

The experience of Brazil and Argentina suggests that nuclear CSBMs, such as an agreement by states not to attack each other's nuclear installations and the exchange of lists of their nuclear installations, may be a helpful first step toward a NWFZ. But although India and Pakistan have signed such agreements, this has not translated into progress toward a NWFZ. Against this backdrop, the prospect for such a zone being established in the region appears unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Middle East:

Iran made the first detailed proposal for a NWFZ in the Middle East. Egypt, while supporting the proposal, argued that any such zone must include Israel.¹⁵ Each year since 1974, the UN General Assembly has passed a resolution calling for a Middle East NWFZ, but progress toward its establishment has been thwarted by a number of obstacles, including a lack of diplomatic contacts between some of the most important parties (for example, Iraq and Israel, Iran and Iraq, Syria and Israel); concerns regarding Israel's nuclear capability; the near nuclear potential of other Middle East states; the development by several states of systems capable of delivering nuclear weapons; and the overall high state of tension among regional countries.¹⁶

Although Israel at first opposed the UN resolutions on a Middle East NWFZ, it allowed the passage of the resolution without a vote in 1980. It is now a consensus resolution. Israel maintains that establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East requires free and direct negotiations among the states of the region. Egypt has gone a step beyond the traditional NWFZ concept by calling for a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. A panel appointed by the UN Secretary-General to recommend measures to facilitate the creation of the Middle East NWFZ found substantial agreement on three points: the creation of such a zone must be a step-by-step process and would require an initial period of confidence-building among the parties; the zone must cover more than nuclear weapons, including chemical and conventional weapons; and the establishment of such a zone requires an improved political climate including progress in the Middle East peace process.¹⁷

The Korean Peninsula:

North Korea was an early proponent of a NWFZ in Northeast Asia, although there were several reasons why it was not taken seriously at the time. But the situation has changed significantly in the 1990s.¹⁸ As reports of a North Korean nuclear program began to emerge, the idea of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula received more attention, resulting in the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula signed by the two Koreas on 31 December 1991. Under the agreement (which has not come into force as yet), the two parties are required not to "test, produce, receive, possess, store or deploy nuclear weapons" and not to "possess facilities for nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment". (This is more specific than the basic obligations language of other NWFZs.) The agreement also provided for a two-tier verification regime: the IAEA safeguards system and a mutual inspection regime to carry out on-site inspection of facilities in both countries.