other forms of violence against dissidents.⁹⁴ Moreover, certain cases of Human Rights abuses within Iran have led to full-blown diplomatic incidents, one of the more notable being the recent death of Canadian journalist Zahra Kazemi.⁹⁵

This image of Iran has been capitalized upon in public diplomacy as Bush’s 2002 statement for ‘*Iranians to work harder for freedom,*’ adding that the ‘*USA would support those Iranians who want the same freedoms, human rights and opportunities as other people around the world,*’ indicates. Since then similar appeals have been made by the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad,⁹⁶ from the offices of Washington think tanks⁹⁷ as well as by Colin Powell, who has advocated ‘*showing those Iranian people that there is a better world out there.. to put the pressure on your political and your religious leaders*’⁹⁸ and going ‘*over the heads of their leaders to let them know we agree with them.*’⁹⁹

This frequently utilized representation is significantly different from the reality. In contrast to most Gulf States, ordinary Iranians enjoy at least some freedom at the ballot box. The Iranian people have a right to vote for their President, for the parties that represent them in the national parliament- the Majles, and for their representatives in the tiers of local government that run cities, towns and villages. Indeed, the 2005 presidential election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad may be considered the most liberal elections that have been conducted in the region, since they were characterized by genuine democratic elements like free campaigning and the unpredictability of the outcome.¹⁰⁰

One important touchstone for Americans is the perceived contrast between the role of women in Iranian and American life. In the United States, the treatment of women under the Islamic Republic has been an index of the worthiness of Iranian civilisation. They are frequently seen as oppressed and helpless. In Iran, however, American women are frequently seen as commodified objects of male desire. Neither view is accurate and the Islamic Republic has made a special point of emphasizing women's equality in education, employment, and politics as a matter of national pride. Iranian women enjoy more social rights than their more repressed regional sisterhood and eleven women MP's were voted to the sixth Majles in February 2000. In 1997 Dr. Masoumeh Ebtekar was chosen by Khatami as a cabinet minister for the Environment and a female advisor on women's issues, Zahra Shojaie, was also chosen and entitled to attend cabinet meetings. The average marriage age for women has increased from eighteen years before the revolution to 23.9 years in 2004. Education for women is obligatory and universal and Iranian women are very well represented in higher education, with women actually constituting 60% of university enrollees, including fields such as medicine and engineering.¹⁰¹ The government has also recently introduced other freedoms that are unthinkable in many other parts of the Islamic world, including the liberalization of the dress code for schoolgirls and the introduction of policewomen into the streets of Tehran.¹⁰²

However it is the unelected bodies and institutions - the Supreme Leader, the Guardian and Expediency Councils, the judiciary and the military - that are overwhelmingly conservative in orientation and which continue to hold enough constitutional power to block many of the moves made by the president and the Majles that have caused stark criticism by the Bush administration.¹⁰³

However, there are many powerful objections to Washington's open appeals for popular demonstration against the government. Given the longstanding willingness of the American government to overlook abuses of human rights, particularly women's rights, by close allies such as Saudi Arabia, it is hard not to see the Bush administration's focus on human rights violations in Iran as a cloak for its larger strategic interests. As one

senior diplomat stated: *'Iranian students might get beaten up when they go onto the streets,' in the words of one former Western diplomat, 'but their counterparts in the Gulf States wouldn't even get as far as protesting in the first place.'*¹⁰⁴

On a theoretical level, the Bush administration's approach is highly dubious. Most obviously, any reference to 'the people' of Iran is clearly a Manichean term that misleadingly places a very complex phenomenon under one convenient label. 'The Iranian people' are of course no more of a monolithic interest group with a distinct desire and 'will' than their counterparts anywhere else in the world and are no more represented by street demonstrators than the general Western public has been represented by their own. The counterblast against the president statements by Iran's Foreign Ministry, which condemned the USA for calling 'a few individuals the voice of the people,'¹⁰⁵ was in this respect entirely convincing.

Moreover, the Iranian political system cannot be simply considered as a dictatorship directed by some factions or powerful individuals. Interpreting the balance of power only in terms of a Constitution that gives absolute power to the Supreme, the Guardian and Expediency Councils is a very limited framework in which to decipher what could be the main domestic political challenges in Iran. After more than 25 years of a republican system, the interplay of the political and social forces is much more complex and can no longer be limited to a dualistic opposition between the 'regime of the mullahs' and the 'opposition.' Indeed, the administration of George Bush and its supporters in the neoconservative movement have been suffering from the delusion that Ahmadinejad is the chosen representative of Iran's clerical leaders. In fact, Ahmadinejad's election was the crowning success of Iran's own neoconservative movement, the *Abadgaran-e Islami* (Islamic Developers) and the older, but related *Isgargaran* (or Islamic Revolution Devotees' Society).¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, looked at from another angle, Washington's appeals to 'the people' also strays perilously close to incitement of individuals to anarchy and violence in a country where such views can be readily channelled into a system of limited democracy. They

