

Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

Issue: Working towards nuclear weapons disarmament in the Middle East

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Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Nikos Kargiotis and I am an upcoming 11th grader in the German School of Thessaloniki (DST). I will have the honor and the pleasure to serve as a Co-Chair in the Disarmament and International Committee in the 1st DSTMUN conference.

First of all I would like to congratulate all of you for your choice to participate in the conference. As many of you may have noticed the topics are greatly concerning and the debate will surely be as exciting as everyone expects to.

What about the first topic, namely “Working towards nuclear weapons disarmament in the Middle East”, it is an issue which has been coming under discussion for many years. Nowadays, however, the discussion seems to be at its peak and I expect that we get this chance and make the debate interesting and fruitful. Of course, we aren’t expected to find a real permanent solution to the topic, but we can try making the first step for a change in the world.

In this study guide you will find a thorough analysis of this topic. Nevertheless, you are expected to make a further research to the topic in order to be well prepared in the conference.

Being a part of the MUN Club and participating in conferences, both as a delegate and as a chair, it has always brought me joy and elation. I am looking forward to the first DSTMUN and meeting you all. I hope that you share the same excitement as me! We will hopefully have an amazing time!

My e-mail address is nikoskargiotis2@gmail.com. You are highly encouraged to contact me if you have any questions about the topic, the committee or the conference in general.

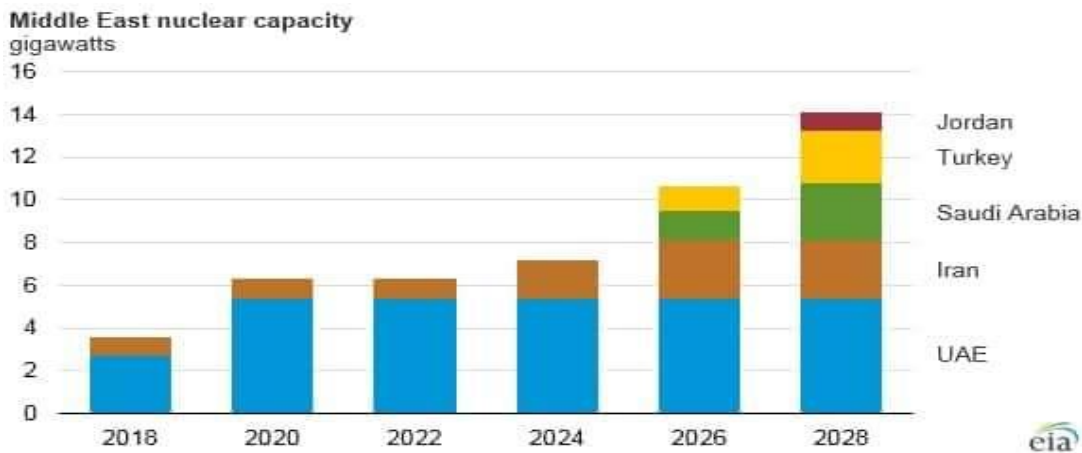
Yours truly,

Nikos Kargiotis

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

One could easily characterize the prospect of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East nightmarish, as there is a high chance that it will throw a region already on the precipice of instability, into a conflagration. The tumultuous political landscape is a result of both the historical wars between the regional nations and most recently, the Arab Spring civilian uprisings against despotism. In this way, one can easily comprehend that it is the increased militarization through nuclear weapons in the Middle East that is jeopardizing the re-establishment of normalcy in the region.

Even though the idea of complete nuclear disarmament in the area is slowly gaining momentum, currently the Middle East is fraught with inter alia Israeli-Iranian nuclear tensions and lack of a strong consensus among the regional States as far as the issue of nuclear weapons goes. The inner turmoil within the Middle East, which can briefly be illustrated by the continuous Israeli equivocating over its possession of nuclear warheads and Iran’s contentious nuclear program, is undermining the global aspiration of non-proliferation, when even the Nuclear-Weapon States have agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals.



