



Committee: Special Conference

Issue: Eradicating the Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East

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Introduction to the Issue

In today's rapidly changing world, countries are continuously broadening their exercises to test and develop nuclear weaponry instead of encouraging non-proliferation.

Although nuclear technology has only been used against a civilian population during World War II on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the horrendous impact it left is discernible to this day. Seeing how far technology has come since 1945, this situation now poses even a larger threat. Only 0.1% of today's worldwide nuclear arsenal's explosive yield would be enough to permanently alter the environment, cause an extensive famine and destroy the agricultural industry.

Driven by regional rivalries, humanitarian crises, and political ruses, Middle Eastern countries have not had the chance to develop their nuclear arsenal as much as the other countries known to possess nuclear weapons.

Israel is the only country in the region presumed to have a nuclear arsenal. Albeit unknown, the nation is estimated to have between 80 and 400 warheads and has been developing methods of delivering them. In addition to Israel, seven other Middle Eastern countries have expressed their interest in developing their nuclear arsenal.





Non-proliferation has always been an aim of the United Nations (UN). Regardless of the Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZ) established, treaties signed, and strategies planned, nuclear technology is still being used as a demonstration of power. In an entangled region such as the Middle East, eliminating this problem can only be achievable if the necessary measures are set through constructive non-proliferation dialogue.

Involved Countries & Organizations

Israel:

Israel is the only country believed to own nuclear weaponry. Although the country is yet to make a statement on the exact number of its warheads, it is estimated to have a stockpile of 80 and 400 of them. The Israeli Government's denial of forming an NWFZ in the Middle East and sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) poses a significant threat to the other countries in the region.

Iran:

Although Iran ratified the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nation's failure to comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) measures caused quite a stir in the Middle East. Iran's behavior caused Former US President Donald J. Trump to withdraw from the agreement and pose economic sanctions. Since Iran no longer has the responsibility of adhering to the measures established by the JCPOA, it is free to continue producing nuclear material. The hostility between the two countries and lack of transparency has influenced the other countries in the region. Today, despite the long-term struggles states have gone through to end Iran's nuclear program, the nation is still believed to own nuclear weapons.

Iraq:

Iran ratified the NPT in 1969. However, in the 1970s, Saddam Hussein ordered a secret program to develop Iran's nuclear technology. Hussein's intention was exposed by Israel when they destroyed one of Iraq's nuclear reactors containing enriched uranium. As a result, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)



passed a resolution to prohibit Iraq from unlawful exercises regarding nuclear technology and established a commission to inspect whether the country was continuing to work on creating a nuclear program or not.

Syria:

Even though Syria has ratified the NPT, the nation has made it clear it has the intention of becoming a nuclear power. It has been seeking a way of developing its nuclear arsenal and has asked for the assistance of several parties such as China, North Korea, and Russia in this regard. In 2007, Israeli forces exposed the reactor Syria had covertly built with North Korea to produce plutonium by attacking the country's nuclear program in Al-Kibar. The Syrian Government's inadequate cooperation with the IAEA caused the international community to question Syria's objective. The nation is currently known to own a single operational research reactor. However, the country is allies with the Russian Federation, a country which has approximately 7850 nuclear warheads.

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA):

Established in January 1998, the UNODA has the aim of ensuring worldwide disarmament. The organization has been working on limiting proliferation and supporting multilateral efforts in bringing stability to the Middle East. It has a database containing the necessary information on the treaties signed and reports prepared on the problem. As the first committee of the General Assembly, it certainly has a critical role in denuclearization.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):

As an independent intergovernmental organization of the UN, the IAEA has an immense responsibility in supervising the nuclear activities of countries. The IAEA General Conference has prepared seven resolutions on non-proliferation in the Middle East throughout the past ten years. It has a vital role in finding a common way for both Washington and Tehran to return to the JCPOA and ensure that the states are adhering to the agreements made.



Saudi Arabia:

Saudi Arabia signed a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA and authenticated the NPT. The country currently does not possess any nuclear reactors or alarming quantities of nuclear material. However, Saudi Arabia has emphasized its desire to expand its nuclear arsenal to combat its primary regional rival, Iran.

United States of America:

The United States of America was the first nation to ever use a nuclear weapon against a civilian population and is in control of approximately 4,480 warheads, 1,740 of them which are deployed. Although the economic sanctions imposed by Former US President Donald Trump are still in place, President Joe Biden has recently expressed his interest in discussing the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) and finding a familiar path if Iran agreed to abide by the measures of the deal. As a country that has been actively taking part in Middle Eastern conflicts, US' behavior regarding its extended nuclear program holds great importance in solving this problem.

