

Appendix C

Walking the Tightrope: Israeli Options in Response to Iranian Nuclear Developments

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The Iranian government's effort to develop nuclear weapons production capability poses a formidable challenge to Israeli policymakers. From the Israeli perspective, the current Iranian regime is highly dangerous; its frequent emotion-filled declarations of intent to "wipe Israel off the map" are matched by actions. Armed with nuclear weapons, the radical Islamic leadership could trigger confrontations and crises that would quickly escalate out of control, particularly given its very limited knowledge of and contact with Israel, and its close links with terror groups such as Hizballah and Hamas. Iran, with these allies or subsidiary groups, is viewed as posing an existential threat and the greatest danger to national survival. Furthermore, Israeli leaders are cognizant of the proliferation dynamic that could be generated by Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons: Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Turkey, perhaps Libya, and other states in the region might be tempted or pressured to follow suit. Thus, within a decade after Iran crosses the nuclear threshold, the Middle East would become a highly unstable multipolar nuclear system. And, as a result, the structure of the nonproliferation regime, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, would unravel completely.

This nightmare scenario is not new and did not suddenly become apparent following the revelations regarding the extent of the links between Iran and A.Q. Khan, the head of the Pakistani "nuclear Walmart," to use IAEA director Dr. Mohammed El-Baradei's terminology. The evidence

that Iran has been secretly acquiring facilities and materials for an illicit nuclear weapons capability, in violation of its NPT commitments, has been increasingly evident. For many years, Israel has been monitoring Iranian efforts to enrich uranium, separate plutonium, and take other measures toward the production of nuclear weapons. Over a decade ago, in the early 1990s, the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin warned of the dangers of a radical Iran armed with nuclear weapons, and Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur responded to questions on this issue raised in the Knesset by invoking Israel's deterrent capability.

During this decade, Israeli leaders have struggled with this issue, seeking to define and implement an effective policy that would stop, or at least slow, the Iranian acquisition effort. High-level interdepartmental committees were formed to consider the diplomatic and military options and their implications in detail. Attempts were made to persuade suppliers, such as Russia, China, and North Korea, to "turn off the faucet" through which the advanced technologies and expertise flows into Iran, both with respect to ballistic missiles and nuclear technology. This issue was also at the top of the agenda in bilateral discussions on security and diplomatic issues held with the U.S. Government, as well as in the growing number of strategic dialogues with Great Britain, other European governments, and elsewhere. At the same time, public attention and speculation by analysts and journalists included the possibility of military action, similar to the 1981 operation in which the Israeli Air Force targeted the Osiraq reactor complex in Iraq. According to the Begin doctrine, "Under no circumstances would we allow the enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction against our nation."¹ Given the deep rejectionism, the asymmetries, and Israel's vulnerability, a "balance of terror" was seen as ineffective and unstable.²

But beyond the inherent difficulties in launching an effective military response, as well as diplomatic costs and other complicating factors, Israeli leaders during the 1990s sought to avoid an armed confrontation that would create hostility and bitterness among the Iranian public, which is seen as far less obsessed with Israel than is the radical Islamic leadership. Thus, Israeli officials consistently refer to Iran as a military threat, but not an enemy (in contrast to Syria or Iraq under Saddam). This does not rule out a military option; Iran has learned the lessons of the 1981 Osiraq operation and dispersed, hidden, and hardened its nuclear facilities, but Israel and the United States have also advanced significantly in terms of intelligence, targeting, and penetration. A preventive strike, however, is clearly a problematic option.

