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## Iranian Perspective for a Nuclear Free Zone in the Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities

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### Abstract

*Iran has remained a controversial topic for many decades among the international actors as well as some regional actors of the Middle East. The nuclear program of Iran has been the center of U.S. attention, and thus Iran underwent various sanctions. It was not until 2015 that the doors to U.S. cooperation opened for Iran, only to be closed two years later in 2017 by U.S. President Donald Trump. This bolted all prospects of Iranian intentions for negotiating a similar deal for Israel to have a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East. Despite being subjected to various allegations and sanctions, Iran continues in its efforts to make the Middle East a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. This initiative will open doors for various opportunities for the regional as well as the periphery states.*

**Key Words:** Nuclear Free Zone, Neo-Liberalism, Iran, Middle East, U.S., Israel

### Introduction

The Middle East, or as it was known as the Far East, is an oil-rich region encompassing the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. It is home to an estimated population of 463,298,595 citizens comprising of Arabs, Persians, Turks, Jews, Kurds, Christians, and various other ethnic groups. It comprises the Arabian Peninsula, some parts of the North African region, and some areas of Europe in Istanbul, connected by the famous Bosphorus bridge connecting the Black Sea with the Marmara Sea. It is the birthplace of the world's prominent religions (Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and more) as well as an exotic habitation of various cultures and cuisines. The Middle East stands out in its outlandish and eccentric guise on one front, then on the parallel front. It is notorious for its regional rivalries, civil wars, and centuries-old

monarchies sitting upon a tremendously colossal oil empire. Famous among the rivalries are the Arab-Israeli conflict which revolves around the rise of Zionism and the conflict in Palestine. On the parallel front civil war in Iraq and Syria following U.S. intervention is another predicament faced by the Middle East. Not to forget the centuries-old traditional rivalry between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran over the competition of regional hegemony is no secret. The cherry on top was when Israel acquired a nuclear weapon creating an environment of instability and insecurity in the region.

The term "Nuclear" has remained a daunting reality since the creation and use of the first nuclear weapon by the U.S. The first-ever nuclear weapon was developed in 1945 by

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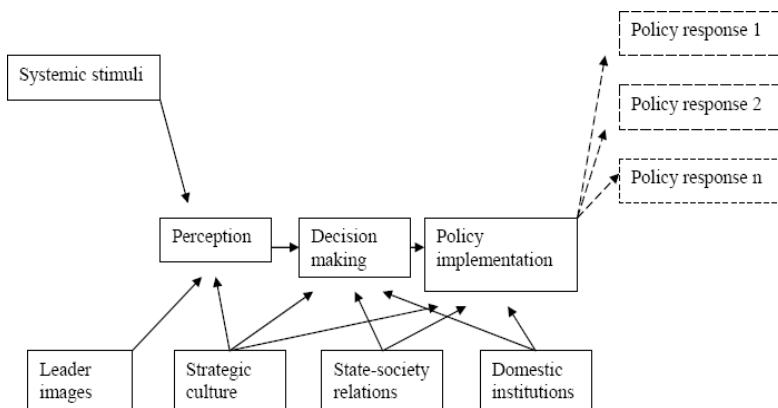
the United States of America, a bi-product of the Manhattan Project operated under the supervision of Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the American Nuclear program. ([The Manhattan Project, 2017](#)) This project gave the world two of the only used nuclear weapons, "Fat Man" and "Little Boy," which were used to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ([The Manhattan Project: An Interactive History, 2004](#)) Thus, destroying every ounce of the city and its citizens. The devastating aftermath of this incident could be traced in the form of barren land and birth defects of newly born children. ([RERF, 1954](#)) It was not until the presidency of Barack Obama that the United States formally acknowledged its actions and apologized for the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Nuclear technology remained a controversy due to its dual usage. On the one hand, peaceful nuclear usage generates energy, cures cancer, and gives life. Then, at the same time, the weaponization of this technology wreaks havoc. Yet, on December 8, 1953, U.S. President Dwight David Eisenhower proposed before United Nations General Assembly 'Atoms for Peace. This program laid down the foundation for the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) and later Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (N.P.T.). Under this program, thirty countries benefited from this technology which included Iran as well as

Israel in the Middle East. ([Varnum, 2014](#)) Little was known back then that this program could give birth to a security dilemma in the Middle East. Israel converted its nuclear program into a weapon grad program and created an environment of fear and deterrence in the region. While Iran being an N.P.T. signatory, remained confronted with a plethora of economic embargoes. Amidst this environment of fear and chaos, Iran took the initiative to create the nuclear-weapon-free Middle East. However, the question that arises is as to what impediments Iran faces in its quest to achieve the nuclear-weapon-free Middle East?

### Theoretical Construct

The theoretical framework applied in this paper is neo-classical realism. The neoclassical realists believe that states policies cannot always be fashioned to the international circumstances because they arise as a result of faulty discernments of decision-makers. As jotted down in figure 1 given below; these culpabilities of the decision-makers interfere with accurate perceptions of the balance of threat with precision; strategic culture, which shapes state responses; state-society relations, which affect the state's ability to endorse and implement decisions; and domestic political institutions, which can either empower or pressure state leaders when they face societal opposition. ([Ripsman, 2011](#))



**Figure 1:** ([Ripsman, 2011](#))

As Neo-realist or structural realist laid emphasis on the anarchic nature of the state that influences the behavior of the state. Similarly, neo-classical realist opines that the

image of the leadership, domestic institutions, strategic culture, and society has a direct impact on the perception of the state as a response to the global environment. These

elements combined with the systemic stimuli determine the outlook of the state and the resultant decision making, and the policy implementation will be accordingly. ([Aron, 2003](#); [Carr, 1964](#); [Niebuhr, 1959](#))

This theory effectively explains the Iranian concerns emerging as a result of an undeclared nuclear rival disturbing the regional stability. Therefore, Iranian leadership not only demands the complete disarmament of the nuclear weapons program of Israel as well as seeks to have a Nuclear Weapon free zone in the Middle East. Iran's dedication towards weapons of mass destruction free Iran as well as the Middle East can be viewed from its own policies of declaring nuclear weapons as un-Islamic and therefore abstaining from acquiring one ([The World Staff, 2019](#)). Yet Iran remains confronted with a plethora of problems, including international sanctions and trade embargoes hindering its economic development.

### Iranian Nuclear Program and the Regional Rivals

Iran received its nuclear program back in the 1950s as part of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Atom for peace" program initiative ([Roe, 2007](#)). Back in the day, Iran relished the privilege of being the darling of the United States of America ([Maloney, 2019](#)). The closeness of the two former allies can be seen from the visit of President Richard Nixon to Iran to request the Shah for providing assistance in protecting U.S. security interests in the Middle East ([U.S. Relations With Iran, 1953–2021, 2021](#)). However, with the change in the regime of Iran and the establishment of the Islamic Revolutionary Iran, the relationship of Iran with the U.S. became estranged. The change in the United States attitude could be seen through the shifting alliance from Iran to Iraq during the eight years long Iran-Iraq war. Ayatollah Khomeini taking charge as the supreme leader of Iran and the downfall of pro-Western monarchic Iran to a fervently Islamic theocratic Iran was a major setback to the western interests.

Iran faced outnumbered challenges both on the regional and international levels in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution. The nuclear cooperation that Iran enjoyed during

the Shah's regime ended with the fall of Shah, but Iranian officials made sure that the program did not come to an end. This situation was viewed as an opportunity by the former USSR, and they formed a Joint Research Organization that helped Iran with its nuclear program. Russia provided Iran with the latest information and nuclear experts, which Iran lacked at the time. Argentina also played a vital role in reaching an agreement of providing Iran with nuclear assistance alongside France. Iran was also accused of acquiring nuclear weapon plans for building a P-1 centrifuge from the Abdul Qadeer Khan network of Pakistan ([Lin, 2004](#)). Iran has remained encircled with various allegations regarding its nuclear program despite the fact that it's a member of the Nuclear non-proliferation regime. While on the other hand, Israel is a nuclear weapon state and enjoys uncanny support and over 3 billion dollars worth of aid from the United States.

