



# SHEDDEN PAPERS



## Nuclearizing the Middle East and Regional Stability

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### *Abstract*

This paper addresses the strategic implications of nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East. It explains and examines the historic and political context of nuclear weapons accumulation by states in the region, and explains why the nuclear monopoly and deterrence strategy of Israel has failed. Ultimately, it promotes the concept of a Nuclear Free Weapons Zone in the region as a means of promoting security and stability in this fractured, yet strategically vital, region.

This paper is approximately 11,000 words long excluding its bibliography and prints off at 33 pages.

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## Introduction

The Middle East can be considered one of the most important parts of the world because it contains most of the global oil reserves and therefore much of its energy resources. Many observers believe that this area's stability means a more stable and safe world. Stability in the Middle East region remains difficult to achieve however, due to a number of issues. These include the Israeli–Arab conflict, the scarcity of water and the potential Sunni-Shi'a conflict. The overarching nuclear issue however, is most pressing, with several countries in the Middle East either having a nuclear weapons programme (Israel), having sought to develop one (Iraq and Syria), or being suspected of pursuing one via its nuclear energy programme (Iran). The risk of proliferation of nuclear weapons to non-state actors or terrorist groups keeps creeping in to complicate the problem still further.

In an already inflamed region like the Middle East, the danger of nuclear proliferation has become a dilemma. The notion of nuclear proliferation has ardent support among a number of strategic theorists. These theorists strongly believe that the level of security and stability in the world can be increased by allowing more states to possess a credible nuclear deterrent. On the other hand, many others see an inherent instability in nuclear proliferation, and as such envisage the region being pushed to the edge of nuclear war.

This paper will discuss the significance and nature of the conflicts in the Middle East, against which nuclear proliferation in the region, including the theory of nuclear deterrence and the prospect of a Middle East Nuclear Free Zone, can be evaluated. In particular, this paper examines the impact of nuclear proliferation on stability in the Middle East, and assesses its potential for stabilising the region or inflaming a nuclear arms race, including the risk of a nuclear exchange.

## The Middle East and its Significance

The Middle East can be defined as the vast geographic area that embraces North Africa and much of Western Asia. It is bordered to the south by the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, to the north by Greece and Eastern Europe, and to the northeast by Afghanistan, Russia and some of the newly independent countries of Central Asia.<sup>1</sup> There are three features which summarise the importance of this part of the world. The first is the importance of its location in the geographic heart of the world connecting the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. The second is its rich oil reserves. The region possesses a large amount of the world's oil, most of which is found in just four countries; Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. The rich oil resources have brought

<sup>1</sup> Monte Palmer, *The Politics of the Middle East*, Thomson Wadsworth, Australia, 2007, p. 2.



the region great wealth, however, it has also made the region a subject of conflict and international interest.<sup>2</sup> The third feature is the shortage of water. The region suffers from a sharp scarcity of fresh water, which hardly covers the needs of its population. The problem of accessing the freshwater in the region may be one of the primary causes inflaming future disputes in the Middle East.<sup>3</sup>

The Middle East is mostly seen as a culturally homogenous region, where most of its citizens share common values, culture and heritage that differ from any other region in the world. These values and culture are influenced strongly by Islam, the religion of the majority in the region, and the Arab heritage shared by the overwhelming majority of Middle Easterners. However, that said, the region is also 'marked by profound religious, ethnic and linguistic diversity'.<sup>4</sup> The cultural differences are also due to the diversity of peoples in the region; Arabs, Kurds, Turkish, Israelis and many other minorities. The Arabs constitute the majority of the region's citizens, and they are at its core. Both the Arabs and non-Arabs are divided by religious and sectarian conflict.<sup>5</sup> These cultural differences exacerbate many disputes in the region.

### **The Concept of the New, or Greater, Middle East**

The term 'New Middle East' was used for first time in June 2006 in Tel Aviv by United States (US) Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. However, the concept of the New Middle East was suggested by former Israeli president Shimon Peres in 1993, which presented the notion of reconstructing the region to free it from conflicts.<sup>6</sup> The term 'Greater Middle East' is used to refer to the Arabic countries, as well as Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian countries and the Caucasus states, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. Sometimes Greece and Cyprus are included. Another approach to define the Greater Middle East comes from a working paper from the June 2004 G8 Summit, when the US administration defined the Greater Middle East as the area including the Arab states, Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and Turkey. Some scholars go further to include all of Central Asia or the Caucasus.<sup>7</sup> The notion of a redrawn Middle East has been presented as a 'humanitarian and righteous'<sup>8</sup> arrangement that might bring benefits to the peoples of the region and its peripheral areas. Pakistan in particular is an important player in Greater Middle Eastern nuclear politics.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F, Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, New York, 1996, pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F, Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F, Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F, Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, *Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The project for New Middle East* 18 November 2006, available at: <<http://www.uruknet.de/?p=m28375>> , accessed 11 May 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Volker Perthes, *America's Greater Middle East and Europe: Key Issue for Dialogue*. Middle East Policy Council, Vol, 11, 2004, available at: <[http://www.mepc.org/journal\\_vol11/0409\\_perthes.asp](http://www.mepc.org/journal_vol11/0409_perthes.asp)>, accessed 15 June 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, *Plans for Redrawing the Middle East*.



## The Arab-Israeli Conflict

The Arab-Israeli conflict is replete with violent events throughout its history. After World War II, the United Nations (UN) recommended the division of the British territory of Palestine into two states, a Jewish state and an Arab state, with the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> The Arab states rejected the UN recommendation to divide Palestine and the idea of establishing a new Jewish state in the region. Even so, the new state of Israel was created on 14 May 1948. The armed forces of Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and some other Arab states immediately attacked Israel but they were ultimately defeated by the Israeli armed forces.<sup>10</sup> Only eight years later, another war started in the region when British, French and Israeli forces invaded the Sinai Peninsula over the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser. The canal is a major economic trading route and an entry point between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Another war occurred in June 1967 when Israel attacked Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Israel intended to attack the Arab troops along its borders in a pre-emptive strike. Israel had succeeded to occupy strategic lands, such as the Syrian Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the city of Jerusalem<sup>11</sup> which is a holy city for the Muslims, Christians and Jews. Since the end of what became known as the Six Day War, many negotiations have been around returning land to the pre-1967 status. These requirements became embodied in the UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.<sup>12</sup> October 1973 witnessed another war between Israel and its immediate neighbors. In this war, the armed forces of Egypt and Syria attacked Israel on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur to attempt to regain the Arab land lost in the 1967 war, but despite a stronger military performance than in 1967, the Arab military attack failed.

Five years after the war, the Camp David Peace Agreements were signed between the Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin, and the Egyptian President Anwar El-Sadat under the auspices of US President Jimmy Carter. Israel returned Sinai to Egypt in return for peace between the two countries.<sup>13</sup> The year 1993 witnessed another page in the 'land for peace' story. The Oslo Peace Accords, whereby Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) exchanged letters of mutual recognition and Israel gave the Palestinians limited autonomy in Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank in return for peace and the commencement, in due course, of final status negotiations towards an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a result of the Oslo Accords, Israel withdrew from the Gaza strip and parts of the West Bank in 1994.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Shah Anup, *The Middle East Conflict – A Brief Background*, available at:

< <http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/MiddleEast/Palestine/Background.asp> >, accessed 7 May 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Shah Anup, *The Middle East Conflict*.

<sup>11</sup> The Arabic and Islamic name for Jerusalem is Al Quds.

<sup>12</sup> Shah Anup, *The Middle East Conflict*.

<sup>13</sup> Shah Anup, *The Middle East Conflict*.

<sup>14</sup> Shah Anup, *The Middle East Conflict*.



## Non-state Actors

In spite of developments in the peace process in the Middle East, some Arab organizations did not recognize the Oslo Peace Accords and refused to abide by its obligations. Armed groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, both backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, refused to recognize the agreements and chose to continue attacking Israel. In April 1996, Israeli forces bombed Lebanon, with Hezbollah retaliating by firing upon populated areas of Northern Israel. Hezbollah, with Iranian support, continued attacking Israel with rockets. Another conflict started in mid-2006. The other most extremist Islamic organization Hamas, widely considered a terrorist organization, gained power in the Gaza Strip back in 1996. These two organizations, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip are the most significant threat to Israel at this time. They continue to attack the Jewish state and they refuse to recognize its right to exist in the region. These organizations may play a very important role in giving expression to Iranian policies, particularly regarding the existence of Israel as state in the Middle East.

