

**MIDDLE EAST CAUCUS**  
**Topic C: Implementing a**  
**Nuclear-Free Zone in the Middle East**

Chair: Júlia Fávero  
Vice-Chair: Priscilla Chacur  
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# Background Information

## Origins of a Nuclear-Free Zone Middle East

Establishing a nuclear weapon free zone (NWFZ) [see Key Terms] in the Middle East is not a recent idea. It was spearheaded by Iran in 1974, followed by Egyptian endorsement. A resolution was thus proposed in the UN General Assembly, aiming to rollback Israel's acquisition of nuclear



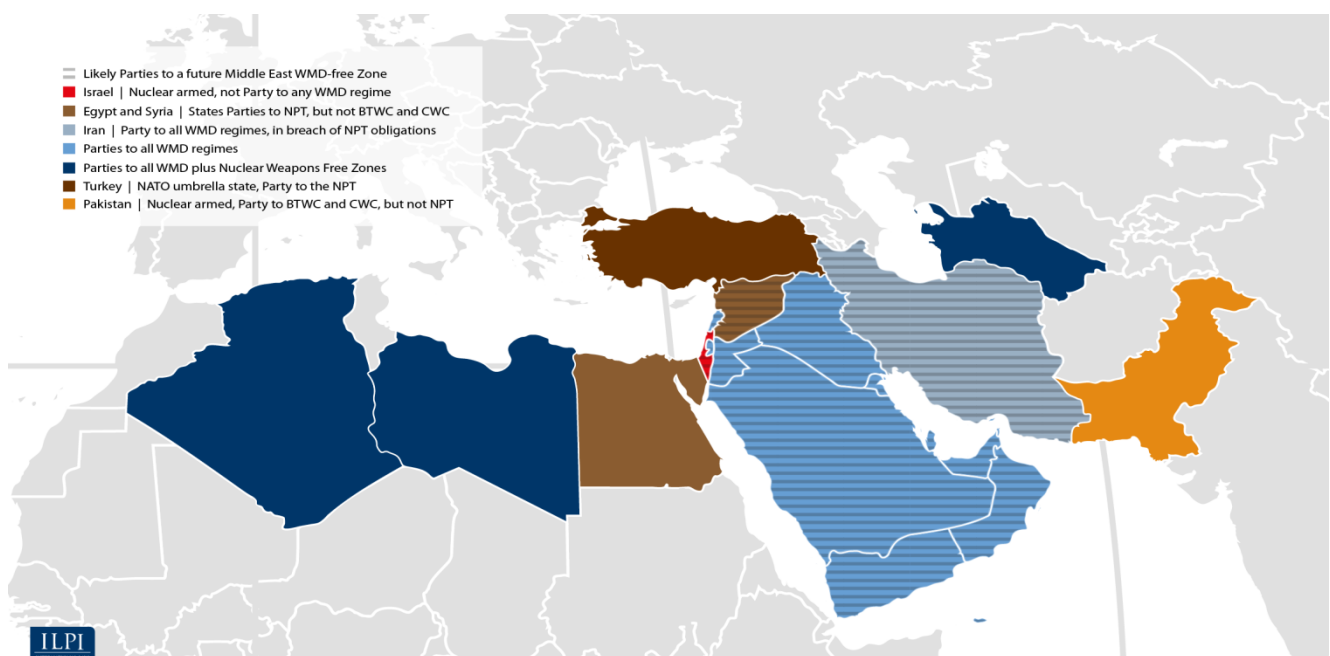
weapons and to restrain further proliferation in the region by having all states join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In 1990, under President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt broadened the concept of this resolution to include a ban on chemical and biological weapons and lobbied incessantly to bring the idea of a Nuclear-Free Zone in the Middle East to the upper echelons of international relations, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) [see Key Terms] and the United Nations. In 1995, NPT state parties agreed to extend the treaty indefinitely in order to move forward with the establishment of a WMD [see Key Terms] Free-Zone in the Middle East (hence the proposal of the 1995 Middle East resolution). This extension was pivotal to the prolonging of the treaty's existence and is recently under thought of a re-evaluation due to stalled progress.

In 2010, a Review Conference of the NPT agreed that the UN Secretary General, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States should convene a conference in 2012, to be attended by all states in the Middle East, on

establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as the mandate of the resolution adopted in 1995. However, what was supposed to be the mandatory 2012 Helsinki conference was indefinitely postponed by the US concern with other more pressing issues concerning the Middle East. Currently, nuclear weapon free zones have been established in five regions: Latin America and the Caribbean (in force since 2002), the South Pacific (1986), South-East Asia (1997), Africa (2009) and Central Asia (2009); covering the Southern hemisphere, there is a combined membership of 97 states, more than half the states in the international community.

## Complications

Now, one of the biggest questions regarding this concern is whether a nuclear weapon free zone should be seen as a means towards a more stable and secure Middle East or whether it would come as a result of it. Some states in the region, particularly Israel, insist that a regional peace agreement must come before the establishment of a zone. The rest of the states, particularly



Egypt, see the zone as a confidence-building measure that could push the Middle East towards regional stability. Israel is currently the only nuclear-armed country in the region that has not signed the NPT or has undertaken to accept comprehensive IAEA [see Key Terms] safeguards, while Egypt and Syria have refused to ratify the other two conventions of weapons of mass destruction (biological and chemical weapons). Iran's nuclear enrichment program further complicates the situation as well as Saudi Arabia's notice that if Iran goes nuclear, it may be compelled to follow (it is important to emphasize, as well, the fact that there is also a religious rivalry Saudi Arabia and Iran as they are ruled by opposing Islam sanctions: Saudi Arabia has a Sunni majority whilst Iran has a Shia majority).