The U.S. is exclusively focusing on Iran as the delinquency factor in the middle East is vexing for the leadership of Iran. While on the other hand, the Israeli nuclear factor is deliberately disregarded by the American polity. Until the Israeli nuclear weapons program is addressed, the apprehensive environment of the Middle East cannot be handled. Thus the nuclear weapons' free middle East would remain a hypothetical situation. Iran feels threatened by the nuclear weapons program of its arch-nemesis Israel. Kenneth Waltz writes in his article;

*"Of course, it is easy to understand why Israel wants to remain the sole nuclear power in the region, and it is willing to use force to secure that status. In 1981, Israel bombed Iraq to prevent a challenge to its nuclear monopoly. It did the same to Syria in 2007 and is now considering similar action against Iran. But the very acts that have allowed Israel to maintain its nuclear edge in the short term have prolonged an imbalance that is unsustainable in the long term. Israel's proven ability to strike potential nuclear rivals with impunity has inevitably made its enemies anxious to develop the means to prevent Israel from doing so again. In this way, the current tensions are best viewed not as the early stages of a relatively recent Iranian nuclear crisis but rather as the final stages of a decades-long Middle East*

*nuclear crisis that will end only when a balance of military power is restored”* [\(Waltz, July/August 202\).](#)

### **Iranian Outlook for a Nuclear Weapons Free Middle East: A struggle from Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action**

During the Shah's regime, Iran proposed that the Middle East should be made a nuclear-weapons-free zone, but unfortunately, it didn't get the desired response. In the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, Iranian efforts were upheld by Egypt in 1990, and they broadened its scope to include a ban on chemical and biological weapons as well. This collective effort was made to create a W.M.D. (Weapons of Mass Destruction) free zone in the Middle East. Iranian efforts bore positive outcomes when in 1991, Iraq destroyed its chemical weapons stockpile and ceased its biological and nuclear weapon programs. Israel, however, remained oblivious to the United Nations-mandated orders to cooperate. Iran even proposed the same mandate regarding weapons of the mass destruction-free middle East in 2012, yet it didn't reap the desired outcomes.

Iran signed the N.P.T. (Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty) in July 1968. Iranian civil nuclear facilities have been operating in compliance with the safety and security regulations of the IAEA and have been under constant surveillance. Still, Iran has remained under constant criticism from the American polity and global community as a whole. It appears to be quite distressing and vexing that Iran, a member of N.P.T., is being subjugated to various economic sanctions. Yet, Israel, a nuclear weapons state, receives an unconditional aid of 3.8 billion dollars from the U.S. [\(Sharp, 2021\)](#). Adding pain to injury are the atrocities committed by Israel in Palestine, yet U.N. and the U.S. remain oblivious to that. Despite all the trust deficit factors, when the Obama administration reached out to Iran for having a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

(JCPOA), Iran was ready to cooperate. This exemplifies Iranian commitment towards Nuclear Weapons Free Middle East. This agreement would have opened doors for future collaborations between Iran and U.S.,

including “the rethinking about Israel's nuclear weapons program.”

JCPOA was aimed at lifting all the U.N. imposed sanctions alongside various multilateral and unilateral sanctions related to the Iranian nuclear program, thus clearing all allegations related to the Iranian nuclear program. This agreement was expected to recoup the economic loss by providing access to trade, finance, energy, and the latest technology. Iran gave assurance that it will keep its enrichment capacity at “*Natanz and Fordo*” nuclear facility up to a safe limit and conduct Research and Development related tasks only. Iran guaranteed Uranium stockpile to remain below 300kgs and will be creating a rather smaller heavy water reactor at “*Arak*,” and all extra spent fuel will be shipped to Russia. Under this agreement, no reprocessing of the spent fuel would take place in any reactor, including the Research and Development Reactor, for the next 15 years. Moreover, Iran would comply with any Additional Protocol [\(Chong, 2015\)](#). A UN ban on the import of ballistic missile technology will remain in place for up to eight years [\(BBC News 2021\)](#).

JCPOA was meant to be a reciprocal plan of action in which Iran was meant to comply with the terms given in the agreement, and the decades-long sanctions would finally be lifted. As per the agreement, the terminated sanctions included: fiscal, banking, and insurance measures; oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors; shipbuilding and transport sectors; minerals and other precious metals; nuclear proliferation-related measures [\(Chong, 2015\)](#). These measures were meant to ease the economic challenges faced by Iran and help it to reinstate its deteriorating economic situation. But before any positive outcome could be deduced, there was a change in the political administration of the U.S. This turned out to be another predicament for Iranian polity, and all hopes of improving torn relations and battered economy were down the groove.

