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# **THE EXPERT REPORT**



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# **The establishment of a nuclear weapon- free zone in the Middle East**



## Introduction

The establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East is one of the most urgent and complex tasks in the field of international security. This region, which has suffered decades of conflict, political instability and economic crises, also faces the threat of nuclear proliferation, making the issue of a denuclearized zone particularly important. The nuclear ambitions of individual countries, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, are a cause for concern among neighbors, including Israel, which, though it does not confirm its nuclear arsenal, is considered to be the only nuclear power in the region. The prospect of a nuclear race in the region is fraught with the outbreak of a rapid nuclear-weapons conflict.

The issue of denuclearization involves the interests and positions of many countries, each with its own unique views on security and stability. The Arab states, for example, generally support denuclearization as a way to reduce the threat from Israel and Iran, but they also express concern about the lack of transparency in

their nuclear programs. Israel, for its part, sees nuclear weapons as a means of containing potential threats and strategically levelling the gap between Arab states in theoretical conflict, creating additional difficulties for consensus.

Moreover, it is worth considering the influence of external forces such as the US and Russia, which play a significant role in regional politics. These countries may have interests in maintaining the status quo or manipulating conflicts to achieve their goals. For example, the US has traditionally supported Israel and may not be interested in creating conditions that could weaken its strategic position. At the same time, Russia can use the situation to strengthen its position in the region through support of Arab states.

In addition, nuclear proliferation in the region raises questions about the possibility of new nuclear powers emerging. Countries like Saudi Arabia openly declare their intention to develop their nuclear technologies, which could lead to an arms race<sup>1</sup>. The longer the region feels threatened by nuclear threats, the more likely it

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<sup>1</sup> Что стоит за обсуждением развития ядерной программы Саудовской Аравии // Ведомости URL: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2024/05/03/1035226-ssha-vinuzhdeni-ne-vklyuchat-izrail-v-sdelku-s-saudovskoi-araviei> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).



is that new nuclear programs will emerge as a response to those threats. This creates additional pressure on the international community to seek solutions and compromises.

In this context, the denuclearization of the area becomes not only a disarmament issue but also a broader regional security issue. Achieving sustainable peace requires not only a commitment to nuclear-free weapons, but also the creation of confidence mechanisms that allow countries to discuss their concerns and security needs openly. This may include multilateral negotiations, the establishment of joint mechanisms for monitoring and controlling nuclear programmes, as well as the active involvement of international organizations.

The UN sees the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East as an important step towards global disarmament and strengthening international security <sup>2</sup>. However, the lack of a common approach among key players in the region makes this task extremely difficult. The UN stresses the need for dialogue and cooperation among nations to achieve sustainable peace.

The main challenges of denuclearizing the area should be addressed in the context of the

upcoming IAEA meeting. These include mistrust among states, different approaches to security issues and the influence of external forces. These factors not only impede the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, but also exacerbate existing conflicts in the region. It is important to understand why this particular problem has become so urgent and how it affects the dynamics of international relations in the Middle East..

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<sup>2</sup> ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN THE REGION OF THE MIDDLE EAST // United Nations URL: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-187249/> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).



### Background of the issue of nuclear-free zones

The debate on limiting the use and deployment of nuclear weapons began to form immediately after the first and the only two nuclear weapons used in the war, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings on 6 and 9 August 1945 respectively<sup>3</sup>. This topic is also inextricably linked to the public "Anti-nuclear movement" that arose from the debate about the ethics of using such destructive weapons for peaceful and military purposes. The main points of discussion were not only the moral aspect, but also the devastating consequences after nuclear weapons testing and use. If there was still a consensus in the society of the time of the Second World War that all available weapons should be used to reduce own losses and inflict the greatest damage on the enemy on the battlefield, After the war, the subsequent development and mass testing of new types and subtypes of such weapons.

Initially the discussion on the need for nuclear weapons limitations remained only in scientific circles and was reflected in the activities of the "United States Atomic Energy Commission", where the experts continued their work "Manhattan project" and led by nuclear power scientist Robert Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer opposed the expansion of the US nuclear arsenal and fought fiercely against the creation of a hydrogen bomb. However, after the nuclear tests in the USSR on 29 September 1949, similar pacifist ideas began to be suppressed in the US, which resulted in the start of a nuclear arms race<sup>4</sup>. The consequence of this competition was a significant increase in nuclear weapons tests in different parts of the world, which affected the health and quality of life of the population of those regions. According to estimates, due to active nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific Islands and on the US mainland, there was subsequently a three-fold increase in radiation levels and at least 550,000 military personnel were exposed to radiation exposure<sup>5</sup>. It is because of the escalation of the nuclear race that issues around the use and testing of nuclear weapons have come out of the scientific circle and become part of public debate.