Detailed Analysis of the Issue

Already bedeviled by regional disputes over religion, land, and culture; the presence of nuclear weapons in the Middle East further increases the region's instability. In addition to Israel, at least six other states in the region have expressed their interest in producing nuclear material. These countries include Egypt, Iraq, and Libya and show their national sovereignty and security as a reason for developing their nuclear arsenal. Although they have not yet succeeded, the absence of their contribution to the treaties signed increases the risk of proliferation. Furthermore, Israel's nuclear monopoly over the Middle East exacerbates the paranoia of the other countries in the region.



Disputes Between the Countries

To completely understand the situation of proliferation in the Middle East, the former hostilities among the countries should be examined. As a region of military and political turmoil, the intention of Middle Eastern countries to arm themselves is mostly because of the religious and geographical clashes.

On 6 September 2007, Israeli forces took military action against Syria and carried out an airstrike on Al-Kibar, bombing a suspected nuclear reactor. A statement from the White House Press Secretary on 24 April 2008 followed the briefing given to some Congressional committees that week. According to the statement, the administration believed that Syria had been building a covert reactor with North Korean assistance capable of producing plutonium and that the purpose was non-peaceful. Syria denied the statements made by the White House and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on the site being a nuclear facility. However, the IAEA was unable to confirm or deny the claim since Syria had apparently failed to comply by the agency's measures. However, in April 2011, the IAEA announced the site was indeed a nuclear reactor based on the newly found evidence. In spite of the statements made, Israel did not acknowledge the airstrike until 21 March 2018.

Similar to the case with Syria, Israel conducted an airstrike on 7 June 1981 and abolished Iraq's incomplete nuclear reactor located in Baghdad. Israel believed the reactor would escalate the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. Their strike to fight proliferation provided the other states another perspective of the nation's ambiguity policy and nuclear capability. The international community condemned the operation and the UNSC referred to it as a "clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international conduct". Iran impaired Iraq's nearly-complete nuclear reactor located in Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq War on 30 September 1980. Although the operation successfully destroyed the facility, it did not stop Iran from further developing its nuclear program.

Plus, Saudi Arabia and Iran's relationship could be given as an example of countries that intend to enhance their nuclear arsenal for national sovereignty and security purposes. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran are in conflict because of distinct religious beliefs and Saudi Arabia has announced it would build a nuclear bomb if Iran did.

However, the majority of the countries in the Middle East, such as Qatar, are continuing to insist on creating an NWFZ to ease the tension in the region.



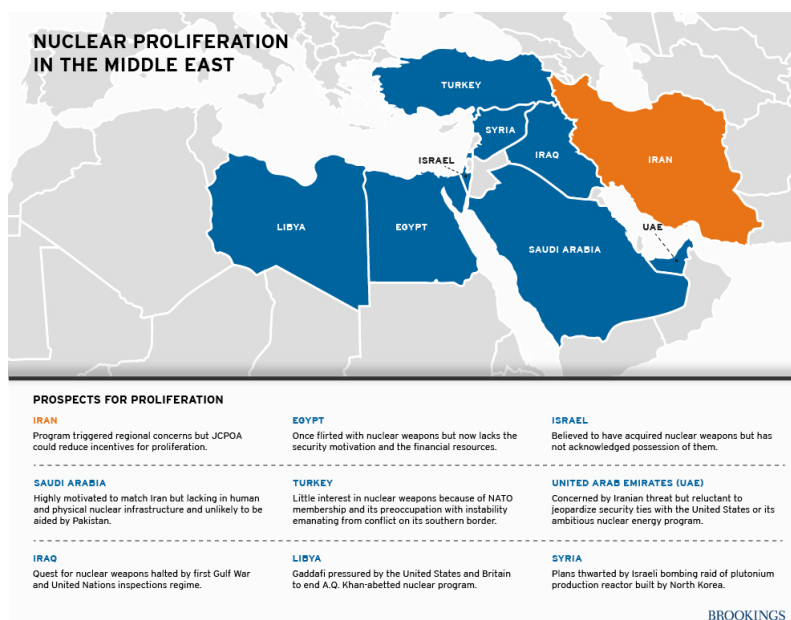
Ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

The NPT is a treaty aimed at cease the harmful use of nuclear technology and encouraging international unity in sustaining nuclear non-proliferation. 191 countries have joined it since it opened for signature in 1968, five of them being states possessing nuclear weaponry. It entered into force in 1970 and has the reputation of being the treaty with the most signatories.

