

The Middle East in the International System

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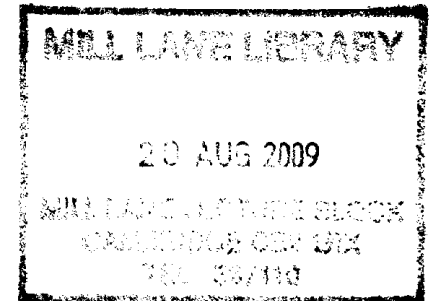
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The  
**Iraq War**

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## Iran: Wary Neutral

*Eric Hooglund*

Iran's official view of US policy in Iraq since 2002 has been characterized by considerable ambivalence. On the one hand, lingering mistrust of Saddam Hussein (as a result of the 1980–1988 war with Iraq) both created and reinforced an attitude that accepted the US containment of Iraq as being in Iran's interest. On the other hand, the United States since 1993 had proclaimed the containment of Iran to be of equal importance to that of Iraq, and therefore Iranian leaders felt encircled by the arrival of thousands of US troops in Iraq together with those in Afghanistan since the end of 2001. Indeed, Bush's 2002 inclusion of Iran in his "axis of evil" meant a US military presence in Iraq could constitute an existential threat for the government of the Islamic Republic. As circumstances in Iraq evolved from early 2003 to mid-2005, Iranian policymakers faced the challenge of crafting strategies to take advantage of new opportunities while simultaneously remaining out of the crosshairs of a triumphal and hostile United States.<sup>1</sup>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has steered Iran's policy, is perceived by the political cognoscenti in Tehran as having been relatively successful in devising short-term strategies to deal with the changing situation in Iraq; it has also managed to avoid becoming entangled in factional conflicts by incorporating advice from a plurality of viewpoints.<sup>2</sup> As regards the actual war, Iran refrained from taking a high-profile view in the international debate that preceded it and largely remained neutral. However, when it comes to devising longer-term strategies to address the implications of the US occupation of Iraq for Iran's future security, there is no consensus among Iranian policymakers on the dangers or appropriate policies. Indeed, a review of the rival ideas of different factions relevant to the foreign policy process provides insights on the complexity of Iran's perspectives with respect to the "Iraq issue," an issue that has become intertwined with the "American issue."

### ■ Prewar Iranian Policy

Prior to the US war against Iraq, the latter country was seen as Iran's principal security threat, even more so than the US military presence in the Persian Gulf since 1990 and in Afghanistan since December 2001. Theoretically, Iran and Iraq were neighbors maintaining polite, albeit not cordial, diplomatic relations. However, in an intellectual and psychological sense, Iranians neither had forgotten nor forgiven Saddam Hussein for what officially they called the "imposed war," the eight-year conflict that began in September 1980 when Iraqi forces invaded Iran. That war, especially in its initial phase (September 1980 to May 1982), was looked upon as a real existential threat to Iran as a country and the Islamic Republic as a government. Few Iranians regarded as a victory their country's acceptance in July 1988 of the UN Security Council cease-fire resolution that ended the fighting; rather, there was a genuine sense of relief that the country—and among the political elite also that the regime—had survived a devastating and costly war. Some fourteen years later, on the eve of the US war against Iraq, Iran still had not signed a peace treaty with its former enemy, although both countries had continued to observe the cease-fire and operated embassies in each other's capitals.

At the beginning of 2003, many of the leading political figures in both Iran and Iraq were the same people who had served in their respective governments during the Iran-Iraq War. Iranian leaders retained a deep distrust of Saddam specifically, and of the Baath Party that he headed more generally. Other than the unresolved issues from the war, their most serious political grievance was that his government provided both sanctuary and financial support for the Mujahidin-e Khalq, an Iranian opposition group that had declared aim of overthrowing the Islamic Republic by armed force, had assassinated key Iranian leaders in the 1980s, had used its bases in Iraq to carry out several militarily insignificant but psychologically irritating attacks inside Iran in the 1990s, and had waged a sustained propaganda campaign against the Islamic Republic that caused public relations headaches for Iran's diplomacy over many years. By the early 2000s, however, the Mujahidin's international effectiveness had diminished substantially, and even Saddam's government recognized that it lacked a popular support base inside Iran. Nevertheless, Iraq continued to support the Mujahidin as a counter to Iran's backing for Iraqi opposition groups that maintained exile bases in Iran.

