

Just

Judaism Action Social Change

JCI CURRICULUM: UNIT 3: CHAPTER 3 – WAR & PEACE LESSON 2: WHEN TO GO TO WAR

LESSON 2: WHEN TO GO TO WAR (2 sessions of 45-50 minutes each)

Goals

For students to:

- Define the terms: *milchemet reshut*, *milchemet mitzvah/chovah*, and *rodef*
- Apply the above concepts to determining whether a pre-emptive strike in Iran is ethical
- Formulate a convincing argument based on Jewish terms and sources
- Synthesize other sources (contemporary, non-Jewish) with Jewish sources in answering these questions

Materials:

- banner paper
- markers
- pens/papers
- Text handouts
 - Text packet #1
 - Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 72a
 - Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 72b
 - Deuteronomy 20:17-18
 - Exodus 17:17
 - Numbers 21:21-24
 - II Samuel 11:1; 12:29-30
 - I Samuel: 23:1-5
 - Meiri on BT Sotah 44
 - Rambam, Mishna Torah, Hilchot Melachim u'Milchamot 5:1; 6:1
 - Text packet #2
 - Christian Just War Doctrine source sheet
 - Forward article – “Israeli Aides Warn U.S. Not To Drop Ball on Iran”
 - Panim Jewish Values matrix
 - Optional: “Beyond Deterrence”

Procedure

SESSION 1 – 45 MINUTES

1) Introduction to terms (*milchemet reshut*, *milchemet mitzvah*, & *rodef*) (25 mins)

Notes for the teacher:

Milchemet Mitzvah/Chovah - Obligatory War

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- Protects the physical and spiritual survival of Jews
- Everyone must fight
- Is called by the king

Milchemet R'shut – Discretionary War

- Allows for expansion or increased power or property
- Clear exemptions for soldiers
- Must be approved by the courts

a) divide students into pairs

b) distribute one to three texts from text packet #1 to each pair so that all texts are distributed.. Each pair should read the text and answer the question on the sheet (5 minutes)

c) each pair should rotate through 5 other chevruta pairs and teach their text to the other pair (5 minutes each for a total of 20 minutes).

e) Collect the texts at the end of the lesson in order to redistribute during the next session.

2) Group Process (15 mins)

Create a banner listing Jewish ideas about when to go to war. Have one student be the recorder, and have individuals offer different ideas that they gleaned from the texts that they studied. Point out vocabulary words/concepts: *rodef*, *milchemet reshut*, *milchemet mitzvah/chovah*. Evaluate wars described in sources as to which category/concept they fit into.

3) Teaser for next session (5 minutes)

Distribute Forward article from text packet 2. Inform students that next session they will be having a debate as to whether a war against Iran would be ethical according to Jewish concepts. Instruct them to read the article and to think about both sides of the argument. Inform them that they will be assigned a position at random.

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SESSION 2 – 45 MINUTES

4) The Debate (50 minutes)

a) Taking sides (5 minutes)

- Divide the class into two groups (do a random distribution question in order to split groups – without telling them what side they will be on).
- One group will argue that the US should go to war with Iran, the other will oppose.
- Inform the class that each group will present their case to President Bush, who has inquired of prominent rabbis as to whether to go to war against Iran.

b) Preparation (25 minutes)

- Distribute text packets 1 and 2 to each group. Each group should utilize these materials to prepare for the debate.
- Instruct each group to subdivide to cover the material.

c) The Debate (15 minutes)

- Each group presents an opening statement
- The “President” (instructor) will quiz each group about the principles of *rodef* and *milchemet mitzvah/reshut*.
- The President will cross-examine each groups argument on whether the US should launch a pre-emptive strike against Iran
- The President will ask each group to offer additional Jewish values he should consider in making his decision.

d) Conclusion (5 minutes)

Ask the following questions for a wrap-up discussion or journaling:

- What was it like to argue this topic from both sides?
- How did you experience the fact that sources can be used to argue either way?
- How do we contend with the flexibility of Jewish sources?

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Text Packet #1

A

סנהדרין עב,א

אמר רבא מאי טעמא דמחזרת חזקה אין אדם מעמיד עצמו על ממונו והאי מימר אמר אי אזילנא קאי גמרא לאפאי ולא שביק לי ואי קאי לאפאי קטילנא ליה והתורה אמרה אם בא להורגך השכם להורגו

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 72a

Because it is certain that no man is inactive where his property is concerned; therefore this one [the thief] must have reasoned, 'If I go there, he [the owner] will oppose me and prevent me; but if he does, I will kill him.' Hence the Torah decreed, 'If he comes to slay thee, forstall by slaying him.'