It establishes a supervision system under the IAEA to decide whether states have abided by the IAEA measures to prevent the utilization of nuclear material for weapon-building or not. In the 2010 version of the Review Conference held by the UN with the purpose of improving the treaty, countries agreed to implement the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East.

As the only country which has not ratified the NPT, Israel's stance makes it tough to curb nuclear proliferation through the treaty in the region. Israel is suspected to have a sizable nuclear stockpile and their absence causes the IAEA to have no authority over the country's nuclear arsenal. This poses a significant

threat against the other states since they are worried about their national security being hindered and are willing to enhance their uranium production to protect themselves from a possible military intervention.



Nevertheless, other Middle Eastern countries have violated the NPT in the past and exposed their lack of support of the NPT as well. For example, The IAEA was unaware of Iran's nuclear program until the nation announced it would halt it.

Despite the requirements of the JCPOA, which will be elaborated upon in the next section, Iran failed to



give the IAEA the adequate access and data, resulting in the UN watchdog to fail in creating an extensive report.

Iran's decision to leave the NPT and Israel's uncertainty could result in an arms race throughout the region and cause terror. These possibilities decrease the likeliness of the formation of an NWFZ in the Middle East.

Ratification of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

Although Iran was insistent on its nuclear program having been designed for peaceful purposes, the international community was certainly unconvinced. Hence, on 14 July 2015, an accord under the name Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran and the P5 + 1 (China, Russia, USA, UK, France, and Germany). JCPOA was another example of UN's way of restricting nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. It had the aim of stopping Iran from producing uranium and lengthened the time it would take Iran to obtain enough material to construct a nuclear bomb.

As determined by the NPT, IAEA is responsible of inspecting Iran's nuclear activities. After the treaty was adopted, the IAEA found significant evidence on Iran seeking to build a nuclear weapon. However, Iran remained rather cryptic regarding its exercises and kept stating the opposite.

The United States of America's Withdrawal from the Deal

JCPOA was an essential step toward non-proliferation in the Middle East. However, on 8 May 2018, Former US President Donald J. Trump announced Washington's withdrawal from the agreement, claiming it failed to curtail Iran's missile program and regional influence. US then imposed sanctions on Iran, further complicating the situation. Because of the abandonment of the accord, Iran no longer has to comply by the terms and advocate non-proliferation. If the nation decides to build a nuclear bomb, then the number of countries referred to as a 'nuclear power' in the Middle East will increase.

After the 2020 November elections, US President Biden said the United States would return to the JCPOA and give economic relief to Iran if it resumed compliance, stressing that diplomacy was the best way of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.



The Use of Nuclear Energy by Terror Organizations

Terror organizations such as Al-Qaeda, Chechnya-based separatists, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Aum Shinrikyo have made their interest clear in obtaining nuclear weapons. The Al-Qaeda, in particular, has purchased stolen nuclear material to build bombs. Proliferation in the Middle East and countries not fulfilling their duties only make it easier for extremist groups to acquire nuclear material illegally.

Nuclear Weapon Free-Zone (NWFZ)

Every country in the Middle East endorses the formation of a NWFZ besides Israel. Although the idea has been widely accepted, countries have failed to establish it mostly because the solution does not focus on the initial incentives which cause Middle Eastern countries to lean toward nuclear proliferation.

Countries feel the urge to protect themselves because of the ongoing regional conflicts and hence, pursue the production of nuclear weapons. The Arab countries see having Israel sign the NPT as the first step of complete non-proliferation in the Middle East. On the other hand, Israel believes in the necessity of

Table 1: Major Multilateral Weapons of Mass Destruction Agreements and Treaties							
	Israel	Iran	Turkey	Saudi Arabia	Egypt	Syria	UAE
Nuclear Weapon State	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
<u>NATO sharing state</u>	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
<u>NPT</u>	Non-party	Party	Party	Party	Party	Party	Party
<u>Chemical Weapons Convention</u>	Non-party*	Party	Party	Party	Non-party*	Party	Party
<u>Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)</u>	Non-party	Party	Party	Party	Non-party	Non-party	Party
<u>Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty</u>	Non-party	Party	Party	Party	Non-party*	Non-party	Party
<u>Missile Technology Control Regime</u>	Non-party*	Non-party*	Party*	Non-party	Non-party*	Non-party	Party
Wassenaar Arrangement	Not a member	Not a member	Member	Not a member	Not a member	Not a member	Not a member
<u>International Atomic Energy Agency Additional Protocol</u>	Not a member	Not a member	Member	Not a member	Not a member	Not a member	Not a member

* Signature and Ratification required for Treaty to enter into force.

