

## Contributions

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# Iranians and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

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## Introduction

Iran's nuclear ambitions continue to vex the international community, bringing the Islamic Republic into ever-sharpening conflict with the United States and its key European allies (Dueck and Takeyh 2010)<sup>1</sup>. Iran, a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapons state, claims that it seeks only to develop the full fuel cycle of a nuclear energy program for peaceful purposes rather than the pursuit of nuclear weapons. All NPT signatories are allowed to do so under Article IV of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty).<sup>2</sup> Despite Iran's claims that enrichment is a right conferred by the NPT, the United States and its allies believe that Iran is using its purportedly civilian energy program to develop a nuclear weapons capability covertly. Washington demands that Tehran end uranium enrichment on Iranian soil, fearing that Iran will

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<sup>1</sup>Dueck, Colin and Ray Takeyh. 2007. "Iran's Nuclear Challenge." *Political Science Quarterly* 122, 2.

<sup>2</sup>Full text of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, available at Federation of Atomic

eventually break out of the NPT and weaponize as North Korea did in 2006 (IAEA Board of Governors 2010)<sup>3</sup>.

To achieve this goal, the United States, working with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the EU-3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom), and the European Commission, among others, has sought to increase the pressure on Iran in a variety of ways. While calls for military action were most prevalent during President George W. Bush's tenure, President Barack Obama's initial approach of engaging the regime through diplomacy has failed to fructify and thus the Obama administration too is considering punitive approaches (Cooper and Landler 2010)<sup>4</sup>. Israel, which enjoys Washington's support, is increasingly considering military action to retard Iran's program (Levinson 2010)<sup>5</sup>.

Given the increasing international concern about Iran's nuclear brinkmanship, numerous organizations have fielded public opinion surveys in Iran. These surveys tend to cover a range of issues pertinent to Iran's domestic and foreign policies, inclusive of questions that seek to ascertain the degree to which Iran's citizenry approves of the NPT, Iran's commitment to the NPT, beliefs about other states' commitment to the NPT as well as development of nuclear weapons (Global Opinion Trends 2002-2007: A Rising Tide Lifts Mood In The Developing World – Sharp Decline in Support for Suicide Bombing in Muslim Countries 2007; Moghadd 2008; Muslim Public Opinion on US Policy, Attacks on

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<sup>3</sup>The legality of this position is tenuous. Opponents—such as Iran—take refuge in Article IV. However, states found to be in violation of Articles I or II forfeit the rights conferred by Article IV. Article I of the NPT states “Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; and not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce any non-nuclear weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices.” Article II of the NPT states “Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices” (IAEA Board of Governors, 2010).

<sup>4</sup>Cooper, Helene and Mark Landler. 2010. “U.S. Eyes New Sanctions Over Iran Nuclear Program.” *New York Times*. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/10/world/middleeast/10sanctions.html>.

<sup>5</sup>Levinson, Charles. 2010. “Israelis Debate Striking Iran Without U.S. Consent.” *Wall Street Journal*. Available at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB100014240527487037575>

Civilians, and al Qaeda 2007; Poll of Iranians and Americans 2008; Results of a New Nationwide Public Opinion Survey of Iran before the June 12, 2009 Presidential Elections 2009). All of these polling efforts and/or residual products present only media-friendly tabulations rather than in-depth analysis of these data. Consequently, these polling efforts offer few if any explanatory insights into Iranians' beliefs about the NPT and related policy issues.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, most firms that have conducted these surveys in Iran do not make respondent-level data available freely to the public, providing scholars no opportunities to expand upon these interesting, but ultimately unsatisfying, analyses.

This article aims to advance the current state of knowledge about Iranian beliefs about the NPT. As discussed herein, there is considerable debate about whether or not Iran seeks to acquire weapons under the guise of civilian nuclear technology development which is Iran's officially stated position. Despite Iran's claims, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which oversees NPT compliance, has repeatedly reported that Iran has not satisfactorily addressed IAEA information that suggests that the country may in fact have a nuclear weapons program (IAEA Board of Governors 2011; Elbaradei, 2011)<sup>7</sup>. However, this paper does not seek to intervene in these technical discussions about Iran's intentions. Rather, it seeks to explore popular opinions towards the NPT and Iran's continued commitment to the NPT as well as the determinants thereof.

This effort will enable analysts to discern with greater clarity the distance that exists between the Iranian regime on this key policy question and the variegated public over which the regime governs. Specifically, we use data from a national survey of 710 Iranians in 2008 which the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) administered. We find that, among those who support Iran's continued commitment to the NPT, are those who value Iran's ability to maximally exploit civilian capabilities with the aim of weaponizing in the future as well as those who believe that it is in Iran's best interest to abjure weaponization. However, the PIPA surveys

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<sup>6</sup>One exception is Fair and Shellman (2008). As the authors of that paper note, they confronted a serious technical issue as the data they used from the 2006 survey of Iranians conducted by the United States Institute of Peace and the Program on International Policy Attitudes split the sample on key questions pertaining to support for the program.

<sup>7</sup>IAEA Board of Governors. 2011. “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran.” <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2011/gov2011-29.pdf>. Elbaradei, Mohamed. 2011. *The Age of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times*. London:

demonstrate that an important minority actually prefers that Iran withdraw from the NPT (10% in 2006 and 15% in 2008).

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Next, it presents a brief history of Iran and the NPT. The essay then discusses forthrightly whether or not public opinion matters in Iran. It then describes the data employed in this survey and its relative strengths and weaknesses compared to previous surveys, describing in some detail the methodological issues that are inherent in the extant polling efforts of Iranians. The essay next sets forth several hypotheses that are tested with these data. The penultimate section of this paper details the analytical results and it concludes with several implications that directly follow from this analysis.

### Iran and the NPT

The NPT came into force in 1970 and aimed to “prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament” (United Nations 2002)<sup>8</sup>. Since it came into force, 189 states have become a party to it with the exception of India, Pakistan and Israel. Only five states are classified as permanent nuclear weapons states (NWS) per the NPT: the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France. Each of these five countries acquired or at least tested nuclear weapons before the treaty came into force. The remaining states are non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS). (As noted above, North Korea withdrew from the NPT and tested in 2006.)

The treaty is constructed around three “policy pillars,” to which all NPT signatories agree in principle (Yudin 2010). Mohammad Elbaradei describes these as three pillars as together comprising a “delicately balanced bargain” (Elbaradei 2011)<sup>9</sup>. First, NNWS pledge that they will not pursue, much less develop nuclear weapons. (For this reason, India denounced the NPT as enshrining a “nuclear apartheid” of nuclear haves and have-nots.) Each NNWS is obliged to conclude a legally binding “safeguards” agreement with the IAEA according to which the country promises to place all nuclear materials under IAEA safeguards. This ensures that the materials will not be

diverted for nuclear weapons development through physical controls and rigorous accounting (Elbaradei 2011)<sup>10</sup>.

Second, all NPT signatories pledge negotiations that will culminate in nuclear disarmament. According to Article VI of the NPT, “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control” (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty). Since the five permanent nuclear weapons states are the only states with nuclear weapons, this aspect of the NPT principally concerns the NWS. The five NWS also pledge that they will not help NNWS acquire nuclear weapons (Elbaradei 2011; Yudin 2010)<sup>11</sup>. Needless to say, neither of these obligations has been upheld in any strict sense. China for example has long been suspected by the United States and others of providing Pakistan, a non-signatory, with nuclear weapons technology (Federation of Atomic Scientists 2010). Iraq, North Korea and Libya—all three signatories to the NPT as NNWS—have sought to acquire nuclear weapons technology (Yudin 2010). And NWS can be reasonably criticized for failing to pursue in good faith or alacrity the disarmament goals. For example, the United States has declined to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which is a key commitment of the NWS to advance disarmament (Araud 2011)<sup>12</sup>.

