



British American Security  
Information Council

# Non-proliferation requires disarmament, and vice versa



Advice to the Iranian Government as it  
seeks to challenge the nuclear order at  
the NPT Review Conference

## **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2010 Papers – 3**

### **Non-proliferation requires disarmament, and vice versa: advice to the Iranian Government as it seeks to challenge the nuclear order at the NPT Review Conference**

**Paul Ingram**  
Executive Director  
*BASIC*

April 2010

*This briefing is based upon a paper written for delivery to Iran's international conference on nuclear disarmament held in Tehran 17-18 April 2010. Disruption to aviation prevented the author from attending the event.*

#### **Summary**

The Tehran conference came in the middle of important international initiatives that raise the profile of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular the publication of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) on 6 April, the signing of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) agreement on 8 April, the first Nuclear Security Summit on 12-13 April and the NPT Review Conference 3-28 May. The vision of a world free of nuclear weapons is reasonably clear, even if the road there is vague and uncertain - the question of whether states are prepared to sacrifice deeply held nuclear positions is far less so. And many obstacles remain. The belief that the presence of nuclear weapons creates stability through restraint is deeply embedded in strategic psyches within states with nuclear weapons - it is a mental trap others would do well to avoid. The nuclear developments in April - the U.S. NPR, the new

START agreement, the Washington nuclear security summit, leading on the NPT Review Conference, are indications of the political investment being placed in progress. These are signs of hope, but the door is only just opening - it is still too early to say how much willingness there is to consider the first steps through it.

Faced with this uncertainty, fellow members of the international community would do well to consider their strategies to encourage these early signs of progress. Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) have for some time been going through the ritual at NPT meetings of highlighting the failure of the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) to disarm, and to varying degrees have on occasion extracted promises of disarmament. But most of the disarmament achieved has occurred more because of changes to the strategic environment than any sense of legal or moral obligation to the international community on the part of the NWS.

Iran is likely to play a central role in the international debate. The fear of an Iranian nuclear weapon capability has gripped many states, and undermined the case for disarmament. Whatever the rights or wrongs of this situation, Iran would do well to consider the active reframing of the discussion. If it were to deepen its relationship with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reinstate the Additional Protocol and ratify it, it could more credibly claim leadership in global disarmament efforts. A world free of nuclear weapons would require all states to accept this level of deep and intrusive inspection and verification measures conducted by the Agency. In walking the walk, Iran would not only reassure more neutral states that it was not using its nuclear program as a cover for an active nuclear weapon program, but it would also more successfully build international support for its case, and ensure the spotlight fell on states that currently deploy nuclear weapons, whether in or out of the Treaty.

## The growing calls for disarmament

There has been an extended flurry of diplomatic activity on the international scene over the last three years. Proposals coming from several credible quarters share the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and point to an extended program of steps required to get there. There is apparent agreement that practical action needs to start with the NWS, and in particular the United States and Russia, who between them possess over 95% of the world's nuclear arsenals. The new START agreement was signed by the Presidents in Prague on 8 April, and the treaty has been sent to their respective legislators for final ratification. The delay to this treaty illustrates the continuing Russian distrust of U.S. intentions, particularly around missile defense, its conventional capabilities and the expansion of the Alliance, and the height of the obstacles that will have to be overcome in the next round of negotiations as numbers reduce further.

Alongside the new START, perhaps the most important initial concrete test of the U.S. Administration's resolve behind this agenda was its NPR, published in full for the first time, on 6 April. How did it do in reconciling the vision with the commitment to retain nuclear deterrence, reassure allies, and expand investments in the nuclear weapon infrastructure? The NPR outlined U.S. policy toward nuclear doctrine, readiness, force structure and disarmament policy. Debates have centered on issues such as numbers and make up of systems, declaratory policy (what the purpose and role of nuclear weapons are in the broader defense posture), and the details around extended deterrence (also known as the "nuclear umbrellas" for U.S. allies).

