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# **Iran and Nuclear Weapons**

Five Models to Explain Nuclear Proliferation in Iran

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## **Abstract**

In the last couple of years there have been a lot of debate and discussion in the media and academia concerning Iran's nuclear program and the possibility that they want to develop nuclear weapons. This paper will seek to explain why a state may take the important decision to develop nuclear weapons and why some states never make that choice. By using Iran as an example the paper seeks to present five different models that each has a different answer to this question. The models presented in this paper will have their theoretical basis in five different approaches: Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Feminism and Political Psychology. Each model focuses on different aspects of Iran's situation and explain why that aspect is important to understand. By presenting these models the paper hopes to give the reader a fundamental understanding of the nuclear non-proliferation debate and why it can be very difficult to know how to respond when new states are accused of trying to develop nuclear weapons.

*Key words:* Iran, Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Proliferation, Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Feminism, Political Psychology.

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# 1 Introduction

“We knew the world would not be the same. Few people laughed, few people cried, most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him takes on his multi-armed form and says, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." I suppose we all thought that, one way or another.”

J. Robert Oppenheimer "Father of the atomic bomb" on the first nuclear test.

On the 6 of august 1945 the Japanese city of Hiroshima was completely levelled by the first nuclear bomb used in battle, the United States had finished developing the weapon only a short time before and was therefore the first country in the world to have nuclear weapons. This event was a revolution, not only in military development but in human history as it proved that humanity now had the technological capability to destroy itself should a third world war ever happen. In the almost 70 years since, another nine countries have joined the so called “nuclear club” but thankfully since the end of World War II no further nuclear weapons have been used in battle. Nuclear weapons, because of their unparalleled destructive power, present a unique threat to international security and the safety of humans everywhere. During the cold war stockpiling nuclear weapons was one of the things that the US and USSR competed in and immense amounts of nuclear weapons, enough to wipe the earth clean of life many times over, was constructed (Shelling, 2008, 20-21). Currently the global nuclear stockpile is estimated to be at ca 16 300 of which 3970 are deployed and can be used with little or no preparation (SIPRI Yearbook 2014). This is a steady decrease since the end of the cold war in the late 1980s when the global stockpile was over 60 000. Every year for the past quarter of a century an average of over 1700 nuclear weapons have been dismantled and one nation, South Africa, has left the nuclear club. But despite this massive drop in the amount of nuclear weapons in the last decades everything is not going in the right direction and since the cold war ended two more countries

(Pakistan and North Korea) have joined the nuclear club and several other states have been accused of trying to do so including Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Libya (Baylis and Smith, 2008, 397).

The aim of this paper is to answer the question why a country makes the decision to try to build nuclear weapons. Building nuclear weapons is an expensive and potentially very dangerous move for a county to make and not a decision that can be taken lightly, especially in the post-cold war era. Yet still nations continue to make huge investments in their nuclear capacity both for civilian and sometimes military use. So what drives a country to make this fatal decision? I feel that many people take it for granted that states like Iran or North Korea would want nuclear weapons witch is quite odd as quite few sates actually try to develop them. Thus I think it is important to ask why these states do so if we are to make any serious attempts to persuade other states not to follow in their footsteps. The aim of this paper is not to say that one theory is right and another wrong but rather to present the different approaches to the problem and how I believe that the different theories relate to each other both on a theoretical and practical level. Naturally I will also present my own ideas and beliefs but more as an example of my reasoning than as an attempt to convince anyone that my opinion is the right one compared to others. Hopefully this will give the reader a clear picture of the problem at hand and the various methods that can be employed to discourage further states from developing weapons of mass destruction as discouraging states from developing WMD:s is, in the long run, impossible if we do not fully understand why they try to develop them in the first place.

### **1.1 Question**

Why does a country chose to develop nuclear weapons?

### **1.2 Method**

To attempt to answer this question I will look at the different theoretical approaches that are dominant in International Relations theory and then try to make an argumentative analyze of these different theories to see their strength and weaknesses. I will look mostly on academic texts and books and make textual

and argumentative analyses of these texts to see how they explain their answers. I will exemplify by using Iran as a case study by which to present the arguments made by the different theoretical approaches. I will present the different theories and make a comparative analyses of their reasoning and ideas.

To simplify the text I will divide it into five parts based on five different models of explaining the question. These five models will take their basis in different theories predominant in international relations studies. I will start with two “older” positivist theories that dominated the International Relations during much of the 20:th century: Realisms and Liberalism and then look at more “modern” post-positivist approaches to the same problem. To make my argument as clear as possible I will use a case study of Iran and how the different models would explain why a country in Iran’s position would make the decision to develop nuclear weapons. The case is not meant to represent a unique situation but rather to give a framework on how to answer the question on any given county based on different models and ways of thinking.

Note that the relationship between the theories and the models of explanations are not always as clear as they may seem in this paper and different theories can reach very similar answers to explain a problem like this one. Naturally not every single realist believes in International security model or every feminist adhere to the reasoning presented in this paper. Despite this I have chosen to attribute each model to a distinct theory to make it simpler to follow my reasoning concerning the different models. For all intents and purposes I will use the name of the models and the name of the theories interchangeably (unless specifically stated otherwise) even though that is a great simplification. As you will see many of the explanations can be, at least at a surface level, very similar but with some important distinctions. Obviously it is impossible to include all possible models of explanation and all theoretical grounds given the limits of this essay so I have chosen these because they represent some of the fundamental different views that exist on the subject.

I will focus mostly on the case of Iran as it is the most resent state to make an

attempt at joining the nuclear club and has gained a great deal of attention from the world media . At a first glance Iran may not be the best example as they do not yet have nuclear weapons and many now believe that they might never take the final step and build a nuclear bomb. However I believe that Iran is a valid case for this study as it is generally believed that they at some point tried to develop nuclear weapons which make the question of why they made that decision valid (Shahram, 2014, 66-67). It is also important since a lot of people believe that Iran wants nuclear weapons and therefore and it is important to understand why as it will explain to some degree why Iran and not another country are perceived to want nuclear weapons. Iran's position in one of the most problematic regions on earth also makes it a fascinating case to examine even if it's only in theory. In the past years there has been a great deal of debate concerning Iran's nuclear capability. So while the question should perhaps be rephrased as "*why would a country chose to develop nuclear weapons?*" I feel that it is important and enlightening to analyze and understand the case of Iran.

The nuclear weapons debate started even before the weapons themselves existed, focusing on the morality of building weapons of such destructive potential. However the Second World War started and the US Manhattan project (the project that developed the nuclear weapons) started and resulted in the creation of the first nuclear bombs and (thankfully) the only time so far that they have been used in actual combat's the bombings of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The US believed at the time that their nuclear monopoly would last 10-15 years but unfortunately for the US the security of the Manhattan project was severely lacking. Thanks to a number of spies in the Manhattan project the Soviet Union was able to start their own project almost immediately and in 1949 made their first nuclear test. The changed dynamic made the nuclear debate take a new direction and focused more and more on the competition between the two superpowers and the role that nuclear weapons played in this dynamic as an ultimate method of deterrence resulting ultimately in the so called Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) theory. Fear of the other retaliating would always keep the two superpowers from waging wars against each other and thus nuclear

weapons would help us avoid WW 3, or at least this was the theory.

After the Soviet Union more and more nations made the decision to create nuclear weapons and in 1952 the UK became the third nation to join the nuclear club and was soon followed by France and China in 1960 and 1964 respectively. At some point, presumably in the late 1960s Israel acquired nuclear weapons but made no test and has still not officially confirmed that they have nuclear weapons.

Following the Cuban missile crises in 1962 the fear of nuclear war increased and a worldwide effort to limit the possibility of nuclear conflict led to the creation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1968. The treaty banned nuclear weapons from all states except the five already officially existing nuclear states (US, Soviet Union, UK, France and China) and encouraged these to cooperate to limit nuclear danger. The treaty was eventually signed by every state except Israel, Pakistan, India and South Sudan (North Korea withdrew in 2003). In 1974 India tested its first nuclear device and sometime in the 1980s South Africa acquired nuclear weapons and became the last nation to do so during the cold war and also the first nation to dismantle their nuclear forces which they did in 1989/90. The end of the cold war also ended the bipolar world and the eminent fear of nuclear wars for many people, this new more multipolar dynamic gave rise to new theories on the importance of nuclear weapons. In 1998 Pakistan made its first nuclear test and in 2006 North Korea became the latest nation to do so.

### **1.3 Existing Literature**

The current literature on the spread of nuclear weapons is mostly focused on how to stop/discourage states from acquiring them or how states “build” them and generally seems to take it for granted that some (or even most) states want WMD:s and therefore do not focus on why they want them in the first place. Naturally there are some who have attempted to answer this question but these tend mostly to argue in favor of their own opinion and focus on a single explanation and argue that that one is the most important (for example Waltz 2003



and O'Reilly, 2012 ). Among the articles that do try to answer this question in a more "objective" way the most predominant and "quoted" article is still Scott Sagan's article *Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb* from 1996/97. In this article Sagan presents the three most common explanations used when talking about why states go nuclear; The Security model, The Domestic Politics Model and the Norms Model (more about these later). Sagan's article is still used by many as a blueprint for analyzing this problem (for example Sherrill 2012 and Steven 2010) and while the article is very good it is almost 20 years old and obviously not up to date in the theoretical field of international relations politics and especially not in the non-positivistic parts of the field that has seen great expansion in the last 10-15 years. Areas such as Feminism and Political Psychology have seen a lot of work connected to this area lately. With this in mind I will try to expand the model to include more of the newer ideas and focus more on the similarities and differences between the positivistic and non-positivistic models of explanation. Since there are now too many models to fit neatly into such an essay I will split this paper into two parts one Positivistic and one Non-Positivistic. These parts will in turn be split into models of explanation based on specific theories that provide some examples of these two main approaches and discuss how they can relate to each other. Three of the models presented in this paper are the models presented by Scott Sagan in his article from 1996 and I have added two more models from more "modern" theoretical approaches.

