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Should Israel Have Nuclear Weapons?

POLS 325-UC

Research Paper

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Throughout Israel's history, she has had to overcome hatred of all sorts from all kinds. Presently, Israel lives amongst its neighbors not knowing from day to day if she is going to be attacked. Some have claimed that Israel would be safer without nuclear capabilities. However, others claim that without nuclear capabilities Israel would not be on the map today. Would Israel be safer and more accepted if they did not have nuclear capabilities? There are both pros and cons to this question.

When talking about Israel's nuclear capabilities, we need to look at two different areas of how Israel is affected by having these deadly weapons. By having nuclear weapons, Israel is affected in military terms as well as political terms. The most common argument in military terms that is given to the support of the Israeli's having nuclear weapons is that without them Israel would not be on the map as we know it. People try to claim that if Israel did not have nuclear weapons they would be attacked and one of their neighboring countries would try to overthrow the government. Another argument that is used is that a few of Israel's neighbors would join and try to overtake Israel on all sides. This is actually a good argument to use.

However, we can look at the past to dismantle this argument. "After Israel declared its statehood, several Arab states and Palestinian groups immediately attacked Israel."¹ A war which is known as the "Six-Day War, [was an] armed conflict [which occurred] in June 1967 between Israel and the Arab states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria."² Israel was able to fight off three other countries and at the same time the Israelis were able to conquer "the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights."³ In this war, Israel did not have nuclear weapons to help them fight off three of their neighbors. One can speculate that since Israel was able to hold off three different countries in the past at one time they would be able to hold off their neighbors in the future if they tried to wage a war against them.

Then there is the argument that since the Israelis have nuclear capabilities, it is only helping bring peace to the Middle East. Indeed, by having the nuclear weapons, it does keep other neighboring countries from

¹ Cohen, Shaul. "Six-Day War." *MSN Encarta*. 21 March 2008.
< http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761570433_1_5/six-day_war.html#s5>

² Id.

³ Id.

waging war against Israel. On one hand, it helps Israel from being attacked by its neighbors because Israel's neighbors would not want to have to worry about a nuclear attack from Israel. It does in one tone help keep the peace in Israel.

On the other hand, there are two arguments that can be used against Israel and helping Israel keeping the peace for itself with its neighbors knowing that it has nuclear capabilities. However, by having the nuclear weapons it causes Israel's neighbors to want to gain a leg on Israel. "Nations seek Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) when their rivals already possess them."⁴ In other words, it has caused the nations that are around Israel to feel like they are going to be overtaken or be threatened by Israel, so they are going to try to get nuclear weapons. A good example that can be used from the past was when "Saddam Hussein, in an April 1990 speech to his military, threatened to retaliate against any Israeli nuclear attack with chemical weapons."⁵ Therefore, by Israel having nuclear capabilities it is causing the other countries in the Middle East to hate Israel and not be able to trust Israel because Israel could easily attack them at any time.

Another argument that can be used against Israel claiming that it helps bring peace to the Middle East is by looking at Hamas and Hezbollah. Although Israel currently has nuclear weapons, they are attacked on daily basis by rocket attacks. "The daily rocket attacks usually begin at 8:30 Am. in order to target Israeli children on the way to school and their parents going to work."⁶ Hamas and the Hezbollah have used "thousands of these rockets that have been fired at Israel over the past seven years."⁷ By having nuclear capabilities, Israel is able to keep its neighbors from attacking them because Israel's neighbors would fear a nuclear attack. However, groups like Hamas and the Hezbollah do not fear a nuclear attack because they are not connected to a government. They

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Bisharat, George. "Should Israel give up its nukes?" *Los Angeles Times*. 20 March 2008. 9 Dec. 2005.
<<http://fairuse.1accesshost.com/news2/latimes968.html>>

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Id.

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Keitel, John. "Israel Attacked Daily; Finally Responds." *Digital Press*. 20 March 2008. 3 March 2008.
<<http://digitalartpress.wordpress.com/2008/03/03/israel-attacked-daily-finally-responds/>>

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Id.

are just groups of people that are fighting to get their voices and views heard.