Indeed, Tehran provided very public support for the anti-Saddam Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which had been founded in Iran by Iraqi Shia exiles during the Iran-Iraq War and reinvigorated by an influx of new members when thousands of Iraqi Shias fled to Iran following the suppression of an uprising in several major towns of

southern Iraq in March 1991. Iran's view of SCIRI as a Muslim resistance group seeking freedom from the persecution and oppression of an antireligious regime contributed to a generally unsympathetic attitude toward the fate of Saddam's regime in any confrontation with the United States. In fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of 2003 gave visas to prominent Iraqi opposition leaders living in exile in Europe and North America so that they could attend a SCIRI-organized meeting in Tehran on the future of a post-Saddam Iraq; attendees included some men who at the time were working closely with the US government, including Ahmad Chalabi and Kenan Makiya.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, Iran's leaders were uncertain what the political consequences of a US war might be. The Gulf War (1990–1991) convinced some of them that the US aim was not regime change, as it had been in Afghanistan, but rather the punishment and disarmament of Iraq—which would be to Iran's advantage, since its leaders shared the belief of the Bush administration that Saddam did have weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The war on Afghanistan persuaded other Iranian leaders that Washington really might be determined to overthrow Saddam, although few, if any, who shared this view believed that the United States would commit large numbers of its own troops for a sustained occupation of Iraq.

As the US government failed to convince most of its major allies of the Iraqi threat, as well as the Arab states that had joined it in the Gulf War, Iranians perceived an international consensus for resolving the issue short of war—that is, through UN inspections of Iraq's allegedly concealed WMD stockpiles, a course they thought might constrain the United States. Under these circumstances, neutrality and support for a UN-sponsored disarmament of Iraq seemed to be the prudent policy for Iran to follow. If, for example, Saddam's regime were to survive the crisis with the United States, then it would have no cause to find fault with Iran. But if the United States were to act unilaterally and even to succeed in overthrowing the Baath, then no successor government would be able to accuse Iran of having supported Saddam.

### ■ Postwar Perspectives on US Intentions Toward Iran

Once the United States initiated war in March 2003, the situation developed in ways that Iran had not anticipated. The complete collapse of the Baath regime and the prospect of Iraq's long-term occupation by 150,000 US troops were a new reality for which few Iranians had been prepared. By June, officials in Tehran were listening with concern as various US officials boasted about plans for the rest of the Middle East, including the possibility

of regime change in Tehran as a follow-up to its "success" in Iraq.<sup>4</sup> Although the United States had been perceived as hostile toward the Islamic Republic ever since 1979, it previously had not been considered a direct threat. The situation now had changed dramatically, and it required a carefully thought out strategy. The territory of Iraq still was a source of threat for Iran, but now it was under the control of a superpower that had demonstrated it was not the paper tiger depicted in the Islamic Republic's rhetoric for over two decades.<sup>5</sup> By late 2003, three general patterns of views had emerged among Iran's national security elite with respect to dealing with the US presence in Iraq. These do not represent monolithic factions, as numerous nuances in perspectives are present within each pattern of views and each continually is influenced by the evolving situation in Iraq.

### ***Undermining US Arrogance***

The first pattern of views sees the United States as the major threat to Iran. It tends to be expressed by those who had espoused an ideological opposition to the United States for many years.<sup>6</sup> They are convinced that the United States never has accepted the Islamic revolution, and they see regional developments, from the Iran-Iraq War to the US war against Iraq, as Washington-initiated or Washington-abetted strategies aimed directly or indirectly at overthrowing the Islamic Republic. The attribution of motives ranges from US opposition to Islam to a US perception of Iran as challenging its hegemony in the oil-rich Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea regions.<sup>7</sup> Because their views tend to mirror those of the US neoconservatives and because many, albeit not all, of them are associated with the conservative political faction in Iran, we can call those holding this pattern of viewpoints "Iranian neoconservatives." They believe in the unremitting hostility of the United States but have a realistic appreciation of US military power and the devastation that can result from its unrestrained use (such as in Iraq in 1991 and again in 2003); they are not intimidated by it and advocate proactive policies to deter an attack on Iran. Some senior military officers as well as civilian ideologues even boast periodically of Iran's readiness to take on US forces should they attempt an invasion. The general view, however, is more restrained with respect to confrontation and is similar to the assessment that one political adviser provided: "The Achilles heel of America's power is its arrogance. I mean the American government cannot accept any other country, but especially Asians and Muslims, as equal. You can see that in this occupation government [Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)] in Iraq. Its policies have caused resistance to rise up, and I predict this resistance will gather more strength in the near future."<sup>8</sup>