#1 Middle East Nuclear Capacity

The nuclear-weapon-free zone that was mandated under the 7th Article of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was to ensure the complete ban on the use, development, deployment, testing and acquisition of nuclear weapons in the area. It would further require an international mechanism, aiming to verify the compliance with the regional treaty instituting such a zone in addition to the approval of the Nuclear-Weapon-States. Nevertheless, in this powder keg of the 21st century, a nuclear-weapon-free zone has yet to be initiated due to many factors, namely the predominant mistrust among the Middle Eastern nations which stem mainly from political, religious and military strains, combined with the geopolitical interest many militarily strong nations have in the area, such as but not limited to the United States of America, Russia and China.

Finally, the recent Syrian violation of the NPT by engaging in clandestine plutonium production and the allegations of Saudi Arabia's desire to withdraw from the NPT in order to acquire nuclear weapons, have both jeopardized the situation and questioned the relevance of the universal treaty in the Middle East. As the treaty's significance wanes in the area, the -at least- devastating ramifications of nuclear weapons combined with the complicated control wielded by external forces, all contribute to the exacerbation of the underlying competition between the Middle Eastern nations to determine a regional power. Set against this backdrop, the question of nuclear tension and aggression between regional factors appeals for a comprehensive, amicable solution acceptable to all parties and aimed at achieving the ultimate goal of peace and stability.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Nuclear Weapon¹

Broadly defined, a nuclear weapon is an explosive device that converts matter into energy. There are two types of nuclear weapons, atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs. Atomic weapons are detonated by splitting atoms of plutonium or highly enriched uranium, which releases an enormous amount of energy. A hydrogen bomb, also referred to as a "thermonuclear" or "fusion" device, uses an atomic explosion to merge two hydrogen atoms into helium. Hydrogen bombs are more powerful than atomic bombs. Both have the ability to inflict massive and instantaneous death and destruction, as well as illness and devastation of the environment.

Nuclear weapon free zone²

Any zone recognized as such by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which any group of States, in the free exercise of their sovereignty, has established by virtue of a treaty or convention whereby:

- a) The statute of total absence of nuclear weapons to which the zone shall be subject, including the procedure for the delimitation of the zone, is defined;
- b) An international system of verification and control is established to guarantee compliance with the obligations deriving from that statute.

Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD)³

¹ Domlife.org, Nuclear Weapon, <https://www.domlife.org/Justice/Disarmament/nucleareduc03.pdf>

² UNGA Resolution 3472 B (2975), Nuclear weapon free zone, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/001/87/IMG/NR000187.pdf?OpenElement>

Device designed to kill humans through the use of atomic or nuclear energy or the release of chemicals, poisons, biological agents or radioactivity.

Nuclear Winter⁴

Nuclear winter, the environmental devastation that certain scientists contend would probably result from the hundreds of nuclear explosions in a nuclear war.

Nuclear proliferation⁵

Nuclear Proliferation is a term used to describe the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons-applicable nuclear technology and information, to nations which are not recognized as "Nuclear Weapon States" by the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, also known as the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty or NPT. Proliferation has been opposed by many nations with and without nuclear weapons, the governments of which fear that more countries with nuclear weapons may increase the possibility of nuclear warfare.

Nuclear weapon states⁶

Nuclear-weapon States parties under the Treaty are defined as those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967, which includes five States, namely the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Russia, China and France.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In order to understand the importance of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and propose effective solutions, one must be accommodated with background information.

Israel's nuclear weapon program in brief

Much that has been presented about Israel's clandestine nuclear weapons program is estimates and reports based on alleged statements and other evidence. David Ben-Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister, had vehemently expressed his desire for Israel to obtain nuclear weapons as a way to prevent the Holocaust from

³ Duhaime.org, Weapon of Mass Destruction, <http://www.duhaime.org/LegalDictionary/W/WeaponofMassDestruction.aspx>

⁴ Britannica.com, Nuclear winter, <https://www.britannica.com/science/nuclear-winter>

⁵ Definitions.uslegal.com, Nuclear proliferation, <https://definitions.uslegal.com/n/nuclear-proliferation/>

⁶ Iaea.org, Nuclear weapon states, <https://www.iaea.org/topics/non-proliferation-treaty>

recurring. It is believed that in the late 1950s, Israel had secretly initiated its weapons program with French assistance by building a nuclear reactor and reprocessing plant. This facility is today infamous as the Negev Nuclear Research Centre in Dimona where Israeli production of weapons-grade plutonium supposedly takes place. However, as suggested by a CIA report, Tel Aviv had begun full-scale production of nuclear weapons only in 1967, right before the Six-Day War.

