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Israeli Nuclear Deterrence in Context: Effects of the US-Russian Rivalry

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Cover image: Negev Nuclear Research Center at Dimona, photographed by US
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Israel's presumptive nuclear deterrence posture depends upon several separate but intersecting factors. Most important, of course, are the country's weapons, infrastructures, and missile defense capabilities. Less conspicuously urgent, but still important, are the principal defining structures of world politics. These include (as ever) the fundamentally anarchic system created after the 1648 Peace of Westphalia ("The State System") and the more transient or temporary US-Russian rivalry. This essay casts attention on the latter set of factors, or "Cold War II." Israel's strategists should pay close attention to this critical expression of geopolitical "context."

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Competent military assessments of any individual state's nuclear deterrence posture must focus on pertinent weapons (both offensive and defensive) and corresponding issues of threat credibility. In the case of Israel, analytic focus has generally highlighted that country's presumptive missile and anti-missile capabilities and expected "willingness to launch" under assorted circumstances. However, in order to suitably reinforce Israel's nuclear deterrence posture, a substantially more comprehensive assessment is required.

This broader focus should be laser-focused on the world system context.

The single most revealing expression of world system context is easy to identify. In essence, it may be best described as "Cold War II." This is not because the US-Russian rivalry is in any way more significant than the fundamentally anarchic system structure originally bequeathed at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648¹ but because the current rivalry – unlike our historically underlying system of geopolitics or power balancing² – is still remediable.

It can hardly be denied that the present system of world politics is coming to resemble or even replicate certain bifurcations exhibited during "Cold War I." This transformation (or "retransformation") applies to the two prevailing adversarial superpowers. A bipolar antagonism between the US and Russia is now easily recognizable amid 1) a steadily expanding nuclear arms race; 2) various points of more-or-less obvious geopolitical disagreement (e.g., Venezuela); and 3) expanding differences regarding worldwide human rights.³

For Israeli military planners and others who might be interested in Israel's nuclear strategy, core US-Russian antagonisms must be studied together with Israel's relevant weapons systems and presumptive nuclear threat credibility. These system-defining antagonisms are transient, in constant flux, and changing (simultaneously) in both foreseeable and unforeseeable ways. Going forward, critical superpower antagonisms could become increasingly vital or even determinative for Israeli nuclear deterrence.

In this connection, a great deal will ultimately depend upon the precise manner in which this resurrected or reborn bipolar rivalry may affect critically underlying elements of Israel's overall strategic posture.⁴

Reciprocally, this discoverable manner of impact could depend very considerably upon Jerusalem's multiple and overlapping national nuclear power alignments with Russia or the US, or (at least conceivably) with both.

Antecedent to any such starkly complex considerations, much will depend upon the expected rationality or non-rationality of each national nuclear power and on certain plausible interactions or “synergies” detectable between the core nuclear adversaries and their respective alliance partners/clients. Regarding the first concern, Israel's planners will always need to bear in mind the timeless wisdom of German philosopher Karl Jaspers (*Reason and Existence*, 1935): “The rational is not thinkable without its other, the non-rational, and it never appears in reality without it.”

Never without it. This compelling assumption exhibits an essential understanding for anyone engaged in strategic nuclear threat analysis. “Everything is very simple in war,” counsels Carl von Clausewitz, “but even the simplest thing is difficult.” This insight remains valid not only during periods of active conflict, but also in those unsteady periods of latent hostility that obtain between impending wars of aggression.⁵

The concept of a “cold war” was described by the seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. In his classic text, *Leviathan*, this early political thinker (who was widely read by the founding fathers of the US, especially Jefferson) opines that a condition of war exists not only during periods of “actual fighting,” but also whenever there exists merely “a known disposition thereto.”

Even during the expansive pre-nuclear era in world politics, a precarious logic of deterrence had already obtained within the global state of nature. Already there existed a condition of raw competition, corrosive violence, and seemingly perpetual anarchy.

