

FORUM: 1st Committee of the General Assembly
ISSUE: Establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East
CHAIR: Simon Spendler
POSITION: Deputy Chair

1. Description of the problem:

Since Israel finished their first nuclear weapon in 1986 the establishing of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is a relevant issue. Though many attempts have been made trying to tackle the problem, there are no nameable succeeds detectable yet. Currently it is a fact that it is only proven for one of the states in the region- Israel- that they have nuclear weapons. It is rumoured that other nations invest into the development of atomic weapons but this couldn't be demonstrated so far. Verified is that the Iran has a nuclear-investment program in progress and that the country tested its atomic power. In 2003 the Iraq was occupied by the United States of America in order to enforce a disarmament of the Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, though none of those weapons could finally be found. In 1974 the Iran proposed a first resolution on the issue of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Mid-east. In 1980 Egypt and Israel proposed a resolution on which every single nation of that region voted in favour. Although the resolution passed and although the problem is debated every single year since 1980, a bigger improvement towards a nuclear-weapon-free- zone isn't visual yet.

2. Definition of key terms:

Middle East:

A region that contains countries in western Asia and Northern Africa (only Egypt). It is not precisely defined which countries belong to the Middle East, but referring to World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the countries are the following: Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Gaza Strip, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi-Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Yemen. The definition of the Middle East from the World Factbook includes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia as well.

NWFZ (Nuclear weapon-free Zone):

A nuclear weapon-free zone, where atomic energy is only used for peaceful aim.

WMDFZ (Weapon-of-Mass-Destruction-Free Zone):

A weapon of mass destruction-free zone.

NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty):

A treaty proposed by Ireland and Finland in conjunction with the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1968. A total of 187 parties have joined the Treaty, which means that it is signed by every single nation in the world, apart from India, Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Israel. The treaty calls upon countries, that have nuclear weapons to fail, to export them to non-nuclear weapon states, and calls upon non-nuclear weapon states to not accept any nuclear weapons or any assistance in getting in possession of them. It accredits five nuclear-weapon states which are China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. These countries are also the permanent five members in the Security Council.

3. Background/ general information

The Middle East has always been a region full of political tensions. Since Israel built their first nuclear weapon in 1968 the tension and the potential for conflicts heavily increased. Although Israel insists that their nuclear weapons are only to be used as a manner of self-defence, the rest of the Arab world believes that Israel would use it as an offensive weapon, if Israel should decide to declare war. Through their nuclear weapons, Israel has a dominant position held in the Middle East.

As many of the Arab countries do have non-nuclear weapons of mass-destruction such as biological weapons, a weapon of mass-destruction-free zone would be more effective than a NWFZ. While the latter only asks for action on one of the two sides of the conflict between Israel and the rest of the Middle East, the former asks both of the sides- which means: the whole Middle East- to disarm. Israel stated that they only created nuclear weapons due to the fact that they were afraid of the weapons of mass-destruction of the Arab world. If this issue was solved, nuclear disarmament of Israel shouldn't be a problem any more.

Important is that the creation of such a zone doesn't solve all the problems occurring in the Middle East but only those concerning military issues and the impact of potential conflicts coming up in the Arab world. Of course it would be a big step towards peace but not a complete solution.

4. Time line of key events

1967

The Six-Day War in Israel: several Arab countries attacked Israel, but after the war the Israeli territory was expanded

1968

First Israeli nuclear weapon built

July 1, 1968

NPT proposed by Ireland and Finland

1974

Iran proposes first resolution on the topic

1980

Israel and Egypt propose a resolution (GA/63/38) on the topic and the General Assembly decides to adopt this resolution annually without vote

5. Relevant treaties, UN resolutions and actions taken

Since 1974 the issue of a nuclear-weapon-free zone is a relevant problem concerning the UN and since 1980 the issue is on the agenda of the UN which means that many resolutions do actually exist on that topic. Unfortunately none of them finally established a NWFZ in the Middle East, what is the reason for not many of these resolutions being relevant for the debate. There are no relevant actions taken yet.