## The Islamic Revolution in Iran

By February 1979, an Islamic radical regime had seized power in Iran and turned an anti-Shah revolution into a radical Islamic Republic. It was essentially a 'victory for Ayatollah Khomeini against the Shah's regime which had been loyal to the West and had maintained good relationships with Israel'.<sup>15</sup> Since its foundation, the Islamic Republic of Iran officially declared its non-recognition of Israel, denying the legitimacy of the Israeli state and its right to exist.<sup>16</sup> Khomeini vowed revenge against the United States and Israel for supporting the Shah's regime, and also in a spirit of revenge, against the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein for evicting him from his sanctuary in the Iraqi holy city of Najaf in 1977.<sup>17</sup> The most important factor in determining the confrontational foreign policy of Iran after the Islamic revolution was not so much Iranian political interests, nor even international considerations. Iran regarded supporting the Palestinians, and refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the state of Israel, as not only a religious obligation, but a humanitarian imperative.<sup>18</sup>

Iraq, which had ambitions to replace Iran as the dominant Gulf state, had many border and ethnic disputes with Iran and tried to limit the Iranian efforts to export its revolution to Iraq, and through it to the wider region. A war started between the two countries on 4 September 1980 which lasted until 8 August 1988. In spite of the war and ongoing animosity between Iraq and Iran, neither country hid their hostility

15 Monte Palmer, *The Politics of the Middle East*, p. 272.

16 Amir M. Hajy-Yousif, *Foreign Policy of the Islamic Revolution of Iran towards Israel 1979-2002*. available at: < [http://www.issi.org.pk/journal/2003\\_files/no\\_1/article/3a.htm](http://www.issi.org.pk/journal/2003_files/no_1/article/3a.htm) >, accessed 12 May 2008.

17 Monte Palmer, *The Politics of the Middle East*, p. 272.

18 Amir M. Hajy-Yousif, *Foreign Policy of the Islamic Revolution of Iran towards Israel 1979-2002*.



towards the existence of the state of Israel. On 7 June 1981, Israel launched a pre-emptive air strike against the Iraqi nuclear reactor near Baghdad and destroyed it.<sup>19</sup>

The geographical distance between Iran and Israel caused Iran to launch an indirect campaign against the Jewish state in the territories around Israel, using non-state groups based in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since the Lebanese Shi'ites and Palestinian Muslim groups were strongly influenced by the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the best strategy for Iran was to strengthen and underpin these extremist groups in order to counteract and fight what it calls the 'Zionist regime'. Put simply, the Iranian influence in Lebanon, proven by the creation of Hezbollah in 1982, and the Iranian support for the Palestinian extremist groups such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas, 'was the best and most significant levers of power for Iran in counteracting Israel'.<sup>20</sup>

In October 2005, a new Iranian president came to power. Ahmadinejad, a self-proclaimed 'the child of the revolution',<sup>21</sup> was elected president. Since he took office, Ahmadinejad has significantly increased the number of his speeches about the Iranian duty to prepare for the return of Imam Mahdi, the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam who, according to Shi'a belief disappeared 800 years ago, and who the Shi'a believe will be back to fight the Jews and infidels who occupy the lands of Muslims. According to a report published in the Farsi language website *Entekhab* this justifies Iran's nuclear ambition.<sup>22</sup> Ahmadinejad, in another public speech, stated that 'Israel should be wiped off the map'.<sup>23</sup>

### The Israeli Stance

Since its foundation in 1948, Israel has been living in a hostile environment among its Arab neighbours and other regional powers like Iran. This atmosphere has driven the Jewish state to adopt a nuclear deterrence policy in order to survive. This policy is based on the theory of strategic nuclear deterrence, and specifically nuclear ambiguity. The policy has provoked other states in the region, which consider Israel an aggressive state as proven by numerous wars, to have or seek nuclear weapon programs in order to develop a regional strategic balance of power. This policy will increase the number of countries that possess nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

Some scholars believe that there is a direct relationship between nuclear deterrence and the conflicts in the Middle East. They base their argument on the assertion that effective nuclear deterrence reduces the danger of major war. They believe that 'the fear of nuclear holocaust would keep the potential enemy from waging a war'.<sup>24</sup> According

<sup>19</sup> Discussed below.

<sup>20</sup> Amir M. Hajy-Yousif, *Foreign Policy of the Islamic Revolution of Iran towards Israel 1979-2002*.

<sup>21</sup> The title that the Iranian president uses for himself.

<sup>22</sup> Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat, President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, pp. 30-31.

<sup>23</sup> Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, pp. 43-44.





to Shai Feldman, nuclear deterrence increases peace by increasing the level of security in the international system, and enhances the security of the state by strengthening the prospect of that state's survival.<sup>25</sup> However, there are many risks associated with 'nuclearizing' the Middle East that outweigh the promise of deterrence.

## Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East

The dynamics of the conflict in the region, and Israel's relative military superiority provide momentum for nuclear proliferation among the Arab states and Iran. The Iran-Iraq war was a powerful formative experience for these countries and their concept of both national security and the need for nuclear deterrence arose from it. Likewise, Israel's long history of conflict with its neighbours, its sense of vulnerability, and the hostile environment it faces from some states and non-state actors in the region has driven its ongoing search for security.<sup>26</sup> This section will highlight the nuclear programs of Israel, Iraq, Iran and Syria and the impact of these programs on the other states in the region.

### Israel

Israel's involvement with nuclear technology goes back to the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. Between 1930 and 1940, many Jewish scientists immigrated to Palestine. One of the most famous was Ernst David Bergmann who later became the first director of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission and the founder of Israel's efforts to develop nuclear weapons.<sup>27</sup> The fact that Israel is surrounded by hostile neighbours and the tragic experience of the Holocaust had shaped the security perception of the newborn state. Israel accelerated its efforts in the nuclear field in order to ensure its security and survival in the middle of real and serious threat from its neighbours.<sup>28</sup> In addition, there was an opinion that the Israeli economy would not be able to sustain the enormous conventional armed forces needed to achieve the required conventional deterrence.<sup>29</sup> This conviction led Israel to conclude that it should possess suitable military capabilities to achieve security. Bergmann, in referring to the Holocaust, deduced that these efforts were to 'ensure that we shall never again be led as lambs to the slaughter'.<sup>30</sup>

France and Israel maintained very close relations in the 1950s and 1960s. France was Israel's principal arms supplier, and as instability spread in French colonies in North

25 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 45.

26 Centre for Defense Information, *Iran, Israel and Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East*, available at: <<http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/menukes.cfm>>, accessed 16 May 2006.

27 *Israel's Nuclear Weapons Program*, available at: <<http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Israel/Isrhist.html>>, accessed 12 May 2008.

28 Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel and Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East*. Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2006, p. 113.

29 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 5.

30 Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel and the Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East*. p. 114.



Africa, Israel provided valuable intelligence obtained from its contacts with Jews in those countries. The two countries continued collaborating (along with Britain) in staging the joint Suez - Sinai operation against Egypt in October 1956. 'The Suez Crisis', as it became known, proved to be the origin of Israel's nuclear weapons production program.<sup>31</sup> France showed interest in assisting Israel in developing a nuclear deterrent<sup>32</sup> and it helped Israel in building its first reactor at Dimona, in the Negev Desert of southern Israel near Beersheba. By 1960, before the Israeli reactor was operating, France, under the new leadership of General de Gaulle, reconsidered the deal and decided to suspend the project. After several months of negotiation, an agreement was reached that allowed the reactor to proceed if Israel promised not to use this technology to produce nuclear weapons.<sup>33</sup> By the mid-1960s, however, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) announced that the Israeli nuclear program was 'established and irreversible'.<sup>34</sup> On 2 December 1960, the US State Department issued a determination that Israel had a secret nuclear installation which had been confirmed only days later by, the Israeli President David Ben Gurion by announcing that Israel was building a nuclear reactor, albeit 'for peaceful purposes'.<sup>35</sup>

Ben Gurion and other Israeli leaders believed that Israel suffered from two sources of vulnerability. First, Israel is a small country with very narrow strategic depth. Secondly, the population is very small compared with its adversaries, the Arabs and Iranians.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the Israeli leaders' strategic thinking directed them to close these geo-strategic gaps between Israel and its opponents through possessing nuclear capabilities to serve as the 'great equalizer' to ensure the security of Israel.<sup>37</sup> With the assistance of France, Israel had started to process uranium at Dimona and develop a new method of producing heavy water. These capabilities provided Israel with the ability to produce nuclear materials.<sup>38</sup> As a result of this cooperation, Israel was the first country in the Middle East to acquire nuclear weapon capabilities.<sup>39</sup> Although there is no evidence that Israel conducted a nuclear test during the early years of its nuclear program, some theorists believe that Israel may have used French testing data to confirm its own nuclear weapon design.<sup>40</sup> However, on 22 September 1979, an explosion high in the atmosphere of the eastern coast of South Africa is widely considered to have been an Israeli nuclear test.<sup>41</sup>

31 *Israel's Nuclear Weapons Program*.

