

**Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee**

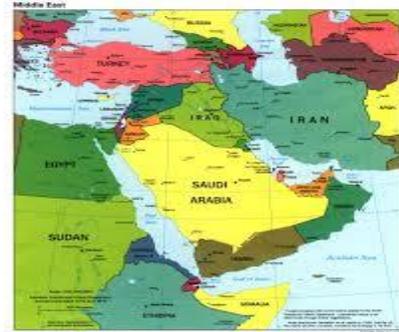
**Issue: Combating the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Greater Middle East region**

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**INTRODUCTION**

ISIS continues to control a significant part of the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian relations worsen, the Syrian Civil war has killed an estimated 270000<sup>1</sup> people and has threatened the lives of 11 million more who have left the country, Turkey’s national security has been violated many times over the past months, Egypt and many other countries are facing political instability, Yemen is in war, and last but not least Iran has planned a new Nuclear program. All in all, the Middle East is facing great political and social instability,



A map of The Middle East

further undermined by numerous problems such as poverty and violations of fundamental human rights worsening the situation. Moreover, it is a fact that the leaders of this region have used Weapons of Mass Destruction in the past against innocent civilians fighting for their fundamental rights. For example, two years ago Bashar al Assad, the president of Syria used chemical weapons during the Syrian Civil War. Bashar al Assad is not the only prime minister that does not follow the rules of international conventions and treaties signed by his country. These reasons, which will be analyzed in this study guide, have led to the “Free -The Middle East” proposal, which proposes the denuclearization of the Middle East as well as making The Middle East a region free of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/syrians-fleeing-turkey-isil-attacks-160415083643212.html>

## **DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

### **The Middle East**

The term 'The Middle East' refers to the geographical region of western Asia and Egypt. The following countries are part of The Middle East: Egypt, Bahrain, Cyprus, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and United Arab Emirates.<sup>2</sup>

### **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)**

The term refers to a significant amount of weaponry including biological, chemical weapons, radiological, nuclear weapons and any kind of weaponry that is able to cause significant harm to human beings, animals, structures and the environment.<sup>3</sup>

### **Proliferation and Non-Proliferation**

Proliferation means increasing or expanding.<sup>4</sup>

### **International Humanitarian Law**

The International Humanitarian Law/law of armed conflict/law of war is a part of the Geneva Convention (1949) as well as the Additional Protocols of the aforementioned convention. It consists of a set of rules and provisions, which regulate the behavior of a state/group during an armed conflict.<sup>5</sup>

### **Arab Spring**

Arab Spring started in 2010 in Tunisia with the Tunisian Revolution; the term characterizes the uprisings of civilians of Arab nations against corrupted and authoritarian governments.<sup>6</sup>

### **ISIS - Islamic State**

Isis is a Jihadist militant and terrorist group, which has as a goal to create a caliphate (the rule of a Muslim ruler) consisting of regions in Iraq and in Syria as well as other countries in the Middle East. Now ISIS holds control over a significant part of the Middle East. ISIS has

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/middle-east?q=middle+east>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/weapon-of-mass-destruction?q=weapon+of+mass+destruction>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/proliferation>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/arab-spring?q=Arab+Spring>

been accused of and has taken responsibility for many terrorist attacks; recent examples include Bagdad and Paris.<sup>7</sup>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

As mentioned in the previous section, weapons of mass destruction are weapons that are able to cause significant harm to people, the environment and to the buildings of a region. Weapons of Mass Destruction are divided into four categories.



The first is Biological Weapons of Mass Destruction: This type of WMDs was first used in 1763 by the British Army against the United States during the American Revolution (1775). In more detail, the British Army used smallpox against the Continental Army. Biological weapons consist either from bacterial, anthrax or Q fever. Nowadays, military forces do not usually use such weapons.

Next, are Radiological Weapons of Mass Destruction: "any device, including any weapon or equipment, other than a nuclear explosive device, specifically designed to employ radioactive material by disseminating it to cause destruction, damage, or injury by means of the radiation produced by the decay of such material"<sup>8</sup>

Then, there are Chemical Weapons of Mass Destruction: Including blood agents, choking hazard agents, nerve agents, tear gas, vomiting agents and psychiatric compounds, blister agents. Chemical weapons are the most frequently used type of nuclear weapons nowadays. ISIS has recently used chemical attacks such as the ones in Iraq in March 2016.

The final category is Nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction: Nuclear weapons are explosive devices, which, because of the nuclear reactions taking place in them are very destructive and harmful. The only nuclear attacks that have occurred are those in Japan

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.yourdictionary.com/isis>

<sup>8</sup> The definition of radiological Weapons of Mass Destruction from the United States of America and the Russian Federation

during the Second World War in Hiroshima and in Nagasaki (in August 1945) causing unexpected short and long-term effects.