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<sup>3</sup> How Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Organized for Nuclear Disarmament // History URL: <https://www.history.com/news/hiroshima-nagasaki-survivors-anti-nuclear-activism> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>4</sup> Rubinson P. Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement. 1 изд. London: Routledge, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Resuming Nuclear Testing a Slap in the Face to Survivors // Union of Concerned Scientists URL: <https://blog.ucsusa.org/lilly-adams/resuming-nuclear-testing-a-slap-in-the-face-to-survivors/> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).



The question of nuclear weapons placement by nuclear powers in other countries (e.g., allies in a military bloc) arose after the division of Europe into two military groupings - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and The Warsaw Pact, which, at the time of the emergence of the organizations, included all the countries of the so-called "nuclear club". The centers of the two competing superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, are geographically distant from each other, which has made it necessary to place their nuclear arsenals on the territory of their allies, that involved non-nuclear powers in a nuclear confrontation.

Due to the increase in international tensions and the increased risks of using nuclear weapons, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Polish People's Republic, Adam Rapacki, spoke at the 12th session of the UN General Assembly, who first proposed the concept of denuclearization, calling it "the concept of a free-atomic zone"<sup>6</sup>. This proposal was a first step towards building international confidence and reducing the risks of an escalation of the Cold War. The core of Rapacki's plan was a proposal to adopt the "denuclearized" status of the Polish Republic, provided that both German states (in this case, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic) agree to accept

this status as well. The Rapacki proposal was a logical continuation of the 1955 Geneva conference and sought to achieve a small "decompression" in the nuclear weapons sphere. Strongly supported by the Eastern bloc, the plan has not met with a response from NATO members. The key argument against denuclearization in the Rapacki's concept for Western Europe is that without nuclear support they face the threat of Soviet domination in Europe. For them, nuclear weapons were a way to wipe out the Red Army's numerical superiority. The first plan to establish nuclear-free zones was finally abandoned after the intensification of the Cold War in the form of the Berlin crisis of 1958-1959, after which all the beginnings and further cooperation of the blocs were impossible.

The problem of proliferation and nuclear weapons deployment was re-emphasized during the **Cuban missile crisis** in 1962. The essence of the crisis was precisely to use the territory of a foreign state to expand the reach of its nuclear weapons, which caused deep anxiety among the population both US and USSR, as well as other non-nuclear powers, that could have been in the place of the Republic of Cuba and Turkey. The sense of fear from the brink of nuclear catastrophe and concern about nuclear contamination has been a catalyst for mass protests in Western

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<sup>6</sup> Карин А.Д. План Рапацкого и идея атомного разоружения // Всероссийская научно-практическая конференция. Томск: НВГУ, 2021.



tries. Based on the "Women for Peace" movement, the US movement to limit testing has taken a swing and this has pushed President Kennedy's administration to agree with the Soviet Union to partially limit nuclear testing.

In the case of the Soviet Union, the reason for the move to limit testing was the widespread concern of the country's leadership related to the increase in radiation levels in peaceful parts of the state (e.g., radiation measurements in Moscow and Leningrad exceeded acceptable levels) and, in particular, the strong shock of the population after the accident in Kyshtym, when irreparable damage was caused to local populations and territories<sup>7</sup>.

## **Nuclear-free zones and their emergence**

The organization of nuclear-free zones, which were similar to the plan of Adam Rapacky, began with neutral Antarctica under the 1959 **Antarctic Treaty**. This is not surprising, because Antarctica was then a no-win territory, and the parties agreed on the need to use its territory for the benefit of all humanity. One of the issues that countries addressed at the

conference in Washington during 1958 was the issue of the continent's nuclear status. The Antarctic Treaty has thus become a model for future disarmament and environmental agreements. He set an example of legal norms and principles that would be applied in other regions of the world. Its success also inspired UN countries to engage in regional and international initiatives on denuclearization and was a step towards creating a global security architecture. Such treaties made it possible to prevent nuclear conflict in these geographical zones forever<sup>8</sup>.

**The Partial Test Ban Treaty** of 1963 followed the trend after **The Antarctic Treaty** and was a significant step towards a comprehensive and comprehensive ban on nuclear testing and nuclear weapons in general. The treaty included a ban on testing in the atmosphere, outer space and underwater. This choice of locations was prompted by the need to reduce "hazardous" tests, whose consequences and contamination could not be predicted at the planning stage. The Treaty achieved its main objective, which was to reduce C14 isotope emissions and bring the natural background of radiation back to normal.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Кыштымская трагедия. Издержки мирного атома // ВДПО URL: <https://вдпо.рф/blog/post/kyshtymskaya-tragediya-izderzhki-mirnogo-atoma> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>8</sup> The Antarctic Treaty Explained // British Antarctic Survey URL: <https://www.bas.ac.uk/about/antarctica/the-antarctic-treaty/the-antarctic-treaty-explained/> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>9</sup> Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) // NTI URL: <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/treaty-banning-nuclear-test-atmosphere-outer-space-and-under-water-partial-test-ban-treaty-ptbt/> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).



