

Middle East Reverberations of the Nuclear Tests in India and Pakistan

Jun 19, 1998



Brief Analysis

The recent nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan have aroused a range of reactions across the Middle East. Following are representative statements by politicians and media analysts regarding the significance and the implications of the nuclear competition on the Indian subcontinent.

Statements from the Arab World

"Pakistan's possession of nuclear power is to be considered an asset to the Arab and Muslim nations." ---Hamis leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in the Kuwaiti daily Al-Rai Al-Aam (May 31, 1998)

"The Arabs should also produce an Arab nuclear bomb in order to achieve a military balance with the Zionists and address all future possibilities." ---Mazhar Arif, a columnist for the pro-government Iraqi newspaper Baghdad Babil (June 2, 1998)

"We believe that both India and Pakistan acted within their right of sovereignty." ---Iraqi President Saddam Husayn in a letter to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (June 6, 1998)

"The Pakistani nuclear weapons are designed to serve Pakistan's strategy in the Indian subcontinent, and to establish a balance of power between Pakistan and India. They have nothing to do with the objectives of the Arab nation. I believe that the only weapon that can serve the Arabs in their confrontation against the expansionist policy of the Zionist entity and the threats posed by its arsenal of nuclear and strategic weapons is their own weapon." ---Iraqi Minister of Culture and Information, Dr. Humam Abd-al-Khaliq, in an interview with Agence France Press (June 5, 1998)

"I don't think Israel needs to declare itself a nuclear power because it won't gain anything from that... And Israel does not face a threat from any state in the region that would prompt it to brandish the nuclear threat... Nuclear arms are not the only deterrent weapons. There are other weapons that are highly deterrent. I am not referring to other weapons of mass destruction, but rather to long-range, high-precision surface-to-surface missiles equipped with powerful warheads... There can be no stability in our region in the absence of a balance of power between us and menacing neighbors." ---Field Marshal Abdelhalim Abu-Ghazala, former Egyptian Defense Minister, in the London-based, pan-Arab weekly Al-Wasat (June 8, 1998)

"Had the Arabs possessed a nuclear bomb, or had they been capable of producing one, Israel would not have launched the 1967 war, or it would have sued for peace in its wake. It would not have violated the peace agreements it has concluded with the Arab sides, and it would not have defied the international community." ---Abdeljabbar Adwan, Palestinian analyst, writing in the Saudi-owned Asharq al-Aswat (June 5, 1998)

"Every country that feels the strain of severe injustice will strive to possess the means for attaining its national decision in terms of security, rights, and sovereignty. All this would lead to an insane arms race. This is because of Israel's exclusive possession of the nuclear weapon in our region...and its capability of reaching Pakistan and India is a known fact." ---From an editorial by Amid Khuli in Syria's government-owned Al-Thawrah (May 30 1998)

Statements from Israel

"The fact that we won't be able to prevent Iran or Iraq from getting nuclear weapons must be taken into account." --- Prime Minister Netanyahu in a statement to the Knesset, Maariv (June 9, 1998)

"Whoever suggests an argument that means withdrawal from [the West Bank] because of the 'nuclear threat' -what they are suggesting is that we cut off our arms and legs because of a headache." ---Cabinet Secretary Dan Naveh, Washington Times (June 3, 1998)

"Israel has nothing to do with the tension on the Indian subcontinent. Israel does not regard either India or Pakistan as an enemy, and all the reports to the contrary...have been false." ---Deputy Minister of Defense Silvan Shalom, Haaretz (June 4, 1998)

Other Statements of Note

"From all over the world, Muslims are happy that Pakistan has this capability...Now they feel more confident because it will help balance Israel's nuclear capability." ---Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, BBC News (June 4, 1998)

"Why do people talk about an Islamic bomb?... This is a Pakistani bomb. In the case of India, you don't talk of a vegetarian bomb." ---Pakistan's Minister of Information, Mushahid Hussain in an interview with Der Spiegel (June 8, 1998)

"In the nuclear tests which India conducted on the 11th and 13th last month, Israel supplied India with the devices for undertaking simultaneous tests, at an interval of a thousandth of a second. Only America and Israel have this apparatus, and we know that it came from Israel." Q: "You claim that Israel helped India conduct the last nuclear tests?" A: "Israel helped India make these tests possible." ---Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Gohel Oyav Han, in an interview with Orly Azulai-Katz, Yediot Ahronoth (June 19, 1998)

"If Pakistan detonates a bomb, the U.S. must say to the government in Islamabad that any sign of its being transferred to the Middle East will be an occasion for war by the U.S." ---New York's senior senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan; comments made to NBC's 'Today' that were not broadcast but made available to the Forward (June 5, 1998)

Compiled by Assaf Moghadam

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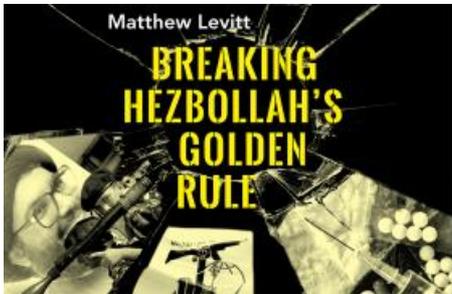


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