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*Non-Proliferation of Chemical Weapons and their
precursors in the Middle East*



**RESEARCH
REPORT**

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Forum: GA1 - Disarmament Committee

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RESEARCH REPORT

Issue: Non-Proliferation of Chemical Weapons and their precursors in the Middle East

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Introduction

Chemical Weapons are devices that contain toxic ingredients and precursors, and are rather cheap to produce. They cause severe mental disabilities and illnesses with little to no repercussions. Some political leaders, mostly in the Middle East region, refer to them as “equalizers” in the sense that they can be easily used against superior militaries and take away their advantages. Sadly, Middle East had been a theatre for these chemical weapons over the past few decades with political leaders taking little to no responsibilities. In fact, the use of chemical weapons in the Middle East has just been the backbone of a much bigger conflict which is: the power race between different groups living in the Middle East and nations that have direct influences on Middle Eastern countries.

Definition of Key Terms

Weapons of Mass Destruction(WMD): A nuclear, chemical or a biological weapon that risks the lives of many people. We will look into the chemical weapons more specifically but bear in mind that chemical weapons are not the only category of WMDs.

Middle Eastern Zone: A WMD-free zone in the Middle East to protect the lives of the population. This idea has been spearheaded by Egypt in late 20th century but had been given little to no anticipation by the involved countries.

Chemical Weapons Convention(CWC): The Chemical Weapons Convention is an arms control treaty that aims to minimize the transportation, use and the production of any chemical Weapons and their precursors.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty(NPT): The nuclear Non-proliferation treaty is a international treaty aimed to inhibit the spread of Nuclear Weapons and their use.

Arab League: Arab League, formally known as the Arab States including some of the strongest Arab countries in and around North Africa.

General Overview

The use of Chemical Weapons has been a great deal of concern for the Middle East for decades when it all started with Egypt first using them in the North Yemen Civil War (1963-1967). After that, Iraq

RESEARCH REPORT

infamously used them against Iran and its own people during 1980-1981 Iranian Revolution. Also, Libya developed a huge stockpile of chemical weapons but never used them.

Seeing the catastrophic implications these weapons had on the region, Egypt first proposed the goal of a WMD-free Middle Eastern Zone. The emphasis was on nuclear weapons and with a general consensus, an agreement was made during the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension conference; however, very little progress had been made after the agreement. Many countries in the region compromised to join the CWC and dismantled their chemical programs but, by 2011 when international violence erupted, only 40 per cent of the chemical weapons maintained by the states and their precursors had been destroyed. Syria was the biggest bearer of these chemical weapons with over 1,400 metric tons in its arsenal. This was a big threat for the region and many outside states including United States of America acted upon the problem. At the end, the countries finally understood the ramifications of these weapons and many of them, including Syria, had signed the CWC.

The problem at hand, isn't a problem that can be solved by the individual steps taken by each country but can only be solved effectively by the cooperation of the countries in the Middle East. Each country should be a member of the CWC and globalization in the Middle East is needed. As of today, Egypt and Israel stand alone as the only countries who haven't signed the CWC in the Middle East. Both of them wait for the other to dismantle their chemical weapons first, creating an unnecessary paradox. The main reason for this conflict is the opposing policies these states have and their unwillingness to get rid of their power. With the Middle Eastern being a turmoil, the use of chemical weapons can just make the situation worse and a fast and effective solution is needed to tackle this problem at hand.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Israel: Israel has a huge stockpile of chemical weapons in its arsenal and that causes a major threat to the entirety of the region. It does not wish to attend any conferences regarding non-proliferation of its chemical weapons without repercussions. Its government believes that first peace should be ensured in the region before any steps can be taken regarding the chemical weapons.

Egypt: Egypt has the complete opposite policy of that of Israel's. The roots of the conflict in the region are caused by this contradiction. Egypt has been the earliest supporter of Non-Proliferation of chemical weapons in the Middle East but still hasn't dismantled its chemical weapons. It believes that the problem of chemical weapons should be first addressed in order to ensure peace in the region.