Between 1963 and the end of the millennium, states continued to seek ways to reduce international tensions, and a series of treaties banning the deployment of nuclear weapons and their testing at various levels began. The major nuclear powers signed the **Outer Space Treaty** in 1967, which was built on principles similar to the Antarctic Treaty. He has designated the Earth's orbit, the Moon and any other space object as a nuclear-free zone and establishes a regime for the peaceful use of outer space. The First Committee of the UN General Assembly in 1968 developed **The Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**, which legally established rules for establishing future nuclear-free zones<sup>10</sup> and should have restrained the expansion of countries that possess nuclear weapons.

The missile crisis in Cuba in 1962 was the occasion for South American states to conclude **The Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean** (also known as The Tlatelolco Treaty). This treaty defined a certain geographical area that stretched from Mexico to Chile and covered the entire territory of Latin America, the Caribbean and affected the overseas territories of colonial powers.

The increase in anti-nuclear movement has led to changes in political devices and at the level of whole states that have included anti-nuclear status in their defense strategies. The first state to declare its own complete nuclear-free crisis was New Zealand, which in 1987 banned by a single act any deployment of nuclear weapons, nuclear power plants and ships with nuclear facilities. This led to the breakdown of New Zealand's alliance with the United States, and the country's nuclear-free status is still a civil and political consensus.

Similar regional treaties were concluded in the South Pacific region in 1986, in post-Soviet Central Asia and throughout Africa in 2009. It is noteworthy that regional integration groups have also entered nuclear-free zone treaties, such as the ASEAN treaty of 1997, where the signatory countries are simultaneously members of one integration association.

The latest attempt to create a comprehensive treaty, to which all world powers were invited, was the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons** in 2017, which has now been signed by 86 states, not including countries of the "nuclear club".

Thus, the world now has five nuclear-free zones that include 114 states, an area of 84 million square kilometers, which inhabit almost half of

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<sup>10</sup> Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZ) At a Glance // TACC URL: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/wmd-free-middle-east-proposal-glance> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).





the world's population. The only country that has voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons and joined a nuclear-free zone is South Africa.

## **IAEA and its structure**

IAEA, or the International Atomic Energy Agency, was founded in 1957 as a reaction on a backdrop of global developments in nuclear science and technology<sup>11</sup>. The idea of a specialized agency for nuclear energy arose from efforts to adapt nuclear energy for peaceful use and minimize the potential threats associated with its proliferation of nuclear weapons. After World War II and after two cases of usage of nuclear weapons in a military conflict, the international community realized that it needed to impose international supervision over the proliferation of nuclear technology to prevent its use for military purposes.

On 8 December 1953, US President Dwight Eisenhower delivered the famous speech "Atoms for Peace" to the UN General Assembly. In his speech he proposed the creation of an international body to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and prevent its use for military purposes. The project was originally intended as a channel of interaction with the Soviet Union, but due to the scepticism of the So-

viet side, negotiations for the creation of an organization were between Western countries - Canada, the United Kingdom and other European allies of the USA. The Soviet side joined in drafting a new organization's charter as early as 1955 in Switzerland, where the first meeting of scientists on nuclear research took place.

In 1956, from 23 May to 20 June, the UN Conference on the Charter of the International Atomic Energy Agency was held at the UN headquarters in New York. At this conference, representatives of 81 countries discussed and agreed on the Charter of the future agency. On 26 October, the IAEA Charter was finally adopted. Vienna was proposed as the capital of a "peaceful atom" not least as a country that has just gained independence from the Allied administrations. The location of the new UN body in her capital allowed Austria to quickly enter the international arena.

In 1957, on 29 July, the IAEA Statute entered into force after being ratified by representatives of 26 states. This day is considered the official date of establishment of the agency. On 14 November 1958, the first meeting of the IAEA General Conference was held in Vienna. The American physicist William Stirling took up his duties as a first Director General of IAEA.

In 1961, the agency signed an agreement with the United Nations that defined the IAEA's sta-

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<sup>11</sup> History // IAEA URL: <https://www.iaea.org/about/overview/history> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).



tus as a specialized agency of the United Nations, reporting directly to the General Assembly once a year.

IAEA has become a key body for the control of organizations of nuclear-free zones and relevant treaties (for example, the Treaty of Tlatelolco). The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons entered into force in 1970 and IAEA was appointed to carry out verifications and inspections under that Treaty.

In 1989, Hans Blix, a Swedish lawyer and diplomat whose years of management have been some of the most challenging in the history of the IAEA, became its Director General. During his tenure, the agency was confronted with the discovery of a nuclear weapons program in Iraq and Iran.

In 2005, the international community recognized the IAEA's contribution to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and preventing its proliferation by awarding the agency and its Director General, Mohammed El-Baradei, with the Nobel Peace Prize.

The organization has several key bodies, each of which performs its unique functions. The IAEA's governing body is the General Conference, which meets annually and consists of representatives from all 175 member states. The General Conference makes important decisions

on the policy, budget and work program of the agency. It also provides a forum for discussion of nuclear security and cooperation among States.

