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Candidate session number

Candidate name

School number

School name

Examination session (May or November)

MAY

Year

2013

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Peace & Conflict

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay:

To what extent is it possible to resolve the conflict in the Middle East concerning Iran's development of nuclear power

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature:

Date:

Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

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I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

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Date:

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Achievement level

Criteria

	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	2		2	
B introduction	2	2		2	
C investigation	2	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	2	4		4	
E reasoned argument	3	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	1	4		4	
G use of subject language	1	4		4	
H conclusion	2	2		2	
I formal presentation	3	4		4	
J abstract	0	2		2	
K holistic judgment	2	4		4	
Total out of 36	20				

To what extent is it possible to resolve the conflict in the Middle East concerning Iran's development of nuclear power?

3,029 Words

Abstract

The international community is demanding Iran to stop producing enriched uranium and ultimately nuclear weapons. For nearly a decade, there is amounting evidence that Iran is building a complex infrastructure that will allow the production of nuclear weapons for mass destruction. This has caused major unrest in the Middle East and around the world. Many Arab countries, mainly the Sunni nations surrounding Iran, are also feeling threatened by a nuclear Iran. Israel is feeling threatened because the Iranian regime is hostile to the Jewish nation. Nonetheless, there is no consensus on how to cope with the Iranian threat. Israel is pushing for military actions by the international community and is threatening to take military action to protect its' small nation. The United States and the European countries are settling with severe economic sanctions and are hoping that with the breakdown of the Iranian economy, the leading powers in Iran will be forced to stop its nuclear program. The oil industry and the world economy are heavily influenced by this evolving conflict. Since the United States and Europe are dealing with a continuous monetary economic crisis, they do not want a major energy shortage to worsen the situation in Europe. It is obvious that Iran is continuing its plan to enrich uranium, in addition to expedited development of long-range missiles. The United States and Israel have launched a cyber attack against Iran that only slowed down its production. This evolving conflict is very complex due to the many players involved with opposing interests. It is clear that all the parties involved have vowed to deny Iran from obtaining nuclear arms. It will be interesting to see whether economic sanctions will suffice or ultimately military action will be employed.

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Iran's ambitions to develop nuclear power are a global source of concern. This has become a major cause of conflict due to the strategic location of Iran and Israel in the Middle East. It is unclear whether this charged situation can be resolved in a peaceful manner since many conflicting powers are involved in this global crisis. Iran is allegedly developing nuclear weapons that result in great opposition from powerful countries such as the United States, Europe, and other countries in the Middle East. Sanctions towards Iran by the United Nations and the international community were created in order to stop their nuclear development, to no avail. Unfortunately, Iran is one of the leading exporters of oil in the world and has a significant influence on market price. As we try to figure out solutions, Iran gains leverage, since it is closer to obtaining nuclear arms. A major problem in the conflict is Israel's growing fear of a nuclear Iran. Israel is concerned of an attack from Iran and therefore wants to take military action to maintain the safety of its young nation. The United States, specifically President Barack Obama, has pleaded that Israel withhold military actions and let the U.S. and others take care of Iran's nuclear issue through diplomatic means and economic sanctions. The U.S. is trying to work out a resolution with Iran shutting down its capability to produce enriched uranium. The U.S. sees any military action by Israel as detrimental to its efforts. I think that as Iran continues to develop nuclear weapons, Israel will be pushed to attack Iran. Therefore, the possession of nuclear power is a major source of conflict in the Middle East. This must be resolved in the near future, one-way or the other.