Significantly, even for Hobbes, and long before the advent of nuclear weapons, the worst “state of war” (including one without any physical fighting) was characterized by a “dreadful equality,” a chaotic *bellum omnium contra omnes* wherein “the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest.”

In any such worst case configuration – as can be seen today wherever nuclear proliferation manages to continue without any inhibitions – the life of individual human beings and of entire states must inevitably be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” For Israel, the shifting parameters of Cold War II and certain related issues of enemy rationality could soon have both indeterminate and foreseeable effects upon its nuclear doctrine and strategy. This of course includes the diverse issues surrounding vital choices between nuclear ambiguity and nuclear disclosure.

For Israel, a state sorely lacking in strategic depth,⁶ the former posture has prevailed unchallenged, at least until today. This problematic stance is referred to metaphorically as Israel's “bomb in the basement.” Still, as a bipolar axis of conflict is now being aggressively reaffirmed in world politics by the superpowers, and as prospects for enemy irrationality are arguably greater than before,⁷ Jerusalem will have to make appropriate modifications to its nuclear deterrence doctrine and posture.

Until today, in principle at least, Israel's national nuclear doctrine and posture have remained intentionally ambiguous. At the same time, traditional ambiguity was effectively breached at the highest possible level by two of Israel's prime ministers: first, by Shimon Peres, on December 22, 1995, and then again by Ehud Olmert on December 11, 2006. Peres, speaking to a group of Israeli newspaper and magazine editors, said: “give me peace, and we'll give up the atom. That's the whole story.” Olmert later offered similarly general but also revelatory remarks that were widely (but perhaps wrongly) interpreted as “slips of the tongue.”

Today, as Moscow and Washington once again become bitter adversaries (in part over their different positions and involvements throughout the Middle East), a basic question should once again be raised in Jerusalem:

Is comprehensive nuclear secrecy necessarily in the best survival interests of the Jewish State?

To respond to this question, Israel must start with the assumption that in any such complex strategic matter, “truth” can be counterintuitive. A full answer must therefore be grounded in the expectations and exigencies of formal strategic doctrine. Whatever else Jerusalem may have in mind concerning such doctrine, its response ought never to be just a series of incremental *ad hoc* decisions or otherwise unreflective seat-of-the-pants policies – that is, positions that are casually invented or re-invented from one crisis to the next.

Any loosening of Israeli nuclear ambiguity would need to be subtle, nuanced, more or less indirect, and incremental. Contrary to the more popular view of disclosure, this loosening would not have to take the provocative form of openly forthright or otherwise official Israeli policy pronouncements.

Instead, it could be allowed to leak out on its own, allowing the point to be made without precipitating any immediate sense of crisis.

Among other things, formal doctrine would represent the vital framework from which any pragmatic Israeli nuclear policy of ambiguity or disclosure could be most suitably extrapolated. In all military institutions and traditions, such doctrine, *inter alia*, must describe the tactical or operational manner in which designated national forces ought to fight in various combat situations, the prescribed order of battle, and all manner of corollary operations. (Appropriately, the literal definition of “doctrine” derives from Middle English, from the Latin *doctrina*, which means teaching, learning, and instruction.)

The central importance of codified Israeli military doctrine lies not only in the particular way it can animate, unify, and optimize national military forces, but also in the efficient manner by which it can transmit messages to enemy states, sub-state proxies, or state-sub-state hybrids. Understood

in terms of Israel's strategic nuclear policy, any indiscriminate, across-the-board ambiguity could prove injurious to the country's national security rather than beneficial.

This is likely (if possibly counterintuitive) because an effective deterrence and defense could occasionally call for a military doctrine that is at least partially recognizable by adversary states and also by certain sub-state insurgent/terrorist group foes.

In any routine military planning, having available options for strategic surprise can prove very helpful (if not fully prerequisite) to successful combat operations. But successful deterrence is another matter entirely. In order to persuade would-be adversaries not to strike first – a manifestly complex effort of dissuasion – projecting too much secrecy could prove counterproductive.