The Vela Incident on September 22, 1979 was the first such event where Israeli nuclear involvement was heavily suspected. A “double flash” of light detected by a satellite in the South Atlantic Ocean was rumored to have originated from a joint nuclear test by Israel and then weapons-enabled South Africa. Although there were several alternate theories about the incident, exclusive leaks by a former Israeli nuclear technician in 1986 strongly linked the Vela Incident to the test of an Israeli neutron bomb. Israel has not yet signed the NPT till date neither has it ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Iran’s nuclear program in brief

Iran established its nuclear program in the 1950s under the aegis of the United States’ Atoms for Peace program. This was established by then Iranian monarch, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who saw nuclear energy as a viable alternative to oil that would eventually be depleted. In 1967, the Tehran Nuclear Research Centre was established and run by the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and in 1975, construction of the Bushehr nuclear plant had already begun. However, all nuclear projects halted and all international cooperation ceased in 1979 when the Islamic Revolution ousted the monarchy and instituted the Islamic Republic of Iran. The nation’s nuclear program only resumed in 1987 and since the 1990s, Iran has been involved in a close alliance with Russia for reactor constructions, technical know-how and research expertise.

The origins of the ongoing dispute over Iran’s alleged, secret nuclear weapons program can be traced back to August 14, 2002 when the National Council of Resistance of Iran revealed that Iran was constructing an enrichment plant at Natanz and a heavy water facility at Arak – facilities that had not been declared before the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) despite Iran having ratified the NPT. The following year, the IAEA adopted a resolution that called for Iran to suspend all enrichment and reprocessing-related activities as well as grant rights of access to IAEA inspectors for environmental sampling, which Iran obliged to before refusing to do so by 2004. On November 14 of the same year, Iran agreed to voluntarily suspend its enrichment program and implement the Additional Protocol under the Paris Agreement. But soon after in August 2005, Iran began production of uranium hexafluoride, a key material in uranium enrichment, at its Isfahan facility. This series of violations of agreements culminated in the IAEA finding Iran in

noncompliance with its safeguards and reporting it to the UN Security Council in 2006. Since then, Iran had been subject to several UNSC, US and EU sanctions while frameworks for mutual cooperation were proposed but ultimately abandoned due to Iran's unwillingness to be transparent about its nuclear program. However, after Hassan Rouhani was elected Iranian President in the 2013 elections, negotiations with the P5+1 nations i.e. USA, UK, Russia, France, China and Germany have resumed and even resulted in some concrete measures taken by both sides to resolve this conflict

Iran-Israel nuclear conflict

Although the Iran-Israel severed relations since 1979 are mainly attributed to the ideological conflict of Islamism vs. Zionism, the involvement of both nations' nuclear program has worsened the situation. In 2010, a series of assassinations of top Iranian nuclear scientists was rumored to have been the work of Israel's secret service, Mossad. These were supposedly meant to halt the Iranian nuclear program or to ensure inability to recover after attacks on Iranian facilities. Moreover in June 2010, Israel allegedly launched a cyber attack on Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment plant through the Stuxnet computer worm. The virus was thought to be of Israeli origin and had destroyed about 1000 centrifuges at the facility. The Mossad had also been suspected of causing the 2011 explosion at the sensitive Isfahan facility. Indeed this proxy conflict has been amplified by Israel's efforts to stop the Iranian nuclear program.

The Nuclear programs in the Middle East

Wishing to avoid any military disorders in the region, the NPT-Countries have decided to sign deals with countries of the Middle East, ensuring the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in an area where there are several conflicts about different issues every year. The first countries signed such a deal were Turkey, Jordan, Morocco and Algeria in 2007. Turkey and Jordan had officially announced that they achieved to conquer any necessary knowledge, in order to be able to develop and acquire nuclear power, energy and weapons. Therefore, these two countries had signed a nuclear cooperation agreement in February 2013. However, their ambitions haven't succeeded yet, although Turkey seemed to be sure that it could have created three nuclear plants until 2015. Furthermore, Jordan has signed such agreements with Spain, South Korea, Japan, Italy and Argentina. Due to the failure of all these agreements so far, Jordan decided to go into a nuclear cooperation with Russia since 2015. The main goal for Jordan is the construction of nuclear bombs by 2022.