For many years, nuclear power has been a major source of conflict in the Middle East. "In December 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower gave the famous speech "Atoms for Peace". This set the US on a course of strong government support for the international use of nuclear power" ("Nuclear"). The intention was that nuclear power would be used for peace, namely the

production of electricity. Although Israel has never admitted to doing so, it meanwhile developed nuclear capability as a means for having a strategic advantage over its neighbors and thus deterring them from potential attacks on Israel. In the early 1950s France agreed to help Israel develop its nuclear program. Although Israel was always mum about its nuclear power, there is a wealth of information indicating that Israel possesses significant amounts of nuclear arms. Foreign affairs journals and European officials estimate that "Israel has anywhere between 100 and 200 nuclear weapons. In addition, it is rumored that Israel has large amounts of enriched titanium and uranium. Some say that Israel developed hydrogen bombs as well" ("Israel's"). These are much more powerful bombs than were dropped by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The widely accepted perception that Israel possesses such destructive power, led many Arab countries to aspire to become the leading counterforce against Israel. Although the vast majority of countries that were interested in nuclear power wanted this as a source of electricity it is obvious that in the Middle East nuclear power was a means to intimidate or to gain power over one's neighbors.

Over 30 years ago, Iraq built a nuclear reactor in order to become a major player in the Middle East and to be able to threaten Israel. "In order to maintain its strategic superiority Israel delivered a deadly aerial attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor near Baghdad. In 2007, Israel launched a similar attack on Syria's al-Kibar nuclear facility" (Amiel). Israel repeatedly demonstrated that it would take necessary actions to maintain its nuclear dominance in the region. Iran is the last in this series of countries in the Middle East trying to develop nuclear power. Since its' inception, Israel was well aware that it cannot withstand a major strategic blow to its tiny country, which is smaller than New Jersey. Therefore, its military strategy has always been on the offensive and conducting military confrontations on enemy territory.

“There are currently five known nuclear superpowers that are also the permanent five members of the Security Council in the United Nations. These are: The United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China. In addition, it is known that India, Pakistan and North Korea also possess nuclear weapons” (Amiel). A huge effort has been made over the years to eliminate any other potential suitors of nuclear arms. North Korea is a great example of a country that possesses nuclear power and is causing great unrest in the Far East. The lack of political stability in Pakistan also is a great source of concern, since there is the potential threat of an atomic bomb falling into the hands of extremist groups in the region.

The United States and the major European countries also perceive that a nuclear Iran is a threat to the region and to international stability. Furthermore, there is almost a unanimous global effort to stop Iran from possessing nuclear weapons. Since Iran is one of the biggest exporters of crude oil in the world, along with its strategic location, this conflict has direct implications on the stability of the world economy, specifically the oil market. “Iran’s location allows it to control the Strait of Hurmoz which, is the transportation route of approximately 40% of the world’s crude oil production” (“Iraq”). Any conflict causes the oil markets to become vary volatile and the price of energy to rise. As a result, the United States and the UN are attempting to increase economic sanctions against Iran. This caused the “Iranian economy to come to a near collapse in recent weeks” (“War” 10). Many banks are not allowed to transfer money in and out of Iran and companies are not allowed to sell their products. “It has become increasingly difficult for Iran to sell its oil and a few countries that are still willing to buy it are demanding rock bottom prices because of the risk of confrontation with the United States” (Amiel). Another confounding factor is the political changes in many Arab countries such as Iraq, Libya and Egypt that resulted in significant decrease in their oil production. In order to stabilize the oil markets several countries

including Saudi Arabia, Canada and the United States have significantly increased their oil production.

Is Iran that close to obtaining nuclear weapons? The Iranians claim that they have no ambitions to develop nuclear arms but rather are interested in nuclear plants in order to diversify their energy sources. However, “several UN committees that were appointed to assess nuclear plants in Iran were denied access and the ones that were allowed in were extremely limited by Iranian authorities to perform a thorough inspection” (“Drumbeats” 12). Amounting evidence from satellite pictures and intelligence by many countries have indicated that Iran is making desperate efforts to build nuclear reactors that will allow it to produce atomic bombs. In addition, Iran is not concealing the fact that it is continuously developing strategic long-range missiles, with a range of up to 3,000 miles. This will place within its’ striking zone the entire Middle East including Israel, the whole European continent and most of the large cities in Russia and China. After experiencing over 30 years of aggression from North Korea who possesses nuclear arms, the United States and other countries are not willing to risk another extremist country obtaining nuclear weapons.

