Can Iran be prevented from obtaining nuclear weapons by sanctions, or will it require preemptive military action? If Iran becomes nuclear, can it be contained?

STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

From the Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict at the Hoover Institution
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The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.

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May 2013 | Issue 2

THE HOOVER INSTITUTION
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Nukes: Why is Iran Different?

By Edward N. Luttwak

Iran's especial interest in acquiring nuclear abilities can be documented from 1974 when its ruler Shah Reza Pahlavi declared as much, announcing with much fanfare vastly ambitious plans for 23 energy reactors, while also initiating a weapon program even more energetically, but much more discreetly. Plausible explanations abound, starting with the abrupt increase in Iran's oil revenue caused by the sharp rise in per barrel prices, which concurrently seemed to presage an era of global energy scarcity. More broadly, the Shah's nuclear initiatives were a logical part of his panoply of military, economic, social, and even cultural ambitions. They were crucial for his highest aim, Iran's transformation into a *quasi* Great Power–it was already the preeminent regional power–through the acquisition of both nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles to deliver them. Remarkably, unlike the Shah's civilian endeavors, which advanced slowly if at all (his "White Revolution" land reform aroused the fierce opposition of land-owning clerics), and his grossly wasteful military-industrial projects (e.g. an entire helicopter factory bereft of a sub-contractor base), both the nuclear-weapon and missile projects were models of frugal efficiency and dispatch because they were joint ventures with Israel and South Africa. But if transitory circumstances, wrong forecasts, and the particular proclivities of a fallen ruler were indeed sufficient explanations, we would not now confront nuclear efforts almost as ambitious if neither frugal nor expeditious, and certainly more threatening to Iran's neighbors.

Again, another set of transitory circumstances can be invoked to explain the post-Shah resumption of nuclear efforts, to wit Iran's very long (1980-1988) and disastrously costly war with Iraq, in which it confronted an exceptionally well-armed aggressor while itself bereft of allies by its own doing, and prohibited from purchasing military and dual-use equipment by most suppliers–even replacement tires for its aircraft had to be smuggled. That war, moreover, was not only the longest of all twentieth-century wars except for the Japanese venture in China, but

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was also marked by the large-scale use of chemical weapons whose role, moreover, was decisive in its most critical battles and thus more consequential than in the First World War. In addition, Iraq launched large numbers of short-range ballistic missiles at Iran's cities, inflicting significant casualties. In those circumstances, given the impossibility of endowing Iran's mostly uneducated population with modern scientific, technological, and industrial skills in less than the span of a generation, and the consequent impossibility of any broad military-industrial autonomy, the attempt to acquire nuclear weapons with smuggled technology was the remaining option.

But these and others like them are still insufficient explanations for Iran's peculiar attachment to its nuclear ambitions, which continue still and very vigorously, even as their diplomatic repercussions, economic costs, and hence domestic political risks keep increasing. Security needs, or rather perceived security needs, can notoriously be invoked to justify any expense, risk or outright loss human or material, but in Iran's case, their plausibility is more dubious than many seem to think. Inherently protected within its vast territory, with only friendly or harmless countries on its borders now that Iraq's military strength has declined into insignificance, and its central government is in any case bound to Iran by sectarian solidarity (Turkey's utter impotence renders its intentions irrelevant), Iran certainly has little to fear from its immediate neighbors. To be sure, it is overtly threatened with bombardment by both Israel and the United States, but Iran's nuclear programs can hardly be justified by those threats because neither country would contemplate an attack against Iran were it not to stop those very programs. Iran is not caught in any prisoners' dilemma, it is not locked with another scorpion in a bottle: the country's national security would unequivocally be enhanced rather than weakened if its weapon-related nuclear activities were

abandoned. Specifically, at the present time, Iran's rulers could swiftly end their isolation, ensure the prompt renunciation of economic sanctions, and end the danger of Israeli or American air attacks, as well as the actuality of covert attacks, by abandoning uranium enrichment efforts, in exchange for guaranteed supplies of fuel rods for as many reactors as they care to build.

Evidently, Iran's rulers are unmoved because the object of their concerns is not national but rather *regime* security, an altogether more precarious affair because their regime is so intensely ideological–and ideological intensity is always a wasting asset once an ideology comes to power as the novelty wears off, and the disadvantages emerge.

