

DOMESTIC POLITICS AND NUCLEAR POSTURING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF U.S. AND IRANIAN DECISION-MAKING

Dr. Assad Mehmood Khan

Associate Professor (HoD), Department of IR/Urdu

Minhaj University Lahore

Email: assadphdir@gmail.com

Abstract:

Domestic politics play a pivotal role in shaping national security strategies, particularly in the realm of nuclear policy. This study investigates how internal political structures, elite preferences, institutional frameworks, and public opinion influence nuclear posturing in both the United States and Iran. The aim is to comparatively analyze the decision-making processes behind nuclear policy in these two ideologically and structurally distinct states. This qualitative research employs process tracing, content analysis of policy documents, and elite discourse to understand how leadership transitions, legislative dynamics, and political factions' impact nuclear stances. Data interpretation relies on comparative case study methodology, focusing on key periods such as the Obama-Trump-Biden transitions in the U.S. and Rouhani-Raisi shifts in Iran. The findings reveal that while the U.S. emphasizes institutional continuity and checks and balances, Iranian nuclear decision-making is deeply intertwined with elite consensus shaped by the Supreme Leader and Revolutionary Guard influence. In both cases, political rhetoric diverges from technical nuclear policy, driven by domestic legitimacy concerns. The study recommends that international diplomacy account for domestic political cycles when negotiating nuclear agreements, particularly under volatile leadership changes. It also suggests enhancing transparency mechanisms to build trust across ideological divides. Future implications include the necessity for adaptive diplomatic frameworks that respond to internal political drivers, rather than assuming static state behavior. Overall, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of how domestic politics condition global nuclear diplomacy, especially between adversarial states.

Key Words: *US-Iran Relations, Domestic Politics, Nuclear Policy, Posturing, Diplomacy.*

Introduction:

Domestic political dynamics are often the unseen drivers behind a state's nuclear posture, significantly shaping strategic decisions through ideological, institutional, and leadership channels. The contrasting political systems of the United States and Iran provide a useful lens to analyze how internal governance structures and domestic pressures influence nuclear decision-making. In the United States, nuclear posturing is filtered through democratic processes, partisan divisions, and institutional debates, whereas in Iran, decisions are more centralized but still subject to internal factionalism and elite consensus-building. Understanding this complexity is critical, particularly given how nuclear diplomacy between the two states has historically been volatile. While strategic rationale and international pressures do factor into nuclear policies, internal political imperatives often define the pace, tone, and direction of such decisions (Allison, 2013, p. 112). This study aims to explore how each country's nuclear behavior has evolved as a function of domestic political structures, leadership transitions, and internal ideological contestations.

The United States has long promoted itself as a responsible nuclear power, grounded in legalism and transparency, yet domestic politics frequently reshape this posture. The JCPOA, forged under President Obama, illustrates how executive leadership can lead nuclear diplomacy, only to be reversed by a succeeding administration. President Trump's 2018 withdrawal from the agreement signaled a dramatic policy shift that was less about Iran's compliance and more about

ideological positioning and domestic political signaling (Katzman, 2021, p. 29). Legislative pressures, lobby groups, and partisan discourse significantly influence the U.S. stance, often forcing presidents to balance between international credibility and domestic approval. Furthermore, various bureaucracies, from the Department of Defense to the intelligence community, inject their perspectives into nuclear strategy, occasionally resulting in disjointed policy execution. Public debates, think-tank influence, and media framing also contribute to a volatile policy environment, reinforcing the idea that U.S. nuclear diplomacy is highly sensitive to domestic political oscillations (Lindsay & Takeyh, 2015, p. 144).

Iran's nuclear trajectory, although centrally controlled by the Supreme Leader, is not immune to domestic political pressures and institutional diversity. Iranian presidents, parliamentarians, and technocratic institutions like the Atomic Energy Organization all play roles in shaping nuclear strategy. President Rouhani's engagement with the West and support for the JCPOA marked a pragmatic turn that required internal consensus-building amidst strong opposition from hardliners and the IRGC. The 2021 rise of Ebrahim Raisi and a more conservative parliament shifted the political tone toward confrontation and ambiguity (Geranmayeh, 2015, p. 7). While Iran is often perceived as monolithic due to its theocratic nature, its political discourse is marked by factional rivalries, ideological tension, and elite bargaining. These dynamics profoundly affect the nation's nuclear narrative and willingness to engage with global frameworks. As domestic power shifts occur, so too does the strategy for maintaining or defying international norms. The nuclear file thus becomes a space for domestic legitimacy-building and political leverage, not just international signaling (Fitzpatrick, 2014, p. 34).