Some Iranian neoconservatives have advocated undermining US influence in Iraq primarily through support for different Iraqi groups that are friendly toward Iran; but it is not possible to state whether those in relevant

decisionmaking positions have approved of any clandestine military assistance to specific groups in Iraq, since such support officially is denied. The general attitude is that the resistance in Iraq is a "natural response" to a foreign invasion and occupation. There is, however, obvious discomfit about some resistance activities, especially those associated with Al-Qaida, which are seen as being as much directed against Iraqi Shias as against Americans. Nevertheless, at least one private organization, the Setad-e Pasdast-e Shohada-ye Jonbesh-e Islami Jahan (Military Headquarters for Commemorating Martyrs of the International Islamic Movement), seems to embrace all resistance indiscriminately and began in June 2004 openly to recruit volunteers for suicide missions in Iraq; five months later, it claimed that 30,000 men and women had registered for training.<sup>9</sup> Setad seems to enjoy the "protection" and perhaps even financial support of at least a few influential political leaders.

More significant than any ideological support for Iraqi resistance in general are the long-standing political ties between SCIRI and members of Iran's political establishment. Indeed, the chief of the judiciary, Mahmud Hashemi-Shahrudi, who was born in Iraq and was among those Iraqis of Iranian ancestry expelled from Iraq in the 1970s, is one of the founders of SCIRI. However, SCIRI is not an Iranian organization, and since its members returned to Iraq in 2003, it has pursued an agenda of tacit cooperation with US forces in the expectation that participation in elections would enable Iraqi Shia Muslims to exercise political influence—long denied—commensurate with their numbers (estimated to be 60 percent of the total Iraqi population). Significantly, the Iranian neoconservatives, although they would like to see a US departure from Iraq sooner rather than later, have not opposed SCIRI's strategy, which included participating in the coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance, that endorsed a list of over 200 candidates for the January 2005 elections, supported a new transitional government in April, and took an active role in negotiations for a new Iraqi constitution. Iranian neoconservatives tend to characterize SCIRI's approach as an effective and rational course, given the power imbalance within Iraq in favor of US military forces. They argue that an Iraqi government in which Shias have an influential voice would demand that the United States withdraw its forces and be a long-term natural ally of Iran.<sup>10</sup>

More problematic for Iran's neoconservatives is devising an effective policy toward Iraqi Kurds, whom they see as determined to maintain their de facto autonomous status and who they believe have an ultimate objective of an independent state. Iranian neoconservatives generally accept, or perhaps tolerate, the principle of autonomy for the Iraqi Kurds within an independent Iraq, arguing that this scenario would preclude supporters of Baathist ideology, if they ever should regain political influence, from being able to reestablish Iraq as a regional military threat. However, they oppose

an independent Kurdish state out of concern about the potential impact of such a state on Iran's own Kurdish minority. The current situation of de facto autonomy is seen as fraught with possible security risks for Iran because, in their assessment, the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq effectively is divided between two rival political factions, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The latter group has continued its long-standing ties to Tehran, but relations with the KDP often have been tense. In fact, many Iranian neoconservatives believe that the KDP provides clandestine support for the Iranian KDP and another Iranian Kurdish party, the Komala, both of which fought a guerrilla campaign against the Islamic Republic between 1979 and 1983 and presently maintain offices in territory under Iraqi KDP control.

More worrisome for holders of this perspective has been the emergence in 2004 of a new Iranian Kurdish organization, Pejak, which has proclaimed its commitment to armed struggle against the government of Iran until the latter grants "autonomy" to Iran's Kurds. Pejak operates independently of the other Iranian Kurdish groups, which have foresworn armed struggle, and it has ties to—and may be a wing of—the Kurdish group in Turkey known as the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Significantly, after the PKK announced in June 2004 that it was abandoning the unilateral cease-fire with Turkish security forces that it had observed since 1999, Pejak began military raids into the Kurdish-populated districts of Iran's West Azerbaijan province, which borders both Iraq and Turkey. Since then, numerous and often deadly skirmishes have taken place between Iranian security forces and Pejak guerrillas in this mountainous border region of Iran, and up through the end of August 2005, Iranian officials said that as many as 120 Iranian police and other personnel had been killed.<sup>11</sup> In view of the close relations between the Iraqi Kurds, especially the Iraqi KDP militia, and US forces, it perhaps is not surprising that Iran's neoconservatives believe that the United States is supporting these "terrorist" incursions into their country. In fact, Revolutionary Guard commander General Yahya Rahim Safavi charged as early as November 2004 that Washington actually was funding Iranian Kurdish groups as part of a concerted effort to destabilize Iran.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Don't Tempt an Angry Giant***

