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The Nuclear Dimension of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Case of the Yom Kippur War

Shlomo Aronson

This paper deals with covert nuclear threats in a high level conflict situation from three aspects: First examined is whether deterrence theory provides us with a suitable theoretical framework to deal with conflict situations outside the values, the traditions and the habits of making decisions which gave rise to the theory. Second, a historical case study is offered, i.e., the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in order to study the values, traditions and the behavior of Arabs and Israelis in a high level conflict situation which included covert nuclear threats. Third, historical and theoretical conclusions are drawn from the discussion of the case study. The conclusions draw the reader's attention to, among other things, the shortcomings of deterrence theory, and to its possible impact upon history — as a kind of a "self-fulfilling prophecy."

This paper deals with covert nuclear threats and their important but limited significance in high level international conflicts of a specific nature. The factual part of the paper, which deals with the history of the October 1973 Middle East war, constitutes the bulk of my presentation. This historical study (which was published in part five years after the Yom Kippur War [Aronson 1978] and has been updated for publication in 1984) requires, however, a theoretical framework based on deterrence theory. The combination of history and theory leads to some conclusions of theoretical significance.

The theory of nuclear deterrence — or the controlled use of nuclear threats — is described by Robert Jervis (who divided it into three waves) as largely apolitical: "Although it is highly political in its discussion of means, it pays little attention to the goals of policy. Moreover, 'deterrence theory' seems to deal with 'relations characterized by high conflict' only" (Jervis 1979, p. 293).

Basically characterized as a game of "chicken" (Brodie 1959, 1966; Wohlstetter 1959; George and Smoke 1974) all three waves of deterrence theory deal with a bilateral, high-level conflict in which nuclear super-powers are involved. Even though the theory is abstract, "and deals with states A and B..., like most theories of international relations developed

by Americans and West Europeans, it is grounded in the experience, culture and values of the West" (Jervis 1979, p. 296).

As a result, deterrence theories are limited not only to bilateral superpower rivalry, but to the overt character of nuclear threats that they might use against each other, and since the early sixties, to the enormous magnitude and diversity of their nuclear arsenals aimed at creating credible second strike capabilities. Existing deterrence theories reflect the global nature of the relations between the two superpowers, and are concerned with the possibility that limited conflicts between them might escalate into a nuclear world war. Thus, the concept of "limited wars" in the nuclear age was developed in the context of a theory of conflict aimed at preventing local conflicts from deteriorating into a general, nuclear world war between two powers each capable of launching second strikes against the other. Loosing one's "second strike" capability, or the perception of the adversary that he may win a "first strike" capability, became a center-piece in the theory.

The first two — but particularly the second — waves of deterrence theory are described by Jervis as "ethnocentric" and status quo biased; these two shortcomings have been only partially rectified by third wave theorists.

The basic methodological problem of all three waves is that they "[rely] too much on deduction" from theoretical, and yet biased premises; empirical research has shown us that "the theory needs modification" in terms of its ethnocentric and status quo biases. Jervis distinguishes between two aspects of "ethnocentrism." The perception of ourselves (the US and the West) as stronger and better than others is an error that is not common to Western deterrence theory. However, the theory is ethnocentric in the sense that it sees "others as being like us," due to the American and Western European experience, values, and culture in which the theory is grounded (Jervis 1979, p. 302).

Yet "both interest and tradition may lead the USSR to view nuclear strategy more in terms of defense than deterrence, to seek the capability to fight and win wars, and reject the axiom that neither side should try to endanger the other's second strike capability," — an axiom that emerged as a result of the second wave chicken game theory. Jervis warns that "deterrence may then explain American but not Soviet policy, and American actions would not have the impact expected by American leaders or predicted by the theory. The problems of living in a world in which the two main states hold very different views on how force and threats can be used have not received careful attention" (Jervis 1979, pp. 276-7).

If this is true regarding the impact of the overt, diversified, and enormous nuclear capabilities that may be used in bilateral conflict between the two established global superpowers (which have access to many other kinds of

force and threats), what about other conflicts, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, which lately seems to have developed some unconventional features? The few scholarly works which deal with nuclear strategy for smaller states (Dunn and Kahn 1975; Pranger and Tahtinen 1975; Harkavy 1977; Feldman 1982) are deduced from deterrence theory itself, and do not deal with the Middle East conflict historically, culturally, or structurally.

The Middle East conflict presents quite a problem to deterrence theoreticians, not only because of the above-mentioned shortcomings of the theory itself. First, the Middle East conflict is bilateral neither structurally nor ideologically. It is a group, or coalitionary, conflict in which a number of Arab states and non-state organizations are ranged against one other state, aiming at more or less radical status quo changes. These Arab states are divided among themselves as to how such status quo changes should reflect and be synchronized with their individual as well as their collective values, interests, and priorities.

Second, the members of the Arab coalition, as a result of their various values and interests, compete among themselves on questions of leadership, influence, and other interests and ideology. This competition is reflected in their behavior in the conflict and combines with their views of Arab (and Muslim) roles (real and hoped for) in the world, their views of non-Arab and non-Muslim cultures and powers, and their relations with foreign powers in juxtaposition to the conflict with Israel.

Third, the conflict between Arabs and Israelis is influenced not only by the different values and interests on the Arab side, but by psychological and strategic-tactical factors caused by changing Arab elites and by the fact that there were many Arab leaders dialectically facing Israel's heterogeneous society with its own divided elites. Compare this to the bilateralism that is typical of US-Soviet relations, and which is described by Jervis as possibly more complex and asymmetrical than is suggested by deterrence theory. This asymmetry may exist, in spite of the US and the USSR being "the two main states" — established continental superpowers and global giants, whose home boundaries are practically uncontested, whose respective hegemonic roles are, to changing degrees, accepted by their allies, and whose nuclear strategies are supported by large varieties of nuclear arms and delivery means. The asymmetries of the Arab-Israeli conflict are dealt with even less by deterrence theory.

Fourth, we must distinguish between the superpower rivalry in which overt nuclear threats are publicly used or implied, and a conflict in a region that still seems to most people to be free of nuclear weapons. This impression is refuted by a number of observations that require careful study. Nuclear threats may have already played an important role in the

Middle East conflict. Being covert or semi-covert, however, these threats, and the nuclear research and development programs behind them, have never been fully proclaimed to be of a military nature by the government or governments involved. Since we are interested in the impact of such covert threats on the behavior of many parties in high-level conflict as a theoretical problem, we should devise a theory that will give no plausible explanation for the behavior of the parties involved in the conflict without introducing such nuclear threats as explanatory variables, among others, for that behavior and for specific decisions made by them. (This methodological problem of the historical research will be dealt with in connection with the Yom Kippur War in Section A of this paper).

Once we have proved that such covert and semi-covert nuclear threats have been used in the Middle East, we must consider their possibly different character and impact in comparison to overt threats upon which deterrence theory is based.

One of the main issues here is the credibility of covert nuclear threats for the party making the threat, which seems — as compared to the rules of deterrence theory — to be related to the limited arsenals and delivery system at its disposal, i. e., to the possible lack of "second strike" capability attributed to that party and to such geo-strategic considerations of political and historical significance as the size and the depth of its own country and the enemy's territory. Yet beyond the rules of deterrence theory, it is necessary to introduce such values as that party's cultural-historical and psychological perceptions and tactical considerations that may be different to an important degree from the Western experience, values, and culture in which the theory is grounded. It is also necessary to look at the credibility of the threatening party as perceived by the threatened parties, because its motives and behavior are perceived by them through their own cultural-historical, psychological, and political values, with which the theory does not deal, and which may vary significantly from one threatened party to the other. Thus a denial mechanism, which would not function in the case of overt threats (or would be dealt with by methods other than public denial), may work here to deny the threatening party a credible threat, not the least by depriving it of the benefits of an overt hostage-taking capability aimed at influencing the public opinion of the threatened party.

Thus, from the point of view of the threatened party or parties, a covert threat does not need to be referred to publicly, because publicly it does not exist. The elite of the threatened party or parties might therefore adopt a much more threatening (undeterred) stance in a conflict in the face of such a threat, even if in fact it could not ignore the nuclear threats of the other party altogether. If the threatened party did not admit being deterred either domestically or vis-à-vis the threatening party, however, it might

make itself hostage to its own public opinion and be forced to commit itself (in the Arab case) to a radical policy vis-à-vis Israel, or at least to radical ideological and political status quo changes which would ignore Israel's covert threats. From this logic it follows that covert threats do not act as a deterrent; therefore nuclear weapons might actually have to be used in such circumstances. Yet, due to Israel's relative political isolation, its people's sensitivity to the nuclear issue, and the rejection by parts of its own elite of the nuclear option as a credible deterrent, nuclear weapons will have to stay in a political, psychological, and strategic basement (Haselkorn 1975) as weapons of last resort of very limited deterrent effect, becoming, in fact, less credible or not credible at all to their own possessors.

On the other hand, due to the diversity of domestic and inter-Arab variables, the impact of covert threats might produce a number of reactions different from the denial mechanism on the Arab side: (1) the acquisition of nuclear weapons by the threatened party or parties in order to create a counter-threat chicken game situation, or a defense posture, or a war-winning situation; (2) the creation of such relations with a nuclear superpower so as to undermine the credibility of the threat and possibly neutralize it altogether; or (3) a lowering of the level of conflict, so that even covert nuclear threats might — at least historically — prove to be not just the big equalizer (Gallois 1960) but might become, thanks to historical, cultural, and psychological variables, an excuse or rationale for some Arab parties to lower the level of the conflict.