have risked hindering the cause of reform by allowing Iranian conservatives to tar protesters with the brush of foreign involvement. This tactic became evident during the June 2003 student protests, when the Supreme Leader accused the USA of orchestrating the demonstrations and referred to the protestors as *'emissaries of the enemy'* stating that they were *'openly supported by America.'*¹⁰⁷ Rafsanjani also condemned the riots in similar terms, claiming *'the failure of the recent unrest in Iran is a further disgrace to the USA,'*¹⁰⁸ while Tehran's Police Chief, Brigadier-General Morteza Talaie, stated that the troubles had been caused by *'those who once served Saddam Hussien and America.....and who are now inciting people by means of television broadcasts funded by the Americans.'*¹⁰⁹ President's Bush's critical remarks regarding the democratic nature of the 2005 election before the final voting had taken place are another good example. Through the criticisms, the Bush administration probably wanted to strengthen the reformist candidates but, in application, the comments backfired. They simply angered many Iranians, who had earlier been ready to boycott the elections, but who as a result of Bush's comments may have changed their minds and gone to the polls in defiance of Bush's statement.¹¹⁰

Iranian reformists frequently decry such statements believing that Western governments should draw a clear distinction between Iranian domestic issues on the one hand and issues that more directly affect the outside world on the other. In terms of defusing the political and economic pressures upon Iran in a way that benefits the cause of democracy and human rights, it is highly questionable that there are any real measures that the West can take. Of course it is also questionable whether the United States is actually interested in achieving these goals as opposed to simply exploiting the divisions and misperceptions of Iranian society.

Conclusion

All four of the issues discussed above (Iran's alleged development of nuclear weapons, Iran's purported support of terrorism, Iran's suspected intentions for Afghanistan and Iraq

and Iran's supposed discrimination and misogynistic social policies) are areas of extreme concern for the United States. Iran's actions in these areas, if they are truly represented by Washington officials, would more than justify President Bush's inclusion of Iran in an Axis of Evil as outlined in his 2002 State of the Union Address.¹¹¹ However within the four areas of concern, there is much to doubt regarding the certainty and extent of Iranian culpability. Nevertheless, all four are treated in public addresses as if they were all established fact and ongoing threats to the United States and the world.

On the other hand, Iranian descriptions of the United States, such as 'Great Satan,' evoke an image so stark, ominous, and full of vitriol it is difficult to look at it in a detached manner. This term was originally utilized by Khomeini to cultivate the core of Iranian dissatisfaction during the final years of the Pahlavi era, and galvanize these feelings in a single, potent symbol. However this highly developed sense of victimhood, exposed in anti-American protests and rhetoric, has continued for the past 30 years and has now developed into a sort of modern ritual. The revolution made the Iranian people masters of their destiny, but it did not eradicate their feeling of victimization. Iran's mythology of itself and its role in world affairs has complimented this 'mythology of the other.' Even today Iranians point to actions such as the 444-day hostage crisis as evidence that Iran has become not just revolutionary oppositionists, but guardians of justice and equality for the people of the world. The United States is still, above all seen as a self-interested manipulator, the hidden hand responsible for Iran's problems. America has been to blame for Iran's crippled economy, the fall of Iran's currency, moral corruption of the youth, the promotion of Zionism and the bolstering of Israel's status around the world. When misfortunes have no logical explanation, they can always be blamed on some phantom enemy. Be it the CIA, the British or in some quarters even the Scottish Freemasons.¹¹² On a personal level, I have seen this sentiment over and over again in my travels to Iran. Once at a women-only dinner party when the talk turned to Bill Clinton, the group had a lot of sympathy for the President and none for Monica Lewinsky. '*She was a Zionist spy sent by Mossad to discredit Clinton*' the group chimed. When the author tried to disagree, the group laughed and said '*I suppose you think the death of Diana was accidental too. Don't you know that Diana was planning to convert to Islam*

to marry an Arab. They wouldn't stand for it.' 'Who's they?' the author asked. 'The West, said one of the girls- they control everything- they even decide which governments rise and fall!'

Both nations construct the 'other' to fit an idealized picture of an enemy. The process is reminiscent of the cold war in the practice of mutual demonization. Both try to emphasize the danger of their opponents, but on close examination, these constructed threats have little or no substance. The relationship between the United States and Iran is unique in the world. Virtually no other pair of nations shares the same pattern of non-communication- even during the Cold War era, the United States maintained contact and diplomatic, cultural and economic relations with Russia and other communist states.¹¹³ These cultural impediments: the trading of accusations and the attempt by both to cast the other as the major threat to the region has not helped create an environment needed to objectively address the four issues discussed above. The tragedy is that relations will deteriorate because the two nations, through a marked trend of political and strategic misperceptions, will be operating with false models of each political systems and organization, leading to a state of confusion exacerbated by mutual incomprehension of each other's culture.

