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DECEPTIONS OF A “NUCLEAR WEAPONS-FREE WORLD”

Why President Barack Obama’s Good Intentions Could Bring Genocidal War to Israel

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In his clearly expressed preference for a world without nuclear weapons, US President Barack Obama certainly means well. To be sure, his idealized vision of such a world seems at least viscerally desirable. The issue, however, is not just the enduring and possibly irremediable security problem of strategic uncertainty and verification, but also that nuclear weapons are not inherently evil or even *per se* destabilizing. In many critical circumstances, as we should already have learned from basic Soviet-American peace during the Cold War, nuclear weapons can even be indispensable to the avoidance of catastrophic war.

For the most part, President Obama is correct. Any further nuclear proliferation would surely be intolerable, and should therefore be contained at all costs. Nonetheless, there are some nation-states in our decentralized world system (international lawyers call it the “Westphalian” system after the major 1648 peace treaty that first brought it into existence) that could never survive in the global “state of nature” without nuclear deterrence. *Israel is assuredly the single most obvious case in point.* Should the Jewish state ever have to face its myriad enemies without such deterrence, its already-planned annihilation by these relentless

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enemies would be hastened and expanded. This apocalyptic situation would obtain even if all these enemy states were themselves non-nuclear.

More than any other state on earth, Israel requires nuclear weapons just to remain alive. Whether ambiguous or disclosed, to ever give up these weapons in exchange for *any* abstract promises of peace through general nuclear disarmament could represent the start of another Jewish genocide. This is not hyperbole, but rather the inescapable conclusion of altogether sound strategic analysis. *By no means are war and genocide mutually exclusive, either strategically or jurisprudentially.*

For a variety of reasons, any concrete proposals for a “Nuclear Weapon Free Zone” in the Middle East would ignore the obvious. Should Israel, forced to yield to well-meaning pressures from the new American president in Washington, begin a process of actual de-nuclearization, nothing of decisive military consequence would remain in the way of coordinated Arab and/or Iranian attacks. Ultimately, in all war, as Clausewitz understood, “*mass counts*”. Without nuclear weapons, appropriately configured and purposefully recognizable, the existential core of Israel’s capacity to deter major assaults would promptly disappear.

It is imperative that President Obama now proceed to look beyond wholly idealized visions of a new world order, and that he begin to look far more precisely and concretely at actual theaters and dynamics of probable conflict. From the standpoint of Israel in particular, which ought never to place its physical survival in the hands of the United States (*especially not now*), what is needed immediately is a comprehensive and systematic re-examination of Jerusalem/Tel Aviv’s core nuclear doctrine. When, sooner or later, it is forced to defend its essential nuclear posture from calls to join a regional “nuclear weapons free-zone” Israel should already have available on hand a lucid and compelling explanation of its correct refusal.

Why, then, must Israel remain a nuclear power? Here is the detailed and complete answer that Prime Minister Netanyahu should prepare to transmit to President Obama.

1. Israel needs nuclear weapons to *deter* large conventional attacks by enemy states. The effectiveness of such Israeli nuclear deterrence will depend, among other things, upon:
 - a Perceived vulnerability of Israeli nuclear forces;
 - b Perceived destructiveness of Israeli nuclear forces;
 - c Perceived willingness of Israeli leadership to follow through on nuclear threats;
 - d Perceived capacities of prospective attacker's active defenses;
 - e Perceptions of Israeli targeting doctrine;
 - f Perceptions of Israel's probable retaliatory response when there is an expectation of non-nuclear but chemical and/or biological counter-retaliations;
 - g Disclosure or continued nondisclosure of Israel's nuclear arsenal; and
 - h Creation or non-creation of a Palestinian state.
2. Israel needs nuclear weapons to *deter* all levels of unconventional (chemical/biological/nuclear) attacks. The effectiveness of these forms of Israeli nuclear deterrence will also depend, on (a) to (h) above. In this connection, Israel's nuclear weapons are needed to deter enemy *escalation* of conventional warfare to unconventional warfare, and of one form of unconventional warfare to another (i.e.,

escalation of chemical warfare to biological warfare, biological warfare to chemical warfare, or biological/chemical warfare to nuclear warfare). This means, in military parlance, a capacity for “*escalation dominance*”.

