

Love of the Land

For those who are home, and for those who are on the way. For those who support the historic and just return of the land of Israel to its people, forever loyal to their inheritance, and its restoration.

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A Dangerous Hegemon

Why Iran must not be allowed to go nuclear

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In the international debate over Iran's nuclear program, the argument for containment—rather than prevention—is gaining currency. But the emergence of a nuclear Iran would be a dangerous option, destabilizing the fragile Middle East and delegitimizing the non-proliferation regime. This month's NPT review must not waste the chance to prevent this outcome.

As Iran moves closer to a military nuclear capability, and the international community demonstrates that it is ineffective—if not totally helpless—in keeping Iran from this goal, discussion on this topic has shifted disturbingly to the potential to contain a nuclear Iran. While the time may come to explore this option, we are not there yet.

To accept Iran's nuclear advance toward a bomb as inevitable would mean that efforts to stop it would lose the essential seriousness and determination needed to succeed. The next step would minimize the gravity of the situation by claiming that the threat can be successfully managed—that nuclear Iran can indeed be deterred and contained. While it would be foolish not to prepare for the possibility of Iran attaining nuclear weapons, there is a delicate balance between such preparations and resolving ourselves to this outcome.

But beyond the implications that discussion of containment might have for whether the West intends to invest the necessary political will and resources in a tough negotiation strategy that might still work, additional questions focus on the notion of containment itself. Is this the correct framework for discussing the potential dangers of Iran going nuclear? Even if deterring an Iranian nuclear attack could be expected to succeed, is this the only threat that we need to prepare for?

In fact, attempts to create the sense that the emerging threat could be managed through Cold War-type deterrence are misleading. They apply conceptual thinking from a very different time and place to a threat that today has serious implications in a number of previously unseen directions.

The Broader Threat of a Nuclear Iran

Today there are surely grounds for believing that other states can deter nuclear Iran from attacking them and their allies with nuclear weapons. Deterrence coming from other nuclear states would be enhanced by new missile defenses, and a nuclear umbrella that the United States would assumedly put in place for its allies in the Middle East. But claiming that Iran can be contained today just as China was in the past reflects a lack of attention to the severe contemporary consequences of Iran becoming a nuclear state. This assumption ignores the dramatic regional implications associated with the Islamic Republic acquiring nuclear weapons. The Iranian government is a regime that is pursuing a hegemonic agenda in the Middle East, that has already taken determined steps in this direction, and that makes no secret of its strong desire to not only change the face of the region, but to encourage any dynamic that will delegitimize Israel to the point that its existence will become a thing of the past.

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