## **2 Case Study**

### **2.1 The case of Iran, History, Politics and Culture**

The modern history of Iran is often considered to start with the disposal of the ruling Qajar Dynasty by Reza Khan in 1925. Reza Khan proclaimed himself Shah (king) under the name Reza Shah Pahlavi. He immediately launched an ambitious campaign to modernize the country. Among other plans, he hoped to develop a national public education system, build a national railroad system and improve health care. At the same time he consolidated his own power and created a strict dictatorship with a strong nationalistic, militaristic and anti-communistic policy. Reza Shah modernized the country to try to close the great power gap with the western powers that had previously had great influence in Iran and he also tried to modernize both the army and the economy in order to make Iran stronger. Unlike most of the Middle East and Asia Iran was never officially colonized but was nonetheless under very strong economic and politic influence from Russia and the British Empire in the 19:th century. In 1941 Reza Shah was forced to abdicate by a Soviet and British invasion as a part of World War II. Iran was officially neutral but Reza Shah was considered by the Soviet Union and Great Britain to be to pro-German and Iran's oil was to important for the allies to let him remain in power. He was succeeded by his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Mohammad (in the West often referred to simply as "the Shah of Iran") continued his father's project to modernize Iran but unlike his father made close connections to the western powers and especially the United States.

Iran started its nuclear program under the Shah the years following the start of the cold war and was one of the original states to sign the NPT in 1968 thereby promising to only develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes. If the Shah intended to follow this is unknown but likely given his close relations with the US.

In the 50s and 60s Iran enjoyed a great deal of economic support to their nuclear program from the US (and to a lesser extent other western nations) under the Atom for Peace program and there were a great deal of cooperation between the two states (Barzashka and Oelrich 2012, 4-5). In 1972 Iran refused to join the Arab countries in the oil embargo and instead increased the oil price, something that gave them a lot of money, some of which were used to continue and expand the nuclear program. Despite this the Shah's regime grew ever more unpopular as he gave himself more and more power and the regime became increasingly oppressive, brutal, corrupt, and extravagant (Mousavian, 2013, 145). Many of the people of Iran also accused the Shah of being a puppet for the United States, the secular policy of the Shah also aggravated large parts of the deeply Muslim population of Iran. In 1979 the unhappiness with the regime became too much and a revolution lead by Muslim fundamentalists forced the Shah out of Iran. Iran was reorganized as the Islamic Republic of Iran with the supreme leader Ruhollah Khomeini becoming the de-facto leader of the country (Barzashka and Oelrich 2012, 10).

After the revolution of 1979 Iran went through many noticeable changes and its relations with the US and Israel became much worse and all cooperation with the US came to an abrupt stop. Following the revolution and the Iran hostage crisis the US started to imply economic sanctions towards Iran to discourage further development of nuclear capabilities (among other things). Without foreign support the Iranian nuclear program initially slowed to a crawl as the need for more materials were growing without significant supplies. The revolution in Iran brought swift political changes in the region and Iraq invaded in 1980 to strengthen its own position. During this war both the United States and the Soviet Union supported Iraq (at least nominally), the war become extremely expensive for Iran and also damaged several nuclear power plants further slowing down the development of nuclear energy. In 1981, Iranian governmental officials concluded that the country's nuclear development should continue. After the end of the war with Iraq the Iranian government started to more seriously invest in its nuclear program as it felt isolated and without allies despite support from the International Atomic

Energy Association to their civilian nuclear program. In 1983, IAEA officials were keen to assist Iran in the chemical aspects of reactor fuel fabrication, chemical engineering and design aspects of pilot plants for uranium conversion, corrosion of nuclear materials, LWR fuel fabrication and pilot plant development for production of nuclear grade UO<sub>2</sub>. In 1984 the nuclear program restarted for real and it is believed by some (Barzashka and Oelrich 2012, 12) that this is also when it was decided to try to develop nuclear weapons and not only a civilian nuclear program. Sometime in the late 80ies Iran received some minor technical support from Pakistan whose nuclear program was noticeably further along the road of constructing nuclear bombs. However no serious cooperation between the two sates became possible partly because of political differences. In 1995 Iran signed a large contract with Russia to receive help in building their nuclear facilities meanwhile the US persuaded most other states not to help Iran with their civilian nuclear program and in 1996 further sanctions were placed upon Iran with reference to their nuclear ambitions. In 2002 documents were reviled that proved that Iran was indeed trying to develop nuclear weapons and in 2003, possibly as a response to the US invasion of Iraq, the Supreme Leader of Iran suspended the military part of Iran's nuclear program (Mousavian, 2013, 148).

Iran is a theocratic republic whose government is split into several different branches. The most powerful political office in Iran is that of the Supreme Leader who is appointed and supervised by the Council of Experts which is a democratically elected body. Supreme leader is the Head of State with some Executive powers related to Defense, Religious affairs and the Guardian Council. The Council of Experts is a body of 86 "virtuous and learned" clerics elected by adult suffrage for eight-year terms. The Council supervises the Supreme leader and can in theory remove him from office but there has been no case of the counsel and Supreme Leader opposing each other so if this works in practice is unclear. The Supreme Leader chosens people for some of the most important positions in Iran including the supreme commander of the military, the Chief Judge and half the members of the Guardian Council. He can veto the laws made by the parliament and legally he permits for presidential candidates to proclaim their

candidacy. Also the declaration of war and peace is to be made by the Supreme Leader together with a two third majority of the Parliament.

The legislative branch in Iran is split into three parts: The first is the Parliament (Majlis) which consists of 290 members elected for four-year terms. The Parliament drafts legislation, sanctions international treaties, and approves the national budget amongst other things. All Parliament candidates and all legislation from the assembly must be approved by the Guardian Council.

The second part of the Guardian Council is composed of 12 jurists, including six clerics appointed by the Supreme Leader, and six jurists elected by the Parliament from among the Muslim jurists nominated by the Head of the Judicial System. The Council interprets the constitution and may reject bills from parliament deemed incompatible with the constitution or Sharia (Islamic law). These are referred back to parliament for revision. In an exercise of its authority, the Council has drawn upon a narrow interpretation of Iran's constitution to veto parliamentary candidates.

The third part of the legislative branch is the Expediency Council. The council has the authority to mediate disputes between the Parliament and the Guardian Council. While this is their only official duty the Expediency Council also serves as the Supreme Leader's main advisory body and as such has great influence and power. The Council's members include heads of the three government branches, the clerical members of the Guardian Council and various other members appointed by the supreme leader for three-year terms.

The Executive branch of the Iran government is led by the President of Iran, the president is officially the highest position in Iran after the Supreme Leader. The President is elected by universal suffrage, by those 18 years old and older, for a term of four years, however all candidates for the president post must first be approved by the Guardian Council before they run for presidency (no woman has ever been approved by the council even though they can technically become president). The Guardian Council does not announce publicly the reason for rejections of particular candidate although those reasons are explained to each candidate. The President appoints and supervises the Council of Ministers,

coordinates government decisions, and selects government policies to be placed before the legislature. While Iran has universal suffrage formal political parties are a relatively new phenomenon in Iran and many conservatives still prefer to work through political pressure and lobby groups rather than parties. Often political parties or coalitions are formed prior to elections and disbanded soon thereafter. This makes the democratic aspects of the Iran system less important than it may seem in theory (Mousavian, 2013, 150).

Like in many states the military has significant political influence in Iran. The military is officially directly responsible to the Supreme Leader and reports only to him. Iran has two types of armed forces: the regular forces divided into Islamic Republic of Iran Army, Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force and the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy and the Revolutionary Guards that stand outside the regular army totaling almost 500,000 active troops. Since the Iranian Revolution, to overcome foreign embargo, Iran has developed its own military industry, produced its own tanks, armored personnel carriers, guided missiles, submarines, military vessels, destroyer, radar systems, helicopters and fighter planes. Because of this the military industry is also of great importance in Iran but Iran still imports lots of military material from non-western states (Barzashka and Oelrich 2012, 15).

With a population just short of 80 million and covering almost 1.7 million Km<sup>2</sup> Iran is one of the largest states in the Middle East region. As an Islamic republic Islam is the state religion and a vast majority of the people are Shia Muslims with some other religious minorities. Approximately 60-65% of the population is ethnically Persians with Kurds and Azerbaijanis being the two largest minority groups. As the Muslim Sharia laws are part of the Iranian constitution Islam has a great impact on the culture of Iran but with a significant amount of pre-Islamic Persian influence. Iran is a mixed economy with a nominal GDP of \$404,132 (\$1,334.3 in PPP) where the state is the most important economic actor, some 60% of the economy is centrally planned. Iran's economy is strongly dependent on the oil and gas exports with China being the most important buyer. With 10% of the world's proven oil reserves and 15% of its gas reserves, Iran is considered to have

the potential to become an economic major power. Sanctions from the rest of the world and political corruption have greatly hampered Iran's economic development and some 30 million is believed to live under the relative poverty line (CIA World Factbook, 2015).

## **2.2 IAEA and the ongoing discussion.**

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an international organization that was founded in 1957 with the purpose of promoting the development of civilian nuclear energy and at the same time prohibit the development and spread of nuclear weapons. One of the IAEA main tasks is to inspect the nuclear facilities of the membership states to insure both that they follow the agreed upon safety regulations and that the facilities are for solely civilian purposes. This can be very problematic as a large functioning civil nuclear infrastructure automatically gives the technological ability to enrich uranium to the point where you can use it for military purposes (although this alone is not enough to build a nuclear bomb). Iran has been repeatedly accused of trying to use civilian nuclear facilities to enrich uranium to the point where they are close to build nuclear weapons and withholding information from the IAEA. Iran has on a number of occasions denied the IAEA inspectors the transparency they demand in accordance with the NPT. In 2003, as a result of these accusations, the three largest states of the European Union, France, Germany and the United Kingdom (aka the EU-3) started negotiations with Iran about how to proceed with their nuclear program in a manner that could insure that Iran had no military intentions with it. Iran argues that without uranium enrichment capabilities that the country will in the long run be dependent on others to provide energy for them. Initially these talks met with little success as Iran refused to be dependent upon anyone else and the EU-3 felt it could not let Iran continue their program without more transparency. In 2006 the

remaining permanent members of the UN Security Council (Russia, China and the United States) joined the negotiations trying to convince Iran to agree to the demands of the IAEA (Fitzpatrick, 2006, 528-529). However the negotiations still did not precede as intended and as a result, four resolutions were put in place by the United Nations Security Council: they demanded to suspend all Uranium enrichment and heavy water (another material needed for nuclear bombs) activities and restricted acquisition of nuclear and ballistic materials by Iran. The continuing refusal by Iranian authority to make clear declarations and to allow sufficient inspections of their nuclear facilities then convinced the EU to enforce additional sanctions on civilian goods and services such as financial activities and energy sector technologies. In 2012, an oil embargo and restrictive financial boycotts were enforced by the EU, in addition to UN sanctions against Iran. Not until November 2013 did the negotiations lead to any serious progress when the Geneva interim agreement was signed by all the parties. The deal consists of the short-term freezing of key parts of the Iranian nuclear program in exchange for a decrease in sanctions, as both sides work towards a long-term agreement. Most states have shown a positive reaction to the deal as it is seen as a way to keep Iran from developing nuclear weapons but at the same time limit the sanctions on Iran that de facto hurts a lot of civilians. Israel have however been very critical of the deal feeling it legitimizes Iran's nuclear ambitions and echoes the deals made with North Korea when trying to keep them from developing nuclear weapons, something that failed. Others claim that Iran has a history of not honoring international deals (such as the NPT) and that it is naïve to believe that they will honor this one (Chubin, 2014, 70-71). Nonetheless all parties seem to be content with the deal and negotiations on how to implement it and how to continue has started. However this is only a start and it's still a long way to reach any consensus in how to solve the problem on a long term basis as the parties still have very different goals with the negotiation. The P5+1 want to be sure that Iran never develops nuclear weapons and Iran wants to be totally independent in terms of energy and politics.



### **3 Theories**

In this chapter I will present five different models that are used for explaining why states choose to build nuclear weapons. The models are each connected to one of the main theories in international relations.

#### **3.1 Positivism**

Positivism is the idea or belief that social sciences can and should be approached in the same manner as natural sciences such as physics. Knowledge is achieved through empirical studies and experiments of the world around us. Positivism holds that society, like the physical world, operates according to general laws. Introspective and intuitive knowledge is rejected, as is metaphysics and theology. Positivists hold the ontological and epistemological belief that there is an objective truth, a “real world” for humans to study and that we can study it if we simply keep ourselves objective and use scientific experiments to analyse what we see. By observing historical examples and contemporary happenings we can predict what will happen, assuming similar things have happened in the past, or at least that is the general idea. Because of their beliefs in empiricism many positivists believe in universal “rules” that govern social sciences just as the rules of physics govern natural sciences. The most famous such rule is, arguably, the Liberal idea of democratic peace. These rules are held to be universal and unchanging over time and space. Positivism in the modern sense is generally attributed to 19th century thinkers such as Auguste Comte (1798–1857) but the general idea of this approach is far older and has been used in social science for centuries, most predominantly in Machiavelli’s “The Prince” from the early 16th century. Positivism was (and in many ways is) the dominant theoretical approach through the 20th century and it is mostly in the last couple of decades that it has come under some serious criticism. Scientists who “stick” to the positivistic school tend to think of humans, and by extension states, as being rational entities that act as they do based on a kind of “rational choice” model where the cost of option A is compared to the cost of option B and the most cost effective choice prevails whether that cost is in terms of money, security or something else (Lebow, 2011, 1219-1221).

### 3.1.1 Realism and the International Security Model

This chapter will try to explain how a realist would attempt to explain the reasons for a state like Iran to develop nuclear bombs. Realism is not one unified theory but a large diverse body of different ideas and beliefs that have some important ideas in common, the most important of these common ideas (for the purpose of this paper) is the assumptions that a state is a single unified rational actor and that as such states will always act out of its own self-interest regardless of the political structure or the situation. In this paper I will focus mostly on neo-Realism (also referred to as structural Realism) as it is the approach that mostly discusses the concept of nuclear weapons and their importance in IR theory. Structural realist focus predominantly on the anarchic nature of the international system, as there is no central government in the international arena each state is forced to act in its own self-interest and protect itself from other states. Defensive structural Realism argue that states will seek to avoid wars by balance and will only amass enough force to be able to defend itself from its enemies while offensive structural realists argue that a state will always try to amass as much power as they possibly can to ensure safety (Williams, 2013, 18-22).

Realism, in most of its variants, is a positivist theory and thus arguing that social science can and should be approached as if it were a natural science. The truth of the world is "out there" and we can find it if we simply study the right cases and observe the statistics of these cases. Realism came to predominance in International Relations studies in the inter-war years of the 20:th century as a critique to the Liberal ideas that many thought of as being far too idealistic and viewing the world as they wanted it to be rather than as it really was (Williams, 2013, 15-16). Realists believe that the ultimate goal of a state is always to survive at any cost and thus care little for concepts such as moral or ethics although they, unlike some theories, generally does not deny the existence of such concepts only their relevance.

States and their leaders engage in a series of calculations wherein they consider their aims for a war, the prospects for victory, and finally, and most importantly,

how the war will affect their attainment of security. The main purpose of nuclear weapons in realist theories is not to use them but rather as deterrence. The general idea of deterrence is to control or at least influence another party's actions through fear rather than direct actions, either through military or economical threats. It is often said that the ultimate form of deterrence is nuclear, as the fear of nuclear weapons and their destructive capability should by far outweigh any gain one could have from attacking the nation. Realists argue that a state will therefore try to get nuclear weapons when they have an enemy that they feel inferior (or at least not superior) to and cannot count on another country to protect them from that enemy (Shilling, 2008, 20-21). According to realist models the Soviet Union started their nuclear program as a direct answer to the American as the cold War started and felt that US nuclear arsenal gave the Americans to great an advantage in the conflict for global dominance. UK and France feared Soviet advances in Europe and that they could not count on the US as they might be deterred by Soviet nukes and might not be prepared to start a nuclear war unless they themselves were threatened. After the Sino-Soviet split in the early 60ies China could no longer count on the Soviet Union to help them and thus needed to protect themselves from both superpowers and in 1964 tested their first bomb which in turn made India, who fought a war with China in 1962 but had yet to pick a side in the cold war, to advance their own program. Israel was surrounded and outnumbered by its Arab enemies and after the Suez crisis in 1956 felt it could no longer count totally on US support. Lastly Pakistan felt threatened by India's conventional and nuclear superiority. Nuclear weapons are thus a tool to respond to an existing treat or to change a status quo that one is uncomfortable with (Sagan, 1995, 58-59; Sagan and Waltz 2010, 90-91).

The first and most important aspect of nuclear weapons for Iran, according to most realist theories, would probably be its problematic relations with Israel and the US (Waltz, 2012, 2-3). The US have been a nuclear power since 1945 and while Israel have never openly admitted to having nuclear weapons it is generally accepted that they have been a nuclear state since the late 1960ies (Allison and Zerkow 1999, 25). Likewise Iran cannot match the conventional forces of the US or Israel in

case of war, should the problematic relations escalate further. Since the US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq the Iran government feels surrounded and isolated and the balance even further in their (potential) enemy's favors. Because of these facts it is reasonable, from a realist point of view, that Iran would want to find a means to ensure its own protection from its more powerful enemies, and to avoid total US hegemony of the Middle East region.

Even before the strong US presence in Iraq and Afghanistan Iran's history with both these countries was problematic as they had different religious views and strategic goals. Having suffered Iraqi chemical weapons attacks in the 1980s, Iran was also concerned about the possible resumption of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs as it might give Saddam the courage to again attack Iran without fearing outside involvement, or might even use them against Iran (Sherrill 2012, 35-36). A nuclear deterrence would then be the most secure way of protection against their offensive neighbor. Another perhaps less significant but still important threat is the on-and-off problematic relations with Iran's eastern neighbor Pakistan: with a population double that of Iran's and a significant nuclear stockpile Pakistan is a close and potentially very significant threat to Iran. From a realist perspective Iran has more than enough reasons to make the decision to attempt to develop nuclear weapons especially in the light of George W Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech in 2002 and the different lessons learned from the examples of North Korea and Iraq: North Korea has nuclear weapons and was not invaded while Iraq did not and was (Sherrill 2012, 40). In the last few year Iran has tried to improve their relations with the nuclear powers Russia and China (Iran's chief oil receiver) but not to the extent that they can feel conformable in their willingness or possibility to protect Iran in case of American hostility. Some realists, most predominately Kenneth Waltz, has argued that this is a good thing as the nuclear imbalance is one of the things that has made the Middle East such a problematic region in the last decades. Waltz argues that balance is a necessary condition for lasting peace and as long as Israel retained its nuclear monopoly there will never be balance. A nuclear Iran would therefore make Israel more cautious and more willing to engage in discussions with the Muslim countries. The risk would also be minimal as the MAD doctrine would

stop the states from ever using the nuclear weapons as it would lead to their own destruction (Waltz, 2012, 2-5)

“If a country has nuclear weapons, it will not be attacked militarily in ways that threaten its manifestly vital interests. That is 100 percent true, without exception, over a period of more than fifty years.” (Waltz, 2007, 137)

Other realists have a profoundly more negative view of the possibility of a nuclear Iran and their decision to make WMD:s. Many offensive structural realists argue that Iran will not stop at having nuclear weapons for their own protection from outside forces. Because the situation in the middle east is so complex and with so many factions in the various countries: Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and even Pakistan rank among the most unstable states in the world at the “Failed State” index (<http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/>) and both in Syria and Afghanistan war still rages. If Iran could acquire nuclear weapons they could be considerable more active in the region without having to fear retaliation from Israel or the US as they would be unwilling to risk nuclear war. Supporters of this theory claims that Pakistan has become significantly more aggressive since they joined the nuclear club provoking the Kargil war and other incidents (Fitzpatrick, 2006, 530) and it is reasonable to assume that Iran would act in a similar fashion, increasing conventional military assistance to Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, as the nations have some similarities. This would potentially strengthen Iran’s power and simultaneously weaken its enemies. Some offensive realists however argue that the making of WMD: s is too dangerous for a nation like Iran as they risk offensives from Israel or the US to be solely for defensive reasons.