What does your text tell you about the appropriate circumstances to go to war? What are the reasons to go to war that your text might advocate or condemn? Do you agree with the text as to when it is appropriate to go to war?

B

סנהדרין עג,א

ת"ר מניין לרודף אחר חבירו להרגו שניתן להצילו בנפשו ת"ל (ויקרא יט) לא תעמוד על דם רעך

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 72b

Our Rabbis taught: from where do we know that he who pursues after his neighbor to slay him must be saved [from sin] at the cost of his own life? From the verse, 'Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor. (Lev. 19:16)'

If someone was pursuing after another person with the manifest intent to kill him, everybody is obligated to save the pursued party, even by taking the pursuers life. (Rambam, *Sefer Nezikin, Hilchot Rotze'ah* 1:6; *Shulchan Aruch, Hoshen Mishpat* 425:1-3)

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C.

דברים כ יז-יט

זְכוֹר, אֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק, בְּדַרְךְ, בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם. אֲשֶׁר קָרַךְ בְּדַרְךְ, וַיִּזְנֹב בְּךָ כָּל-הַנְּחֻשְׁלִים אַחֲרֶיךָ--
וְאֵתָהּ, עֵינֶיךָ וַיִּגְעַ; וְלֹא יָרָא, אֵל הַיָּם. וְהָיָה בְּהַגִּיתָ ה' אֵל קִיֶּךָ לְךָ מִכָּל-אֵי יָדְיֶךָ מִסָּבִיב, בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֵל קִיֶּךָ
נָתַן לְךָ נַחְלָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ--תִּמְחָה אֶת-זִכְרֵ עַמְלֵק, מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם; לֹא תִשְׁכַּח.

Deuteronomy 25:17-19

Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt — how, undeterred by fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear. Therefore, when the Lord your God grants you safety from all your enemies around you, in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!

What does your text tell you about the appropriate circumstances to go to war? What are the reasons to go to war that your text might advocate or condemn? Do you agree with the text as to when it is appropriate to go to war?

D.

זט:יז פרק שמות

וַיֹּאמֶר, כִּי-יָד עַל-כַּס יְהוָה, מִלְחָמָה לֵה, בְּעַמְלֵק--מִדֹּר, דָּר

Exodus 17:17

He said, "It means, 'Hand upon the throne of the Lord!' The Lord will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages."

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E.

במדבר כא--כד

וישלח ישראל מלאכים, אל-סיחון מלך-האמורי. אעפ"ה בארצו, לא נטה בשדה ובכרם--לא נשתה, מי באר: בדרך המלך נלך, עד אשר-נעבר גבולך. ולא-נתן סיחון את-ישראל, עבר בגבולו, ויאסוף סיחון את-כל-עמו ויצא לקראת ישראל המדברה, ויבא יקצה; וילחם, בישראל. ויפיהו ישראל, לפי-תקרב; ויירש את-ארצו מארנון, עד-יב'ק עד-בני עמון--פי עז, גבול בני עמון

Numbers 21:21-24

Israel now sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, "Let me pass through your country. We will not turn off into fields or vineyards, and we will not drink water from wells. We will follow the king's highway until we have crossed your territory." But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. Sihon gathered all his people and went out against Israel in the wilderness. He came to Jahaz and engaged Israel in battle. But Israel put them to the sword, and took possession of their land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as [Az] of the Ammonites, for Az marked the boundary of the Ammonites.

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F.

שמואל ב יא:א, יב:כט-ל

ויהי לתשובת השנה לעת צאת המלאכים, וישלח דוד את-יואב ואת-עבדיו עמו ואת-ישראל וישתחו את-א-בני עמון, ויצרו, על-רבה; ונדוד, יושב בירושלם. ויקח את-עטרת-מלכם מעל ראשו ומשקלה ל. וילכדה, ביה וילחם; רבבה וילך, העם-כל את דדו ויאסוף כט. כפר זהב, ואבן יקרה, ותהי, על-ראש דוד; ושלל העיר הוציא, הרבה מאד

II Samuel 11:1; 12:29-30

It happened, at the return of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.

