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**ESTABLISHMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

BY

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Establishment of Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East

by

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: Establishment of Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East.

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 10 April 2002 **PAGES:** 27 **CLASSIFICATION:** Unclassified

Worldwide proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles has been on the rise especially in the Middle East. As the negotiated settlements of the Middle East Peace Process are implemented, the region expects opportunities for establishing a weapons of mass destruction free zones. This paper will address the complex problem of proliferation of weapons of mass destructions in the Middle East, and the trend to establish nuclear weapons free zones in this flashpoint. Finally, the author's recommendations highlight what might be done in this regard.

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ESTABLISHMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Security of both the United states and the Soviet Union was based on a grim premise: that neither side would fire nuclear weapons at each other, because doing so would mean the end of both nations. More nations have nuclear weapons and still more have nuclear aspirations. Many have chemical and biological weapons. Some have developed the ballistic missile technology that would allow them to deliver weapons of mass destruction at long distances and at incredible speeds. And a number of these countries are spreading these technologies around the world.¹

The Middle East is a land which historically has been full of turmoil. It is a land with competing demands for land and resources. These demands have dominated relations within the area. Prior to WWI, U.S. activity in the region was limited to primarily religious, philanthropic, academic organizations. U.S. interests increased in the region with the discovery, in the Persian Gulf, of the world's greatest oil reserves. For some time the development of a petroleum-dependent economy of the West and Asia established the Middle East as a region of vital interest to the United States, Europe and Asia.²

Stretching from North Africa to Turkey and the Persian Gulf, the Greater Middle East is undergoing transition. The proliferation of Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and other new challenges are increasing. The open conflict between Israel and the Arab states in the region has decreased. The last major Arab-Israeli military confrontation occurred in 1982. Iraq twice invaded its neighbors, but most regional states have resolved border disputes and other tensions more amicably.³ The violence between Palestine and Israel, however, has increased.

The Middle East is an international flashpoint, a place where open warfare could erupt at any time. It is the home of numerous countries possessing at least some combination of weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, it is an area where states are developing an increasing capability to deliver WMD by missiles and / or aircraft. The Middle East is also the home of countries friendly to the US but these same countries oppose each other's policies. It is also the place where you will find rogue states that are hostile to the United States. In short, the Middle East is a WMD war waiting to happen. Such a conflict would harm U.S. allies and interests : this needs to be avoided.

The term entitled " establishment of a nuclear- weapon- free zone in the Middle East " was first included in the agenda of the General Assembly, in 1974. This was at the request of Iran, who was later joined by Egypt. The concept of a nuclear- weapon – free zone is not new.⁴

Two such zones have been in existence for some time, in Latin America, the Caribbean and in the South Pacific.

UNITED STATES INTERESTS IN THE REGION

The paramount national security interest is maintaining the unhindered flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to world markets at stable prices. Nearly two-third of the world's reserves of oil lie beneath the Persian Gulf and countries around it. Additional reserves in North Africa and elsewhere bring the total for the Middle East as a whole to more than 70%. It is vital to not let any hostile Nations in or outside the region gain control of the region.

Increasing dependence on Gulf oil and the U.S. commitment to Israel and the other Arab regional partners must ensure continued progress towards a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace. Such a peace is not merely the absence of active hostilities but must be a real peace. The peace must be productive, and lead to long term security and prosperity in the Middle East. The development of a more stable Middle East would help to undermine the popular appeal of radical states, and radical political movements among the Arabs and Israelis.

Part of the importance of the peace process lies in the U.S. interest in the security of key partners in the Middle East. Their security is important to the U.S. not only because of the need to ensure the flow of oil, but also for the constructive role these countries play in the region. U.S. supports Israel's security through a combination of measures, including strong military assistance and by enhancing the peace process with its neighbors. U.S. has a parallel interests in the security of the principle Arab partners.

The need to safeguard U.S. citizens and their property from destruction or confiscation is a permanent U.S. interest throughout the world. It is the matter of particular concern in a region like the Middle East.⁵

The Middle East's position astride the air and sea lanes connecting Europe and the Mediterranean with Africa, Asia, and the Indian Ocean makes it important to America's ability to trade and project military power. Five major Maritime choke points are vulnerable to interference by adjacent Middle Eastern countries; the strait of Gibraltar, the strait of Sicily, the Suez Canal, the Babb al Mandab, and the strait of Hermes. Major air transportation routes also traverse the region.

