



## Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME</b>
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The P5+1 have been able to somehow resolve the emerging Iranian nuclear crisis, ending its journey from nuclear proliferation towards a promise of nuclear non-proliferation.

Based on Iran's nuclear development programme for the time period 1950s-2002, there lie four justifications in order to explain why Iran was suspected of possible proliferation. These four consist of prestige; in which possession of a nuclear weapon was used as a tool to project power in terms of its military might as well as enhance the overall power of the State. The Shah of Iran in particular took it upon himself, as a matter of prestige, in wanting to develop Iran's nuclear power capabilities also because of his fascination for the West and sought this achievement as a means that would earn Iran respect globally.

The bureaucratic politics are also part of the four justifications, where certain individuals within the bureaucracy play an important role in pushing nuclear decision making. In Iran's case it was Akbar Etemad, a young Iranian nuclear physicist, who undertook the task of fulfilling the Shah's desire for a nuclear capable Iran.



The third justification is the technological pull where technology advancement drove decision makers to undertake this pursuit. Iran looked at nuclear energy as a source of cheap power, despite many critics questioning Iran's nuclear programme as a source of energy when it is an oil rich state.

Security motivation is an important cause for going nuclear based on the theory of realism which states that maximum defence for a State can be achieved by going nuclear since it is the ultimate guarantor of security.

Iran's nuclear programme did meet some road blocks in the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution that led to the new government cancelling the Shah's entire nuclear energy programme; arguing that it has cost the exchequer a huge sum for the establishment of nuclear reactors. However, the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, which led to a huge loss for Iran, made it realise its shortcoming and thus, Iran began to seek non-conventional weapons in order to enhance its defensive as well as its offensive capabilities. Therefore, Iran's duel with Iraq is viewed as an attributor towards Iran's security motivations and thus, the drive towards its nuclearisation with the aim of enrichment and reaching the capability of a full nuclear cycle.

Iran fulfilled all of the above four justifications in pursuit of its nuclear capabilities even in the midst of the heavy sanctions imposed by the West. Iran, despite being a signatory to the Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT), continued with its illicit nuclear enrichment activities, bringing to light the various shortcomings in the NPT. Thus began Iran's intense nuclear negotiations in 2002 which eventually led to the nuclear deal in 2015.

However, questions emerge on why Iran gave up its nuclearisation in the aftermath of the Iranian nuclear deal. One argument put forward is that Iran, through the 15 years of negotiations got what it always wanted the capability to achieve a full nuclear cycle.

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