Realism can thus give very different answers to why a state choses to make the attempt to make nuclear weapons but all of them come from the same reasoning of making a rational choice based on potential costs and benefits. If the potential benefits, whether for defensive or offensive intends, exceeds the costs of making the WMD than a state will attempt to do so. Based on your own version and interpretation of realist argument a realist could argue anything from direct invasion to simply let it happen when asked the question on how to tackle the problem of states such as Iran trying to make nuclear weapons. The only way to

truly discourage Iran from building nuclear weapons would be direct force or convincing Israel to dismantle their nuclear weapons and/or convince the US to be less active in the region, neither of which is very likely to happen.

### **3.1.2 Liberalism and the Domestic Politics Model**

Liberalism is a set of theories that has been predominant in the western mind ever since the enlightenment in the 17:th and 18:th centuries. Liberalism takes its roots in the ideas of individual freedom and promotes ideas such as democracy and market economy to grant individuals as great amounts of freedom as possible. Like Realism, Liberalism is a positivist theory that focuses on “scientific” ideas in that the world can be observed and measured to gain knowledge and understanding on how the social world works. Arguably the best example of this is Francis Fukuyamas book “The End of History” that argued that the 20:th century offered empirical proof that Liberalism and liberal democracies was superior to all other ideologies and government forms (Baylis and Smith, 2008, 110-112). While Liberalism has some assumptions in common with Realism they are very different in their approach to international relations. Whereas Realism discards moral and (at least theoretically) seeks only to explain how the world works from their perspective Liberalism have strong opinions of right and wrong and seeks to encourage the spread and convince others that their own values are the right ones and that all nations should adopt a democratic government form as they argue that they are more peaceful than other variants. This is best exemplified in the “democratic peace theory” that states the liberal democracies never go to war against each other as there are no examples of this happening in the hundred or so years that modern democracies have existed. Liberals also argue that it is interdependences (that is mutually beneficial interaction) between states that is what creates good and stable relations rather than military alliances (Sagan, 1995, 64). However while lack of democratic governments and interdependence can explain the background to why a state choses to develop nuclear weapons it

cannot answer why the specific decision was taken. To do so from a liberal point of view we can look at another thing they see very different from realists namely how a state works. As I mentioned in the realist section realists see the state as a single unified rational actor, while liberals agree that a state is rational they do not see it as a single unified unit but rather a complex structure of many different organizations with many varying interests leading to the so called “domestic policy model” to why states make a certain decision at a specific time (Smet, 2010, 14).

Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons is useful in building domestic support for the Islamist regime. Although not accountable to the people, the clerics nevertheless seek popular support in order to reduce the costs of ruling. (Sherrill, 2012, 41)

The domestic policy model as the name suggests argue that it is not external threats but rather domestic interests that determines if a state will go nuclear or not though obviously domestic actors are influenced by external situations. Domestic models of proliferation contend that states seek nuclear weapons. Nuclear programs are, from this point of view, the result of an entity or coalition of groups within the state that sees nuclear weapons as a means to accomplish some domestic goal (Sherrill 2012). This is, liberal’s claim, the explanation why some states does not follow the direct path to nuclear weapons as Realism might predict. An example of this could be why France acquired nuclear weapons so long after the Soviet Union and the UK. The Soviet Union tested its first nuclear bomb in 1949 and so could threaten western Europe with conventional war while hopefully keeping the US out with nuclear deterrence making the European nations feel the need for their own nuclear capability as security. The UK tested its first weapon in 1952 but France not until 1960 despite being in the same situation, however France had suffered far more damage in World War II than the UK and thus could not motivate to spend the billions of dollars (mostly from the Marchall plan) on a nuclear program rather than rebuilding bombed cities and destroyed infrastructure. Such an investment would have been political suicide in a democratic county. Stalin’s Soviet Union however, despite suffering even more destruction than France, was not concerned with the opinions of the people and

the military as an organization had much greater influence. Even more peculiar, from a realist point of view, is the long (almost a decade) time between China's first nuclear test and India's in 1974. India should definitely have had the economy and the nuclear know-how to create a nuclear device at least by the late 60ies if deterrence against china was their only concern. However several important groups in the Indian government opposed the nuclear program and instead wanted for India to join the NPT and while many others wanted to proceed with the nuclear program the actual decision was postponed until the pro-nuclear side won in the end. When the actual test was performed the reaction from the public was very positive and most Indians supported the decision to go nuclear (Sagan 1996, 66-67).

This model can also explain why some nations drop their nuclear ambitions totally such as Sweden or more noticeably South Africa who developed nuclear weapons in the 80s only to dismantle them at the end of the decade. The South African government supported the idea of nuclear weapon throughout the 70s and early 80s but by the end of the decade had drastically changed their opinion as the apartheid regime in South Africa came under even greater criticism both from within and from the international community. In 1989, several months before the fall of the Berlin wall the South African government took the decision to dismantle the six nuclear weapons they had constructed and around the same time the discriminating laws were changed a bit. Liberals see this as an attempt by the existing regime to remain in power by making popular decisions to get internal support (Sagan, 1996, 69-71).

In Iran the regime is not democratic and does not need the direct support or popularity of the people but must nonetheless be careful: the current regime in Iran was created by a revolution and it is not outside the realm of possibility that such a thing could happen again so ether the support of the people or the military, to keep the people in line, is important.

Islam is the ideological foundation justifying the positions of the elite in Iran. Regime elites compete among themselves for power; yet, they are all dependent on the maintenance of the Islamic system for their positions. To what extent the



actual leaders in Iran are religious or is simply using religion as a tool has been questioned but they use the religion as a unifying force to bring the people together. Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is useful in building domestic support for the Islamist regime. Whether the leaders believe or not they are, however, stuck with using Islam as a base for their power as they cannot publicly repudiate that which provides the sole basis of their regime's legitimacy (Sherrill, 2012, 42). Although not accountable to the people, the leaders nevertheless seek popular support in order to reduce the costs and problems of ruling. By tying the construction of nuclear weapons to nationalistic pride the nuclear program can serve several important functions at once, especially in times of economic hardship and isolation. At the same time it can be a source of pride in their technological achievement and a way to alienate the people from western influence by demonizing the west as trying to deny the Iranians something that they have. Because of this observers have noted a strong support for the nuclear program from the Iranian people as they feel it is something they deserve. Developing nuclear weapons could also provide a clear, tangible achievement by which the regime leaders could justify the economic difficulties in Iran in the past years. By portraying the economic problems as sacrifices by the people to permit technological progress, the regime can reduce the level of criticism the economic problems can otherwise lead to. However if they fail, having invested large sums in the nuclear program, the regime would be hard-pressed to explain a lack of results. Because of this the bureaucratic momentum of the decade's long program could also prove to be a driving force in the pursuit of nuclear weapons as failure at this point would potentially be disastrous for the regimes legitimacy (Smet, 2010, 29-30).

Institutionally the nuclear program is officially controlled by the civilian Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) but is de facto under the control of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) a military organization that, officially, exists to protect the country's Islamic system but that has in the last years grown into a multi-billion dollar economic organization that has very great influence on the government (Sherrill, 2012, 40-41). As the IRGC has become more and more

important in Iran both economically and politically the nuclear program has become important and their resources have increased. For the IRGC the control of the nuclear program, both civilian and military, has become an important part in their own self-interest as their original purpose is very close to the regular military. Nuclear weapons would enhance IRGC power in the Iranian regime, guaranteeing that the IRGC will retain influence in the future, especially during possible uncertainties that might surround the succession of Supreme Leadership when he eventually dies. The great complexity of the Iran political system also helps the nuclear program as it becomes a way for different political organizations to gain support and advance their own interests on their rival's expense. Some liberals also highlight the importance of certain individuals as they are the ones who make the ultimate decisions. Who is Supreme Leader and president matters as their cooperation and support is necessary to develop the nuclear sector. The 2013 election of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran is argued as one of the reasons for the agreement made in November 2013 between Iran and the P5+1 as he is more willing to cooperate than his predecessor. Others reject this explanation as the Supreme Leader remains the same and is the most important individual in Iranian politics (Sagan, 2011, 230).

Liberalism gives a very different answer to why a state chooses to start military nuclear program when compared to Realism. Like realist however they believe in the idea of rational actors weighing the options based on the cost of building or not building nuclear weapons. Few if any liberals would probably argue that a nuclear Iran (or any non-democratic state) is a good thing as isolated dictatorships with limited economic freedom is opposed to what liberals think is a good state. Thus to a liberal the question of who is developing nuclear weapons is essential to how one is to respond to it. Discouraging Iran to close their nuclear program would be most effectively achieved by increased interdependence and promotion of a greater respect for liberal democratic values within Iran and, failing that, propose economic sanctions to the point where developing nuclear weapons become so expensive that is not worth it.

