

Pinsker reveals that the Lincoln cottage—the house that the National Trust has so lovingly restored at a cost of \$15 million—may not really be the, um, Lincoln cottage.

“The oral tradition at the Soldier’s Home,” Pinsker writes, has “always assumed that the president lived in the same cottage during each of his three seasons in residence.” Yet this is just an assumption. There’s a fair amount of evidence that the Lincolns actually spent the first two summers at a smaller but more sumptuous cottage next door to the one that is now called the Lincoln cottage.

This smaller cottage, which still stands, was the one used by James Buchanan as a summer home. A Civil War-era print of the site labels the smaller cottage the “President’s Villa.” The same print labels what we now call the “Lincoln cottage” the “Military Governor’s House.” And a congressional letter from early 1864 requests money to refurbish our Lincoln cottage. The reason for the request: “The house heretofore occupied by President Lincoln has, since last summer, been taken by some other person.”

Pinsker weighs this evidence only to dismiss it. He concludes, rather shakily, that it is still “most likely” that the Lincolns used the Lincoln cottage for all three seasons. On the present record, we can’t know for sure. That’s history for you: All that can be said definitively is that the Lincolns stayed in what we call the “Lincoln cottage” during 1864, their last summer at the retreat.

Among other things, this means that the Emancipation Proclamation might not have been written there, in the bare rooms where the tourists and buffs will now come to feel their *frissons*, but in the house sitting inconspicuously next door, neglected. On the other hand, it also means that we can still be sure about that banister—sure that Abraham Lincoln, in the momentous summer of 1864, gripped it with his own hand as he climbed wearily to bed.

And for lots of us, that’s what really counts. ♦



Iran Goes Nuclear

Last month’s National Intelligence Estimate is far from the last word. BY STEPHEN RADEMAKER

Conventional wisdom holds that the international community is “united” in its concern about Iran’s nuclear program and “adamant” about stopping Iran from developing nuclear weapons. All responsible governments are said to be pulling frenetically in the same direction, disagreeing occasionally, but only over tactics.

Enter Thérèse Delpech, a French official—director of strategic studies at the French Atomic Energy Commission—but certainly not a spokesman for the French government. She takes a club to these international platitudes, revealing a world largely indifferent to Tehran’s nuclear program, at times complicit in it, and always with something more important on its mind.

Her subtitle says it all: *The Abdication of International Responsibility*. Delpech delivers a blistering critique of all the key players in the Iranian nuclear controversy: the Iranian regime, of course, as well as its diplomatic enablers in Russia, China, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). But she goes on to flay those governments that are widely seen as most committed to stopping Iran’s nuclear program, including Great Britain, France, and Germany (the so-called EU-3), to say nothing of the United States.

She begins with Iran, reviewing the history and technical details of its nuclear program and demolishing the notion that the program could be designed for peaceful purposes.

Launched in secret 20 years ago, pursued in violation of Iran’s legally binding safeguards obligations, and with no economic justification for the huge investment required, Iran’s program only makes sense as a nuclear weapons program.

Delpech moves on to Russia, asking why Moscow is not more alarmed about the potential development of nuclear weapons by a Muslim fundamentalist state on

its periphery. She observes correctly that, in private, Russian officials agree that Tehran is pursuing nuclear weapons. Yet Russia has provided considerable nuclear assistance to Iran over the past 15 years, and persists today in blocking meaningful action against Iran at the U.N. Security Council. Reviewing possible explanations, such as the desire to build a strategic partnership with Tehran and business considerations, she concludes that “in Moscow it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between strategic issues, commercial issues and criminal activities.”

China has a similar record of past cooperation with Iran’s nuclear program, coupled with the provision of diplomatic protection for it today. As a result of its relentless economic growth, China is now the world’s second largest consumer of oil and relies on Iran for 15 percent of its oil imports. Clearly, Beijing’s principal interest is in enhancing its access to energy, but Delpech argues that it has strategic interests as well. Like Russia, China is keen to establish a diplomatic foothold in the Middle East. In addition, China is more than happy to refocus America’s attention and military might away from East Asia, particularly Taiwan.

