

Iran's Nuclear Strategy:

Understanding Tehran's Acquisition Pathway

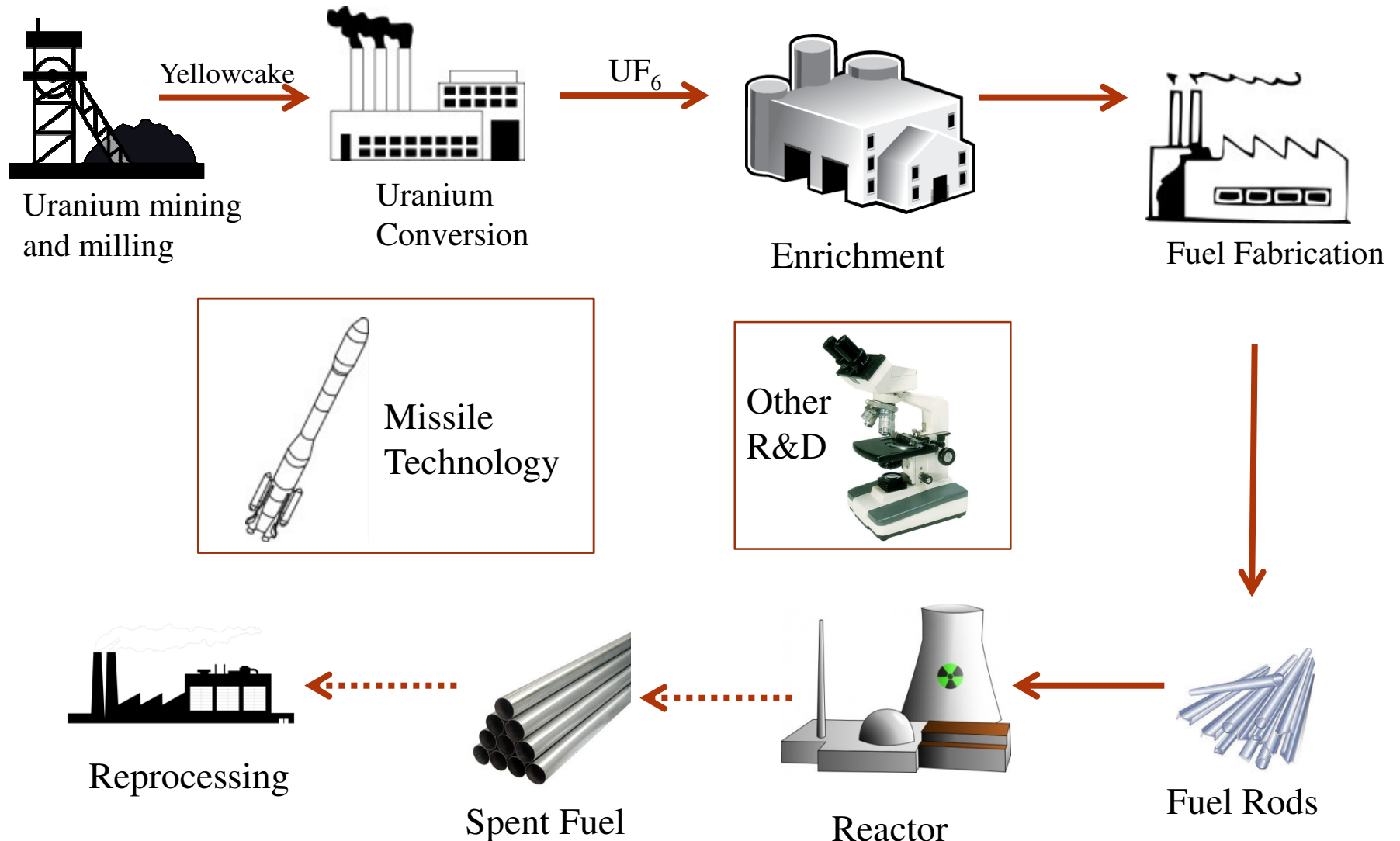
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Four Basic Contentions:

1. Iran currently possesses a latent nuclear weapons capability
2. Iran's leaders exhibit signs of nuclear ambivalence
3. Iran's nuclear M.O:
 - Create options → Delay → Wait for consensus
4. Iran's leaders respond to provocation with provocation

Iran's Nuclear Fuel Cycle



Iran Already Possesses a Nuclear Weapons Capability



Nuke Agency Says Iran Can Make Bomb

September 18, 2009



Iran experts at the U.N.'s nuclear monitoring agency believe that Tehran has the ability to make a nuclear bomb and worked on developing a missile system that can carry an atomic warhead, according to a confidential report seen by The Associated Press.

Iran Exhibits Signs of Nuclear Ambivalence

- I. Abraham (1998, 2006, 2009) –Leaders may not have well-developed intentions regarding weaponization; may be persuaded either way
 - 2007 NIE (2011 update): Iran has not yet taken the decision to weaponize, largely because it has not needed to
 - Serious divisions exist among political elite
 - Chemical weapons precedent from 1980s

Iran's Decision-Making Process

- Create widest possible range of options
- Delay controversial decisions
- Wait for consensus to emerge



“[Khamenei] has ruled the country by consensus rather than decree.”

– Karim Sadjadpour

Provocation Begets Provocation

- Consensus most likely to emerge in response to provocation
- May 25, 2011: IAEA Report → June 8: Triple 20% Enrichment
- Nov. 28, 2009: BoG Censure → Nov. 30: Announcement of 10 new enrichment facilities

“We had no plan to build many nuclear sites like Natanz but...the West adopted an attitude toward Iran which made the Iranian government to pass the ratification on construction of ten sites similar to the Natanz enrichment facility.”

-Ali-Akbar Salehi



This Means Trouble for the US

- US Policy: Delay Iranian acquisition of a bomb
- Misaligned with reality in Iran
- Abraham warns: Seeking to dissuade ambivalent actors from that which they do not intend to do can backfire
 - ❑ “Rally ‘round the flag”
- Likely to encourage an Iranian push for a bomb

