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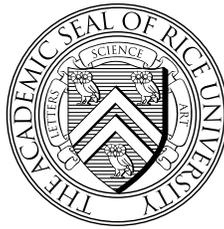
**WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND THE MIDDLE EAST:
THE VIEW FROM ISRAEL**

By Ze'ev Schiff

The Isaac and Mildred Brochstein Fellow in Peace and Security
James A. Baker III, Institute for Public Policy
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in Honor of Yitzak Rabin

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Biography

ZE'EV SCHIFF

Ze'ev Schiff is the Isaac and Mildred Brochstein Fellow in Peace and Security at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University.

The defense editor of the leading Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*, Mr. Schiff is the author of several books and numerous articles on strategic and military subjects. His books include *A History of the Israeli Defense Forces*, *Earthquake in October*, *Israel's Lebanon War*, and *The Intifida* (with Ehud Ya'ari). His articles have been published in magazines and newspapers such as *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *The National Interest*, *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, and *The Los Angeles Times*.

Mr. Schiff has received a number of Israeli awards for journalism, including the prestigious Sokolov Prize. He is also the recipient of the President Haim Herzog Prize, awarded for special contribution to the State of Israel.

Mr. Schiff has been a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment and fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He also has served on the council of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

Mr. Schiff is married with two children and resides in Tel Aviv, Israel.

INTRODUCTION

The most important objective of the confrontation with Iraq is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It is a strategic objective that takes precedence over everything else and that, in certain circumstances, would constitute a *casus belli*. All other goals of the confrontation with Iraq are either secondary or a function of the chief objective. The demand to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime is based primarily on the assumption that as long as it is in power, it would not be possible to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq because Saddam Hussein would either prevent it or resume developing such weapons once the weapons inspectors accomplish their mission and leave Iraq. The planned overthrow of the regime is also based on the assumption that with weapons of mass destruction in his possession, Saddam Hussein would ultimately use them against his neighbors. Saddam Hussein already has used these weapons twice. In the Iraq-Iran war, he ordered the use of chemical weapons against the Iranians. His brutality reached its peak when, doubting their loyalty, he used chemical weapons again against Kurds in the Halabja region—his own citizens.

The danger posed by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam Hussein is not restricted to the Middle East. Such weapons could well reach radical terrorist organizations that have absolutely no political or moral restraints. They are liable to use WMD anywhere in the world, against American, British, Israeli or other targets—anyone, in fact, standing in their way. Clearly, the finger of Saddam Hussein on the nuclear trigger could pose a serious threat to regional as well as international stability.

That can be said to be Israel's official position, and its position on this issue is unequivocal. Being on the front line facing Iraq, Israel considers the present situation to be a strategic

threat. If Saddam Hussein successfully develops nuclear weapons, he and his regime would threaten and imperil Israel's very existence. Because of Israel's small geographic dimensions and the concentration of its population in a narrow strip, that danger is greatly magnified. The threat to Israel will become many times more intense if other countries in the area, such as Iran, are armed with nuclear weapons.

We need to bear in mind that of the countries invading Israel during the 1948 war for independence, Iraq was the only one that did not sign the armistice agreements with the newly established state. Iraqi leaders have declared over and over again that they were at war with Israel. Saddam has called for the destruction of the Jewish State. In addition to the 1948 war, Iraqi forces took part in the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur (October) War. During the 1991 Gulf War, Israel was the target of Saddam Hussein's missiles, some 40 of which, launched from western Iraq, were aimed at its population. For fear that Saddam Hussein might use chemical weapons against Israel, gas masks were issued to the entire population. Iraq has also extended considerable support to a number of terrorist organizations operating against Israel. Saddam Hussein makes a special point of donating large sums of money to families of Palestinian suicide bombers.

It is only natural that the Israeli intelligence services should attach special importance to all information concerning Iraqi efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. However, Iraq is not the only intelligence target. Every other country in the region seeking to make or obtain weapons of mass destruction awakens Israel's curiosity. Israel also keeps track of other countries, often geographically remote, that are potential suppliers of weapons of mass destruction. The basic assumption is that the production of WMD must be stopped;

otherwise the region, and especially Israel, would be in a most precarious situation. The Iraqi issue must not be treated as an isolated, self-contained problem. The fate of Iraq will profoundly affect the strategic picture of the whole Middle East and far beyond. In the region, a swift and smashing victory in Iraq would create many opportunities. A slow, lame, and inconclusive victory that leaves WMD in the hands of Iraq could undermine regional stability. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, and Jordan would face growing threats. Much of Israel's deterrence capacity would be blunted, and the temptation to attack Israel by various means, including WMD, would grow. Consideration of benefits and risks of a war against Iraq, therefore, requires the broadest possible strategic context.