The Obama Administration has also emphasized its commitment to seeing through Congress the ratification of both the new START agreement and

the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The NPR gave a hint of the deals made in an attempt to follow through on this commitment. Obama's Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, agreed to the NPR stating that the United States did not need either to test its nuclear weapons nor invest in new warheads, opening the door for support for the CTBT in the Senate. Many Republicans in the Senate remain skeptical about the value of such arms control measures to U.S. security, and it is likely to be a long haul to convince them to vote in favor. Prospects for the ratification of new START look a great deal more promising, but it may not happen until late 2010 or even in 2011.

## What is behind the calls for disarmament?

In the United States the threat of nuclear terrorism, and hence the security of nuclear materials is often highlighted as the most important threat facing the United States, and the principal motivator on this agenda. President Obama announced in Prague his intention to lock-down all vulnerable nuclear material around the world in four years and to host a summit in Washington to reach international agreement on cooperation on this agenda. This was held on 12 and 13 April, and involved states outside the NPT – India, Pakistan and Israel (through Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu withdrew at the last moment for fear of Israel's nuclear arsenal being raised as an issue at the summit). Iran was excluded. This summit happened a few days before the Tehran conference, with the purpose of agreeing a series of measures on the agenda to secure key materials that can be used for nuclear weapons.

Along with this there is a strong fear across the political spectrum, even an assumption, that on current trends the spread of nuclear technology and weapons is inevitable, sooner or later. And with the spread of nuclear weapons comes more complex deterrent relationships, and a much

greater risk of nuclear use. In addition, of course, there is a loss of exclusive control, as states that challenge the status quo acquire the means to protect themselves from great power intervention and threaten their neighbors with nuclear annihilation.

These two factors – the fear of proliferation and the threat of nuclear terrorism – feature at the forefront of reasons cited for urgency. Other possible reasons for disarmament, such as the dangers of sliding into a new Cold War or arms race, the moral troubles around policies of nuclear deterrence, the dangers of nuclear accidents, let alone the positive opportunities for transforming international relations away from the politics of threat, come very much second place in the story.

### **Why take the agenda seriously?**

So, are the NWS serious, or is this simply a strategy to convince the rest of the world to continue to abide by their non-proliferation responsibilities while they continue to deploy their nuclear weapons regardless? The fear of nuclear danger and the loss of control is undeniably central to the agenda. The evidence would suggest a strong widespread recognition within NWS of the connection between disarmament and non-proliferation. The NPT is often said to embody the bargain between states that have promised not to develop their own nuclear weapons in return for disarmament by those that already possess them. Its living embodiment is in the Review Conferences, where demands made upon states to accept greater non-proliferation obligations, such as the Additional Protocol, are made conditional on credible commitments to disarm. Agreement around the measures necessary to ensure non-proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not possible without clear indications from NWS that they will genuinely engage in disarmament, the recognition that the status quo is neither credible nor possible

– and that the further spread of nuclear weapons would entail significantly reduced stability and security for everyone. The manner and emphasis each politician and official chooses to place on different aspects of this vary, depending upon political disposition and the national culture, but the connection is now generally undeniable.

### **Obstacles and reasons to be skeptical**

There are numerous technical obstacles to progress, outlined in a burgeoning literature on the subject. There is also a great suspicion of arms control in conservative Republican quarters in Washington, verging on the ideological. Arms control is essentially seen by some as a failure to exploit military advantage, a gift to those hostile to American values and interests. If the United States can win in the race for supremacy in military technology generally, why voluntarily constrain the competition? They strongly oppose limiting the options of the President to respond to challenges or crises, apparently unable to see the impact of such positions on the prospects for international reconciliation and cooperation. Such attitudes could play a decisive role in the debates around ratification of START follow-on and the CTBT, despite the clear and obvious direct benefits to U.S. security arising from these treaties. And these first steps are relatively easy when compared to those further down the line when the United States would have to start considering controls on its conventional military capabilities if the concerns of other states are to be accounted for.