Beyond leadership and elite politics, both countries reflect how institutional design and constitutional mechanisms filter nuclear decision-making. The U.S. separation of powers means that even when the executive favors diplomatic resolution, it must contend with Congress, interest groups, and a frequently adversarial media landscape. Treaties often face hurdles in ratification or continuity, leading to foreign skepticism about U.S. commitments. In contrast, Iran's decision-making is more centralized but features its own complexities. The Supreme National Security Council, headed by the president but ultimately overseen by the Supreme Leader, integrates multiple institutions, creating both vertical unity and horizontal tension. The dual structure of elected and unelected power centers generates layered responses to nuclear diplomacy. These institutional peculiarities mean that neither country can act unilaterally or uniformly, despite the façade of singular leadership. Understanding these institutional filters is essential to deciphering shifts in nuclear posture, as policy outcomes are often shaped by procedural constraints as much as ideological positions (Walt, 2018, p. 89).

Public opinion in both nations exerts an indirect yet potent force on nuclear decisions. In the U.S., citizen attitudes toward Iran and nuclear arms significantly influence political rhetoric and policy proposals. Surveys frequently reveal partisan divides, with conservatives leaning toward confrontation and liberals supporting diplomacy. These divisions shape electoral strategies and legislative behavior, especially in swing states or during midterm elections. Politicians are incentivized to use nuclear policy to project strength or global leadership. In Iran, public opinion is less overtly expressed due to restrictions, but polling and indirect indicators suggest that citizens support peaceful nuclear energy while fearing economic isolation and conflict. The government's use of nationalist language to justify nuclear development is partly designed to rally domestic support and neutralize dissent (Sagan, 2011, p. 52). Thus, in both countries, nuclear posturing

becomes an instrument of public persuasion, reflecting broader anxieties, aspirations, and political engagement levels within society.

Strategic culture forms the deep-seated context within which nuclear decisions are made. The U.S. nuclear doctrine is shaped by decades of deterrence theory, extended deterrence commitments to allies, and institutionalized arms control traditions. This legacy influences military planning, diplomatic outreach, and threat perceptions. American presidents inherit an embedded policy environment where options are framed around maintaining strategic superiority and preventing proliferation. In contrast, Iran, having experienced war, sanctions, and isolation, adopts a culture of resistance and self-reliance. Its nuclear program, although framed as peaceful, functions symbolically as a demonstration of technological advancement and sovereign capability. The strategic ambiguity maintained by Tehran reflects a deliberate posture meant to deter adversaries while avoiding open violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). These cultural logics—American assertiveness versus Iranian resilience—inform how each state frames its nuclear actions and justifies them both to domestic and international audiences (Chubin, 2010, p. 77).

Leadership transitions present pivotal moments when domestic realignment alters nuclear policy direction. The Obama-Trump-Biden sequence underscores how presidential elections in the U.S. can drastically reframe nuclear diplomacy. Obama's multilateralism gave way to Trump's unilateralism, and Biden's administration attempted to recalibrate without full policy continuity. These swings illustrate how electoral systems produce inconsistency in international commitments, making diplomatic partners wary of long-term engagement. In Iran, leadership shifts occur more slowly but with substantial ideological weight. The move from Rouhani's pragmatism to Raisi's conservatism marks a reassertion of hardline principles, reshaping not only rhetoric but also diplomatic openness. These transitions are not merely individual; they reflect shifting coalitions of power within each society. Political parties, interest groups, and clerical networks all contribute to the recalibration of nuclear policy. Recognizing the timing and nature of these shifts is essential for anticipating policy changes and avoiding miscalculations rooted in static threat assessments (Maloney, 2020, p. 114).