The problem of how to amend deterrence theory to fit these possibilities has been dealt with elsewhere (Aronson forthcoming). However, several issues related to deterrence theory should be mentioned here as objects for the historical research. First, how is the acquisition of military nuclear potential (i. e., credible nuclear threat) possible in the age of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), considering the mechanisms of superpower guarantees given to or expected by countries which have joined the treaty system since 1969? This problem might be divided into the following issues:

— Do the NPT and the superpowers' obligations and guarantees given or implied to non-nuclear countries apply to Israel, which acquired its nuclear facilities in 1958 and never signed the NPT (but until 1969 was subjected to US inspection [Quester 1969; Aronson 1978; cf. Aronson 1979 and 1980])? In other words, did the US tacitly agree to recognize Israel as a member of the "nuclear club" as the end of the American inspection of Dimona in 1969 might imply? Did Israel become entitled, so far as the US was concerned, to use nuclear threats to stay alive or even to work toward the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict within changed boundaries? Could the Soviets have agreed to this, or at least to the fact that a nuclear

Israel faces the non-nuclear Arab states, and is recognized by the US as a nuclear power? Was such an understanding at all possible within the detente negotiations of 1971-73, the basis of which was an agreement — in the spirit of the second wave deterrence theory — concerning the nuclear arms race intended to prevent the escalation of local conflicts into a nuclear war between the superpowers? Since we do not have public statements to support either possibility, we must ask ourselves the following question:

— What became of the vague Soviet nuclear guarantee that was given to Egypt by Soviet Deputy Minister of Defense Marshall Grechko late in 1965 (Aronson 1979)? According to a carefully worded press report from Cairo on February 4, 1966, Grechko “reportedly refused to provide Egypt with nuclear weapons but pledged protection if Israel developed or obtained such arms.” Here the issue of nuclear guarantees by superpowers to clients becomes a crucial problem in testing deterrence theory, as the simple bilateralism of a superpower mutual hostage-taking situation might be destroyed if one superpower is forced to the aid of a client threatened by a nuclear client of the other superpower. If no agreement could be achieved in advance between the two superpowers on how to deal with such a situation in high level complex regional conflicts, as detente was supposed to do, the guarantees could theoretically assume three main forms: (1) the supply of nuclear warheads and delivery means by the USSR to a client state, to be used according to the client’s discretion; (2) the transfer of nuclear weapon systems by the Soviets to a client state, to be used at Soviet discretion, the systems thus remaining under Soviet control; or (3) the threat or the actual use of Soviet-based nuclear weapons against the rival of a client state.

The Middle East can serve as an important case study in attempting to answer the questions raised above regarding the relations between the superpowers and their respective clients, testing practical and theoretical deterrence arrangements (or loopholes) left between the superpowers themselves.

The complexity of the superpowers’ strategic, political, economic, psychological, and historical-cultural relations with the Middle East (including important domestic political factors, such as American Jewish support for Israel and the personal political variables represented by individual US presidents) and with each other, and of their sometimes contradictory relations with the states and non-state organizations the region, is indeed not sufficiently dealt with by deterrence theory. The struggle of the states and non-state organizations in the Middle East to enhance their historical-cultural values and processes of modernization (influenced by different values and using different means), to further their prestige and hegemonic ambitions, and to achieve a higher degree of independence from the super-

powers (while using the rivalry between them to their own advantage) puts additional burdens on deterrence theory, which excludes multilateral complications emerging in the simple chicken game upon which the theory is based. Therefore, in order to test reality against theory, we must study Middle Eastern reality and the superpowers' actual behavior with regard to the nuclear complications involved.

Regarding Israel itself, some scholars, influenced by second wave deterrence theory, almost totally dismissed the potential of nuclear threats as a deterrent in the case of Israel, and advocated a conventional strategy, combined with territorial concessions aimed at a political conflict resolution (Evron 1974, Rosen 1975, Harkavy 1977). But whether the Arabs, or a given Arab elite, were, or may be, ready to resolve their conflict with a conventional Israel (which is outnumbered, surrounded, potentially under-equipped conventionally and which could be politically outmaneuvered by a united Arab world) — even if Israel were to make far-reaching concessions — is a political, historical, cultural, and psychological question that must be dealt with beyond the premises of deterrence theory.

Other scholars, influenced by the second wave theory (Dowty 1975, Inbar 1981), dismissed the evidence regarding Israel's nuclear development program, which began in the late 1950s, as irrelevant to their opinion that Israel should not go nuclear and reached the conclusion that, indeed, it had not. Here the theory might have obscured reality — consciously or not — because the adaptation of chicken game rules to the Middle East would not work as it seemed to work in determining US-Soviet behavior at the time, at least before the third wave theorists' and Jervis' criticism of second wave theory made these assumptions rather questionable regarding the relations between the two superpowers themselves. Nonetheless, the adaptation of the chicken game to the Arab-Israel conflict was based on the assumption that the Arabs would destroy Israel's small and vulnerable heart — once Israel's own nuclear effort drove them to acquire nuclear weapons of their own — without Israel (small, financially and politically dependent on outside support and opposing vast, scarcely populated adversaries) being able to retaliate in the way outlined by the theory, i. e., possessing a credible second strike capability (Harkavy 1977). One of the arguments here was that "the Arabs" were "irrational," "emotional," and politically "unstable," and thus free to behave in ways different from the two superpowers (Allon 1959).

Scholars, policy-makers, and military strategists thus used the chicken game negatively when adapting it to the Middle East, postulating "irrationality" on the Arab side, in the sense of the Arabs being ready to fight and win wars in the nuclear age, and "rationality" on the Israeli side, in the sense of Jervis' ideas, that Israel would unsuccessfully try to deter countries that might risk status quo changes (due to their different "values," "motives,"

and experience). Thus Israel would use nuclear threats "rationally" for the sake of deterrence only (as the US does), while the Arabs might use nuclear bombs to destroy Israel. This is to be anticipated, in comparison to the "rational" behavior (which is made possible by their arsenals, their diversified delivery systems, their size, etc.) attributed by second wave theoreticians to both the US and the USSR.

These assumptions and conclusions will be dealt with historically below, in comparison with the existing scholarly literature analyzing Israel's behavior in the 1973 War. Surprisingly, the treatment by a respected international relations analyst of the 1967 and the 1973 Wars (especially the latter) (Brecher 1974, 1980) is devoid of discussion of Israel's nuclear potential in conditions of a possible monopoly, except in one marginal case. The denial of facts in his analysis regarding not only Israel's behavior before and during the 1973 War in connection with its nuclear potential, but regarding as well Egypt's planning, Egyptian-Syrian operations in the field, and the superpowers' behavior is due to Brecher's tendency to use limited variable models, based on his understanding of decision-makers' "perceptions" on the Israeli side only, and during the crisis situation itself (Brecher 1974). Thus, the results of such research are misleading. An analysis on the reasons for this should be helpful not only in studying the effect of nuclear threats before and during the Yom Kippur War, but in helping modify existing scholarly research based on cognitive limited variable, "perceptive," decision-making oriented and highly deductive international relations theories.

A. THE YOM KIPPUR WAR: COMMON ISRAELI PERCEPTIONS AND FOREIGN AND SCHOLARLY LITERATURE COMPARED TO ISRAELI AND ARAB BEHAVIOR

This paper and the forthcoming book upon which it is based are limited by my method of historical research to non-classified documentation — most of it from Arab, US, and Western European sources, and to interviews in Israel and abroad — dealing with the "limits of covert nuclear threats" which seemingly played a role before, during, and after that war.

The unclassified, written sources that I have analyzed and the interviews I have conducted, when combined with the *modus operandi* of the parties concerned, seem to yield plausible explanations for Arab, Israeli, American, and Soviet decisions before, during, and after the hostilities, which otherwise could not be coherently explained. These "plausible explanations" include covert nuclear threats as a major variable in the Arab-Israeli conflict since the early 1970s, and the issue of Israel's nuclear potential as a major problem for the Arabs since the early 1960s (Aronson 1976, 1978).

However, in Israel the usual questions regarding the origins of the Yom Kippur War, its timing, scope, and goals have been given the following widely accepted answers by politicians and analysts: In simple terms (and this view is simple), the October 1973 War is seen as a general, coordinated Egyptian-Syrian offensive, aimed at Israel's destruction. Supported by the Soviet Union, against the spirit and letter of detente, and by most of the Arab world, this offensive surprised Israel due to an unforgivable intelligence error (or "concept") and due to unnecessary operational "misdeeds" in the field, combined with bad military leadership on the highest (General Dayan's) level. Yet due to its own conventional military power, and to some US aid given without much direct influence over the operations, Israel managed to win the war: it drove the Syrians back to the vicinity of Damascus and encircled the Third Egyptian Army, while penetrating Egypt to within 101 kilometers of Cairo (Herzog 1975; Schiff 1976). The fruits of that victory, however, were stolen by the US, which — probably deliberately — stopped the Israelis in their victorious drive and imposed a "no winner" situation in order to enhance its own standing with Cairo and the Arab world, at Moscow's expense.

Another opinion, which gained ground in Israel only recently when adopted by General Ariel Sharon, perceives the 1973 War as a limited Arab offensive aimed at upsetting a regional *satus quo* in favor of the Arabs. Which "Arabs"? What were the reasons leading to that status quo? What were the inputs of the superpowers toward maintaining or upsetting it? Outside scholarly circles, the typical ethnocentric, self-focused Israeli political-psychological explanation of Arab, Soviet, and American behavior remains simple: Arab rejection of Israel and inter-Arab competition on leadership and hegemony — checked only by Israel's own conventional power — combined with American interests in the Arab world and Soviet imperialism, are working together to impose on Israel a staged withdrawal from vital territory (which started in 1973) that may lead to Israel's final destruction.