The Board of Governors<sup>12</sup> is an important body of IAEA, composed of 35 member states elected by the General Conference for a two-year term. The Executive Board is responsible for managing the agency's current affairs, reviewing budget issues and monitoring compliance with the decisions of the General Conference. The Governing Council meets five times a year, except for urgent meetings.

Operating body of the IAEA structure is the Secretariat, headed by a Director General appointed by the General Conference. The secretariat ensures that decisions of the governing bodies are implemented and carries out the daily operations of the agency. He is also responsible for preparing reports, conducting research and organizing international meetings and events.

IAEA also has several specialized committees and working groups that deal with specific aspects of nuclear energy, such as the safety of nuclear facilities, radiation safety, nuclear control and non-proliferation.

Considering the objectives and goals of IAEA, several key areas of activity can be identified as follows:

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<sup>12</sup> Offices Reporting to the Director General // IAEA URL: <https://www.iaea.org/about/organizational-structure/offices-reporting-to-the-director-general> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).



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**energy**, in which the agency is actively working on the dissemination of knowledge and technologies for the safe use of nuclear energy, including its application in energy, medicine and research activities.

IAEA develops international norms and standards in the field of nuclear safety and security to prevent incidents of nuclear terrorism and protect nuclear materials and to ensure **the safety of nuclear technologies**.

IAEA nuclear site inspections, as part of **the verification of international obligations**, play a key role in ensuring compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. IAEA monitors and verifies the declarations of member states to warn and detect violations and inconsistencies.



### Current position and positions of key actors on the issue of denuclearization in the Middle East

#### The current situation with the nuclear-free zone in the Middle East

The Middle East is a region with heightened political instability and risks associated with long-term conflicts between states. Today, the most worrying issue is the intractable Arab-Israeli conflict that has again entered its active phase following a Palestinian Hamas paramilitary attack on the State of Israel on 7 October 2023. The spread of the conflict to the entire region has led to concerns for its security, not only in the economic and humanitarian sphere but also in the nuclear field.

According to the UN, in the Middle East region at least two states have or have had nuclear programs - the Islamic Republic of Iran and the State of Israel. If in the case of Iran's nuclear program, the agency has proof of its existence, in the case of Israel there is no direct evidence that confirms or disproves the presence of a nuclear arsenal. This state of affairs makes it very difficult to build collective confidence in the

region and prevents progress on the issue of denuclearization.

The UN is seeking a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East for several reasons. The UN sees in a nuclear-free zone an opportunity to reduce political escalation in the region and ensure regional stability through the creation of a collective security system<sup>13</sup>. The General Assembly created an annual **Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction** in 2018, which aimed to establish a Middle East Zone Free of All Weapons of Mass Destruction. The conference included all countries of the League of Arab States, including the Islamic Republic of Iran. This conference is the main specialized meeting to address this issue, based on the General Assembly and with consultations with the First Committee of the GA. The conference has now held four sessions, the last of which was in November 2023<sup>14</sup>. One of the topics of discussion was the comments made by some Israeli officials, who were condemned by the commission's member countries. The State of Israel is boycotting this conference and has not sent its representatives<sup>15</sup>, what is preventing this

<sup>13</sup> В ООН обсуждают возможность создания безъядерной зоны на Ближнем Востоке // United Nations URL: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2019/11/1367371> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>14</sup> Доклад Конференции по вопросу о создании на Ближнем Востоке зоны, свободной от ядерного оружия и других видов оружия массового уничтожения, о работе ее четвертой сессии // United Nations URL: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/365/20/pdf/n2336520.pdf> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>15</sup> Безъядерное обсуждают без Израиля // Коммерсантъ URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6337590> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).



conference  
from developing an effective disarmament strategy.

## Position of the State of Israel

Israel is one of the first members of the IAEA and joined the organization in its founding year, 1957. However, Israel is not a signatory to the **Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons** and does not allow agency experts into its nuclear facility in Dimona, where independent sources say Israel is developing its nuclear weapons technology. It is believed that in this way, Israel artificially threatens to have a nuclear arsenal to ensure national security in the event of future conflicts with Arab states. The issue of Israel's possession of nuclear weapons has been a concern since the late 1980s<sup>16</sup>, when this topic first appeared in international discourse. By publishing information in Western newspapers from the Israeli nuclear engineer Mordechai Vanunu in 1986, the world learned about Israel's nuclear weapons development and saw the photos. The Israeli state has refused to comment on this information despite a request from IAEA, of which it is a member. The international public

has been shocked by Mordecai's kidnapping in Italy and his illegal transport to Israel.

Today, the Israeli position is considered one of the main obstacles to the creation of a nuclear-free zone. Israel ignores calls to sign or ratify previously signed treaties that deal with any aspect of nuclear power or weapons. For example, Israel has signed but not ratified the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials, which regulates the circulation of nuclear materials and allows IAEA experts to monitor their use. During the current conflict, the State of Israel for the first time indirectly confirmed their possession of nuclear weapons, according to the words of the Minister for Jerusalem Affairs, Amihay Eliahu<sup>17</sup>, who called the use of nuclear weapons «one of the options» possible. It has launched a new round of discussions in the region around the threat of nuclear blackmail and has again undermined the trust of regional states.

