

# Mid-East Nuclear Proliferation

While the immediate focus of international attention has been on stopping [Iran](#) from obtaining the ability to build nuclear weapons, an equally worrisome development is that the Iranian drive to obtain a nuclear bomb has stimulated a regional race for nuclear technology to counter the perceived threat from a nuclear Iran.

Like [Iran](#), at least twelve other Middle Eastern countries have either announced plans to explore atomic energy or have signed nuclear cooperation agreements: [Saudi Arabia](#), [Algeria](#), [Egypt](#), [UAE](#), [Jordan](#), [Morocco](#), [Tunisia](#), [Turkey](#), [Syria](#), [Kuwait](#), [Qatar](#), and [Oman](#) (Two other countries - [Yemen](#) and [Libya](#) - cancelled their nuclear programs). Each of these countries, like Iran as well, have explicitly stated that they are only interested in peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

The fear is now that these countries may follow the Iranian example and work toward building a nuclear bomb to protect themselves in any future nuclear arms race.

As [President Obama](#) noted in March 2012, "It will not be tolerable to a number of states in that region for Iran to have a nuclear weapon and them not to have a nuclear weapon ... so the threat of proliferation becomes that much more severe ... The dangers of an Iran getting nuclear weapons that then leads to a free-for-all in the Middle East is something that I think would be very dangerous for the world."

These [Middle East nations](#) are increasingly apprehensive about the [threat of a nuclear Iran](#) and the failure of the international community to take decisive actions to prevent Tehran from achieving its nuclear ambitions. If the West is going to protect its interests in the region and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is vital now that [Iran](#) be stopped so steps can be taken to rein in these new efforts to join the nuclear club.

## **Developments in Mid-East Nuclear Proliferation:**

### **Saudi Arabia**

- In **May 2008**, the U.S. and [Saudi Arabia](#) agreed to establish a nuclear cooperation relationship and Saudi Arabia joined the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).
- In **April 2009**, King Abdullah told US diplomat Dennis Ross, "If [Iran] get nuclear weapons, we will get nuclear weapons."

- In **August 2009**, the Saudi minister of water and electricity announced that the kingdom was working on plans for its first nuclear power plant.
- In **July 2010**, Saudi Arabia and [France](#) announced the signing of a nuclear cooperation pact in order to develop atomic energy.
- In **February 2011**, Saudi Arabia and France signed a bilateral cooperation agreement for the development of nuclear power.
- In **January 2012**, a senior official noted, “We cannot live in a situation where Iran has nuclear weapons and we don’t ... If Iran develops a nuclear weapon, that will be unacceptable to us and we will have to follow suit.”
- Prince Turki al-Faisal noted that if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, “[that] would compel Saudi Arabia...to pursue policies which could lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences”.
- In **January 2012**, King Abdullah signed an agreement with China for cooperation in the development and use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.
- In **February 2012**, the London Times quoted a “senior Saudi official” as saying that Riyadh would launch a “twin-track nuclear weapons program” should Tehran realize its ambition of obtaining a nuclear weapon.

## UAE

- In **January 2008**, UAE signed a deal with a French company to build two nuclear reactors.
- UAE signed a nuclear framework agreement with [France](#) for cooperation in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful, civilian purposes.
- [UAE](#) and U.S. signed an agreement in **April 2008** to establish peaceful nuclear energy cooperation and formalized that MOU in **January 2009**.
- In **May 2009**, President Obama approved the agreement on nuclear energy cooperation.
- The agreement with the U.S. follows the public launch of a UAE policy document outlining potential development of a domestic nuclear power plant.
- In **August 2009**, UAE joined the IAEA Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management.
- In **May 2010**, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs, said they were developing nuclear technology in a "transparent, safe, secure, and peaceful" manner and outlined the UAE's policy to "develop its nuclear energy programme in a responsible manner".
- In **March 2011**, the UAE accepted a \$20 billion bid from a South Korean consortium to build four commercial nuclear power reactors, total 5.6 GWe, by 2020.
- In **June 2011**, a national opinion poll found strong support for nuclear technology development with 85% of respondents believing in the importance of nuclear energy.

- In **July 2012**, UAE began building a maiden nuclear power plant and signed an agreement with [Australia](#) for the supply of uranium.

## Jordan

- In **January 2007**, Jordanian King Abdullah announced in an interview with *Haaretz* that Jordan was interested in acquiring nuclear power for peaceful and energy purposes.
- In **August 2007**, [Jordan](#) established its Committee for Nuclear Strategy and set out a program for the development of nuclear power.
- In mid **2008**, Jordan signed an agreement with the Atomic Energy of Canada to conduct a study on building a reactor using natural uranium fuel for power.
- In **December 2008**, Jordan signed an MOU with Korea Electric Power Corp to carry out site selection and feasibility study on nuclear power projects.
- In **November 2009**, Jordan signed an \$11.3 million agreement with WorleyParsons for the pre-construction phase of a 1000 MWe nuclear power plant.
- In **February 2011**, Jordan and Turkey signed a nuclear cooperation agreement.
- In **2012**, Jordan announced plans to start building a nuclear power plant in 2013 for operation by 2020 and a second one for operation by 2025.
- Jordan signed nuclear cooperation agreements with France, Canada, UK and Russia, in respect to both power and desalination.
- Jordan signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with China, covering uranium mining and nuclear power.
- Jordan also has cooperation agreements with South Korea, Japan, Spain, Italy, Romania, Turkey and Argentina related to infrastructure for nuclear power.

