

If Iran Gets the Bomb: Weapons, Force Posture, Strategy

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The decision would require tradeoffs affecting the security, survivability, and military credibility of Tehran's nascent arsenal.

Four decades after launching a nuclear weapons program— at a moment when the regime's conventional deterrence has been weakened by Israeli blows to its proxies, air defenses, and missile production capabilities—Iran may finally be on the verge of building a bomb. Such a decision would require tradeoffs that could affect the security, survivability, and credibility of a nascent arsenal. Iran would thus be compelled to assess related priorities when deciding whether to “go small” with a minimum deterrent force, “go big” with an arsenal befitting a regime with grandiose ambitions, or chart a middle course.

In this comprehensive Policy Focus, military analyst Michael Eisenstadt examines Iran's nuclear choices regarding weapons, force posture, and strategy, and their implications for the region if the Islamic Republic does get the bomb. He then offers recommendations for how the United States and its allies could shape the regime's nuclear decisionmaking in order to bolster deterrence and regional stability.



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