The Iranian Nuclear Capability

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The moment that Iran will emerge as a nuclear power has been expected as the revolution against the king (Shah) emerged victorious. The Mullas (the religious people) emerged with a mentality that highly regards self-dependence, and considers it as part of the Islamic teachings. A good Muslim doesn't put his fate in the hands of others even if they were friends, should always be vigilant and capable of defending him/herself. A Muslim should always be strong, not for the purpose of attacking others, but for deterring aggressors.

They believe that the Arabs and the Muslims have been humiliated over the years by the Western countries and Israel, their wealth has been robbed, and weakened by their own governments. Most Arab and Muslim governments are puppets of the US, and have dumped their own peoples into backwardness and frequent defeats. The US has been arming Israel and extending every possible political, diplomatic and economic support. Israel has been ruthless and preventing the Palestinian refugees from returning to their homes and property.

Aside from their Islamic and political thought, the Iranians are proud of themselves. Although the Persian Empire was toppled by the Muslims, they still study its history with great admiration. This doesn't mean that the Mullas are Persian nationalists, but they don't see themselves disconnected from the great historical achievements of their civilization.

From the very beginning, the US and the Arab regimes looked at the Iranian revolution with suspicion, particularly due to the political discourse it adopted. It started talking about the dignity of the Muslims and the liberation of Palestine. The Arab regimes feared that the Iranian fever might spread to their own countries, Israel sensed the threat that might emerge, the US cared so much about the sources of energy. That is why the three parties collaborated and waged a war against Iran with the leadership of Saddam Hussein. The Arab regimes and the Western countries financed and equipped the Iraqi president who turned to be an enemy after the war.

Iran got the message; that is, if it doesn't develop its own military arsenal, it will remain vulnerable. It suffered so much from the siege imposed on her by the US and the European countries, and it decided to take the necessary steps toward developing its own military equipment. It could manufacture canons, artilleries, sub-machines, helicopters, tanks, short and medium range missiles, laser guided bombs and so on. Some of these equipment were tested in southern Lebanon by Hizballah against Israel and proved effective.

For so many years, Iran skillfully could bring the world's attention to its efforts to build a nuclear facility for electrical purposes on the gulf in cooperation with Russia. The US, Israel and other countries concentrated their attention on this project and tried hard with

Russia to back up on the contract. However, the real Iranian efforts were in the backyard with strict secrecy. The Western intelligence failed to detect the level of progress Iran achieved in the field of nuclear research although doubts and suspicions have always came to the fore.

Iran has been quick in gaining nuclear knowledge and know-how. It became evident that Abdul Kadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb provided Iran with precious knowledge; and it is thought that Iran could attract some Russian scientists after the fall of the Soviet Union, and could establish a certain kind of cooperation with North Korea. It is possible that the North Koreans traded knowledge with financial assistance. Now the West is caught in the Middle of an astounding reality.

Apparently, the Iranians have developed something to depend on in any kind of confrontation with the West. Their discourse is challenging and determined, and they haven't been shaken by the American and Israeli threats. The possibility that they already have the bomb is strong, and for sure they have the means to deliver it. But, regardless of this possibility, Iran has several factors in its favor in any military confrontation that might erupt:

1- Iran is a vast country of around 1,600,000 km2, and a population of 70 million. Strategically, this requires the mobilization of so much air and missile power. Israel finds it very difficult to attain without the direct intervention of the US.

2- It is hard for both the US and Israel to distinguish between the real nuclear sites and the decoy. It is thought that Iran has dug into the mountains hundreds of sites with a skill to make it hard for the satellites to differentiate.

3- In retaliation, Iran can hit the oil fields and refineries in Saudia Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. The already high oil prices might jump up to $200 a barrel. The US will be the country to blame.

4- Iran could make Iraq a harder place for the Americans who are already facing a fierce resistance. It has so much influence on the Iraqi Shiites who haven't been participating in the resistance. It can put the American army in Iraq under tremendous pressure.

5- The Arab regimes aren't capable any more in waging a war against Iran on behalf of the US. Saddam isn't there any more, the Iraqi army is so weak, the Arab regimes are bankrupt, and Iran is much stronger than before.

6- Iran is confident that the utmost that Israel and the US could do is to use the air force or the long range cruise missiles. Ground invasion isn't thought of due to the vastness of the country, and to the limited capability of the US to wage a new war.

7- Iran is threatening to hit Israel if it becomes under attack. It has the missile power to do that.

It is estimated that Iran will suffer so much destruction if the US wages a military attack, but so many strategic experts believe that that is not going to cripple the Iranian military capability. Iran has been very cautious and clever, and takes the necessary steps to absorb the fire power of the US.

The US has been threatening, but, in the meanwhile, resorting to the UN. Russia and China are unwilling to go along with the US in adopting economic and military sanctions against Iran. Will France and Britain join the US in its efforts to dismantle Iran? Or will the US go ahead with a new military adventure? Things don't seem easy or comfortable particularly the US army is facing so much trouble in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I think that Iran will ultimately emerge as a nuclear power, and the US has to accept this reality. But the hard time will be Israel's share. For the first time since its establishment as a state, Israel feels that its existence is seriously endangered.