Not only Israel and European countries are feeling threatened by a nuclear Iran. “Iran is a Shiite Muslim state and has been known for many decades to be hostile towards Sunni governed states” (Fetini). One example is the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. Another Arab country that might be threatened is Saudi Arabia, the largest producer of crude oil in the world. A major concern is that Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab countries such as Egypt, will feel obliged to develop nuclear arms to counteract the Shiite Iran. In addition, Saudi Arabia ships the vast majority of its oil through the Strait of Hurmoz. “Iran has frequently threatened to shut down any naval transportation through the straits if economic sanctions will increase or if an attack will be

launched against it” (“War” 10). Other Sunni countries that are concerned of a nuclear Iran are Kuwait, Iraq, Abu-Dhabi and Bahrain. All these countries are supporting United States sanctions against Iran. This is causing huge pressure on the international community to find solutions without creating a global energy crisis, which will threaten the economic viability of many European countries.

The track record of the Iranian regime presents many reasons for Israel to feel threatened. Iran has a long proven history of supporting Shiite terrorist groups in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and around the world. “In 1992 and 1994 two bombs devastated the Argentinean Jewish community in Buenos Aires. The first attack was launched on the Israeli embassy and killed 29 people and injured more than 250. In 1994 the second attack targeted on the Jewish Community Center, where 87 people were killed and over 100 were injured. In 1998 a telephone call intercepted from the Iranian embassy in Argentina demonstrated conclusively that Iran was involved in the attack on the Israeli embassy. As a result, Argentina expelled 6 Iranian diplomats” (Amiel). In 2006 Hezbollah, the Shiite militia that controls southern Lebanon, launched an attack on Northern Israel with thousands of rockets that were supplied by Iran. Hezbollah is totally dependent on Iran financially and politically. Iran also is the major contributor to the Hamas in the Gaza Strip, encouraging unrest in the Israeli borders. The president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has repeatedly threatened to wipe out Israel and to “clear” the Jewish state from the Middle East. He urged the Jews to go back to the countries that they came from, and is denying the Holocaust that occurred in World War II. Since Israel is geographically very small, it probably would not be able to sustain an atomic attack without the majority of its population being affected.

What are the means that Israel can use to stop Iran? A series of “accidents” have occurred in Iranian nuclear plants and several leaders of the Iranian nuclear program have been killed in the last few years. “A cyber attack that caused the shut down of the Iranian centrifuges was launched two years ago. This was a major blow to the Iranian efforts to produce enriched uranium; however it did not stop its program completely” (Amiel). Despite the rumors and speculations, it is unclear whether Israel and the United States were involved in these instances. Iran on the other hand has denied that it was involved in a series of recent attacks against Israeli officials in India and Georgia. Neither Iran nor Israel admitted that these incidences were part of an undercurrent war that has developed between the two countries. Israel has also been very vocal in pressing the international community to take action against Iran with limited success. “Israel is allegedly planning for an aerial attack on the nuclear facilities in Iran, similar to its attack on the nuclear plant in Iraq in 1981” (“Drumbeats” 26). However, many experts claim it is questionable whether an air strike would be effective. The Iranians have managed to spread their nuclear facilities in many regions in Iran as opposed to a single site, and have built underground fortresses to protect the centrifuge plants. It is questionable whether Israel has the concrete penetrating bombs to launch an effective strike. It is perceived that only the United States has the strategic ability to launch such an attack. Another unlikely option is that Israel would use an atomic bomb against Iran. Israel has never admitted to having nuclear power, let alone using it. In all the previous wars in the last 60 years Israel has never attempted to use nuclear weapons. “It is believed that only if it feels that its existence is in jeopardy, i.e. a proven immediate atomic threat, would Israel consider an aversive nuclear attack against Iran” (Amiel).