Nuclear weapon states have undoubtedly achieved significant disarmament in terms of numbers and the withdrawal of systems, since the end of the Cold War, so that, for example, total global numbers of warheads have reduced from an estimated global peak in 1986 of over 65,000 to

present-day numbers of around 20,000.<sup>1</sup> Whole classes of weapon systems have been withdrawn (notably through the 1987 INF agreement<sup>2</sup> that withdrew all intermediate-range missiles from Europe). Much of this in the late 1980s and early 1990s was achieved through patient and ambitious arms control. Much since has been achieved largely through redundancy and the recognition that these weapons are in any case losing their salience. The 2002 Moscow Treaty (SORT) formalized significant actual and planned reductions in warhead numbers by Russia and the United States, a very short treaty without any verification measures that expires in 2012. A recent article by authors associated with the U.S. Air Force (USAF) skeptical of the possibilities for the United States ever escaping the need for nuclear deterrence said that this disarmament process could easily and immediately continue and that the United States needs only 311 warheads in its deployed arsenal to retain a credible extended deterrent capability, whatever the response of potentially hostile states.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that much greater disarmament in numbers, and possibly also in alert status and declaratory policy, is quite possible within the current deterrence paradigm. The biggest challenges come in transforming doctrines away from dependency upon nuclear deterrence – and we are nowhere near that stage yet.

Nuclear deterrence still plays a central role in defense planning, and in the minds of those responsible for national defense in the NWS and their allies. The belief that the presence of nuclear weapons creates stability through restraint is

<sup>1</sup> Robert Norris and Hans Kristensen, NRDC Nuclear Notebook

<sup>2</sup> Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

<sup>3</sup> James Forsyth, B. Chance Saltzman and Gary Schaub, “Remembrance of Things Past, the enduring value of nuclear weapons,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Spring 2010

deeply embedded in strategic psyches. And it is difficult for one side in a strategically hostile relationship to abandon the approach independently of the other. The Obama Administration’s decision to submit this year the largest increase in funding for the U.S. nuclear weapon complex since the end of the Cold War was not simply a political sweetener for the Republican Senators they hope to win over in the ratification votes. It also reflected a fundamental belief, expressed in every Administration speech talking about the need to move toward disarmament, in the continued relevance of nuclear deterrence in the near to medium term. The United States will retain reliable, secure and up-to-date nuclear weapons, with a supporting infrastructure, all the while others retain nuclear weapons. The scale of this investment presents an open question for those of us committed to this disarmament agenda as to whether this exposes hypocrisy, a lack of commitment, or a complex realistic strategy. The answers are not as easy as some might think.

Extended deterrent relationships further complicate the picture. During the debates within the U.S. Administration over the NPR, the hottest have been around the need not so much to directly deter the Russians or other potential challengers to U.S. influence, but rather how best to reassure jittery allies in Europe and in Asia. Extended deterrence has many benefits to both the United States and its allies – not least in dampening competition in the locality and reducing the pressures on allies to expand their military potential or to acquire their own nuclear arsenals. But seen from the perspective of those outside the relationship it looks more like a traditional imperialistic sphere of influence approach, menacing to states in region who do not tow the U.S. line, particularly in areas with a recent history of U.S. military intervention. Extended deterrence may help to build trust between allies but it also



weakens it with those outside the arrangements. In the end, the NPR came down heavily in favor of retaining extended deterrence, and specifically supported investment in renewing the B61 free fall bombs that make up the forward-deployed joint force with European allies, despite their military and political disadvantages.

This last commitment was particularly symbolic, demonstrating that while the rhetoric may well be genuine, there is a great deal of reassurance still required within Washington and its closest allies before they are willing to start relinquishing the perceived benefits from such deployments.

