Defying a 2003 agreement to halt its nuclear program, Iran resumed its nuclear activities in 2005 despite the objections and sanctions of a concerned international community. Theoretical frameworks in international relations may suggest the strategic environment, regime type, and international institutions as key variables to explain foreign policy-making. In this article, it is argued that nuclear decision-making in Tehran cannot be understood through a "black-box" model that would assume Iran to be a unitary rational actor that knows its capabilities, interests, and wants. Instead, one must investigate the changes in the domestic decision-making and bargaining process through a bureaucratic politics model. Although some point out hardliner President Ahmadinejad as the sole decision-maker, we argue that a single individual could not have changed the course of the entire country; there were coalitions and struggles among multiple actors within the regime. Analyzing two different eras within the case of Iran, we argue that the shift in bureaucratic coalitions among the Supreme Leader, the President, the Revolutionary Guards, the Atomic Energy Agency of Iran, and the Supreme National Security Council explains the shift in Iranian foreign policy. In our conclusion, we draw several implications of this argument for the scholarly literature and offer policy-prescriptive advice.
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