That is all more true when an ideology is a tangled web of contradictions to begin with: the intensely Persian, supposedly scholastic but entirely clerical Twelver Shi'ism of the present rulers of Iran belies its Kurdish, Turkic, and Sufi origins in the Safaviyeh order founded by the Kurdish mystic Sheikh Safi al-Din, whose last head Ismāil was empowered by Turkmen Qizilbash ("red head") militants to make himself Shāh in 1501, at the start of his conquest and forcible conversion of till then Sunni Iranic lands. Still a rather new religion by Middle Eastern standards, Iran's particular form of Twelver Shi'ism is still undergoing convulsions, more commonly manifest in the periodic discovery and suppression of Sufi gatherings or heretical movements, but currently most evident in the vehement polemics aroused by the presidential candidacy of Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei. He is a mystic guide to followers (including his in-law President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) who seem to believe that he is in direct contact with the occulted 12th Imam, the world-ending Messiah of the Twelvers. But to his clerical opponents, Mashaei is a heretical "deviant" who undermines their role of spiritual intermediation by advocating a direct dialogue with god. In the past, the clerics secured his dismissal as First Vice President and tried to put him on trial for sorcery; now they are appealing to the so-called Guardian Council to prohibit his candidacy.

Such turmoil weakens the Iranian regime by undermining its ideological unity, intensifying its sense of vulnerability, and increasing the appeal of nuclear reassurance, so to speak. A quite different consequence of the regime's ideology ends up having the same ultimate effect: its especially intense form of Shi'a Islam—with its visibly different prayer rituals and peculiar institutions, from temporary marriage to the clerical hierarchy of Hojatollahs, Ayatollahs, and even Grand Ayatollahs—undermines at every turn the regime's pan-Islamic pretensions, as does the highly discriminatory treatment of Iran's own Sunnis (Amounting to some ten percent of the population–mostly Kurds, but also Baluch, coastal Arabs, and Afghan immigrants–Sunnis are excluded from public offices, and are not even allowed a single mosque in Tehran.).

From the start, the Islamic Republic tried to overcome these contradictions by stressing its absolute opposition to the existence of Israel in the most vehement terms, in an attempt to claim leadership over the Arab world as well, in spite of its own strongly Persian (*ajami*) identity. Further, and more especially under President Ahmadinejad, the regime has also been decidedly anti-Jewish, as a way of slighting the significance of its Shi'a, and indeed anti-Sunni, creed (In yet another contradiction, of all the many Jewish communities in Muslim lands, only Iran's survives in a functioning state with active centers in several cities as well as Tehran.).

Both maneuvers were initially successful, as the Iranian revolution aroused much enthusiasm among Arabs as well because of its sharply anti-Western character, while its Shi'ism did not seem that important to Sunni populations in most Arab countries, where there are no native Shi'a, and little was known of their practices. All this has changed long since: among Arabs, only the Twelver Shi'a of Iraq and Lebanon are still inclined to sympathize with the Islamic Republic, and even they may resent its Persian national character, while the vast majority of Sunni Arabs see it as alien in both nationality and religious practice (YouTube clips of bloody Muharram self-excoriations–even the heads of babies are cut with razors to induce bleeding–are festooned with horrified Arabic-language comments.).

Iran's regime was initially much strengthened by its external popularity among the Sunnis of many countries. But it has now retreated into sectarian isolation with its fellow Twelvers of Iraq and Lebanon, and this involution again increases the appeal of nuclear weapons, and helps to explain Iran's peculiar persistence in trying to acquire them.

One more motive is less direct in its workings. By the time of the 1979 revolution, even among the better-educated, more urban, and more urbane Iranians, religious piety had been intensified by the Shah's secularism. Predictably, the regime's clericalism and puritanism have had the opposite effect, secularizing Iran's urban populations at least. Not all Iranians resent the clerics' denial of personal freedoms, but clerical high-living evokes no such approval, and there is much criticism of clerical corruption, a vague accusation to be sure, but seemingly centered on the management of the *bonyads*, the Islamic foundations that control at least a fifth of the entire economy, including many industrial and commercial firms that seem to employ a great many relatives and friends of the clerics in charge. Regime opponents range from relatively pious critics of clerical power and privileges to unknown numbers who have become blatantly post-Islamic. Just as the Shah unwittingly made Iranians more pious, the Islamic Republic has made them more secular. In that context, Iran's nuclear pursuits strengthen the regime, both directly by evoking nationalist support, and indirectly, by provoking sanctions that are certainly useful to slow Iran's nuclear progress, but which also have the unfortunate side effect of increasing barriers between the domestic political scene and the outside world.