**It abides by MTCR guidelines

securing peace and stability between the states before such a zone is created. These conditions have a vital part in delaying the elimination of nuclear weaponry in the region.



Regional experiences and disputes, Iran's non-compliance with the IAEA, and inclination to produce a nuclear bomb and Israel's policy of ambiguity hinder the process of a NWFZ being established.

List of Important Events

16 July 1945	UN carries out the first-ever nuclear test with a bomb named "trinity."
6 August 1945	An atomic bomb is used for the first time, resulting in 140,000 casualties within a month of the bombing.
9 August 1945	An atomic bomb is used on a civilian population for the second time.
24 January 1946	The United Nations General Assembly endorses all nuclear weaponry to be abolished.
5 August 1953	Partial Test Ban to prohibit all countries from testing nuclear weaponry is opened to signatures.
29 July 1957	IAEA is created to promote and oversee the peaceful use of nuclear technology.
1 July 1968	NPT is signed.
30 September 1986	Israel's nuclear technology and possessions are discovered.



11 May 1995	A resolution calling to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is agreed upon.
24 September 1996	The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban (CNTB) is opened to signatures and ratified by the P5: China, France, Russia, UK, and the US.
14 July 2015	An Iran nuclear deal framework is formed between Iran and the P5.
8 May 2018	Former US President Donald J. Trump announces the withdrawal of the US from the Iran Deal.
November 2020	President Joe Biden expresses his administration's interest in rejoining the Iran Nuclear Deal if Iran strictly complied by the measures.
February 2021	Iran states they have no intention of using their nuclear technology for harmful purposes unless they are "pushed" toward developing a nuclear bomb.

Past Attempts to Solve the Issue

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East has existed since the late-20th century. Therefore, numerous strategies have been planned to solve this problem. Although these strategies have played a major role in having countries acknowledge the need for a NWFZ, the likelihood of proliferation remains.



The creation of the NPT is considered as the most momentous approach to resolve the issue at hand. However, in addition to the exception of Israel, evidence have been found on other Middle Eastern countries violating the treaty. For example, states have been suspicious of Iran's nuclear exercises because of their lack of compliance with the IAEA.

Apart from the NPT, treaties or conventions such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) have been signed or ratified by a few of the Middle Eastern countries. However, they were either unable to enter into force or were not as comprehensive because of the lack of cooperation. JCPOA, for example, failed after the US decided withdraw from the agreement.

Another example of a step taken to diminish nuclear proliferation in the region is pushing Israel into ratify the NPT. However, it is important to remember that Israel's ambiguity has been useful in decreasing the enthusiasm of the Arab countries to deploy nuclear weapons. It would be unrealistic to expect Israel to suddenly change this behavior as this solution does not focus on the incentives causing Middle Eastern states to enhance their nuclear arsenal. Peaceful and stable relationships between these neighboring states built on mutual trust is vital for curbing nuclear proliferation in the region.

Related Documents

[Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#)

[The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#)

[Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty \(CTBT\)](#)

[A/RES/50/66](#)

[A/RES/73/83](#)

[S/RES/1887](#)

[The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#)

[Biological Weapons Convention \(BWC\)](#)

[Chemical Weapons Convention \(CWC\)](#)

[Resolution Adopted on 24 September 2020 During the Tenth IAEA Plenary Meeting](#)



Possible Solutions

It is crucial for the Middle Eastern countries which have not yet signed the NPT to play their role in establishing a region sterile of nuclear activities. Working with regional agencies to build trust between states and maintain denuclearization is one way of achieving this goal.

Considering the situation with both Iran and Israel, it is safe to say there is a need to increase transparency in the region for reliable and complete intel to be obtained. Utilizing technology by establishing the necessary structures to track countries' nuclear programs would certainly be helpful.

However, it must be kept in mind that Israel's ambiguity on the quantity of its nuclear material has prevented countries from developing their nuclear arsenal.

Iran should be encouraged to return to the JCPOA and work in cooperation with the IAEA and may be proposed incentives in return. To maintain the JCPOA, a peace talk between the United States of America and Iran could be conducted.

Another element to consider is the promotion and financing of the extensive use of clean nuclear energy and raising awareness among the Middle Eastern countries with uranium enrichment facilities.



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