

## A Constructivist Analysis of Israel's Nuclear Policy

### İsrail'in Nükleer Politikasının Konstrüktivist Analizi

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**Tuğçe ERSOY\***

#### **Abstract**

According to social constructivism, material resources acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded and identities shape the actor's material and non-material interests. This article would seek to examine Israel's constructed meaning of nuclear weapons and to analyze Israel's nuclear policy from a social constructivist perspective. It is argued that having nuclear weapons for Israel, is the prominence of Zionist design. The aim is to protect the existence of the state while preserving its "Jewishness"; simply to safeguard the identity. It is also argued that Israel's nuclear policy as deterrent factor vis-à-vis Arab attacks, has not only failed but also fueled a non-conventional arms race in the region since Israel is perceived as a threat in the Arab shared knowledge.

**Keywords:** *Social Constructivism, Nuclear weapons, Israel's nuclear policy, Regional culture in the Middle East*

#### **Öz**

Sosyal inşacılığa göre, somut kaynaklar bağlı oldukları ve paylaşılan bilgi yapısı aracılığıyla insan eylemlerinde bir anlam kazanırlar ve kimlikler aktörlerin maddi ve maddi olmayan çıkarlarını şekillendirir. Bu çalışma İsrail'in nükleer silahlar için inşa ettiği anlamları incelemeyi ve İsrail'in nükleer politikasını sosyal inşacı bakış açısından analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın yazarı, İsrail için nükleer silahlara sahip olmanın, Siyonist politika tasarısının bir devamı olduğunu tartışmaktadır. Bundan amaç, devletin "Yahudi" karakterini ve aynı zamanda da varlığını koruma ve güvence altına almaktır. Buna ek olarak, yazar, İsrail'in Arap saldırıları karşısında caydırıcı olduğunu düşündüğü nükleer politikasının başarısız olduğunu; bölgede geleneksel olmayan (non-conventional) silah yarışını da tetiklediğini öne sürmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Sosyal inşacılık, Nükleer Silahlar, İsrail'in Nükleer Politikası, Ortadoğu Bölgesel Kültürü*

\* Research Assistant, Institute of Middle East Studies, Marmara University, Istanbul

## INTRODUCTION

With the proclamation of its state, Israel found itself in a state of war. Even after the proclamation; a state of war continued. As a result, Israel's sense of insecurity increased with national security dominating the national agenda. Additionally, Israel's vulnerability i.e. small size, small density of population, lack of tactical depth and total absence of operational and strategic depth, nurtured the security oriented tendencies leading to the formation of the national agenda.

The domination of Israel's decision-making processes by security has also influenced its foreign policy as well as economic and social policy. Heller argues that the expansive notion of security blurred the distinction between the army and society. He supports his assumption with a speech given by Ben Gurion to the Knesset in 1955, according to whom;

“In our case, security plays a more important role than in other countries and it does not depend only our army.... Security means the settlement of empty regions, the dispersal of the population... Security means the conquest of maritime and air space... Security requires economic independence; it requires the development of research and scientific skills.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, security is *sacred* in Israel. Departing from the notion developed by researchers which define Israel as a “nation in arms”, Kimmerling concludes that militarism has become a factor in Israeli society from the very beginning of the state since the arms and management of violence came to be perceived as routine and an integral part of the Israeli-Jewish culture.<sup>2</sup>

The strategic environment in which Israel found itself during the period of its consolidation, dictated a posture of military deterrence which had a defensive strategic purpose since Israel had no political justification for launching a war; even though its operational content was offensive.<sup>3</sup> Conceived in the 1950s, the Israeli security conception was based on certain premises which included; the demographic asymmetry between the combatant sides i.e. fewer Jews than Arabs;<sup>4</sup> the immense demographic discrepancy between the Jewish settler society and its Arab environment, and settlements as a tool in determining the state's geographical and political boundaries.<sup>5</sup> These premises transformed Israel into a status quo preserving power. Hence the sole objective of the Israeli military was designated to defending the country against a hostile Arab environment. Since the fundamental threat to Israel's existence was a surprise Arab attack, Israel had to be prepared

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<sup>1</sup> Mark .A. Heller, *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16

<sup>2</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *Clash of Identities: Explorations in Israeli and Palestinian Societies*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 135

<sup>3</sup> Heller, *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security*, 10

<sup>4</sup> Shai Feldman, Abdallah Toukan, *Bridging the Gap: A Future Security Architecture for Middle East*, (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publications, 1997), 9

<sup>5</sup> Kimmerling, *Clash of Identities*, 159-160

for the worst case scenario; thus it sought to develop a high quality strategic warning capability and a quick response to external threats.