Although promoting the reform of the former USSR is not primarily a Middle East issue, eight of the fifteen newly independent states have strong historical and cultural affinities to the Middle East. What happens in the Middle East affects them and the course of their social and political development.⁶ The turmoil that could be created by the export of Iranian revolution to

the Caucasus or Central Asia, the spillover of conflict from adjoining countries, or unrest resulting from other events in the Middle East could derail fragile reform efforts in these countries.

The U.S. has a fundamental interest in the development of political systems which respects human rights according to internationally accepted standards, permits popular participation in government, and reflects popular will. Enlarging the world's free community of market-oriented democracies is the core of the U.S. National Security Strategy. At the same time, experience has shown the hazards of trying to impose western political models on societies with a different culture and background. There is a need for complete respect for the fundamental human rights which are recognized by all of the world's great ethical and religious systems. This fundamental respect is also part of the heritage of Islam around the world.

The oil boom in the 1970s and the vast expansion of wealth in the hands of the oil producers created a large market for western goods which has survived, despite recent declines in oil prices. This market embraces everything from highly sophisticated defense equipment and nationwide infrastructure projects to the full panoply of consumer goods. The U.S. seeks to ensure that its exports enjoy access to this highly competitive commercial arena and that they enjoy fair treatment.

ARMS RACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East's arms imports were about 60 billion dollars between 1994-2000. The largest suppliers, of arms to the Middle East and elsewhere are the United States, Russia, Britain, China, and France.⁷

Most of the conflicts in the Middle East, especially between the Arabs and the Israelis, were the result of trying to solve differences by military power, which in the writer's opinion, was useless. These conflicts have caused the arms race to grow in this region. Border disputes among the states in the region and claims of historical rights between the Israelis and Palestinians, represent the main causes of military confrontations. These confrontations have led to high armament rates in the region. Added to these confrontations are ideological differences, minorities within countries in the region, and competition for natural resources, all of which represent major sources of disputes.

In spite of the different causes for each of these disputes, analysis reveals that armed confrontation tends to occur when political leaders have a narrow perspective. In these cases the use of diplomatic means in order to avoid armed conflict has occurred far too infrequently. Israel is a prime example where this issue becomes problematic due to its unique development

and security problems⁸. There is the need for Israel to arm itself in order to protect the Israeli borders. Secondly, the issue of Israeli security has acquired a mysterious and negative aura around the Israeli state and has extended into the surrounding region.

The Middle East has the highest concentration of weapons of mass destruction and missiles programs of any region in the world. They have been acquired through direct purchase, domestic development, or a combination of the two. This trend is dangerous because as states become more self sufficient, they become less susceptible to outside pressure⁹.

The quest to achieve a balance of power, the lack of trust between Arabs and Israelis, the perception that the United States in its regional role is not even handed in its treatment of regional actors, are all factors contributing to the vertical and horizontal proliferation trends. These trends are making the region highly dangerous and volatile.

United States has concluded that Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria are aggressively seeking NBC weapons and increased missile capabilities. From the Arab side¹⁰, Arabs believe that the Israeli nuclear arsenal poses a threat to their security, so they must acquire a strategic balance. Therefore, they have sought WMD capabilities , such as chemical and biological capabilities, in the form of the "poor man's weapons" to acquire a strategic balance with Israel.

REASONS FOR ACQUIRING WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

There are numerous explanations for countries in the region to acquire Weapons of Mass Destruction. These include national security; global or regional status and prestige; and domestic political reasons including bureaucratic, technocratic, and military industrial politics. Domestic reasons usually account for national decisions on whether to join and comply with nonproliferation treaties and regimes. All three explanations could apply to India's decision to conduct a series of nuclear tests, but security and status rather than domestic politics would seem to account for WMD decisions in the Middle East.

The Middle East is one of the most tension filled, conflict prone and heavily armed regions in the world¹¹. The Arab-Israeli conflict has been the most prominent and dangerous conflict in the second half of the twentieth century. This is due to the lack of acceptance of the legitimacy of the Israeli state and its right to exist. This lack of acceptance has resulted in wars aimed at Israeli annihilation. Although, there has been considerable progress, as reflected in the conclusion of peace treaties between Israel and its Egyptian and Jordanian neighbors, and progress with the Palestinians through the Middle East peace process, not all states in the region have accepted this trend. For example Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia have not accepted

the trend. Recent events between the Palestinians and the Israelis have demonstrated that the overall situation remains fragile.