### **Rational level of engagement**

Leading members of the non-aligned movement (NAM) have been effective in holding nuclear weapon states to account at regular NPT meetings. NAM states have pointed out the lack of progress, the apparent unshakable attachment to nuclear deployments, and the manner in which nuclear weapon states have abused their possession to retain status and power in the world. But holding account is one thing, achieving breakthrough on the path to a nuclear weapon-free world may be entirely another. Rage or expressions of indignation are not enough, and can often be counter-productive, playing to fears and fueling the perception that Iran presents a threat to stability and everyone's security.

It is a genuine challenge to see how states can move out of their established deterrent relationships quickly, especially when the 'realist' self-help approach combined with an emphasis on the worst-case scenario is so deeply engrained in their strategic paradigms. It takes patient and realistic multilateral diplomacy, conflict-management, trust-building, focus on joint interests, arms control, the strengthening of international regimes and agencies, trade and

other instruments. It involves all states in the process investing in transparency and other measures that reassure and focus on multilateral approaches. And while this process develops, it is inevitable that investments will continue in military nuclear capabilities, and that states will experience unpredictable shocks to the system that push them back into established deterrent postures. A reasonable approach to the situation is to understand the security dynamics within which rival states co-exist, and to attempt to chart out a realistic road for them to travel, that engages diverse opinion, and builds trust.

In contrast, an approach that simply aggressively challenges the NWS may be cathartic and may at times be highly appropriate, but it will not be effective alone in creating the conditions that encourage states to disarm, and often is likely to have the opposite effect.

## **Iran as a Non-Proliferation Laboratory**

### **Approach to Iran**

Looked at from Iran's point of view, there are plenty of reasons to be outraged by the actions of the international community in restricting access to technology, and punishing Iran on the grounds of suspicion. It is easy to point to the international community's double-standards, in limiting its response to Israel's possession of nuclear weapons to quiet and gentle diplomacy, or in the nuclear deals with India. Bad enough that the NPT enshrined a temporary double-standard by allowing some states to retain their nuclear weapons while imposing controls upon others. The apparent lack of will to contemplate disarmament all the while nuclear weapons have salience rubs salt into the wound of injustice and insecurity.

Iran, alongside North Korea, has become for much of the international community the test case for the non-proliferation regime. While the actions of these two in particular emphasize that the status quo is not sustainable – the proliferation of sensitive technologies, whether actually used to deploy nuclear weapons or not, is inevitable – they also and more potently provide a block to progress on disarmament. Is it possible to prevent a state as large as Iran from acquiring a military nuclear technology that gives it the option to develop an arsenal in a region that is delicately balanced and suffers from ongoing conflict? Are the verification and inspection procedures sufficient to credibly and with enough warning detect any such development? Has the international community the tools and the combined political will to use them if a state is found to be cheating? Will that enforcement work in preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons? These are the questions raised by western analysts, diplomats and leaders. This is the frame through which Iran's nuclear program is read and the frame instinctively leads the debate into how to strengthen its components – monitoring, enforcement, and then more effective enforcement.

It is undoubtedly the case that to work, an international regime needs near-universal confidence and adequate mechanisms to underscore it. This confidence will require the sort of IAEA inspections and reporting involved at the Natanz enrichment facility, the model Additional Protocol on top of this, and far more, and will be needed throughout the world where there are nuclear facilities, or suspected nuclear facilities. Otherwise, with the spread of dual-use nuclear power technology, we are simply opening the nuclear weapon door to anyone who chooses to walk through.

Crucially, and this is the point missed by many within the international community, it is going to take a fair and universal application of procedures around the world without prejudice to build legitimacy. This is not to say that every facility needs 24-hour physical inspection and verification, but that all facilities need to operate under a similar overall regime, with the same triggers applied by the IAEA when suspicious behavior is detected. And, for example, if the proposals for multilateral nuclear arrangements around the supply of fuel and waste are to have any hope of truly tackling proliferation concerns, then supplier states will also need to surrender national capabilities to the international arrangements, and invite recipient states into negotiations at an early stage to help frame the fundamentals of the proposals. Until this is done, recipients will always see such proposals as back-door efforts to maintain technical dominance in an expanding and lucrative market.

