

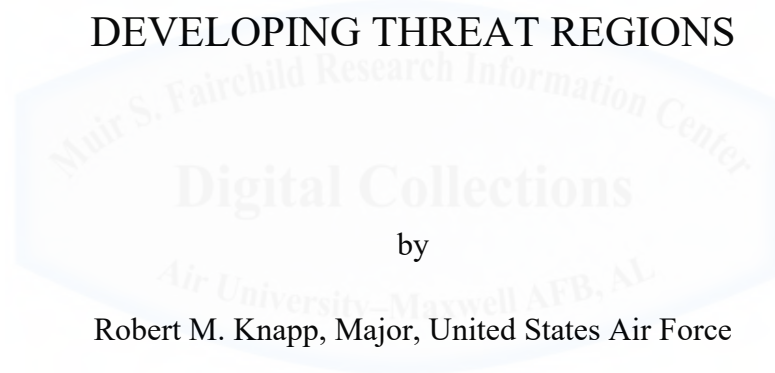
AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

TAILORED DETERRENCE

BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR EXTENDED DETERRENCE IN

DEVELOPING THREAT REGIONS



by

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Abstract

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the 2016 United States (U.S.) election season elevated the Iran nuclear threat to common household discussion. As the number of nuclear-armed states and regions increase, the U.S. must find a flexible and tailorable framework for entering extended deterrence agreements. NATO and the Western Pacific region offer two independent models to review and reference; however, neither represents the dilemma currently facing the U.S. regarding the Middle East. Absent U.S. intervention, Iran will likely become a nuclear-armed state (at some point) and several other Middle Eastern states will likely attempt to follow suit. The new presidential administration must consider tailored options for future security agreements and the role of conventional versus nuclear deterrence, in addition to the moral dilemma of prioritizing representative governments versus nuclear non-proliferation. To this point, the U.S. has only extended the nuclear umbrella to NATO, Japan, South Korea, and Australia...all strong, stable, liberal democracies.

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Introduction

The 2016 U.S. presidential election repeatedly emphasized a national concern over the “Iran deal” and the implications of a nuclear-armed Iran. At the same time, the U.S. nuclear umbrella is notably absent from the Middle East, while concern and tensions in the region continue to rise based on the perceived Iranian threat and the potential proliferation of nuclear technology throughout the region. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known as the “Iran deal,” is a multinational agreement that effectively removes United Nations (UN) Security Council sanctions against Iran and enables them to reemerge as a regional power within the Middle East, but slows their nuclear progress.¹ The JCPOA has generated strong opinions both supporting and denouncing the agreement.

Additionally, the U.S. currently extends a form of nuclear deterrence within both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and throughout the Western Pacific region, as potential deterrence models to tailor and/or specialize for use in the Middle East. The following paper will recommend a limited or tailored version of extended deterrence (starting with conventional deterrence) in the Middle East should the JCPOA fail to maintain peace and stability in the region. In the end, “even one new nuclear weapons country could create a catastrophic cascade of proliferation. With each new nuclear country the existing balance of regional and global security would be upset and the world would grow more unsafe.”² Finally, while there are compelling reasons to continue this discussion, this paper argues that the current sociopolitical and military threat situation in the Middle East does not support, facilitate, nor necessitate the implementation of a new nuclear security guarantee with the Gulf Coast allies.

The United States maintains a nuclear stockpile to deter adversaries and assure allies.³ Extended deterrence is the exported version of nuclear brinkmanship used to deter and assure

regional adversaries and allies. The U.S. has pledged extended deterrence to its' NATO allies, to provide a regional deterrence from Russian aggression, and to Western Pacific allies (Japan, South Korea, and Australia), to deter communist aggression in the region.⁴ The employment of extended deterrence is significantly different in the two regions and offers a starting point for researching and developing additional tailored models for use in other regions. While extended deterrence seeks to both deter and assure, the value of each independently is questionable and likely different between NATO and the pacific. As applied to the Middle East, adversaries and allies are examined on the ability to either deter or assure. Peripheral questions that must be answered before a determination is made to extend the nuclear umbrella to the Middle East are:

Can Iran be effectively deterred?

Can the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) be effectively assured?

Morally, does non-proliferation trump the moral virtue of representative governments?

The answers to these questions will assist policy makers in determining any future nuclear deterrent in the Middle East.

Thesis

While the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the U.S. election season highlighted the lack of a declared U.S. nuclear deterrent in the Middle East, the current sociopolitical and threat environment within the region does not support, facilitate, nor necessitate the implementation of a new nuclear security guarantee. The U.S. has a long history of supporting and promoting democracy, providing the nuclear umbrella to the monarchies of the Middle East would undermine the principles and historical virtue of American values.