In recent years, experts on Iran and on U.S. foreign policy have put forward any number of theories regarding how best to tackle the list of problems in the U.S.-Iranian relationship. None of them are terribly compelling. All of them have problems with some combination of logic, feasibility, cost and repercussions. Not one is indisputably the correct policy for the United States, although some have more problems than others. In particular because how deeply troubled the relationship is, those approaches that offer the quickest, cleanest, and most direct solution to America's problems with Iran are the least likely to succeed and the most likely to cause more harm than good.

¹ For a detailed narrative of the politics surrounding the Hostage Crisis, see Taheri, Amir. *Nest of Spies, America's Journey to Disaster in Iran* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

² It should be noted that while the United States has been able to gain a rapprochement with China, Vietnam, Japan and others, it still has persistent internal as well as external factors preventing a major opening of dialogue with Iran, although some initiatives were attempted during the Clinton administration. For a concise summary of Clinton's policy, see Pollack, Kenneth. *The Persian Puzzle* (New York: Random House, 2004).

³ Beeman, William O. *The "Great Satan" vs the "Mad Mullahs," How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other* (Westport, London: Praeger Press, 2005), p 131.

⁴ For a current analysis, see Independent Task Force Report, *Time for a New Approach* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004).

⁵ Halliday, Fred. "Iran's Regional and Strategic Interests," in *Iranian Challenges*, Chaillot Paper, No 89, ed Posch Walter, (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, 2006), p 62.

⁶ Halliday, Fred. "Iran's Regional and Strategic Interests," in *Iranian Challenges*, Chaillot Paper, No 89, ed Posch Walter, (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, 2006), p 59.

⁷ Beeman, William O. *The "Great Satan" vs the "Mad Mullahs," How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other* (Westport, London: Praeger Press, 2005), p 4.

⁸ Freeman, Simon. "Bush: Iran's 'Grave Threat' to Global Security," *The Times*, January 13 2006, www.timesonline.co.uk, "Bush: Iran Grave Security Threat," CNN, March 10 2006, www.cnn.com, Richemann, Deb. "Bush Sees Iran as Greatest Security Threat," *ABC News*, March 16 2006, www.abcnews.com.

⁹ For perhaps the most incisive work on Iranian cultural attitudes, see Sciolino, Elaine. *Persian Mirrors, the Elusive Face of Iran* (New York: The Free Press, 2005).

¹⁰ For the seminal work in this field, see Jervis, Robert. "Hypotheses on Misperception," *World Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (April 1968), p 454-479.

¹¹ Jervis, Robert. "Hypotheses on Misperception," *World Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (April 1968), p 454-479. Jervis, Robert. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976).

¹² For a concise history of the crisis surrounding the Iranian nuclear program, see Howard, Roger. *Iran in Crisis? Nuclear Ambitions and the American Response* (London: Zed Books, 2004), p 89-114.

¹³ Howard, Roger. *Iran in Crisis? Nuclear Ambitions and the American Response* (London: Zed Books, 2004), p 89-114.

¹⁴ Sanger, David E. Sciolino, Elaine. "Iran Strategy: Cold War Echo," *New York Times*, April 30, 2004. www.nytimes.com

¹⁵ Beeman, William O. *The "Great Satan" vs the "Mad Mullahs," How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other* (Westport, London: Praeger Press, 2005), 119-121.

¹⁶ "Testing Iran's Nuclear Intentions," *The Economist*, March 10 2006, www.economist.com, Perkovich, George. "For Tehran, Nuclear Program Is a Matter of National Pride," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 21 2005, www.carnegieendowment.org

¹⁷ Keddie, Nikki, *Modern Iran, Roots and Results of Revolution*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p 274. For a more in depth analysis of the issues facing oil based economies, see Stevens, Paul J. "Oil and the Gulf, Alternative Futures," in *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essays in Politics*,

Economy, Security and Religion, ed. Gary Sick, Lawrence Potter (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p 85-115.

¹⁸ Keddie, Nikki, *Modern Iran, Roots and Results of Revolution*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 274. Oil and Gas Market Overview, *Atieh Bahar Consulting*, www.atiehbahar.com, Interviews with Vipcco Consulting, Tehran, July 16 2005.

¹⁹ *The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*, www.un.org

²⁰ Linzer, Dafna. "No Proof Found of Iran Arms Program," *the Washington Post*, August 23, 2005, www.washingtonpost.com, "IAEA Chief Finds No Early Evidence of Iranian Nuclear Program," PBS Online News, April 13, 2006, www.pbs.org

²¹ See article 3, *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*, www.un.org, Pan, Esther. "Iran: The Nuclear Threat", *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 6, 2005, www.cfr.org

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²³ Speech given by the US Representative to the IAEA at Chatham House, March 22 2006.

²⁴ For a detailed history of the Russian and Chinese interests in Iran, see Howard, Roger. *Iran in Crisis? Nuclear Ambitions and the American Response* (London: Zed Books, 2004), p 95.

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²⁶ "Full Text of President Ahmadinejad's speech at the General Assembly," *IRNA - Islamic Republic News Agency*, September 17 2005, www.irna.com

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