Iran and the Bomb
The Abdication of International Responsibility
by Thérèse Delpech
Translated by Ros Schwartz
Columbia, 160 pp., \$26.95

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Delpech is especially critical of the IAEA, excoriating the agency for exceeding its mandate as an international inspectorate. She cites repeated instances in which the IAEA leadership has sought to influence diplomatic initiatives to restrain Iran, most notably its efforts to dissuade the IAEA Board of Governors from referring Iran to the Security Council. She also takes the agency to task for resorting to “all sorts of euphemisms and understatement” to avoid finding Iran in breach of its nuclear nonproliferation obligations, for not fully exercising its inspection authority in Iran, and for removing two particularly effective IAEA inspectors at Iran’s request.

“Who is giving orders to the Agency?” she asks. “The Board of Governors or the country under examination?”

Turning to Britain, France, and Germany, the leaders of international efforts to negotiate with Iran, Delpech correctly points out that their early interest in the problem had more to do with Iraq than Iran, and even more to do with demonstrating the superiority of “soft power” over the muscular foreign policy of the early Bush administration.

With so much prestige and ideology invested in their diplomatic project, the EU-3 could not afford to see it fail. For years they equated an IAEA referral of Iran to the Security Council with the failure of their initiative, and therefore on three occasions, between 2003 and 2005, they shielded Iran from such a referral. The result was additional time for Iran to advance its nuclear program. Delpech’s verdict is harsh: “Europe will have to shoulder part of the blame for the development of Iran’s nuclear programme if the Iranian bomb sees the light of day.”

She assigns a greater share of the blame, however, to America. Delpech faults the United States for failing to provide leadership on the Iran issue commensurate with its power and

responsibilities in the international system. Contrary to the usual European critique, her complaint is not that America has provided insufficient support to the efforts of the EU-3, or that it has failed to talk directly to Iran. Rather, her complaint is that the America has not been tough enough.

Distracted by Iraq and burdened by all the unhappy developments in

by the U.S. intelligence community this past December. As popularly understood (or, more precisely, misunderstood), the NIE casts grave doubt on Delpech’s basic premise that Iran remains a nuclear threat that must be contained. The infelicitous phrasing of the NIE certainly invites such misunderstanding.

The assertion in the first sentence of the NIE—“We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program”—appears to assure us that Iran is no longer pursuing nuclear weapons. In a little-noticed footnote to this assertion, however, the NIE’s authors clarify that “by ‘nuclear weapons program’ we mean Iran’s nuclear weapon design and weaponization work and covert uranium conversion-related and uranium enrichment-related work; we do not mean Iran’s declared civil work related to uranium conversion and enrichment.”

In other words, the NIE’s authors are excluding from their definition of “nuclear weapons program” the underground enrichment facility at Natanz, which began life as a covert nuclear facility, and was only acknowledged by Iran and declared to be for civil purposes after its existence was revealed by an Iranian opposition group in 2002. The authors are also excluding from their definition the uranium conversion facility at Isfahan, the heavy water reactor under construction at Arak, and other sensitive facilities that, along with Natanz, have been the focus of intense international concern since 2002.

Delpech’s conclusions about the ominous nature of the Iranian program relate to the now-declared “civil” facilities that became known once Iran was caught illegally concealing them. Her conclusions do not depend on assump-



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Mashhad, 2006

U.S.-Iran relations since the fall of the shah, America insists at the rhetorical level that “all options are on the table,” but, in fact, is manifestly unwilling to use military force. The use of force would not be the optimal outcome, but “negotiations that are not accompanied by any threat in the event of a failure to meet obligations have no chance of success.” With America in a “state of paralysis,” Delpech comes to the dire conclusion that “what Iran is about to show is that there is no longer anyone in control of the international scene.”

Delpech’s logic is crystal clear and backed by a firm command of the facts. At times, however, the author’s outline-like organizational style impedes rather than facilitates the reader’s comprehension. The biggest disappointment is that her narrative ends in August 2006, shortly before the European edition of her book was released. As a result, developments since then are not addressed.

The most important subsequent development is, of course, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) released

tions about unknown conversion and enrichment-related work that the NIE now assures us was suspended in 2003. The same can be said, incidentally, about the premises upon which the Bush administration and other governments have been operating since 2002.