### **Termination of JCPOA and Nuclear Standpoint of Iranian Leadership**

Iranian compliance with the JCPOA was endorsed and verified by IAEA. However, it was the United States that did not hold its end of

the bargain and as soon. As per the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015), the unanimous withdrawal from the JCPOA of either party would be unlawful, yet President Trump revoked it without deliberation. ([Archived Presidential White House Websites, 2017](#)) This step on the part of the Trump administration came as a shock not only to Iran but to the rest of the participants of the JCPOA as their approval was not taken before revoking the agreement. This withdrawal earned Iran a wide range of sympathy from the other stakeholders of JCPOA. At the same time, everything that Iran had planned to achieve through this deal ended with the termination of the JCPOA. Iran was once again surrounded by a plethora of sanctions, and the economy suffered colossally. Though, the question remains as to why all of a sudden, a new administration, after coming into power, would be so adamant about ending an agreement that was beneficial for them.

The withdrawal from JCPOA can be accounted for three main reasons; Destroying the Obama legacy, inclination towards Netanyahu, and most importantly, the new faces in the cabinet. Trump has been known for his unconventional ideas, narcissistic personality, and impulsive actions. After assuming office, President Trump ended the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, withdrew from the Paris Agreement on climate change, revisited Obama's protections for undocumented immigrants, and last but not least, revoked the JCPOA. President Trump's inclination towards Netanyahu changed his perspective on Iran momentarily. In one of his speeches to the people of the United States, he stated that; his "number one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran" ([Jaffe, 2015](#)). He accused Iran of carrying out nefarious activities of constructing ballistic missiles. He argued that it was about time the world should stop treating Israel as second-class citizens. He recognized Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel despite global reservations. Benjamin Netanyahu took Donald Trump in confidence to revoke JCPOA as it would have had consequences for the Israeli Nuclear Weapon Program. Although it cannot be supported with sufficient evidence, the Israeli financial lobby has been notorious for its desk activities.

Termination of JCPOA deep-rooted the seed of mistrust in the minds of Iranian leadership and polity. This behavior of the U.S. was condemned by the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei, and he remarked; "I said from the first day: don't trust America. ([BBC News 2020](#)) Revoking this deal aggravated the relationship further between Iran and the U.S., and the joint effort to restore good relations by Obama and Hassan Rouhani was relinquished. By revoking this deal, the U.S. handed over Iran to its rivals China and Russia, who benefitted greatly from the withdrawal and provided a lending hand to the sinking economy of Iran. Many of the European and Asian countries have shown serious concerns regarding the withdrawal pushing Iran many steps closer to further enriching Uranium.

It remains furtive as to why Trump would end an agreement with Tehran while reconstructing coalition dialogues with Pyongyang. Unlike Iran, North Korea does have a nuclear weapon under the control of a military dictator, or maybe that precisely is the reason that Trump was open to dialogue and not embargoes. Iranian economy suffered a huge setback as no banks were ready to do business with them, fearing U.S. sanctions. Oil trade suffered gravely, and all hopes of establishing cordial diplomatic relations with the European countries diminished with this deal. Tehran has still assured that it has no intentions of acquiring a nuclear weapon as it's not their prerogative. Iran seeks to establish its influence by expanding its role as the helper and the provider of the oppressed and not the destroyer of humanity. The role of Vilayat e Faqih (guardian Islamic jurist) forbids the use of force as an influential factor.

Iran's former president and an Islamic cleric, Akbar Hashmi Rafsanjani, indicated Iran's position on nuclear energy: "God willing, we expect to soon join the club of the countries that have a nuclear industry, with all its branches, except the military one, in which we are not interested. We want to get what we're entitled to. I say unequivocally that for no price will we be willing to relinquish our legal and international rights. I also say unequivocally to those who make false claims: Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons, but it will not give up its rights. Your provocation will not make us

pursue nuclear weapons. We hope that you come to your senses soon and do not get the world involved in disputes and crises.”([MEMRI TV, 2004](#))