For more than 30 years, the Middle East has been a region of concern with regard to nuclear weapons and recently with regard to chemical and biological weapons as well. Chemical and biological weapons are easier to acquire than nuclear weapons and are highly lethal. Middle Eastern governments have also shown increased interest in acquiring greater access to missile delivery technology, and systems with expanded ranges. On top of this, the Middle East continues to be the world's largest recipient of aid with respect to conventional weapons. As costs for these conventional weapons continue to rise, the pressure to acquire WMD will also increase.¹²

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL

Given the massive conventional threat to its survival, Israel chose to create a nuclear infrastructure. This infrastructure would enable Israel to access nuclear weapons when security conditions dictated. At the same time it maintained a posture of nuclear ambiguity claiming that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons in the region. The policy of deliberate ambiguity reflected an Israeli assessment that an open declaration of nuclear status would not strengthen Israel's security. Open declaration would create significant pressure from neighboring states to force Israel down the nuclear path. Additionally an unleashing of a nuclear arms race in the region would not be in Israel's interest. Israel's position on nuclear ambiguity has not altered over the years. Although in the wake of the South Asian nuclear tests and Iran's flight testing of a long-range missile, it is reported that the government apparently has begun a review of its policy of nuclear ambiguity.¹³

Nuclear	Sophisticated nuclear weapons program with an estimated 100-200 weapons, which can be delivered by ballistic missiles or aircraft. Nuclear arsenal may include thermonuclear weapons. 150MW heavy water reactor and plutonium reprocessing facility at Dimona, which are not under IAEA safeguards. IRR-15MW research reactor at Soreq, under IAEA safeguards. Not a signatory of the NPT; signed the CTST on 9/25/96.
Chemical	Active weapons program, but not believed to have deployed chemical warheads on ballistic missiles. Production capability for mustard and nerve agents. Signed the CWC on 1/13/93, currently debating its ratification.
Biological	Production capability and extensive research reportedly conducted at the Biological Research Institute in Ness Ziona.

	No publicly confirmed evidence of production. Not a signatory of the BTWC.
Ballistic Missiles	Approximately 50 Jericho-2 missiles with 1,500 km range and 1,000kg payload, nuclear warheads may be stored in close proximity. Approximately 50 Jericho-1 missiles with 500km range and 500kg payload. Shavit space launch vehicle with 4,500km range and 150kg to 250kg payload. Unconfirmed reports of Jericho-3 program under development using Shavit technologies, with a range up to 4,800km range and 1,000kg payload. Developing next (Shavit upgrade) with unknown range and 300-500kg payload.

TABLE 1 ISRAEL CAPABILITIES

IRAQ

Iraq is another Middle East state trying to establish a nuclear capability. It is making a major effort toward this goal. Unlike Israel, it pursued this objective while a party to the Nonproliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Iraq's motivations reach beyond security concerns. It is engendered by its geopolitical proximity to its larger competitive neighbor, Iran. Iraq also has political ambitions, which include asserting itself as a leader and spokesman for the Arab world. This pits Iraq against Egypt, which traditionally has seen itself in the role as leader and spokesman of the Arab world. Iraq also aspires to be the dominant, if not hegemonic power, in the energy rich Persian Gulf.¹⁴

Nuclear	With sufficient black-market uranium or plutonium. Retains nuclear weapons design, and may retain related components and software Repeatedly violated its obligations under the NPT, which it ratified on 10/29/69. Until its termination by Coalition air attacks and UNSCOM removal program, Iraq had an extensive nuclear weapons development program.
Chemical	May retain stockpile of CW munitions, including special chemical/ biological al-Hussein ballistic missile warheads. Believed to possess sufficient precursor chemicals to produce hundreds of tons of mustard gas, VX, and other nerve agents. Repeatedly used CW against Iraqi Kurds, and against Iran. An extensive CW arsenal including 33,537 munitions, 690 tons of CW agents, and over 3,000 tons of CW precursor chemicals have been destroyed by UNSCOM. Not a signatory of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
Biological	Iraq's claim that it destroyed biological weapon munitions unilaterally including all of its special chemical/ biological al-Hussein warheads has not been verified by UNSCOM. May retain biological weapon sprayers for Mirage F-1 aircraft.