In the matter of Israel and both its historical and new enemies, military success must lie in credible deterrence and not in any actual warfighting. Examined in terms of ancient Chinese military thought offered by Sun-Tzu in *The Art of War*, “Supreme excellence consists of breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.” With this dictum in mind, there are times for Israel when successful deterrence policies could require the deliberate loosening of information that had formerly been tightly held.

In essence, such information could concern Israel's capabilities, intentions, or both.

Looking to Cold War II, such information would also need to be rendered compatible with Jerusalem's preferred superpower alignments. More than likely, these alignments will still favor ties to Washington over Moscow, but a tempering or even a reversal of this preference is not inconceivable.

But back to basics. Sometimes, strategic truth must be counterintuitive. There are circumstances wherein ordinary levels of secrecy could be too much, undermining a country's national security. (We may recall, in this connection, the Cold War-era movie *Dr. Strangelove*, in which an eccentric strategic advisor to the American president discovers, to his horror, that the existence of America's “doomsday machine” had not, in fact, been made known in advance to the Soviets. “The whole

point of the doomsday machine is lost,” complains Dr. Strangelove, “if you keep it a secret.”)

Israel's nuclear weapons must remain oriented to deterrence *ex ante*, not to war-fighting or revenge *ex post*. As designated instruments of deterrence, nuclear weapons can succeed only in their protracted non-use. Once they have been used, deterrence, by definition, will have failed. It is also worth noting that once the weapons are used, any traditional meanings of “victory,” especially if both sides are nuclear, would instantly become moot.

The Cold War is over. Israel's emerging deterrence relationship to a prospectively nuclear Iran is not analogous to the historic American-Soviet “Balance-of-Terror.”⁸ Still, there are crucial elements of Cold War II superpower antagonisms that will substantially affect Israel's nuclear strategic choices. This means that Israel must never construct its own nuclear strategic doctrine and policy without closely assessing US-Russian relations.⁹

There are also certain Cold War I deterrence lessons to be learned and adapted by the Jewish State during Cold War II. More precisely, any unmodified continuance of total nuclear ambiguity concerning Israel's strategic targeting doctrine, secure basing modes, and/or capacity to penetrate a designated enemy's active air defenses could cause a newly nuclearized or still-nuclearizing enemy state (e.g., Iran) to critically underestimate Israel's retaliatory capacity or resolve.

As a subsidiary but still urgent nuclear concern, Israeli planners will need to continually assess the capability and intentions of Pakistan, an already nuclear Islamic state and one that has openly declared a “nuclear war fighting” concept of national nuclear deterrence. This non-Arab Islamic state has already undertaken a formal shift from “mutual assured destruction” (MAD) to “nuclear utilization theory” (NUT), to use the specialized parlance of orthodox nuclear strategic theory.¹⁰

Going forward during Cold War II, uncertainties surrounding the presumed components of Israel's nuclear arsenal could lead enemy states to draw the wrong conclusion. In part, this is because Israel's willingness to make good on any threatened nuclear retaliation could be seen as inversely related to weapons system destructiveness. Ironically, if Israel's nuclear weapons were believed to be too destructive, too apocalyptic,¹¹ they might not credibly deter.

In the future, an Israeli policy of ambiguity could cause an already nuclear enemy state to overestimate the first-strike vulnerability of Israel's nuclear forces. This overestimation could be the result, in part, of silence concerning the measures of protection that had been deployed to safeguard Israeli nuclear weapons. Such silence could, in turn, be the product of Israel's perceived alignment with one or the other current superpower.

A related problem could be the product of Israeli doctrinal obfuscations regarding the country's defense potential, a silence that could be mistakenly taken by enemy states as an indication of inadequate Israeli Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD). To be maximally useful, certain relevant strengths and capabilities of Arrow 3 and other interrelated elements of active defense would need to be revealed, perhaps even in previously unimaginable contours of operational detail.

Again, going forward, certain elements of strategic truth – especially in such unprecedented circumstances – could prove counter-intuitive. The then-prevailing conditions of Cold War II could be expected to have distinctly meaningful effects upon any such revelations.