Security Council resolutions over Iran's nuclear program since 2002 have referred to Iran's nuclear program as a threat to peace and security, and have issued instructions to Iran to suspend its enrichment program and all related activities, under Chapter VII authority.<sup>4</sup> Iranian representatives respond with righteous indignation as the victim oppressed by those with greater power over it, and stand by Iran's rights to freedom of action and in particular its rights to develop nuclear technology, enshrined in Article IV of the NPT. They point to the hypocrisy of states standing as their judge bristling with their own nuclear weapons, protecting their allies from international condemnation, and embarking on a renewed push for nuclear power expansion under their control. They point to the lack of evidence of

---

<sup>4</sup> U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1696, 1737, 1747 and 1803

an ongoing military component in Iran's nuclear program, supported in the 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate on Iran.<sup>5</sup>

This paper does not judge the rights or wrongs of the situation. Indeed, the focus on rights in this dispute has only served to heighten the conflict, the lack of communication and perceptions of threat as a result. Iran's choice to so strongly assert its declared rights as a first principal has only served to strengthen the case of those seeking to portray Iran as aggressive, a principal threat to international peace and security. Hard-ball speeches and negotiation tactics simply play into those perceptions. Each side has focused on its own red line – for the Iranians, that their right to enrich the fuel for their civil reactors is recognized – for the P5+1 that this enrichment is suspended and safeguards strengthened sufficiently for the international community to have confidence that the program is not being used to divert material and technology into any secret military program. The strategies pursued by all sides have been inflexible and damaging, encouraging Iran to stand firm and continue the very enrichment activities that are perceived by others to be a threat to the international community. Contrary to the zero-sum perceptions of many involved in the struggle, this is actually a lose-lose outcome, particularly damaging when mutual benefits are possible.

It may be that this is inevitable given the history of distrust and menace both Iran and the United States have shown toward one another – actions and reactions have been interpreted consistently in the worst possible light, and opportunities for reconciliation or joint action have been squandered. It is as if key actors have hyped the

<sup>5</sup> An unclassified summary of the U.S. NIE on Iran's nuclear program, released in November 2007, is available online: [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20071203\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf)

threat and deliberately spiked the chances of reconciliation for their own purposes.

When President Barack Obama was first elected in November 2008 the Iranian leadership was internally conflicted around how to handle relations with him. His election was likely to transform the relationship, but from its point of view, not necessarily positively. Obama's policy of reaching out to Iran would be seen as much more credible than his predecessor's, and could potentially be used to unite the international community against Iran if it were deemed to be rebuffed. His rapid appointment of Hillary Clinton to the State Department, whose earlier statements supporting military threats against Iran, was seen by some as an alarming indication of the future U.S. strategy. The immediate reaction was to warn that Obama was no different than Bush, and that there would be no significant change. But over the first year of the U.S. Administration it became clearer that this would not be seen as a credible position. President Obama's New Year message to Iran's government and people, his speech to Cairo University, and the level of private 'track two' engagement, clearly showed a new approach.

But the image of Iran in the United States and Europe remains harmful to finding cooperative solutions. Iran's missile development and its nuclear program is cited as justification for the establishment of U.S. missile interceptors in Europe, poisoning the relationship between the United States and Russia. Iran's transparency failure prior to 2003 shook confidence in IAEA safeguards and the Agency itself. The possibility of the development of a nuclear weapon capability by Iran was used extensively by the British government to justify to its population the decision in 2007 to start the process of replacing its Trident nuclear submarines. Unless Iran can shake off this image, many states will continue to isolate the



country and use it to justify actions that undermine global security. Escaping this image, while protecting its freedom of action, must be a high priority for Iran's foreign policy.