Both these Israeli schools are based on the argument that "territorial depth" (or "secure boundaries" in the occupied Arab territory) are a decisive guarantee to Israel's future security; the 1973 Arab offensive, limited as it was, reaffirmed the Israeli conviction that future wars might be decided in Israel's favor thanks to secure boundaries. Most Israeli policy-makers add to the territorial guarantee the dimension of a conventional arms balance, which must be maintained along with a series of measures necessary to prevent a repeated surprise attack. General Sharon alone seems to have adopted a combined conventional-territorial-nuclear strategic concept, which *inter alia*, led to the Israeli raid against Osiraq reactor in Iraq

and contributed to his invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982. Yet these developments are beyond the premises of our discussion here.

Nonetheless, following the Yom Kippur War, General Moshe Dayan publicly introduced a vague nuclear threat into Arab-Israeli conflict. Dayan had been in charge of Israel's security since 1967; one must ask if he might have made covert threats before and if his use of nuclear threats simply became more open after 1973 War. Furthermore, the Labor leader, Shimon Peres, Dayan's successor as minister of defense and in 1958 the founding father of Israel's nuclear program, used vague nuclear threats before the Yom Kippur War and repeated them afterward (Aronson 1978).

Thus, one must ask whether the limited nature of the 1973 Arab offensive was not dictated, among other things, by an Arab perception of a nuclear Israel.

The descriptions of the 1973 events by Egyptian and American policy-makers and politically involved sources agree without exception on at least one thing: the 1973 Arab offensive was not aimed at Israel's destruction but was a "limited war." Such sources as Sadat's memoirs (Sadat 1977), Hassanein Heikal's *Road to Ramadan* (Heikal 1975), Nixon's memoirs (Nixon 1978) and his TV interviews with David Frost (Aronson 1978), and Kissinger's two volumes of memoirs (Kissinger 1979, 1982) differ, of course, in their basic descriptions of the authors' own roles and their respective countries' strategies and tactics before, during and after the hostilities. Yet both Sadat and Heikal deal with the problem of "strategic weapons" that had been sought for an ambitious operation against Israel (operation code "Granite I" and "Granite II") which was gradually given up by the Egyptians in favor of a much more limited war. Soviet support and military guarantees, maintains Sadat, which were limited in scope or refused altogether, dictated that strategic decision. Heikal tells us that Sadat's predecessor, Nasser, in a meeting with Libya's Qaddafi, had ruled out altogether the concept of a war of destruction against Israel, as Israel was perceived by Nasser as a nuclear power; a war to destroy Israel would have brought about a nuclear holocaust, which the superpowers would not have allowed in any case (Heikal 1975). Parallel to this, Nixon tells us that he ordered a nuclear alert following the transfer of Soviet nuclear warheads to Egypt on November 25, 1973 (Aronson 1978). This requires further explanation in light of Sadat's disappointment with the Soviet's and Nasser's argument vis-à-vis Qaddafi, that the superpowers would do anything to avoid getting involved in nuclear entanglements in the Middle East. Kissinger, on the other hand, never mentions this in his memoirs but speaks of "very alarming news" arriving in Washington on the eve of the decision to declare a world-wide nuclear alert. Heikal, however, published a special analysis on Israel's bomb in his *El Aharam*

newspaper immediately after the war (Heikal 1973); in which he warned the Arabs that following the Yom Kippur War, Israel would resort to "nuclear blackmail," requiring the launching of an Arab counter effort as soon as possible. This, too, requires further evaluation if we put it together with Heikal's own report of Nasser's decision four years earlier to avoid a war of destruction against an alleged nuclear Israel. Why did Heikal rediscover a nuclear Israel after a local, "limited", and rather successful Arab offensive against Israel, which mobilized Washington to support a change in the status quo in the Middle East toward meeting some Arab demands.

These questions introduce the nuclear dimension into any serious, scholarly discussion of the 1973 War (and of the Middle East conflict in general), first as an issue that cannot be ignored altogether as is usually the case in Israel itself. Yet Arab, Soviet, and American behavior, at least on the face of it, before, during, and after the war raises a number of additional questions with possible "unconventional" ramifications.

First, we have no plausible explanation for the degree of sensitivity that Sadat demonstrated toward detente and the detente talks between Nixon and Brezhnev in 1972 and 1973, which resulted, among other things, in an open disagreement between the superpowers regarding the Middle East, yet included an explicit understanding regarding Palestinian "rights" (Heikal 1975; Sadat 1977; also Shiloah Center, quoted in Aronson 1978).

Was the increased American conventional and financial aid to Israel after Israeli-Egyptian ceasefire of August 1970 interpreted as resulting from Israel "nuclear blackmail" vis-à-vis the US? In other words, was Israel given conventional aid by the US in order to prevent it from adopting a nuclear strategy of sorts that might threaten the Arabs openly or have involved the US with the Soviet Union?

Did detente seem to Egypt to be an agreement between the superpowers to establish "rules of behavior" aimed at avoiding the danger of direct confrontation as a result of their possible involvement in regional conflict? Could this "basic rule" of detente have been interpreted by the Arabs as supporting the status quo in the Middle East, in spite of Soviet statements to the contrary and Soviet-American declarations in favor of "Palestinian rights"?

Since detente was based on mutual American-Soviet interest regarding the prevention of a third world war and aimed at the regulation of the nuclear race between the two countries, did the Arabs believe that the US and the USSR had agreed — without publicly admitting it — to avoid the danger of nuclear confrontation between them resulting from an Arab attack against a nuclear Israel? Israel was perceived by the Arabs as having secured a nuclear potential before NPT delegitimized open efforts of the

Arabs to acquire a nuclear potential of their own, and before detente placed further constraints on Soviet willingness to come to the aid of the Arabs in the event of an Israeli nuclear threat, if the Arabs resorted to a war to destroy Israel. A careful study of Arab sources (see Heikal, for example, and Aronson) leads to the conclusion that the Arabs, especially Egypt, suspected that Israel had succeeded in achieving a "special" nuclear status with the US, i. e., had been recognized as a "nuclear power" by Washington: detente (and NPT) required maximum clarity regarding clients who might involve the superpowers in nuclear confrontations. Faced with an unstable and totally hostile Arab coalition — several members of which were Soviet clients who might have expected "nuclear guarantees" from Moscow — Israel might have been seen by both Moscow and Washington as ready to react to an Arab challenge in a manner that might indeed involve the superpowers in a nuclear conflict. At least the Arabs could have feared that. Israel might use nuclear threats — or even nuclear weapons — in a manner that would require Soviet counter moves, which, in turn, might trigger American counter moves. Both NPT and detente were basically aimed at preventing such situations.

If Sadat suspected that Soviet "nuclear guarantees" (and Soviet support for any far-reaching Arab attack against Israel's territory) had become questionable, as a result of NPT and detente, he indeed had to lower his goals and limit his military planning for the 1973 attack.

In fact, Egyptian, Syrian, and Soviet behavior during the hostilities seems to substantiate the assumption that the war was planned as a limited attack against Israel's occupied territorial margin, following an explicit Soviet, Egyptian, and Syrian warning that a war in the Middle East was to be expected. Thus, Soviet behavior — especially the supply of offensive weapons to Egypt and Syria starting in March 1973, which had been withheld until then — could be explained as follows: after the departure of the Soviet military personnel from Egypt in the summer of 1972, Moscow was released from its direct involvement in an Arab attack; following the detente talks of 1972-73, in which Brezhnev publicly and privately warned Nixon that a war was imminent (Kissinger 1979), the hostilities were viewed by the Russians in terms of a justified, limited, conventional, Arab attack. The problem that requires special attention is the episode regarding the alleged shipment of Soviet nuclear warheads to Egypt after the ceasefire of October 22, 1973, the American worldwide nuclear alert which might have resulted from it, and the Egyptian lessons learned from those episodes.

The behavior of Egypt and Syria on the battlefield during the war itself seems to substantiate the proposition that the war was limited to the margin of the Israeli occupied territory; moreover, the Arabs did not fully use the military capabilities they had at their disposal, and did not exploit their

success. The Syrians halted their march to the old boundaries (the 1949 Armistice Demarcation Line) and did not venture beyond the 1967 occupied Golan Heights. They restricted the use of their military capabilities, which they had successfully implemented within the Golan Heights to capture the Israeli intelligence gathering position on Mt. Hermon, and did not take — even temporarily — the few bridges leading from Israel to the Heights, nor did they send commandoes into the Israeli army reserve deployment areas close to the old boundary, where they could have created serious trouble during the first days of shock on the Israeli side, following the initial surprise.

The Egyptians (and the Syrians) used several conventional type missiles against Israeli military targets. The Egyptians never attacked Israeli civilian targets in or outside the occupied Sinai, but they did send a subsonic Kelt missile in the general direction of Tel Aviv — which was intercepted by Israeli warplanes well away from the coast — to serve as a signal that civilian targets and in-depth strategic bombing should be ruled out by both parties, as Cairo had at its disposal retaliatory means, such as Scud missiles, which could not be intercepted. The conduct of the field operations was also significant. The Egyptian infantry, carrying vast quantities of anti-tank weapons and supported by armor and widely deployed artillery batteries, crossed the canal and dug in on Israeli-held territory three to six kilometers deep along the whole front, isolating or capturing most of the Bar-Lev line strongholds. The Israeli command expected the enemy to behave the way it would have in such circumstances and push its advantage to the utmost. The military was educated and trained not to make distinctions between a “war of destruction” and “limited wars” against Israel. The GOC Southern Command and GHQ tried therefore to determine where the enemy’s main thrusts were, believing that they must have been toward the depth of the Sinai or maybe even toward Israel’s heartland itself. In the case of the initial Syrian thrust, which went further toward the old border, most military men believed then — and now — that Syria’s President Assad was ready to cross that border and invade the Galilee.