Third, all NPT signatories agree to facilitate the development of peaceful uses of nuclear technology to help address the energy needs of developing countries which are signatories. These efforts include cooperation and exchanges among signatories to develop scientific knowledge and expertise about nuclear technology, provision of suitable equipment, and making available fissile materials available to developing signatory countries (Elbaradei 2011; Yudin 2010).

Iran’s adherence with the NPT has been opaque at best. Iran signed the NPT on July 1, 1968 and deposited the ratified agreement in February 1970. Its NPT safeguards agreement came into force in 1974 (International Atomic Energy Agency 2009)<sup>13</sup>. Despite being a NNWS, Iran inspires

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Araud, Gérard. 2011. “Statement by Mr Gérard Araud, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, on behalf of the P5.” <http://www.franceonu.org/spip.php?article5694>.

<sup>11</sup>International Atomic Energy Agency. 2009. “Islamic Republic of Iran.” <http://www->

<sup>12</sup>United Nations. 2002. “Brief Background.” Available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dda/WMD/teaty/>.

<sup>13</sup>Elbaradei, Mohamed. 2011. *The Age of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times*.

considerable dubiety about its intentions with respect to developing nuclear weapons. The NPT confers to Iran and all other NNWS the right to develop nuclear technology that could enable it to break out at the time of its choosing. Article IV of the treaty declares that "Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with articles I and II of this Treaty" (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty). Thus for many Iranians, the NPT confers rights to Iran as long as it remains within the NPT. Indeed as long as Iran remains within the fold of the NPT, in principle, it is entitled to assistance in developing "peaceful uses of nuclear energy" (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty).

There are many problems with the NPT which do not permit a ready resolution of the Iran policy dilemma or address other NNWS that may seek to develop nuclear weapons. First, the NPT is weak on execution. As Elbaradei has explained, the IAEA is expected only to inspect and verify what the NPT states have declared. Second, there is no mechanism to enforce disarmament commitments or even a designated oversight body to monitor progress towards this important goal. Third, nuclear weapons states, through their commitment to facilitate access to nuclear technology, are also advancing the capability of NNWS to develop nuclear weapons, especially those forms of assistance that advance the ability of NNWS to develop full nuclear fuel cycles (Elbaradei 2011). Nor does the NPT provide solid definitions of what comprises technological advances that are firmly beyond the requirements for non-weaponized uses. All steps of processes of the nuclear fuel cycle have peaceful applications and are permitted under the NPT, including: mining; milling; conversion of yellowcake to uranium hexafluoride; enrichment of the uranium hexafluoride to generate nuclear energy; fabricating enriched uranium fuel for reactor cores, storage of depleted fuel, and reprocessing of the spent fuel for re-use. Thus development of a full nuclear fuel cycle does not indicate intent to develop nuclear weapons (Elbaradei 2011). Indeed, this is Iran's position.

However, the fundamental tension between the NPT's disarmament and non-proliferation goals on the one hand and the commitment to allowing states to develop national full fuel cycles is that NPT states have "conducted weapons-related activities under the guise of peaceful nuclear

applications" (Yudin 2010).<sup>14</sup> The NPT does not specify thresholds of activities that are probative of an intent to develop nuclear weapons which permits states to fully exploit entitlements under the NPT to subsidize their weapons program. One of the key concerns of potential weapons proliferation is enrichment. Weapons-grade uranium typically contains 90% Uranium-235; however a nuclear weapons device could be built using uranium which has been enriched to 20% or less. This amount of enrichment is well within the range of civilian purposes (Yudin 2010). Another problem with verification of state intent is that nearly all processes needed to conduct a civilian nuclear energy program are nearly identical to those of weapons program, as noted above. As the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research notes:

Nuclear energy and nuclear weapons production cycles use basically the same materials, technology and equipment. There are no technological barriers between the production of fissile materials for civilian use or for military use. Weapons-grade uranium can be produced using the same enrichment equipment used to produce low-enriched uranium (LEU) for civilian power generation. Both civilian and military reprocessing plants use the same technology to separate plutonium from spent fuel (Yudin 2010, pp.19-20).

Iran embodies virtually all of these concerns. First, one of the key concerns is the level of Iran's uranium enrichment which has reached 20%. This indicates Iran's ability to enrich to weapons' grade levels because the technologies to reach this level would, in principle, allow Iran to enrich further. Second, Iran has consistently failed to resolve a number of questions about activities and facilities which the IAEA suspects are not aimed at developing solely civilian capabilities including dubious activities at Kaleyeh Electric Company, the extent of Iran's centrifuge program (used for enriching uranium) at Natanz, the acquisition of technology and fissile material from Pakistan as well as undeclared facilities and uranium stocks identified by the IAEA. Despite being presented with evidence of deception by the IAEA, Iranian officials "did not seem particularly embarrassed," instead dilating upon what Iran has considered "double dealings on the part of the West" (Elbaradei 2011, p.118).

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<sup>14</sup>According to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDR), "For example, the discovery of Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons programme following the 1990-1991 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, the discovery in the early 1990s of non-compliance of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea with its non-proliferation obligations, Libya's acknowledgment in 2003 that it had a nuclear weapons-related programme for some 20 years, as well as unresolved questions the IAEA still has on Iran's nuclear activities."

Further evidence of Iran's intent to breakout of the NPT and weaponize has been Tehran's refusal to accept proposals, such as those offered by Russia, that would allow Iran to develop the full fuel cycle but would require Iran to remit the fuel to Russia. Similarly, Iran has shown dedicated interest in deploying centrifuges (to enrich uranium) on a scale that is consistent neither with scientific development nor peaceful uses. These and other infractions have resulted in numerous UN Security Council Resolutions against Iran until it can resolve the outstanding IAEA concerns about the extent and intent of its nuclear program (IAEA Board of Governors 2011)

Turning to Iranian opinions about the NPT, in 2006, one of the authors commissioned a nationally-representative survey of Iranians in conjunction with PIPA and Search for Common Ground. In that effort, we found that a majority of Iranians (69%) were "aware that Iran" was a signatory to the NPT. (11% either refused or did not know and 21% said that they were not aware.) And a majority (66%) thought it was a good idea that Iran had agreed to be a part of that treaty. (10% said it was a "bad idea" and the balance refused to answer or said that they did not know.) Finally, when respondents were asked whether or not they believed Iran should withdraw from the NPT, 60% said Iran "should not withdraw" (15% said Iran should withdraw and the remainder declined to provide a response) (United States Institute of Peace, Poll of the Iranian Public 2007)<sup>15</sup>.

While Iranians overwhelmingly supported the NPT and their country's commitment to it in the 2006 survey, Iranians did not believe that other signatories were living up their obligations. When asked "how well you think the United States is fulfilling [its disarmament] obligation," a majority (73%) said "not very well." Most Iranians believed, in various measures, that other states are defecting from their NPT obligations with Iranians believing that many (22%), some (26%) or a few (28%) countries have "secret programs for developing the capacity to produce nuclear weapons. And a robust majority (84%) indicated that they believed that in the future there will be more countries with nuclear weapons than today (United States Institute of Peace, Poll of the Iranian Public 2007)<sup>16</sup>.