Literature Review

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is the Iran nuclear deal that lifts United Nations (UN) Security Council sanctions and allows for a peaceful nuclear program in Iran.⁵ The JCPOA is the culmination of decades of diplomacy and advocates argue that it has significantly reduced the threat of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons in the near-term. Critics argue that the JCPOA will allow Iran to economically recover and emerge as a significant regional threat to the GCC and the entire Middle East, while continuing to develop nuclear weapons covertly. While that is undetermined, the JCPOA has opened the door to Iran and reduced the urgency of the U.S. to extend a nuclear security guarantee to any nation in the Middle East.

Prior to the creation of the JCPOA, Richard Russell's article: *Off and Running: The Middle East Nuclear Arms Race*, provides a semi-current update on the status of nuclear technology throughout the Middle East and the potential for significant proliferation.⁶ This article paints a grim picture of the impending nuclear arms race in the Middle East that Russell argues is teetering on the actions of Iran and the U.S. If the JCPOA fails to keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, *Off and Running* is a potential outcome that will drive future U.S. actions and policy. This article highlights the importance of continuing to monitor the situation throughout the Middle East and maintaining feasible options to counter future threats.

Bombs and Umbrellas: Defending US Middle East Allies from a Nuclear Armed Iran, is a SAASS thesis arguing against entering a NATO-like agreement in the Middle East.⁷ Parker Wright presents case studies of security alliances and the challenges they have presented with France, Taiwan, and S. Korea while forming his argument against building a NATO-like agreement with the GCC. Overall, this was written before the JCPOA was created and argues for

a strong U.S. presence within the Middle East to strengthen bilateral relationships and deter Iranian aggression. While, the JCPOA may have delayed any decisions regarding extended deterrence in the Middle East; if the JCPOA fails, Wright's argument remains valid and should be considered by future policy makers as a starting point for tailored deterrence options in the region.

Global Zero is an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons.⁸ This is an obviously biased organization that presents a one-sided opinion centered on elimination of nuclear weapons, but has significant following and wealth of unclassified information. Global Zero is a source of collective information revolving around nuclear news and headlines. Global Zero is the counter argument against nuclear activists and is included to ensure the latest trends and opinions are considered in developing this research. This is essentially the antithesis to Roberts' *The Case for U.S. Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century*.

Finally, Brad Roberts' *The Case for U.S. Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century* offers a modern look at Nuclear Deterrence with the 2010 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review as the starting position.⁹ He offers strong arguments for regional and tailored deterrence based on the current U.S. nuclear triad and offers insight into the extended deterrence models of NATO and East Asia. Roberts argues that the U.S. needs to continue a balanced approach to nuclear statecraft while continuously monitoring the threat environment and adapting force structures appropriately. Roberts acknowledges and refutes opposing arguments that call for dramatic reductions in capabilities. Overall, *The Case for U.S. Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century* is firmly grounded in history and logic, which offers a significant counter to Global Zero activists.

While these sources comprise the bulk of this paper, several other articles, websites, and books add depth and variety to the discussion. All reference materials will be identified in the end notes and bibliography.

Research Methodology/Framework

Brad Robert's discusses tailored deterrence through the model of NATO, Northeast Asia, and the Middle East. This tailored model will be expanded to include his discussion on substitutions for nuclear weapons and the conceivable uses for conventional deterrence. Combined, Robert's indirectly provides a building block or stepping stone approach to providing deterrence based largely on characteristics and traits of both allies and adversaries¹⁰. This model will be extrapolated to the environment in the Middle East and the GCC allies versus the Iranian adversary. This research paper is a review of current extended deterrence models employed in NATO and the Western Pacific region, along with a synthesis of recommendations based on the perceived environment in the Middle East. The case study reviews will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the two versions currently employed and offer options for the Middle East. The bulk of the paper will be supported by Roberts' tailored deterrence models in *The Case for Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century*, and Wright's case studies in *Bombs and Umbrellas: Defending US Middle East Allies from a Nuclear Armed Iran*. Several articles and journals will supplement and update the discussion to the present, to develop a coherent plan of action for inclusion in a 2017 edition of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review.