However, Israel is actively promoting the denuclearization of the area and is participating in the development of relevant directives. The key position of Israel in voting on this issue is to seek consensus on this decision. However, since 2018, in the discussions of the First Committee of the GA, Israel announced that it no longer

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<sup>16</sup> Как Израиль развивал свою ядерную программу и какое оружие имеет сейчас // РБК URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/08/11/2023/654a49709a7947d111f2d810> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>17</sup> В Палестине заявили об обращении в МАГАТЭ из-за ядерного оружия Израиля // ТАСС URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/19617927> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).



plans to cooperate with regional arms control agreements<sup>18</sup>, accusing the Arab states of sabotaging the status quo in the region. Israel is supposed to try through diplomatic efforts to maintain its status as the only nuclear state in the region<sup>19</sup>.

## **Position of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the second active regional actor that has been developing its own nuclear weaponry. Before the Islamic revolution of 1979-1980, Iran was limited to developing a peaceful atom under the guidance of French and American experts; but after the revolution it began a project to enrich uranium. According to IAEA, between 2000 and 2003 Iran initiated the so-called «Amad project», which aimed to create a nuclear weapon and create means of its delivery.

Iran is a signatory to all restrictive and prohibitive treaties under the auspices of IAEA, and regularly admits agency experts, but the country's leadership has repeatedly noted that if there is a significant threat they will return to the issue of nuclear weapons. Relations be-

tween the IAEA and Iran began to deteriorate after the failure of the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action** - a treaty between Iran and all permanent members of the UN Security Council. This plan allowed IAEA experts to monitor nuclear facilities on the territory of the Islamic Republic in order to prevent the emergence of nuclear weapons. In return, the security council countries lifted sanctions on Iran.

The end of this plan was the complete withdrawal of the United States from the agreement and its imposition of a sanction's regime against Iran<sup>20</sup>. This was a new round of the crisis around Iran's nuclear program, which split opinions in two. For example, Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin recently stated that the blame for the failure of the initiative lay solely with the US, when Iran fully complied with its side of the agreement<sup>21</sup>. On the other hand, Iran's regional rival Israel has supported US withdrawal from the treaty, claiming that Iran is violating the treaty and expanding its nuclear capabilities. Israel provided evidence in the form of documents from the aforementioned «Amad program» which indicated that Iran continued to conduct covert nuclear research. In turn, the US actions

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<sup>18</sup> Israeli Explanation Of Vote On UNGA Resolution "Establishment Of A Nuclear Weapon Free Zone In The Region Of The Middle East" // UNIDIR URL: <https://app.unidir.org/node/6161> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>19</sup> Sharad Joshi Israel's Nuclear Policy: A Cost-Benefit Analysis // Strategic Analysis: A Monthly Journal of the IDSA. 2000. №12.

<sup>20</sup> THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL: What's Wrong With It And What Can We Do Now? // United Against Nuclear Iran URL: <https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/iran-nuclear-deal> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>21</sup> Путин: Иран выполнял все обязательства по ядерной сделке // ТАСС URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/21008261> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).



condemned by the other four signatory countries of the plan: the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, France and the United Kingdom<sup>22</sup>.

Today, the IAEA is criticizing the Iranian government for sabotaging the agency's activities on the territory of the Islamic Republic and recently issued a resolution calling on Iran to resume cooperation and share responsibility for regional nuclear security. The Iranian government has responded by calling the resolution unconstructive<sup>24</sup>.

In the negotiation process, Iran notes the main goal of achieving a nuclear-free world and supports Israel's position on the consensus agreement<sup>25</sup>.

## **Position of the main actors of the European region**

The European countries (as well as the European Union) have a common position on the need to develop new principles for the denuclearization of the Middle East based on similar treaties. At the recent thematic debate in Geneva on 31 January 2023, the EU representative noted, that for the Union to preserve peace in the Middle East is one of its strategic priorities and noted the crucial role of the existence of nuclear-free zones to maintain a nuclear-free regime in regions around the world. The EU has announced the need for all countries in the Middle East region to join the agreements under the auspices of the IAEA<sup>26</sup>.