Former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated that neither Iran is developing a nuclear weapon nor does it have any intention of doing so in the future. On August 9, 2005, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a fatwa; “production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islam and that Iran shall never acquire these weapons.”([Iran Daily - Front Page - 08/11/05, 2006](#)) Hojatoleslam Mohsen Gharavian, a student of Qom's cleric Mesbah Yazdi, said that; “We do not seek nuclear weapons and the Islamic religion encourages coexistence along with peace and friendship.”([The Muslim News, 2007](#)) On February 22, 2012, in a meeting with the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei said:

“The Iranian nation has never pursued and will never pursue nuclear weapons. There is no doubt that the decision-makers in the countries opposing us know well that Iran is not after nuclear weapons because the Islamic Republic, logically, religiously, and theoretically, considers the possession of nuclear weapons a grave sin and believes the proliferation of such weapons is senseless, destructive and dangerous.”

As a response to the withdrawal of the JCPOA, President Hassan Rouhani said that; “We have never sought nuclear weapons. With or without the nuclear deal, we will never seek nuclear weapons” ([Al Jazeera, 2020](#)) Iranian non-nuclear intentions were even endorsed by the French President Macron that; “In the current context, France is determined that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon, but also that we avoid all military escalation in the region.”

The foreign minister of Iran, in a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Ankara, said that; “Iran's nuclear activities do not mean it's seeking an atomic bomb.”([staff & Agencies, 2020](#)) He further added, “I hope that with the Biden administration, the United States will return to this agreement and cooperation on the [nuclear] issue is restored. In this way, God

willing, the sanctions and embargoes imposed on brotherly Iran are lifted.”([staff & Agencies, 2020](#)) Biden was the vice president of the U.S. during the Obama regime when the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was brought into motion. He is hopeful that the U.S. will return to the deal under his presidency. However, Iran will have to show compliance to the terms of the deal first. Israeli defense minister Chief Aviv Kohavi has released a threatening statement that if the U.S. undergoes this plan, then the Israeli military will plan a strike against the Iranian nuclear program. These aggressive proclamations have compelled the Biden administration to issue a statement of their own, claiming that no steps regarding JCPOA will be taken without consulting with Israel and other major allies of the Middle East.

It seems that Joe Biden has a soft corner for Iran, and it can be seen from his selection of the special envoy to Iran, Robert Malley, who is a veteran on Middle Eastern Affairs. Israeli media and Iranian hawks are skeptical that Malley is the right choice here because he was the crucial draftsman of the JCPOA. A wave of fear and anger can be sensed among the Iranian hawks as they believe that Malley is only making it all the easier for Biden to execute the withdrawn deal. This deal remains one of the most challenging factors for the U.S. as this decision will alter the course of action for middle eastern politics.

### **Nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East: View-point of Israel, U.A.E., K.S.A, and U.S.A.**

Reservations regarding the Iranian nuclear stockpile have always been there; however, it is the funding of Houthis in Saudi Arabia and Hamas and Hezbollah in Israel which concerns the U.S.A. the most. Speculations regarding Iranian building a dirty bomb might have been a concern, but it was the vast missile program that terminated the JCPOA. These missiles ending up in the hands of Hezbollah, Hamas, and Houthis were a major apprehension on the part of the Trump administration. ([Abbas & Naqvi, 2021](#)) These trepidations resulted in the withdrawal of the U.S.A. from the JCPOA. However, what the U.S. and the rest of the west fail to comprehend is that despite the allegations, Iran has constantly been assuring

the world that they do not intend on weaponizing its nuclear program. Iran has shown its devotion time and again regarding its reluctance not only on acquiring a nuclear weapon but the complete disarmament of this weapon from the region.

Iran and Egypt remained the pioneers of this idea and presented a resolution in 1974 titled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the region of the Middle East" in the United Nations General Assembly ([U.N. General Assembly, 1974](#)). Since the emergence of NWFZ in the Middle East, 22 Arab states of the Middle East have joined this struggle to make the region a more safe place to exist. However, from 1974 to 2018, this resolution adopted by the UNGA has remained without a majority vote. Israel has opted to stay away from all the meetings, and even in the meeting held in 2019, despite a seat being reserved, its absence spoke volumes regarding its willingness to comply with such a proposition. Similarly, the U.S.A. showed its reluctance to become part of this agreement due to the fact that it considered this proposal to be singling out of Israel. Israel's reservation for this proposal remained that it was not consulted with prior to making any such arrangements. The U.S.A. is an ally, and staunch supporter of Israel called it an attempt of Arab states to weaponize multilateral diplomacy against Israel ([Bino, 2020](#)).

