

U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

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Introduction

The Middle East is one of the regions of the world that have faced serious political instability. The region plays host to significant historic antagonist states of the world, which are Palestine, Israel and Iran. These countries have had endless geographical disagreements which often result in wars. The war between these states has been a key contributor to the unrest witnessed in the Middle East. This is because the war takes different dimensions, for instance, religious affiliations. The Muslim extremists have quite often come out strong in support of Palestinians. This, therefore, called for increased protection of Israel by the International Community. This was especially due to the historical injustice that was meted out to the Jews by Adolf Hitler's regime¹. This was a substantial contributing factor to the leniency the International Community expressed towards Israel when Tel Aviv chose to go nuclear. This move served as an impetus for Iran's growing interest in investing in nuclear energy. This paper aims at establishing the policy through which the U.S. can tackle the Middle East nuclear weapons` issue.

It is understood that Iran launched its nuclear program in the 1960s. The fundamental role of this program was to provide energy for the local industries. The U.S. was at the fore in supporting this move, through its offer to extend nuclear technology to Iran². Germany and France also went ahead to allow their companies to engage in the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant project. The project is said to have taken another course during Iranian Revolution in the early 1980s. The revolution witnessed a change of the country's administration. The new administration is reported to have done away with the transparency that had been earlier the driving force behind the nuclear power project. This eventually led to

¹ Spiegel Stephen & Kibbe Jennifer, *The Dynamics of Middle East Nuclear Proliferation, Volume 66*, (Edwin Mullen Press, 2008).

² Adam Ogultarhan, "An Examination of U.S. Policies in the Middle East and the Implication of those Policies on the U.S. Global Position". (Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations, 9 no.1 2010 113-142)

suspicion in the International Community regarding Iran's nuclear engagements³. U.S. intelligence has often reported on Iran's journey towards nuclear warfare, which is against the NPT.

Tehran has maintained that its nuclear power plant is for electricity production. This argument has, however, not moved in line with the reports of UN nuclear inspectors. In November 2011, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) realized that Iran had increased its stock of Uranium, and was moving towards production of nuclear fuel. In February 2012, IAEA confirmed that Iran had started producing nuclear fuel. The report indicates that the nuclear fuel plant is located in a mountain which is very close to the holy city of Qum. It is understood that a very thin line exists between production of nuclear fuel and production of nuclear weapons. This is a move that causes tension in the international community at large; bearing in mind that Iran is doing this against the NPT which had discouraged Iran's enrichment of Uranium fuel until claims of its involvement in nuclear weapons are cleared.

Talks calling upon Iran to stop its nuclear activities that could soon see it become the tenth nuclear state have often ended without any success. Many times such talks have been initiated upon the release of a report suggesting that Iran is enriching itself with uranium fuel. The talks have often been the subject of failed lengthy deliberations due to lack of willingness of either party to drop its demands. For instance, the latest talks, which took place in Baghdad collapsed, since Iran demanded the West to drop all sanctions against it. The United States and the other six world powers were unable to come to terms with Iran's demand. This forced the talks to be adjourned until June in Moscow. The most devastating issue lies in the fact that

³ Slavin Barbara, *Bitter Friends Bosom, Enemies: Iran, the U.S., and the Twisted Paths to Confrontation*. (St. Martin's Press, 2009).

no one is sure about which new findings could be discovered before the negotiations resume. This presents a very precarious situation both in the Middle East and the rest of the world⁴.

Israel has been high on alert, following the revelation by the IAEA in February on the progress of Iran's nuclear program. The launch of a nuclear fuel plant near Qum is viewed by Israel as a clear indication of Iran's desire to manufacture nuclear weapons; contrary to its claim of peaceful use of nuclear energy. NPT had earlier permitted Iran to continue with its nuclear program on account that it is for generation of non-war nuclear items. Iran's suspicious nuclear program appears to have worsened its relationship with Israel. The two countries are historical enemies, and for that Israel has a feeling that its security is threatened by what Iran is doing. As a result, intelligence reports indicate that Israel is planning to launch attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities at Natanz. Experts believe that Israel was able to test a long-range ballistic missile. This was carried out from an Air Force base that is located south of Tel Aviv. Prior to the launch of the missile test, speculation marred Israeli media on whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak had eventually made up their mind on attacking Iran's nuclear facilities.

U.S. Nuclear Policy

The Middle East and Western countries have been vital trade partners. However, terrorism activities, targeting the West, with their origin in the East have been a major threat to these international relations. This has made the West to be more interested in the Middle East's current events. This explains the importance of the policy that the U.S. should adopt in regard to nuclear weapons in the Middle East. A review of earlier policies that the U.S. adopted in regard to nuclear weapons in this region is important in asserting why bolstering the global non-proliferation regime is the only way forward for the United States.

⁴ Nuclear Talks, 2012, "Talks End With No Deal", (*The New York Times*, Dated May 24, 2012).

