

**THE FUNCTIONAL UTILITY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS: A CASE  
STUDY OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR CRISIS**

**BY**



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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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**DEDICATION**

To my boys Ato and Fiifi.



## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this essay is mine and that I have not submitted it to any other institution for assessment and that all references have been duly acknowledged. I am solely and fully responsible for whatever errors that might appear.

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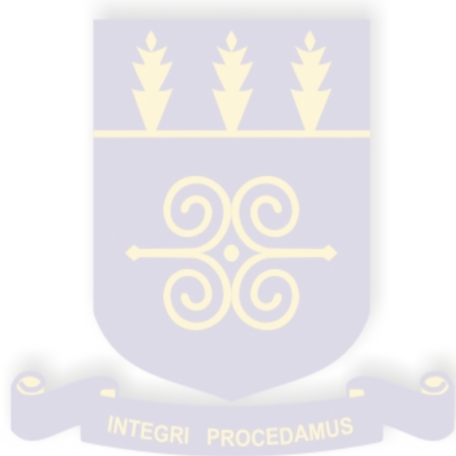


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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**AEOI**- Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran

**IAEA**-International Atomic Energy Agency

**MNC**-Multinational Corporations

**MIRV**-Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicles

**NWS**-Nuclear Weapon States

**NATO**-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

**NPT**-Non Proliferation Treaty

**TNC**-Tehran Nuclear Centre

**WMD**-Weapons of Mass Destruction

**UNSC**-United Nations Security Council

**NATUF<sub>6</sub>**-Natural Uranium Hexafluoride

**LEUF<sub>6</sub>**-Low Enriched Uranium Hexafluoride

**HEUF<sub>6</sub>**-Highly Enriched Uranium Hexafluoride

**UO<sub>6</sub>**-Uranium Dioxide



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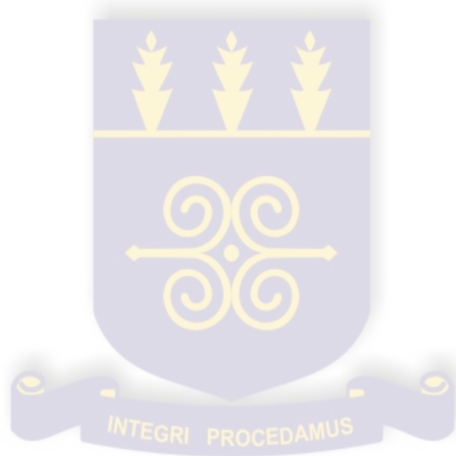
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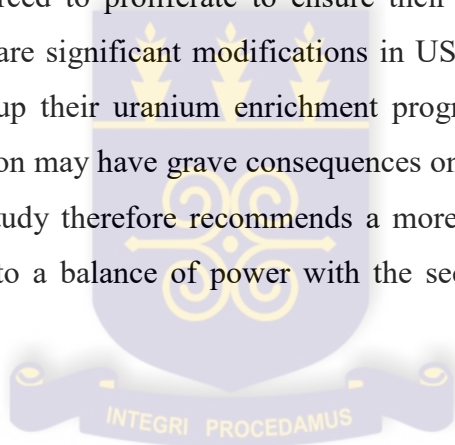
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## **ABSTRACT**

In an international system lacking an overarching authority to regulate the relations between states, nations rely on their own means to survive. In this anarchic system, the resort to the threat or actual use of military force has been part of international relations for centuries as states compete for power and survival. The introduction of nuclear weapons as an enhancer of the military capability of states and a strategic weapon brought a new dimension to how states crafted their national security strategies. States wanting to compete in this system without the risk of intimidation from nuclear armed states saw the acquisition of the nuclear weapon as the most efficient way of securing their nations from military aggression. This dissertation uses the Realist theory to examine the functional utility of nuclear weapons, the reasons behind the Iranian nuclear programme and the implications of a possible Iranian bomb. The paper contends that states facing threats from nuclear rivals and without strategic nuclear partners may be forced to proliferate to ensure their national security. The study concludes that unless there are significant modifications in US foreign policy towards Iran, the Iranians may not give up their uranium enrichment programme and their quest for a nuclear weapon. This situation may have grave consequences on the non-proliferation regime and global security. The study therefore recommends a more pragmatic US policy in the Middle East that will lead to a balance of power with the security of all regional players guaranteed.



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

In international relations states are said to be operating in an anarchic system where states can only depend on their own capabilities to achieve their national interests and their survival. National security in this state of anarchy is the most important interest of the state, for without it there would be no state and therefore no interests for the nation to strive to achieve. In ensuring their national interests, states often employ the full spectrum of their national power, being economic, diplomatic, geographic and military capabilities to compete and achieve their interests (Morgenthau: 1946). The history of inter states relations in the international system is replete with examples of states who have used or threatened the use of military force to achieve their national goals and objectives.

Up until 1945, states opting for the military option were limited to mainly the use of conventional weapons, because the use of chemical and biological agents was not widespread. However in the late 1930s, various countries begun exploring the possibility of developing nuclear fission for military purposes. At the outbreak of the Second World War, United States intelligence discovered that the Germans under the nuclear physicist Werner Heisenberg were far advanced as far as nuclear fission was concerned. Concerned that Germany might be able to create an atomic bomb, US scientists implored policy makers to, as a matter of urgency begin research into developing a uranium bomb (Sherwin: 1986).

The US nuclear weapons programme was launched on October 1941 under the Manhattan Project, which was initially, a cooperation between the United States, Canada and the United

Kingdom. The Project which was under the supervision of General Leslie Grooves and physicist J Robert Oppenheimer was able to produce the first bomb in the spring of 1945(Sherwin: 108). On 6 August 1945, with the war over in Europe and Japan on its knees as a fighting force, the US dropped the first atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, killing over 140,000 people instantly and on August 9, a second bomb was used on the city of Nagasaki which also killed about 24,000 people (Diehl and Moltz: 2008: 7).

The use of the atomic bomb on Japan by the United States changed the international security and political landscape forever, as it set in motion, a series of chain reactions that culminated into what became known as the nuclear arms race. Whiles the use of the bomb achieved the objective of ending the war in the Pacific, it portrayed the US as a very dangerous actor in the international system, an actor who can secretly develop and unleash this terrible weapon on an enemy without warning (Gerson:2007). The devastating destruction of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki confirmed this and led to more frantic efforts by the US to halt the spread and use of the atomic bomb within the framework of the newly formed United Nations (Sherwin:110).

The United States in its bid to control and manage the future use of nuclear weapons proposed the setting up of an international organization, the Atomic Development Authority which will be vested with the powers under an international framework for the “managerial control or ownership of all atomic energy activities potentially dangerous to world security” which failed, primarily because of Soviet mistrust of US intentions (Morgenthau: 253).

According to Martin Sherwin (110) negotiations for the control and management of the use atomic energy failed because the United States had come to recognize the bomb, in the very least, as an instrument of diplomacy to be used in post war negotiations. In addition to this, in the

new post war environment of the Cold War, the US considered the atomic bomb a “winning weapon” that could guarantee American security. Gregg Herken (1988) also points to Major General Thomas Farrell’s insistence that “if we cannot be sure that the world will remain safe, then we must arm to the teeth with the winning weapon” as further example of the role of the atomic bomb in US domestic and foreign policy choices, especially during diplomatic negotiations with the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union, not to be outdone, hastened its research into the use of nuclear fission for military purposes and successfully created and tested their atomic bomb on August 29 1949, much earlier than US and UK intelligence had estimated (Sagan:2000: 21). Having failed to secure an international agreement to abolish the military use of the atomic bomb, the US and the Soviet Union both endeavoured to advance and expand their nuclear weapons programs for the sake of their national security, especially in the emerging strategic environment of the Cold War.

This set off the nuclear arms race, as the other permanent members of the newly formed United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the United Kingdom (1952), France (1960) and China (1964), all developed, stockpiled and deployed massive nuclear weapons for military and national security purposes (Sagan:2000).

International desire to stabilise the arms race led to an agreement on the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963, initially between the US and Soviet Union and later the UK. Further international effort by the two superpowers for an agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons led to the signing of the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968 (Diehl and Moltz:2008). The Treaty had the objective of mainly preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to

the gradual disarmament to complete disarmament by 1995. By 1970 when the Treaty entered into force, five (5) of the current nine (9) nuclear states had already acquired them and were thus recognised under the Treaty as nuclear weapon states, three (3) of the other four (4) (India, Pakistan and Israel) had gone a long way of acquiring the weapons and thus did not sign the Treaty (Diehl and Moltz; 2008).

Since the end of the Cold War, the strategic environment of the international system has changed and the proliferation of nuclear weapons to states and non-state actors has become a real possibility with the ever changing security situation in the international arena making the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons a major foreign policy priority for subsequent US governments. However certain foreign policy decisions by the US has been perceived as threats to the national security of some states, most of whom have tried to proliferate, either successfully or unsuccessfully. Some of these states include Libya, Syria, Iraq, Iran and North Korea ((Diehl and Moltz: 2008: 1). North Korea, which originally signed the Treaty, withdrew from it in 2003 and successfully tested a nuclear bomb, citing threats to its security from the US and its allies (Stoessinger: 2011).

Since the year 2000, Iran's nuclear enrichment programme has been an issue of concern for the international community, especially the United States and regional rivals like Saudi Arabia and Israel. Iranian officials have claimed that their nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, however the UNSC maintains that its uranium enrichment is for weapons purposes and has called for an end to the programme, as it is in contravention with its international obligations under the NPT. To get Iran to halt uranium enrichment the country has been placed under crippling international sanctions with the threat of military force from the US and Israel. The impasse has created an international crisis as diplomatic efforts between Iran and the

P-5+1(UNSC permanent members and Germany) countries have failed to produce a breakthrough until recently.

Most scholars and security analysts have observed that the extensive nature of Iran's nuclear weapons programme may have a dual purpose and its determination to continue enriching and stockpiling uranium may be for the purposes of producing a nuclear weapon as a deterrent to address its security challenges.

The paper will seek to examine the functional utility of nuclear weapons which makes the acquisition of nuclear weapons a desirable prospect for states hoping to secure their national security in the ever changing nature of the international security environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The paper will also examine the national and regional security implications of a potential nuclear armed Iran within the framework of Iran's regional security environment and make some recommendations towards the peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear crisis.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

From the United States in 1945 to North Korea in 2003, the acquisition of nuclear weapons has impacted on both the domestic and foreign policy directions of Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) and enhanced the military capability of the nuclear armed states. Since the end of the Cold War, the changing and unpredictable nature of the international security landscape has resulted in more states seeking to acquire nuclear weapons for national security purposes.

In a uni-polar international structure, the foreign policy decisions of the single preponderant power have affected international security as US foreign policy decisions have already been cited as North Korea's reasons for going nuclear and the attempted proliferation efforts by states like Iraq, Libya, Syria and Iran. The history of the nuclear arms race has proven that states that have

perceived threats to their national security by nuclear armed rivals have inevitably sought nuclear weapons in their attempt for deterrence. This work seeks to examine the role of nuclear weapons in the domestic and foreign policy strategies of states. It also seeks to examine the extent to which Iran's perceived security threats have impacted on its nuclear programme and the implications on both regional and global security should Iran develop nuclear weapons.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

The objectives of the study are the following:

1. To examine the functional utility of nuclear weapons to nuclear armed states.
2. To examine how Iran's strategic security environment may have contributed to its extensive nuclear programme.
3. To examine the implications of a possible Iranian nuclear weapon.

### **1.4. HYPOTHESIS**

In an international anarchic system characterised by the self-help principle, states facing external threats from nuclear capable rivals may seek nuclear weapons as a form of deterrence. The hypothesis underpinning this study is that "Iran may halt its uranium enrichment programme if it no longer feels threatened by nuclear armed rivals, the United States and Israel"

### **1.5. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

**The functional utility** of nuclear weapons refers to the importance and usefulness of nuclear weapons in both domestic and foreign policies of nuclear armed states and other potential states.

**Vertical Proliferation** of nuclear weapons refers to the addition to the nuclear arsenals of the major nuclear powers.

**Horizontal proliferation** is the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries.

## **1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the study of International Relations, theory plays a fundamental role. While there are many theories that could be used to examine the above topic, the classical Realist Theory has been chosen as the theoretical framework within which this study will be conducted.

According to Kegley and Wittkopf (1999; 27), classical realism is “a paradigm based on the premise that world politics is essentially and unchangeably a struggle among self-interested states for power and position under anarchy, with each competing state pursuing its own national interests”

Realism as a theory of International Relations traces its roots to ancient Greece, to the writings of Thucydides and his accounts of the Peloponnesian War. In recounting the reasons leading to the war, Thucydides, alludes to the fact that “the growth of the power of Athens and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta made war inevitable” (Elman; 2007, page 11). Thus the regional rivalry between the two city-states led to a security dilemma which resulted in warfare due to Athens’ power and the subsequent Spartan insecurity. Proponents of the theory also enlist Kautilya’s arguments in “Arthashastra” in which he emphasizes on “the survival and aggrandizement of the state and his instructions on the principles of the balance power” (Seabury; 1965:7, as cited in Elman 2007:22) as Realist. The writings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Florentine diplomat, political philosopher and military strategist, Niccolo Machiavelli are also considered as belonging to the Realist school of thought. Machiavelli, in his book, “*The Prince*” “argues for strong and efficient rulers for whom power and security are the major concerns” (Elman; 2007; 12). The writing of

the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his work “*The Leviathan*” is considered one of the citadels of the modern classical realist theory.