Many observers would add yet another motive, the special attraction of nuclear weapons for the followers of a religion that many view as intensely pessimistic, and which is certainly centered on the themes of abandonment and martyrdom.

That may fairly define the creed, but its history can be read in a quite different way, as an optimistic sequence of ideological victories won by force of arms: Ismāil and his Safavid successors conquered and converted all of today's Iran, western Afghanistan, and large parts of what is now Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, as well as much of Mesopotamia, including the preeminent Shi'a pilgrimage cities of Nayaf and Karbala.

Taking all these different consequences into account, it can therefore fairly be said that Iran's attachment to its nuclear endeavors is ideologically over-determined. That makes a diplomatic solution highly improbable, given the very poor exchange rate between material inducements and the renunciation of ideological compulsions.

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Sanctions and Iran

By Williamson Murray

During the arduous campaign that eventually led to the fall of Quebec and French Canada in 1759, the British commander, James Wolfe, commented that "war is an option of difficulties." So too might we characterize the strategic choices that confront statesmen in the international arena. The problems raised by the Iranian efforts to acquire nuclear weapons raise daunting and conflicting issues and possibilities, few of them positive.

Iran has hardly displayed anything resembling an acceptance of the present order in the Middle East. Its operatives have engaged in consistent efforts through the use of terrorism and covert operations to undermine regimes throughout the area, while its obdurate, fanatical stance against the existence of Israel represents an existential threat to that state, especially should Khomeini's successors acquire nuclear weapons. Moreover, acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran represents a greater threat than North Korea's possession of those weapons, because the legacy of the past for the latter carries with it the memory of what the United States is capable when pushed too far.

And so, what to do with the threat raised by the potential of Iranian possession of nuclear weapons? The obvious road is the one on which the United States has already embarked: namely sanctions and continued negotiations to 'persuade' the Iranians to abandon their pursuit of nuclear weapons. The second and equally obvious one is to launch a series of complex and difficult raids to take out the nuclear facilities on which the Iranian nuclear weapons program depends. The first route, however, has a dismal record of success. The Abyssinian crisis of the 1930s underlines the dangers that sanctions have in achieving policy goals. In 1935 Mussolini launched his Fascist legions against the tribal levies of Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia); like Italy, Ethiopia was a member of the League of Nations, established at the end of World War I to prevent further

conflicts. Thus, the Italian invasion represented a direct challenge to the international order. In response to that action, the League declared sanctions against the Italians, but British leaders, fearful that Mussolini might unleash his forces against them in the Mediterranean, insured that oil was not included in the list of commodities on the list of prohibited goods. Thus, the British imposed sanctions to please their voters, but insured that the sanctions would have minimal impact on Mussolini's ability to wage war. In effect, to the likes of Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain sanctions allowed them to create the appearance of taking a stand without taking the risks inherent in actually attempting to halt the Italian invasion. Thus, British policy fell between two stools: it did nothing to halt the invasion, while at the same time angering the Italians to the point that Mussolini would soon join with Hitler and the Japanese in forming the Anti-Comintern Pact.

The result was that sanctions failed to hurt Italy's strategic position, and modern Italian forces, aided by liberal doses of mustard gas, soon disposed of Haile Selassie's tribal levies. Six years later, the United States declared the equivalent of sanctions on virtually all exports to Japan, including oil, in response to the Japanese occupation of southern Indo-China. Five months later, backed into a corner the Japanese responded with their attack on Pearl Harbor and military operations that destroyed the colonial possessions of the Americans, Dutch, and British throughout Southeast Asia. The lesson is clear: sanctions to be effective must bite. If they do, they carry with them the distinct possibility that their target will respond with military force. So far sanctions against both North Korea and Iran have not pushed those two annoying powers into a corner, which explains why they have had so little effect on the economies and behavior of those two states.

