

Forum: Disarmament Commission

Issue: Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East

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Introduction

The issue of the production, selling and use of nuclear weapons has only become more demanding and complicated since weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were developed and widely used for military purposes during World War I. Nuclear weapons were first used in 1945 when the United States tested its first nuclear bomb in New Mexico on July 16th of that year. Throughout the years, Middle Eastern countries were able to obtain weapons of mass destruction but only one was in possession of nuclear weapons: Israel.

In the last 50 years, the nations of the Middle East have faced a great amount of conflict between each other. The causes of these conflicts include; power struggles, religious conflict, discrimination, security issues, colonialism and Western hegemony, intervention and extremist organizations. Causes such as these create conflict in the form of blockades and more importantly: wars. Israel is the only Middle Eastern Country that possesses nuclear weapons. There is great speculation that Iran will soon obtain nuclear weapons. Saudi Arabia has threatened to develop its own nuclear bomb if Iran acquires one. Many fear that this will result in a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

Establishing a nuclear weapon free (NWF) zone would help to further encourage global nuclear disarmament, strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as well as aid the Middle East in establishing more peace between the nations.

Definition of Key Terms

Conflict

A political conflict is a dispute between the leaders of two or more nations in regards to social values and/or foreign relations.

Power Struggles

A power struggle is a struggle between two or more people for control in a particular area or field.

Religious Conflict

Conflict that is justified by religious differences. Disputes may also be caused by disapproval of religiously inspired laws.

Discrimination

The unfair treatment of an individual or group of people because they belong to a specific group. This could be on the grounds of race, religion or sex.

Colonialism

To occupy a country which means to gain control (or fragmentary control) over another country. Once control is gained, the country is exploited economically.

Hegemony

Leadership, dominance or strong influence over a country or group of people like the Western hegemony in the Middle East.

Extremist Organisations

An individual or group of people who have political views to an extreme extent, mainly people who support illegal, violent or dangerous actions such as: bombing and rioting.

Blockade

When a country cuts off supplies (imports and exports) and communications from another country by force.

Nuclear Weapons

A weapon- typically bombs- that creates an explosion using nuclear energy.

Nuclear Arms Race

A competition over ascendancy in nuclear weaponry between two or more countries. For example, the Arms Race of the Cold War between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Weapons of Mass Destruction

A weapon that could be chemical, biological or nuclear that has the ability to cause significant damage to its surroundings and loss of life.

Background Information

Since 1980, establishing peace and security in the region by developing a NWFZ in the Middle East has been possible with the agreement of the Middle Eastern nations to refrain from producing, testing, acquiring or stationing nuclear weapons on their territories. However due to Israel's policy of deliberate ambiguity, it is still not confirmed whether or not the country possesses nuclear weapons. Additionally, there is speculation that Iran is developing a nuclear bomb. Pakistan also has nuclear weapons. Despite the recurrent support for the issue at the General Assembly, very little was achieved until after the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995 when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) hosted multiple meetings about ways to 'advance the process' alongside experts and academics. This led many analysts and political figures to question the true intentions of the leaders of the region. There was speculation about some countries' genuine interest in a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East such as Iraq and Syria.

Egypt

To Egypt, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is a way to pressure Israel to end its ambiguous nuclear policy, which states that it will not sign the non-proliferation treaty until a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is found. Egypt made no effort to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Its main focus is conventional forces and biological and chemical weapons, so it is not a threat in terms of nuclear weapons disarmament.

Iran

Iran's nuclear weapons program was first established by the Iranian monarch at the time; Shah Mohammed Reza under the United States' Atoms for Peace Program in the 1950s. Shah Mohammed saw nuclear energy as a more reliable, longer-lasting alternative to oil. Although the country quickly advanced with its nuclear weapons program the process was halted after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Prior to that, the Tehran Nuclear Energy Centre was established in 1967 and was managed by the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran. This led to the beginning of the construction of the Bushehr nuclear plant in 1975.

During Obama's presidency in the United States he had consistently carried out airstrikes in order to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Some would argue that airstrikes would only have a 'limited impact on the prevention of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons as it would only hinder its ability to

build a nuclear arsenal by a few years. Additionally, the People's Mujahedin properties and its Auvers-sur-Oise base was raided by French police due to an order made by the anti-terrorist magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguière. There was speculation that Iran was going to shift its base of operations in June of 2003.

Recently, Iran has repeatedly argued that it is not pursuing a nuclear weapons capability and instead that its nuclear weapons program is solely for meeting its growing civilian energy needs. In 1974 as a result of concerns over Israel's growing nuclear weapon program, Iran suggested the concept of establishing a Middle Eastern nuclear-weapon-free zone (MENWFZ) in a joint resolution at the UN General Assembly. Five years prior to that, the Shah of Iran had made a proposal similar which failed to gain any support from other nations because nations were not as concerned about weapons of mass destruction.