France is active in the nuclear disarmament process<sup>27</sup>, emphasizing the importance of diplomacy and multilateral negotiations. Paris believes that such an agreement should include all

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<sup>22</sup> What is the status of the Iran nuclear deal? // House of Commons Library URL: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9870/> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>23</sup> Кондратенко Виктория Константиновна Причины выхода США из "иранской сделки" // Скиф. 2019. №9 (37). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/prichiny-vyhoda-ssha-iz-iranskoj-sdelki> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>24</sup> Насколько Иран приблизился к созданию ядерного оружия // РБК URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/07/06/2024/6661d76c9a7947613d751b88> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>25</sup> Statement by Iran's Deputy Permanent Representative on Nuclear Weapon Free Zone - 31 January 2023 // Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran URL: <https://geneva.mfa.gov.ir/portal/newsview/709290> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>26</sup> EU Explanation of Vote – UN General Assembly 1st Committee: Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East // Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations in New York URL: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-explanation-vote---un-general-assembly-1st-committee-establishment-nuclear-weapon-free-zone\\_en?s=63](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-explanation-vote---un-general-assembly-1st-committee-establishment-nuclear-weapon-free-zone_en?s=63) (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>27</sup> Despite Opposing Views on Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, First Committee Delegates Say 'We Are in the Same Boat', Must Join Forces to Reach Safe Shores // UN URL: <https://press.un.org/en/2019/gadis3637.doc.htm> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).



the states of the region, including Israel, Iran and the Arab countries. France also supports the benefits of nuclear cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy within the framework of this agreement and is the main partner of the countries of the region for nuclear construction.

Germany supports<sup>28</sup> the denuclearization of nuclear power but emphasizes the need for transparency and trust among nations. Berlin believes it is important that all parties agree on a verification mechanism to monitor compliance with the agreements.

The UK is advocating<sup>29</sup> a comprehensive approach to security in the Middle East. London agrees that the denuclearization should be part of a broader strategy to resolve conflicts in the region. The UK also warns against unilateral actions that could exacerbate existing tensions.

## **Position of the Unites States of America**

The United States of America stands as a close ally of the State of Israel and supports the concept of consensus and equal treatment. At a recent vote in the First Committee of the General Assembly in 2018, where it discussed

the establishment of the previously mentioned **Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction**, the US voted against, Supporting the Israeli position. Many experts call the US's support for Israel a bid to preserve its regional nuclear-weapon advantage. The US is accused of a double-standard policy, which consists in supporting its nuclear-armed ally and selling off pro-Iya initiatives to disarm other states in the region<sup>30</sup>.

The US's key stance includes support for diplomatic dialogue, which includes both nuclear and non-nuclear countries, as well as active participation in multilateral forums aimed at creating the conditions for such a zone. The US also emphasizes the importance of respecting international norms, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and calls on all states in the region to be accountable and transparent in their nuclear programs. America is therefore willing to provide an opportunity for agreements that will build confidence and help reduce tensions over nuclear issues in the Middle East.]

## **Position of the League of Arab States**

The League of Arab States has a policy of full support for the denuclearization initiative and

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<sup>28</sup> GERMAN COMMISSIONER FOR DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL ADDRESSES CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT // UN URL: <https://www.un Geneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2009/03/german-commissioner-disarmament-and-arms-control-addresses> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).

<sup>29</sup> Middle East: Nuclear-free Zone // UK Parliament URL: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2008-04-23/debates/08042355000005/MiddleEastNuclear-FreeZone> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).

<sup>30</sup> Nuclear Weapons and Non-Proliferation in the Middle East // Carnegie Endowment URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2024/02/nuclear-weapons-and-non-proliferation-in-the-middle-east?lang=en> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).





Egypt is the initiator of this concept at the UN level. The Arab League member countries are supposed to use international pressure to force Israel to abandon its nuclear program and disarm its nuclear arsenal<sup>31</sup>. The fact that Israel does not deny or confirm its nuclear arsenal is an existential threat to LAS' security. The uniting countries perceive such actions as nuclear blackmail and a threat to their own security and sovereignty.

Egypt is a leading disarmament force in the region<sup>32</sup> and has been an active advocate of the denuclearization zone. Egypt calls this a condition for sustainable peace and security in the region, and demands that all nuclear-weapon states, including Israel, sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and pursue a transparent nuclear weapons policy.

Saudi Arabia also supports the denuclearization initiative<sup>33</sup>, and insists not only on limiting Israel's nuclear presence, but also on halting Iran's nuclear research program. The Kingdom understands the denuclearization as a way to ensure that nuclear technologies will not be

used for weapons and supports international efforts in this area.

Iraq supports<sup>34</sup> the nuclear-free zone initiative and stresses the importance of consensus among Arab countries. Iraq stresses that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should be based on the principles of justice and respect for the sovereignty of all States without exception.

The League of Arab States, as a collective entity, advocates the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, emphasizing the need for joint efforts to overcome political divisions and ensure regional security. LAS countries have similar approaches to the issue, emphasizing the importance of multilateral dialogue and the need to respect international disarmament norms.

## **Position of the Russian Federation**

The Russian Federation has been a fundamental supporter of denuclearization in the Middle East throughout the twenty-first century. Russia is a strong supporter of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and considers its provisions as fundamental for future nuclear-free zones. In 2007<sup>35</sup>, Russia

<sup>31</sup> Cohen A. *The Worst Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain With The Bomb*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the region of the Middle East Report of the Secretary-General // General Assembly First Committee URL: [https://docs-library.unoda.org/General\\_Assembly\\_First\\_Committee\\_-\\_Seventy-Eighth\\_session\\_\(2023\)/77-38-Egypt-EN\\_0.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/General_Assembly_First_Committee_-_Seventy-Eighth_session_(2023)/77-38-Egypt-EN_0.pdf) (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).