Based on cumulative deterrence, limited military decision and excessive use of force, both in limited conflict settings and general wars,<sup>6</sup> Israel adopted a national security doctrine to overcome the Arab states' quantitative advantage. According to Israeli thinking, in order to persuade the Arabs to accept peace, military victory was not sufficient. What would convince the Arab states to make peace with Israel would be an understanding that they could not destroy Israel and that the price of this conflict would be very high. Hence, the Israeli strategy of *cumulative deterrence* would persuade Arab states that there was no alternative to this political accommodation.<sup>7</sup>

With the Cold War, a new unconventional threat began to occupy the agendas of the international powers: that of nuclear war. During Cold War years, there occurred a balance of threat, since the two powers the USSR and the U.S., had nuclear capability which played a deterrent role. Whilst, at the same time, nuclear proliferation continued, with those states, who felt insecure, searching for the ways to go nuclear.

Since its inception, Israel has sought to increase its level of security by any means, including nuclear weapons, through which it hoped to deter possible Arab attacks. Questions however remain. Why have Israeli politicians decided to develop a weapon which is the most terrible instrument of destruction? What might be the motivations behind this decision? Was Israel really threatened with annihilation or was that just rhetoric or misperception?

Material resources acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded. Nuclear weapons also constitute social facts according to constructivist terminology, since they illustrate a state's commitment to its constructed social purpose, i.e. identity and interests (power, prestige and dominance). In light of this background, this article seeks to analyze Israel's nuclear policy from a social constructivist perspective. This article will also assess Israel's constructed meaning of nuclear weapons.

I argue that having nuclear weapons for Israel, is the prominence of Zionist design. The aim is to protect the existence of the state while preserving its "Jewishness"; as a means of protecting its identity. I also argue that Israel's nuclear policy as deterrence vis-à-vis Arab attacks has not only failed but also fueled a non-conventional arms race in the region as Israel is perceived as a threat in the Arab shared knowledge. As long as the two sides perceive each other as a threat, there is no possibility of constructing a shared knowledge for a viable peace settlement and therefore the sense of insecurity will continue to foster conflict and hostility.

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<sup>6</sup> Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security & Foreign Policy*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 15

<sup>7</sup> Feldman and Toukan, *Bridging the Gap*, 12

The study will proceed in three steps. First, the politics of nuclear weapons will be evaluated according to social constructivism and the social factors behind the reasoning of acquiring nuclear weapons will be examined. Second, Israel's nuclear policy will be analyzed via social constructivism in order to unearth the motivations for going nuclear. And finally, the regional culture in the Middle East would be observed so as to find cultural factors that drive Israel's nuclear policy.

## **1. NUCLEAR POLITICS AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

Social constructivism contends that social reality and information is constructed and that social actors, structures and information have a role in the composition of the social reality. This reality is shaped in an inter-subjective context which constitutes the social structures in which the identities and interests of social actors are constructed during social interaction. Therefore, constructivism argues that actors construct their social contexts and at the same time these contexts construct actor's identity. In other words, actors and structures are mutually constructed.

According to constructivism, states are social entities while international relations are social spaces. Thus, international politics is an inter-subjective reality based on rules and norms that shape the decisions which lead to action/inaction from which a specific meaning is derived. According to Alexander Wendt, social structures have three elements: shared knowledge, material resources and practices. While shared knowledge and understanding define the nature of relationships, the social structures; material resources acquire meaning through the structure of shared knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Thus, material capacities explain nothing unless they pass through a belief system.

