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## **Nuclear Non-Proliferation from a Gulf Perspective**

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## 1 Introduction

Over the past decades the non-proliferation regime has faced a number of challenges in the Gulf region, putting its effectiveness to test. Traditionally, the Israeli nuclear program has presented a major concern for the Arab states. The six GCC states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and UAE) as part of the wider Arab world, have joined other Arab states in calling for the unconditional nuclear disarmament of Israel and supporting the idea of the Middle East region as a Nuclear Free Zone.

Among the states of the Gulf, Iraq showed an early interest in developing a civilian nuclear program. By the late 1970s, Iraq had embarked on the development of a clandestine military nuclear program. The Israeli air force attack on the Iraqi nuclear installations in mid 1981 set back the development of the program, but by 1990 Iraq had recovered and was able to advance its military nuclear program to a critical stage. In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the UN Security Council resolutions imposed on Iraq resulted in the forced dismantling of the Iraqi civilian and military nuclear programs under the supervision of IAEA and other specialized committees. At this time the GCC states came out in full support of the UN efforts aimed at disarming Iraq of its WMD capability and preventing the state from developing any such capability in the future.

Since 2002/2003, the Iranian nuclear program has emerged as a new source of concern for the GCC states. Some credible evidence had emerged by then pointing to the possibility that the Iranian nuclear program could have military dimensions. For the GCC states, Tehran's nuclear ambition poses a major challenge to their national and regional security, as a nuclear Iran would drastically alter the strategic balance in the geopolitical Gulf.

The GCC states' experience with the Israeli, Iraqi, and lately the Iranian nuclear programs has strengthened their belief that there is a need for an effective and enforceable non-proliferation regime. Currently, the view widely held in the GCC is that the non-proliferation regime is facing serious challenges that undermine its effectiveness and put a question mark over its eventual survivability.

## 2 Regional Non-Proliferation

The likelihood of a nuclear arms race in the Gulf region at present depends to a great extent on whether or not the international community can prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear military ca-

pability. Iran is a member of the NPT and by crossing the nuclear threshold it would not only render the non-proliferation regime obsolete, but would also put a challenge before the GCC states as their security interests will not allow them to accept Iran as the only nuclear power in the region; consequently, if Iran acquires nuclear military capability, the GCC states may have no other option but to enter a nuclear arms race.<sup>1</sup>

The past decades have shown that if one state in the Gulf region aims to achieve military superiority, other regional states will react decisively and try to restore the balance of power. The conventional arms race during the 1970s and 1980s between Iraq and Iran had a certain impact on the GCC states by forcing these states, according to their different capacities, to join the arms race. This past record of the conventional arms race in the Gulf region could serve as an indicator to predict the future behavior of the GCC states in case the non-proliferation regime falls short in preventing certain regional states from developing their nuclear military capability. It is most likely that the majority of the GCC states will seriously consider joining the nuclear arms race as a means of self-defense and as a necessary measure to protect their independence and security.

### GCC attitude toward the Iranian nuclear program

The GCC states have a clear-cut policy towards Iran's nuclear program. When Iran started its program in the 1960s, these states had raised no objections to the civilian nuclear program. As members of the NPT, the GCC states recognized Iran's right to develop a civilian nuclear program and they had no reason to doubt its peaceful intentions. The GCC states, like the rest of the international community, changed their attitude towards the Iranian nuclear program in 2002/2003, when evidence emerged about a clandestine nuclear program. Following IAEA inspections and reports, it became evident that Iran in fact had violated its NPT obligations.

Iran's secret nuclear activities and the lack of transparency in the Iranian nuclear policy has generated deep concern among the GCC states. These states support the argument that Iran as a member of NPT is under binding international legal obligation not to engage in any clandestine activities or develop any form of military nuclear capability. The GCC's capacity to pressurize Iran to abandon its nuclear ambition is limited, there-

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<sup>1</sup> The author bases her assumptions in this paper on discussions with regional officials.

fore the bloc's policy has emphasized the important role of the international community in forcing Iran to abstain from illegal activities. The GCC states supported IAEA efforts and looked at the involvement of the UN Security Council as a positive development toward the internationalization of the effort to prevent Iran from developing illegal nuclear military capability.