Meanwhile, Algeria and Morocco signed cooperation deals with Russia and France respectively. In 2012, Morocco took the permission by France to start

building its own nuclear reactor, but since then we have not known any further details about how is the construction going. Algeria's deal with Russia was quite successful and that's why they decided to renew it in September 2014. This deal allows Algeria to design, construct, operate and serve any nuclear power plants and reactors, as well as it provided collaboration in researching nuclear power for the uses of agriculture, biology, soil science, seawater desalination, and medicine.

Another country in the area which has played a significant role in the history of nukes in Middle East is Saudi Arabia. Having signed its first deal with USA related to nuclear weapons in 2008, Saudi Arabia has shown much interest in obtaining any nuclear weapons. It must be said the fact that Saudi Arabia had agreed with Pakistan to buy nuclear weapons in 2015, but this agreement has never been in use yet. So far, Saudi Arabia has cooperated about nuclear weapons with USA, France and Russia. Its provide of oil to the United States helps Saudi Arabia to keep the balance in its conflict with Iran.

Qatar, Oman, Tunisia and Kuwait are some further countries of the region having signed nuclear deals, wishing to get nuclear powers for peaceful goals.

The biggest project about Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in Middle East owns to Syria. Not only had it been creating a plutonium reactor in North Korea (2001-2007), but also the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission published a project in 2020, according to which Syria will be producing nuclear energy by 2020. On the top of that is the continuous rise of the amount of chemical weapons the country acquires.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

A major landmark in the history of nuclear weapons is The Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was created by the United Nations with the purpose of limiting the expansion of nuclear weapons. It opened for signing in 1968 for the first time, with the goal of promoting international cooperation concerning the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Nowadays, it is considered a long-term treaty aiming to further facilitate with the goal of eventual total nuclear disarmament.

The significance of the treaty, lays on the fact that it is in essence the only existing legally binding commitment to non-proliferation, as it has been signed by all 5 nuclear weapon states. Up to now, 190 parties have signed the treaty -India, Pakistan and Israel being the only states that have yet to sign it-, thus making the NPT the most successful international non-proliferation treaty. Notwithstanding India's and Pakistan's apparent lack of nuclear development since 1998, their hostility towards non-proliferation poses an immediate threat to international

security as they are not legally bound to limit their expansion as far as nuclear technology goes.

The NPT works in tandem with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is responsible for safeguarding NPT's articles. Firstly, a state has to declare its nuclear capabilities to the IAEA and work cohesively with the agency in order to verify that the aforementioned declaration is true. Then, the IAEA has to inspect the nation's nuclear sites and aid in verifying its continuous compliance with the NPT. To give an illustration, the IAEA has to monitor uranium levels so as to ensure that in the case that there is continued nuclear development, it is for peaceful purposes only. All the aforementioned safeguards, have been created with the purpose of enforcing the treaty, while they pose an example of true effectiveness as far as ensuring that countries are actually undergoing non-proliferation efforts goes.

Every 5 years, the NPT is reviewed, as it is deemed necessary for ensuring that its standards are representative of the current global environment. An important review conference, was the one that further updated the NPT with the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East⁷ which called upon all nations that have ratified the NPT in addition to the rest of the nations in the Middle East to cooperate together in the creation of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone (NWFZ), which aimed to control the unguarded nuclear facilities in the area.

All in all, the NPT has become an acclaimed treaty to which all Middle-Eastern states -with the exception of Israel- are parties, meaning essentially that there is regional support for the creation of a NWFZ. As the most prolific treaty on non-proliferation, the NPT's implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East is a testament toward the growing focus on working towards the establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East.

Possible threats from the presence of nuclear weapons in the Middle East

While the possibility of full-scale nuclear warfare occurring in the Middle East is quite unrealistic, the threats emerging from the presence of such weapons and even from facilities suspected of producing these weapons are detrimental for peace and confidence building in the region. While airstrikes during wars had heavily damaged reactors and posed the risk of exposing radioactive material in the process, other threats have included violations of the NPT, attempted sabotage at nuclear control systems and bilateral nuclear tensions. All of these threats, in a direct or indirect manner, have begged for a Middle East NWFZ as a plausible solution.