David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it. He took the crown of their king from off his head; and its weight was a talent of gold, and in it were precious stones; and it was set on David's head. He brought forth the spoil of the city, exceeding much.

What does your text tell you about the appropriate circumstances to go to war? What are the reasons to go to war that your text might advocate or condemn? Do you agree with the text as to when it is

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G.

שמואל א כג: א-ה

וַיִּגְדוּ לְדָוִד, לֵאמֹר: הִנֵּה פְּלִשְׁתִּים בֹּלְחָמִים בְּקַעֲיֵלָה, וְהָמָּה שׁוֹסִים אֶת-הַגְּבֻרֹת. וַיִּשְׁאַל דָּוִד בַּיהוָה, לֵאמֹר, הֲאֵלֶיךָ וְהַפִּתִי, בְּפִלְשְׁתִּים הָאֵלֶּה; וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-דָּוִד, לֵךְ וְהִפִּיתָ בְּפִלְשְׁתִּים, וְהוֹשַׁעְתָּ, אֶת-קַעֲיֵלָה. וַיֹּאמְרוּ אַנְשֵׁי דָוִד, אֵלָיו, הִנֵּה אֲנַחְנוּ פֹּה בַּיהוּדָה, יִרְאִים; וְאָף כִּי-נִלְכְּ קַעֲלָה, אֶל-מַעְרְכֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיֹּסֶף עוֹד דָּוִד לְשְׁאוֹל בַּיהוָה, וַיַּעֲנֶהוּ ה'; וַיֹּאמֶר, קוּם רֵד קַעֲיֵלָה--כִּי-אֲנִי נֹתֵן אֶת-פְּלִשְׁתִּים, בְּיָדְךָ. וַיֵּלֶךְ דָּוִד וְאֲנָשָׁיו קַעֲיֵלָה וַיִּלָּחֶם בְּפִלְשְׁתִּים, וַיִּנְהַג אֶת-מִקְנֵיהֶם, וַיַּךְ בָּהֶם, מִכָּה גְדוֹלָה; וַיִּשַׁע דָּוִד, אֶת יְשֻׁבֵי קַעֲיֵלָה.

I Samuel: 23:1-5

David was told, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and are robbing the threshing floors." Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go and strike these Philistines?" The Lord said to David, "Go strike the Philistines, and save Keilah." David's men said to him, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" Then David inquired of the Lord yet again. The Lord answered him, and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand." David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their livestock, and killed them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

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H.

Meiri on Babylonian Talmud *Sotah* 44b

One may launch a pre-emptive attack against an enemy that is amassing forces on the border. Such an attack is sufficiently defensive to be categorized as *milchemet mitzvah* (obligatory war).

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I.

משנה תורה להרמב"ם **מלחמת מלחמה א:**

אין המלך נלחם תחילה, אלא על מלחמת מצוה ואיזו היא מלחמת מצוה--זו מלחמת שבעה עממים, ומלחמת עמלק, ועזרת ישראל מצר שבא עליהם. ואחר כך נלחם במלחמת הרשות--והיא המלחמה שנלחם עם שאר העמים, כדי להרחיב גבול ישראל ולהרבות בגדולתו ושמעו.

Rambam, *Mishna Torah, Hilchot Melachim u'Milchamot* 5:1

A king should not initiate war unless it is *milchemet mitzvah* (an Obligatory War). And what is an Obligatory War? This is a war against the seven nations (see Deut. 7:1), war against Amalek, or to assist Israel from trouble that has come upon them (see Num. 10:9). Secondly, one can fight *milchemet reshut* (a Permitted War), which is a war fought against any other people in order to expand the borders of Israel or to increase [the king's] greatness and reputation.

משנה תורה להרמב"ם **מלחמת מלחמה ו:**

אין עושין מלחמה עם אדם בעולם, עד שקוראין לו לשלום--אחד מלחמת הרשות, ואחד מלחמת מצוה: שנאמר "כי תקרב אל עיר, להילחם עליה--וקראת אליה, לשלום

Rambam, *Mishna Torah, Hilchot Melachim u'Milchamot* 6:1

One should not make war against anyone until first calling out to them for peace, whether in the case of a Permitted War or in an Obligatory War, as it says: *When you come upon a city to make war upon it, you shall call out to it for peace* (Deut. 20:10).