In the 2008 survey, Iranians continued to evidence support for the NPT. A majority of Iranians (59%), according to the 2008 survey, indicated that it was a good idea for Iran to sign the NPT as a non-nuclear weapons state.

This is somewhat lower than the comparable finding of 66% two years earlier (WorldPublicOpinion.org, Poll of Iranians and Americans 2008). Similarly in 2008, 63% of Iranians believed that Iran should remain within the fold of the NPT and a similar percentage of Iranians in 2008 believed that there were many (24%), some (28%) or a few (24%) countries that have "secret programs for developing the capacity to produce nuclear weapons (WorldPublicOpinion.org, Poll of Iranians and Americans 2008)<sup>17</sup>.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the NPT sustains such support among Iranians is due to the public belief that the NPT is an instrument that confers rights to Iran rather than a punitive regime to retard Iran's ability to cultivate indigenous capabilities. However, both the 2006 and 2008 data demonstrate that while Iranian support the NPT there is overwhelming belief that other NPT states—be they NWS or NNWS—are defecting from their commitments.

Given the high stakes of Iran's nuclear brinkmanship, a number of organizations have undertaken polling of the Iranian public to assess the degree to which Iran's citizenry supports the regime's foreign and domestic policies, including Iran's continued commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and other aspects of its stated nuclear ambitions, such as developing a full nuclear fuel cycle (Results of a New Nationwide Public Opinion Survey of Iran before the June 12, 2009 Presidential Elections 2009; Poll of Iranians and Americans 2008; Mogahed 2008; Global Opinion Trends 2002-2007: A Rising Tide Lifts Mood In The Developing World – Sharp Decline in Support for Suicide Bombing in Muslim Countries, 2007; Terror Free Tomorrow 2009; WorldPublicOpinion.org 2008; WorldPublicOpinion.org 2007; Mogahed 2008; Pew 2007)<sup>18,19,20</sup>.

An important but ultimately unanswerable question is whether or not Iranian public opinion matters in influencing the decisions of the authoritarian regime (Sadjadpour 2006-2007)<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>15</sup>WorldPublicOpinion.org and Search For Common Ground. 2008. "Poll of Iranians and Americans." [www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/.../Iran\\_Apr08\\_quatre.pdf](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/.../Iran_Apr08_quatre.pdf).

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

<sup>17</sup>Mogahed, Dalila. 2008. "The Battle for Hearts Moderate vs. Extremist the Muslim World." [http://media.gallup.com/WorldPoll/PDF/GALLUPpMUSLIMSTUDIES\\_ModeratepvsExtremistpViews\\_11.13.06\\_FINAL.pdf](http://media.gallup.com/WorldPoll/PDF/GALLUPpMUSLIMSTUDIES_ModeratepvsExtremistpViews_11.13.06_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>18</sup>Pew Global Attitudes Survey. 2007. "Global Opinion Trends 2002-2007: A Rising Tide Lifts Mood in the Developing World – Sharp Decline in Support for Suicide Bombing in Muslim Countries." <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/257.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup>Sadjadpour, Karim. 2006-2007. "How Relevant is the Iranian Street?" *Washington Quarterly* 30, 1: 151-162.

<sup>15</sup>United States Institute of Peace. 2007. "Poll of the Iranian Public." [http://www.usip.org/files/MWI/iran\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.usip.org/files/MWI/iran_presentation.pdf).

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

However, there are compelling reasons to believe it uses Iran's regime has invested considerable resources in securing and sustaining popular support to maintain regime legitimacy. For this reason, Iran regularly conducts elections at federal and sub-national levels even if the candidates who can contest the elections are vetted by the regime's Council of Guardians. (At the sub-national level, there is less scrutiny and thus Iranians tend to view these elections as more genuinely reflecting the public's preference).

The importance of the Iranian street was clearly evident in 2009 when widespread protests broke out following President Ahmadinejad's flawed 2009 re-election. While the mass gatherings initially focused upon supporting his reformist challenger, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, they soon transformed into the "Green Revolution," which challenged the regime's legitimacy. In a further embarrassment to the regime, Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of Grand Ayatollah Khomeini who led the Iranian revolution, along with almost all of his descendants, support the Green Movement (Dehghanpishch 2010)<sup>22</sup>.

The regime has also energetically cultivated popular support for its controversial nuclear aspirations. This has been most evident during the tenure of President Ahmadinejad. He has successfully pulled the debate about Iran's nuclear policy out of the discrete purview of policy elites and into the public domain. In doing so, he has framed the nuclear issue as one of "national independence that would stymie foreign powers seeking to deprive Iran of its rightful place—as a major international and technological power" (Barzefer 2009, 24). By most accounts, he has been successful. Numerous polls of Iranians find that, among Iran's political elite and general public alike, there is a near unanimous belief that Iran should have a "full nuclear fuel cycle," which Tehran may view as "interchangeable with deterrence" (Barzefer 2009, 26)<sup>23</sup>.

Implicitly U.S. policy also assumes that Iranian public opinions matter. The previous Bush administration explicitly sought to reach out to the Iranian public, which it believed to be amenable to regime change and could have utility in achieving that objective. In 2005, the US Congress passed the Iran Freedom and Support Act of 2005, which appropriated \$10 million and directed the President of the United States to use these

President Bush praised the allocation of these so-called regime change funds as the first step in promoting popular efforts to overthrow Iran's theocratic government and to forge a liberal democracy in its place.

After the public burst into protests on June 12, 2009 over the flawed presidential election, Twitter (a social network that allows users to quickly pass small messages to large groups) emerged as a key tool in organizing the demonstrations. Twitter had planned a major update in the wake of the protests, which would have put Twitter offline. The U.S. State Department, in a radical departure from its usual practice, asked Twitter to delay the upgrade to facilitate further popular mobilization (Grossman 2009)<sup>24</sup>. Regime efforts to shut down the social networking tool failed. This again underscores the value of public opinion both to the regime and to outside forces seeking to mobilize the public to force political upheaval against the regime.

Despite the proliferating polls of Iranian public, there is no theoretical literature that exposts how relevant—much less effective—public opinion is in conditioning the policy choices of an authoritarian regime. While there have been several studies that have explored the regime's likely course of action with respect to developing a nuclear weapons capability and what factors may shape these decisions, this body of literature about state motives cannot easily be used to offer a series of propositions about why publics may approve of or reject a state's policy. Moreover, there is little theoretical guidance about which techniques of polling are more suitable for gauging public attitudes within highly constrained authoritarian regimes wherein respondents may fear that participating in a survey or answering particular questions in specific ways may cause them harm. Consequently, some firms field their surveys using phone-interviews from call-centers within or without Iran, while others used face-to-face techniques. As discussed below, both of these methods have strengths and weaknesses yet proponents of each method tend to argue for the superiority of their method.

Perhaps for these reasons, many of the extant polling efforts and/or residual products are almost always mere presentations of tabulations geared to produce media headlines but little exposition about what the data may mean. Available analytical products afford few insights into the

<sup>22</sup>Dehghanpishch, Babak. 2010. "Iran's Hushed Up Civil War." *Newsweek*. Available at: <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/06/08/iran-s-hushed-up-civil-war.html>.

<sup>23</sup>Barzefer, Kayhan. 2009. "The Paradox of Iran's Nuclear Consensus." *World Policy Journal* 24.