The use of military force to wreck the Iranian programs carries with it a series of potential unintended effects. As American military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan have learned, the enemy gets a vote. Any major attack, whether successful or not, entails the reality that the Iranians

will strike back. In what form and how is difficult to predict and therein lies the problem. As one senior officer commented to me several months ago, once such an attack occurs, the United States better count on not being able to send a carrier task force into the Persian Gulf again. The difficulty that the Iranians pose is the fact that unlike most Arab states and their tribal societies, the Iranians are a nation with the ability to mobilize their population and resources to an extent that the Arab nation has not been able to achieve. Moreover, not only a fierce religious belief, but a palpable sense of nationhood reaching back to the Persian empire motivates them. Only the gross incompetence of Khomeini's regime in military matters prevented the Iranians from overwhelming their Iraqi opponents in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988; but the Iranian people showed themselves willing and able to 'bear any burden, pay any price' in their war against the Iraqi invaders.

There are also, one might note, the unintended effects that such a military effort might bring in its wake. There is no guarantee that there will not be substantial collateral damage not only by the conventional weapons used to attack the nuclear sites, but due to the nuclear pollution resulting from major explosions. Nor should American strategists and planners ignore the possibility that such an attack will have a substantial impact on young Iranians who at present appear to be largely pro-American. Nor should they miss the fact that the successful creation of nuclear weapons by the Iranians will potentially lead the Saudis to embark on their own nuclear program. A world in which a number of Middle Eastern powers possess nuclear weapons will not be a safer world, as some political scientists would have us believe. But above all, policy makers should not delude themselves into believing that the application of sanctions offers a safe route in which the Iranians will accept what we believe to be in their self-interest.

Williamson Murray serves as a Minerva Fellow at the Naval War College. He graduated from Yale University in 1963 with honors in history. He then served five years as an officer in the US Air Force, including a tour in Southeast Asia with the 314th Tactical Airlift Wing (C-130s). He returned to Yale University, where he received his PhD in military-diplomatic history under advisers Hans Gatzke and Donald Kagan. He taught two years in the Yale history department before moving on to Ohio State University in fall 1977 as a military and diplomatic historian; in 1987 he received the Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award. He retired from Ohio State in 1995 as a professor emeritus of history.

Iran: Bad Outcomes, and Worse

By Ralph Peters

Negotiations are the opium of the chattering classes, but sanctions are pure heroin to our governing elite. Those who have risen to power in Washington on the strength of words, rather than deeds, assume that malign foreign powers must be as receptive to appeasement and largesse as their constituents, while those who have never done without imagine that foreign actors accustomed to hardship must surrender if deprived of imported luxuries.

Repeated rounds of negotiations have granted the junta in Tehran a decade to advance their nuclear ambitions. The Persians invented chess; our diplomats play checkers. As for sanctions, they are, indeed, felt by the powerless, but those in authority can still get spare parts for their Mercedes and all else, thanks to our Persian-Gulf "allies," our Afghan clients, and delighted Russians, all of whom profit wonderfully by undercutting our ballyhooed embargo.

We do not have an "Iran strategy," merely a pouch of impotent diplomatic techniques that allow us to delude ourselves about progress and postpone effective action, while, at most, further inciting Iranian feelings of nationalism and inherent superiority. Meanwhile, we project vacillation, trepidation and moral weakness. Nor do we grasp that, while Iran is the present, if not yet fully real, danger, the long-term, insidious threat of greater scope comes from Saudi Arabia, a state that has bought influence wholesale in Washington, and whose uncompromising global zealotry for the Wahabi cult within Islam has already killed Americans by the thousands, while stunting the prospects of millions of needy Muslims. But that is another story.

Another story, too, is this writer's conviction that our president has privately accepted the advent of Iranian nuclear weapons and will not employ American military force to shatter the program (admittedly, a greater challenge than the public grasps).

Would Iranian possession of nuclear weapons be so great a threat? Even should Tehran's apocalyptic rhetoric regarding Israel prove nothing but talk–an existential question for Israelis–an Iranian nuclear arsenal would give the Shi'a autocrats de facto control of the Persian Gulf and its littorals without the need to pull a single trigger. Ships would transit the Strait of Hormuz only at Iran's sufferance as Tehran's capabilities threatened to choke off what remains the lifeblood of the world's oil supply. The ayatollahs would not even need to preach their threat, although one suspects they could not refrain from doing so.