### **NWFZ and Opportunities for the Middle East**

Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East has been a topic long under debate for over three decades. This treaty could not be concluded due to the International allegations on the Iranian nuclear program. The Iranian leadership has categorically repudiated all the accusations, yet the international community remains fixated on Iran alone. Iran views Israel as an aggressor in the Middle East and a threat to their national security as well. The plight of Palestinians is also a factor of the major concern of Iran as Israel is neither obliging by Nuclear Weapon's Free Zone in the Middle East nor is it regarding the human rights watch on the matter of Palestine. Yet both the regional and international actors have turned a deaf ear towards the atrocities and

implacability of Israel. Israel enjoys a sacrosanct amount of privileges offered by the United States of America and thus does not refrain from exploiting any available opportunity. This is the case with its nuclear weapons and the atrocities it is causing in Palestine under the protection of the very same weapon. It is of paramount significance that the nuclear weapons program of Israel is taken seriously for the stability of the Middle East.

A nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was proposed by Iran and Iraq in 1974 to the United Nations General Assembly. By 2015 all the middle eastern states, with the exception of Syria and Israel, had agreed upon signing the NWFZ treaty. Iran demanded that Israel should shut down its nuclear plants in Dimona along with all the spent fuel reprocessing plants. But Israel remained reluctant to the calls for NWFZ by Iran and allies denying its nuclear weapons program. Israel claims that this is a self-declaration on the part of Iran that it wants the nuclear-weapons-free Middle East.

Iran remains determined that a nuclear-free middle east holds prospects of greater magnitude for the region. For this, Iran seeks the support of the Global Community and the U.S. in order to achieve this objective. The Iranian leadership has made their reservations loud and clear that Israel's nuclear weapon remains the only challenge to the future opportunities and prospects of the Middle East. In the present situation of the Middle East, negative security assurance by Israel is not enough as Iran seeks to solve the matter of Palestine along with safeguarding its territory. This could be achieved only by denuclearizing Israel. The nuclear-free Middle East would also ensure that the threat of a dirty bomb could be curtailed. The growing need for the energy of the middle eastern countries can be met through the peaceful nuclear program. The nuclear club will have one less problem (Israel's nuclear program) to deal with. This might also set an example for the periphery states Pakistan and India to rethink their nuclear weapon program and reach a similar deal.

### **Israel's Samson Option a challenger to Middle Eastern Stability**

It is no secret, however, that the arch-nemesis

of Iran and the suppressor of the Palestinians, Israel, is a nuclear weapon state. The middle eastern stability lies in the balancing of the terror, which remains a challenge as Israel remains the sole possessor of a nuclear weapon. As said by Kenneth Waltz himself, the security dynamics and the stability factor of the Middle East will remain a challenge for the regional actors until Israel is dealt with on the same ground as Iran is. When you minus Israel from the nuclear disarmament equation, the math totally fails, and the major factor of the challenge to be accepted remains undealt with. Waltz has laid emphasis on the fact that Iran is an N.P.T. signatory and has time again given assurances of no nukes as their mandate. Therefore, placing sanctions and embargoes will only deteriorate the situation further. Iran sees Israel as a threat to the Middle Eastern Stability, and thus they have proposed a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. However, the lack of support from Israel is all the more detrimental for the middle eastern stability and Iranian suspicions regarding Israel's true intentions ([Hersh, 1991](#)).

The nuclear doctrine of Israel is quite rigid and unbending as it offers no soft corner for those who hold ill intentions towards the existence of Israel. This feature of Israel's nuclear doctrine has earned it the name of "Samson Option" by some analysts ([Hersh, 1991](#)). Samson is a name of a biblical creature from the Hebrew bible whose power temple was his long hair. But his lover Delilah from the enemy territory enticed him and cut his hair, making him weak. Israel believes that their power lies in their nuclear weapon as well. Yet, due to their nuclear opacity, it is not easier for the outside governments to determine and comprehend the extent of their nuclear capability with certainty. Samson Option infers that Israel will retaliate massively against any country whose military has invaded or caused destruction to Israeli territory. The massive retaliation doesn't explicitly indicate an attack by a nuclear state but any aggressive state for that matter. ([Strategic Doctrine - Israel, 1981](#))

This imperviousness of Israel's nuclear weapon program is a major concern of Iran. What is more alarming for Iran is the silence of the regional Arab actors as well as the U.S. on the matter! It is imperative for the world

powers and the regional powers in the Middle East to address the issue of Israel's nuclear weapon.