### **History of Weapons of Mass Destruction in The Middle East**

The Middle East is one of the most war torn areas in the world. The history of the Middle East is tarnished by many wars either for religious, economic or expansionary purposes over the past decades. Taking into consideration the dangers of the use of these weapons as well as the need of many the Middle Eastern nations to defend themselves from their neighbors or other countries, there has been a significant proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction during the past decades in the region. The following incentives are the reasons for seeking Weapons of Mass Destruction in the region.

- Need for security and countries' domestic policies: In an unstable area such as the Middle East, the responsibility of and necessity for a country to maintain its national safety and security is even higher. The possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction boosts a country's level of security and can also be repulsive for another country wanting to invade in the first. The aforementioned military strategy is called "Mutually assured destruction" and aims to ensure that neither side is willing to use its weapons against the other, as this would cause complete destruction for both states involved.
- External threats and pressures: Except for Middle Eastern countries posing threats to their neighbors there are also external threats. Over the past years there has been much involvement of global superpowers in wars taking place in the region such as the invasion of the USA in Iraq or the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan.
- The Middle East is a region with many oil-producing countries trying to take control over drilling rights or oil pipelines. As a consequence, the possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction is also a means of protection of the trade interests of a state in The Middle East.

### **The Middle East Weapon of Mass Destruction Free Zone**

The idea of the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in The Middle East was first proposed by Egypt in the 1990s. Since then many countries and international organizations, including the UN, have encouraged the idea and have made several efforts towards its implementation. For example, the United Nations have created resolutions, which were also endorsed and encouraged by many Middle Eastern states. However, the aforementioned plan is hard to implement as long as the relations between Middle Eastern states are unstructured and interests are not aligned. The real problem derives

from the fact that Middle Eastern states are afraid of their neighbors and therefore don't have the courage to take further steps in order to achieve Weapons of Mass Destruction disarmament. It is a fact that specialists, politicians, and experts on the topic have publicly admitted that the aforementioned is the best solution towards the achievement of the non-proliferation of weapons with catastrophic results in the region.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED**

### **Iran**

The well-known noncompliance of Iran with its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)<sup>9</sup> has been an issue of heated debate over the past decades. Iran breached the NPT by hiding a uranium enrichment program, which afterwards came to light and was followed by 6 UN Security Council resolutions and many sanctions towards Iran. Although Iran claimed that the development of its nuclear program was only for peaceful purposes, enriched uranium can be used for the creation of nuclear weapons. The aforementioned sanctions including the exclusion of Iran from west markets led to the fall of the value of Iranian riyal as well as to inflation. In 2013 the country signed the Geneva interim agreement (Joint Plan of Action), which called for the limitation of Iran's enrichment activities, followed by the limitation of the sanctions from the other side (P5+Germany). The interim agreement was the first step towards the final agreement, namely the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of 2015. It should also be mentioned that a UN arms embargo exists along with a ban on buying missile technology towards Iran.

### **Israel**

Israel is believed to possess nuclear weapons, despite not being designated as a nuclear state by the NPT, which the country has also refused to sign. The Israeli government has never denied or admitted the possession of nuclear weapons. However, it is estimated that Israel stockpiles 100-200 warheads, and as a consequence Israel is one of the main nuclear powers in the region. The continuous denial of Israel to accept International Atomic Energy Agency's inspections or to sign the NPT is for many an indirect result of the country's tense relations with countries such as Iraq and Palestine (a state that is not fully recognized by the UN). We also have to bear in mind that Israel is a country that is not a member of the Islamic World, further complicating its relations with Muslim countries that are prominent in the region. Recent history can also prove the aforementioned statements if we take a look at

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<sup>9</sup> The treaty was open for signature in 1968

the wars that have happened against the state of Israel or even the fact that Iraq does not recognize Israel as an independent state.

### **Iraq**

The former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was accused of having used chemical weapons against the Kurds of northern Iraq during the Anfal campaign (1987). This caused the death of 5000 people and the worsening of health of 10000 more that survived the attack. During the same period of time the Iraqi government developed a biological weapon program as well as a nuclear program, that didn't result into a nuclear bomb. After the Gulf War, the United Nations Security Council inspectors visited Iraq in order to ensure that Iraq destroyed its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs. Nowadays, ISIS has taken control of northern Iraq and this poses security concerns since the organization may attack with Weapons of Mass Destruction.