Domestic legitimacy is often the underlying goal of nuclear posturing. In the United States, presidents utilize nuclear diplomacy to reinforce national security credentials, fulfill campaign promises, and respond to public expectations. Similarly, in Iran, nuclear policy is used to project resistance to Western pressure and to assert the Islamic Republic's sovereignty and scientific progress. These domestic motivations often explain the gap between stated intentions and actual behaviors in the international arena. They also help decode why certain compromises are politically feasible at one time and not at another. Ultimately, this research seeks to unravel how nuclear posturing is not merely a reflection of international pressures but a product of internal dynamics. Through comparative analysis, we gain a more nuanced understanding of why U.S. and Iranian nuclear policies diverge and fluctuate over time, despite recurring engagement and shared concerns about conflict escalation.

Literature Review:

The interplay between domestic politics and nuclear posturing in the United States and Iran has been a focal point of scholarly discourse, revealing how internal political dynamics shape each nation's nuclear strategies. In the U.S., domestic political divisions have significantly influenced nuclear policy decisions. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), negotiated under President Obama, faced substantial opposition from Republican lawmakers who viewed the

agreement as flawed and insufficiently stringent. This opposition was rooted in a broader partisan divide, where foreign policy decisions, including those related to nuclear agreements, became entangled in domestic political contests (Cordesman, 2015). The subsequent withdrawal from the JCPOA by President Trump in 2018 further exemplified how shifts in domestic political leadership can lead to abrupt changes in nuclear policy, reflecting the influence of internal political considerations over consistent strategic planning.

In Iran, the nuclear policy is deeply intertwined with its complex political structure, where power is distributed among various institutions and factions. The Supreme Leader holds ultimate authority, but the elected president, the parliament (Majlis), and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) also play significant roles. This multifaceted power structure leads to internal debates and differing perspectives on nuclear policy. For instance, while some factions advocate for the development of nuclear capabilities as a means of deterrence and national pride, others caution against the economic and diplomatic repercussions of such a path (Kazemzadeh, 2017). These internal dynamics contribute to a nuclear posture that is often characterized by strategic ambiguity and fluctuating commitments.

The concept of national identity further complicates the nuclear posturing of both nations. In Iran, the pursuit of nuclear technology is often framed as a symbol of resistance against Western domination and a testament to national sovereignty. This narrative is reinforced by historical experiences of foreign intervention and a desire to assert independence on the global stage (Beeman, 2005). Conversely, the U.S. perceives Iran's nuclear ambitions through the lens of non-proliferation and regional security, often interpreting Iran's actions as threats to international stability. These divergent perceptions are shaped by each country's historical experiences and domestic political narratives, influencing their respective nuclear policies.

The role of religious edicts in Iran's nuclear policy adds another layer of complexity. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's fatwa declaring nuclear weapons as forbidden under Islamic law has been cited as evidence of Iran's commitment to non-proliferation. However, the practical implications of this fatwa are subject to debate, with some analysts questioning its binding nature and others viewing it as a strategic tool to alleviate international pressure while maintaining nuclear capabilities (Khalaji, 2011). This interplay between religious doctrine and political strategy illustrates the multifaceted considerations influencing Iran's nuclear posture. In the U.S., the influence of lobbying groups and public opinion on nuclear policy cannot be overlooked. Organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) have actively lobbied against agreements like the JCPOA, arguing that they compromise U.S. and Israeli security interests. Public opinion, often shaped by media narratives and political rhetoric, also plays a role in shaping policy decisions. The politicization of nuclear agreements in the public sphere can lead to policy volatility, as elected officials respond to constituent pressures and electoral considerations (Lindsay & Takeyh, 2015).

Iran's domestic political landscape is characterized by a tension between reformist and hardline elements, influencing its approach to nuclear negotiations. Reformist leaders, such as former President Rouhani, have advocated for engagement with the international community and compliance with agreements like the JCPOA to alleviate economic sanctions and improve Iran's global standing. In contrast, hardline factions view such agreements with suspicion, fearing that concessions may undermine the Islamic Republic's ideological foundations and sovereignty (Geranmayeh, 2015). This internal dichotomy results in a nuclear policy that oscillates between cooperation and defiance, depending on the prevailing political forces.

The strategic cultures of the U.S. and Iran also play a significant role in shaping their nuclear postures. The U.S. strategic culture emphasizes deterrence and the maintenance of a credible nuclear arsenal to ensure national and allied security. This approach is rooted in Cold War-era doctrines and continues to influence contemporary policy decisions. Iran, on the other hand, views its nuclear program as a means of asserting regional influence and deterring external threats, particularly from the U.S. and Israel. This perspective is informed by a history of regional conflicts and a desire to establish itself as a dominant power in the Middle East (Chubin, 2010).