32 *Israel's Nuclear Weapons Program*.

33 *Israel's Nuclear Weapons Program*.

34 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 4.

35 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 4.

36 Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel and the Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East*, p. 114.

37 Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel and the Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East*, p. 114.

38 *Jane's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence, Israel*, October 2007, p.4, available at: <<http://www8.janes.com/search/printFriendlyView.do?>>, accessed 31 March 2008.

39 Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel and the Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East*, p. 113.

40 Robert S. Norris et. al., 'Israeli Nuclear Forces.' *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 58, No. 5, October 2002, p. 73.

41 Robert S. Norris et. al., 'Israeli Nuclear Forces,' p. 73.



The Six Days War between Israel and the Arabs in 1967 witnessed the first nuclear alert state in the history of Israel. The Israeli Prime Minister at that time, Levi Eshkol, ordered the first nuclear alert. It is also reported that in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir ordered the assembly of nuclear weapons.<sup>42</sup> In 1986, an Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu produced sensational photographs of the Israeli nuclear warheads published in the British daily newspaper the *Sunday Times*.<sup>43</sup> The information that Vanunu provided to the press is still considered to be the most important and detailed information about Israeli nuclear weapons. This information was substantiated by later satellite photos related to other aspects of the Israeli nuclear weapons program.<sup>44</sup>

As a part of its nuclear weapons strategy, Israel seeks to maintain a nuclear monopoly and prevented other countries in the region from gaining nuclear capabilities. General Amnon Shahak, the Deputy Israeli Chief of Staff in 1992 said 'I believe that the State of Israel should from now on use all its power and direct all its efforts to preventing nuclear development in any Arab state'.<sup>45</sup> The Israeli General considered that all means were legitimate to achieve this aim, including violence.<sup>46</sup> Israel had already applied this approach eleven years earlier by attacking the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, and did so again much later, against Syrian nuclear facilities in September 2007.<sup>47</sup>

## Iraq

Iraq's nuclear program began with the 'Atoms for Peace' program in 1956, when the US led the international community in establishing nuclear research programs in many nations around the world.<sup>48</sup> In 1962 construction began on Iraq's first research reactor. Another 2 megawatt IRT-5000, reactor was supplied by the Soviet Union and was upgraded to 5 megawatt in 1978.<sup>49</sup> After the Ba'ath regime seized power in Iraq in July 1968, Iraq considered Israel to be a threat. Iraq declared many times that it considered Israel its enemy. It was the Iraqi leadership's ambition to play a more important role in the region, and keeping in mind a desire to offset the nuclear power of Israel, Iraq began considering a nuclear weapon program. Like Israel, Iraq also cooperated with France in obtaining a 500 megawatt gas-cooled power reactor, which used graphite as a moderator and natural uranium as fuel. It was an old fashioned power source by that time but had nonetheless 'served as the backbone of the British and French

42 Robert S. Norris et. al, 'Israeli Nuclear Forces,' p. 73.

43 *Jane's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence, Israel*, October 2007, p. 4.

44 *Jane's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence, Israel*, October 2007, p. 4.

45 Israel Shahak, 'Israel's Nuclear Weapons Strategy; Not for Discussion in English.' *The Washington Report on the Middle East Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 31 July 1992, p. 11.

46 Israel Shahak, 'Israel's Nuclear Weapons Strategy; Not for Discussion in English,' p. 11.

47 *Jane's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence, Israel*, October 2007, p. 4, available at:

<<http://www8.janes.com/search/printFriendlyView.do?>>, accessed 31 March 2008.

48 *Iraq's Nuclear Weapon Program from Aflaq to Tammuz*, available at: <<http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Iraq/IraqAtoZ.html>>, accessed 16 May 2008.

49 *Iraq's Nuclear Weapon Program from Aflaq to Tammuz*.



nuclear weapon programs'.<sup>50</sup> The agreement for the 'Tammuz'<sup>51</sup> reactor was signed in 1976. France began to have second thoughts about the wisdom of helping with this kind of reactor to Iraq, or in providing such an efficient irradiation facility. France tried to amend the contract and provide a model using a lower enrichment fuel.<sup>52</sup>

In 1979 Iraq sent engineers to visit India's nuclear establishments and scientists. The Iraqi engineers also showed a clear interest in the feasibility of using power-plant produced plutonium in nuclear weapons.<sup>53</sup> On 7 June 1981, the Israeli Air Force launched a pre-emptive strike against the Iraqi reactor and completely demolished its core, destroying the reactor building down to its foundations and crippled Iraq's nuclear program.<sup>54</sup> After the Israeli attack, Iraq continued its efforts towards rebuilding its nuclear program, and a series of meetings were held between Iraqi and French officials. As a result of these meetings, a new agreement was reached between both countries to provide a new reactor to Iraq.<sup>55</sup> During the eight years of war against Iran, Iraq continued its nuclear research program secretly. After invading Kuwait in August 1990, Iraq attempted to accelerate its program to develop nuclear weapons by using radioactive fuel from French and Russian-built reactors. It made a crash effort in September 1990 to recover enriched fuel for its supposedly safe-guarded French and Russian reactors, with the goal of producing a nuclear weapon by April 1991. The Iraqi nuclear program was ultimately ceased after an air raid by US led coalition forces destroyed its key facilities on 17 January 1991.<sup>56</sup>

After the 1991 Gulf War, the UN Security Council issued a number of resolutions to force Iraq to open its weapons of mass destruction facilities, including the nuclear facilities, to international inspection. The inspection by the UN teams revealed new information on the Iraqi nuclear weapons program. The UN teams found much evidence of 'two successful weapons designs, a neutron initiator, explosives and triggering technology needed for the production of bombs, plutonium processing technology, centrifuge technology, Calutron enrichment technology, and experiments with chemical separation technology'.<sup>57</sup> The UN inspection teams also provided information on the Iraqi nuclear reactors and more than ten other main nuclear weapon-related facilities. The UN teams showed that Iraq had conducted research into the production of a radiological weapon, a weapon that 'disperses lethal radioactive material without initiating a nuclear explosion'.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the UN inspectors also found evidence

50 *Iraq's Nuclear Weapon Program from Aflaq to Tammuz*.

51 The Iraqi name for the Osirac Nuclear Reactor means the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the Arabic Calendar, which was when the Ba'ath regime came to power in Iraq in 1968.

52 *Iraq's Nuclear Weapon Program from Aflaq to Tammuz*.

53 *Iraq's Nuclear Weapon Program from Aflaq to Tammuz*.

54 Alon Ben-David, *Israel Remains Tight-lipped over Syrian Air Strike*, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 2007, p. 2, available at: <<http://www8.janes.com/search/printFriendlyView.do?>>, accessed 31 March 2008.

55 Robert. S. Norris et. al., 'Israeli Nuclear Forces,' p. 75.

56 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq*.

57 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq*.

58 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq*.



that 'three prototype bombs were detonated at test sites, one at a ground level static test and two others were dropped from aircraft'.<sup>59</sup>

After the US-led intervention began in March 2003, the Iraqi nuclear program came to an end. According to the new Iraqi constitution, and the policies which have been adopted by the new government, Iraq will no longer be a producer or importer of any kind of weapons of mass destruction.