Constructivism understands the international structure as constructed through shared knowledge. In such a structure, the threat perception becomes more important since the more the knowledge is shared the less would be the threat perception. State identities rooted in domestic socio-cultural milieus, produce understandings of one another over differences in identity and practice.<sup>9</sup> The alliance patterns which emerged during the Cold War is an example for this assumption.

States enhance their security and sovereignty through weapons. In this context, nuclear weapons are sought for their strategic importance as a means of deterrence. Pakistan's nuclear program, for example, emanates from the country's insecurity vis-a-vis India, whilst India's program is a response to its insecurity from China.<sup>10</sup> Owning nuclear technology has been important since it was introduced in the international arena. During the Cold War, it was a symbol of power and prestige between the superpowers. In terms of the security and survival of states, nuclear weapons were championed as the most effective deterrent ever. However,

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Relations", *International Security*, Vol.20, No.1, (1995), 73-74

<sup>9</sup> Tedd Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 23, No.1, (1998), 186

<sup>10</sup> Jo-Ansie van Wyk, Linda Kinghorn, "The International Politics of Nuclear Weapons: A Constructivist Analysis", *South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol.35, No. 1, (2007), 26

it should be pointed out that the countries' decision to acquire nuclear weapons is not necessarily confined to security considerations. The values attributed to this weapon adds further dimensions for the motivation of going nuclear. Nuclear weapons have a symbolic nature, that of the ultimate and invulnerable weapon. The motives behind nuclear choice are thus bound to the socially constructed values attached to such weapons.<sup>11</sup> According to Scott Sagan, nuclear weapons are more than the tools of national security and they are not only political objects of considerable importance in domestic debates but also they can serve as international normative symbols of modernity and identity.<sup>12</sup>

As the international architecture changed following the end of the Cold War and new actors and new modes of warfare were introduced to the international politics,<sup>13</sup> nuclear proliferation has become more complex. The danger posed by uncontrolled proliferation, compelled international leaders to consider various strategies, one of which was the establishment of norms. Global norms would create shared knowledge, and therefore would trigger change towards non-proliferation. As the perception of fear and threat would diminish, the move towards acquiring nuclear weapons would also decrease. The four phases of establishing norms, that of normative emergence, innovation, construction and consolidation,<sup>14</sup> have proved to be successful from certain perspectives. While nuclear testing was legitimate and prestigious during the 1960s, it has become illegitimate in our era. During the same years, joining the "nuclear club" represented prestige, but today the rhetoric of adhering to the NPT<sup>15</sup> is favored whilst non-signatory states are criticized.

From another perspective, it should be noted that establishing international norms concerning nuclear non-proliferation has its limits. State identity plays a great role in this issue. As long as there are certain social facts that are constructed according to a state's situation vis-à-vis its conflictual environment, the decision to acquire nuclear weapons is likely to be positive as the conflict has become an inter-subjective reality. Therefore, like military organizations, nuclear weapons "can be envisioned as serving functions similar to those of flags, airlines and Olympic teams: they are part of what modern states believe they have to possess to be legitimate."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Karsten Frey, "The Psychology of Nuclear Choice", *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 9, No.3, (2007), 369

<sup>12</sup> Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?", *International Security*, Vol.21, No.3, (1996), 55

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed analysis of those changes see Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, (Cambridge:Polity Press, 2006)

<sup>14</sup> van Wyk and Kinghorn, *The International Politics of Nuclear Weapons: A Constructivist Analysis*, 28-30

<sup>15</sup> Known as Non-Proliferation Treaty, NPT is an international treaty opened for signature in 1968. Its objective is to prevent nuclear weapons and the development of its technology and to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. According to NPT, five following states are recognized as nuclear-weapon states: U.S., Russia, U.K., France and China. India, Pakistan and North Korea are believed to have nuclear weapons.

<sup>16</sup> Sagan, *Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons*, 74

## 2. SOCIAL FACTORS BEHIND ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR CHOICE

The role of social facts and inter-subjective realities are the important elements in contributing to Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons. How does Israel construct realities, identity and nuclear norms vis-à-vis Arab world by which it is contained? Three social factors determine Israel's position with regard to nuclear weapons.