The works of these earlier writers influenced the proponents of the Realist Theory like E H Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and Reinhold Niebuhr among others. According to Elman (2006; 12) Hans Morgenthau’s book, “*Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*” is considered as the standard bearer for political realism. According to Morgenthau (1946:13), international politics, like all politics is a struggle for power. The theory further states that nations struggle for this power in a state of anarchy where there is no authoritative power to regulate the relations between states. Thus the level of a state’s power or capability is the only way that will ensure its survival in this hostile environment. To this end, no means is more important than the acquisition of power and no principle more important than the “self-help” principle (Kegley and Wittkopf: 1999:27). Thus one of the main concepts of Realism is the acquisition and use of power to attain a nation’s interests in the international system and one of the means for states to increase their power is the increase of its military capability, either conventionally or unconventionally.

States competing to achieve their interests may feel threatened by the policies of others, especially if they are ideological and strategic rivals. This is so because the increase in the military capability of one state may lead to a security dilemma that may trigger an arms race or a direct attack from the state that feels threatened by the increased military upgrading by its neighbour. Although Iran has not developed nuclear weapons, the drive towards the development of uranium enrichment is dictated by the necessity to increase its military capability to counter any perceived threats to its security from both regional rivals like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel and a global power like the US. However these same perceived rival states feel threatened by the possibility of an Iranian nuclear weapon due to the position of Iran in their security calculus.

Thus whiles Iran may be upgrading its military capabilities to address the perceived threats from the United States and Israel, they, in effect also feel threatened by the possibility of an Iranian nuclear bomb.

From the Realist view, Iran cannot rely on any other state or on international organisations like the United Nations to safeguard its national interests because of the anarchic and self-help principle of the international system. It is within this Realist lens that this work will seek to examine the Iranian nuclear issue and why it has become such a contentious international issue for the better part of a decade.

Critics of the theory have however pointed out that whiles states may be the main actors in the international system, the post-Cold War era global structure has other non-state actors whose activities impact on inter-state relations and may therefore affect the decision making processes of states. The actions of non-state actors like the Multinational Corporations (MNC), Religious Groups, Terrorist Organisations and other Non-Governmental Organizations have impacted significantly on the international system of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Additionally, the processes of integration and interdependence as the most rational means of achieving economic prosperity, security and sustainable development have casted a doubt on the Realist claim that the only way that nations can survive in the international system is through the principle of self-help. Finally the lack of an authoritative figure to regulate inter-state activities does not necessarily mean a state of lawlessness where states can do as they please but relations are guided by the principles of international law.

The numerous criticisms notwithstanding, Classical Realism as a theory can be adequately used to examine the questions posed by this work. The international system lacks an overarching authority to regulate the behaviour of states. Thus states may act rationally in their interest by

increasing their capabilities and acquiring power in order to survive. This creates the platform where the interests of two states may clash, which could be resolved through the threat of or actual use of force, as has happened many times throughout history, therefore as Richard Betts (2000:52) argues, “hopes of collective security are utopian.” It is in this context that the functional utility of nuclear weapons in international politics, with specific interest on the Iranian situation will be studied.

### **1.7. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In an essay entitled “Scientists, Arms Control and National Security” in the book *National Security: Its Theory and Practice from 1945-1960* (1986) edited by Norman Graebner, Martin J Sherwin traces the history of the atomic bomb, through to earlier efforts to control and manage its military use under international agreement and how this failed. According to him, a great debate ensued between the scientists who built the bomb over the relationship between the bomb and American national security. One side believed that America’s atomic monopoly at the time was temporary and American national security could be best served by neutralizing the use of the bomb through an international agreement if possible. The other group argued that the atomic monopoly was a guarantor of national security, a weapon that should be fully exploited as an instrument of diplomatic and national power. United States policy makers, according to Sherwin, like the scientists also believed that not only could the bomb win the war for the Allies, but also balance the enormous conventional military capability of the Soviet Union after the war. This prompted the Secretary of War Henry Stimson to declare that the bomb was a “badly needed equalizer” as a panacea for the deficiencies of American power. He concludes that international agreement to control and manage the military use of the atomic weapons failed because the

United States came to regard the atomic bomb as a “winning weapon” that guaranteed American national security.

This essay sheds light on the role and importance of the atomic weapon on American national security strategy, domestic and foreign policies and the decision making process of policy makers during the war and immediately after the war.

In his essay “Rethinking the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation: Three Models in Search of a Bomb” in the book *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, US Interests and World Order* edited by Victor Utgoff (2000), Scott Sagan outlines three models why states endeavour to acquire nuclear weapons. According to him the general consensus that states only seek nuclear weapons to counter military threat to their national security is simplistic and lacks critical analysis of the proliferation puzzle, as nuclear programs may also serve more parochial and less obvious objectives. He then uses three models to analyse why states decide to build or refrain from developing nuclear weapons.

His first model of analysis is the security model. Here he argues that due to the destructive nature of the nuclear weapon any state that seeks to maintain its national security must balance against any rival state that possesses nuclear weapons by gaining access to a nuclear deterrent. When states choose to develop nuclear weapons to serve as deterrent against conventional military threat they are facing, it also creates a threat to other regional rivals who must also initiate their own nuclear weapon programs to maintain their national security and this according to Scott Sagan is one of the most common explanation for nuclear weapons proliferation. He illustrates this by tracing the nuclear weapons history of all the eight (8) (at the time of publication, 2000) Nuclear Weapon States who all acquired nuclear weapons for national security reasons, in either

balancing the threat of an enormous conventional capability of a rival or as a deterrent to an already nuclear armed rival. In using the same security model to analyse why nations refrain from acquiring nuclear weapons, Scott Sagan argues that a change or a re-evaluation of the external security threats a nation may be facing may lead it to refrain from developing a nuclear weapon or even dismantle an already assembled nuclear arsenal. According to Sagan, South Africa built a small nuclear arsenal in the 1970s as a deterrent due to perceived threats to its national security from the Soviet Union's presence in Angola and Namibia. However with the Angolan and Namibian crises solved and the Cold War ended, South Africa upon the re-evaluation of its external security environment dismantled its nuclear arsenal in 1991 due to the absence of threats to its national security.

The second model of nuclear weapons proliferation focuses on domestic actors who encourage or discourage governments from pursuing the bomb either for national or parochial interests. He identifies 3 kinds of actors that are important to a nation's proliferation decision; the state's nuclear energy establishment, important units within the military and politicians. When such actors form coalitions that are strong enough to control the government's decision making process then nuclear weapons programs are likely to thrive. While international threats still exist in this model, they are not the central cause of weapons acquisition but the parochial interests of these individuals and groups.

The third model of nuclear weapons acquisition focuses on norms concerning weapons acquisition. According to Scott Sagan nuclear decisions are dictated by important symbolic functions that both reflect and shape the state's identity. The state's decision to acquire or not acquire nuclear weapons are determined by deeper norms and shared beliefs about what actions are legitimate and appropriate in international relations. In what he terms "nuclear symbolism"

he argues that military organizations and their weapons can be said to be serving the same functions as national flags or national airlines: that they are part of what modern states believe they have to possess to be legitimate or advanced states. Thus states with the capability will develop nuclear weapons because it will represent prestige and manifest their technological advancement. However, what is prestigious may depend on international norms and the belief system of the time. To illustrate, nuclear testing in the 1960s, was considered prestigious, legitimate and a sign national pride, however, due to the NPT, today nuclear testing is considered illegitimate and irresponsible. He uses this model to explain the French nuclear acquisition in the 1950s and the Ukrainian nuclear restraint in the mid-1990s after the Cold War. While Scott Sagan uses the 3 models to analyse why states may seek nuclear weapons, the work could have been more representative if he had used the same models to analyse the situations of states like Iraq, Libya, Iran and North Korea who were all pursuing or suspected to be pursuing nuclear programs at the time of publication (2000). Nevertheless this work is relevant to this study as it uses the models to analyse reasons why nations may choose to pursue nuclear programs. In addition to this, all the 3 models used apply to the case of Iran, the country of study.

Kenneth Waltz in "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May be Better" (1981) argues that although the first 35 years of the nuclear age has seen mainly vertical proliferation and little horizontal proliferation, this situation is very fortunate and predicts that there is bound to be more horizontal proliferation in the coming years when the world would witness about 10 or 12 nuclear armed states. Many analysts consider this situation as dangerous for global security due to the unpredictable nature of some of the states seeking to acquire nuclear arms, however, Kenneth Waltz writes that this could be a positive development for global security due to the role

of nuclear weapons in ensuring global stability and peace during the Cold War. He argues that while the international anarchic self-help system may necessitate that some states may take the nuclear option to ensure their security, nuclear weapons have made wars so frighteningly expensive that states may refrain from starting wars that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons and utter destruction. Waltz outlines 7 reasons why states may seek to acquire nuclear weapons. First, that great powers always counter the weapons of great powers. Secondly, a state may seek nuclear weapons for fear that its nuclear ally will not retaliate if she is under attack, as was the case of Britain's acquisition of nuclear weapons. The third reason is when a country without a nuclear ally but with a nuclear armed rival seeks nuclear weapons to balance that of the rival. Fourth, a country may want nuclear weapons because it lives in fear of its adversaries' present or future conventional capability. The fifth reason is that some countries may find nuclear weapons cheaper and safer than running an economically ruinous and militarily dangerous conventional arms race, as nuclear weapons may promise increased security and independence at an affordable price. The sixth reason why states may seek nuclear arms is that some countries may want nuclear arms for offensive purposes, although this is highly unlikely. Finally a country may seek nuclear weapons as a sign of prestige, to enhance its international standing. Waltz predicts that due to some of these reasons more countries are likely to join the nuclear club. Kenneth Waltz also argues that nuclear weapons may ensure both domestic and regional stability because pursuing a nuclear weapons program is a long and difficult process that an unstable government or unstable domestic political situation may not be able to achieve. Regionally, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by "irrational" states like Libya may make them more amenable as they will be deterred from taking inordinate risks because like other rulers, rulers of such states are sensitive to risks; in effect, nuclear weapons induce caution, especially in weak states. According to

Waltz, the gradual spread of nuclear weapons will promote peace and reinforce international stability due to the role of nuclear weapons in deterring aggression by other states. The likelihood of war therefore will decrease as the deterrent and defensive capabilities of states are increased through nuclear weapons. This article is relevant to this study because Waltz predicts that due to the roles of nuclear weapons in international politics, they are bound to spread, however this spread may not endanger global security as is feared by many but will rather lead to stability as the acquisition of these weapons will make states more cautious in starting wars. However his analyses were restricted to mainly the 5 superpowers of US, Soviet Union, Britain, France and China. Granted that the next generation of nuclear weapon states may not be superpowers like the aforementioned 5, an analysis based on the situations of India and Israel would have been more beneficial to this study. In addition to this he restricted his analysis to only the military functions of nuclear weapons and not the other functional uses that may prompt a state to go nuclear.

Saira Khan in her book “Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted Conflict and Proliferation” (2010), traces the history of the Iranian nuclear program from when Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran purchased a 5 mega-watt research reactor from the United States in the 1950s for peaceful purposes. Iran however branched into uranium enrichment that could put it closer to acquiring nuclear weapons due the security challenges it has been facing since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Apart from the Shah, every Iranian leader since the Revolution is examined to ascertain their role in the development of the nuclear programme whiles in office. Whiles national security may be the important reason for Iran’s drive towards nuclear weapons, according to many analysts, Saira Khan establishes a clear connection between protracted

conflicts, security and nuclear proliferation. To her, the concept of intractable asymmetrical conflicts which usually makes weaker states prone to nuclear proliferation have been ignored by many scholars who have written on the Iranian issue. Iran's security challenges include regional rivals like Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Israel and a global power like the United States. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has fought a bitter 8 year war with Iraq in which both the United States and Saudi Arabia supported Iraq. After the war, the US has invaded Iraq twice and threatened to invade Iran, while Saudi Arabia and Israel keep increasing their conventional military capability with the help of the US and Israel is armed with the nuclear weapon. Although Iran has not acquired nuclear weapons, the threat to its national security through these asymmetrical and protracted conflicts, she argues has moved the country towards a uranium enrichment programme that could allow Iran to produce nuclear weapons quickly should it choose to do so. She argues that proliferation is a function of a state's drive for security, prestige and bargaining leverage, especially when the state is engaged in a protracted conflict. The Bush Administration's aggressive policies towards Iran has humiliated and threatened Iran's security for which the remedy, according to Saira Khan is the defiant enrichment of uranium and perhaps the acquisition of nuclear arms. US foreign policy under President Bush that humiliated and threatened Iran included the continuous imposition of sanctions, the linking of Iran and Al Qaeda after the September 2001 attacks, and the "Axis of Evil" Speech. This threat was exacerbated by the US invasion of Iran's neighbour, Iraq, another of the "Axis of Evil" states, without United Nations approval which demonstrated Washington's power in a unipolar international system, a situation that proved to the Iranians that without a nuclear deterrent they might be next. Consequently Iran became relentless in its drive to acquire nuclear weapons and boldly announced its decision to enrich uranium. As long as the US does not change its hostile foreign

policy towards Iran, it is unlikely that Tehran will relinquish its uranium enrichment programme, which will put it closer to making nuclear weapons. According to her, Iran may be compelled to suspend its program due to International pressure or the adverse effects of the sanctions on its citizens, however such a suspension will only be temporary as long as the asymmetrical protracted conflict between the US and Iran still exists. This book is relevant to the study because it is one of the few works that examines the problem of the study from the Iranian point of view. Although the author stated categorically that Iran has not acquired nuclear weapons, she examines the underlying factors that has driven Iran into the uranium enrichment programme just as some aspects of this study seeks to do and predicted that as long as the US and Iran are engaged in a protracted asymmetrical conflict, Iran will seek to secure its security through nuclear weapons. This work however stopped short in examining the implications to global and regional security should the Iranians break out from uranium enrichment to develop nuclear weapons and this is the gap this study seeks to fill.