Tehran would dominate the region militarily, raising the cost of intervention to a prohibitive level for outside powers, while touching off a regional arms race that would see Turkey rapidly develop nukes "for defensive purpose," while Saudi Arabia would call in its chips, having bankrolled the Pakistani nuclear-weapons program in the past. As a minimum, we would see, in short order, three historically hostile and currently spiteful nuclear powers, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia jostling against one another in a very small strategic space. Israel might be attacked only as an afterthought.

There are no good options or attractive solutions to the Iranian sprint toward armed hegemony, but, in terms of strategic Realpolitik, a nuclear-armed Iran is the worst of various unattractive outcomes.

As for the hopes of the fingers-crossed crowd that Israel might take unilateral military action against Iran's nuclear program, be careful what you wish for: Israel does not have the power to destroy Iran's artfully dispersed and deeply positioned facilities. Jerusalem (or Tel Aviv, to the timid laggards in our State Department) has the military wherewithal to start a conflict dramatically, but not to end one conclusively.

The Iranian response to Israeli strikes would be asymmetrical: While missiles would be launched at Israel just to maintain bragging rights, and terrorist operations would reach from Afghanistan to Lebanon and beyond, the crucial response would be broad-spectrum Iranian attacks on oil transport from the Persian Gulf and on the oil-producing, -processing and transfer infrastructure on the Arab side of the water. The effect on the world economy would be immediate and powerful. Inevitably, world opinion–ferociously anti-Jewish even where there are no Jews–would blame Israel, not Iran, for the resulting crisis.

If military action should be required, it would be far better (if tragic, nonetheless) for the United States to do it–preferably at the head of a close-knit coalition (this would not be an operation for symbolic participation that only cluttered the Air-Sea-Land battle space). Only the U.S. Armed Forces have the capability both to smash the Iranian weapons program and to devastate–though still not eliminate–Iran's retaliatory capabilities

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And it would be hard. Not a matter of days or weeks, but of months, an intensive air campaign and supporting naval operations (with limited on-shore special operations) would not only have to strike nuclear-related targets buried deep underground or cynically placed in populated areas, but would have to neutralize Iran's early-warning radars, intelligence nodes, air-defense system, Republican Guards facilities, naval capabilities in the Gulf and the Arabian Sea, air force, national communications network, cyber-capabilities–and key leadership clusters. This would be a serious war, not a get-off-cheap surgical strike.

Complicating matters, the Iranians have spent the last generation retailoring the Revolutionary Guard Corps and the (lower-priority) regular military specifically for the mission of catastrophically damaging Persian Gulf commerce. Iran's naval forces are certainly no match for the U.S. Navy, yet capital ships–including any supercarrier–caught in the Gulf at the commencement of

hostilities would be in grave danger from multi-faceted air and surface attacks with fast boats, mines, torpedoes and missiles launched as swarms, and perhaps even aircraft used in "kamikaze" fashion. A badly damaged American supercarrier would lead to the most profound revolution in naval affairs since World War II (although it might be a blessing in disguise to learn how vulnerable supercarriers are before we charge into a conflict with China from the flight deck).

And the only way to make the Iranians quit would be to decapitate the leadership three levels down from the top. Meanwhile, the global economy would tip into panic and deep recession, if not worse.

Every potential course of action is perilous and structured for tragedy. But to quote former U.S. Army chief of staff General Gordon Sullivan, "Hope is not a method." The view of the threat's immediacy may differ when viewed from Washington versus Jerusalem, but the long-term strategic effects of Iran's possession of a nuclear arsenal would be still worse than a hard pre-emptive war. As a splendid master sergeant I knew liked to put it, "It just sucks every which way."

And one great caution: Should military action be chosen, it must be massive and comprehensive from the outset. Any attack on Iran's nuclear program that sought to minimize the number of targets within Iran would only result in maximum damage to all parties and an extended war.

RALPH PETERS is the author of twenty-nine books, including works on strategy and military affairs, as well as best-selling, prize-winning novels. He has published more than a thousand essays, articles, and columns. As a US Army enlisted man and officer, he served in infantry and military Intelligence units before becoming a foreign area officer and global scout. After retiring in 1998, he covered wars and trouble spots in the Middle East and Africa. He now concentrates on writing books but remains Fox News's strategic analyst. His latest novel, *Hell or Richmond*, a gritty portrayal of Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign, follows his recent *New York Times* best seller, *Cain at Gettysburg*, for which he received the 2013 Boyd Award for Literary Excellence in Military Fiction from the American Library Association.