⁷ NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Annex, "Resolution on the Middle East," 17 April - 12 May 1995, http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/1995-NPT/pdf/Resolution_MiddleEast.pdf.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Iran

The Iranian government is claiming that its nuclear program is only for energy and thereby peaceful proposed; it has been the subject of several political conflicts across the Middle East, not convincing neither the Gulf States nor Israel. On top of all, Iran is a signatory of the NPT. The approach Iran has as far as nuclear power goes, is characterized by the term “nuclear hedging”, meaning it is very cautious, due to the increasingly heavy sanctions greater powers have implemented and thus, the growth of internal divisions. On the one hand, Iran hopes it can keep the possibility of a nuclear weapons program open in the case that it needs it- seeing as it is surrounded by nuclear power-; while on the other hand it aims to avoid any further tension with Saudi Arabia.

Gulf States

Countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Jordan, besides their common Sunni Muslim religion, also share their worries about a growing arms race in the Middle East. Even though the Gulf States’ relationship with Israel isn’t the best, they both stand opposed to an Iranian nuclear weapons program, while the recent Iranian nuclear weapons deal, reassured neither, as their leaders aren’t convinced of Iran’s peaceful intentions. In addition to Saudi Arabia’s and UAE’s heavy militarization the possible consequences of an Iranian nuclear weapons program could be devastating.

Syria

Initially, Syria developed Weapons of Mass Destruction due to the threat of Israel and the presence of NATO⁸ and the USA in the region. According to the NPT it is not a nuclear weapon state. Syria is part of a Nuclear Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA, while having also signed and ratified the NPT.

Turkey

Although it aims to develop ballistic missile programs, Turkey hasn’t insisted on possessing nuclear warheads because of its intentions to join the European Union and its participation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s nuclear sharing program. Encouraging the non-proliferation regime, is the fact that Turkey has signed all treaties concerning weapons of mass destruction. Even if Turkey doesn’t own any nuclear weapons, it still hosts approximately 60-70 nuclear weapons on its territory.

⁸ The members of NATO are Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America

USA

A rather controversial aura surrounds the USA's stance in the Middle East and in particular its policy about nuclear weapons in the region. No matter it being the most vocal proponent of the NPT in general, of transparency in national nuclear program, it has remained tight-lipped on its both military and political ally's, Israel's, clandestine nuclear weapons program. To give an illustration, at the 2012 Helsinki conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the Middle East, the US seemed to have taken all efforts so as to avert the forum from having a complete focus on Israel and specifically, its nuclear capability. On top of that, USA has engaged in a rather bitter conflict with Iran concerning its questionable enrichment activities, taking measures, such as but not limited to the imposing of unilateral sanctions and asset freezes on the nation, at least up to 2014, when after 32 years of diplomatic disengagement the 2 countries established dialogue. Finally, the United States would want to reassert its regional influence at a time when relations with nations such as Saudi Arabia are waning and the global oil market continuing to demand.

Russia

Russia supports a nuclear free Middle East, while similarly to the United States, it has encouraged all states that haven't done so, to accede to the NPT, allow full application of IAEA safeguards on their nuclear facilities and sign the Additional Protocol in addition to more intrusive inspections. Furthermore, the need for confidence building measures and joint statements has been emphasized, aiming to alleviate the general suspicion amongst Middle Eastern countries. On the other hand, though, Russia has political obligations towards its principal allies, Iran and Syria, both due to the USA's hostility towards the two nations and to maintain its exports of armament and nuclear reactors to the nations. Finally, one could say that Russia hopes to assert itself as a strategic regional player to counter the historic American influence on the area.