The first is "geopolitical realities". These realities determine Israel's construction of nuclear norms. The security reasons drive Israel to power dominance in the region. This stems from the inter-subjective reality that has grown out of the belief that Israel has to be powerful so as not to be destructed or annihilated.

"The history of the conflict between Israel and the Arab world" is also influential on Israel's construction of nuclear norms. Both sides have constructed an inter-subjective reality vis-à-vis each other. Both sides do not trust each other; neither of them believe in the possibility of a reconciliation, and have nurtured a negative identity towards each other. Years of interaction has led to the kind of social learning mentioned above and this learning has shaped the identities and interests of both sides'. Consequently, the conflict is fostered continuously and both sides see the other as the victimizer. During such a process which is marked by the "otherization", a possible attack is always perceived to be on the agenda. For this reason, acquiring nuclear weapons as a deterrent factor in order to protect the existence of Israel as a Jewish state has become inevitable from the Israeli point of view.

Israel pivots upon the idea that the state will maintain its independence through *self-reliance*. This corporate identity which refers to the state's intrinsic qualities such as norms and beliefs constructs a social identity which refers to sets of meanings that the state attributes to itself<sup>17</sup> and in turn continuously constructs Israel's interests and interactions. Since its inception, Israel constructed its state identity on democracy and Western values; and in terms of its interests, on protecting the Jews against extermination, a reality which the Jewish people have faced throughout their history. Hence, in order not to have the Holocaust repeated, Israel has pursued the development of its nuclear program. At this point, it might be asserted that the motivation for acquiring nuclear weapons which are conceived as totems of power, is the actor's perception of fear, not the existing danger.<sup>18</sup>

Israel's self-image is constructed by this fear of persecution and annihilation; to support this posture, Israel has rearranged its perceptions, evaluations and opinions. It perceives Arab states as Nazi Germany and keeps drawing parallels between Nazis and Arab leaders depending on their rhetoric. To perceive that its decisions (in our case acquiring nuclear weapon) are correct, what is achieved is

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<sup>17</sup> For types of state identities see Alexander Wendt, "Collective identity formation and the international state", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.88, No.2, 384-387 and Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Chapters 5 and 7.

<sup>18</sup> Frey, *The Psychology of Nuclear Choice*, p.374

attributed more value while what is sacrificed is devalued. This is what Robert Jervis refers as “cognitive dissonance”.<sup>19</sup>

National identity plays an important role on the decision making processes of going nuclear. Jacques Hymans’ national identity conception sheds light on the role of individual understandings of nuclear norms. According to Anthony Smith, national identities are composed of common understanding, desires, opinions, a common ideology and cultural dimensions.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, national identities are social facts grounded in inter-subjective understandings. This inter-subjective influence determines the decisions of the leaders. Thus, decisions are made via collective memory, and according to Hymans, via recall of emotional memories. Recall of emotional memories may impact the choices in two ‘pathways’: cognitive and emotional. In the emotional pathway, past emotions are reactivated.<sup>21</sup>

In the case of Israel, the Holocaust reignites the original feeling of fear, with no decay over time. Two aspects of Holocaust have left everlasting impressions on Jews: Security is not just the safeguard of political values, institutions and a way of life; but it means the very existence of the people; and secondly, the experience of the Holocaust has taught the Jews that security is too important to be left to others<sup>22</sup> as a result of which self-reliance counts. The memories are still fresh in the collective consciousness of the Jews. This was the case just before the Six Day War in 1967 whereby the people in Israel were so fearful of destruction<sup>23</sup> by the Arab states that the victory was welcomed as a divine miracle and not as a result of military superiority. In the same vein, the distribution of gas masks to Israeli citizens for protection against a possible chemical attack from Iraq during the Gulf War, might be interpreted in light of this collective memory. Ultimately, it is obvious that fear is the driving force in Israel’s decision to acquire nuclear weapons.

However, in the case of Israel, fear should be understood as perceived imminence of not only physical but also emotional danger; because states may have a view of their circumstances which have very little connection to reality.<sup>24</sup> Fear has several effects on the decision maker. Due to the feeling of fear, the threat perception level might be higher than the threat’s actuality; thus the reaction is produced in kind.