Syria: Syria used to have the 4th biggest arsenal of chemical weapons under the ruling of president Bashar al-Assad during 2013. With the interference of many strong outside forces such as the United States of America and Russia, they agreed upon getting rid of their arsenal and now are one of the strongest supporters of non-proliferation of chemical weapons in the Middle East. Following the use of chemical arms in Syria, there is a mainstream support formed in the world to eliminate chemical weapons once and for all.

RESEARCH REPORT

United States of America and Russia: Although they are not in the Middle East Region, the huge influence they have upon the globe allows them to act as a helping hand from the outside. They made several countries abide the CWC and have a huge influence upon the conflict.

Iran: Iran has been an active country regarding Non-Proliferation from 1974, when they co-sponsored the 1974 resolution calling for nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East. The expanding of the zone to Tehran possess a threat to Iran since it is considered as an important aspect of Iran's defensive posture. Today, Iran chooses to stay rather quiet regarding the problem and not attend the conferences conducted by the states.

Timeline of Events

1963-1967	<i>Egypt employed a huge number of chemical weapons during the Yemen Civil War.</i>
1974	<i>The UN resolution aimed to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.</i>
1980-1981	<i>Iraq used chemical weapons in the Iran Revolution of 1980-1981 while not abiding to the CWC.</i>
1990	<i>Egypt proposed WMD-free zone is proposed as an extension to the 1974 UN resolution which specified a nuclear-weapon-free zone.</i>
1993	<i>Israel signed the CWC but never ratified it. The Israeli government discussed it many times but the consensus didn't change since the Arabs didn't sign the treaty at all.</i>
1995	<i>A general consensus was reached upon about the steps that should be taken in order to establish a WMD-free zone in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.</i>
2005	<i>The members of the Gulf Cooperation Council(GCC) failed to form a sub-regional WMD-free zone because of their lack of personnel to devote on this matter and cooperation.</i>
2010	<i>NPT Review Conference adopted an action plan to address the zone and determined 2012 as the date of the next conference regarding the formation of a zone in the region.</i>
2013	<i>After no such conference had been held, the UN Secretary Ban-ki Moon and Russia insisted that something should be done since then many talks have been held but no consensus could be reached.</i>

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Because of the widespread use of chemical weapons in the Middle East, it was obvious that something should be done to tackle this issue.

RESEARCH REPORT

1974 UN resolution aimed to tackle the issue by forming a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East Region but banning nuclear weapons wasn't specific enough to cover the real roots of the problem which was the chemical weapons. This solution proved to be worthless after the effects of the chemical weapons continued to be seen.

In 1995 at the NPT Review and Extension Conference a general consensus was reached upon a WMD-free zone in the Middle East but this was just a verbal agreement and no significant outcome occurred.

In 2005 GCC failed to form a WMD-free zone because they were not aware of the consequences of the issue and didn't want to devote a huge number of personnel upon this issue.

In 2010 NPT Review Conference adopted an action plan to address this issue and determined 2012 as a date for a conference but no conference was held in 2012.

Many Middle East countries signed the CWC but many of them failed to abide to it. This caused the tension in the region to magnify which then made it impossible for any rational conference be held regarding a WMD-free zone.

Possible Solutions

The goal of the WMD-free zone is not new. It has already been set for over 30 years with little to no action taken. It is proven that banning all WMDs at the same time is not realistic and even though there have been such agreements, no countries have abided to the rules. The best way to build trust in the region is by banning the WMDs incremental effects meaning that: phasing weapons out by category, beginning with chemical weapons. In a region that has been the home of many conflicts and revolutions in the past few decades, banning chemical weapons will be a significant and achievable goal in order to ensure broader WMD-free zone. It is important to take the points of all the member countries into consideration and not focus on just the non-proliferation of chemical weapons of just one country.

Until recently, forming such a zone was unimaginable but with the recent events in Syria and Iraq the idea started getting regional acceptance and it is important to keep this in mind. In order to tackle this problem, first, a functioning WMD zone should be set in place and this is the best time to do just that. After the regional peace is ensured non-proliferation of chemical weapons is going to be just a matter of time.

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RESEARCH REPORT

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