Egypt

Egypt has been working towards a nuclear free Middle East, being the leading proponent of the zone in the area. Nevertheless, it is pursuing both ballistic and biological weapons program. Israel and Egypt have been continuously approaching discussions over a nuclear free Middle East, they seem however to have different policy objectives. Generally, one can say that the contestation over the issue constitutes a reflection of the rival powers fighting for dominance in the region, a fight likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Israel

Israel's policy concerning its nuclear weapons program is characterized by ambiguity, as it neither confirms or denies the existence of nuclear weapons, however it has often been suggested by experts that Israel owns more than 80 nuclear warheads. This uncertainty about Israel's nuclear programs ultimately aims in providing an insurance policy against its very hostile neighbors (e.g. Palestine), while as it is kind of isolated against potential enemies; even if Israel has nuclear weapons it seems unlikely that it will decide to give them up soon. Furthermore, the Israeli government is extremely worried by the threat of Iranian nuclear weapons programs, meaning that firstly, policy-makers are split over the best course of action against Iran and secondly, that the CNTBT-although signed- is yet to be ratified.

Please note that under no circumstances can countries like Israel and Iran, or Iran and Saudi Arabia be in the same block.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1966	The first beliefs that Israel possess nuclear weapons, emerge
1970	The Non-Proliferation Treaty(NPT) is put into force
1981	Iraqi efforts to build a nuclear reactor facility are destroyed by Israel
August 2006	Turkey announces its plan to have 3 nuclear plants by 2015
September 2006	Egypt announces its goal to produce nuclear energy
2007	Israel destroys a Syrian nuclear reactor in Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)
January 2007	Jordan makes public its interest to acquire nuclear power for peaceful and energy purposes
January 2008	The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and France sign a nuclear agreement
April 2008	UAE and the United States of America (USA) start a peaceful nuclear cooperation
May 2008	-Saudi Arabia and USA start a nuclear cooperation -Turkey and USA start a nuclear cooperation
May 2010	Turkey and Russia start a nuclear

	cooperation
July 2010	Saudi Arabia and France sign a nuclear agreement
February 2011	Jordan and Turkey start a nuclear cooperation
2012	Jordan signs nuclear cooperation agreements with France, Russia, China and the United Kingdom (UK)
2015	The Iran deal is signed
November 2015	Egypt and Russia start a nuclear cooperation
2018	USA quits the Iran deal

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

It is an international treaty that entered into force in the year 1970. It recognizes 5 nuclear weapon states (USA, UK, France, China and Russia) and bans all other states from acquiring nuclear weapons. In return, the nuclear weapon states agree to share peaceful nuclear technology and to eventually disband their arsenals. North Korea used to be a signatory of said treaty, but retracted its cooperation in 2003.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

The JCPOA, well known as 'Iran deal', was signed in July 2015 between a six-nation negotiating group and Iran. Its main goal is the reassurance that Iran would never be able to develop nuclear arsenals through some imposed sanctions. The deal was effective and helped to the control of the 'nuclear situation' in Middle East; USA, however, decided to exit this deal in May 2018. The situation now seems troubled, while many of the signatories of the deal try to save it in contrast to USA's wishes.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

It was passed by the UN General Assembly on 7 July 2017. It decrees that its signatories will never test, produce, stockpile, transfer or use nuclear weapons. No member of NATO and no nuclear state voted in favor of this treaty.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

This treaty was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on September 10th, 1996. It bans all nuclear explosions, for both military and civilian purposes. It has not entered into force due to 8 specific states not ratifying it.

Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)

This treaty opened for signature on August 5th, 1963. It regulates nuclear tests and requires that they be conducted underground. 126 Parties have ratified this agreement. China, North Korea and France are the nuclear states that have not signed this treaty.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

While topical nations as well as external powers have attempted to bring about a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East, most of these actions haven't fructified often due to opposition by one or more Middle Eastern states. The earliest effort was actually the entering of the NPT into force on March 5, 1970 wherein Article VII endorsed regional treaties that outlawed nuclear weapons in their territory. This was followed by the adoption of Resolution 3263 by the UNGA on the question of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone jointly proposed by Iran and Egypt. Since then, a resolution on the same has been adopted every year in the UNGA without a vote. The IAEA General Conference too has annually passed similar resolutions without a vote. These resolutions, however, have been non-binding on nations and while regional states have accepted these in good spirit, the lack of obligation has further delayed the objective. In 1989, an IAEA Secretariat report was the first to take up the geographic definition of the Middle East, defining it as a region extending from Libya in the west, to Iran in the east and from Syria in the north, to Yemen in the south. In September 1991, the UN Secretary General issued a report outlining "effective and verifiable" measures for a Middle East NWFZ, especially by employing Confidence Building Measures. Both these documents have focused on specific steps necessary to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free region and have been applauded for their recommendations.