### **3.2 Non-positivism**

Non-positivism is a broad set of theories that share the common concept that they reject positivism as a way of analyzing international relations. While positivists argue that social sciences should be approached in the same way as natural sciences non-positivists hold the belief that the observer can never be free of his/her own views and thus cannot be objective when analyzing social phenomena. You cannot understand international relations by performing experiments as if you were analyzing the laws of physics. Instead knowledge comes from understanding humans and their actions and writings and trying to understand the minds of other humans. Non-positivism is not a unified concept and many of them agree with the ontology of positivism: that there is an objective truth but reject the idea that it can be objectively studied. Many other variants reject the ontology of positivists and deny the existence of any “real world” and believe that our social world is constructed by us and the discourse which we live with. Non-positivism generally reject the ideas that there are any universal values that are always right such as Liberal beliefs that democracies do not go to war against each other or Realist claims that states will always value its survival over all other things. Non-positivism instead argues that all such ideas are socially constructed and therefore dependent on our individual and/or collective beliefs and experiences (Lebow, 2011, 1224-1226).

#### **3.2.1 Constructivism and the Identity/Norms model**

Constructivism arose as a set of theories in the 80s and 90s as a critic to the standard theories of Liberalism and Realism believing that their positivistic approach to social science makes them focus too much on what can be easily measured empirically and ignore more subtle but equally as, or more, important aspects of social sciences. Constructivists argue instead that the world is constituted socially through inter-subjective interaction; that agents and

structures are mutually constituted; and that ideational factors such as norms and identity are central to the constitution and dynamics of world politics (Williams, 2013, 64-65). Constructivism is sometimes considered a theoretical “middle ground” between positivists and non-positivist as constructivist often agree with the positivist epistemology that there is a “real world” but not the idea that this world can be observed in any objective way and that as humans we are always to some extent colored by our own experience and beliefs (Björkdahl, 2002b, 25). Alexander Wendt famously claimed that “Anarchy is what States Make of it” as a response to Waltz explanation that international relation is a resolute of the anarchic international system. Wendt agreed that the international system was anarchic but rejected Waltz idea that this must lead to certain forgone conclusions in state behavior (Williams, 2013, 75-76).

“Both social Constructivism and new institutionalism focus on norms concerning weapons acquisition, seeing nuclear decisions as serving important symbolic functions – shaping as well as reflecting a state’s identity and modernity” (Sagan, 1996, 73)

Constructivists argue that international relations to a great extent are dominated by norms that are constantly being constructed and re-constructed as the dynamics in the world changes. Unlike realists who discards the relevance of moral or liberalists who believe in a set of never-changing moral values constructivists believe that morals are important but changes to reflect the changes in the world dynamics. Why, for example, was nuclear tests considered impressive and positive in the 50ies but is today very frowned upon even by the existing nuclear states? The norms and ideas surrounding nuclear weapons and their status has obviously changed in the last decades and many believe that the NPT and its broad support has changed how we view these things without any real “empirical” change (Sherrill, 2012, 45-46). Before the NPT was enforced in 1970 only the US and Soviet Union really tried to keep nuclear weapons from spreading by offering protection to their allies. Between 1970 and 2015 only four states developed nuclear weapons despite many having both the capability and the external reasons to do

so (for example South Korea).

Despite this change in how nuclear weapons is perceived many states try to develop them as they are still perceived to have an important symbolic value to the states strength both in military and technological terms. It is a generally believed norm that you cannot be a great power without having nuclear weapons.

“Norms help define goals and purposes of states. Although they do not establish clear policy options, they offer a general vision and direction and can be seen as providing the road maps for states’ foreign policy action, ‘since traditional international law provides governments with little guidance’.” (Björkdahl, 2002a, 22)

Norms in international politics give states a goal and a way to reach that goal given their own view of how and where their place in the system is. Nuclear weapons is an important part of this as, since the cold war, they stand out as something that is closely connected to great-powers status and today many believe that you cannot be considered a real great power unless you possess nuclear weapons. The international norms of what a great power is and how to become one gives Iran the road map they need and a goal to aim for as they try to become a great-power. When talking about nuclear proliferation and Constructivism equally as important as norms is the concept of identity and the importance nuclear weapons has on a state’s identity (Nia, 2010, 150-152).

This is important both as something to show the rest of the world but also to show the Iranian population to create a new identity. Constructivist models emphasize the symbolic importance leaders attach to nuclear arms. By acquiring nuclear capability, states hope to establish their identity as technologically advanced and independent powers deserving of special recognition. In short, states seek honor and prestige more than they seek any direct tangible benefits. Iran has long sought to play a leading role in the Persian Gulf region in particular and by extension the entire Muslim world. Iranian Islamists try to incorporate Persian nationalism into their brand of Islamism. Becoming the first nuclear capable Muslim nation in the Middle East would allow them to enhance their appeal to Muslims across the region, despite religious differences. Moreover, a nuclear weapons capability

would serve as a public symbol solidifying the independence of Iran from Western dominance, by proving that they are not afraid to develop nuclear weapons no matter what other states say (Nia, 2010, 178-180). This is also closely connected to the national pride of the people and a leader who can close or diminish the power gap between Iran and western states would gain a good reputation. This may seem similar in some ways to the domestic policy model as they both appeal to the nationalistic pride of the people but there are major differences as well: the domestic policy model is a rational choice model where the cost of possibility A is weighted against the cost of possibility B and the most efficient one is chosen, an identity that you try to create or project cannot be as easily put into an “economic value” as political support. Another major difference is that in the domestic policy model you try to gain something from someone in this case you try to project something to someone which can be a very significant difference. It is worth noticing however that from the identity point of view there is no real need for Iran to actually make an nuclear weapon as it is the technology to do so and the “guts” to develop the nuclear program when other tell you to stop that is the most important part. If you can show this without actually detonating a bomb it might actually be preferable since you won’t get as much negative reactions from others (Sherrill, 2012, 43). Given Iran’s current approach this seems an unlikely goal as they seem determent to weaponize their nuclear program and wants to challenge the global norms of a western dominated world (Hymans & Matthew, 2013, 33). To fully understand why Iran wants to create nuclear weapons many constructivists would argue that you need to understand the history and its great importance to how a state and its inhabitants view themselves when compared to other states (Nia, 2010 161-162). Iran generally starts its history telling with to the Achaemenid dynasty ruling the area from ca 550 b.c to 330 b.c (in European history telling generally referred to as the first Persian Empire). At 8 million km<sup>2</sup> it was by far the geographically largest empire the world had seen at the time and would keep that record for well over a thousand years. Following a short period under Hellenistic rulers Iran raised again as a great power under first the Parthian and then the Sasanian (Sassanid) dynasties (sometimes called the neo-Persian

empire). For centuries the Iranian Shah was the primary rival of the Roman Emperors and was the major power in Western Asia. These long millennia of great-power statuses have been important in shaping the national identity of the modern Iran and its natural status as a regional power (Nia, 2010, 160-162). With this historical background it is understandable that Iran wants to establish itself as the leader of the Muslim world and is unwilling to face the current political reality that this is not the case. The need to change this identity from that of a small state to a large one becomes a fundamental part in understanding Iran's choices and the path that Iran walks.

“Iran suffers from a status discrepancy: a gap between its own and others' perceptions of its importance. It wants to sit at the top table with the big boys, not be relegated to dining with its smaller rivals in the Gulf.” (Chubin, 2014, 76).

This gap, and the importance of closing it, has become a fundamental part of the politics of the Iranian government and the nuclearization in both the civilian and military sector is an important part of this. Nuclear energy and nuclear weapons are here seen as the ultimate proof of a state's technological and military strength even though neither will in any strict empirical way change the current situation of Iran to any great degree (Chubin, 2014, 65-66). From this point of view it is easy to understand why Iran should want nuclear weapons to prove their importance in the international system and as long as nuclear weapons are associated with great power it is unlikely that they would not want them. Becoming the first nuclear Muslim state in the Middle East would be an important step in taking a leading position in the region and among Muslims in general. This puts Iran in great contrast to other states with completely different identities and goals. For example Japan has the capability to develop nuclear weapons and is/was close to potential threats like China and the Soviet Union but has never made any attempt to make nuclear weapons, a constructivist could argue that this is because of guilt since WWII and the importance of creating a new non-military identity since then. For constructivist the importance of socially constructed norms and identities are most

vital to understand (Chubin, 2014, 87-88). To tackle the problem of a state developing nuclear weapons it is therefore these norms that must be understood and countered, something that is difficult but not impossible since it has definitely happened in the past. One way to discourage Iran's nuclear ambitions from this point of view could be to offer them something else that gives them international prestige (Sagan 2011, 240). A theoretical (but practically impossible) example of this could be a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council something that would recognize any state as an important one.

### **3.2.2 Feminism and the Hyper-masculinization Model**

While Feminism has existed as a theoretical framework for a long time, dating back to the writings of people like Nicolas de Condorcet and Mary Wollstonecraft in the late 18th-century, it is only in the last couple of decades that Feminism has made a significant impact in the field of international relations (Williams, 2013, 108-109). Feminism is a wide set of theories with a lot of differences but with the common idea of analyzing international politics through the lens of gender. While there are exceptions most feminists (at least in international relations) are non-positivistic, focusing a lot on understanding gender as a social construct or the importance of the discourse of gender. Like most theoretical approaches Feminism have a lot of variations and what is presented here is only one way of looking at this question from a feminist perspective but one I think offers an interesting insight. Feminists argue that the fundamental, perceived, differences between men and women effect, not only national but also international politics as it changes our look on reality and how we perceive the world around us. These differences are connected to the fundamental difference between sex and gender and the importance of understanding what these differences imply (Kirby, 2012, 779). While the exact differences between sex and gender is a very fascinating topic it is slightly outside the perimeter of this paper so suffice to say is that sex is a biological function while gender is a social construct where you connect certain attributes with certain genders (slightly simplified). Feminists argue that in international politics there is a



structure that places masculinity over femininity (Kirby, 2012, 780–801). This can be seen as a direct critique towards the dominance of neo-realist theories who deny any structures and base their arguments on the assumption that the international system is almost completely anarchic. Feminists argue that gender is an important structure in the international system as there are some specific attributes and characteristics that are connected to masculinity and that these characteristics are generally considered positive and associated with strength while characteristics associated with femininity are seen as negative and connected to weakness. Characteristics such as courage, aggressiveness, determination and decisiveness are among those generally associated with masculinity (Sjoberg, 2013, 62).

