

The Iranian Nuclear Threat Against Israel

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Executive Summary

At this moment, Israel is acting to remove the threat of Iran's nuclear program and ballistic missile arsenal. The situation is still developing and detractors seek to draw attention to possible detrimental consequences of Israel's action. It is therefore worth clarifying what the consequences of inaction would be, and what the grave reality of a nuclear Iran would look like.

Regarding the timing to act now, Iran was about to take the final steps toward having a nuclear bomb. In the past months it has leaped forward in uranium enrichment, bringing it within days of enough weapon's grade uranium for a bomb, and enough for nine bombs with three weeks. In the days preceding the operation, the IAEA declared that Iran was not complying with its nuclear nonproliferation obligations. The window of opportunity for action was rapidly closing.

The fundamental reasons why a nuclear Iran would be an existential threat to Israel and a severe threat to global security, can be summarized as the following:

The threat of outright nuclear attack on Israel - The possibility of a surprise Iranian nuclear attack on Israel cannot be dismissed. The regime may act in ways not necessarily bound by Western notions of rationality — including the use of nuclear weapons even at the cost of self-destruction. Even if the regime is rational enough to avoid steps that would lead to its own destruction, if it were to assess that it could destroy Israel without endangering its survival, then it might indeed choose to launch a surprise attack on Israel with the aim of annihilation.

The possible use of a nuclear weapon in the event of regime collapse or other scenarios - In a scenario where the regime is on the verge of collapse, there is a real possibility that it would launch a nuclear attack on Israel, as the regime's survival would no longer be a constraint. Additionally, errors stemming from the deep mutual distrust between the two countries could result in a nuclear exchange that neither side intended. The regime might also transfer a nuclear

bomb to a terrorist organization, which would then use it against Israel without Iran taking responsibility.

Nuclear escalation as a tool for Iranian regional hegemony – Iran would use the threat of nuclear escalation to gain leverage in its regional struggles, and would intensify efforts to assert hegemony over the broader Middle East. It would limit U.S. freedom of action in the Middle East. This would also place intense pressure on regional states to align with Iran or adopt conciliatory policies toward it.

Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East – A nuclear Iran would create a strong incentive for other regional powers to pursue nuclear capabilities or weapons of their own, which would create a highly unstable regional nuclear arms race and severely undermine the NPT.

Undermine US-led global order – A nuclear Iran would represent a significant strengthening of the anti-Western axis of China-Russia-Iran. Given Washington's longstanding opposition to a nuclear Iran, a successful Iranian effort to become a nuclear state would cause great damage to the credibility of the U.S. worldwide.

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