However, there were no Egyptian “principle thrusts” in the Sinai at first. The whole canal front was covered by roughly the same number of Egyptian forces, which were in turn covered by artillery and dominating tank and anti-tank missile positions on the other side of the canal. Behind them a strategic reserve of armored divisions covered the rear. The Egyptians had carried out a limited offensive, followed immediately by the establishment of a defensive formation. They were able to create a solid strip of defenses along the Israeli side of the canal and they expected the Israeli counter-attack, which they were able to defeat. Without trying to exploit their victory, they refrained from undertaking a deep penetration effort beyond

the immediate canal zone. This "strategic halt" was used by the Soviets (Heikal 1975) to push for a ceasefire and an end to the hostilities. The Egyptian president refused. The question is, since his "limited war" had already brought about a major success, what did Sadat have in mind?

The Egyptian/Syrian limited war concept brought about an angry reaction from Muammar Qaddafi of Libya. Having dismissed the Egyptian-Syrian offensive at first as a major mistake, Qaddafi later realized that Sadat and Assad had succeeded in a rather limited endeavor — which ruled out any thrust against Israel's heartland. This "limited war" concept was no more acceptable to Qaddafi than it was discernable by Israeli generals. This strange symmetry between the most radical, nuclear-obsessed Arab leader and totally conventional Israeli military experts also requires an explanation.

B. THE NUCLEAR FACTOR IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE ROLE OF ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM BEFORE 1973 AND ITS LIMITED ROLE AS A COVERT THREAT, 1970-1973

The generally accepted description of the pre-1967 Arab-Israeli conflict avoids the nuclear dimension, even though it had been introduced into the area in the early 1960s. The questions raised in Section A above might be answered by the inclusion of the nuclear dimension in discussions of the Middle East conflict.

There is reason to speculate, although we have no records other than public speeches and official stances, that the Six Day War of 1967, or rather the escalation process which preceded it, was precipitated by an Arab perception of Israel going nuclear. According to available Arab data, this perception triggered a very interesting, multi-level Arab (Egyptian) response which included a threat to pre-empt Israel before it went nuclear; an effort by Egypt to acquire nuclear weapons, or at least nuclear waste to be mounted on short-range rockets, which failed; and a public stance that rationalized conventional pre-emption by arguing that if Israel went nuclear, the existing boundaries would be "frozen" and Israel's existence secured (Aronson 1978).

This last point seems worthy of further research, if and when more data becomes available, because Nasser's perception of Israel as "a transient phenomenon that could not withstand the sheer force of Arab numbers" (Vatikiotis 1980, p. 254) was based upon an impressive Arab manpower superiority of about 120 million Arabs to three million Israelis. Yet this ratio, which on the face of it made every Arab conventional effort against Israel tolerable in terms of Arab losses, was in fact very problematic. Due to Arab domestic priorities, the requirements of modernization, the role of the military as the backbone of most Arab regimes, the shortage of

technical and managerial skills, and the relative backwardness of the potential mass-army soldiers, the conventional military ratio between Israel and its neighbors in 1967 was actually much different. The ratio of tanks, for example, was 1:2 (Aronson 1978).

However, the idea that the Arabs could theoretically tolerate greater losses than Israel, and at the end Arab "sheer numbers" would prevail, might have indeed remained predominant in Arab official thinking, but much less so in actual military planning. Thus the Six Day War was not planned, but triggered, by the Arabs, and ended in the expected defeat without any actual nuclear connection.

Yet after the 1967 War, the nuclear factor seems to have acquired an actual meaning for President Nasser; the following dialogue between the Egyptian president and his Pan-Arab follower Qaddafi — who came to Cairo in 1969, after having overthrown the Libyan monarchy, to pledge support for the official Arab goal of a war to destroy Israel — is reported by Heikal (1975; p. 76): "Nasser said patiently that this was impossible... Neither the Russians nor the Americans would permit a situation that might lead to nuclear war." Qaddafi then asked whether Israel had nuclear weapons; Nasser answered that this was a strong probability, and added that Egypt did not possess them.

Indeed, the Egyptian president had tried unsuccessfully to acquire some kind of unconventional means of mass destruction in the 1960s, probably nuclear waste, to be mounted on short-range missiles produced by German and Austrian scientists in Egypt (Aronson 1977a). During his 1969 conversation with Qaddafi, Nasser seems to have renounced the option of a war of destruction against Israel, which, in any event, he had never planned in the past. He used Israel's nuclear effort as a cogent argument, or at least as an excuse vis-à-vis Qaddafi, the radical zealot, to explain his limited war effort without, however, arguing so in public. As for Qaddafi, he jumped to the conclusion that nuclear weapons were the pre-condition for re-establishing the balance needed to embark upon the holy task of destroying Israel. Qaddafi seems to have been guided by the same approach ever since, initially trying to buy a bomb — "not a big atomic bomb, just a tactical one" — in China; the Chinese refused to sell (Heikal 1975).

Nasser, who thought in long terms of conventional Arab superiority that would "crush" Israel, may have given up that goal entirely, or at least temporarily, but was determined to fight a limited war — necessary and justified in his eyes — to liberate the Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967. In this sense, Egypt publicly adopted a limited war goal within the framework of a total political and ideological (but not a military!) commitment against Israel's very existence. Nevertheless, to force his will on his nuclear foe, Nasser needed something to neutralize Israel's nuclear

threat, even if, unlike Qaddafi, he had given up any hope of destroying Israel. The Egyptian president appears to have been unacquainted with the details of the internal debate within Israel itself with regard to nuclear weapons (Aronson 1978).

One can discern, according to the very insufficient public data now available, three Israeli approaches to this issue. Each of them, of course, was basement based, even if the original one, preached by Israel's founder and first prime minister and minister of defense, David Ben-Gurion, had been more overt than the others. Ben-Gurion, who adopted and supported his deputy (in the Defense Ministry) Shimon Peres's initiative to build a reactor in Dimona with French aid and outside IAEA control, was always aware of the unbridgeable conventional gap between Israel and its mortal enemies.

One can determine, behind Ben-Gurion's few public statements and interviews in the early 1960s, the assumption that a nuclear Israel might better deter the Arabs from attacking Israel within its pre-1967 boundaries, because any such attack would be disastrous for them, too. In a conventional struggle, the Arabs could always have hope for victory against the much inferior (and politically rather isolated) Israel, or at least they would be able to absorb their losses (while benefiting politically from the continued belligerence) and gird themselves for the next war. Ben-Gurion's maxim, that 'Israel could not afford to lose any round, whereas the Arabs could afford to lose them all' seems to be the key to his strategic thinking in the early 1960s before his sudden resignation in 1963. Ben-Gurion's successor, Levi Eshkol, and the latter's foreign minister, Golda Meir, were inclined to adopt an American orientation — which at the time required Israeli acceptance of American inspection of the Dimona nuclear plan, due to Israel's insistence on avoiding IAEA control — rather than Ben-Gurion's French and West German orientation. Eshkol's coalition associates on the left under the former general, Yigal Allon, preached that a nuclear option would tie Israel's hands in its conflict with the Arabs, because they were bound to obtain such an option too. A geographically inferior Israel would then have to yield to any Arab provocation, because reacting to it might, due to the emotional and highly unstable character of Arab regimes, trigger a nuclear holocaust. The obvious corollary of Israel's own nuclear effort would be, when joined by an Arab counter effort, the perpetuation of Israel in its pre-1967 borders, which Allon himself had earlier called a "corridor state"; its physical restriction would give the Arabs decisive advantage over Israel, even if it were nuclear-equipped. Allon preferred, as a result of his geo-strategic analysis, a conventionally stronger Israel — rather than a nuclear Israel — which could pre-empt and change the 1967 boundaries (the 1949 Armistice Demarcation Lines) in its favor, so long as the Middle

East was free of nuclear weapons, which he believed would exert maximum restraint on Israel's freedom of action.

Ben-Gurion's semi-public counter argument, which failed to convince his successors, was that, while conceding that the Arabs might also get a nuclear capability some day, it made no essential difference in the (conventional) balance of power between three million Israelis and the more than 100 million Arabs. Ben-Gurion considered nuclear weapons to be the only means to inflict unbearable harm on the Arabs, whereas a conventional arms race might end in the Arab's favor and induce them, politically and psychologically, to fight Israel to the end. A conventional pre-emptive war, which Allon and Eshkol's chief of staff, Yitzhak Rabin, would recommend for emergencies, was not totally ruled out by Ben-Gurion who himself had launched a pre-emptive strike against Egypt in 1956. For Ben-Gurion, however, such a strike was conditioned by a large number of prerequisites, such as foreign military and political aid, limited objectives, and no occupation of the Arab populated, Jordanian-controlled West Bank of the Jordan River. Ben-Gurion argued that a pre-emptive war might force Israel to assume the rule of a million Arabs on the West Bank, a prospect he dreaded for both political and long-range strategic as well as for moral reasons (Aronson 1978).