A second perspective shares many of the Iranian neoconservatives positions on Iraq, but it holds a much more alarmist view of US intentions vis-à-vis Iran, and, accordingly, is preoccupied with devising policies to avoid becoming a US target. Those who share this perspective may be called realists, because they insist that they have a "realistic appreciation" of US power. The realists' fundamental belief is that the United States not only is hostile to the Islamic Republic but also wants to overthrow it. On those occasions when the United States has cooperated with Iran, such as in its

war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, then such cooperation has been minor and only for immediate US tactical interests. The basic US hostility toward the Islamic Republic and desire for regime change in Iran has not been altered as a result of any cooperation, as is evidenced by the way Washington has responded *after* securing what it wanted from Iran. For example, realists cite the successful efforts that Tehran made in 1991 and 1992 to persuade Lebanese groups holding Western hostages in Beirut to free them to a United Nations mediator. They argue that Iran had received oral assurances that the United States would respond to its efforts favorably, but it reneged. Instead, US officials "defamed" and "demeaned" Iran and soon declared the Islamic Republic to be the object of a dual containment policy aimed at both Iraq and Iran. Similarly, after Iran had cooperated to help the United States in the removal of the Taliban, President George W. Bush castigated it as a member of an "axis of evil."<sup>13</sup>

The lesson that realists have "learned" from Iraq is that Washington is prepared to use Iranian exiles living in the United States to carry out regime change in Iran. They cite the score of Iranian expatriate satellite television stations that began operating in California in 2001 and broadcast anti-Islamic Republic programs into Iran as evidence of US intentions. Indeed, in early summer 2003, some of these Iranians watched in anger and horror as Iranian exiles on these satellite shows called on their compatriots in Iran to rise up and overthrow the government. Much can—and did—change in two years, and by June 2005, realists recognized that the situation in Iraq had not developed according to US expectations. They interpret this new reality as having created among some US decisionmakers misgivings about and even opposition to tackling a similar regime change strategy in Iran.<sup>14</sup> But is it possible to take advantage of this new situation in a way that lessens the danger to Iran's security?

For realists, the United States is capable of inflicting severe devastation on Iran and is too great a threat for Iran to contain in the absence of any major power ally; hence the priority must be averting an attack by abstaining from initiatives that might invite US ire or retaliation. Policies that amount to deliberate confrontation, as advocated by some Iranian neoconservatives, are regarded as unnecessarily provocative, because they ultimately may endanger Iran. However, this does not mean that Iran should be trying to find areas of cooperation, because the United States repeatedly has proven its bad intentions vis-à-vis Iran. Nevertheless, Iran cannot ignore the United States, as it not only is right next door in Iraq, but also literally surrounds Iran: it has troops in Afghanistan and operational military bases in Central Asia, Pakistan, and on the Arab side of the Persian Gulf; in addition, Turkey is part of the US-led NATO military alliance. These geopolitical realities best can be neutralized by cultivating diverse diplomatic and economic relations with neighbors, most of which do not share the "irrational"

US hostility toward the Islamic Republic. The same also is applicable to European allies of the United States and US rivals, such as China and Russia. The assumption is that these other countries can act as a moderating force on the United States, especially after it has been "burned" in Iraq.

Realists generally agree with Iran's neoconservatives about US arrogance, which they see as inciting opposition to its policies, notably the resistance in Iraq. They also are convinced that Washington does not fully understand why such opposition arises, and that this is why it tends to blame Iran for problems caused directly or indirectly by its own actions. This combination of superpower arrogance and ignorance is fraught with dangers but also offers long-term possibilities for outmaneuvering the United States. Iran, realists believe, should wait patiently, since the United States is creating the conditions that will force its exit from Iraq.