GA/63/38 Resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, adopted by the General Assembly every year without voting on it and submitted by

Egypt:

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/1com/1com08/res/L1.pdf>

NPT Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, signed on the 1st of July 1968:

<http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/npt/text/npt2.htm>

6. Positions of major countries involved

Israel

Israel is the only country in the Middle East with an officially confirmed possession of nuclear weapons and, in particular, the possibility to produce them in a short amount of time. Taking this into account, it is obvious that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East only concerns the disarmament of Israel. Israel always stated that they would only use their nuclear weapons for self-defence, what wasn't accepted by the Middle East. Israel is of the opinion that establishing a NWFZ is only possible after a certain period of time when the relations between Israel and their neighbour countries are balanced, calm and friendly. They first want peace and will be in favour of establishing a NWFZ afterwards. Israel started investing into nuclear energy in 1949, one year after their official declaring of independence. In the late 1950s they began their investment into nuclear weapons as well. Secretely Israel started building a reprocessing plant and a nuclear reactor. During the next years they received French and British aid.

Iran

It is assumed that Iran is a country that may develop a nuclear weapon since they have been exploring nuclear power in recent years. According to their government, Iran is investigating nuclear power for peaceful goals and to gain new sources of energy. Their nuclear investigation program commenced in the 1950s with the aid of the United States of America. The involvement of western powers went on until the Iranian revolution in 1979. After the revolution the nuclear program was suspended, but later it was resumed with fewer participation of the United States and other western countries. According to the Iran, the first nuclear power plant was finished within 2009, a second one would already be in construction. Iran was the first nation to propose a resolution about a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East in 1974.

Iraq

The Iraq believes that a nuclear-weapon-free zone is necessary to expedite the process of establishing peace in the Middle East. But the country opines that it would only be possible to create such a zone if Israel wasn't in possession of nuclear weapons. After having established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, peace negotiations may proceed faster and may have a greater effect.

Egypt

Egypt always totally supported a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In the past they already helped Iran their first effort to establish such a zone in 1974 and they furthered Israel with their proposal in 1980. Egypt has always played one of the major roles in the implementation of such a zone. They believe that it is a good way to install peace all over the world.

Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi-Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Yemen and the Russian Federation

These countries are all in favour of such a NWFZ in the Middle East and have voted in favour of

any resolution trying to tackle the problem. Syria actually proposed several resolutions on that issue and the Bahrain is even in favour of a weapon of mass destruction-free zone.

7. Useful sources and links

Nuclear-weapon-free zones- The solution to nuclear disarmament?

http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2004/webArticles/081204_nwzf.asp

Brief background of the NPT

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dda/WMD/treaty/>

Weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and the Establishment of a WMDFZ

<http://www.pugwash.org/reports/pic/56/working-group2.htm>

A nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East: A pie in the sky?

http://www.twq.com/05winter/docs/05winter_muller.pdf

Resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/1com/1com08/res/L1.pdf>

Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons

<http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/npt/text/npt2.htm>

The six day war

<http://www.sixdaywar.co.uk/>

Weapons of mass destruction in Israel

<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/nuke/>

Nuclear-weapon-free zones: Advantages, shortcomings and prospects

<http://www.afri-ct.org/Nuclear-weapon-free-zones?lang=fr>

Nuclear-weapon-free zones: Still a useful disarmament and non-proliferation tool?

<http://www.afri-ct.org/Nuclear-weapon-free-zones?lang=fr>

MENWFZ

<http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/menwzf/index.html>

Relations between Iran and Israel

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/25/iran.israelandthepalestinians>

Is a nuclear-free Middle East a pipe dream?

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1925255,00.html>

About the IAEA- The "Atoms for Peace" Agency

<http://www.iaea.org/About/index.html>