<sup>24</sup>Grossman, Lev. 2009. "Iran Protests: Twitter, the Medium of the Movement." *Time*. Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8559,1905125,00.html>.

determinants of why Iranians may support the nuclear program.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, some of the firms that do such work in Iran do not make respondent-level data available. The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) is one that does provide scholars access to their respondent-level data.

### The Data and Their Relative Strengths and Weaknesses<sup>26</sup>

PIPA fielded its survey, along with Search for Common Ground (SCG), in Iran using face-to-face surveys of 710 respondents between January 13 and February 9, 2008. Overall, the survey's margin of error is +/- 3.8%. PIPA used a multistage stratified, province-based sample.<sup>27</sup>

The data used to test the set of hypotheses developed in this paper comes from a 2008 PIPA survey. PIPA fielded its survey, along with Search for Common Ground (SCG), in Iran using face-to-face surveys of 710 respondents between January 13 and February 9, 2008. Overall, the survey's margin of error is +/- 3.8%. PIPA used a multistage stratified, province-based sample (Poll of Iranians and Americans 2008). This poll builds upon a previous survey fielded by PIPA, SCG and the United States Institute of Peace (Fair and Shellman 2008)<sup>28</sup>. The 2008 PIPA/SCG is the best poll data available for insights into Iranian public opinion toward the nuclear energy and weapons issue in Iran. While there have been more recent surveys carried out in Iran on political issues, there is no more recent survey that is available for scholarly analysis that has questions relevant to nuclear issues.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the 2008 PIPA/SCG data is the most recent, most

comprehensive, and most reliable (due to the means of collection) data set available for analysis of the determinants of Iranian attitudes toward nuclear weapons development.

While the data may seem dated since they were collected in 2008, the basic issues have stayed the same since that time. Iran still faces the same international issues it faced in 2008, albeit some of them with more urgency. But the Iranian government has not changed its public stance on nuclear weapons and, from our perspective, it has not changed its argument that the development of nuclear weapons is forbidden by Islam. Thus, since the context for Iranian respondents has not changed that much on the issue of nuclear weapons, we believe this data still gives us very valid and important insights into the Iranian public's thinking on nuclear weapons. It is also highly unlikely that there will be any more public opinion polls—with publicly available data—carried out in Iran in the near future due to the sensitivity the regime has about foreigners asking such questions in the highly charged political environment.<sup>30</sup>

As noted above, there have been several polls of Iranians in recent years, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The World Values Survey included Iran in its 2000 wave, but it did not include questions that addressed the specific policy concerns of interest mentioned above, and it predated the events of September 11 2001. The Tarrance Group conducted a survey in May-June 2005 on behalf of the Iran Institute for Democracy engaging 758 Iranian adults of voting age. That survey relied upon a call-in technique from a call centre in the United States using random digit dialing (RDD) by callers fluent in Farsi. Similarly, Readers Digest and Zogby International conducted a survey of Iranians with a national random sample of 810 Iranian adults in May 2005 through telephone calls placed from outside Iran, using the RDD method. Gallup also conducted a poll of Iranians in 2001 and 2002. While many of the questions posed by Tarrance, Zogby, and Gallup were germane to our query, they did not include questions about the nuclear (civilian or weapons) program.<sup>31</sup> Terror Free Tomorrow has also conducted several polls in Iran using RDD. The most recent poll of 2009 used RDD from telephones *within* Iran whereas previous efforts used RDD with call centers based outside of Iran (Results

<sup>26</sup>One exception is C. Christine Fair and Steven M. Shellman. (2008) "Determinants of Popular Support for Iran's Nuclear Program: Insights from a Nationally Representative Survey", *Contemporary Security Studies* 29,3: 538-558. As the authors of that paper note, they confronted a serious technical issue as the data they used from the 2006 survey of Iranians conducted by the United States Institute of Peace and the Program on International Policy Attitudes split the sample on key questions pertaining to support for the program.

<sup>27</sup>This discussion draws from previous work by Fair and Shellman, "Determinants of Popular Support for Iran's Nuclear Program."

<sup>28</sup>For more technical information, see WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Poll of Iranians and Americans," January-February 2008. [http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr08/Iran\\_Apr08\\_guaire.pdf](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr08/Iran_Apr08_guaire.pdf).

<sup>29</sup>Fair, C. Christine and Steven M. Shellman. 2008. "Determinants of Popular Support for Iran's Nuclear Program: Insights from a Nationally Representative Survey." *Contemporary Security Studies* 29, 3: 538-558.

<sup>30</sup>Terror Free Tomorrow conducted a poll in Iran in 2009 that asked a pair of questions about support for nuclear weapons development but that data is proprietary and not available for analysis.

<sup>31</sup>Even survey groups that try to call into Iran from the outside or make calls within Iran are finding it near impossible to do so because of the intense scrutiny from the regime and the fear that Iranians have of answering sensitive questions in such an environment of regime coercion.

<sup>32</sup>Moreover, all Gallup and Zogby respondent-level data were and are proprietary.

of a New Nationwide Public Opinion Survey of Iran before the June 12, 2009 Presidential Elections 2009).<sup>32</sup>

In addition, independent domestic polls within Iran are rarely allowed and government-sponsored polls are often skewed (Sadiqpour 2006-07). Needless to say, respondent-level data are not available from these polls.

Both the past PIPA/SCG poll from 2006 (with USIP) and the current poll use face-to-face interviews. The survey literature finds that face-to-face interviews are superior to RDD (Keeter, Tompson, and Mokrzycki 2007; Blumberg, Luke, and Cynamon 2006).<sup>33</sup> Research has shown that RDD respondents tend to have higher non-response rates than face-to-face participants (Brogan, Denniston, Laff, Flaggs, Coates, and Brinton 2001; Galesic, Tourangeau, and Couper 2006). Similarly, studies have shown that RDD respondents are more likely than personal interviewees to satisfice (as evidenced by no-opinion responding, non-differentiation, and acquiescence).<sup>34</sup> Experts have also found evidence that RDD respondents

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<sup>32</sup>Terror Free Tomorrow, "Results of a New Nationwide Public Opinion Survey of Iran before the June 12, 2009 Presidential Elections," June 2009. This survey used RDD from phones within Iran. See <http://www.terrorfreetomorrow.org/upimages/tftt%20Iran%20Survey%20Report%200609.pdf>. Previously, in 2007, Terror Free Tomorrow a fielded a survey of Iranians using the RDD method from call center outside of Iran. See Terror Free Tomorrow, "Polling Iranian Public Opinion," <http://www.terrorfreetomorrow.org/upimages/tftt%20Iran%20Survey%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup>The Pew Research Center, in their effort to estimate bias resulting in mobile phone substitution, found that lack of a landline in the United States is not currently damaging estimates for the entire population. However, they found that evidence that it does create biased estimates on certain variables for young adults, 25 per cent of whom are cell-only according to the most recent government estimate. See Scott Keeter, Trevor Tompson, and Mike Mokrzycki, "What's Missing from National RDD Surveys? The Impact of the Growing Cell-Only Population," Revised version of paper presented at the 2007 Annual Conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, Anaheim, California, 17-20 May 2007, <http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/514.pdf>. Some studies in the United States found that bias accruing from substitution to mobile phones is low for adults as the percentage of adults without landlines is low. See for example, Stephen J. Blumberg, Julian V. Luke, and Marcie L. Cynamon. (2006) "Telephone Coverage and Health Survey Estimates: Evaluating the Need for Concern About Wireless Substitution," *American Journal of Public Health* 96, 5: 926-931. No comparable studies of Iranian phone usage has been conducted and given the well-known youth bulge and reliance upon mobile phones, sample bias likely remains an issue.