The associations of these characteristics are very important to understand as they to a great degree dictates the actions of governments and their leaders. It is fundamental from this point of view to understand gender as a structure in international relations as without understanding gender we cannot understand how and why states act as they do. By placing masculine characteristics over feminine characteristic as a structure it will guide states to act in a way that is perceived as being masculine and avoid any action that might lead to other perceiving you as feminine as such characteristics are “weak”. This has led to a state of masculine hegemony in the world. As with the case of constructivists feminists argue that states are guided by values and norms that give certain goals and paths towards these goals but contribute these norms to a historical and special consistent structure of masculinity over femininity (Kirby, 2012, 820–821). This hierarchy in gender is easily observed by analyzing the language used in international politics and conflicts. In the cases of both the Afghanistan and Iraq war the rhetoric of protecting women and children from the oppressive state connecting the war to (positive) masculine chivalry. Likewise when describing others committing horrible acts gender- biased language such as the “rape of Nanjing” in 1937-38 is often used. Weakness in states are often describes with word such as impotence or “spreading its legs” noting a lack of masculine strength (Sjoberg, 2013, 101). One of the most obvious example of such a language is the

Indian Hindu nationalist Balasaheb Thackeray who explained “we had to prove that we are not eunuchs” when asked about the 1998 nuclear weapon tests. Once Pakistan had tested nuclear weapons India had to do the same or seem “unmanly”. This kind of language is more important than simply being a choice of word as the way we think and act are reflected in the way we express ourselves and to use this kind of language helps to keep and expand the gender hierarchy in the human mind and makes states continue to act after a certain pattern (Williams, 2013, 116).

By valuing masculine characteristics highly states will act in a way to try and achieve and project these values towards other states. The honor of a state becomes very important and a state will do a lot of decisions based on the simple objective of trying to protect or enhance that honor. This can easily lead to a state trying to become more and more “masculine” and act in ways that are perceived to be masculine leading to a stage of hypermasculinization. This is not limited to, or even mostly associated with, actions but also with the general discourse in a state and how that state changes to perceive itself and its honor. A state with a strong hypermasculine discourse will be more likely to be aggressive and competitive (Sjoberg, 2013, 100-102) when compared to a state with a more gender-neutral discourse. This helps explain why states in similar situations can act very differently from each other. It is worth noticing that feminists generally don’t believe that men (as a sex) are more aggressive than women but rather that aggressiveness as a characteristic is associated with masculinity (as a gender) and therefore often seen as a proof of strength. Developing nuclear weapons would in many cases be a very strong step in preserving ones masculinity and defending ones honor (Duncanson and Eschle, 2008, 551). Seen as the ultimate show of military strength and power nuclear weapons becomes naturally connected to masculine power and potency (that they, or rather the missiles they are attached to, are phallic-shaped only highlights the symbolism). A state with a hypermasculine discourse would therefore benefit a lot from nuclear weapons, especially in a case where an aggressive military policy is not preferable for some reason. The discourse in Iran is very much one of masculinity where strength and aggressiveness are seen as the

way to deal with external problems. Legally speaking, women in Iran are not as discriminated as in many nearby states but are nonetheless systematically denied many possibilities (as in the case with the president post mentioned earlier) often with motivations as not being “strong” enough for the task (Kirby, 2012, 810). Iran’s dominant masculine discourse is a fundamental part of the desire to develop nuclear weapons (this can be in contrast to states with a less extreme masculine discourse where the idea of developing nuclear weapons have not been as notable especially in the post-cold war era).

“A dominant hypermasculinity in the international system structure would lead states to approximate hypermasculinity in their functions, search for capabilities, and interaction with one another (Sjoberg, 2013, 101).”

In the case of Iran it can be especially important given its troubled relation to the United States and other nations. Hypermasculinity here becomes a reaction to a threat or an uncertainty when interacting with the western world and potential conflicts.

“... sometimes, a state’s hegemonic masculinity becomes reactionary or “hypermasculine” in response to feeling threatened or undermined...” (Sjoberg 2013, 89)

In fear of suffering the same fate that Iraq suffered an increased masculine discourse, especially among the leaders who fears being perceived as feminine and therefore weak, has emerged. Femininity becomes synonymous with being incapable of protecting the country and its inhabitants and as such deeply connected with the honor of the state. This increased masculine discourse makes the development of nuclear weapon all the more symbolically important as a sign of masculine power. Iran’s regime develops nuclear weapons as a sign of their potency but also as a very real demonstration of power and strength. Another important factor to take in account is the concept of honor as connected to women and femininity. Women are often seen as the keepers of a states honor and it is the ultimate failure of a state to be incapable of defending that honor (which is why wartime rape is seen as such a disgrace both for the person in question and the state as a whole) (Kirby, 2012, 815). Comparing the geographic borders of a state to

a woman's body and to have that body "penetrated" by another state is seen as the ultimate form of shame. In a situation where a conflict with the west and the US becomes a reality (as was the case in Iraq) having nuclear weapons is seen as the only possible way to defend that honor given the vast military inferiority that Iran has. As such nuclear weapons becomes very important both on a symbolic but also on a strictly practical level, as a necessity to defend the state (Duncanson and Eschle, 2008, 545-546). From a feminist point of view a state's decisions, such as whether to develop nuclear weapons, is not a question of what is the most logical or economical thing to do but rather guided by a gendered structure of norms and ideas. By following the discourse that exist in the world today some choices becomes a necessity in certain situations and a state with a very gendered discourse like Iran walks a certain path. Discouraging a state in such a condition can be almost impossible as they are stuck in a discourse that is not easily changed (Duncanson and Eschle, 2008, 561-563).

### **3.2.3 Political Psychology and the Ontological security Model**

Political Psychology is a relatively young field in International relations and as the name implies it seeks to explain political changes and events by looking at the human psychology rather than at external factors in the decision making process. Human are motivated by emotions and the inner workings of the human brain. Political Psychology can be approached from both a positivistic point of view, (focusing on the human nature and natural reactions of the human brain) and non-positivistic point of view (focusing on how our emotions are affected by our subjective impressions and personal opinions and experiences) (Hymans, 2006, 460-462). In this article I will mostly focus on the non-positivistic branch. Within Political Psychology the relationship between politics and psychology is considered bi-directional, with psychology being used as a lens for understanding politics and politics being used as a lens for understanding psychology. Political Psychology also highlights the importance of leadership and who people will follow under what

circumstances. As Political Psychology focuses on the human mind it is important to understand the reasoning of individuals, primarily, but by no means only, the leaders of states. A leader who can “read” and affect the current psychological “sense” of the people will be more successful than others who try to lead. This is very important as leaders can manipulate these feelings to further their own goals. An important addition to the international relations debate that Political Psychology has “introduced” is the concept of Ontological Security and its effects on the decision making process not only of leaders but of a state as a whole.

“Ontological security is security not of the body but of the self, the subjective sense of who one is, which enables and motivates action and choice”. (Mitzen, 2006, 344)

As the quote explains ontological security is the importance of feeling safe in one’s own identity and beliefs. This can include things like nationalism and religion: identities that many feel are threatened in an increasingly globalized and secularized world. This is in some way similar to the view of constructivists as they both focus strongly on the importance of identity on an individual and national level. However there is an important difference in that constructivists focus mostly on the identity you project (or a new identity you want to project) outwards to others while political psychologists focus on preserving an existing identity inwards. This difference is important as the driving factor here is fear rather than pride or a want for more. Some political psychologists have talked about a “memory boom” in the world since the end of the cold war. With the collapse of the bipolar international system a greater interest has risen for the collective memories of the people as an incitement for politics (Gustafsson, 2014, 71-72). This has given rise to changes in both internal politics such as increased nationalism and religious traditions and external politics such as remembering pre-cold war conflicts. This “memory boom” makes the concept of ontological security all the more important as the driving forces behind it becomes clearer.

In this context globalization becomes a problematic, destabilizing force in the international community something that is in strong contrast to the classic liberal view of globalization as something good and beneficial for all involved parties. This

is because of the strong western dominance in the globalization process and the strong spread of values with their origins in the west. By bringing cultures closer and closer to each other the “stronger” cultures have a great effect on the “weaker” and changes them (sometimes purposefully and sometimes not). Many people in other cultures feel that the western world is to an increasing degree spreading their values and by extension culture at the expense of their own cultures (Kinnvall 2004, 745). This is especially dominant in the former western colonies since they already have a strong cultural legacy of enmity and fear towards the west. They fear that they will lose their own identities. To lose ones ontological security will lead to a sense of having lost the stability and security that your life was based on and make you unsecure of what the future holds. This can make people easier to “manipulate” by leaders as they feel lost and need something to cling to.

“It is at such times of “homelessness” and alienation that leaders may emerge to channel existential fears and feelings of loss and despair “(Kinnvall 2004, 763)

This fear is becoming especially significant in states that are generally considered “enemies” of the West and especially enemies of America. In these state the fear becomes more predominant because of the significant difference in strength and influence in the world making the fear of losing your ontological security all the more tangible as you are aware that you are already in a distinctive inferior position. This fear helps to create a further wedge between different cultures that makes the existing enmity even more predominant (Kinnvall 2004, 751). Iran most definitely fits this description as the relations between Iran and the more powerful nations of the west have become increasingly bad ever since the revolution in 1979. This has only increased because of the many economic sanctions that have been forced upon Iran by Western powers that mostly strike at the population making the people feel targeted by foreign powers (Hymans, 2006, 456-457). Nationalism and religious fundamentalism have become important aspects of Iran’s politics over last couple of decades and fear of losing their identity becomes more predominant with these factors as the identification with the nation-state

grows stronger.