### **Searching for Agreement**

A third perspective, which may be termed "pragmatic," sees Iran and the United States as sharing similar objectives with respect to stability in Iraq as well as elsewhere, such as Afghanistan. Those holding this view generally argue for quiet (i.e., nonpublicized) cooperation with the United States on matters of common interests, even though they recognize that Iranian and US perspectives differ on other issues, such as the continuing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. They accept that the United States is a superpower that often behaves in ways that may harm other countries and that some of its specific policies may defy reason and even may be contrary to its own national interests—notably US policies toward Iran in the post-Soviet era. Many of them tend to have a relatively sophisticated knowledge about the debate over these policies among different constituents of the US foreign policy establishment and believe that Iran could work with "rational elements" within it. The pragmatic perspective is not identical to that of the political faction known as reformists, although many reformists, as well as some conservatives, share a pragmatic view on Iraq.<sup>15</sup>

For pragmatists, the case of Afghanistan provides a precedent for a situation where it has been possible for Iran and the United States to work together, however tenuously, on specific issues of mutual concern. For example, pragmatists who were or currently are in positions to know about details of Iran's policies in Afghanistan insist that they encouraged the Northern Alliance—the Afghan resistance forces fighting against the Taliban government—to cooperate with the United States beginning in October 2001. Furthermore, they say that de facto cooperation has continued, even though the politicians in both Iran and the United States are loath to admit this. According to a high-ranking Iranian army officer, "[Afghan President Hamid] Karzai could be a more effective leader, but he has brought some stability to the country, and neither we [Iranians] nor the

Americans have any interest in [seeing a return of] the situation that prevailed under the Taliban."<sup>16</sup>

The foremost area of common interests is Iraq. Indeed, pragmatists do not hesitate to say that the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime was a positive development for Iran. In the immediate aftermath of that government's collapse, however, they acknowledged that the establishment of the US occupation regime (the CPA) was an unexpected development that impacted negatively on Iran. But by the end of 2003, Washington "realized it could not maintain a puppet regime in Baghdad except by a level of permanent military force [that it] was unwilling to keep there."<sup>17</sup> As evidence for Washington's grasp of the reality in Iraq, pragmatists cite the termination of the CPA, its replacement by an interim government, the authorization of elections in January 2005, and the subsequent installation of a transitional Iraqi government in April, all developments that they believe Washington accepted reluctantly.

According to this perspective, Washington's objective in Iraq increasingly has become stability, an aim that Tehran also shares. Significantly, US officials came to realize that stability could not be achieved unless Iraqi Shias were allowed to have a meaningful political role in their country's future, another point of common agreement. Pragmatists also tend to be less concerned than Iran's neoconservatives about the autonomous government that the Kurds have been developing in northern Iraq. According to one deputy minister, "The Americans are using the Kurds and really do not want them to have an independent state. But the situation could get beyond the control of the Americans . . . and even if the Kurds somehow succeed in keeping an independent status, they are landlocked and their eternal enemies are the Turks and the Arabs. . . . But Kurds and Iranians are the same peoples, brothers, you know, like the Turks in Istanbul and Baku and Tashkent are alike in their language, etc. . . . Sure, we [Iran] don't like the idea of an independent Kurdish state there [in northern Iraq], but we could live with it and be its natural ally."<sup>18</sup>

The perception that Iran and the United States share similar strategic interests with respect to Iraq does encounter the reality of frequent US official rhetoric that Iran is trying to undermine US forces in Iraq. US secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, for instance, charged in August 2005 that the governments of both Iran and Syria were not interdicting arms to Iraqi insurgents that were being shipped from their countries.<sup>19</sup> How do pragmatists square such US charges with their belief in the mutuality of interests? On this question, they tend to compare the processes of formulating foreign policy in Iran and the United States. For example, they view the neoconservatives in Washington as a "group of Christian, Jewish, and secular fundamentalists" who are similar to Iran's fundamentalists (their term for Iranian neoconservatives) in the sense of having a xenophobic worldview that

stresses national security and is incapable of empathy with others.<sup>20</sup> They contend that the US neoconservatives pushed the United States into the war with Iraq as one element in a broader strategy that was focused on promoting the overall interests of Israel. However, because their promised “liberation” of Iraq was not realized, and because, instead, the United States found itself fighting an ever-spreading resistance movement, the US neoconservatives have lost their influence. Of course, they still can “invent” crises, such as trying to scare the world into believing that Iran is developing nuclear weapons.<sup>21</sup> However, those Americans who understand that Iran and the United States share a number of common strategic interests have reasserted influence in the policymaking process.<sup>22</sup>