	Maintains technical expertise and equipment to resume production quickly of anthrax, botulinum toxin, aflatoxin, and Clostridium perfringens (gas gangrene). Conducted research on BW dissemination using unmanned aerial vehicles. Ratified the BTWC on 4/18/91, as required by the Gulf War cease-fire agreement.
Ballistic Missiles	May retain components for dozens of Scud-B and al-Hussein missiles, as well as indigenously produced Scud missile engines. Maintains clandestine procurement network to import missile components. Developing Ababil-100 with 150km range and 300kg payload, flight-testing al-Samoud with 140 km range and 300kg payload, and producing Ababil-50 with 50 km range and 95 kg payload.

TABLE 2 IRAQ CAPABILITIES

IRAN

In many ways what is said of Iraq can be said for Iran. Iran is determined not to be caught short again and to equip itself to deter and defend itself against future contingencies in which WMD might play a role. However, while security-related experience clearly plays a significant role in Iranian thinking about WMD, broader considerations are also relevant. Both as a deterrent against its enemies and as a means of amplifying its voice internationally, nuclear weapons may appear tailor-made for the regime. Israel, Iraq, and the revolutionary nature of the Iranian regime are factors in Teheran's thinking. There is also the presence of a radical regime on Iran's borders, and its proximity to South Asia where two states have carried out nuclear tests and have moved from undeclared to declared nuclear status.¹⁵

Nuclear	Large nuclear development program to construct power reactors for civilian energy generation, reliant on Russian assistance. 5MW and 30KW research reactors and .01 KW critical assembly at Esfahan and Tehran, which are under IAEA safeguards. Ratified the NPT on 2/20/70; signed the CTBT on 9/24/96.
Chemical	Began chemical weapon (CW) production in mid-1980s, following CW attacks by Iraq. Limited use of chemical weapons in 1984-1988 during war with Iraq, initially using captured Iraqi CW munitions. Began stockpiling cyanogens chloride, phosgene, and mustard gas after 1985. Reportedly initiated nerve agent production in 1994. Ratified the chemical weapons convention on 11/3/97, but hasn't submitted an initial declaration.
Biological	Research effort reportedly initiated in 1980s during war with Iraq. Suspected research laboratory at Damghan. May have produced small quantities of agents and begun weaponization. Ratified the BTWC on 8/22/73.

Ballistic Missiles	Approximately 150 Scud-C with 500Km range and 700Kg payload. Up to 200 Scud-B with 300 Km range and 985Kg payload. Approximately 25 CSS-8s with 150 Km range and 190 Kg payload. Un known quantity of indigenous Mushak missiles with ranges 120,to200Km Developing Shahab-3 with over 1,000 Km range and over 700 Kg payload, and Shahab-4 with 2,000 Km range and 1,000 Kg over load.
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TABLE 3 IRAN CAPABILITIES

SYRIA

Syrian motivations for WMD appear to be less grandiose and more focused on security. Specific concerns include not only Israel, with whom it has territorial disputes, but in the longer run also Iraq and Turkey. Syria does not at present appear to have aspirations to be a nuclear weapon state. Its infrastructure does not support the development of nuclear weapons. Syria does not have a program which would enable it to establish a capability for it to go down the nuclear path. It has a significant chemical weapons capability including a large stockpile of chemical agents and weapons. It also has missiles capable of delivering these chemical weapons deep into Israeli territory. With no articulated doctrine for use of such weapons, one must surmise that they are intended as a deterrent against either an overwhelming Israeli conventional attack or a nuclear threat.¹⁶

Nuclear	No evidence of a nuclear weapons program. Nuclear technological development remains at the research stage. One research reactor in Damascus, under IAEA safeguards. Ratified the NPT on 9/24/69; has not signed the CTBT.
Chemical	Largest and most advanced CW capability in the Middle East. Reported to have chemical warheads for Scud ballistic missiles, and chemical gravity bombs for delivery by aircraft. Estimated CW stockpile in hundreds of tons. Agents believed to include Sarin, VX, and mustard gas. Major production facilities near Damascus and Homs, with hundreds of tons of agents produced annually. Program remains dependent on foreign chemicals and equipment. Not a signatory of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
Biological	Weapons research program, but not evidence of production capability. Signed the BTWC on 4/14/72, but has not ratified the convention.
Ballistic Missiles	60-120 Scud-C with 500km range and 500kg payload. Up to 200 Scud-B missiles with 300km range and 985kg payload. 200 SS-21 Scarab with 70km range and 480kg payload. Developing indigenous production capability for accurate M-9 missiles with 600km range and 500kg payload.