The GCC states' stand favors diplomatic and economic measures to pressurize Iran, and publicly at least, expresses its disapproval with the employment of the military options at this stage. However, if sanctions do not work, non-military pressure fails and Iran is successful in continuing the development of its nuclear program, the GCC states could reconsider their objection to the military option. In any case, these states are in no position to prevent a third party from carrying out military action against Iranian nuclear facilities, and they could benefit from such action as a last resort to thwart Iran's nuclear ambition.<sup>2</sup>

### GCC attitude toward India/ Pakistan

While the GCC states do consider a nuclear Iran as a direct threat to their national security and the regional strategic balance, they do not perceive a similar threat from the other two regional nuclear powers, India and Pakistan. Unlike their relations with Iran, the GCC states have no direct strategic engagement with India or Pakistan. There are no existing conflict lines between the GCC states and India/Pakistan. Neither India nor Pakistan have been involved in the past – or are involved at present – in a military confrontation with the GCC states. The governments in India or Pakistan have never posed a threat to the GCC countries. In fact, the GCC states have a close relationship with Pakistan; when India conducted its first nuclear test in 1972, the GCC states supported Pakistan as the first Islamic country to go nuclear.

### 3 Regional Governance

The GCC states have for long rejected the nuclear option. The majority of these states have signed most, if not all, WMD prohibition treaties, including the NPT and the related protocols. Five of the six GCC states have qualified for the Small Quantity Protocol (SQP) status, which implies almost zero nuclear activity. None of the states has a nuclear reactor of any type, nor do they have research facilities. In the past, there have

been allegations against Saudi Arabia about a potential nuclear cooperation with Pakistan; however, to date, there is no evidence to support this claim. Saudi Arabia uses radioactive isotopes only in small quantities and in limited areas: for medical research at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and the Research Center in Riyadh, and for industrial imagery at the Energy Research Laboratory at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran, and the Nuclear Energy Research Institute at King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology in Jeddah.<sup>3</sup> Some experts claim that the CSS-2 ballistic missiles, which the Kingdom purchased from China in 1988, can be used as nuclear delivery system. However, these missiles are designed with conventional warheads. To dispel any fears about the Kingdom's intention to use the missiles as nuclear delivery systems, then King Fahd assured the United States that Saudi Arabia had no intention of equipping them with nuclear warheads.<sup>4</sup>

However, the perceived weakness of the current non-proliferation regime has generated an internal debate within the GCC and in the wider Arab world about the rationality, practicality, and validity of the traditional Arab nuclear policy, which until now had almost totally excluded the use of nuclear technology.

In December 2006, the GCC General Secretary Abdul Rahman Al-Attayah announced the joint decision of the GCC states to establish a nuclear research program. Soon after that the GCC Secretariat opened negotiations with the IAEA seeking approval and support for the project. At the same time, a number of individual GCC states started parallel negotiations with the IAEA to pursue national civilian nuclear programs. Both the GCC research program and the civilian program constitute a clear departure from the traditional regional 'zero nuclear policy' which had been followed until recently.<sup>5</sup> Since the announcement about establishing the civilian programs, the GCC states have acted fast on initiating the planned projects; in March 2008, two of the six GCC states, UAE and Bahrain, signed nuclear

<sup>2</sup> See also Nicole Stracke, "Nuclear Arms Race in the Gulf," *Khaleej Times*, 2 February 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Mustafa Alani, *Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Gulf*, Gulf Research Center, 2008 (forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, April 29, 1988, page 2.