### **Underestimating US Ideologies**

The realists' views may encompass a more “realistic” appraisal of US power than do those of Iran's neoconservatives or pragmatists. However, none of the three perspectives seem to have a realistic appraisal of US intentions.<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, it is easy to find among Iranian analysts genuine fascination about the views of influential Americans who have expressed doubts about the US official policy of not engaging with Iran on many contentious issues. On the other hand, it is difficult to find any Iranians who understand the worldview of US neoconservatives and how Iran fits into this thinking. Perhaps one of the best-known articulators of that worldview is Robert Kagan, who argues that the law of the jungle dominates international politics, and that it is the mission of the United States, as the world's sole superpower, to intervene, unilaterally if necessary, to prevent international outlaws from disrupting peace and stability.<sup>24</sup> Iran is one of the international outlaws for US neoconservatives. And they have used a succession of colorful “diplomatic” code terms—from “state sponsor of terrorism,” to “rogue state,” to “axis of evil,” to, most recently, “outpost of tyranny”—to describe Iran. One of their objectives, dating back at least to the early 1990s, is “regime change” in Iran. There are, of course, many articulate critiques of the US neoconservative vision. And even some members of the US foreign policy establishment seem to agree with Chalmers Johnson's argument that the unintended consequences for the United States of its foreign interventions already are being manifested in “blowback” from Iraq.<sup>25</sup> But for the neoconservative mind-set, if the US project in Iraq is not proceeding as they had predicted, then the problem is not the policy objective but the interference in Iraq of outlaw forces, such as Al-Qaida and Iran. This perception, rather than acting as a deterrent to the neoconservative agenda, has increased their desire for regime change in Iran. Nevertheless, the US neoconservatives have experienced at least a temporary setback in terms of their political influence in Washington due to a general view that the Iraq adventure is not going well for the United States. Indeed, it is note-

worthy that since March 2005, US official rhetoric directed against Iran briefly became somewhat milder; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, for example, described US policy as trying to “mitigate the downsides of Iranian behavior,” rather than regime change.<sup>26</sup>

However, while it is reasonable to conclude that US neoconservatives have failed to use Iraq to influence US policy toward Iran, it would be a mistake to assume they will be unsuccessful in persuading the US foreign policy establishment of the necessity for regime change in Iran *if* there is no resolution—acceptable to Washington—of the controversy over Iran's nuclear energy program. Neoconservative pundits long have argued that Iran's nuclear energy plans are a cover for a secret nuclear weapons program, and there has been a concerted stoking up of the nuclear issue since it was revealed in 2002 that Iran's nuclear development program was more extensive than it previously had acknowledged to the International Atomic Energy Agency. In fact, the circle of US officials and policy analysts who mistrust Iran's statements that it has no covert weapons program extends far beyond the neoconservatives. Curiously, inside Iran, among those involved with the formulation of foreign and national security, and irrespective of which perspective they may hold, there is a palpable underestimation of the determination in Washington to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. This view even prevails among those Americans who advocate constructive dialogue with Tehran and accept the likelihood of Iraq in the future having closer relations with Iran than with the United States.

### ■ Notes

1. The analysis in this chapter has benefited from the suggestions of several colleagues who read the initial drafts. I am grateful to the following scholars for taking the time to comment on my ideas: Hamid Abdollahyan, Ervand Abrahamian, Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Hamid Ahmadi, Jabbar Bagheri, Kaveh Ehsani, Saban Kardas, Afshin Matin-asgari, Ali Rezaei, Seyed Mohammad Moussavi-Rizvi, Jalil Roshandel, and Alexander Winder.

2. For a succinct overview of how factional political views are accommodated in the formulation of Iran's foreign policy, see Jalil Roshandel, “Evolution of the Decision-Making Process in Iranian Policy,” in Eric Hooglund, ed., *Twenty Years of Islamic Revolution*, pp. 123–142. See also Anoushiravan Ehteshami, “Iran's International Posture in the Wake of the Iraq War,” pp. 182–84.