The literature I have reviewed here traces the history of atomic/nuclear weapons and their roles in inter states relation in the international arena for nuclear armed states. The literature also goes to explain why in spite of the NPT, other states, including Iran, have been making secret efforts to develop the nuclear weapon. I intend to build on this research and apply the Realist theoretical framework to understand how security challenges could lead to nuclear proliferation by Iran.

## **1.8 SOURCES OF DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

The study utilised mainly secondary sources of data, such as books, journals, articles, reports and other internet sources. The methodology employed was the qualitative approach, which allowed for the review and in depth analyses of the data collected, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter and the achievement of the objectives of the study.

## **1.9. ARRANGEMENT OF CHAPTERS**

The study will be organised as follows;

Chapter One – Research Design.

Chapter Two- The Functional Utility of Nuclear Weapons for nuclear armed states.

Chapter Three- The Iran’s Nuclear Programme and its Security Implications.

Chapter Four- Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **THE FUNCTIONAL UTILITY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS TO NUCLEAR ARMED STATES**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

The functional utility of nuclear weapons to the states that possess them has been evident throughout history. From the discovery of nuclear fission, scientists, military strategists and policymakers alike envisioned the path to a potentially powerful weapon that could change the state of relations between states, not only militarily but also diplomatically and technologically, thereby altering the standing of a nation in the international arena (Sherwin: 1986).

From 1945 to 1970 before the Non Proliferation Treaty came into force, states with the capability to acquire the nuclear weapon, (mainly the P-5) undertook extensive research to develop the bomb for a myriad of reasons. The NPT is premised on the three pillars of Non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear technology. The P-5 countries all joined the NPT as Nuclear Weapons States and are recognised as such under the Treaty. However three states, India, Pakistan and Israel all refused to join the Treaty, with India claiming the NPT created an exclusive club of nuclear “haves and have-nots” (Sagan:2000). From 1970 onwards, with the NPT in force, it was thought that nuclear weapons will be eliminated through non-proliferation and disarmament. Contrary to the objectives of the NPT, there has been both vertical proliferation (P-5 states have added to their nuclear arsenals) and horizontal proliferation (4 additional states) and there are other states that have advanced their research into nuclear technology and are thought to be capable of making nuclear bombs if they choose to do so.

The resilience of nuclear weapons in the international strategic calculus has baffled many peace activists and policymakers, after all efforts to eliminate it from international relations have failed.

According to many analysts and policymakers, the situation is so because of the roles and importance of nuclear weapons to nuclear armed states in the international arena.

## **2.2. THE MILITARY / NATIONAL SECURITY ROLE**

As already cited above, the Realist view of the international system is one of anarchy where nation-states depend only on themselves to achieve their national interests and survive. Survival, through the protection of their territorial integrity is the primary goal of states and in striving to ensure their survival, states increase their capabilities, often their military capabilities to enable them meet their national interests (Mearsheimer: 2001). Thus securing the security of the state through enhancing the military offensive and defensive capabilities to deter aggression from other states is the most important of all the interests of a state, according to the Realist logic.

Flowing from this Realist point of view, it could be seen that all the 9 nuclear armed states acquired the weapon either for military purposes or to deter aggression and secure their national security. The analysis will begin with the United States, the first country to develop and test the atomic bomb and follow through on a country by country basis to ascertain the military and national security functions of the nuclear bomb to these states.

### **2.2.1. The United States Nuclear Weapons Programme**

For the United States, the atomic bomb, in the early years of atomic monopoly represented a “guarantor of national security, a weapon that should be fully exploited as an instrument of diplomatic and military power” (Sherwin 1986: 105). During the Second World War, the acceleration into the research programme into the military purposes of nuclear fission among the global powers was premised on the fact that whichever state acquired the bomb first will win the war. The potential and devastating nature of this new type of bomb was alluded to in a letter

from nuclear physicists Albert Einstein and Leo Szilard to President Roosevelt. In the said letter Einstein is thus quoted, “ a single bomb of this type, carried by boat and exploded in port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory” (Gershon: 41-43). This informed the acceleration of research to develop the bomb before any other potential opponent under the Manhattan Project.

Having successfully developed the weapon, the atomic bomb was seen as a military weapon that could enable the US achieve its strategic objectives of the war in the Pacific, which was, the unconditional surrender of Japan. To achieve this objective by conventional means required an invasion of the Japanese mainland, which according to estimates would have caused over 10,000 American lives (Morton: 2000: 440). However, by using the atomic bomb, the US was able to achieve its objectives by ensuring the unconditional surrender of Japan and bring the war in the Pacific to an earlier end and save thousands of American lives. Thus the atomic bomb represented “a miracle that ended the war and solved all the perplexing problems posed by the necessity for an invasion” (Morton 445).

In using the atomic bomb on Japan, not only had it served a military purpose, but also as envisaged by US policymakers it was also intended for a national security purpose with an ‘eye’ on the post-war international era (Gershon:2007). The Pearl Harbour attack had brought to the fore the vulnerability and military weakness of the United States, according to some policymakers, and it was thought that if America should return to that status quo of military vulnerability after the war there would be another ‘Pearl Harbour’ attack (Graebner:1986). In addition to this, in the emerging Cold War picture, US policymakers had become aware of the deficiencies in American power in relation to that of the Soviet Union, especially military

capability. The atomic bomb was therefore seen as an adequate balancing force to the Soviet Union's massive conventional capability. In the words of the US Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson the atomic bomb "was a badly needed equalizer" and a panacea for the deficiencies of American power (Sherwin: 108) and also to make "Russia more manageable in Europe" in the post-war negotiations (Morton 444).

Thus, the atomic bomb was considered as the 'spine' of the US military in the post-war era to deter aggression and also enhance its offensive capabilities (Graebner 1986). To this end, the atomic bomb played an important military role during the war period. In the post war era, through the Cold War, the atomic weapon not only ensured American national security, but also was used as a weapon of diplomacy in ensuring American national interests (Soman:2000).

The use of the atomic bomb on Japan by the United States changed the strategic calculus within the international community, as most states, both allies and rivals felt threatened and sought out ways to balance the American nuclear threat. Thus, for states who seek to maintain their territorial integrity and ensure their national security, there was the need to balance against the US by gaining access to the atomic weapon to deter any intimidation and aggression from the United States.

### **2.2.2 The Soviet Union Nuclear Weapons Programme**

In the post-war era, the Soviet Union had moved from being an ally of the United States to a rival in the Cold War era and thus it was the nation threatened most by the US atomic monopoly at the time. To the Soviets, their conventional military advantage had been cancelled out by the US non-conventional capability of the atomic weapon. Thus, to balance this and ensure its

national security, the acquisition of the atomic bomb by the Soviet Union was a “strategic imperative” (Sagan; 2000). As a direct response to the American bomb, the Soviets doubled their efforts to acquire the atomic bomb to enhance its unconventional military capability and secure its national security.

The urgency in acquiring the weapon was reiterated by Soviet Union leader Josef Stalin to nuclear scientists Igor Kurchatov and BL Yannikov in August 1945, as quoted by Scott Sagan, “A single demand of you comrades....provide us with atomic weapons in the shortest possible time. You know that Hiroshima has shaken the world. The balance has been destroyed. Provide the bomb, it will remove a great danger from us” (Sagan: 21). The Soviet Union tested its first nuclear weapon in 1949, much to the surprise of both US and British policymakers.

For the Soviets, the nuclear weapon became the panacea of deterring American aggression, especially in Europe and ensuring its national interest and security (Sagan: 2000).

### **2.2.3 The British Nuclear Weapons Programme**

The Cold War had pitted the US led North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) with the Soviet led Warsaw Pact countries. In the early years of the Cold War, US extended security guarantees under the “nuclear umbrella” to its NATO allies were enough for both Britain and France (Sagan: 2000). However, the self-help nature of the international system dictated that Britain and France secure their individual national nuclear deterrents, especially in the face of credible threats from the Soviet Union.

The United Kingdom, which with Canada had been part of the Manhattan Project that developed the American atomic bomb but later cut off, had initiated its own nuclear weapons programme to balance and counter the threat of the Soviet Union to enhance its military capability and ensure its national security (Sherwin:1986). The UK thus tested its first nuclear bomb in 1952, joining the US and the Soviet Union in the nuclear arms race (Barnaby: 1993).

#### **2.2.4 The French Nuclear Weapons Programme**

The French, likewise the British, were also given guarantees under the “nuclear umbrella” by the US under NATO security arrangements (Sagan: 2000). However once it became apparent that the British were pursuing a nuclear weapons programme, they also initiated their nuclear programme. For the French, to secure their national integrity and security they needed their own national nuclear deterrent in the face of continuous Soviet threat and when their national interests were at variance with that of their allies, as was the case in the aftermath of the Suez crisis in 1957 (Sagan:41). To this end, research in their nuclear programme was accelerated and France tested its first nuclear bomb (*Gerboise Bleue*) in 1960 and became the fourth member of the nuclear arms race (Sagan: 2000).

#### **2.2.5 The Chinese Nuclear Weapons Programme**

The Chinese quest to enhance their military capability through unconventional means to protect their national sovereignty and security came to the fore during the Korean War. According to many scholars including Appu Soman (2000:10), the US had threatened the Chinese with nuclear retaliation during the Korean War and the Taiwan Straits crisis in the mid-1950s. However Beijing felt the imperative of a nuclear deterrent after the Sino- Soviet split in the early 1960s

and thought that the best way of deterring aggression from both their nuclear armed adversaries, the US and the Soviet Union was to balance their nuclear capability. The Chinese secured this deterrent when it tested its first nuclear weapon in 1964 and joined the nuclear states club (Sagan: 2000: 22).

### **2.2.6 The Indian Nuclear Weapons Programme**

In line with the chain reaction and the Realist idea of balancing against a nuclear rival by acquiring the nuclear weapon as a deterrent it was not surprising that India joined the nuclear armed race. India had just fought a war with China in 1962, and it was a matter of course to ‘go nuclear’ to counter the perceived threat from Beijing, if it was to deter any aggression from China and secure its national security (Sagan: 2000). The Indian response came in 1974 when it tested what was termed a “peaceful nuclear explosion” (Sagan; 22).

### **2.2.7 The Pakistani Nuclear Weapons Programme**

In an article published in 1981, Kenneth Waltz argued that according to Realist logic, it was only a matter of time before the Indian nuclear test elicits a response from Pakistan. His analysis was based on the fact that India and Pakistan have been bitter rivals since independence in 1947 and had fought two wars in 1947 and 1965. Therefore it was only rational for Pakistan to seek to balance the Indian nuclear weapon by acquiring its own nuclear weapon to enhance its military capability to deter India any threat from India.

The Pakistani Prime Minister, Ali Zulfilqar Bhutto had earlier in 1965 declared that if India acquired nuclear weapons, Pakistan will have no option but to follow suit, “even if we have to

eat grass.....” (Reiss: 2004). The two countries fought again in the Bangladeshi Liberation War in 1971 and in all the three wars, the conventional military superiority of the Indian Armed Forces was evident over their Pakistani rivals. Thus with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India, Pakistan was faced with a hostile neighbour with a conventional military superiority and also a nuclear capability (Sagan: 2000). Therefore for Pakistan to secure its national security through enhancing both its defensive and offensive military capabilities it was rational that it sought the acquisition of nuclear weapons as a means of deterring any perceived threat from India, either conventional or unconventional. In 1998, Pakistan conducted its first nuclear test at the Chagai Hills, incidentally, in response to earlier tests by India (Sagan).

#### **2.2.8. The Israeli Nuclear Weapons Programme**

The Israeli nuclear weapons case is a curious one because of its policy of nuclear opacity. Israel has not tested a nuclear device publicly, it has not publicly claimed or denied that it has nuclear arms, however it is widely believed that Israel possesses nuclear weapons. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Federation of American Scientists Israel possesses between 75-200 nuclear warheads and is currently believed to have attained second and third strike capabilities with the acquisition of nuclear submarines and the use of Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicles (MIRV) for its missiles (Farr: 1999). Israel is believed to have begun a nuclear weapons programme in the late 1950s with French assistance under Prime Minister Ben-Gurion.