## Turkey

- Early in **2006**, the port city of Sinop was chosen to host a commercial nuclear power plant.
- In **August 2006**, [Turkey](#) announced plans to have three nuclear power plants total operating by 2015. Discussions had been under way with Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd regarding two units as an initial investment.
- In **2007**, a bill concerning construction and operation of nuclear power plants and sale of their electricity was passed by parliament and subsequently approved by the President. The bill provided for the Turkish Atomic Energy Authority (TAEK) to set the criteria for building and operating the plants.
- In **February 2008**, preparatory work began to build a second nuclear power plant in Sinop.
- In **May 2008**, a civil nuclear cooperation agreement with the USA entered into force.
- In **May 2010**, Russia and Turkey signed an intergovernmental agreement for to build and operate a nuclear plant with four reactors in Akkuyu.



- In **June 2010**, a nuclear cooperation agreement with South Korea was signed to build the second Sinop plant with four nuclear reactors.
- In **2011**, the government announced intentions for three further nuclear power plants with four reactors each, all to be operational by 2030.
- In **March 2012**, a Turkish public opinion survey found a majority of 54% supporting policies that would lead Turkey to develop their own nuclear weapons.
- In **January 2013**, Turkish President Abdullah Gul called for a comprehensive solution to Iran's nuclear program and said Turkey does not want to see any neighboring country possess nuclear weapons. "Turkey will not accept a neighboring country possessing weapons not possessed by Turkey herself," Gul said.

## Egypt

- In **September 2006**, [Egypt](#) announced it would revive long dormant plans to construct a nuclear energy.
- In **March 2007**, Energy and Electricity Minister Hassan Younis announced plans to construct 10 nuclear-powered "electricity-generating stations" across the country.
- [Russia](#) and Egypt signed a nuclear cooperation accord in March 2008.
- In **2009**, the Egyptian Nuclear Power Plant Authority (NPAA) and WorleyParsons Limited concluded a \$160 million contract with services to include "site and technology selection studies and carries through to design, construction management, commissioning and start-up of the 1,200 MWe nuclear power plant."
- In **2010**, Cairo formally requested nuclear energy training assistance from the Korea International Cooperation Agency
- As of **June 2011**, Egypt's transitional government was planning to invite international companies to bid for their reactor construction project at El-Dabaa.

## Kuwait

- In March 2009, [Kuwait](#) setup a national nuclear energy commission, in cooperation with the IAEA, to consider the development of a nuclear technology program.
- In April 2010, it signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with France relating civil nuclear energy applications, including electricity generation, water desalination, research, agronomy, biology, earth sciences and medicine.
- In September 2010, announced intention to build 4 nuclear power reactors by 2022 but this plan was scrapped in mid-2011.
- In June 2010, Kuwait signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the U.S. Government on nuclear safeguards and other nonproliferation topics.

- By December 2010, Kuwait had nuclear cooperation agreements with USA, Russia and Japan.

## Algeria

- In January 2007, Algeria and Russia signed an agreement to investigate the establishment of a nuclear power facility.
- In June 2007, Algeria signed a nuclear cooperation accord with the USA to begin generating nuclear energy for civilian purposes.
- During 2008, Algeria signed other nuclear technology agreements with Argentina, China, and France.
- In February 2009, the government announced that it planned to build its first nuclear power plant to be operating about 2020.
- [Algeria](#) has one of the most advanced nuclear-science programs in the Arab world and is considering the role that nuclear power might play in its domestic energy mix.

## Morocco

- In 2007, nuclear power company Areva signed an agreement with Morocco's Office Cherifien des Phosphates (OCP) to recover uranium from phosphoric acid.
- In October 2007, [Morocco](#) signed a nuclear energy cooperation agreement with France to develop a nuclear power plant near Marrakesh.
- In January 2010, government announced plans for two nuclear reactors to start operation after 2020.
- In January 2011, the government approved plans to set up a nuclear safety agency and draft a law on nuclear security.

## Qatar

- Qatar was actively involved in the GCC decision of December 2006 to pursue nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.
- In April 2008, [Qatar](#) announced a plan to build a nuclear plant.
- In May 2008, Qatar sent experts to a meeting of the IAEA in [Vienna](#).
- In 2010, Qatar raised the possibility of a regional project for nuclear generation.

## Tunisia

- In December 2006, [Tunisia](#) signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with France focused on nuclear power and desalination.
- In April 2008, the nuclear cooperation agreement with France was amplified to include the possible construction of a nuclear power plant.



## Syria

- From 2001-2007, [Syria](#) is believed to have been building a gas-cooled reactor similar to the plutonium production unit at Yongbyong in North Korea (this plant was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike in 2007 and all remains were subsequently demolished by the Syrian government).
- In 2011, the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission published a proposal for a new nuclear power plant by 2020.

## Oman

- In June 2009, [Oman](#) signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with Russia.
- In February 2010, a delegation of U.S. experts met with Oman's Nuclear Steering Committee regarding areas of potential future cooperation in nuclear technology.