3. See further the independent, bilingual English-Persian weekly *Iran Times* (Washington, DC), 31 January 2003.

4. For a summary of the debates within the Bush administration over regime change strategies for Iran, see *Iran Times*, 6 June 2003.

5. The change in attitudes with respect to US power can be seen in a series of public letters signed by many parliamentary deputies and other prominent persons calling on all officials to tone down anti-US rhetoric and to try to accommodate some US interests in the region in order to avert the possibility of a US invasion of

Iran from Iraq; the authorities would not allow the media to print these letters, but they circulated widely via the Internet and fax machines and were debated in various private gatherings. For excerpts from these letters, see *Iran Times*, 30 May 2003.

6. Such views have been expressed consistently in the editorials and opinion essays of the Tehran daily newspapers *Jomhuri-ye Islami* and *Kayhan*; see, for example, various issues of these papers for 2004 and 2005.

7. This same argument is made by some scholars in Europe and the United States, including Michael Klare, whose book *Resources Wars* was translated into Persian in 2004–2005.

8. Author interview with senior official who works in the office of the *faqih* (Ali Khamenehi), Tehran, January 2004.

9. *Iran Times*, 3 December 2004.

10. The relations between the Iraqi Shia party, Al-Dawa, and the government of Iran, at least since the early 1990s, have not been as close as those between SCIRI and Iran. According to Juan Cole (personal communication, April 9, 2005), Ibrahim al-Jafaari, the Al-Dawa leader appointed prime minister of the new government formed on 7 April 2005, lived in exile in Iran from 1980 to 1989 but may have left and moved to London in a dispute with fellow Al-Dawa members over keeping the party independent of Iran. See further <http://www.juancole.com>.

11. For more details on the security situation in Iran's Kurdish areas, see *Iran Times*, 9 September 2005.

12. *Iran Daily*, 25 November 2004.

13. The views of realists can be found in various issues of *Iran Times*, as well as in papers associated with the reformists, such as *Mardomsalari* and *Sharq*, January 2004 through August 2005.

14. Based on interviews with several realists in Tehran, 12–14 June and 25 June 2005.

15. The career officials of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which tries, usually successfully, to keep foreign policy issues separate from the partisan political struggles over domestic issues, has been a bastion of the pragmatic perspective. Former foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi (1997–2005) actually called for cooperation between Iran and the United States over Iraq in a speech at the United Nations in September 2003 and in a subsequent interview with a major US newspaper; see his interview in the *Washington Post*, 25 September 2003. For his views on Iraq, see Kamal Kharrazi, "The View from Tehran," pp. 26–27.

16. Author interview, Fars province, Iran, 25 December 2003.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Author interview, Tehran, January 2004.

19. See further *Iran Times*, 19 August 2005.

20. This analysis is based on conversations with several Iranian scholars and analysts in Tehran, January 2004; in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey, July 2004; and in Salmanshahr, Tehran and Shiraz, Iran, June 2005.

21. On the US debate over Iran's nuclear development program, see Kaveh Ehsani and Chris Toensing, "Neo-Conservatives, Hardliner Clerics, and the Bomb," *Middle East Report* no. 233 (Winter 2004), pp. 10–15.

22. According to these Iranians, the Council on Foreign Relations, publisher of the quarterly *Foreign Affairs*, is an "influential" organization that advocates "dialogue" with Iran over mutual interests. Significantly, several Iranian colleagues who subscribe to this view called or e-mailed me during summer 2004 to express their favorable reaction to a newly released council study paper *Iran: Time for a New Approach* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, July 2004). Several prominent

former US officials also are cited as sharing this position, including Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft.

23. For a fascinating analysis of foreign policy perspectives among Iran's elite as being shaped by a general "utopian romanticism" with a Muslim inflection, see Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, "Islamic Utopian Romanticism and the Foreign Policy Culture of Iran," *Critique* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2005), pp. 265–292.

24. See further Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power*.

25. See further Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback*. For a similar view about the consequences of US intervention from inside the US government, see Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris*.

26. For an analysis of and the excerpts pertaining to Iran from Rice, regarding her 15 September 2005 interview with the editors of *NBC News*, see *Iran Times*, 23 September 2005. On Rice's testimony to the US Senate that the US position vis-à-vis Iranian policy in Iraq was one of trying to have discussions in Baghdad between the US and Iranian ambassadors, see *Iran Times*, 28 October 2005.