3. Israel needs nuclear weapons to *preempt* enemy nuclear attacks. This does *not* mean that Israeli preemptions of such attacks would necessarily be nuclear (more than likely, they would almost certainly be non-nuclear), but only that they could conceivably be nuclear. Of course, should Israel ever need to use its nuclear forces for such a purpose, it would signify the utter failure of these forces as a *deterrent* (per number 2, above). Significantly, such failure is increasingly plausible because of the problematic nature of nuclear deterrence in general, and because of the particular circumstances of the Islamic Middle East regarding decisional *rationality*.
4. Israel needs nuclear weapons to support conventional preemptions against enemy nuclear assets. With such weapons, Israel can maintain, explicitly or implicitly, a threat of nuclear counter-retaliation. Without such weapons, Israel, having to rely entirely on non-nuclear forces, might not be able to deter enemy retaliations for the Israeli preemptive attack. This also relates to the need for “*escalation dominance*”.
5. Israel needs nuclear weapons to support conventional preemptions against enemy non-nuclear (conventional/chemical/biological) assets. With such weapons, Israel can maintain, explicitly or implicitly, a threat of nuclear counter-retaliation. Without such weapons, Israel, having to rely entirely on non-nuclear forces, might not be able to deter enemy retaliations for the Israeli preemptive attack. Again, this illustrates Israel’s incontestable need to dominate escalatory processes.
6. Residually – as only a distinctly last resort – Israel needs nuclear weapons for nuclear war fighting. Although, in the best of all possible worlds, this particular need will never have to arise, and although Israel should always do *everything possible* to avoid any such use (**Project Daniel** made this avoidance a major point in its final report, *Israel’s Strategic Future*, presented to former PM Sharon), it cannot be ruled out altogether. Rather, Israeli planners and decision-makers who could possibly find themselves in a dire situation of “no alternative” must take it seriously. Among the possible and more-or-less probable paths to nuclear war fighting are the following: enemy nuclear first-strikes against Israel; enemy non-nuclear first-strikes against Israel that elicit Israeli nuclear reprisals, either immediately or via incremental escalation processes; Israeli nuclear preemptions against enemy states with nuclear assets; Israeli non-nuclear preemptions against enemy states with nuclear assets that elicit enemy nuclear reprisals, either immediately or via incremental escalation processes. Other pertinent paths to nuclear war fighting include accidental/unintentional/inadvertent nuclear attacks among Israel and regional enemy states, and even the escalatory consequences of nuclear terrorism against the Jewish state. As long as it can be assumed that Israel is determined to endure, there *are* conditions where Jerusalem/Tel-Aviv could resort to nuclear war fighting. This holds true if:
 - A Enemy first-strikes against Israel would not destroy Israel's second-strike nuclear capability;
 - B Enemy retaliations for Israeli conventional preemption would not destroy Israel's nuclear counter-retaliatory capability;
 - C Israeli preemptive strikes involving nuclear weapons would not destroy enemy second-strike nuclear capabilities; and

D Israeli retaliation for enemy conventional first-strikes would not destroy enemy nuclear counter-retaliatory capabilities.

It follows, from the standpoint of Israel's nuclear requirements, that Jerusalem/Tel-Aviv should prepare to do what is needed to ensure the likelihood of (a) and (b) above, and the unlikelihood of (c) and (d).

7. Israel needs nuclear weapons for the residual “*Samson Option*”. Although any such use of nuclear weapons, by definition, would be profoundly catastrophic, Israel is apt to understand that it would be better to “die with the Philistines” than to die alone. This sort of understanding is much more than a matter of Jewish honor, and also much more than a refutation of the so-called “*Masada complex*” (suicide without punishment of the aggressor). It *could* (depending upon awareness by enemy states) represent an integral and indispensable element of Israel's nuclear deterrent. Moreover, the biblical analogy is somewhat misleading. Samson chose suicide by pushing apart the temple pillars, whereas Israel, using nuclear weapons as a last resort, would not be *choosing* “suicide” or even necessarily committing suicide. For states, the criteria of “life” and “death” are hardly as clear-cut as they are for individual persons. Finally, it is essential that Israel's leaders, in considering possible uses of nuclear weapons, regard the Samson Option as one to be precluded by correct resort to all other nuclear options. Stated differently, a resort to the Samson Option, by Israel, would imply the complete failure of all other options, and of the failure of its nuclear weapons to provide essential national security.