<sup>34</sup>In the context of survey answers, satisficing includes choosing explicitly offered no-opinion response option, selecting responses which are believed to be socially desirable, failing to differentiate among responses when presented with a battery of questions asking for ratings of multiple objects on the same response scale, and manifesting acquiescence response bias by tending to agree with any assertion, regardless of the content offered.

tend to be less cooperative and engaged in the interview and more likely to complain about the length of the interview than were face-to-face respondents. This finding held even when the telephonic interview is shorter than those conducted face-to-face. RDD respondents, relative to face-to-face respondents, have also been found to be more suspicious about the interview process and more likely to present themselves in socially desirable ways (Holbrook, Green, and Krosnick 2003).<sup>35</sup>

### **Our Argument: Social Psychological Sources of Opposition to the NPT**

There is no theoretical literature on how publics think about the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Thus, this project cannot build off any Iranian-focused public opinion literature on security issues in order to develop hypotheses to explain the variation in opinion that we see in Iran toward the issue of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We argue that the social psychology of Iranians would play a large role in shaping their views on the NPT. Those Iranians who are generally more trusting of other people and nations are going to be more accepting of being in a constraining international regime, such as the NPT, as opposed to those who are not trusting of other countries and thus would not want to be constrained by the strictures of the NPT.

First of all, we must assume the issue of the NPT treaty is not a constant subject of conversation for the average Iranian. While it is an important issue to Iran as a nation, we are safe to assume that the mass public in Iran does not have the level of information and interest that Iranian foreign policy elites have concerning the NPT. Thus, basic predispositions individuals have about the world will play a large role in shaping their views on specific foreign policy issues. These basic predispositions about the world come, to a great extent, from social psychology.

The basic psychological predisposition that is most likely to determine whether one is likely to view the world from a hostile or cooperative perspective is an individual's sense of trust in other people. Generalized trust in other people will allow for trust in other nations that is known as *international trust* (Brewer and Steenbergen 2002). This level of trust in other countries is essentially a product of the view one has of basic human

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<sup>35</sup>Holbrook, Allyson L., Melanie C. Green, and Jon A. Krosnick. 2003. "Telephone versus Face-to-Face Interviewing of National Probability Samples with Long Questionnaires: Comparisons of Respondent Satisficing and Social Desirability Response Bias." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67, 1: 79-125.

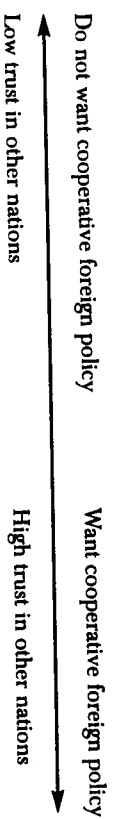


nature (Binning 2007; Brewer et al 2004; Brewer and Steenbergen 2002; Citrin and Sides 2008; Herreros and Criado 2009; Torgler 2007)<sup>36</sup>.

Thus, according to this logic, social trust is the foundation for cosmopolitanism. One cannot be a cosmopolitan without having a general trust in others. Generalized trust reduces ethnocentrism (Mansfield and Mutz 2009)<sup>37</sup>. Generalized trust will allow one to identify with those beyond one's local community (Kaltenthaler et al 2004). Generalized trust will also be bolstered by education as education is known to be positively correlated with social trust (Haimmueller and Hiscox 2006; Inglehart 1999; Kaltenthaler et al 2004)<sup>38</sup>.

Trust in others will condition how likely one is to want a foreign policy that is based on cooperation or confrontation. Logically, those who are distrustful of others (and thus other countries) would want their government to be vigilant in the face of threats from other countries. Such individuals are more likely to favor avoiding participating in international institutions. Those individuals who have a more positive view of human nature, i.e., believe that people/nations can generally be trusted, will be more supportive of participating in international institutions. The logic of the argument can be visualized in Figure One below.

Figure One: Trust in Others in General



<sup>36</sup>Binning, Kevin. 2007. "It's Us against the World: How Distrust in Americans versus People-in-General Shapes Competitive Foreign Policy Preferences." *Political Psychology* 28, 6: 777-799. Brewer, Paul and Marco Steenbergen. 2002. "All against All: How Beliefs about Human Nature Shape Foreign Policy Options." *Political Psychology* 23, 2: 39-58. Citrin, Jack and John Sides. 2008. "Immigration and Imagined Community in Europe and the United States." *Political Studies* 56(1): 33-56. Herreros, Francisco and Henar Criado. 2009. "Social Trust, Social Capital, and Perceptions of Immigration." *Political Studies* 57(2): 337-355. Torgler, Benno. 2007. "Trust in International Organizations: An Empirical Investigation Focusing on the United Nations." *The Review of International Organizations* 3(1): 65-93.

<sup>37</sup>Mansfield, Edward and Diana Mutz. 2009. "Support for Free Trade: Self Interest, Sociotropic Politics, and Out-Group Anxiety." *International Organization* 63 (3): 425-457. <sup>38</sup>Haimmueller, Jens and Michael J. Hiscox. 2006. "Learning to Love Globalization: Education and Individual Attitudes toward International Trade." *International Organization* 60 (2): 469-498. Inglehart, Ronald. 1999. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Kaltenthaler, Karl, Ronald Gellany, and Stephen Caecoli. 2004. "Explaining Citizen Attitudes toward Trade Liberalization." *International Studies Quarterly* 48: 829-851.

Those with high international trust are much more positive about the nature of international relations. They do not necessarily see the world as a constant struggle between states to gain more security at the expense of other states. Trust and non-security cooperation between states are possible. Thus, international trusters view international institutions as useful forums for solving common international problems and reducing a sense of tension between states. Because international trusters believe it is possible for states to overcome the basic distrust, they can focus on many issues of mutual concern.

So how would Iranian international distrusters and international trusters differ on the issue of whether Iran should remain in the NPT or withdraw from the regime? International distrusters would oppose staying in the NPT regime because they would view it as potential shackles that would keep Iran from maximizing its security potential. The NPT puts limits on what Iran can do to arm itself for deterrence, defense, or compellence, and precludes the development of nuclear weapons.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the NPT makes Iran vulnerable to those countries that pose direct threats to its security. Also, the regime is overseen by the IAEA. To someone who distrusts other nations, IAEA inspections could reveal information about Iran that could threaten its security. Also, the IAEA would likely be used as a tool of powerful members of the UN to make Iran weaker, as an Iranian who distrusts other nations would not assume that an international organization has real autonomy as it would be too dangerous for states to grant that.

<sup>39</sup>Compellence and deterrence are both forms of coercion, however they are usually considered to be distinct from one another in theory. "Deterrence" is portrayed as preventing an action from occurring (e.g. convincing country X from not invading country Y). "Compellence" usually refers to efforts undertaken to reverse an action that has been executed (convincing country X to withdraw from country Y once it has invaded). Compellence can also imply dissuading an adversary from taking an action that it has decided to prosecute (e.g. not to conduct nuclear tests once it has decided to do so). In other words, the compeller is dissuading the adversary to rescind a decision already taken. Obviously, the distinction between compellence and deterrence hinges on information about the intent of the adversary and the interpretation of that information. For this reason, it is difficult to distinguish between these forms of coercion in practice. For further discussion about these distinctions, see Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966); Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Alexander George and William E. Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); and Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 15-16. For an applied case, see Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *Confronting Iraq: U.S. Policy and the Use of Force since the Gulf War* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000), pp. 5-12.