The case for an Israeli bomb makes Realist sense due the peculiar position Israel finds itself. It is a country surrounded by hostile neighbours who do not accept its existence. In addition to this Israel’s neighbours, Syria, Egypt, Iran and Iraq all possessed larger armies than Israel. Although

Israel possessed a superior military conventional capability compared to its Arab neighbours, it lacked the numbers in population and the strategic depth that its neighbours possess (Gershon: 2007). For this reason it was thought, very earlier on in its history that for the state of Israel to survive it needed to deter its neighbours from further aggressive adventures that would threaten the security of the state. Thus the solution was the secret acquisition of nuclear weapons to deter their hostile neighbours from threatening Israeli national security (Farr: 1999).

Throughout its history, Israel has fought and repelled Arab attacks on numerous occasions with conventional forces, however the lack of strategic depth dictates that they could not take any chances with their security and the security offered by the acquisition of the nuclear weapon seemed the best option (Gershon:2007). The nuclear weapon therefore was to deter aggression from its hostile neighbours and allow the state of Israel to exist in peace with its Arab neighbours. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Peres emphasised this to a Jordanian newspaper in 1998 that “we have built a nuclear option, not in order to have a Hiroshima but to have an Oslo” (Farr: 10).

### **2.2.9. The North Korean Nuclear Weapons Programme**

The analysis for the functional utility of nuclear weapons for military and national security reasons can also be extended to the reasons behind North Korea’s acquisition of nuclear weapons. North Korea was a signatory of the NPT but withdrew from the Treaty in April 2003 after being accused by the United States of having a secret uranium enrichment programme (Stoessinger:2011). In addition to this, North Korean leader Kim Jong II regarded President Bush’s reference of North Korea as part of an ‘Axis of Evil’ during a State of the Union Address

in January 2002 as ‘a declaration of war’ (Stoessinger : 2011:331). To this end, North Korea, aware of US superior conventional and unconventional capabilities, accelerated its nuclear weapons programme in a bid to acquire a nuclear deterrent. In October 2006, North Korea tested its first nuclear device to confirm its nuclear status and deter any further aggression from the United States. Since then, North Korea has resorted to nuclear or ballistic missile tests anytime it perceives threats to its national security from the United States and its allies (Stoessinger: 2011). The most recent of these was earlier in 2013 where it threatened the US and its allies with preemptive nuclear strikes due to US military exercises with neighbours South Korea and Japan (debkafile.com: 2013).

#### **2.2.10. The South African Nuclear Weapons Programme**

In the mid-1970s, due to perceived threats to its strategic interests from Soviet expansionist’s activities in Angola and the Southern Africa region, South Africa thought to secure its strategic interests and its national security, a nuclear deterrent was necessary. In addition to the perceived Soviet threat, Pretoria was also wary of the threat of a “total onslaught by Black Africa” to overthrow its apartheid regime (Reiss: 2004: 6).

To this end, South Africa resorted to the acquisition of a nuclear weapon to deter any external aggression, either from the Soviet Union or other African states.

South Africa however halted its nuclear weapons programme and dismantled its nuclear weapons in 1989 upon a re-evaluation of its strategic security environment. By 1991, with the end of the Cold War and Apartheid in its final throes, South Africa no longer considered the Soviet Union or Black African states a threat to its national security and therefore had no use for the nuclear

deterrent. On 10 July 1991, South Africa joined the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state, making South Africa the only country to voluntarily dismantle its nuclear arsenal (Sagan: 2000). In a speech to a joint Parliamentary session in March 1993, President de Klerk explained why Pretoria had built a nuclear deterrent and cited among others the Soviet threat and the presence of Cuban forces in Southern Africa as a threat to South Africa's security and thus the need for a balancing deterrent (De Villiers et al: 1993).

When facing threats to its national security and national interests, Pretoria resorted to nuclear weapons to enhance its military capability to protect its national interests and secure its national security. However, after the re-evaluation of its strategic environment, South Africa dismantled its nuclear arsenal when it became apparent that it no longer faced any threats to its national security from its external environment (De Villiers et al: 1993).

### **2.2.11 Other Nuclear Weapons Aspirants**

The acquisition of nuclear weapons for military and national security purposes is not limited only to the above analysed states. Apart from the already mentioned states, other countries have also tried to acquire nuclear weapons, usually, through the development of a secret weapons programme for the purposes of enhancing their military capability and securing their national security. Countries in this category include Iraq, Syria, Libya and Iran, all in the Middle-East.

According to Kenneth Waltz (1981) states without nuclear allies may attempt to acquire nuclear weapons to balance the nuclear capability of a rival when faced with threats to their security. Flowing from this, it was logical that the aforementioned Middle East states will attempt to

acquire nuclear weapons in an attempt to balance that of their regional rival Israel. In addition to Israel, these four states have been at the receiving end of some aggressive US foreign policy decisions which have been perceived as threats to their national security. All these states have at one time or the other been referred to as ‘rogue states,’ sponsors of terrorism and have been threatened by the United States military activities in the region (Stoessinger).

Iraq’s secret nuclear programme, which begun in the late 1970s have been dismantled after two wars and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Former Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi also agreed to halt its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programme and open Libya to international inspections in December 2003 (Stoessinger:330). An Israeli attack on a Syrian chemical plant in 2007 is said to have been an attack on a secret nuclear weapons programme plant (Farr: 1999). The reasons and security implications of the Iranian nuclear weapons programme will be examined in detail in the next chapter. It is clear that these states attempted to acquire nuclear weapons after perceiving threats to their national security from a nuclear armed regional rival, Israel and a global hegemon, the US.

Thus in line with Realist logic, the acquisition of nuclear weapons was to serve as an equalizer to both the conventional and unconventional military superiority of their rivals (US and Israel).

From the above analysis it is apparent that all the nine nuclear armed states and the other states that have tried but have been unsuccessful to acquire the ‘bomb’ all regard the nuclear weapon as a device that can enhance their military capabilities and ensure their national security and survival. The functional utility of the nuclear weapon in this regard is to deter the threats of aggression from adversaries and ensure the security of the state.

States that are faced with external strategic threats, either through the conventional superior capabilities or the unconventional nuclear capabilities of a rival, in all probability will turn to the deterrent capability of the nuclear weapon, if they possess the capacity to develop the bomb. However as exemplified by South Africa, countries that develop nuclear arms for military and national security reasons may choose to halt and dismantle the programme in the future, if previous perceived threats are no longer apparent.

In an anarchic global system where states rely on their own capabilities for survival, the nuclear weapon remains a vital part of the national security strategy of the states that possess them and an “attractive proposition to those which do not” (Chisem: 2011). This could explain why the NPT and the numerous other counter proliferation measures have failed, because of the functional utility of the nuclear weapon as a weapon that can ensure the security and survival of states in an unpredictable international system.

### **2.3. A NATION’S TECHNOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC PROWESS**

The atomic bomb or nuclear weapon also possesses the functional utility as a manifestation of a nation’s scientific advancement and technological capability. The nuclear research and weapons development programme is a scientifically and technologically demanding process. Thus some states may engage in nuclear research for military purposes as a way of proving to the international community their technological and scientific prowess. To this end, the nuclear arms race was not only a race to acquire a deterrent for national security but also a display of the scientific and technological advancement where the successful test of the nuclear weapon proved

a nation's scientific prowess (Sagan). The arms race was not restricted to the development and testing of atomic bombs, but transcended from atomic to hydrogen bombs and the technologically advanced delivery vehicles for the warheads, all of which involves the most advanced scientific, technological and industrial capabilities (Einhorn:2004). The successful development and testing of nuclear weapons and the appropriate delivery vehicles filled the states with enormous pride and prestige, fulfilling their quest not only for a nuclear deterrent but also the knowledge of having joined an exclusive club of nations through their scientific and technological prowess (Sagan).

#### **2.4. A SYMBOL OF NATIONAL PRESTIGE**

The acquisition of nuclear weapons also represents the state of a nation's status within the international community and often considered as a symbol of prestige for the acquiring states, in spite of the dictates of the NPT. According to Hans Morgenthau, prestige on the international arena represents "the third of the basic manifestations of the struggle for power" (Morgenthau 1948: 50), which is used as a means to an end by states to achieve their national interests. Thus in international relations the search for power and prestige go hand in hand.

Throughout history, nations have sought to use their militaries to enhance their status and prestige usually through military demonstrations, show of force and showing the flag, usually with their Navies (Graebner:1986). However, with the advent of the atomic age, the acquisition and successful testing of the nuclear weapon came to represent a symbol of status and prestige for states that acquire nuclear weapons (Morgenthau:54). The testing of nuclear weapons is designed to both impress the international community about a nation's military capability and

also intimidate its rivals. The testing of the atomic bomb by the United States in the earlier years of atomic monopoly, no doubt emphasised the United States' status as the most powerful nation on the earth (Sherwin:1986).

A position of prestige in the international system enables a nation to confirm its status as a global or regional power, especially if there are concerns that its prestige and status are eroding. To this end, most states in the international system used the acquisition and testing of the nuclear bomb to either reaffirm their global status or to announce their status to the international community (Sagan: 2000). It is therefore not surprising that the P-5 (5 permanent members of the Security Council) countries are all nuclear armed and also recognised as such under the NPT.

The role of the French nuclear weapons is often cited as the best example for this argument. After the Second World War, France's international position as a global power had been in decline after emerging from the war as a liberated victor and especially due to the loss of most of her colonial territories in the 1960s (Sagan: 2000). Having explored many ways to reclaim its international status and power, President de Gaulle settled on the acquisition of the nuclear bomb as he regarded the weapon "as a dramatic symbol of French independence that was needed for France to be seen as a great power" (Sagan: 43). Apart from France other states have sought to enhance their international prestige through the acquisition and public testing of nuclear weapons including China and India. According to O'Neill (2006:6), India's 1998 nuclear testing was prompted by their desire for international prestige. Many scholars also believe that North Korea's breakout from the NPT and subsequent acquisition and testing of their nuclear device was a decision to enhance their international status and prestige. After a successful space launch

in 2011, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un promised further launches and nuclear tests to demonstrate the country's "technological advances and power"(debkafile.com:2012).

The prestige analysis could also be used to understand the reasons behind other states that have tried and failed to acquire nuclear arms. The attempt by Libya, Syria and Iraq to acquire nuclear weapons, it is believed was motivated by the aura of prestige that would no doubt have accompanied the successful testing of a nuclear device by any of these Middle East states. According to a CIA Report on the interrogation of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader considered the nuclear weapon as both a powerful military deterrent and a symbol of prestige, especially among the Arab states (as cited in O'Neill: 3).

The euphoria and immense pride that often preceded the acquisition and public testing of nuclear weapons by the nuclear weapon states supports the above argument that the nuclear weapon has represented and continues to represent more than a military weapon that ensures the security of these states, but also a manifestation of the status and prestige of the states that possesses them. Thus as rational actors, states that are facing credible threats from nuclear armed rivals or rivals with superior conventional military capability and possess the scientific, technological and financial capability to acquire the bomb may consider it a viable option of not only securing their national security but also enhancing their international status and prestige among the community of nations. An Iranian bomb may serve similar purposes of fulfilling its strategic designs of becoming a major player in the region.

## **2.5. POLITICAL/DIPLOMATIC UTILITY**

The atomic bomb has also proved useful in diplomatic and political manoeuvres in both regional and international politics. From the early days of the Manhattan Project, the functional utility of the nuclear weapon as an essential tool of statecraft, especially its potential to compel rivals to make political and diplomatic concessions, was apparent to US decision makers (Soman:2000). Forster Dulles, Secretary of State in the Eisenhower Administration emphasised this claim when he argued in 1956 that when “nuclear capability was combined with communications of intent to use, compellence worked” (Dingman: 1989:1).

Atomic diplomacy refers to the threats to resort to the use nuclear weapons to achieve diplomatic goals (history.state.gov). The argument for atomic diplomacy is more credible in the early years of US atomic monopoly from 1945 to 1949, nevertheless there are examples of how other nuclear armed states used their possession of the nuclear weapon to achieve diplomatic goals. The devastating nature of the atomic bomb informed US policy makers of its potential utility in post-war negotiations with the Soviet Union (Morton:2000). To this end, in using the bomb on Japan, American policymakers were also hoping to intimidate the Soviets in making concessions in the negotiations as to the post-war balance of power.

Although it is widely believed that the atomic bomb was used on Japan to induce the unconditional surrender of Japan, many analysts believe that in addition to inducing Japanese surrender, the use of the atomic bomb was also to intimidate the Soviet Union and make them more “manageable in Europe” during post-war negotiations (Morton: 444). According Gar Alperovitz (1965) the use of the nuclear weapons on Japan was intended to gain a stronger

position for post-war diplomatic bargaining with the Soviet Union and that the weapons themselves were not necessary in inducing a Japanese surrender.

The possession of the bomb also strengthened American negotiating position with its European allies after the war, as they felt protected by the extended security of the US “nuclear umbrella”. The protection under the nuclear umbrella the US extended to its allies in the early years of atomic monopoly explains the pre-eminent position of the US in the NATO (Morton: 2000).