<sup>33</sup> STATEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA // IAEA URL: [https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/23/09/saudi-arabia-gc67\\_en.pdf](https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/23/09/saudi-arabia-gc67_en.pdf) (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).

<sup>34</sup> Iraq cooperating with disarmament procedures, but many banned weapons remain unaccounted for, inspectors tell Security Council // OHCHR URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/iraq-cooperating-disarmament-procedures-many-banned-weapons-remain> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).

<sup>35</sup> Россия выступает за создание безъядерной зоны в районе Ближнего Востока // United Nations URL: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2007/07/1109571> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).



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ted a report to the General Assembly, where it invited countries of the region to extend IAEA safeguards activities to all countries without exception. By such actions, the Russian Federation proposes to achieve a fundamentally new regional agreement that would be based on mutual trust and security. In 2015<sup>36</sup>, Russia was only strengthened in its view that it should play a key role in creating momentum for the denuclearization process, but by 2023, according to Russian Permanent Representative Ulyanov, Russia's initiative has been confronted with Israel's position<sup>37</sup>. The Tel Aviv categoricity, not least related to the escalation in Gaza, is facing a Russian initiative, so Moscow insists on an annual nuclear-free zone discussion that should eventually lead to agreement.

At the moment, Moscow is trying to consider the complex political realities of the region and balance the interests of all countries, which is necessary for conflict prevention and long-term stability in the Middle East. Thus, the Russian position on the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East reflects its determination to strengthen peace and security in one of the most conflicted regions of the world.

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<sup>36</sup> Россия настояла на создании безъядерной зоны на Ближнем Востоке // RG URL: <https://rg.ru/2015/04/17/zona-site.html> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).

<sup>37</sup> В России оценили шансы создания на Ближнем Востоке зоны без ядерного оружия // Газета.ru URL: <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2023/12/28/22023085.shtml?updated> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).



### Chapter 3: International Movements for Nuclear Disarmament

The participation of the anti-nuclear community in reducing nuclear tension and establishing a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East is an important aspect of global security. The region, beset by conflict and political instability, represents a unique and complex challenge for the international community. Anti-nuclear movements and organizations play a key role in promoting disarmament, building confidence among nations and ensuring sustainable peace.

#### International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and its achievements

One striking example of the anti-nuclear community's involvement is the work of the **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)**<sup>38</sup>. This organization, which won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, actively promotes the idea of complete nuclear disarmament and the creation of nuclear-free zones. ICAN organizes conferences, seminars and campaigns aimed at raising awareness of the risks associated with nuclear weapons as well as at drawing attention to the humanitarian con-

sequences of nuclear conflicts. In the context of the Middle East, ICAN emphasizes the need for a nuclear-free zone, which could be an important step towards reducing tensions between the countries of the region.

Another important example is the work of non-governmental organizations such as "Greenpeace" and "Peace Alliance", which are also engaged in nuclear disarmament<sup>39</sup>. These organizations campaign against nuclear testing and promote international dialogue on security issues. In 2019, "Greenpeace" organized an action in support of the denuclearized zone in the Middle East, drawing public attention to the need to solve this problem.

Education and awareness is an important aspect of the work of the anti-nuclear community. The organization conducts lectures, training and educational programs for youth and the general public, explaining the risks associated with nuclear weapons and the importance of disarmament. This provides a basis for the formation of public opinion in support of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.

Yet, despite the efforts of the anti-nuclear community, there are many challenges to achieving

<sup>38</sup> The campaign // ICAN URL: [https://www.icanw.org/the\\_campaign](https://www.icanw.org/the_campaign) (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>39</sup> Greenpeace opposes nuclear energy. Young climate activists say that's 'old-fashioned' // CBC URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/dear-greenpeace-nuclear-energy-1.6958765> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).



t h i s goal. Political mistrust among<sup>40</sup> the states of the region, conflicts and rivalries hinder dialogue and joint action. However, the anti-nuclear movements continue to work on overcoming these barriers, emphasizing the need for cooperation to ensure security and stability.

The participation of the anti-nuclear community in reducing nuclear tension and establishing a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East is thus an integral part of the global strategy for peace. Through active participation in dialogues, educational initiatives and lobbying disarmament programmes, these organizations seek to create a safer world for future generations.

### **“Nevada-Semipalatinsk” movement**

The "Nevada-Semipalatinsk" movement was established in the early 1990s in Kazakhstan and became an important element in the fight against nuclear testing and for nuclear disarmament that united two anti-nuclear movements of the biggest nuclear countries<sup>41</sup>. The movement was named after two key nuclear test sites: Nevada in the US and Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan, where nuclear tests were conduct-

ed. The causes of its occurrence were related to the environmental and social consequences of nuclear tests, which were experienced by residents, who had undergone serious changes in their health and living conditions.