Finally, the IAEA and the UN would be viewed as constraints on what Iran could be able to do to maximize its security potential.

An international trustee, on the other hand, would be much more positive about Iran remaining in the NPT. People with high levels of international trust, generally, do not see other states as threatening the way that those with low levels of trust do. Thus, they do not see the same danger in remaining in the NPT as international distrusters do. By remaining in the NPT, Iran is signaling that it is a state that does not intend to threaten its neighbors. By assuming such a posture, Iran could reduce the sense of mutual tension it has with other states and can thus concentrate on other matters such as mending its ailing domestic economy, rather than diverting resources into weapons development and procurement. An Iranian who trusts other nations would look at the IAEA and the UN as very important institutions to help build confidence among Iran's potential adversaries that Iran does not intend to develop nuclear weapons and therefore does not represent a grave threat to the national security of countries with which Iran has fractious relations.

Those with low levels of international trust would thus be opposed to remaining in the NPT. Those with relatively higher levels of international trust would want to remain in the NPT. Our logic, framed above, yields a set of hypotheses for us to test in the analysis. The first hypothesis centers on how the sense of threat from other countries conditions views toward the NPT. It reads as:

*H(1): Those Iranians who view other countries as threats will be more supportive of the Iranian government withdrawing from the NPT.*

We also argued above that international distrusters would view the NPT as a constraint on Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons, which would harm Iran's ability to deter, defend, and compel. Those who generally trust other nations would not want Iran to develop nuclear weapons as they would be provocative and destabilizing. This logic yields the hypothesis:

*H(2): Those Iranians who want Iran to develop nuclear weapons will be more supportive of the Iranian government withdrawing from the NPT.*

Another major difference between those who trust other nations and those who do not is over the costs or benefits of having the IAEA and the UN being involved in Iran's affairs because of the NPT. Those who distrust other nations would be strongly opposed to the IAEA and the UN for their ability to undermine Iran's security. Their opposition to the IAEA and the UN would be one reason why they would want to withdraw from the NPT.

Those who tend to trust other nations, on the other hand, would welcome the role that the IAEA and the UN play in Iran's affairs. Since international trustees would want to remain in the NPT, they would accept the role of the IAEA and the UN as necessary for maintaining the regime.

*H(3): Those Iranians who do not trust the IAEA and the UN will be more supportive of the Iranian government withdrawing from the NPT.*

The following sections of this paper are devoted to exploring these ideas through empirical analysis.

## **Data and Research Design**

In order to test the hypotheses developed in this study and alternative potential explanations, we use a logistic regression using data from the 2008 PIPA Iran Survey. Using Gary King's Clarify program for Monte Carlo simulations, we also examine first differences to determine the relative magnitude of the significant independent variables in explaining the variance in our dependent variables. This statistic allows us to directly compare which of the significant independent variables has the strongest influence on the dependent variable. The number of respondents in the original sample was 710. We use a sub-sample of that, which has removed the *don't know/refused* responses from the original sample. This leaves with a sample of 334 respondents for the analysis.

As is clear from the reduction in size of the original sample to the N that was used in the analysis, a substantial number of cases were lost due to respondents choosing the don't know and refusal responses (which were collapsed into one category during the initial response coding). In order to determine if there was a systematic bias of some sort in the respondents who chose don't know/refused to several of the utilized questions, we ran a correlation matrix of the variables included in the analysis to determine what was most highly correlated with DK/NRs. Table 1 shows the nature of those correlations.

**Table 1: Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Independent Variables and Don't Know/No Response Respondents**

Variable	Correlation
Gender	.191**
Education	.147**
Income	-.127**
Age	.088
Iran Nuclear Weapons Preference	.0665
Tehran	.042
Secret Nuclear Programs	-.037
U.S. Attack Nuclear Facilities	.037
U.S. Base Threat	-.014
UN Influence	.013
IAEA Influence	.013

\*\*correlation significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation matrix shows that the gender category of female, those with less education, and those with lower income are correlated with the DK/NR category. This finding lends an explanation to the nature of the DK/NR respondents. Women in Iran, while comparatively well-educated in comparison to some other states in the region, are not as likely to be as politically engaged and feel less politically efficacious than men (Alkhami and Friedl 1994; Moghadam 1992; 1994; Weiner and Banuazizi 1994)<sup>10</sup>. But this is likely to be particularly true in a highly patriarchal society such as Iran. Thus, Iranian women are more likely to think that they are not prepared to answer questions on an issue such NPT policy. It also makes sense that those with lower general levels of education and income (which, are usually highly correlated) have lower response rates. People with lower levels of education tend to have a perception of themselves as being less political efficacious. They are also less likely to have knowledge about the matter being asked about and thus will more likely not respond to the

<sup>10</sup> Alkhami, Mahnaz and Enka Friedl. 1994. *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Post-Revolutionary Iran*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press. Moghadam, Valentine. 1992. "Patriarchy and the Politics of Gender in Modernising Societies: Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan." *International Sociology*, 7, 1: 35-53. Weiner, Myron and Ali Banuaziz. 1994. *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press.

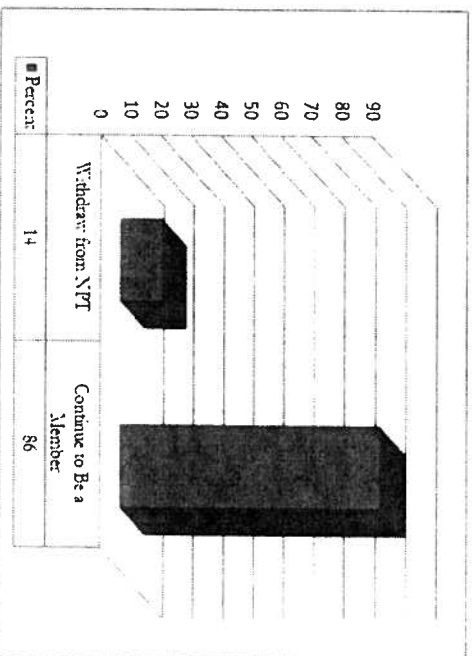
question compared to those who have more knowledge about the issue at hand (Berinsky 1999; Krosnick and Milburn 1990)<sup>11</sup>.

### The Dependent Variable

In order to assess Iranian attitudes towards nuclear policy, we ran a model that used the following question as its dependent variable: *Do you approve of Iran continuing to be a member of the NPT or do you think Iran should withdraw from it?* Respondents that stated *withdraw from NPT* were coded as 1 and *continue to be member* as 0.

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of responses for the dependent variable.

**Figure 2: Nuclear Proliferation Treaty Policy Preference**



What we can gather from these results is that a majority of respondents are satisfied with the status quo. Over 80% of respondents want Iran to continue as a member of the NPT. We do see, however, that 14% want the nation to withdraw from the NPT.

<sup>11</sup> Berinsky, Adam. 1999. "The Two Faces of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science*. 43, 4: 12909-1230. Krosnick, Jon and Michael Milburn. 1990. Psychological Determinants of Political Opinionation." *Social Cognition*. 8: 49-72.

### *The Independent Variables*

Given the previous work on Iranian nuclear policy preferences and more general political attitudes toward foreign policy discussed above, we examine rival explanations within both of our models.