## Iran

Just as the Iraqi nuclear program started under the 'Atoms for Peace' program, the Iranian nuclear program started in 1960, when the US provided the Shah of Iran with a research reactor and laboratory equipments.<sup>60</sup> The 'Atoms for Peace' program was promulgated only under condition that these countries would never develop nuclear weapons programs.<sup>61</sup> In 1968, the Shah of Iran signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).<sup>62</sup> In 1974, the Shah signed an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to make all Iranian nuclear materials the subject of IAEA inspection.<sup>63</sup> In the same year, the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization was founded and the Shah announced a plan to build 22 nuclear reactors around the country over 20 years.<sup>64</sup>

After the Islamic revolution in 1979, the new regime inherited a substantial nuclear infrastructure from the previous regime, and it continued the country's nuclear research program.<sup>65</sup> However, the Iraqi Air Force launched several air strikes on the Iranian nuclear facilities during the eight year war between the two countries in the 1980s.<sup>66</sup> In 1984, Iran developed a nuclear research laboratory with assistance from China. This facility had been built originally by the Shah, and new facilities had been added 'resulting in a large complex that later grew beyond the needs of peaceful research'.<sup>67</sup> After the Iran-Iraq War ended, the Iranians resumed their efforts to acquire nuclear technology in cooperation with Russia and China.<sup>68</sup> The Iranian goal of possessing nuclear weapons was heavily influenced by the lessons learnt from the long war with Iraq, especially with regards to self-reliance and preparedness.<sup>69</sup> Another factor that drove the Iranians towards possessing a nuclear weapons program was out of competition with the Israeli nuclear program on one side and the Pakistani nuclear

59 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq*.

60 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, pp. 31, 129.

61 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 31.

62 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, pp. 129-130.

63 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 130.

64 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 130.

65 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 131.

66 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 131.

67 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 131.

68 John K Cooley, 'The Fire Again? Iraq, Iran and the Gulf.' *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2006, p. 18.

69 Saharam Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C., 2006, pp. 7-8.



program on the other side.<sup>70</sup> Critically, Iran had failed to win the eight years war against Iraq through the use of conventional weapons, even though Iraq is smaller in size than Iran and its population almost one-third the population of Iran. This motivated Iran to develop a nuclear weapons program to strengthen its efforts to establish a Shi'a crescent, or 'Islamic Empire', throughout the Middle East.<sup>71</sup>

The Iranian nuclear ambition was expressed for the first time in a speech by the Iranian President at that time, Hashemi Rafsanjani, to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) in 1988. The Iranian President said 'We should fully equip ourselves both in the offensive and defensive use of chemical, bacteriological and radiological weapons'.<sup>72</sup> The Iranian President was influenced in this decision by the Iraqi use of chemical weapons against Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. In order to achieve its nuclear goal, the Iranians made every effort to obtain nuclear weaponry and materials. The fastest and easiest way to achieve this was by contacting the world's foremost informal entrepreneur of nuclear weapons technology, the Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadir (A.Q.) Khan, who headed a network to sell nuclear technology.<sup>73</sup> A. Q. Khan and his network helped Iran push its nuclear program ahead by providing plans, technology and advice, and the Iranian enrichment program stepped up a gear after 1995.<sup>74</sup> By 2004, Iran was able to develop a capability across the nuclear fuel cycle. Mohamed El Baradei, the head of the IAEA, declared that 'Iran has been developing a nuclear fuel cycle. Have they taken the steps from that into weaponization? We have not seen that, but I am not yet excluding this possibility'.<sup>75</sup> It is clear that Iran by that time had the enrichment capability to enable it to weaponize its nuclear program.

The Iranians spent much time, money and effort to develop their nuclear program. According to Marshall Breit, in 2005 the Iranian uranium enrichment program was more advanced than what was expected, and that 'Tehran may be only a few years away from being able to produce enough highly enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon'.<sup>76</sup> In November 2005, inspectors from the IAEA reported that they found some documents delivered by the A.Q. Khan network in Iran related to casting and machining uranium; the only use for such materials is to make nuclear weapons.<sup>77</sup> In April 2006, Iranian President Ahmadinejad made the highly controversial statement that 'Iran has joined the nuclear countries of the world'.<sup>78</sup> The latest US National Intelligence Council (NIC) report in November 2007, however, questions this judgement. The NIC

70 Scott Sagan et. al., 'A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster.' *Journal of International Affairs*; Vol. 60, No.2; 2007, p. 137.

71 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 132.

72 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 132.

73 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, pp. 132-133.

74 Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs; Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity and the Rise and Fall of the A.Q. Khan network*, Scribe Publications, Victoria, Australia, 2006, p. 71.

75 Al Venter, *Iran's Nuclear Option, Teheran's Quest for the Atom Bomb*, Drexel Hill PA., Casemate, January 2005, p. 85.

76 Al Venter, *Iran's Nuclear Option, Teheran's Quest for the Atom Bomb*, pp. 85-86.

77 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 172.

78 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 165.



estimates that 'We continue to assess with moderate to high confidence that Iran does not currently have a nuclear weapon'.<sup>79</sup> However, the head of IAEA stated on 24 June 2008 that only a six month period would be necessary for Iran to build a nuclear weapon.<sup>80</sup>

## Syria

The Syrian Atomic Energy Commission (AECS), an organization established in 1979 by Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, in disclosures to the IAEA, states that its goal is the peaceful use of nuclear technology for power plants.<sup>81</sup> Syria also has a nuclear research centre at Dayr Al Hajar. According to a CIA report to the US Congress, Russia and Syria have continued their long-standing agreements on cooperation regarding nuclear energy.<sup>82</sup> However the current Syrian President, Bashar Al-Assad, has in the last few years clearly declared his support for accelerated proliferation,<sup>83</sup> increasing the danger of proliferation in the region. In fact Syria is now considered one of the most dangerous and most important target states in international counter-proliferation efforts.<sup>84</sup>

Many reports indicate that Syria was involved in negotiations with the A.Q. Khan network in mid-2004. With North Korean support, Syria started to build a heavy water reactor to produce plutonium in 2001.<sup>85</sup> Many North Korean officials visited Syria during the construction phase of the Syrian reactor which was very similar to the North Korean reactor, and this close collaboration between the two countries created clouds of suspicion about the nature of the Syrian nuclear program.<sup>86</sup> The facility was eventually bombed by Israel in September 2007, and the debris completely removed shortly thereafter, leaving in place suspicions about the exact nature and aim of this facility. However, on 24 April 2008, the White House released photographic images to support the assertion that the target of the Israeli air raid was indeed a nuclear reactor constructed with the assistance of North Korea.<sup>87</sup> The Israeli air raid reflects the Israeli aim and determination to maintain its nuclear monopoly over the region even by undertaking risky operations when necessary.<sup>88</sup> The target that Israel attacked in Syria has widely been reported to the media as 'having nuclear components, probably from

79 *Iran: Nuclear Intention and Capabilities*, National Intelligence Council, November 2007, available at: <[http://www.dni.gov/press\\_release/20071203\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_release/20071203_release.pdf)>, accessed 24 June 2008.

80 Nuclear Threat Initiative, *Six Months Needed for Iranian Nuke*, June 2008, available at: <[http://www.nti.org/d\\_newswire/issues/print.asp](http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/print.asp)>, accessed 26 June 2008.

81 *Syria Secret Nuclear Threat*, available at: <<http://www.aina.org/news/20050104115532.htm>>, accessed 26 June 2006.

82 *Syria Secret Nuclear Threat*.

83 Carl Ungerer, *Proliferation Central: Syria's Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Weapons*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 29 April 2008, p. 1.

84 Carl Ungerer, *Proliferation Central*, p. 1.

85 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Syrian Weapons of Mass Destruction an Overview*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 3 June 2008, p. 17, available at: <[www.csis.org/media/pups/080602\\_syrianwmd.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/pups/080602_syrianwmd.pdf)>, accessed 12 June 2008.

86 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Syrian Weapons of Mass Destruction an Overview*.

87 Anthony H. Cordesman, *Syrian Weapons of Mass Destruction an Overview*.

88 Matthew Gray, *The Israeli Strike on Syria and its Implications*, Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies ANU, 2007.