Another approach adopted by some Israeli policymakers argued that diplomatic efforts to slow Iran's effort to acquire the technology and materials necessary for the production of nuclear weapons (particularly fuel cycle components) would allow time for Iranian political dynamics to unfold, leading to regime change. When the "reform movement" in Iran was seen to be gaining momentum and support under President Khatami and other "moderate" leaders, it was possible to envision a post-revolutionary government that would not be interested in pursuing nuclear weapons or would view the costs of proceeding as too high. Or, if this approach failed, such a pragmatic leadership would at least not be obsessed by Israel, and a nuclear weapons capability would be far less threatening and destabilizing. However, in the past few years, the reform movement seems to have weakened, thereby also reducing the likelihood of such outcomes. Still, some Israeli officials place primary emphasis on regime change, but this hope is not seen as a likely scenario in the foreseeable future. In addition, the available evidence indicates a broad Iranian national consensus, including reformists, in favor of pursuing nuclear weapons as a "national right."

Given these obstacles to halting the Iranian nuclear weapons program, increasing Israeli attention and resources are being focused on dealing with this potential outcome. In close consultation with the U.S. Government and with major American assistance, missile defense programs and testing have been accelerated, and new technology, including extended range ballistic missile defense (BMD) and boost phase intercept (BPI) concepts, is under discussion.

In addition, some Israelis have begun to examine potential deterrence options vis-à-vis a nuclear Iran. Since the 1948 war, deterrence has been a major component of security policy, and it is widely credited with providing a degree of stability in relations with Syria, persuading Saddam Husayn not to risk the use of chemically armed missiles during the 1991 war, and in many other situations.³ Perhaps the Iranian government, including its current radical regime, and, more importantly, under a post-Islamic leadership, would understand the requirements of stable mutual deterrence. And perhaps a multipolar regional system of deterrence could evolve, in which Israel's legitimacy would no longer be challenged and its survival would not be threatened. At some point, the optimists in this group noted, regional arms control and cooperative security discussions might resume, this time including Iran, Syria, and post-Saddam Iraq.

Each of these approaches is inherently complex and risky, and this is reflected in the continuing emphasis on the need for halting Iran's nuclear

weapons acquisition efforts to date. Jerusalem, like Washington, is grappling with the rapidly closing window within which Iran might be stopped short of the finish line. Hopes that the political leadership of the IAEA would suddenly acknowledge the overwhelming evidence of cheating, which the agency's own reports show began almost two decades ago,⁴ and declare Iran to be in noncompliance appear to be declining (if such hopes were ever realistic), and the time remaining for the imposition of sanctions to prevent the production of enriched uranium is fading. The European troika's difficulty in changing Iran's objectives speaks for itself, although this process seems to have slowed the pace of uranium enrichment during the past year and may be able to extend the timeframe further for a diplomatic solution.⁵ With some time, some American scholars argue, American involvement in the application of carrots and sticks can halt Iran's nuclear efforts before they are completed. "By promising strong rewards for compliance and severe penalties for defiance, Washington can strengthen the pragmatists' case that Tehran should choose butter over bombs."⁶ But the obstacles are formidable, and in this framework, military action also cannot be ruled out, even though the obstacles and risks are formidable.

On this basis, it would be prudent to consider alternative scenarios in which Iran achieves a nuclear weapons capability, either overtly or similar to the Israeli policy of nuclear ambiguity. Furthermore, given regional dynamics and national (or regime) security perspectives, the proliferation of similar capabilities around the region within a decade must also be considered likely and should be addressed. While not the preferred outcome, from the Israeli perspective, "thinking about the unthinkable" is an important exercise in planning for the future.

Threat Perceptions

Iran's drive for nuclear weapons began under the shah and has numerous explanations, including regional power ambitions, the sense of vulnerability in a hostile Arab- and Sunni-dominated region, and a history of warfare, including the Iraqi invasion and 8-year-long war during the 1980s. In addition, the survival of the regime is under threat, both from internal pressure and from the U.S. Government. Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are seen as a form of insurance policy.⁷

But all of these factors notwithstanding, from the Israeli perspective the impact of Iranian nuclear weapons on its own security is understandably paramount. While Iran is not a confrontation state bordering Israel, and there is no history of direct military clashes, its extreme Islamic ideology, declarations of extreme hostility, rejection of the very concept of

Jewish sovereignty, and support for terrorist groups such as Hizballah and Hamas are seen as posing an existential threat to Israel. Indeed, while threat levels posed by Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq have declined, and after Palestinian terror attacks have shown a major decrease, Iran has emerged as the major strategic threat to Israel. In the terminology of international relations theory, Iran is a revisionist state, uninterested in preserving the status quo, but rather seeking to expand and use its capabilities to alter the international and regional political framework.