Then there is a similar argument that is made that since the Israeli people have nuclear capabilities, there is deterrence to any of Israel's neighbors attacking them. By having the nuclear capabilities, the Israelis are sending a message to its neighbors that they could retaliate by using a nuclear weapon against the person that waged the attack. In order to understand this point of view, we need to understand what a deterrence theory is. Deterrence theory is the thought that "governments [would] threaten an immense retaliation if attacked, such that aggressors are deterred if they do not wish to suffer great damage as a result of an aggressive action."⁸ Therefore, "even the most radical Arab leaders who aspired to destroy Israel would be deterred if they knew [Israel] possessed nuclear weapons."⁹

Although that is a good argument to use, one can look at two areas from the past to combat this argument. First, we can look at the past when Israel has fought off other countries without having nuclear capabilities. For example, "in six short days, Israel had fought against superior Arab forces and had resoundingly defeated them, and then a couple of years later came Yom Kippor when Israel came close to losing."¹⁰ In both of these wars, "no nuclear weapons were used to defend"¹¹ Israel from her neighbors.

The second argument that can be used is that by having nuclear capabilities, it is causing the other countries in the Middle East to look down upon Israel. It will cause the other countries that are in the Middle East to think badly about Israel. In other words, the public opinion in other countries in the Middle East will cause the people in those neighboring countries of Israel to want to attack Israel because they will be in fear of an attack from Israel. Therefore, the people in the neighboring countries will want to attack Israel first, because

⁸ "Deterrence Theory." [Wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deterrence_theory). 23 March 2008. 21 March 2008.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deterrence_theory>

⁹ Pedatzur, Reuven. "Let them have nukes." [Haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/759746.html). 20 March 2008. 9 July 2006.
<<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/759746.html>>

¹⁰ Fritz. "Should Israel Have Nukes???" [AboveTopSecret.com](http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread205083/pg2). 20 March 2008. 26 April 2006.
<<http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread205083/pg2>>

¹¹ Id.

they will want to catch Israel off guard. Since Israel has nuclear capabilities, it is leading to a war waiting to happen, because the surrounding countries will want to do everything they can to survive before Israel attacks them with nuclear weapons. One can speculate that since Israel has nuclear capabilities then it is leading to unrest amongst the neighbors of Israel.

Then one can speculate since all of the countries in the Middle East that feel threatened by Israel will one day say enough is enough and all join together and wage a war against Israel. Yes, indeed Israel has nuclear weapons, but if enough countries start to get paranoid about Israel waging an attack against them, then the countries could join together and wage a war against Israel. In other words, by Israel having the nuclear capabilities then it is causing unrest amongst the neighbors of Israel. Which could lead to a war in the Middle East, and lets face it any war is not good in the world, because it leads to the death of innocent civilians.

Now, lets look at it in a different point of view. If Israel would dismantle and get rid of their nuclear weapons; they would not be at threat of a war being waged against them from their neighbors or other close countries. Therefore, if Israel did not have nuclear capabilities then the neighboring countries would possibly have more relations with the Israeli people, because they would not be of fear of the Israelis. In my opinion, if Israel did not have nuclear capabilities, I feel that they would be more accepted more by their Arab neighbors in military terms. The reason is that the Arab countries would not be in fear of Israel getting mad at them one day and just wiping them off the map.

Then there is the argument that without nuclear weapons Iran would try to wage a war or try to acquire nuclear weapons in order to wipe Israel off the map. Let us look at it from this point of view. One can speculate that the real reason why Iran is trying to get nuclear capabilities is to be able to keep up with Israel and Israel's nuclear program. Although in the past, Iran's president "Ahmadinejad has called for wiping Israel off the map."¹² If Israel did not have nuclear weapons, Iran would have no need fearing Israel, and there would be not be a threat of a war taking place amongst the countries in the Middle East.