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<sup>19</sup> Jervis, borrowing from Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance, seeks to analyze perception and misperception in international relations and contends that the existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, motivates the person in trying to reduce dissonance. When dissonance is present, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 382

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Smith, *Milli Kimlik*, translated by Bahadır Sina Şener, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), 27

<sup>21</sup> Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27-28

<sup>22</sup> Edwin S. Cochran, “Israel’s Nuclear History”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 6, No.3-4, 2000, 132

<sup>23</sup> For the situation of the Israelis before the war see Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 136-137

<sup>24</sup> Frey, *The Psychology of Nuclear Choice*, 384

Owing to fear, decision makers might react hastily based on his/her stereotypes.<sup>25</sup> At the end of the process of interpreting the threat; the fear, not the danger, is likely to decrease. This is because, it is the existing fear collated with collective memories that is the cause of the threat perception. Therefore, in order to decrease fear; there is no symbol of power more powerful than nuclear weapons, since having a nuclear bomb would have a psychological impact on the nation and it will decrease the feeling of insecurity.

David Ben Gurion's greatest concern following the War of 1946 was the possibility of a second Holocaust. Moreover, Palestinian leader Hajj Amin al-Husseini's visit to Hitler and his alleged support-in the eye of the Jews- for his final solution to the Jewish question contributed to Ben Gurion's thinking.<sup>26</sup> This perspective was established in the early years of Israel. It was Ben Gurion's perception of the threat from hostile Arab states that led to the establishment of the Research and Planning Branch within the Ministry of Defense, the task of whom was to measure the level of uranium at the Negev desert as early of 1948.

At this point, it should be noted that Israel is considered to be an undeclared second generation nuclear power according to the nuclear proliferation literature.<sup>27</sup> Regarding its nuclear capability, since its inception Israel has pursued the strategy of deliberate ambiguity. Today, Israel's nuclear policy relies on three principles. These are that Israel:

- 1) Does not possess nuclear weapons,
- 2) Will not be the first to launch nuclear war in Middle East
- 3) Has the scientific and technologic capacity to produce nuclear weapons.<sup>28</sup>

The primary Israeli concern that led the state to adopt a nuclear policy was the possible attack from a unified Arab coalition which had gained the support of the Soviet Union in order to destroy the Jewish state. As the years passed by and despite a series of peace agreements between Israel and certain Arab states, these kind of concerns were objectified in time and were settled in an inter-subjective context. Ultimately, the shared knowledge constructed within this context has shaped the opinions of the leaders. Many Israeli decision makers have viewed the anti-Israeli and sometimes the anti-Semitic-rhetoric of Arab leaders, journalists and intellectuals as evidence of an overall intent to destroy the Jewish state.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*, 28-30

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed analysis of Hussein's period in Germany see Zvi Elpeleg, *Filistin Ulusal Hareketinin Kurucusu Hacı Emin El Hüseyini*, translated by Dilek Şendil, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), 116-130

<sup>27</sup> Cochran, *Israel's Nuclear History*, 129

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 140

<sup>29</sup> Zeev Maoz, "The Mixed Blessing of Israel's Nuclear Policy", *International Security*, Vol. 28, No.2, 2003, 48



### 3. ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR POLICY AND REGIONAL CULTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Ideas of peace and security in various regional and cultural contexts are shaped according to different concepts and experiences. These concepts and experiences might be useful to non-proliferation and arms control but on the other hand, they contribute to proliferation and armament. Culture is composed of widely shared beliefs, traditions and symbols that determine a state's or a society's interests and values with respect to security and stability. Culture either presents decision-makers with a limited range of options or it acts as a lens that alters the appearance and efficacy of different choices.<sup>30</sup>

As for strategic culture; it has both a societal and international dimension. Societal aspects of the strategic culture is concerned with the historical experiences that shape the attitudes regarding security, war and nuclear norms. Thus, societal element of strategic culture constitutes the historical and social dimensions of security policies which cannot be reduced to material interests or rational calculations.<sup>31</sup> As Alastair Johnston asserts "It is strategic culture, which gives meaning to these variables. The weight of historical experiences and historically-rooted strategic preferences tends to constrain responses to changes in the "objective" strategic environment, thus affecting strategic choices in unique ways."<sup>32</sup>