TABLE 4 SYRIA CAPABILITIES

LIBYA

Although Libya has no significant nuclear infrastructure, it has history of trying to acquire nuclear weapons. This effort includes trying to buy them outright and offering lucrative rewards to nuclear scientists and technicians to work on Libya's behalf. In January 1996, Qadhafi made the statement that " the Arabs who are threatened by Israeli nuclear weapons have the right to try in any way possible to possess nuclear weapons. This is to ensure that a balance is achieved and that the region is not left at the mercy of the Israelis. Libya has not made headway in developing a nuclear infrastructure or capability, and instead has placed emphasis on more easily accessible chemical weapons, as well as having established a research and development program for biological agents. Libya also maintains a missile development program that depends heavily on outside assistance.¹⁷

Nuclear	Seeking to purchase or develop nuclear weapons since the early 1970s. Nuclear scientific research program remains at rudimentary stage. Maintains 10MW research reactor at Tajura under IAEA safeguards. Ratified the NPT on 5/26/75, has not signed the CTBT.
Chemical	Used small quantities of mustard agent against Chadian troops in 1987. Produced 100+ metric tons of nerve and blister agents at Rabta facility in the 1980s. Initiated construction of underground chemical agent production facility. Not a signatory of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
Biological	Limited research-and-development program, but no evidence of production capability. Ratified the BTWC on 1/19/82.
Ballistic Missiles	Scud -C variant with 550km range and 500kg payload, 100+ Scud -B missiles with 300km range and 935kg payload. SS-21 Scarab with 70km range and 480kg payload. Program to develop al Fatah (Iltissalat) missile with 950km range and 500kg payload, under gradual development for over 15 years.

TABLE 5 LIBYA CAPABILITIES

EGYPT

Egypt appears to have given up its nuclear weapons aspiration since the mid-1970s. Instead, it has focused on building up its conventional capabilities. It has not given up all interest in WMD. This may be seen as a hedge against Israeli nuclear capability and, equally likely, to maintain its role as spokesman for an Arab world. Egypt has had no chemical weapons for three decades. Analysts presume it still maintains some capability to produce them if required. Egypt has refused, up till now, to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention. Egypt is waiting for Israel to make concessions on its nuclear program in the context of the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) talks which are part of the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP).¹⁸

Nuclear	No evidence of a weapon program. 22MW and 2MW research reactors at Inshas, both under IAEA safeguards. Has only engaged in basic scientific research since the 1960s. Acceded to the NPT on 2/26/81; signed the CTBT on 10/14/96.
Chemical	Used mustard gas in Yemeni civil war, 1963-67 Un confirmed reports of developing nerve agent feed stock plants. Supplied Syria with chemical weapons (CW) in early 1970s. Supplied Iraq with CW agents and technology during the 1980s. Not a signatory of CWC.
Biological	May have a biological weapons program, though not large in scale. Signed the BTWC on 4/10/72, but hasn't ratified the convention.
Ballistic Missiles	100+ Scud-B with 300 kilometer range and 985 (KG) payload. Approximately 90 Project T missiles with 450 KM range and 985 KG payload. Developing Scud-C variant production capability with North Korean assistance, with 550 KM range and 500 KG payload. Developing Vector missile with 800 Km to 1,200 Km range and 450-1,000 Kg payload.

TABLE 6 EGYPT CAPABILITIES

WMD IN THE REGION - SUMMARIZED

Currently, only Israel is a nuclear power in the Middle East. Its arsenal of nuclear weapons is estimated to number about 100-200. Moreover, it is assumed that Israel also possesses both chemical and biological capabilities. Some Arab countries in the region acquired "SCUD" missiles. These missiles are equipped with conventional warheads. They were purchased from the former USSR, China and / or North Korea. During the cold war years, some countries in this region were able to obtain and refine their capability of designing and producing long-range missiles. They have also succeeded in developing their chemical and biological programs. They use this as a deterrent weapon in the face of Israel nuclear arsenal.

Currently neither Iran nor Iraq possess an indigenous nuclear weapons capability, but both states have a strong desire to join the nuclear club despite international efforts to curb nuclear proliferation.