Recent measures taken to solve the issue began at the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991 when a multilateral working group on arms control and regional security (ACRS) was established and with the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. However in September 1995, this group failed in further negotiations due to a dispute between Israel and Egypt regarding the agenda of the forum. The ACRS group did manage to initiate Confidence Building Measures such as agreements on maritime issues, pre-notification of military exercises, military information exchange, regional communication networks and the

establishment of three Regional Security Centres but it failed primarily due to the lack of parallel peace and diplomatic negotiations. Hence as of now, there exists no regional dialogue mechanism to help the Middle Eastern nations in parleying to achieve a viable solution.

The NPT Review Conferences have been another platform where the issue of a Middle East NWFZ has been brought forth. In the 1st NPT Review Conference in 1995, a resolution on the Middle East was passed, encouraging states to take practical measures towards an NWFZ in the region. This was extended upon at the 2010 NPT Review Conference where five practical steps were suggested to establish a Middle East NWFZ, including the convention of a regional conference to discuss the issue in 2012 and appoint a facilitator for the same. While the Republic of Finland volunteered to host the conference, it was nevertheless cancelled due to Israeli non-participation that stemmed from Israel's rejection of the 2010 NPT Review Conference Final Document, deeming it to be "deeply flawed and hypocritical." Part of the reason why this significant conference failed to take place was the United States' decision to postpone the conference, in its capacity as a co-convenor, in order to avoid sole focus on Israel's weapons program

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Firstly, nuclear-weapon-free zones should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the states in the region concerned. Secondly, assistance should be provided, including through the United Nations, to the states concerned in their efforts to establish a zone, while all the states of the region concerned should participate in the negotiations on and the establishment of a zone.

Nevertheless, for the topical states to freely arrive upon a regional NWFZ, it will be of paramount importance for there to be certain CBMs implemented by all nations that will gradually erase the lack of confidence these countries have in each other.

Additionally, long-standing demands should also ideally be covered, such as establishing a strong, regional dialogue forum to discuss security concerns and the question of a comprehensive peace settlement among regional countries.

Furthermore, a secondary issue that emanates from the prospect of a Middle East NWFZ is the role of the P5 nations and their political interests in the region that has at times caused actions to be taken that are not in the best interests of the Middle East. The first aspect of their role would be to provide the necessary security assurances to member states of the NWFZ as a confirmation of their "no first-use" policy of nuclear weapons. The P5 nations must look forward to providing assured

negative security assurances that are relatively more pacifist in nature than positive security assurances. To that extent, it would be ideal for the potential member states to hold dialogue with the P5 nations in order to negotiate adequate assurances for themselves and to formalize it by means of an additional protocol. Moreover, it can be plausible to encourage the 5 external powers to assist with the establishment of the zone, including the drafting of the treaty as well as setting up of the regulatory body. Member states may even consider better defence, security or trade agreements with any of the P5 nations that avoid allowing a lot of intrusion by these powers in the internal affairs of the regional states, while incentivizing the P5 nations to commit towards a Middle East NWFZ in return for continued partnership in the aforementioned fields. While the guidance and diplomacy of the P5 nations is required, it is also essential that their geopolitical interests don't harm the progress of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons.

Finally, a seemingly simple yet in fact complex question is also that of defining the Middle East as a region over which the proposed NWFZ will have mandate. Various studies and reports have recommended different compositions of this region however it is mandatory to define the region geopolitically and in a manner that is acceptable to all parties. A feasible solution would be to request the United Nations Statistics Division to study the region in question, under its geoscheme, and to produce a report that would define its exact coordinates and hence recognize the Middle East as an official region. If a political approach is to be taken, it would be advisable to include Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Libya since these nations are either confirmed, suspected or have been known formerly to possess nuclear weapons. However, a definition of the Middle East should aim to cover as many countries in the larger Middle East North Africa (MENA) region as possible while ensuring that the NWFZ can be enforced efficiently.

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