The first hypothesis category (H(1)) draws from militant internationalist logic of why to withdraw from the NPT. To instrument for a sense of threat from other nations, we employ five survey items from the 2008 PIPA survey. The first variable examines the perceived threat posed to Iran by the U.S. having military bases in the Middle East. The question specifically asks: *How much, if at all, do you think U.S. bases in the Middle East are a threat to Iran?* Respondents were given the options of: *not at all a threat* (0), *a minor threat* (1), *some threat* (2), and *a major threat* (3). Those that see U.S. military bases as a major threat are expected to want Iran to withdraw from the NPT.

Our second threat measure looks at the perception Iranian citizens have of other nations potentially having secret nuclear programs. The question asks: *How many countries do you think have secret programs for developing capacity to produce nuclear weapons?* Respondents are presented with the following responses: *none* (0), *a few* (1), *some* (2), and *many* (3). Given that many potential nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states are defecting from the NPT, the assumption is that individuals who perceive of many secret nuclear regimes in the world would want Iran to leave the NPT. The last threat measure asks respondents: *How likely do you think it is that the United States will take military action against Iran's nuclear facilities in the next year or two?* Respondents could answer *not at all likely* (0), *not very likely* (1), *somewhat likely* (2), and *very likely* (3). Those who believe that the U.S. will attack are expected to be more likely to want to leave the NPT. Such an argument is bolstered by the fact that the U.S. invaded nuclear-free Iraq but not nuclear-weapon possessing North Korea; hence, it appears that nuclear weapons are a deterrent.

Our second hypothesis (H(2)) centers on the notion that Iranians who want their country to develop nuclear weapons will want to withdraw from the NPT. The survey measures the amount of support for developing nuclear weapons with the question: *Iran's position is that it should have a full fuel cycle nuclear energy program, but it shouldn't develop nuclear weapons. Do you: (a) think that Iran shouldn't pursue a full fuel cycle nuclear energy program, (b) approve of this program, and (c) think Iran should develop nuclear weapons.*

Per our third hypothesis (H(3)), that those Iranians who have a negative view of the UN and the IAEA will be more favorable toward withdrawing from the NPT, we draw on the following question from the survey: *Please*

*indicate if you think each of the following are having a mainly negative or mainly positive influence in the world. We include the United Nations and the IAEA in the analysis. Response choices were mainly negative (-1), depends/neither (0), and mainly positive (1). Those who see either the UN or the IAEA as a negative influence are hypothesized to be more likely to want Iran to withdraw from the NPT.*

In addition to these independent variables suggested by our three hypotheses, we include controls for five variables as part of our models. Given the previously discussed concerns of sampling in Iran, we include two controls for location: community size and Tehran regional residency. For community size, answers were *less than 10,000 (rural)* coded 0, *10,000-100,000 (small town/city)* coded 1, *100,000-500,000* (2), *500,000 to 900,000 (large city or urban area)* coded 3, and *more than 900,000 (very large city or urban area)* coded as 4. We dummy code respondents than live in Tehran (1) compared to any other region of the country (0). Given Ahmadinejad's time as mayor of the city and the fact that Tehran residents are more exposed to politics, it is important to control for these potential differences. The control for age is broken into four categories: *25 and under* (0), *26-35 years old* (1), *36-50 years old* (2), and *51 and over* (3). Income is asked of survey respondents and then recoded and scaled to: *very low* (0), *low* (1), *average/median* (2), *high* (3), and *very high* (4). Education is assessed through a question that asks: *Please tell me what is the highest class in school you have completed.* Respondents were given the options of: *Less than primary* (0), *primary* (1), *less than high school diploma* (2), *high school diploma* (3), *some college/university* (4), *bachelor's degree or higher* (5). Lastly, we control for gender with *men* coded as 1 and *women* coded as 0. Table 2 summarizes our hypotheses and their corresponding operationalizations.

Table 2. Hypothesis Table

Hypothesis	Independent Variables
H(1): Those Iranians who view other countries as threats will be more supportive of the Iranian government withdrawing from the NPT.	How many countries do you think have secret programs for developing capacity to produce nuclear weapons? None (0), a few (1), some (2), and many (3). How much, if at all, do you think U.S. bases in the Middle East are a threat to Iran? Not at all a threat (0), a minor threat (1), some threat (2), and a major threat (3). How likely do you think it is that the United States will take military action against Iran's nuclear facilities in the next year or two? Not at all likely (0), not very likely (1), somewhat likely (2), and very likely (3).
H(2): Those Iranians who want Iran to develop nuclear weapons will be more supportive of the Iranian government withdrawing from the NPT.	Iran's position is that it should have a full fuel cycle nuclear energy program, but it shouldn't develop nuclear weapons. Do you: (0) do not want weapons or (1) think Iran should develop nuclear weapons.
H(3): Those Iranians who do not trust the IAEA and the UN will be more supportive of the Iranian government withdrawing from the NPT.	Please indicate if you think each of the following are having a mainly negative or mainly positive influence in the world: United Nations and the IAEA. Mainly negative (-1), depends/neither (0), and mainly positive (1).

Since many of our independent variables ask respondents questions that are potentially answered from within the same value set, we need to assure that multicollinearity is not an issue with the specification of our model. Table 3 reports all correlations between the independent variables used in our model. The influences of the IAEA and the UN are more highly correlated ( $\rho = .46$ ) than any other variables but still allow for variation. Likewise, Tehran and income are highly correlated (.43) but is explained by the geographic disparity of income within the country. Age and education are also correlated (at  $\rho = .41$ ) but can be explained and still demonstrates variation.

Table 3: Correlations between Variables

	U.S. Base Threat	Secret Nuclear Programs	U.S. Attack Nuclear Facilities	Iran Nuclear Weapons Preference	UN Influence	IAEA Influence	Education	Age	Income	Tehran Resident	Gender
U.S. Base Threat	1										
Secret Nuclear Programs	.2090	1									
U.S. Attack Nuclear Facilities	.2716	.1415	1								
Iran Nuclear Weapons Preference	.0282	.0741	.0548	1							
UN Influence	-.0625	-.0778	-.0507	-.0734	1						
IAEA Influence	.0178	-.0988	-.0238	.0115	.4556	1					
Education	-.0476	-.0172	.1092	-.0763	.0583	-.0098	1				
Age	-.0039	.1113	-.1634	-.1141	-.0893	-.0146	-.4128	1			
Income	-.0924	.0109	.00071	-.1036	-.0682	-.0313	.2884	-.0615	1		
Tehran Resident	-.1311	-.1107	-.0722	.0269	-.0941	-.0038	.1892	-.0917	.4311	1	
Gender	.0199	-.0159	-.1502	-.2538	-.0254	-.0489	-.0953	.0772	.0141	-.0058	1

Likewise, Table 4 presents the variance inflation factor scores for the independent variables included in the model. All are below the typical threshold of 10 for excessive collinearity.

**Table 4: Variance Inflation Factor Values**

Variable	VIF
Education	1.38
Age	1.33
UN Influence	1.31
Income	1.30
IAEA Influence	1.29
Tehran	1.26
U.S. Attack Nuclear Facilities	1.19
U.S. Base Threat	1.15
Iran Nuclear Weapons Preference	1.13
Gender	1.12
Secret Nuclear Programs	1.11
Mean VIF	1.23

As a result of the correlation matrix and the VIF scores, we do not believe collinearity is an issue for our specified model of analysis.

**results on the Analysis**

The logistic regression analyses results for our model are presented in Table 4.