Relations between Egypt and Iran

Many countries both outside of the Middle East and those part of it have suggested establishing an NWFZ in this region but the issue was not fully recognized until the 1960s. In 1974 Egypt and Iran made a declaration to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. This then leads to the Mobarak Initiative of 1990 to limit weapons of mass destruction. At the time, both Iran and Egypt did not have a nuclear weapons program and this could have been a motive for them to carry out these actions as a public rebuke to Israel, due to a lack of confidence in Israel.

Relations between Iran and Egypt started repeatedly going from hostile to peaceful after the Egyptian revolution of 1952 which overthrew the two Iranian Shahs that had control over the country and brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power. The ties between the two were hostile again after the Iranian revolution which severed ties between Egypt and Iran. Moreover, tensions rose after Egypt's recognition of Israel and its peace agreement with it in 1979. Despite Egypt and Iran's constantly changing diplomatic relations, they authorised their first ambassador - in April of 2012- to Egypt. Additionally, they share membership in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Eventually, the two nations agreed to re-establish bilateral diplomatic relations after a visit from Mohammed Morsi (the Egyptian president at the time) in August of 2012 after Iran appointed an ambassador to Egypt.

Now that Iran has a nuclear weapons program, it has agreed to strict controls over it. On July 14th of 2015 the five powers (France, the United Kingdom, the United States, China and Russia) alongside Germany came to an agreement with Iran aiming to keep its nuclear weapons program entirely peaceful. This is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The US has recently ended its participation in the deal. Iran and the remaining countries continue to follow the policies of the deal.

Israel

Shortly after the Holocaust, Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion was determined to acquire nuclear weapons as a means of prevention of a similar event transpiring in the future as well as protection if it does occur. Many argue that in the 1950s Israel had constructed a nuclear reprocessing plant and a nuclear reactor with French assistance. It is now an infamous facility known as the Negev Nuclear Research Centre in Dimona. However, according to a CIA report; Tel Aviv had only initiated the production of nuclear weapons just before the Six-Day war in 1967.

Nuclear weapons

Although Israel has never confirmed nor denied its possession of nuclear weapons, it is still known as “the Middle East’s principal nuclear power”. US experts stated in a 2013 report that “Israel’s nuclear arsenal includes eighty nuclear warheads”. Additionally, Israel is yet to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of nuclear weapons. Moreover, aspects of its nuclear research program was restricted from the inspectors of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), creating more suspicion towards Israel and its possession of nuclear weapons.

Pakistan had successfully tested nuclear weapons in 1998. Despite the fact that it is not actively involved with the Arab-Israeli conflict, its relationship with Saudi Arabia could put Pakistan in the middle of Middle Eastern power struggles due to its possession of nuclear weapons. In an effort to hinder Iran’s regional influence, Saudi Arabia has provided Pakistan with immense financial support and some believe that this money could have ended up funding Pakistan’s nuclear program. In November of 2013, a BBC report claimed that Pakistan may have even agreed to provide Saudi Arabia with a nuclear bomb if Iran obtains one of its own.

Major Countries and Organizations

The Gulf Research Centre

The Gulf Research Centre Foundation is a non-profit organization that collects and spreads information regarding the social, political, economic and security problems that are faced by the countries of the Gulf region. As a result of a suggestion made by the Gulf Research Centre, a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Gulf was established in 2004.

Iran and Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia pledging to create its own nuclear bomb in response to Iran possessing one, played a key role in the possible obstruction of creating a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East. There

have always been tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran due to the struggle for regional dominance and religious differences. Iran mainly follows the Shia sect of Islam whilst Saudi Arabia follows the Sunni sect. An example of the tensions between the two countries are still present is the US-led invasion of Iraq which overthrew a major Iranian adversary, a Sunni Arab named Saddam Hussein. However the struggle for regional dominance is the main cause for any disputes between the nations regarding nuclear weapons. If Iran acquires its own nuclear bomb, it will have more influence on the other Middle Eastern countries and since Saudi Arabia desires regional dominance, it has threatened to get its own nuclear bomb. There is speculation that because Saudi Arabia funds many of Pakistan's military causes, that Pakistan will be the one to provide the nuclear weapons. It is because of Middle Eastern countries' desire to acquire nuclear weapons that the Middle East continues to struggle to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The International Atomic Energy Agency is an international agency that promotes the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to hinder its use for military purposes. The organization was created on the 29th of July in 1957. The IAEA hosted multiple conferences with the aid of experts to consider methods to push the process of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone (MENWFZ) further in 1990. However, despite this the Middle East still stands in the same place as it did many years ago. Although it is being discussed more frequently at the General Assembly, not many countries (in the Middle East) have disarmed and there has not been much pressure for other nations to disarm, especially because the United States is heavily involved with Middle Eastern conflict and Saudi Arabia and does not agree with eradicating nuclear weapons. Additionally, the organization was responsible for inaugurating safeguard obligations for the Middle Eastern countries regarding the issue. This safeguarding continues to take place however countries like Israel have made some of their nuclear weapon research programs unavailable to the IAEA.