Defeat of Saddam Hussein and the removal of WMD from Iraq could, for example, offer an excellent opportunity to address the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Failure to exploit this opportunity would only invite the Israeli Right and settlers to stick to their settlement project in the territories. It would imply a continued Israeli occupation—a sure recipe for ongoing terrorism. It could end in a military confrontation with Hezbollah and Syria, which backs it. To miss another such opportunity would cause endless trouble. An opportunity presented itself in 1991 when the Bush Administration and Secretary James A. Baker, III set up the Madrid peace conference. Direct negotiations between Israel and some Arab delegations took place for the first time, resulting in the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO. Peace was signed between Israel and Jordan, and direct talks began between Israel and Syria. Because of mistakes made by both parties, some of these opportunities were not properly utilized. Defeat of Saddam might offer the opportunity to resume the peace process.

Should the war fail to eliminate the menace of WMD from Iraq, other Middle East countries are likely to develop or try to obtain them. It is also possible that a number of Arab countries would one day form a coalition aimed at obtaining nuclear weapons. Members of such a coalition might imagine that they could resist international pressure and the threat of sanctions more effectively together rather than alone. If Saddam Hussein has succeeded in obtaining nuclear weapons, why not do likewise? Some would call it a defensive necessity.

The possibility that in addition to Iraq, other Middle Eastern countries (like Iran or Libya) would become armed with nuclear weapons could induce a change in Israel's nuclear policy. So far, Israel has been firm in upholding its image as an undeclared nuclear country. It neither confirms nor denies possession of nuclear weapons. This obviously involves avoiding any nuclear tests. If the Middle East slips into multipolar nuclear arming, Israel could conceivably change its attitude and its policy. Such a change might result from security concerns, the hawkish political positions of an elected Israeli government, or the pressure of public opinion and the desire to pacify such pressures. Israel could, for instance, decide on a nuclear test. It could give up its nuclear ambiguity and declare that it is a nuclear country. It could decide to produce tactical nuclear weapons and reject the idea that nuclear weapons are intended solely for the case of a genuine threat to survival. With Iran moving to achieve nuclear weapons, more and more Israelis claim the need to build capacity for a second strike, despite the vast investment this would require.

However, successful liquidation of WMD in Iraq would be a warning to whoever may be planning to follow Saddam's example in developing such weapons. We intend to prove that the development of nuclear and other WMD is

already on its way. At all events, successful liquidation of WMD in Iraq would offer a chance to delay and slow down the nuclearization process. It might be a chance to set new regional restrictions for arms control and inspection arrangements.

The problem of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East involves countries outside the region. North Korea is an outstanding example. Though situated at the other end of Asia, it is deeply and directly active in a number of Middle East countries in the production of missiles and enriching uranium for nuclear arms.

Pakistan also cannot be overlooked. A Muslim country, Pakistan possesses nuclear weapons and is under military rule following a coup d'état. It received generous Saudi financial aid for the development of its nuclear project. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have both wholeheartedly supported the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which in turn extended its patronage to Bin Laden and Al Qaida.

IRAQ

Iraq is rated as the most dangerous Middle East country today in all that concerns weapons of mass destruction. Though it is not the only country to possess such weapons, Iraq is the only country to have used them since World War II and the only country to block UN inspectors from accomplishing their mission to dispose of them. In 1998, Saddam Hussein forced an end to UNSCOM, the UN Special Commission, which had been operating for seven years. In late 1999, the UN replaced UNSCOM by another organization—UNMOVIC—UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission. Baghdad's objections made it impossible for UNMOVIC to begin work, until President George W. Bush

threatened military action. All reports submitted by Iraq have either been incomplete or false. In fact, it is rather doubtful that weapons of mass destruction could be spotted effectively under UNMOVIC inspection rules. UNSCOM inspection veterans (i.e. Stephen Black, Robert Gallucci, David Kay, David Kelly, and John Larrabee) told a roundtable on the control of nuclear weapons, held in Washington on November 6, 2002, that they doubted the efficacy of the organization under the rules, which UNMOVIC itself has set.

At the same time, UNMOVIC chairman Hans Blix believes that his organization stands a very good chance of success in Iraq. Speaking in Ottawa on August 28, 2001, where he addressed an UNMOVIC inspectors training course, Blix said that the most important point to keep in mind was that more weapons of mass destruction have been destroyed in Iraq thanks to UNSCOM than had been destroyed during the Gulf War. Blix ignores the fact that but for the war, Iraq would not have agreed to admit UNSCOM inspectors and would have continued to keep information from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which Blix headed. Blix pointed out that "a failure to ensure the eradication of Iraq's program of weapons of mass destruction would be a serious setback and would send the wrong signal in the global issue of nonproliferation and concerning the future effort to achieve regional arms control in the Middle East."

Many experts agree that of all the Arab countries, Iraq now has the most advanced infrastructure, mainly in human resources, for the development of nuclear weapons. That explains British prime minister Tony Blair's assertion that if Iraq obtains fissile material, it could produce nuclear weapons within a year or two. President Bush has spoken of six months, if Iraq acquires fissile material. In his Ottawa address, Hans Blix said that information had emerged after the Gulf War that Iraq

was perhaps a year away from obtaining nuclear weapons without being exposed by the IAEA.