It can be assumed therefore that Ben-Gurion was not content with just creating a nuclear option but tended to consider a nuclear strategy: the active, psycho-political employment of a nuclear deterrent *within the 1949 lines, because it was Israel's geographical vulnerability that could make such a deterrent credible to the Arabs and free Israel from the political, strategic, and moral complications of dominating a large, alien ethnic minority in the West Bank.*

In conversations with Yigal Allon and others, Ben-Gurion called a possible occupation of the West Bank an "Algerian disaster," which he feared might destroy Israel from within. For this reason, it can be assumed that Ben-Gurion was able to promise faithfully to President de Gaulle that Israel, once in possession of a real nuclear deterrent, would not be interested in launching a pre-emptive, conventional war and changing its existing boundaries, thereby precluding Israeli rule over a large number of Arabs. France was, at the time, Israel's main nuclear supplier. Under de Gaulle, Paris threatened to stop its nuclear aid to Israel. Yet the Ben-Gurion-de Gaulle meeting of 1960 resulted in a compromise: France supplied the missing parts of the Dimona reactor and Israel proceeded to complete its nuclear program — publicly declared to be a peaceful research program — by itself, without foreign inspection (Aronson 1978).

It seems, however, that this program was not supported by a majority in Ben-Gurion's cabinet. Ben-Gurion's majority party "doves" were opposed

in principle to nuclear weapons, and they joined Eshkol, Golda Meir, and Yigal Allon and his colleagues on the nationalist left to stifle it in favor of a conventional effort, US orientation, and the conventional pre-emptive strike, if necessary, that led to the border changes in 1967.

After 1967, the basically conventional Israeli security doctrine, based on occupied territory and "secure" boundaries, was partially and unofficially changed by Moshe Dayan to include a nuclear threat, especially in the context of Arab-Soviet ties.

Between 1963 and 1967, completely absorbed by Arab conventional threats and its own conventional vulnerability, Israel (which friend and foe alike perceived as developing a nuclear potential) practically ignored its own nuclear potential and adopted a geo-strategic, conventional security policy up to the Six Day War. For a geographically vulnerable and nationally motivated country, a conventional pre-emptive approach and a resultant boundary change would have been the typical course rather than deterrence aimed at preserving the status quo. Indeed, this was the Israeli army's actual behavior. A nuclear capability seemed necessary as a precautionary measure against future Arab nuclear efforts that would lead to a "balance of terror" and put an end to Israel's freedom of conventional action. Until very recently, most army generals and civilian experts alike adopted this approach. Following 1967, when Israel acquired something like "secure borders," deterrence, including nuclear deterrence, could have been adopted over pre-emption because Israel became more interested in preserving the status quo and the Arabs were struggling more than ever to change it. However, only the newly appointed minister of defense, Moshe Dayan, added something like a nuclear threat to a wholly conventional approach.

Under Dayan, Israel's attention was quickly turned to the growing cooperation between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Dayan's perception of Soviet behavior (and of superpower behavior in general) was based on the assumption that great powers involved in regional conflicts will behave according to their global and regional interests: motivated by prestige, calculation, and rivalry among themselves, the Soviets might inflict unbearable harm upon small states, especially when those states opposed Soviet interests.

In 1966 the Soviet Union had extended a public nuclear guarantee to Egypt. This guarantee seems to have been formulated very cautiously: Israel was not declared to possess nuclear weapons; Soviet "protection" was not spelled out; no nuclear weapons were promised to Egypt. Even if General Dayan believed he could rely on Israel's nuclear threat as a deterrent in its struggle over "secure boundaries" and Arab acceptance of Israel beginning in 1968 he publicly warned against the Soviet-Arab connection and the growing Soviet involvement in Egypt as the most

alarming element in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Soviet nuclear "protection," even if highly vague, could have rendered the psychological threat of Israel's own nuclear capability, as perceived by the Arabs, almost useless. Thus, for Dayan, nuclear weapons served Israel as a limited, psychological deterrent, and no nuclear strategy of any kind was developed by him, or by the Israeli Army, in connection with Israel's main political and conventional territorial goals: those "secure boundaries," which in themselves were perceived by Israel's security elite — mostly former army officers — to be the main guarantee against an Arab attack, a decisive geo-strategic deterrent and bargaining assets for peace alike. Arab motives to undertake a limited war to remove what was to them the totally unacceptable Israeli presence in occupied territory were perceived by Israelis as a manifestation of basic Arab desires to be rid of Israel altogether.

As we have seen, in his talks with Qaddafi, Nasser did refer to Israel's nuclear capability as a very valid and serious threat, which, at least until the Arab side acquired nuclear weapons, justified the tacit dropping of Egypt's commitment to support a war of destruction against Israel. To Dayan this commitment could be validated by the growing Soviet involvement of the Arab side, which might have been countered by gaining more US support (which in itself required more political flexibility on Israel's side) and by disseminating nuclear threats for Arab, Soviet, and American consumption. In other words, even if Dayan believed Soviet nuclear "protection" for Egypt undermined Israel's credibility as a nuclear threat to Egypt, he still might have hoped that the Russians would not ignore Israel's nuclear threat to the Arabs and even to Russia itself — limited as it might have been — if they decisively helped the Arabs in what he perceived to be a continued Arab effort to destroy Israel. At the same time he hoped to get the US behind Israel — thanks to the Soviet orientation of Egypt and Syria — without losing Israel's autonomy vis-à-vis Washington. For Egypt, having no nuclear capability of its own and planning a large-scale limited war to "liberate" the occupied Arab territories, the growing Soviet involvement seems to have become a necessity.

If this was the situation at the time of Nasser's death in the fall of 1970, President Sadat's ascendancy was surrounded with great difficulty. Lacking Nasser's public appeal and influence over the Arab masses, rightly suspect to the Soviets as a national-conservative politician, Sadat never enjoyed Soviet support to the degree his predecessor did. He feared the pro-Soviet and Nasserite elements around him, who could argue in favor of Egypt's Soviet connection due to Egypt's total dependence on Soviet conventional weapons and to the strategic (and nuclear) backing Egypt needed in order to initiate a large-scale, if limited, conventional war against Israel.

Yet, during 1971-72, and following the SALT negotiations and the detente

agreements of the time, Sadat not only argued convincingly that the Russians had refrained from supplying Egypt with the necessary conventional weaponry needed for operations "Granite I" and "Granite II" — aimed at "liberating" the whole Israeli occupied territory — he also liquidated his pro-Soviet competitors and, later, reduced Egypt's war aims considerably. Still complaining of the lack of Soviet supplies, he ordered the Russians out of Egypt in the summer of 1972. By so doing, the Egyptian president seemingly lost Soviet strategic "backing"; Yet he secured Soviet weapons shipments instead, which made it possible for him to embark, together with Syria, upon his limited attack in October 1973 with a limited degree of Russian support which, once he had decided to go to war, he extracted from Moscow.

Since Dayan was thinking in terms of a Soviet-backed war of destruction against Israel, he probably perceived the Soviet withdrawal from Egypt in 1972 as a major change in Israel's favor. After all, Egypt had no nuclear capabilities and without the far-reaching cooperation that Nasser had developed with Moscow, Sadat seemed to have no means of neutralizing Israel's nuclear threat. Indeed, Qaddafi deplored the Egyptian-Syrian attack on Israel, having understood rightly that it was to be a very limited war, not a way to destroy the enemy, and yet a grave risk because the Arabs lacked the means to neutralize a possible Israeli atomic challenge.

Hassanein Heikal writes (1973, 1975) that the aims of the limited war of 1973 were both military and political: to force the great powers to abandon their preoccupation with detente for awhile, to turn Israel from America's principal ally in the region (as it seemed to them to be since the "Black September" of 1970) into a problematical client-state, and to offer Washington Arab oil and cooperation with Egypt in return for the remainder of the occupied areas left in Israel's possession.

This would offset Israel's nuclear advantage, making it irrelevant to the problem of her position in the region and her continued possession of the occupied Arab territory. For there could no longer be a question of destroying Israel or even of liberating all the territories by military means. After all, a Soviet nuclear guarantee for the destruction of Israel had never been given. Richard Nixon, for his part, warned Arab ambassadors in Washington a few days after the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War that "the Arabs should under no circumstances violate the pre-1967 lines" (Aronson 1978, p. 381). Soviet aid to Egypt was limited in advance to a partial liberation of the territories, because an Arab invasion into Israel's heartland would have created a very serious danger of superpower escalation. Even an Israeli threat, limited though it might have been, against cities in the Soviet Union itself, could not have been ruled out entirely.

From Sadat's point of view — and many hints of this are contained in his memoirs serialized in the Egyptian *October* magazine and Kuwait's *As-Siyassa* — Nasser's growing dependence on the Soviets was unnecessary due to risk of a superpower confrontation which seemed to have been a serious subject for negotiations between the superpowers since 1971. Thus detente could have given Israel a definite strategic and geo-political advantage, thanks to its covert nuclear threats juxtaposed with the superpowers' new rules of behavior. The Israeli nuclear monopoly and Dayan's implicit threats could not really be ignored — even if they were so publicly. To the Arabs the Israelis were criminal, irresponsible violators of their own traditions of exile life, irrational usurpers of other people's rights. This misconception might have given Israeli nuclear threats a very high credibility in Arab eyes. At the same time, Israel's conventional strength and its position relative to the United States made ambitious Arab operations seem exaggerated and unrealistic.

Furthermore, the political and economic price of Soviet aid, i.e., total dependence on a superpower that was able to supply only arms, was too high in terms of Sadat's national priorities.

Finally, Sadat came to realize that the more aid the Soviets gave to Egypt, the more American aid would flow to Israel. Thus, Washington held the key. But the Americans did not want to listen to Sadat, who had thrown the Russians out of Egypt and waited in vain for his reward. He therefore decided to attack and hold the banks of the Suez Canal so as to bring about a strategic change in the Middle East: to cut down to size the "empire" of Israel which, according to Sadat, had grown over-confident because the US had come to regard it, at least since September 1970, as a regional policeman entitled to advance its interests as it saw fit. As Sadat understood it, the US saw a strong Israel as the guarantor — at least in the short run — of a quiet and balanced Middle East. Israel's nuclear option was thus combined — in Sadat's eyes — with its "inflated" status after September 1970.