The Political adviser to the Egyptian president recently commented on Israeli's nuclear capabilities. He stated that Israel has committed a great mistake by acquiring nuclear weapons. He went on to say that this has resulted in an imbalance in relations with Israel's neighbors. By acquiring nuclear weapons Israel has encouraged other countries in the region to acquire weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological as well as nuclear weapons.¹⁹

The concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones

Geographical, political and other circumstances make each nuclear-weapon-free zone different from any other. The term nuclear-weapon-free zone, however, usually implies the fulfillment of certain common objectives and the implementation of certain elements of arms control.

The primary objectives for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone are to bar the presence of nuclear weapons in the zonal area and to reduce the risk involved in a nuclear war. The fulfillment of those objectives requires cooperation both among prospective zonal states, and nuclear-weapon states, and some other extra-zonal states.²⁰

Egypt stated three basic principles were relevant to the nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East: (a) the states of the region should refrain from producing, acquiring or possessing nuclear weapons; (b) the nuclear-weapon states should refrain from introducing nuclear weapons into the area or using nuclear weapons against any state of the region; (c) an effective international safeguard system affecting both the nuclear-weapon states and the states of the region should be established.²¹ Egypt stressed that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East should not prevent parties from enjoying the benefits of the peaceful uses of atomic energy, especially for the economic development of the developing countries in the region.

The geographic limits of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should normally be established by the agreement of the states concerned. It is these states that determine, in the exercise of their sovereignty, whether they are prepared to place all or part of their territory under the constraints the regime of the zone will involve.

An analysis of the region in terms of core countries and peripheral countries may be helpful. Such an analysis should take into account the geography, of existing tensions and of the potential of particular states to develop nuclear weapons. This sort of analysis, explicit or implicit, is the base of all discussions of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone. It will augment the rather substantial body of literature which has developed, both inside and outside the United Nations concerning nuclear free zones throughout the world. In this study the region was taken to include" the area extending from Libya in the West, to Iran in the East, and from Syria in the North to Yemen in the South. A zone can be developed in stages, beginning with the core countries and later expanded to include additional states within the region.²²

THE PRESENT SITUATION

All states in the area including Israel support the idea of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone. No Government has expressed opposition to the idea. The problem is how, through what process (means) and under what conditions (ways), a zone might be established.²³

The views of the Governments concerned regarding the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East were submitted to the various General Assemblies. They reaffirm the long-standing support which the concept has received and also shine a bright light on the question of how to move forward.

For the Arab Governments to include Iran, the problem is simple. The difficulty lies in the Israeli policies and the proper step for Israel to take would be to join the NPT. They would need to negotiate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and apply the safeguards on its nuclear installations. Israel needs to provide and accept full-scope safeguards on its installations, prior to joining the NPT²⁴.

For the Israel the problem is equally simple. The difficulty in the region lies in the unwillingness of Arab States in the region, to accept Israel as a legitimate State. The proper step for them to take would be to sit down and at a formal negotiating table with Israel work out the arrangements for creating a legitimate state and security zone.

For third-party observers, some skepticism is justified as to whether the matter is as simple as both side assert. If the Government of Israel were to accept the Arab demand for safeguards on its Dimona reactor, then the installation could no longer be used --- assuming Worst case that it has been ---for the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes²⁵. However, safeguards on Dimona would do nothing to neutralize whatever stockpile of weapons-grade material might have been accumulated. If Israel were to become a party to the NPT, that would also imply an obligation on its part to declare, to safeguard and then to dispose of any nuclear weapon stockpile it might have. Short of adherence to the NPT, Israeli should negotiation for full-scope safeguards with IAEA. This would imply a declaration by Israel to safeguard any stockpile of nuclear fissionable material and to develop an agreement on how to deal with this materials.

Given the present intense mistrust which exists between Israel and most Arab Governments in the area, it is difficult to imagine either (a) an Israeli Government making an immediate, full disclosure of weapons related nuclear material or (b) a general acceptance of the completeness of whatever declaration Israel might make. For its part, IAEA does not at present have the authority or the means to conduct verification in the form of inspections or searches for undeclared material or installations. Clearly, an extended transition with novel and

complex arrangements will be required to move from an initial acceptance by Israel of safeguards on its known facilities to an eventual acceptance by other States that Israel is truly a nuclear-weapon free state.

Creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is thus not simply a matter of finding some clever diplomatic formula that overcomes or circumvents the deadlock of the Israeli and Arab positions. Only a series of steps that reduce tensions drastically can bring the parties to a serious negotiation. And even then it would not be expected that the negotiations would be quick and easy or that the zone, when agreed, can be fully realized without an extended transition.