North Korea, trans-shipped via Iran to Syria'.<sup>89</sup> An adviser to the Israeli National Security Council states that Syria had also planned to supply Iran with 'spent fuel produced'.<sup>90</sup>

### The Impact of the Nuclear Programs on the Other States in the Region

Due to the complex and contested situation in the Middle East, stability in the region remains difficult to achieve. This is attributable to two factors. The first is the Israeli-Arab conflict, and its almost boundless repercussions across the region. The second is the proliferation of nuclear weapons, with some countries in the region either having a nuclear weapons program (Israel), or being suspected of pursuing one via its nuclear energy program (Iran and Syria), or having had WMD facilities which have since been destroyed (Iraq).

Many countries in the Middle East find themselves in a dilemma, facing Israeli nuclear weapons from one side and the potential Iranian ones from the other. Most of the Arab states in the region consider the Iranian nuclear program to be the most dangerous. The conservative Sunni Arab monarchies in the Gulf and Jordan believe that the nuclear threat might come from Iran due to 'the Shi'a ascendancy in Iraq and the Gulf, which may present a threat to the survival of the Sunni Arab monarchical order in the region'.<sup>91</sup>

The fear of a nuclear Iran has led the Arab states in the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, to reconsider their own nuclear options. Saudi Arabia is leading the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states efforts to confront Iran over its nuclear programme.<sup>92</sup> As a result of these concerns, 'the GCC representatives met in February 2007 with officials from the IAEA in Vienna to consider a feasibility study for a nuclear program'.<sup>93</sup> The decision of the GCC to pursue plans for a joint nuclear research program highlights the Gulf States' increasing concerns about the need to balance the potential Iranian nuclear threat.<sup>94</sup> Saudi and other GCC concerns might lead these countries towards possessing nuclear weapons. The idea of acquiring nuclear weapons to balance the Iranian nuclear threat was expressed by a senior Saudi diplomat who, 'when asked during an interview about the best way to for the region to respond to a nuclear Iran, stated that the answer is with another nuclear weapon'.<sup>95</sup> If Saudi Arabia and other GCC states decided to possess nuclear weapons, this would almost certainly trigger a nuclear

89 Matthew Gray, *The Israeli Strike on Syria and its Implications*.

90 Nuclear Threat Initiative, *Six Months Needed for Iranian Nuke*, 25 June 2008, available at: <[http://www.nti.org/d\\_newswire/issues/print.asp](http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/print.asp)>, accessed 26 June 2008.

91 Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, 'A Nuclear Iran: The Reaction of Neighbours.' *Survival*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 2007, p. 118.

92 Fear of Nuclear Iran Sparks Saudi Action, *Jane's Information Group 2007*, p. 1, available at: <<http://www8.janes.com/search/printFriendlyView.do?>>>, accessed 31 March 2008.

93 Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, 'A Nuclear Iran,' p. 113.

94 Marianna Athanasopoulou, *A Nuclear Saudi Arabia*, Centre for Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Studies, No. 3, February 2007, p. 13.

95 Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, 'A Nuclear Iran,' p. 114.





arms race in the region. It would also increase the amount of nuclear materials in the region, which may not always be subject to strong state control, therefore increasing the risk of loss or diversion of nuclear materials from nuclear facilities. In turn, there would be a danger of cross-border nuclear materials smuggling, and nuclear weapons could end up in the hands of non-state actors, including those considered the terrorist groups.

The smaller Arab states are concerned by the Iranian nuclear program as well. Comments made by Jordan's King Abdulla, reserving the right to develop nuclear programs for peaceful purposes, however 'illustrate these concerns which could have a dangerous cascading effect on the Arab ambition for a nuclear capability'.<sup>96</sup> The danger of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East might spark the ignition of a Sunni-Shi'a conflict between Iran and some conservative Sunni countries, or an Iranian-Israeli conflict. These possible conflicts carry the larger danger of using nuclear weapons in the region, making the nuclear question loom very large for those concerned about the delicate nature of the Middle East and its politics.

## Concept of Nuclear Deterrence and the Case of the Middle East

Deterrence has special utility across the national security spectrum arena from the normal peacetime competition, to unrestrained war with Weapons of Mass Destruction.<sup>97</sup> The Israeli policy of deterrence is to survive by maintaining nuclear superiority against hostile Arab states and Iran.<sup>98</sup> This section will examine nuclear deterrence theory and discuss the nuclear crises in the Middle East. It will also analyse the Israeli nuclear deterrent in a multi-nuclear Middle East, the possibility of nuclear deterrence failing, and thus the risk of nuclear proliferation ending in a nuclear war in the region.

### The Concept of Nuclear Deterrence

Nuclear deterrence can be considered one of the most profound ideas of the twentieth century international system.<sup>99</sup> In order to understand the concept of nuclear deterrence, it is important to first understand the meaning of deterrence. The most general accepted understanding of deterrence is 'the use of threat to induce an opponent to act in a desirable way'.<sup>100</sup> Following the invention and use of nuclear weapons in World War Two, nuclear deterrence rose to prominence and has also under the most scrutiny.

<sup>96</sup> Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, 'A Nuclear Iran,' p. 113.

<sup>97</sup> John M. Collins, *Military Strategy, Principles, Practise and Historical Perspective*, Brassey's, Washington D.C. 2002, p. 71.

<sup>98</sup> Israel's NBC policy, *Jane's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence, Israel*, October 2007, p. 7, available at: <<http://www8.janes.com/search/printFriendlyView.do?>>, accessed 31 March 2008.

<sup>99</sup> Craig A. Snyder, *Contemporary Security and Strategy*. Deakin University, Victoria, 1999, p. 120.

<sup>100</sup> Craig A. Snyder, *Contemporary Security and Strategy*. p. 121.



The nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 recorded the first use of nuclear weapons in warfare. The huge destructive power of the new weapon was more than apparent, leading those who came to accumulate them to become so powerful that they essentially deterred all others from attacking them. The strategy of nuclear deterrence is based on persuading the opponent that you have the capabilities for a nuclear strike and you are ready to exercise these capabilities in certain cases.<sup>101</sup> As a result, the theory of a nuclear deterrence emerged.<sup>102</sup> The relationship between nuclear deterrence and peace is based on the assumption that there is less danger of war when the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence is high, because the fear of a nuclear 'holocaust' keeps the opponents from waging war against each other.<sup>103</sup> Deterrence strategy can be seen as having two prongs. The first is deterrence by punishment, which based on both sides possessing an equally effective deterrent. The second is deterrence by denial which means that a superior capability is critical to ensuring deterrence.<sup>104</sup>

### Israeli Nuclear Deterrence

Due to the hostile environment which surrounds Israel, Israeli thinkers adopted a nuclear deterrence policy in order to ensure the survival and the security of the Jewish state. The Israeli thinkers believe that nuclear weapons can serve as a security guarantee for the survival of Israel.<sup>105</sup>

Israeli nuclear deterrence theory is based on a number of principles. They include the presumptions that:

1. Nuclear weapons can provide Israel with the ability to threaten an unacceptable retaliation to opponents who threaten the existence of the state;
2. The size of the punishment (that the enemies of Israel would suffer if they threaten the existence of Israel) should be correctly estimated to a level that will remove any challenge to Israeli survival from that source;
3. The Israeli nuclear deterrent posture should remain ambiguous;
4. Nuclear deterrence would provide Israel with the ability to retain a retaliatory capability to any opponent's first strike.<sup>106</sup>

Many thinkers believe that Israel's nuclear deterrence policy has contributed positively to enhancing the security environment for Israel and the region in general. They deduce that the regional military balance has tilted in Israel's favour and that has contributed to a series of peace agreements between Israel and many of its opponents.<sup>107</sup> However,

101 Rajesh Rajagopalan, *Relevance of Nuclear Deterrence*, Delhi Policy Group, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 9-10.

102 Craig A. Snyder, *Contemporary Security and Strategy*. pp. 121-122.

103 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 43.

104 Rajesh Rajagopalan, *Relevance of Nuclear Deterrence*, pp. 10-11.

105 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 45.

106 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 54.

107 Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, China, Britain, France and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2000, pp. 252-253.



it can also be argued that nuclear deterrence failed to stop the wars in 1967 and 1973, and the Iraqi missile attacks on Israel during the Gulf War in 1991.