It is under these circumstances that it is becoming increasingly possible and even preferable for Iran's leadership to do something to make the people feel that they are fighting for their ontological security, and making a stance towards the west is an essential part of this. From this point of view the development of nuclear weapons can be used as a kind of psychological defense against other nations imposed ideas. Nuclear weapons symbolizes Iran's attempt to make a stand against foreign pressure and at the same time represents a kind of "only possible defense" in a way similar to how realists see weapons of mass destruction but with the focus on the psychological and ontological effects of their deterrence rather than on any actual military capacity that they may grant the state (O'Reilly, 2012, 780-781). Note that the ontological security that Nuclear Weapons may grant can be very different for the leadership of the state and for the general population as a whole. The psychological effect of having some way to defend yourself can be very great and the length you are willing to go to achieve it is also great. This explains why economic sanctions has so far proved ineffective (and some would even argue counter-productive) in discouraging states like Iran and North Korea from developing nuclear weapons.

The significance of Ontological Security becomes even more apparent when looking at Iran's neighboring country Pakistan and their long and complex relations with India and their own history of acquiring nuclear weapons. Pakistan nuclear program started during the cold war and became very important in the mid 70ies after the disastrous war with India in 1971 in which Pakistan lost its eastern half (modern Bangladesh) and India's first nuclear test in 1974. Ever since the original split between the two countries in 1949 Pakistan has suffered from a kind of inferiority complex towards its larger neighbor and adversary. India is undoubtedly larger, has a greater population, more natural resources, richer and had proven to be military superior in the 1971 conflict. According to many political psychologists this inferiority complex "forced" Pakistan and its leaders to compete with India on any field they could and nuclear weapons being both symbolically and military enormously powerful was such a field leading famously to the

Pakistan leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto clamming that Pakistan would get nuclear weapons even if the population had to “eat grass and leaves” something that was not considered “wrong” by the majority of the Pakistani people (O’Reilly, 2012, 777). This can become a kind of psychological compulsion, where you need to act in a way that is often completely illogical and at any cost. Political psychologists argue that you only reach this level of compulsion when you feel that it is more than your physical safety that is at stake but rather your way of life. This fear can drive a people, not only their leaders, to go to any extreme to reach their goal (Mitzen, 2006, 351).

Iran’s desire for nuclear weapons becomes an important reminder of the problems that the world faces as globalization spreads across the world. To halt this process is difficult as the process of globalization is already so integrated in the international political and economic system that it is unlikely to disappear. To discourage states from trying to develop nuclear weapons lies in recognizing and dealing with the real structural insecurities for many people in the more complex global world (O’Reilly, 2012, 770-771). The emotional and psychological effects of globalization and one cultures impact on another must be taken into account in all global interactions to avoid problems like the Iranian nuclear program.

## **4 Analyzes**

These different theories and models offer a very great variety of explanations to why a state makes the decision to try and build nuclear weapons and how to best tackle the problem of nuclear proliferation. Iran is a very interesting case as all the models bring a very clear perspective given Iran’s unique political structure and interesting place in international position, both geographically and culturally. There are probably few political scientists of any alignment that does not to some level agree that all of these theories have made some valid points and that they all help to explain why states build nuclear weapons although they vary greatly in what is the most important part. The most significant difference lies in how the models answers the question of how to meet that decision and how to respond to



states trying to create nuclear weapons. Discarding for the moment the question if Iran really wants nuclear weapons (I will get back to that) the way to discourage them from walking such a path is very different for the supporters of the different models. The most fundamental difference is the one between positivists and non-positivist or the argument between a rational choice and a decision guided by more abstract reasoning than simple mathematics as mean of explanation. But this is also simplifying the debate on the issue and many people can reach very similar conclusions based on very different starting points and reasoning. Liberals and Political Psychologists share a similar view on the great importance of individuals in the explanations (compared to others such as realists and constructivists) but reach that conclusion in very different ways. Many using these models would argue that the agreement between the P5+1 and Iran reached in November 2013 would not have been possible if not for the victory Hassan Rouhani in the Iranian election or if the Bush administration had still ruled in the US (Senn and Elhardt, 2014, 320-321). Others, most predominantly realist, reject this idea arguing that the negotiations are instead dominated by events outside the control of any individual or group of individuals.

For a long time Realism was (and to a great extent still is) by far the most dominant of the various models, if not within the academia then at least in media and political debates, of explanation as it fits very well with the general ideas of the cold war and how other states reacted to the bipolar world of the US and Soviet Union. Realism is also nice in its simplicity in seeking the reasons for everything back to the very basic explanation of surviving something everyone can understand and relate to on some level. Realisms focus on deterrence provides a very simple explanation why Iran, like so many states before it wants the nuclear bomb to keep its enemies from attacking. Because of its dominance Realism is also by far the most criticized of the models as many feel that it simplifies the world to such an extreme degree that it does not give any real satisfying explanations at all. Non-positivist argue that the total focus on empirical explanations such as external threats limits the understanding as other factors play a greater role in understanding state actions. Humans are directed more by our desires and our

subjective beliefs than empirical “truths” such as military strength or GDP measurements. Norms and discourses are instead argued to be the explanations to why states act as they do and the problems one must focus on when analyzing situations like the one with the Iran nuclear debate. Realists deny that these things in the end have any real importance and when it comes down to it a state will always think of its own survival and discard any other goals or incitements such as norms or structures. As long as the international system is anarchic the state cannot afford to think or act in any other way. These great differences make Realism and other theories very hard to combine in any meaningful way. However this does not mean that they don’t have anything to offer each other in terms of intellectual understanding. In political science it is common to talk about three levels of analysis: System, Domestic and Individual levels. The System level focuses on explaining things by looking at the system in between states and the entire international arena as a whole. Domestic, or state level focuses on the internal political system of a state (such as democracy or dictatorship) and how that explains the states actions. Individual level seek to find the answers in the behavior of individuals. While most agree that all these level have some importance different theories focuses more on some and less on others. Realists focus almost only on the system layer and can as such offer some level of understanding on that level even to theories that generally focuses more on other levels. Even if you generally believe that states are mostly guided by individuals and their personal beliefs, an understanding of how the system can play a role in the decision making process can still add further layers to your understanding or at least offer a contradicting view that is worth keeping in mind.

To fully understand nuclear proliferation it is important to ask ourselves, not only why some states make the decision to develop nuclear weapons, but also why some states chooses not to do so. What are the differences between a state like Sweden, who had a nuclear program but shut it down in 1968, Japan, who never tried to build nuclear weapons despite having every opportunity to do so, South Africa, who did acquire nuclear weapons only to dismantle them a few years later, and North Korea, who did develop them despite enormous international pressure

to stop their nuclear program? All the models give their own version of what differences makes states act the way they do. The case of South Africa is very interesting here as it is the only state to make first the decision to build nuclear weapons and then make the decision to unmake them. From the International security model perspective this can be very hard to explain as there are no incitement for a state not to have nuclear weapons save perhaps the cost of developing them compared to the deterrence they provide. While South Africa had few direct external threats it can still be reasoned that during the cold war the communist threat was present enough to justify building nuclear weapons from a realist point of view but why they would dismantle them while the possibility of external threats exist is harder to answer as they are not particularly expensive to keep. Other theories offer a lot more of an explanation to this problem as they can focus more on the effects in a state. A liberal would argue that the change in South African internal politics came with the fall of the Apartheid regime and the cost of international pressure was what lead to the decision. In this case Realism and Liberalism can be used to complement each other as they offer different explanations but based on a similar world view, South Africa built nuclear weapons when they had a potential threat and an internal political situation and destroyed them when they had served their purpose and no internal support existed any more. Constructivists and Feminists would probably agree that the fall of the Apartheid system is key to understanding the changes in South Africa's policy but focus more on the need to change their identity and their discourse to compensate for the changes in the rest of the world. As the norms on nuclear weapons become more and more negative keeping them became a political liability even before the final abolishment of the Apartheid system in 1994. Note that none of these theories directly contradict each other and can be used as complements to understand the question even though they focus on different aspects.

The point where the models directly do contradict each other is on the subject of how to respond to a new state trying to join the nuclear club. The positivistic theories focus on direct actions such as military threats or economic sanctions as

indirect actions such as referring to the NPT or simply discussing the subject with the country at hand (in this case Iran) as this gives no real incitement for Iran to comply unless they really want to. Many Political Psychologists argue that this is not only ineffective but actually causes more damage than good as forcing Iran into a confrontation will only make them more isolated and more and more dependent on their ontological security as a sign of stability and security for the people making their incitement to resist western influence by developing and possibly constructing nuclear weapons. Instead the focus should be on trying to close the cultural and political gap between Iran and the West by closer cooperation and interaction. Liberals would agree that a closer interdependence would help but focus more on the economic aspects of this than cultural or psychological aspects. This again shows some similarities and some arguably more profound differences between Liberalist and Political Psychologists as they both believe that increased interaction is very important to avoid international conflicts but reach very different conclusions where Liberals seek to make everyone in the world accept a certain set of values and ideas (liberal democratic market-economies) whereas Political Psychologists seek to increase interaction as a means of accepting differences and promote understanding of others way of thinking and thereby limit the “us vs them” mentality. This is however not as mutually exclusive as it might initially seem: cultural ideas and beliefs can spread in more subtle and often more effective ways in cases where understanding and acceptance rather than coercion or economic pressure is predominant methods of interaction (O’Reilly, 2012, 785). If “we” want Iran to become more democratic a more accepting policy might be more effective than economic sanctions.