Export Controls Policy

The exports control policy used by the U.S.A for quite a long period in the Middle East has come up under criticism for increasing woes in the region.⁵ The policy entails the introduction of trade sanctions on any state of the Middle East that embarks on non-proliferation activities. The policy aims at ensuring that the region remains safe from nuclear weapons. Experts have however discovered that by imposing sanctions, for example, the case in Iran, the problem is not solved. It should be understood that the issue of nuclear weapons in Iran is engulfed by so many misconceptions about the culture of the people. As noted earlier, prior to fall out, the U.S.A and Iran were allies. The U.S. should seek a policy that can reinstate the earlier relations, instead of hostility.

It is paramount that the U.S. maintains its position as the major world power. This is only possible by avoiding scenarios through which its rivals, for example, Russia, China and India are looking upon in order to increase their superiority. These countries have been taking advantage of the sanctions that the U.S. imposes on Iran and the entire Middle East region in order to further their interests. This is an issue that the U.S. policymakers failed to consider before adopting the export controls policy. It further causes more harm to the innocent people of the Middle East. This is clear, since Iran is still going ahead with its suspicious nuclear program even in the wake of stiffer sanctions from the entire West.

Deterrence Policy

The U.S. policymakers have been deliberating on the effectiveness of deterrence policy. Here, the U.S. is expected to strengthen Iran's neighbors so as to enable them deal with Iran nuclear menace. This policy was strongly advocated for by President George W.

⁵ Vali Nasr & Ray Takey, "The Cost of Containing Iran Washington's Misguided New Middle East Policy", (*Transatlantic Affairs Newsletter*, 3 no.5, 2008).

Bush's administration. This administration is reported to have provided a total amount of \$ 20 billion to Saudi-Arabia for arms package. This was given out so as to strengthen Saudi Arabia in terms of military stability. This stability was established. This policy saw the strengthening of ties between the U.S. and Israel, an issue which continues to cause havoc in Iran. It appears as if the policy makers forgot the fact that Israel was a nuclear state. By pursuing this policy, the U.S. was putting the entire Middle East at risk. There was little or no consideration of what would happen if, for instance, Israel launched attacks against Iran's nuclear facility and lost the attack. This would eventually result to nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

Dealing with the nuclear weapons threat in the Middle East requires more sober policy; policy that will not be seen as being partial by any of the countries from the region. It has to be issue based, quite in line with the NPT provisions. This way, it will not be seen as targeting a specific state and hence, will have the ability to bring normalcy through dialogue in the region. It is, therefore, desired that the U.S. adopts the global non-proliferation regime as a policy through which to tackle the Middle East nuclear weapons menace.

Measures Being Undertaken to Address this Issue

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) held its conference during 8-28 May to come up with possible control measures of nuclear weapons production, among other factors that affect its operations. The target was to find possible mechanisms of making the target countries ascend to the treaty. This, more specifically, targeted those of the Middle East. Among the provisions of the treaty that were brought to the fore during the conference, was the nuclear disarmament and security assurance to the countries that were involved, the issues that affect the Middle East region and the implementation of the 1995 Agreement on the Middle East. During the conference, the U.S policy makers were faced with a variety of controversies and challenges that formed the basis of the recent actions being carried out.

These challenges were classified generally into three categories, which include disarmament, nonproliferation and responsible use of the nuclear energy. These were expanded to incorporate the non-NPT countries, and were also targeted at addressing the issue of establishing the zone of free weapons with regard to mass destruction. One of the steps, taken as recommended by the U.S policy makers on this issue, is disarmament. This is in accordance with article IV of the Treaty, which requires that all parties to the Treaty partake in negotiation talks aimed at cessation of the nuclear weapons in circulation. This idea has been welcomed by most NPT members, although with doubts of whether the measures being taken were enough. In conjunction with their doubts, the parties, however, had the feeling that Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT) was better placed in fulfilling the requirements of article IV. The U.S, in response, emphasized that the step had equal weight in achieving the requirements of article IV. As a consequence, the U.S established the START agreement with Russia, as was recommended by the parties to replace the 1991 START treaty. The treaty, which was signed on April 8th, 2010, required the declaration of the treaty member countries to prevent the deployment of nuclear weapons. President Obama stated that this had been in line with article IV and expressed the endeavor of the U.S towards ensuring the non-deployment of the nuclear weapons⁶.

Another step, being thought over by the U.S. policy makers, is the ratification of the CTBT, which, despite being formulated back in 1996, has not been enforced. The U.S. is under pressure to ratify the treaty as done by some of the NPT member states, such as Britain and Russia. The analysts argue that this will prompt other NPT and non-NPT member states to ratify the treaty. This pressure is being piled by the international community which is terming the ratification by the U.S. as a touchstone in complying with the article IV. This is also being echoed by analysts who have argued that this would convince other countries to support the U.S in its initiatives to strengthen the nonproliferation regime⁷.