Findings and Analysis

Extended Deterrence in NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was officially created with the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty, or Washington Treaty, on 4 April, 1949.¹¹ NATO was created as a collective security agreement between the original twelve nations (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States).¹² The U.S. nuclear umbrella has been an integral part of European security since before ratification of the Washington Treaty as President Truman extended deterrence with B-29s during the Berlin Blockade of 1948-49.¹³ As such, NATO is the most comprehensive, developed, and longest lasting form of extended deterrence, which makes it a starting point for any discussions on extended deterrence or tailored forms of deterrence.

At the foundation, “NATO promotes democratic values and encourages consultation and cooperation on defense and security issues to build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.”¹⁴ Emphasizing the importance of democracies in relation to employment of nuclear weapons, on April 6, 1949 President Truman stated: “...if it [a decision to use the atomic bomb] has to be made for the welfare of the United States, and the democracies of the world are at stake, I would not hesitate to make it again.”¹⁵ The U.S. support of NATO is underpinned by the democratic requirements to have a representative government before a country is invited to join the treaty.

U.S. extended deterrence to NATO was aimed at preventing the spread of communism through an overwhelming conventional attack from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was far too powerful for the conventional forces in Western Europe and could only be stopped through a credible nuclear presence. However, the U.S. nuclear presence in NATO has certainly

complicated the relationships between Moscow, Washington, and NATO throughout the Cold War. Faced with budget issues, President Eisenhower adopted the Massive Retaliation policy with Secretary of State Dulles' announcement that "The way to deter aggression is for the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing...the deterrent of massive retaliatory power."¹⁶ This led to a back and forth struggle between the U.S. and NATO regarding nuclear presence and U.S. troop levels on the European front with the Soviet Union. Later, the Cuban Missile Crisis was flamed and complicated by the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey and resulted in a *quid pro quo* removal of weapons from both Cuba and Turkey.¹⁷ Additionally, and more recently, the attempted coup in Turkey in August of 2016 had news reporters wildly debating the safety and security of nuclear weapons assumed to be vulnerable inside of Turkey.¹⁸ Ultimately, the location or security of U.S. nuclear weapons in NATO is outside the scope of this paper, but unrest in Turkey and the renewed aggression against Crimea and the Ukraine from Russia certainly cause concern. While extended deterrence to NATO has been a bedrock of the security cooperation and critical to communist containment, there is more to explore.

Extended deterrence is about more than deterring an adversary. Extended deterrence is also intended to assure allies and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In the case of NATO, the Soviet Union was deterred, but the allies were not always assured. Since the creation of the organization and the extension of the U.S. nuclear umbrella, both the United Kingdom and France have created independent nuclear capabilities. U.S. response to the French request for nuclear weapons at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and the Suez Crisis in 1956 virtually guaranteed that France would create an independent nuclear stockpile.¹⁹ The United Kingdom detonated their first atomic bomb in 1952 and France later detonated a device in 1960, despite security

guarantees from the U.S. president.²⁰ There are several likely reasons that France sought an independent nuclear capability, but most revolve around U.S. credibility as an ally, the U.S. commitment to Europe, and French pride.²¹

Ultimately, within NATO, the U.S. is assuring an alliance of stable liberal democracies and has successfully deterred major combat operations and nuclear attack from Russia, despite shortcomings in assurance and non-proliferation. The defense of the democracies of the world was the driving force behind President Truman's decision to extend the U.S. nuclear umbrella. U.S. capability and credibility was enough to deter the Soviets; however, U.S. credibility as an ally was insufficient to assure France and prevent them from creating an independent nuclear force. Many of these factors are currently at play in the Middle East, except the countries in question are not the democracies of the world.

Extended Deterrence in the Western Pacific

The Western Pacific is a much more complicated system of bilateral security agreements from the U.S. to the individual nations of Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Australia. For the sake of space, this paper will focus mainly on the U.S.-ROK agreement and the extended nuclear deterrence that accompanies the agreement. In the wake of the Korean War, the U.S. sought to support the democratic government of the ROK against the Soviet-backed communist threat from the north. In 1953, Secretary of State Dulles stated, "We do not make the mistake of treating Korea as an isolated affair. The Korean War forms one part of a worldwide effort of communism to conquer freedom."²²

Overall, the Western Pacific is very different from NATO. The diverse sociopolitical and cultural variables have prevented a collective security agreement among the democratic nations

in the Pacific, despite U.S. Senate desires.²³ The closest arrangement in the Pacific is the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), but the collective agreement is significantly limited in comparison to NATO. ASEAN member states are: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Formed through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, ASEAN's fundamental principles are:

Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations;
The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion;
Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner;
Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and
*Effective cooperation among themselves*²⁴

While ASEAN does not contain any nation-states that are currently under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, the non-intervention cultural mentality and independent ambitions displayed in ASEAN principles can be expanded to encompass most of the region.