Israel also maintains a regional nuclear monopoly by denying other states in the Middle East the capabilities to produce nuclear weapons.<sup>108</sup> Israel has used every effort, including the use of deadly force, to prevent other states in the region from possessing nuclear programs. Blatantly, Israel attacked nuclear facilities in Iraq and Syria. Israel's policy regarding Arab countries and Iran is to preserve its position as the only state in the region possessing nuclear weapons.<sup>109</sup>

### **Israeli Nuclear Deterrence in a Multinuclear Middle East**

In order to balance power in the region and to offset Israeli nuclear superiority, a number of countries in the region have decided to seek nuclear programs. The Israeli nuclear arsenal continues to drive Iranian efforts and other countries in the region towards acquisition of nuclear weapons.<sup>110</sup> The acquisition of nuclear weapons by only one or two the states in the Middle East would change the Israeli deterrent position. The expected changes in the Israeli posture could be:

1. Israel would not sustain the ability to impose the 'desirable level' of punishment on its opponents.
2. The mutual capabilities to impose damage might affect Israel's opponents' perceptions of the degree of punishment that they might suffer in the case of deterrence failure.
3. The acquisition of nuclear weapons would affect the stability of Israeli nuclear deterrence by weakening its retaliatory capabilities.<sup>111</sup>

### **The Possibility of Failure of Nuclear Deterrence**

The lessons learned from the cold war and many armed conflicts around the world lead one to deduce that nuclear weapons neither deter nor provide an appropriate response to all threats.<sup>112</sup> The punitive capability that nuclear weapons threaten can not be relied on if adversaries know that a state cannot use them.<sup>113</sup> In a complex environment like the Middle East with its unique web of conflicts and tensions, it is very difficult to imagine how nuclear deterrence would work to deter terrorist groups or other non-state actors from acquiring nuclear weapons. In the fight against terrorist groups or insurgents, it is almost impossible to use nuclear weapons or even think that the nuclear deterrence can work. The guerrilla fighters in Vietnam did not consider the

<sup>108</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 66.

<sup>109</sup> Israel NBC Policy, *Jane's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence, Israel*, October 2007, 18 October 2007, p. 7, available at: <<http://www8.janes.com/Search/printFriendlyView.do?docId>>, accessed 31 March 2008.

<sup>110</sup> Michael Donovan, *Iran, Israel and Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East*, Centre for Defence Information, Washington D.C., 14 February 2002.

<sup>111</sup> Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 83.

<sup>112</sup> Max G. Manwaring, *Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Frank Cass & Co. London, 2001, p. 29.

<sup>113</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pp. 45-46.



American nuclear arsenal; it was the same with the Palestinian fighters in the 'intifada' and with Hezbollah during its war against Israel in 2006. Deterrence will not work against non-state groups because nuclear weapons are developed to be used against large strategic targets and are almost impossible to use against small groups based in civilian areas, armed with small arms and light weapons.

Many thinkers argue that in order to have active nuclear deterrence, a state must design a threat that can be executed rationally.<sup>114</sup> 'The nuclear deterrence must rest on a credible threat to resort to one of a range of measures for inflicting punishment, not non-credible threats to initiate a suicidal nuclear exchange'.<sup>115</sup> In fact, it is very important to realize that 'successful deterrence strategy must recognize that deterrence may fail'.<sup>116</sup>

The experience of recent wars in the Middle East shows in spite of Israel's nuclear arsenal, Arab countries went to war against it in both 1967 and 1973 Iraq launched missile attacks on Israel in 1991. Hezbollah and Hamas continue attacking Israel seemingly regardless of Israel's nuclear weapons. Since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, it has not stopped its hostility to Israel although Iran is quite aware of the existence of Israeli nuclear weapons. Indeed, due to the ongoing nature of the conflicts in the Middle East, it is not at all apparent that the Israeli nuclear deterrence policy has ensured security and stability in the region.

### **Risk of a Nuclearized Middle East**

Due to the complex nature of the conflict in the region, there are many risks that could arise from the proliferation of nuclear weapons. These risks could spark uncontrolled nuclear conflict which could cast long shadows on the entire world not least because of the world's dependency on the region's oil reserves.

The first risk results from the fact that nuclear weapons could be used by irrational decision makers.<sup>117</sup> Any 'newcomers' to the nuclear club are considered 'irresponsible and unpredictable'.<sup>118</sup> The modern history of the Middle East shows irresponsible use of other weapons of mass destruction. For example, the former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against Iran in the Iran-Iraq War and against the Kurds in the north of Iraq. The Iranian President Ahmadinejad stated that 'Israel should be wiped off from the map,' indicating the potential action of a nuclear Iran. According to Yair Evron, the level of irrationality in some leaders in the Middle East suggests that "nuclear weapons in the Middle East, far from necessarily stabilizing

<sup>114</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 47.

<sup>115</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 47.

<sup>116</sup> Max G. Manwaring, *Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 32.

<sup>117</sup> Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, pp. 142-143.

<sup>118</sup> Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 143.



relations in that troubled and tormented region, might in fact lead to the first full-scale nuclear war in the world".<sup>119</sup>

The second risk might come from the low level of 'conceptualising' the use of nuclear weapons. The region lacks a nuclear conduct doctrine which could regulate the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>120</sup> In the absence of formal or informal relationships between Israel and its adversaries in the region, it would be impossible to develop a doctrinal dialogue which can control the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>121</sup>

The third risk is related to the introduction of nuclear weapons is the creation of a 'nuclear Arab coalition' that might confront a nuclear Israel.<sup>122</sup> Perhaps even an 'Islamic nuclear coalition,' would confront the Jewish state. This scenario may end with an apocalyptic nuclear 'clash of civilisations' if the United States or any other western state supported Israel in a nuclear conflict.

Another risk comes from the danger of an uncontrolled level of nuclear escalation.<sup>123</sup> A nuclear Israel provoked Iraq and Iran and possibly Syria to go nuclear. The Iranian nuclear program could provoke the GCC states and perhaps Jordan to become nuclear. This scenario could lead to uncontrolled and never-ending nuclear escalation under the justification of a balance of power.

In addition, there is a risk that comes from the inadequate control of nuclear weapons technology. Another danger might emerge from the transmission of nuclear weapons to terrorist groups.<sup>124</sup> Unless extremely rigorous controls are applied universally, there is a danger of accidental or unauthorized use of these weapons.<sup>125</sup> Extremist and belligerent organizations like Hamas or Hezbollah would not hesitate to use every weapon at their disposal in order to achieve their political aims.

### **The Possibility of Nuclear War in the Region**

The greatest potential danger of nuclear proliferation, especially in a newly nuclear state, is that the nuclear shield could embolden that state to be more aggressive and to launch a direct attack, nuclear or otherwise, against its enemies.

The current policy of the Iranian leadership regarding Israel as expressed by President Ahmadinejad, that 'Israel should be wiped off from the map', has convinced many observers that Iran will not hesitate to use a nuclear attack against Israel if it develops the capacity to do so.<sup>126</sup> The Iranian Shi'a culture that believes in the reappearance of

119 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 143.

120 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 147.

121 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 147.

122 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, pp. 142-143.

123 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, p. 155.

124 Scott Sagan et. al., 'A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster,' p. 139.

125 Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence for the 1980s*, pp. 163-164.

126 Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, 'A Nuclear Iran,' p. 112.



the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam may motivate the Iranians to launch a nuclear attack directed against Israel. This concern was expressed by the Deputy Israeli Defence Minister Ephraim Sneh who said that 'Ahmadinejad thinks he will bring the Muslim messiah, the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam ... under such threat, most Israelis would prefer not to live here'.<sup>127</sup>

The Israelis rightly believe that an Iranian nuclear capacity would be a grave strategic threat to the Jewish state. Israel seeks to maintain a nuclear monopoly in the region by preventing other countries from possessing nuclear programs. Israel has already conducted successful attacks on the nuclear facilities in Iraq in 1981 and Syria in 2007. These attacks may encourage Israel to attack the Iranian nuclear facilities. In a case like this, it is likely that Iran would not hesitate to launch a retaliatory attack against Israeli nuclear facilities. Israel can not rely on nuclear deterrence theory to avoid an Iranian nuclear attack because of the irrational determination of the Iranian government to destroy Israel. The Iranian President said in April 2006 'the Zionist regime is a rotten, dried tree that will be eliminated by one storm because its existence has harmed the dignity of the Islamic nations'.<sup>128</sup>

The irrationality of Iranian nuclear policies in not only provokes Israel. Arabian Gulf states also worry about a nuclear attack from Iran. The tension between Iran and its Arab neighbours is in part due to the latter seeing Iran as seeking to become a nuclear Shi'a state, in order to establish and consolidate Persian hegemony. Iran's determination to establish a Shi'a crescent in the region, alarms the conservative Sunni Arab states in the Gulf. An Omani official responded to a suggestion of an external nuclear security umbrella with 'what can a nuclear umbrella do for us? We are only 40 kilometres from Iran'.<sup>129</sup>

Many thinkers believe that the concept of the New Middle East<sup>130</sup> was designed to expand Israel's domination over the Middle East.<sup>131</sup> Israel, which has adopted a policy to reach out to Central Asia, started a strategic alliance with Turkey, and maintained strong relationships with emerging major powers like India and China.<sup>132</sup> These relationships are aimed for many observers at 'encirclement of Iran which is representing the greatest threat to Israel currently'.<sup>133</sup> Iran might respond to the Israeli plans by taking military action, in fact some scholars think that Iran has already begun a war against Israel through Hezbollah.<sup>134</sup> This hypothesis may lead to another possible scenario for inter-state nuclear war in the region; Iran, with its support for extremist

127 Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, 'A Nuclear Iran,' p. 112.