To best understand the utility of Israeli strategic nuclear doctrine and posture, analysts must first clearly identify *for themselves* the core foundations of Israeli nuclear deterrence. These foundations concern prospective attackers' perception of Israel's nuclear capability, as well as their perception of Israel's willingness to use that capability. Selective telegraphing of Israel's strategic nuclear doctrine could potentially enhance Israel's nuclear deterrence posture by 1) heightening enemy state perceptions of Israel's capable nuclear forces and 2) making clear that Israel is willing to use those forces in reprisal for designated first strike and/or retaliatory attacks.

To deter an enemy attack or a post-preemption retaliation against Israel,¹² Jerusalem must prevent a rational aggressor, by threat of an unacceptably damaging retaliation or counter-retaliation, from deciding to strike. Here, Israel's national security would be protected by convincing the potential rational attacker (irrational state enemies could of course pose an altogether different and possibly insurmountable problem) that the costs of any considered attack will always exceed the expected benefits. Assuming

that Israel's state enemies value self-preservation most highly and choose rationally among alternative options, they will refrain from attacking an Israel that is believed both willing and able to deliver an unacceptably destructive response.

These enemy states might also be deterred by the plausible prospect of a more limited Israeli attack, one that would be directed only at national leaders. In the usual parlance adopted by military and intelligence communities, this prospect refers to more-or-less credible threats of “regime targeting.”

Two factors must combine to promote belief in such prospects. First, in terms of *capability*, there are two critical components: payload and delivery system. It must be successfully communicated to any calculating attacker that Israel's firepower, and its means of delivering that firepower, are capable of inflicting unacceptable levels of destruction. This means Israel's retaliatory or counter-retaliatory forces must always appear both invulnerable to enemy first strikes and capable of penetrating the prospective attacker's active and civil defenses.

It may or may not need to be communicated to a potential attacker that such firepower and delivery vehicles are superior to those of the adversary. Deterrence, Israel's planners must always remember, is never about victory. The capacity to deter may or may not be as great as the capacity to win.

Consider the modern-day example of North Korea and the US. In this dyad of adversaries, the Americans are clearly superior by any metric of battle-readiness. The North Koreans could nevertheless wreak terrible harm on US armed forces and even to portions of the American mainland, to say nothing about corollary damage that could be visited upon US allies in South Korea or Japan.

With Israel's strategic nuclear forces and doctrine kept locked in the “basement,” enemy states could conclude, rightly or wrongly, that a first-strike attack or post-preemption reprisal would be cost-effective. But were relevant Israeli doctrine made more plainly obvious to enemy states contemplating an attack – obvious in the sense that Israel's nuclear assets seemingly meet both its payload and delivery system objectives – Israel's nuclear forces could better serve their existential security functions.

The second factor of nuclear doctrine for Israel concerns *willingness*. How can Israel convince potential nuclear attackers that it possesses the resolve to deliver an appropriately destructive retaliation and/or counter-retaliation? Again, the answer lies in doctrine: that is, in Israel's demonstrated commitment to carry out such an attack, and in the nuclear ordnance that would be available to its forces.

Here, too, continued ambiguity over nuclear doctrine could wrongfully create the impression of an unwilling Israel. Any doctrinal movement toward some as-yet-undetermined level of disclosure could meaningfully heighten the impression that Israel is in fact willing to follow through on a nuclear threat.

There are persuasive connections between more “open” Israeli strategic nuclear doctrine and certain enemy state perceptions of Israeli nuclear deterrence. One such connection centers on the relationship between greater openness and the perceived vulnerability of Israeli strategic nuclear forces to preemptive destruction. Another concerns the relation between greater openness and the perceived capacity of Israel's nuclear forces to penetrate the offending state's active defenses.

To be deterred by Israel, a newly nuclear Iran or any other nuclear adversary (potentially, one of the major Sunni Arab states also worried about Iran) would need to believe that at least a critical number of Israel's retaliatory forces would survive an enemy first strike, and that those forces could not subsequently be stopped from hitting their pre-designated targets in Iran or anywhere else.