Egypt, and Syria, therefore ignored Israel's nuclear factor for the purposes of this limited war, but recognized it with regard to Israel's heartland. Thus they halted their advancing troops unjustifiably, in terms of their initial success in the field, in midcourse. There is no other explanation for the strategic halt of the Egyptian and Syrian advances before the arrival of the Israeli reserves in the areas that were densely covered by Arab ground-to-air missiles (in Sinai, down to the strategic passes, and on the Golan, up to the 1949 line).

Writing in *Military Review*, Charles Wakebridge (1976) expressed surprise that the Syrians stopped in their tracks whenever their armor approached the old boundary. It is unlikely that this resulted from confusion within

the Syrian command system. Nor has it been explained why the Syrians, deep in the heart of Golan, did not use the techniques they had so successfully applied in the conquest of Israel's military intelligence outpost on Mt. Hermon. The Syrians could have taken Bnot Ya'acov bridge, which would have led them to the heart of the Galilee, or they could have sent small commando detachments into the Israeli army's deployment area on the Israeli side of the old border. Since the Syrians refrained from such actions, it would appear that, for Assad, this border was a nuclear taboo, protected moreover by the United States.

After the war Sadat said that the Soviets had made a great effort to freeze the advance after the initial Arab successes. But Egypt wanted a long drawn-out war of attrition after the limited, initial success in terms of territory, which would involve the United States and induce it to support limited Arab goals. King Feisal of Saudia Arabia had promised Sadat that an oil embargo would be imposed if the war were to last long enough for Israel to have to ask for American aid (Sadat 1977). This explains the Egyptian armored attack on October 14, the main purpose of which was to extend the war.

Qaddafi spoke out in public against the Egyptian-Syrian offensive. He understood that Egypt and Syria had decided on a very limited war, whereas he remained committed to an all-out war for Israel's destruction. Furthermore, in Qaddafi's view, any Arab military effort against Israel should have been "covered" by Arab nuclear weapons, for what would the Arabs do if Israel were to inflict on them an "instantaneous (nuclear) disaster" in the opening phase of the war? The course of the fighting convinced Qaddafi that his initial analysis of the Egyptian-Syrian war aims was correct.

In retrospect, this can be seen as a recognition of Israel's nuclear strength and of its position within the American political system, which assured its existence, at least within the pre-1967 boundaries. In order to liquidate Israel — as the Libyan ruler still wishes to do — Arab nuclear weapons are necessary to counterbalance Israel's nuclear option and deter the Americans from direct involvement in Israel's favor.

The Israelis, on the other hand, seemed to have been surprised by the attack, by its timing and initial tactical and strategic success, and by its limited nature. Geared to think in terms of a war of destruction, most Israeli ministers and all Israeli generals had concluded that their geostrategic advantages and the conventional means at their disposal would defeat any attempt at such a war. Assuming that Cairo had lost Moscow's nuclear guarantee following Sadat's break with the Russians — which he seems to have taken very seriously — apparently only Defense Minister Dayan had combined this conclusion with the implications of the "basic rules of detente." Under such conditions Dayan believed that the Arabs could

undertake only a very limited attack. This was precisely the case, but the "limited attack" was of large dimensions. Shallow in penetration, it inflicted heavy losses on the Israeli army, without letting Israel enjoy any advantages from its nuclear threats. Yet the differences between Dayan and the prevailing conventional schools of thought brought about a considerable degree of confusion and enmity among Israeli policy-makers. During the initial Syrian thrust (October 6-9, 1973), the defense minister seems to have had strong doubts about whether the Syrians would be carried beyond the initial penetration into the Galilee; at this point he might have used more explicit nuclear signals, yet most of the cabinet did not attribute any deterrent power to what they considered to be "last resort" unconventional weapons, especially as Egypt appeared to have renewed its Soviet connection. Most policy-makers and the generals had continued to think in conventional-territorial terms, and still believed that "secure" boundaries would prevent a war of destruction or decisively defeat it. Yet as a result of this thinking and because these boundaries were contested internationally and unacceptable to the Arabs, they became safe Arab ground for conventional attack against Israel. Arab motives, which Israel should have studied more closely, combined with Israel's own conventional strategy and produced a military, political, and strategic setback to Israel, which was compounded by the oil crisis. However, Israel's nuclear threat, combined with its conventional power, did work. It constrained Arab planning in advance, even if very few Israelis understood this combination or admitted it, otherwise there is no way of explaining the repeated Syrian halts that were not militarily justified, the rather subtle use of surface-to-surface and air-to-surface missiles by the Arabs against Israeli targets, and the failure by the Arabs to use — beyond the occupied territories — the strategic weapons and military techniques they possessed. This kind of "signalling" was aimed at limiting the conflict to certain areas, yet during a day or two of confusion over Arab goals, a "strategic vacuum" with regard to a possible use of Israel's nuclear threat seems to have prevailed in the minds of Israel's policy-makers — Dayan trying to give it more credibility, others opposing his measures until restricted Arab action on the ground and Israel's conventional counter-measures apparently rendered any nuclear response unnecessary. Israel appeared to have been saved largely due to its conventional efforts, not to self-imposed Arab restraint which was, among other things, the result of Israel's nuclear threat. Thus, the legacy of occupied territory and of "secure boundaries" as the main source of Israel's survival was not only maintained but strengthened.

One of the major unanswered questions about the Yom Kippur War is the repeated story about Soviet nuclear warheads in Alexandria on October 25, 1973. *Ma'arakhot*, the official professional monthly of the Israeli armed

forces, published a commentary on the nuclear warheads that the Soviets allegedly supplied to Egypt. The two authors believe the United States deliberately misled Israel at the end of October 1973 when it informed Israel that the Soviets had brought nuclear warheads to Egypt.

According to this view, the US wanted to make Israel lift the siege of the Egyptian Third Army in the face of this "assumed" Soviet nuclear threat. Israel had encircled the Egyptian force by October 24, 1973, having violated for that purpose a Security Council ceasefire resolution that had gone into effect on October 22, following a Soviet-US understanding. In retrospect, it appeared to the authors that the Americans wanted to use the situation for their own advantage and blaze a trail for themselves into Egypt. This is one interpretation. Another version of the episode of the Soviet warheads, which I have tried to check in Washington, speaks of a Soviet vessel that sailed through the Dardanelles on October 13, 1973, one week after the outbreak of the war, carrying a cargo of bridging equipment on its deck. On October 23 this ship again passed the straits, its deck bare, but in its hold it carried nuclear material. The cargo was detected thanks to highly advanced American sensor equipment installed at the Dardanelles. The ship docked in Alexandria a few days later and at first the nuclear cargo remained in the hold. The Americans rather nervously informed Israel a few days later that the cargo had "disappeared" from the ship and that their satellites were unable to trace it. There were doubts as to whether it had been unloaded at all and the question arose whether it had been mounted on Egyptian Scud missiles.

The subject is very important because it seems that this is an instance of an actual nuclear guarantee by the Soviets to Egypt to offset Israel's nuclear option. Careful note should be taken of the dates. According to the report published in *Time* magazine April 12, 1976, Moshe Dayan, at the height of the military crisis on the Golan Heights on October 8, ordered the visible positioning of Israeli nuclear missiles — or some other form of nuclear signalling.

If that is so, then it is reasonable to assume that the ship, or any other vessel would have carried the Soviet answer to Israel's nuclear threat on October 13 when it sailed through the Dardanelles for the first time. But, it was precisely on this date that the vessel transported an ordinary military cargo, and no other Soviet ship was traced at the time carrying nuclear materials to Egypt. When it was again discovered in the Dardanelles ten days later, its nuclear cargo was detected by the Americans. It was possibly meant to give nuclear teeth to the Soviet-American Intervention Force, which, according to Brezhnev's suggestion to Nixon, should have been sent to the Middle East in view of the violation of the ceasefire of October 22, 1973, by Israel and the encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army. It may also

have been intended for an exclusive Soviet presence in Egypt, should Nixon have refused to cooperate. At any rate, this was not a reaction to the Israeli nuclear threat which had existed publicly since the eighth of the month. Until the violation of the ceasefire, the Russians had not seen any reason for intervention, nuclear or otherwise, and they did not react to the positioning of the nuclear missile on October 8 that *Time* attributed to Israel. As soon as the ceasefire had been violated, a political-military situation arose that enabled, or forced, the Soviets to threaten intervention, since they had a perception of an Israel possessing a nuclear option, they equipped their intervention force with a nuclear option of its own, and did not give any warheads to the Egyptians.

President Nixon said in his TV interviews with David Frost (Aronson 1978) that the appearance of the nuclear ship in Alexandria aroused great commotion in the White House and directly brought about the worldwide nuclear alert that he ordered following Brezhnev's threats. The US might have decided upon a worldwide nuclear alert to deter the USSR from intervening and as a hint that the Soviets should return their nuclear vessel to Soviet waters so it would not have to turn the issue of the nuclear vessel into a public warning over which the Soviets might lose face. The Soviets thereby gave up their intention to intervene in Egypt. Their nuclear presence in Alexandria was maintained for a week or two, then the vessel returned home.

A couple of years afterward, American naval officers told me in Washington that the nuclear cargo was never unloaded from the ship in Alexandria. It was kept there under the strictest guard by Soviet, rather than Egyptian, naval personnel until the ship returned, at the beginning of November, to its mother port of Nicolaev.

