
Still uncertain is whether some Iranians, now or in the future, would have both the interest and the ability to transfer nuclear weapons, radiological materials or related items to terrorist groups. Prudent American policies should aim not only to prevent such a transfer, which would threaten the United States even more than an Iranian national nuclear deterrent, but also to respond effectively should it occur.

Berman then addresses a topic that typically has received much less attention: the recent improvements in Iran's relative political-military positions in the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus. He notes how the U.S.-led invasions and occupations in neighboring Afghanistan and Iraq have provided Tehran with geopolitical openings in those countries. Besides these developments, the author ascribes much of Iran's regional resurgence to the soaring price of energy, which has resulted in an exponential increase in the petrodollars at the regime's disposal. By 2000, Tehran had become the third-largest purchaser of Russian arms exports and had acquired weapons from China, North Korea and other sources (including private dealers) as well. The country also continues to develop its indigenous defense industry. Together, foreign and domestic arms suppliers have enabled Iran to improve its navy and shore-based defenses near the sensitive Strait of Hormuz and to deploy ballistic missiles that could threaten targets such as Israel more than a thousand miles away.

ALTHOUGH BERMAN convincingly dissects Iranian intentions, he exaggerates Iranian capabilities. For example, the third chapter (entitled "Suddenly a Superpower") speaks of Iran's "massive defense acquisitions", "far-reaching military maneuvers" and alleged transformation into the "preeminent military power in the Persian Gulf." With

the recent decimation of Iraq's military, Iran's armed forces clearly enjoy superiority over its Persian Gulf neighbors, but they would not long survive a clash with the American military. Its U.S.-supplied warplanes possess 1970s-era avionics and sensors; its ground forces lack mobility; its command-and-control technologies lag decades behind those found in most advanced Western militaries. Politically, Tehran's influence in most of Central Asia and the Caucasus remains much less than that of Russia, China or the United States. Iran is not a full member of any of the four multilateral security institutions most active in its neighborhood—the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Gulf Cooperation Council or NATO—and must rely on a disparate array of underdeveloped and frequently conflicting bilateral relationships to advance its regional interests.

Berman's analysis also may underestimate the American government's commitment to countering Tehran. His general view is that for many years U.S. policymakers have not taken the Iranian challenge sufficiently seriously and that their response has therefore proven inadequate. A passage from the introduction summarizes much of the author's critique:

Embroiled in a worldwide war on terrorism, the United States has not yet turned its attention to Tehran. Instead, it has ceded leadership to the international community on the most prominent aspect of the global threat posed by Iran: its nuclear capacity. And it has remained silent on Iran's mounting adventurism in the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, as well as its persistent support for international terrorism.

Other observers also have accused the current Bush Administration of "outsourcing" to foreigners its policies toward Iran (and North Korea), but it would be more correct to say that, while mem-

bers of the administration share a general concern about Iranian behavior, its various factions have remained divided over how best to respond. The result, as with North Korea, has been deadlock, disjointed and sometimes conflicting policies, and the repeated postponement of difficult decisions in the hope that external developments (such as European or Russian intervention) will in time resolve these problems.

In addition, some material presented in the book's concluding chapters weakens the arguments found in the first part. For example, in making the case that a well-constructed American response could exploit favorable geopolitical trends to overcome the Iranian challenge, the author shows how various developments already are working to check Tehran's influence. Rather than seeking to appease Iran's growing strength, for instance, its neighbors have taken steps such as strengthening their defenses against ballistic missile attacks to counter it. In a recent article in the *Foreign Affairs*, Berman himself notes that Russian policies toward Iran—a relationship the book characterizes as a “strategic partnership”—might be hardening as Moscow comes to appreciate how Tehran could threaten Russian interests in the Caucasus and elsewhere.

Despite the overtly stark description of the Iranian threat found in the initial chapters, the underestimation of the countervailing forces already constraining Tehran, and several ambitious proposals

On the other hand, attempting to coexist with a nuclear-armed Iran under its current government in the hope that it will pursue moderate policies would entail great risks. Having a nuclear deterrent against the United States might reassure Tehran's leaders about their security and make them more willing to introduce additional domestic reforms and improve ties with Washington. More likely, the regime would seek to hide behind its nuclear shield while it continued to support terrorism and pursue other anti-American policies.

GIVEN THE problems with both coexistence and combat, the best approach until a major transformation occurs either within Iran itself or with its external environment is to employ multilateral policies like those advocated in the book's conclusion to change its behavior. Such a strategy would be more effective, however, if it explicitly ranked the various threats Tehran presents to the United States and allocated resources accordingly. The recommendations also would be even stronger if they more clearly differentiated between policies the United States should pursue now to help shape the international environment and hedging strategies Washington should adopt only if these shaping strategies fail. For example, although the author explains why an Osiraq-like military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities likely would entail more costs than benefits, the text does not specify how the United States should respond if timely regime change does not occur and the current Iranian government actually deploys an operational nuclear arsenal. Mr. Berman points out that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could embolden Tehran's anti-American-

ism and lead Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and other countries to seek their own nuclear arsenals. U.S. policymakers need to begin crafting detailed

to help shape the international environment and hedging strategies Washington should adopt only if these shaping strategies fail. For example, although the author explains why an Osiraq-like military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities likely would entail more costs than benefits, the text does not specify how the United States should respond if timely regime change does not occur and the current Iranian government actually deploys an operational nuclear arsenal. Mr. Berman points out that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could embolden Tehran's anti-American-

ilat s, hidghldght the Ufutlitiyof nrly nog do the iolictca dvenlopa scivlitn nuclear alwevrtindu ehr, Eith its binhr nuclear -armd 7raniempaati Ufoamout