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Text Packet #2

The Forward

Israeli Aides Warn U.S. Not To Drop Ball on Iran
Chaos Feared if Syrian Regime Is Toppled

Ori Nir | Fri. Dec 09, 2005

WASHINGTON — As Israeli-Iranian tensions mount, Jerusalem is increasingly concerned that the Bush administration is not doing enough to block Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The American-Israeli disagreement over Iran policy is just one of several that has emerged in recent weeks, the Forward has learned.

The tensions were visible last week in Washington, during the semi-annual “strategic dialogue” between Israeli and American security officials. Although the talks were generally harmonious, they also exposed some stark disagreements, sources said.

During their meetings in Washington, Israeli officials voiced concern over signs that the Bush administration is considering a policy of regime change in Syria — a development which Israel fears could unleash chaos and a more dangerous situation than the status quo. Some officials in Israel reportedly are still taken aback by what they depict as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s heavy-handed brokering of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement over the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

But for Israel and American Jewish groups, the biggest concern is what they describe as the Bush administration’s failure to assume a leadership role on Iran, even after it became clear the European-led negotiations with Tehran were failing to produce an agreement.

“What we have seen is that for more than two years... the U.S. contracted this issue to the Europeans — and the only result is that Iranians have gained two years to get closer to the completion of their nuclear cycle, which by many estimates is only months away,” said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice-chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. “It is a message to every rogue state that you can diddle around with the Europeans and the United States, and in the meanwhile create a new reality.”

The Europeans, he said, still approach the Iran question with “appeasement and weakness,” while having “no game plan” for decisive action.

At the strategic talks in Washington, Israel complained that American officials agreed to delay referring Iran to the United Nations Security Council for sanctions regarding Tehran’s nuclear program.

Later in the week, on November 30, the country’s most influential pro-Israel lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, took the highly unusual step of issuing a statement criticizing the Bush administration. AIPAC typically avoids public criticism of the administration, particularly when it comes to this White House, which Jewish groups feel is bent on punishing critics by denying them access to policymakers.

In its November 28 statement, AIPAC condemned the administration for agreeing to give Russia a chance to negotiate a plan under which Iran would be allowed to enrich uranium under international supervision to make sure that its nuclear material is not used for military purposes. AIPAC expressed concern that giving Iran more time to negotiate rather than immediately referring the country to the U.N. Security Council

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may “facilitate Iran’s quest for nuclear weapons.” The statement warned that giving Iran yet another chance to manipulate the international community “poses a severe danger to the United States and our allies, and puts America and our interests at risk.”

An AIPAC spokesman denied that the statement was coordinated with the Israeli government. A spokesman for the Israeli embassy in Washington said that the statement did not necessarily reflect Israel’s position.

Israel is not looking for the United States to topple the regime in Tehran or launch a military attack against Iran, Israeli officials and American experts say. Instead, what Israeli officials say they have wanted for years is for the United States to lead an international campaign to isolate the Islamic republic and slap it with sanctions. Israeli officials say that the international community has a variety of options short of military action at its disposal.

Israeli officials, sources said, were surprised by reports that rather than take the lead in pressuring Iran, the Bush administration instructed its ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khaklilzad, to open a dialogue with Iran’s ambassador there. In addition, Israeli officials were also upset by Washington’s restrained reaction to the deal that Russia is finalizing to sell Tehran more than \$1 billion worth of anti-aircraft missiles, which could be used to help Iran protect its nuclear facilities against a possible air strike.

Recent public comments by several senior Israeli officials — including the Israeli military’s chief of staff and the head of military intelligence — fueled speculation of a connection between Aipac’s statement and Israel’s growing anxiety over what it views as Iran’s methodical push for nuclear weapons.

During a press briefing Sunday, the Israeli military’s chief of staff, Dan Halutz, said that letting the Iranians escape international pressure “encourages them to continue their nuclear project.” He added that, “the political means that are used by the Europeans and the U.S. to convince the Iranians to stop the project will not succeed.”

Israel’s military intelligence chief, Major General Aharon Ze’evi-Farkash, warned last week that time is running out and said that the international community’s diplomatic efforts to reverse Iran’s project will become futile by March 2006. Several Knesset members, who were briefed by Ze’evi-Farkash, told Israeli reporters that they interpreted his comments as cautioning that after that point, only military power could block Iran’s nuclear pursuit.