It appears, therefore, that the Soviet Union acted with circumspection and did not physically transfer any nuclear weapons to the Egyptians. Least of all did Moscow give Egypt a nuclear response to an Israeli atomic attack against Syria, as some Israeli analysts feared. The Kremlin created a nuclear presence in Egypt in a political military situation which *prima facie* made it possible for Israel to violate the ceasefire. In the view of the Soviets, this violation justified their intervention; they were thwarted by President Nixon's nuclear alert.

C. HEIKAL VERSUS SADAT

Hassanein Heikal seems to have learned his lessons from Soviet and American behavior during the later phases of the war (Heikal 1973, and cf. Heikal 1976). Heikal's analysis is based upon his perception of Israel's own lessons learned from the 1973 War, or Israel's values and basic motives, and upon his understanding of the superpowers' behavior in the conflict —

especially in connection with what he claims to be the clear US acceptance of Israel as a nuclear power.

According to his analysis, the 1973 War demonstrated a real military, political, and technological change in favor of the Arabs. Israel realized that the qualitative and quantitative changes in the Arabs' favor are irreversible, and are combined with growing Arab political and economic influence far beyond the Middle East. Moreover, Israel perceives Arab demands for its withdrawal to the pre-June 1967 lines as an interim formula, leading to a growing Arab pressure toward the liquidation of Israel altogether.

Indeed, "Israel understands that the Egyptian-Israeli struggle is a strategic battle beyond the Palestinian problem. Egypt will never accept any power blocking her way to the East... Egypt's defense requirements and her historical motives dictate her strategy — the reopening of her eastern gates and her refusal to be isolated [by Israel] to Africa" (Heikal 1976).

Thus we can determine here a parallelism between Israeli fears and Heikal's Arab goals and Egyptian Pan-Arab postures which aim at the reduction of Israel's territory, not only beyond the limited goals of the 1973 War itself, but toward "Egypt's breakthrough to the East," (ibid) i.e., toward Israel's withdrawal from parts of the Negev desert and from its southern port of Eilat, so as to allow the establishment of a land bridge between Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf. Due to its historical, cultural, and political motives and ambitions, which are only partially related to the Palestinian question, such an Egypt might not need to coexist with a reduced and weakened Israel at all. Heikal believes that since Israel is well aware of Egypt's motives and goals, and of the disadvantageous strategic-political changes, it must rely on the only "decisive" deterrent, nuclear weapons.

Heikal proceeds to analyze US-Israel relations, which he perceives as basically conflicting, and which therefore must drive Israel to rely on its own power. The US itself prefers such an autonomous Israel, and even actively helped it to become a nuclear power.

The US-Israel conflict has emerged, says Heikal, from the fact that all US interests in the Middle East (oil, financial, political, and strategic interests) are in the Arab countries. Yet the only reliable base for defending these interests is Israel. Complicating matters further, growing Arab-American cooperation since 1973 harms Israel, while growing Israeli military power in support of US interests harms the Arabs. Heikal concludes that that "sometime in the past, several circles in America sought for a way out of this dilemma by allowing Israel to develop her own deterrent" (ibid). Quoting British and American sources, Heikal maintains that the CIA supported Israel in its military nuclear program, and tells his readers that Henry Kissinger explained US arms supplies to Israel during the 1973 War — delivered in spite of American fears that the Arabs might react by

imposing an oil embargo — by “arguing that Israel might have felt desperate and could have escalated the conflict beyond its conventional framework” (ibid). “Very simply,” says Heikal, “the meaning of all that is a double Israeli advantage: Israel received conventional American arms supplies, arguing that these deliveries were vital to give her a sense of security, otherwise she might have gone nuclear. At the same time, Israel went nuclear, but used the nuclear argument to secure any conventional arms supplies she needed” (ibid).

Discussing the value of an American security guarantee for Israel (one of the options raised by the West following the 1973 War), Heikal concludes that Israel realized that Kissinger had been trying since the war “to mobilize Arab support for American interests” (by exerting pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territory), while trying to drive a wedge between the Arabs and the Soviets (ibid). The American anti-Soviet strategy has indeed so far been successful, but “Israel is more realistic than Kissinger,” Heikal (ibid). “The strategy of isolating Egypt (from the other, pro-Soviet Arab states), and the tactics of driving a wedge between the Arabs, will finally clash with natural and historical facts. Israel would not withdraw from occupied Arab territory as Washington would like her to, and Israel knows that Arab money — not American aid — is essential for Egypt’s development. Israel knows that . . . the Arab world may not be able to make war without Egypt, but Egypt — without the Arab world — cannot make peace” (ibid).

Thus, Israel, expecting new wars which might reach and exceed the “dimension of destruction” of the October war, may resort to acquiring “a decisive deterrent.” Israel’s nuclear strategy, according to Heikal, will be simple. It will *use* nuclear weapons rather than try to deter its enemies. Mixing deterrence and compellence, he proceeds to describe the employment of nuclear weapons by Israel — “contrary to the superpowers’ behavior” — as follows:

— The temptation to use new weapons acquired by any party to any conflict, will prevail, especially when Israel can maintain that it would save many Israeli lives in a battle with an overwhelmingly superior enemy.

— This use of nuclear weapons might deter Egypt and Syria, and force them to police the Palestinians, who otherwise — contrary to Egypt and Syria — have nothing to lose. Israel will thus use nuclear threats for the purpose of creating a double hostage-taking situation.

The Soviets would not aid the Arabs following the use by Israel of nuclear weapons. The Israeli action would, of course, bring about much international “noise,” but it would not have any influence on a *fait accompli*. “in spite of the fact,” says Heikal, “that one of the superpowers had explicitly warned Israel against the use of nuclear weapons against the Aswan High Dam.”

Thus, Soviet nuclear guarantees seem to have lost their deterrent value for Heikal following the affair of the Soviet vessel, which had arrived in Egypt only after the superpowers had agreed between themselves on a cease-fire. As pointed out above, such an "explicit Soviet warning" is untraceable in the public sources of our research, and, therefore, Soviet nuclear guarantees seem to have been even less convincing, from Heikal's viewpoint.

Those who may dismiss the use of nuclear weapons by Israel as "an act of complete madness," says Heikal, should be reminded of "Israel's psyche," which consists of two "neurotic phenomena": the fear of total destruction, especially following the Jewish experiences in Nazi Germany, and the "Massada neurosis," a suicidal tendency (*ibid*).

These characteristics do not prevail among the superpowers, "whose struggle is not a matter of life and death, but a social, political and economic struggle and a competition over spheres of influence. The Arab-Israeli battle is a matter of to be or not to be for one of the parties" (*ibid*).

The Arabs and the Israelis never adopted the rules of the game; they have not initiated a dialogue; they do not have a common language. Israel has a nuclear monopoly, whereas the superpowers have reached a balance of mutual destruction. Egypt tried "during the sixties to obtain a nuclear deterrent, but failed because of the financial burden involved." Other Arab countries tried to buy nuclear weapons "but were told that the bomb was not for sale, that Arabs should unite and develop a nuclear deterrent following a special summit meeting." An Arab nuclear deterrent will establish a mutual nuclear balance, but this balance will not only free the Arabs of Israel's nuclear threat, "it will allow conventional wars, in which the balance has been changed in the Arabs' favor... and will be further changed in this direction" (*ibid*).

Thus Heikal, a radical, Pan-Arab, Egyptian nationalist, has finally arrived at a problem related to the theory of nuclear strategy: the use of nuclear threats as a measure allowing conventional wars of destruction.

This option adopts the notion of "limited wars" in the nuclear age to the level of compellence in conditions of deterrence, which also seems to be the strategy of Libya's Qaddafi.

The other radical option, of which we have become aware since 1973, is the option of lowering the level of the conflict, rather than maintaining it on a high level, which dictates an exceptional, probably unrealistic, effort toward Arab unity necessary to develop a common Arab nuclear-conventional strategy aimed at the destruction of Israel. This effort in itself might not be desirable for Egypt, due to its specific domestic, social, and ideological traditions and interests — especially if it is aimed at acquiring an "Arab deterrent" for the purpose of conducting a conventional war of destruction against a nuclear Israel. Such a "deterrent" might not work, because accord-

ing to Heikal's own logic Israel would not be deterred but compelled to use its deterrent first for defense or to win a war of destruction.

The Arabs, who would not unite anyway, might develop nuclear capabilities separately not simply for the purpose of deterring Israel but for use in the ideological, cultural-political, inter-Arab game, pushing to isolate Egypt or to compel it to adopt radical policies — which might involve Egypt, as a hostage of Arabs more radical vis-à-vis Israel, in a nuclear war. This seems to have been President Sadat's logic — which was always Egypt-centered, conservative rather than radical, less motivated by stereotypes of the enemy and inclined to treat Israel more subtly than the Heikals of the Arab world — during the lengthily negotiating process that started in December 1973 and led to the second Sinai agreement of 1975. At that time, Sadat hoped to push Israel out of occupied Arab territory without making peace with her, thanks to his US orientation and the oil crisis. Israel, however, refused to go along after 1975 (Aronson 1978). In 1977 Begin became Israel's prime minister, and Dayan — who repeatedly stressed the nuclear option — became his foreign minister.