The United States is not the only country that has used the threat of the use of nuclear weapons to attain diplomatic or political goals. Other states like the Soviet Union, Israel and North Korea have all resorted to atomic diplomacy to achieve their diplomatic end states. In 1962, after failing to get the US to make diplomatic concessions by removing its Jupiter nuclear missiles in Turkey and also in negotiations over West Berlin, the Soviet Union secretly smuggled and installed nuclear weapons in Cuba (Alperovitz:1962). The presence of nuclear weapons in Cuba placed American cities in grave danger of nuclear strikes and threatened American national security. In the ensuing crisis (The Cuban Missile Crisis) and negotiations to get the Soviets nuclear weapons from Cuba, the Soviet Union succeeded in getting US in making concessions on West Berlin and also removing the Jupiter missiles from Turkey ([turkeywonk.wordpress.com](http://turkeywonk.wordpress.com)). Thus the Soviet leadership was able to achieve a diplomatic settlement through the deployment of nuclear weapons in Cuba and the threat to use them.

During the Yom Kippur War of 1973, many scholars believe that Israel resorted to nuclear diplomacy to gain US military support. After being overwhelmed by Arab armies on two fronts

in the early stages of the war, Israeli political and military leadership turned towards Washington for military support (Gerson: 2007:199). However negotiations with the United States for arms delivery delayed because President Nixon, who was not impressed with Israeli pre-emptive strikes on its Arab neighbours in 1967, withheld American military support as a form of punishment (Kissinger: 1979). Reports from the frontlines indicating heavy Israeli casualties induced panic among the political and military leadership, prompting Prime Minister Golda Meir to authorise a nuclear alert and send a message to President Nixon, threatening “very serious conclusions” if the US does not replenish Israeli military hardware (Moore 2009: 7). This resulted in a massive airlift of military hardware to the Israeli Defence Force which turned the war around in Israel’s favour (Kissinger). Many analysts believe that Prime Minister Meir’s message to President Nixon amounted to nuclear blackmail and that Israel resorted to the threat to use nuclear weapons to achieve what diplomatic negotiations failed to achieve.

The quest to induce, compel or even intimidate states for a political or a diplomatic advantage may also lead other states to seek the nuclear weapons to gain an even hand in diplomatic negotiations and a clear example is the US nuclear intimidation of China during the Korean War and the Taiwan Straits crisis in the 1950s which pushed China to seek for its own nuclear deterrent (Soman: 2000: 10). The acquisition of the nuclear deterrent therefore prevents non-nuclear states from being intimidated to making concessions that could be injurious to their national interest. This may be a rational and logical course of action for a non-nuclear weapon state engaged in competition for geopolitical dominance with nuclear weapon states, like Iran.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR CRISIS

#### **3.1. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAMME AND THE CRISIS**

Iran's nuclear programme started under the regime of the Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in 1957. Under the Atom for Peace programme, the United States offered nuclear facilities and technical training for its allies during the Cold War, including Iran. Under this programme, Iran benefitted from extensive assistance from the United States in its nuclear research programme (Khan: 48). The US assistance included five megawatt (MW) light-water research reactors and ancillary facilities to the Iranian government and in return the Iranians agreed not to use the reactors for military purposes (Khan: 47). In 1967, Iran obtained from the US a 5 megawatt small research reactor at the Tehran Nuclear Centre (TNC) which was fuelled with highly enriched uranium (Barnaby: 1993: 99). In 1968 Iran signed the NPT and ratified it in 1970 to underline the Shah's desire to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The ratification of the Treaty brought Iran's nuclear activities under safeguard inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

According to Frank Barnaby (1993) however, the 1974 nuclear testing by India led to a shift in focus by the Shah to explore the possibilities of utilizing the nuclear research programme for military purposes. To this end, the Shah expanded the nuclear facilities by securing agreements for the supply of more nuclear reactors from France, West Germany and the United States. In addition to these, Iran also secured guarantees for the supplies of low enriched uranium needed to fuel the nuclear power reactors (Barnaby: 99). Iran continued its acceleration in nuclear

research programme under the Shah with the objective of generating 23,000 megawatts of nuclear power in 20 years (Khan). To meet this objective, it was the desire of the Shah for Iran to domesticate the full nuclear cycle process which led to the acquisition of uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing technologies by 1976 (Barnaby : 99).

The full outlay of Iran's nuclear programme by 1976 had begun to arouse some level of concern among the international community especially the Western powers (Khan). The concerns bordered on the possibility of Iran using its extensive nuclear research facilities for a dual purpose, a civil and a military one. After a US intelligence report pointed to an Iranian clandestine weapons programme the US suspended all cooperation on nuclear research with Iran in 1976 (Khan: 48). While it is not clear whether it was the intention of the Shah all along to secretly build a weapons programme under the guise of the NPT, it was evident by 1976 that the extent of Iran's nuclear programme was more advanced than what will be needed for the generation of nuclear energy and other peaceful purposes. The situation is further muddled by contrasting statements attributed to Akbar Etemad, Director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) until 1978. While Saira Khan (48) argues that Akbar Etemad, claims the Shah never had any interest in nuclear weapons, Ray Takeyh (243) cites Dr Etemad's suspicion about the Shah's nuclear ambition as evidence that the Shah wanted to utilize the programme for dual purposes. The clearest indication about the dual nature of Iran's nuclear programme was given by Ardashir Zahidi, the Shah's foreign minister, who claimed that the strategy was to build "a surge capacity with the necessary infrastructure and know-how to build a nuclear military capacity within a short time"(Takeyh : 242-243). There is also evidence that Iranian authorities had given serious considerations to the possibility of diverting the nuclear research for military

purposes, which led to the decision of reprocessing plutonium locally, securing an agreement with South Africa for the supply of yellow cake in 1976 and also the acquisition of an experimental laser system (Khan : 48). Others have argued that although there was no official policy under the Shah to utilize the nuclear programme for a dual purpose, the 1973 oil crisis resulted in a financial windfall for Iran which enabled nuclear scientists to be generously funded and openly mandated. It can also be argued that perhaps the scientists secretly engaged in a weapons programme without the knowledge of the authorities but this line of argument is not credible considering the extent of Iran's nuclear programme and its uranium enrichment capabilities (Barnaby: 1993). Whatever the reasons behind such an extensive nuclear programme might be, after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 Leonard Spector (1987) argues that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the new Iranian leader inherited the "most ambitious nuclear weapons programme" in the Middle East. It can be argued that having set up the nuclear programme for civilian purposes, the changing security situation within Iran's environment, especially India's test, informed the Shah to explore the possibility of developing a nuclear weapon. However the Islamic regime halted the nuclear research programme because it was considered "un-Islamic" (Khan). For this reason Iran's nuclear programme saw very little progress from 1979-1989.

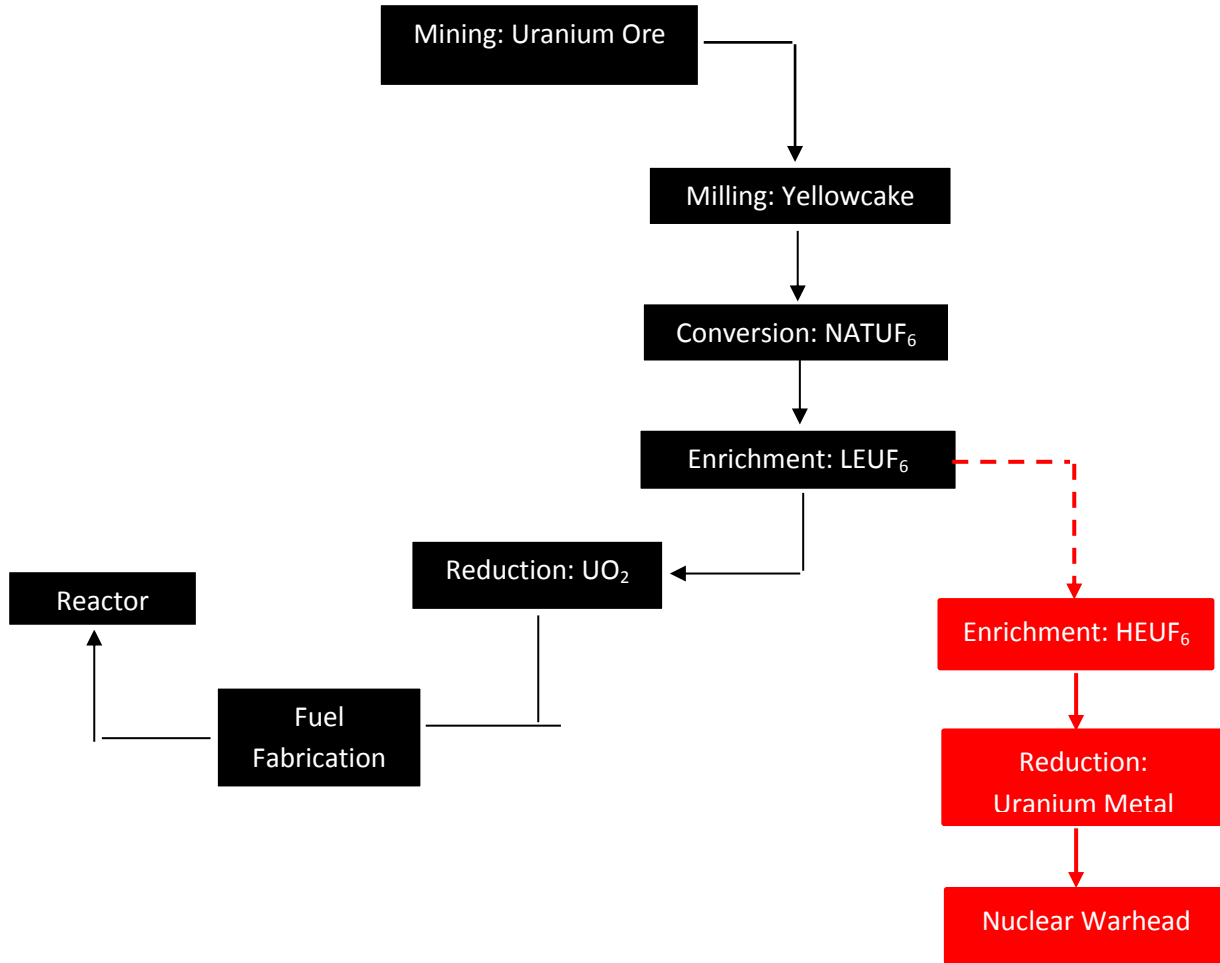
From 1989, under the leadership of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Rafsanjani, Iran's nuclear research programme was reinvigorated as the new leaders sought to strengthen the country's "strategic capabilities to address future security challenges" (Khan: 50). It is widely believed that Iran's bitter experiences during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), led to the change in Iran's nuclear policy and Saira Khan (2010) argues that President Rafsanjani made serious efforts to utilize Iran's nuclear programme for military purposes by ordering research into

nuclear weapons and delivery systems. The visit of the controversial Pakistani nuclear scientist A Q Khan to the Bushehr nuclear facility also gives credence to the resurrection of the nuclear weapons programme under President Rafsanjani. From the 1990s Iran worked earnestly on the uranium enrichment programme with technical assistance from countries like Russia, China, Pakistan and North Korea. Earlier in 1991 Iranian Vice-President Mohajerani stated that “Iran needs the ‘Islamic bomb’ to counter the nuclear capability of the enemy” in reference to the Israeli nuclear arsenal (Barnaby: 100). From the Realist perspective, having suffered a war of aggression from Iraq and with US foreign policy in the region threatening its national interests and security, the drive towards the nuclear bomb seemed the most rational option to the Iranians in deterring further aggression.

The Iranian nuclear crisis begun in 2002 when an exiled Iranian resistance group revealed the existence of two new nuclear sites that had not come under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguard inspections. The group also revealed the extensive nature of Iran’s nuclear facilities and its secret uranium enrichment programme. The world learnt for the first time that Iran had domesticated or are in the process of domesticating the nuclear fuel cycle process, which included a uranium mine at Saghand, a yellowcake production plant near Ardakan and a uranium enrichment plant at Natanz (Iranwatch.org). The extensive nature of Iran’s nuclear programme aroused the suspicion of the UNSC and regional rivals as it meant that the country had acquired the expertise to enrich uranium locally which could be used to fuel both nuclear reactors for peaceful purposes and also produce nuclear weapons.

While the technical processes of the nuclear cycle is not the focus of this study, it is pertinent to examine briefly the process and why Iran's nuclear programme has aroused the suspicion that it has. According to the Swedish nuclear physicist Hannes Alvern the nuclear process for peaceful and military purposes are "Siamese twins" (Barnaby: 1). This is true because the utilization of the nuclear programme for both peaceful and military purposes are virtually the same, the difference being the percentage of enriched uranium for the production of fuel for nuclear weapons. To further illustrate, uranium is the basic fuel for nuclear power reactors which is converted from its raw state of uranium oxide concentrate ( $U_3O_8$ ) into a gas uranium hexafluoride ( $UF_6$ ) through an enrichment process (World Nuclear Association). This is further enriched to increase the amount of the fissile isotope uranium-235 from its natural level of 0.7% to 3.5% which after further processes is used as fuel for nuclear reactors to produce energy. However, within this same nuclear fuel cycle process, the uranium could be further enriched to a "concentration suitable for a nuclear weapon", above 90% U-235 (Reardon: 2012: 26). Thus a country with a nuclear energy programme may inevitably also acquire the "technical knowledge and expertise" to make a nuclear weapon (Barnaby: 2).