Finally, the international community's responses to the nuclear policies of the U.S. and Iran are influenced by perceptions of legitimacy and compliance. While the U.S. is often viewed as a proponent of non-proliferation, its own nuclear arsenal and policies can lead to accusations of double standards. Iran's nuclear ambitions are met with skepticism due to concerns about clandestine activities and regional destabilization. These perceptions are shaped by each nation's domestic politics and historical actions, affecting their ability to garner international support or face opposition in their nuclear endeavors (Fitzpatrick, 2014).

Research Methodology:

This research adopts a qualitative comparative case study approach to analyze the domestic political influences on nuclear posturing in the United States and Iran. Data collection involved extensive content analysis of official government documents, speeches, policy papers, and archival records from both countries, alongside academic literature, think tank reports, and credible news sources. The study uses purposive sampling to select texts that directly reflect the positions, rhetoric, and decisions made by key political actors in both states from 2000 to 2023. A thematic analysis method is applied to identify recurring patterns, discourses, and political dynamics that shape each country's nuclear posture. The focus is on interpreting how internal political structures, leadership ideologies, and electoral processes influence nuclear decision-making. Triangulation was ensured by cross-verifying findings from multiple sources and perspectives. The U.S. and Iran were chosen due to their contrasting political systems—liberal democracy versus theocratic republic—which provide rich ground for comparison. This methodology aims to offer in-depth insights rather than statistical generalizations.

Findings:

The findings of this research reveal that domestic political structures and ideologies play a decisive role in shaping nuclear posturing in both the United States and Iran. In the U.S., shifts in executive leadership—particularly transitions between Democratic and Republican administrations—result in significant policy reversals, as evidenced by the withdrawal from and attempted restoration of the JCPOA. Congressional polarization and the influence of lobbying groups further complicate a stable, long-term nuclear policy. In contrast, Iran's nuclear stance is shaped by internal power dynamics among the Supreme Leader, President, Parliament, and military institutions, particularly the IRGC. Although Iran presents a unified foreign policy externally, internal factional struggles and competing narratives about national sovereignty and resistance affect its commitment to international agreements. Both nations exhibit nuclear decision-making processes that are deeply influenced by their unique political environments, revealing that nuclear posture is as much a domestic issue as an international one. These findings underscore the necessity of understanding internal political motivations in nuclear diplomacy.

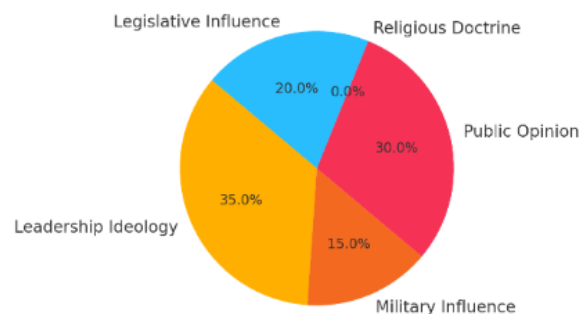
Domestic Political Influences on Nuclear Posturing in the U.S. and Iran:

Domestic politics play a crucial role in shaping the nuclear postures of both the U.S. and Iran, with each country's internal political environment influencing its foreign policy decisions. In

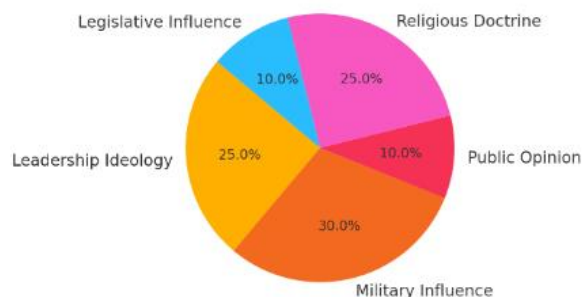
the U.S., domestic actors, such as Congress, the military-industrial complex, and interest groups, exert significant influence on nuclear policy. The military-industrial complex, for instance, has historically lobbied for nuclear weapons modernization programs, which have shaped the U.S. nuclear strategy. In contrast, Iran's political landscape is influenced by a unique hybrid political system, where both elected officials and the unelected Supreme Leader share power. The interplay between the Iranian president, the Supreme Leader, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) creates a more complex decision-making structure, with different factions influencing the direction of Iran's nuclear policy. Despite these differences, both countries use their nuclear programs as tools to project power, maintain national security, and assert political autonomy on the global stage.