## Way Forward

In order for Iran to achieve its nuclear weapon's free middle eastern vision, Iran must come forward with some speculations revolving around Iran's nuclear program as well. First and foremost, Iran must try to forward a hand of the alliance towards the K.S.A. as it is the need of time. The Arab countries must realize that the U.S.A. has been succeeding in diverting the world's attention to an N.P.T. signatory Iran and diverting it from Israel. Israel remains the sole possessor of the nuclear weapon in the Middle East, and thus, the security and stability of the entire region remain in peril. U.N. needs to be reminded that it is Israel and not Iran committing human rights violations in Palestine and yet U.N. remains silent on the atrocities committed. However, the country pioneering the idea of a nuclear-weapons-free zone remains under strict scrutiny and international sanctions. Iran needs to establish strong diplomatic relations with the Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, in order to compel Israel to surrender its nuclear weapon and to achieve an NWFZ in the Middle East.

As of now, the priority of Iran and the Arab states must be the prevention of complete annihilation of both Palestine and the Middle East at the hands of the state of Israel. This can be achieved by having a dialogue with Israel and the U.S. and bringing them both onboard by providing security assurances to Israel. Upon successful disarmament of their nuclear weapons program, the state of Israel will remain safe, and their territorial integrity will not be jeopardized. They will not be held accountable for past crimes. European Union model of economic interdependence complimenting the liberal school of thought can be introduced in the Middle East. Rather than focusing on power politics, the Arab states, along with Iran, must implore Israel to accentuate mutual cooperation, which will be beneficial not only for the state itself but the regional stability and cooperation as well. A confidence-building measure can be adopted by both Iran and Saudi Arabia over the common goal, which is stability in the Middle East and disregard divided grievances. The most

important reservation that needs to be addressed is to bring Israel on board. Trade cooperation and exchange programs can be done between the state of Israel and Iran. It might seem quite idealistic in nature, yet new precedence continues to amaze the global community. If Germany and the European states who have fought two deadly of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century form a model of cooperation and interdependence, then surely the Middle Eastern countries can develop strong institutes to meet the insecurity paradox of the region in a way other than nuclear missiles. These baby steps will open doors for a diplomatic solution for the issue of Palestine.

Nonetheless, if efforts for disarmament fail, then there is no guarantee that it will result in another flawed Baruch plan where the U.S. tried to remain the sole possessor of nukes till the rest surrendered. The former Soviet Union refused to accept the terms till the complete surrender of the U.S. as well. But as the world stood witness, today there are five declared and four undeclared nuclear weapons states with a lingering threat of a dirty bomb ending up in wrong hands.

## **Conclusion**

It must be comprehended by the global community that Iran is not the problem in the Middle East but rather a solution. Despite being subjected to various international sanctions, Iran has remained dutiful to the IAEA

protocols. It has not tried to acquire a nuclear weapon in spite of all the international accusations and allegations. Iranian leadership wants the region to be a peaceful place for its inhibitors, and for that, it is imperative that the Middle East becomes a nuclear-weapons-free zone. Iranian commitment regarding a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East amidst international sanctions and criticism is commendable. Despite the U.S. abandonment during the Iran-Iraq war post-Iranian Revolution and the imposition of Sanctions, Iran was ready to cooperate with the U.S. on the JCPOA. But it was once again disappointed by the deceptive behavior of the U.S. government.

This deal could have opened a lot of opportunities for Iran and the region as a whole. The Iranian leadership has long claimed that nuclear weapon is not their prerogative. However, if the growing threat of Israel is not dealt with timely and the Middle East is not made a Nuclear Weapon Free zone, then their hands are tied. Iran feels that the security of the non-nuclear states of the Middle East falls to the Vali e Faqih (The guardian of the Islamic Jurists). So Iran shall do what falls in its capacity for the security of the weaker states and Palestine. Peace and stability mean Israel should also disarm or else, if need be, Iran might also go ballistic because "Desperate times call for desperate measures.

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