**Table 5: Logistic Regression Results**

**Dependent Variable-NPT Membership**

Model One			Model Two			
Independent Variables	Coef.	SE	First Df.	Coef.	SE	First Df.
U.S. Base Threat	-.357*	.171	.103	-.481**	.192	.123
Secret Nuclear Programs	.206	.209		.229	.234	
U.S. Attack Nuclear Facilities	.541***	.181	.182	.518**	.200	.147
Iran Nuclear Weapons Preference	.566	.375		.582	.439	
UN Influence	-.257	.226		-.338	.240	
IAEA Influence	-.531**	.225	.112	-.485*	.241	.091
Education				-.053	.166	
Age				-.452*	.213	
Income				.279	.188	
Tehran Resident				.181	.415	
Gender				-.044	.388	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.104			.148		
Log Likelihood	-133.94			-122.39		
Log Likelihood $\chi^2$	27.76			36.18		
N	334			334		

The first model examines just the explanatory variables while the second looks at both the explanatory and control variables. Both models have consistent results when looking at our explanatory predictors. By looking at the Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> for both models, we can see that there is approximately a 4%

increase in explanatory power by inserting our control variables into the model. We find support for two of three categories of explanation: threats from other countries and perceived influence of international agencies.

Our threats from other countries category produces two significant variables out of three. At the .05 level of significance, we find that Iranians who believe the United States are likely to attack their nuclear facilities in the next year are more likely to want their country to withdraw from the NPT. This is as predicted.

Further, also significant at the .05 level, we see that individuals who do not believe that U.S. military bases pose a threat are more likely to want Iran to remove itself from the NPT. This runs counter to our prediction. But it is important to think about its corollary. Those Iranians who see US bases as threats want Iran to stay in the NPT. It could be that Iranians who view the US presence in neighboring countries as a threat may believe that, by remaining in the NPT, Iran will not provoke an American attack. Thus, those who believe that the US *will* attack want out of the NPT to likely develop a nuclear deterrent and those who see the US as a mere threat do not want to invite an attack by quitting the nuclear weapons regime.

Assumptions regarding secret nuclear programs do not have a significant impact on attitudes toward Iran's status with the NPT. Thus, Iranians do not seem to want to withdraw from the NPT because they fear that their neighbors are developing nuclear programs, which may degrade the safety of Iran and its citizenry.

The perceived influence of the international agencies category finds one of two variables to be significant. At the .10 level of significance, we find that individuals who believe the IAEA has a negative influence are more likely to want Iran to remove itself from the NPT. This means that Iranians who do not trust the IAEA and think that its motives toward Iran are not positive want to withdraw from the NPT.

There is not a significant relationship found between the influence of the UN and Iran's position with the NPT. Thus, there is a difference in how Iranians view the IAEA and the UN. Iranians view the IAEA with distrust but do not have such negative attitudes toward the UN, even though the IAEA is part of the UN system.

The third category of explanation, which focused on Iranian public desire to develop nuclear weapons, does not present a significant relationship. This means that those Iranians, who want to withdraw from the NPT, do not seem to want to do so primarily in order to develop nuclear weapons.

Only one of our five control variables emerged as significant predictors, which explains the difference in robustness between models one and two. We find that younger Iranians are more likely to want Iran to withdraw from the NPT. Education, gender, Tehran residents, and income did not prove to be significant predictors.

Given that we use logit, the coefficients reported in Table 4 do not represent the marginal effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. As a result, we report the first differences of our significant independent variables in Table 4 as well. The first difference reported measures the probability of the dependent variable, signifying a desire to see Iran withdraw from the NPT when the independent variable of interest is moving from its minimum to its maximum value while all remaining independent variables are held at their means. This allows us to consider the substantive significance of each independent variable to explaining variation in the dependent variable.

When looking at the model, we see that the variable measuring fears of U.S. attacks of nuclear facilities proved to have the largest first difference-.147. That means that increasing the value of this variable from its minimum to maximum while holding all other variables constant creates a 14.7% increase in the probability that the respondent would want Iran to withdraw from the NPT.

The variable that measured whether Iranians felt that U.S. military bases in the Middle East pose a threat to their country produced a first difference of .123, making it the second most powerful predictor among the explanatory variables. The influence of the IAEA variable has a value of .091, making it the third most powerful predictor of preferences over withdrawing from the NPT.

## Conclusions

This essay explicated what the Iranian mass public believes about Iran potentially staying in or leaving the NPT. Moreover, in some measure, it also explained how and why Iranians have differing opinions about this matter. We argued that the Iranian mass public has very general views on the issue of the NPT that are not likely informed by a grand strategic vision of Iranian foreign and security policy. Rather, the average Iranian has general predispositions about the nature of world based on her social psychology.

We developed and tested a set of hypotheses derived from our argument about how trust of other countries shapes views of international cooperation. The first category centers on how a sense of international threat can shape attitudes toward withdrawing from the NPT. We find that those who are the most convinced of immediate attack are the most committed to the idea of withdrawing from the NPT.

The second hypothesis focused on the desire to develop nuclear weapons. We found that there was no relationship between a desire to have Iran develop a nuclear arsenal and wanting to withdraw from the NPT. Thus, those Iranians who want their government to withdraw from the NPT, do not want to do so in order to develop nuclear weapons. This is a very important finding for policy-makers who are concerned about Iran's nuclear intentions. If a movement grows in Iran to withdraw from the NPT, governments engaged on this issue should not assume that it means that the Iranian public is clamoring for the development of nuclear weapons.

We also tested a hypothesis that support for withdrawing from the NPT was driven by a distrust of international organizations, namely the IAEA and the UN, the two international organizations that are primarily working on the Iran nuclear issue. Based on the results of our analysis, it seems that a section of the Iranian public holds the IAEA in disdain and does not trust its motives. This distrust is driving support for quitting the NPT. Thus, these Iranians do not want out of the NPT to develop nuclear weapons, but to avoid the perceived harassment of the IAEA that they have heard about in their media. Because the IAEA is more directly involved in Iran's nuclear issue than the broader UN, the Iranian public has more of a negative opinion of the IAEA and thus would like to avoid the perceived loss of sovereignty and humiliation that the IAEA can cause.

How can the West keep Iran in the NPT and still maintain proper inspection measures of Iran's nuclear programs? Right now, there is no immediate worry that Iran will withdraw from the NPT. The Iranian government has stated that its policy is to remain in the regime. There is strong support for this posture, even if it is not universal. Probably, the most important thing that the West can do to keep the Iranian public committed to staying in the NPT is to not give the impression that an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities is eminent. While the threat of an attack is a threat that may induce the Iranian authorities to cooperate, it can backfire and drive up support for withdrawing from the NPT and possibly developing nuclear weapons. The trick for the West is to figure which is better to use with the Iranian regime when it comes to nuclear

development, the carrot or the stick. Our study seems to indicate that threats of the stick may generate a public opinion climate in Iran that may bolster those Iranians officials who want Iran unfettered by the strictures of the NPT.

Quitting the NPT may aid in the development of nuclear weapons or it may simply score a populist victory for the regime in Tehran. Either way, US and other policy-makers need to try to do more to convince the Iranian public that an unprovoked attack on Iran is not in the making and that the IAEA is an honest broker simply trying to make the world a safer place and not single Iran out for unfair treatment. This may be an impossible task. As we said before, the average person has quite simple preconceptions of how the world works. These may not be easily changed by propaganda efforts from the outside.