In the Middle East, there occurred a web of conflicts related to territory, non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament from which culture cannot be separated. One might offer four levels of conflict in the region that have taken shape around the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>33</sup> The inner level comprises the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is followed by the Arab-Israeli conflict. These two conflicts are pursued by ideological ones that contain them: Arab nationalism vs. Zionism and Jewish aspirations to nationhood vs. Islamic political doctrines. This web of conflicts which has been ongoing for decades has created a regional culture which is composed of inter-subjective realities based on stereotypes, collective memories and identities.

Israel's nuclear policy stems from this conflictual culture. It is the product of the set of attitudes and beliefs that relate to the way Israeli society regards its conflict with the Arab world. Stereotyped concepts on both sides have constructed a certain mentality and understanding towards each other. Cultural factors such as religion, history, global orientations, size and numbers play a central role in the construction of identities.

While Israel considers its nuclear capability a 'doomsday weapon' i.e. as an insurance against a possible contingency when the Arab countries are powerful enough

<sup>30</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1995, 42

<sup>31</sup> Keith Krause, "Cross-cultural Dimensions of Multilateral non-Proliferation and Arms Control Dialogues: An Overview", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol.19, No.1, 1998, 12

<sup>32</sup> Johnston, *Thinking about Strategic Culture*, p.34

<sup>33</sup> Gabriel Ben Dor, "Regional Culture and NACD in Middle East", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol.19, No.1, 189

to threaten Israel with imminent annihilation,<sup>34</sup> Arab responses to Israel's nuclear program have been threefold:

- 1) Acquiring nuclear weapons or a nuclear security guarantee from the Soviet Union (during the Cold War),
- 2) developing biological chemical weapons to counter Israeli nuclear,
- 3) Insisting Israel accepts the NPT.<sup>35</sup>

As a matter of fact, Israel's nuclear policy is part of the country's culture and it is related with the specific character of the Jewish identity; i.e. the Jews are chosen people by God. Israeli society is culturally predisposed to the idea that Arabs should not be trusted on existential issues and that Jews are a nation which dwells alone.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Israeli rationale for developing a nuclear program has been based on two social factors: the perception of external threats to its existence and the historical experience of the Jewish people. It has been demonstrated throughout the study that the first driving force in Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons is not national pride but the feeling of fear and the perceptions of threat that were fostered by a shared common knowledge and collective memory. The stereotypes regarding its hostile environment, stemming from the inter-subjective realities of the region have contributed also to this understanding. Apart from these, the shared memories of the Holocaust which do not decay over time, have been influenced Israeli leaders' in their decision making processes over the development of nuclear capability.

Ensuring its national existence and protecting the Jewishness of the state is the main principle of Israeli leaders. It is rooted in the thoughts of Zionism, which is also a social category and not a monolithic entity but 'a socially constructed discourse' according to Jacques Derrida. It has been conceived along with the analysis that the threat posed by Arab states seem very real despite the fact that Israel's military capabilities are superior than the Arab states and that the level of threat has not been as high as the level of the perceived threat. As has been demonstrated, historical memories and constructed knowledge about the Arab world have played an efficient role in this perception. Aside from these, the discourses and the rhetoric of the Arab leaders have created an inter-subjective reality according to which both sides developed their policies. Both territorial and demographic asymmetry between Israel and the Arab states formed a catalyst for a higher threat perception.

Israel's deliberately ambiguous strategy has reassured Israeli society in times of hostility. However, the impact of the image of nuclear Israel has not been felt by

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 204

<sup>35</sup> Cochran, *Israel's Nuclear History*, p.142

Arab policy. It should be noted that no single decision defined Israel's nuclear policy. A series of choices based on the regional culture of the Middle East, personalities of the key leaders, certain characteristics inherent in Jewish identity and Zionism played central roles in this process. To conclude, it might be said that Israel's nuclear capacity proved to be successful against a non-existent threat.

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