**Fig. 3.1. Uranium Fuel Cycle**



Note: NATUF<sub>6</sub>= Natural Uranium Hexafluoride, LEUF<sub>6</sub>=Low Enriched Uranium Hexafluoride;

UO<sub>6</sub>= Uranium Dioxide;

HEUF<sub>6</sub>= Highly Enriched Uranium Hexafluoride.

Courtesy Robert J. Reardon (2012:27)

The diagram on the previous page depicts the uranium fuel cycle and how close uranium enrichment for civilian purposes is close to that for military purposes. It is the acquisition of this expertise in addition to other expertise that are specialised to the nuclear weapons programme that have aroused suspicions about the purposes of Iran's nuclear programme. According to Saira Khan, Iran acquired the technology for moulding uranium into warheads, probably from the AQ Khan network, and also purchased P-2 centrifuges which according to the experts are not needed for a civilian nuclear programme (Khan:52).

Since the year 2000, IAEA Reports have constantly raised concerns about the "possible military dimension to Iran's nuclear programme" and the existence within the country's nuclear programme of activities that could lead to the development of a nuclear warhead (IAEA Report 2013:10). Alarmed that Iran's uranium enrichment programme may be diverted for military purposes, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) demanded Iran to suspend the production and stockpiling of uranium enriched to 20% (a step away from weapons capability), export some of the enriched uranium to a neutral country, shut down the Fordo production site and open up all of its facilities to safeguard inspections. Iran on the other hand refused these demands, insisting that uranium enrichment was their legal right under the 1970 NPT.

Since 2006, the UNSC has imposed wide ranging sanctions on Iran, including asset freezes and travel bans on institutions and individuals involved in the nuclear programme. These sanctions have severely affected the country's banking and energy sectors, slowing down its oil-dependent economy (Iranwatch.org). International efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis have resulted

in diplomatic negotiations with the P-5+1(5 permanent Security Council members and Germany) and Iranian authorities to find a solution to the crisis.

The majority of the P-5 + 1 members favour a diplomatic or political approach to resolving the impasse, however, the US and Israel have threatened the employment of all options including the use of military force to compel Iran to abandoned its uranium enrichment programme. The possibility of an Iranian nuclear weapon is considered detrimental not only to American and Israeli national security, but also to regional stability. Iranian insistence of continuing with its uranium enrichment and the US and Israeli determination to halt the programme, through military means if necessary, is a situation that could further inflame the fires of conflict in an already volatile region if negotiations for a permanent diplomatic solution fail.

The election of President Ahmadinejad in 2005 further escalated the nuclear crisis, especially, his controversial rhetoric against both the United States and Israel. Under his regime, the uranium enrichment programme continued, in contravention to both IAEA and P-5 + 1 demands. Iran also suspended negotiations on its nuclear programme on numerous occasions and blocked inspections to its facilities. In 2006 President Ahmadinejad declared that Iran has “joined the club of nuclear countries” (Khan: 51) and wanted the international community to accord Iran that status. It is the believe of most observers that Iran intends to enrich and stockpile enough uranium to enable it breakout of the NPT and quickly produce a nuclear weapon if it chooses to do so, just as North Korea had done.

The assumption of Hassan Rouhani in August 2013 to the Presidency in Iran brought new hopes for a breakthrough in the negotiations to solve the crisis. President Rouhani, considered a moderate, reiterated Iran's right to uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes under the NPT but stated that Iran had no desire to develop a nuclear weapon (Friedman:2013). In addition to this he stated his government's readiness for diplomatic talks with the United States, which resulted in a phone call with President Obama on 27 September 2013, marking the highest political contact between the two countries since 1979 (Presstv.com: 2013). The members of the P5+1 have all welcomed this approach with the US and Iran reaching a new rapprochement in their relationship. This new optimism for a solution led to the renewal of talks between the two parties in Geneva on October and November 2013, which all the parties labelled as positive after the first and second round of talks (Reynolds:2013). Israel however has dismissed this optimism, labelling the Iranian "charm offensive" as a façade behind which Iran hope to further advance their nuclear weapons programme. During his address at the UN General Assembly Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced the Iranian leader as "a wolf in sheep's clothing"(Aljazeera [News:01](#) Oct 2013). He warned the world about easing sanctions on Iran and added that the nothing has changed in the uranium enrichment programme under the new regime and that the Iranian leader's "smiley campaign" at the UN General Assembly was a smoke screen to conceal Iran's "unabated march towards the nuclear bomb"(Fox News.com 01 Oct 2013). It must be noted that the Israelis might be concerned because through all these "charm offensive" and willingness for a solution, Iran has not halted its uranium enrichment and the continuous Israeli rhetoric also serves to heighten the tension between the two states.

The Third Round of Talks between the two parties yielded a deal on 24 November 2013 that was hailed by both parties as a breakthrough and a possible solution to this nuclear impasse. The deal called for a temporary suspension to uranium enrichment, grant full access to inspectors to its nuclear facilities especially at Natanz and Fordo. In return some sanctions against Iran will be eased for a period of six months which will inject about seven billion dollars into the Iranian economy ([bbc.co.uk/news/ middle-east](http://bbc.co.uk/news/middle-east): 25 November 13). While the deal was generally celebrated by world leaders, including US President Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu declared it “a historic mistake” with some US senators criticising the deal as being “too soft on Iran” ([bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk): 25 Nov 13). However it must be stated that this is not the first time that Iran has frozen its uranium enrichment with the view of getting sanctions eased. In 2003, in the heat of the US invasion of Iraq, Iran froze its nuclear programme in the hope of getting sanctions eased and better diplomatic relations with the US and the West and when that did not materialise, Iran resurrected its uranium enrichment programme (Khan). This is a testament to the fact that Iran may be willing to give up its uranium enrichment for the lifting of sanctions and cordial diplomatic relations with the West and the US in particular. With the current deal lasting for only six months, there is a long way to go in seeking a lasting solution to this impasse.

For Iran to completely give up its uranium enrichment programme, there must be a significant shift in US foreign policy towards the Islamic Republic, review its policies towards its strategic partners in the region like Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. US strategy must look towards a balance of power within the Middle East, especially between the Shias and Sunnis, which will make Iran more secured in the region with its national security guaranteed. Iran on the other

hand must also eschew its radical foreign policy that seeks to threaten its Sunni Arab neighbours, tone down its support to terrorist organisations like Hezbollah and its anti-Zionist rhetoric.

Iran's drive towards nuclear technology has been debated for decades and still there is no consensus as to the main objectives of such an extensive nuclear research programme. Some analysts (mainly Western observers) believe that the nuclear programme is a ploy by the Iranians to enrich enough uranium beyond the 20% and up to 90% weapons grade to produce a nuclear weapon in the future, Iranians on the other hand have always insisted that the uranium enrichment programme is for the production of nuclear fuel to power its nuclear reactors. Although Iran had not utilised its nuclear programme to produce nuclear weapons at the time of this study, proponents of Realism believe that states that face external threats to their national security may take measures to balance those threats either by enhancing its military capabilities or seek a powerful ally. Iran considers the massive military presence of the United States in the Middle East and the US strategic alliance with Israel and the other Sunni Arab states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia as a threat to its national security and as long as US and Israeli foreign policy towards Tehran are aggressive, it is difficult to envisage a peaceful solution to this nuclear impasse after the expiration of the current six-month deal.

The next section of this study will examine some of the external threats to Iranian security that have informed the Iranian decision for a possible nuclear deterrent.

### **3.2. EXTERNAL THREATS TO IRANIAN SECURITY**

To understand the factors that may have influenced Iran's gradual expansion of its nuclear programme from its original purpose to include a military dimension, it is pertinent to examine the country's strategic security environment and how this has imparted on its nuclear programme.

Throughout its history, Persian-Shite Iran has sought to be the major player in a region dominated by Arab-Sunni states and this has brought it into direct confrontation with Arab states like Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In its recent history, Iran's foreign policy has also conflicted with regional rivals like Israel and global powers like the US. In this section we will examine Iran's relationship with its Arab neighbour and long-time adversary, Iraq, regional rival Israel and the United States and the impact that the foreign policy decisions of these states have had on the Iranian decision on its uranium enrichment programme.

#### **3.2.1. Iraq: A Historical Adversary**

Iraq and Iran have been involved in numerous border disputes since the 1950s, most notably over the strategic Shatt-al-Arab waterway. While their disputes led to numerous skirmishes throughout the years it exploded into a full scale war in 1980 and lasted for eight bitter years (Khan). After the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, Iranian revolutionary leaders imposed an Islamic ideology that was at variance with its Muslim neighbours. Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-Western rhetoric and his call for the revolution to be exported to other "corrupt" Muslim states was considered as a threat to the national stability of the other Arab Muslim states, most notably Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the other Sunni monarchies ( Takeyh :2009).

In 1980, with Iran still undergoing social upheavals due to the revolution, Iraq, with the support of other Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE and the tacit support of some Western countries invaded Iran with the aim of settling the border dispute and also removing the threat of the radical Islamic ideology from Tehran (Kemp:2004:101). The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) has been described as one of the most devastating and longest wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Khan: 53). It was a costly war in economic and human terms for both countries especially Iran, considered the victim of Iraqi aggression.

The war had a profound effect on the Iranian national psyche which led to a refocus on the country's desire to enhance its military capability and the possibility of a non-conventional deterrent. Not only had Iran suffered aggression on its territorial integrity, but during the war, Iraq under Saddam Hussein enjoyed financial, military and diplomatic support from fellow Arab states as well as global powers like France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States (Khan :53). In addition to Iraq's conventional superiority, the Iraqi's also attacked the Iranian civilian and military personnel with chemical and biological weapons (Khan) and when the UN Security Council failed to either condemn or sanction Iraq, the Iranians learnt a very important lesson in international relations (King : 2003). In August 1988 UNSC Resolution 598 called for a ceasefire and a return to the pre-war borders. However from the Iranian perspective the Resolution failed to reprimand Iraq as the aggressor state and even clarify which of the parties had employed the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) due to the political support Iraq enjoyed from the superpowers (Hiltermann :2003) .

As already stated Iran's conflict with Iraq dates back to the 1950s and although Iraq has always been considered in Iran as the main threat to its national security it was thought that Iraq could be managed and contained. However, Iraq's surprise attack on Iran and the subsequent lessons from that bitter and costly war shifted Iran's focus to a more Realist approach to its national security and foreign policy. To this end Iranian authorities sought to enhance their military capability to ward off future aggressors in line with realist logic. Saira Khan (2010:50) argues that Iraq was the main reason that "triggered" Iran's nuclear weapons programme, which unfroze the programme, frozen by the Ayatollah.

It has been proven to the Iranians that in an anarchic system states cannot rely on other states or an international body to protect them from aggression. That the only way a state will survive is when it possesses the capability to deter aggression by other states and to Iran the best way to deter further Iraqi aggression was to enhance its non-conventional military capability by working feverishly and secretly on its nuclear weapons programme. Another reason that led to the reactivating of Iran's nuclear weapons programme was the Iraqi secret nuclear programme which was damaged by an Israeli air strike in 1981. While it has been argued that Iraq's nuclear weapon programme was to counter the Israeli threat, Iran as a long-time rival to Iraq, was bound to be concerned enough to seek its own nuclear deterrent to counter that of the Iraqis. The decision to revive the nuclear weapons programme was confirmed by the visit of Pakistani nuclear scientist Dr A Q Khan (Father of the Pakistani nuclear programme) to the Tehran facility in 1986 (Khan). Iran also sought technical assistance from China in 1985, Pakistan in 1986 and Argentina in 1987 (Barnaby: 99).

In summing up, Iran's nuclear programme which by the mid-1970s had taken on a dual purpose was frozen after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The Revolutionary leaders however changed that after Iran suffered a bitter war of aggression from their long-time adversary, Iraq. Iran had to fight without a strategic partner while the aggressor state, Iraq, enjoyed the support of its Arab neighbours and other global powers. Tehran also suffered chemical and biological attacks to which the international community and the UNSC failed to sanction Iraq. Consequently, Iranian leaders lost all faith in the international community and international organisations to protect Iranian interests and national integrity and concluded that the only way to deter another aggression by any of their rivals was for the state to rely on itself and enhance its conventional and non-conventional military capabilities. Many observers, including Saira Khan and Ray Takeyh have argued that this accounts for the extensive outlay on its nuclear facilities immediately after the war with Iraq. It must be added however that with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the position of Iraq as the main strategic rival to Iran has diminished somewhat. The removal of Saddam Hussein left Iran seeking to be the dominant Muslim power in the region which pitted it with the other regional power Israel and a global power with enormous strategic interests in the region, the United States.

### **3.2.2. Israel: A Regional Rival**

The state of the relationship between Iran and Israel has been labelled as an enigma by many Middle East observers. Prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the two countries enjoyed cordial diplomatic relations and cooperated at various levels for their mutual benefit (Marantz:2012). This was a strategic partnership during the reign of the Shah as both Iran and Israel were allies of the United States during the Cold War era (Takeyh).