The regional dimension – a struggle for power and influence – has a powerful grip over the issues, thwarting many solutions that have been offered. This paper does not ignore those dynamics, but sees them as the context within which improvements could be pursued. Iran, as a large and powerful state within the region, has a right to exert its legitimate interests beyond its own borders. Equally, as a member of the international community and specifically the United Nations, Iran has a responsibility to abide by the U.N. Charter and generally by international law, and to participate in the evolution of international law and norms that lead to greater stability and reduced conflict. This does not mean simply accepting the existing power structures, nor indeed the extensive presence of U.S. forces in the region. As an open economy in an increasingly globalized world, Iran's interests clearly lie in integration within the international community on terms that are respectful to its position.

It is not the concern that Iran is currently engaged in actual weaponization of nuclear material that has provided the principal motivation for action in the Security Council (ignoring perhaps the latest revelations involving intelligence from key western states submitted recently to the IAEA), but rather the secrecy of many of its operations in the past, a less-than full cooperation with Agency inspectors and specific inquiries around past activity, and most especially the acquisition of dual-use technologies by Iran that could be used for rapid break-out in the future. The fact is, many key states within the international community do not trust the Iranians with enrichment or heavy-water technologies, whether or not they use them for

military purposes, and justify this lack of trust on its previous secrecy and violation of its Safeguards Agreement with the Agency. And it seems unlikely they ever will without some radical change in the situation.

This presents a problem that goes beyond the specific relationship between Iran and the wider international community, and raises two key questions that deserve further consideration and open debate without prejudice.

1. *Is it possible to devise rigorous schemes that build international confidence in a country's nuclear program when trust is low, without being prohibitively expensive or intrusive, and are there direct benefits to Iran of engaging in this project?*

If so, given its current standing with the IAEA and the United Nations, Iran is in an ideal position to develop these schemes with IAEA inspectors. There are added benefits to this approach that could have globally-important spin-off implications in the moves toward a world free from nuclear proliferation and of nuclear weapons. If we believe it is in fact impossible to achieve international confidence in an Iranian program, are we doomed to see a protracted conflict with an uncertain outcome that will harm everyone's interests?

2. *Are there other routes for the international community and for Iran to take, which will deliver legitimate Iranian needs and objectives without harming international confidence?*

Such routes would entail recognition of Iran's rights, enable Iran to develop its civil technology in a manner that is not discriminatory, but also reassure the international community of its intent.

## Iran's use of IAEA Inspectors

Since the outbreak of the current nuclear stand-off, Iranian diplomatic strategy appears to have been to cooperate with the IAEA just to the extent that this holds off international action, perhaps in the belief that cooperation is a bargaining chip, and that to give too much too soon would be to overplay their hand for too little in return. In each of its reports the IAEA Secretariat has always pointed to the need for Iran to cooperate more fully and proactively if confidence is to be fully established. The Iranian task of judging the necessary level of cooperation has been challenging, made all the more so by the entrenched positions taken by the United States and European officials. The problem is that this strategy also gives the impression to the 'opposition' in the negotiations that playing harder ball achieves results.

Iranian spokespeople have talked up references to the levels of cooperation between Iranian technicians and inspectors when IAEA Reports to the Board of Governors have been published, and Western diplomats have pointed to the holes in the evidence. In sum, we have a situation where the international community, the IAEA and Iran are inadvertently developing an IAEA inspections model of containment toward a state displaying resistance. This resistance creates a feedback loop of suspicion, whether founded or baseless.

Iran succeeded in making a breakthrough with the IAEA by agreeing a 'modalities of resolution of the outstanding issues' and published these on 27 August 2007.<sup>6</sup> In a diplomatic coup it changed the game overnight – by agreeing what the key outstanding questions were and setting a timetable for resolving them. This set back efforts by the

United States to isolate Iran, giving Russia and China solid ground for resisting further sanctions, at least temporarily. Early efforts by the United States to criticize the agreement were quickly abandoned when it was clear that they were not going to receive sufficient international support. Instead, they sold it as a success for the strategy of pressurizing Iran into movement.