Before the Gulf War, Iraq received aid for its nuclear project when nobody suspected the military nature of the Iraqi nuclear project—that is, nobody except Israel, which smashed the Iraqi atomic reactor in 1981. Later on, an extensive enquiry revealed that aid had come from companies as well as the governments of Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Brazil, Sweden, Poland, and Nigeria. Surprisingly enough, aid also came from the United States, which, at the time, regarded Iraq as the “good guy” in the Iraq–Iran war. In its continuing quest for nuclear weapons since the Gulf War, Iraqis have turned to South Africa and other countries for uranium ore and other dubious acquisitions. Before the arrival of the present delegation of inspectors headed by Blix, Saddam demonstrated his resolve by announcing that he had instructed the head of the atomic energy commission of Iraq to step up its activities.

NORTH KOREA

Of the countries now promoting nuclear proliferation, the most prominent is North Korea, labeled by President Bush as one of the three countries forming an “axis of evil.” North Korea’s military activity in the Middle East has been growing, beginning with missile development aid to Pakistan and then to Syria, Iran, Libya, and Egypt. North Korea supplies missile engines and parts and assists construction of missile production lines. In the early ’90s, in return for such aid, Pakistan supplied North Korea with nuclear technology. Pakistan’s nuclear aid included development of centrifuges for the production of enriched uranium. Years later, after North Korea’s nuclear weap-

ons project had progressed, it began extending nuclear aid to Middle East countries.

Here, North Korea created a very dangerous precedent. To conceal nuclear activity at home—especially after having reached agreement with the United States in 1994 to replace its nuclear reactors with reactors operated by light water, which does not produce plutonium—North Korea moved part of its nuclear operation to Iran. Thus, two countries of the “axis of evil” cooperate in the nuclear field. It is not unlikely that a similarly secret partnership has been concluded between North Korea and Libya. In Iran, North Korea has focused on setting up uranium-enriching centrifuges; in return, Iran receives a part of the produce of that device, which almost has become operational. The North Koreans also have been given the go-ahead from Tehran to experiment in Iran with their Taepo Dong, an advanced missile engine with a range of up to kms 5000. Here again, the Iranians are getting something for their pains. The Iranian Shihab-3 missile is practically a carbon copy of the North Korean No Dong.

The conclusion is that in the field of WMD, the Middle East cannot be viewed as a separate geographical region. To hinder the development of WMD in the Middle East, it is necessary to deal simultaneously and vigorously with countries like North Korea, which consistently violate their commitments. The problem with North Korea took a turn for the worse on January 10, 2003, when Pyongyang announced its immediate break with Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). North Korea’s representatives had previously admitted that their country had a nuclear weapons program and had expelled IAEA inspectors. All this happened in defiance of the North Korean agreement with the United States signed in Geneva in 1994; its agreements with KEDO, the international organization incorporating Japan and South Korea; and the agree-

ment signed with South Korea in December 1991. Under these agreements, Pyongyang is bound to discontinue its plutonium and nuclear weapons production programs in return for the construction of light water reactors in North Korea and the supply of heavy fuel (financed by the U.S., South Korea, Japan, and the European Union.)

The violation of agreements concerning the nuclear issue has become a regular North Korean practice. The implementation of almost every clause signed by Pyongyang always has been fraught with delays and blackmail. Demands often are for money, food, fuel, or "compensation" for alleged damages. In most cases, Pyongyang manages to have its way. For every North Korean compromise, some sort of remuneration needs to be made. Various mediation efforts by former president Jimmy Carter and former defense secretary William Perry have been temporarily successful, but only in return for more concessions to North Korea. Various politicians in South Korea maintain that nuclear weapons provide Pyongyang with a means to extort funds to ease North Korea's difficult economic situation. This may be true, but it also proves that if that practice works, North Korea would not be in a hurry to give it up. It would hold on to it as long as possible, just as it has been doing for years, and would resort to it regularly in other regions the world over. The North Korean precedent in breaking with the NPT treaty necessarily affects the future of that international treaty as well as the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The North Korean nuclear problem escalated into a full-blown crisis with Saddam Hussein's refusal to reveal and remove his weapons of mass destruction, making the danger of war in Iraq more acute. Pyongyang obviously views the preoccupation of the United States and the international community with Iraq as a window of opportunity. The danger is

not that North Korea will launch a nuclear strike against the South or against other of its neighbors. The North Korean danger is global and that is how it should be seen.