It is appropriate to point out that Israel's security position is characterized by three features which plays a part in determining its attitude towards the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. First is the relatively small size of its territory. Second is the sustained hostility between Israel and the great majority in states of the region. Third is the fact that Israel has no military allies in the region. The states which might support Israel in a conflict are geographically remote.

According to the U.N institute for disarmament research, the implementation of the zone is not an easy task. It requires intensive and sustained efforts from the states of the region and major outside powers. The cooperation of the international community as a whole, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations, will be of vital importance.

TOWARDS A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Certainly the United States, if it has the desire, could have the main role for developing security in the region. There are many reasons for the United States to take the lead. Conflict in the region can catapult the world into world war. Perhaps most important is that the U.S. is considered the only remaining superpower who has the capability and ability to enforce a nuclear free zone. The United States is also the main country sympathetic toward Israel and, at the same time, has many Arab friends and vital interests in the region. The United States has great influence on all major key players concerning this issue in the region.

Reducing tensions in the region is the first step. As previously mentioned the key players in the Middle East are divided into two contrary parties, Israel on one side, and the Arab countries and Iran on the other. The main issue for the tension is the occupied territories, a problem dating back to the 1967 war. Solving this issue would be the halfway point in developing stability in the region. The first step was already been accomplished when Egypt and Israel signed their peace agreement. This peace process should be advanced farther with the

Israeli withdraw from the occupied territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state. But the question stands: Can peace really exist in the Middle East under a one-party- monopoly of nuclear weapons?

Accomplishing the first step, requires the acceptance of the international legitimacy. Peace will come to the region with some degree of literal facts and some tolerable concessions from both sides. The international community, the Arabs, the Israelis, and especially the US should look at this issue as an integral dilemma. Everything is linked, the issues are not separate items. Every country in the world has fixed borders, there is no exception. Israel should also declare its legal borders which are (or should be) recognized by the international community.

The security of Israel or other states in the region should not depend on the various regional antagonists acquiring nuclear weapon or other WMD. To the contrary, these weapons form a great threat for every country who processes them. This especially true of Israel with its small land area. The use of the WMD would effect every country in the region regardless if they remained neutral. For example, what would happen if one of the terrorist airplanes on the September 11th hit a nuclear installation ? Sure it would be a dilemma for the United States, but it would likely not effect other nations. However, if this happened to any of Israeli 's nuclear arsenal, it would be a disaster for all nations in the region.

True security may come by actualizing peace and a good relationship between nations. For Israel to be accepted as a Middle Eastern country, depends on Israel itself. By accepting itself as Middle Eastern country and not a European country or an extension of the United States, it will be able to interact with the great majority of states in the region. There is no doubt that Israel has a strong technological base. The Arab states have the oil, the wealth and the man power, but Israel has the technology. Integration between these elements could create an economic rival in the world markets. Exploiting the revenues to develop the region for its benefits as well as the world's benefits, could provide for true security and should be the pledge for all states in the region.

Building confidence, or creating the conditions in which a zone becomes reality, is the second step²⁶. The Israeli side should be given confidence that their neighbors have no intention of using their superior manpower, wealth and other resources to destroy Israel. The Arab / Iranian side should be given the confidence that Israel has no intention of using its superior technical skills, including nuclear technology, to expend its frontiers. Confidence could be built by a system of inspections under the umbrella of the United Nations.

The major nuclear powers would contribute in the matter of security assurances. Security assurances should include both negative and positive assurances. Negative assurances are the commitments to refrain from particular action. Positive assurances are the undertakings that in specified circumstances a guarantor will take a specified action.

Obviously, the establishment of a nuclear- weapon- free zone in the Middle East, should be accompanied with the establishment of a chemical and biological free zone as well²⁷. In other words, the elimination of a nuclear threat to one side will be exchanged with the elimination of a chemical and biological threat on the other side. A freeze on missiles (beyond a certain range) should be pursued as a matter of high urgency by all nations in the region.

The third step is the adherence to the NPT, the CWC, and the BTWC by all nations of the region. The acceptance by Israel for safeguards on the Dimona facilities would be an important move towards the establishment of this zone. At the same time the acceptance by other states for safeguards on their WMD programs will encourage and confirm the confidence between both sides.