More importantly the decision to cooperate was borne out of the fact that Persia Shia-Muslim Iran and Jewish Israel were considered as outcasts in a region dominated by Arab Sunni-Muslim states. Consequently, Iran, under the Shah had not been involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1948 up until the early 1980s (Khan: 72).

After the 1979 Revolution however, the relationship between the two states became strained as the new regime in Tehran regarded Israel as both an ideological and strategic rival as is argued by Ray Takeyh (2009). Ideologically, the revolution ushered in a regime of radicals with an Islamist ideology that was at odds with most of its neighbours including Israel. Strategically Iran had harboured designs of being the predominant power in the region for centuries, a desire which scholars believe was at the centre of its rivalry with its Arab neighbours Iraq and Saudi Arabia (Tyler:2009). To achieve this age old desire, Iranian authorities saw the Zionist state as the main stumbling block and as a new strategic rival mainly because of its partnership with the United States.

The new leadership in Tehran regarded Israel as an artificial construction by the West, imposed in the Middle East to divide and subjugate Muslims (Takeyh: 63) and therefore failed to recognise Israel. Accordingly, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini embarked on an anti-Zionist and anti-Western rhetoric, calling for the destruction of the "Zionist puppet state" (Takeyh). This position further degraded the relationship between the two states to one of enmity and the call for the elimination of Israel was considered as a threat to the survival of Israel (Beres: 2004). Thus Ray Takeyh concludes that the idea of Israeli illegitimacy, the necessity of

its demise and the imperative of Muslim unity behind the cause of anti-Zionism became the standard rhetoric of the Islamic Republic.

In line with its Islamist ideology and anti-Zionist rhetoric, Iran became part of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1982 when it supported Syria in creating the Lebanese Shia organisation Hezbollah and even extended both financial and military support to other Sunni anti-Israeli organisations like the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, all considered terrorist organisations by the United States and Israel (Khan: 58). The use of proxies to engage the Israelis was not only a decision to compensate for the lack of strategic capabilities of the Iranian military but also was to avoid a direct confrontation with an adversary with superior military capabilities until such a time that the Iranians would have been able to upgrade both their conventional and non-conventional forces to be at par with that of the Israelis. The strategic decision to embark on a uranium enrichment programme is borne out of the desire to march the Israeli non-conventional capabilities (Takeyh).

Iran and Israel have been locked in a protracted conflict since the early 1980s because both countries consider the policies and activities of the other as inimical to their national interests and even survival. Iranian sponsorship of terrorist organisations and the continued call for the elimination of the “illegitimate” Zionist state turned the country into a pariah state in the eyes of the international community leading the United States to label it a “rogue state” with an irrational leadership (Khan: 2010). Iran thus, entered the Israeli strategic calculus as an existential threat to its national security and survival that needed to be watched and contained (Beres: 2004:7).

Iran on the other considers Israeli military dominance, especially its nuclear weapons (and the international community's acquiescence) and its alliance with the United States as a direct threat to its strategic and ideological objectives (Takeyh: 2009).

The enmity between the two states will continue as long as Iran continues not to recognise Israel as a state, continues its support for organisations considered as terrorist organisations and Israel continues its alliance with the United States while the Palestinian issue remains unresolved. Thus contrary to what most western observers believe, the Iranian quest to enhance its military capability, especially its nuclear weapons programme is not aggressive and irrational but borne out of Realist rational calculations to confront the magnitude of the threat it faces to its national interests. As John Mearsheimer (2001) argues, states must generate their own means and rely on themselves if they are to achieve their objectives and secure their national security. Without a strategic partner and with inferior military capability compared to the Israelis, Iranian leaders have come to embrace the self-help principle by developing both their conventional and non-conventional military capability to match that of the perceived threat. For the Iranians the only way of equalizing the Israeli nuclear threat was to quickly acquire their own nuclear weapons as a means of balancing the Israeli military preponderance in the region.

### **3.2.3. The United States: An Ideological and Strategic Rival**

The United States of America is another country whose foreign policy decisions in the Middle East are perceived by Tehran as a threat to its national security. In many ways, Iran's relationship with the United States mirrors that of Israel, in that Iran and the US had cordial diplomatic relationship during the reign of the Shah. According to Patrick Tyler (2009:210-211) Iran acted as one of the pillars used by the US to check Soviet incursions into the Persian Gulf during the

Cold War and the Shah was considered as one “of the most exotic of America’s allies in the Middle East”. As is the case with Israel, however, this relationship turned into hostility after the 1979 Islamic Revolution due to the fact that the new leaders in Tehran considered the US as an ideological and strategic rival and pointed to America’s unflinching support of Israel against the Palestinians as an insult to all Muslims (Takeyh:2009). The US on the other hand recognised Iran’s anti-Zionist and anti-Western rhetoric and the Ayatollah’s calls for the Revolution to be exported to other “corrupt” Muslim states as a threat to regional security and its national interests (Tyler:2009).

Ray Takeyh believes that the 1980s was a decade that witnessed a marked deterioration in the Iran-US relations. The seizure of US diplomats by Iranian students and the subsequent hostage crisis that lasted for 444 days had a dramatic impact on American politics. Geoffrey Kemp (2004: 101) contends that this led to President Jimmy Carter’s downfall and the election of Ronald Reagan which led to the decision to “oppose Iran in a forceful and effective way” during the war with Iraq in the hope that Saddam Hussein could topple Ayatollah’s new radical regime in Iran (Kemp: 102). To this end the US placed Iran under widespread international embargo which really affected Iran’s war effort and US support to Iraq during the war further deepened the enmity between the two states. Although there was a small window of back channel cooperation during the war in the Iran-Contra Affair (the arms for hostages deal), the shooting down of an Iranian civilian airliner and United States continued support to Saddam’s Iraq and Israel, two of Iran’s regional adversaries marked the US as a grave threat to Iranian national security and survival, leading the supreme leader to label the US as the “Great Satan” (Takeyh).

For the United States, the radical Islamic ideology of the new regime had turned Iran from a strategic partner in the Middle East into an international pariah, a rogue state and a sponsor of terrorism whose foreign policy strategies were at variance with US national interests in the region.

The early 1990s ushered in two international phenomena that had profound transformation on Iran's security environment and further impacted on its relations with the US. The first was the end of the Cold War which according to many scholars ushered the world into a unipolar order, where the concentration of power was vested in a single preponderant state, the United States (Kegley and Blanton: 2011:91). Although with time other states have regained some of the influence, notably the EU and China, the United States still remains the only country with the military, economic and cultural might to assert its primacy in international affairs, and as such, pursue its national interests more aggressively (Kegley and Blanton:92).

The second factor was the First Gulf War which was a consequence of the United States' one time ally Iraq's invasion of Kuwait which brought the full military might of the world's only superpower, the US at the head of an international coalition to the doorstep of Iran. Iran considered the presence of US forces on its borders as a serious threat to its national security and therefore made a strategic decision to remain neutral in the conflict in the hope that this will be seen as a positive gesture by Washington that could lead to a thaw in their relationship (Kemp : 104). However the Iranian gesture was not reciprocated by Washington as it was believed that a policy of rapprochement towards Iran will not be in the interest of regional stability with Israel in

mind and thus the decision was that both Iran and Iraq were to be treated as rogue states that were to be “contained and isolated” (Kemp :104).

The first Gulf War while it degraded Iraq as a threat to Iranian security, also revealed the extent of Saddam’s secret nuclear programme which had a profound impact on the Iranian authorities *vis a vis* their own nuclear ambitions.

Accordingly, Iran sought to accelerate its own secret nuclear programme in its desire to deter any aggression from any rival, especially in the light of its difficult relationship with both the US its ally Israel.

The September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States changed the focus of American foreign policy strategy in the Middle East in particular and around the globe in general. The new policy ushered in the “Bush Doctrine” which is a term used to describe various foreign policy principles of President George W Bush. The main tenets of this doctrine as enumerated in the US National Security Strategy of 2002 was equating terrorist organisations with the countries that support them, preventive strikes on potential enemies and the promotion of democratic regime change, especially in the Middle East (Lieber :2002). In addition to this on 29 January 2002 President Bush in a State of the Union address labelled Iran as part of an “Axis of Evil” comprising of Iraq and North Korea for their quest for weapons of mass destruction which posed a threat to US interests and national security (Stoessinger :2010:330). In 2003 true to the tenets of the Bush Doctrine, President Bush invaded Iraq for the second time to disarm Iraq and effect a regime change and usher in democracy. Iran and North Korea, the other parts of the “Axis of Evil” responded in different ways. North Korea protested the labelling as an act of war, withdrew from the NPT and speedily tested a nuclear device and declared itself a nuclear weapon state

(Stoessinger:331). John Stoessinger argues that the United States' reaction to North Korea was one that baffled many observers, in that having threatened North Korea with military strikes to prevent it from acquiring nuclear arms, the US sought a negotiated settlement with North Korea after it tested the nuclear device.

The Iranian response was in two folds. First and foremost Iran ceased its uranium enrichment and opened up its facilities to IAEA safeguard inspections in the hope that it could diffuse the tensions between the two states and lead to the easing of sanctions against the Islamic Republic (Khan:2010). The US responded with more anti-Iranian rhetoric and more “credible noises” from the US senate from influential senators like John McCain for the invasion and regime change in Tehran (debkafile.com). This led to the Iranian moderates losing ground to the hardliners in the political set-up prompting the Supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei to declare that the “Great Satan”(US) cannot be trusted (Takeyh: 2009). The second Iranian response which was instigated by the hardliners was first to engage the US military in an insurgency in Iraq by funding the Shia leader Moqtada Sadr and his Mahdi Army (Stoessinger: 352). Next was to restart their uranium enrichment in their desire to enhance their military capability to deter any threats from the US. Thus Iran followed the North Korean example by collaborating with other states, most notably North Korea on their conventional military capability by enhancing its ballistic missile programme with the various versions of the Shabab and Sajjil strategic missile series with the range of reaching Israel (Elleman: 2). On the non-conventional front Iranian leaders concluded that with both the US and Israel conventionally superior in their military capability and also nuclear armed, the only way to confront this enormous threat was to acquire its own nuclear weapons to deter an Iraqi-like invasion by the United States (Khan).

The Iranians have argued that the uranium enrichment programme will not be halted and that the United States does not have the moral right to dictate which nation joins the nuclear club, especially since the US is the only state that has used the atomic weapon on another state (Stoessinger: 367) which gives every state the right to acquire the nuclear weapon to deter any aggressive attack from the “Great Satan”.

Since the Islamic Revolution Iran and the United States, once strategic partners during the Cold War have become ideological and strategic rivals viewing each other’s foreign policy as a threat to the other’s national interests. The 2003 Gulf War, initiated as part of the Bush Doctrine may have succeeded in eliminating Saddam Hussein as a threat to Iran, nevertheless, it brought the military might of the world’s only superpower to the borders of Iran, a situation Tehran considers inimical not only to its national security but also to the gains of the Islamic revolution, especially when American culture could also erode the foundations of theocratic rule (Takeyh : 4). The Bush Doctrine and the “Axis of Evil” speech did not only threaten the regime in Tehran and therefore Iranian national security but also Iran felt humiliated by the antagonistic nature of American foreign policy towards the Islamic Republic (Stoessinger: 2010). For this reason many observers, including Khan and Takeyh have argued that Tehran’s unrelenting determination to continue its uranium enrichment programme is a reaction to the antagonistic nature of US foreign policy towards the Islamic Republic and also a means of asserting its regional influence and independence from US and Western pressure.

### **3.3. IRAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR CROSSING THE THRESHOLD**

Iranian authorities have always insisted that their nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes; however, most countries notably the United States and Israel believe that the extensive nature of Tehran's nuclear programme is to secretly build nuclear bombs. What have alarmed the P-5+1 countries and regional rivals is the fact that apart from the domestication of the full nuclear fuel cycle, there has been, according to Takeyh and Khan, the call by certain prominent Iranian leaders including the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, former President Rafsanjani and his vice Ata' Allah Muhajirani and former President Ahmadinejad for Tehran to arm itself with nuclear weapons for its future security. These statements have lent credence to the fact that Tehran may be secretly utilizing their nuclear programme for dual (civilian and military) purposes.

The extensive nature of Tehran's nuclear facilities and the stated desires of some of its leaders makes the US and Israeli position more convincing despite the subsequent denials of other Iranian authorities. This is especially so because most analysts, including Jacques Hymans have argued that the unrelenting development of a country's nuclear programme may inevitably lead to nuclear weapons (Hymans: 2006:42).

The role of nuclear weapons in international relations indicates that their acquisition may impact on the states that acquire them and their immediate environs. The examples of other nuclear states indicate that states that are faced with external nuclear threats may look to the nuclear weapon as a guarantor of their national security. The North Korean example has also proven that member states of the NPT could secretly develop nuclear weapons and then break out of the Treaty and go nuclear.

In this section we will seek to examine the possible implications on Iranian and regional security should Tehran cross that threshold to acquire nuclear weapons.