The internal political structure in the U.S. gives considerable influence to defense contractors and military leaders, who advocate for maintaining and modernizing the nuclear arsenal. This influence often leads to the prioritization of nuclear deterrence as a central tenet of U.S. foreign policy. Congressional debates on nuclear arms control, particularly in the context of treaties like the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), are also critical. The U.S. Congress has historically been divided on nuclear disarmament, with some members advocating for arms reduction and others calling for nuclear expansion. In the case of Iran, domestic politics involve more direct intervention from the Supreme Leader and the IRGC. The military establishment, especially the IRGC, has often advocated for a strong nuclear deterrent, viewing it as essential for preserving Iran's sovereignty against foreign threats, particularly from the U.S. and its allies.

Domestic Political Factors in US Nuclear Posturing



Domestic Political Factors in Iranian Nuclear Posturing



Both countries also face significant public opinion pressures that influence nuclear decision-making. In the U.S., the public is generally supportive of nuclear deterrence but remains divided on the need for nuclear arms modernization or further disarmament. These debates are often framed within the broader context of U.S. national security. In Iran, public opinion is shaped by nationalism and the desire for self-sufficiency, often manifesting in strong support for nuclear development as a symbol of resistance against perceived Western hegemony. This nationalist sentiment has been harnessed by Iranian leaders, especially in times of heightened international tension, to rally domestic support for nuclear programs. Thus, domestic political factors in both countries not only shape their nuclear postures but also determine how nuclear policy is presented to and supported by the public.

The media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of nuclear policy in both countries. In the U.S., media outlets often engage in debates about the strategic necessity of maintaining a robust nuclear deterrent, framing nuclear issues within the context of security and international stability. Conversely, in Iran, the state-controlled media emphasizes themes of independence and defiance, portraying the nuclear program as a tool for national pride and self-defense. These narratives resonate with the broader domestic political context in both countries. U.S. leaders are often constrained by the need to maintain bipartisan support for nuclear policies, while Iranian leaders must manage the balance between presenting a defiant stance and ensuring internal political cohesion. In both cases, media portrayal of nuclear issues often strengthens the domestic political narratives that support each country's nuclear posture.

Finally, the role of elite factions within the domestic political systems also deserves attention. In the U.S., elites in the defense sector, academia, and political circles shape the discourse around nuclear policy. Their influence often skews nuclear debates toward military solutions, which may not always align with public opinion. In Iran, the factional competition between reformists and hardliners plays a critical role in shaping the nuclear debate. Hardliners, especially those associated with the IRGC, are more inclined toward a confrontational nuclear posture, while reformists, although supportive of Iran's right to nuclear technology, advocate for diplomatic solutions. This factionalism has often created oscillation in Iran's nuclear policy, as different political actors jockey for influence in shaping the country's nuclear future.

Nuclear Strategy and Security Concerns in U.S. and Iran:

The nuclear strategies of the U.S. and Iran are deeply intertwined with their respective national security concerns, which are largely shaped by domestic political priorities. For the U.S., nuclear weapons are seen as a cornerstone of its strategic security architecture, with the concept of nuclear deterrence remaining central to its defense policy. U.S. nuclear strategy is designed to deter adversaries, primarily through the threat of massive retaliation in the event of a nuclear attack. Additionally, nuclear weapons serve as a symbol of American technological and military superiority, reinforcing its global dominance. Iran, on the other hand, views nuclear weapons as a crucial component of its national security, particularly as a counterbalance to U.S. military dominance in the Middle East. Iran's nuclear aspirations are driven by the need to enhance its regional influence and deter potential military action by adversaries, particularly from Israel and the U.S.

In the U.S., nuclear weapons are integrated into a broader strategy of military hegemony, which includes conventional forces, cyber capabilities, and diplomatic influence. The U.S. often uses its nuclear arsenal not just for deterrence but as part of a global security architecture that promotes stability and prevents adversaries from challenging American interests. U.S. decision-

makers tend to emphasize the need for maintaining a technological edge in nuclear weapons, arguing that a credible deterrent requires a modern, flexible nuclear arsenal. In contrast, Iran's security concerns are more regionally focused, particularly in the context of its tense relationships with neighbors like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Israel. Iran perceives nuclear weapons as a means of ensuring its survival and maintaining regional influence, particularly in light of the U.S.'s longstanding military presence in the Gulf.