Therefore, for purposes not only of Delpech's analysis, but also Bush administration foreign policy, the NIE's conclusion that "in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program" is a classic straw man. It is a fact that may be true under the NIE's cramped definition of a "nuclear weapons program," but it is not a fact that negates Delpech's analysis, or that of those countries that have been working to constrain Iran's nuclear program.

The NIE is not the only development since 2006 that is left untreated by Delpech's narrative. As the narrative ends, the Security Council has just taken its first meaningful action, adopting a resolution requiring Iran to suspend its nuclear program within 30 days. She expresses confidence that Iran will not comply, and questions whether the Security Council will respond to that noncompliance by imposing sanctions.

In fact, the Security Council has since acted twice to impose sanctions, though Russia and China have wielded their veto power at the Council to ensure that those sanctions have more bark than bite. The latest deadline set by the Council for suspension by Iran of its nuclear program "or else"—May 2007—has long since passed without any indication that Russia and China will allow the Council to deliver on its threat. The NIE is sure to compound the diplomatic challenge of persuading Russia and China that the Council must back up its demands with action.

There have been other important diplomatic developments as well. The new government of Nicolas Sarkozy in France sees international action against Iran as absolutely essential, in radical contrast to its predecessor. On the other hand, despite the election of Angela Merkel, Germany has moved in the opposite direction, becoming ever more reluctant to pay an economic price to prevent Iran from acquiring

nuclear weapons. The tendency of the IAEA leadership to see itself as an independent power center has grown more pronounced. The August 2007 agreement between the IAEA and Iran on resolving outstanding verification questions not only ignores pertinent Security Council resolutions, but arguably is inconsistent with them.

The most interesting and least-

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noticed changes involve Russia. As Delpech notes, Russia's behavior toward Iran since the demise of the Soviet Union appears to result from a combination of strategic calculation, business opportunism, and criminal activity. For most of that time, a central goal of U.S. policy has been to change Russian behavior by changing the economic incentives influencing that behavior. Specifically, the United States has sought to persuade the Russian nuclear establishment that its involvement with Iran is a liability, and that ultimately Russia stands to make much more money by abandoning the Iranian market.

To this end, Congress enacted, and the executive branch enforced, laws imposing economic sanctions on Russian commercial entities that supplied Iran with nuclear and other sensitive technologies. Following Russia's decision in 1995 to complete the Bushehr nuclear reactor in Iran, the Clinton administration shelved plans to negotiate a bilateral agreement with Russia permitting nuclear commerce between

the U.S. and Russian nuclear industries. The Bush administration changed this policy last July by initialing a nuclear cooperation agreement with Russia. The House of Representatives has signaled its disagreement with this policy change, however, voting 397-16 in September to approve legislation that would condition U.S. nuclear cooperation with Russia on termination of Russia's cooperation with Iran.

In response to these kinds of pressures, the Russian nuclear agency, Rosatom, apparently decided a few years back to go legit. Rosatom wants to compete in the international market with the likes of Areva, General Electric, and Westinghouse, and it seems to have recognized that it will not be able to do so if it continues to be seen as a supplier to Iran. Accordingly, Rosatom began dragging its feet on completing the Bushehr reactor, while also seeking to renegotiate the price with Tehran. Russian sources suggest that Rosatom also decided to take a pass on tenders issued by Iran in April 2007 for the construction of two additional nuclear reactors.

Rosatom's change of heart regarding Iran was a hopeful sign that, perhaps, Russian foreign policy would one day shift to conform to Rosatom's new calculation of its economic interests. Regrettably, this hope must now be counted among the casualties of the NIE. Less than two weeks after the NIE was released, Russia shipped the first batch of nuclear fuel to Iran for the Bushehr reactor after years of resisting Iranian pressure to do so. Implicit in Russia's decision to ship the fuel was a decision to direct Rosatom to complete the construction of Bushehr. Thus, far from conforming Russian foreign policy to Rosatom's economic interests, the NIE prompted Russia to conform Rosatom's actions to Russian foreign policy.

Iran and the Bomb does not give us the benefit of Delpech's reactions to these developments. She would surely say, however, that Russia's recent actions were a predictable retreat in the face of apparent American equivocation, and the NIE would no doubt be the new Exhibit A on her list of abdications of international responsibility. ♦