The international community is frantically looking for solutions to this conflict. The international community has stepped up its diplomatic and economic pressures against Iran to the

point that its economy is on the verge of collapse. This is causing unrest and political conflict inside Iran as to the appropriate ways to respond to these sanctions. The Iranian leadership and population have great pride in the nuclear program. However, it is increasingly clear that to bring this program to fruition would come at an almost impossible price to the Iranian state. Therefore, “Iran in recent weeks was willing to restart recent negotiations about its nuclear program” (“War” 10). “President Obama was quoted saying that he would consider allowing Iran to develop nuclear power plants for electricity under strict international supervision and on the condition that enriched uranium would be imported to the Iranian nuclear plants and not produced inside Iran. In addition, the United States has publicly warned Israel against launching a strike against Iran” (Obama). The Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama have repeatedly negotiated the terms in which Israel would be justified to launch such an attack. Obviously there is not full agreement; however, it is perceived that because of the strong alliance between Israel and the United States an attack would not be launched without mutual consent. Israel perceives the Iranian tactics as a means of delaying further sanctions and not a sincere attempt to solve the conflict. This is because Iran is far from agreeing to transparency, external inspection and oversight of its nuclear plants. Israel is mainly concerned about the immediate threat to its viability as a sovereign state. However, the United States and other countries are mainly concerned that an attack on Iran would cause volatility of the oil market that would result in a major economic crisis and a global recession. “The United States and other countries will exhaust all diplomatic and economic means before agreeing to a military option. The United States has repeatedly declared through various officials that if diplomatic sanctions will not convince the Iranians to withdraw their nuclear program a military strike by the United States will be a viable option” (Obama). Obama’s statements were made in order to signal to Israel that

the United States is taking the Israeli concerns seriously. Iran's response to the sanctions and their ability to compromise will determine whether a peaceful solution will be found. In recent weeks, the Iranians have agreed to allow more significant inspections in their facilities and to limit Uranium enrichment to less than 20%. Although this is perceived by many as an initial step toward compromise, the Israeli Prime-Minister Benjamin Netanyahu perceives this as another tactic to gain more time and leverage by the Iranians. Nonetheless, it does not seem reasonable that Netanyahu will launch an attack on Iran without a previous understanding at least with the United States.

The Middle Eastern conflict is over a century old. Ever since Israel was declared a state in 1948, virtually all the Arab countries surrounding it have tried to invade its borders and many other Arab countries felt obliged to join the Israeli-Arab conflict. Because of Israel's nuclear power, several Arab countries have attempted to develop nuclear arms as well. Israel has long felt that in order to survive, it needs a strategic edge over its neighbors. Therefore, Israel maintains a very large army, a highly equipped air force and cutting edge military technology. The Arab countries surrounding Israel have long felt that the Jewish state unjustifiably invaded Arab land and pushed out the Palestinian Arabs that were occupying that land for centuries. The conflict in the Middle East has caused global unrest every time that an escalation occurred. This resulted especially in a volatile oil and energy market. The most recent conflict between Israel and Iran about Iran's ambitions to become a nuclear power has again caused a regional crisis and global unrest. Israel's threats to attack Iranian facilities, has urged the United States and the international community to take a stand and to impose sanctions against Iran in order to stop the development of nuclear arms. Iran has consistently claimed that their nuclear ambitions are aimed at peaceful intentions of developing an alternative source of energy. However, amounting

evidence including U.N. inspection units have proven otherwise. It is unclear whether the United States will be able to persuade the Iranians to let go of their nuclear ambitions and whether Israel will see eye to eye with the United States as to when a military attack on Iran is justified. Nonetheless, it is obvious to all parties that a military clash between Iran and Israel will have a catastrophic effect on the oil market, the global economy and on both nations. Therefore, the international community is actively pursuing solutions and monitoring developments. It will be interesting to see how this crisis pans out and what will be the next crisis in the Middle East.

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