

## Iran and Nuclear Weapons

### What does the world, what does Israel have to fear?

Despite evasions, denials and equivocations, it is quite clear now that Iran is intensely pursuing the holy grail of nuclear weapons. The only question is whether it is six months or three years away from that goal. What would it mean to the world, what would it mean to Israel, if Iran succeeded in this quest and if nobody, no country, would prevent it?

#### What are the facts?

**An existential danger.** In 1981, Israel, in a daring raid, destroyed the Iraqi nuclear installation at Osirak. The whole world, sad to say, including the United States, condemned Israel for this "act of aggression." But, of course, Israel did the world a tremendous favor, a favor that was only grudgingly acknowledged many years later. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, Saddam Hussein would indeed have had nuclear weapons. The Iraqi dictator would have been the undisputed master of the Middle East. The United States, indeed the whole world, would have been at his mercy.

An even much greater danger now threatens us from Iran, because Iran is governed by religiously fanatic mullahs, who do not shrink from bringing any sacrifice, wreaking any destruction, if they believe that it will bring their religion-inspired goals to fruition. The primary targets of that fanatical zeal of the Iranian ayatollahs are the U.S. (the "big Satan") and Israel (the "little Satan"), perceived as being America's agent in the Middle East.

Since Iran is close to possession of long-range missiles, the United States would be in mortal danger of attack by that country. But even short of such attack, Iran, just as Saddam had planned, would be in unquestioned dominance of the Middle East and of its oil supply, the life blood of the Western world. It would cause intolerable damage to life and to the economy of the United States.

But Israel is the most immediate target of Iran's fury. Iran's unquenchable hatred of Israel is totally based on religious rage and on the conviction that "nonbelievers" have no legitimate place in the Middle East. Iran's leaders have publicly threatened Israel with destruction once they come into possession of nuclear weapons.

**Horrible panorama.** Israel is such a small country that one or two nuclear weapons strategically placed in its

narrow coastal strip would destroy it. Louis René Beres, professor of political science and international law at Purdue University, has described what would happen if and when Iran's mullahs direct their Islamic bombs on Israel. In addition to an immediate death toll in the hundreds of thousands, overwhelming health problems would afflict the survivors. Beyond the immediate burn

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injuries, Israelis would be crushed by collapsing buildings and torn to shreds by flying glass. Others would fall victim to raging firestorms. Fallout injuries would include whole-body radiation injuries and injuries produced by deposits of radioactive substances within the

body. After an Iranian nuclear attack, medical facilities would be taxed beyond capacity. Water supplies would become altogether unusable. Housing and shelter would be unavailable for hundreds of thousands. Transportation and all other communication would break down and food shortages would be critical and long-term.

Normal human society would cease. Many of the survivors could expect an increase in serious degenerative diseases, also premature death, impairment of vision and sterility. A vastly increased incidence of all kinds of cancers would be unavoidable. Many balanced relationships in nature would be destroyed, upset by the extensive fallout. Survivors would have to deal with mushrooming insect hordes that would spread from the radiation-damaged areas in which they arose. This fact, coupled with the prevalence of unburied corpses, uncontrolled waste and untreated sewage, would generate tens of trillions of flies and mosquitoes. Breeding in the dead bodies, these insects would make it impossible to control typhus, malaria, dengue fever and encephalitis. But beyond that, throughout Israel, the largest health threat would be posed by hundreds of thousands of rotting human corpses. The survivors might envy the dead.

The effects of a nuclear attack on Israel are too horrible to consider. Even the description given above cannot begin to do justice to the devastation and to the total destruction that would be wrought. There can be little question that, as its final action as a coherent society, Israel would use its own considerable military might against its tormentors and would convert the entire Middle East into a hell, in which ultimately nothing could survive. It is clear that that has to be prevented at all cost, and that no effort should be spared to keep the hands of the evil ayatollahs off the nuclear trigger. One hopes that it can be done by persuasion and diplomacy. But if it can not, somebody – perhaps the United States or perhaps Israel, with or without the approval of the United States – would have to preempt and, by whatever means, keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. It is the most important cause of our time. The survival of the world is at stake.

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