<sup>5</sup> For more about the intention and objectives of GCC nuclear programs, see Nicole Stracke, "Nuclear Development in the Gulf: A Strategic or Economic Necessity," in *Nuclearization of the Gulf, Security and Terrorism Bulletin*, no. 7, December 2007.

energy cooperation agreements with France and the US. On March 23, the UAE government issued the first official document which outlined the state's nuclear strategy.<sup>6</sup> The document underlined the state's commitment to fully cooperate with the IAEA, accept IAEA safeguards, ensure transparency, and respect the international law. To avoid any risk of proliferation, both UAE and Bahrain agreed not to produce their own fuel cycle; instead they would rely on the existing international markets to import the required nuclear fuel. The involvement of the IAEA at the early stages will ensure the project's transparency and strengthen confidence among states and the international community that the program will be for civilian purposes only and follow international legal requirements and will not be misused. The GCC states' declared partnership and technology cooperation with western states and companies give assurances that the nuclear program will fulfill the safety standards related to the nuclear reactors' design and maintenance, transport, storage and disposal of radioactive waste.

The UAE and Bahraini commitment to establish a civilian nuclear program under the supervision of the international legal system follows from the GCC states' long history of commitment to remain free of WMD. To underline this commitment and open a dialogue channel with Iran, the GCC states over the last two years have put forward two major initiatives: the establishment of the Gulf Weapon of Mass Destruction Free Zone and the proposal to establish a Regional Nuclear Enrichment Consortium.

### **The Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Gulf proposal**

The concept of nuclear free zones has proven to be an effective instrument to reduce the chances of nuclear proliferation and help in confidence building; up to this point, none of the countries which are members of NFZ have violated the treaties.

The idea of establishing a Nuclear or a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East is not a new concept. At the meetings of the UN General Assembly in December 1974, a joint Iranian-Egyptian resolution was adopted calling for the declaration of the Middle East as a Nuclear Free Zone. But since then the project has made no progress, despite its continuous tabling wi-

thin the UN agenda, and the ongoing discussion of its contents at regional and international conferences.<sup>7</sup> To break the deadlock, the GCC states decided to put forward the WMDFZ in the Gulf initiative. In December 2005, the GCC Secretary General Al-Attiyah announced for the first time the initiative to declare the Gulf as a weapons of mass destruction free zone. The idea of the WMDFZ in the Gulf is based on the principle of progress from sub-regional to regional approach. The basic idea is that while a Middle East comprehensive security regime appears unachievable in one go, a step-by-step regional security arrangement could be established within the geopolitical Gulf region – at the first stage between the six GCC states, and Yemen, Iraq, Iran to be extended at a later stage to other Middle East states. There are a number of factors which point to the feasibility of such a project:

1. In its initial stages, the WMDFZ in the Gulf will only include the nine states that comprise the geo-political Gulf (including the six GCC states, Yemen, Iraq and Iran) and are linked through common conflict lines, the idea being that states belonging to the geo-political Gulf share the same threat perceptions and have a common interest in achieving the objective of regional security. While the GCC states, which are geographically close to Iran, are mainly concerned about the Iranian nuclear program and perceive it as a direct threat to their national security, other Arab states such as Egypt or Morocco have a rather moderate stance towards Iran's nuclear program. The WMDFZ project is designed in response to the specific sub-regional security concerns, without ignoring the ultimate need for a comprehensive 'all abroad' security and disarmament regime to include all states of the Middle East region.

2. All of the nine Gulf States are eligible for the membership of the proposed Gulf WMDFZ. The majority have adopted the international treaties and protocols prohibiting the positioning or the development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.. On the ground, the concept of the Gulf WMDFZ is already in play; as all of the candidate states have committed themselves to international treaties to refrain from any activities related to WMD. The Gulf WMDFZ project is seen as a starting point and potential cornerstone for a more comprehensive, region-wide non-

<sup>6</sup> *Emirates News Agency*, 23 March 2008. (Statement in Arabic only)

<sup>7</sup> For more on the evolution of the Weapon of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Gulf, see Mustafa Alani, *Weapon of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Gulf*, op.cit.

proliferation regime. The agreements for such a regime would be an “open door” offer; other regional states will be invited to join at a future stage. In that way, this Gulf WMDFZ does not aim to undermine the WMDFZ in the Middle East but rather to complement the idea.