As noted, the Iranian regime is obsessed by Israel, reflecting an extreme Islamic ideology, the standard exploitation of anti-Israel policies to gain power in the regional environment (used earlier by Nasser, Assad, and others), and the effort to divert domestic political unrest away from hostility to the restrictions and failures of the Islamic regime. In December 2001, then-President Hashemi Rafsanjani called the establishment of the Jewish state the “worst event in history” and declared, “In due time the Islamic world will have a military nuclear device, and then the strategy of the West would reach a dead end, since one bomb is enough to destroy all Israel.” Similarly, Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared “that the cancerous tumor called Israel must be uprooted from the region.”⁸

This obsession is often translated from the rhetoric of hatred and threats of destruction (including highly anti-Semitic programs on Iranian television) into actions, such as providing shiploads of missiles, explosives, and weapons to Palestinian terror groups (as in the case of the *Karine-A*, *Santorini*, and other arms ships captured en route to Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces [IDF]). Reports in the Israeli press and from Israeli security officials increasingly present evidence of Iranian financing, planning, training, intelligence, and other involvement in suicide bombing and other terror attacks by groups such as Hamas, the al Aqsa brigades, and Islamic Jihad.

Iran, in cooperation with Syria, is also the major supporter of Hizballah’s attacks from southern Lebanon, and constitutes a local extension of Iranian power up to the Israeli border and inside Israeli territory. For many years, Hizballah led the attacks against Israeli towns, and, since the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, this group has continued to launch periodic limited attacks across the border. Israeli security officials report that in the last 4 years, Hizballah has deployed over 10,000 tactical missiles (according to some sources, the number has reached 13,000, including the Iranian-made Fajr-5, with a range of 75 kilometers), many of which are capable of reaching cities and industrial centers in a

significant part of the country. This strategic deployment provides an umbrella for periodic attacks on the Israeli side of the border and a deterrent against Israeli escalation in response. It is also the model for Palestinian groups operating in Gaza, which have been firing missiles at Israeli towns on the other side of the separation fence, with direct participation, assistance, and involvement as acknowledged by Lebanese Hizballah leader Hassan Nasrallah. This confrontation is inherently unstable, and at some point, Hizballah's salami tactics are likely to trigger a rapid escalation into a full-scale confrontation.

In addition, Hizballah, aided directly by Iranian officials, is viewed by Israel and others as being responsible for the terror blasts in Buenos Aires, Argentina, that destroyed the Israeli embassy and the Jewish community building in 1992 and 1994, killing dozens of people. And in the realm of religious and propaganda warfare, Hizballah (via its Al Manr satellite television broadcasts) has emerged as one of the most virulent sources of incitement and anti-Semitism.⁹

The Iranian effort to acquire nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles with ranges capable of reaching Israel (and far beyond) cannot be separated from its support for terrorist groups and the deep-seated animosity of the regime toward Israel. Missiles on parade in Tehran are decorated with slogans such as "Wipe Israel off the map," and Israel is referred to as "the Zionist entity," reminiscent of the rejectionist slogans of the Arab governments and Palestine Liberation Organization leadership in earlier decades. Iran's direct role in Hizballah and Hamas terror attacks is an ongoing reflection of these objectives.

This combination of religious hatred, the perceived domestic political importance of this cause for an increasingly unpopular regime, and the growing strategic capabilities creates a framework for escalating violence and confrontation with Israel.

Response Options

Since the United Nations partition resolution of November 29, 1947, which triggered a campaign of terrorism followed in May 1948 by the Arab invasion, Israel has been a country under siege. Given its minuscule territory and consequent lack of strategic depth, small population, and limited resources, Israel has given the highest priority to security and strategic issues. The nature of the warfare has changed as specific threats have evolved.