There is perhaps a hint here of a more extensive alternative strategy for Iran that could more effectively break the dominant story within the international media. Iran could voluntarily enter into talks with the IAEA to establish and develop the nature of a rigorous, robust inspections and verification regime that would give strong and reasonable confidence that its technology was secure and not being used for military purposes, while protecting Iran's legitimate sovereignty concerns. Why should it do this? Would this not be giving in to the West and opening Iran up for further demands? Has Iran not put effort into building confidence by voluntarily suspending enrichment in 2003 and then again in the Paris Agreement of 2004, only to have its good faith abused?

By establishing this process Iran could take the logic of the modalities study to the next stage. Not only could it cut through the current demands of the U.N. Security Council, but it could establish general protocols appropriate for objective and reasonable verification with IAEA staff. It would in practical terms take the initiative and control out of the hands of the Security Council. In short it would transform its position from a reluctant participant perceived as a recalcitrant, to a proactive architect of a framework necessary for roll out across the world.

If Iran could complete the modalities process and clear up the key questions that pointed a suspicious finger of blame, it could then place the framework

<sup>6</sup> IAEA Infirc 711, available <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infircs/2007/infirc711.pdf>

on the negotiating table as a very real, transparent and negotiable ‘carrot’ in return for the file being returned from the Security Council and Iran given recognition of its rights to retain the enrichment program in which it has sunk so much political and financial capital. This may not be wholly acceptable as a final outcome of negotiations for the permanent members of the Security Council, because it would still enable Iran to acquire a nuclear latency – the ability to develop and deploy nuclear weapons rapidly in the future – but it would go a long way to reassuring much of the international community, and create the space necessary to allow negotiations to progress.

### **Non-proliferation Laboratory – the Global Context**

The global disarmament movement outlined in the first section of this paper opens up a crucial opportunity for Iran to transform its image in the international community, and hands it an opportunity to play a positive leadership role in the moves toward a nuclear weapon-free world. Just as the British government has described itself on a number of occasions, in reference to the joint project with the Norwegians centered on verification of warhead dismantlement, as a ‘disarmament laboratory’, so Iran could establish itself as a ‘non-proliferation laboratory’. This would make explicit the grand bargain between non-proliferation and disarmament. Indeed, Iran could actively draw the links between the two in a progressive manner – strengthening further its safeguards and inspections processes as the NWS got closer to their own disarmament. This would enable Iran to canvass international support for its position and to apply real (not simply rhetorical) pressure on the NWS to move forward toward disarmament.

By taking a leadership role in this endeavor with clear common global advantage, Iran would

achieve a dramatic diplomatic benefit and undercut hostility toward it. It would also greatly strengthen its hand in international non-proliferation and disarmament negotiations – its position at the 2010 NPT Review Conference would be unassailable. It would also weaken the hand of its opponents in this current dispute, and shift global attention to their failures to observe their disarmament obligations. In a time of shifting power – between states and non-state actors, as well as between states themselves – it would be those governments that seek to abuse their formal positions and attempt to cling to the past that would be seen as the real enemies of peace and stability.

## **British American Security Information Council**

### **In the United Kingdom**

The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square  
London, N1 6HT  
+44-(0)207 324 4680

### **In the United States**

110 Maryland Ave., NE, Suite 205  
Washington, DC 20002  
+1 202 546 8055

### **On the Web**

<http://www.basicint.org>

*Cover photo: Iran’s Assembly of Experts in session, photo: Mohammad Kazempour, ISNA*

*BASIC would like to thank the Ploughshares Fund, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Polden Puckham, and the Ford Foundation for making this work possible.*