The initial response of the GCC states and the other states such as Iran, Iraq and Yemen towards the idea of WMDFZ in the Gulf was positive<sup>8</sup>. The first meeting to promote the concept took place in 2004 in Dubai and was organized by the Gulf Research Center, a regional think-tank. In the Track II debates that followed, the center brought together international relations specialists, diplomats and senior government officials from the GCC states to evaluate the prospects of such a concept. The three Track II meetings were successful and within only a short time, the GCC adopted the project, and the secretary-general announced the initiative to declare the Gulf region, including Iran, Iraq and Yemen, as WMDFZ during the GCC summit in Abu Dhabi in 2005. The debate of the initiative at the Abu Dhabi GCC summit indicates the GCC states’ general support of the Gulf WMDFZ. Kuwait and the UAE in particular came out strongly in favor of the initiative saying that it could be part of a “new security system” that supports security and stability in the region. During the Track II negotiations in 2006, Iraqi officials were also positive about the initiative viewing it as an important first step toward a Middle East region free of WMD<sup>9</sup>. Iranian officials at the conference too supported the Gulf WMDFZ in principle as long as it did not undermine the strategic importance of the Middle East WMD Free Zone. However, Iran has made its acceptance of the GWMD conditional on Israeli nuclear disarmament and withdrawal of US troops from the Gulf region. The current nuclear stand-off with Iran has led to a temporary setback in the debate. International support is needed in particular from the US, EU and Russia to give the initiative a new boost.

#### **GCC Multinational Nuclear Consortium proposal**

In October 2007, the Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal, put forward a GCC initiative

<sup>8</sup> For official documents on the GWMD Free Zone, see “Nuclearization in the Gulf,” *Security and Terrorism Bulletin*, no 7, page 32-37.

<sup>9</sup> The Arab League criticized the Gulf WMDFZ on the ground that this initiative would undermine the ME WMDFZ. For UAE’s response to the Arab League statement, see: Nuclearization in the Gulf, op.cit.

ve that invited all states of the region, including Iran, interested in nuclear technology to participate in the establishment of a Uranium Enrichment International Consortium for the Middle East states which could be based in a neutral country outside the region.<sup>10</sup> The project aimed to establish a joint enrichment and processing center to supply nuclear fuel to civilian reactors in the Middle East region. All states in the region could thus secure the supply of nuclear fuel for all power plants of member states of the consortium, but they would not have access to enrichment technology. The objective of this proposal is the creation of a regional multi-state consortium under the control and the supervision of the international community to support the states aiming to develop their nuclear programs. The GCC proposal aimed to centralize enrichment activities to prevent the states of the region from militarizing their civilian programs and to ward off the possibility of a nuclear arms race in the region. The proposal was officially rejected by Iran on November 3, 2007, when the Iranian Supreme National Security Council vice-secretary Javad Vaidi said that, “Iran welcomes the idea of a consortium to make fuel abroad, provided Iran can continue with its own fuel-making activities” implicating that Tehran had no intention of stopping its enrichment process or abandoning its right for the production of nuclear fuel.<sup>11</sup> This was the third time Iran rejected a proposal for the internationalization of nuclear fuel supply. Already in August 2005, EU 3 had offered to supply nuclear fuel to Iran if it stopped enrichment activities, and in February 2007, Russia had proposed the enrichment of uranium for Iranian power plants aiming to break the negotiation deadlock and kick-start the idea of curbing non-proliferation through multilateral cooperation. However, the Iranian government did not think these proposals were adequate enough for putting its enrichment program on hold.

#### **4 GCC and Global Governance of Non-Proliferation**

From the point of view of the GCC states, the NPT was founded on the basis of three main pillars: disarmament, nonproliferation and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the right of non-nuclear states to obtain and develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. For the GCC states, the NPT has particularly fai-

<sup>10</sup> See Nicole Stracke, Nuclearization in the Gulf, page 10.