Carefully articulated doctrinal openness, or partial nuclear disclosure, could be a rational option for Israel, at least to the extent that enemy states were made aware of Israel's nuclear capabilities. The operational benefits of any such expanding doctrinal openness would accrue from flows of information about matters of dispersion, multiplication, and hardening of strategic nuclear weapon systems, and about other technical features of these systems. Most important, doctrinally controlled and orderly flows of information could serve to remove any lingering enemy state doubts about Israel's strategic nuclear force capabilities and intentions.

Left unchallenged, such doubts could lethally undermine Israeli nuclear deterrence.

A key problem in purposefully refining Israeli strategic nuclear policy on deliberate ambiguity has to do with what Prussian military thinker Carl von Clausewitz famously called “friction.” No military doctrine can ever fully anticipate the actual pace of combat activity, or, as a corollary, the precise reactions of individual human commanders under fire. It follows that Israel’s nuclear doctrine must somehow be encouraged to combine tactical flexibility with a selective doctrinal openness. The question of how such seemingly contradictory objectives can be reconciled presents a primary intellectual challenge to Israel’s national command authority.

In thinking about plausible paths to nuclear war, Israeli planners must consider the risk of inadvertent or accidental nuclear war. Even if the risk of a deliberate nuclear war involving Israel is small, the Jewish State might remain vulnerable to such a war occasioned by a mechanical malfunction or human miscalculation.

Jerusalem must assess the intersecting risks between a deliberate nuclear war and an accidental nuclear war. These risks could exist independently of one another, and could be affected in various ways by Cold War II alignments. Moreover, Israel – like the US – must prepare to deal with issues of cyber-attack and cyber-war. These issues have to be considered together with the destabilizing advent of “digital mercenaries.”

There is one more core conceptual distinction that warrants mention: the difference between inadvertent and accidental nuclear war. By definition, any accidental nuclear war would be inadvertent. Conversely, however, an inadvertent nuclear war would not necessarily be accidental. False warnings, for example, which could be generated by technical malfunction or sparked by third-party hacking/digital mercenary interference (which might or might not have something to do with the dynamics of Cold War II), would not be included under causes of an unintentional or inadvertent nuclear war. Instead, they would represent cautionary narratives of an accidental nuclear war.

Most critical among the possible causes of inadvertent nuclear war would be errors in calculation by one or both (or several) sides. The most blatant example would involve misjudgments of either enemy intent or enemy capacity that emerge and propagate as a crisis escalates. Such misjudgments could stem from an amplified desire by one or several parties to achieve “escalation dominance.”

In any such crisis condition, all rational sides would likely strive for escalation dominance without too severely risking total or near-total destruction. Where one or several adversaries is not rational, all the usual deterrence bets would be off. In that instance, Jerusalem would need to input unorthodox security options, including some that could derive in whole or in part from prevailing Cold War II alignments.

Other causes of inadvertent nuclear war involving Israel could include flawed interpretations of computer-generated nuclear attack warnings; an unequal willingness among adversaries to risk catastrophic war; overconfidence in deterrence and/or defense capabilities on one or several sides (including Israel); adversarial regime changes; outright revolution or *coups d'état* among adversaries; and poorly conceived pre-delegations of nuclear launch authority among foes.

Overconfidence could be aggravated by successful tests of a nation's missile defense system, whether by Israel itself or by any of its adversaries. This problem could also be encouraged by over-optimistic assessments of Cold War II alliance guarantees. An example might be an intra-crisis judgment in Jerusalem that Washington stands firmly behind its every move during an ongoing crisis, up to and including certain forms of reprisal. An enemy of Israel could similarly mistake the commitment of its own preferred Cold War II guarantor (whether Russian or American).

A potential source of inadvertent nuclear war during Cold War II could be the backfiring of a strategy of pretended irrationality. A rational enemy of Israel that had managed to convince Jerusalem of its own irrationality could spark an otherwise avoidable Israeli military preemption. Conversely, an enemy leadership that had begun to take seriously any hint of decisional irrationality in Jerusalem could be frightened into striking first.