128 Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 31.

129 Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, 'A Nuclear Iran,' p. 113.

130 Shimon Peres and Arye Naor, *The New Middle East*, Element Books Shaftsbury, New York, 1993, p. 5.

131 Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, 'Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Israel, 1979-2002.' Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, available at:

< [http://www.issi.org.pk/journal/2003\\_files/no\\_1/article/3a.htm](http://www.issi.org.pk/journal/2003_files/no_1/article/3a.htm)>, accessed 14 November 2008.

132 Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, 'Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Israel

133 Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, 'Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Israel

134 Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, 'Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Israel'



groups like Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, may use a 'Cuban missile crisis' scenario to spark a war by moving or leaking nuclear weapons or materials to these groups, and thus escalate their activities to such a degree that it could spark an interstate nuclear war in the region. A similar scenario could be directed against the Sunni Arab states in the Gulf if the Iranians started to support Shi'as in some Arab states in an effort to wrest power from the dominant Sunnis. Iran has continued to interfere in many of the Sunni Arab states in the Gulf. This interference has escalated the tension between Iran and the Arab states. A Sunni-Shi'a conflict could even expand to a nuclear exchange between Pakistan and Iran.

## The Concept of Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone

The concept of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ), which is designed to help prevent the spread and use of nuclear weapons, has developed in political discourse since the mid-1950s.<sup>135</sup> The first ever proposal for a NWFZ was introduced by the former Soviet Union in 1956 in reference to Central Europe.<sup>136</sup> As a minimum requirement, a NWFZ prohibits the stationing, testing, use and development of nuclear weapons inside a particular geographical region, whether that is a single state, a region, or area governed solely by international agreements. They have been promoted in many forums, including through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the UN General Assembly, and NWFZ are generally seen as being positive steps towards nuclear disarmament. The NWFZ is different to the NPT. The NPT promotes the peaceful use of nuclear energy, promotes the control of nuclear materials and seeks ultimate nuclear disarmament. It also permits parties to host another's nuclear weapons on their territories. In contrast, a NWFZ agreement obliges the signatories to ensure the 'absence of nuclear weapons on the territories of the defined region regardless of who controls them'.<sup>137</sup>

The first major agreement for this kind of zone was created between the Latin American states in 1967, the Treaty of Tlateloco. This treaty established a nuclear weapons free zone on continent of South America. A similar effort was made in 1985 when the members of the South Pacific Forum decided to create a NWFZ from the Antarctic Sea to the Equator and from Latin America to the west coast of Australia.<sup>138</sup> Other zones have been established later in Africa after signing the Treaty of Pelindaba in 1996, and NWFZ was also created in the South East Asia region by all ten members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>139</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 1.

<sup>137</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, pp. 3-4.

A number of proposals have been made to create similar zones in South Asia, the Middle East and parts of Europe. However, there is a diverse array of these agreements, from establishing NWFZ that range in size from local communities and cities to continent size areas and even the entire globe.<sup>140</sup> The establishment of NWFZs in Africa, South America and South East Asia took long time to be achieved. However, the creation of a NWFZ can be considered a partial step, indeed a vital one in the Middle East, and a contribution to a process which may lead to general and complete nuclear disarmament.<sup>141</sup>

There are many laudable objectives in establishing a NWFZ. Prawitz and Leonard summarise them as:

4. Sparing the zonal states from the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons;
5. Reducing the threat of war by contributing to preventing the potential threat of nuclear weapons;
6. Contributing to the process of disarmament of nuclear weapons globally and improving regional and global security and stability;
7. Strengthening the confidence and enhancing the bilateral and multilateral relations among the zonal states.<sup>142</sup>

### **A Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone in the Middle East**

The nature and complexity of the conflicts in the Middle East have served as the driving force for the nuclear weapons programs in the region. One of the political efforts that aimed to allay the tensions in the region was framed as a NWFZ proposal by Egypt and Iran to the United Nations General Assembly in 1974.<sup>143</sup> In 1990, the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, also suggested establishing a zone in the Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction. This proposal was not intended to replace the first proposal but to be pursued in parallel with the earlier proposal.<sup>144</sup>

Israel continues to refuse to join the NPT or to subject its nuclear facilities to inspection by the IAEA. Moreover, Israel sees the establishment of NWFZ in the region as a final step, not a first one. Yet these policies contravene the spirit of the NPT and the IAEA and lead one to argue that there is an existing dangerous situation that affects security and stability in the region, and the world at large. In a speech made by the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Committee for the 2000 Review Conference on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Ambassador said:

<sup>140</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>141</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>142</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 40.

<sup>143</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 59.

<sup>144</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, p. 59.





While many regions around the world are achieving success in the establishment of nuclear-free zones as a result of the cooperation and recognition of the need for peaceful co-existence among their countries, we find that the international and regional efforts to make the Middle East a nuclear free zone are fruitless. This is the result of the refusal of one country, Israel, to cooperate with these efforts.<sup>145</sup>

Bringing about a change to the Israeli stance on a NWFZ in the Middle East depends heavily on normalizing bilateral and multilateral relationships among all states in the region. The Israeli position is illustrated in a speech made by the former Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Levi, to the 1996 UN General Assembly, Levi said that:

After peaceful relations and reconciliation have been established among all states in the region, Israel will endeavour to establish in the Middle East a zone free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as well as ballistic missiles, based on mutual and effective verification.<sup>146</sup>

However, it is unlikely that Israel will join the NPT or become a member of the IAEA because its defence policy is unwaveringly based on nuclear deterrence, which is unlikely to change due to the difficulty of reaching peaceful accords with all the states in the region, including Iran. This situation may encourage other countries in the region to reconsider the benefits of their relationship with the IAEA, and it undermines the credibility of the NPT. In a speech given by the former Iranian foreign minister at the seventh review conference on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, he unequivocally stated that 'the credibility of the NPT is at stake'<sup>147</sup> because of perceived double-standards by particularly western states towards Israel and Iran.

A feasible alternative measure for maintaining and promoting peace in the region is the delimitation of a zone in which strict comprehensive verification can be applied. The establishment of such a zone would limit peaceful nuclear activities, build mutual confidence among the countries in the region and thus be a first step in facilitating the establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone.<sup>148</sup> The establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East requires cooperation among the states in the region and between these states and other nuclear powers. Such cooperation would need to build confidence and create an environment which works towards building the NWFZ regime in the region. The role of the nuclear powers in promoting peace and stability in the region require a direct involvement in pushing forward the process of establishing a NWFZ.

145 Fawzi Shobokshi, 'Statement Of Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia Before The Third Session Of The Preparatory Committee For The 2000 Review Conference On Non-Proliferation Of Nuclear Weapons.' 14 May 1999, available at: <[www.mofa.gov.sa](http://www.mofa.gov.sa)>, accessed 16 June 2008.

146 Ramesh Thakur, *Nuclear Weapons – Free Zones*, Macmillan, London, 1998, p. 197.

147 Gordon Prather, *Iran defends the NPT*, 7 May 2005, available at: <[www.antiwar.com/prather](http://www.antiwar.com/prather)>, accessed 16 June 2008.