<sup>11</sup> Radio Free Europe, Monday, November 5, 2007 Volume 11 Number 205 (direct quote from AFP)

led to address the first two pillars: Disarmament and Non- Proliferation.

### Failure on disarmament

Article VI of the NPT urges members of the treaty to work towards nuclear disarmament. GCC officials criticize the nuclear states' lack of political commitment in regard to dismantling their nuclear arsenals. Instead of following an active disarmament policy, nuclear states insist on keeping and developing their nuclear weapons stocks; besides, some states are developing a new generation of nuclear weapons, while others have declared that the option of using these weapons – even against non nuclear states – remains part of their “defensive policies and security strategies”.<sup>12</sup>

### Selectiveness of the NPT

The NPT has been working on the basis of selectiveness. Initially, the NPT treaty aimed to include all states in order to prevent proliferation on a global scale. This objective has clearly failed; states such as India, Pakistan and Israel have acquired nuclear military capability but are not under international control. The decision of some states to remain out of the NPT combined with their insistence on developing nuclear capability has raised questions about the objective and universality of the treaty and created a major gap in confidence among states in particular in the Gulf.<sup>13</sup> For Gulf States, Israel's nuclear capability in particular has been a delicate issue. Israel is the only nuclear power in the Middle East and it continues to refuse to place its nuclear facilities under IAEA supervision and join the NPT.<sup>14</sup> In October 2007, Qatar's permanent representative to the UN, at the General Debate of the First Committee of the General Assembly on Disarmament and International Security, talked about the “failure of the political will” which is preventing the NPT from raising its standard and ad-

vancing the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.<sup>15</sup>

### Violations and withdrawal

While the NPT was not effective in disarming nuclear powers and failed to stop non-members from acquiring nuclear capability, it also had its limitations in preventing members of the treaty from violating IAEA obligations and developing nuclear military capability. Members of the NPT have repeatedly violated the treaty. In the 1980s Iraq worked on a militarized nuclear program; North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003 and conducted an underground nuclear test in October 2006; and, in 2003, Iran was caught violating its NPT safeguards agreement. The current Iranian nuclear impasse, along with the Iraqi and North Korean experiences, has revealed a number of weaknesses in the non-proliferation regime.

The fact that Article X in the NPT established the right to withdraw from the treaty giving three months' notice has been used by states such as North Korea and Iran to blackmail the international community into concessions. NPT signatories are aware of the fact that if a member withdraws and continues to develop its nuclear program, this drastically undermines the treaty. States could then be tempted to use the NPT as a means to legally obtain nuclear technology and develop their nuclear know-how. Once these states have reached a certain level, they could leave the NPT and use the obtained knowledge and technology to convert their civilian nuclear programs into military ones. In this context, it is a significant weakness of the NPT that it lacks a punishment mechanism to deter members who decide to leave or violate the treaty. If a member violates the NPT, it is reported to the IAEA, the nuclear watchdog, which then evaluates the scope of the violation and decides whether or not the issue should be referred to the UN Security Council. This process is complex and takes time during which the state can work to advance its nuclear program.

It is the lack of punishment and the slow process of the NPT verification regime that has been criticized by the GCC side, and has played an important part in the Iranian case. In August 2002, the Iranian exile opposition group *Mojahedeen Al Khalq* accused Tehran of hiding a uranium en-

<sup>12</sup> See statement of the League of Arab States at the First Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Vienna, 30 April-11 May 2007.

<sup>13</sup> See statement by Anwar Othman Albarout, Head of the UAE Delegation before the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review NPT Conference, Vienna, 30 April -11 May, 2007. <http://english.mofa.gov.qa/newsPage.cfm?newsid=1207>

<sup>14</sup> See statement of Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review conference.

