



# IRAN AND THE BOMB

## BRET STEPHENS

Why are so many people with so many different perspectives – from the Prime Minister of Israel, to the King of Saudi Arabia – so worried that Iran might build a deliverable nuclear weapon? Or to put it even more simply: why do we have to stop Iran from getting the bomb?

The reason is painfully obvious: They might actually use it.

France has nuclear weapons. So does the United Kingdom. But nobody worries that they will use them. It's not nuclear weapons that are the problem. It's who has them and what they might do with them.

“We do not worship Iran, we worship Allah,” said Iranian Leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1980. “I say let this land burn. I say let this land go up in smoke, provided Islam remains triumphant in the rest of the world.”

A militant nation that does not fear its own destruction is a sure threat to its enemies. And that threat is taken to a whole new level if the militant nation arms itself with nuclear weapons.

Who are the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran?

There are three:

The first enemy of Iran is the United States of America.

A common slogan chanted by Iranians at public rallies is “Death to America.” But it's not just a slogan. Iran has been committing actual acts of war against what it calls “The Great Satan” for over three decades.

There was Iran's seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979, the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut that killed 241 American servicemen, and the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia that killed another 19 Americans – not to mention the War in Iraq, during which Iran did little to disguise the fact that it supplied anti-American militias with sophisticated, armor-piercing munitions responsible for the maiming and death of hundreds of U.S. soldiers.

A nuclear Iran could greatly expand its efforts to harm American interests, secure in the knowledge that its possession of nuclear weapons would make any military retaliation extremely unlikely.

And over time, and not much time, a nuclear Iran could develop the sort of intercontinental ballistic missiles that would bring American and European cities within range of its weapons.

A second enemy of Iran, which is a Shiite Muslim nation, are the Sunni Muslim nations of the Middle East. An Iranian bomb would instantly spark a nuclear arms race in the region as Arab states – nearly all of which have majority Sunni populations – move to defend themselves against aggression from Iran.

As these regimes and dictatorships race to become nuclear powers, the chances that nuclear weapons might be used, either directly or through terrorist proxies, grow exponentially.

And the third and ultimate enemy of Iran is Israel.

Only around a thousand miles separate the Islamic Republic from The Jewish State. Iranian leaders have called Israel “a rabid dog,” “a cancerous tumor that needs to be cut away,” and have called publicly and repeatedly for Israel’s “annihilation.”

They wage a continuous terrorist war against Israel through their proxies, Hezbollah and Hamas.

Former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani – a man often described as a moderate and a pragmatist in the Western press – articulated the Iranian position this way:

“If one day, the Islamic world is also equipped with weapons like those that Israel possesses now, then the imperialists’ strategy will reach a standstill because the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything. However, one bomb will only harm the Islamic world.”

He’s right.

That’s why the civilized and sensible leaders of the world cannot allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons.

Because once the Iranians do, they will pose a severe threat to the security of America and Europe, spark a regional arms race that could see the world’s worst players acquire the world’s worst weapons, and threaten the Jews with extermination for the second time in a century.

Or to put it more simply: Iran cannot be allowed to get the bomb because they might actually use it.

I’m Bret Stephens.