The final step will be taken when all states of the region can credibly declare that they have no unsafe guarded fissionable material nor unsafe guarded facilities that could produce WMD. This situation would need a substantially expanded system of verification. The system of verification would take on a multilateral or bilateral character.

CONCLUSION

The nuclear powers, especially the United States, have a common interest in reducing the potential for nuclear proliferation and subsequently the proliferation of other WMD in the Middle East. Recognition of this fact suggests working toward a continuation and expansion of international controls, such as making the Middle East a nuclear as well as a WMD free zone.

In order to convince the Israeli policymakers to join the NPT, the United States might consider some type of firm commitment to assist and provide Israel with the latest in electronic reconnaissance and early warning equipment. While the United States has already provided Israel with some of these latest sensors, other reconnaissance gear designed to improve Israeli tactical intelligence collection should be provided. In addition to the Israeli capabilities in the field of early warning, the US should continue to maintain the highest possible degree of Israel confidence in its early warning capability by providing all assistance to Israel.

Despite the complexity of the Middle Eastern issues, trust and confidence building measures, are different factors which can help lead the region toward a durable peace. Establishment of a nuclear weapon or weapons of mass destruction free zone is affected by any

progress made on the peace talks. It is all linked and it affects the peace process in the region. But peace, "real peace", cannot exist without the equivalence of power. The question should now be answered, what will happen in the Middle East, if the region remains hostage to one crazy moment when one crazy person presses the nuclear button?

Security is a crucial and elaborate issue for all states in the region. Regional economic cooperation is an important issue. It is regional cooperation, which will cement a just and lasting peace. Economic cooperation would lead to a comprehensive peace and help peace take root in the Middle East.

Peace does not just happen, it must be based on principles. To ensure peace with justice in a comprehensive way, a number of equal principles must be fulfilled and respected:

- The respect for the principle of land for peace.

- The rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self determination.

- The right of all states to live within secure and recognized borders.

- The possession of weapons of mass destruction must be reconsidered.

- Regional security must be achieved at the lowest level of armaments.

- The security of one party should be linked to, and not be at the expense of the security of others.

- Terrorism and violence, in all their forms, must never be resorted to.

- Provocative policies and brute force which kindle the fire of frustration and despair, must be abandoned.

- The rule of law and international legitimacy must be respected at all times.

- The principle of balanced obligations and commitments should be the guiding mantle.

The road to establish a nuclear weapons free-zone is long and a challenging one. It will require leadership with a high sense of responsibility and statesmanship and an unwavering commitment to the spirit of peace.

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ENDNOTES

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⁴ United Nations, “ Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East”. New York , 1991. pp 1-3

⁵ Graham T. Allison and Robert Blackwill. “ Regional Strategic Appraisals, Middle East. America’s National Interests. Jan 2002. pp 354-356.

⁶ Shlomo Aronson, with the assistance of Oded Brosh.” The politics and strategy of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East”. Opacity, Theory, and Reality, 1960-1991

⁷ Richard Grimmett, Trends in Conventional Arms Transfer to the Third World by major Suppliers, (Congressional Research Service, 1991).578.

⁸ Roger F. Pajak, “ Nuclear proliferation in the Middle East” : Implications for the superpowers. 1982.

⁹ Sami Hajjar, “ Security Implications of the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass destruction”, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, December 17, 1998, 6-9

¹⁰ Bruce Jentleson, “The Middle East Arms Control and Regional Security Talks”, Progress, Problems, and Prospects, (Institute on Global Conflict / University of California, September 1996), 4.

¹¹ Murād Ibrahim Al-Dasouqi, “Military Power in Arab Regional Confrontation”, The International Politics Journal, (January 2000)

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¹³ Schneider, Barry R. “ Middle East security issues “ in the shadow of weapons of mass destruction proliferation

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¹⁵ Ibid, 19

¹⁶ Ibid, 21

¹⁷ Ibid, 25

¹⁸ Ibid, 17

¹⁹ Dr. Usama El-Baz, Political Adviser to President Mubarak commented on the Israeli nuclear capabilities. April 22,2000.

²⁰ United Nations Publications. " Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East". Department for Disarmament Affairs.21.

²¹ Roger F. Pajak,." Nuclear proliferation in the Middle East" : Implications for the superpowers. 1982. 43

²² Ibid,4

²³ Ibid, 22

²⁴ Ibid, 23

²⁵ Ibid,53

²⁶ Ibid, 43

²⁷ United Nations Publications. " Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East". Department for Disarmament Affairs.45

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