<sup>15</sup> <http://english.mofa.gov.qa/newsPage.cfm?newsid=1207>, visited 24 March 2007. See also statement of the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

richment facility at Natanz and a heavy water plant at Arak. Five months later, in February 2003, the IAEA was able to act by visiting the suspected, yet undeclared, nuclear sites to verify the claim. However, after that it took almost four years of negotiations and diplomatic struggle until, in December 2006, the UN Security Council imposed the first set of economic and financial sanctions against Iran. Even though it was clear that Iran had violated its safeguards agreements, it took several years for the IAEA to comprehend the full scope of the violation and transfer the Iranian case to the UNSC which then decided to punish Iran. But even with the Iranian nuclear file in the UN Security Council, and after the third round of sanctions, Iran still defies the international community's demands and continues with its nuclear activities. The lack of agreement among the permanent members of the Security Council – US, France and Britain on one side and China and Russia on the other – limits its ability to impose effective sanctions on Iran and pressurize the regime to a point where it would have no other choice but to give in to international demands and put an end to its nuclear enrichment. If the non-proliferation regime is unable to deal with this challenge and Iran as an NPT member crosses the nuclear threshold, it is likely that, in future, states will exploit the weakness of the regime and take advantage of the limitations associated with the NPT.

There are a number of steps that can be adopted to strengthen the non-proliferation regime:

- The easy and secure right that the member states have to withdraw from the NPT should be either removed or the notification period should be extended from three months to 2-3 years. This would prevent members from using the right to withdraw as a "blackmail strategy." It could be extremely difficult to amend the treaty in order to remove the right of withdrawal; however, if the right of withdrawal remains a part of the treaty, it would be helpful to extend the period of notification to allow the international community reasonable time to work to increase its diplomatic pressure in an effort to convince states threatening to withdraw to remain within their international legal obligations.
- To prevent any NPT member from developing a dual use project and diverting scientists and technology from the NPT-supported civilian program to a clandestine military one, every NPT member should sign

the Additional protocol. This will give the IAEA the right for intrusive inspection at any time and any place and can deter or limit the chance of a state developing a military program secretly.

- The IAEA reporting system should be improved to ease and shorten the process from IAEA discovering a possible NPT violation until the transfer of the case to the UN Security Council. This could be done through establishing an "NPT Permanent Monitoring Committee" as a specialized committee within the UN Security Council structure which works closely with the IAEA and focuses on monitoring the implementation of the treaty.

### **How can the GCC states strengthen the regional non-proliferation regime?**

So far the GCC states have proved their sincerity in abiding by the international rules and obligations of the non-proliferation regime; however, with the announcement of their intention to consider the introduction of nuclear energy in the region, there is a need to adapt suitable legislation to handle the new projects. At present, GCC states do not have the required legal framework to ensure the security and safety aspects required to satisfy the international community's concerns. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and United Arab Emirates have not signed the Additional Protocol, and Qatar has not yet submitted comprehensive safeguards agreements to the Board of Governors for its consideration<sup>16</sup>. It is not that these states do not agree with the principle of the safeguard agreements or the Additional Protocol, rather all GCC states – with the exception of Qatar – have qualified to the Small Quantity Protocol status (SQP) that is given to states with only minimal quantity of nuclear materials.<sup>17</sup> These states have

<sup>16</sup> See [http://www.iaea.org/OurWork/SV/Safeguards/sir\\_table.pdf](http://www.iaea.org/OurWork/SV/Safeguards/sir_table.pdf) , visited 2 April 2008; See also [http://ola.iaea.org/ola/treaties/iaea\\_related.asp](http://ola.iaea.org/ola/treaties/iaea_related.asp)

<sup>17</sup> The SQP allows states considered to be low risk to opt out of the more intensive inspection regimes in return for a declaration of their nuclear activities. In addition, the Protocol allows for the possession of:

- a. One kilogram in total of specific fissionable material, which may consist of one or more of the following (extract); (i) Plutonium; (ii) Uranium with an enrichment of 0.2 (20%) and above, taken account of by multiplying its weight by its enrichment;
- b. Ten tons in total of natural uranium and depleted uranium with an enrichment above 0.005 (0.5%)
- c. Twenty tons of depleted uranium with an en-

no nuclear facilities or activities and, therefore, felt that signing the Additional Protocol was unnecessary as long as they remained committed to their zero nuclear option.