### **Syria**

Syria is not a designated nuclear weapons state by the NPT, it has signed and ratified the NPT and it is also a part of a Nuclear Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. During the past decades, Syria has had assistance from other countries in order to develop its Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs. The main reason Syria developed Weapons of Mass Destruction programs was the threat of Israel and the threat of the presence of NATO or the USA in the region. During the Syrian civil war and detailed in 2014, the Assad regime used chemical weapons against innocent civilians. The International Criminal Court prosecuted Bashar al Assad, the president of Syria. Now, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is taking part in the process of the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria.

### **Egypt**

Egypt is a state party of the NPT and it doesn't possess any nuclear weaponry. However, Egypt is suspected to have a chemical weapon capability. The aforementioned is also encouraged by the fact that Egypt has neither signed nor ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention. Egypt's missile program is very advanced<sup>10</sup>. It should also be mentioned that Egypt promotes the establishment of a Middle East free of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

### **Turkey**

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<sup>10</sup> Read more about Egypt's missile program: <http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/egypt/>

Turkey hosts 60-70 US nuclear weapons on its territory. The country has signed all treaties concerning Weapons of Mass Destruction and is one of the key factors that encourages the non-proliferation regime. The main reason that Turkey has not insisted on possessing nuclear, chemical and biological weaponry is due to Turkey's intentions to become a member state of the European Union as well as its participation to North Atlantic Treaty Organization's nuclear sharing program. Turkey aims to develop ballistic missile programs.

### **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS)**

It was in April 2016 when a chemical attack by ISIS took part in northern Iraq. Meanwhile, ISIS has officially stated its intentions for possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Taking into consideration the fact that ISIS is a terrorist organization which has made several attacks such as the one in Baghdad on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July and also the fact that ISIS has stolen dangerous materials from Iraq such as radioactive materials or materials for chemical weapons.

### **International Atomic Energy Agency**

The International Atomic Energy Agency is an international organization with a main purpose to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy as well as the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The organization has made several efforts aiming for the control of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and especially in Iran and in Syria. Last but not least, under the NPT the organization has a role of the international safeguard inspectorate.

### **UNDIR (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research)**

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research is an autonomous institution of the United Nations, which is voluntarily funded and aims for the promotion of international security and disarmament. Concerning the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East the institute has made several reports such as the "Prospects for Nuclear Power in the Middle East after Fukushima and the Arab Spring".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Read more: <http://www.unidir.org/programmes/weapons-of-mass-destruction>

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

| Date       | Description of Event   |
|------------|--|
| 1763       | The first Weapons of Mass Destruction are used by the United States against the British Army during the American Revolution. |
| 1946       | Crisis in Iran takes place. (Well-known Iran Crisis of 1946)   |
| 1948       | The Arab-Israeli conflict takes place.   |
| 1948       | “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” is completed.  |
| 1968       | The treaty of the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons is signed.  |
| 1962-1970  | Yemen civil war takes place.   |
| 1979-1989  | The Afghan war against the Soviet Union occurs.  |
| 1980-1988  | The Iran-Iraq war takes place.   |
| 1987       | Use of chemical weapons against the Kurds of northern Iraq during the Anfal campaign.  |
| 1990-1991  | The Gulf war takes place.  |
| After 1991 | UN inspectors visit Iraq in order to ensure the destruction of Weapons of Mass Destruction by the Iraqi government.          |
| 1992       | Egypt proposes the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction free zone in The Middle East.                              |
| 2003       | The war in Iraq starts.  |
| 2011       | Syrian Civil war begins.   |
| 2013       | Iran signs the Geneva Interim Agreement.   |
| 2014       | The Syrian government uses chemical weapons against innocent civilians.  |
| 2016       | Chemical attack by ISIS takes place in northern Iraq.  |

## **UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS**

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

The non-proliferation Treaty is an international treaty, which aims to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons or weapons technology and to achieve a global disarmament of nuclear weapons. According to the NPT five member states are allowed to have nuclear weapons, namely the USA, China, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and France (also known as the P5). Despite this there are also other countries that possess nuclear weapons such as India, Pakistan and North Korea; there are also other countries suspected as having nuclear weapons such as Israel. It also ensures the cooperation between member states and peace and security in the world.

The Middle Eastern countries that have not signed it: Israel

### **Chemical Weapons Convention**

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a convention, which aims for the elimination of the production or use of chemical weapons, which is an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. All state parties have agreed to disarm from chemical weapons.

The Middle East countries that have not signed it: Israel (no ratification), Egypt

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. At the time the Declaration was adopted, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia abstained during voting and Yemen failed to vote in general. The Declaration consists of articles that express human rights and elaborate on their protection. Its importance is vital. Despite the fact that the Declaration does not consist of articles directly related to the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction, their use is an indirect violation of human rights.