Regarding this second scenario, it should be remembered that many years ago, Moshe Dayan, then Israel's Minister of Defense, expressly argued that "Israel must be seen as a mad dog, too dangerous to bother."

But the demons of nuclear strategy and nuclear war will likely take a different form. For the most part, their mien is "rational." If they are thought to be sinister, it is not because their national leaders crave wanton bloodshed and carnage, but because they seek maximum safety for their own nations amid rising global chaos.

And while nations have always been in the “state of nature,”¹³ at least since the Peace of Westphalia (1648), current conditions of nuclear capacity and worldwide anarchy portend a uniquely dangerous amalgam.

Among other things, the reason for such dire portents lies in the indispensability of rational decision-making to viable nuclear deterrence, and the interpenetrating fact that rational decision-making can become subject to corrosive modification or even complete disappearance.

Although not readily discernible or predictable, these effects upon enemy rationality could be derived from the ever-changing dynamics of Cold War II. An example would be any strategic nuclear decisions in Tehran that are based in whole or in part upon that country’s interpretations or assessments of Cold War II.

With still largely unpredictable enlargements of Cold War II, Israeli decision-makers must systematically prepare for progressively higher seas. To avoid being pushed out to sea altogether, they will first have to prepare for unprecedented levels of world-systemic upheaval and transformation, and, correspondingly, for unfathomable levels of decisional complexity. In some cases, moreover, these calculations will even have to assume varying levels of enemy irrationality that could obtain among state, sub-state, or hybridized adversaries.

Of necessity, for Israel, a country smaller than Lake Michigan, ultimate survival tasks will be profoundly intellectual.¹⁴ These analytic victories, in turn, will depend upon the prior capacity to understand the many elements of Cold War II. In principle, at least, such capacity could lead Israel to consider certain preemption options. Any final decisions regarding such residual options would most properly be based upon:

1. expectations of enemy rationality or irrationality
2. expected likelihood of enemy first strikes
3. expected costs of enemy first strikes
4. expected schedule of enemy nuclear (or biological) weapons deployments
5. expected efficiencies of enemy active defenses over time
6. expected efficiencies of Israel’s active defenses over time

7. expected efficiencies of Israeli hard-target counterforce operations over time
8. expected reactions of unaffected regional enemies
9. expected US, Russian, and world reactions to the Israeli preemptions.

In Jerusalem, there will be forces pushing the Israeli ship of state out to sea, but these forces could still remain subject to national control. Among the qualities examined above, what will be most critical is an Israeli determination to face the bewildering complexities of world politics with more than just a perfunctory nod to Cold War II. Looking ahead, this continuously resurrecting expression of superpower bipolarity will define the systemic context within which Israel's evolving nuclear strategy takes its shape.

NOTES

- 1 See *Treaty of Peace of Munster*, Oct. 1648, 1 *Consol. T.S.* 271; and *Treaty of Peace of Osnabruck*, Oct. 1648, 1, *Consol. T.S.* 119. This "Westphalian" anarchy stands in stark contrast to the legal assumption of solidarity among all states in the presumably common struggle against aggression and terrorism. Such a peremptory expectation (known formally in international law as a *jus cogens* assumption), is mentioned in Justinian, *Corpus Juris Civilis* (533 C.E.); Hugo Grotius, 2 *De Jure Belli Ac Pacis Libri Tres*, Ch. 20 (Francis W. Kesey, tr., Clarendon Press, 1925) (1690); Emmerich De Vattel, 1 *Le Droit Des Gens*, Ch. 19 (1758).
- 2 Historically, the idea of a balance of power - an idea of which the nuclear age balance of terror is a variant - has never really been more than a facile and perilous metaphor. In fact, it has never had anything to do with true equilibrium. As balance is always a matter of individual and more-or-less subjective perception, adversary states can never be fully confident that strategic circumstances are balanced in their favor. In consequence, each side perpetually fears that it will be left behind, and the search for balance produces ever-wider patterns of insecurity and disequilibrium.
- 3 In essence, postulating the emergence of Cold War II means expecting the world system to become increasingly bipolar.
- 4 One issue here would concern Israeli reliance upon the US for "extended deterrence." Alternatively, Israel could find itself lined up more closely on certain issues with Moscow than with Washington. See, on such ironic prospects: Louis René Beres, "Staying Strong: Enhancing Israel's Essential Strategic Options," *Harvard National Security Journal*, June 13, 2014.
- 5 For the crime of aggression under international law, see: *Resolution on the Definition of Aggression*, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly, Dec. 14, 1974, U.N.G.A. Res. 3314 (xxix), 29 U.N. GAOR, Supp. (No. 31), 142, U.N. Doc. A/9631 (1975), reprinted in 13 I.L.M., 710 (1974).
- 6 A great deal has been written on questions of "strategic depth." The heart of this issue was addressed as early as June 29, 1967, when a U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum specified that returning Israel to the pre-1967 boundaries would drastically increase its vulnerability. The-then Chairman of the JCS,