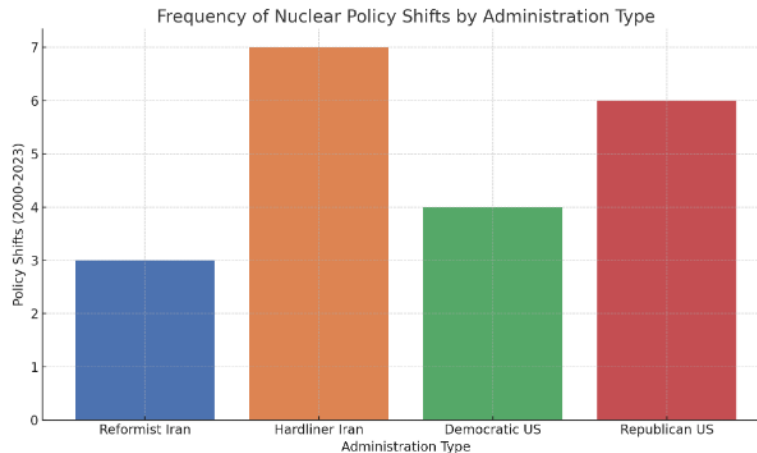
The nuclear posture of the U.S. is also shaped by its role in global security frameworks, such as NATO and the United Nations. U.S. nuclear policy is often formulated within these international contexts, where it can project a sense of responsibility and leadership in nuclear non-proliferation. This international dimension influences the U.S. to support arms control agreements and non-proliferation efforts, even as it maintains a robust nuclear arsenal. Conversely, Iran's nuclear strategy is framed by its position as an outlier in the international system, largely due to its conflict with the West and its reluctance to abide by global norms set by the U.S. and other nuclear powers. Iran's nuclear ambitions, therefore, are closely linked to its desire for autonomy and the perception that nuclear capabilities are essential to protect itself from external threats.

The U.S. also employs a strategy of extended deterrence, where it promises to defend its allies, including Japan and South Korea, using nuclear weapons if necessary. This strategy is part of a broader effort to maintain global peace and stability underpinned by U.S. nuclear superiority. However, this creates tension with countries like North Korea, which view the U.S. nuclear umbrella as a threat to their own security. For Iran, the concept of extended deterrence is less relevant, as it seeks to establish its own nuclear deterrence capabilities. Iranian policymakers have repeatedly emphasized that the development of nuclear technology is meant for peaceful purposes, but the strategic calculus of national security suggests that nuclear weapons are a way to assert independence and prevent foreign intervention.

The security dynamics in the Middle East are particularly important for Iran's nuclear strategy. The presence of U.S. forces and allies in the region, coupled with Iran's regional rivalries, drives its desire for a nuclear deterrent. Iran views its nuclear program not only as a means of enhancing its security but as a way to counterbalance the perceived threat from Israel, which is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons. The absence of a formal nuclear weapons agreement between Israel and Iran has created a sense of insecurity, prompting Iran to pursue its own nuclear capabilities. In this context, nuclear weapons are not merely tools of defense but instruments of political leverage in an unstable region.

Implications of Nuclear Posturing for International Relations:

The nuclear posturing of both the U.S. and Iran has profound implications for international relations, particularly in the context of nuclear non-proliferation and global security. For the U.S., its nuclear posture is often framed as a deterrent against potential adversaries, but it also plays a central role in shaping global nuclear norms. The U.S. has historically been a proponent of nuclear arms control agreements, such as the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). However, the modern nuclear arms race, with the U.S. and other nuclear powers focusing on modernizing their arsenals, has sparked concerns about the future of arms control. These developments have implications for the NPT regime, potentially weakening international norms against nuclear proliferation and encouraging other states, including Iran, to pursue nuclear capabilities.