For Iran to maintain its national security and achieve its strategic designs of becoming the dominant power in the Middle East, it is imperative that the perceived threats it faces are addressed. The ideological shift following the 1979 Revolution turned both the United States and Israel from strategic partners to antagonistic rival states, considered a threat to the Islamic Republic's national security and strategic objectives. Faced with threats from states with superior military conventional capabilities, Iranian authorities considered it as an imperative, the quest to enhance their own military capability to deter any attack from these adversaries as has happened to one-time rival, Iraq (by Israel in 1981 and US in 2003). The preponderant nature of both the US and Israeli military have created a security dilemma for Iran. In addition to this, both states are nuclear armed, who have vowed to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, including the threat of military strikes. As argued by Kenneth Waltz, states that face threats from nuclear rivals may be forced to proliferate, especially if they do not have any nuclear allies, thus for Iranian authorities, the decision to further utilise their nuclear programme for military purposes will be a rational, realist one if Tehran is to enhance its military capability and secure its national security in an international structure that is anarchic.

The desire to boost its military capability has seen Tehran embarking on an extensive ballistic missile programme, however with the Iranian economy crippled under US and international sanctions, a conventional arms race with the US and Israel is a path Iran cannot sustain. Consequently the non-conventional path of the nuclear weapons is Iran's way towards deterrence in the face of perceived US and Israeli threats.

Another possible impact of the nuclear weapon on Iran would be the prestige and status it would bestow on the Persian state despite the inevitable international condemnation that will follow such an action. Prestige and status are important virtues in international politics, especially for states that harbour designs of hegemony in their regions. For Tehran therefore, the possible acquisition of the nuclear weapon will bestow prestige and status on the state's technological and industrial sectors, especially in the face of crippling international sanctions. To many, the Islamic Republic's determination to continue its uranium enrichment programme is a means of asserting its independence and national identity (Takeyh). Thus the subsequent development of the nuclear bomb may represent both an ideological and strategic triumph over its adversaries, the "Great Satan" (USA) and "Little Satan" (Israel) and enhance Iran's image in the eyes of the Shia populations across the Middle East.

For Iran, the addition of nuclear arms to its military arsenal may also enhance Tehran's political and diplomatic leverage that all aspiring hegemons crave. Granted that the acquisition of nuclear weapons may bestow prestige and status on Iran like it happened in the cases of France, India and Pakistan as has been argued by Sagan and Waltz, then the new found prestige may also afford Iran some diplomatic leverage, especially among Third World countries and the members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Iran's desire to be a major player in the international system is not only restricted to the Middle East but also in developing countries like Ghana, where Iran seeks closer diplomatic and economic ties. For Iran, not only can the nuclear weapon act as a strategic equalizer to US and Israeli military preponderance and secure its national security, but it could also enhance its status and prestige in the Muslim world and identify the Islamic Republic as a champion of the Muslim cause and also in the Third World where Iran could become a symbol of defiance towards Western order.

Finally, a nuclear armed Iran may become an isolated and international pariah state, just like North Korea. Iran may well go on and acquire the nuclear weapon but this may not alter its status in the international community and may lead to the destruction of the economy if the current sanctions are maintained. An economically weak and isolated Iran may not be able to exert any influence in the region and beyond, thus although the nuclear weapon may secure its physical security, it may adversely affect its geostrategic designs of becoming a key player in the Middle East.

A possible Iranian nuclear weapon may also have various implications on the stability and foreign and domestic policy decisions in the Middle East. It has been widely argued that should Iran press on and become a nuclear armed state, the stability of the region will be in jeopardy. A nuclear armed Iran may endanger the security of its neighbours, mostly the Sunni-Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Qatar and also Israel and therefore result in a security dilemma that may be solved with further nuclear proliferation in the region. According to Robert Einhorn (2004) and Thomas Lippman (2004), a nuclear armed Iran may be unacceptable to both Egypt and Saudi Arabia and could serve as the catalyst that tips the decision by these states to proliferate which could further destabilise an already volatile region.

On the other hand an Iranian nuclear weapon may lead to a balance of power in the region and a more stable Middle East, especially if the purpose of the bomb is for deterrence which may be the purpose for a possible Iranian bomb, considering the superior nature of both the Israeli and American nuclear forces. As Kenneth Waltz contends states act more cautiously when the cost of war is high, thus a nuclear armed Iran may elicit caution from its adversaries, the US and Israel, knowing that any conflict may have the potential of degenerating into a nuclear war. Iran may also learn to act more “responsibly” as continuous anti-American and anti-Zionist rhetoric may

be viewed more seriously. To this end the states may learn to accommodate each other just as other nuclear rivals like India and Pakistan and Russia and China have accommodated each other in the past.

With regards to the implication on the non-proliferation regime in the region, although the possibility is there, many believe that a possible Iranian bomb may not have any significant implication on nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (Einhorn: 2004). A nuclear armed Iran may be seen as a threat to its Sunni-Arab neighbours, nevertheless, the military alliance and cooperation of these states with the United States means that extended US security assurances to these states may be enough to prevent them from feeling threatened and resorting to nuclear proliferation. The US Secretary of State John Kerry alluded to this fact when he assured the Gulf States of US protection in the face of concerns by Arab states of a possible US rapprochement towards Iran after the second round of Geneva Talks (Al Jazeera News: 11 Nov 13). In addition to this the most advanced Arab states, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia lack the technological and industrial base required for a nuclear weapons programme without external assistance and thus there is very little chance of Egypt or Saudi Arabia acquiring nuclear weapons (Einhorn:2004) .

A resurgent and dominant Iran in the region may have some implications on US foreign policy and national interests by constraining US freedom of action in the Middle East and may hamper its efforts of democratising and improving the human rights records in the region. However a stronger Iran may lead to closer military, economic and political ties between the United States and its strategic allies in the region as states like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and even Israel will seek assurances of US military, economic and political support in the face of any Iranian threat. A situation like this may not be injurious to US national interests as the Obama Administration seeks to regain the influential role the US enjoyed in the past. The US primacy in

the region has waned following US foreign policy choices during the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war. This has resulted in traditional allies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia exploring possible closer ties with Russia, a decision that has not gone down well with Washington (debkafile.com:30 Oct 13). A dominant Iran with a nuclear capability may make these states insecure enough to drive major regional players like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel back under the US security umbrella. This is especially so because the preponderant nature of the US military places it in a unique position to be the only patron who could meet the security, economic and political interests of these Middle East states (Friedman: 2013).

In summing up, the Middle East will not be destabilised should Iran utilize its uranium enrichment programme to develop nuclear weapons. Although some states may feel threatened, the assurances of the world's superpower, the US and its military, economic and political preponderance should be enough to ensure the security of the region. This was the case with US assurances to Britain and France during the early years of the Soviet Union's nuclear testing and also to South Korea and Japan during North Korea's nuclear acquisition. On the other hand it has been argued that an Iranian bomb will balance the Israeli threat, making Iran more secured which may lead to Iranian withdrawal of support to its non-state proxies like Hamas and Hezbollah. As Kenneth Waltz argues, nuclear weapons make countries more cautious in their rhetoric due to its devastating nature and states like China and Pakistan, all once considered radical states before their acquisition of the nuclear weapons have toned down their political rhetoric after becoming nuclear powers. Thus we believe that having secured its national security through the nuclear weapon, Iran may not act belligerently as is currently believed, partly due its status and also both the conventional and non-conventional military capabilities of the US and Israel. An Iranian nuclear weapon may lead to stability in the Middle East through the balance of power between

the two main primary regional actors, Israel and Iran. It may also lead to closer ties between the US and its allies in the region and further enhance US primacy in the region.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

This chapter summarise the salient contents of the three previous chapters and draws conclusions on what has been discussed in the study. It also proffers some recommendations on how the Iranian nuclear crisis could be resolved permanently.

### **4.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The study used the Realist Approach to test the hypothesis that in an international system that is anarchic and characterised by the self-help principle, states facing external threats from nuclear rivals may seek nuclear weapons to secure their national security. To this end Iran may halt its uranium enrichment programme if it no longer threatened by nuclear armed rivals.

The main findings of the study include the following:

1. The nuclear weapons have been considered as a strategic weapon that has played significant roles in the domestic and foreign policies of the states that have acquired them. Thus states that have perceived threats from nuclear rivals regarded the nuclear weapon as the most effective means of deterring aggression from their rivals and securing their national security, a situation that set off the nuclear arms race. Consequently international nuclear non-proliferation efforts have not been successful because of important role that nuclear weapons play on the national security strategy of the nuclear armed states.
2. Iran's nuclear programme, established in the 1950s by the Shah for peaceful purposes had begun taking on a more dual role by 1978. After the 1979 Revolution, the radical Islamists ideology of the new regime turned former strategic partners, the US and

Israel into antagonistic rivals and further antagonised its long-time rival, Iraq which led to the eight year war with Iraq.

3. Iran's bitter experiences during the war with Iraq led to a re-evaluation of the security environment of the Islamic Republic which not only resulted in the unfreezing of the nuclear programme, but its expansion as well. The expansion of the nuclear programme, coupled with some statements from regime authorities pointed to the desire by Tehran to secure its national security through nuclear weapons.

4. In 2002 the revelation of Iran's extensive nuclear facilities and its uranium enrichment programme alarmed the international community especially the US and Israel amidst concerns that Iran is secretly trying to build a nuclear bomb. Iran's refusal to suspend its uranium enrichment programme led to crippling sanctions against the state while US and Israel threatened military strikes to halt Iran's nuclear programme, leading to the nuclear crisis.

5. Iran has not developed nuclear weapons, however its insistence to continue enriching uranium has been perceived as a threat to the security of its neighbours and regional security, while the continuous insistence on military strikes by the US and Israel have served as threats to Iranian national security. The election of Hassan Rouhani as the Iranian president brought a new optimism in negotiations with the P5+ 1, which resulted in a six month temporary deal in November 2013.

## **4.2. CONCLUSION**

In an international anarchic system where the self-help principle is paramount, nuclear weapons have played a vital role in the domestic and foreign policy decisions of nuclear armed states. Not

only has nuclear weapons been regarded as an imperative for securing the national security of states that have to contend with nuclear rivals, but it has also been used as a tool of diplomacy and political coercion and has also been the measure of a state's scientific and technological prowess. This important role has seen to it that all attempts to eradicate the development and stockpiling of nuclear arms had seen very little success.

In the post-Cold War international arena, the preponderant nature of the sole super-power, the US and its unilateral foreign policy strategies across the globe have further tested the nuclear non-proliferation regime. United States foreign policy choices have been perceived as threats to the national security of some states, including North Korea, Syria, Libya, Iraq and Iran, who have attempted to secretly develop nuclear weapons in the past with North Korea successfully testing a nuclear device.

Iran's nuclear weapons programme was established for civilian purposes in the 1950s, however after the 1979 Revolution, Iran's ideological position in the Middle East led to the new regime being isolated and turned former partners the US and Israel into bitter enemies, in addition to its long-time rival Iraq. The bitter lessons from the Iran-Iraq war coupled with US foreign policy decisions in the region further radicalised the regime in Tehran which resulted in the resurrection and expansion of its nuclear programme with declarations for the quest for a nuclear deterrent.

The revelation of the full extent Iran's nuclear programme aroused the suspicion of the international community especially the US and Israel about the real intent of such an extensive nuclear programme. The suspicion that Iran was secretly building a nuclear weapon resulted in the Islamic Republic being placed under crippling international sanctions that has nearly ruined its economy, with threats of military strikes from the US and Israel further heightening tensions

as diplomatic negotiations continue to resolve the crisis. The assumption of the presidency by Hassan Rouhani, considered a moderate, resulted in a breakthrough after the Third Round of Talks with the agreement of a temporary six month deal which placed certain limitations on Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for ease of certain sanction. However a permanent solution will require that the key players, Iran and the US make major strategic adjustments in their foreign policy choices leading to security guarantees, the balance of power and stability in the Middle East.

Failure to reach a permanent deal after the six months deadline will mean that uranium enrichment and stockpiling by Iran will continue with full sanctions against Iran and the threat of the military option back on the table. The implications of an Iranian breakout towards the nuclear weapon may be varied but most significantly it will represent a major boost to its military capability and act as a deterrent towards any military aggression by the US and Israel. It may also be regarded as threats to the national security of its regional rivals which may lead to further nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. However this is not likely due to the United States' ability to extend its security guarantees to its allies in the region to ensure that their national interests are not usurped by a dominant Iran.

#### **4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

For the Iranian nuclear crisis to be permanently resolved and prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, it is important that there are significant shifts in the foreign policy choices of the main stakeholders, Iran and the US. The United States as the main preponderant power in international politics must use its position of primacy to modify its policy towards Iran that does not antagonise and isolate Tehran, with security guarantees to the Islamic regime. This could

include the significant easing of sanctions on Iran and a more impartial role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The US policy adjustments must also seek a balance of power in the region by ensuring that a strong and stable Iran is balanced by strong and stable neighbours like Saudi Arabia and Egypt backed by US security assurances to its allies in the region. A strong and stable Iran must also not pose as a strategic threat to Israel in any way by renouncing its support for radical anti-Israeli groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, while playing its role as a regional player without threatening the security of its other Arab neighbours.

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