Aside from the difference in bilateral versus collective security agreements between the U.S. and the Pacific allies, the method of providing extended deterrence is different or tailored to the environment. In NATO, nuclear weapons are stored in NATO host nations, controlled by U.S. forces, and employed by NATO partners.²⁵ In the Pacific, the U.S. does not have any nuclear weapons. Extended deterrence is provided through a proclamation, without any physical weapons. Displays of U.S. resolve are accomplished through Bomber Assurance and Deterrence (BAAD) missions and the presence of U.S. forces in and around the area. Presentations by U.S. Air Force top brass highlight that the extended deterrence in the Pacific is far more centered on assurance than deterrence.²⁶

While North Korea rattles sabers and gathers international recognition as a wild card, many question whether North Korea has a rational government that can be deterred. Repeated threats, agreements, and U.S. posturing failed to prevent North Korea from pursuing, developing, and testing nuclear weapons.²⁷ Now, with North Korea as an established nuclear state, the U.S. extended deterrence model must continue to focus on assuring allies and preventing a flurry of nuclear proliferation throughout the region.

Like NATO, extended deterrence in the Western Pacific was founded on the basis of supporting democracies and preventing the spread of communism. Unlike the NATO arrangement, the U.S. does not maintain a nuclear stockpile within any of the Pacific nations. With this model of tailored deterrence, the U.S. has successfully assured allies enough to keep them from developing their own independent nuclear force, but has been unable to deter the continued pursuit and development of nuclear technology by North Korea. Ultimately, the Pacific model of tailored extended deterrence highlights that forward troop deployments, in this situation, have successfully deterred communist aggression and prevented a hostile takeover of the ROK, even after North Korea became a recognized nuclear state.

The Threat from Iran

In many ways, Iran has behaved like North Korea. Iran has resisted the western world and retreated into isolationism. In general, Iran has been increasing its' military posture and assertiveness throughout the Middle East.²⁸ Iran continually denies a military desire for nuclear weapons and asserts its' nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, yet restricted international inspectors from observing and monitoring progress.²⁹ Iran has covertly worked towards weaponized nuclear technology, at the same time developing long range ballistic missile delivery systems as part of their "mosaic" defense strategy.³⁰ To a casual observer, there are more

parallels and similarities between Iran and North Korea than there are differences. However, the fundamental democracy versus communism struggle that was key to the extended deterrence models in NATO and the Western Pacific is absent.

Tehran ambitions are unclear and open to speculation. One side argues that Iran has always been “aggressive, anti-American, and murderous,” but always retreats from severe retaliation.³¹ The other side argues that Iran would be emboldened by nuclear weapons and would increase regional assertiveness.³² Either way, Iran has seemingly backed away from nuclear brinkmanship with the JCPOA. Unless proven otherwise, the U.S. currently has no imminent nuclear threat to deter; however, that does not imply that the extended deterrence debate and discussion should be sidelined. Ideally, this opens the door for further discussion on alternate forms of deterrence and Robert’s tailored deterrence models.

The Lack of Stable Liberal Democracies

The U.S. has a long history of cooperation in the Middle East. In 1945, President Roosevelt committed the U.S. to protecting “Saudi Arabia from external threats, while Saudi Arabia would supply crude oil to meet U.S. energy demands.”³³ Since then, the U.S. has been heavily involved in the region with the Iraq wars, the ousting of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and now the fight against ISIS in both Iraq and Syria. Throughout the past three decades, the U.S. has maintained a significant footprint and developed strong relationships with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). At the same time, the Middle East has a long history of nuclear ambition. Since the 1960s, there have been four potential nuclear states: Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Syria.³⁴ Russell’s argument that a nuclear Iran could likely spur a regional nuclear arms race has a strong historical foundation that should not be sidelined by the signing of the JCPOA.³⁵

The GCC was established in 1981 between Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to confront the threat posed by the Iran-Iraq War.³⁶ While the GCC has been important to the U.S. efforts in the Middle East, tensions between the U.S. and the GCC, and tensions among the GCC states has limited regional progress. Tensions between Shias and Sunnis, along with tensions “between Muslim regimes that were members of the Westphalian state system and Islamists who consider statehood and the prevailing institutions of international order an abomination to the Quran,” threaten to keep instability and uncertainty within the region for many years to come.³⁷ Much of this tension revolves around ideological differences between western democracy and the Islamic monarchies of the Middle East.