Deterrence Options

We have seen (numbers 1-2, above) that Israel needs nuclear weapons, among other purposes, to deter large conventional attacks and all levels of unconventional attack by enemy states. Yet, the effectiveness of nuclear weapons in meeting these needs is limited and exceedingly problematic. Even if the country should move toward partial or full disclosure of its nuclear weapons, Israel cannot reasonably rely entirely upon nuclear deterrence for survival. This should be apparent to anyone who has watched the continuing unfolding of Iran's expressly genocidal intentions.

Aware of these limitations, Israel must nonetheless seek to strengthen nuclear deterrence such that an enemy state will always calculate that a first-strike upon the Jewish state would be irrational. This means taking steps to convince the enemies state that the costs of such a strike will always exceed the benefits. To accomplish this important objective, Israel must convince prospective attackers that it maintains both the *willingness* and the *capacity* to retaliate with nuclear weapons. Where a rational enemy state considering an attack upon Israel would be unconvinced about either one or both of these essential components of nuclear deterrence, it might choose to strike first, depending upon the particular value or utility it places upon the expected consequence of such an attack.

Regarding *willingness*, even if Jerusalem were prepared to respond to certain attacks with nuclear reprisals, enemy failure to recognize such preparedness could provoke an attack upon Israel. Here, misperception and/or errors in information could immobilize nuclear deterrence. It is also conceivable that Jerusalem would, in fact, lack willingness to retaliate, and that enemy decision-makers perceived this lack correctly. In this case, Israeli nuclear deterrence would be immobilized not because of “confused signals” but because of specific Israeli intelligence and policy failures.

Regarding *capacity*, even if Jerusalem maintains a substantial arsenal of nuclear weapons, it is essential that enemy states believe these weapons to be distinctly usable. This means that if a first-strike attack is believed capable of destroying Israel's arsenal, the Jewish state's nuclear deterrent will be immobilized. Moreover, even if Israel's nuclear weapons were configured such that they could not be destroyed by an enemy first-strike, enemy misperceptions or misjudgments about Israeli vulnerability could still occasion the failure of nuclear deterrence. A further complication here concerns enemy state deployment of anti-tactical ballistic missile defenses, which might contribute to an attack decision against Israel by lowering the aggressor's expected costs.

The importance of "usable" nuclear weapons must also be examined from the standpoint of probable harms. Should Israel's nuclear weapons be perceived by a would-be attacker as "too destructive" they might not deter. To some extent, at least, successful nuclear deterrence, to the extent possible, may vary *inversely* with perceived destructiveness. At the same time, per earlier recommendations by *Project Daniel*, it is essential that Israel always base its central deterrence position on appropriate levels of "counter value" targeting, and never on "counterforce".

No examination of Israeli nuclear deterrence options would be complete without consideration of the "*Bomb in the Basement*". From the beginning, Israel's bomb has remained deliberately ambiguous. For the future, however, it is by no means certain that an undeclared nuclear deterrent will be capable of meeting Jerusalem's security goals or that it will even be equal in effectiveness to a (more or less) openly-declared nuclear deterrent.

Disclosure would not be intended to reveal the obvious, i.e., that Israel has the bomb, but rather to heighten enemy perceptions of Jerusalem's capable nuclear forces and/or Jerusalem's willingness to use these forces in reprisal for certain first strike attacks. What, exactly, are the plausible connections between an openly declared nuclear weapons capacity, and enemy perceptions of Israeli nuclear deterrence? One such connection concerns the relation between disclosure and perceived vulnerability of Israel's nuclear forces to preemptive destruction. Another such connection concerns the relation between disclosure and perceived capacity of Jerusalem's nuclear forces to penetrate the attacking state's active defenses.

To the extent that removing the bomb from the basement, or disclosure, would encourage enemy views of an Israeli force that is sufficiently invulnerable to first-strike attacks and/or is capable of piercing enemy active defenses, disclosure would represent a rational and prudent option for Israel. Here, the operational benefits of disclosure would stem from deliberate flows of information about dispersion, multiplication, hardening, speed and evasiveness of nuclear weapons systems, and about some other pertinent technical features of certain nuclear weapons. Most importantly, such flows, which could also refer to command/control invulnerability and possible predelegations of launch authority, could serve to remove enemy doubts about Israel's nuclear force capabilities, doubts which, left unchallenged, could undermine Israeli nuclear deterrence.

Removing the bomb from Israel's "basement" could also heighten enemy perceptions of Jerusalem's willingness to make good on its retaliatory threats. For example, by releasing information about its nuclear forces that identifies distinctly usable weapons, Israel might remove any doubts about Jerusalem's nuclear resolve. Here, a prospective attacker, newly aware that Israel could retaliate across the entire spectrum of possible scenarios without generating intolerably high levels of civilian harms, would be more likely (because of disclosure), to believe Israel's nuclear threats.

I must also mention here the vital connections between disclosure, doctrine and deterrence.

To the extent that Israel's strategic doctrine actually identifies nuanced and graduated forms of reprisal – forms calibrating Israeli retaliations to particular levels of provocation – disclosure of such doctrine (at least in its broadest and most unspecific contours) could contribute to Israel's nuclear deterrence. Without such disclosure, Israel's enemies could be kept guessing about Jerusalem's probable responses, a condition of protracted uncertainty that could serve Israel's security for a while longer, but – at one time or another – might fail altogether.

I have already mentioned the complex problem of enemy rationality – especially in my earlier published writings about the growing nuclear menace from Iran. Strategic assessments of nuclear deterrence always assume a rational state enemy; that is, an enemy that values its own continued survival more highly than any other preference or combination of preferences. But this assumption is enormously problematic. There is, in fact, absolutely no reason to assume that all prospective attackers of the Jewish state would *always* choose physical survival among all possible options, or even that such attackers would hew perfectly to careful and systematic comparisons of all expected costs and all expected benefits. As long as such enemies are capable of missile attacks upon Israel, and as long as Israel is unable to intercept these attacks with near-perfect or possibly even perfect reliability (*no system of ballistic missile defense, including Israel's Arrow, can ever be leak-proof*), Israeli dependence upon nuclear deterrence could have existential consequences.

Where should Israel go from here? Recognizing the substantial limitations of the so-called “Peace Process” the Jewish state must seek security beyond the protections offered by nuclear deterrence. It must, as recommended by *Project Daniel*, prepare for preemption against pertinent military targets. Although many will find even such preparation “aggressive” or “uncivilized” and although it may already be very late operationally in certain relevant scenarios, the alternative may amount to national suicide. Significantly, the right of preemption is well established under international law as “anticipatory self-defense”. *International law is not a suicide pact.*

Preemption Options

We have seen that, among other purposes, Israel needs nuclear weapons to undertake and/or to support various forms of conventional preemption. In making its preemption decisions, Israel must determine whether such essential defensive strikes, known jurisprudentially as expressions of *anticipatory self-defense*, would be cost-effective. This would depend upon a number of critical variables, including:

- a Expected probability of enemy first-strikes;
- b Expected cost of enemy first-strikes;
- c Expected schedule of enemy unconventional weapons deployment;
- d Expected efficiency of enemy active defenses over time
- e Expected efficiency of Israeli active defenses over time;
- f Expected efficiency of Israeli hard-target counterforce operations over time;
- g Expected reactions of unaffected regional enemies; and
- h Expected US and world community reactions to Israeli preemptions.

Regarding preemption options, Israel's overall question is this: As Jerusalem/Tel-Aviv must plan for such forms of anticipatory self-defense, against *which* particular configurations of

hard targets should they be directed and *when* should they be mounted? If it is assumed that enemy states will only add to their chemical/biological/nuclear arsenals, and that these additions will make effective Israeli preemptions more and more difficult, if not altogether impossible, rational Israeli strategy would seem to compel Jerusalem to strike defensively as soon as possible. If, however, it is assumed that there will be no significant enlargement/deployment of enemy unconventional weapons over time, this *may* suggest a diminished rationale for Israel to strike first.

Israel's inclinations to strike preemptively in certain circumstances could also be affected by the steps taken by prospective target states to guard against Israeli preemption. Should Israel refrain too long from striking first, enemy states could implement protective measures that would pose additional hazards to Israel. These measures include the attachment of certain launch mechanisms to nuclear weapon systems, and/or the adoption of "launch-on-warning" policies. Such policies would call for the retaliatory launch of bombers and/or missiles on mere receipt of warning that a missile attack is underway. Requiring launch before the attacking warheads actually reached their intended targets, launch-on-warning would clearly carry grave risks of error.

Ideally, Israel would do everything possible to prevent such measures from being installed in the first place, especially because of the expanded risks of accidental or unauthorized attacks against its armaments and population centers. Yet, if such measures should become fact, Jerusalem might still calculate that a preemptive strike would be cost-effective. This is because an expected enemy retaliation, however damaging, might still appear *less unacceptable* than the expected consequences of enemy first strikes.

Perhaps the single most important factor in Israeli judgments on the preemption option will be the *expected rationality* of enemy decision-makers. If, after all, these leaders could be expected to strike at Israel with unconventional forces irrespective of anticipated Israeli counterstrikes, deterrence, as we have already seen, would not work. This means that enemy strikes could be expected even if enemy leaders understood that Israel had "successfully" deployed its own nuclear weapons in survivable modes, that Israel's weapons were entirely capable of penetrating enemy active defenses, and that Israel's leaders were altogether willing to retaliate.

Faced with an irrational enemy bent upon unconventional aggression, Israel could have no effective choice but to abandon reliance on traditional modes of nuclear deterrence. Even if it is not faced with an irrational enemy, however, Israel will have to plan carefully for preemption options, planning that must take into account Jerusalem's nuclear weapons. In the course of such planning, it will be important to recognize that enemy capabilities and intentions are not separate but interpenetrating, interdependent and interactive. This means:

- 1 Capabilities affect intentions and vice-versa; and
- 2 The combined effects of capabilities and intentions may produce policy outcomes that are greatly accelerated and/or are more than the simple sum of these effects.

Let us consider the particular dangers from Iran. For the moment, those who would still downplay the Iranian threat to Israel sometimes argue that Teheran's unconventional capabilities remain problematic, and/or that its willingness to attack Israel – *Jihadist* ideologies/motivations notwithstanding – is tolerably low. Yet, over the next one to two years, that country's further development of nuclear weapons will likely become irreversible, creating conditions whereby a first-strike against Israel might be construed as altogether rational. Whether correct or incorrect in its calculations, an Iranian leadership that *believes* it

can strike Israel with impunity, near-impunity or at least without incurring *what it defines* as unacceptable costs, could be strongly motivated to undertake such a strike. Such motivation would be heightened to the extent that Iran remained uncertain about Israel's own preemption plans. Here, Iranian capabilities would affect, and possibly even determine, Iranian intentions.

The Iranian threat to Israel might, on the other hand, originate from a different direction. In this scenario, Iran's intentions toward the Jewish state, irremediably hostile and perhaps even genocidal, could animate Teheran's accelerated development of nuclear military capabilities. Here, representing genuinely far-reaching hatreds rather than mere bluster and propagandistic bravado, Iranian diatribes against Israel would ensure the production/deployment of increasingly destructive forces, weapons and postures that could plausibly threaten Israel's physical survival. What I have been describing are circumstances where Iranian intentions could affect, and possibly even determine, Iranian capabilities – circumstances that warrant very careful attention in Jerusalem.

But what if Iran's intention toward Israel were *not* irremediably hostile or genocidal? What if its public bombast were not an expression of genuinely belligerent motivations, but a position designed entirely for *intranational* and/or *international* political consumption? The short and most obvious answer to these questions is that such shallow and contrived intentions would not impact Iranian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel. Yet, upon reflection, it is likely that even inauthentic expressions of intent could, over time, *become* authentic, that repeated again and again, such expressions would become self-fulfilling.

It would be unreasonable for Israel to draw comfort from the argument that Iranian intentions are effectively harmless. Rather, such intentions could impact capabilities decisively over time. Backed by appropriate nuclear weapons, preemption options must remain open and viable to Israel.

An important factor in our discussion of intentions, capabilities and preemption options is the still ongoing “Peace Process” now better known as the “Road Map”. Conventional wisdom has been quick to suggest that this process, by demonstrating and codifying Israel's commitment to peaceful settlement of disputes, diminishes the enemy (Iranian) threat. After all, wouldn't world public opinion uniformly condemn Iran for any act of aggression directed against Israel? And wouldn't, therefore, Iranian aggressive intentions be reduced or even removed, a change that could slow down Teheran's pertinent unconventional militarization and consequently the overall danger to Israel from that enemy state?

Probably not. The conventional wisdom may be wrong, or merely partial. Following the earlier Oslo Agreement, Israel's inclination to preempt enemy aggression had likely been diminished. After all, virtually the entire global community would have frowned upon such preemption in the midst of an ongoing, incremental search for “peace” in the region.

There is more. If Iran should recognize these effective inhibitions on Israeli preemption options (and there is every reason to believe that they *would* recognize these inhibitions), that enemy state could calculate as follows: “As our (Iranian) militarization will be less threatened by Israeli preemptive attack during the ‘Peace Process’, we (Iran) should *increase* our capabilities – especially our unconventional weapons capabilities – as quickly as practicable.” Such a calculation, as we now know, could enlarge Iranian intentions to attack Israel and could make cost-effective hostile actions by Iran that would not otherwise even have been considered or even have been possible.

If the “Peace Process” produces a Palestinian state, a result that now looks increasingly likely with its expressly strong support from US President Barack Obama, the effects on enemy

capabilities and intentions, and therefore on Israeli preemption options, will be significant. Here, Israel's substantial loss of strategic depth could be recognized by enemy states as a distinct military liability for Jerusalem/Tel-Aviv. Such recognition, in turn, could heat up enemy intentions against Israel, occasioning an accelerated search for capabilities and consequently a heightened risk of war.

Israel could foresee such enemy calculations and seek to compensate for the loss of territories in a number of different ways. Israel could decide that it was time to take its bomb out of the “basement” as a deterrence-enhancing measure, but this might not be enough of a productive strategy. It could, therefore, accept a heightened willingness to launch preemptive strikes against enemy hard targets, strikes backed up by Israeli nuclear weapons. Made aware of such Israeli intentions, intentions that would derive from Israel's new territorial vulnerabilities, enemy states could respond in a more or less parallel fashion, preparing more openly and more quickly for nuclearization and/or for first-strike attacks against the Jewish state.

Taken by itself, a Palestinian state would affect the capabilities and intentions of both Israel and its enemies. But if such a state were created at the same time that Israel reduced or abandoned its nuclear weapons capabilities, the impact could be more substantial. This scenario should not be dismissed out of hand.

What would happen if Israel were to actually relinquish its nuclear options? Under such circumstances, Israel would not only be more vulnerable to enemy first strikes, it would also be deprived of its essential preemption options. This is the case because Israeli counter-retaliatory deterrence would be immobilized by reduction or removal of its nuclear weapons potential, and because Israeli preemptions could not possibly be 100% effective against enemy unconventional forces. A less than 100% level of effectiveness could be tolerable if Israel had a “leak proof” ATBM (anti-tactical ballistic missile) capability in the “Arrow” system, but such a capability is inherently unachievable.

Nuclear War fighting Options

We have seen that Israel could conceivably need nuclear weapons, among several other essential purposes, for nuclear war fighting. Should nuclear deterrence options and/or preemption options fail altogether, Israel's “hard target” capabilities could be critical to national survival. These capabilities could depend, in part, upon nuclear weapons.

What, exactly, would be appropriate” in such dire circumstances – conditions *that Israel must strive to prevent at all costs?* Instead of “Armageddon” type weapons (see the “Samson Option” below), Israel would need, *inter alia*, precision, low-yield nuclear warheads that could reduce collateral damage to acceptable levels, and hypervelocity nuclear warheads that could overcome enemy active defenses. Israel would also benefit from certain radio-frequency weapons. These are nuclear warheads that are tailored to produce as much electromagnetic pulse as possible, destroying electronics and communications over wide areas.

Regarding the nuclear weapons needed by Israel for nuclear war fighting, Jerusalem could require an intermediate option between capitulation on the one hand and resorting to multi-megaton nuclear weapons on the other.