The possibility of military action against Iran has already become fodder in Israel’s heated election campaign. Earlier this week former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu — widely expected to emerge as Likud’s candidate for prime minister — argued that “everything” must be done to block Iran and said that “this is the Israeli government’s primary obligation.”

“If it is not done by the current government,” Netanyahu said, “I plan to lead the next government to stop the Iranians.” His comments were widely interpreted as a swipe at Prime Minister Sharon, who had urged the West to step forward on Iran, saying that Israel “will not lead” the efforts to block Tehran’s nuclear quest.

The escalating Israeli rhetoric elicited an immediate reply from the spokesman of Iran’s foreign ministry, who threatened a “devastating” reaction to an Israeli military strike.

Some pro-Israel activists who are unhappy with the administration’s approach attribute it largely to the American presence in Iraq. “The administration doesn’t have any answers of its own on Iran,” said Morris Amitay, a former executive director of Aipac who now heads the Washington Political Action Committee, a prominent pro-Israel lobbying group. “With its hands full in Iraq, it let some of the other countries take

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the lead in trying to deal with the problem as a path of least resistance.”

This view, according to a senior official with a major Jewish organization, is shared by many in the Jewish community. “Frankly, as I hear from many Israeli officials: America picked the wrong adversary to fight in the Gulf, and the war against Iraq is now restraining it from leading a diplomatic campaign — let alone a military one — on Iran,” the Jewish communal official said.

A senior congressional aide, speaking on condition of anonymity, expressed the same frustration over the lack of American leadership last week. Paraphrasing an ancient teaching of Rabbi Hillel, the aide said: “If not America, then who? If not on Iran, then on what? And if not now, then when?”

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Christian Just War Doctrine

"Christian just war doctrine" was originally developed by Saints Ambrose and Augustine and later refined by Thomas Aquinas and others. Just war doctrine provided a middle road between the pacifism of the early church on the one hand and the crusade or the unrestricted use of force in God's service on the other. Just war standards have come to be worked out in response to four basic questions: (1) Who has the authority to order that force be used? (2) What reasons are necessary and sufficient for such an order? (3) What special, additional considerations ought to govern the decision to employ force? And (4) what is acceptable conduct, under conditions of armed conflict, in respect both to armed antagonists and to unarmed bystanders? (See David Little, "Introduction," in David Smock, *Religious Perspectives on War*, U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2002).

The seven basic principles of Christian just war doctrine are:

Jus ad bellum ("justice on the way to war")

- *Legitimate Authority*: Requiring that only legitimate officials may decide to resort to force is one way to protect against arbitrariness.
- *Just Cause*: The three standard acceptable causes are self-defense, recovery of stolen assets, and punishment for wrongdoing.
- *Peaceful Intention*: The intention is to use force to achieve peace, using force to restrain and minimize force.
- *Last Resort*: Before turning to war, all reasonable approaches to a peaceful resolution need to be employed.
- *Reasonable Hope of Success*: In going to war, there must exist the reasonable expectation of successfully obtaining peace and reconciliation between the warring parties.

Jus in bello ("justice in the midst of war")

- *Proportionality*: The suffering and devastation of war must not outweigh whatever benefits may result from war.
- *Discrimination or Noncombatant Immunity*: The means of warfare must discriminate between combatants and noncombatants.

from "Would and Invasion of Iraq by Justified?" published by U.S. Institute of Peace, www.usip.org)

JCI CURRICULUM: UNIT 3: CHAPTER 3 – WAR & PEACE
LESSON 2: WHEN TO GO TO WAR

Beyond Deterrence

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Later this week, the United Nations Security Council will take up the issue of Iran's nuclear program, and prospects are not good for an agreement among the five veto-wielding members. As a result, the world may soon be confronted with the question of what to do absent a united front at Turtle Bay. While some will argue for the use of force to prevent Iran from completing a nuclear weapon even absent a U.N. imprimatur, others are already arguing that the Iranian nuclear threat can be contained in the same way they say the Soviet threat was controlled in its day. Such thinking, however, is a mistake.