In recent years, North Korea has contributed to the destabilization of the Middle East, more so, perhaps, than any other country. It has been supplying ground-to-ground missiles to a number of countries in the region. It has started setting up missile production lines in a number of countries such as Syria and Libya. It has extended the range of the missiles, improved their precision and increased the carrying capacity of their warheads. North Korea signed an agreement with Egypt for the delivery of 50 No Dong missile engines (medium range), but this agreement was canceled under pressure from Washington. At the height of the Iraqi crisis, North Korea sold Scud Missiles to Yemen. That consignment was intercepted on its way from North Korea by Spanish and American naval forces. Various intelligence services are convinced that Yemen has procured these missiles in N. Korea for Iraq. Israel fears that if the North Korean crisis is not settled, Pyongyang would try to form an anti-American coalition in the Middle East comprising Iran, Syria, and Libya. Ten years ago, Korea held informal negotiations with Israel on a possible deal. In return for discontinuing the export of ground-to-ground missiles to the Middle East, Pyongyang demanded a billion dollars to cover the various losses incurred by the cancelled sales. When Washington told Israel to leave the problem to the U.S., Prime Minister Rabin complied, placing Israel in a silent subordinate position. Now, 10 years later, it has become quite clear that the problem of the North Korean missiles in the Middle East and elsewhere has worsened. Now that a North Korean danger to Israel has grown, Israel might seek its own direct contacts, in coordination with Washington, of course. It has done so in its contacts with Russia regarding

the latter's ties with Iran and has done the same in contacts with China.

What Israel fears most is that having already sold missile technology, North Korea would sell nuclear technology as well. If the North Korean crisis deepens, North Korea might be willing to sell fissionable material and parts for the production of nuclear weapons or its expertise in building the kind of subterranean sites it has built at home. A study by the Congressional Reference Service of the Library of Congress (August 2002) states the U.S. perception of the danger succinctly: "The Administration's fear was that North Korea would have the means to export atomic bombs to other states and possess a nuclear missile capability that would threaten Japan and U.S. territories in the Pacific Ocean."

IRAN—*The Growing Nuclear Threat*

Iran's place in a nuclear-armed Middle East is central. Because of the ideology dominating its radical Islamic regime and its relentless call for the destruction of Israel, Iran may well become a very dangerous player.

The following outlines the contributing factors to Iran's nuclear activity:

Iran has a secret plan to obtain nuclear weapons and is busy putting it into practice. To that end, Iran obtains know-how, technology, and equipment from Russia, North Korea, and China or other sources. This is something on which a number of central intelligence services agree. A signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran is nevertheless engaged in underhanded activities in defiance of the treaty and its Safeguards appendix. The most glaring violation is a large nuclear fuel project in Natanz, being constructed north of Isfahan. Iran is the

last remaining NPT signatory that has yet to agree to the special clauses of the additional protocol allowing inspectors of the international nuclear agency to carry out more meticulous inspection operations. These clauses would allow inspection in places not listed among the locations specified by the inspected country. Because of the delay in signing, Iran has twice been cited in internal reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Presumably, Iran is "working to obtain nuclear weapons, and unless its efforts are thwarted, it will become nuclear. If Iran chooses to embark on a nuclear weapons program, it will avoid signing the Additional Protocol as long as it can resist the consequent political and technological pressure, which is currently limited. Moreover, it will most likely sign [but not ratify] the Additional Protocol only after it overcomes all technical obstacles to the production of a nuclear weapon, obtains all the necessary resources, and, most likely, begins to produce fissile material" (Chen Zak, *Iran's Nuclear Policy and the IAEA*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001).

Iran's secret endeavors to obtain nuclear weapons are quite extensive and proceed on a number of concurrent tracks, starting with the procurement of uranium (UF6) from China to operate the centrifuge to enrich uranium and ending with an agreement with North Korea to produce enriched uranium on Iranian soil and perform tests with the engine of a long-range missile. The agreement guarantees Iran an allocation of North Korean enriched uranium. Most significant is the extensive construction in Natanz of the nuclear fuel production project. Activity there is shrouded in considerable mystery and is, so far, off limits to IAEA inspectors. At a press conference in Washington on August 14, 2002, Alireza Jafarzadeh, a leading figure of the Mujahedin in Iran, said that construction in Natanz began some two years ago. To conceal the operation, the

project was described as intended to revive the desert. According to Jafarzadeh, the main construction work is nearing conclusion and will cost \$300 million.

Iran will step up its nuclear activity if it turns out that the weapons of mass destruction in Iraqi hands are not totally eliminated. However, if the weapons of mass destruction in Iraqi hands are eliminated, it may have a restraining effect on the Iranians.

Top Iranian officials, including President Khatami's entourage, are unanimous on the need for a nuclear-armed Iran to effectively deter potential enemies. During the Gulf War, Iran became the only country since World War II to suffer attack by WMD, when Iraqi forces deployed poison gas. The international community was notably indifferent. That indifference sustains the predominant Iranian view that Iran is fully justified to arm itself with nuclear weapons for defense and deterrence. To achieve deterrence in the Middle East, conventional military capabilities are not enough. It would appear that one of the main lessons Iran has learned from the Gulf War is that care should be taken not to repeat Saddam's mistakes. Tehran will take care not to be caught violating the NPT and will try to avoid an excuse for military force against it because of its nuclear project.