### **Recent Developments**

The stalled progress is beginning to have aggravated responses from the Middle Eastern countries. Egypt staged a walkout of the Preparatory Committee in protest over the Helsinki conference's postponement. This year, Iraq, speaking on behalf of the Arab group, said that Arab states should "seriously reconsider their position toward the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty" if there is no conference held before the scheduled 2015 Review Conference. Iran is still expected to politically support its Arab neighbors and Turkey has warned that the calling off the Helsinki conference would bring "inevitable repercussions on the 2015 Review Conference".

Furthermore, this year Iran has been begun talks with world powers (the five permanent member of the UN Security Council along with Germany) in

order to discuss Tehran's nuclear program, which has particularly been a concern for the international community given the uncertainty as to whether it will be used strictly for peaceful reasons. Also this year, on September, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for African and Middle Eastern Affairs, Amir Abdollahian, has expressed the hope that Theran would promote cooperation in the area of energy after the removal of the unilateral sanctions against Iran.

### **Ground Rules for a NWFZ in the Middle East**

In a NWFZ in the Middle East, each state party would be required to conclude and bring into force a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) [see Key Terms] with the IAEA. In this case, any undeclared reprocessing or enrichment of uranium would constitute a clear violation of the provisions of the CSA. This is because technologies that enable the enrichment of uranium and the separation of plutonium can be used to make fuel for electricity and nuclear weapons. Hence, verification of these activities is essential in order to ensure that they are being used exclusively for peaceful means.

In order for a NWFZ in the Middle East to occur with a level of assurance similar to that provided by the IAEA, the verification system would have to apply to the entire nuclear fuel cycle and should be caused by the finding of undeclared production facilities and nuclear material. Furthermore, a Middle East NWFZ would need to address the dismantlement of Israel's nuclear weapon capabilities under international verification. Compliance by states with CSAs will also need to be assessed.

## Timeline

- 1974:** Iran proposes a resolution supporting the establishment of a Middle East NWFZ.
- 1980:** The resolution is passed without a vote in the General Assembly.
- 1990:** Egypt spreads the idea of a Nuclear-Free Zone area in the Middle East with the intent of improving its international relations.
- 1995:** NPT state parties agreed to extend the treaty indefinitely in order to move forward with the establishment of a WMD in the Nuclear- Free Zone.
- 2005:** NPT Review Conference fails to conclude with any final agreement; one of the reasons was that Egypt negated the talks because they lacked of progress.
- 2010:** The NPT Review Conference decided that 3 members of the Security Council and the UN Secretary General should convene a meeting with all the Middle Eastern nations.
- 2010:** NPT Review Conference agrees on the convening of a regional conference on a WMD Free Zone and to appoint an official Facilitator.
- 2012:** USA postponed the conference
- 2013:** Egypt walks out of Preparatory Committee in rage for the regular postponement of conferences to discuss the issue.
- 2013:** Norway hosts the first intergovernmental conference, with diplomats from 128 states, with the purpose to examine the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.
- 2014:** Iran nuclear talks with UN Security Council permanent members and Germany.
- 2014:** John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State, acknowledges 'tangible progress' in nuclear talks with Iran.

# Key Terms

**Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ):** a specified region in which countries commit themselves not to manufacture, acquire, test, or possess nuclear weapons.

**Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT):** is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

**Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD):** a weapon with the capacity to inflict death and destruction on such a massive scale and so extensively that its very existence may be considered a critical threat.

**International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):** is an international organization that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons. The IAEA was established as an autonomous organization on 29 July 1957.

**Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA):** agreements part of the IAEA which seek to control activities (called safeguards) by which the IAEA can verify that a country is living up to its international commitments not to use nuclear programmes for non-peaceful (nuclear weapons) purposes.



## Guiding Questions

- How would a Nuclear- Free Zone decrease or increase tensions in the Middle East?
- What would be the international resonations of such decision?
- How does the UN plan to keep the area safe? How would it make sure it would not affect bordering cities?
- How would weapons used in the area be controlled? Which types of weapon (biological, chemical) would be permitted/not and why?
- What would be the penalties for misusing the area?
- What would the enforcement mechanisms be?

## Further Research

**Helpful PDF files that provide on NWFZ in General and in the Middle East (this is good for more detailed information)**

<http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/nuclear-weapon-free-zones-en-314.pdf>

<http://fissilematerials.org/library/rr11.pdf>

[www.gcsp.ch/content/download/10539/129994/download](http://www.gcsp.ch/content/download/10539/129994/download)

**A more summarized background on the topic:**

<http://www.princeton.edu/news-and-events/news/item/princeton-report-charts-step-step-path-toward-nuclear-weapons-free-middle>

**Links to news on more recent occurrences:**

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/English/Home/Single/493752>

<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/13/world/europe/kerry-iran-nuclear-talks/>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25074729>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/24/secret-usa-iran-talks-nuclear-deal>

**Always helpful news websites:**

<http://www.theguardian.com/world>

<http://edition.cnn.com/MIDDLEEAST>

<http://bbc.com>