**Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) 3**

**Nuclear Non-Proliferation in the Middle East**

**Introduction:**

Nuclear weapons are considered one of the most dangerous weapons in the history of man. Besides its potential to annihilate millions and obliterate the natural environment, the dangers of such destructive weapon arise from its mere fact of existence. While nuclear technology does have peaceful applications such as energy, even the possession of this technology is a threat due to the possibility of military applications in the future.

Nations around the world have continued to voice their concern over the use of nuclear weapons; these concerns are not unjustified. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II plagued Japan while the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War created firm tensions between two contrasting political ideologies.

Since the founding of the United Nations, efforts have been directed to resolving issues regarding nuclear warfare and eliminating such weapons. The International Atomic Energy Commission, established in 1946, was given the task to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy, in addition to providing an international forum in which the aforementioned problems could be discussed. The notion of nuclear proliferation can be assessed from two viewpoints; either a nation state is already in possession of nuclear weapon or a nation intends to retrieve the weapons in some shape or form. When it comes to the production of nuclear weapons, the technological capability and level of security alert of the state should be discussed. Countries in the Middle East may feel prompted to produce nuclear weapons due to the pressure from domestic politics or internal security issues, mainly to strengthen its own capability in light of many peaceful demeanours shown by the West.

Finally, the motives for nuclear proliferation should be noted, as any nation state in the Middle East who intends to pursue nuclear technology through non-peaceful means will be met with the public decry from the West, and perhaps the support from the unattached extremist groups.

**Background & History:**

The nuclear arms race began at the end of World War II. During this period, the amount of nuclear weapons production skyrocketed and there seemed to be no limit. Then on July 29th, 1957 the International Atomic Energy Agency was constructed as an independent organization to monitor nuclear energy around the world. Soon after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was signed in 1968. At this time, five countries possessed
nuclear warheads. They are United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China. Basically the treaty is an agreement with countries that already possess nuclear weapons and those that do not. The agreement is that those countries that do not possess nuclear warheads will agree to never acquire such weapons and in return, the countries that already do will provide the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy. The main objective was to limit further production of weapons of mass destruction and to encourage disarmament slowly to the countries that already possess them. Despite 190 nations ratifying the treaty, North Korea, Israel, Pakistan, and India all refused to sign the treaty.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty is centered on three main pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. After the NPT was implemented many countries felt secure with the terms and abandoned their nuclear weapon programs. South Africa went to the extent of destroying what was left in its arsenal and other countries such as Ukraine and Kazakhstan simply gave their weapons to a country that was allowed to possess nuclear warheads, Russia.

Despite all the good the NPT has resulted in, the treaty has caused great argument in the middle east. Iran voiced its concern that it is threatened by the United States and has no power due to the restrictions of the treaty. Iran argues the question what gives countries the right to have nuclear warheads and has raised tensions in the middle east. If Iran continues to fight disarmament, many other middle eastern countries will follow suit leading to a nuclear arms race that eliminates any chance for non-proliferation.

**Current Situation/Problem:**

By definition, nuclear proliferation is the spread of the nuclear weapons. Currently, the biggest problem that lies in the Middle East is the development of Iran’s nuclear weapon program. The United States claims that part of Iran’s nuclear weapons programs violate the standards set by the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) by not declaring their enrichment program. Iran counters by stating that it is actually the United States that have broken the treaty by continuing to produce atomic arms.

As the tensions grew on, the United States and by extension the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) declared that there should be consequences for Iran’s non-compliance. In 2006, the UNSC applied their first set of sanctions on Iran. Since then, the UNSC have piled on more sanctions almost on a yearly basis, exponentially increasing the tensions with this nuclear proliferation crisis. Furthermore, the United States and other Western nations firmly believe that Iran is making weapons, an activity that many countries are discontent about. However, Iran shows a completely new view on the topic, and to understanding the issue from an holistic standpoint, one must also look at the problem from Iran’s side.

Iran claims that all of the activity that goes on in their nuclear research facilities falls within the boundaries of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. They claim that all of their actions regarding uranium enrichment are for energy purposes in nuclear plants and not to make any nuclear weapons. However, Iran has refused to cease their uranium enrichment programs after several countries such as the United States, China, and Russia have offered to provide the uranium required to power Iran’s nuclear power plants. In turn, Iran has actually increased uranium enrichment production, claiming that they have the right to
enhance uranium. Upset with Iran’s non-compliance, the United States and its allies have begun economic sanctions against Iran. In 2006, the supply of nuclear-related technology and materials to Iran was cut off. Economic sanctions have been growing tighter every year with currently a full arms embargo and complete economic cut-offs with Iran from the United States and other major western powers. These sanctions have left Iran in a state of economic turmoil with the currency of Iran having dropped very significantly from 2011. In retaliation, the Iranian government has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, which over 20% of the world’s oil supply passes through. Further economic sanctions on Iran leave the country in a poorer state, perhaps potentially causing Iran to make drastic actions in order to secure concessions from Western countries.