Then there is the argument that if Israel gave up their nuclear capabilities; the Israelis would not have a

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Liss, Sharon Kehnemui. "Christain Group Warns: Iran Wants to Hit Israel First, U.S. Next." Fox News. 25 March 2008. 29 July 2007. <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,291078,00.html>>

say in what happens in the Middle East. Many people try to claim that by not having the nuclear weapons then Israel would not be involved in the decision making process regarding the Middle East. However, if you think about it they would be more involved in the talks involving the Middle East process. Many countries around Israel do not recognize her as being a country. However, if Israel would dismantle her weapons then one can speculate that she would be invited to more talks about the Middle East and it would lead to more people in the Middle East recognizing Israel as a country. This would benefit the Israelis in military terms because it would lead to a country that would be able to join in alliances with other Middle East countries and it would lead to a safer place for everyone to live. It would also benefit Israel in military terms because the countries that Israel would then have new relations which would then cause the groups of Hamas, and the Hezbollah to reduce the number of attacks that are being carried out by these groups against the Israeli people.

On a side note, another argument given is that by having the nuclear capabilities Israel has benefited in military terms as well. By having these weapons, the Israeli's have been able to forge a relationship with the United States government that has benefited the Israeli military "Israel [has] used their existence to guarantee a continuing supply of American conventional weapons."¹³ Therefore, by having nuclear weapons the Israeli government has been given much support and financial aid from the United State's government. The United States has given information, money, as well as military aid to the Israeli government that has been used to benefit the Army of Israel. The relationship between Israel and the United States is likely to continue for many years to come. Without this relationship between the United States and Israel, the Israeli military would not be as strong as it is today. So, in one sense by having nuclear capabilities the Israeli government has taken advantage of the assistance given to them by the United States government, "a policy [that is] likely to continue"¹⁴ for many years to come.

However, by having such a strong friend like the United States has haunted them in the past. For example, at the start of first gulf war when Iraq was at war with its surrounding countries, Saddam tried to attack

¹³ "Zionist Israel's Thermonuclear Blackmail of America." [Rense.com](http://www.rense.com). 21 March 2008.
<<http://www.rense.com/general35/isrnuk.htm>>

¹⁴ Id.

Israel. Saddam carried out the attacks on January 18, 1991, when Iraq “attacked two Israeli cities with Scud missiles”¹⁵ in order to change the way that the war was going. Saddam wanted to bring Israel into the war, because “any Israeli military action [would have] broken apart the multi-national coalition against Iraq by provoking the Arab members to withdraw their support”¹⁶ of the gulf war. Because of these attacks, Israel considered retaliation against Iraq, but the current “American President, George, Bush, issued an appeal to Israel to hold back from retaliation for the attack.”¹⁷ The Israeli government had to back down from Iraq, because the United States had asked the Israeli government not to attack Iraq. In one sense, by having the relationship that the Israeli government has with the American government can also make the Israeli government look weak. However, “Israel has never asked American troops to fight its battles.”¹⁸ “Although Israeli forces were prepared to participate in the Gulf War, they did not because the United States asked them not to”¹⁹ “Even after the provocation of the Scud missile attacks, Israel assented to United States appeals not to respond”²⁰ On one hand, by listening to the American government’s plea to not get involved, it had the effect of making the Israeli government look like it was weak because it could not fight their own battles.

There is a side effect to the Israeli government having nuclear capabilities. Since the Israeli government has taken advantage of her relationship with the United States to make their military stronger then if the United States gets involved in something then the Israeli government has to worry about being brought into the conflict. In other words, if the United States gets involved in the war like the first gulf war in the Middle East then Israel could be attacked, since they are such a close friend to the United States. For example, in the first gulf war,

15 “On This Day, January 18, 1991: Iraqi Scud missiles hit Israel.” BBC News. 24 March 2008.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/18/newsid_4588000/4588486.stm>

16 Id.

17 Id.

18 Bard, Mitchell. “The Gulf War.” The Jewish Virtual Library. 21 March 2008.
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Gulf_War.html>

19 Id.

20 Id.

Saddam carried out a Scud missile attack against Israel on January 18, 1991. Saddam was attacking Israel because he was trying to change the way the war was going because “any Israeli military action [would have] broken apart the multi-national coalition against Iraq by provoking the Arab members to withdraw their support”²¹ of the gulf war. As a result of being such a close friend to the United States, both the United States and Israeli governments have to agree on when to get involved in wars in the Middle East because of the effects that it will have on both countries.

Since Israel has nuclear capabilities, it is effected not only in military terms but also in political terms as well. Like any country that has nuclear capabilities, the Israeli government has to deal with the way they are affected in the political arena by having these deadly weapons. Any country that has nuclear capabilities like Israel has to be prepared to be attacked or looked down upon by other governments for having these weapons. On one hand, by having these weapons it clearly gives Israel the advantage if she finds herself at war. On the other hand, in a political sense, it also causes some problems as well as fixing some other problems.

On one hand, having nuclear capabilities benefits Israel. One “purpose of [the] nuclear weapons, not often stated, but obvious, is their use on the United States.”²² The Israeli government knows that “America does not want Israeli’s nuclear profile raised.”²³ Since the Israeli government knows this “they have been used in the past to ensure America does not desert Israel under increased Arab, or oil embargo, pressure and have forced the Untied States to support Israeli diplomatically”²⁴ towards other countries. The Israeli government has “used their existence to guarantee a continuing supply of American conventional weapons, a policy likely to continue.”²⁵

²¹ “On This Day, January 18, 1991: Iraqi Scud missiles hit Israel.” BBC News. 24 March 2008.

²² Farr, Colonel Warner D. “The Third Temple’s Holy of Holies: Israel’s Nuclear Weapons.” Federation of American Scientists. 20 March 2008. 1 Sept. 1999. <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/nuke/farr.htm>

²³ Id.

²⁴ Id.

²⁵ Id.

On the other hand, having nuclear weapons gives Israel another advantage in the political scene because it gives Israel some power as well. Since Israel has these deadly weapons, she gains power in two ways. First, she gains power because the Israeli government can use the nuclear weapons as a way to make neighboring countries back down or concede on some issues that Israel wants to push. However, Israel has not been able to use this part of their power all that much because many the neighboring countries do not like Israel one bit. Second, it gives Israel more power because it puts Israel in a list of only a handful of countries that have these deadly weapons. “Just eight countries China, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are known to have nuclear weapons.”²⁶ By having these weapons, it gives Israel the advantage to be put in a list of only eight countries that have nuclear weapons. By being one of those eight countries it puts Israel in a list of nations that other countries can be afraid of, because out of all of the nations that are in the world only eight of them have nuclear weapons.

Another way that Israel is affected in political terms by having these nuclear weapons is the effect that other countries around the world will pressure Israel to get rid of their nuclear weapons. In the past, many countries have stated that in order for the Middle East to be a peaceful place Israel must get rid of all of their nuclear weapons. For example, “Jordanian King Abdullah said his country is interested in a nuclear-free Middle East and urged the international community to pressure Israel to dismantle its nuclear arsenal.”²⁷ In other words, countries will try to put pressure on Israel to get rid of their nuclear weapons and try to point the finger at Israel as a bad country since they have these nuclear weapons. Therefore, the Israeli government will have to take time away from the real issues at hand and have to deal with other governments pointing the finger at Israel for having these deadly weapons.

By having nuclear weapons, Israel has been given increased political pressure because they are able to

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Allison, Graham. “How to Stop Nuclear Terror.” *Foreign Affairs*. 21 March 2008.

< <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040101faessay83107-p0/graham-allison/how-to-stop-nuclear-terror.html>>

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Cohen, Dudi. “Jordan King: Israel must disarm nukes.” *Ynetnews.com*. 20 March 2008. 24 April 2006.

< <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3243110,00.html>>

get away with stuff that other countries in the Middle East are not able to get away with. For example, Israel has been allowed to build nuclear weapons over time. On the other hand, other countries in the Middle East like Iran, and pre-9/11 Iraq were not allowed to build nuclear weapons because of other countries or the UN putting sanctions against these countries. One can speculate that since Israel has been given a double standard and can get away with stuff like building nuclear weapons while other countries are not allowed to then the neighboring countries of Israel are going to hate Israel because they are basically on a pedestal.