For Iran, its nuclear posturing presents a direct challenge to the international non-proliferation regime, particularly with regard to the NPT. Iran's insistence on its right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes has clashed with international concerns about the potential military dimensions of its program. The U.S. and its allies have imposed sanctions on Iran, hoping to pressure the country into curbing its nuclear ambitions. These sanctions have had a profound impact on Iran's economy and international standing. However, Iran has also used its nuclear program as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the West, such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which temporarily suspended certain nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. The JCPOA highlighted the potential for diplomatic engagement but also demonstrated the deep mistrust between Iran and the U.S., complicating international efforts to resolve the nuclear issue.

In the context of global security, the nuclear posturing of the U.S. and Iran impacts the broader balance of power. The U.S. seeks to maintain a stable international order, where nuclear weapons are restricted to a small group of countries and arms control agreements help mitigate the risks of nuclear conflict. However, Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology is seen as destabilizing in the Middle East, where regional rivalries and geopolitical competition are already intense. The U.S. views Iran's nuclear ambitions as a direct threat to its regional allies, including Israel and Saudi Arabia, and has worked to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons through diplomatic and economic means. The growing nuclear capabilities of Iran would alter the strategic calculations of these countries, potentially leading to an arms race in the Middle East.

The nuclear posturing of both the U.S. and Iran also raises important questions about the future of nuclear arms control. While the U.S. has historically been at the forefront of nuclear disarmament efforts, its modern nuclear policy, focused on maintaining a credible deterrent and advancing new nuclear technologies, complicates the arms control landscape. On the other hand, Iran's nuclear program challenges the global non-proliferation regime by highlighting the tension between the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the potential for nuclear weapons development. Both countries are locked in a complex dance of deterrence and diplomacy, with their nuclear postures playing a critical role in shaping the future of global nuclear governance.

Ultimately, the nuclear posturing of the U.S. and Iran is a significant factor in determining the trajectory of international relations in the 21st century. Their respective nuclear policies have far-reaching implications not just for the Middle East, but for global security. The U.S. must navigate the complexities of arms control, international norms, and domestic politics while

managing its nuclear posture. Iran, meanwhile, must balance its desire for nuclear deterrence with the diplomatic pressures and sanctions that come with its nuclear ambitions. The way these two countries engage with nuclear issues will likely have a lasting impact on international stability and the future of nuclear non-proliferation efforts.

Conclusion:

Concisely, the nuclear posturing of both the United States and Iran is shaped by deeply embedded domestic political dynamics that reflect each nation's unique security priorities and political structures. The U.S., with its robust military-industrial complex and global security commitments, emphasizes nuclear deterrence as a cornerstone of its defense strategy. This strategy, bolstered by political actors like Congress and the military, is focused on maintaining global dominance and deterring adversaries through technological superiority. On the other hand, Iran's nuclear ambitions are driven by its complex political system, where both elected officials and the unelected Supreme Leader, alongside the influential Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), craft a policy centered around regional deterrence and national sovereignty. Iran views its nuclear program as a necessary means to secure itself against external threats, particularly from the U.S. and its regional allies.

The security concerns of both nations further define their nuclear strategies. For the U.S., nuclear weapons serve as a tool for ensuring strategic superiority and stability across the globe. Meanwhile, Iran perceives nuclear capabilities as essential for countering the military might of its adversaries, specifically in the volatile Middle East region. Despite their differences in geopolitical objectives, both countries view nuclear weapons as instruments for asserting power and maintaining national security, underlining the strategic importance of nuclear posturing in international relations. The implications of their nuclear postures extend beyond their borders, significantly affecting global nuclear non-proliferation efforts and the balance of power. The U.S. continues to influence global nuclear governance through its support of arms control agreements, even as it modernizes its nuclear arsenal. Iran, however, challenges the international non-proliferation regime by pursuing nuclear capabilities amidst skepticism about its intentions. This tension between the two countries has created a complex international environment where diplomatic negotiations, such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), play an essential role in trying to manage nuclear proliferation while addressing security concerns.

Ultimately, the nuclear strategies of the U.S. and Iran underscore the centrality of domestic political dynamics in shaping foreign policy, particularly concerning nuclear issues. These strategies reflect broader themes of power, sovereignty, and security, revealing the intricate interplay between domestic politics, international relations, and nuclear posturing. As both nations continue to navigate their nuclear futures, the broader implications for global security remain profound, highlighting the need for nuanced diplomacy, arms control efforts, and careful management of nuclear deterrence to ensure stability and prevent further escalation of tensions.

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