Another potential problem that arises from Iran’s nuclear proliferation activities is the potential for other countries in the Middle East to follow suit. With Israel already in possession of nuclear arms, and Iran potentially to follow, other countries in the Middle East have stated they may investigate nuclear weaponry as well. This places the entire area on the verge of a new nuclear arms race. Though several countries have voiced that they will only pursue such efforts if Iran is to succeed, it may not very long until Iran successfully produces a nuclear weapon, leading possibly to a new conflict similar to that of the Cold War.

**Relevant Documents:**
Non-Proliferation Treaty
United Nations Security Council Resolution 1696- first set of sanctions on Iran
United Nations Resolution 1737- economic sanctions on Iran

**Bloc Positions:**
Many foreign nations are concerned about the growth of nuclear arms technology in the middle east especially in Iran and Israel. While some nations have a clear position on this issue, others’ positions are still ambiguous and unclear. It is your job, as a delegate, to accurately represent your country and form an alliance, or bloc, with nations who hold similar beliefs. Delegates should remember that each country has a unique situation in regards to nuclear proliferation and desires a resolution that meets their need.

Currently, the two countries in the middle east that are known to be in possession of nuclear arms are Israel and Iran. “According to a 2013 report by US experts, Israel’s nuclear arsenal includes 80 nuclear warheads, with enough fissile material potentially to double that number” (“Middle East Countries with Nuclear Weapons”). It isn’t part of the NPT and many parts of its nuclear research facilities are off limits to the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency).

Iran’s “pursuit of a potential nuclear weapons capability is rooted in a deep sense of insecurity” (Arms Control Association). Iran has gone through many external and internal threats and views the United States the biggest of them all. The U.S invasions into afghanistan and Iraq were seen as a prelude to regime change in their country (Arms Control Association). Though not declared IAEA reports beginning from 2003 have shown that Iran has violated the NPT on several occasions. Despite the ambiguity, Iran’s nuclear research has been ongoing and it has continued to enrich its uranium levels above the NPT standards. When faced with threats, Iran has continue to deny claims of possessing
weapons and even threatened to block a vital oil point. Nobody is sure whether Iran has nuclear weapons but the United States still has time to negotiate with Iran before suspicions are confirmed and it is too late.

Other than these countries no other country in the middle east is known or heavily suspected to possess nuclear arms; however with that being said if current conditions continue the result is more likely that not going to be a full nuclear arms race with countries such as Syria and Saudi Arabia joining in. The one thing all these countries do have in common is that they believe that it is duplicitous that United states and other strong nations support nuclear non-proliferation while they continue to increase their arsenal.

Committee Mission:

In attempting to resolve the potential nuclear arms race in the middle east, the SPECPOL committee must consider economic and military status of each country, keeping in mind that each countries' priority in this issue is keeping its civilians safe. The main issue will be addressing whether less affluent and weaker countries should be allowed nuclear technology development, knowing that it could lead to a full nuclear arms race especially with countries violating nuclear treaties and the rising tensions in that area. On the other hand, delegates should not forgot to address countries such as the United
States and Russia, who are in full support of the NPT but continue to possess and produce their own nuclear arms.

Other issues to be addressed in the committee's session are stricter regulations and ramifications for countries that violate the NPT other than the previously tried economic sanctions which have proven ineffective in the past. Lastly, delegates should keep in mind that taking away nuclear technology from middle eastern countries could adversely affect countries' economies as most energy does come from nuclear energy. Keeping in mind all these issues, delegates will need to come up with a way to satisfy all countries and slow if not end nuclear proliferation threat in the middle east.

Questions to Consider:
1.) What possible ramifications should be imposed on countries who do not follow or break nuclear non proliferation treaties/agreements?
2.) Why should nations such as the US, China, France, Russia, and the UK be allowed to possess nuclear weapons while other nations are not?
3.) What sort of incentives would motivate countries not only in the middle east but in general to abandon its nuclear program?
4.) How does the UN ensure countries that announce that they are exploring atomic energy for peaceful uses are indeed doing so, without infringing on their national sovereignty.
5.) How effective has the NPT been in preventing nuclear proliferation, and what changes can be made it so it can be better enforced?
6.) Suppose United States has 100 nuclear warheads, and Israel 5. Should disarmament be proportional or not depending on the amount of nuclear weapons?

Sources for Further Research:


http://middleeast.about.com/od/oilenergy/tp/Middle-East-Countries-With-Nuclear-Weapons.htm

https://www.armscontrol.org/2011_09/Iran_and_a_Nuclear-Weapon-Free_Middle_East%20%20%20%20

https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/60_nuclearproliferation.html


http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml