

Facing “Abnormal” Enemies

“Do you know what it means to find yourselves face to face with a madman?” inquires Luigi Pirandello’s, *Henry IV*. “Madmen, luck folk, construct without logic, or rather with a logic that flies like a feather.”

In the absurd theatre of modern world politics, decisions based on logic can quickly crumble before madness. Looking ahead, especially if madness and nuclear weapons capacity should sometime happen to coincide, a targeted country’s vulnerabilities could become intolerable. For Israel, a nation-state smaller than America’s Lake Michigan, any such combined enemy development must always be prevented.

For Israel, however, not all possible forms of enemy abnormality would necessarily exhibit madness. There could also emerge one or several adversaries, both state and sub-state, who are not genuinely mad, but are nonetheless *irrational*. Significantly, irrationality, at least in world politics, is not the same as madness, and must therefore be treated differently.

Whereas mad enemies would be unpredictable, and not subject to any calculable forms of deterrence, a “merely” irrational state enemy could still maintain a consistent and transitive hierarchy of preferences. This means that although a presumptively irrational enemy might not value its national survival most highly – indeed, this is the standard definition of irrationality in world politics – it could still be deterred by credible Israeli threats to harm whatever *is* valued above all. In the Islamic Middle East, for example, this apparent object of greatest value is apt to concern certain palpable feelings of religious obligation.

Also worth noting is that a fully genocidal state enemy of Israel could be rational, irrational, or mad, and should be

dealt with in Jerusalem on the basis of its particular decision-making classification.[\[2\]](#)

Oddly, regional or global chaos, which is always much more far-reaching than simple anarchy – that is, than the structurally-created condition of decentralized authority that has been with us since the Peace of Westphalia (1648) – may still reveal discernible shape and form. How, precisely, should this usually dense or opaque “geometry” of chaos best be deciphered by Israel? Going forward, this is a question of understanding that Israeli planners can choose to ignore only at their country’s existential peril.

To best augment Israel’s still-developing strategy of deterrence, including nuclear deterrence, Jerusalem must further accelerate its already-ambitious plan for suitable active defenses. At the same time, no matter how promising the interpenetrating Israeli protection systems and their components happen to be, there exist urgent reasons for MOD/IDF never to become too dependent upon active defenses. This is because *no* system of ballistic missile defense (BMD) can ever be dependable enough to preclude or minimize a core strategy of deterrence.

Even with the very best integrative, multi-layer systems that presently include Arrow, Iron Dome, and David’s Sling, there may still be a too-high level of “leakage.” This risk becomes especially obvious in those increasingly plausible cases where the incoming warheads could be biological and/or nuclear.[\[4\]](#)

There are further meaningful nuances. Israel must clarify that *Arrow* and its other active defenses would always operate together with Israeli nuclear retaliations. This point is central. Always, Israel’s pertinent state adversaries must be made to understand that, wherever appropriate, Israel’s defensive deployments would never supplant or even render less probable an unacceptable Israeli nuclear reprisal.

On expected Israeli preparations for nuclear war-fighting, these should never be interpreted as a distinct policy alternative to nuclear deterrence. On the contrary, such preparations should always be taken as essential and integral components of Israeli nuclear deterrence. At all times, the overriding purpose of Israel's nuclear forces, whether still ambiguous, or newly-disclosed, should remain deterrence, never actual military engagement. As was pointed out by *Project Daniel* back in 2004: "The primary point of Israel's nuclear forces must always be deterrence *ex ante*, not revenge *ex post*." [6] These platforms could include cars, trucks, and boats.

Should a newly-nuclear adversary of Israel ever decide to share certain weapons-usable materials and/or scientific personnel with terror-group surrogates, the Jewish State might then have to face a substantially heightened prospect of nuclear terrorism. Ultimately, at least in principle, the multiple perils posed in such conceivable scenarios could even impact American cities.

The latent "good news" in all of this speculation is that deterrence of an enemy state that might not value its own physical survival above all else could still work. For Israel, successfully deterring a potentially irrational nuclear adversary need not be judged out of the question. [Israel National News](#).