To see why, consider how some are already trying to apply the "logic" of Cold War-style mutually assured destruction to twenty-first century Iran. For example, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Barry R. Posen, recently penned an op-ed for the New York Times entitled "We Can Live With A Nuclear Iran." Mr. Posen maintains that it is not "beyond the capacity of the United States and its allies to defuse" the threat a nuclear Iran would pose without literally defusing Iran's program. Indeed, he writes, "there is reason to believe we could readily manage a nuclear Iran." Any reckless action on the part of Iran such as arming terrorists with nuclear weapons or blackmailing neighboring states would be forestalled by the specter of revenge and annihilation that the United States and its allies would wreak upon the Iranian nation should they act in such a way. Mr. Posen therefore concludes that before America and its allies contemplate actions, "including war," that they "might take to forestall a nuclear Iran," that there is a "need to coolly assess whether and how such a specter might be deterred and contained."

"Cool assessment" is always called for. But, pace Mr. Posen, cool assessment in this instance leads to a somewhat different conclusion. The prospect of a mutually assured destruction strategy hardly makes one confident that a nuclear Iran could be "deterred and contained."

A complete assessment might start with a refresher course on human nature. Consider the correspondence Sigmund Freud had with Albert Einstein in 1932. On July 30th of that year, Einstein asked Freud, "Is it possible to control man's mental evolution so as to make him proof against the psychosis of hate and destructiveness?" Freud, in response, stated, "There is no likelihood of our being able to suppress humanity's aggressive tendencies. The ideal conditions would obviously be found in a community where every man subordinated his instinctive life to the dictates of reason. Nothing less than this could bring about so thorough and durable a union between men. But surely such a hope is utopian."

Proponents of containment might well agree with this Freudian assessment of human nature, but, as the Iranian example demonstrates, they err when they suggest that the instinct for survival can keep this impulse in check. The thinking goes that Iran would not employ its stockpile of nuclear weapons, should it ever have them, because it would lead to Iran's own obliteration, and no rational power would act with such reckless disregard for its own existence. This is a variant of the doctrine of mutually

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assured destruction that has been with us since the days of the Cold War.

However, this argument is not compelling in our day because it fails to take into account the religious and ideological motives that inform the Iranian leadership. Indeed, there is little reason to believe that a policy of deterrence would dissuade a nuclear Iran from launching or fomenting a nuclear attack against its opponents. Yet reliance on deterrence as an adequate means for insuring peace is based upon the premise that the human desire for survival is so great that no one would knowingly prefer a nuclear conflagration to continued existence. Is that actually the case in a country where thousands of young Iranian Shi'ite Muslims were willing in the 1980s to sacrifice their lives at the behest of an Ayatollah Khomeini in order to earn a martyr's death in the landmines of a Middle Eastern desert, and where the numbers of people willing to follow their example has only grown in the years since?

Deterrence is effective so long as one's opponents fear death for themselves, their families, their nations, or the world. In the case of persons who possess no such fear - in fact, who are convinced that such destruction would lead to a place in Paradise - the prospect of annihilation hardly provides an obstacle to war. Deterrence as a credible guarantee of non-aggression presupposes rational actors who prefer life to death.

The one "virtue" of deterrence is that, even if it holds large numbers of innocent citizens hostage to the rationality of their leaders, it at least spares those citizens the horrors of a "hot" war. But is avoiding violence in such a situation really always a virtue? Consider a 1938 exchange of letters between Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Buber. In their correspondence, Buber pointed out to Gandhi - who had urged the Jews of Germany to employ non-violent forms of resistance as a weapon against Hitler - that the world we inhabit is an imperfect one. Violence, evil, and destruction exist. As a Jew, Buber said that he could never "desire to use force." However, Judaism does not proclaim, "as did Jesus, the son of our people, and as you do, the teaching of non-violence, because we believe that sometimes a man must use force to save himself or even more his children."

While hardly desirable, or even the first recourse in a confrontation with evil, force must still remain available as a final option in our dealings in a world where aggression against the innocent exists. One employs such force with a great deal of hesitancy, but its use, real or perceived, may be the only just course a community can adopt when confronting a particular situation. While one should strive always to abjure force, "if there is no other way of preventing the evil destroying the good, I trust I shall use force and give myself into God's hands."

A policy based upon deterrence alone will not be sufficient to resolve the Iranian problem because the fundamental assumption of deterrence - that both sides value their lives - doesn't hold here. Policymakers would be better off, then, considering the words of Martin Buber, when he said to Gandhi, that while we would only employ force "with fear and trembling," we nevertheless must "weigh exactly how much [force] is necessary to preserve the community."

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