However, the situation has changed with the decision of the GCC states in 2006 to establish nuclear programs. The SQP status is under review as some experts pointed out the danger that states which had only signed the SQP could secretly build their nuclear capabilities because they were not subject to IAEA inspection. In fact, outside the Additional Protocol, the current IAEA verification and safety standards enshrined in the Safeguards Agreement are not sufficient as they only deal with “declared nuclear sites” and with information supplied by the concerned states. In the past, states such as Iraq or Iran have violated the safeguards rules and declared some sites while hiding others. Thus, in order to assure the international community about the peaceful nature of their planned nuclear programs and allay any misgivings, it is necessary that all GCC states sign the comprehensive safeguards agreements and the Additional Protocol. This way, IAEA will have the legal power to inspect nuclear installations and the international community will have no reason to doubt the GCC’s commitment to establishing civilian programs for peaceful purposes.

Furthermore, the UAE and Bahraini decision to abstain from producing their own nuclear fuel cycle – instead relying on imported fuel – can serve as an example for other GCC states that are planning to establish nuclear civilian programs. Bilateral cooperation and multilateral agreements, including the import of fuel from existing international markets as well as the establishment of multinational nuclear consortiums, reduce the need for enrichment and reprocessing plants and minimize the risk of single states starting on an enrichment process.

There is no doubt that the GCC states currently intend to fulfill their obligations to the NPT. In a statement for the First Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review conference, the GCC states called for the adoption of the “13 critical steps” from the 2000 Review Conference aiming to systematically implement Article VI of the NPT including:

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richment of 0.005 (0.5%) or below,  
 d. Twenty tons of thorium, (see; the Structure and Content of Agreements between the Agency and States required in connection with Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, see INFCIR/153 (corrected version), June 1972.

- Arrangements by all nuclear-weapon states to place fissile material designated by each of them as no longer required for military purposes under IAEA
- Strengthening efforts by the nuclear-weapon states to reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally
- Increasing transparency by the nuclear-weapon states with regard to nuclear weapons capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to Article VI

The statement of the UAE Arab League representative describes the 2010 Review conference as a “crossroads”; “either we manage to face up to the challenges and achieve the necessary balance, or we will end up with a non-proliferation regime that is invalid and void of any meaningful substance.”<sup>18</sup> The UAE statement is even more critical saying that nuclear disarmament is the only way to avoid a nuclear arms race.<sup>19</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

The GCC states have embarked on establishing a civilian nuclear program solely for peaceful purposes. However, the actual nature of the program could shift from civilian to military if the non-proliferation regime collapses or suffers a major setback as a result of one regional state’s success in acquiring nuclear military capability. Despite the public commitment to maintain the peaceful and civilian nature of the GCC states’ nuclear program, the decision to invest in nuclear projects aims at building the foundation for nuclear technology know-how. This could be helpful if the regional security environment undergoes major changes toward a possible nuclear arms race. If Iran emerges as a nuclear power, the GCC states will have two options: Either they will opt to enter a nuclear arms race and develop their own nuclear military capability or they will rely on third party protection perhaps in the form of a nuclear umbrella most likely from the US. However, given the growing dissatisfaction with US policies in the region and the rising regional discomfort about dependence on the US, it should be assumed that the US umbrella will only be a short term solution until the GCC states have developed their own nuclear military capability. In any case, the GCC states feel the need to leave their options open

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<sup>18</sup> See statement by Anwar Othman Albarout, Head of the UAE Delegation, page 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



while hoping that the non-proliferation regime will improve and become more effective and prevent the introduction of a new nuclear power in the Gulf region.

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