The Iranian Nuclear Threat

By Victor Davis Hanson

Most agree that a nuclear Iran would not be subject to the same degree of deterrence, as even other rogue states like North Korea or Pakistan. The former is a client of nuclear China, the most populous nation in the world; the latter is an existential enemy of nuclear India, with the world's second largest population. And because the Iranian theocracy, whether sincerely or in a feigned fashion, often talks in apocalyptic terms about the appearance of its 12th missing imam, the end of Israel, and assorted threats to the United States and Sunni Gulf states, it projects an image that the normal protocols of the nuclear club might not apply fully to its own strategic calculus. In other words, it believes appearing crazy is an advantage in nuclear poker.

And is there an alternative to a nuclear Iran? It is equally bleak, given that computer viruses, sabotage, UN inspections, and international sanctions so far have not slowed down the Iran nuclear program enough to suggest that it will not in the near future deploy a nuclear weapon.

The third alternative of preemption is equally discouraging, given that the Iranian facilities are scattered, subterranean, may not be all known, and protected by advanced air defenses. There are also loud promises of all sorts of conventional and non-conventional Iranian retaliation against Israel, the Sunni regimes, and U.S. overseas facilities and bases. Iran is a rhetorical master at weaving scenarios of Armageddon, as it promises to take the region down with it. The only preventative of a future nuclear Iran would be a joint preemptive air assault, led by the United States, along with its NATO allies, begrudgingly and quietly approved by China and Russia, and sustained for several days–an unlikely scenario in the second term of the Obama administra-

tion. So most likely we are at an impasse, or rather a race–waiting to see whether Iran gets a few bombs before 2017 when a new administration might adopt a more muscular stance.

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON, the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, is a classicist and an expert on the history of war. He is a syndicated *Tribune Media Services* columnist and a regular contributor to *National Review Online*, as well as many other national and international publications; he has written or edited twenty-three books, including the *New York Times* best seller *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power.* His most recent book is *The Savior Generals: How Five Great Commanders Saved Wars That Were Lost - from Ancient Greece to Iraq* (Bloomsbury 2013). He was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Bush in 2007 and the Bradley Prize in 2008 and has been a visiting professor at the US Naval Academy, Stanford University, Hillsdale College, and Pepperdine University. Hanson received a PhD in classics from Stanford University in 1980.

Suggestions For Further Reading

Can Iran be prevented from obtaining nuclear weapons by sanctions, or ultimately will it require preemptive military action? If Iran becomes nuclear, can it be contained?

Two recent collections of essays explore the history of Iran's nuclear program and the international community's responses to it. The first is *Iran: The Nuclear Challenge*, edited by Robert D. Blackwill (Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2012), and the second is *Iran and the Bomb: Solving the Persian Puzzle*, edited by Gideon Rose and Jonathan Tepperman (Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2012). Both works shed light on the complexities of this issue and will assist readers in the development of policy. Readers should also consult the work of the United States Institute of Peace, Iran Study Group, for current developments on this and other political and security concerns related to Iran.

- *Iran: The Nuclear Challenge*, edited by Robert D. Blackwill (Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2012).
- *Iran and the Bomb: Solving the Persian Puzzle*, edited by Gideon Rose and Jonathan Tepperman (Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2012).
- United States Institute of Peace, Iran Study Group

RELATED MATERIAL

- *Showdown with Iran* (Frontline PBS)

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Discussion Questions

Can Iran be prevented from obtaining nuclear weapons by sanctions, or ultimately will it require preemptive military action? If Iran becomes nuclear, can it be contained?

1. What would be the likely Iranian conventional and non-conventional response to a Western air attack on its suspected nuclear facilities, and to what degree would the United States and its allies be able to meet such challenges?

2. What would make Iran uniquely dangerous as a nuclear power and almost impossibly difficult to contain in a fashion not true even of North Korea or Pakistan?

3. Would the reaction of the Islamic World to a Western attack on Iran's nuclear facilities be predictably split along Shi'a/Sunni lines, or would Muslim anti-American solidarity trump both Islam's internal divisions and particular regional worries about a nuclear Iran?

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