### **Geneva Convention, Hague Conventions and bio-chemical warfare Geneva Protocol**

The well-known Geneva Convention was created after WWII and regulates standards, including the International Humanitarian Law, concerning the humanitarian treatment during an armed conflict as well as the internationally accepted acts by a state during a war. Moreover, the bio-chemical Geneva Protocol also exists, which prohibits the use of some kinds of chemical and biological weapons during war. Last but not least, The Hague Conventions regulate aspects of war including the weaponry and its use.

### **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**

The aforementioned treaty prohibits the testing of nuclear weapons.

The Middle Eastern countries that have not signed it: Syria, Israel (no ratification), Iran (no ratification), Egypt (no ratification)

### **Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons (BTWC)**

This treaty bans the development, the production and the stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons, which are an entire category-type of weapons of mass destruction. States parties of the treaty undertake the responsibility of sending annual reports of their activities.

The Middle East countries that have not signed it: Egypt (no ratification), Israel

### **United Nations Security Resolutions**

Resolutions in order to address the problem in Syria:

- SC resolution 2118 (2013): This resolution aims to the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria. (S/RES/2118)
- SC resolution 2235 (2015): This resolution established a Joint Mechanism in order to find out the responsible ones for the chemical attacks during the Syrian civil war (S/RES/2235)

Resolutions in order to address the problem of Iran's nuclear program:

- SC resolution 1696 (2006): Calls for the suspend of the Uranium enrichment program (S/RES/1696)
- SC resolution 1737: It was adopted due to Iran's failure to comply with the aforementioned resolution. (S/RES/1737)
- SC resolution 1747: It was adopted due to Iran's failure to comply with the aforementioned resolutions. (S/RES/1747)
- SC resolution 1803 (2008): It was adopted due to Iran's failure to comply with all the aforementioned resolutions (S/RES/1803)
- SC resolution 1929 (2010): It demands the halt of Iran's enrichment activity (S/RES/1929)
- SC resolution 2231 (2015): It endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (S/RES/2231)

### **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

All the aforementioned treaties as well as the creation of special organizations aiming to the non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, show that there is a global mobility

towards the resolution of the issue. We need to understand that these treaties and these conventions are binding for the states that have signed and ratified them, but meanwhile they are placed under great pressure from the small amount of countries that haven't signed them. Moreover, the content of the aforementioned treaties consists not only of theoretical wishes and suggestions, but also contains practical solutions such as investigations from experts and sanctions to those who do not compromise or follow the rules.

In addition, the proposal of making the Middle East a Weapons of Mass Destruction free region has been heard and endorsed by the international community. In fact, many countries, and of course organizations have publicly spoken in favor of the aforementioned suggestion, as they find that this solution is going to solve the instability in the region.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

In politics and in international relations things should be examined with realism and in our case the real problem derives from the state of the relations between ME countries, characterize by lack of trust amongst others. This leads to displays of aggression between the countries resulting into an inability to reach a solution. Cooperation between the states of the Middle East is the key factor. However, since this is a very hard venture other member states of the United Nations should guide them throughout their discussions and ensure the effectiveness and the implementation of the decisions. Additionally, attention must be paid to the question of better control of the exports of military equipment to unstable regions and especially in the Middle East.

As it is mentioned in a previous section of this study guide, there have been examples of use of Weapons of Mass Destruction against innocent civilians by the government. Taking into consideration the fact that one of the United Nations goals is the protection of fundamental human rights; the international community must take action in order to protect innocent civilians. Such actions may include the sending of peacekeeping operations, the posing of sanctions by the UNSC and the prosecution of those who are responsible by the ICC.

Additionally, a main problem concerning the adoption of relevant treaties and conventions as well as the international humanitarian law today is the ineffectiveness of these treaties in today's world. Many of the treaties related to our topic were created many years ago and therefore they are sometimes not thoroughly and clearly written. For example, no article exists concerning the ban of the use of nuclear weapons during an armed conflict. Consequently, the creation of special committees and agencies aiming to the creation of additional protocols for these treaties is necessary.

In general, all proposed solutions have to aim at the creation of a The Middle East free of Weapons of Mass Destruction, as this is the most effective solution to the issue, which will ensure peace and security in the region. However, we have to bear in mind that this is a gradual process, which may take decades in order to be completed, reflecting the importance of an agreement within the international community on how to approach this issue.

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#### Multimedia Resources

Image 1 : [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east.html)

Image 2: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-chemical-weapons-attack-blamed-on-assad-but-wheres-the-evidence/>

Image 3: <https://frommashriqmaghreb.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/use.jpg>