One thing that has always happened since nuclear weapons were first used is that “nations seek weapons of mass destruction when their rival already possess them.”²⁸ “The states arrayed against Israel hold that it is their right to develop nuclear weapons as a deterrent to the Israeli arsenal.”²⁹ Since nations try to get nuclear weapons when their rivals already have them leads to the next argument in the political scene. Other countries in the Middle East like to argue that since Israel already has nuclear capabilities then they have the right to build nuclear weapons as well. Jordanian King Abdullah said that, “if the world is demanding Iran does not develop nuclear weapons it should also demand that countries [like Israel who] possess nuclear weapons disarm.”³⁰ In other words, “Objections will surely be raised about the unfairness of a world in which some states are allowed to possess nuclear weapons while others are not.”³¹ By other countries in the region claiming that it is unfair that they are not allowed to possess nuclear weapons, it puts unneeded political pressure on the Israeli government because it makes the Muslim world look down upon the Jews in the country. One can speculate that any government that is given this kind of pressure will be taking away needed energy to focus on issues that needed to be dealt with.

²⁸ Bisharat, George. “Should Israel give up its nukes?” *Los Angeles Times*. 20 March 2008. 9 Dec. 2005.
<<http://fairuse.1accesshost.com/news2/latimes968.html>>

²⁹ Donovan, Michael. “Iran, Israel, and Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East.” *CDI*. 21 March 2008. 14 Feb. 2002.
<<http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/menukes.cfm>>

³⁰ Cohen, Roger. “Very bad and Worse—the Options With Iran.” *The New York Times*. 21 March 2008. 2 May 2006.
<http://select.nytimes.com/iht/2006/05/03/world/IHT-03globalist.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin>

³¹ Allison, Graham. “How to Stop Nuclear Terror.”

Also, another issue affects Israel in the political scene in a major way. Many countries in the Middle East keep calling for Israel to disarm their nuclear weapons. For example, Jordanian King Abdullah stated that “for peace to be achieved in the region, Israel has to disarm its nuclear weapons.”³² Abdullah went on to say that “if there is peace Israel will not need nuclear weapons.”³³ In other words, other countries keep putting political pressure on Israel to disarm their nuclear weapons because they are questioning if Israel really wants to achieve peace with her neighbors. They claim that since Israel has these weapons then she is not willing to accept peace amongst her neighbors. One can speculate that since the claims are being made then it is putting more pressure on the political figures in Israel to speak out and say that is not the intentions of the weapons.

There is also that fact that since “Syria's forces are now retreating from Lebanon, the Taliban has been removed from power in Afghanistan and there is no longer a Soviet Union to arm and encourage Arab regimes hostile to Israel's existence, [and] there is now a substantial United States military force in the region.”³⁴ “Thus, Israel has less need of nuclear weapons now than at any time in its history and it has a clear interest in preventing any other regional power from getting the one weapon that could offset its conventional superiority.”³⁵ In other words, Israel does not need these deadly weapons.

In my opinion, Israel does not need these deadly weapons. By having these deadly weapons, Israel is causing other countries in the Middle East to try to acquire these deadly weapons. If Israel was to disarm their supply of nuclear weapons, I feel that they would be more accepted in the Arab world because the Arab's would not be given a double standard any more. In the past, the Israeli government has been able to do things that other countries in the Middle East have not been able to do. If Israel was to disarm their nuclear weapons, I feel that the countries around Israel would finally realize that the Israeli government is another country amongst them and she would be accepted by the rest of the Middle Eastern countries.

³² Cohen, Dudi. “Jordan King: Israel must disarm nukes.” *Ynetnews.com*. 20 March 2008. 24 April 2006.
<<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3243110,00.html>>

³³ Id.

³⁴ Cirincione, Joseph. “Iran and Israel's Nuclear Weapons.” *The Globalist*. 20 March 2008. 11 March 2005.
<<http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=3217>>

³⁵ Id.

If Israel did not have nuclear weapons then she would be safer today. If Israel did not have these deadly weapons then she would not have to worry about her neighboring countries trying to acquire nuclear weapons, and using them against the Israeli population. It would also lead to more communications between all of the Middle Eastern countries because none of them would have to worry about Israel waging a nuclear attack against them. In other words, if Israel did not have nuclear weapons then the tension amongst the Middle Eastern states would be lowered dramatically and they would all possibly get along.

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