Unlike NATO or the Western Pacific, the Middle East does not endorse representative governments and does not have a common enemy in communism. The regional tension is between different factions of Islam, with a host of intertwined and overlapping historical disputes. The advent of the Arab Spring in 2011 highlights the fragility of the ruling class of monarchs throughout the Middle East. The rise of ISIS and their quest for an Islamic Caliphate reinforces the challenges and instability within the region that must be addressed before an enduring security agreement can be established.³⁸ Absent these foundational commonalities, extending the ultimate security guarantee seems unlikely.

Any form of extended nuclear deterrence must have a clearly defined ally and a clearly defined adversary. Extended deterrence must show both a capability and a level of credibility that will both assure allies and deter adversaries. NATO and the Western Pacific are both examples of success and failures of extended deterrence in both the aforementioned categories. In the Middle East, the U.S. has maintained a presence for three decades without tangible results in assuring allies in the GCC. During the same three decades, Iran has shown little sign of being

deterred from interfering with regional stability or in ceasing their nuclear ambitions (aside from the recently signed JCPOA, which is still too new to judge). Ultimately, until there is a common cause and a common enemy (i.e. democracy versus communism), the Middle East does not have any partnerships or alliances strong enough and enduring enough to justify the ultimate security guarantee of nuclear extended deterrence.

Conclusion

At first glance, the continuous U.S. presence within the Middle East and the perceived nuclear threat from Iran appear as a calling for extended nuclear deterrence agreements with the GCC to stabilize the region and prevent widespread proliferation of nuclear weapons. After a deeper look at the current extended deterrence models employed by the U.S., the successes and failures of each, and a review of the sociopolitical environment in the Middle East, it becomes apparent that Iran is unlikely to be deterred, the GCC is unlikely to be assured, the region is unlikely to be stabilized, and the U.S. should not waiver on a longstanding reputation of supporting stable liberal democracies with a representative government. The Middle East is not ready for an extended nuclear deterrence agreement. Robert's model of tailored deterrence is a step in the right direction, but the foundation to any extended deterrence must be based on democracy and the right of people to have a voice in their governments. Any other agreements will lack the credibility and historical precedent to assure or deter and will likely fail. The U.S. should continue to work on regional stability within the Middle East, continue to engage Iranian compliance with the JCPOA, and clarify that the U.S. nuclear shield is only extended to democratic nations. If the GCC is compelled to make significant sociopolitical advances, the discussion of extending the nuclear umbrella can be resumed. In the meantime, the U.S. should consider adopting new terminology that distinguishes between conventional and nuclear

deterrence. While this paper has argued that the U.S. nuclear shield should be reserved for democratic nations, there is an entire escalation ladder that does not include the threat of nuclear employment and does not require the U.S. to craft binding, long term security agreements.



End Notes

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- ⁶ Richard Russell, *Off and Running: The Middle East Nuclear Arms Race* (Washington, DC: Joint Forces Quarterly, 3rd Quarter 2010), 94-99.
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- ⁹ Roberts, *The Case for Nuclear Weapons*, 51-105.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 176-252.
- ¹¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Key Events*, <http://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html>
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- ¹⁷ Larsen and Kartchner, *On Limited Nuclear War*, 50-52.
- ¹⁸ Dan De Luce, *No the US Is Not Moving Its Nukes From Turkey to Romania* (Foreign Policy, 2016) <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/19/no-the-u-s-is-not-moving-its-nukes-from-turkey-to-romania/>
- ¹⁹ Wright, *Bombs and Umbrellas*, 23.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-19.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 32-33.
- ²² Quoted in Wright, *Bombs and Umbrellas*, 77-78.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 79.
- ²⁴ Association of South East Asian Nations, *Overview*, <http://asean.org/asean/about-asean/overview/>
- ²⁵ Larsen and Kartchner, *On Limited Nuclear War*, 259.
- ²⁶ Lt Gen Jack Weinstein (Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.), in discussion with the author, 20 October 2016.
- ²⁷ Wright, *Bombs and Umbrellas*, 86-87.

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- ²⁸ Roberts, *The Case for Nuclear Weapons*, 56.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 56.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 56.
- ³³ Wright, *Bombs and Umbrellas*, 104.
- ³⁴ Roberts, *The Case for Nuclear Weapons*, 54.
- ³⁵ Russell, *Off and Running*, 94-99.
- ³⁶ Global Security, *Gulf Cooperation Council*,
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/gcc.htm>
- ³⁷ Henry Kissinger, Quoted in Roberts, *The Case for Nuclear Weapons*, 57.
- ³³ Roberts, *The Case for Nuclear Weapons*, 57.



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