

The Middle East is also the focus of attention because it has recently been the scene of the first extensive use of ballistic missiles since the Second World War, namely, the war between Iran and Iraq. Furthermore, since many of those missiles were targeted against enemy cities, the precedent has been set for their use against civilian populations.

Israel

Israel possesses the most advanced ballistic missile technology in the region. Its domestically produced ballistic missiles are based on a system developed with the help of France in the 1960s, and are now believed to be nuclear-capable, if not already nuclear-armed.

The Jericho I missile, with a range of approximately 500 km, is said to be similar in size and performance to the US Pershing I.⁶ The Jericho II, reportedly first tested in 1987, is believed to have a better guidance system, a more impressive payload, and a greater range than the previous model. Reports suggest that Israel may possess as many as 50 Jericho Is and up to 100 Jericho IIs.

Following Israel's launch of a domestic satellite in 1988, Tel Aviv has been credited with the ability to deploy a missile capable of reaching targets approximately 1,500 km away. This brings within reach Soviet military bases on the Black Sea, and Moscow has already raised its concerns about such a development.

Israel's missile technology programme may have served as a *quid pro quo* for access to South African uranium. According to US sources, the missile technology of the Jericho II may have been transferred to South Africa in exchange for uranium and access to a missile test site.⁷

Syria

Syria has a diversified missile force, although it is highly dependent on foreign imports. In addition to its Soviet-made large artillery rocket, the Frog-7, Syria has obtained from Moscow numerous SS-21 and Scud-B missiles. Although the Frog-7 is an old system with a limited range of 70 km, reports suggest that Damascus may have developed a chemical warhead to fit the missile. It is also rumoured that Syria is attempting to do the same for the longer range (300 km), though less accurate, Scud-B missile, as well as for the highly accurate, but shorter range (120 km), SS-21 Scarab.

There are reports that Syria may have approached China for its M-9 missile, believed to be a land-based system with a range of 600 km. Although the M-series is not yet fully developed, some reports suggest Syria's hopes of acquiring any may have been dashed by US pressures on Beijing.

Iraq

Iraq also possesses a significant missile capability. In addition to its Frog-7 and hundreds of Scud-B

missiles, many of which were fired at Iran during the Gulf War, Iraq has a dedicated missile research and development programme and has cooperated with other countries in the development of new missiles.

Using its own resources, Baghdad has twice upgraded and extended the range of its Scud-B missile. In August 1987, the Iraqi government announced having tested a 650 km land-based missile called the al-Hussein.⁸ In April 1988, Baghdad announced the successful test of a 900 km range missile, named al-Abbas.

Iraq is believed to have invested at least \$3 billion in missile development and production. It also provided partial financing for the Argentinian-led Condor project. Egypt was also involved in this project, the aim of which was to develop a missile of 1,000 km range. Due to US pressure, however, Egypt withdrew from the project and Argentina cancelled its participation because of cost.⁹ According to some analysts, Iraq's interest was to equip such a missile with nuclear warheads.

In December 1989, to the surprise of many experts, Iraq successfully launched a three-stage, 48 ton rocket into the atmosphere. This rocket could give Baghdad the potential to place a satellite into low orbit, or produce a missile capable of delivering warheads thousands of kilometres away.

Combined with Iraq's missile programme is its attempts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Even though Israel slowed the Iraqi nuclear programme when it bombed the Osiraq nuclear reactor in 1981, many sources suggest that Iraq is trying to use a network of companies in Europe to procure the equipment and expertise to produce fissionable material. Concerns about Iraq's nuclear ambitions were renewed in March 1990, when electronic devices that can be used to trigger nuclear bombs were seized in England before being sent illegally to Baghdad.

Although Iraq made use of chemical weapons during its war with Iran, there is no confirmation that ballistic missiles delivered them. In April 1990, however, Iraq's President Saddam Hussein said that his country has chemical weapons and announced it would use them if threatened by nuclear weapons — referring to Israel and its nuclear weapons capability. This was followed in September 1990 by a report that Iraq successfully tested a chemical warhead on a ballistic missile in 1989.¹⁰

Iran

Like Iraq, Iran possesses a large inventory of ballistic missiles and made extensive use of them in the Gulf War. In addition to its Scud missiles, there are