Of course, all such discussion will be objectionable to people of feeling and sensitivity. It would, after all, be far better to speak of nuclear arms control or sustainable nuclear deterrence or even preemption, than nuclear war fighting. Yet, the Middle East remains a particularly dangerous and possibly irrational neighborhood, and a strategic failure to confront

the most terrible possibilities could produce the most terrible harms. For Israel, a state that yearns for peace and security more than any other in this neighborhood – a state born out of the ashes of humankind's most terrible crime – genocide looms both as a memory and as an expectation. Resisting the short-term temptations of “Road Maps” and “Peace Processes” its leaders must always plan accordingly. *But let us be clear, per earlier recommendations by Project Daniel, that nuclear war fighting options should always be rejected wherever possible.*

The Samson Option

Proposals for a Middle East Nuclear Weapon Free Zone notwithstanding, Israel still needs nuclear weapons, both for the compelling reasons already discussed, and also for “last resort” purposes. Although this is certainly the least important need – since, by definition, any actual resort to the *Samson Option* would reveal failure and collapse of all essential security functions – it is not unimportant. This is because Israeli *preparation* for last resort operations could play a role in enhancing Israeli nuclear deterrence, preemption and war fighting requirements, and because such preparation would also show the world that the post-Holocaust Jewish state had kept its faith with an ineradicable Jewish obligation.

Regarding any prospective contributions to Israeli nuclear deterrence, preparation for a *Samson Option* could help to convince would-be attackers that aggression would not prove beneficial. This is especially the case if Israeli preparation were coupled with some level of *disclosure*, if Israel's pertinent Samson weapons appeared to be sufficiently invulnerable to enemy first-strikes, and if these weapons were identifiably “counter value” in mission function. By definition, the *Samson Option* would be executed with counter value-targeted nuclear weapons. Such last-resort operations might come into play only after all Israeli counterforce options had been exhausted.

Considering what strategists sometimes call the “rationality of pretended irrationality” Samson could aid Israeli nuclear deterrence by demonstrating a willingness to take existential risks, but this would hold only if last-resort options were not tied definitionally to *certain* destruction.

Regarding prospective contributions to preemption options, preparation for a *Samson Option* could convince *Israel* that essential defensive first strikes could be undertaken with diminished expectations of unacceptably destructive enemy retaliations. This would depend, of course, upon antecedent Israeli decisions on disclosure, on Israeli perceptions of the effects of disclosure on enemy retaliatory prospects, on Israeli judgments about enemy perceptions of *Samson* weapons vulnerability, and on enemy awareness of *Samson's* counter value force posture. As in the case of *Samson* and Israeli nuclear deterrence (above), last-resort preparations could assist Israeli preemption options by displaying a willingness to take certain existential risks. But Israeli planners must be mindful here of pretended irrationality as a double-edged sword. Brandished too “irrationally” Israeli preparations for a Samson Option could encourage enemy preemptions.

Regarding prospective contributions to Israel's nuclear war fighting options, preparation for a *Samson Option* could convince enemy states that a clear victory would be impossible to achieve. But here it would be important for Israel to communicate to potential aggressors the following understanding: Israel's counter value-targeted *Samson* weapons are *additional to* (not at the expense of) its counterforce-targeted war fighting weapons. In the absence of such

communication, preparations for a *Samson Option* could effectively impair rather than reinforce Israel's nuclear war fighting options.

Conclusion

Whether President Obama should agree or disagree, not all nuclear weapons states are created equal. Some, like Iran – still an *aspiring* nuclear weapons state – would present an intolerable threat of nuclear aggression. Others, like Israel, need nuclear weapons and doctrine simply to stay “alive”. Without them, Clausewitz’s concept of “mass” would quickly overtake and suffocate the Jewish state.

Israel’s nuclear weapons are required to fulfill essential *deterrence* options, *preemption* options, *war fighting options*, and even the *Samson Option*. These weapons should *never* be negotiated away in formal international agreements, especially in the midst of a so-called “Peace Process” and its attendant creation of a Palestinian state. ***This imperative is the case no matter how appealing might appear the projected vision of a “world without nuclear weapons” and no matter how high the authority of this idealized vision’s enthusiastic proponent.***

For Israel, a country smaller than some American lakes (e.g., Lake Michigan), particular nuclear weapons choices should be made in cumulative conformance with the seven (7) relevant options that I have just discussed and, more broadly, with the ever-changing strategic environment of regional and world power configurations. In the final analysis, regrettable as it may appear, the ultimate structure of Israeli security will be built largely upon the foundations of nuclear weapons and strategic doctrine, and not on “security regimes” “peace processes” “confidence building measures” or “nuclear weapon free- zones”. Significantly, and on this point President Barack Obama should take very careful note, if these foundations are constructed carefully in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, they could best assure that nuclear weapons will never actually be used in the Middle East.