The United Nations Office for Disarmament (UNODA)

The UNODA is a United Nations Office that was established in January of 1998. Its purpose is to deal with disarmament affairs and promote weapons of mass destruction free zones. UNODA has established many treaties regarding nuclear weapon free zones in general such as: the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty of Rarotonga, the Treaty of Bangkok, the Treaty of Pelindaba and the Treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia which target: Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Africa and Central Asia. In terms of the Middle East it has passed numerous resolutions on the issue.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1974	Declaration to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone made by Egypt and Iran.
1990	The General Assembly passes a resolution on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.
2004	A weapons of mass destruction (WMD) free zone is established in the Gulf region as suggested by the Gulf Research Centre for the six members of the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman).
2010	An (Non-Proliferation Treaty) NPT conference is pressured by Egypt and the Arab League in order to force Israel to end its policy of ambiguity.
September, 2013	Initiative for a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East.
January, 2014	The Secretary-General of UNODA received letters supporting the confirmation for declaring the Middle East a weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological weapons) free zone.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, 4 December 1990 (**A/RES/45/52**)
- Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, 23 December 1997 (**A/RES/52/34**)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The idea of establishing the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone was first proposed by a group of respected Israelis, in the Committee for the Denuclearisation of the Middle East in 1962. Following this, in 1971 Iran and Egypt made a suggestion about the issue at the General Assembly and 'embraced the concept as national policy'. An initiative in Egypt then expanded the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East to make the Middle East free of any weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in 1990. All states in the region had agreed to give up any 'offensive' biological and chemical

weapons and become a part of global treaties and agreements regarding the issue including the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Israel failed to comply with these requests, causing a lack of confidence in other Middle Eastern nations. This solution was useful and beneficial to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, however it did not put enough pressure on the countries which is why Israel failed to comply, disrupting the order that it brought with the nations that agreed.

In 1995 a resolution on the Middle East that was co-sponsored by three of the powers: Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, all of which called upon all Middle Eastern states to “take practical steps in appropriate forums aimed at making progress towards, inter alia, the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems, and to refrain from taking any measures that preclude the achievement of this objective.” Furthermore, the resolution also called upon organizations and all NPT parties to “extend their cooperation and to exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the early establishment by regional parties of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.” Nonetheless, the resolution was not taken into force as Iran developed a nuclear weapons program and Israel still has one.

Possible Solutions

There are many issues regarding pledges, policies and statements regarding the issue that the leaders of the states of the Middle East have made, however; an obstacle that is just as challenging as the measure itself is the stigma around the possibility of a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) free zone in the Middle East. These skepticisms stem from the progress made on the issue since 1974 which did not make a significant change. This causes diplomats and experts (especially those of the West) to deem the issue as unrealistic and unachievable. By changing the approach of the situations and applying more pressure on these nations from the permanent members of the United Nations; more progress can be made and at a quicker pace than before. The measure itself is in fact not impossible as Africa has been a nuclear weapon free zone since 2009 as of the Pelindaba Treaty which was originally signed in 1996 but only came into effect in 2009. This proves that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone is not impossible and can be made relevant in the Middle East.

Another key issue is the lack of confidence that Middle Eastern nations have in each other. Although Israel has not disclosed whether or not it has nuclear weapons, it is believed that it does have nuclear weapons as a means of protection from any attacks within the region. Iran is believed to have the capacity for producing its own nuclear weapons and frequently argues that it seeks to protect itself and other Arab nations from Jewish attacks. It is due to this that multiple confidence-building measures

must be taken in order for the nations to be more trusting of each other. Additionally Israel should follow the NPT and apply full IAEA safeguards to their facilities as a way of giving up its nuclear weapons program to show its willingness to make progress with this measure. This could be done through the influence of the country's foreign relations. The United Kingdom is known as Israel's 'closest partner in Europe' and Israel is the UK's 'closest partner in the Middle East'. This would then encourage other nations and create more trust especially since there is a lot of unanswered questions in terms of Israel and nuclear weapons due to its policy of ambiguity.

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Appendix or Appendices

- I. carnegieendowment.org/2002/04/16/chemical-and-biological-weapons-in-middle-east-pub-11745

(Carnegie Endowment)

This website is useful because it gives clear explanations that are specific to countries in the Middle East. Although the website is about biological and chemical weapons in the middle east it gives an understanding of why nuclear weapons might be specifically targeted in this measure.

- II. www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43419673. (BBC News).

This website is beneficial because it provides a specific and current example of potential conflict between nations due to nuclear weapons. Additionally, it is a trustworthy and well-known news source.

- III. www.jpost.com/Middle-East/UNSC-powers-back-nuke-free-ME-174776. (The Jerusalem Post)

This website is helpful because it goes through all of the steps taken towards this measure in terms of the UNSC powers. More importantly, it goes through the information in order of the date an event occurred.