148 United Nations General Assembly, 'Establishment of Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East.' Report for the Secretary General, UN Doc. A/ C.1./S7/L/28, available at: <<http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/week/pdf/un1st/menwzfz.pdf>>, accessed 8 June 2008.



The nuclear powers could sign an agreement undertaking not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any state in the region. They could also undertake not to provide any state with nuclear weapons in case of conflict between zonal states. Neighbouring states like Pakistan, having also developed 'the Islamic nuclear bomb', should show good faith and commit itself to the same obligations.

The prospect of a NWFZ in the Middle East could play a positive and constructive role and promote extending the zone to include neighbours around the entire periphery. The states in Central Asia and the northern part of the Mediterranean Sea and other countries may support the regime and it may encourage them to establish their own NWFZ.<sup>149</sup> Despite the fractured and fragile political situations in the Middle East, there are some steps that should be taken by states in the region to start the process of establishing a NWFZ. These steps include addressing the political and security issues, exploring the possibility of sub-regional initiatives such as a Gulf regional NWFZ, or West Asia NWFZ, and work towards the universalization of relevant NWFZ agreements.<sup>150</sup>

#### *Obstacles to a Middle East Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone*

In comparison with other areas in which regional NWFZ have been created, the Middle East is particularly complex. Because the Middle East is an area plagued by a long history of intense and overlapping ethno-national and religious conflicts, there are many difficulties and obstacles in achieving the trust and compromises needed to establish a NWFZ in the region. The development of nuclear capacity is intricately related to the security issues and threat perceptions across the region. Yet there are serious obstacles facing regional actors in reaching a compromise on an issue so delicately linked to their national security. Confidence between all actors within the region is seriously lacking.

According to Jan Prawitz, all states in the region except Israel prefer an early establishment of a NWFZ in order to pave the way for the solution of various problems and conflicts. Israel maintains that negotiating such a zone should only 'crown the final and successful conclusion of a regional set of peace arrangement'.<sup>151</sup> The staunch Israeli stance is considered by most of the states in the region as an obstacle in the face of establishment NWFZ in the Middle East. Again, the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the IAEA made the poignant comment that:

It is regrettable that there is an international consensus and regional desire to make the

<sup>149</sup> Jan Prawitz and James F. Leonard, 'A Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Global Change, Peace and Security.' Vol. 11, No. 3, October 1999, pp. 257-271, available at: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1478115990841288>>, accessed 2 June 2008

<sup>150</sup> Michael Crowley, *The Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone*, Verification Research, Training and Information Centre, London, UK, 7 November 2006.

<sup>151</sup> Jan Prawitz, *A Note on the Proposed Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, available at: <<http://www.cisd.soas.ac.uk/Editor/assets/wmdfzme%20%prawitz%20070917.pdf>>, accessed 11 June 2008.



Middle East a nuclear free zone, while Israel stands as an obstacle against the wishes of the people in the region who aspire to live in an area that is free from nuclear terror.<sup>152</sup>

The conditions for the creation of an active NWFZ in a region with deep-set conflicts like the Middle East will require the settlement of intense and ongoing conflicts.<sup>153</sup> In the case of Israel, which considers nuclear deterrence essential for its national security, without peaceful settlement of the conflicts in the Middle East, continued nuclear deterrence is considered essential for the security of the state of Israel. Another consideration for the creation of a NWFZ in any region is the scope of the area to be included.<sup>154</sup> In a conflict-ridden region like the Middle East, the core sector should be defined in terms of potential states that might be involved in a military dispute in which nuclear weapons could be used.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, there are deep differences between the various conceptions and mechanisms to establish a NWFZ in the region. These differences result from conflicting perceptions of security requirements and threats posed to the states in the region, and the link between the establishment of a NWFZ and regional peace processes.<sup>156</sup> In summary, a Middle Eastern NWFZ is not viable until the existing sources of conflict have been addressed, in particular, the issue of the long term security of Israel and, in parallel, a just and lasting conclusion to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

## Conclusion

The notion of a nuclear balance is a two-edged sword. Nuclear weapons can play a positive role in terms of providing the promise of deterrence that might stabilize the region, but in a unique region like the Middle East with all its actual and potential conflicts, it might lead instead to an uncontrolled nuclear arms race. The history of nuclear weapons in the Middle East is linked clearly to the insecurities and conflicts in the region. The region became nuclear over 50 years ago when Israel started its nuclear program. This program was the driving force behind the other nuclear programs in the region developed by Iraq and Syria. In turn, the Iran-Iraq War provoked Iran towards possessing a nuclear capability, however the Iranian nuclear ambition at this point in time seems to be directed against Israel. This being said, the GCC states are extremely concerned about a nuclear Iran.

The Iranian (Shi'a) nuclear ambition could trigger the conservative (Sunni) Arab states to develop a nuclear capacity in order to deter or contain the Iranian nuclear program that might be turned against them in the Iranian path to establish a Shi'a crescent in

152 Fawzi Shobokshi, 'Statement Of Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia Before The Third Session Of The Preparatory Committee For The 2000 Review Conference On Non-Proliferation Of Nuclear Weapons.'

153 Ramesh Thakur, *Nuclear Weapons – Free Zones*, p. 194.

154 Ramesh Thakur, *Nuclear Weapons – Free Zones*, pp. 195-196.

155 Ramesh Thakur, *Nuclear Weapons – Free Zones*, p. 196.

156 Ramesh Thakur, *Nuclear Weapons – Free Zones*, p. 196.



the Middle East. In this context, it is not so surprising that states in the Middle East have used every effort in order to develop their own nuclear programs. This increases the dangers of uncontrolled proliferation including the potential for extremist groups to obtain nuclear materials. A number of states, and non-state actors like Hamas and Hezbollah, refuse to accept the legitimacy of Israel as a state in the region. Non-state actors are both hard to locate and defeat, and with unofficial state backing, pose an ongoing threat to Israel. As a result, there is a great deal of tension in the region, and Israel has maintained a nuclear deterrence policy as a security guarantee for its survival, even if history shows it has a poor record of actually deterring aggressors. Further, other countries in the region who see Israel as an aggressive power, have tried to balance that power and offset the 'nuclear Israel' by adopting their own nuclear programs.

The possibility of a nuclear 'clash of civilizations' between Islam and the West could occur if the US was to support Israel in a nuclear confrontation with its opponents. Furthermore, the prospect of nuclear terrorism overwhelms any other debate that suggests theories of 'nuclear balance' in order to stabilize the Middle East and ensure its security. The potential conflict between the Sunni and Shi'a, might also spark a nuclear dispute in the region.

Further, the danger of irrationality by leaders and decision makers is particularly worrying. This may lead to nuclear weapons actually being used, especially in light of the endemic lack of conceptual nuclear doctrine in most states in the region. Put simply, the theory of deterrence is not playing out in practice.

In spite of the success that has been achieved by establishing NWFZ in many areas around the world, the Middle East is still a long way from establishing a zone free from nuclear weapons. This failure is due to several factors linked to the nature and complexity of the historical conflict in the region which have left legacies of mistrust and enmity. The refusal of Israel to cooperate peaceably with other countries in the region continues to inflame the situation. Israel should show some flexibility on nuclear issues in order not to give any reasons to other states in the region to justify their own nuclear program. While Israel says it will negotiate on the NWFZ after it has peace, this could be reversed, and a NWFZ could create the appropriate conditions under which they could negotiate those peace agreements. However, a Middle Eastern NWFZ is not viable until the existing sources of conflict have been addressed, in particular this must involve ensuring the long term security of Israel, which includes addressing the Palestine issue. First steps therefore include addressing the underlying political and security issues, exploring the possibility of sub-regional initiatives such as a Gulf regional NWFZ, or West Asia NWFZ, and work towards the

universalization of relevant agreements.

The nuclear powers can play a major role in promoting peace and stability through pushing forward the process of establishing a NWFZ. The major powers could undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any state in the region, and not to provide any state with nuclear support in the event of armed conflict among the states in the region. Other nuclear states like Pakistan might commit itself to the same obligations. Establishing such an area within the region would push the wheel of peace forward through building confidence in both bilateral and multilateral relations among the states and may promote peace and stability and help to keep nuclear terror away from the region. Moreover, a NWFZ in the Middle East might expand to include some other countries in south Europe and central Asia. As such, this zone might act also as a positive development in working for peace around the world.



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