The U.S policy makers are also considering a variety of moves aimed at countering proliferation, referred to as nonproliferation and compliance. In doing this, one of the considerations being made is the reduction in reliance on nuclear weapons. This is to be achieved through ensuring peaceful co-existence of nations and finding alternative means towards approaching conflicts. This should be viewed in line with the Safeguards Agreements, which require that the member states ascend to the treaty, which is in compliance to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). These agreements aim at ensuring safe application of nuclear materials other than directing them at preparing destructive weapons⁸.

The U.S. has opted to avert any situations that could culminate into employment of these weapons. The non- nuclear-weapon states conduct is governed by two NPT`s articles. Noncompliance to these requirements is subject to action as specified by two articles of the IAEA agreement. The U.S. has also opted to uphold its policy of the nuclear deterrent, which restricts retaliatory attacks, using nuclear weapons on its enemies. The country has also decided to support the pursuit of nuclear energy and encouraged its use for individual purposes as a means of encouraging other non-nuclear-weapon states to comply with the NPT regulations.

Policy Recommendation

In order to prevent proliferation, America ought to embrace a multi-facet approach, including arms control and promotion of international peaceful coexistence of both NPT and non-NPT members. The U.S. should not resort to the use of arms when imparting peace, but rather explore the available diplomatic tactics in arriving at a consensus. Diplomatic approach should also be employed in imparting sanctions, aimed at controlling the usage of nuclear related energy forms. The rules implemented should be applied to all countries to avoid conflicts. This approach is viable, since it offers a platform for all countries in utilizing the

nuclear power, while adhering to the stated rules. Therefore, before resorting to military preemption, the U.S. should first exhaust all possible channels that prevent proliferation. For instance, it should be at the fore front in exploring the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction. This should be achieved through establishing international coalitions to eradicate the recipes of WMD and promote strict mechanisms in safeguarding the components of WDM. Embracing the spirit of harmony helps in critical analysis of issues and its benefits are far more reaching than resorting to military tactics.

The U.S. should also incorporate the additional protocol policy. This involves establishing monitoring mechanisms to ensure that countries do not deviate from the Safeguard Agreement in using the nuclear energy. This provides assurance of the security of other countries and, hence, there is no need in looking for potent protection mechanisms. In coming up with these treaties, equal measures should be taken in controlling the involvement in nuclear weapon production. Apart from assuring the security of the countries, this method is viable since it helps provide proper guidelines towards the use of nuclear power and ensures beneficial gain of the relevant countries. However, this tactic has its main challenge in threatening the security of a given country. Some countries are opposed to this tactic, since they feel that their security detail is compromised in being monitored on their activities. This is brought about by the lack of trust between the member states.

Therefore, the U.S. policy makers should strive towards eradicating the notion that America is safeguarding its own interests in the name of controlling nuclear usage. The U.S needs to create confidence, especially among the Middle East countries, so as to have a breakthrough in the control of nuclear weapons. The U.S should also consider leading by example. They should start off by opening up to their own policies and allow themselves to be assessed, other than focusing on others. This, however, does not apply to America alone. The Middle East countries should learn to respect the treaties as agreed. They should learn to

respect and live by their words. For instance, Iran, despite pledging to stop manufacture of nuclear weapons, still went on, defying the agreements set ⁶(Kenner, 2010). This also creates a sense of insecurity in other countries, prompting them to take part in the unwarranted productions. This has led U.S to focus more on its internal security, as well as safeguarding its vested interests in the Middle East. This has proved expensive for America and has even led to the underfunding of some crucial sectors in the name of funding the security docket.

Conclusion

In controlling nuclear weapon manufacture, the U.S, through its nonproliferation policy, should find mechanisms of increasing the membership of the treaties aimed at creating peaceful coexistence between itself and more specifically the Middle East countries. The policies implemented should not threaten the security state of other countries. The policies should be arrived at through consensus and all member states of a given treaty should be bound by them without any exception. The viability of the policies should be weighed before implementing, as most of them are usually biased. These policies and treaties should be respected by each member state, and implementations foreseen. For instance, in implementing the additional protocol treaty, close supervision should be monitored to those countries that are suspected of violating the IAEA rules. For instance, in 1991, the IAEA confirmed the dismantlement of South African nuclear weapons ⁷(Baeckmann and Pericos, 1995). Iran, for instance, should bind these rules and respect them. All is said than done, military actions are usually much more expensive and would result into much more calamities than approximated. Therefore, the U.S policy makers ought to formulate policies that are focused towards promoting peace, instead of resorting to military actions.

⁶ David Kenner, "Who Wants to Bomb Iran?" *Foreign Policy*
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/02/08/who_wants_to_bomb_iran

⁷ Von Baeckmann, Dillon Perricos, "Nuclear Verification in South Africa," (IAEA Bulletin, January 1995).

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