These responses have taken different forms, including preventive and preemptive attacks (the 1967 war and the Osiraq operation),

investment in defensive systems, seizure of territory (the Judea and Samaria regions of the West Bank, southern Lebanon), and deterrence through “disproportionate response.” The support, assistance, and coordination with the United States have generally served as force multipliers, increasing the capabilities, range, and firepower of the IDF and the impact of deterrence threats and Arab perceptions.

In addition, the U.S. assurances have, in some cases, allowed Israel to take some risks—including the withdrawal from Sinai after the 1956 Suez war, the 1970 cease-fire with Egypt that ended the war of attrition, disengagement agreements with Egypt and Syria after the 1973 war, the Oslo framework and (failed) experiment with Palestinian autonomy, and the withdrawal from Lebanon. These risks have also contributed to escalation and high costs for Israel, but, over time, they have also brought some stability and a modicum of (cold) peace in the case of Egypt and Jordan and, informally and on a limited basis, with Syria. Thus, these strategies are likely to be applied to the developing Iranian threat, as deemed appropriate.

Defense Options: The Arrow, the Wall, and BPI

In the late 1980s, the proliferation of ballistic missiles in the region, as highlighted in the Iran-Iraq “war of the cities,” coupled with the threat of WMD warheads, led Israeli defense planners to begin development of strategic missile defense systems. For this purpose, Israel can be considered to be a cluster of point targets, in sharp contrast to area BMD concepts and requirements, making the technical obstacles more manageable. This resulted in the “Wall” (*Homa*) BMD program, which included the design, development, testing, and deployment of the Arrow interceptor, along with advanced detection, early warning, and terminal targeting systems. A significant portion of the research and development costs were financed with U.S. Government assistance, and the level of cooperation in this area remains high.

During the 2004 Iraq war, a number of advanced Arrow BMD batteries were deployed and operational, along with U.S. Patriot PAC-2 interceptors. Since then, and in response to the Iranian testing of its Shabab-3 ballistic missile, the Arrow and its accompanying components continue to be improved and tested.

The logic of the Israeli strategic missile defense program goes beyond providing a defense against WMD warheads. It is designed to influence the strategic calculations of potential attackers, such as Iran. Given that Iran’s arsenal of offensive missiles and nuclear warheads will be

limited, the combination of reduced probability of penetration and ensured massive destruction in response (discussed in the section on deterrence below) are seen as making the risks of a first strike extremely high.

At the same time, Israeli officials and analysts are also aware of the limitations of BMD, including the unfavorable cost-exchange ratio and the availability of delivery systems other than ballistic missiles. Thus, while this approach is important in countering the expected Iranian threat, it is not the only or the central element in Israeli strategy.

Building Stable Bilateral Deterrence: Israel-Iran

Faced with continuing threats to national survival, Israel has always placed primary emphasis on maintaining a credible and robust deterrence capability. The deep structural asymmetries in the region (territorial extent, demography, and so forth) make Israel appear to be vulnerable to a crippling first strike, and the capability to inflict overwhelming and disproportionate retaliation regardless of the extent of the initial attack has been a central feature in deterring attack. This is the case with respect to conventional warfare (based on overwhelming air superiority and highly mobile ground forces), as well as providing the foundation for the development of the Dimona nuclear complex, Jericho ballistic missile technology, and the policy of “deliberate ambiguity.”

In the conventional sphere, the record has been mixed. In the 1973 war, Egypt and Syria were not deterred by what Israeli leaders viewed as overwhelming superiority. But this was the last of the major attacks by the Arab “confrontation states,” and the response was sufficient to lead Anwar Sadat to end the cycle of wars and become the first Arab leader to recognize the legitimacy of Israel. With respect to low-level warfare and terror campaigns, the weakening of Israeli deterrence during the 1990s is widely seen to have contributed significantly to Arafat’s strategy and the decision to use violence to achieve Palestinian objectives. Thus, one of the major goals in the Israeli response was to reestablish the deterrence image, not only in the eyes of the Palestinians, but also throughout the region.