So far I have worked under the premises that Iran definitely wants nuclear weapons and discarded the discussion if this really is the case. As in this paper Iran is simply an example I feel this is reasonable but I still think that the arguments behind this assumption is worth mentioning. The Iran government have repeatedly denied any desire for nuclear bombs claiming that their nuclear program is for strictly civilian (energy) purposes. In 2005 the Supreme Leader issued a Fatwa (Muslim religious law) against the use, production or stockpiling of nuclear

weapons claiming them forbidden in accordance with the Koran. A Fatwa is considered binding precedent by those Muslims who have bound themselves to that scholar, in this case all of Iran. Iran's government uses this religious rhetoric as an argument that they do not want nuclear weapons. There has been three main counter arguments that have been put forward depending on different ideas of Iran's government. The first is simply the idea that the Iran ruler doesn't really care at all about religion, and/or Fatwas, but simply uses it as a cover to try and persuade others of their opinions and convictions. A realist would probably argue that it doesn't at all matter if the Iran leaders are religious or not as in the long run they can't afford to let the reactions be deterred by anything less than the idea of their own survival. People who deny this have argued that when Iraq used chemical weapons in the 80-88 war, Iran did not respond in kind despite having the possibility to do so and a potential threat to their survival existed, and instead remained true to their religious convictions. Others, primarily non-positivists, argue that while Iran and its leaders are definitely religious Muslims there are ways in which you can circumvent the Fatwa and still remain true to their faith. One such escape is the concept of taqiyya. The concept of taqiyya is that a Muslim can be allowed to use lies to conceal his faith if his life is threatened and that this can be applied to the entire state of Iran and thus can the leaders be allowed to lie if they believe they are threatened. Another argument focuses on the possibility of by-passing the Fatwa by using the idea that Muslim laws and morals can be set aside if Islam itself is threatened by some external or internal force, this kind of reasoning has been used by terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda to motivate their actions claiming that the US and the entire western world has declared war on Islam worldwide. Counterarguments to this has been that the Fatwa against nuclear weapons is directly supported in the Koran and thus God's law that cannot be circumvented. It is worth noticing that the IAEA has never directly accused Iran of trying to create nuclear weapons only of lacking in transparency in their nuclear program (Mousavian, 2013, 149-151).

A strong contrast in the ideas of positivists and non-positivists is the outlook on Iran's religious beliefs and if these are important parts of why they would want

nuclear weapons. A realist would strictly argue that they are not while a feminist would argue that it is, as the religion is fundamental in forming the general ideas of people. Like most religions Islam is in many ways a conservative institute promoting traditional values and morals including family structures. As such a strong Muslim identity will help in forming a masculine discourse where man and manliness is considered preferable. That's not to say that Islam in itself is necessarily misogynic but rather that it promotes remaining in a culture/society that has misogynic tendencies. Another point of interest that separates the different models is the importance of the internal political structure. Iran has a very complex political system with lots of different organizations and institutions that does not necessarily always agree. Like I have mentioned before liberals believe that it is very important to understand their institutions and the various rivalries within the state. Others, especially realists but also some non-positivists, deny that internal structure have any deep significance at all as states actions are dominated by external threats or international norms respectively. Feminists and political psychologists are often somewhere in-between as they often argue that the political structure effects how people think and reason on an emotional/psychological level but is not necessarily as important as other factors such as culture or ontological security.

Another very important difference in theories is how change in a state can and, perhaps more importantly, should be achieved: from outside or from within. Many positivists (and some non-positivists) argue that change should be imposed on a country by the international community and results can best be achieved through interaction and if that fails direct actions. This is very much the current norm in international relations and the talks between Iran, the IAEA and the P5+1 is a good representation of this idea. The talks are focusing on how to change Iran and the main method used are economic sanctions and to some extent military threats. Many post-positivists, and some positivists, reject this idea and instead argue that if Iran is to experience any real, lasting change in its view on the nuclear front it must come from within the state itself. Whether they believe that the main problem is ontological security, hypermasculinity or a demand for prestige is the

most important problem, they argue that these are ideas that cannot be forcibly changed by someone else but only by addressing the fundamental issues behind the want for nuclear weapons. The problem with this view is naturally how to change these fundamental issues without coming back to the problem of forcing our ideas upon someone else. Another problem can be the limited time frame, changing the basic ideas of a state, or the entire international community, can take time, and time is not always something you can spare (depending on your view if what the goal is).

No matter which model you believe is the most important or does best analyze the situation in Iran, most people would probably agree that to discourage a state like Iran from developing nuclear weapons will be difficult at best or at the worst downright impossible. Whether they feel threatened by Israel's nukes, Western cultural influence, international political insignificance or perceived feminine weakness it will be hard to convince the Iranian rulers that this is not the case and that nuclear weapons is not a necessity. Of course this doesn't mean that there is no point in trying to dissuade states like Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Only by discussions can we reach the further understanding that is necessary to make any attempt to solve the problem.

#### **4.1 Conclusions**

So far I have in this paper been, or at least tried to be, impartial and only look at the different models without actually favoring any one of them. In this part I will now present my own ideas and opinions on what theory and model is the best and my take on the situation of Iran's nuclear agenda. Lastly I will say a few words on the general debate concerning nuclear weapons and proliferation.

I think that all the theories have their strengths and weaknesses and all of them bring something to the table if one wants to understand international relations,

but some of them I feel give a deeper and more fundamental understanding. Realism is nice in its simplicity but the total focus on external threats and not on any internal situations makes it problematic. Realists can generally give a reasonable explanation to why a state develop nuclear weapons but is not as good in explaining why some states do not want them or why states develop them at a specific time. For example realists tend to argue that France decided to get nuclear weapons after the Suez crises when they realized that they could not count on the US to always to support them. While this makes sense it begs the question why other states did not react? Why for example did not Japan or South Korea come to the same conclusion as they also must have realized that being allied with the US dose not guaranty that the US would always help them? They both had the incitements (external threats) and at least by the mid 60ies the economic ability to do so yet neither did. Similarly all positivistic theories simplify the problem by only looking at the obviously observable factors when analyzing international politics and thereby risk missing things that are not easily quantifiable. Humans are not perfectly rational and objective entities that can always be assumed to make rational choices. However this does not mean that it is necessary or desirable to completely discard empirical research as a way of analyzing political events. Positivistic analyses can give great understanding in general trend in world politics and sometimes knowing what these trends are can be every bit as important as understanding the exact reasons behind them, at least at first.

Personally I believe that the constructivist norms and identity models is the best of the models for understanding why Iran, or any other state, would want to develop nuclear weapons. This is because I believe it, more than any of the other models, explain why some states develop nuclear weapons while others don't, despite similar situations as well as similar political or cultural conditions. The importance of a state's sense of identity, and how that identity interacts with international norms, is in my opinion vital for understanding state behavior. International norms can explain why we can see some important general trends in the international



system and a states (perceived) identity can explain why some states do not follow the norms but rather try to break them. The rise of the NPT regime as an international norm in the late 60ies is very interesting as it very swiftly changed the general look on nuclear weapons from something if not positive than at least a state's internal affair to something very negative causing major international objections. This change is hard to explain by using the other models and I think very important to understand when looking at why some states want nuclear weapons and some don't. Like I mentioned above Iran wants to be one of the "big players" in the Middle East but lacks the economic and military power to become that as it is. Nuclear weapons therefore become a good way of increasing their national prestige and at the same time show their disdain for western dominated international norms. If you compare that to Sweden, who had a nuclear program from 1945 to 1968, you see a strict difference in how international norms affect countries with different identities. Sweden views itself as a peaceful and responsible member of the international community and when the NPT regime became predominant in the mid 60ies it was natural for Sweden to accept it rather than to continue its nuclear ambitions and was among the original states that signed it and has not made any further attempts to make nuclear weapon despite the possibility of doing so. This does not mean that Sweden care any less for its international prestige than Iran does but rather that the different identities make them react differently to existing international norms. This I think give the norms/identity model a strength that most of the others lack in its ability to explain the great difference we can observe in how states react and which sates do develop nuclear weapons. This doesn't mean that I think that the norms model is perfect or always is the best to use when trying to understand every single case of why a state wants nuclear weapons but I think it has the most potential to explain the entire nuclear proliferation situation.

Ontologically and epistemologically Constructivism also appeals to me as it generally walks a middle ground between more extreme positivist and non-positivist theories. The importance of socially constructed ideas rather than human nature or essential characteristics of international politics is, I think, fundamental

in understanding how human, and by extension, states act in certain situation but that does not mean that there is no such thing as objective facts that can be measured simply that we are always guided by other things as well. Personally I believe that the schism between positivism and non-positivism is sometimes overdramatized and that both these can offer some understanding when analyzing a problem or question in international relations regardless of what you personally believe in. Post-positivism can often give a deeper theoretical understanding while positivism can often offer a practical solution to a given problem. To take into account both the importance of social and material matters and to weigh these against each other's give, in my view, a deeper understanding of a given problem. Of course taking this kind of reasoning to far is also very problematic as you eventually reach the conclusion that "everything can be explained by something" by which time you no longer have a theory at all, just a very obvious statement.

In my opinion the debate concerning the nuclear proliferation issue, both in the academia but especially in politics, is far to dominated by positivist and especially realist argument and thoughts. Arguments used both by the IAEA and the states involved have their roots in realist arguments on how and why states act as they do and therefore miss many important nuances in international politics. However this does not mean that you should simply replace one theoretical dominance with another. To simply change from a dominant realist discourse to a dominant constructivist or feminist discourse would risk falling back to the same problem again of simplifying by trying to explain everything with one model. Instead, in my opinion, academics and especially politicians should be prepared to try and look at the problem of nuclear proliferation from all possible angles and be ready to apply all different models even if they do not necessarily agree with them themselves. Positivism and post-positivism alike have something to offer to the understanding of the nuclear debate and I think it is important that the actual debate reflects this something that is not always the case.

This paper can give no direct answer to the main question of why states develop nuclear weapon but will hopefully offer a variety of answers and opinions that all

have their own merits and help people understand the problems that exists both in understanding the theories of nuclear proliferation but also the difficulty in what to practically do when a new state (like Iran) wants to join the nuclear club. If Iran really wants nuclear weapons (something that should not be taken for granted) convincing them to do otherwise will probably be very difficult in the long run.

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