The activists of the "Nevada-Semipalatinsk" movement were mostly people suffering from the consequences of nuclear tests, environmentalists, scientists and human rights defenders. They aimed to draw public attention to the dangers of nuclear weapons and demanded an immediate halt to the tests. One of the movement's most significant actions was a mass march in 1991, when thousands of people took to the streets of Almaty, protesting against the nuclear legacy and demanding the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site.

The main achievement of the movement was the closure of the Semipalatinsk testing ground in 1991, which was a significant step in the Kazakh state administration after independence. This decision was supported by the then President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who understood the importance of nuclear disarmament for both the country's domestic development and international image<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> The Roots of Middle East Mistrust // Project Syndicate URL: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/roots-of-middle-east-mistrust-by-timur-kuran-2016-07> (дата обращения: 22.08.2024).

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/nevada-semipalatinsk-movement-and-international-citizens-congress-nuclear-test-ban>

<sup>42</sup> Kazakhs stop nuclear testing (Nevada-Semipalatinsk Antinuclear Campaign), 1989-1991 // Global Nonviolent Action Database Toggle URL: <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/kazakhs-stop-nuclear-testing-nevada-semipalatinsk-antinuclear-campaign-1989-1991> (дата обращения: 07.10.2024).



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The "Nevada-Semipalatinsk" movement not only managed to close the site, but also played an important role in spreading the ideas of nuclear disarmament on the international scene. Kazakhstan has become an active participant in global initiatives for nuclear arms limitation and non-proliferation, having signed a number of international treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.



## Conclusion

The creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East and the Middle East remains one of the most urgent and difficult challenges in the field of international security. The region, which is rife with conflicts, political instability and historical tensions, requires a comprehensive approach to achieve sustainable peace and security. The nuclear weapons issue includes not only the presence of nuclear arsenals, but also questions of confidence among states, compliance with international agreements and transparency in defense strategies. Nuclear weapons add a new level of complexity to existing problems, and their presence or potential presence in the region is causing concern among both neighbors and the international community.

One of the key issues to be addressed is the need for a platform for dialogue among countries in the region. The existing divisions and mistrust among States such as Iran, Israel and the Arab countries are impeding constructive negotiations on a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Also, the dysfunction of all existing dialogue platforms due to lack plays a serious role. It is important to develop mechanisms that allow countries to discuss their concerns and interests

openly, as well as to find compromises that help reduce tensions.

The countries' different positions on this issue also play a significant role. Israel has a policy of uncertainty about its nuclear arsenal and considers it necessary for its security. At the same time, Iran insists on the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy and accuses other states of double standards. The Arab countries, in turn, demand that Israel recognize the region's nuclear-free status and respect international norms, while the Western states advocate a nuclear-free status without preconditions. These differences underline the need for a neutral platform to discuss and develop common principles.

The situation remains tense today. Despite some cooperative steps, such as international conferences and confidence-building initiatives, the results remain limited. The adoption of a resolution at the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference on the need for a denuclearized zone in the Middle East was an important step forward. However, the implementation of this resolution faces serious obstacles.

Finally, the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle and Middle East requires not only political will on the part of States but also active participation by the international community. It is necessary to continue working on building confidence between countries, developing control

and transparency mechanisms, and involving civil society in the process of discussing nuclear security. Only by working together can stability and peace be achieved in this strategically important region, ensuring security for future generations.

The denuclearization process faces several key challenges. One of the main obstacles is deep mistrust among the countries of the region. Israel considers its nuclear program necessary to survive a threat from its neighbors, while the Arab countries demand that Israel recognize the region's non-nuclear status. The political instability caused by the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, as well as the tense relations between Iran and the Arab states, make it difficult to establish a platform for dialogue. Intervention by external powers such as the US and Russia<sup>43</sup> They both help to resolve the situation and complicate it, because support for certain regimes or groups can undermine efforts to establish a nuclear-free zone. Finally, the different approaches to nuclear safety and threat perceptions of each state create additional barriers to consensus.

Despite the complex challenges, a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East is possible if an integrated approach is adopted. Dialogue should be established among all stakeholders, providing a

platform for open negotiations with international organizations and countries that are mediating. Confidence-building among states is also an important step: it may include information sharing on nuclear programs and joint civil defense exercises. The active participation of the international community, including the UN and other organizations, in the process of denuclearization will be an important element for the success of this initiative. Education programs aimed at raising public awareness of the risks and benefits of denuclearization can help to engage civil society in discussions on nuclear safety. Finally, the development of a clear legal framework to define countries' obligations to renounce and control nuclear weapons will contribute to the establishment of a sustainable security system.

Thus, the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East and the Middle East is a complex but vital task for ensuring stability and security in the region. Despite the challenges, active dialogue, international cooperation and confidence-building can be the basis for achieving this goal. Successful implementation of nuclear-free zone initiatives will not only provide security for the countries in the region, but also be an important step towards global peace and stability in the face of growing threats from nuclear weapons.

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