One may reasonably assume that Iran would adopt a policy of nuclear ambiguity if and when it obtains nuclear weapons. Iran would probably prefer to take this line rather than quit the NPT. It is doubtful that Iran would follow the example of India and Pakistan, which carried out nuclear tests. Iran's deterrence would have to be achieved by subtle means. The nuclear ambiguity adopted by Israel could provide a model, though unlike Iran. Israel has not signed the NPT and is not violating any international convention.

A nuclear-armed Iran would create a strategic upheaval in the area. Its repercussions

would be felt in neighboring Turkey, a NATO member. It would certainly shake Israel's self-confidence in the face of what it regards as a strategic threat that needs to be neutralized. Having relinquished weapons of mass destruction, a new, post-Saddam Iraq would rightly ask whether Iranian nuclear arming did not pose a threat. In Saudi Arabia there is sure to be a growing desire to buy nuclear capability. In Egypt there would probably be a rise in voices claiming that there is no alternative to acquiring nuclear weapons.

PAKISTAN, LIBYA AND SAUDI ARABIA

When Benazir Bhutto came into power in Pakistan in 1988, she first heard about her country's nuclear arsenal, not from the officers in charge of Pakistan's nuclear activities, but from American representatives. From its early stages the nuclear weapons project in Pakistan has been in the hands of the military and under their control, free of any practical involvement of the political leadership. Political leadership in Pakistan is shaky. Owing to military pressure, not one of Pakistan's elected prime ministers has been able to complete his or her term of office. Since the foundation of Pakistan, there have been four military coups d'état. Adding to the instability, Pakistan has been embroiled in three wars with its neighbor India—another nuclear state. Pakistan also has been involved in guerilla warfare and terrorism. Unlike democratic countries where the military are subordinate to the elected government, in Pakistan, control of nuclear weapons and the decision to use them have always been in the hands of the military.

Neither Pakistan nor India has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty nor the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Both countries have carried out nuclear tests, including hydro-

gen power. After India's and Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998, the U.S. imposed sanctions on both countries. These sanctions were lifted when Pakistani leader General Musharraf sided with the United States in the war against Al Qaida and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which provided Al Qaida with a base. Together with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan had formerly cultivated the Taliban regime. When sanctions were lifted, Pakistan actually became, if not formally so, a nuclear power recognized by Washington. Is Pakistan liable to pass on nuclear technology to other countries in the Middle East or elsewhere? And how safe are the nuclear weapons in its possession?

In January 1999, after Pakistan had performed nuclear tests, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that his country would reinforce the rules banning the export of nuclear technology. The army deposed Sharif. General Musharraf, his successor, reiterated Sharif's promise, emphasizing that he was aware of the sensitivity to global nonproliferation and disarmament. Life has taught us that political promises are not always kept. The short history of Pakistan's development of missiles and nuclear weapons has taught us the same lesson.

In the early '90s, Pakistan concluded a deal with North Korea for the exchange of missile and nuclear technology. Islamabad obtained from North Korea parts of missiles that, among other things, would help produce its Ghauri ground-to-ground missile, capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and identical to attributes of the North Korean No Dong and the Iranian missiles developed subsequently, the Shihab-3. In return, Pakistan passed on know-how and technology for the construction of the uranium-enriching centrifuge. Years later, North Korea passed on this information to Iran and probably to other countries in the Middle East. North Korea and Iran traded in technology for the production of nuclear

weapons, which had originally come from Pakistan.

According to intelligence reports, part of the funds needed to develop Pakistan's nuclear project came from Saudi Arabia. Islamabad had very close connections with Saudi Arabia, including military cooperation. In the past, the Saudis invited Pakistan to deploy forces in Saudi Arabia, apparently with the object of protecting the regime. Two Pakistani brigades were deployed in Saudi Arabia for an extended period. In return, Islamabad was granted considerable financial aid, probably as convenient cover for the transfer of funds for the Pakistani nuclear project. Cooperation between Islamabad and Riyadh also included an understanding to support Afghanistan's Taliban regime.

Quite unexpectedly, Saudi Arabia has been showing an interest in nuclear cooperation with the Pakistanis. Saudi representatives have actually been granted a rare visit to Pakistani nuclear installations. Saudi Arabia's interest recently has been reported in a State Department journal. In the past, Saudi Arabia had shown no interest in weapons of mass destruction, although it suspected that Iraq and Iran posed a threat. Riyadh always had solid grounds to count on Washington's backing against these threats. All the same, many commentators agree with Richard Russell ("A Saudi Nuclear Option." *Survival*, Summer 2001) that Saudi Arabia now considers it a mistake to count exclusively on American defense in light of Iranian and Iraqi nuclear resolve and is considering building its own deterrent force.

If the Saudis do acquire nuclear weapons, they have missiles to deliver them. In the mid-'80s Saudi Arabia unexpectedly obtained from China ground-to-ground missiles known as CSS-2, missiles with a range of kms 3000 or more, capable of carrying a 2.5-ton warhead. The Saudis never told Washington in advance

about this \$3.5 billion deal. Saudi prestige rather than strategic necessity played the decisive role. Saudi Arabia currently is negotiating with China on upgrading of the old CSS-2. In November 2000, when China signed an agreement with Washington, undertaking to refrain from the sale of missiles and their spare parts to other countries, it surprised the Americans by requesting the exclusion of Saudi Arabia from the agreement, arguing that the deal in question was of long standing. Missile experts believe that the chances of improving the old CSS-2 missiles are slender. If, as seems likely, the Chinese try to sell the Saudis new missiles instead, they will be in violation of their agreement with the United States. The Saudi missiles affair proves yet again that the problem of WMD cannot be confined to any single region. Reports recently have been spreading about Pakistani cooperation with Libya. Relations between Pakistan and Libya always have been good. For years, Libya has been showing great interest in chemical, biological, as well as nuclear weapons of mass destruction. It has invested a lot of money in the construction of a chemical weapons project and has offered large sums of money to various countries in return for assistance in these areas. At a time when sanctions were imposed on Libya because of its terrorist activity and the involvement of Libyan intelligence in the Pan Am crash, there was a lull in Moammar Qaddafi's efforts to obtain WMD. When the sanctions were lifted in January 2003, Libya renewed its efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction. A country with a poor scientific and technological infrastructure, Libya is willing to pay large sums of money in return for scientific and technological assistance and technological acquisitions. U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control and international security affairs John Bolton has noted Libya's activities. "The U.S. suspects Libya has a longstanding pursuit of nuclear weapons, and since the lifting of UN

sanctions in 1999, the regime of Moammar Qaddafi has been able to increase his access to dual-use technology," Bolton said. These particulars also have been passed on to a number of European countries bordering on the Mediterranean interested in developments in Libya. Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon has made the surprising statement that Libya is liable to precede Iran in developing a working nuclear device.

Iraqi and North Korean experts have been assisting Libya. Experts from Pakistan also have been seen in Libya. The question is what do the Egyptians know about Libya's activities. Like Sudan, Libya is seen as Egypt's backyard. Unusual initiatives in these countries would be seen in Cairo as a threat to Egypt's vital interests. It is most unlikely that a Libyan initiative to arm itself with WMD would be treated with equanimity by the Egyptians, and it is doubtful that Egyptian intelligence would not know what John Bolton had reported.

Naturally enough, Pakistan's nuclear weapons cache excites great interest and much concern beyond its immediate neighbors. That also goes for the question of command and control of these weapons. The proximity of Pakistan to Afghanistan and the presence of terrorist elements in that country aggravate the question of nuclear security. It stands to reason that the Americans and the British have given some thought to various related scenarios. These scenarios could include control gained by insurgent units of the Pakistani army, a military coup d'etat, and the subsequent capture of all or part of the nuclear weapons. Most illuminating is the following expert conclusion of Gaurav Kampani, of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, Ca.:

"In the near term, there is little danger to either the security of Pakistan's fissile material installations or the safety of its nuclear command and control. Fears of domestic instability and factional infighting within the military are exaggerated. Although a

rogue military commander or unit could in theory gain control over a cache of fission bombs, their unconstituted nature, the enormous interorganizational effort required to reconstitute them, and the dense opacity surrounding the location of their constituent parts make that possibility remote. The small number of nuclear warheads in Pakistan's inventory and still smaller number of facilities used to produce fissile material also give national command authorities considerable advantages in protecting them against potential attacks by terrorists. To be sure, local hot spots and political instability could result in a temporary loss of control over some storage sites. However, the secrecy of the nuclear storage bunkers, the separation of military cantonments from civilian population centers, and the presumed military contingency planning, mitigate the dangers of that likelihood."

Pakistani commentators assert that the nuclear material is safe also because its main parts are distributed around the country, in secure military camps, and there is a plan to remove the material by air away from danger spots. According to these commentators, the allegedly radical Islamization process in Pakistan is exaggerated. But the recent general elections indicate that the Islamic organizations opposed to Pakistani support of the U.S. war against terror are powerful and could become even stronger. Qazi Hussein Ahmed, head of the Jamaat-e-Islami, a leading group in the Islamist union, has declared that the election results demonstrate that Musharraf's support of the United States is "a one-man move and does not follow the resolution of representatives elected by the people" (*The Wall Street Journal Europe*, October 14, 2002). Whereas General Musharraf has taken a step forward with the democratic elections, the results have caused him serious doubt about opening the new parliament.

It is most likely that the Islamic bodies exert appreciable influence on Pakistani military forces. That probably explains why General Musharraf supports militants calling for a

hard military line in Kashmir. This, in turn, is leading to a mounting confrontation with India and to fear of a nuclear confrontation between the two countries. In order to ensure the military support of his rule, Musharraf needs to secure the support of the radicals who demand a hard line in Kashmir. General Musharraf refuses to label the Islamic fighters in Kashmir as terrorists. What is happening in Kashmir, he calls Indian State terrorism (Interview in *Middle East Insight*, April 2002).

"Pakistan today is the most dangerous place on earth." That is veteran commentator Jim Hoagland's view of that country (*Herald Tribune-Washington Post*, October 25, 2002). The question is not how nuclear weapons are kept safe in that country, but whether a military coup d'etat is possible there. It has happened several times in the past, when an anonymous and irresponsible group of men took control of the nuclear weapons. Another question is whether the radical Islamic forces in Pakistan could grow steadily stronger, even within the framework of a democratic process. Both prospects would have appalling global repercussions.

THE ISRAELI STRATEGY

Neither Israel nor its strategy can be overlooked when discussing weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. For many years Israel was regarded as an undeclared nuclear state, having neither confirmed nor formally and publicly denied possession of nuclear capacity. On a number of occasions its leaders said Israel would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the region. Israel has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. At the same time, it has declared itself willing to sign the treaty against nuclear tests (CTBT), to which end it has carried out tests on its own

territory of detonation for calibration purposes. In all matters concerning its nuclear capability, Israel is conducting a deliberate policy of ambiguity, which it regards as best possible deterrence against its enemies, some of whom actually call for the destruction of the Jewish state. The governments of Israel have credited the policy of nuclear ambiguity as successful from every point of view. So long as the present strategic situation lasts with no unexpected changes, the policy will prevail.

Israel insists that, unlike India and Pakistan, it has never performed a nuclear test and strongly denies having any hand in what the press described as “a detonation, which was in fact a nuclear test” in the Indian Ocean facing the South African coast. India carried out its first nuclear test in 1974. Both India and Pakistan carried out tests in 1998. About these tests, Israel has remained silent. Moreover, while India objects to the NPT treaty because the treaty allegedly discriminates in favor of nuclear states over non-nuclear states, Israel is not opposed to that treaty, in principle. Israel argues that the treaty is not well-constructed regarding methods of supervision and control and fails to protect Israel from actual nuclear threats.

At the Madrid conference after the Gulf War, in deliberations with Egypt and other Arab countries at the Arms Control and Regional Security Committee (ACRS) chaired by the United States, Israel announced that it would be prepared to discuss joining the NPT two years after peace is reached with the remaining Arab countries and Iran. Egypt rejected Israel's proposal and walked out on the ACRS talks. Even if WMD in Iraq are eliminated, Israel's basic approach is unlikely to change, especially if countries such as Iran and Libya continue developing nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Israel's nuclear ambiguity has a disquieting effect on the Arabs. Egypt, for instance, de-

mands that Israel put all her cards on the table. It is doubtful that this is what the Egyptians really want because it might generate internal pressure in Egypt and other Arab countries to produce their own nuclear weapons. From Egypt's point of view, Israel's nuclear ambiguity seems to be the lesser evil.

The American administrations are well aware of Israel's unique security situation. They admit that as long as there are serious threats to its existence, Israel must maintain strategic deterrence. “Strategic deterrence” in Israeli terms means nuclear deterrence. At present, there is no American pressure on Israel to subscribe to the NPT without delay.

Israel, on its part, has treated its nuclear capability with the utmost discretion. It has never threatened any of its enemies with nuclear weapons. On the eve of the 1991 Gulf War, when there was a chance that Saddam Hussein would use weapons of mass destructions against it, Israel did not threaten Iraq with a nuclear counterattack. It was U.S. defense secretary Dick Cheney who told a CNN interviewer that Israel could strike back with great force and that Israel might possess nuclear weapons. Cheney was issuing Iraq the nuclear warning that Israel refused to issue. When, in the late '70s, it became clear to Israeli intelligence that Iraq was very busy developing nuclear weapons, the government of Israel resolved to take strong measures to prevent it. When all Israel's political initiatives failed, including appeals to governments directly involved in supplying Iraq with reactors and other technological equipment for developing nuclear energy, Israel commenced efforts on its own to restrain Iraq's nuclear enterprise. In a successful operation in 1981, the Israeli Air Force destroyed Osirak (Tammuz), the nuclear reactor located near Baghdad. Israel was condemned for its military operation, but the destruction of the reactor had obviously suspended Iraq's nuclear enter-

prise. Proceeding with greater secrecy after the Israeli attack, Saddam spread his nuclear project to different parts of the country to protect installations and weapons projects against total destruction. There is no doubt whatever that had Israel not destroyed the Iraqi reactor, the Gulf War would have been a much different war.