In addition, polls and other evidence demonstrate that Israelis from across the political spectrum view the ambiguous nuclear deterrence policy and the weapon of last resort as successful in preventing additional wars and limiting the level of attacks during the wars that did occur. For example, according to the available evidence (including statements by Egyptian war planners), Cairo opted for a deliberately limited strategy in the 1973 war to avoid triggering an Israeli strategic response.

In 1991, the decision by Saddam Husayn not to use chemical or biological warheads in the missile attacks on Israel is also attributed to fear of overwhelming Israeli retaliation. Furthermore, Shimon Peres and others claim that Israel's nuclear capability and the realization that Israel could not be "wiped off the map" without massive retaliation throughout the Middle East were primary factors in initiating peace processes with Egypt, Jordan, and beyond.¹⁰

However, the development of an Iranian nuclear capability and a multipolar nuclear environment would end the Israeli nuclear monopoly and fundamentally change the calculus of strategic deterrence in all major dimensions. In terms of capabilities and maintaining an assured second-strike capability, Israeli planners are well aware of the need to reduce vulnerability by dispersing and hardening retaliatory systems. Given the small size of Israel's territory, reliance on land-based ballistic missiles and the ability to scramble long-range aircraft is understood to be problematic, and additional options are necessary. International press reports have claimed that the diesel-powered submarines that were built in Germany and delivered in recent years provide the foundation for a sea-based strategic retaliatory force, including cruise missiles. In all likelihood, such a force would not replace the aircraft and land-based missile components, but would provide an additional "insurance policy."

In the context of a multipolar nuclear Middle East and the need for a credible second-strike capability, maintenance of Israel's policy of deliberate ambiguity would become increasingly difficult. In terms of capabilities, the movements of a submarine force, and the dispersal of aircraft and ballistic missiles in hardened structures, would be more visible than the current requirements. Smaller and more advanced warheads required for these advanced delivery systems may also need testing, thereby changing the Israeli policy in a fundamental manner.

Credibility and communications are also central components of stable deterrence, and a more overt and visible nuclear weapons capability may be seen as necessary to avoid Iranian (and wider regional) misperceptions, particularly given the isolation of decisionmakers in Iran. An Israeli decision to disclose its nuclear capabilities or to test a weapon (or long-range ballistic missile) in public might be viewed as necessary to highlight the ability to inflict massive destruction in response to a first strike.

However, the isolation of Iran's leaders, the fog that surrounds its decisionmaking structures, the absence of direct channels of communication with Israel, and its radical faith-based revisionist objectives will make the development of stable deterrence extremely difficult. While

the Iranian leadership is not seen as suicidal or particularly prone to high-stakes risk taking (in contrast to Saddam Husayn and other Arab leaders), there are likely to be many misperceptions regarding Israeli intentions and redlines. And, with many potential triggers for crises and escalation between Tehran and Jerusalem, including Hizballah, Hamas, and extremist elements within Iran, the difficulties in managing these crises in a nuclear environment will pose formidable challenges.

To diminish these dangers, Iranian leaders will have to renounce their destabilizing revisionist and revolutionary objectives and develop links, including diplomatic relations, with Israel. During the Cold War, the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and management of ongoing strategic relations proved difficult enough, even with diplomatic ties and periodic summit meetings between U.S. and Soviet leaders. This is also true with respect to India and Pakistan, which came close to mutual destruction following their respective decisions to test nuclear weapons. The policy of boycotting the “Zionist entity” must be seen as particularly irresponsible and dangerous for a country armed with nuclear weapons and itself a target for massive retaliation. In addition, in order to develop a stable deterrence relationship, ties with destabilizing terrorist groups and extremists will need to be cut, for the survival of Iran itself, in this environment.

Toward a Stable Multipolar Deterrence Relationship

As argued here, an Iranian nuclear capability would trigger (or accelerate) regional proliferation, including Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and elsewhere. Within a decade, the Middle East is likely to have five or more nuclear powers, making creation and management of a system of stable deterrence far more complex, particularly given the inherent instabilities, history of conflict, and deep hostilities.

In this environment, the survival of these nations and the prevention of nuclear warfare will require measures to address the mutual fears of surprise attack, including direct communications, particularly in crisis situations. Those regimes in addition to Iran that continue to boycott Israel, such as Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria, will also need to establish links and ensure that myths and misperceptions are replaced by realistic analysis. Command and control systems in these countries will be necessary to prevent access by extremist groups whose ideological or religious beliefs envision warfare and destruction on a massive scale.

This process will require the active intervention of outside powers, including the United States, Europe, Russia, and China. The relatively passive (and often low-priority) approach used during the multilateral

arms control and regional security framework, created in the context of the 1991 Madrid conference, failed to produce significant results. While grand regional disarmament agreements are highly unrealistic in the existing political and strategic environment (as explained below), tangible limited measures to reduce instability and increase communications and coordination are possible and necessary. These should become high-priority objectives for the United States, with the cooperation (to the extent possible) of the other major powers.

A U.S.-Israel Defense Pact or NATO Membership?

The prospects of an Iranian nuclear weapons capability and wider regional proliferation have revived unofficial discussions of the costs and benefits of different formal security alliances, including a U.S.-Israeli defense treaty and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership. The previous discussions have noted the perceived advantages of an Israel-U.S. bilateral treaty, in terms of enhanced Israeli deterrence (assuming that the U.S. deterrence image is robust), easier access to advanced weapons, and a reduced economic burden from ongoing defense expenditures. These dimensions would be particularly significant in the cooperative development and operation of advanced missile defense systems, perhaps to include Turkey and NATO, as well as in aspects related to maintaining a credible second-strike deterrent vis-à-vis Iran and other potential adversaries.

In contrast, Israeli policymakers also note that after almost four decades of close security cooperation, a formal treaty may not provide much more in terms of deterrence or security assurances. It may also reduce Israeli freedom of action and have other costs, particularly if a less supportive U.S. Government is elected in the future.

The option of NATO membership is perhaps more symbolic and less tangible in terms of direct benefits, but the development of formal security links to both the United States and Europe may provide a useful alternative, at little cost for Israel. However, opposition to a formal alliance with Israel from France and other NATO members who maintain close relations with the Arab regimes would have to be overcome.

Messianic Visions: A Middle East Zone Free of WMD

One of the proposed means to prevent Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons is a grand agreement that would include, in addition to resolution of U.S.-Iran issues, a tradeoff involving Israel's nuclear deterrent option. The range of such proposals is quite wide, including some

that envision a freeze on the Israeli nuclear program and accession to the NPT as a nuclear weapons state (a scenario that is off the scale, even in the realm of highly unrealistic suggestions, as it would require opening up the NPT to amendment and requiring re-ratification by all of the signatories). At the other end of the scale, there is also discussion of Israel relinquishing its nuclear capability by joining the NPT and submitting to IAEA safeguards as a non-nuclear weapons state, or the development of a Middle East nuclear weapons-free zone.

As long as the Middle East conflict is unresolved and the threats to Israeli survival remain, none of the grand bargain concepts that expect Israel to give up its nuclear deterrent option in return for international guarantees with respect to Iran can be considered viable. As the cases of Iraq, North Korea, and now Iran clearly demonstrate, the ability of international mechanisms such as the IAEA to monitor effectively and assure compliance with nonproliferation treaties is far from adequate. Furthermore, the United States and the other members of the United Nations Security Council have shown that they will not take risks regarding their own interests by using force or even imposing effective sanctions to gain compliance. From the perspective of core Israeli security perceptions and requirements, these Kantian idealistic hopes are not credible options in a Hobbesian Middle East characterized by warfare and continuous terrorism, which are, in turn, fuelled by deep hostility and perceived threats to survival.

In the long term, however, and assuming that the region survives the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the potential for negotiation of a Middle East nuclear weapons-free zone is likely to increase. In contrast to the international and universal arms control framework—including the NPT, IAEA, and Chemical Weapons Convention, which have proven highly ineffective in the case of Iran, as well as Iraq and Libya—a system of mutual inspection based on a specially tailored verification regime, could, in theory, be successful.

In the process of learning to develop and manage a stable deterrence relationship, direct communication links will eventually be established. The populations of the respective players, including Iran, may go through a process similar to that of the United States and Soviet Union, as well as Europe during the Cold War, and demand measures that reduce the risks of mutual assured destruction. This process will be assisted by, and could also lead to, internal political changes, including democratization, in order to create more responsive and accountable governments (although, realistically, the politics of extremist nationalism and religious exclusivity will remain very powerful forces).

At the same time, the zero-sum frameworks that have dominated may develop into more cooperative situations, in which confidence- and security-building measures may evolve due not to pressures and inducements from the outside, but from the internal recognition of the elements necessary for national survival.

Conclusion

For all of the reasons explained in this analysis, this process, if it happens, could take many years or decades, and during this period, avoidance of nuclear destruction will be tenuous, at best. For the current political and strategic horizon, the prevention of Middle East nuclear proliferation by focusing on halting the illicit Iranian acquisition of fissile material remains the best policy option for the United States, Israel, Europe, Russia, China, and for the region. If this process is unsuccessful, the measures required for a stable deterrence system would become central, and might encompass a formal Israeli-U.S. defense treaty or Israeli membership in NATO. Other regional steps, such as mutual recognition and reliable communications, would be necessary in order to manage the relationship and prevent nuclear destruction. In parallel, consideration of confidence- and security-building measures and efforts to develop a nuclear weapons-free zone should also be on the agenda, within a realistic framework if they are to be effective. At the same time, proposals that lack credibility and are based on amorphous and unreliable “international guarantees”—such as those that have failed to prevent Iran, Iraq, Libya, and other countries from violating their NPT commitments and that will endanger Israel’s survival—are counterproductive and unrealistic.

Notes

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¹ Ha’aretz, June 9, 1981, cited in Shai Feldman, “The Bombing of Osiraq Revisited,” *International Security* 7 (Fall 1982), 114–143, and Gerald Steinberg, “The Begin Doctrine and Deterrence,” in *Israel in the Middle East—The Legacy of Menachem Begin*, BESA Center for Strategic Studies, BESA Colloquia on Strategy and Diplomacy No. 15, September 2000.

² Ariel Sharon, quoted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, December 18, 1981, 1–17.

³ Gerald Steinberg, “Parameters of Stable Deterrence in a Proliferated Middle East: Lessons from the 1991 Gulf War,” *Nonproliferation Review* 7, no. 3 (Fall/Winter 2000).

⁴ Links to the relevant IAEA documents are available at <www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/iaeaIran/index.shtml>.

⁵ The *troika* referred to is the so-called EU-3 of the European Union—Great Britain, France, and Germany—who have been negotiating with Iran on nuclear issues.

⁶ Kenneth M. Pollack and Ray Takeyh, "Taking on Tehran," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 2 (March/April 2005).

⁷ Kori N. Schake and Judith S. Yaphe, *The Strategic Implications of a Nuclear-Armed Iran*, McNair Paper 64 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2001), 1–15.

⁸ "Former Iranian President Rafsanjani on Using a Nuclear Bomb Against Israel," Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch 325, January 3, 2002, available at <www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=iran&ID=SP32502>; "Iran Leader Urges Destruction of 'Cancerous' Israel," Reuters, December 15, 2002, available at <<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/meast/12/15/mideast.iran.reut/>>.

⁹ Avi Jorisch, *Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hizballah's al-Manr Television* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004).

¹⁰ Cited in Ariel Levite and Emily Landau, *Israel's Nuclear Image: Arab Perceptions of Israel's Nuclear Posture* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1994), 66–67.