Israel's nuclear monopoly and its image in Arab eyes as a "crazy state" may have forced Sadat into an insoluble dilemma: if Heikal was right, Egypt had no chance to gain the Sinai — and all the Arab territory — even with American support, and it would soon be confronted with Israeli "nuclear blackmail" requiring an Arab counter threat, and a degree of cooperation with more radical, more provincial, and (in Sadat's opinion) less responsible Arab leaders. Thus, the issues of Arab radicalism and Arab unity, and the problems presented by Egypt's domestic priorities and its middle-of-the-road tradition between modern, revolutionary secularism (Syria, Iraq) and the somewhat modernized fundamentalism of Qaddafi (all of them connected with the Palestinian problem and represented in the PLO) may have become clearer to Sadat in 1977 when he studied his strategic dilemma. Egypt's role as a leader of the Arab world could not assume the character and contents of Syrian secular Pan-Arabism, or be guided by inner Palestinian disputes and Arab inputs into the crowded, loose Palestinian leadership under Yassir Arafat. Nor could Egypt follow Qaddafi who, in the name of Pan-Arabism, suggested some kind of a return to the Middle Ages. But the strategic dilemma remained: either to wait until an Arab state acquired nuclear weapons and risk a nuclear holocaust — because the acquisition of such weapons by radical Arabs might involve Egypt in a nuclear war rather than deter Israel, inflicting unimaginable sufferings on the region as a whole — or push Israel out of the occupied territories with US support, which would require a degree of acceptance of Israel by Egypt. This dilemma seems to have helped Sadat to rethink the meaning of Egypt's role as a "leader of the Arab world," allowing him to lower the level

of the conflict by embarking in 1977 upon the road which led him to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. To Sadat, the Arabs should not have been interested in revenge, or in mutual destruction, but in advancing positive national causes. They represented the legitimate, rational element of the conflict. But Sadat feared that they might adopt the "crazy and suicidal" features attributed by Heikal and Qaddafi to Israel if they pursued the highly dangerous path suggested by Heikal, especially when Begin assumed power in 1977. Such a path would involve them, and Egypt, in a nuclear war if they wanted to destroy Israel. Having nothing to lose, the Israelis would not be deterred by Arab nuclear threats aimed at creating a secured Arab conventional superiority. On the contrary, they might be tempted to use nuclear weapons at the outset of any Arab challenge — which otherwise might succeed, as did the limited 1973 War, having learned their lessons from that war. These seem to have been the "basic and most decisive parameters of the conflict for Sadat, reflecting his order of priorities, his analytical frame of mind, his values, and his leadership style. In fact, Sadat publicly argued against Qaddafi and imprisoned Heikal shortly before his premature death.

Apart from Qaddafi and Heikal, who speak in terms of reducing Israel further within its pre-1967 lines and liquidating it in stages, Iraq has developed (since 1974) its own nuclear program, and Syria also seems to have entered into some degree of cooperation with Libya and to have launched a nuclear research and development program of its own.

Iraqi and Syrian nuclear goals and deterrence strategies (or compellence, or both) seem to have emerged from Arab lessons learned from the 1973 War, particularly from the superpowers' behavior during the war. At any rate, the main deterrence theory lesson suggested by this paper is the different effects of nuclear threats on different historical elites involved in a high level conflict, including the possibility of lowering the level of the conflict following a limited conventional war against an enemy who enjoys a nuclear monopoly. Following the 1973 limited war, which restored the self-respect of one party to the conflict and helped create a diplomatic-political dialogue between the rivals through the good offices of the United States, the nuclear dimension might have served as a catalyst for Anwar Al-Sadat's reorganization of Egypt's policy and the negotiation of the Camp David Agreement as Begin and Dayan — credible hawks and nuclear foes in Sadat's eyes — replaced the "last resort" Israeli government headed by Yithak Rabin. Even when such weapons are acquired by Egypt, without any dependence on radical Arabs in this regard, the issue of destroying Israel might remain academic for Cairo, even if real peace or cooperation as agreed upon in 1979 may vanish as well.

CONCLUSION

Deterrence theory, which accepts high level conflicts as given, is not very helpful in discussing the nuclear dimension of Middle Eastern states' behavior because of the motivations that may drive those entities to acquire nuclear capabilities, and the different impact upon various states in the region when nuclear weapons are acquired by one or more of those states, friend, coalitionary partner, and foe alike. One of the most important impacts of nuclear weapons in this regard does not necessarily need to be negative; nuclear weapons can serve an excuse, a justification and a rationale for giving up a basic enmity between an Arab state and Israel which would otherwise prevail due to cultural, historical, psychological and interest-driven reasons.

The mythical, "supernatural" perception of nuclear weapons, when it exists, and which deterrence theory has tried very hard to demythologize and rationalize, could serve pragmatic, status-quo inclined politicians as a "negative incentive" toward bargaining with nuclear foes, even pariah opponents, and discharge them from the otherwise existing or imagined pressure by their own populations to liquidate them. Psychologically, nuclear weapons may release "legitimate" adversaries of a pariah state from their obligation to destroy it, not only because of the "mythical" power of the nuclear devices held by that state, but because of the nature of nuclear weapons in the post-Hiroshima world, which to a large extent nullifies (in the eyes of their holders) national zeal, larger masses, vaster territory, "historical" and religious advantages, and even will power, based on cultural and historical qualifications which the enemy is not supposed to possess. This seems to be the case with Egypt's acceptance of Israel's very existence without accepting Israeli "security" and ideological demands for occupied and populated Arab land.

The reaction by the radical Arab states vis-à-vis superpowers and a nuclear Israel may be precisely the opposite, as we have seen above with regard to Libya, and possibly Iraq and Syria. Here nuclear weapons may be symbols of modernization, independence and a guarantee for preserving and developing one's cultural values and historical glory alike, or they may be a means to influence superpowers to renounce support of a pariah client, and even to threaten a superpower directly or indirectly as a means to acquire "nuclear guarantees" from the other superpower — a relatively rare element in the Soviet-American confrontation. Various kinds of superpower-client relations may emerge due to the very threat of small states going nuclear: greater or lesser support may be granted to them by the patrons, i.e., more conventional aid in order to prevent them from relying on nuclear deterrence alone, or less direct involvement in their favor

may be the case with a patron facing the other superpower patron of his client's enemy. Whether arrangements between the US and the USSR to control this were agreed upon prior to the 1973 Middle East War and remained in force afterwards could not be answered in this paper.

As far as the form of the acquisition of nuclear weapons is concerned, it seems to me that we are now in the middle of a period of covert acquisition efforts within and outside of NPT. Countries such as Iraq or Pakistan, which invested billions in nuclear programs, (and were aided from the outside), will not admit it, and even less so will pariah states go overtly nuclear, although they might cooperate among themselves to achieve impressive nuclear capabilities.

Yet these small states will not possess flexible nuclear arsenals, and therefore will lack the variety of strategic nuclear options that the superpowers have. The credibility of their covert efforts and the limited amounts of nuclear weapons at their disposal, may allow conventional wars between them, and prevent them from adopting nuclear strategies. In spite of an actual change toward co-existence, the covert nature of the nuclear threat involved, and ideological, political and psychological reasons, could prevent this basically positive development from becoming politically accepted, and thus the atmosphere of fear and mutual hatred would prevail.

Moreover, a small state's nuclear monopoly could enhance hatred abroad and trigger further preventive actions to retain that monopoly. When one state holds a monopoly, some of her adversaries may resort to strategy or strategies of conventional nature (war of attrition, guerrilla acts, limited conventional wars) to bypass the problem. Yet nuclear weapons allow such a degree of destruction that destroying a nuclear foe (or even risking a limited war by conventional means) is problematic for leaders of "developmental dictatorships," who are basically interested in pursuing positive national goals. Even if they acquired nuclear weapons themselves, benefitted from them politically and psychologically and succeeded in neutralizing less radical coalitionary partners vis-à-vis a pariah enemy, and if they even succeeded in becoming a "shield state" to oil-rich neighbors and "atomic big brothers" to guerrilla organizations (which could be the case of Iraq), the degree of damage that the whole Arab world may suffer if taken hostage by a nuclear Israel threatened to death by an Arab adversary would be "unbearable" in comparison to the relatively low degree of willingness to accept losses and damage on both sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948. Yet, for the radicals among Arabs, the war will go on by other means, while Israel will not take any chances but will try to retain her nuclear monopoly, which, under Begin, is coupled with ideological, not just security bound, claims for occupied territory. Paradoxically enough, by publicly renouncing Arab total denial of any Israeli right, Egypt could now choose to go to a limited

war over the occupied territory, (and not Israel's very existence), if agreement is not reached, with a higher degree of safety to Cairo than before. It could embark upon an ambitious nuclear program for peaceful use (which could provide Egypt with a military nuclear infrastructure in due course) with a small degree of danger of Israeli pre-emptive action.

As far as nuclear deterrence theory is concerned, several radical Arab states, such as Syria, have adopted the argument that Israel's size and limited resources would never give her a credible second strike or even a first strike capability. As discussed above, many Israeli leaders tended to accept that, and refused to use nuclear threats at all. Moreover, denial mechanisms worked on both sides to render Israel's nuclear threats ineffective, at least publicly. Yet the question remains whether a Western originated deterrence theory (with its emphasis upon East-West chicken-game rules), has influenced Middle East reality. The radical Arabs seem to have decided to play the chicken-game in the future (hoping to neutralize Israel's nuclear option by acquiring a nuclear option of their own), and use Arab conventional superiority and guerrilla tactics to crush Israel at the end without risking a nuclear war. As far as Israel was concerned, the theory combined in a peculiar way with the values, interests and beliefs with which it has never tried to deal, and produced a self-fulfilling prophecy: i.e., Israel has adopted, (between 1967 and 1973), a territorial strategy aimed at deterring the Arabs from launching a conventional attack against her, using her nuclear option as a "last resort bomb in the basement," fearing Soviet nuclear guarantees to Egypt, denying the deterrent value of its own nuclear effort as a result of refusing to accept the rule of the "chicken-game" between her and the Soviet-supported Arabs. The theory worked here as a *negative* model, and helped secure the Arabs a conventional war game, safe from Israel's nuclear threat, of which Israel herself was more afraid than her foes.

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