The question that Israel faced in 1981 could arise again if it turns out that Iran or Libya has been or is going to be armed with nuclear weapons, or it turns out that the UN inspectors have failed to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. There is also the question of what Israel should do if, in a war against Iraq, Saddam Hussein attacks Israel with weapons of mass destruction and causes massive loss of Israeli life. Would it be reasonable to expect a country such as Israel to sit back and leave it to other countries—the United States, in particular—to retaliate?

CONCLUSION

The countries of the Middle East now find themselves at the edge of an abyss. It is not only their mutual animosities that have brought them there but also the intrusion of powers from outside the region. Many of the countries that stand at the abyss are at the point of arming themselves with nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Each has its particular explanations and excuses. Every one of them leans on what it believes to be threats to its security, though rarely is the alleged threat genuine. Every one of them believes that weapons of mass destruction are the best deterrent against close or distant rivals, small powers and great. Every one wants the prestige that nuclear weaponry brings to the state. None of them says it wants these weapons to threaten, intimidate, or crush a rival.

One way to draw back from the abyss would be the elimination of Iraq's WMD and the facilities that are developing them. If Iraqi weapons of mass destruction are totally eliminated, the possibility opens for a thorough and comprehensive international supervision system in cooperation with the Iraqi regime. Without such cooperation—as in when the South African government decided to give up its nuclear weapons—it might not be possible to discover all the hiding places where missiles and weapons of mass destruction have been concealed. We already have seen that Security Council sanctions alone will not hinder Iraq from continuing its plans to produce weapons of mass destruction. There is some doubt that the present inspection, though theoretically extended after the Gulf War thanks to the additional IAEA protocol, could overcome the obstacles posed by a country determined to conceal its activities. The only effective means of disarming Iraq appears to be war. It would be war with aims that are totally different from all past wars, because its central objective would be the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of an extreme and dangerous regime. Elimination of weapons of mass destruction cannot be achieved by army units alone. Professional inspectors selected and trained for their mission must accompany them.

The successful removal of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq will be a clear warning to other countries in the process of becoming nuclear. It probably will not alter the nuclear reality in countries such as India or Pakistan, but it could draw a border, which says that Pakistan and India do not represent a precedent to be adopted and followed. A successful removal of the weapons of mass destruction from Iraq could pave the way for a revival of regional talks in the Middle East on arms control and regional security. These talks have been interrupted because of differences between Egypt

and Israel. If these talks are revived after the war in Iraq, the way will be clear for discussions on a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and threats of any kind.

Failure to eliminate Iraq's WMD could have disastrous consequences. Egypt, Libya, and Saudi Arabia would have new incentives to acquire nuclear weapons. Iran would feel newly threatened. A multipolar nuclear-armed Middle East would be dangerous for all countries, especially Israel. Opportunities for terrorist groups to obtain WMD would increase. Stability and American leadership would suffer. Deterrence against terrorist organizations and rogue states would weaken. Their boldness would grow. America's regional friends would lose faith in its will to protect them. Radical states and organizations like Iran, Iraq, and the Hezbollah would be emboldened to operate against Israel or against American interests in the Middle East. Future efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or elsewhere would be a far more arduous and intricate undertaking.

The struggle will not end with Iraq or the other aspiring nuclear powers of the Middle East. A forgiving attitude toward the nuclear violations of North Korea or any other countries supplying banned nuclear technology to the Middle East would only increase the appetite of the countries of the region to continue developing their nuclear projects. Israel will maintain its refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and will be spurred to ask the United States to sign a mutual defense pact. As an alternative, there will probably be an Israeli demand for the development of a "second strike" capability against an enemy country equipped with nuclear weapons.

The struggle is, therefore, global. It consists of the need to persuade countries like Russia and China to avoid handing over nuclear technology, even for civil uses to countries that cannot be trusted. Compared with

France, Russia has, in the past, manifested caution in transmitting nuclear technologies. In the case of Iran, that caution is no longer practiced. Progress toward international control is quite slow; apprehension of the future is becoming acute. The threat of a new military coup in Pakistan with radical Islamic forces in power only aggravates that fear.

Some argue that the international community has missed its chance, that the battle is lost because more and more countries are moving toward nuclear arming and cannot be stopped and that countries like North Korea and Iran already have crossed the point of no return. It follows that the object of the struggle now can only be to slow down the process of nuclear arming. This pessimistic view is not accepted universally. According to Israeli intelligence, for instance, there still is a chance of arresting the nuclearization of the Middle East; the door has not been shut on that struggle. It all depends on the course of events in Iraq. The struggle includes a variety of means, ranging from economic inducements and political pressure, regional settlements and sanctions, all the way to war when all else fails—war with the mission of taking the weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of a country that threatens its neighbors as well as international stability. Action should be timely and swift in order to prevent the enemy from using the very weapons that it is the purpose of the war to eliminate once and for all.