Gen. Earl Wheeler, concluded that for minimal deterrence and defense, Israel must retain Sharm al-Sheikh and Wadi Giral in the Sinai; the entire Gaza Strip; the high ground and plateaus of the West Bank mountains; and the Golan Heights, east of Quneitra.

- 7 In genuinely scientific terms, of course, there are no reliably accurate ways to appraise these unprecedented prospects as true and ascertainable probabilities.
- 8 Recalling the Roman Stoic philosopher and statesman Cicero, in *The Letters to His Friends*: “For what can be done against force, without force?” During the nuclear age, the traditional term “balance of power” has been largely replaced with the more technologically appropriate “balance of terror.” For the conceptual origins of this historic replacement see Albert Wohlstetter, “The Delicate Balance of Terror,” *Foreign Affairs*, 37/2, January 1959, pp. 211-34.
- 9 In this connection, Israel must always ensure that it does not enter into any agreements that might threaten its physical existence. Thomas Jefferson, third president of the US, wrote about this core obligation as generic for all nations. Writing in his *Opinion on the French Treaties* (April 28, 1793), Jefferson opined: “The nation itself, bound necessarily to whatever its preservation and safety require, cannot enter into engagements contrary to its indispensable obligations.” Merrill D. Peterson, *The Political Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Monticello Monograph Series, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, 1993, p. 115.
- 10 For this distinction, see, for example, Louis René Beres and Gen. (US/ret.) Barry McCaffrey, “Israel’s Nuclear Strategy and US National Security” (Tel Aviv, 2016).
- 11 The underlying idea of an apocalypse seems to have been born in ancient Iran (Persia) - specifically, with the Manichaeism of the Zoroastrians. Interestingly, at least one of these documents, *The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, found in a Qumran cave, is a comprehensive description of Jewish military tactics and regulations at the end of the Second Commonwealth. In essence, the Sons of Light were expected to prevail in battle against the Sons of Darkness before the end of days, and the later fight at Masada was widely interpreted as an apocalyptic struggle between a saintly few and the many wicked.
- 12 Regarding preemption, the Israeli precedents for any such defensive moves would be the destruction of the Iraqi nuclear reactor on June 7, 1981, and the destruction of Syria’s nuclear reactor on September 6, 2007.

- 13 Says Thomas Hobbes: “But though there had never been any time wherein particular men were in a condition of war one against another, yet in all times, Kings and Persons of Sovereign Authority, because of their Independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators, having their weapons pointing and their eyes fixed on one another....(*Leviathan*).
- 14 For this term, I am indebted to FE Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* (1957).
- 15 A long-studied passage in Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* explains that earlier Scholastics were like spiders, weaving webs out of their own heads without any consideration of surrounding facts. While these webs were inherently admirable on account of their workmanship and “fineness of thread,” they were lacking in substance. (I, iv., 5). Presently, in explaining Israel's nuclear doctrine amid historical structural anarchy, it is important to construct dialectical arguments upon well-reasoned analytic foundations, and not on diaphanous constructions of modern-day Scholastics.

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